



**PREPARING
OUR HOME:**
Lessons from Xet'ólacw
Community School,
Lil'wat Nation





Preparing our Home is a community-based resilience planning program. The program enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming emergency preparedness leaders in their communities.

preparingourhome.ca



The joint World Meteorological Organization/Global Water Partnership Associated Programme on Flood Management (APFM) and Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP) promote the concepts of integrated flood and drought management.

floodmanagement.info droughtmanagement.info



The Water Youth Network is a global connector in the water sector, made up of a vibrant community of students and young professionals and across disciplines.

www.wateryouthnetwork.org

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Design: Associated Programme on Flood Management/
Integrated Drought Management Programme



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INTRODUCTION

Preparing our Home is a community-based program that enables Indigenous youth to reach their potential in becoming resilience leaders in their communities.

Experiences and research around the world show that youth programs can help build, sustain, and improve community preparedness and resilience. Preparing our Home enhances activities directed at understanding risk from an inclusive people-centered community-based approach that connects youth, Elders and community members and brings together Indigenous knowledge and global disaster risk reduction solutions. The program strengthens resilience capabilities in Indigenous communities by building leadership through youth training and exercises.

Following best practices of community-based planning, Preparing Our Home workshops involve community members, educational and youth staff, band staff (e.g. land officers, housing staff), community safety officers, councillors, former Chiefs, and Elders. A community gathering showcases and celebrates youth (an exhibit of workshop photography and paddles carved) and brings awareness to emergency preparedness work being conducted by the youth in the community (hazards and risk assessment, preparedness strategies and measures developed by the youth, community resilience strategies and the role of youth).

This toolkit outlines key elements of the program as it was implemented at the Xetólacw Community School, Lil'wat Nation: hazard mapping and risk assessment; community resilience assessment and youth strategies developed (personal/household, school and community levels).



Below are some of the examples of positive disaster resilience changes that happened as part of this program:

The Xetólacw Community School created a School Safety Committee with an intent to work on the emergency plan for the school to address priority hazards identified as part of the workshop: floods, fires and the development of school lock-down procedures.

The workshop strengthened connections between the school, the Fire Department and the community leaders in emergency planning.

As part of the workshop, the youth sorted emergency supply bins stored at the school that had not been opened for over five years, itemized the inventory, identified what was missing or was needed.

The youth identified the need for a secondary access road/a new evacuation route in a case of a wildfire.

In 2017, the participants of the Preparing our Home program won a global competition for their work to understand hazards and develop a school curriculum by integrating Indigenous Knowledge for increasing community resilience. The winners of the Global Competition for Youth-led projects on Floods and Droughts were announced at the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction in Cancun, Mexico. This brochure captures key lessons learned over the past 3 years in Lil'wat.

GLOBAL CONTEXT

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework, a 15-year global roadmap for disaster risk reduction underlines the importance of addressing the needs of Indigenous peoples and the importance of Indigenous knowledge in tackling disaster risk and increasing community resilience:

“Disaster risk reduction requires a **multi-hazard** approach and **inclusive, risk-informed** decision-making based on the **open exchange** and dissemination of disaggregated data, including by sex, age and disability, as well as on **easily accessible**, up-to-date, comprehensible, **science-based**, non-sensitive risk information, complemented by **traditional knowledge**.”

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030



Connections between Preparing our Home and Sendai Framework:

Multi-hazard and risk-informed: using participatory mapping and low-cost technology, this program enables communities to conduct hazard identification, hazard mapping, social vulnerability mapping and risk assessment for stresses and shocks ranging from floods, extreme weather events, droughts, sea level rise, road accidents, oil spills to loss of language and culture.

Inclusive, open and people-centred: the program connects youth as change agents with community members, Elders, external partners and non-Indigenous peers to collectively learn, collaborate and enhance resilience.

Interweaving worldviews: by integrating Indigenous knowledge, Western science and technology for increasing community resilience.

COMMUNITY IN FOCUS: Lil'wat Nation

The Lil'wat7úl have called their territory home since time immemorial. For millennia, the people enjoyed an economy based on trade between other First Nations. And, as today, they valued the importance of family life.

Organized in extended family groupings, the Lil'wat7úl wintered in villages consisting of clustered s7ístkens, semi-subterranean "pit houses." In temperate months, life was lived outside, with fishing, hunting and gathering taking up peoples' days as they travelled a traditional territory of almost 800,000 ha, from coastal inlets to deep into the rainforest. The connection with the land was both economic and spiritual, with the Lil'wat7úl prizing a harmonious relationship with nature — a value that remains strong today. Fishing, hunting and harvesting indigenous plants for food and medicine are among the cultural practices that have endured since time immemorial.

Today, the majority of Lil'wat Nation citizens live near beautiful Mount Currie, British Columbia. Named for the spectacular 2,591 m (8,501 ft.) mountain in the centre of Lil'wat Traditional Territory, the community is home to the majority of the nation's more than 2,000 members.

With the Lil'wat Nation's largest demographic group being youth between the ages of 15 and 30, capacity building through education and training is a priority.



Xetólacw Community School

Since 1972, the Lil'wat Nation has operated Xetólacw Community School (XCS), its K-12 school. Xetólacw Community School prepares students to meet today's challenges by delivering quality education grounded in Lil'wat traditional ways. The school's educational model is built on N7ákmen (Our Way), incorporating Lil'wat cultural learning, traditional values and language into a strong, standardized academic curriculum. Keeping Lil'wat language and traditions vital is an educational priority. From pre-school to Grade 12 students take part Ucwalmícwts (language) classes and culture courses, learning to embrace and celebrate what it means to be Lil'wat7úl. There is also the language immersion program that has been revitalizing the ucwalmicwts language, for students from Kindergarten to grade 3.



Lil'wat Principles of Learning

Some of the Lil'wat Principles of Learning identified by Lil'wat Nation scholar Dr. Lorna Williams and used by the Lil'wat Nation's Xetólacw Community School include principles that are central to community resilience as a broad educational concept. For example,

Kamúcwkalha means the acknowledgement of the felt energy indicating group attunement and the emergence of a common group purpose.

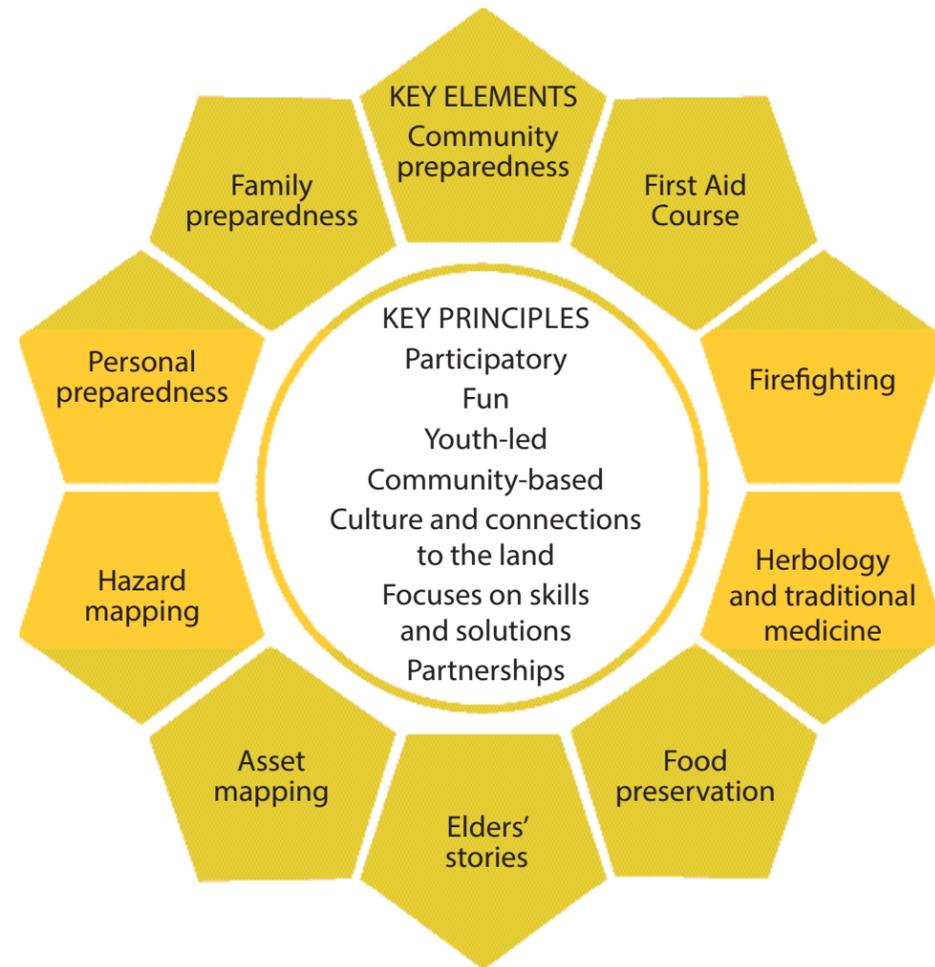
A7xekcal means valuing our own expertise and considering how it helps the entire community beyond ourselves.

Cwelelep means recognizing the need to sometimes be in a place of dissonance and uncertainty, so as to be open to new learning.

Emhaka7 means encouraging each of us to do the best we can at each task given to us.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Xetólacw Community School Resilience Curriculum



The community resilience curriculum developed at XCS focused on multiple dimensions of resilience: cultural resilience, self-sufficiency, lifesaving skills, firefighting skills, traditional medicine plants, among many others. The curriculum also focused on key hazards such as flood risk (for parts of the community located in low-lying lands), water shortages (wells drying out during summer months, especially for people located on the mountain slopes), and fire risk (a major concern throughout the community). In 1986 the Xetólacw community relocated from the regularly flooded floodplain to higher ground but that has led to a high risk of wildfire and droughts due to its location on a forested mountain slope.

In 2017, an Emergency Preparedness super course was conducted at the school by Xetólacw Community School staff, community leaders and the Preparing Our Home program staff, funded by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. During the course, over 50 students got a chance to learn about community resilience, learn photography skills and carve a paddle.

In 2018, the Preparing Our Home program partnered with the Water Youth Network, and the World Meteorological Organization/Global Water Partnership Associated Programme on Flood Management and Integrated Drought Management Programme to develop a youth-led Indigenous community resilience curriculum in Lil'wat Nation.

From January to April 2018, Casey Gabriel and Sandy Henry held an elective class with a dedicated group of students that worked collaboratively with key community members of designing community resilience curriculum. The classes happened on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings for one hour. The classes focused on developing resilience and preparedness at a personal family and community levels.



Photography

Including photography as part of the program allowed for a creative way to incorporate mapping (e.g. hazards and assets). More importantly, it also made it possible to effectively communicate stories of preparedness and vulnerability to peers and community by documenting personal, household and community preparedness measures and having an exhibit of their printed photographs at the end of the workshop.

By learning about photography and digital story telling youth gained transferrable skills that empowered them to tell their stories. Youth's images were also used as part of a national social media campaign to raise awareness about emergency preparedness on reserves.



Asset Mapping

Hazard mapping served as a foundation for planning activities. Connections were made with Land Offices prior to the workshop to ensure access to maps for youth to use. Youth are especially well-positioned for participatory mapping techniques as they have an intimate on-the-ground knowledge of their communities as a highly mobile and connected subset of the population. Several generations of mapping techniques were used: from hand-drawn maps from before the youth were born to specifically prepared maps for the workshops to youth flying a drone for the most up-to-date aerial mapping of their community's hazards, land-use patterns and assets.

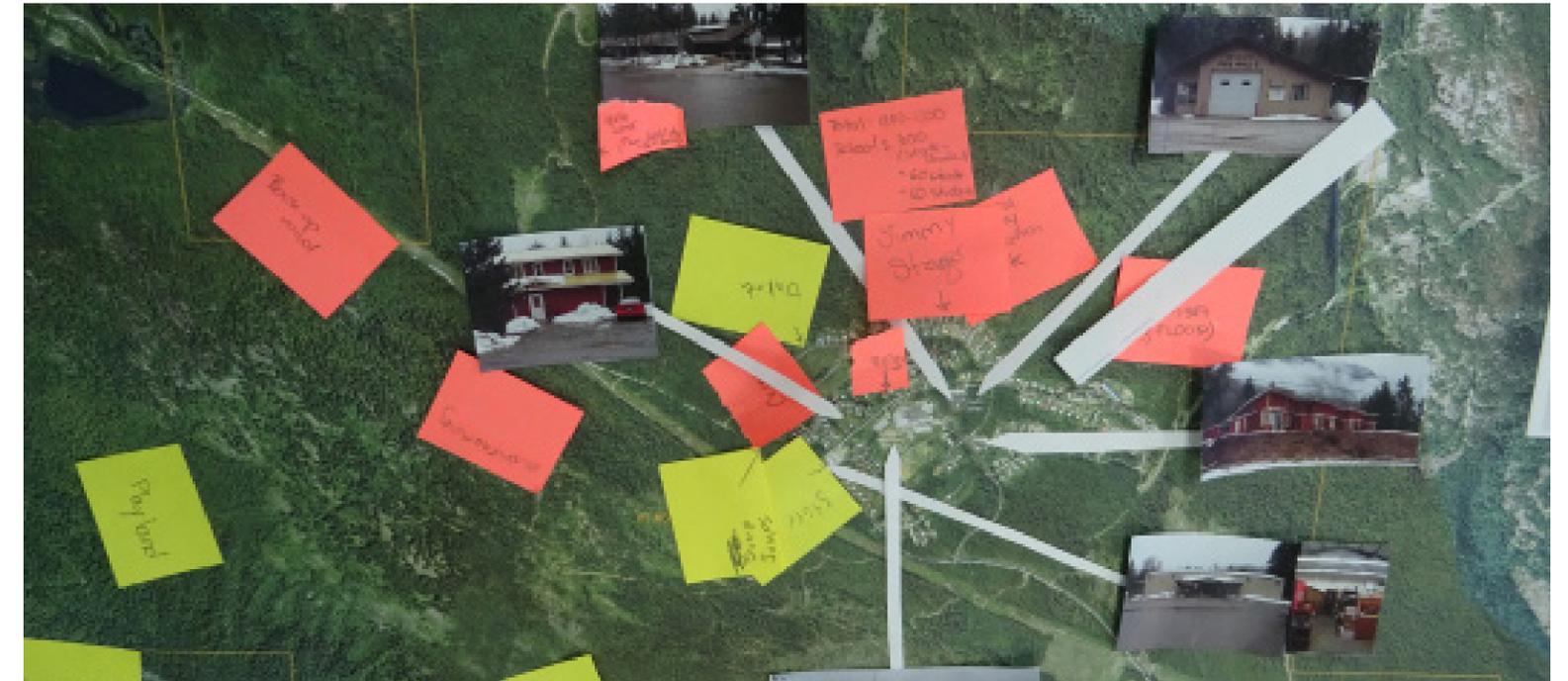
In Lil'wat, the students took a map of the community and surrounding local area and listed specific buildings that may or may not be impacted during any natural disasters that may happen.

The list that was made up included but not limited to, homes, schools, grocery stores, banks, gas stations, health centers.



Discussions that happened:

1. The likelihood of major roads being washed out during floods or any other natural disaster that may happen. The students realized how important the roads were, if they were to be cut off than we would lose access to the above-mentioned list.
2. The community evacuation plan, the emergency evacuation route for our upper community has one road that is only accessible by 4x4 vehicles. There is one section of that road that is blocked, and our community safety officer is looking into getting the access routes open again. The community has a strong emergency operations center when its needed.
3. If, and when natural disasters occurred in the community, what buildings were used for evacuation centers if needed? What kind of work went on in these centers? Who did what when these times happened?
4. When flooding happened in our local area, it was discussed how not only our local community, but the surrounding communities always come together and help each other out. For example, when its time to sand bag in the areas needed there is lots of people with trucks that come and help deliver the sandbags to the affected area. There are the local people who volunteer their time to prepare snacks and meals for those out bagging.



Food Preservation

After having Sheila come and talk with our class about food that are non-perishable, Sandy and I decided that we wanted to have the students make food that would be simple enough for them to make at home and put into their family's emergency kits at home. We got the students to look for simple recipes for things like jerky, fruit leather, or what kind of food that can be dehydrated. After a day of searching these recipes we got some of the ingredients and showed the students how simple it was to make fruit leather. Of course, kids being kids the fruit leather didn't make it to their homes.



Emergency preparedness

Development of a household emergency preparedness plan, including emergency preparedness kits, communications plan, storing enough food for 72 hours to two weeks, establishing a meeting point/protocol in case of evacuations at the school, etc.

- Grab and Go bags (GAG bags): We had discussions in class as to what belonged in GAG bags and wanted to get the students one for themselves.
- We also had a discussion on what kind of materials were needed for life straws, so the students could create some as a class project but there wasn't enough time in the semester for this project to happen. We had eventually received some in the mail for the class and a few extras from Emergency Management British Columbia.
- Casey Gabriel hosted a community information session to explain the work that the class has been doing. The community event had a great turnout and included some door prizes for the participants. The grand prize was an emergency preparedness kit for a family of four.
- We also talked with the students about the different sizes of emergency kits for families, Elders and the inclusion of family pets. This made them think of what they have and don't have in or around their house to make a kit for their household.



Learning from the community and beyond

Of the 23 days that were scheduled for the class there were 5 days that some presenters came and did a presentation on the area of their expertise.

1. **Yaqalatqa7 (Johnny Jones), Lil'wat Nation Cultural Technician**, came to the class and talked about how the Elders before us dealt with any emergency things that may have come up in the past. He also talked about any place names that had a great deal to do with and natural disasters that might have occurred during the time long ago.
2. **Heather Murdock, Flood Risk Engineer**, came to the class and had a model of a low-lying area and showed the class what happened when the waters rose during the flood season. The students were fully engaged in this presentation, they were able to see the outcome of the strength of water flow when floods happen.



3. **Troy Bikadi, Community and Workplace Health and Safety Officer, Lil'wat Nation**, came to the class and discussed what his role is in the community. As his role is new to the Nation, he is still figuring out how important his role is in and around the community.
4. **Sheila Bikadi, Natural Herbalist, Lil'wat Nation**, came to the class and did a presentation to the class that had to do with edible plants that people could consume if needed in any case of an emergency. She also discussed what plants could and would be used for medicinal purposes in and around the community. Students got books on herbology that the school was able to purchase with the funds provided by this grant.
5. **Devon McDonald & Hailey Barry, Representatives from Emergency Management BC's Organizational Learning and Public Education section**, came and watched me facilitate a regular class, they interacted with the students of the class. Devon and Hailey both mentioned that the work that has happened in the school is already way ahead of a lot of communities in BC that are doing work with emergency preparedness.

Fire Safety Bootcamp

There was one week in the middle of February that one of our classes participated in what we call a “super-course”. For this week-long course, students participated in a program that we called Fire Safety Bootcamp.

On the first day the students had the opportunity to get their First Aid training, for some of them it was a refresher course.

Day 2 consisted of looking into what goes on inside an ambulance. The paramedics that were with the ambulance allowed the students to see what its like working the stretchers and some of the machines on the inside. The students then got to see what it's like to look for a vein to take blood samples from a person's arm. Of course, it wasn't a real person's arm, but the students sure enjoyed the experience.



Days 3-5 Along with members from First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) and members of the local Volunteer Fire Department, the students went through what some departments go through during training/practice days:

- Donning and doffing full turnout gear
- Working with fire hydrants
- Learning about the different types of fire extinguishers
- Doing a presentation to the kindergarten class about how to do a fire drill.

During the three days the students had their turnout gear on, they went to the lunch room at the local community school and let the students and staff of the school see them in the gear.



PUTTING SKILLS INTO ACTION: Responding to a Grass Fire

In late afternoon of April 9th, 2019 a fast-moving grass fire threatened the community. It quickly spread over 95 hectares and burned down several poles carrying electricity and caused power outage due to fallen trees. The Lil'wat Nation set up an emergency operations centre and warned residents of 15 properties to be ready to evacuate on short notice. Luckily, no homes were damaged. The 22 members of the Lil'wat Nation Volunteer Fire Department quickly responded, and the fire was fully contained within a short period. The First Nation's Chief Operations Officer, Ernest Armann said he's glad the community has been working on emergency preparation.

The youth played a big role in community emergency preparation and in response to this event.



“Having youth in situations of preparedness is critical.

For example, the Lil'wat Nation Volunteer Fire Department, has a group of 22 volunteers on our crew and at least 8 of them range between the ages of 16-27. Our department doesn't turn anyone away if they want to serve our community.

The youth that are on the fire department are learning the basics to exterior fire attack and ladder usage, to name a few. They are working alongside some seasoned veterans of the department.

If youth don't step up in these important roles, then who would be there to serve their communities? There are many other roles that youth can play if they feel they don't belong in the front lines.”

Casey Gabriel, Lil'wat youth coordinator,
a fire captain at the Xetólacw Fire Hall
and the Preparing Our Home program lead



What made this programme work?

Reflecting on the amazing work that has been accomplished over the past two years, our team has come up with key ingredients for success. We are certain that your community has talents and resources that could be leveraged to bring community together and we hope our experience will help you in this process!

It is important to note that this program did not take much funding to operate. By leveraging community resources and talents, by engaging with broader partnerships, and supporting local champions, a lot was accomplished on a very modest budget.

In our opinion these were key reasons for success.

Local champions and leaders: The program would not be possible without the dedication of local leaders and champions. Casey Gabriel, a fire captain at the volunteer fire department an educational assistant at the school and the Lil'wat Youth coordinator was a central leader for this program. The program would not be possible without Sandy Henry's dedicated leadership and support.

Strong support from the school and community: We would like to thank Rosa Andrew Principal, Xetólacw Community School for her leadership and vision. We would like to thank the many community members, Elders, and professionals that were part of this learning journey in helping youth navigate their way to reclaim resilience built on Ntákmen (Our Way), by incorporating Lil'wat cultural learning, traditional values and language into the curriculum.



Partnerships: This program would not be possible without a multi-year partnership with the Preparing Our Home program, the International Sustainability Education Foundation, and financial support from Indigenous Services Canada. We are also grateful for the support from the Water Youth Network, the World Meteorological Organization/Global Water Partnership Associated Programme on Flood Management and Integrated Drought Management Programme in developing a youth-led Indigenous community resilience curriculum in Lil'wat Nation.

We are grateful to First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) for the amazing Fire Boot camp experience, as well as the Pemberton Fire Department and members of the local Wildland firefighting chapter.

The amazing youth of Lil'wat!

We would like to thank the following students for their hard work on making their community a better place:

Preparing Our Home and Photography Supercourse (2017):

Kelsey Nelson, Alex Douglas, Johnny Thomas, Malcolm Smith, Eunice Smith, Julz Anthony, Luke Johnny, Dakota Flynn.

Tressa Peters, Tristen Jackson, Leonard Peters, Jimmy Stager, Chloe Edmonds, Shevon Johnny, Aiyanna Terry, Sydney Bikadi, Tyra Ollinger.

Xetólacw Community School Preparing Our Home Curriculum development (2018) and Firefighting bootcamp (2018):

Ben Williams, Nikita Jones, Ross Sam, Dason Gabriel, Charmaine Gabriel, Sadie Joe, Eunice Smith, MacInnes Peters, Leonard Jones, Tyra Ollinger, Shevon Johnny, Isabelle Stager, Alex Douglas, Laurence Wallace, Jimmy Stager





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