

In This We...  
**Journey Together**

Newsletter of **syiyaya** Reconciliation Movement

AUTUMN 2022



### wrapped up in euphoria

wrapped up in euphoria  
beams of love beckon and intensify  
tipping the scales of the balance within  
chaos bounces around  
making space for the unknown  
bravely, fearlessly stepping in  
breathing with eyes softly closed  
exhilaration flows  
seeking the once known sweet spot of bliss  
ignited a new glow  
vulnerability of shedding light on the tender spots  
thirsty for the abundance offered  
claiming the space  
making noise with the energy that collides  
expansive and worthy  
breathe, honour thy self  
fill your being and be graceful with the givings  
shine from within  
sharing the abundance of the euphoria  
let it be sacred

*Alydia Joe*

### A Call to Self-Educate

*An Editorial by Richard Till*

The notion of peaceful trade as being the basis for the settlement in British Columbia is tempting to believe, pervasive and misleading. It is easy if not convenient to overlook the forceful violence that traders and colonists, settlers and elected policy makers initiated and perpetrated. It is even easier to brush these conflicts aside as “being in the past.” Reconciliation requires recognition of how we got to where we are and the resilience and successes of First Nations survivors.

The Tsilhqotin War (1864) was not the first or only war between First Nations defenders and colonial resource seekers—but it is often remembered as the most unjust. Previously (1858), American gold miners aided by French and German mercenaries, through wilful atrocities, initiated the Frazer Canyon Wars. We have recently learned that the Canyon Wars ended thanks in great part to the wisdom of Nlaxa’pamux women who gave good council to Chief Cxpentlum. The death toll of the Canyon Wars is often misconstrued due to a nighttime gun battle in which many miners were killed—research tells that was a self-inflicted incident of “friendly fire” and not due to actions on the part of First Nations defenders.

On the outer coast, entire villages were destroyed by gunboats when ongoing trade disputes led to hostilities. Many of these events were triggered by traders and fortune seekers who lacked a willingness to listen, learn and show respect. It has since been explained that few of the villages attacked had anything to do with the initial disputes. Similar annihilations occurred on the Gulf Islands, Nahwitti, Ahousaht, Kimsquit and other villages. As historian D. Francis records “Contrary to what we would like to believe, the success of the colonial project in Canada . . . depended on force and violence.” And yes, records show gunboats were used for enforcement of colonial agendas in local Salish Sea waters.

War was not the most devastating colonial assault against First Nations peoples here. The forced exodus of smallpox victims from Fort Victoria resulted in a population loss estimated at 90% for the Haida and 85% for the Nuxalk alone. Indeed, the 1863 epidemic was described as depopulating most of the South Coast nations. Genocide, by any other name, opened up BC for unbridled settlement and resource extraction.

Hostile actions against First Nations people did not cease 160 years ago. After the 1863 epidemic the illegal land grabs of Joseph Trutch and the railroad companies reduced recognised indigenous reserve lands by over 90%; Duncan Campbell Scott's 1920 Indian Act enforced residential school attendance that brought, loss of culture, language, art, health, emotional well-being, and for a recorded 4130 children their lives and futures. Although not legally enforceable, passes were required to leave reserve lands until around 1930, this often resulted in isolation, starvation and lack of accessible medical care. The inequitable mistreatment of WW1 and WW2 veterans still goes unnoticed. The potlatch ban extended until 1951. The Sixties Scoop forcibly removed children from First Nations parents and communities. Denial of Aboriginal rights and title continues to be fought in the courts as does the denial of harm done to students of state run schools continues. Canada's failure to solve and resolve crimes perpetrated against the missing and murdered indigenous women continues. There is more . . .



Reconciliation cannot fully proceed without truth and although many of these examples may be nuanced or difficult to unpack and absorb, they form the basis of past and ongoing inequalities and injustices in this country and this province. First Nations people have never stopped advocating for their rights and freedoms, to vote and retain status, to fish and hunt, to practice culture and move freely on their own land, to harvest and utilize their own resources.

Facing this ongoing legacy of violence, oppression and trauma is a truly bright and resilient generation of First Nations people who are creating and innovating a new society that looks to a brighter and more equitable future. Few can, or do, appreciate the toll that this work of

resilience takes on individuals, families and communities, moment-by-moment and day-by-day. Those who are quick to judge and criticize the efforts of First Nations to rebuild and restore a fully equitable quality of life must take the time to understand the full story and the severity of the journey. And on that note, it behooves us to self-educate. Ongoing, education, discussions, workshops and articles will provide a starting place for many of us to begin. We must study colonial and present impacts and flawed relationships not to implement remotely managed and untried solutions but to LISTEN first, and only then, respectfully asking where, when and how we might work together.

We who benefit from colonial advantage have so much more to learn and more importantly so much more to do to make amends, and to help restore peace and balance. It's always the right time to end wars of violence, extractive and oppressive policy. We have momentum now—let's move forward.

## **CARVING TEARS INTO DREAMS OF RECONCILIATION POLE PROJECT UPDATE**

In June of 2019, the syiyaya Reconciliation Movement began the reconciliation pole project, "Carving Tears into Dreams of Reconciliation." Master Carver ?antuni Tony Paul, who designed the pole, worked together with over 1,500 people to carve the design. The carving took place throughout the Summer and Fall with opportunities each week for Nation and community members and representatives from a wide variety of groups including local governments, school groups, local organizations, media and many more to participate.

In March of 2020, the project was put on hold to meet safety guidelines for the COVID19 pandemic. Tragically, in November of 2021, ?antuni Tony Paul and his wife Cindy Paul passed away due to complications from COVID19. The syiyaya Reconciliation Movement, supported the family with respect and compassion as they grieved the loss of their parents. In May 2022, in consultation with family members, Corey August and Jamel Paul who represented the family, it was agreed the pole would be completed in honour of ?antuni Tony Paul.

In June 2022, syiyaya contracted with xwalacktun, Rick Harry, Creative Journeys Studio, Master Carver of the Squamish Nation to complete the carving, honouring the original design. xwalacktun was assisted by shishalh Nation Members: Shain Jackson, Dionne Paul, Manuella Salinas, Dion Louie, Eric Hill, Candace Campo, and Nievelina Carmona. During the carving time (June 26 to July 4), the site was open for visitors both by invitation and in a drop in manner and included an evening with the Sunshine Coast Community Forest Committee (SCCF). Community members also participated by bringing food and other refreshments to the carving team. This period of carving



was incredibly productive and fun. xwalactun inspired everyone with his carving skills, teaching abilities, humour, kindness experience, expertise and hard work. The carvers who collaborated with him expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to work with and learn from xwalactun. They indicated that they felt so honoured to be included in this project.

We are very grateful to Sunshine Coast Community Forests for their enduring support for this incredible project. They funded the original work and, when the project experienced a pandemic setback, they offered the funds that would allow for the completion of this project. The support from SCCF exemplifies the commitment of the people and organizations in the shishalh swiya to “Journey Together” toward our collective dream of full reconciliation.



## THE POWER OF A BLANKET

In 2010, John and Nancy Denham attended Canada’s First National Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Event in Winnipeg. This event was deeply transformative and John and Nancy have since been committed in a deeply personal way to the Journey Towards Reconciliation. They recognized that reconciliation must begin with truth telling and with all Canadians learning about the true history of the colonization and its impact over the past hundreds of years.

After the TRC, they participated in a Kairos Blanket Exercise, an interactive learning process developed in response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) report strong recommendations about the importance of educating Canadians about colonization. John and Nancy subsequently trained as facilitators and have since facilitated over 40 Exercises. They also developed a strong Sunshine Coast team to support this work and have expanded this work to include another interactive learning process called the Mapping Exercise developed by the Anglican Church.

What is it about these simple exercises that are so powerful? At an intellectual level, participants learn about European colonization of Turtle Island (North America), the accompanying dispossession of Indigenous peoples (reflected by the steady removal of blankets upon which participants stand) and Indigenous resistance and efforts to reclaim land and rights. An important way that the process engages participants at an emotional level is that the process is witnessed by local people of Indigenous and Metis ancestry, gently inviting accountability and growth.

The witnesses are also deeply impacted by the process. Though it takes tremendous courage and generosity to share their experiences and wisdom about the lived impact of colonization in their lives, it also fosters hope and healing. One formal witness at local events was kanatiao, a Haudenosaunee man who was a teen when he witnessed the Oka Crisis in his homeland. He said, “Every Canadian should participate in a KAIROS Blanket Exercise.” Former shishalh Chief Garry Feschuk, another oft-time formal witness said, “The Blanket Exercise raises awareness and is a first step towards reconciliation.”

To support learning and relationship building, participants have the opportunity to dialogue about the experience as a group through a traditional talking circle. Participants generally leave with a visceral sense of the experience of being colonized and make a commitment to contribute in whatever ways they can to supporting reconciliation.

Several Blanket Exercises have been held in 2022, including two during siyiyaya Days, two at Catholic Churches in Gibsons and Sechelt and a Blanket and Mapping Exercise at Gibsons library. Over 100 Sunshine Coast residents came together to learn and support this process.

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## SIYIYAYA DAYS

This year saw the very first 'siyiyaya Days – In This We Journey Together' a celebration and awareness raising about the First Peoples of Canada that started on National Indigenous Peoples Day and closed with Canada Day. Coordinated by the District of Sechelt in partnership with the shishalh Nation and syiyaya, the week was a powerful array of awareness building activities, Talasay Tours Talking Trees Tours, great food, dialogue circles and a showcasing of Indigenous art and music.



## CANADA DAY

Canada Day celebrations in 2022 started with Residential School Survivors being honoured at the front of the parade, recognizing in every way that First Peoples should come first in our country. The parade was vibrant with drumming and singing and children in a long canoe followed by hundreds of orange shirted supporters, drumming and expressing their support for reconciliation.



The day continued at Hackett Park with a full program including shishalh Elders prayers and songs, political speeches, craft sales, music and many other fun activities.



## NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

On September 30, all people of the shishalh swiya were invited to join family, friends and neighbours to show our community's deep and enduring commitment to walking with Residential School Survivors at this very painful time.

The day began with the shishalh Nation hosting a Commemoration Ceremony in which courageous Survivors had an opportunity to share their truth. This was followed with an invitation from the Nation to walk the steps of the children who attended St. Augustine's Residential School down to the pier and back. People had an opportunity to share their remembrances of and love for individual Survivors at the hak'wat Exhibit coordinated by the tems swiya Museum.

The siyaya Reconciliation Movement then held a ceremony to honour the organizational partners that are supporting the reconciliation work on the Sunshine Coast. Attendees then moved to the intersection of the highway and t'itah Way for the Reconciliation Crosswalk Ceremony. People were then ready for a feast, an amazing traditional salmon feast, prepared by Lucy Joe and her team of caterers. After all Elders were served, hundreds of community members of all ages joined in, sitting and sharing a meal together.

This day provided an opportunity to celebrate the strength of the shishálh culture and the opportunities for reconciliation that are now engaging so many people of the shishálh swiya. As Former Chief Garry Feschuk tells us: "when you sit at the table with us, we are family."



## INSTALLATION OF THE RECONCILIATION CROSSWALK

The shishalh swiya acknowledges the legacy of residential schools in our community at the very entrance to Sechelt with the installation of a high quality, artistic crosswalk at the Tsain-Ko Mall and Sechelt Hospital intersection, which borders the property of the former Residential School in Sechelt.

This crosswalk, installed in September 2022, was officially opened on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with ribbon cutting by a shishalh Elder, Tom Paul Sr and his granddaughter Lindsay August, and a blessing by Survivors and children led by ti'talus Audrey Joe. The crosswalk was a collaborative initiative of the shishalh Nation, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, syiyaya and over 20 other government, business and community partners.

The Reconciliation Crosswalk honors those whose lives were taken away or severely damaged by their residential school experience by being a very public and visible acknowledgement. Survivors will know that their entire community stands up with them. Non-indigenous community members and visitors to shishalh will be reminded of Canada's painful legacy of genocide and offered an opportunity to hold the Survivors in their hearts for that moment that they are at the intersection.



### IN THE BUSINESS OF HEALING

'Sacred House,' owned and operated by Alydia Joe, shishalh Nation member, opened in 2019 and now has an online presence ([www.sacredhouse.ca](http://www.sacredhouse.ca)) and in-person workshops offering healing supports grounded in traditional Indigenous teachings from across Turtle Island.

As a First Nations owned and operated healing and wellness company, Ms Joe presents the four sacred medicines of the Indigenous medicine wheel philosophy in healing processes.

With authenticity and awakened spirit, she offers carefully chosen spiritual tools and culturally appropriate offerings from many different Indigenous cultures.

Ms Joe is a registered professional counsellor and is trained as a spiritual life coach and wholistic therapist. She says "I lived the intergenerational trauma, my adversity is my greatest asset." She sees holistic healing as a very important component of reconciliation. Ms Joe advises that "a full understanding of self allows permission to connect with others with compassion, empathy. The human connection is a catalyst for healing. It's a lifetime endeavor." For her "reconciliation is about unity and it provides a platform for understanding, forgiveness and compassion that our world needs." When asked what the inspiration for this work is, Ms Joe says "I am doing this for my grandchildren, my nieces and nephews and all future generations."

Sacred House is currently contracted with the shishalh Nation providing healing circles, psychoeducation workshops for their staff, and developing a wellness platform for youth. They also work with youth to develop self awareness and confidence, arming them with knowledge and skills to live with a purposeful lifestyle. Sacred House offers one-on-one counseling and life coaching to anyone in the shishalh swiya. Ms Joe encourages all people to consider spiritual and wholistic healing: "I want to teach everybody how to use the medicine."

If you want to learn more, send an email to [inquiries@sacredhouse.com](mailto:inquiries@sacredhouse.com).

*Photo provided by Alydia Joe*

## PARTNERS IN RECONCILIATION

In 2022, the role of partnership as key to the success of reconciliation processes on the Coast was highlighted in commitment and in ceremony. Although the shishalh Nation and the District of Sechelt have partnered with syiyaya Reconciliation Movement since its inception, many other organizations have contributed in significant ways over the years.

The following partners were honoured for their contributions on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation with the gift of a feather carved by Shane Jackson: Sunshine Coast Regional District, School District 46, Lehigh Materials, Telus, First Peoples Cultural Council, Canadian Heritage, Ananda Foundation, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, Vancouver Foundation, Sunshine Coast Community Forests, Sunshine Coast Restorative Justice Society, Sunshine Coast Foundation, Vancouver Coastal Health Sunshine Coast Community Services Society, Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice, MP Patrick Weiler and MLA Nick Simons, Peter Grant Law, Sechelt Rotary, and the Sunshine Coast Credit Union.



These partnerships form one of the important building blocks of reconciliation, offering the potential to link our work with theirs and dramatically expanding our capacity for systemic change. An example of how this can work is the partnership with Sunshine Coast Division of Family Practice (SCDFP).

The SCDFP supports physicians to have a voice in the development of health care and has a vision for “healthy, thriving Sunshine Coast communities supported by resilient doctors and comprehensive community-based health care.” Key values that relate to reconciliation include cultural

humility in community engagement and diversity, equity and inclusion. So it was no surprise when SCDFP voiced its interest in getting more involved with reconciliation through a closer relationship with syiyaya.

Dr Rob Lehman, External Relations Lead, describes their interest in being involved with syiyaya as a result of their “increasing recognition over the last few years of the reality of the ongoing effects of colonization.” He says “this is not the country I thought it was” and “our society cannot be truly healthy and functional if there are vulnerable populations who are not being treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.”

Having worked on the Coast for close to 40 years, Dr Lehman recognized that he was unclear how to best connect with Indigenous people in our community in a meaningful way. Involvement with the syiyaya Reconciliation Movement and other initiatives gives him hope. In particular, the crosswalk inspires an understanding of the importance of “bridging between the shishalh Nation and the hospital.” He anticipates that plans for a Kairos Blanketing exercise for physicians for next year, a possible night at the Longhouse, and involvement in the UBC Elder to Elder program will help local physicians better understand Indigenous history and their whole person perspective of wellness. According to Dr Lehman, SCDFP will continue to work with syiyaya, the shishalh Nation, Vancouver Coastal Health and family physicians to create a health care system that is fully inclusive for Indigenous members of our community.



Partnerships such as this expand and deepen our capacity for reconciliation in exponential ways. If your organization or business wants to join with other syiyaya Reconciliation partners in this important reconciliation work, please contact us at [scsyiyaya@gmail.com](mailto:scsyiyaya@gmail.com).

Photo Credits: David Moul

## WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023

We move into 2023 with deep gratitude for the support of so many individuals and organizations across the shishalh swiya. Your commitment and generosity inspires and motivates us to continue this good work.

In 2023, we will deepen the partnerships we forged around syiyaya Days, Canada Day, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Mark your calendars. Based on the overwhelming reception we received in the honoring of these important days, we will begin planning soon with the shishalh Nation and the District of Sechelt and welcome your involvement in making each of these days significant milestones in 'Our Journey Together.'



We will also complete the healing focused projects begun over the past four years. The Healing Regalia Project offers an opportunity for all family members of Survivors to create regalia for the survivors in their family. And the work has already begun. In the Spring, we will hold a ceremony to honour the Survivors and their families. The Reconciliation Pole will be unveiled and a community feast held to which all are invited. The unveiling of the pole will mark the beginning of the next phase of "In This We Journey Together." We look forward to continuing to work together to create enduring reconciliation with the shishalh swiya.



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The Sunshine Coast Kairos Blanket Exercise Team is now working with the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the shishalh Hospital, the Ministry of Children and Family, church communities, and others to hold Blanket and Mapping Exercises for their staff and members.

If your group is interested in holding a Blanket Exercise for your staff or membership, please call Nancy at: 604-740-6400. The Sunshine Coast Blanket Exercise Team is available wherever a minimum of 20 people ask us to facilitate!

**For more information about the syiyaya Reconciliation Movement, please visit [syiyayareconciliation.ca](http://syiyayareconciliation.ca)**