

Walking Together in the warm land of the Cowichan Valley

# Mill Bay Nature School

We acknowledge that for thousands of years the Malahat, Lake Cowichan, Quw'utsun, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, & Lyackson Peoples have walked gently on the unceded territories where we now live, work, learn, and play. We seek a new relationship with the first peoples here, one based in honour and respect, and we thank them for their hospitality.

# Q'shintl

# Message

## December 7, 2019



This is a message that Pam Mitchell wrote about her son Wilder who passed away. I asked permission to send this to the MBNS community as we are mentioned in it. The children gave their attention and thoughtful presence to Pam, Levi and Oakley at the birthday honouring circle on Friday. It was beautiful.

How do you celebrate the birthday of a person who is no longer with you?

I mourn the memories we will never make. I wonder, if he were here with us, what colourful words his vocabulary would consist of? At 18 months he was so intelligent. He could say "paw patrol", "happy birthday", "hockey", his siblings' names and so much more. He was a bright, shingling light in some of the darkest times of our family's life. As addiction tore through our home and two of our family members left us, nurturing Wilder was my distraction, along with caring for my other boys. It has been a hard adjustment not having his warm little body beside me at night nursing through-out. It was important for me to breastfeed him until he was two, like I did with his three brothers. My body still hasn't adjusted to him being gone; just another reminder of the deep sorrow felt by this tragic loss.

On this day, two years ago I kissed my children and sent them off to school, and daycare, knowing I would be performing one of the most painful and yet beautifully rewarding tasks that a woman can undertake. After nesting all morning, cleaning my home to prepare myself to give full attention to the little being that was about to arrive, my body told me he was ready just after noon. I walked from bathtub to bathtub in my home, trying to make myself comfortable through the intense pain. I had the support of my two beautiful friends, Lou and Kari, who talked with me through it and diligently worked to fill up the labour pool in my bedroom as my body prepared for an honourous mission. Wilder was born at 2:14 pm, weighing 6lbs 11oz via home waterbirth. He was my smallest baby, coming 16 days earlier than expected, which I choose to believe was his way of getting all the time he could in on this earth with us. It was a wonderfully memorable day.

Labour is painful yet beautiful; grief is painful, and yet also beautiful, because we realize how much we love what we have lost. My grief has been emotional labour. I brace myself between contractions; try to prepare myself for what is to come. The pain of the contraction can be unbearable and sometimes I wish I could leave my body to escape from it. But I am a fighter, if not for myself then for the little people who rely on me to get them through this loss and trauma and day to day life.

Coming into this day I was unsure of how to honour Wilder. Part of me wants to hide away in my pain as I have felt like doing in active labour. Instead I have decided to share this day with our loved ones and community members, so my boys and I can openly share the life and loss of a little angel that brought so much joy to our lives. I am so grateful for the school that my boys attend and the amazing community of support we have there. Yesterday children, teachers and parents gathered to honour Wilder's life. We talked about how much joy he brought us all and we watched his memorial video. We cried with our school community, we hugged, we shared our stories of loss. I felt connected to and loved by my community. Two sweet little girls shared their stories with me about losing their grandparents. I was grateful to listen to them as they related to me. In a time when I feel depleted, like I have nothing left to give, I can offer my presence, ears and heart for listening. I find that adults who have not lost a child tell me that they can't relate to me and honestly that is not what I want to hear. I want to be related to. Loss is loss, grief is grief, trauma is trauma, sadness is sadness. There is no sliding scale, no way in which to measure. Let's join each other in our grief, loss, sadness and trauma without comparison but with love and the intention to connect and share.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this.

*Pam Mitchell*