PARTNERSHIP IN CARING

Cowichan Tribes/Malaspina University College
Child Care Demonstration Project
November of 1989, a group of students attending Malaspina University College, and concerned about a lack of child care services, met with us at the College and the Cowichan Tribes. They asked us to assist them in developing better child care services for their children. These parents, both First Nations people and non-First Nations people, were hoping to have their children well cared for in a safe and healthy environment.

We responded with a commitment from the Cowichan Tribes and Malaspina University College to do whatever was possible to assist them in reaching their goals. Through a partnership with the Child Care Initiatives Fund and Health and Welfare Canada, the dream was realized. It is a wonderful story and one which really has no ending, because children who are well cared-for today will be healthier adults tomorrow, both in body and spirit.

Similar to the Thunderbird in the history of the Cowichan people, we have successfully met the challenge of the Whale (who was his legendary adversary), and provided for the Cowichan people.

If there is any advice we could offer to groups attempting to solve their child care needs, it would be the following:

- Form partnerships with other groups that have an interest in the problem; strength comes from a broad base of support.
- Create a strong vision of what you want.
- Decide on guiding principles for action; you will need these when the going gets tough.
- Be persistent! The mountains of challenges along the way are not insurmountable. They will be climbed and conquered.

And most important,

- Keep the vision of the smiling faces of children in front of you at all times.

Cowichan Tribes Chief, Philomena Alphonse
Linda Love, Principal, Malaspina University College, Cowichan Campus and Diane Modeste, General Manager of Cowichan Tribes
"One raindrop cannot nurture a whole crop, but many raindrops together can create a harvest."

Sabrina Williams

We Can Do It

An idea becomes reality.

"I remember like it was yesterday," says Sabrina Williams. "In 1989, I was a student at Malaspina University College in Duncan and also a single parent without a vehicle to get to school or bring my daughter to daycare. Believe it, her little stroller saw lots of mileage. I always wondered why we couldn't have something closer to the college. The students could have a safe and reliable place to bring their children, an environment that could provide culturally appropriate learning materials, and a place for elders to come and share their knowledge, teach cultural values and instill a sense of love and pride in our culture. I believed a childcare program like this might counter or heal some of the results from the past.

One day while chatting with a Malaspina counsellor, I shared my dream of a daycare on campus. She suggested I start a petition for a daycare. I was intimidated by this idea at first but then I thought - why shouldn't I?

Before long, helping hands had filled the pages of the petition with signatures. The Cultural and Education Administrator at the Tribes’ office, Dorina Elliott, welcomed me and the petition with encouragement and support. She along with Linda Love from the College, drew together a team of interested and experienced individuals to brainstorm, gather information and identify potential funding sources. After that we began to meet on a regular basis.

Looking back, I realize how rewarding and empowering the whole process was to me. Alone, one individual could not have achieved what we have today. It takes teamwork and the ability to visualize the goal and overcome the obstacles. It was not easy and it took the time and persistence of a lot of people. When one person alone feels uncertain, the rest of the group is there to reassure and encourage.

One raindrop cannot nurture a whole crop, but many raindrops together can create a harvest."

The Partners

The Cowichan Tribes

The Cowichan Tribes is the largest Band in British Columbia, with more than 2,800 members living on and off the nine Reserves totalling 6,120 acres. Cowichan is the collective name of six villages originally known as Somenos, Quamichan, Comeakin, Clem Clemaluts, Kil Paul Is, Khnipsen & Koksilah. Cowichan in Halq’um’um means “the warm land.”

The Cowichans are a proud people, well-known both nationally and internationally for their artisans and the skills of their Cowichan knitters.

High unemployment and school drop-out rates in the recent past have resulted in the Cowichan Tribes Council vigorously pursuing employment and education initiatives. Council lobbied for the Cowichan Campus to be built on the Reserve next to their Heritage Centre. This was the first time a college campus has been located on reserve lands in British Columbia. Council also obtained the major contract for installing gas pipelines on Vancouver Island. Both initiatives have paid off in jobs and in increased levels of education for their members.

Malaspina University College

The Cowichan Campus of Malaspina University College is located on the banks of the Cowichan River in downtown Duncan, 65 km north of Victoria. From two classrooms in 1986, the Cowichan Campus has grown to its present 35,000 square feet. The campus now serves a student population of more than 6,000 and has a full-time staff of more than seventy-five.

Malaspina University College has always had a close working relationship with the Cowichan Tribes. This accord was strengthened in 1987 when it was decided to build the Cowichan Campus on leased Reserve lands.

The College is immediately adjacent to the Cowichan Native Heritage Centre and within blocks of the downtown core and major shopping areas.

The Campus has made it possible for people to continue their education in spite of limited incomes and transportation problems, while maintaining strong ties with their community. This includes many First Nations people, especially women. Other factors, including adjustments in the forest industry and single parents returning to school, have resulted in the steady growth of the Cowichan Campus.

This situation created pressure on limited child care services in the community. Before this child care project came on line, college instructors were often having to accommodate preschoolers and infants in their classes.
Elements of a Successful Partnership

Le' lum'el is Culturally Appropriate

Many people who call or visit the Le' lum'el child care facility ask, "How do you reflect cultural heritage in your program?" Below are some of the ways it is achieved at Le' lum'el.

- Walls are covered with traditional drawings, carvings and photos.
- Pictures on walls have Hul'qumi'num (Cowichan) captions under them.
- Puzzles are made from local native artists' prints.
- Our music centre has traditional drums.
- Our story book centre has traditional Cowichan stories.
- Every week we cook traditional foods.
- We go on field trips to Native Heritage Centre and the Cowichan River.
- We attend local cultural activities.
- Our Circle or Sharing Time is carried out both in Hul'qumi'num and in English. (i.e. one song in Hul'qumi'num and one in English. Prayer before lunch is said both ways. The Cultural teacher speaks in Hul'qumi'num. "Please" and "thank you" etc. are always said in Hul'qumi'num).
- Art is centred around cultural & traditional customs (i.e. make and decorate paddles, masks, drums and tell stories about them. A Big House made of cardboard is set up at the traditional time of year).
- Our Cultural teachers speak the language and tell stories.

Family Day Care
Slow start but Good Ending

One of the objectives of the Child Care Project was to establish licensed family day care homes with Native caregivers to provide alternative child care services on Reserve.

It was determined that there were no licensed Family Day Care homes within walking distance of the Cowichan Campus and none in areas with a high proportion of First Nations residents.

The biggest stumbling block in reaching this goal was a lack of day care subsidy funding from federal and provincial agencies for the parents living on Reserve. Advertising in the Cowichan Tribes newsletter and at the College in the same month brought a number of responses from potential caregivers.

Two in-home day care centres now operate on Cowichan Reserve lands and both are fully licensed.

Co-operation of Parents, Staff and Community

To have a successful child care program you need committed participation from families, the community and the program's qualified staff, according to Al Lawrence, Manager of Le' lum'el, who has been working as an administrator in child care centres for 14 years.

"Together you must create a framework that will not only meet the needs of the children, but also maximize their potential while they are with you," Al states.

This framework is important for children because it is often their first experience away from home with caregivers other than their family. Your program must also provide continuity in staffing and an environment which reflects the child's cultural background, home and community.

To ensure this occurs, a program must be planned with parent consultation and based upon a thorough knowledge and understanding of the child's growth and development. In doing this, a program should encourage children to be actively involved in the learning process, to experience a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and to pursue their own interests and concerns.

At Le' lum'el, with the majority of children being First Nation's, a significant part of the program reflects traditional values of caring, sharing and living in harmony, plus Hul'qumi'num language instruction. Cultural teachers are on staff and the Elders are a regular part of the program.

The hardest and most important task is the establishment of a procedures manual which includes personnel policies. "This enables staff as well as parents to know exactly what will be done or what to do in any situation. It is a huge challenge for anyone, but as a team working together no goal or idea is impossible. Together we can make a difference," insists Al Lawrence.

Toy Library Finds New Home

The establishment of a Toy and Equipment Library for parents and family care providers was another goal of this child care project. It was planned in three phases.

Phase one introduced the toy library concept to the parents and staff at the Le' lum'el Centre through hand-outs, posters and a presentation to a meeting of parents.

Phase two involved the acquisition of additional toys, theme boxes and materials reflecting the cultural heritage of the Cowichan Tribes.

Phase three, the operational stage, was initially delayed because of a lack of space at the Le' lum'el program. The Cowichan Tribes' assumed full responsibility for the Toy & Equipment Library in September of 1993 and incorporated it within the Infant Development Program at the Tribes' Health Unit. It is now fully operational and is being well used by the Le' lum'el Centre, teen mums, the in-home day care centres and many parents.
Child Care Project

Funding

Funding for the Cowichan Tribes/ Malaspina University College Child Care demonstration project came from the Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) of Health and Welfare Canada. The purpose of this fund is to encourage and evaluate child care innovations and to enhance the quality of child care in Canada.

It funds development, demonstration and research projects to meet needs in specific priority areas, such as infant, out-of-school, rural, flexible or work-related care arrangements, or of specific target groups, i.e. children with special needs, children from minority cultural backgrounds or Aboriginal children.

Since its establishment in 1988, the CCIF has placed a high priority on initiatives which address the needs of Aboriginal communities. To date, over 21% of CCIF funding has reached Aboriginal groups, $16.6 million dollars towards 101 projects at the community, regional, and national level.

Aboriginal communities have taken advantage of CCIF funding to undertake many different types of child care initiatives. These include:

• national child care inquiries
• community-based needs assessments
• development of formal training programs
• culture and language curriculum
• development of culturally appropriate standards
• a range of models of service, such as family daycare homes and child care centres

More information related to CCIF projects is available from Francine Knoops, Child Care Program (Phone: 613-952-8224/ Fax: 613-957-9620)

Project Goals

• to establish a group child care program that meets the needs of First Nation parents who are attending the College, work, or participate in other educational or work projects
• to meet the child care needs of students and staff at the Cowichan Campus
• to establish a toy & equipment library for parents and family daycares
• to support establishment of licensed family daycares with First Nation care givers to provide alternative child care services
• to develop an ongoing training program in the field of Early Childhood Education that will meet the need in the Cowichan Valley for trained and provincially accredited child care personnel able to provide quality child care
• to complete an outside evaluation of the project and a self-evaluation of the general objectives of the project
• to ensure that child care services will be operating independently with on-going funding sources, no longer dependent on the Child Care Initiative Fund

Highlights

1989

APRIL

• Students at the Cowichan Campus submitted a petition outlining their need for a daycare.
• Discussions initiated with Health & Welfare Canada for funding a child care project.
• Ad hoc Advisory Committee, made up of representatives of Cowichan Tribes, Malaspina University College, the community and students, met to look at child care services. It was agreed that this would be a cooperative joint effort with the Cowichan Tribes and the Cowichan Campus.

NOVEMBER

• Approval received from the Child Care Initiatives Fund (CCIF) for a study to establish child care needs of First Nations and non-First Nations students, employed Tribes members and College staff.

1990

FEBRUARY

• A Needs Assessment determined 111 families in the target group needed child care services. Ninety-five families indicated they would prefer to place their children in a child care centre close to the College. Committee decides to set up a child care centre and provide support for family day care homes on Reserve.

APRIL

• A joint submission to Child Care Initiatives Fund was made by Cowichan Tribes and Malaspina University College for a child care project.

1991

AUGUST

• CCIF Funding approved for two year Child Care Project.

NOVEMBER

• Cowichan Tribes provided funding to renovate a space in the Native Heritage Centre immediately adjacent to the Cowichan Campus.

DECEMBER

• Project Manager hired.

1992

MARCH

• Le'Um'el Child Care Centre officially opened.

SEPTEMBER

• Full enrolment; 83% of children are of First Nations parents.
• Three First Nation students took second level Early Childhood Education courses offered at Cowichan Campus.

DECEMBER

• The Le'Um'el Toy and Equipment Library opened.

1993

JANUARY

• Parent & staff questionnaire conducted and evaluation of Le'Um'el Child Care Centre was positive.

MAY

• Agreement reached by the Cowichan Tribes, University of Victoria and Malaspina University College for a Child and Youth Care Education and Career Ladder Project. This childcare training program began in September 1993 at the Cowichan Campus.

JUNE

• Cowichan Tribes' Cultural & Education Centre determined to be best vehicle for ensuring delivery of on-going child care services after Child Care Initiatives funds have ended.
• Two Cowichan women living on Reserve made application for establishing in-home daycare centres.

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The Report Card

"Straight A's"

"Program evaluations are like having the auditors arrive, or waiting for your marks after an exam," according to Cowichan Tribes Cultural and Education Centre Administrator, Dorina Elliott. Earlier in 1993, the Cowichan Tribes assigned responsibility for the child care project to the Cultural & Education Centre of the Cowichan Tribes. "You are pretty certain you have done everything right, but you always have that nagging feeling you might have forgotten something, so everybody is always a little edgy," she states.

This child care project went through both a self-evaluation involving staff and parents and an outside evaluation by the Emeritus Group: Education Services Ltd.. The evaluation by Emeritus Group was done by three well-known and respected former British Columbia School Superintendents, W.F. Marshall, D. Bosnich and J.H. Morgan, and by Dr. E. de Konick. An interim evaluation was done in April 1993, followed by a final evaluation report in October 1993.

The project really didn't have anything to be worried about, especially after the evaluators said in their interim evaluation in April, "Being new, it has experienced, and overcome, expected start-up, growth, and continuity problems; but the program is blessed with a staff that enjoy their work. The External Evaluators believe that staff have every reason to be pleased with the quality of service they deliver."

Final Evaluation Highlights

- Two in-home daycare centres now operate on Cowichan Reserve and are fully licensed.
- Toy & Equipment Library is being well used by the Le'lum'el Centre, teen mums, the two in-home day care centres, as well as many parents.
- 18 First Nations students are enrolled in the Child and Youth Care Training program at the Malaspina University Campus. Five are men.
- An earlier recommendation by evaluators to limit child care centre program expansion because of space limitations is redundant. A new location with more space is approved by Cowichan Tribes Council.
- Two important program expansions have occurred concerning cultural components. First, the Elders have become a vital part of this program ...and secondly, a cooking program has been implemented on a regular basis.
- When staff members who are on leave return, three quarters of the staff will be First Nations people and there is every indication that this ratio will increase.
- In place is an excellent Policies and Procedures manual, which details every aspect of Le'lum'el, including job descriptions, standards of care expected, and forms used. This manual is a most professional piece of work.
- Parents are forming a real partnership with Le'lum'el, not only dropping off and picking up their children, but also visiting the program during the day and taking the time to collaborate with staff. One hundred percent of parents attended a year-end social at the centre.
- Le'lum'el has developed a very positive name for itself because of its successes. The CCIF agency now refers other interested parties to Le'lum'el as a model. The program has had visitors from as far away as Quebec and many calls from other bands.
- Without exception, the responses from parents were positive and thoughtful. They were thankful for the program, which allows them to continue their education. All of those interviewed shared a common belief that a cross-cultural, ethnic mix of children was healthy and desirable.
Need Child Care
Information?

The following are available from Cowichan Tribes Malaspina University College Demonstration Project.

- Statement on Quality Care
- Policies and Procedures for Group Child Care
- Personnel Policies
- Parent/Staff Evaluation Questionnaire for Group Child Care
- Cataloguing System for Toy Library

Contact:
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HAY CH QA
THANK YOU

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