



# astonishing Witnessing moments of growth and development

September 2021



## A Story:

Every Friday, since the beginnings of Mill Bay Nature School, we have gathered outside for our Birthday Honourings. Anyone in our community - child or adult - who has had a birthday the previous week is called up, sits in the oversized cedar-carved honouring chair, and is witnessed to by their Clan Leader - their gifts, their strengths, stories of their learning and growing. Everyone sits attentively - dreaming for their turn. Parents are delighted at the love shown for their children.

The gathering begins with a Hulq'umi'num' song and drumming that was gifted to us by Louis Sylvester, and then our acknowledgement created and led by Delilah Hachey (10 years old). Delilah began the journey of understanding the story of the Hulq'umi'num Mustimuhw on the lands upon which we play and learn when MBNS began in 2018. Her family has witnessed how Delilah spends time in her room at home contemplating how to make the acknowledgement

more meaningful, more steeped in truth; she has Indigenous ancestry.

On this particular Friday, as we welcomed a Knowledge Keeper from Penelakut Island, Marya Sylvester, Delilah stood on our outdoor stage and, as always, waited patiently and silently for the children to gather and become quiet. (Sometimes this can take minutes!). After speaking the acknowledgement - telling the story from pre-contact, to contact, the residential school trauma, resultant loss of culture, and how we are trying to "bring it back" - our guest, Marya, with tears in her eyes, stood up on the stage, and announced in a loud, clear voice - "Everything this young girl has said is TRUE! I am a residential school survivor. I know. Huy ch q'u. Huy ch q'u ..."

We sat in awe; deeply grateful for the journey of Truth and Reconciliation we are taking together, and deeply respectful of the leadership of a brave, bold ten year old.