



# astonishing Witnessing moments of growth and development

January 2022

## Dance Exhibition A Learning Story



**Children and their voices are centered in a traditional Hulq'umi'num' village structure at MBNS.** It is this practice that makes space for learner agency and risk taking.

Weekly, the learners of MBNS gather at Q'Shintul Lelum- a place of ceremony- to bring forward ideas, noticings and wonderings rooted in their experiences. We problem solve, suggest solutions and listen in community. Soon after our return to learning from winter break, Atara takes up the opportunity to share her love of dance, and invites others to show off their moves in a 'pronouncement'

"Meet by the tires if you want to sign up to be in the **dance exhibition**"

Many questions emerge. Is it a contest? Will there be judging? Do you have to do it by yourself? What about music? When? Can I design if I change my mind after I say I want to? Who will come watch?

Atara works to field questions about her idea, and demonstrates a commitment to listening to questions and ideas deeply. The evidence of this is that she (and her team!!) make adjustments where needed so that the dance exhibition is as accessible as possible.

**Changing her mind (several times) about how the dance exhibition will look makes for a thoughtfully planned dance party.**

Upon reflection of this magical development unfolding right in front of us, Sheila, the Pous Clan leader, shared she was witnessing “**directive energy moving into beautiful leadership.**” Atara is engaging in authentic, self-directed learning. What is leadership really all about? Learners are living and seeing it.

A team organically sprouts up to help bring this offering to life: Wilson, Meredith, Micah, Eli, Molly, George and more want IN! They are the support that has stepped up and into this learning opportunity- it is too fun to pass up. Community begins to grow around this joyful dance offering. This collaboration turns out to be mandatory as more than eighty students sign up on the first day.

After the details are (mostly!) smoothed out, joy oozes out of dancers of all ages as they practice. Costume design, music selection, choreography... all important things to consider. Free play is filled with laughter, collaboration, problem solving and creativity.

The big day, Friday January 21, finally comes around. The sun is shining, it’s the end of the week, parents are arriving and dancers are preparing. After free play, the audience begins to assemble at the circle and the stage is rolled forward from rehearsals.

With staging support from Anne, leader stqeeye’ elu, (wolf clan) and musical support from Vanessa, clan leader of tumus elu, (sea otter clan) Atara calls on the dancers to show off their moves. Love radiates from backstage, it pours forward from the circle, and smiles can’t help but sprout from the performers.



Sound waves blast through the air from **Baby Shark to Encanto to Johnny Cash to original songs and beats** made just for this special day. The audience soaks it up and enjoys time spent together.

Afterwards, dancers relish in delicious candy, while organizers get flowers for their dedicated work. When asked by Anne if she would do it all again, Atara immediately says "NO! It's so much work!" The crowd protests and Atara turns to see just how many people have been impacted by the dance exhibition. She quickly changes her mind... "Well, maybe!"

When I remember this day, I am reminded of the power of children to converge on the opportunity to take risks and invite community in. The dance exhibition represents the beauty that emerges when we listen and take the lead of children. Authentic, real-world learning stemming from the creativity of children is the result of **pedagogy and practice that centres children; something Hulq'umi'num speaking peoples have lived since time immemorial.**

This is the work taken up by staff, families, and learners at Q'Shintul Lelum, the 'House of Walking Together,' on the ancestral, unceded land of the Cowichan Peoples.

Witnessed by Cayla, smuqw'a' clan leader (blue heron).

