



Port Alberni Association for Community Living **PAACL NEWS**



Children/Youth with Special Needs Program (CYSN)

In spite of the restrictions of COVID-19, the Children & Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) program staff have continued to support youth through a variety of online activities - one of which is a Star Wars themed Role Playing Game (RPG) that they've been hosting since March 2020. This game was set to be played in person but the pandemic caused a change in plans. Switching to an online format allowed youth to meet weekly from the safety of their own homes. There are facilitated conversations around the use of RPG's as therapeutic modalities for youth with learning and social challenges. The program staff have recognized the success of using this online platform as the youth supported have developed their social skills, cognitive growth and "Outside-The-Box" processing. The game is turn based and cooperative, which encourages each player (youth and staff) to support the other characters to solve a problem. Creativity and working together often sparks a lot of laughter and smiling faces which only enhances the experience of this program for the youth.

The CYSN program has also begun fabricating costume pieces based on the characters of their RPGs. One of the costume pieces, a Mandalorian-themed helmet, was presented to Gary, a young man who recently aged-out of the CYSN program, as a gift for his 19th birthday. He seemed to be encouraged, commended and extremely happy to have received the gift and even wore it through the McDonald's drive-thru! This spring the CYSN program is embarking on a Lord of the Rings themed RPG, which will allow the participating youth to design new characters and experience different challenges. There is no doubt there will be costume pieces created for this too!

