

SPRING 2021 EDITION

Family Ties

**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SECWÉPEMC
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES**



WHO WE SERVE

Aboriginal families and children living in the seven Secwépemc communities and Kamloops area. This includes: • Adams Lake • Bonaparte • Kamloops • Neskonlith • North Thompson • Skeetchestn • Whispering Pines/Clinton

Secwépemc Child and Family Services

MAIN OFFICE LOCATION

300 Chilcotin Road
Kamloops, BC
Phone: 250.314.9669
Fax: 250.314.9609

Email: reception@secwepemcfamilies.org

Toll Free: 1.866.314.9669

URBAN OFFICE LOCATION

285 Seymour Street
Kamloops, BC

Phone: 250-461-7237 Fax:

Email: urban.Reception@secwepemcfamilies.org

secwepemcfamilies.org

WELLNESS OFFICE LOCATION

#3-275 Seymour Street
Kamloops, BC

Mission Statement

Secwépemc Child and Family Services Agency delivers a standard of care for children and their families that is rooted in cultural practice and that genuinely acknowledges the importance of families and communities. The Agency seeks to create an environment that is inclusive and safe.

New Faces New Places

Meet some of your new coworkers who have recently joined the agency



LAURALEE TAYLOR
Mental Health Coordinator

WHO I AM A Cree/Ukrainian woman from Treaty 8, Drift Pile First Nation just outside of Slave Lake, Alta.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO? “Working with children, youth and families has always been a passion of mine as I grew up in and out of the foster system and did not have great experiences.”



BEVERLY PRICE-BELLWOOD
File clerk

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Kamloops
WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO?

“I love to cook, craft, sew, work in my yard and garden and decorate/organize. My husband and I love spending time boating on the Shuswap and spending time with our family. We also enjoy travelling.”



RYLEA MILLER
Community Family Preservation Team, Neskonlith Caseworker

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Kamloops
WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO?

“I enjoy being outdoors and travel whenever I get the chance. If you see me in the community you will most likely find me petting a dog or drinking coffee.”



LYLE PAUL
Events Coordinator

WHERE ARE YOU FROM? Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc

WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO? “I love spending time with my family, hunting, graphic design, exercising, skateboarding, making music, going to concerts and reading.”



STEWART McWILLIAM
Family Preservation

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

“Duncan on Vancouver Island but I have spent the last 10 years living throughout the Interior and now settling in Kamloops.”



MICHAEL TRUDEAU
Float Caseworker

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Originally from Hudson's Hope, BC
WHAT DO YOU LOVE TO DO?

“I am a true lover of all things outdoors. I am deeply into music and have a weekly show on CFBX. I also have a longstanding passion for reading.”

This young Anishnabe (Ojibway) woman wants to be a role model for youth

TRISTEN SCHNEIDER



STAFF PROFILES

Q: What brought you to the agency?

Honestly, it was my dream to live in British Columbia.

I worked in Jasper National Park (as part of an Indigenous interpretive team for Parks Canada) for four years and it really enticed me and my soul, being this First Nations woman living on reserve, coming from a small community. I was always told by my parents to leave the reserve and get as much opportunity as I can.

My biggest thing is that it's really important for me to have young people in these types of roles. It's really important to create space, and take up space, for young people. And being vocal about it.

One of the other reasons why I took this opportunity is that I have younger cousins who look up to me and I have a community that's looking up to me. It's really important to be a role model for my community, to be proud of the community that I come from, too.

Q: Tell us a bit about your background

My community, Shawanaga First Nation, Ojibway territory, is located two-and-a half hours north of Toronto, along Georgian Bay. We only have roughly about 600 people registered for the community, and only 200 live on reserve, so it's a pretty-knit tight community. One of the famous things that we're known for is Francis Pegahmagabow (the most highly decorated Indigenous soldier in Canadian military history and the most effective sniper of the First World War).

In some of my previous work prior to coming to the agency, I was employed with the Chiefs of Ontario, working with a political advocacy body. I worked with indigenous youth 18 to 29 around suicide, life promotion, mental health.

It really all stemmed from me being a part of my community Youth Council, that's how I got to where I am today — being involved from the local level. And then I started making connections, I have really good relationships with a lot of the chiefs back in Ontario. So it's like my network has been expanding. And that's one key thing why I wanted to come to B.C., is because networking and relationship-building are important. So when it is time for me to go

“One of the main reasons I took this opportunity is that I have younger cousins that look up to me, I have a community that's looking up to me. It's really important to me to be a role model for my community, to be proud of the community that I come from.”

home back to Ontario, let's say I'm working in my community, then I could be like, 'Oh, let me call this person in Kamloops. Because I know they know that they have more information or maybe help support my community in this initiative.'

Q: Who inspired you on your journey?

My grandfather on my mother's side, Roger Jones, was a well-respected elder back in Ontario. He did tremendous work with the homeless population. My grandmother, his wife, was part of the Indian day school. What I can recall as a child was living at my grandparents house every other weekend or every weekend, so for me, I really grew up obtaining that older soul.

In terms like of leadership, it was my Uncle Howard. When I was younger, just before our national Aboriginal Day, I went to go see him. He was just newly elected chief and I was about 10 years old, and I wanted to have fireworks on Aboriginal Day. So I asked him, and he said, 'No problem, Tristen.'

Continued on following page



QWEQWENTSÍN (GRATITUDE PRAYER)

Tqeltkúkwpí7,
Creator,

Kukwstéc-kuc re pyin
te sit'qt
Thank you for today

Kukwstéc-kuc ren
k'wséltkten-kuc
Thank you for my family/
relatives

Kukwstéc-kuc te
xwexwéyt te stem
Thank you for giving us
everything we need

Kukwstsétsemc
Thank you

New Youth Hub Set to Open on Kamloops North Shore

We will be opening our brand-new Youth Hub in July to better support our teens where they are.

Located on Tranquille Road on Kamloops' North Shore, the space is approximately 4,700 square feet, with plenty of room for kids to hang out on comfy couches and chairs, hop on Wi-Fi, play games, watch TV, use the kitchen, have a nap in the nap room, or touch base with their social or support workers. There will also be a washer-dryer, computers, and other amenities.

Harm reduction supplies will also be on site, as well as a clinician's office, and the entire Youth Intensive Team — the team leader, four social workers and two support workers.

New help-phone program launched exclusively for Indigenous children

Indigenous Initiatives and Equity Programs is now offering *Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program*. This is the first Kids Help Phone program designed specifically for First Nations, Inuit and Métis young people and was developed by Indigenous experts under the leadership of the Kids Help Phone Indigenous Advisory Council. The program is also delivered by a team of Indigenous Kids Help Phone staff using a distinctions-based approach.

Brighter Days helps young people build that courage by showing them what to expect, helping them understand how the services are used and, most of all, that it's OK to reach out for support. Additional sessions empower youth to support their own well-being.

Visit *Brighter Days: An Indigenous Wellness Program — Kids Help Phone* for more information and to register or email Indigenous@kidshelpphone.ca



COURTESY SIMPCW FIRST NATION

JURISDICTION UPDATE

Developing Inherent Secwepemc Jurisdiction for Children & Families

WHAT WE HEARD

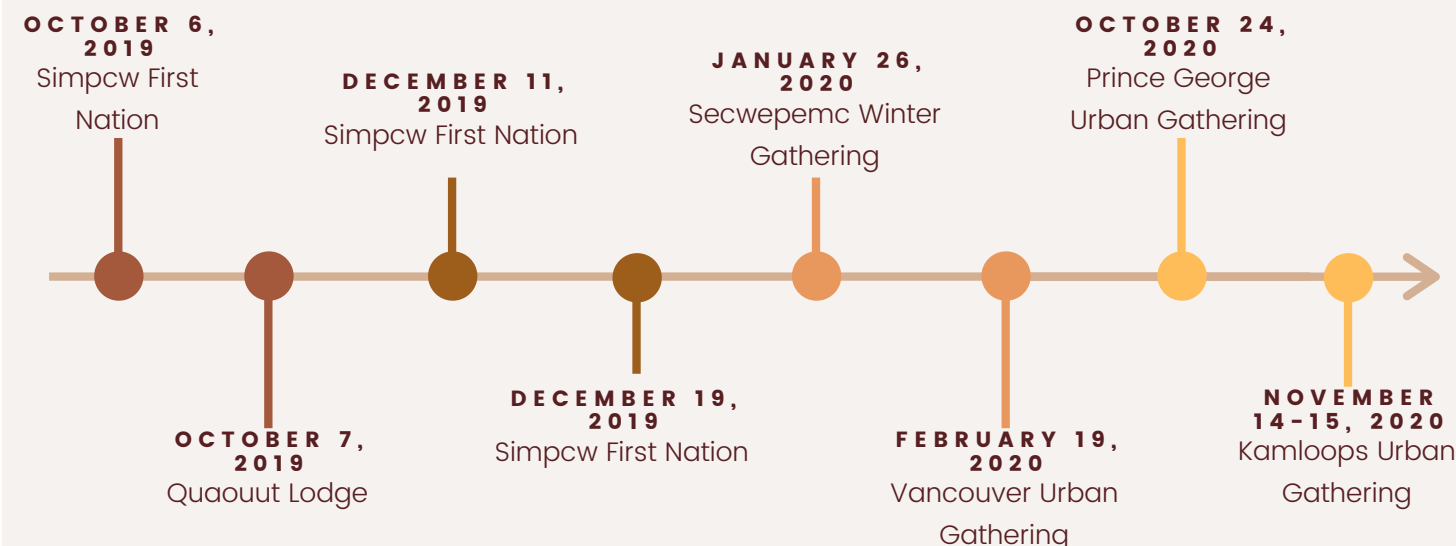


Since 2019, Simpcw First Nation has been busy developing Jurisdiction for Children and Families. The development of this jurisdiction is meant to replace British Columbia's current Child, Family, and Community Service Act (CFCSA). This act currently governs the administration of child welfare across the province.

SFN's leadership made a commitment to all members that the development of this law will be done through a comprehensive community members-driven process to create the best child and family services jurisdiction possible that is reflective of member's interests, values, and principles. As part of this we would like to share what we heard from members about what matters to you. We will use what we heard from members to move forward in the next phases of creating the jurisdiction.

WHEN WE HEARD

Timeline of Community Engagement



THE BC GOVERNMENT'S CFCSA AND MCFD HAVE FAILED INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

We heard strong frustration and distrust with the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) surrounding the ways their services continue to fail the community. While there is recognition that there needs to be a system in place, the BC government's CFCSA is inadequate and does not align with the needs and wants of the community. Members voiced concerns about the lack of accountability of the BC MCFD and government more largely.

Many members expressed the need to protect our children from the MCFD, and the fear that surrounds having an external, colonial body managing the care of the children. There was strong dissent about the lack of self-determination that comes from the BC government having control over our children.

"The MCFD is behind in operating their own laws"

"I don't like dealing with the ministry, even for support"

"No more '60s scoop, loss of language, or broken homes"

"They don't want to end racism - I trust Simpcw more"

MEET DAVE JEWELL

CAREGIVER PROFILE

DAVE WITH HIS TWO DAUGHTERS



Q: Tell us a bit about your background

When I was in my second year at the University College of the Cariboo in the late 1980s I got hired full time with Interior Community Services, which back then was Kamloops Youth Resources.

At that point I was also in the auxiliary police and I was looking at a career in either policing or telecom. It was unique because I was working in group homes with teenage boys at the same time, so it became a bit of a conflict, but not necessarily a negative conflict.

Then I started getting into fostering with my first wife, contracting with the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). We took in kids from babies all the way up to teenagers. In my lifetime, we've had more than 100 kids. When we got divorced, I sort of went out of it for a couple of years and then I got back into it and been into it ever since.

Q: Why did you decide to get into fostering?

The reason I originally got into fostering was my nephew, who had gotten into trouble with the law and passed away in custody in Vancouver. He was undiagnosed as schizophrenic and they didn't identify it, and he ended up hanging himself in custody. Shortly after that, I was just starting into fostering but it gave me a real sense of trying to help kids a bit more, too. And maybe that's why I went to the justice side, too. I worked for a contractor with probation, and he had individual contracts that you could work privately. So I did that for about 10 years as I got into fostering.

Q: How does the agency differ from the MCFD approach?

I worked for the Ministry for more than 20 years and the biggest difference is that SCFSA is identifying that kids all have individual needs. And you need to develop your contracts to address that. You can't do them under one lump contract.

When I used to contract with MCFD, it was, 'Here's a contract, this is what you'll do with it.' And I would say, 'Well, this kid has this,' and they wouldn't provide extra funding, or they would complain about it. So SCFSA identifies these kids have needs and we're going to provide for that. And I think that's only fair that they do that given that there's more funding available, in terms of counseling that can be covered and some activities that can be covered. So there's no reason they shouldn't provide a lot of that stuff.

Q: Why do you like most about fostering?

We're not in it for the money, obviously. We do it to help kids move forward. That's why I do it. Even for Shayla, we've had her for many years, and to think of the idea of her having to move or something because there's nothing available, it's just not going to happen. We're going to make that commitment that she gets through her life. We do it to help them out and try to connect them with their families. We say to the Resource workers, 'If there's any time we can connect them back to a relative or a friend or something where they could live that connects them to their culture, let's do that.'

Q: What do you like to do in your spare time?

We like to travel, we go on hikes. We do karaoke at home. My wife is Filipino so you have to do karaoke at home. I want to get a quad or something next to get outdoors.

3 STEPS TO BECOMING A CAREGIVER

1. Speak to a Resource Worker and ask questions to see if caregiving is well-suited for you. Ask for a caregiver package.
2. SAFE Home Study
3. Online Training

A child living in a Family Care Home is a temporary arrangement. Our goal is to return the child or youth to their families when the necessary mental, physical, social and spiritual supports have been established.

Contact Team Leader Gail Peterson to find out more
gail.peterson@secwepemcfamilies.org

SECWÉPEMCMC CULTURE

Bear and Coyote and the Tale of 2 Seasons

Courtesy Lyle Thomas
Community Integration Team Leader

Spring (sqepts) is now officially here! This is the start of a new year, new beginnings, the return of leaves, plants and warmer weather. The robin, hummingbird and the mountain bluebird are just a few of the birds that will return. Bear cubs, fawns and moths will soon appear, and people will start to move outdoors and may even start to move farther away from home for a day or two.

Spring has always been a sign of a new year. Yes, there are four seasons and, yes, we acknowledge when each season starts, but there are only two seasons that matter most — summer and winter.

Summer starts when the snow melts, trout fill the streams, and berries start to ripen and get picked. Almost as soon as summer starts, it comes to an end when the sockeye are no more and the birds start to fly in groups away from the dark clouds forming in the North. There is a brief interlude when it is time to relax, but not for too long, as the air is cooled and the ground hardens, the mountains turn white and the leaves fall, for this is the start of winter, until summer starts again.

When Bear was asked by the Creator to think of what he would like for seasons, all Bear thought of was how long he would like to sleep. Bear was told to count the tailfeathers of a bird, divide the number in half, and that is how long summer and winter would be. Bear being very, very smart, good looking and extremely strong compared to Coyote, chose grouse, which has 22 tailfeathers. That meant that Bear would get to sleep for 11 months. Once Coyote found out about Bear's plans, he tricked Bear into counting a red-tail flicker's tailfeathers, which only has 12. Divided in half makes six, and this is why there are six months of winter and six months of summer.

Spring is a true season, the start of a new year and is the beginning of summer, until the first day of fall when winter begins.



WHAT IS JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE?

Jordan's Principle is a child-first principle named in memory of Jordan River Anderson. Jordan was a First Nations child from Manitoba. Born with complex medical needs, Jordan spent more than two years unnecessarily in hospital while the province of Manitoba and the federal government argued over who should pay for his at home care. Jordan died in the hospital at the age of 5, never having spent a day in a family home. Jordan's Principle ensures that First Nations children can access the services they need, when they need them. Services are provided on the basis of substantive equality, which includes providing culturally based services that take into full account the historical and contemporary disadvantage that many First Nations children live with.

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE

FRAMEWORK UPDATE

NEW PROGRAM ENSURES FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO THE SERVICES THEY NEED

We have recently hired our very first Jordan's Principle Coordinator — Erin Chillihitzia. Since joining the agency in 2016, Erin has had various roles, such as Family Enrichment Worker, Early Years interventionist and child protection. Erin has dedicated her career to advocacy for Indigenous children with special needs who not only face unique challenges with their diversity, but also systematic oppression.



Jordan's Principle supports substantive equality to children when accessing government services such as:

- Orthodontics
- Education Support
- Technology
- Speech therapy
- Tutoring
- Assessments
- And more!

Erin is available to assist families navigate the application process, so please contact her with any questions you may have.

Erin Chillihitzia, BSW | Jordan's Principal Coordinator
Secwépemc Child and Family Services
 285 Seymour St. Kamloops, BC V2C 2E7
 Work cell: 250.319.1931
 Fax: 250.421.1620
erin.chillihitzia@secwepemcfamilies.org

A development of framework of practice must be lead and guided by our member communities and rooted in culture and language, and it will guide agency practice in all service delivery areas.

WHAT ARE WE DEVELOPING?

- A framework for cultural practice is a living document for the communities and SCFSA staff to ensure that Secwépemc cultural practices guides all aspects of organization. It will be informed by work that has already been completed within the Nation and communities and will ensure community direction and guidance. The document is a way of affirming Secwépemc teachings about family systems and raising Secwépemc children for SCFSA staff and communities.
- Provide the vision and strategic directions for cultural practice for SCFSA.
- Support Secwépemc communities to find their own answers to the question: How do we want to look after our children and youth? How can we keep our children and youth safe in their families?
- Shape the kind of services that SCFSA provides. Guide the design of current and new support programs.
- Set the mind frame and ethical orientation of the people who work with our children.

PROJECT OUTLINE

- Guidance and direction: SCFSA Elders Committee, SCFSA Youth Committee, SCFSA community liaisons
- Engagement with SCFSA member communities as directed by community liaisons
- Develop community engagement plan — what do we want to gather, ask, know?
- Information scan — work completed by Stsmemelt Project, Simpcw Jurisdiction, Secwépemc Masters/PhD theses, community developments and other sources of information
- Children and Youth Art Project — *"What is in my Heart"*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide feedback and direction into the project

NEXT STEPS

- Adding this project as a standing item on meeting agendas to ensure regular and meaningful consultation and direction to support moving the project forward

Children and Youth Art Project: *What Is in my Heart*

We are developing an art book to accompany the development of the Secwépemc Cultural Framework of Practice. It is intended to bring forward and centre the voices of Secwépemc Children and Youth. Each contribution will be required to have parental informed consent and each contributor will receive two books. The book will also be bilingual.

WHO: All children and youth from the communities that SCFSS serves.

WHAT: Artwork, on paper with markers or pencil crayons or crayons, or photography answering one of the following questions:

- "I feel the most loved / safe / connected when ..."
- "I am the most proud when ..."
- "What I love the most about my family / community is ..."
- "What I want to see for all Secwépemc children / youth in my community ..."

WHEN: March-June 2021

WHERE: Community schools, children in care, community call outs, youth groups

FACILITATED BY: SCFSA Community Engagement staff