

OFFICE OF THE WET'SUWE'TEN UPDATE

Nov 27 2020

STAFFING AND OFFICE CLOSURE UPDATE

Effective immediately, the Office will be closed and staff will have modified work schedules.

We will continue with the following protocols:

- No face to face or in person meetings
- Anabip family Programs will continue virtually.

The Main Office is Closed – contact by email or phone.

Message from the Executive Director:

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en/Wet'suwet'en Treaty Office Society has closed all Administrative Buildings for an undetermined time due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. All staff are working from home with a modified work environment and schedule, we are making all efforts to ensure that there are no significant impacts to service delivery. All departments are required to maintain, update and implement Covid-19 safety plans as this pandemic evolves, we adjust programs and services accordingly.

My hands are up to our Dini'ze and Tsak'e'ze who have adapted very well during this difficult time, the Board of Directors continue to meet weekly, they have continued with their work

on various committees, all through VIRTUAL PLATFORMS!!!

To the clans who have lost members during this pandemic, I lift my hands up to you as well, those who have continued our cultural duties in very innovative and responsible way. And caution that our system is ancient, that has been resilient and remains intact in 2020, our past Dini'ze and Tsak'e'ze face health pandemics, economic strife, and war, at the end of the day our systems and processes remained. Together we will get through this, when we recover from this pandemic, we will return to our cultural processes, back into hosting our teas, back into our Balhats, our feast hall. This global pandemic has revealed how precious our system is, how our collective ways, ceremonies, the sharing and laughter helps us take care of each other. Even though our gatherings are on hold, we know the collective strength, wisdom carries on until we can come together again.



The COVID19 pandemic has impacted so many lives within and outside of Wet'suwet'en Territories, these are challenging times, it is critical that we manage ourselves as individuals to the best of our abilities to avoid exposure and/or transmission of this virus.

All staff are committed to provide uninterrupted services in a safe way, it may look different, it may be challenging at times, I ask for your patience.

Noh Nay Kahl Yah, Debbie Pierre, Executive Director

Human and Social Services Team

encourages those in need to reach out to the most relevant program based on need, and your location. We are serving virtually and have COVID safety top of mind while we flex to meet your needs during pandemic restrictions.

FAMILY SERVICES ON WETSUWETEN TERRITORY:

For Wet'suwet'en families living in **Witset, Hagwilget, Houston and Smithers**: ANABIP's doors are closed due to the pandemic, however, our services are still available.

We are encouraging our Wet'suwet'en membership to stay safe during this pandemic and remember we are still here to serve you.

Working together we can keep our communities safe, ANABIP is committed to helping Children and Families through this challenging time.

Doorstep services are available in emergency circumstances – please wear a mask and note that staff will be masked and 6 feet away *

Here is a list of our Anabip workers' cell numbers you can call.

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| ▪ Ian Michell | (210) 778-1425 | | |
| ▪ Diana Creyke | (210) 778-1428 | | |
| ▪ Russell Lewis | (210) 778-1427 | Julie Vantunen | (210) 778-1426 |
| ▪ Jeremy Dumont | (210) 778-1441 | Betty Tom | (210) 643-2649 |



Photo: 2 Joe Nass Camp 2015

COVID Information: BCCDC at <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

FAMILY SERVICES – URBAN PREVENTION:

- Access to our program will happen through Zoom, FB Messenger, email, phone calls and Skype are our modes of communication with our families in **Vancouver, Prince George and Burns Lake**.

- We will continue to have Wet'suwet'en Wednesdays in **all** three locations.
- We will continue to attend CFS court over the phone.
- Continue our relationship with MCFD, CSFS, VACFAS and other delegates agencies through Zoom, Skype, phone and emails
- We offer virtual zoom sessions for our Wet'suwet'en families - regardless of where they reside.

Co-Ordinator: Trish Naziel 250-552-6421 for urgent requests for those not already served by the team.

Early Childhood Development Program

Currently ECD is offering our teachings virtually.

- The teachers are doing Zoom sessions with our preschoolers 4 days a week.
- Our family support worker is offering one to one with our parents one day a week, and has parent group 3 days a week, virtually.
- Our bus driver/ admin emails or sends through text message our monthly calendars to our ECD families, as well as delivers weekly snacks to our families.
 - The bus driver also delivers ingredients to our families can participate in our Parent-tot kitchen once a week. All deliveries are delivered to the doorstep, there is no direct contact with parents or children.
- During this difficult time, virtual learning is the next best way with staying connected with our families of ECD. They feel supported and not so alone.
- The bus driver also delivers learning activities for our preschoolers. Vouchers are delivered bi-weekly to our families that participate in Parent-Group.

For emergencies or new referrals: Coordinator, Tara McKinnon is contacted at 250-643-1148.

UNLOCKING ABORIGINAL JUSTICE:

Existing Gitksan or Wet'suwet'en Justice clients can contact Co-ordinator Lisa Mowatt at 250-842-2200 or 778 202 0997, or email: lmowatt@wetsuweten.com.

Strategies for virtual services to those in need as well as with the Justice system are in place and working well.

OVER THE CHRISTMAS

BREAK: Our staff will be enjoying a much-deserved rest; however, we will have a calendar identifying emergency contacts for each of the days over that holiday.

Coordinators are working on that calendar with the various teams. This calendar will be forwarded to Chiefs and partners once complete.



Photo: 3 Joe Nass Camp 2015



Joe Nass camp (2015) Cool animal prints – what kind?

Contact Us

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way out depends on how you treated others and how you treated mother earth. while on earth in a spirit form, you cycle with the seasons, cycle with life that replenish mother earth, when the time comes and mother earth is satisfied with your re-learning work, your relatives who live will receive good, then you are ready to travel to the stars ...” LinkedIn quote.

RELLECTING FROM THE DINI’ZE AND TSAKĒ’ZE

Dini’ze Na’Moks, John Ridsdale, Tsayu Clan (Beaver):

Our members might feel disrespected by the COVID-19 protocols when we can’t have a feast or funeral but, it is for everyone’s safety and well-being. We want everyone to be safe and get through this pandemic as best we can.

We are likely going to be living this way for another year or two, and maybe even longer. So, take care of yourself.

Dini’ze Hagwilneghl, Ron Mitchell, Laksilyu Clan (Little Frog) – the elders are sharing that they get lonely, so reach out to one another, call each other on the phone. Don’t wait!

Dini’ze Woos, Frank Alex, Cas Yihk Gidimt’en Clan (Bear)

“in the winter, when it gets dark, spirits who still wander the earth search for a way to the stars above, our legends tell of what journey the spirits must take in order to get to the stars. The



Photo: 4 Woos in the Balhats

JOIN IN FOR THE “WELLNESS WEDNESDAY”, ONCE A MONTH TO SHARE STORIES, LAUGHTER, LANGUAGE AND WELLNESS WAYS...OFFRED VIA VIRTUAL SESSIONS.

SEE ANABIP PROGRAM COORDINATORS OR TRISH NAZIEL FOR DATES AND TOPIC.

COVID SUPPORTS: KAYLA MITCHELL, YOUTH DIRECTOR

The Office of the Wet'suwet'en's COVID-19 response efforts to date have been focused on understanding the needs of our membership across and beyond yintah borders.

Kayla Mitchell, Youth Director conducted a community-based survey to ask our membership what their families needed during this time. This was an opportunity for families to share the realities of what they're going through.

After receiving responses (see information graphic for details) we have contracted positions to three Wet'suwet'en women who will support our nation safely in our cultural, mental/emotional, and spiritual selves.

Please contact our Youth Director, Kayla Mitchell (778-210-1105), if you would like access to these opportunities.

The COVID-19 response efforts are nation-based and accessible by any Wet'suwet'en members.



Photo: 5 Blue Lake Youth Camp (preCovid)

ALHK'AH 'ALL TOGETHER' COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE SURVEY RESULTS

The following information is taken from 93 Wet'suwet'en respondents residing across and beyond yintah borders. The survey was live from August 24th - September 8th, 2020

1 WE HAVE BEEN MOST IMPACTED BY COVID-19 EMOTIONALLY/MENTALLY

76% of respondents mentioned it has impacted their health emotionally/mentally. Some suggestions made include: grounding exercises, IFOT, and online indigenous counselling support.

2 WE NEED ACCESS TO CULTURE, SAFELY

61% of respondents said that COVID-19 has negatively impacted their access to culture.

3 STRENGTHEN OUR ONLINE COMMUNITY DURING COVID, AND BEYOND

Across questions, it is apparent that we need to strengthen our online communities through social media and technology use, to ensure we remain connected, and continue to be connected beyond the second wave. Online communities can support members who live away from the Yintah in accessing feasts, community events, and other important meetings.

4 FOCUS OUR SUPPORTS ON ELDER AND YOUNG FAMILIES/YOUTH

In personal responses, many folks mentioned that we need to focus on youth and Elders. We need to support our young families, and those with more barriers to accessing supports.

5 STRENGTHEN OUR TECHNOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

Elders who responded to the survey expressed their need to become more technologically aware. Holding 'crash courses', and providing technology supports is one way we can support this.

6 ONLINE WET'SUWET'EN CLASSES

69% of respondents mentioned they would like to access online learning for Wet'suwet'en culture, including language, story telling, and harvest/preservation how-to videos.

7 ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL FOOD OPTIONS

Access to traditional food options, including educating our nation on harvesting protocols and wiggus for sustainable livelihood.

8 HARM REDUCTION/COMMUNITY CARE

Many personal responses/comments mentioned the need to support our members actively using substances. We need to reduce harms to these people. We need to wrap our community blanket around these individuals and support access to health services including harm reduction while using substance

Research conducted by Kayla Mitchell, Youth Director at the Office of the Wet'suwet'en, 778-210-1105. kayla.mitchell@wetsuweten.com

WET'SUWET'EN TSA'KOZĚ, DINI'ZĚ LHA NIS WIDILHDZILH NI

NIWHTSEDETNI are Never Far
Away

**COLLECTIVE WISDOM ABOUT
SURVIVING PANDEMICS CAN
BE FOUND IN CULTURE AND
IN LAND**

WRITE A LETTER or CALL a grandchild, friend or cousin. Say tabi engissiy -- I love you this much....Don't wait for tomorrow...*)

Storytelling – c'idede is often around Es'des – trickster and we are going in to storytelling time, khīt (winter) <3

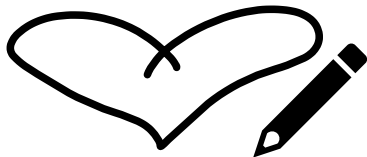
- Share your favorite memory of khīt, winter with your family
- Share your fave story of Es'des at supper time with your loved ones

Virtual “Visit Around” on Facetime, Skype or Zoom...

Try online visits with family, friends or Helpers with face to face calls. It helps you stay connected, laugh, share stories and check in on each other.

Read a Book, Poetry or Make Art

READ Indians on Vacation by Thomas King...Draw or Doodle



Compiled by S Martin, B Lacombe, Hagwilnegh
Adapted from the Elder Justice Initiative



**FRIENDS, FAMILY -
YINTAH BASED
CONNECTIONS ARE
GOOD HELPERS**

We are Resilient \o/

cook or share food with a single person or a family in need – from your garden, harvesting or make a donation

Laughter 😊 is good

medicine – share a joke or photo that makes you laugh – or a funny story...! It's ok to be silly 😊

Practice smiling 😊 →

smile for 2 minutes each day
– SMILING is my Favorite

**ANABIP Wellness
Wednesdays – Once a
Month** see Trish Naziel for more information

Drum or Sing

Sing or drum: 🎵
practice your clan song

Connect with the yintah in your own way: notice the sunrise, sunset, feel the wind or sunshine...<3

Yintah habkits – inter-connected

**PHYSICAL DISTANCING IS
BEING A GOOD RELATIVE**

EXERCISE is Medicine

• Go for 30-minute walk outside with Your little pup – walk slowly & be safe



• pack or chop wood for an elder or shovel SNOW

ninyez seny'in – keep your distance → no hugs or hand shakes

Stretch each morning

Can you touch your toes?

→ Rub your lower back.

**JOIN “MAGICAL BACKYARD
MEDICINES” on FACEBOOK:**

Request a medicine making kit so you can make your own salve.

BEAD, Sew or KNIT

Sew cloth masks

– small group sewing, baking or Beading: make moccasins for new babe

Knit a toque for an elder

We Hold You Up – with big love TABI ENGISSIY

WET'SUWET'EN CULTURAL PROTOCOLS: WHEN SOMEONE DIES WHEN LIVING AWAY FROM HOME: DRAFT

- let family and house chief know when someone passes; and the father clan will be confirmed
- confirm deceased's wishes for either a burial or cremation
- confirm the home community/reserve
- a small burial at the First Nation is max 10 people; masks worn at all times & do physical distancing
- First Nation may restrict burials at this time - so there may be no burial until 2021 or longer - please check with the First Nation – there are safety protocols in place and may be different in each community



confirm if a burial or a cremation – with COVID a cremation may be the only option - FYI

- The First Nation may provide funeral supports, please contact the Band Office for more information



father clan is informed of the Loss & father is hired for key funeral ceremony and supports

- father clan supports a cremation or a burial, confirms funeral home and payment/budget
- may provides clothing, candles for the deceased, medicines for the burial/cremation
- is hired to do the eulogy, obituary, & photos/slide show



designate a spokesperson to keep the larger family informed and father clan; be GENTLE with each other at this time

- an online virtual smoke feast/tea may be offered: to share the decisions made for who is hired in the father clan
- encourage a virtual ceremony/ service for family, father clan, friends: share the eulogy and photos, this helps us with the supports and grieving
- if back at home – see if you can offer a “walk through” feast for father clan to be paid back for their service → confirm First Nation community hall rental, follow safety protocols
- an outside walk through feast may be more suitable
- cremation _ is new for some families, discuss how you would want a cremation service to be in your family



Tabi misiyh to all leadership in helping pull this together.