

SPRING 2022 EDITION

# Family Ties (k'wseltkten)



TteS Elder Colleen Seymour, left, leads staff in a song at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new SCFSA building.

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SECWÉPEMC  
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

## WHO WE SERVE

Indigenous 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

## URBAN OFFICE LOCATION

285 Seymour Street

Kamloops

## WELLNESS OFFICE LOCATION

#3-275 Seymour Street

Kamloops

SCFSA acknowledges, with deep respect and gratitude, that our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Secwépemc speaking Peoples. We recognize the past, present, and future generations of the Secwépemc Peoples who help us as stewards of this land, as well as honour and celebrate this place. We honour our connection to this land and the teaching and healing that it offers.

## 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 Faces New Places

Meet some of the newbies who have recently joined the agency



**GORDON CUTHBERT**  
Family Enrichment Worker

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** “I am a member of the Sheonitay Nakona Oyate from Kisbey, Sask.”  
**WHAT’S YOUR PASSION?** “My goal is to help children and their families better themselves, solidifying a better future together.”



**SUZETTE PRINCE**  
Resource Worker

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Prince George (Nak’azdli Whut’én Indian Band)  
**WHAT’S YOUR PASSION?** “I am an intergenerational Residential School survivor and like many of you, I am passionate about changing the future for our Indigenous children in care.”



**JORDYN WILLAMSON**  
Family Preservation Caseworker

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** “I was born in Prince George, and raised in Mackenzie on Tse’khene land.”  
**WHAT’S YOUR PASSION?** “In high school I found a passion for the arts, specifically painting and dance.”



**TAMMI MacLEOD**  
Float Caseworker

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** I was born in the Kootenays and grew up in Okanagan Falls and Revelstoke  
**TELL MORE ABOUT YOURSELF** “I just recently moved to the interior after living in Fort St John for 16 years to be closer to family.”

## Mission Statement

Secwépemc Child and Family Services Agency collaborates and advocates for the well-being and cultural continuity and connection of children to their families and communities by honouring the legacy of our Secwépemc ancestors and our Secwépemc Nation.

## Vision Statement

Secwépemc Child and Family Services Agency works in collaboration with Secwépemc communities to deliver family services that strengthen the family unit and uphold Secwépemc laws and are guided by Secwépemc values.



# GATHERING TOGETHER & NEW BEGINNINGS



The Agency's new home is taking shape right behind our current building on Chilcotin!



AT TOP: Standing shoulder to shoulder with Williams Lake First Nation Chief Willie Sellars, middle, Cultural Coordinator Dave Archie and the entire Williams Lake FN at Sacred Fire ceremonies on their lands.  
ABOVE: We were also happy to help our partners at Adams Lake Indian Band for "Calling our Children Home". The day featured ceremonies, activities, speakers, and entertainment.  
LEFT: The Bonaparte First Nation celebrated Family Day in style this year with its Loon Lake Winter Carnival.



We expect to host our grand opening sometime in late May or early June. More details to come.



# MEET CINDY CARUSI

Many of you know Cindy Carusi as our ever-helpful, always cheerful Chief Financial Officer, but many of you might not know how passionate she is about reconnecting with her

Secwépemc culture and language.

She is so passionate about it, in fact, that Cindy takes any chance she can to jump online and learn from the many Secwépemctsin teachers we have in the surrounding area.

An intergenerational survivor, Cindy's mom was a Residential School survivor who saved Cindy's sister from the same fate.

Cindy is also our latest winner of the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Award, which you can read about on the last two pages. Dr. Blackstock is also a woman Cindy describes as her hero.

Here's a bit more about Cindy:

**Q: What brought you to the agency?**

I worked for Shuswap Nation Tribal Council as a student and we did the books for SCFSA. I always wanted to work here.

**How many years ago would that be?**

16

**Q: What did you know about the agency before you were hired?**

I like the idea of helping children, supporting our First Nations children. Just seeing the potential that people can have with the support, because not everyone has that kind of support in their life.

**Q: Can you talk about your own family history?**

My mom was a Residential School survivor, and she had nine brothers and sisters, all of whom were very close. And her nine brothers and sisters were almost removed by the child-welfare system. But her older sister and her sister's husband took the kids and ran when they heard the child-welfare officials were on their way. My mom's mom passed away when she was 14 so her older sister and brother-in-law took on that parenting responsibility.

My mom overcame many challenges having attended Residential School. She held anger, hurt and heartache, and she was still able to prevent my sister from being taken to Residential School. I may not have been taken because I was younger, but my sister for sure would have been taken. My mom took her and ran with her.

**Q: Do you have memories of those times?**

I do have memories from my childhood, both good and challenging ones, but I choose to focus on the good memories. Attending Residential School created a lot of different emotions for my mom, but for the most part she did an amazing job considering what she went through and she did everything she could to protect us. My mom was my best friend and helped me raise my two daughters.

Because of my mom's experience with Residential School, she didn't see the value in school. When I was in Grade 7, I quit school and she said, 'That's fine. If you don't want to go there, you don't have to,' because she had such bad memories of school. I was allowed to quit school, but I had to go to work. So at 10 I went to work at the Oasis Hotel and then at 12 I went to work at the Husky waitressing a graveyard shift, and she was OK with that. I received my education in life and didn't graduate from university until I was 40.

**C** I like the idea of helping children, supporting our First Nations children. Just seeing the potential that people can have with the support, because not everyone has that kind of support in their life.

**Q: What do you like most about your job?**

I love the idea of what we're doing for the children and families. I love that we are now able to offer Prevention services. I love the language and the cultural aspect, too, because I missed out on a lot of that as a kid. All of this is new to me, I've never had that in my life.

I take pride in making sure that this funding is protected. We want to make sure it goes to our people because that's who it's meant for.

**Q: You talked about how Cindy Blackstock is your hero. Can you elaborate?**

My first boss called us the poor cousins across the river. We had no funding, we couldn't offer training, and we couldn't offer raises. MCFD even offered us their used furniture. And then Cindy Blackstock took it upon herself to fight the federal government.

She's just so fierce. Because of her we have all these programs — the cultural program, increased early years support for children. They say one to six is critical for a child's development, so now we have a team of people working with our one- to six-year-olds. There are so many little ones who require support and now we can work with them. We couldn't do that before. We had minimal funding, so we could help a triage of a few children and just skim the top of the need, but we're doing so much work now and that's because of her. She went to court but it wasn't about money for her. It's about helping our people.

She's just amazing. She really is.

The Province is still funding our operations based on number of children in care with limited funding to support families and prevent children from entering care and that's just discriminatory and wrong.



# DR. CINDY BLACKSTOCK AWARD

## 2021 WINNER CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER CINDY CARUSI



Cindy Carusi, middle, receives the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Award with Natasha Marshall, left, and Executive Director Yvonne Hare.

Here's what **Executive Director Yvonne Hare** said about Cindy in her nomination: "I would like to nominate Cindy Carusi for the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Award for the exemplary leadership she has shown as Finance Manager. Cindy has had an enormous yet quiet impact in her role by leading our amazing Finance department for more than 15 years. She exemplifies the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Award in her outstanding contribution to the children and families whom SCFSA serves and she shows it in her commitment every day how she models Dr. Cindy Blackstock in her vision of improving the conditions for Indigenous children, families, and their communities."

"Cindy is an unsung hero and tireless advocate in our Finance department. Over the past two years, I have worked with Cindy on several projects that are improving the lives of our community members and the staff at SCFSA. Cindy has worked alongside me to advocate for a significant increase in Prevention funding that is literally stopping the removal of children in our communities. She has also played a major role in negotiations with Indigenous Services Canada and contractors for the development of a brand-new

office building to house SCFSA programs and services, which will ultimately bring our SCFSA family together under one roof, making our own dreams come true.

"In her service to the children, families, and communities we serve, Cindy never hesitates to go over and above to ensure we have funding available to meet their needs and more. She founded our annual Funscrip Award for families, reducing the stress that our low-income families have in trying to give their children something extra like a bicycle. She spends time ensuring that all of our Christmas hampers for families are done every year so that no one goes without. I always notice that she joins in community and agency events, and she actively helps out participants and represents SCFSA in the most meaningful ways.

"Cindy Carusi is undoubtedly one of our greatest unsung heroes and she deserves to be recognized for her countless sacrifices, generous spirit, gentle heart, and last but not far from least, the incredible impact she has had over the years in improving the lives of the children, families, and communities we serve.

"To you, Cindy, I admire you so deeply and am honoured to be on this incredible journey with you!"

**From Cindy Carusi:** "It is an absolute honour to receive this award. Kukwstsétsemc, Yvonne, for the nomination. It feels amazing to give back to our communities and I will continue to dedicate my energy to offer the best service to our children, families, and communities. The employees at Secwépemc Child and Family Services are dedicated and hardworking and I am proud to be part of the team.

"Dr. Cindy Blackstock, my hero, has been described as a relentless moral voice for the inequitable provision of child and family services to First Nations. Dr. Blackstock's efforts secured millions of dollars of funding by speaking out against the systemic inequalities of services provided to our children and families and holding the federal government accountable through the legal system. In 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the federal government to immediately end discriminatory practices and support First Nations children equally.

"The federal government was ordered to increase funding for child and family services and the work of advocating for equality continues. There have been many changes to funding at SCFSA, which have allowed for the development of additional programs and support. Because of the work of Dr. Blackstock our agency now has the funding to work in collaboration with the communities and families we serve to ensure the services are culturally appropriate and community driven, create Prevention programs to provide the much-needed support to families to keep children at home or at least in their communities, and provide equality in salaries and benefits. I am honoured to have been able to contribute to these initiatives."



## Great feedback from our 12 Days of Christmas Contest!

**We asked our Facebook followers what they like about SCFSA. Here's what they had to say:**

"I really appreciate the Kinship Connections program, as it helps our children in care remain with the family, and often times in community. Knowing ones roots is so important, as it is where our culture grows from."

"It is so awesome that you are providing programs that are about culture and how to gather and preserve food. That is so important to teach families and children."

"Incorporating culture into early learning is so important. Having children and their families learn in an inclusive environment helps children learn resilience and empathy. Such an amazing program."

"I basically had all the services that you provided for myself and the care for my grandson. Your teams are all totally amazing. You give so much to all who reach out, always friendly services and support."

"The agency has a great team of workers ... when I needed them to get the other parent involved with children, the agency was always available to help and I have always had a intake worker who listens to my concerns with no judgment ... they go to a lot of community events through the year ... always fun and generous with each event they do ... barbecue in the summer ... Christmas gifts for children."



# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & NOTICES

Secwépemc Child and Family Services



## IS RECRUITING YOUTH TO JOIN THE YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL (YAC)

The Youth Advisory Council was formed in 2018 to ensure that youth not only have a voice in their own care, but also in the larger care system that is designed to support them. The YAC ensures that SCFSA holds a youth voice, and its policies and initiatives are informed by young people who have experienced care. YAC is also committed to improving social work practice, and to continually developing their leadership and advocacy skills.

### Eligibility:

Be 16- 27 years old  
Youth from or currently in care with SCFSA

### INTERESTED IN MAKING AN DIFFERENCE IN CHILD WELFARE?

Seeking youth that are interested in making a difference in the care experiences of other youth and speaking about topics relevant to them. The YAC meets every last Tuesday of the month, with opportunity for further engagement. This is a volunteer position but an honorarium is provided.

Come SHARE, LEARN, and feel SUPPORTED in this space.

### Please submit names

to Christina LeBlond, Youth Support Worker  
christina.leblond@secwepemcfamilies.org



Secwépemc Child & Family Services  
Wellness Team

## 'Mind Medicine' Group

- Group meets via zoom-reliable internet/computer required.
  - Program supplies provided.
  - Gifts for those who complete the program!
- \*\*Must be in Kamloops or surrounding areas\*\***

For registration or more info contact:  
lauralee.taylor@secwepemcfamilies.org

**Ages 13-18**

**7 week program:  
Mar 15th - Apr 26th.  
Tuesdays  
5:00-6:30pm.**

Learn to Manage Anxiety & Develop  
Effective Coping Strategies



Please check website  
[secwepemcfamilies.org](http://secwepemcfamilies.org)  
for more information



### Indigenous Parenting Program

Facilitated by the Early Years Team at SCFSA

THE INDIGENOUS PARENTING PROGRAM IS A 5 WEEK PROGRAM FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS WHO WANT TO EXPLORE TRADITIONAL PARENTING PRACTICES AND STRENGTHEN THEIR FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURE AND HOLISTIC PARENTING.

**IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY**

**WEDNESDAYS 1:30-3:30PM**

**APRIL 6-MAY 4/2022**

For information & registration contact  
[ashley.rankin@secwepemcfamilies.org](mailto:ashley.rankin@secwepemcfamilies.org)





## POSTPARTUM SUPPORT

For Indigenous families/parent to new babies

When: online every first and third Tuesday of the month  
By Zoom for the time being to stay safe during Covid-19

Every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each month  
1pm -2pm

RSVP TO: Crystal Bullock at  
[crystal.bullock@secwepemcfamilies.org](mailto:crystal.bullock@secwepemcfamilies.org)  
Phone: 250 320-4659

Group will be hosted by Crystal Bullock, Barb Fedora and Nicole Williams

Items covered are from the four parts of the medicine wheel including Breathing, diet and exercise, self-care, Sleep/taking a break, developing supports, resisting isolation, helping your body heal, mindfulness and so much more.