

GENERATIONS OF WISDOM



**Coastal
Water Protectors**

An initiative of the BC Métis Federation



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GENERATIONS OF WISDOM



The Generations of Wisdom retreat was an unforgettable four-day, three-night experience that brought together four Métis youth and four Métis elders from across British Columbia, uniting them in the breathtaking landscape of Tofino. This retreat was more than just an excursion—it was a journey of connection, learning, and shared wisdom, where generations came together to honor the past, engage with the present, and dream of the future.

Each evening, we gathered around home-cooked meals, where conversations flowed as easily as laughter. These nightly discussions became the heart of the retreat, creating a safe and open space for youth and elders to share their experiences, stories, and perspectives. Through these conversations, we explored the past, present, and future of Métis culture, conservation, and community, strengthening our ties to both one another and our shared heritage.

Mornings were filled with engaging activities that allowed participants to express themselves and deepen their connections to the land. Whether it was hiking through forests, painting landscapes inspired by the coastal beauty, or sitting down for meaningful one-on-one elder and youth interview sessions, each morning offered a chance for growth, creativity, and storytelling.

Afternoons were dedicated to adventure, exploration, and awe-inspiring experiences. The group embarked on a helicopter ride to the breathtaking Paradise Lake, where untouched wilderness stretched as far as the eye could see. A winter wilderness boat excursion provided an up-close experience with the diverse coastal ecosystems, as participants marveled at the stunning scenery and the wildlife that calls these waters home. A guided tour at the Ucluelet Aquarium offered a deeper understanding of marine life and conservation efforts, leaving participants inspired by the beauty and fragility of the ocean.

What began as a gathering of strangers quickly transformed into a family of friends, bound by shared experiences and the stories exchanged throughout the retreat. The Generations of Wisdom retreat was not just a trip—it was a profound and life-changing experience, reinforcing the importance of intergenerational connection, Métis identity, and our relationship with the land and water. As the retreat came to an end, participants carried home not only new friendships but also a renewed sense of purpose, wisdom, and gratitude—ensuring that the knowledge shared during these four days will continue to ripple through their lives and communities for years to come.

MAURICEA PANCHENKO

"Wisdom is the ability to listen and learn no matter how much experience you have"



Born in Burnaby and raised across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island, Mauricea Panchenko considers Coast Salish territory her home. Growing up amidst the natural beauty of these lands has shaped her connection to the environment, which she deepens through spiritual practices such as harvesting and smudging. These moments of grounding allow her to feel most connected to herself, reinforcing the sacred relationship she shares with nature. Among her favorite places is a tranquil lake nestled among trees and mountains, where she feels a strong bond with the surrounding elements and the peace they bring.

Attending the Generations of Wisdom Retreat offered Mauricea a valuable opportunity to immerse herself in nature without the usual challenges of daily life. The retreat allowed her to be fully present with the land, air, and water, helping her reconnect with the environment in a profound way. This experience reminded her of the importance of centering nature in her practices, education, and the way she raises her son. It reinforced her commitment to nurturing a reciprocal relationship with the land, respecting its resources while recognizing the responsibility to protect and care for it.

Reflecting on the retreat, Mauricea fondly recalls the helicopter tour, which left her in awe of the breathtaking landscapes.

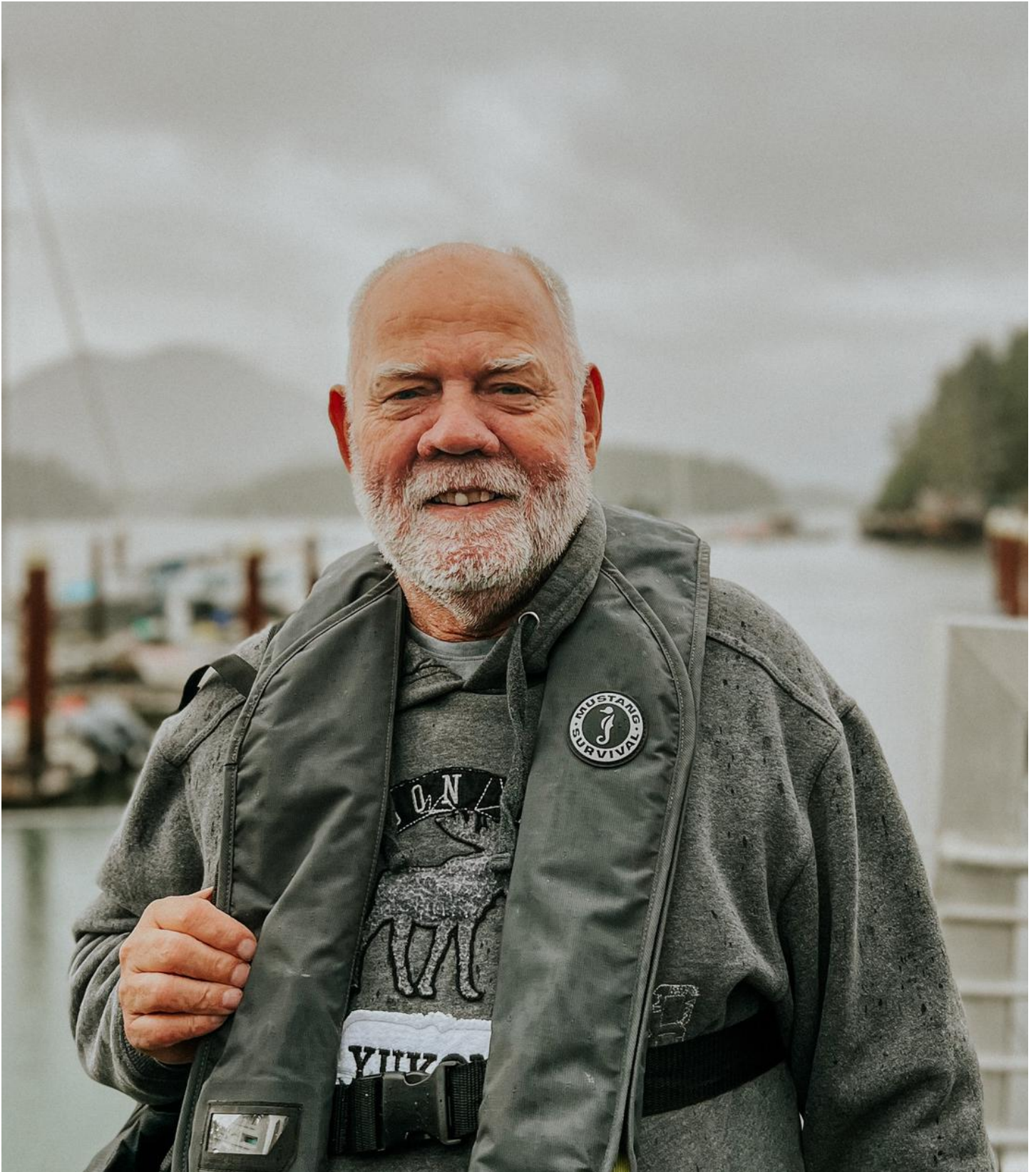
Yet, it's the joyful camaraderie of the evening leg wrestling with fellow participants that stands out most, bringing a smile to her face. For Mauricea, the retreat was a reminder of the need to both seek and contribute to a supportive network, emphasizing the shared responsibility of building and nurturing connections.

The retreat also inspired a shift in her perspective on nature and mindfulness. Mauricea aims to integrate these lessons into her daily life by slowing down, appreciating the beauty of her surroundings, and practicing gratitude for the resources the land provides. She recognizes the importance of fostering a balance between giving and taking from nature, a principle she is determined to uphold.

Mauricea defines wisdom as the ability to listen and learn, regardless of one's experience or knowledge. True wisdom, she believes, lies in seeing the world through multiple perspectives and remaining open to growth and change. This retreat not only strengthened her bond with the natural world but also deepened her understanding of community and connection. It served as a powerful reminder of the importance of honoring the land, building relationships, and carrying forward the teachings of reciprocity and respect into everyday life.

EARL STOREY

"Community means working together to keep the planet clean and friendly for us, our kids, their kids, and beyond."



Born and raised in East Vancouver, Earl Storey has always had a deep appreciation for the beauty of British Columbia and its natural landscapes. Earl feels most connected when surrounded by nature, whether hiking through the wilderness, fishing on the ocean, or simply enjoying the outdoors. For him, being in these environments brings a sense of peace and belonging, no matter where he is.

A people person at heart, Earl cherishes opportunities to meet others who share his Métis heritage and values. The Generations of Wisdom retreat provided a unique chance to connect with like-minded individuals, fostering meaningful relationships with new friends. Earl found great joy in exploring the incredible beauty of Tofino, a destination that attracts visitors from around the world, and sharing that experience with his newfound community.

The retreat also deepened Earl's appreciation for the importance of stewardship. He is committed to taking care of the land and encouraging others to do the same, ensuring that the natural world remains vibrant and healthy for future generations. For Earl, community means working together to keep the planet clean and welcoming—not just for ourselves, but for our children, grandchildren, and generations beyond.

Earl defines wisdom as the knowledge gained through life's experiences and the hands-on learning that shapes our understanding of the world. Reflecting on his time at the retreat, he expressed gratitude for the opportunity to participate, learn, and connect. For Earl, the retreat was a reminder to enjoy the gifts of nature, nurture a sense of responsibility for the world around us, and explore the beauty and strength found in community.

COZETTE CARRIERE

"Community is the foundation in feeling acceptance; and with acceptance comes pride, and with pride comes teachings and future knowledge."



Born in 1994 in Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, Cozette Carriere grew up in Richmond, British Columbia, where she has lived since 2003. Her connection to the land and environment is deeply rooted in her Métis heritage and her profound appreciation for nature. She feels most connected to herself when immersed in the outdoors—among forests or near bodies of water. She describes her strongest connection to the environment as standing among towering trees, looking up to see the patterns of the sky framed by branches and leaves. For Cozette, this experience is a humbling reminder of how small we are compared to the timeless beauty of nature.

The Generations of Wisdom retreat reignited Cozette's passion for reconnecting with cultural practices that she had set aside over the past few years while raising her children. She reflected on the power of small, passionate groups to create meaningful change and how the retreat reminded her of the importance of her actions and those of others in preserving nature.

One of Cozette's most cherished memories from the retreat was the one-on-one conversations between elders and youth. These dialogues revealed unexpected similarities in life experiences and challenges, highlighting the shared resilience within the community.

She was also struck by how Métis culture and practices seemed to be naturally ingrained in participants, even in those who had only recently discovered their Métis identity.

Cozette left the retreat with a renewed commitment to her community and her culture. She intends to stay connected to Métis and First Nations communities in her area, sharing teachings and opportunities with her children to ensure these traditions are passed down. For Cozette, community means everything — it is the foundation of acceptance, which fosters pride and leads to shared teachings and knowledge for future generations.

To Cozette, wisdom is the act of accepting failure and continuing to push forward with education and mindful thinking. It is the ability to break free from unproductive cycles and embrace growth daily. Through this retreat, Cozette reaffirmed the importance of grounding herself in nature, embracing her Métis heritage, and fostering community connections for a brighter future.

CHRISTINA JACKSON

"Wisdom doesn't come from knowledge but from the connections we make with others—their stories, perspectives, and shared experiences."



Christina Jackson was born in California but considers Pitt Meadows, British Columbia, where she moved at age 11, to be the heart of her childhood. For the past 26 years, Christina has lived in Vernon, drawn by the region's lakes and hiking trails that have become central to her life. She feels most connected to herself when near water, whether by a lake or the ocean, as it offers her a sense of calm and grounding.

Her most cherished place is Rattlesnake Point in Kalamalka Provincial Park, a trail she has visited countless times. From this spot, Christina finds peace, gazing over the lake and mountains and embracing the tranquility of nature. This location holds special significance, as it became a shared space for her and her daughter Anna, who joined her on hikes as an infant and continues to be part of these meaningful moments.

Participating in the Generations of Wisdom retreat was transformative for Christina. It gave her a deep sense of pride and connection to her Métis heritage, something she had been longing for. She found joy in meeting other Métis people, feeling for the first time like she was part of a larger community.

One of her most cherished memories from the retreat was walking along the beach with Cozette, her youth partner. As they shared stories surrounded by the beauty of nature, Christina felt an incredible sense of connection to both Cozette and the water.

This experience deepened Christina's understanding of the interconnectedness between nature and well-being. It inspired her to slow down, appreciate the land and water around her, and strengthen her ties to the Métis community. For Christina, wisdom doesn't come from knowledge alone but from the connections we make with others—their stories, perspectives, and experiences.

Through this retreat, Christina gained not only a renewed appreciation for nature but also a sense of belonging to a Métis family that spans the province. She looks forward to deepening these relationships and continuing to honor the connections that bring meaning and wisdom to her life.

JERICA PIPPOLO

"Water is one of the many connecting forces for land; everything from plants to little invertebrates depend on it—it connects everything."



Born and raised in Kamloops, BC, Jerica Pippolo has always found a deep connection to the natural world. Whether she is reading on the beach, backpacking through mountain ranges, or fishing in quiet streams with friends, nature is where she feels most in tune with herself. Water, in particular, has always held a special meaning in her life. The movement of a stream, the way rapids bubble and dance, and the gentle sway of vegetation within the current all offer her a sense of peace and clarity. To Jerica, water is more than just a resource—it is a vital force that connects all life, from plants to the smallest invertebrates.

Attending the Generations of Wisdom retreat was a transformative experience for Jerica, as it reconnected her with her Métis heritage. Before the retreat, she had little connection to her culture, but through shared experiences and the warmth of the community, she found herself deeply embraced by the people and traditions around her. The retreat also reshaped her perspective on the ocean. Previously unfamiliar with its vastness and complexity, she initially felt disconnected from it. However, through the knowledge and stories shared by her fellow retreat members, she began to see the ocean not as something distant or intimidating, but as an essential, life-giving force that provides for so many.

One of the most powerful memories Jerica carries from the retreat is the time spent in evening discussions with the group. These conversations created a space where past, present, and future were woven together through stories, reflections, and shared wisdom. It was a setting where everyone felt safe to speak, to listen, and to learn from one another, fostering a sense of true connection and belonging.

As she moves forward, Jerica hopes to integrate gratitude into her everyday life, slowing down to appreciate the people around her and the land she walks upon. She envisions community as a second home—where individuals with shared values can come together, support one another, and simply belong. To her, wisdom is something earned through experience, whether it is passed down through generations or learned firsthand. Most importantly, she believes wisdom must be shared, as it is through this exchange of knowledge that we can protect and preserve the world for future generations.

DIANN KEHLER

"The retreat reminded me how important it is to stay grounded. I came home more motivated."



Born in Kamloops, BC, and having lived across Alberta and British Columbia, Diann Kehler's journey has taken her from the northern landscapes of Fort St. John to the vibrant communities of Prince George and the serene beauty of the Okanagan, where she raised her children. Throughout her life, she has felt a deep connection to nature, whether hiking in the remote parks and trails of the Okanagan, standing in awe of Fintry Falls, or finding peace along the shores of Gellatly Bay. Her love for the outdoors extends beyond Canada, as she recalls the wild, untouched beauty of the Andes Mountains between Chile and Argentina—a place that left a lasting impression on her.

Attending the Generations of Wisdom retreat rekindled Diann's love for nature and deeply grounded her. Due to health challenges, she had drifted away from outdoor activities like hiking and swimming, but the retreat reminded her of the healing power of the land and water. She returned home more motivated than ever, embracing daily walks along the lake and rekindling her appreciation for the time spent outdoors. Being surrounded by the younger generation also brought back memories of the many weekends she spent hiking and swimming with her own children.

A particularly memorable experience from the retreat was the visit to the aquarium, where she was captivated by the knowledge and passion of the guide. Learning about aquatic life and the conservation efforts, such as releasing live displays like octopuses back into the wild, was both calming and inspiring. The retreat also reinforced the importance of community in her life. Like many, she felt a sense of isolation since the pandemic began, but through shared meals, outdoor activities, and heartfelt conversations, she was reminded of the joy that comes from connecting with others. Since returning home, she has reconnected with close friends, making plans to spend more time together outdoors and share in the simple pleasures of community life.

For Diann, wisdom is the knowledge gained through life experiences, the belief in a higher spirit, and the lessons that come when we are open to learning. She believes that each day offers an opportunity to be better—to be kind, accepting, and open to the wisdom that is lovingly shared with us. The retreat not only reignited her connection to nature but also reinforced her commitment to embracing and sharing the wisdom she has gathered throughout her journey.

ANNA JACKSON

"Being surrounded by big mountains and trees reminds me of how small my problems are and to take a step back and connect with what is really important—nature."



Born and raised in Vernon, BC, Anna Jackson has always felt at home in the outdoors. Whether running, camping, or swimming, time spent outside is how she reconnects with herself and finds balance. Three years ago, she moved to Vancouver Island for university, drawn by its natural beauty and opportunities for adventure. Yet, amid the demands of student life, she sometimes found herself confined to her studies, forgetting the very reason she moved to the island in the first place — to be surrounded by nature. The Generations of Wisdom retreat served as a powerful reminder of the importance of stepping outside, taking a deep breath, and immersing herself in the land that has always brought her clarity.

Anna has always felt the strongest connection to the land when she is in the mountains and forests. Towering trees and vast landscapes remind her of how small everyday worries are in the grand scheme of things, allowing her to step back and focus on what truly matters. Being in nature provides her with a sense of peace, grounding her and reinforcing the importance of staying present. Throughout the retreat, moments spent walking along the beaches and hiking through the forests were among her most cherished. These experiences deepened her connection to the land while also fostering meaningful bonds with those around her.

One of the most transformative aspects of this retreat was the opportunity to connect with her Métis culture. Before this experience, both Anna and her mother had never been part of the Métis community. Through this retreat, they found a sense of belonging, gaining a supportive network of people from across the province. The relationships built here are ones she holds close to her heart, marking the beginning of a lifelong journey of cultural reconnection.

Looking ahead, Anna hopes to integrate the lessons she learned into her daily life by prioritizing time for self-reflection and reconnecting with nature, even during the busiest times. The retreat reinforced the value of taking a step back, breathing in the fresh air, and appreciating the world around her. To her, wisdom is the knowledge and experiences exchanged between people—a continuous flow of learning, growing, and sharing. The Generations of Wisdom retreat provided her with that gift, one she will carry forward in both her personal and cultural journey.

TRACY RAGRAZZI

"Water is where I feel most at home—my cells are one with the waters, and I am very comfortable."



Tracy Ragrazzi's roots trace back to the South Peace Country, where she was born in Dawson Creek. Her earliest years were spent "up the Alaska Highway," before her family moved to her grandfather's farm in Bonanza, a rural community just across the Alberta border. Dawson Creek was their closest town, and it remains a place deeply tied to her history and kinship. Though she has lived in many places since then, her connection to the land has never wavered. She has had the privilege of knowing British Columbia in its entirety—from the rugged Pacific coastline to the lakes and foothills, across the Rockies, and into the sprawling grasslands beyond. These landscapes, rich in beauty yet marked by scars of deforestation and pollution, fuel her appreciation for the environment and the urgency of its care.

For Tracy, water is where she feels most at home. Whether floating in the Pacific Ocean, standing in a northern stream, or diving into a cold mountain lake, she feels as though her very cells merge with the water, making her part of the ecosystem itself. She has carried this sense of connection with her across vastly different environments, from the near north to the subtropics, always taking an interest in the natural world. The Generations of Wisdom retreat reinforced this connection, offering her a new lens through which to view the land and sea.

One of the most enlightening experiences was seeing the same waters from multiple perspectives: first from the sky in a helicopter, then from the surface, and finally from beneath at the Ucluelet Aquarium. Learning about marine stewardship in this intimate way left a lasting impression, reinforcing her trust in conservation efforts and the people leading them.

Among the most memorable moments of the retreat was the day she and the group stood together by a remote mountain lake, drinking from its pristine, living waters. It was a moment of pure connection—to the land, to each other, and to something greater. Yet, beyond these experiences, what Tracy found most reassuring was the wisdom and strength of the younger generation. Conversations about the past, present, and future of Métis culture and conservation left her deeply impressed by their integrity and determination. Seeing their commitment to caring for the planet gave her hope for what lies ahead.

Tracy carries this renewed sense of purpose forward, integrating a lifelong commitment to learning and sharing into her daily life. She views community as a space where people come together to create in a positive way — sharing time, ideas, resources, and concerns. To her, wisdom is the ability to observe, learn, and adjust — and in this, nature remains the greatest teacher.

EXPLORING THE INLETS



Amidst the breathtaking landscapes of Tofino, our group embarked on a winter wilderness boat excursion, venturing into the heart of the region's rugged inlets. The cold, crisp air filled our lungs as we set out onto the choppy winter waters, surrounded by mist-covered islands and towering evergreens lining the shoreline. The adventure was not just about exploring—it was about bonding, embracing the raw power of nature, and witnessing the incredible wildlife that thrives in these coastal waters.

As the boat cut through the waves, the group quickly found themselves drawn together, sharing the thrill of the rolling swells and the vastness of the Pacific. The winter sea had a presence of its own—untamed, unpredictable, yet deeply mesmerizing. The rhythmic rise and fall of the boat became part of the experience, a reminder of the sheer power of the ocean and the respect it commands.

Eagles soared overhead, their piercing calls echoing across the water, while sea lions basked on rocky outcrops, lifting their heads curiously as we passed by. We watched as otters floated effortlessly on their backs, playing among the kelp forests, undisturbed by the changing tides. Each sighting was a reminder of the resilience and beauty of the natural world, reinforcing the importance of conservation and our role in protecting these fragile habitats.

What made this excursion truly special, however, was the camaraderie it built among the group. Laughter rang out as we braced against the winter wind, bundled in layers, sharing in the excitement of each new wildlife encounter. Conversations unfolded effortlessly, inspired by the vastness of the landscape around us. There was something about being on the water—away from the noise of daily life, surrounded by the elements—that deepened our connections not just to nature, but to one another.

By the time we returned to shore, we were windblown, exhilarated, and filled with a renewed sense of awe. This winter wilderness excursion was more than just a boat ride; it was an unforgettable experience of adventure, connection, and appreciation for the wild beauty of Tofino's inlets. We arrived as a group, but we left as a team—bonded by the water, the waves, and the moments we shared in the heart of the winter sea.





CURI
PRO



A BIRD'S EYE VIEW



Our journey to Paradise Lake in Tofino was nothing short of extraordinary. We embarked on a thrilling helicopter tour, split into three different chartered flights, each departing one after the other. As the rotors whirled to life and we lifted off the ground, excitement filled the air. Below us, the vast expanse of coastal rainforests, winding inlets, and rugged mountain peaks stretched endlessly, offering a breathtaking perspective of Tofino's untouched beauty.

What made this adventure truly remarkable was the ever-changing weather that greeted us along the way. We soared through patches of golden sunshine, only to be met moments later by bursts of hail and rain, drumming against the windows. As we climbed higher, the sky transformed once again, and we found ourselves flying through a gentle snowfall, watching as delicate flakes danced around us. It was as if we were witnessing the full spectrum of Tofino's wild and unpredictable climate—all in one exhilarating flight.

Upon reaching Paradise Lake, we stepped out into an entirely different world. The air was crisp, fresh, and filled with the scent of the wilderness. Surrounded by towering peaks and the stillness of the lake, it felt as though we had landed in a place untouched by time. We took a moment to simply breathe, absorbing the incredible beauty that surrounded us. Some wandered along the shoreline, taking in the reflections of the sky on the water's glassy surface, while others stood in quiet awe, feeling the deep connection between the land and the elements.

This experience was more than just a helicopter ride—it was a rare and humbling encounter with nature's raw beauty. To witness such a vast and wild landscape from the air, to feel the changes in the weather firsthand, and to stand atop the world at Paradise Lake, was something that will stay with us forever. As we boarded the helicopters once more for our return journey, we carried with us a profound sense of gratitude, adventure, and the unshakable feeling that, for a brief moment, we had truly touched paradise.







BRIDGING GENERATIONS

One of the most profound moments of the Generations of Wisdom retreat was when Métis elders and youth were paired together for one-on-one interviews. These were no ordinary conversations—nothing was off-limits. Each pair set off on their own, walking along nature’s paths, surrounded by the towering trees and crisp ocean air. With each step, stories unfolded, memories were shared, and a deep sense of understanding began to form between generations.

Some walked in comfortable silence before opening up, while others immediately dove into conversations about family, history, identity, and personal journeys. The questions asked were not just surface-level; they were raw and meaningful. Elders shared their experiences, hardships, and wisdom, while youth spoke about their aspirations, struggles, and dreams. The exchange was powerful—two people from different points in life, discovering just how much they truly had in common.

Afterwards, we gathered in a circle, where each person introduced their interview partner. As each pair shared, the room filled with laughter, nods of understanding, and even tears. Some stories made us chuckle, while others were deeply personal, offering glimpses into the challenges, triumphs, and resilience that have shaped each of us. It became clear that, regardless of age, we are all connected by shared experiences, emotions, and the desire to belong.

The beauty of this exercise was not just in the words spoken but in the bonds that were formed. What started as an interview became something much deeper—a moment of trust, vulnerability, and connection. The Generations of Wisdom retreat was always meant to bridge the gap between youth and elders, but in that moment, there was no gap at all. We were simply Métis people, sharing stories, learning from one another, and growing together. It was a truly unforgettable and transformative experience, leaving each of us with a new friend and a deeper appreciation for the wisdom that exists in every stage of life.

