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TLA'AMIN NATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



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VISION

Tla'amin Nation is a healthy, thriving, self-determining, and culturally strong Nation that respects our people, water, lands, and resources and embraces ʔəms taʔow in all that we do.

MISSION

Our mission is to honour our ancestors and ʔəms taʔow through responsible stewardship of our territory and resources, with open and accountable decision-making in the best interests of Tla'amin people – past, present, and future.



Message from the Hegus

Tla'amin Nation is in the midst of a great comeback, and it's an honour to serve as hegus and witness our community's strength and resurgence.

From the completion of 41 new homes this year to the launch of our first-ever ʔayʔajuθəm immersion program for the čičuy, we are a community on the move. Strengthened by self-government based on our Ta-ow, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish.

This year I want to highlight work our Nation completed in two policy areas: citizenship and funeral practices.

Determining Tla'amin belonging is sacred work that should never have been the business of the federal government. I raise my hands to our all-woman citizenship committee for rewriting our law so that we, as Tla'amin people, could recapture our responsibility to determine citizenship.

The good thing and the hard thing about self-government is that our problems are ours to solve.

The second policy area was our community conversation about office closures and Tla'amin funerals. Our workforce has grown and so have the essential services that we deliver and that our citizens depend on. I'm proud of how our citizens and workforce brought forward their ideas and proposals to find positive solutions that respect our teachings and our need to provide essential services.

The announcement of the sale of the tiskʷat site in 2023 set off a powerful chain of events, providing an opening for our reconnection to our original village at tiskʷat. A Memorandum of Understanding, negotiations with Catalyst, and acceptance of our specific claim followed. I heard it said, and truly believe, that the ancestors are putting the wind on our backs with tiskʷat.

It's always been about the land; we belong to this place and have adapted and cared for it, and it has cared for us. We have a growing and thriving cohort of young leaders coming up, and the key to unlocking opportunity for them is a solid made-in-Tla'amin Land Use Plan. Zoning our TSL for housing, cultural, and economic uses is a key priority ahead.

We owe our ancestors and Elders a debt of gratitude to be here today. The laws, regulations, and social norms created to disadvantage and sideline our people for the last 150 years haven't worked. I am full of hope for this year to come and wish you all a year of health and growth.

ʔimot

Hegus John Hackett

Tla'amin lands consist of 8,323 hectares of land owned by the Nation in fee simple. The Lands and Resources team aims to ensure that development and land use of Tla'amin lands provide the greatest benefit to Tla'amin people. This includes management of fisheries, forestry, and leased lands; coordination with local governments; community projects; and implementation of laws and plans.

The Lands team includes the Territorial Stewardship Department, Tla'amin Salmon Hatchery, Guardian Watchmen Program, Mapping, Lands Management, and Food Security. In 2024 the Lands Budget increased by \$750,000. Much of these funds came from grants.

New positions in the Lands Department for 2023-2024 include: Territorial Stewardship Manager, GIS Technician, Referrals Coordinator, Fisheries Engagement Coordinator, and TEK Coordinator.

TLA'AMIN HATCHERY GETS A FACELIFT

The Tla'amin salmon hatchery returns almost a million fry of various species every year providing an invaluable boost to terminal run salmon in Tla'amin territory. This year the hatchery completed \$200,000 in renovations aimed at modernizing the facility: a new incubation room for Chinooks, a resurfaced raceway for spawners, and a new in-stream gravity feed system for the river water supply.



New incubation room for chinooks, resurfaced raceway for spawners, Tla'amin member Kris Louie welds up a new gravity feed system for river water supply.



Hatchery team releases fry into Sliammon Lake, hatchery staff clip coho fry.

TLA'AMIN SALMON ENHANCEMENT AND FOOD SECURITY BY THE NUMBERS

1.5 million

Chum eggs harvested and fertilized (70k eyed eggs provided to Klahoose).

500

Ocean-going chum Tla'amin purchased smoked and distributed to community members.

60,000

Coho eggs harvested and fertilized. Tla'amin can take 35% of the coho run for eggs and eggs are cared for until June. Coho are adipose clipped before going into Tla'amin Lake, where they will stay until the following spring before migrating out to sea.

150,000

Chinook (spring) eggs harvested and fertilized.

1,000

Pounds of halibut purchased and distributed to the community.



PROJECT AIMED AT WAKING UP UNWIN LAKE PIVOTS TO THEODOSIA RESTORATION EFFORTS

In 2023, Tla'amin successfully won \$1.7m in funding to bring salmon back to Unwin Lake. The four-year project is supported by Klahoose Nation and funded by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Unwin Lake is located in the heart of Tla'amin territory and was a historically important multi-species terminal salmon run.

Unwin Creek was blocked in the 1920s by logging operators who redirected the creek to facilitate log transport between Unwin Lake and Tenedos Bay. The man-made creek was straighter and steeper and included five barriers to fish passage which stopped migration of salmonids into Unwin Lake.

Tla'amin approached the project by pursuing nature-based solutions rather than “hard” infrastructure by focusing on the restoration of natural processes, including reconnecting of Unwin Lake and Tenedos Bay using the old creek channel and existing natural water flow processes.

Year one of the project cost \$346,000 and was focused on assessing the viability of restoring passage through the old creek bed. The study found that the construction, upkeep and maintenance required to restore the creek was labour intensive and cost prohibitive. Tla'amin has requested permission to move the remaining three years of restoration funding to the Theodosia watershed. Tla'amin will focus restoration efforts on restoring summer and fall run chum passage and habitats.



KʷŪMQƏN FIELDWORK REVEALS NEARLY 5,000-YEAR-OLD SITES



Elsie Paul at kʷŪmqəŋ on the shoreline at the head of Deep Bay (est. 1942)

kʷŪmqəŋ is the heart of Tla'amin territory and more recently has been known as Tenedos Bay or Deep Bay. In the Tla'amin language, place names are always descriptive. kʷŪmqəŋ means “facing towards the head,” kʷŪm (kwum) “to go up into the woods,” qəŋ (kin) “head,” hence “Facing towards the head.”

Tla'amin Nation Elder Elsie Paul recalls that she lived at Deep Bay with her grandparents on a float home. Her grandfather trapped mink and otter and had a long line from here towards Mink Island, where he

would catch dogfish and other bottom fish such as ling cod, red snapper, and rock cod. The livers from the dogfish would be harvested for sale and were rendered at Blubber Bay (and sometimes Comox) for industrial uses during the war and for greasing skid roads and logs for hand loggers.

For thousands of years, kʷŪmqəŋ was an important fish-drying spot for Tla'amin people. Archibald Menzies, the surgeon naturalist on Captain George Vancouver's crew, describes the scene of entering kʷŪmqəŋ in the summer of 1792 in one of the earliest written accounts.

“We soon after rounded out a deep Bay, on the West side of which we saw a great number of fish stages erected from the ground in a slanting manner, for the purpose of exposing the fish fastened to them to the most advantageous aspect for drying. These Stages occupied a considerable space along the shore & at a little distance appeared like the Skeleton of a considerable Village; they were made of thin Laths ingeniously fastened together with Withies of the Roots of Pine Trees & from the pains & labour bestowed on them it was natural to infer that Fish must be plenty here at some season of the Year, & that a considerable number of Natives rendezvous for the purpose of catching & drying them for winter subsistence....” (Menzies 1923:66-68).

kʷŪmqəŋ was heavily logged and industrialized during in the early 1900s by the Palmer family. At the height of logging activities in Deep Bay, there was a school with 10 to 12 children at Deep Bay. During this period, many Tla'amin families lived on the water for much of the year, travelling by boat and living aboard float homes, the men taking work in hand logging operations.

Just below the surface

The first recorded archaeological visit to *kʷəmqən* was by Donald Mitchell in 1966. Over a few summers, he conducted site visits and made surface collections of artifacts. In the 1970's larger regional surveys were completed to register surface archaeological evidence of areas in and around Desolation Sound by Acheson and Riley.

Norman Gallagher, a Tla'amin Nation knowledge holder and archaeological advocate, reported the destruction and damage of several mortuary sites near *kʷəmqən* in the 1990s, leading to additional fieldwork and protection of Tla'amin sites.

Tla'amin initiated the most recent archaeological study at *kʷəmqən* in preparation for a salmon restoration project in Unwin Creek, and the second phase of fieldwork happened November 5-7, 2023.

Thirty shovel tests, one excavation unit, and four machine tests were excavated. One column sample and two radiocarbon dates were analyzed. Tests found this site is much larger than originally documented, stretching 373 m NE/SW by 119 m N/S.

A total of 403 artifacts were found during fieldwork, among them 32 formed artifacts. Formed artifacts are defined as "deliberately formed." They included six decorative bone objects, a projectile point, a biface, a bone point, a chopper, an abrader, four cores, three knives and a knife preform, a bifacial tool, five utilized flakes and an expedient tool.

Three mortuary features (ancestors grave/funeral rites sites) were also found at *kʷəmqən*. Two of these sites remained undisturbed and one of them was discovered to be a robbed grave, with evidence of extensive excavations on the floor of a significant rock shelter.

To assist with understanding Tla'amin ancestors' activities in the past, a column sample was collected, and the material was analyzed. Results

from this sample identified 75 salmon bones and ranked salmon as the second most abundant fish in the sample. Herring was the most abundant fish in the column sample, and dogfish shark was the third most abundant. The samples were dated to 4,858-4,801, nearly 5,000 years ago.

As a result of the project, Lands Director Denise Smith says that additional protections are underway.

"We are working towards a stronger relationship with the Province, in particular BC Parks and the Archaeology branch, to provide better management and protection of these important areas. Our history has told us that our people occupied these areas and the archaeology has proven it. It is important to ensure that visitors who come to recreate here do it in a responsible and respectful manner and that the Province's management of these sites incorporates our knowledge and history."

This story produced from Parsley, 2024 *Final Report of the Archaeological Impact Assessment of EaSe-100 in a portion of kʷəmqən (Tenedos Bay), Desolation Sound, BC: HCA Permit: 2022-0091*. On file with Tla'amin Nation and the BC Archaeology Branch.



Projectile points found at kʷəmqən

TERRITORIAL STEWARDSHIP TEAM PROTECTS TLA'AMIN TERRITORY ONE REFERRAL AT A TIME

Resource developments such as logging, hydroelectric projects, and mining are ongoing within Tla'amin Territory.

These activities typically require approval from the federal, provincial, or local government. Before granting permission, the government must consult with Tla'amin by sending the Nation "referrals" – proposals for review and a request for formal input. These referrals can be very simple or broad and complicated, according to Connie Graham, Territorial Stewardship Manager.

"We see everything from someone building a garden shed to a new apartment building, from mineral mines to forestry cut blocks, and from floating cabins to shellfish farms. Other government offices deal with a specific type of file or legislation, but Tla'amin government looks at all of them. It can create a lot of work, but it's important to members that Tla'amin's voice is heard."

Tla'amin Nation's Territorial Stewardship Department received 501 referrals in fiscal year 2024. With 248 working days a year, the small but mighty team is processing about two new referrals every day.

The bulk of these referrals are forestry (178) and archaeology (201) related, with mining, aquaculture, and recreation also being major industries in the territory. The team has a good system in place to make sure nothing gets dropped. It starts when a referral is submitted to Tla'amin Connect, the Nation's online referrals program.

Referrals can be submitted by government staff, archaeologists and researchers, companies and developers, or homeowners themselves. Tla'amin Connect lets staff map out where a project is proposed and exactly what values are in that area. Staff then use the software to review projects for impacts to Tla'amin rights, communicate with proponents of projects, and provide stewardship direction to decision-makers.

Where ground disturbing activities are taking place, the team will deploy one of Tla'amin's four trained Culture and Heritage Technicians (CHTs) to monitor the work.

In 2024, Tla'amin CHTs logged almost 3,000 hours monitoring industrial and development activity within the territory. Described as the Nation's "eyes and ears on the ground," CHTs provide a vital service in protecting Tla'amin Ancestors and cultural property.

Scott Galligos has been working as a CHT for four years. He explains that while his previous role in fisheries kept him deeply connected to the local territory, his current position has introduced him to the expansive Tla'amin world beneath the surface.

Holding the handiwork of his Ancestors in his hands has been a revelation for Galligos, and he says it has helped him to reconnect with his culture and his Tla'amin identity.

"This new chapter or venture that I'm taking in my life has been so very humbling, rewarding, and healing. It fills me with pride to be Tla'amin."



Tla'amin Cultural Heritage Technicians Jason Galligos and Alexis Rublitz confer on the site of a new subdivision.

2023 Elk Draw

Tla'amin secured additional tags for the 2023 elk draw, increasing the total number from six animals in 2022 to eight animals in 2023. The annual Tla'amin Elk Draw took place on August 18, 2023, and eight Tla'amin citizens were drawn from a pool of 32 applicants.

2023 Elk Draw winners were:

- ▶ Walter Paul
- ▶ Vern Wilson
- ▶ Ashley George
- ▶ Dillon Johnson
- ▶ Wade Williams
- ▶ Trista Tom
- ▶ Kris Louie
- ▶ Leslie Ann Louie

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA AND TLA'AMIN NATION WILL BEGIN SPECIFIC CLAIMS NEGOTIATIONS ON TISK^wAT

The parties commence negotiations 145 years after Tla'amin was displaced from its original village site.

On October 13, 2023, the Government of Canada offered to negotiate Tla'amin Nation's tisk^wat specific claim. The claim is over 20 years in the making and is centred on the illegal purchase of lot 450, which includes tisk^wat.

"I feel overcome with emotion today," said hegus John Hackett. "Our ancestors were illegally removed from tisk^wat almost 150 years ago. Seven generations of Tla'amin people have fought to restore our responsibility to the big river and we are the generation that has the chance to correct this historic wrong."

Tla'amin Executive Council signed an Executive Order on October 18 accepting Canada's offer to negotiate. The Order directs staff to begin negotiations immediately. Executive Council member Dillon Johnson says Tla'amin has developed plans for tisk^wat which balance social, cultural, environmental, and economic values. "A lot of harm has been done to the land," said Johnson. "Our plans seek to reverse that harm in a careful and responsible way. Canada's recognition of our rightful ownership at tisk^wat is an important step toward that. We look forward to a fast and fair negotiations process so that we may resume our rightful relationship with this place."

TLA'AMIN NATION AND BC COMMIT TO WORKING TOGETHER TO SAFEGUARD FUTURE OF TISK^wAT SITE

Tla'amin teachings speak to the power of twins.

Twins carry special gifts, are known to communicate without words, and often have the ability to foresee the future.

Identical twins Eliana and Yianoula Kamaretsos (Pielle) are only two months old but already have left their mark on Tla'amin history.

Their feet and hands painted with Tumuth, the twins witnessed the signing of a historic agreement with the Province of BC aimed to care for and reclaim the Tla'amin village site seven generations after it was taken from their ancestors.

Eliana and Yianoula were among 300 people gathered at tisk^wat on October 27 to celebrate the signing of a [new Memorandum of Understanding](#) with Premier David Eby which sets out environmental protection, economic opportunity, and a path to Tla'amin ownership of tisk^wat.

The event began in a chilly predawn light when Johnny Louie and Drew Blaney lit a sacred fire to feed the ancestors who called Tla'amin's original village of tisk^wat home. Noreen Paul prepared the meal of traditional food that would be recognizable to the ancestors and handed out cedar to the small group assembled.

“The fire opens the portal to the other side,” said Blaney. He explains that we light the fire to invite the ancestors to be with us and watch the work. “They have been waiting a very long time for this day.”

MLA Nicholas Simons was the emcee for the signing ceremony and Carmen Galligos and Noreen Paul covered him in a speaker blanket to protect him and help him carry out the work of the day.

Drew Blaney led over 100 members of Tla'amin drum family in the honour song to welcome hegus John Hackett, Premier David Eby, Minister Murray Rankin and Tla'amin Legislators Losa Luaifoa, Brandon Peters, Erik Blaney, Gloria Francis, Lori Wilson, Larry Louie, Leonard Harry, and Dillon Johnson to the site.

Elsie Paul, the eldest member of Tla'amin Nation, offered the opening prayer. Her voice breaking with emotion, she spoke first in Ayajuthem and later summarized in English. “I’ve offered prayer to the ancestors that they are here today with us, that they are happy that we are gathered here, on this precious piece of land where our ancestors once lived. We remember them today and we ask them to guide the work that is going on in a good way.”

Ayajuthem teacher Alisha Point then shared a [poem titled “tisk^wat”](#) written by local poet Joshua Degroot and based on Tla'amin oral testimony and traditional use studies. The 40-line poem was addressed to the big and fast river and recited in the only language that Tla'amin ancestors understood.

[A translation of the poem](#) by Gail Blaney and Elsie Paul was circulated so that those in attendance could follow along in Ayajuthem or English.

Following the poem, Premier David Eby shared his commitment in bringing the strength of the entire BC government to enable collaboration on to tisk^wat. He then spoke of the history of wrongs at tisk^wat – wrongs that BC is working to right.

“The tisk^wat village site is clearly so central to the Tla'amin people,” said Eby. “The injustice that was done when the village site was taken, when the river was dammed, and when the salmon disappeared, and when others took the economic benefit from

Four things to know about yixmetštəm (yeekh-met-shtum) tisk^wat (we are going to take care of tisk^wat) MOU

1. It has a two-year term and implicates eight ministries across the BC government.
2. The MOU includes provisions to safeguard the future of tisk^wat through strong environmental stewardship and remediation of the former mill site.
3. It aims to increase Tla'amin economic benefit from the site after being shut out for the last 150 years.
4. The MOU recognizes Tla'amin's long-term goal of site ownership.

that, leaving Tla'amin out, and for generations trying to grapple with that loss, was profoundly wrong. And our goal here today, as the provincial government, is to pledge to work in partnership with Tla'amin First Nation to address that wrong.”

In his remarks, Hegus John Hackett reminded the ceremony attendees that Tla'amin Nation has never given up on tisk^wat and that the only thing that has changed is the willingness of our treaty partners to hear and understand us.

“For seven generations, our story, our history, our connection to this place hasn't changed. What has changed is the listener. We have willing partners walking beside us now. And for that I am grateful.”

Following speeches by dignitaries, the MOU was signed by hegus Hackett and Premier Eby and witnessed by the youngest and eldest members of Tla'amin to symbolize the destructive legacy and the generational opportunity these two governments recognize at tisk^wat.



Premier David Eby, MLA Nicholas Simons, Elder Elsie Paul, hegus John Hackett and Minister Murray Rankin look on as Executive Councillor Erik Blaney applies tumuth to Eliana Kamaretsos held by mom Nikole Pielle. Eliana and Yianoula Kamaretsos (on the left held by dad Konstantinos Kamaretsos) make their mark in history as part of the MOU signing with dignitaries.

Drew Blaney and the drum family closed the event by leading Tla'amin kids in a newly composed Tla'amin honour song.

With the twins and the ancestors looking on, the Nation celebrated.

As the kids danced, the sounds of their feet on the earth mingled with the beat of the drum, the smoke of the sacred fire drifted in the air, and for the first time in seven generations there was a sense of hope that tisk^wat was within reach.



Leadership pauses for a photo after signing the MOU. Left to right: Tla'amin Executive Councillor Dillon Johnson, Tla'amin Executive Councillor Lori Wilson, hegus John Hackett, Premier David Eby, MLA Nicholas Simons, Tla'amin Executive Councillor Losa Luaifoa, Tla'amin Executive Councillor Erik Blaney and Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Murray Rankin.

Education

Education by the numbers

of Students supported through the Tla'amin education team:

- ▶ Early Childhood: **46**
- ▶ Indigenous Supported Child Development: **33 Tla'amin + 10 Indigenous non-Tla'amin chi chuy in the qathet region**
- ▶ Skills, Training, & Employment: **145**
- ▶ K-12: **120**
- ▶ Post-Sec: **52**



The Education team supports the educational needs of Tla'amin people and works closely with education partners to assist our students as they navigate through the BC school system and to develop Tla'amin-specific cultural programming.

In fiscal year (FY) 2024, the department consisted of Early Childhood Education, including daycare and preschool, K-12 Education (and partnerships like ʔayʔajuθəm immersion and the GIJE high school program), Indigenous Supported Child Development, Ahms Tah Ow programming, Post Secondary Student Support, Skills & Training opportunities, and Language and Culture.

New positions (in FY 2024) included Language Support/Elder in Residence and the pilot year of the ʔayʔajuθəm immersion Apprentice-to-Instructor positions.

Early Childhood Education graduates Angus Charlie and Loretta Hanson are now working for the Nation.



HOMEGROWN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS CARING FOR TLA'AMIN KIDS

In 2022, the Tla'amin Department of Education recognized a need for trained Early Childhood Education Workers within our region, particularly for the Tla'amin Community Programs.

After applying for, and winning, some grant money, the Nation partnered with Vancouver Island University's tiwš'emawtx^w campus to host an all-Indigenous cohort of students right here in t'išosəm.

Tla'amin Director of Education, Sophie Call said "There was so much for us all to learn at first, both for our new university students and our education team. We had to push against some tough common barriers to post-secondary education access for Indigenous learners in order to create the conditions that would best support student success."

Loretta Hanson graduated from the made-in-Tla'amin program in 2024, becoming a certified Registered ECE II. She says her journey to certification took many twists and turns.

"In 2022 I was asked to fill in at Tla'amin CDRC Daycare as a Responsible Adult (RA) because they were short staffed, and I have been with the daycare ever since.

It was then that Tla'amin and VIU were working to try and do a cohort of the ECEC program and offer it in the community. I talked with my family to see if we could make this work if I decided to do it. I also talked with a fellow employee, which helped make my decision to do it.

"The next two years of schooling was a journey that did not come without its bumps, but I picked myself back up with encouragement from my teachers, Sophie, co-workers and friends. I managed to achieve my Dogwood and participate in 2023 Grad ceremony with my son Denny, which was a huge honour. I finished the program and achieved my Early Childhood Education Certificate. I had some

interesting conversations with mentors and teachers and made the decision to continue my education and work to acquire my Infant, Tot and Special Needs, which gives me my diploma. I encourage anyone doubting their abilities in achieving their goals and dreams to go for it because you can achieve anything you put your mind to!"

Angus Charlie was working as a janitor at health when he was called to the work.

"I was a janitor at the health building for two years and for a year at CDRC as well. While working at the CDRC, I got to know the kids and it made my day going in to work to hear all the kids and see their smiles. They were just adorable, and it got to the point where every time I walked into the classrooms to clean up, and all of the kids would be so happy saying, "Angus is here! Angus!" I never felt so happy seeing the kids.

"Within a month, there was a two-year course being offered and I was enrolled in the Early Childhood Educator course. Two years have passed, and I am officially an Early Childhood Educator working with the three to five kids in the Walking Feet's classroom in the Children's House. I am loving my new permanent full-time position as an ECE worker within Tla'amin Nation."

Call saw so much promise in the made-in-Tla'amin cohort approach that she and her team immediately began devising the next cohort model for teacher-assistants.

"We are very grateful for our relationship with Vancouver Island University, and particularly the tiwš'emawtx^w campus leadership. We think the hardworking students have achieved something special here."

THE STUDENT BECOMES THE TEACHER

Teachers usually have the summer off, but for Tla’amin teacher and language learner Karina Peters, that wasn’t the case.

Dream of ʔayʔajuthəm immersion program gets its start.



Entrance to the qaymixʷqenəmšt immersion program.

When Karina Peters entered teacher college at UBC 17 years ago, she knew her purpose was to teach the Tla’amin language – it’s what she wrote on her purpose statement all those years ago.

And now, after 11 years of teaching in the qathet school district, and following an intense summer of planning, Peters was part of the team to launch qaymixʷqenəmšt [qay-mixw qeh-numsht] (We will all speak our language) immersion program for Tla’amin children in kindergarten and grade 1.

Peters said moving from 30-minute lessons in the mainstream school system to teaching immersion required a lot of investment.

“With other language teachers like French or Spanish, you could log on to any website, teachers pay teachers, or download curriculum and packages. But for us as a team, we were simultaneously teaching while creating and developing our content and curriculum at the same time. So, it was a lot of work.”

The immersion pilot program began as part of the Tla’amin preschool program in the morning and was later opened to Tla’amin kindergarten and grade 1 students in the afternoon.

Peters said these baby steps helped the team. “Beginning only the preschool space for the first couple of weeks of the school year allowed the K-1 team a chance to practice speaking mostly in ʔayʔajuthəm for over an hour at a time. By September 26, we were ready to welcome our first class of K-1 ʔayʔajuthəm students.”

Eighteen kindergarten and grade 1 students registered for qaymixʷqenəmšt and children came from James Thompson, Assumption, and the PR Christian School. Students were bussed in at lunch time and spent the afternoon huks məməʔaqenəm (no English).

The focus was understanding and fluency in the ʔayʔajuthəm language. Learning was play-based, outdoor, community-focused, repetitive, and movement and music-rich – all strategies proven to help reclaim language domains.

Peters said it was a whole new experience teaching children so young and for such an extended time. The instructional team started by just getting to know the kids. “We just really focused on building that positive rapport with the kids, making sure that they feel safe. Creating that positive, safe learning environment for



Karina Peters at qaymixʷqenəmšt

them – connecting at home when we needed to, connecting with admin when we needed to.”

The pilot program was a team effort and pulled from the most committed ʔayʔajuθəm learners and speakers in Tla’amin.

Karina Peters co-led the program with Koosen Pielle, and the co-instructors expressed the need for some significant support as they prepared for a needed level of language fluency neither had yet encountered.

Enter the veterans. Tla’amin’s long-serving preschool teacher, Dorothy Louie, was keen to welcome formal immersion into her classroom and support the younger instructors in their new, daunting roles. Retired teacher Gail Blaney, who holds a graduate degree in language, agreed to



Instructors Karina Peters and Koosen Pielle with qaymixʷqenəmšt students Rielle Johnson and Mathieu Harry. qaymixʷqenəmšt was featured on CBC in March 2024.

be that needed support, offering both years of experience in the classroom and strong knowledge of and fluency in ʔayʔaj̕uθəm.

A roster of 12 Elders was approached and assembled. A rotation of two elders at a time supported the teachers who may be challenged to find the words for the many various situations that arise on any given day in the learning space. Working in pairs enables Elders to expose students and teachers to a good, natural flow of conversation.

According to Peters, the Elders were deeply impacted by the experience too.

“We had a number of Elders commenting and saying, I’m so grateful for this program to be happening, because when I was their age, we were taken away, we were forbidden, and to see this being brought back, and for the children to be

using and speaking the language as much as they are it just hits you in the heart. It’s full circle.”

The next generation of ʔayʔaj̕uθəm teachers was supported in program design through a unique instructor-apprentice role. Alyssa Louie and Nailah King-Hopkins were selected for their current skill set and commitment to learning the language themselves.

Instructor-apprentices help with program delivery, support the čičuy in the classroom, and develop needed teaching and learning resources – from flashcards to videos, posters to visual aids.

“Growing teachers is critical to the sustainability of the program,” said Director of Education Sophie Call. “The introduction of instructor-apprentices is about planning for long-term growth – we know ʔayʔaj̕uθəm teaching staff will be needed.”

Parents day at immersion class





qaymix^wqenəmšt students tour the Tla'amin firehall.

The program is now in its second year with a continued focus on kindergarten and grade 1. It now runs full days on Tuesdays and Thursdays in its own classroom at the CDRC. This year the same instructional team of four is hard at work integrating literacy and numeracy into the program. Tla'amin families are very supportive, and the class is already full with 20 registered students and a waitlist now created.

Peters says she is full of gratitude. “One of the coolest memories I had last year during qaymix^wqenəmšt was at lunchtime, we were singing the grateful song and the hungry song, and I was brought to this vivid memory of Sue Pielle when she taught us at the old čičuy school. That was our routine. We sang the hungry song before we went to have lunch. Now here I am teaching our čičuy the same song, I’m just so deeply proud and honoured to have the opportunity to teach our kids.”



Karina Peters kindergarten class, Karina is middle row far right and Sue Pielle is top row far left.

TLA'AMIN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEYS

Tla'amin Nation's post-secondary program funded 52 students this year in pursuit of their educational dreams, for an overall post-secondary investment of \$800k.

Meet three graduates and learn more about their educational journeys.



Mariah Gaebel
Vancouver Island University – Practical Nursing Access Program

“My motivation for going to school to become a Licensed Practical Nurse was making an impact on people, taking on a greater responsibility as previously being a care aide and the challenge of learning new skills. My role is providing direct patient care, administering medication, monitoring vital signs, assisting with wound care, etc. I love being able to make a difference in people’s lives and offering care and comfort. My advice for someone graduating would be the transition from student to professional can be challenging. It’s okay not to know everything immediately – confidence comes with experience.”



Brittany Vivier
Mental Health, Substance Use, and Harm Reduction Counsellor at Tla'amin Health

“This year I graduated from Nicola Valley Institute of Technology with an Advanced Diploma in Indigenous Wholistic Wellness and Addictions Counselling. This education has allowed me to learn how to practice as an Indigenous counsellor that lives in two worlds. Using a ‘two-eyed’ seeing approach, I practice using research and evidence-based western interventions, as well as holding space, honouring and practicing our traditional ways of healing with connection to the land, water, community, and family. As we continue to heal as a nation and people from the effects of colonization, it is my honour and privilege to walk along beside our people in their pursuit of health and wellness. The very best part of my job is getting to witness the joy, success, recovery, health, and wellness of our people.”



Nolan Louie
*Registered Social
Worker (RSW).*
Tla'amin Health

“I’ve recently completed my Master of Social Work (MSW) at the University of Victoria (UVic). I chose this educational path due to my interests and values for analyzing dominant colonial discourses in our society and how discourse contributes towards masking oppression and suffering.

“My practice at Tla’amin Health focuses on providing individual counselling and psychotherapy sessions for individuals and couples. I also make referrals and liaise with community organizations and service providers for additional resources as needed.

“What I enjoy about my role is the opportunity to help people navigate through life’s challenges and rewards. It takes courage to share your story and it’s a privilege for me to witness and support with each person’s journey of healing.”



Community Services

CITIZENSHIP AND ENROLMENT LAW AMENDMENTS ENSURE MEANINGFUL TIES TO TLA'AMIN

On October 4, 2023, the Tla'amin Citizenship Law had its final reading and was passed into law by the Tla'amin Legislative Assembly.

Since 2018, community outreach, research, and policy analysis has been undertaken regarding the *Citizenship and Enrolment Law*. This work arose from the concern that the current eligibility criteria are too broad and do not adequately consider whether someone has meaningful ties to Tla'amin. The proposed new criteria focus primarily on Tla'amin ancestry and having a continuing Tla'amin community connection.

Losa Luaifoa is the Director of Community Services and responsible for Citizenship. She regarded the task of revising the Law as sacred work. “Nothing is more important to Nationhood than the ability to define citizenship or belonging,” said Luaifoa. “We took our time with these amendments so that we could get it right and consider the many perspectives of Elders, knowledge keepers and our Citizens. The revised *Citizenship and Enrolment Law* will ensure that we all have the chance to exercise our rights and responsibilities as Tla'amin people.”

February 4, 2024, Citizenship committee meeting. The Citizenship Committee was formed at Treaty and is comprised of Tla'amin Citizens Jolene Sutcliff, Elsie Paul, Pam Wilson, April Treakle, Doreen Hopkins, and Losa Luaifoa, supported by membership clerk Kylie Paul.



ČEPΘTAN HOUSE OPENS ITS DOORS TO TLA'AMIN FAMILIES

čepθtan (chepth-tan) is an ʔayʔajuθəm (Ayajoothum) gender-inclusive word meaning Auntie or Uncle. čepθtan House is a new place in the village where family helps family, as Tla'amin people have always done. At čepθtan House, families can access respite (temporary) care from a trusted adult in a safe and secure space.

Crystal Gustafson describes the impact it has had on her. "I do respite care, and Chepten House has been so good, not just for the kids I care for but also my own four kids. It's a nice big home and it's really fun for the kids. It's like going on a trip somewhere without having to leave the community. The kids like to choose their rooms, saying, "I get this room!" All kids deserve to have fun, be safe, and interact with caring people. Chepten House provides that."

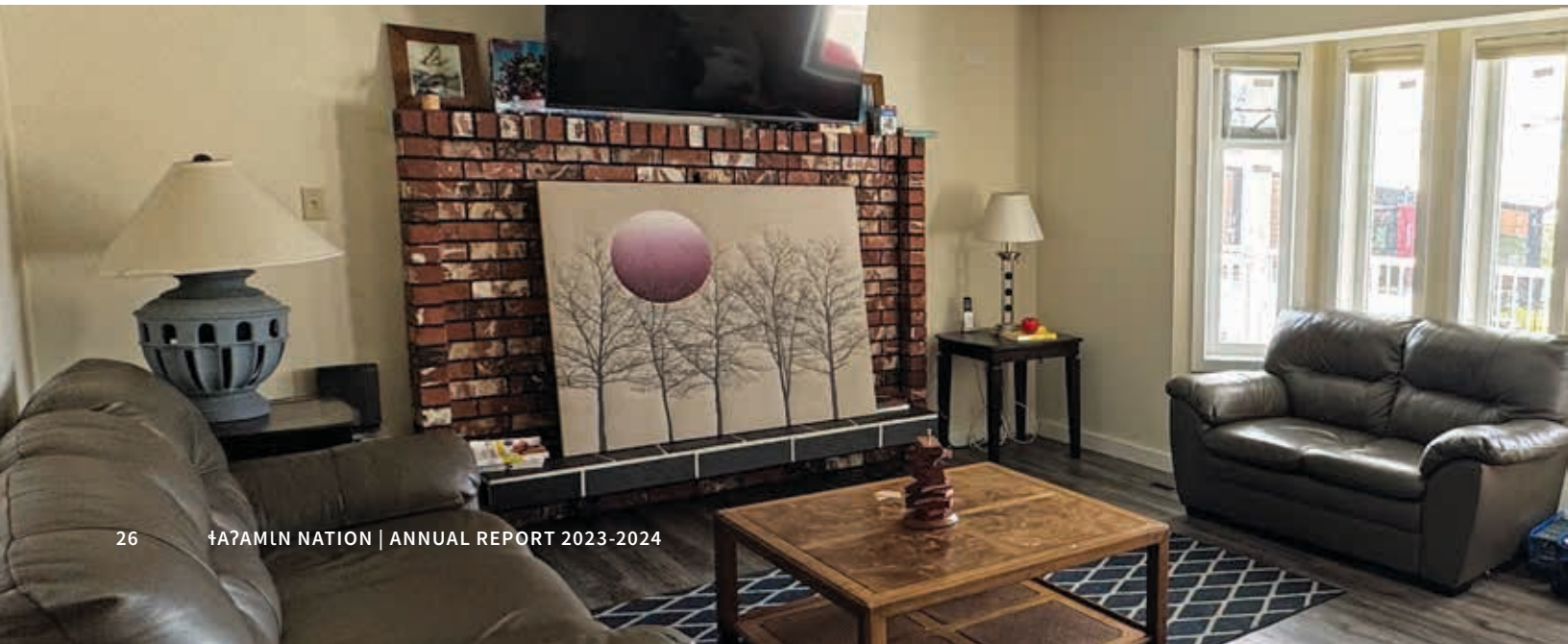
čepθtan House opened its doors in early 2024 to fill a huge gap of having a safe space for families to stay at, especially for temporary accommodation. We needed a place where visitations could take place between care provider and children or just a short-term respite care space.

Tony Sweet has used čepθtan House and says "I've stayed at Chepten House eight times now. I found out about it through workers in Sliammon. Couch surfing for the last couple of years with two kids has been rough. I'm staying with my sister-in-law and it's pretty crowded. Being at Chepten House when I have my kids and my stepson it gives me space, room to breathe. The kids have room to play and just relax. Being there gives my sister-in-law a break too. Chepten House has been very helpful for a person in my situation, someone who is house searching. It's a breath of fresh air."

Tla'amin's čepθtan House and other Child and Family Services are being developed and built upon Tla'amin teachings, says čepθtan House coordinator Trista Tom. "This is a safe place and is catered to the specific needs of our people."

When asked what she the most rewarding part of her new job is, Trista says "I get to help and support our people and bring new programming to our Nation that was only ever offered in town, so now we can be in the comfort of our community. Plus, I get to work and snuggle with some pretty cute babies!"

The living room at čepθtan House.





Fresh vegetables on display for good food box. Good Food Box staff Dylan McTavish packs up the monthly offerings.

GOOD FOOD BOX DISTRIBUTES OVER 50,000 POUNDS OF FOOD IN 2023/2024

The Tla'amin Good Food Box program was established in 2018 to combat childhood hunger and help Tla'amin families achieve food security. It was originally designed for social assistance clients, home and community care supported houses, and prenatal program clients.

In 2020, during the height of the Covid pandemic, the Good Food Box was extended to all Tla'amin households to support Tla'amin food security when grocery stores were facing major shortages.

The Good Food Box provides about 20 pounds of food per month per household, including essentials like milk, eggs, cheese, bread, and butter along with produce like potatoes, carrots, and onions.

Pam Wilson is the Good Food Box Coordinator and says that

“So many families are helped every month by the Good Food Box. We have two local farms on board now, Paradise

Valley and Blueberry Common to get our community members local fresh fruit and vegetables. I’m so grateful for the Good Food Box crew who work so hard every month to have bags ready for pick up for our citizens.”

This year an average of 210 Tla'amin households accessed the program every month, resulting in over 50,000 pounds of food being distributed.

Losa Luaifoa, Director of Community Services, is responsible for the program and says that demand for the Good Food Box is starting to outpace availability. “Our costs increased a lot this year,” Luaifoa continued. “Next year we’ll have to consider reinstating an application process to ensure this program will always be available for those who need it most.”

The Nation spent \$130,000 on the Good Food Box in fiscal year 2024. It receives deep discounts from local grocers and farmers due to bulk purchasing.

ʔayisaθot

Housing & Capital Infrastructure



The Housing and Capital Infrastructure team oversees social housing, housing policy, housing repairs, village maintenance, water treatment plant, asset management, and construction services.

The team also project manages new construction in Tla'amin and in 2024 oversaw a capital infrastructure budget of \$7.8m. New hires in 2024 were focused on building maintenance and project management.

ΛΑΧΛΑΧΑΥ ΨΑΥΕ PROVIDES COMFORT, SAFETY, AND PEACE FOR ELDERS AND CITIZENS WITH MOBILITY ISSUES

On June 1, 2023, Tla'amin Nation celebrated the grand opening of Λαχλαχάυ Ψάυε (Klah Klah Hay Ayeh), or Elders House, which provides 24 units of apartment-style living for Elders and Tla'amin citizens with accessibility challenges.

At the opening ceremony, Hegus John Hackett remarked that “The creation of Λαχλαχάυ Ψάυε fulfills a 30-year-old vision of our Elders to age-in-place, close to their grandchildren, and as active participants in community life.”

Λαχλαχάυ Ψάυε features eight two-bedroom units, and 16 one-bedroom units, and provides safe, affordable, accessible housing for Elders and citizens with disabilities who can still live independently. Every unit meets general accessibility standards, and a few are equipped with ceiling lifts and lowered counters for members that use wheelchairs full-time.

One of the building's first residents was Sharon Francis. Sharon attended the building grand opening on June 1 and was moved in by August.



Sharon Francis at Λαχλαχάυ Ψάυε. Francis says that her new home has brought comfort, safety, and peace to her life.

Sharon is grateful for the extra space which allows her to have her grandkids, jeh-jehs, and close friends over. She says she missed cooking which was hard to do in her last place because it wasn't designed for someone in a wheelchair. Now Francis has become ʔaxʔaxay ʔaye's biggest promoter, encouraging other community members to check it out.

"I've been showing off my new place to other family members, close friends, and even our Elders who reside elsewhere.

"I truly believe our environment plays a key role in all aspects of our being. After going through a difficult year dealing with health issues, I am finally basking in the benefits of being in a brand-new building, realizing that I deserve to live in a safe, comfortable home in my own piece of Paradise."

The purpose-built complex is located next door to the Tla'amin Health Centre, enabling more efficient coordination of vital primary care, and dental and home care services to Elders and citizens with unique needs. "The location has made things more convenient," explained Francis. "The location allows me to attend more community functions plus I have easier access to Health services and the Government House."

The new space has had a positive impact on quality of life too. "I enjoy taking my fur baby for daily walks around the neighborhood, utilizing the various trails and familiar shortcuts from my youth. I love my pantry which is spacious enough to fit my deep freezer plus store all of the amazing deals from my couponing and my great big kitchen has lots of counter space for me to do food prep with ease. I enjoy my independence and appreciate the fact that I can safely thopeesh on my own in the amazing walk-in shower with a built-in bench. I'm sleeping a lot better absorbing the peace and quiet."

ʔaxʔaxay ʔaye was designed through workshops with Elders and community members and its design looks like the plank homes Tla'amin ancestors used to build.

Francis said that one of the best things about this building is "In the fall when it starts to rain you can smell the yellow cedar that was used to construct this place." It feels like home for another special reason too. "In the early summer months there are the most beautiful wildflowers everywhere you can see. I remember the small purple flowers from my childhood where they'd abundantly bloom along the waterfront, they bring back fond memories. I'm truly blessed to be able to live in this oasis."

Tla'amin health director Marlane Paul feels the project has had a really positive impact.

"Elders and members with unique needs have said that they want to stay in community – connected to language, culture, ceremony, and one another," said Paul. "ʔaxʔaxay ʔaye introduces safe and accessible housing built with our members needs in mind so that they can be as independent as possible for as long as possible."

ʔaxʔaxay ʔaye construction was funded through the Federal Government's Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI), which provides capital contributions to facilitate the rapid construction of new housing and/or acquisition of existing buildings for the purpose of rehabilitation or conversion to permanent affordable, supportive, or transitional housing. The RHI provided \$8.7 million, and Tla'amin Nation contributed \$2.2 million.



Emily White and Brandi Marriott check out the plans for ʔəms ʔaye during the ground blessing ceremony.

GROUND IS BLESSED FOR ʔƏMS ʔAYE “OUR HOUSE”

Since 2007, a new cultural centre and traditional foods processing facility have been part of Tla’amin’s Community Plan. In spring 2023, it was decided that construction estimates from the 2020 design were no longer affordable due to increased costs and the spaces not meeting the needs of the community. Extensive community engagements and input and guidance from Elders and Tla’amin Program Managers were considered in finalizing the re-design.

On February 20, 2024, Tla’amin Nation blessed the ground so that construction could begin.

ʔəms ʔaye will include a 2,000 square foot feast hall and cultural gathering space which will accommodate up to 350 guests and a small museum to house Tla’amin cultural treasures. It will also include a state-of-the-art language lab and recording studio for the transmission of ʔayʔajuθəm from one generation of Tla’amin Citizens to the next.

A new Traditional Food Processing Facility will be located adjacent to ʔəms ʔaye providing a home base for Elders, knowledge keepers, and harvesters to share wisdom about procuring and preparing foods from Tla’amin lands and waterways. Ample

teaching space, large game and seafood processing areas, and large commercial freezers and coolers are among the facility’s prominent features.

Both buildings will be community and wheelchair accessible. Gardens for medicinal plants, a smokehouse, and a carving shed on site will serve as a cultural hub for the Nation.

Carmen Galligos, Director of Public Works and Housing, said at the grand opening:

“Today I want to make it about uplifting those Elders who got us here today. It’s because of you that we still have a language to learn and record, it’s because of you that we understand our world and what it means to be Tla’amin. You protected our culture through the worst of times and ʔəms ʔaye will be a place to repair, restore, and regrow our culture, language, and teachings. We designed this building with the comfort of Elders in mind. To create a place worthy of your sacrifice.”

TLA'AMIN FUNERAL POLICY AIMED AT UPHOLDING TLA'AMIN TA-OW AND ENSURING SERVICE CONTINUITY

When a Tla'amin loved one passes on to the other side, the family, community, and Tla'amin administration work together to ensure safe passage of our loved one and to uplift the grieving family.

Over the last 50 years, and for many reasons, some of the responsibilities around death and dying that were once held by Tla'amin families have shifted to the Tla'amin administration. Yet, the Nation hasn't paused to host a community conversation about these shifting responsibilities, and how to best uphold our ta-ow in today's world.

In 2023, Tla'amin Executive Council passed a motion to engage the community and create a policy for funeral support and office closures that respects and upholds both Tla'amin teachings and provision of essential services.

Executive Council Member and Community Services Director Losa Luaifoa is very involved in supporting families who have lost a loved one. She works closely with Tla'amin families both on and off lands and says that while each family has slightly different needs, our teachings and principles are the same – love, care, and respect. Translating these principles into policy is the hard part.

The community engagement process happened in three parts: 1) a review of past community feedback, 2) focus groups and a survey at the Tla'amin General Assembly, and 3) sharing of the draft report and an invitation for further comment.

“Just as we walk carefully when we lose a loved one, it was important for us to walk carefully in the engagement and policy process,” said Luaifoa.



“Need to respect our Tla’amin value of everyone helping out, for some people, helping out means going to the family and cooking, preparing the pamphlet, etc., for others it means staying at work and keeping the lights on and the services running. Funeral days are not vacation days.”

“Staff, elected leadership, management, especially those who are community members, should be focused on what their obligations are to the family experiencing the loss, instead of what they should be receiving. Those related to (including close friendships/non-biological relations) the deceased should get the time off paid, as it has always been. Staff who are attending services should get the time off paid as it has always been. Staff who wish to work at the funeral service (serving tea, helping with food, etc) should get the time off paid as it has always

been. Staff who don’t fit into those categories should continue to be in office. Our teachings do say to slow down and stay/still and quiet. There are always quieter/slower things to do. Big meetings/events could be cancelled but workers continue to work. Answer emails, catch up on reports, deep clean or reorganize your space. Construction crews can take things slow. Focus on one project. But taking the day off does mean culture. Hard work is culture.”

Tla’amin thanks the Elders and other Tla’amin citizens who took time to provide their voice through this process. These policy changes are effective immediately. Citizens are invited to read *Connecting our Past to our Present* summary of engagement report here <https://www.tlaamination.com/funeralpolicy/>

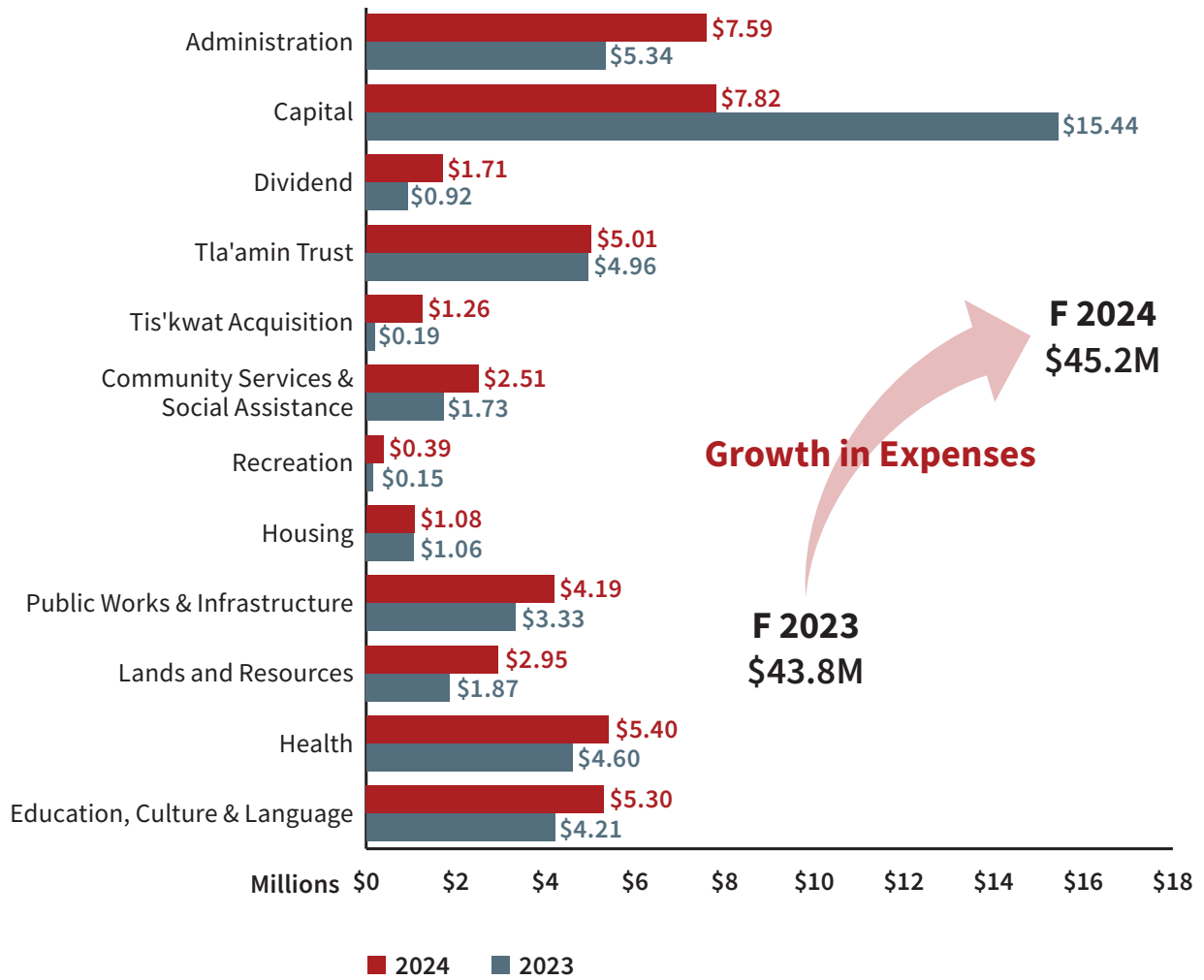


FINANCES

In 2023/2024 – 70% of Tla’amin Nation’s 261 Full-time, Part-time, and Casual Staff, are Tla’amin First Nations Citizens.

	F2024 (Unaudited) Consolidated	F2023 (Unaudited) Consolidated
Indigenous Services Canada	\$ 26,644,173	\$ 23,033,115
Tla’amin Trust	\$ (5,010,590)	\$ (4,964,799)
Federal Government	\$ 2,240,342	\$ 9,164,465
Province of British Columbia	\$ 4,375,396	\$ 3,077,302
Other Government and Grant Funding	\$ 4,707,926	\$ 4,391,606
Investment Income	\$ 3,830,874	\$ 1,926,680
Rental Income	\$ 533,737	\$ 333,232
Property and Other Taxes	\$ 560,277	\$ 466,963
Fishing Licences	\$ 140,638	\$ 116,883
Equity earnings	\$ 3,429,585	\$ 3,803,169
Other Income	\$ 298,298	\$ 429,109
Total income	\$ 41,750,657	\$ 41,777,725
Education	\$ 3,200,593	\$ 2,804,241
Culture and language	\$ 346,510	\$ 256,208
Health	\$ 2,395,259	\$ 1,769,069
Land and resources	\$ 1,348,937	\$ 595,503
Public works and infrastructure	\$ 1,291,166	\$ 1,365,479
Housing	\$ 877,051	\$ 856,216
Recreation	\$ 93,499	\$ 56,600
Social assistance	\$ 1,174,215	\$ 920,982
Community services	\$ 440,716	\$ 240,757
Tis’kwat	\$ 1,255,885	\$ 186,854
Information technology	\$ 398,644	\$ 375,101
Insurance	\$ 702,096	\$ 480,638
Legal and professional fees	\$ 1,371,534	\$ 668,043
Bank charges and interest	\$ 190,607	\$ 303,131
Dividend distribution	\$ 1,707,153	\$ 920,965
Administration	\$ 1,027,324	\$ 827,113
Amortization	\$ 1,886,211	\$ 1,287,720
Salaries and benefits	\$ 14,549,089	\$ 10,758,502
Total expense	\$ 34,256,488	\$ 24,673,121
Profit (Loss)	\$ 7,494,169	\$ 17,104,604
Capital acquisition	\$ 7,821,645	\$ 15,440,082
Cash flow surplus (deficit)	\$ (327,476)	\$ 1,664,522
Non-cash revenue and expenses	\$ (1,543,374)	\$ (2,515,449)
Deficit	\$ (1,870,849)	\$ (850,927)
Reserve Project Funding	\$ 2,454,318	\$ 3,377,646
Surplus	\$ 583,469	\$ 2,526,718

Change year-over-year









One Heart, One Mind, One Nation
tlaaminnation.com

