



# May 2026 NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS ISSUE

See updates from the Scw'exmx Child and Family Teams! Enjoy our eye-catching photos from our Staff Wellness Day, Cedar Bark Harvesting!

Find out what our amazing Teams have been getting up to! Also what employment opportunities we have open!



## Mission

We are all somebody's seventh generation. We are committed to work with our communities to create the necessary change to ensure children currently in care have the advocates they deserve and seven generations from now, the need for a child welfare system will no longer exist as our families will be whole and healthy.



## tekm míns | tá k'wúl'əm - Our Call to Action

We are at a critical moment in time. A great deal of change is taking place within the current political climate in which we exist. Bold steps are required to actualize the changes necessary for the communities we represent. For the first time since colonization, our action will fundamentally alter the foundation upon which outside governments have imposed political interests of assimilation through the systemic removal of our children.

For generations, our children have been the ones on the front line of federally and provincially legislated cultural genocidal regimes. Our families and communities were fractured but never broken. To achieve healing, justice and hope for each child ever removed from their parents, families and communities, it is up to us to provide a new reality for generations to come.

Through the wisdom of our ancestors, we have been taught the ways to care for one another. We must work toward a future markedly different from the current state wherein there are more Indigenous children in care now than at the height of the residential school era. While the current system is derived from legislation and policy, not of the Indigenous origin at a community level or otherwise, we undertake the process of decolonization to bring traditional knowledge, guidance and practices of the nte?kémx and syilx people forward in collaboration and guidance of our communities.

It is our responsibility to create the necessary change to ensure children currently in care have the advocates they deserve; and seven generations from now, the need for a child welfare system will no longer exist as our families will be whole and healthy. nte?kémx and syilx ancestors have anticipated this change and passed on their wisdom as we respond to this call to action. This very legacy is now ours to nurture and protect as we build a new platform where today's children, young people, families and communities will remain together and rekindle their cultural ways of being.

## Vision

Work collectively to exercise nte?kémx and syilx inherent rights as we empower children, young people and families.

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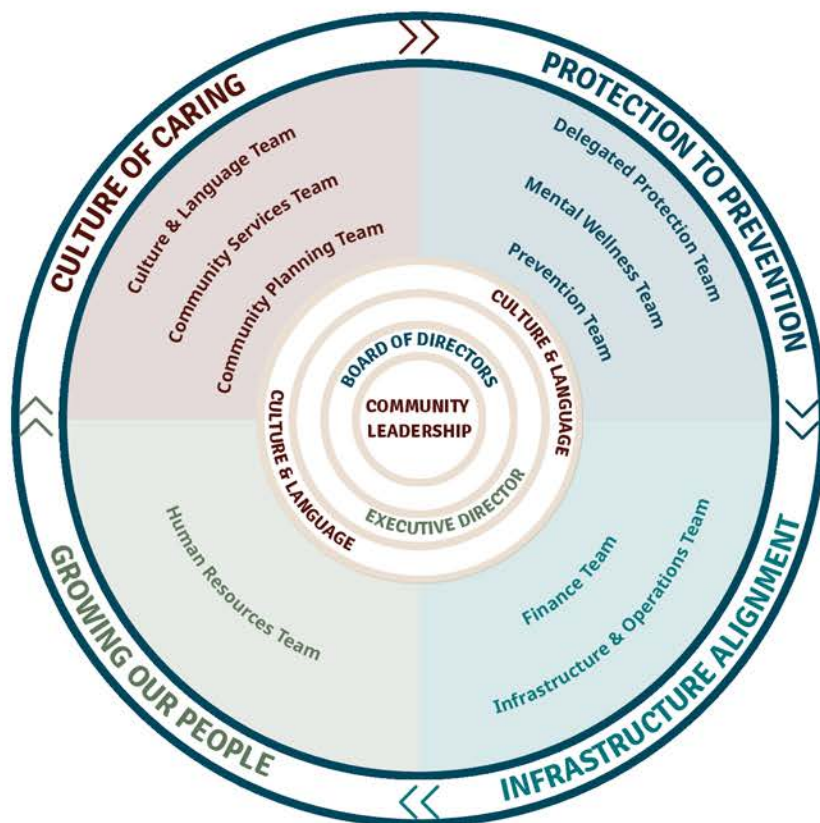
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# SCFSS STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

## CULTURE OF CARING

- Communicate with one voice
- Integrate language and traditional teachings into programs and services
- Grow caregiver networks in alignment with traditional and community values
- Incorporate learning from Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Return rights and responsibilities to our people through the development and implementation of Governance and Laws



## PROTECTION TO PREVENTION

- Bring and keep our children home
- Align programs and services with our vision
- Shift our focus from fear to love
- Build community engagement and capacity
- Build trusting relationships

## GROWING OUR PEOPLE

- Engage community expertise to support our vision
- Retain those committed to our vision
- Adopt, embrace, and implement cultural practice frameworks
- Acknowledge Post-traumatic Growth (PTG)
- Build professional capacity

## INFRASTRUCTURE ALIGNMENT

- Realign budgets to shift from protection to prevention
- Improve Information Technology support in current and post COVID-19 environment
- Structure change management to achieve our collaborative vision
- Improve prompt management reporting
- Integrate programs and services to build community capacity

## TEACHINGS FROM OUR ELDER GABBY (JIMMY) ISAAC

### MOOSE HIDE TANNING

"My Granny taught me this work," Gabby says. "That's how this knowledge gets passed on."

In Mary June's backyard, the work of tanning hide is in motion. Gabby helped build much of what's there, including the smokehouse, the stretching frames, and the small shelter where the first part of the process happens.



It starts with a soaked hide, worked by hand and scraped clean of its membrane and hair before moving on to the next step.

For scraping, Gabby uses a tool he made from a horse rib, worn smooth from use and sharpened just enough to do the job without cutting the hide. It is the same kind of tool his Granny used, and one he still prefers.

"We soak it, clean it, then soak it again," Gabby explains.

From there, the hide is soaked a second time with animal brains to soften it, then stretched and worked by hands, shovels, and soft wooden tools until it becomes flexible.

"It takes time," he says. "You've got to stay with it. Moose is a lot thicker than deer." The final step is smoking. Hides are hung inside the smokehouse and surrounded by slow, steady smoke made from smouldering rotten wood.

"It's the smoke that does the work," Gabby says.

Each hide can sit in the smoke for hours, sometimes more than once, depending on the finish. "The longer you smoke it, the darker it gets."

The smoke also helps protect the hide once it is finished. "That smoke helps it when it rains. It repels the water," he explains.

By the end, the hide is ready to be made into gloves, moccasins, or clothing, shaped by the work and the knowledge passed down through generations.













"This is how we keep it going," he says. "By doing it and sharing it."

# May Harvesting



May, known as Digging time or slaʔáqʷám, is a season for harvesting Morel Mushrooms, Lightning Mushrooms, wild onions, Indian celery, potatoes, sunflowers, and wild strawberries. It also marks the start of trout season, with Minnie Lake and Peter Hope Lake Trout plentiful.

Learn sustainable harvesting practices and pronunciations from knowledge keepers. Phrases in red are in **n̓l̓eʔkepmxcín**, while turquoise ones are in **nsyilxcən**. A QR code is provided for an audio file.

		
Mushroom	mə́łqíʔ	ṛ́łqín
		
Bitterroot	ʔkʷépn̓	sṛíłm̓
		
Celery	ćeweteʔ	łáqʷa
		
Trout	péłuskʷu tək swéłt	xʷəxʷmínaʔ



# Prepare to harvest (nsyilxcən)

What to include in your harvesting kit.



k'it'mn  
Shears



k'wl'k'wul'mxn  
Boots



snkəʃmútn  
Chair



lkapú  
Coat



q<sup>w</sup>acən  
Hat



píca?  
digging stick



ł'aqna?  
Bag



Learn more by going to the First Voices website: <https://www.firstvoices.com/nsyilxcen/>

# Spring Matching Game

Look, read, pronounce and match in nle?kepmxcín



nkíkaxhí (n-knee-kahhn-ee)  
Butterfly



spzúzu? (shpz-ooz-oo)  
Bird



spáqm (shp-ak-m)  
Flower



pəʂke? (push-ka)  
hummingbird



scəkqíhke? (sl-k-kee-ah)  
Pinecone



stʔásze (stahh-za)  
squirrel



Learn more by going to the First Voices website: <https://www.firstvoices.com/nlekepmxcin/>



## CULTURE TEAM UPDATES - ON THE LAND

### Cedar Bark Harvesting - April 17, 2026

There is a deeper understanding and different kind of learning that happens on the land, and a recent cedar harvesting day at Nicolium Creek was a reminder of that.

Hosted by the SCFSS Culture & Language team alongside NVIT, Nlaka’pamux Health, Lower Nicola Indian Band, and the LNIB Band School, the day brought together community members, staff, and partners to learn by doing.



With guidance from Sharon Antoine, the group worked together to harvest cedar bark while following proper protocols. Questions were shared, stories came up naturally, and conversations circled around respect, care, and the role cedar continues to play in everyday life.

Between harvesting, people took time to look around, pointing out what was growing nearby and sharing teachings on plants like devil’s club, stinging nettle, and fiddleheads.

Midway through the day, everyone gathered for a sandwich bar lunch, taking a break to eat, visit, and enjoy being together before heading back out to continue the work.

The cedar bark gathered will be used in future projects like hats, baskets, and jewelry. Carrying those shared teachings into something people can continue working with and building on.

Special kʷukʷscémxʷ, limləmt, thank you to Sharon Antoine and all the other elders that shared their teachings.



*Elijah Kennedy,  
Cultural Program Coordinator*



# ON THE LAND - CEDAR BARK HARVESTING PHOTOS!





# ON THE LAND - CEDAR BARK HARVESTING PHOTOS!



# CULTURE TEAM UPDATES - FEEL THE BEAT



## Beauty and the Beads - April 28, 2026

Our recent Feel the Beat session at the Nicola Office brought community members together for an evening of learning, creativity, and connection.

Participants explored beading techniques while creating regalia-inspired pieces such as hair ties, chokers, headbands, barrettes, and cuffs. With supplies and guidance provided, both youth and adults had the opportunity to learn the full process, from design to hands-on creation, while expressing their own creativity.

The space was active and collaborative, with participants from multiple communities coming together to share knowledge, learn new skills, and support one another. Elders also joined in and enjoyed the opportunity to bead alongside others and share their experiences and teachings.

The response to the evening was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants shared how much they enjoyed learning the beading process and were already asking, "When's the next beading night?".

Events like Feel the Beat continue to create meaningful opportunities for cultural connection, creativity, and shared learning.

We look forward to offering more beading sessions in the future.



*Adrian Retasket,  
Cultural Program Coordinator*





# FEEL THE BEAT

Feel the Beat is a time to come together to learn, practice, and share language and culture. Our Elders share that learning language and culture is a form of healing as traditional practices naturally connect us to our Indigenous identity. Feel the Beat is open to the communities (Coldwater, Lower Nicola, Nooaitch, Shackan, Upper Nicola, and Urban) and families of Scw'exmx Child & Family Services Society.

This month, we will be making beaded lanyards, pine needle baskets, and harvest bags!

Please register by scanning or clicking the link or scanning the QR Code below.

**We have room for 40 participants per event, register soon!**

Register  
Now



## DINNER & SUPPLIES PROVIDED!



Jun 2, 2026	4-8 PM	N'kwala School	Beaded Lanyards
Jun 9, 2026	4-8 PM	Shackan Band Hall	Pine Needle Baskets
Jun 16, 2026	4-8 PM	Nicola Office	Making Harvest Bags

**\*\* Materials will be provided to learn the workshops, and facilitators will be available to teach. \*\***



**Please bring your feast bag and leftover containers to reduce plastic waste.**  
If you have any questions or need transportation, please contact our Cultural Program Coordinators by calling the number below.



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# COMMUNITY SERVICES TEAM UPDATES - NOOAITCH GIRLS GROUP

## Girls Group - April 1 & 15

The Nooaitch Girls Group has been a space full of learning and connection over the past few months. Meeting twice a month at the Nooaitch Band Hall, the group brings together girls ages 8 to 13, with up to 12 participants attending regularly.

Each session has offered something meaningful, from learning about body changes and moon time protocols to conversations about substance use awareness and cultural well being. Along the way, the girls have built strong connections with one another and with the team supporting them.

“I learned how powerful I am when I have my moon time, and how powerful my spirit is,” shared one of the girls.

Elder Esther Shackelly also shared the importance of the work, saying, “This is really great that these young women are learning about moon time protocols, because these teachings are getting lost.

Upcoming sessions will continue exploring traditional wellness, along with topics like boundaries and consent. The group will also design a logo to be featured on hoodies for participants as part of a celebration.



*Willa Ermineskin,  
Community Prevention Worker*



*Mindy Garcia,  
Community Prevention Worker*





# WOMEN'S GROUP UPDATES - SPRING WREATH MAKING

April 20, 2026

The April Women's Group brought together women from all five bands and the urban Indigenous community for an evening of connection and creativity.

Hosted in partnership with *Journeys into Tomorrow Transition House*, the evening focused on making spring wreaths, with everyone creating something of their own using both gathered and provided materials.

The Women's Group continues to offer a space for women and girls to connect, support one another, and spend time together, while also creating opportunities for mothers and daughters to learn alongside each other and for knowledge and skills to be shared across generations.



*Ali Antoine,  
Family Wellness Navigator*



*Krystal Langager,  
Child Wellness Navigator*





# MEN'S GROUP UPDATES - ANNUAL BOWLING FOR WELLNESS

April 18, 2026

The Men's Group recently hosted their annual Bowling for Wellness night in Merritt with 19 participants in attendance, some of their sons, and a few elders from across the communities.

The evening opened with a talking circle and prayer. Participants introduced themselves and shared where they are at, creating space for conversation around mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellness. For some, it was one of the few places where they could speak openly and be heard.

"I learned that guys do want that connection. If we set up the time and the space to do those wellness circles, the guys will talk."

- Jason Ermineskin

The group shared a meal provided by Canada Cafe before heading out to knock over some pins.

The night gave men time to be together without pressure, while still staying connected to what came up in the circle. For those working through recovery or trying to make changes, that space matters. Conversations reflected that, including staying grounded and taking things one step at a time.

"It's a safe environment... Having something safe for them to do and make healthy choices... and letting them know they're not the only ones going through a tough time."

- James Isaac Jr.

What came through across the evening was how important it is for men to have a space like this regularly. Not just for one night, but something they can return to, where connection and support are already there.

The Men's Group will continue building on these gatherings, with plans to expand cultural components, bring in more elders, and improve access for participants.



 *James Isaac Jr.,  
Men's Group Coordinator*

 *Jason Ermineskin,  
Men's Group Coordinator*



# Men's Group



Dad & Me



## Father's Day BBQ

FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2026 | 3:00PM - 8:00PM

KLC OFFICE - 2475 MERRITT AVE

Drug and Alcohol Free Event

### Respecting Our Protectors

Come together to celebrate the fathers and father figures who put family first every day. This special event is all about showing our appreciation for everything dad does. His strength, support, and care never goes unnoticed. To help celebrate all the father figures we have arranged games and family themed activities!

We have arranged dinner for 80 participants, so please register in advance and help us make this a memorable day dedicated to our fathers.

*Participants are encouraged to bring hand drums.*

for any questions or help with registering:  
Call Jason Ermineskin (250) 378-2771 or email  
[jason.erminekin@scwexmx.com](mailto:jason.erminekin@scwexmx.com)

Register Now

### AGENDA

- 3:00 PM - Doors Open
- 3:15 PM - Welcome & Prayer
- 3:30 PM - Group Activity, (Father appreciation) & discussion
- 4:30 PM - Relationship Building Activities
- 5:30 PM - Dinner
- 6:45 PM - Interactive Activities & Sharing
- 7:30 PM - Reflection & Closing Remarks
- 7:50 PM - Closing Prayer, drumming and wrapping up



Upper Nicola

LOWER NICOLA INDIAN BAND



COLDWATER INDIAN BAND





# CHILD WELLNESS TEAM UPDATES- CAR SEAT SAFETY CHECK

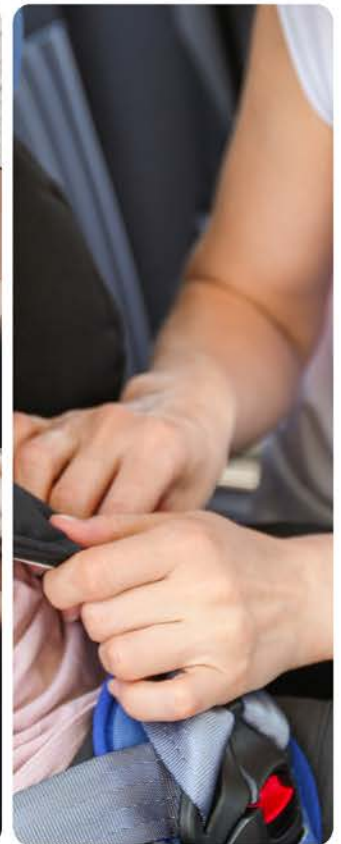
April 30, 2026

Members of the Child & Family team recently completed car seat safety training focused on proper installation and keeping little ones buckled up and safe.

After completing the training, the team hosted a follow-up session at the KLC office on April 30, where they worked directly with community members, including caregivers and grandparents, to help them learn how to properly install car seats.

The training focused on building practical, hands on skills so staff can support families directly in the community through one-on-one support as needed.

The team is continuing to make the world a better place, one car seat at a time.



*Kaity Lewis,  
Child Wellness Navigator*

# YOUTH TEAM UPDATES

## Weekly Youth Gathering Lodge

April 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30, 2026

Held every Thursday at KLC, the Youth Gathering Lodge has created a healthy environment where youth can come together, try new things, and spend time with one another. Each week brought something different throughout April, from knobby ball to time on the land and harvesting, to baking Douglas fir cookies and taking part in activities recognizing and honouring MMIWG2S.

Along with activities and time together, snacks and basic hygiene supplies are available each week for youth to access as needed. Attendance has continued to grow, with up to 13 youth joining so far from across all five bands and surrounding areas. Youth have been eager to take part, showing up each week and already sharing ideas for what they would like to do next.

“CAN WE GO TO THE WATERSLIDES THIS SUMMER?”

“CAN WE GO ON THE LAND?”

“CAN WE GO CAMPING?”

These gatherings offer more than just something to do after school, giving youth a place to feel connected, build confidence, and strengthen relationships while developing a strong sense of identity and belonging. *Our youth are welcome to join us for **Drum Making on Jun 4<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at KLC.***



Our team is planning the 4th annual Nicola Valley Youth Gathering in collaboration with CNA, stay tuned for the save the date poster. This year's theme is the 4 directions.

### Youth In The Kitchen

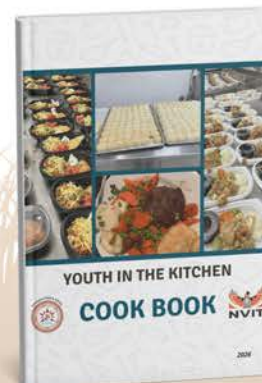
There were 8-10 youth who have completed their monthly cooking classes with Chef Kim at NVIT. The youth were gifted kitchen supplies, SCFSS aprons, incentives, and Chef Kim was gifted a SCFSS/ Metis chef apron. Thank you culture team for devils club medicines for burns.



*Shay Lee Jack,  
Youth Connections Team Leader*



The Youth Transition Coordinators and Communications Team created a ‘Youth in the Kitchen’ cookbook featuring recipes taught by Chef Kim, complete with stunning photos of the youth’s incredible culinary creations. We’ve proudly posted it on our website!



## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Scw'exmx Child and Family Services Society (SCFSS) is family-centered and guided by n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x traditional knowledge and principles. SCFSS utilizes prevention and protection strategies with the collective goal to keep children with their families and communities. SCFSS recognizes historical challenges and is guided by traditional strength and wisdom to build family and community capacity in a monumental shift from protection to prevention.

As an Indigenous organization serving the n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x communities, SCFSS prioritizes the hiring of n̓eʔk̓épmx and syil̓x community members. Following community member priority and pursuant to Section 41 of the BC Human Rights Code, preference may be given to qualified applicants of Indigenous ancestry.

### Current Postings

- Child Safety Manager
- Delegated Services Administrator
- Family Service Team Leader
- Guardianship Team Leader
- Resource & Guardianship Manager
- Resource Team Leader
- Youth Outreach Worker
- Executive Director

**APPLY NOW**

See our full postings and apply on our website at [www.scwexmx.com](http://www.scwexmx.com)

## GROWING OUR PEOPLE - COMMUNITY AND CULTURE ORIENTATION WEEK



SCFSS recently shifted to facilitating a full week of Culture and Community orientation, bringing new staff together for a meaningful introduction to the work, the communities, and the culture.

The week began with two days of Community Orientation. Staff took part in a full orientation led by Stephanie Tourand, followed by visits to Coldwater Band, Upper Nicola Band, Lower Nicola Band, Shackan, and Nooaitch. Guided by Mindy Garcia and Willa Ermineskin, the group met community staff and built connections across the region.



The final three days focused on Culture Orientation, led by Adrian Retasket & Elijah Kennedy. Staff were welcomed by Elders Champion Barbara Huston and the Resident Elders, and spent time learning through shared teachings, conversation, and time together.

Participants learned introductions in nsyilxcən and nłeʔkepmxcín, took part in discussions after watching Sugarcane, and spent time out on the land. This included cleansing with fir boughs and a water ceremony at the river, where the importance of water was shared in a meaningful way. Staff also created medicine bags and commitment sticks to carry forward in their work.

“We need to be sure to always be in a good way when we do our work,” shared Adrian Retasket.

A very special thank you to the Elders for sharing their knowledge, stories, and teachings throughout the week.

This first full week of orientation created space for connection, learning, and a strong start for new staff as they begin their work.

# WELLNESS COMMITTEE - SPRING EQUINOX WELLNESS SESSION

April 21, 2026

The Spring Equinox provided an opportunity for the Scw'exmx Child & Family team to reflect on balance through the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and shared time together.

On April 21st, SCFSS staff gathered at the Coldwater Band Hall for a wellness session that brought nearly the full team together. The event opened in a good way with a prayer led by Barbara Huston, who also shared teachings on balance across spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing.

Staff painted terracotta pots and planted tobacco seeds, connecting to seasonal teachings of renewal and growth. Participants also received wellness bundles that included a book called "You are the Medicine", hibiscus tea with a steeper, a beaded lanyard, a smudging chimney, tobacco for offering, two cards with prayers, natural soap, and a natural scented candle.

The group later gathered around a shared fire for hot dogs, veggie dogs and conversation. Unfortunately for Barbara, her roaster stick broke and her nearly perfect smokie fell into the fire.

"Looks like the ancestors needed it more than me." - Barbara Huston



Thank you to the Wellness Committee, Daniel Garcia, Crystal Leier, Barbara Huston, and Sarah Blonde, for organizing a meaningful gathering.

We also take a moment to remember the tobacco plants that didn't quite make it, they are not forgotten.



# SCW'EXMX CHILD & FAMILY NEWSLETTER SIGN UP!



Would you like to receive newsletters and updates from Scw'exmx Child & Family? Scan or click the QR code below to sign up for our newsletter today!



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# Scw'exmx Child & Family

Child Wellness Concern After Hours? Please Call:

**1-800-663-9122**

## **Children's Help Line for Children and Youth**

Do you need help?

If you don't feel safe or you have a concern, you can call this number 24-hours a day for free from any phone.

**310-1234**

Scw'exmx Child & Family Services Society

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Downtown Address: 1988 Quilchena Ave., Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Culture & Language Address: 2099 Nicola Avenue, Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Mailing Address: 1750 Lindley Creek Rd, Merritt, BC V1K 0A3

Prevention Hub Address: 2475 Merritt Ave, Merritt, BC V1K 1B8

Quilchena Address: Unit #2 - 3512 Highway 5A, Quilchena, BC V0E 2R0

Telephone: 250-378-2771

[www.scwexmx.com](http://www.scwexmx.com)

Facebook Page: [facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily](https://facebook.com/scwexmxchildandfamily)



Healthy Children



Healthy Communities



Healthy Families