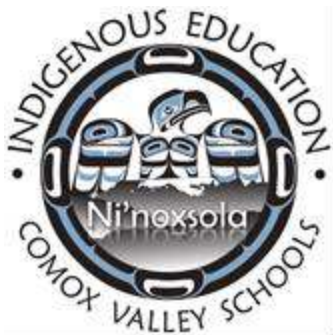


NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program

Revised September 2021



LETTER TO STAFF

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Gilakas'la, Tansi, Hello,

As members of the Ni'noxsola Advisory, it is our pleasure to introduce you to our project.

To begin let us explain our name: Ni'Noxsola (Nee nox so la) is the Kwak'wala word for Wise People.

The following link will assist you in pronouncing Ni'noxsola correctly:

<https://www.firstvoices.com/explore/FV/sections/Data/Kwak'wala/Kwak%CC%93wala/Kwak%CC%93wala/learn/words/5dc949d0-815f-4b73-a6db-fb14ae7e821a>

When using it in the singular it becomes Noxsola. Please note that the word depicts wisdom, not age and is designated to Wise Ones of the Kwakwaka'wakw people. If you are unsure of how to address a person designated with this title of wisdom, just ask them.

They may have a word from their own cultural heritage or a personal preference. In these pages we will refer to our Ni'noxsola team as Knowledge Keepers, Wise Ones and Elders.

The Elders in Residence program will pair a Wise One from our community with a local school. The Elder will join your school community from September through to June for an agreed upon number of hours per week.

We aim to prioritize relationships between staff, students and our Ni'noxsola team with the goal of building bonds leading to a deeper respect for Indigenous peoples and culture.

It is our desire that both the Knowledge Keeper and host school will share common interests and for that reason we would like to inquire the following:

What would you, as a teacher, leader, ISW, like to see implemented in your school?

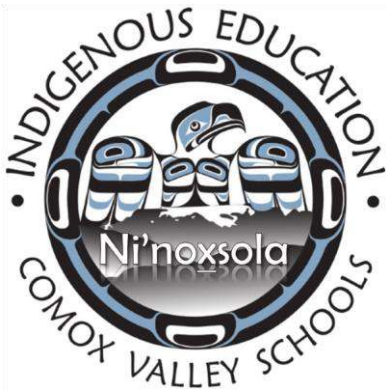
Are there certain age groups that you feel would benefit more from an Elders presence?

Feel free to share your thoughts, concerns and ideas with us via our coordinator:
gwen.monnet@sd71bc.ca

Thank you for your insights.

The Ni'noxsola Advisory:

Mary Everson *Evelyn Voyageur*
Edna Leash *Bryce Mercredi*
Bruce Carlos



ROLES OF SUPPORT STAFF

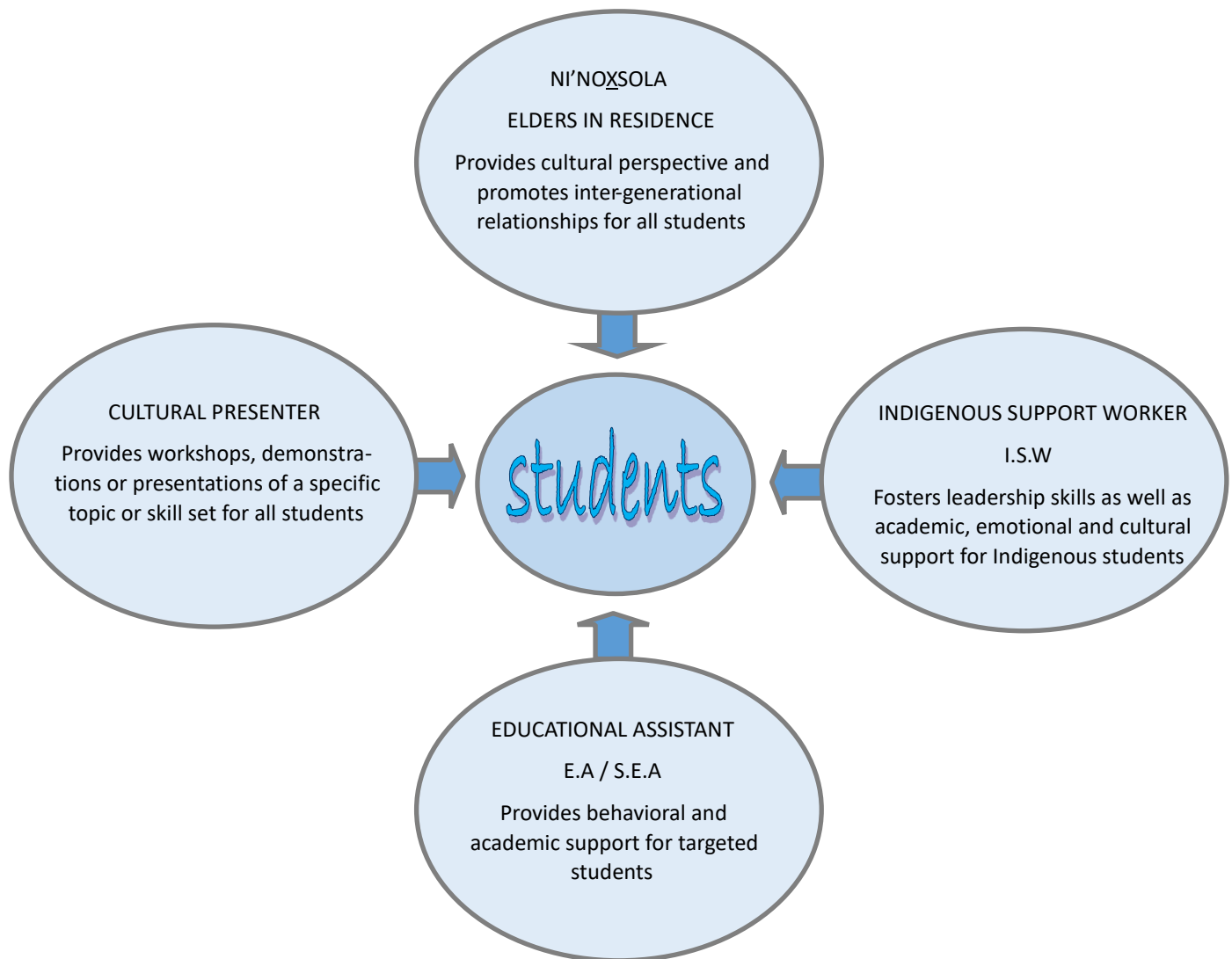
Ni'NOXSOLA

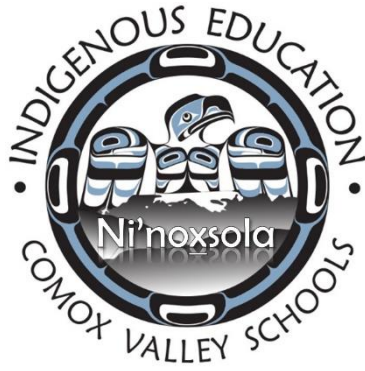
Elders in Residence Program

Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

The following visual was created with the purpose of clarifying the roles of different support staff within the school.

This is a highly simplified tool and does not in any way mean to deflect from the many responsibilities that each role carries.





WHO IS AN ELDER?

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program

Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Who is an Elder?

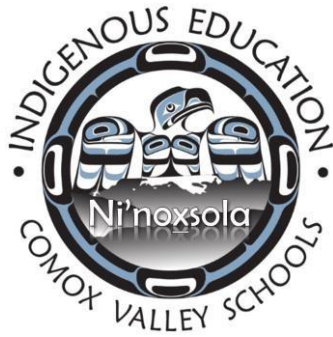
Our Ni'noxsola Advisory considers an Elder to be someone who is wise in the ways of their culture and are recognized in the Indigenous community for their culture, wisdom, stability and understanding; regardless of age.

Wise Ones have knowledge of traditional and cultural teachings and live based on the traditional life values that they grew up with. An Elder is respectful of all peoples and is a positive role model to Indigenous people. It is for these reasons that the title of Elder, Noxsola, Knowledge Keeper, Wise One (or however it is culturally appropriate for your Elder to be addressed) cannot be chosen; it is earned through a shared respect throughout the Indigenous community.

It is the vision of the Ni'noxsola program to create awareness and understanding of the meaning of cultural integrity. To share with the community the real meaning of what it means to be an Indigenous person, what are the core beliefs and to understand that essentially it is the land and environment that dictates the culture and traditions of Indigenous groups across Canada.

"The concept of an Elder in the Indigenous community is sometimes a difficult one for non-Indigenous people to understand. The difference is in the language: in English, it is a title; a noun. In Indigenous languages, it is a verb that describes the role."

Elders Protocol and Guidelines- University of Alberta



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program

Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

A Knowledge Keeper would work in consultation with CVS Principal of Indigenous Education towards:

Goals:

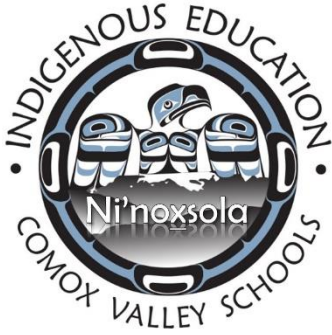
- Assisting host school in providing opportunities within the school system throughout the grades for all students and staff to recognize and appreciate our local First Nations people including sharing of the Origin Story of our local people (to be provided)
- Assisting host school in providing information regarding the diversity of Indigenous peoples across British Columbia and Canada
- Maintaining a presence in the host school to encourage a greater understanding of cultural values including: prioritizing the background and connection to ancestors, people, nature and society; the societal rules of community, the validating of life and the sharing of Indigenous world views.
- Assisting the host school in providing opportunities within the school system throughout the grades for all students and staff to recognize and appreciate the Elder's personal cultural background and the sharing of traditional knowledge and experience.
- To facilitate communication/relations with local Knowledge Keepers for staff and students.
- Cooperation with the host school to plan and implement strategies to encourage Indigenous enhancement activities for our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit students.

Objectives:

- To prioritize relationships between staff, students and Wise Ones with the goal of building bonds and a deeper respect for Indigenous peoples and culture.
- Accessibility to provide insight and guidance to staff and students at the host school in implementing cultural content designed to enhance our Indigenous programs

Liaise with:

- Comox Valley Schools Ni'noxsola Advisory
- Ni'noxsola Coordinator gwen.monnet@sd71.bc.ca



ROLE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Core Function:

The Elder in Residence will provide guidance and support to students and employees of their host school through the sharing of their traditional knowledge and experience.

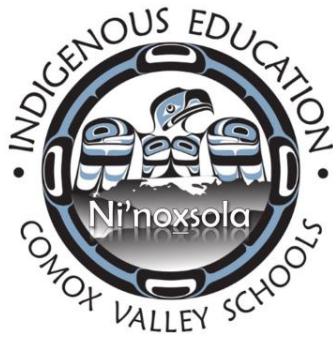
Authority:

The Elder in Residence is responsible to the District Principal of CVS Indigenous Education.

Details of Function:

The Elder in Residence will:

- Work in cooperation with staff to increase students' knowledge and understanding of cultural teachings.
- Welcome attendees to gatherings on behalf of our program as the Resident Elder when appropriate.
- Participate in the instruction of school programs, collaboratively and with the support of the host school staff and teachers.
- Assist in the planning and implementation of Indigenous content for teachers and support staff where possible.
- Assist in fostering and maintaining positive, supportive relationships between Indigenous students and school staff.
- Attend meetings as required and where appropriate.
- Provide verbal or written reports to the District Principal of Indigenous Education at monthly meetings.
- The Elder in Residence will not replace teachers, instruct or supervise students without assistance.



K'OMOKS HISTORY

NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program

Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Information source <https://komoks.ca/cultures/>

K'ómoks First Nation History

K'ómoks First Nation's history begins with the arrival of their ancestors to this territory at the end of the last Ice Age. Descent from these First Ancestors tie the K'ómoks and Puntlatch tribes to their respective territories. For thousands of years, KFN ancestors occupied the extent of their territories, and harvested and managed the rich natural resources therein. These lands and waters supported thousands of people who developed a rich and sophisticated culture. The disease and warfare that accompanied contact with Europeans in the late 18th century decimated KFN ancestors, just before an onslaught of settlers came to their territories. From this time, KFN has struggled against colonial policies that tried to alienate KFN people from their territories, resources, and culture. Despite all of this, KFN's ancestors persevered, and current generations of KFN people continue to assert their rights and title to the whole of their territory.

HISTORY

For thousands of years indigenous people occupied the shoreline of eastern Vancouver Island in a place referred to as, "the land of plenty". This Land of Plenty stretched from what is known today as Kelsey Bay south to Hornby and Denman Island and included the watershed and estuary of the Puntledge River. The people called K'ómoks today referred to themselves as Sathloot, Sasitla, leeksun, Puntledge, Cha'chae, and Tat'poos. They occupied sites in Kelsey Bay, Quinsum, Campbell River, Quadra Island, Kye Bay, and along the Puntledge estuary. As a cultural collective they called themselves, "Sathloot", according to the late Mary Clifton.

Oral history and archaeology describe a rich and bountiful relationship between the K'ómoks and Land of Plenty. Salmon, seal, octopus, herring, cod, deer, ducks, shellfish and a plethora of berries filled the tummies of the young and old alike. The technologies that were applied in harvest, preparation and cultivation of local resources were appropriate to the environment, resource and spiritual beliefs. Fish weirs, duck nets, berry picking techniques and clothing design met the needs of the K'ómoks and for generations provided variety, utility and sense of cultural uniqueness. Mask dances and rhythmic songs filled the winter nights and season. Property was distributed to guests in potlatches and elaborate naming ceremonies honoured the youth, leaders and elders of the communities.

Following contact with Europeans northern groups started a southerly move into K'ómoks territory. A period of conflict displaced the K'ómoks southward to their relatives the Puntledge. Followed by a period of colonial policy and practices, the K'ómoks families have endured hardship and loss of land, resources and cultural connection. Modern leaders are striving to reclaim cultural expression and relationship the "the land of plenty". Today the head chiefs of the K'ómoks are Ernie Hardy (Sasitla), Allan Mitchell (Sasitla/Cha'chae) and George Cook (leeksun).



K'OMOKS ORIGIN STORIES

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Information source <https://komoks.ca/cultures/>

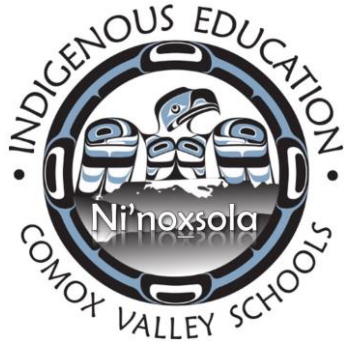
<KFN today consists of several formerly separate tribes, both culturally K'ómoks and Pentlatch. The Sathlout ('sath-loot), Sasitla (sa'seet-la), leeksen (eye-'ick-sun) and Xa'xe ('ha'hey) are all culturally K'ómoks and have their own unique origin stories. The Pentlatch had a similar culture but spoke a distinct language and also have their own unique origin story. These origin stories all tie the tribes' first ancestors to their respective tribal territories. We have included a selection of KFN origin stories below and will continue adding others as we are ready to share.>

A Sathlout Origin Story

"A long time ago, Cia'tlk'am ('shal-kum) descended from the sky. He wore the feather garment Qua'eqoe ('khwhy-khwhy) and settled in Nga'icam (Quinsam). He became the ancestor of the Catloltq (Sathlout). With him, his sister Te'sitla (teh-'seet-la) arrived. She was so big that she needed two boats to cross the sea. The brother and sister wandered through all countries and visited the Nanaimo, Ni'ciatl (Ni-Such), Tlahu's (Kahuse) and many other tribes who all became their younger brothers." {Boas 1895:86}

A Pentlatch Origin Story

"A long time ago, two men, Koi'min ('koh-yuh-min) and He'k'ten ('heck-oo-tin) descended from the sky. They became the ancestors of the PE'ntlatch (Pentlatch). Once the sea receded far from its shore and the women went out far and filled their baskets with fish. The bottom of the sea remained dry for a long time. But He'k'ten was afraid that the water would rise that much higher later on. Therefore, he made a long rope of cedar branches and toed four boats together. At last, the water really flowed back and began to flood the shore. So, he tied the rope to a big rock in the mouth of the PE'ntlatch River, fastened the other end to the boats and the two chief families floated about on the rafts. The other people begged He'k'ten, "Oh, allow us to tie our boats to your rope. We will give you our daughters as wives." But He'k'ten didn't allow it and pushed them away with poles. When the water receded again, they alone found their home again, while the others were scattered about the wide world. A whale remained stranded high up on the mountain near PE'ntlatch Lake. The water up there froze and it was unable to get away again. It can still be seen there today and that is why the glacier in the PE'ntlatch Valley is called K'one-is (Queneesh)."



BIOGRAPHY – DR. EVELYN VOYAGEUR

Nl'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Aboriginal Education Comox Valley Schools

Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw – Kingcome Inlet

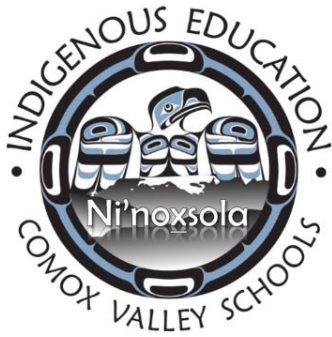


Despite going to St. Michael's Residential School at age ten, Dr. Evelyn Voyageur is a fluent speaker of Kwakwaka'wakw and an active matriarch in the Kwakwaka'wakw culture and traditions. She has dedicated her life to improving the health of Indigenous peoples through her more than five decades in the nursing profession.

As a registered nurse with a PhD in psychology, Dr. Voyageur has worked extensively in community- and hospital-based health care in across Alberta and British Columbia. She has worked with the Indian Residential School Society, where her work focused on supporting former students healing from the trauma of residential schools. She is also an educator who has taught and developed nursing curricula at the University of Victoria and North Island College.

Dr. Voyageur has received many awards for her contributions to Aboriginal nursing, including a 2018 Indspire Award for Health. This award acknowledged her promotion of Indigenous health in a number of capacities, most recently as BC representative for the Aboriginal Nurses Association and member of the board of St. Joseph's General Hospital in BC. Dr. Voyageur was also recognized in 2017 in two ways by the College of Registered Nurses of BC when she received the Life Time Achievement award and was one of 150 nurses across Canada chosen for excellence in nursing. Also of note, she was one of the first recipients of the Award of Excellence in Nursing from Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Branch.

Dr. Voyageur has been active in the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association (formerly Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada) since 1980, serving as the BC representative, vice-president, and president (2010 to 2012). She also founded the Native and Inuit Nurses Association of BC (NINA) in the early 1980s to help educate those who work with First Nations communities.



BIOGRAPHY – EDNA LEASK

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Tlingit, Tagish & Tutchone – Yukon



Hello, my name is Edna Leask. Comox has been my home for 25 years. I respect and honour that I live in the traditional territory of K'omoks First Nations.

My ancestors are Tlingit, Tagish and Tutchone. I come from the Yukon. My father's people came from Lake Laberge and my mother's people are from Selkirk along the Yukon River.

My Mom and Dad were the Elders who greatly influenced me in my life. As a way of sharing my story, I want to share some stories about my Mom and Daddy. I remember February 14 with fondness because I can almost taste my Mom's heart-shaped sugar cookies which she made especially for me.

At least that's what I thought. I have brothers who might disagree. The cookies had pink icing and red icing around the edges. My Mom always made important events very special. She stayed up all night, many nights sewing moccasins and mukluks so Christmas would be a day to remember. There wasn't much money in those days so that's how she made extra money. Christmas was a big event at our home and there was always many extra people eating Christmas dinner. Relatives and others who were welcomed into our home to share food.

Mom showed me how to hunt small game and gather food from the land. Our father was the big game hunter. All the kids went on a hunt at one time or another and we all had jobs to do. Although, I was the youngest, my father always made sure I was included and I had a little job to do. We learned from our parents how to live on the land and eat from the land. Daddy was an avid outdoorsman, he knew how to live 'in the bush'. My parents had 'his' and 'her' dog teams. Another fond memory was my Daddy singing in his language and telling stories about the different places we hunted and camped. He always cached our tent poles so the poles would be there when we came back again. We had several different camp sites for food gathering. My parents were a team and raising their family was their main focus.

Courageous, bold, adventurous, dedicated, determined, patient, generous, responsible, honest, hard-working, kind-hearted, sharing, caring, loving are some of the words I think of when I think of my Mom and Daddy. I recall, years later, my Father still checking to make sure everyone was okay. By then, he was an old man. He always had time for his grandchildren and there are many grandchildren. My parents taught me and my brothers and sisters about our people; who all our relatives are and the importance of keeping family and community connections. They taught us to share and to care about people. I do my best to teach my children and grandchildren what I learned from my Mother and Father. I know what my parents taught me are the guiding principles for me and my family. I can say that what I learned from them has helped me to deal with many challenges that I have had to face as an aboriginal woman in Canada. I believe in the importance of preserving the legacy of aboriginal people and actively encouraging the understanding of First Nations/aboriginal values and culture in Canada.



BIOGRAPHY – JOANN RESTOULE

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



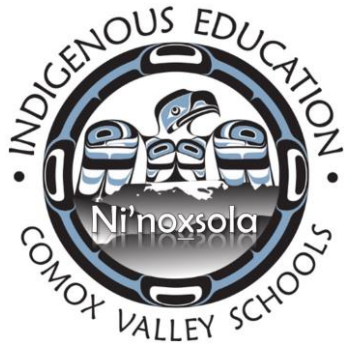
Dokis First Nation , Anishnabe – Sturgeon Falls, Ont

I am a member of the Dokis First Nation, of the Anishnabe people. The Anishnabe people are located throughout areas of the Great Lakes both in Canada and the United States. My family crests are the Eagle, "Migisi" and the Muskrat, "Wajask". As an Anishnabe Kwe-woman, mother and grandmother I have looked for ways and means to celebrate my cultural heritage. Culture, spirituality, art, theatre, song and dance have played a large role in my life. Through these mediums I have found ways to explore, learn and teach the rich cultural history of the ancestors of this country.

As a young woman I had the opportunity to spend time with Elders and mentors from across North America and other parts of the world. I pursued a deeper understanding of the impact of Canada's policy of assimilation by obtaining a degree in Criminology and Corrections then working at the Canadian National level with the Assembly of First Nations and the National Native Women's Association. Through my work in Addictions, Corrections, Health, Education, Economic Development, Youth Programs and developing awareness and understanding of culture and spiritual practice, I was able to grasp the degree to which we, as First Nations people had lost our sense of place and identity. How the traditional ways of being and cultural practices could bring this strength and identity back into being.

The experiences and the expertise I have gained from cultures around the world have taught me the value of a sense of place and belonging. Culture, spirituality, family and community are to me, the pillars of life. Opportunities to create these connections in a meaningful way are first and foremost in all aspects of my life and my work. I am the mother of 3 children and a grandmother, "Kokum". I make my home in the Comox Valley where I have lived for over 30 years.

I have most recently retired from my post within the school system as a Youth and Family Program Worker. In this role I enjoyed the time spent meeting with young people, exchanging thoughts and ideas and creating opportunities to build awareness and connections.



BIOGRAPHY – ANNIE JOSEPH

Nl'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Aboriginal Education Comox Valley School



Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw – Kingcome Inlet

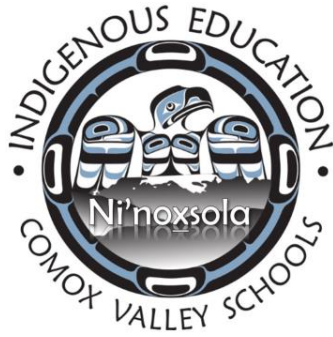
Annie Joseph remembers her home always being full of children from the community. She was a middle child, born into a large family of 12 children. She remembers her parents were loving, protective and always hard working and they were always quick to help family and neighbours.

When she was a small child, Annie was injured and this kept her from being sent away to residential school like many other children in the small village. This meant that Annie grew up speaking Kwakwa'la and she is a fluent speaker of this First Nations language. Also, the Big House was not accessible due to Canadian laws. At the time, it was against the law to potlatch and perform ceremonies.

Because she grew up in Kingcome and spoke the language, Annie was fortunate to experience a traditional way of life in Kingcome Inlet.

Annie left Kingcome Inlet at age 20 with her husband who would travel for work. They lived in Port Hardy, Alert Bay and Vancouver. They had 5 children together and fostered a dozen more over the years. Now there's 21 grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Always community-minded, Annie used to teach Sunday school in Kwakwa'la at St. George's church in Kingcome. Today Annie lives in Courtenay and she still teaches Kwakwa'la to children and adults.



BIOGRAPHY – Sheila Buchanan

NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Métis – Lac la Biche



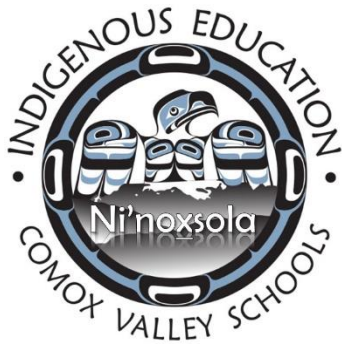
Sheila Buchanan was birthed by her Grandmother in a log house in the small town of Lac la Biche in Northern Alberta. She was the second child of fourteen and was raised by her Grandparents who taught her traditional ways such as trapping, cooking and survival skills. She speaks the languages that were spoken in the Métis community of Lac la Biche which include Cree, Michif, English and a little French.

Métis Jigging was a regular part of Sheila's home life where the community would come together and dance. Every weekend neighbours would take turns hosting the family friendly dances in their homes. Lac la Biche may have been a poor community, but it was rich in simple pleasures and family values. Transportation was typically a horse and wagon, or a cutter in the winter months which is a type of sleigh.

Sheila was married at the age of eighteen and moved to Athabasca, also located in Northern Alberta. It was there that she raised her three children. She is now the proud Grandmother of twelve Grandchildren and twelve Great-Grandchildren.

Sheila is a firm believer in adult education. She decided to further her education in her late twenties by finishing her high school diploma, then obtained a college degree in law enforcement and corrections and completed her studies with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Alberta.

Sheila has worked as a Peace Officer, Corrections Officer and retired as a Parole Officer.



BIOGRAPHY – TRISH MCPHAIL

NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Aboriginal Education Comox Valley Schools

Kitasoo & Heiltsuk Nations



I respectfully acknowledge that the land we gather on is on the Unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.

Hello, my name is Trish McPhail, I am from the Kitasoo & Heiltsuk Nations. I live in the beautiful Comox Valley on Vancouver Island with my husband of 28 years & our three amazing children.

I would like to share with you a little bit about who I am. During my school years I grew up in many different towns & communities in BC. I began my childhood in Haida Gwaii, where I was so lucky to live until I was in Grade 4. I am grateful for living in a small remote mining town because it allowed for incredible connections to nature.

I have a deep love for the ocean, rivers, forests & our coastal wildlife.

I was adopted and as an adult I discovered that I was a 60's+ Scoop Baby; taken against my birth mother's will & given to a non-Indigenous family. Due to this practice, myself and thousands of other children like me were deprived of the opportunity to be raised with the traditional teachings of our beautiful Indigenous ways.

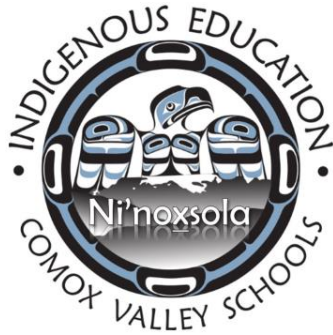
I am now embracing my roots as I deepen my learning of our remarkable culture alongside our children and I am happy to say that we have been reunited with many of our relatives, including my birth mother.

What I have come to understand is that there is a blood memory that is so strong, that our beautiful way of being is woven into the core fibres of who we are. Knowing where you come from helps us walk taller & embracing who we are speaks volumes of our incredible resilience.

I am honoured to be a part of the Indigenous Education Team of SD71, guiding our youth along their education journeys allows deeper connections as we heal & move forward together.

Every Child Matters





BIOGRAPHY – David Dawson, Gamutalagalis

Ni'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Kwakwaka'wakw - K'ómoks First Nation



Gilakas'la nugwa'am Gamutalagalis. I come from the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw, Mamalilikulla, Walas Kwaguil, Namgis, and the We-Wa-Kai of the Kwak'wak'awakw People as well as the Pentlatch and Sahtloot of the K'ómoks First Nation.

My name is David Dawson, and I was born and raised in the Comox Valley and territory of the K'ómoks First Nation. I am very proud to say that my people come from Kingcome Inlet. I have close family connections to the K'ómoks First Nation through my Grandmother Mary Everson who is the daughter of the late Margret Frank (Wilson) of the Walas Kwagiul who Married the late Chief Andy Frank of the K'ómoks First Nation.

I have been blessed and privileged to learn my cultural ways from many mentors in my life such as my uncles Andy Everson of the K'ómoks First Nation and George Taylor of the Tlowitsis First Nation of

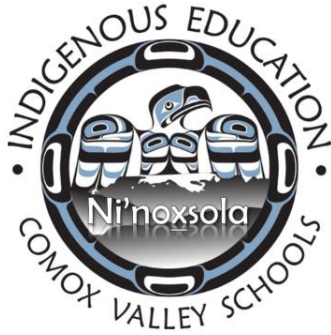
Turner Island.

I have been a part of two different dance groups, one of them for over 20 years and the other for over 10 years. I continue to learn my cultural ways as I walk this sacred gift of life and freely give what has been freely given to me.

I have been on a healing journey for some time now, and this journey has really allowed me to see the cultural values of LOVE, KINDNESS, RESPECT, and GENEROSITY more clearly. Within this journey, I have implemented these values into all that I do, and I can honestly say, all my successes in life have been based off these values.

I currently work at Comox Valley Schools as an Indigenous Support Worker in which I have been honored to bring in a cultural link to the healing within. I am on the Indigenous Cultural Presenters List which enables me to go into various schools and share cultural stories through drumming and singing. Moreover, for the past two summers I have been graced with the opportunity to work with children and families through the partnership of Ministry of Children and Families and the Child Development Association with my role as a culture keeper.

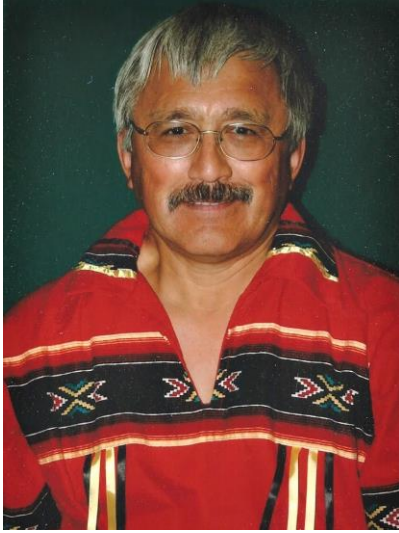
I have been taught that love is the most powerful medicine and that we can overcome anything in life if we instill that love within. We all have a sacred gift within. Learn with your heart, and lead with love in your heart.



BIOGRAPHY – BRYCE MERCREDI

NINOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools



Métis – Fort Chipewyan

Bryce Mercredi was the first child of 8 born to Métis parents Peggy and Xavier Mercredi in Fort Smith, NWT. His parents were both born and raised in Fort Chipewyan where they attended residential school as day students. Bryce comes from many generations of Métis who worked for the fur trade, the Hudson Bay Company and as postmaster in Fort Chipewyan on the North shore of Lake Athabasca. Bryce's great-great grandfather travelled with Alexander Mackenzie to the Arctic Coast and to the West Coast of British Columbia.

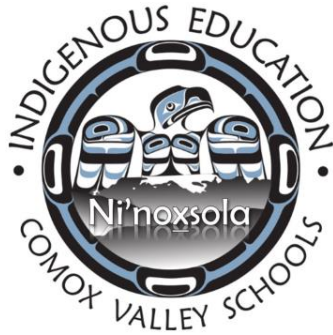
The Mercredi family eventually moved to Yellowknife where the children were raised. Once acquiring a Mine Technician Diploma, Bryce worked in Northern BC, New Guinea, the Yukon and finally Port Hardy where his 3 children were born.

The family moved to Comox in 1985 where he and his wife still reside. They are the proud grandparents of 3.

Bryce has been involved in providing a voice for the Métis people for over 25 years including forming the Métis community North Island Métis where he served as director and vice president.

Since its formation in 2004, Bryce has remained president of the local Métis association MIKI'SIW. Through the years the MIKI'SIW has grown in numbers and has had an impact on our Aboriginal community through their charitable work and creation of weekly family oriented cultural workshops. The MIKI'SIW has been an active participant in various cultural events such as Walking With Our Sisters, Aboriginal Days, Aboriginal Graduation and has given identity to the Métis people of our community.

Bryce has been a part of the Aboriginal Education Council for over 20 years and shares his knowledge of Métis history and culture as a cultural presenter for Comox Valley Schools. He was presented with the Order of the Sash which is a distinct award provided by the Métis Nation of British Columbia to honor important work by an individual.



BIOGRAPHY – LAWRENCE MERCREDI

NI'NOXSOLA

Elders in Residence Program
Indigenous Education Comox Valley Schools

Métis – Fort Chipewyan

I was born February 13, 1951 in Fort Chipewyan AB. I am third born in a family of eight children. My parents Margarite Xaverine (Peggy) and Xavier Francis (X) were both born in Fort Chipewyan AB.



I have been blessed to have over 40 years of marriage to a beautiful and caring wife, Dianne, who gave us two beautiful children: Karina and Adam, who in turn gave us three grandchildren.

We moved to Yellowknife, NWT in the winter of 1952 because my father, in his wisdom, did not want his children to attend residential schools. In moving to closer proximity to a day school he spared myself and my siblings the residential school experience. We were fortunate that he was in a position that he could provide us with a more secure environment as many were not.

I graduated in 1969 from St. Patrick's High School. Hunting, fishing and hockey occupied a large part of my childhood.

My work experience began with gold and mining exploration; surveying both surface and underground.

I travelled through Canada and Europe during the mining off season.

I settled in Yellowknife and began a career in the property assessment field. I was the first aboriginal assessor trainee that graduated for the Govt. of the N.W.T. as an assessor. I was in this field for approximately 14 years after which time I began private practice and expanded my services to the whole of the N.W.T. I did this for approximately 22 years when I decided to return as an employee of the Government of NWT as a correctional officer. I completed 13 years of service when retirement brought my wife and I to Vancouver Island.

I am a member of the North Slave Métis Alliance with whom I represent on the Traditional Knowledge Elders Group (TKEG). This is a group of Elders from affected communities of Dominion Diamond Mine Inc. We consult and advise on issues that effect the environment, particularly expansion plans. Issues we discuss range from wildlife concerns for the caribou, grizzlies, moose, birds and smaller mammals as well as land, air and water quality.

There are companies that consider traditional knowledge on the same plane as western science. I see this as a step forward as traditional knowledge has been a big part of my life for many years and I am very proud to have passed this knowledge on to my grandchildren.