

Question and Answer Summary

Gwa'yi Music Revitalization and Festival FPCC Pilot Project

with Lindsey Mae Willie and Myc Sharratt

November 26, 2025

Q: You shared a lot about the team that you built and how important that was. I know you also mentioned getting help. Where did you find volunteers?

Lindsey: Some of them were community volunteers. We put a call out for volunteers. The first year, our youth from Guilford came. They're all youth workers and they came to support. Dennis offered to teach them sound design and running live shows. He's offered that every year. So we had the youth that year, and the next year, some youth were mentoring with **Darryl Dawson** and helped as well. Our board volunteered selling T-shirts. The Band hires youth workers each summer, and they all helped. I know we paid for the stage to be built. We just put a call out, and everyone was able to help.

Q: That's great. What a meaningful way to engage the youth at home and give them training for putting on future festivals. And what about the location? Where in the village does the festival happen?

Lindsey: The first year we had it on the field. We installed a power source in the band office and ran a cable across the road into the field. The next year we tried behind the school. It was a more intimate place, so people liked it. But because it's next to the Health Center and the helipad, having tents there is dangerous in case a helicopter comes, which happened the next day. I had to run around and take all the tents down before the helicopter showed up. So we couldn't do it there the next year. This year we had it on the field again, but pointing in a different direction. It was close to that power source again. Now we've moved the stage across the field next to someone's house who will provide power so we don't have to keep moving it. We wanted a permanent spot, so we're getting a cement foundation. The band has offered to build us a roof for the stage.

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Q: Being a three-year pilot, can you share any examples of how you built on learning from the first year, second year and then third year?

Lindsey: There's one example I can think of right away, and that's feeding the musicians. There are no restaurants here and no stores. We hired someone to cook for the musicians, but we had them go out of the music festival area to the Health Center to eat. The first year we didn't have too many attendees, so it took half the audience away from who was performing on stage at the time. After that year, we decided to provide food right by the venue so people could stay and watch the show. Food is important to keep people there and happy, and it adds to the atmosphere—like hamburgers and hot dogs. Vendors were also selling their food, so there was choice and variety.

Myc: The timing of when we had dinner was also a factor. We had a dinner time planned but didn't give space in the music schedule, so we either had to bring the food out and have a BBQ next to the stage so everyone could keep enjoying music or we needed to take a break. Navigating those blind spots was a learning experience. It was unfair to an artist, and we gave them more time at the end, but it was still a blind spot.

Lindsey: Also the first two years I was doing all the community coordination and didn't have time to really welcome our artists or guests, which didn't feel good. We were lucky to hire **Leanne** this year, and she took care of all the logistics for boats and accommodations. I was able to be more of a host to everybody, which feels much better.

Myc: **Claire** and another handful of volunteers were great too.

Q: Given the remoteness, did \$75,000 cover most of the event? Did you have to go to outside sources?

Lindsey: Actually, the first year we had a different cap and spent more than 75. The first year it was about 85. After that, the cap was 75. In order to bring more people home, we asked the DFN Health Center to chip in money to hire more boats to bring people in, and they did. They paid for two 12-passenger boats and the river travel for everybody. They've done that this past year as well, which is really helpful. It brings more people in.

We try to keep it at 75 plus the Health Center's contribution, and we are pretty close to 75 each year. We have to pick and choose what we want—if we want more people to come in, we'd have fewer bands. We also got a top-up last year from First Peoples',

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which covered the cost for swing dancing workshops and Kwak'wala-speaking MCs' wages. That allowed us to do additional activities last year.

Q: Have you had many repeat artists? Or do you try to have a different line up each year?

Lindsey: It's both. I put out a poll to the community and they wanted both old and new artists. So we did a mix last year. I think we've done a mix every year. The first year was all new, but the second and third was a mix of both.

Myc: I'll add a list of the artists to the document being shared. I have three posters from each of the years. I want to mention that Pindian and Alex came back into the community to do that show, and that was a very moving experience for them. I'll include a list of the artists in the document.

Q: Congratulations on such a wonderful music festival and presentation. When you book an artist who is travelling into the community for the first time, how do you explain the protocols and the uniqueness of the travel considerations for the Gwa'yi Festival?

Myc: Great question. Koralee guided me when I first started and even this last year, asking, "Are they aware of this part of it?" So I doubled down and had phone calls with people, letting them know they may need to get their feet wet. There's an ATV that drives up to the boat, and we can help. For example, Murray Porter is a bit older, so we had to consider how he and his partner would get on and off the boat.

We explained each step of the travel. It's a long trip, especially from Vancouver—they had to take a float plane, then transfer to another boat, then get on an ATV. We also explained billeting. One challenge in Kingcome is flooding, which means there are quite a few stairs. Sharing that information upfront was important, and they were okay with it.

You should share all challenges with artists before booking. Even if it's drivable, let them know, "It's probably a 13–14 hour drive from where you are. Are you still interested?" Sharing those pivot points is crucial.

Lindsay usually speaks more to protocol when artists arrive. I handle the initial booking, the front facing-hiring, and then when they come into the community, Lindsay has that conversation, walks them in on the ATV, which gives her time to host.

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Lindsey: I had one conversation about drinking because it can be an issue sometimes. We told people we don't want visible drinking around the festival—there are children and a history here. We were a dry community back in the day, so we avoided that by stating “no drugs or alcohol” upfront on posters and in artist agreements. It's in the contract now.

I make announcements at the beginning of the festival for housekeeping. I don't remember if I ever said no pictures of certain areas, but the people we invite we kind of vet. We invite artists that show community spirit and understand this is a tight-knit community. Anything strict is in the paperwork. We've had small discussions with some people, but I assume everyone knows it's a dry, family-friendly event. I give people the benefit of the doubt, though maybe I should follow up.

Myc: A follow-up vibe check is important—not just email. For some festivals, like just a day thing, email works, but a quick phone call helps a lot.

Lindsey: You can often tell by their rider or requirements what their vibe is.

Myc: That's a very good point. We had a funny one and they did not come in.

Q: If someone wanted to directly donate in support of the festival, is there a website with a link to donate?

Myc: I just saw a light bulb go above Lindsay's head!

Lindsey: Actually, that's a good idea. We should set that up. We don't have that right now. I can share an email where we get all of our e-transfers sent to if that's something you're interested in. Other than that, we don't have a place for that yet.

Marijo.nanwakola@gmail.com is the e-transfer email for donations to the Music Festival society

Q: Will the Dragon Fly hat be a merch for the next festival?

Myc: That's the GoFundMe. If you donate a certain amount, we have a partnership with the Dragonfly hat people. Let's make this happen.

Lindsey: We should, that's a good idea.

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Participant: It looks so good. Is it alive? I thought it was alive attached to the hat.

Myc: I don't know what it was made of; I think it was just plastic. I thought it was just for fun or something.

Myc: We named the dragonfly—was it Steve? We'll have to ask Dennis.

Koralee: No dragonflies were harmed in the making of that hat.