



Uyaqhmis

Special Issue Issue 83

**The Legacy of ʼnaasiismisʔaksup,
Stella Maureen Peters**

PM41913515

AFTERGLOW

**I'd like the memory of me to be a
happy one.**

**I'd like to leave an afterglow of
smiles when life is done.**

**I'd like to leave an echo whispering
softly down the ways,**

**Of happy times and laughing times
and bright and sunny days.**

**I'd like the tears of those who
grieve, to dry before the sun;**

**Of happy memories that I leave
when life is done.**



huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND

Huu-ay-aht envisions a strong, self-determining, self-reliant and sustainable Nation. ʔiisaak, hišukma c̓awak, and ʔuʔaʔuk guide us as we work together to foster a safe, healthy, and sustainable Nation, where our culture, language, spirituality, and economy flourish.

Huu-ay-aht First Nations Wellness Statement

Our citizens are grounded in our culture, teachings, and sacred principles. Through healing, wellness, celebration, and the understanding of our Treaty, we are connected, empowered, responsible, accountable, and motivated.

Please send all comments and questions to the Huu-ay-aht Communications Department.
communications@huuayaht.org

Mailing Address:

Huu-ay-aht First Nations
4644 Adelaide Street,
Port Alberni, BC
V9Y 6N4

www.huuayaht.org

Download and register the Huu-ay-aht First Nations App to receive notifications to your phone.

Keep up to date with Uyaq̓hm̓is on social media:
[@HuuayahtFN](https://www.instagram.com/HuuayahtFN)



Follow us on
Instagram

Huu-ay-aht First Nations
Facebook page



Like us on
Facebook

Remembering Stella: A Legacy of Leadership, Kindness, and Community

Dear Huu-ay-aht Citizens;

This issue of the Uyaqhmis is not our usual community and Nation update. With the respectful approval of the Peters family, Huu-ay-aht First Nations Government staff have dedicated this edition to reflecting on, highlighting, and celebrating the beautiful life and legacy of our friend, family member, and Executive Councillor, the late *ḥaasiismis?aksup* (Stella Maureen Peters).

A proud Beachkeeper for Anacla and a devoted member of the Executive Council for Huu-ay-aht First Nations, *ḥaasiismis?aksup* passed away leaving a profound, lasting impact on her community and the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

Stella's life was deeply anchored by her family. She was the daughter of the late Sharon Peters and the late George Price (Métis), and the granddaughter of Arthur and Aggie Peters.

Her legacy lives on through her spouse, James Nookemus; her children, Lonnie Nookemus, Patrick Nookemus, Kristen Young, Michelle Nookemus, James Jr., and Annette Nookemus; and her many beloved grandchildren: Vanessa, Nolan, Tauri, Jayson, Patrick, Ivan, Hunter, Barry, and Sydney.

Stella's dedication to her people spanned decades. She served as a council member for 10 years prior to the Treaty, a pivotal time during which she was instrumental in Community Human Services (CHS), focusing her

efforts on social health, education, family care, and emergency planning.

For 38 years, Stella was also a pillar of Kiiḡin Village. As a passionate educator, she advocated fiercely for the revival of Huu-ay-aht language, songs, dances, and regalia.

Having witnessed the historic transition from federal jurisdiction to self-governance, she took immense pride in the Nation's growth and served as a tireless voice for her community's betterment.

At the time of her passing, she held the vital portfolios for Citizen Devel-

opment, Health, Education, Climate Change, and Emergency Planning.

Beyond her official roles, Stella was known for her immense kindness. She was a constant helper and a welcoming host, famous for the community potlucks she hosted throughout the year to bring people together.

In recognition of her lifelong commitment and generosity, she was honoured as Citizen of the Year in 2022. Stella's wisdom, her dedication to Huu-ay-aht traditions, and her unwavering voice for her people will be deeply missed and forever remembered.



This image was used to replace Stella M. Peters Photo in the Huu-ay-aht Government Offices to respect the traditions of putting away all images of her (Photo provided to Huu-ay-aht Communications).

Huu-ay-aht First Nations Support is available

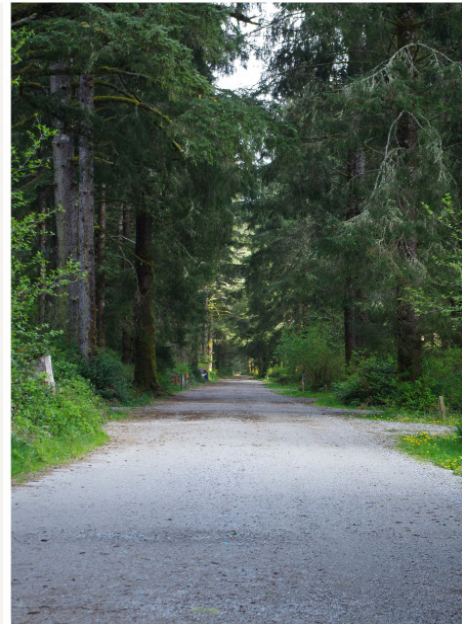
Teechuktl Mental Health: 250-724-3939
Quu'asa Wellness: 250-724-5757
Huu-ay-aht Counsellors: 250-723-0100
Huu-ay-aht Cultural Team: 250-728-3414

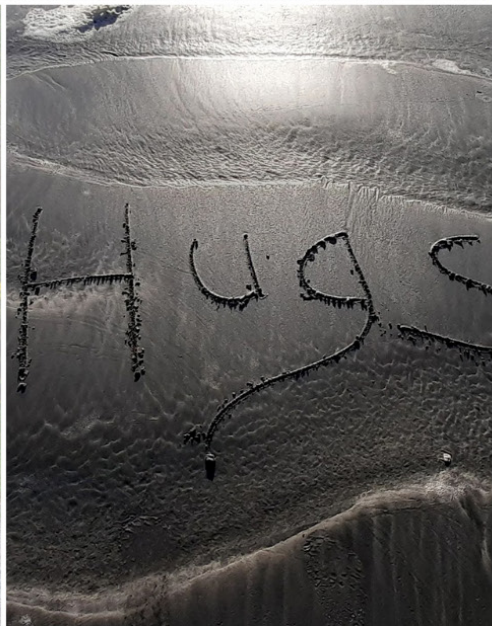
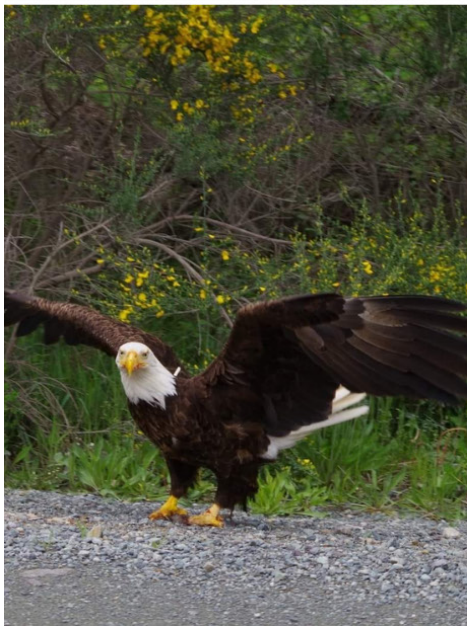
Vancouver Island Crisis Line: 1-888-494-3888
BC Bereavement Helpline: 1-877-779-2223
Mental Health Support: 310-6789
Kuu-Us Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717
1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)





**Photos Taken By
Stella M. Peters**





The Pillar of Our Community: Championing Health, Education, and Connection



Residents of Anacle and Bamfield gathered for a festive Community Potluck Dinner to celebrate the winter holiday season in 2025, at the House of Huu-ay-aht (Photo by Stella M. Peters).

Stella lived with intention, guided by principles that shaped not only her own life but also those around her.

She was a kind and thoughtful person who made a point of acknowledging everyone she passed, offering a simple "hello" and "how are you doing?" that made people feel seen and valued.

She had a quiet, generous spirit. Stella delighted in surprising others with small, meaningful gifts she had made herself.



Every Child Matters keychain gift from Stella M. Peters (Photo by HFN Communications).

Whether it was a handmade trinket, a calendar, or a coffee mug featuring her photographs left gently on a desk, these gestures carried her warmth and care in ways words often

cannot.

Family and community were at the heart of who she was. Stella ensured that no one felt alone during the holidays, organizing special potlucks where people could gather, share food, and experience connection, especially those who might otherwise go without. She believed deeply that everyone deserved a place at the table.

Mental health and community safety were deeply important to her. Stella worked closely with the Indigenous Policing team, always advocating for the well-being of others, especially youth and Elders.

She raised awareness about important issues such as bike safety, recognizing elder abuse, and the importance of reaching out to the RCMP when needed. Through her community engagements, she helped create a safer, more informed environment for all.

Stella carried a wealth of cultural knowledge and generously shared it. At First Nation Health Authority (FNHA) meetings, she offered teachings that grounded and inspired those present.

Her practice of gifting eagle feathers to meeting chairs reflected her deep respect for tradition, offering strength and guidance in leadership. She was also a strong advocate for cultural safety and humility in health care. Stella spoke courageously about her lived experiences, calling for meaningful change.

She emphasized the importance of trauma-informed practice and the need for policies that truly reflect respect, understanding, and equity for Indigenous peoples.

Education was another passion she held close. Stella was committed to improving opportunities for community members and to contributing to policies that better served citizens. She celebrated every achievement, attending graduations and scholarship ceremonies, always present to recognize the hard work and success of others.

Stella's legacy is one of kindness, generosity, advocacy, and cultural strength. She uplifted others, brought people together, and worked tirelessly to make her community safer, healthier, and more connected. Her impact will be felt for generations to come.

The Guardian of Our Future Through Emergency Preparedness

Stella's unwavering dedication to community well-being extended profoundly into the essential field of emergency preparedness, where her contributions have been both impactful and transformative.

She approached her work with a unique understanding of the delicate balance between addressing the urgent needs of the present and ensuring the long-term safety of the future.

In today's fast-paced world, it can be incredibly challenging to gather people around the table to discuss emergency preparedness when immediate problems demand immediate attention.

Stella recognized this struggle and approached it with a grounded, patient perspective.

She understood that while

achieving perfect readiness is often unrealistic and that working on various projects frequently involves navigating unforeseen hurdles, the responsibility to protect the community cannot be sidelined.

Stella served as a steadfast anchor for her colleagues and community members.

Her unwavering commitment to preparedness not only inspired confidence but also made it easier for others to navigate the intricate complexities and challenges inherent in the field.

Even during times when building momentum and garnering support for initiatives was particularly difficult, her persistent and "stick-to-it" attitude ensured that progress advanced and that safety remained a top priority for

the Huu-ay-aht First Nations.

Stella viewed emergency management not merely as a professional obligation but as a deeply personal promise to her community and her family.

This connection was reflected in her approach to every strategy and planning session, where she fostered an environment of collaboration, active listening, and deep care for others' well-being.

Stella's influence on emergency preparedness has left a lasting legacy.

Her remarkable foresight, resilience in overcoming challenges, and steadfast dedication to the long-term health and security of Huu-ay-aht ensure that the impact of her work on community safety will resonate for many years to come.



An aerial perspective of the Pachena River flowing into the wide sands of Pachena Bay Beach in Anacla. In the distance, is Lower Anacla community (Photo from Huu-ay-aht Archives).

The Voice of Kiiḡin Village: Guiding the World Through the Heart of Huu-ay-aht

Stella Peters' connection to Kiiḡin was deep, enduring, and grounded in her lifelong commitment to Huu-ay-aht culture, history, and people. For decades, she walked the trails of Kiiḡin not only as a guide, but as a teacher and knowledge-holder.

She possessed the unique ability to bridge the gap between the modern world and the ancient wisdom of our ancestors. When she spoke, the wind through the old-growth trees seemed to carry her words further, ensuring that every visitor felt the weight and the wonder of the National Historic Site.

Through her work, she helped ensure that those who came to Kiiḡin understood its significance, not just as a place of the past, but as a living part of who we are as Huu-ay-aht. She was the voice that spoke for the land when others had forgotten how to listen.

Beyond the tours, Stella played an instrumental role in the quiet, vital work of caring for and protecting Kiiḡin. Her expertise was sought for sensitive site visits, restoration conversations, and long-term planning. She was a



Kiiḡin Longhouse door entrance (Photo from Huu-ay-aht First Nations Archives).



Waves meeting the rocky shore during a summer sunset with light clouds at Kiiḡin (Photo from Huu-ay-aht First Nations Archives).

fierce advocate for "respectful sharing", the idea that while the world should know Kiiḡin, the land must always come first.

Her involvement reflected a deep sense of responsibility to ensure the site was cared for in a way that upheld Huu-ay-aht values. Guests often remarked that the walk through the forest was "magical" under her guidance, as she pointed out the traditional uses for plants, berries, and animal tracks.

She didn't just teach history; she taught the "way of life", including the traditions, customs, and the difficult truths of the history our people endured.

Whether she was consulting with archaeologists or mentoring younger community members, Stella led with quiet authority. She taught us that to lead is to serve, and to serve the land is to honour the ancestors.

Her presence in these planning circles ensured that our cultural protocols remained at the heart of every decision made regarding the West Coast's only remaining

traditional First Nations village.

Whether she was welcoming guests onto the territory, guiding them along the rugged coastal path, or contributing to high-level discussions about the site's future, Stella carried herself with warmth, knowledge, and unmistakable pride.

She created meaningful, often life-changing experiences for visitors. For our own community, she was a beacon of identity. She helped strengthen the bond between our youth and their heritage, showing them that our history is written in the soil and the sea.

Her work has left a lasting impact, helping to ensure that Kiiḡin continues to stand as a living place of Huu-ay-aht identity and responsibility. As the tide comes in and out at the village beach, the echoes of her teachings remain. We carry her legacy forward every time we share a story, protect a tree, or welcome a guest to our shores.

Stella did more than guide us through a village; she guided us back to ourselves.