



nawalakw

year in review

2021 was another year of firsts for Nawalakw, with much progress in each of our five program pillars. But first and foremost, we have so much gratitude. Gratitude for our amazing funders who are helping us realize the Nawalakw vision. Gratitude for our Nawalakw team, who all work to bring good energy into realizing this dream. The team has accomplished so much this year. Gratitude to our partners and collaborators, who help us deliver the work. And to the Elders and kids who attend our programs, who inspire us every day, and remind us why we dreamt of the purpose of Nawalakw - to bring healing, renewal, and connection to our culture, our land, and each other.

our pillars



Kulustola awil'golakw,
a'ek'akila'ena'yi,
a'ek'akila'akw dlu'wi
alumasagila

*A wellspring of
inclusive healing,
learning, and
renewal*

HEALING CENTRE
CULTURE CAMP
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
GATHERING PLACE
ECOTOURISM
DESTINATION
SOCIAL VENTURE

We finished construction on Phase One - our amazing new language and culture camp facility at Hada, with space for 24 campers, their chaperones, Elders, and support staff. We installed a 630 ft dock for better site access. Solar panels and Tesla Powerwalls arrived courtesy of Give Power (www.givepower.org) to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. Through the generosity of donors like Donald Ellis for his annual contribution to sponsor a week of camp, Soap for Hope, Arcteryx, LUSH, Ocean Outfitters, Power to Give, Mastercard Foundation, and others who wish to remain anonymous, we were able to outfit the camp with furniture, linens and cookware, canoes for the paddle program, acquire our water taxi Miss Chief, and other equipment necessary to run Nawalakw.

Perhaps most exciting - we held our first language camps, hosting four weeks with campers from Gilford Island, Kingcome Inlet, T'lislagi'lakw School, and First Nations Health Authority: Youth in Care in the summer and fall.

"I was so overwhelmed with joy to see those kids welcome us elders, singing a traditional song. I was so overwhelmed that they're here for a purpose, and that they've come out here to learn our way of life. I was so amazed and overwhelmed with them." T'laqwalał Chief Charlie 'Chaz' Coon



advisory council

We are honoured to have had meetings with our Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw treasures to help guide our work at Nawalakw. We look forward to continuously taking guidance and gaining strength from our Chiefs and Matriarchs as we move into 2022 and the advisory continues to grow.



about Nawalakw

Nawalakw is a healing centre focused on immersing youth in Kwak'wala and the culture and traditions of our ancestors.

Nawalakw means Supernatural in Kwak'wala, our language spoken for thousands of years here in our territory.

Nawalakw is located in the heart of the Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Territory — known to many as the Great Bear Rainforest on the Southern Central Coast of British Columbia, in one of the richest and most diverse biospheres on earth.

This sacred space is envisioned as a dual purpose, world-class ecotourism lodge during the summer and a gathering place during winter for our people to maintain traditional teachings in all aspects of the Kwakwaka'wakw culture.

Our vision is to support a revival of the Kwakwaka'wakw language and culture and become the first place on earth where Kwak'wala, will once again be

spoken fluently by youth and Elders alike.

From traditional harvesting and language practices, to songs, stories and the creation and preservation of regalia and art, Nawalakw will bring wellness, pride, purpose, and profit to our people, and allow us to share the beauty of our people, our land, and our culture with others.

Nawalakw represents medicine for our people, and a deep connection to the values taught by our ancestors about how to live and thrive in unity with nature and with each other.

As a charitable and social enterprise, we are committed to being a catalyst for sustainable economic development, woven with the fibers of our culture. As a form of deep healing and connection moving forward in a self-determined way, we will offer local employment, ongoing cultural education, and nurture other local businesses. Proceeds from this project benefit our community.

food sovereignty

Last year, supply chains everywhere were challenged due to COVID. This year, extreme weather conditions and flooding continue to stress our reliance on global food systems. With help from COVID relief funds, we built 120 garden boxes in 2020 and distributed seafood. In 2022, we are excited for more opportunities to support the food program in community.

Our partnership with Backpack Buddies continued in 2021 ensuring food, toiletries, and supplies regularly go home with kids on weekends, filling gaps that may

be left by in-school meal programs.

In 2022, traditional food and marine harvesting programs will continue, as we continue the work to build food resiliency for our communities.

Verna Ambers has joined Nawalakw as Food Security Program Manager. Bill Wasden worked with Namgis First Nation to secure a land lease that allowed the addition of a community garden including a greenhouse in 2022. The lot has been cleared and planning is underway!



introducing the Miss Chief

Our water taxi, “Miss Chief” transports students, elders, and supplies to our facility at Hada. She came to Nawalakw thanks to a very generous donation from Ocean Outfitters, making this purchase possible.

Ocean Outfitters is a carbon neutral adventure touring company based in beautiful Tofino, BC. A certified green business, they are committed to connecting visitors with nature and inspiring conservancy, they also know a thing or two about safe marine transportation.

We thank Ocean Outfitters for their generous spirit and their commitment to supporting our work at Nawalakw.



food sovereignty

120+
garden boxes
built + maintained

2024
kids meals
through
Backpack Buddies

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Our communities have experienced waves of generational trauma that have left lasting impacts, we believe now is the time for healing and to reconnect with our language and land.

Language Apprentices



K'wak'wabalas,
Gloria Hunt



Gusdidzas,
Matt Ambers



Taayisim,
Kiara Peterson



Petr Javier



Malidi,
Sydney Roberts

5 apprentices
2080 hours of
language
instruction
delivered

get to know **Ikawegi'lakw** — Deanna

Deanna is the granddaughter of Deanna Lorna Cook and the great granddaughter of Christopher Charles Cook and Jane Charity Cook (nee Hunt). She proudly carries the name Ikawegi'lakw. She is also the granddaughter of Eleanor Norma Beans (nee Dawson) and Henry Stanley Beans (Herman). She is married to Ryan Nicolson and together they have four sons: Brendan, Caelan, Ryan, and Conor.

What is your role with the project?

I am honoured to join the Nawalakw family in the position of Language Programs Director. While the program is brand new with a lot yet to unfold, I joined an enthusiastic team of language learning apprentices and together we are working towards both building proficiency and capacity.

How did you get involved with the project?

Funnily enough, it was the Language Programs Manager in the Indigenous Education Department of the University of Victoria (my boss) who first told me that this position would be coming available. She had been asked to help develop the job description. I have dedicated most of my life to learning and teaching our language and I feel very fortunate to serve Nawalakw and our communities in this role.

What is your favorite part of the project?

While I am new to this role, my favorite part thus far is reconnecting and working with our people again. Both my husband and I relocated our family to Victoria to

pursue post-secondary education. Little did we know, our boys would become quite exceptional hockey players and they continue to be met with exciting opportunities in the sport. It is our dream



to return to our homelands, however, it is also our job to support our boys with their dreams and aspirations. It has been wonderful to learn about Nawalakw and work closely with the team.

What are you reading/watching/thinking about?

I'm always reading about Indigenous languages, language revitalization, language reclamation. Right now I am reading through auntie Ruby's book: "Tsit'sak'alames Ruby (Ruby's stories)" by Ruby Dawson Cranmer. We watch the Canucks every chance we get. In our house there are five die hard Canucks fans and one die hard Oilers fan. I am thinking about how to build an incredible language program, one that will support learners to become proficient speakers...

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Scream-around at hockey tournaments! My goodness, I love to watch my boys play sports! Some of my other favorite activities are: learning bak'wamk'ala, chatting with K'ixsisalas (Gloria) and Kwankwanxwalige'dzi Wakas (Bobby Joe), crocheting, beading, 'ladies dancing', and basking in the sunshine.

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“The time has come where our people will gain strength from this place once again”.

- Maxwayalidzi K'odi Nelson

bak'wamk'ala — immersive language programs

Our first full year of the language program had 5 apprentices meet regularly with our Elder's council to immerse themselves in learning our language and culture, record the knowledge, and develop curriculum and camp programming for the language and culture camps at Hada.

We had an amazing few months at Hada! With the completion of the culture camp we were able to open the doors and our hearts to our very first guests.

In August, we spent one week each with our Kwikwasut'inuxw and Dzawada'enuxw youth and wise-ones. This was a very exciting time for all of us to see how our young language apprentices had been preparing for the moment when camp would come to life.

There was a beautiful welcome of "Whu-hu-hu-vey" on the shore as our relatives approached their homelands. Of course, this was followed with words of welcome and many warm embraces.

Throughout the week, everyone enjoyed indoor and outdoor activities like yoga,

lahal, cedar bark weaving, and canoeing to name a few. The Summer weather was gorgeous, it really was perfect weather to explore our territory.

Early in the Fall, we were joined by students and staff from the T'lisalagi'lakw school for another exciting week of programming followed by a week partnered with First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) and hosting our youth-in-care. It was a huge honor to spend time with this group of youth in their homelands.

"I could not begin to explain how happy it made me...I did some singing and I danced. I even drummed. I weaved my very first cedar bracelet. I laughed and smiled, I cried too. I now accept my skin, I love who I am". — *youth participant, Nawalakw Culture Camp*

2021 was an exciting year and we look forward to 2022! Over the next 2 years, with support from MasterCard Foundation we plan to add another 10 language apprentices to the program.



2021 Nawalakw Language Apprentices: Kiara Peterson, Gloria Hunt, Matthew Ambers, Sydney Roberts. (not pictured: Petr Javier)

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What the Language Apprentices are saying about their experience

“I thought I would be planning a language and culture camp, but what we ended up doing was giving participants the confidence to be themselves,” Kiara shared.

“I’m most proud of all of the growth – not only in the kids and how much Kwak’wala they can learn in a week, but in all of our language apprentices. And the personal growth in myself too. I’ve learned so much, Ikan noke, I’m so grateful to have this opportunity.”

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“Our elders are there to guide us and correct us,” affirms Matt, a Nawalakw language apprentice. “Living with the Elders together for a week is like having a living dictionary. But it’s bigger than that. I feel strongly that this approach to healing is the answer to creating systemic change. Every week, it’s good for the heart to hear stories of all the healing and lessons learned in just one week of camp. I feel proud knowing we’re a part of systemic changes that will last for generations.”

capacity building

54
jobs created

22
employees/
contractors

32
youth summer jobs

23
training programs
delivered

capacity building

Our team of staff and contractors grew to 22 people, and through the Canada Summer Jobs program we hired 32 youth in various roles in 2021.

Through partnerships with businesses, capacity building and training programs, Nawalakw participants secured work as ecotourism guides, hospitality and camp maintenance workers, accounting and office roles, mental health counselling, and more.

In total, we were able to offer 23 training opportunities and micro certifications including small vessel boat operator and marine safety training, wilderness first aid, risk management, film & media production, marine guardianship, food production, carpentry, accounting, and career mapping workshops.

For 2022, Nawalakw has secured funds for training and capacity building, and we will continue to be a catalyst for learning and growth in this way.



wellness programs

Joe Whonnock joined our team in 2021 as the Health and Wellness Manager, working closely with FNHA to deliver culturally appropriate healing programs.

He was instrumental in bringing the We Care Fair featuring retired NHL player Jordin Tootoo to events in Alert Bay, Campbell River, and Port Hardy. These events were directly related to suicide prevention and drug and addiction awareness for teens aged 12-18.

Presentations on trauma and addiction from people with lived experiences, unintentional or intentional overdose, mental health and suicide, resources and follow-up opportunities for healing and cultural events, and Naloxone training were delivered. The Alert Bay event was attended by 150 people.

Joe completed three engagement events in our communities in 2021, though the process was stalled due to COVID.



In 2022, Joe will continue to engage with and seek input from all of our Kwakwaka'wakw Nations to develop programs based on community-led input, that will incorporate traditional knowledge, and create opportunities for our youth, and programming for kids in care.

land-based healing

“People like to see numbers, and there are a lot of those to talk about. But for me, it’s the individual stories that mean the most,” says K’odi Nelson, Executive Director of Nawalakw. “It’s just amazing to witness kids at camp. Every time it’s the same results — a week of laughter, tears, learning and a lot of emotion. By the end of the week, kids stand six inches taller, speak louder, clearer, and with more confidence. They have a better sense of who they are, where they come from, and have more and more pride in their culture.”

“It’s not a theory anymore. We affect people in many different ways, but each and every one of them leaves having had a life altering experience.”

“Yesterday my grandson [name withheld for privacy] went to the Nawalakw Culture & Language camp hosted by FNHA. A group of youth were transported to camp. I had tears in my eyes.

The gratitude that I have towards K’odi for his movement and vision on creating Nawalakw cultural & language camp. [name withheld] attending this 5-day program will open up his spirit to our cultural teachings, cultural identity.

My grandson also attended Nawalakw a few weeks ago with his 6/7 Tlisalagi’lakw school. He loved the culture & language program. He talks about his experience and has opened up more and I am forever grateful for our cultural teachings. I truly believe culture is healing.”



economic impact

\$1M+
local purchasing

58%
Kwakwaka’wakw
Communities

27%
North/Central
Island

15%
British Columbia

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“It was amazing to be one with the land, the sky, the water and our spirit. Mayaxalapa Respect one another, laxwapa love one another and gawalapa link arms and uplift each other. Gilakas’la to the Nawalakw team for the amazing experience. I will sure remember this for a life time and will be going back there in the near future. Gilakas’la again!”

Q&A with Tamara

Tell us a little about yourself.

Nugwa'am Nax'Na'gam. My name is Rising of the Dawn. My colonial name is Tamara Alfred. I'm the great great granddaughter of late Chief Johnny Scow, Great Granddaughter of Hereditary Chief Willam D. Scow - Umbu, and Granddaughter of late Hereditary Chief Vincent Henry Scow, and mother of young Hereditary Chief Anthony Alfred of the Kwikwasut'inuxw people. I am a Nelson/Johnson on my Grandmother Caroline Scow's side. Her mother was Annie Nelson (nee Johnson, great cedar bark weaver), and her father Roy Nelson. I'm a proud, strong Musgamagw woman.

I'm the mother of two beautiful children. My Son, Anthony Alfred Jr. is 15 and loves school and music. My Daughter is 13, loves boxing and is very outgoing. My husband Tony is my best friend, and the love of my life. We've been on this beautiful journey together for 20 years. We have a wolf/husky Ginger, and a black cat, Church (He's a funny little guy).

I was brought up in our Kwakwaka'wakw ways. I am a singer and dancer. When I sing, I feel power. When I dance, I feel light - like I'm floating, and there is good energy around me. I was taught to see the good in people and things, and I have done my best to do so.

I worked with youth in various roles for most of my career. I sit on the board of directors for the Indigenous Justice of BC, and the Restorative Justice of BC.

Our people, especially our youth, need support in many areas. Bringing back our traditional ways of healing, our ways of supporting one another, making connections with our own - and most importantly, transferring knowledge from our knowledge keepers, are so important.

The time is now to be proud of our ancestral heritage and learn the ways of our ancestors.

What stands out for you, as you reflect on the year gone by?

COVID brought on mental health crises for many of our youth. I saw it first hand within the Indigenous justice side of things. When I came to Nawalakw, I knew we could support youth by offering youth training and employment.

Aside from addressing the burdens of their everyday life, this was a good way for them to escape and be around like-minded peers who



wanted more, wanted to succeed, and it was really important for them to be supported in that way.

The pivotal thing was changing the mindset from "I'm not good enough, I can't" and kicking the "shitty committee" to the curb. And by the end of the summer, you could almost hear them thinking "I am good enough, and I can!" and feeling so proud of their accomplishments.

Getting families and community buy-in, youth wanting to do it, that was a big highlight for me.

It was a bit of a turning point for our communities. Youth were showing up, participating. You could see the pride in the youth after completing a program or certification, and they wanted more and more.

What are you most proud of and why?

One of the biggest things was bringing the youth home to Hada. When the first group went into Hada the animal kingdom came. Our traditional, cultural, and spiritual ways all came out in full force. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever witnessed in my entire life. I will never forget that special day.

The energy of that first day was a snowball effect of emotions for every single person there. It exceeded anything I could have imagined. That was my moment to know that it's real, it's happening, our youth will get to experience something special in this sacred place.

The second highlight was Canada Summer Jobs program. Having managers take on students and I told them "I'm going for 32." But I'd done this before with organizing the Youth Play Potlatch. I knew I had support this time too, and it gave me confidence to know that 32 was doable.

Sending youth out to experience so many realms of the working world was so exciting for them. Some were nervous to be away from home. So many had never worked, or never worked outside of Alert Bay.

We prepared them with expectation-setting and some training. They went to Echo Bay, Nimmo Bay, Sea to Cedar, Hada, Kingcome, and Gilford. They worked with elders, youth, and all age groups in many different roles. People in our territory were all in our youth got blanketed with support.

Nimmo Bay rolled out the red carpet to show the youth how to operate an ecotourism resort, what it's like for the guests to enjoy every day, and showed them all the possibilities for jobs at a high end resort.

The youth got to see front of house: wilderness guides, boat drivers, yoga instructors, the spa, paddling and back of house: maintenance, trail building, housekeeping, cooking, accounting, and marketing. It opened their eyes to know that there is work in our own backyard, in our beautiful territory.

We're working toward getting our youth to have sustainable, meaningful jobs in our own territory and eventually at our facility. They got to try out traditional harvesting, gardening, and get training certificates. Everyone had their own beautiful milestones, got to experience growth and new skills and new experiences. They were open to everything, and got to see that they can be proud of who they are and where they come from and they came away with new ideas for them to cultivate.

What was the biggest learning for you?

I'm always seeking that next thing, looking from the birds eye view, and I like to go, go, go. So I had to learn to allow myself to be in the moment. You miss things when you don't take time to reflect. I was able to take it all in, especially that first day of camp, and it was a life-changing experience.

I've also learned to have more faith. If you don't put it out into the universe, it'll never be heard. If you don't ask, it'll never happen. I'd spend time on the beach, or in my bed, or on the boat, and think and ask, and weeks down the road, sometimes the next day, boom, something amazing would happen. If you put good into the universe, the universe will provide.

Is there anything you wish you could have done differently?

I wish we had more time. We couldn't have

youth all travelling together, because they had their other jobs, or they couldn't always join the bigger groups. So we had some missed opportunities.

This year my goal is to bring the organizations together in Alert Bay so they can see those who employ our youth, and give everyone the bigger context and the opportunity to learn and share best practices in a workshop week, that would be a good way for us to wrap up the season.

What are your goals for 2022?

With CSJ, the goal is to expand the number of positions to 60! I want to work with those who had students last year, the places that want new students this year and provide more opportunities for the youth in our territory and of course, the youth who will be going to Hada.

A goal at Nawalakw is also to bring more focus and support for our elders. We need them to share their traditional guidance, knowledge, and love. There have been moments of joy, laughter and tears, gratitude for the elders and the youth, and everyone gets so much out of being together and learning from each other.

What are your hopes for the next few years?

My hopes are that our people of all ages, come together and walk together as one to work together, support each other, encourage each other, and find solutions together.

I hope we are in control of our territory and our youth see now and in years to come they can stand on any beach in our territory and they know it belongs to them, and this is who they are, and to be proud. The warmth they feel is the ancestors, smiling with love and gratitude that they're home, and that we all support each other. Our territory influx with our people being back home.

My hope and dream is that Nawalakw will be the glue for us.





Gilakas'la I thank you

We are blessed by loving people and generous companies that support our vision. Through language and culture programs, Nawalakw is committed to being a place of hope, healing, and strengthening the identity of our people through a connection to our ancestors, culture, and this sacred place.

We know the land, air, and sea heals and sustains us and our mission will continue this for our children and youth, and our children yet unborn.

Today, we recognize friends and sponsors who support Nawalakw through generous donations.

Gilakas'la Soap for Hope, Give Power, Ocean Outfitters, Power to Give, Arc'teryx, Donald Ellis, and MasterCard Foundation for generous gifts that support our vision.



As we prepare for the next phases of the development of Nawalakw, we continue to seek guidance from our Elders, to stay centered on our vision to be a catalyst for healing, connection, and sustainable Indigenous enterprise while maintaining focus on preserving and revitalizing Kwak'wala.

We are creating healing and wellness through our culture, building capacity, and sustainable economic resiliency in our communities and it's important we do it together, in a good way. Preparations for Phase 2 include fund development, architectural design, and engineering planning.



nawalakw

Contact Us

We'd love to hear from you!
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