



# XWÍSTEN

C O M M U N I T Y   P R O F I L E

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# Xwísten

The smiling people

# NXwísten

The foamy waters after the rapids

## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>What is Xwísten's Community Profile?</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>What is the Xwísten Comprehensive Community Plan?</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>OUR PEOPLE AND CULTURE</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>History</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Culture and Language</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Population and Demographics</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>OUR COMMUNITY</b>	<b>11</b>
<i>Education</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Health and Wellness</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Housing</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Safety and Security</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Social Development and Elders</i>	<i>23</i>
<b>GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Elected Leadership</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Band Administration</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Xwísten Organization</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>OUR ECONOMY</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Employment and Jobs</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Economic Development Initiatives</i>	<i>30</i>
<b>OUR LAND AND RESOURCES</b>	<b>33</b>
<i>Our Lands</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Land and Resource Management</i>	<i>34</i>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Additional Details on Educational Programming</i>	<i>37</i>



# Introduction

## What is Xwísten's Community Profile?

This Community Profile provides a 'snap shot' of current conditions in our community. It is meant to provide a starting point for preparing the Xwísten Comprehensive Community Plan. In addition to looking at what is happening now in our community, this profile provides some direction on areas that we may need to pay special attention to in our Comprehensive Community Plan. Most of all, it is meant to share information with members on how we are doing and to help get discussions going about where we want to go as a community and how.



The profile has been organized into five sections:

**Our People and Culture** – History, Culture and Language, Population and Demographics

**Our Community** – Education, Health and Wellness, Housing, Safety and Security, Social Development

**Our Government** – Leadership and Governance, Band Administration, Band Financial Health

**Our Economy** – Employment and Jobs, Economic Development Initiatives

**Our Land** – Our Land and Resources, Land Use Planning

In each of these sections, we looked for trends so we can start thinking about how we can build on our strengths (the positive trends) and address our weaknesses (the negative trends).

This is our first effort to profile some of the issues in the community and we know we may have missed some areas. We also expect that some members may disagree with some points. This is fine. We want people to discuss this document and we want to hear from members about it and the issues it explores.

Ultimately, the Community Profile is meant to help get discussions going about **where we want to go** as a community and **how we want to get there** as we create our Comprehensive Community Plan.

## What is the Xwísten Comprehensive Community Plan?



Comprehensive Community Plans, or CCPs, are a relatively new approach to community planning that is more community-based and driven.

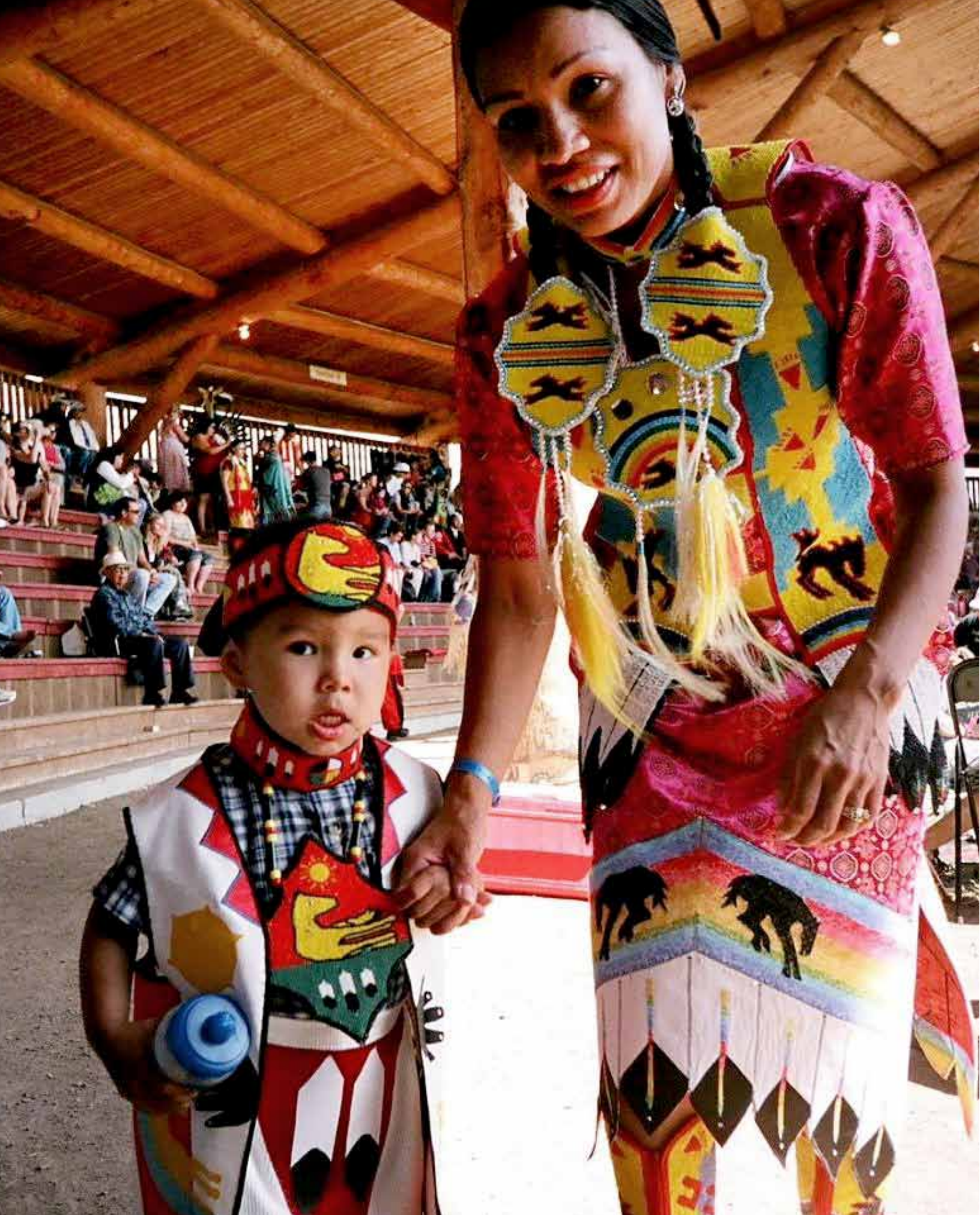
Comprehensive Community Plans go beyond traditional land use planning that just looks at the physical pieces of a community – like roads, infrastructure and housing – and looks at the ‘big picture.’ As illustrated, CCPs consider all the different pieces that make up life in a strong, successful community – like good health, a thriving culture, a strong local economy and jobs, a clean environment, and good governance.

Xwísten has done a number of planning activities in the past, but many of these plans are now outdated, and are not integrated with each other. It is heartening to see that many of the objectives from these past plans have now been accomplished, including the creation of our new multi-purpose centre, a new subdivision, early childhood education programs, and a number of health and wellness initiatives. These achievements have opened up a lot of opportunities and have given us a good base for moving forward.

The Comprehensive Community Plan will provide an up-to-date overall plan for the community. It will incorporate our values and traditional ways and describe the future we want for our children and grandchildren. The plan will also provide current and future leadership, administration and members with a roadmap to the future we all want. It will include specific policies for a future where we will:

- Make more efficient use of our limited resources
- Better protect and improve our community, culture and traditional ways
- Ensure more sustainable land use on our reserves and properties we own
- Increase employment for members
- Improve our band's overall economic health
- Strengthen our governance capacity
- Revive, promote and preserve our language and culture for all members
- Address our members educational needs
- Address our members social needs
- Address our members housing issues
- Create business and job opportunities for members





# Our People and Culture

We are the Xwísten, which means the smiling people in our language. Our language and customs are of the St'át'imc, the interior BC Nation that has existed for many thousands of years in the mountainous regions of south central British Columbia.

## History

Xwísten is part of the St'át'imc, Nation, whose territories extend from Pavilion in the northeast to Skookumchuck and Port Douglas in the south. The traditional territory of Xwísten includes the entire watersheds of the Yalakom and Bridge Rivers between Mission Ridge on one side and the Blackhills Creek and along Camelsfoot Range on the other.

Since time immemorial we have also used the west bank of the Fraser from West Pavilion to Lillooet. Especially important to our people are the fishing rocks at the mouth of the Bridge River and the rapids upstream. Salmon fishing here not only provided a major food source, but also functioned as an important meeting place and cultural focus (and still does to this day). Control of fishing in this area has long been the traditional right and responsibility of the Xwísten people.

The Bridge River- Yalakom area was known as a rich hunting ground. Deer, mountain goat, and mountain sheep are still sought after by the many hunters who arrive each fall.

The Bridge River Salmon run was one of the world's largest. In the 1950's BC Built the Terzaghi dam 45 km upriver and diverted most of the water to Seton Lake for hydro-electric power generation. An attempt was made to relocate the salmon run to Seton Lake, leaving the Fraser at Cayoose Creek, 10 km south of the Bridge River fishing rocks. Some salmon have returned to the river, but the run has not achieved its former abundance.

Up to the late 1800's, Xwísten members continued to live primarily off of their agriculture, fishing and hunting. In 1858 gold was discovered in the area, and Xwísten members earned income by providing agricultural products including beans, wheat, oats, and potatoes to the gold miners that came through Lillooet. In 1862 our community was devastated by the introduction of smallpox, but we survived and carried on. We continued to provide agricultural products to the market until mid twentieth century when the nature of agricultural distribution changed and transportation and proximity to market had become an important factor. By the 1960s, most farms in the Bridge River area were abandoned and irrigation systems fell into disrepair.

Since then, we have continued to hunt and fish and have witnessed several swings in the resource economy in our area. We are becoming increasingly resilient as we diversify our economy and see increasing numbers of our students graduating from high school and post-secondary. We are proud of our history and culture and continue to make it a part of our every day lives.

## HOW WE USED TO LIVE

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By examining the houses, art, artifacts, tools and remains of the people who lived here long before us, we can begin to understand how they lived. The study of these artifacts is called archeology, and we have been working with archeologists for a number of years to understand our history.

Our archeology pithouse site is dated about 1800 years before present and there are approximately 100 S7istken (pithouses) at the site. Some interesting facts about these pithouses:

- The pithouses were winter dwellings for the Xwísten people
- Xwísten people constructed them by first digging a pit and then acquiring wood for upright posts and beams
- Layers of timber and matting covered the roof, offering extra insulation
- Pithouses came in a wide range of shapes, sizes and construction styles, including circular, square and elongated ground-plans
- Most pithouses had the entrances at the center where the smoke escaped, with or without side entrances
- Some of the pithouses were connected with tunnels
- Up to 4 families (10-15 people) could live in one pithouse
- Xwísten people dug cache pits inside and outside of the pithouses and lined them with birch and pine bark to store food.



From the evidence left behind, we know that the size of the settlement changed over time (with up to 1000 people living here at one time), and was sometimes abandoned altogether. Abandonments occurred as the possible result of a catastrophic landside or earthquakes blocking the salmon, as Xwísten people relied on the fish for 70% of the protein in their diet.

In addition to the pit-houses, archeologists have found a wide range of ornaments and tools such as projectile points, knives, scrapers, awls, hammer stones, needles, and wood working adzes. Some objects are made up of, bones, antler, shell, stone and wood.

If you are interested in the archeological history of our area, drop by the Band Office where you can read books and displays on the topic.

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## Culture and Language

Culture and Language is an important part of our community identity and cohesion. From the time of our ancestors to our life today, our culture and language and our strong ties to the land are what define us as a people and as individuals. By strengthening our connection with our history, language and traditional practices, Xwísten members as individuals and the community as a whole will be better equipped to face the challenges of the future.

### Highlights

Language	↗	<b>Improving</b> - Despite a small number of fluent speakers, there is increasing interest to learn the language among our adult population, and it is being introduced to a new generation through our Head Start and daycare programs.
Xwísten traditions and culture	↗	<b>Improving</b> - Many Xwísten members still hunt and fish, and produce beautiful traditional arts and crafts. Interest in our culture is increasing.

Using cultural practices has strengthened our community. There is increasing interest in traditional knowledge and methods. About 10 of our on-reserve members still conduct traditional ceremonies, and many more partake in fishing and hunter (about 70 on-reserve members fish, by one count).

Our new multi-use centre proudly displays traditional artwork including traditional headdresses, cedar baskets and carvings. These displays raise awareness of our culture with visitors and residents alike.

The multipurpose centre is also the venue for weekly craft nights where we can learn and practice traditional arts and crafts. Our cultural hunting and fishing methods are traditions are being strengthened through field trips and hunting workshops which bring together elders and youth to pass on knowledge to a younger generation.

Despite the increasing recognition and promotion of our culture, revitalizing our language has been difficult. There are about 12 fluent speakers in our community, and 10 people that are actively learning the language. Even though community interest was expressed for language programs, few members attended classes when they were offered, and fewer still graduated and continued on to the second level. Our elementary children who attend school in Lillooet are taught St'át'imc, from preschool to Grade 7. However, the Lillooet high school only offers St'at'imcets intermittently, and it can be difficult for our high school students to continue learning the language.



With a Language & Cultural Teacher, an Elder, joining the children on a daily basis in our Headstart school & daycare, and teachers using the language throughout the day, our children and youth are becoming familiar with St’at’imcets sounds and words. In time, this may blossom into a more advanced use of our language.

Reinvigorating culture in a community is a challenge. Everyone is so busy these days – even our elders – and we need to take the time to slow down and learn from them. Culture comes from the community; actions from projects and staff will have little impact unless members themselves are motivated to get involved in traditional activities. Despite that, we see culture as something that needs to be integrated into everything we do at Xwísten, from community celebrations to governance and decision-making.

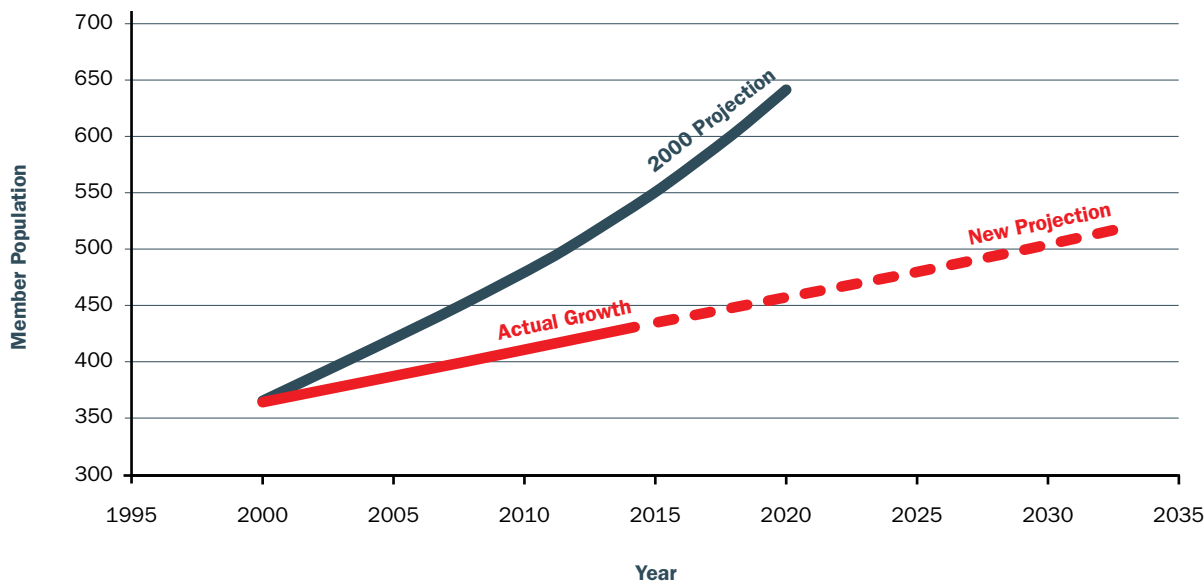
Population and Demographics

A clear picture of our population’s size, age, and growth trends can help us understand the changes our community has undergone, and anticipate what kind of issues might come up in the future.

Xwísten Membership

Currently, Xwísten has 424 registered members, up 60 from the year 2000 when we had 365 members - an annual growth rate of about 1%. This is much lower than we had predicted back in 2000, when an expected annual growth rate of about 3% put our 2010 population at 480 and our 2015 population at 551<sup>1</sup>. Assuming the more modest 1% growth rate continues, we can expect to have a membership of about 470 in ten years and 520 by the year 2033. Keep in mind, that given the small size of Xwísten’s population, growth rates, demographic trends and projections are unpredictable and should only be used for discussion purposes.

Total Member Population

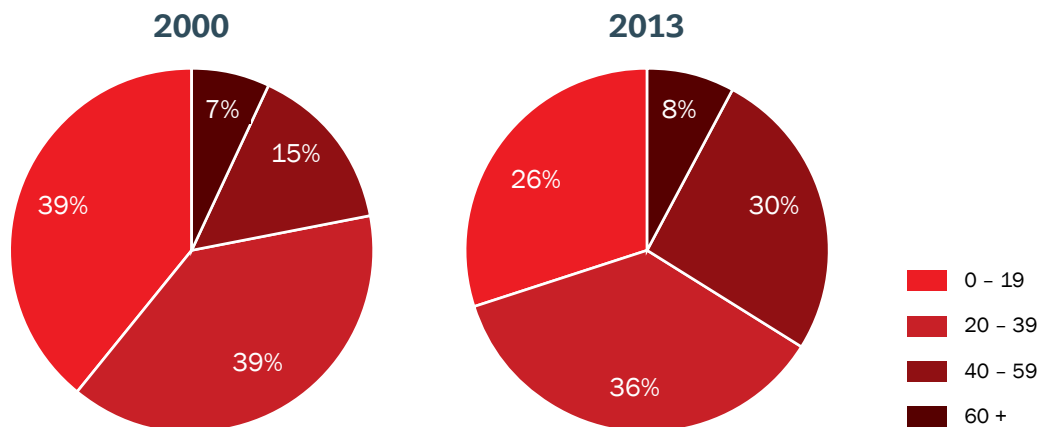
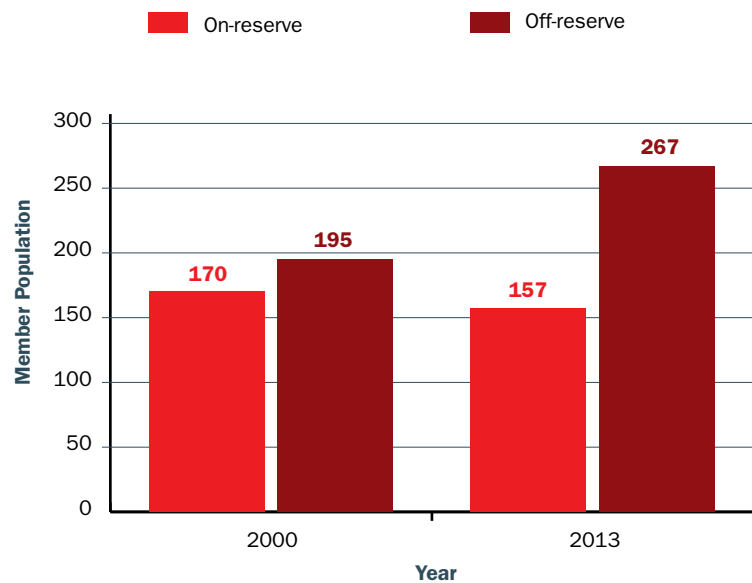


1 Xwísten (Bridge River) Indian Band Physical Development Plan, August 2000.

A little over one-third (37%) of our 424 members live in our community (IR-1 and IR-1A), with the remaining two-thirds (63%) living off-reserve or on the reserves of other First Nations. This is a lot different than back in 2000 when the split of members living on- and off-reserve was almost equal at 47% and 53%, respectively. Though our overall population increased since 2000, we actually have fewer members living on-reserve today than back then.

With 39 non-members living in our community (20% of the total), our on-reserve population is actually 196 people. However, as the number of resident non-members is unchanged since 2000, there was still a 6.2% drop in total on-reserve population from 209.

With a median age of 30, our population is relatively young compared to the provincial population with a median age of 41. However, compared to 2000, our population is generally getting older. Back then, people under 40 made up 78% of the population; now, they only make up 66%.



A closer look at the age composition of our current membership population can tell us a lot about the future needs of our community in terms of services, facilities, housing, education, and health; different age-groups have different needs.



# Our Community

## Education

Xwísten is committed to helping our community members in their educational pursuits throughout their lives. Bridge River Education offers services in Early Childhood Education, kindergarten (K5) to grade 12, Post Secondary, Occupational Skills Training and Trades Training.

The following section provides an overview of the services that we offer. **More details on each program are provided in the appendix.**

### Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is critical to the life-long success of an individual. We are currently redeveloping our early childhood programs to be more holistic in nature. Our current offerings are:

- **Head Start – Parent and Child programs.** Head Start is a program that aims to enhance child development, school readiness and overall family health through the use of culture and language, education, health promotion, nutrition, parent and family involvement, and social support. We currently have 13 students registered in this program.
- **After School Program** (ages 4-6). No students have enrolled for this program yet, so we will be expanding it to ages 4-12.
- **Provincial Daycare Program.** We currently have 11 children in Daycare (3 of which are Xwísten members).
- **Primary (K4) program.** This program will be started in September 2013 if 10 or more students register.



### Kindergarten (K5) to Grade 12 Education

We have almost 70 school-aged children in kindergarten to Grade 12. They are mostly registered in schools in Lillooet but 7 students go to school elsewhere. The services we offer for school-aged children are:

- Educational Counselling Services
- Liaison Services between the provincial schools, if needed
- After School Bridge River Brains Club (tutoring, extra educational assistance and year end trips)
- Parental support at the schools, if needed
- Assistance with Post Secondary Applications and information
- On line Career Cruising website

Funding for these programs is federal but supported by Provincial Grants.



### Post-Secondary (i.e. after high school)

Xwísten provides support through the following programs:

- **Post Secondary Education Program.** We administer this federal program that provides funding to cover tuition, books, and some living expenses (\$900-1380 per month). We can help with the application process as well.
- **Occupational Skills Training (OST).** We can provide funding for short courses and certificates like Occupational First Aid, CPR, Bear Aware, Foodsafe, Petroleum Safety Training, Canada Labour Code, and Assistance for courses through Aboriginal Skills Group (Heavy Equipment Operator, Warehousing). The OST funds have not been fully used in the past couple of years.
- **Trades Programs.** Funding is available for trades programs, but it can only be accessed once per person.
- **Counselling Services.**

Funding for these programs are federal but supported by Xwísten. We also partner with the Social Development department to offer skills training programs and courses from time to time.

**How are we doing?**

Early Childhood Education	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Our Early Childhood Education programs are less than five years old but are growing fast. We've also hired an Early Childhood Education coordinator to oversee these programs.
Kindergarten (K5) to Grade 12 success	→	<b>Staying the same</b> – Our homework club has varying attendance levels and we see a need for more parental support and involvement in order to help our youth succeed.
Post secondary enrollment and graduation	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Enrollment and graduation rates are going up. We are expected four students to graduate with bachelor's degrees this year.
Cultural learning opportunities	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Our early childhood programs incorporate cultural learning and elementary schools in Lillooet also include a cultural component (but it is not holistically integrated into the curriculum). The local High school could not find a culture/language teacher.
Skills and training	→	<b>Staying the same</b> – There are some occupational mini-courses for certificates, but they should be more targeted and held more often.
Adult learning for basic education	↘	<b>Needs attention</b> – We do not currently have any basic education programs for adults, although many adults are interested in getting a high school diploma or improving their reading skills. There are options available to them (through online learning, etc.) but the band does not currently have any of our own programs. This is an area we need to address.

## Health and Wellness

The physical well-being of our members is just the beginning of a much broader concept of health and wellness. Helping our members live well and be in good health means supporting them socially, emotionally, and psychologically as well.

Currently, Xwísten offers members the following programs and services through the Health Department to help them get active, eat better, tackle drug and alcohol problems, and deal with other general health concerns:



- Administering Health Canada and First Nations Health Authority programs, and dealing with financial reporting
- Youth recreation programs, like hunting and fishing trips, yoga, crafts, movie nights, and many more activities
- Providing garden vegetable seeds to community members to grow their own gardens to freeze, can, dry and trade
- Drug and Alcohol programs including support groups, referrals to treatment centers, detox programs, medical services and social services
- Nutrition counselling, nutrition information sessions (often administered jointly with a committee made up of neighbouring First Nations communities)
- Screening for blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol and other important health criteria
- Medical transport (with physician's note)
- Our Community Health Representative/Nurse provides pre- and postnatal care, dental health, some home care services, and child health clinics
- Putting on a variety of clinics and workshops to keep Xwísten community members informed about health issues. For example, a few of the many programs we've had this year are:
  - » Halloween fire safety

- » Arthritis and foot care
- » Diabetes workshops called “Amawil’cam” - “Better Yourself”, put on in partnership with other communities
- » Back to School Health Fair, including bicycle safety
- » Heart health clinic
- » Women’s health

### How are we doing?

Physical health of community members	➔	<b>Staying the same</b> – Diet and exercise are areas of concern, particularly for youth. However, we have more opportunities for exercise and nutritional information so we hope this will improve.
Mental health of community members	➔	<b>Staying the same</b> – Xwísten members have access to a Counselor or psychologist (with referral). High stress levels are a problem in the community.
Health Care for community members	↗	<b>Improving</b> – In the past ten years we have gotten more programs and staff for health care, however, it is still not sufficient.
Drug and Alcohol support	↘	<b>Getting worse</b> – Our Drug and Alcohol worker is only part time, and cannot meet the demand for support.
Youth recreation and quality of life	↗	<b>Improving</b> – We have recently hired a youth recreation coordinator who has been organizing a variety of events for youth.

While there is a lot of work to be done, we are starting to make progress. People are taking responsibility for their health, especially adult members who have become more concerned as they age. However, there are still a number of concerns, particularly with youth.

Eating habits have been an issue for years, and many of us, especially youth, continue to eat foods that are high in solid fats, salt and sugar, like burgers, fries, pop, energy drinks and chips. Our health department has been working hard to educate members about the dangers of eating unhealthy foods and the benefits of good nutrition. Nutritional information is now being provided to the community through ongoing workshops, and to parents and children through the Headstart program. We distribute seeds to community members so they can grow their own healthy foods. To lead by example, and to introduce people to more healthy foods, our Bearfoot Grill Concession does not serve fried foods.

Lack of exercise is also still a concern. New technology like computers, video games, and smartphones have led to youth and others spending more of their free time in sedentary activities. Along with poor eating habits, this lifestyle can lead to a lot of health problems, including high cholesterol, heart attacks and strokes, and Type 2 diabetes.

However, some members are becoming increasingly active and fit. Members are taking advantage of our new multi-purpose centre gym to get physical exercise, such as drop-in floor hockey, basketball and volleyball and even a yoga class. The Head Start program also uses the gym during the day for young children to play inside when the weather is bad. People have also started walking and hiking more, especially to the fishing grounds.

On and off-reserve members of all ages can apply for recreation funding, and our new Recreation Coordinator has been organizing more programming for youth such as indoor games, track and field and archery events in other communities, self-esteem building opportunities, hunting excursions with Elders and more.



In the past ten years we have come a long way in the types of health services available to our members. We've attained a Community Health Representative and have developed a home care program called Ama Swa7. However, limited resources and access to health funding make providing comprehensive health programs and services to our members an ongoing challenge. Our Home and Community Care Nurse is only available ten hours a week, limiting time to support clinic and hospital discharges, and resulting in short client home visits. The Community Health Nurse only visits once a week, which isn't enough to meet community demands.

Our Alcohol and Drug Counselor is also a part-time position and cannot meet the demand for support. It can take 2-6 months to get access to a treatment centre after coming out of detox. No follow up is available for people coming out of treatment, other than Alcoholics Anonymous. Further complicating our ability to provide quality service in this area is that it this position is very hard to keep filled due to the part time hours and the nature of the job.

While Xwísten members have access to a counselor or psychologist (with referral), high stress levels remain a problem in the community.

Finally, we recognize the value of working with other St'át'imc communities to jointly administer health care and learn from each other's successes and challenges. We are active members of the Northern St'át'imc Health Hub, and we jointly administer programs and liaise with other levels of government through this group.

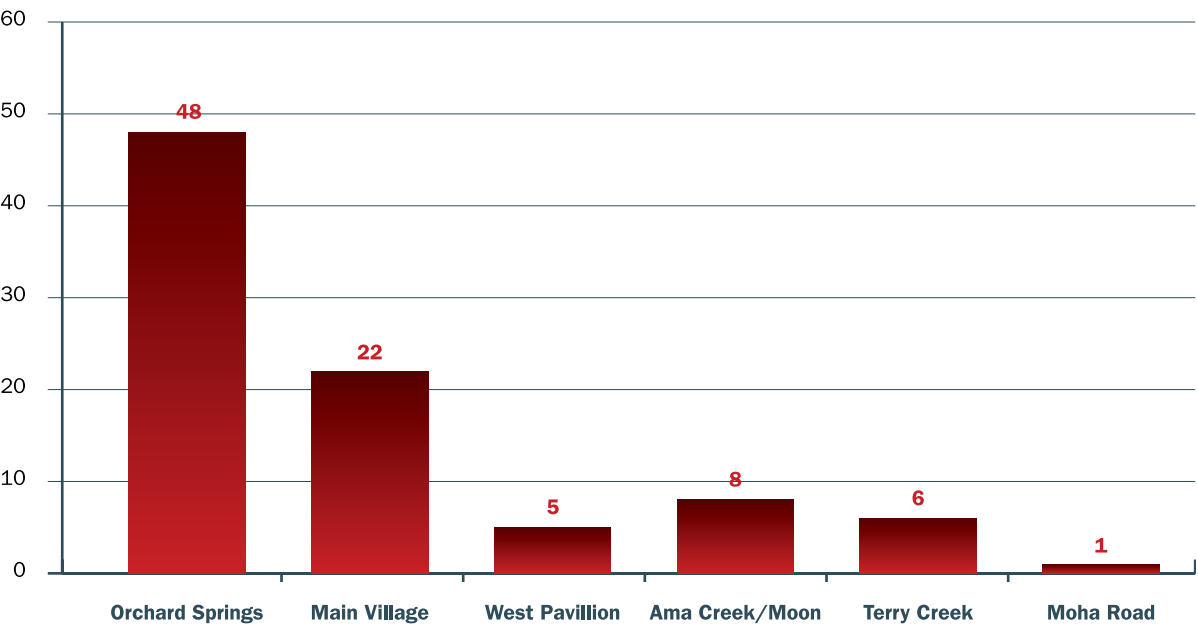
## Housing

Quality housing that matches the needs of our members is critical to building a strong and healthy community in the future. Having comfortable and well-built homes can give members and their families the freedom to focus on things that matter most to them, like school, work, their health, or the community.

### Overview

Currently, we have 90 dwellings in our community, located in one of six location: Orchard Springs; Main Village; West Pavilion; Ama Creek/Moon Creek; Terry Creek/Applespring; and Moha Road. This is roughly a 34% increase over the 67 houses on-reserve in 2000.

Number of on-reserve dwellings



These 90 dwellings are a mix of CMHC homes, band-owned rentals units, and homes owned by members.

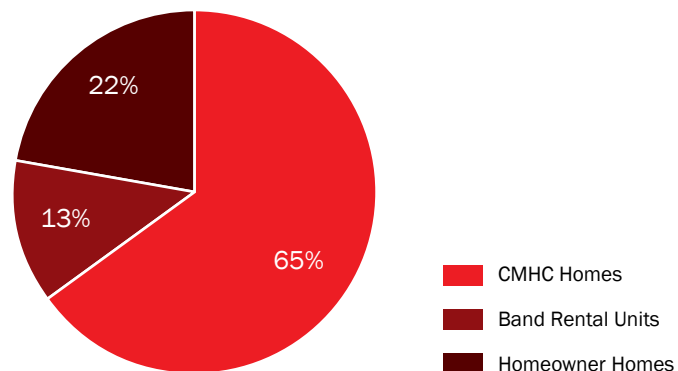
### Housing Quality and Condition

Housing quality and condition appear to be an ongoing concern. While the quality of construction on-reserve is reported to be consistent with past construction, it is noted that off-reserve housing is of a higher quality. This lesser quality becomes most apparent as housing ages, and the cost of repairs and maintenance increases.

This past year during the annual housing inspection, it was noted that many houses had numerous outstanding maintenance issues. Many issues were easily fixed but had not been reported, such as minor water problems that have lead to mould issues. Additionally, abuse by renters continues to cost the band considerable amounts of money in repairs to drywall, paint, doors and flooring; when tenants move out there is generally a major amount of work to be done.

However, the situation appears to have been worse 13 years ago, when 10% of the existing houses were abandoned, beyond repair or considered worthy of demolition.<sup>1</sup> And things will likely continue to improve: the annual house inspection is now proactive and any items noted are put onto a list and addressed as soon as possible.

Housing mix

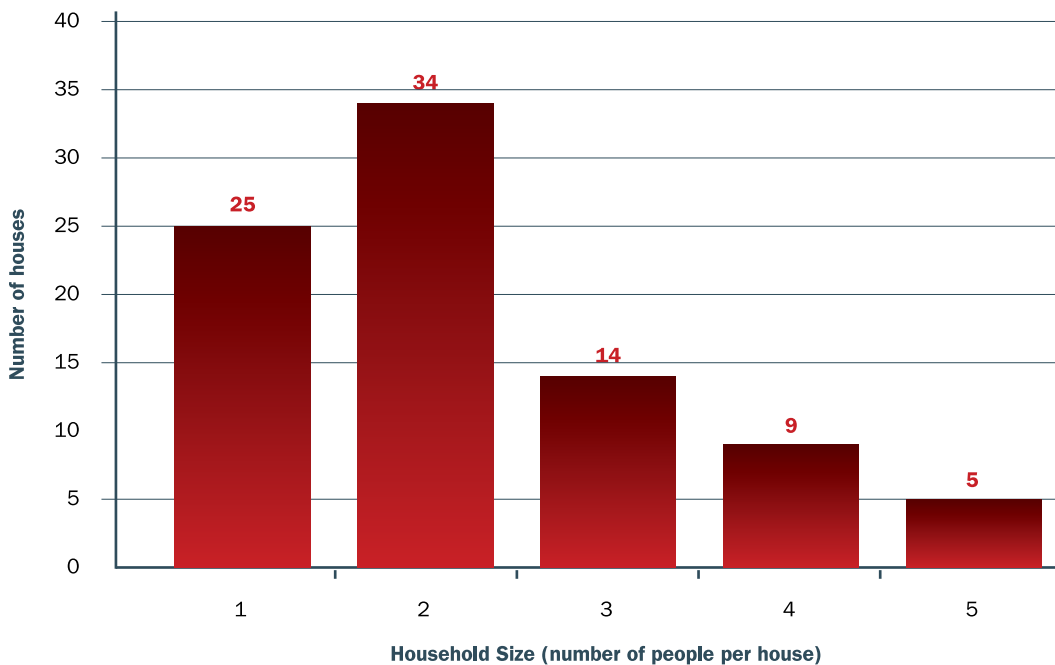


<sup>1</sup> Xwisten (Bridge River) Indian Band Physical Development Plan, August 2000

### Household size and Overcrowding

Though overcrowding was cited as a minor problem back in 2000, it does not appear to be an issue currently. Today, there are no homes with more than five people, and a majority of homes (66%) with only one or two people.

### Number of homes by Household size



This is consistent with the reduction of the housing wait list which went from 25 families in 2000, currently has 6 names on the renter list, soon to be reduced to four. This is not surprising considering the addition of 23 dwellings in the last 13 years (five of which were built in 2012), and the overall reduction in on-reserve population. However, as population is directly affected by availability of housing, the reduction in overcrowding and the housing waitlist may only indicate that members are increasingly choosing to live off-reserve.

And as nearly 95% of the homes on-reserve are traditional single-family detached houses (four duplexes and a mobile home comprise the remainder), the majority of small households leads to a potential concern with a lack of housing types. For example, it is reported that there are a number of single persons living in three bedroom houses.

## Development Potential

We currently have limited potential to expand the supply of housing. There are two vacant lots in Orchard Springs subdivision, and two in the Main Village that are in line for service hook-up. Depending on the type of housing developed (e.g., duplexes, triplexes, or single-family detached homes), these existing lots could accommodate between four and twelve new dwellings.

Any more extensive housing development will require another phase of expansion for services (e.g., water, sewage, utilities) and subdivision of land.

Housing demand and availability	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Waitlist has shrunk from 25 families in 2000 to 6 names today (soon to be 4 names). 23 homes built since 2000; five built last year.
Housing quality & condition	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Housing quality is consistent with past construction, but quality is generally inferior to off-reserve construction. Annual housing inspection is now proactive, and issues are noted and addressed as soon as possible.
Vacant lots and development potential	↗	<b>Improving</b> – There are four vacant lots in the community: two in Orchard Springs; two in the Main Village that are in line for service hookup. Future development will require a water system expansion.
Housing Issues	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Repairs from rental abuse continue to cost the band a lot of money. Rent collection is a problem: the arrears list is never clear, and numerous eviction notices have been delivered in the course of a year.

## Safety and Security

Feeling safe and comfortable in our neighbourhoods and streets is an important part of building cohesion across our community. Clean streets where our youth can play and our elders can safely walk will help our members feel proud of where they live and stay connected with each other. Emergency preparedness will ensure that we remain safe in the event of a disaster.

### Highlights

Emergency Preparedness	↗	<b>Improving</b> – In the past few years we have developed emergency preparedness plans, built a new fire hall with fire truck and improved the training of our fire fighters.
Crime and violence	→	<b>Staying the same</b> – On the whole we have low levels of crime and violence. The issues that we do have tend to stem from drug and alcohol abuse.
Traffic	→	<b>Staying the same</b> – Speeding on the reservation has been an issue at times. Some drivers do not have licenses.
Safety/Police presence	→	<b>Staying the same</b> – Many residents are confused about the jurisdictions of the RCMP and the Stl'atl'imx Tribal Police Service (only the RCMP has jurisdiction over Bridge River). We had our own 'watchmen' program but it was disbanded due to a lack of funding.

In the event of a fire, our volunteer fire department is well trained and we have a new fire truck, but a lack of water is a limiting factor in their ability to effectively fight fires, as is the low number of fire fighters (we currently have 5 volunteer firefighters, but it is estimated that we need 12). Our firefighters are able to handle small residential fires, but are not trained to respond to forest fires. Due to the hot dry summers in our area, there is a high risk of annual forest fires (and increasing risk due to climate change). In 2011 we were stranded in the community due to forest fires – a stark reminder of the need to be self sufficient with regards to fire fighting and emergency preparedness.



As for other types of emergencies, like earthquakes or floods, we have a 2010 Emergency Plan that includes earthquakes, landslides flood and other hazards. Despite this, some people feel that community members do not know who to call or where to go in case of emergency. In the future we would like to do emergency drills and have emergency kits in every home, but we are not there yet. While we have been told that we are above the flood line from the Terzaghi damn situation approximately 25 kilometres away, we believe that we should still be prepared in case the predictions are incorrect and the damn breaks.

Our community has a low level of crime, however there are still some issues that are reported or public, and many more that remain 'below the radar' – as many people are reluctant to call the police or speak up about their problems. This is particularly true with mental and physical abuse, but there are also some issues with elder abuse and petty theft. Many of these crimes stem from drug or alcohol abuse. While not technically a crime, bullying remains an issue in our community with both adults and children. Adults have been bullied in their jobs and children have displayed bullying behavior at school – a trait that is often, but not always, modeled on behavior they see at home.

The RCMP has jurisdiction over our area. Unlike many other communities in our area, the Stl'atl'imx Tribal Police Service does not have any jurisdiction over our community. This is very confusing for some of our residents – some people have called the Tribal Police (which often takes a lot of courage) and been told to call the other police. This leads to frustration and potentially not following through. To help alleviate this problem, Xwísten members formed a community Watchmen program in the early 2000s that lasted one year and seemed to have a positive effect. However, the group could not secure ongoing funding and was forced to disband.



## Social Development and Elders

Xwísten has a number of services to help our members stay involved in the community, maintain a safe home environment, and support themselves and their families.

- Income assistance, basic living allowance
- Training and employment skills programs
- Employment and Training expenses (e.g. training fees and gear)
- Adult In-Home Care: assists elders with their needs
- Family Violence: supports members in creating a safe home environment
- Administration of the National Child Benefit Program
- Elders Programs: supports our elders with socializing, being active, and attending workshops
- Liaise with the Education and Health departments with workshops
- Liaise with Lillooet's Ministry of Children and Families

In the last year we were typically helping about 65-75 people at any one time (including Social Assistance recipients and their dependents). About 15-20 people work in the summer and go on Social Assistance in the winter.

### Elders


Elders – any member over 55 – are an invaluable part of the community and we hope to see them participate more in community affairs. Xwísten has 41 Elders, 27 living on-reserve and 14 off-reserve. To keep them social, active, and engaged in our community, the Elder's program offers the following range of events and activities:

- We attend a yearly Elders gathering at a different location around the province each year. In 2012 it was held in Prince George.
- We develop an Elders newsletter
- We host regular lunches
- We conducted a door to door survey to understand what our elders want and need
- We are starting to hold events that bring together elders and youth, like fishing trips



**BRIDGE RIVER**  
**INDIAN**  
**BAND**

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**XWISTEN**

Phone 256 7423      Fax 256 7999

# Governance and Administration

## Elected Leadership

Xwísten has four elected Councillors and one Chief. We operate under the Indian Act election code, and have elections every two years for our entire elected body.

The role and responsibilities of the Chief and Councillors is to manage our communities' affairs as delegated under the Indian Act and in accordance with the objectives of our members. Council is entrusted to represent members' views and aspirations at the local, provincial and federal levels.

Our Chief and Council are also responsible for overseeing our band administration and the facilities and programs which they operate. Chief and Council are not involved in the day-to-day operations of the band (a common practice of good governance) but they direct and supervise the Band Administrator. Finally, Chief and Council approve the budget for the band each year, and are ultimately accountable for the band's finances.

## Band Administration

Our administration is responsible for the day-to-day operations of Xwísten, including all programs, program planning, and implementation and policy development as directed by Chief and Council.

Our goal is to provide effective and efficient programs and services that meet the needs of our members, in a manner that nurtures growth, opportunities, and prosperity, while maintaining and enhancing our unique traditions and heritage.

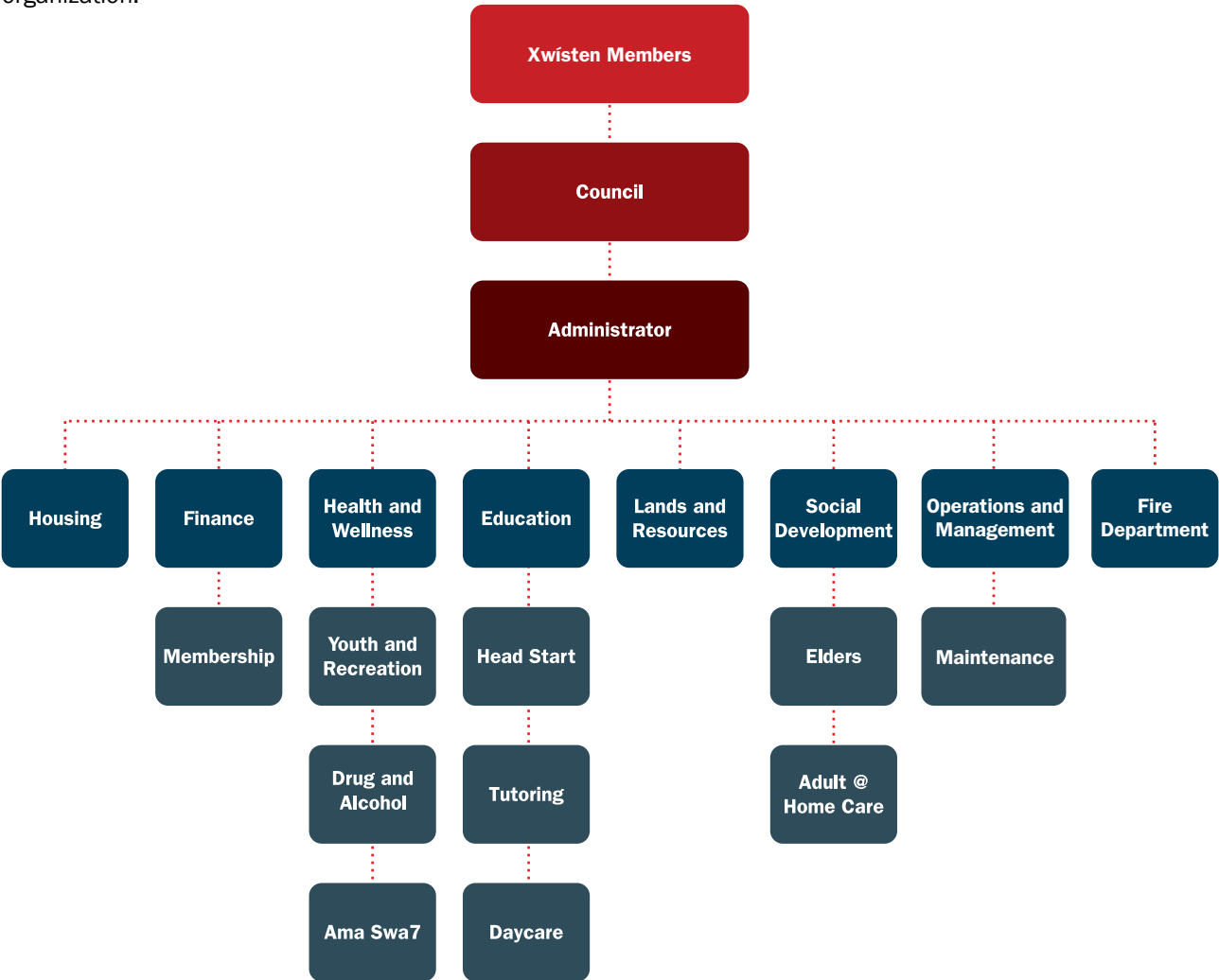
Financial Management	↗	<b>Improving</b> – In the past ten years our financial management has improved by leaps and bounds.
Performance and efficiency	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Our funders are demanding increasing reporting and transparency in the last 5 years, and it has made us much more efficient and effective.
Communications with members	↗	<b>Improving</b> – Community meetings, newsletters, open office hours and updated community contact list are all helping us to improve communication with members.

The band currently employs 18 full time equivalent, permanent positions. At any given time there are also about 2-20 non-permanent positions, such as drivers, forest crew management, labourers, contract planning positions, etc. We also hire 4-8 students each summer to work in the daycare, provide office assistance, work in tourism or perform other functions depending on their skills and interests.

We prefer to hire band members or community members if possible. This might sometimes mean providing on the job training or helping them get the right qualifications before they can start the position.

## Xwísten Organization

The band is made up of two parts: leadership and administration. The authority of our leadership to make decisions comes directly from Xwísten members through elections. Chief and Council decisions are implemented by staff under the management of the Band Administrator. The chart below illustrates this organization.



### Finances

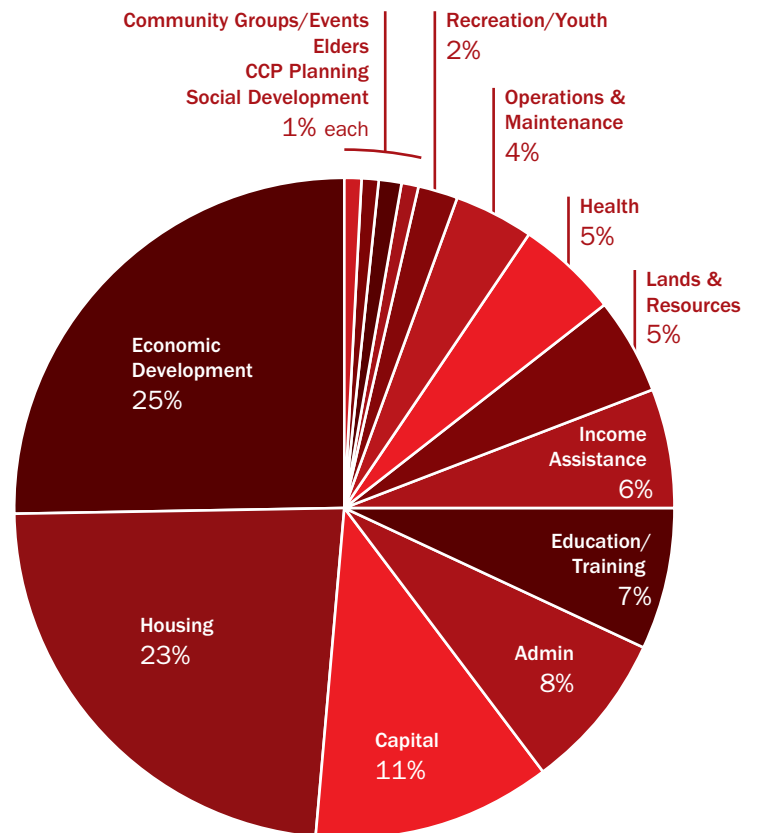
Our ultimate goal is economic self-sufficiency and well-being for our people.

Our finance department is run by a certified general accountant and our processes, efficiency and transparency have improved markedly in the past 10 years. For example, our audit used to take two and a half weeks, and now it takes just over two days. We have also streamlined many of our processes, like only printing cheques on certain days so that we can be more efficient and do them in batches.

The band spends money on providing programs and services for members. The piechart below shows the breakdown of how our money was spent in 2012/2013.

The money that we use to run the band administration and provide programs and services from members come from several sources, and has changed dramatically in the past 10 years. Funding from the government has been cut significantly - it used to make up about 70% of our finances, whereas today it is only about 45%.

Despite funding cuts, we have managed to continue to provide services for the band by finding other funding sources, such as proposal-based funding from government agencies, private sector funders, revenue-sharing agreements from resource companies, and running and owning businesses. See the Economic Development section of this report for more information on these businesses.



### Communication with members

Our members are the foundation of our community and the focus of our administration's work. Because of this, we work hard to share information with them on band activities, programs, opportunities and challenges. This can be difficult, especially with off-reserve members.

We hold monthly community meetings to provide community updates. About 20-30 band members typically attend. We also send out a monthly paper newsletter (with an online option) to all members. This is our primary method of keeping in contact with off-reserve members. In order to distribute settlement funds to members, we recently updated our membership list and now have up-to-date contact information for all but 5 members.

One of our current goals is to improve the services that we can offer to off-reserve members. Part of the Community Plan will be to gain a greater understanding of the needs of our off-reserve members and how we can best serve them.



# Our Economy

## Employment and Jobs

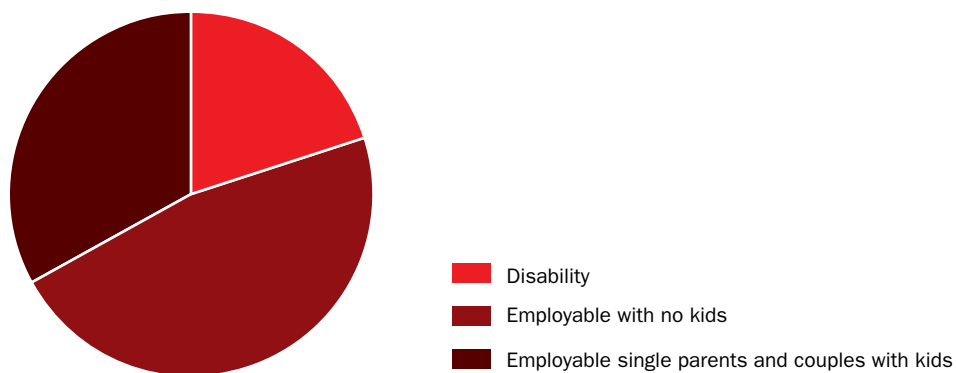
Xwísten members are independent and proud, and have always valued work as a means of providing for our families. The nature of 'work' has changed so much in the past few hundred years in our area; from fishing and hunting, to agriculture and trade, to forestry and now an economy that requires formal post-secondary education for many jobs. It is an ongoing challenge to keep up with the skills required for the available jobs, especially jobs available in our rural location.

Currently, Xwísten members are employed in a number of different industries and jobs, including band administration, logging, fisheries, tourism through Xwísten experiences, summer internships, archeology, childcare, machine operations, and flagging, to name a few.



42 band members are on social assistance, which represents about 14% of total employment-aged adult members (20-64 years old). Of these, 90% have completed Grade 12 education, and about 80% are employable (see below).



### Breakdown of Xwísten members on social assistance



We have been working to build our people's capacity and we have had many successes: our education attainment rates (the number of people finishing high school and higher levels of education) is growing; we are continuing to offer important employment training and support programs, and; there are increasing numbers of jobs in our area due to a current increase in resource jobs and the development of a number of local businesses through Xwísten's economic development initiatives and those of the St'át'imc Nation.

## Economic Development Initiatives

Revenue is critical to becoming a self-sufficient, self-governing band. The revenue from our economic development initiatives goes towards program and project funding within the band. Our goal is to find **good investments** that also provide employment opportunities that **match the skills sets** of our band members.

Revenue generation		<b>Improving</b> - Many of our businesses are in the early start up stages, and all profits are put back into the business to help them grow. We foresee more revenue generation in the near future as these businesses mature.
Economic Development Potential		<b>Improving</b> - Forestry is once again taking off in our region. We are seeing an increase in mineral exploration and independent power projects (IPPs) like run of river hydro. These are all opportunities for investment and employment opportunities.

Our band's economic development initiatives are coordinated through the Band Administrator and Finance Manager. We are currently looking into funding possibilities for hiring an economic development coordinator for the band.

Over the years, we have started many band-owned businesses and provided work opportunities for many members. Some ventures succeeded, while others did not fare as well. Each of our projects has provided lessons to apply to new initiatives.

### Band-owned businesses

We have several ventures that are owned by the band:

- **Xwísten Experience Tours and Bearfoot Grill Concession Stand:** Xwísten Experience Tours offers tours from June to September, which include food, historical commentary, and sightseeing of our traditional fishing grounds and settlements. Xwísten tours employs six full time employees throughout the summer months.
- **Equipment rental:** The band owns, and rents out, several large pieces of equipment, including excavators, skidders, backhoes, dumptrucks, and a loader. We also own a septic truck and portable toilets and provide rentals and septic maintenance services.
- **Labourers:** On a fairly regular basis, companies contact the band to provide temporary labour, and the band in turn finds employable band members to fill the positions. These types of contracts typically include slashing, fuel management (i.e. forest thinning), fisheries contracts, hydro contracts, flagging, etc.

- **Bridge River Indian Band Development Corp:** The band owns a development corporation that can own and operate other subsidiary businesses. The only business currently operated by the development corporation is Bridge River Logging.
- » **Bridge River Logging:** We have operated this company for over 30 years on and off – its success follows the ups and downs of the logging industry. It currently has 9 employees (about half of whom are band members) and we see it growing to 10-15 total jobs in the near future.

### Partnerships and joint ventures

In addition to the businesses that are fully owned by our band, we have also made investments and partnerships in other businesses:

- **Lillooet Salish Enterprises:** Xwísten is a 50% joint owner of this business, along with Cayoose Creek Band. The business owns and rents out three buildings in Lillooet, including the Tribal Council office.
- **St'át'imc Tribal Holdings:** Xwísten is one of 6 communities that are shareholders in this group. While there are currently no operations, in the future we may operate a pellet plant through this group.
- **St'át'imc Government Services/ St'át'imc Chiefs Council:** This group is currently in the process of starting and running several businesses, including businesses that specialize in engineering; management consulting; piping and piling; welding, fabrication and engineering; Eco-resources, archaeology and heritage; and safety services.

### Benefiting from the use of our land and resources

When an organization wants to use our land or resources to do business (for example, forestry, mining, oil and gas, hydro), we negotiate with them to ensure that we are fairly compensated for this use. Of course, this compensation can include payments (and it usually does), but Xwísten is also working hard to negotiate other benefits, like employment and training opportunities for our members.

We currently have contracts with two independent power projects (which are not yet operational or generating revenue for the band), an exploration agreement with a mining company, and two forestry agreements. We would like to expand on this by looking into Non-Timber Forest Products.

In some instances in the past, people have used our land without our consent, and we are now working with them to be properly compensated for this use. This is the case with the BC Hydro settlement agreement that was finalized in 2011. The agreement, between the 11 St'át'imc communities and BC Hydro, covers all past, present and future impacts and grievances related to existing BC Hydro facilities within our territories. The settlement will have many benefits to our people, and will allow us to provide new opportunities, services and programs.





# Our Land and Resources

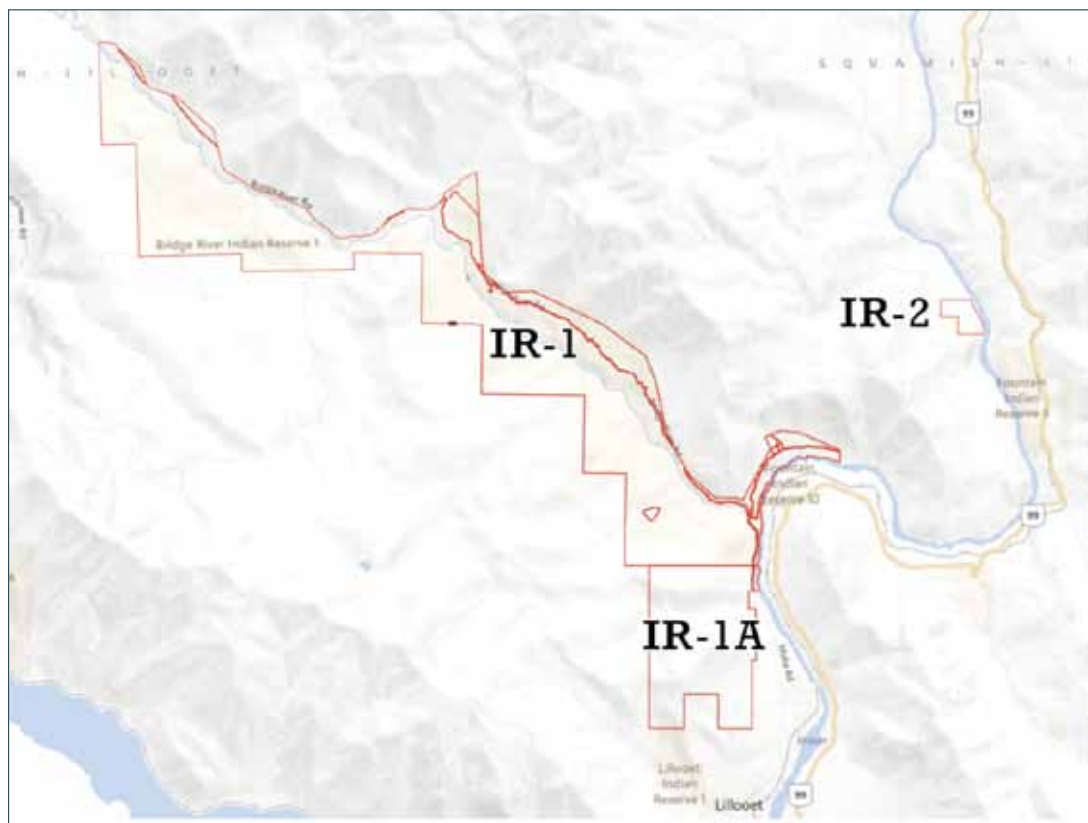
Xwísten protects St'át'imc lands and resources, as they are the basis for our way of life, and our legacy to pass on to our children.

## Our Lands

The traditional territory of Xwísten includes the entire watersheds of the Yalakom and Bridge Rivers between Mission Ridge on one side and Blackhills Creek and along Camelsfoot Range on the other. We have three reserves:

- IR1 - 3,932 hectares (9712 acres)
- IR1A - 860 hectares (2,124 acres) (this is a jointly administered reserve)
- IR2 - 56.7 hectares (140 acres)

IR-1 is our main reserve. It is made up of benchlands and steep slopes rising from an elevation of about 200 meters (700 feet) to about 1000 meters (3,500 feet).



## Land and Resource Management

The Lands and Resources department is responsible for managing our reserves, our territory and our resources like water, timber, and salmon. This is a very broad job, and includes:

- **Fisheries management:** Working to improve our fish stocks, coordinating with other levels of government on fisheries management.
- **Wildlife:** Protection of wildlife from the adverse effects of resource use projects in the territory, like logging, mining and the infrastructure needed to support them, roads and waste areas.
- **Economic use of lands:** Our lands are our assets, and we can use them to generate income. We look for ways to allow Xwísten members to benefit economically from the land (like from agriculture) and we make sure that Xwísten is fairly compensated when companies want to build roads on our land, use our water, or cut down our trees.
- **Land Use Planning and management:** Determining where housing, agricultural, industrial development and other land uses should occur is part of our job. We also work with our neighbours to make sure that our land uses are in sync.
- **Culture and heritage:** Ensuring that the culture and heritage is protected because our history is written upon the land. We adhere to Nxekmenlhkálha Iti tmícwa (St'át'imc Land Use Plan).

### How are we doing?

Salmon health and stocks	→	<b>Mixed</b> - Long term trend has been downward, but efforts are being made to improve stocks.
Improvement of agricultural lands	→	<b>Mixed</b> - Lack of water makes our land difficult to irrigate, but there is a demand for local produce and we are beginning a Land Use Plan to investigate options.
Income generation from lands and resources	↗	<b>Improving</b> - We have several resource sharing agreements with resource firms and would like to expand on this by including looking into non-timbered forest products.
Tenure (traditional lands, reserves, Certificates of Possession)	↗	<b>Improving</b> - Efforts, like the Land Use Plan, are underway to harmonize land tenure on our reserves and address conflict.

As stewards of the land, conservation is an important aspect of our relationship with its resources. There has been a long-term downward trend in salmon stocks which is very concerning. Efforts are being made to improve the stocks, such as through our fisheries habitat rehabilitation work and re-establishment of the St'át'imc Hydro Fisheries Cooperative Group.

As part of the St'át'imc Land & Resource Authority (SLRA), we also work to protect cultural areas, wildlife, habitat, Environmentally sensitive areas, and our water sources across St'át'imc lands. The SLRA provides recommendations to the St'át'imc Chiefs Council on land and resource applications based on the Nxeke'menlhkálha Iti tmícwa (St'át'imc Land Use Plan), the St'át'imc Land and Resource Code, and other St'át'imc laws.



Our lands are also part of how we make a living, as they have always been. We have several resource sharing agreements with mining exploration companies, forestry licensees, and water users (i.e. Independent Power Products). We would like to expand the income generated from our lands by looking into non-timber forest products, such as traditional plants, mushrooms, and game.

Agriculture is another activity that our people have been involved in as a generator of income since the arrival of goldminers in the late 19th century (and before). Though its importance as an industry was diminished with improved transportation through the 20th century, demand for local produce has been increasing in recent years. Our land is difficult to irrigate making a lack of water and access to it a main concern. A preliminary Agricultural Feasibility study was done in the 1980s, and we are currently starting a Land Use Plan that will look into the potential for expanding our agricultural resources.

Tenure is another complex problem which our Land Use Plan will help us address. Issues with traditional lands, reserves, and Certificates of Possession have resulted in conflict over tenure. But efforts are underway to harmonize land tenure on our reserves, like through the Land Use Plan.



# Appendix

## Additional Details on Educational Programming

### Early Childhood Education

The Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Daycare:</b> As of April 2013, 11 children attend Daycare (3 of which are Xwísten Members).</li> <li>• <b>Head Start:</b> There are 13 registered children, including all Daycare participants.</li> <li>• <b>After School Program for children ages 4-6:</b> No students have taken advantage of this program so we will be extending it to ages 4-12.</li> </ul>
Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xwísten is planning to get a primary (K4) program established on reserve for September 2013. We need 10 students enrolled to establish the program.</li> <li>• Develop an Early Learning Policy/Manual.</li> </ul>
Day Care Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-Age Child Care.</li> <li>• Educator to child ratio depends on the age of the children.</li> <li>• Cost is based on the Provincial Subsidy Daycare user fees Charts. Daily costs per month can range from \$37.50 (0-18 months) down to \$23 (School Age).</li> <li>• Lunches can be provided for the minimal cost of \$3 per day.</li> <li>• All Daycare children take part in our Head Start programs (these are part of our field trips).</li> </ul>
Head Start	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Program (Head Start) funds activities that support early intervention strategies to address the learning and developmental needs of young children living in First Nations communities.</li> <li>• The goal is to support early child development strategies that are designed and controlled by communities.</li> <li>• Head Start is centered around six components: education; health promotion; culture and language; nutrition; social support; and parental/family involvement.</li> <li>• The Program is being operated holistically. For example Language and Culture are part of the whole program and not a pull away session. Language for items can be seen in both St'at'imcets and English. Food prepared can be educational (colours, numbers, letters), health (how to eat healthy), Language &amp; Culture (St'at'imcets names &amp; traditional foods) &amp; Parental Involvement ("This is how you can support your child").</li> <li>• Healthy snacks and lunches provided daily.</li> <li>• Parents are provided with training that will assist in their parenting (Food Safe, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, First Aid, Drum Making, Language, Horticulture, Composting, Salmonid Program, Firearms, etc.).</li> <li>• This program can be parent driven. Parents can determine training needs what the group will do for the day, what snacks or meals to prepare etc.</li> </ul>

**Kindergarten (K5) to Grade 12**

The Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Xwísten members in preschool (Lillooet area) (1 off-reserve).</li> <li>• 13 members registered at Cayoosh Elementary (6 off-reserve).</li> <li>• 23 members registered at George M Murray Elementary school (4 off-reserve).</li> <li>• 21 registered at Lillooet Secondary School. 1 has dropped out for the year, 5 are in the Alternate Program.</li> <li>• 7 students registered at schools outside of Lillooet.</li> <li>• 1 student Gold Trail Distributed Learning (1 course left for adult dogwood!).</li> </ul>
Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent and Guardian Club is needed.</li> <li>• Develop Educational Policy/Manual for kindergarten (K5) to grade 12.</li> </ul>
Bridge River Brains Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open to all members of Bridge River Band (3:30-5:30 Monday to Friday with changes for holidays and pro-D days).</li> <li>• Have had anywhere from 1-12 students show up.</li> <li>• Provide assistance with homework or extra assistance to improve grades. In the past, adult students have attended as well for a quiet place to study.</li> <li>• Tutors attend School District 74 Professional Development days (for example, for training on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and 'Boy Smart').</li> <li>• Tutors will attend Individual Education Planning meetings at the schools.</li> <li>• Engrade can be accessed for grades and assignments (with parental approval).</li> <li>• Other tutoring supports (Online-Computers can be used at the office, In school-Aboriginal Student Support Workers Lunch Hour program, Teachers are willing to arrive early and stay late or through lunch, Chillaxin Youth Centre has an after school homework program).</li> </ul>
Kindergarten (K5) to Grade 12 Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling services.</li> <li>• Review attendance and report cards of students.</li> <li>• Provide information to Grade 12 students for Post Secondary.</li> <li>• Liaise between Parents, student and/or school staff.</li> <li>• Host community education meetings/dinners.</li> <li>• Access funding opportunities for programs/complete applications and reports as needed.</li> <li>• AANDC reporting as required.</li> <li>• Attend Individual Education Planning meetings with schools as requested by the parent/guardian.</li> <li>• Work with the schools when requested for planning.</li> <li>• Attend Meetings as required.</li> </ul>
Adult Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through the Gold Trail Distributed Learning program we can have students sign up for courses that will lead to their graduating with an adult dogwood diploma.</li> </ul>

**Post Secondary (i.e. after high school)**

The Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 students enrolled full time this year (3 withdrew).</li> <li>• 2 students enrolled part time (1 started in January).</li> <li>• 3 expected to graduate with a bachelor's degree.</li> <li>• Total number of bachelor's degrees prior to April 2013 = 4 (1 also has a Masters Degree).</li> <li>• 12 Students have used funds from Occupational Skills Training (2 attended the Aboriginal Skills Group and will receive their Red Seal certification as Heavy Equipment Operators).</li> </ul>
Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Post Secondary Manual with upgraded Policy.</li> <li>• Upgrade forms.</li> </ul>
Post Secondary Education Program (PSEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post Secondary dollars come from the Federal Government (AANDC) and we have to follow their guidelines for approved programs.</li> <li>• Funding covers tuition, books, some supplies and living allowances but budgets are limited to AANDC levels.</li> <li>• Living allowance ranges from \$900 to \$1380 per month.</li> <li>• Overruns of the amount allocated from AANDC are provided by a one time only budget set aside by the Band.</li> <li>• All applications must be treated like you are applying for a job. All letters must be signed to be accepted, all resumes must have 2 or three references (based on the program you are applying to), all certificates attached and your status number included.</li> <li>• A letter of Intent to attend Post Secondary in September must be submitted prior to March 31.</li> <li>• All completed applications for September must be submitted prior to May 31 for approval.</li> <li>• Must have completed and graduated with a dogwood from Grade 12, acceptance into a program from the Post Secondary Institution, <b>Official Transcripts</b>, completed application, completed and attached career cruising results, meeting with the Education Coordinator and attendance in high school will be used to assess whether or not to approve an application.</li> </ul>
Occupational Skills Training (OST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a minimal budget for Occupational Skills Training that has not been fully accessed the past couple of years.</li> <li>• All applications must be treated like you are applying for a job. All letters must be signed to be accepted, all resumes must have 2 references, all certificates attached and your status number included.</li> </ul>

<p>Occupational Skills Training (OST) (continued)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational Skills are for very short courses such as Occupational First Aid, CPR, WHIMIS, TDG, Confined space, Bear Aware, H2S Alive, Heavy Equipment Operator, Traffic Control, Chainsaw basics, Security, Foodsafe, Fire Suppression, Lock-out/Tag-out, Safety Training Worker, Medical Terminology, PST Petroleum Safety Training, Canada Labour Code, Assistance for courses through Aboriginal Skills Group (Heavy Equipment Operator, Warehousing) or the BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association (BCAMTA).</li> <li>• 12 students - we have a FA Industry course with TE planned in the community (2 days in April 2013).</li> </ul>
<p>Trades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-time only funding for people interested in the trades programs.</li> <li>• All applications follow PSEP except Grade 12 is not a requirement.</li> <li>• Funding for Culinary Arts, Carpentry, Heavy Duty Mechanic, Welding or any course that is not offered by BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association (BCAMTA) or Aboriginal Skills Group, etc.</li> </ul>



