

Denise Jefferson
2981 Martin Rd
Bellingham, WA 98226

Re: Candidacy for Position B

Dear Members of the Nooksack Tribe,

Good day. My name is Snul-Thul-Sa, and my given name is Denise Jefferson. I am writing to formally announce my candidacy for Position B.

I am a direct descendant of the Sulkanum family. I am the daughter of the late Elizabeth (Villa) Paez and Alphonso Paez. My grandparents were Rose (Roberts) Villa and Pete Villa, and I am the great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Joe.

I have been married to my husband, Gabriel Jefferson, for 30 years. Together, we raised our family here in Nooksack on our Sulkanum land. We are the proud parents of Raymond Jefferson and Jane Jefferson and are blessed with three grandchildren: Gabriel Jefferson, Jamie Rose Jefferson, and Isabelle Jefferson.

Although I was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I have spent my entire life in Nooksack and was raised by my grandparents, Rose and Pete Villa. I had the privilege of growing up on our Sulkanum land, spending my childhood on Martin Road and Suchanon Drive with my parents, aunt, great-grandmother, uncles, and cousins. These experiences grounded me deeply in our community, culture, and family values.

Currently, I work as a Mental Health Provider with the Lummi Crisis Outreach Team and hold a license as a Licensed Social Work Associate-Independent Clinical (LSWAIC). With more than 20 years of experience in social work, I have dedicated my career to supporting children and families within the child welfare system.

I respectfully submit my petition to run for Position B and kindly ask for your support in the 2026 Nooksack Elections. I am genuinely passionate about this opportunity and would be honored to contribute my time, skills, and dedication to my tribal community through this important leadership role.

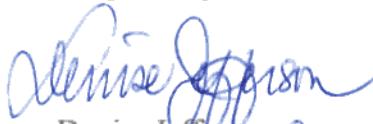
I bring a strong sense of responsibility, reliability, and respect for the work carried out on behalf of the Nooksack people. My professional background has reinforced the importance of clear communication, compassion, ethical practice, attentiveness, respect for individual differences, and strong community relationships in supporting social change and effective governance. I am dependable, organized, and willing to step in wherever support is needed.

What draws me to this position is the critical role the Tribal Council plays in shaping decisions that impact our community today and for future generations. I am deeply committed to serving our people while upholding our inherent sovereign rights with cultural integrity. This opportunity is profoundly meaningful to me as we work together to ensure sustainability for current

members, preserve a strong foundation for those yet to come, and continue honoring the dedication and sacrifices of our previous leaders and ancestors who laid the groundwork for our people.

Thank you for your continued support and consideration.

Respectfully,


Denise Jefferson
Snul-Thul-Sa 
Dec 31, 2025

Denise L. Jefferson, MSW, LSWAIC



12/31/25

Executive Leader | Behavioral Health & Child Welfare
Bellingham, WA
2981 Martin Rd
Bellingham, WA 98226
360-922-9688

EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Strategic and culturally grounded executive leader with over 20 years of experience directing tribal child welfare and behavioral health programs within tribal and state systems. Proven expertise in program administration, clinical oversight, regulatory compliance, workforce supervision, and systems collaboration. Deeply committed to tribal sovereignty, culturally responsive practice, and ethical service delivery that strengthens Native children, families, and communities.

Demonstrated success leading multidisciplinary teams, developing policy and quality assurance frameworks, managing crisis response systems, and advancing reunification and permanency outcomes. Experienced liaison to tribal councils, state agencies, courts, and federal partners, with a strong foundation in trauma-informed, strength-based, and community-based service models.

CORE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

- Executive & Program Leadership
- Tribal Child Welfare Administration
- Behavioral Health & Clinical Oversight
- Compliance (ICWA, DCYF, DLR, Tribal Codes, WAC, and CFR)
- Policy Development & Quality Assurance
- Workforce Supervision & Staff Development
- Crisis Response & Risk Management
- Family Reunification & Permanency
- Intergovernmental & Interagency Collaboration
- Trauma-Informed & Culturally Responsive Practice

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Lummi Indian Business Council/ Lummi Behavioral Health

**Lummi Crisis Outreach Mental Health Provider / Lummi Behavioral Health Clinician /
WISe Clinician, LSWAIC | Dec 2024 – Present**

- Provide clinical leadership and direct mental health services to children, youth, and families through outpatient and WISe programming.
- Conduct diagnostic intakes, treatment planning, and crisis intervention using trauma-focused and evidence-based modalities.
- Deliver culturally responsive, community-based services through home, school, and outreach settings.
- Collaborate with families, schools, and multidisciplinary teams to support stabilization, wellness, and long-term recovery.
- Provide crisis outreach

Social Worker II | Sept 2023 – Dec 2024

- Served as primary liaison between Lummi Nation and Washington State DCYF to ensure Active Efforts compliance and protection of tribal sovereignty.
- Led reunification planning, service coordination, and crisis response for high-risk families.
- Developed safety plans, crisis plans, and service plans using Motivational Interviewing and culturally grounded practices.
- Provided 24/7 on-call crisis support.

Puyallup Indian Tribe

Acting Children's Service Director | Feb 2023 – July 2023

- Directed all Children's Services operations, ensuring compliance with Puyallup Tribal Codes, DCYF, and DLR licensing standards.
- Supervised caseworkers, CPS investigators, and administrative staff; provided leadership during complex child protection matters.
- Implemented reunification strategies and strengthened multidisciplinary collaboration.
- Developed SOPs, performance management systems, and quality assurance processes.
- Reviewed and approved court documentation and resolved client and stakeholder concerns.
- Prepared quarterly and annual reports for BIA and Tribal Administration and represented the department in council and interagency meetings.

CPS / Intake Specialist | Feb 2022 – July 2023

- Supervised CPS staff operations, ensuring compliance with Puyallup Tribal Codes.
- Conducted child abuse and neglect investigations, safety assessments, and dependency actions under tribal code.

- Coordinated placements and court proceedings in compliance with ICWA and Child Protection Codes.
- Partnered with DCYF and tribal agencies across jurisdictions.
- Provided 24/7 on-call intake and emergency response.

Lummi Child Welfare

Program Manager | Aug 2017 – Jan 2022

- Led comprehensive child welfare operations, including CPS investigations, dependency case management, foster care licensing, and permanency services.
- Supervised supervisors and frontline staff; provided training, evaluations, and crisis management support.
- Ensured compliance with Lummi Code of Laws, Title IV-E/Title 8, and internal policies.
- Integrated trauma-informed care into program operations and staff wellness practices.
- Identified service gaps and implemented strategic improvements to enhance outcomes.
- Prepared and presented quarterly and annual reports to tribal leadership and partners.
- Strengthened collaboration with Washington State DCYF to improve outcomes for tribal families.

Nooksack Indian Tribe

Indian Child Welfare Program Manager | July 2010 – June 2017

- Directed Indian-Child Welfare programming, including investigations, case management, and reunification services.
- Supervised ICW staff and managed caseload assignments and program operations.
- Conducted risk, safety, and protective factor assessments and developed individualized service plans.
- Facilitated CPTs, MDTs, FTDMs, and Wraparound services.
- Developed policies, procedures, and case management tools to improve efficiency and compliance.
- Maintained strong partnerships with tribal, state, and community agencies.
- Provided 24/7 on-call response for child protection emergencies.

Earlier Experience

Social Worker III – CPS / – Department of Children & Family Services--2004
Case Manager II / Supervisor – Lummi Family Services

COPES Provider – Washington State
Details available upon request

EDUCATION & LICENSURE

- **Licensed Social Worker Associate Independent Clinical (LSWAIC)**
- **Master of Social Work (MSW)** – University of Washington
- **Bachelor of Arts** – University of New Mexico
- **Associate of Arts, Transfer Degree** – Northwest Indian College