



SUZETTE AMAYA

Manager of Organizational Change

What is a powerful way you connect to your culture?

I connect to my Kwakwaka'wakw culture by making Regalia, sewing Button Blankets, swimming in the ocean to connect with the waters back in my homelands.

When you reflect on the past, what are you most grateful for?

I am grateful for my late mother Clara Ritchotte for her teaching, her character and commitment to helping others. I'm blessed to be raised in Humility.

What role does humor play in your life?

Humour plays a huge role in my life, its healing and helps me survive inter generational traumas and stay focus on being grateful always n' teaches me patience through laughter and light heartedness.

How do you show care or love for others?

I show love through connection, compassion and empathy I love to love.

What is your greatest hope for future generations?

That our generations heal, and live their best lives empowered and confident!!!



PETER ODYNSKY

Community Recreation Coordinator

What is a powerful way you connect to your culture?

I think for me it is the simple things I find the most meaningful. Through my Mother and from my Grandfather I have learned to see the world with more of a spiritual lens. They through interactions and modelling as much as anything else taught me the interconnectivity of ALL and that a small part of everyone who passed before 'exists' as part of the world we live in now... As such

I think I consciously try to learn and interact with all parts of the world with a goal to listen, learn and broadening my understanding.

When you reflect on the past, what are you most grateful for?

That is a tough one – I guess I am glad that not everyone is predisposed to a parasitic mind set like we are taught to be currently – and I think my kids too still think that most of the world is full of caring considerate people. I have hope we can choose to live in balance as part of the world not seeking to tame and conquer it.

What role does humor play in your life?

Not sure. I think of joy more than humor as humor has been a shield and a mask

How do you show care or love for others?

I listen and accept all others understanding they have different perspective, and we are all connected at some level and intimately dependant on each other.

What is your greatest hope for future generations?

That they continue to care – apathy will be our down fall.



DENISE JOHNSON
Indigenous Programmer

What is a powerful way you connect to your culture?

I'm just learning my culture, and I have never been more connected since I started working here at Britannia. Not only learning mine but learning other Nations Culture and protocol's as well.

When you reflect on the past, what are you most grateful for?

I'm so grateful for my family and friends I have in my life! My family has always been my rock while living here in the city. My friends who are always there when I need them, especially when I live so far away from my family, its good to call on them. They have become my Vancouver family and I am grateful for that!

What role does humor play in your life?

Absolutely NONE at all. JK! I try not to take anything to seriously. It is great when you find someone who has the same point of view in life as you do! That is when you know you can just let that Indigenous humor out!

How do you show care or love for others?

By creating a safe space for them to come and talk to me if they need to. I'm here to listen, to learn and creating a healthy community with each other!



REBECCA BRASS
Indigenous Community Youth Worker

I started my journey with Britannia Community Centre in August 2024, and my role is Indigenous Community Youth Worker. I am Sauteaux-Cree from The Key First Nation.

A powerful way that I connect with my culture is through Art and food, I started learning how to bead a few years ago after losing my mother and I inherited her beading supplies. I never knew my mom had everything to get me started, but she did, and here I am years later working on perfecting my skill. I also am the bannock and fry bread maker in my family. When I reflect on the past I feel most grateful for the teachings I've received from my elders as well as the teachings I received from life in general, I find it's important when the universe is speaking to you, to find your way to listen. Humor is an essential part of healing, in my life we love to tease and joke in a good way. One of the best things about Native (Indigenous) women is our larger than life Laughter!! I show care or love for others by making sure that they feel comfortable, are they hungry or thirsty? Are you cold, or too hot? I want to help you find comfort in your day. My greatest hope for future generations is to have enough of what ever it is that you need in life.



TIANA SACCO

Project Manager – Funseekers Daycamp

What is a powerful way you connect to your culture?

I try to express myself through art, Beading, singing (and drumming with my family), and experimenting with new forms of art I haven't tried yet. When I can, being able to go back home and be a part of ceremony is also very important to me. The most important way to connect to my culture is learning and listening to those who came before me, absorbing all the stories and knowledge of my elders, parents, and even my peers. Accepting the fact that nobody knows everything, and we all have so much learn. Historically our stories have been passed down verbally for generations. I intend to keep that tradition alive.

When you reflect on the past, what are you most grateful for?

I am grateful for my mom, she is a strong, powerful, and resilient woman who has taught me almost everything I know and live by daily. I am also very grateful for my community; if it weren't for the support I had in my youth and early adult years, I truly don't think I'd have the confidence I have now.

What role does humor play in your life?

It has always been a big part of my life/personality, it could be a coping mechanism, a conversation starter and just fun to be around. I learned that at a very young age, I don't know what I would do without humour.

How do you show care or love for others?

Quality time, gift giving, and words of affirmation. Supporting them in their time of need or trying new experiences together.

What is your greatest hope for future generations?

I hope that my generation can make a difference in all aspects. decolonization, reconciliation, and breaking the cycle or move towards a future where we can fully break the cycle. A future where my kids can enjoy their life connected to the land, culture, and history of our peoples.



KYA PRINCE

Program Assistant – 55+

I have a long history with Britannia, growing up in the Grandview-Woodlands neighbourhood. I remember playing in daycare here with my siblings and running through the school halls with friends, before graduating from the Outreach Program in 2011.

After working with the Vancouver Parks Board for a time, I had the opportunity to join the Britannia 55+ Centre team through the Arts and Health Project. I was fortunate to learn from Indigenous Artists and support Indigenous community members connecting through traditional and modern crafts like beading, weaving, leatherwork, and painting. From this, we worked to create a welcoming space for all ages and cultures to come together and learn from each other.

Over the years, I've worked across many departments at Britannia. Each experience has deepened my connection to this community. I'm proud of what we've built together, and excited for what's still to come.



MICHELLE CHENOWETH
Children's Activity Leader

I started at Britannia in January 2000 as a sub at Grandview/Terrace daycare and shortly after was hired in a full-time inclusion contract. I worked in the daycare for a few years and also worked in their OSC program. In 2006 after having two beautiful children I returned to work as a RPT childcare worker in the OSC program on site where I worked as the Program 3 floor supervisor for many years then transferred over to the Preschool

program where I've currently been for almost 8 years, partly as a Floor supervisor but now as a regular staff.

I connect powerfully every morning with my culture. I start by laying out my altar: my sage, eagle feather's, rock and my fire(matches). As I prepare my smudge bowl, I always start my prayers with gratitude. Gratitude for all my blessings, my husband, children, family & my amazing job. I am extremely grateful for this life I helped create. The little brown girl who lived, and survived, almost ten years at residential school away from everything I knew and loved, where I felt the most loved, happiest and safe. But I am here now, somewhere I worked extremely hard to get to. I feel so blessed for my job, to have the privilege of helping to shape some little but powerful humans. I get to share stories with them when I was their age about my grandparents, who only spoke Cree. How I loved sitting on the floor learning how to make bannock or looking through my grandpa's binoculars for bears. As I continue to grow and watch life move forward, I pray that we'll take better care of each other with more love and kindness and leave our beautiful Mother Earth better than when we got here! PEACE



BRENLEE REMPEL
Aquatic Leader

I started at Britannia in 2011 as an aquafit instructor/lifeguard. I worked auxiliary until January 2020 when I became the Regular Part Time Aquatic Leader (RPT AL). I still teach aquafit as well as being the deck supervisor on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays. I'm also leading the FitNation Aquatic fitness classes on Wednesdays at 10:15 AM and at 8:00 PM.

I was adopted at four months into a white family and have grown up being loved, cherished and at times, spoiled! My family was not about race or the colour of my skin. I rarely felt any differences growing up which I know is rare. Ironically, my adopted father worked for Indian and Northern Affairs but my adopted mother was very reluctant to allow me to attend Pow Wow's and other cultural events that would have brought me closer to my culture. But I was fully integrated into my adopted family's culture, so I don't feel lost, like I'm without a culture. I believe I have a strong sense of self and was given a solid base to gain a firm belief system. I am extremely grateful to my family who have given me unconditional love, the ability to make choices and understand consequences. They have given me the means to branch out and grow as well as supported me through every step in my life. I feel lucky to have this life!



SOLEILLA DENOMME

Program Assistant – Weaving Community Together

What is a powerful way you connect to your culture?

I love going home & spending time with family.

When you reflect on the past, what are you most grateful for?

Just the ways that the adults in my life made sure I stayed a kid as long as possible.

What role does humor play in your life?

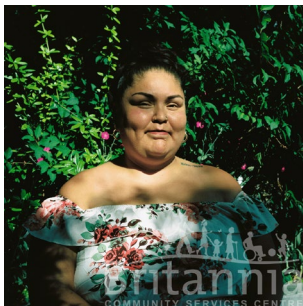
Humour keeps the heavy times at bay, everyone needs a little laugh in between cry's. Also natives are just funny as heck.

How do you show care or love for others?

I like to give gifts & write cards. Our families are always generous people.

What is your greatest hope for future generations?

I love seeing the young ones learn and take after the older generations. I don't believe in putting the weight of the world onto our youths' shoulders though. We have to fight for the world we want, now for them and for ourselves. It's true that the youth are our future but what kind of world do we want for them? What kind of world do we want to create and leave for them?



TRACY McLEAN

Indigenous Early Years Family Support Worker

A powerful way that I connect to my culture would be how introduce myself to new people to new coworkers to new clients. I like to say: I am ɫaɫaayaknuk - very talented and giving with hands, and my English name is Tracy McLean, I come from the West Coast of Vancouver Island Nuu chah nulth territories, more specifically Ditidaht and Hesquiaht.

When I think about my past, the first thing that comes to my mind is how my parents raised me and the culture that my mom implemented into my life as a young girl teaching me how to dance, and how you carry yourself in a cultural ceremony, such as a potlatch.

Definitely humour has been a key value in my life because hear one laugh as medicine but it also is a fine balance of not hurting one another!

How do I show Care and love to others? There are many ways that you can care and love for one, but I feel like the most important value that comes to mind is respecting one another.

My greatest hope for the future generation would be that our leaders to come to respect and honor, traditional ways and be able to also foster the Western way! Having traditional knowledge and being educated I feel is the best to values one can have!



JOEY CHARLES

Program Assistant

I am proudly Huu-ay-aht and Tseshaht of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth First Nation. Ways I like to stay connected with my culture is by going back to my traditional territory for community dance practice. Dancing has always been a part of my life learned from my mother and community. One of my favourite songs to dance is the paddle song gifted to my mom, it is about being exhausted from a canoe journey and asking for help. It reminds me to never be afraid to ask for help when needed and

that my community will always be there for me.

I am most grateful for my mother for always being there for me and my struggles even when she had her own hardships to deal with.

My mom always says laughter is the best medicine. I have had countless bad days cured by long nights of boisterous laughter from friends and family, so I am inclined to believe her.

I think the best way to show you care is by listening and understanding. Sometimes when our loved ones are struggling, we rush to try and fix it. But sometimes you can't fix it. You just have to understand.

I think every generation wishes the next to be able to do everything they couldn't, but I'd also like them to be able to do everything we have. I hope they can make and wear their regalia with pride, that they can dance like their ancestors are watching (because they are), but most of all I never want them to feel ashamed or like they are not allowed to be exactly who they are. That they know we are rooting for them!



About the Artist

Marina Montiel was born and raised on these unceded, ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil Waututh Nations and has been a portraiture photographer for over 25 years.

I feel blessed and proud to play a small part in celebrating the Indigenous Staff at Britannia during National Indigenous History Month. Connecting with others through the arts can only be achieved through intention, trust and collaboration. As I continue my personal journey towards Reconciliation, I'm grateful to be surrounded by such a proud and caring community, guiding me with their humility and humour.