

FALL/WINTER 2022-23 EDITION

# K'weseltkten (Family Ties)

WINTER GATHERING  
POWWOW!  
See more pics inside!

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF  
SECWÉPEMC CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

WHOM 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

153 Kootenay Way  
Kamloops

YOUTH OFFICE

348 A Tranquille Rd., 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*

DR. CINDY BLACKSTOCK AWARD WINNER

# BERNIE CHARLIE



Bernie Charlie is this year's recipient of the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Award, a Distinguished Service Award that was created in Dr. Blackstock's honour in 2018.

The Dr. Cindy Blackstock Service Award is given to an employee in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the children and families who are served by Secwépemc Child and Family Services and in appreciation for their commitment/dedication towards realizing Dr. Blackstock's vision for all First Nations children.

Bernie recently made the courageous decision to leave the Agency and follow her heart to work with the children and families from her home community, but we were able to make this presentation to her before she left.

Here's what Sharon Edwards had to say about why she chose to nominate Bernie:

*"I nominate my beautiful colleague, Bernie Charlie, for the 2022 Dr. Cindy Blackstock Service Award. Bernie is a contributing member to our awesome Resource Team. Bernie is an Aboriginal Social Worker (she is Carrier and Gitksan heritage) who uses her cultural teachings in her social work practice. Bernie generously shares her cultural teachings with us and explains the meaning behind her cultural practices/beliefs. She explains the connections between the cultural practices and how this impacts the family and community in ways of looking after each other (which in turn makes the statement of a community raising a child so true).*

*"Bernie is courageously truthful and believes in telling the truth or exploring for the truth. She believes people she works with and for deserve the truth and it is respectful and honorable to be truthful."*

Bernie met up with Dr. Cindy Blackstock by chance at a conference in Vancouver in December.

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# What Bernie had to say in her own words and her own language

*Hadeeh, Dinee Zeh, Dza kiy zeh, ski zeh, Si Bernie Charlie sadnee. Gitdimden habilh dzeeh dzilh.*

*Gilantan haba dza dzilh get.*

*Sneh, Violet Charlie dey hilyilhnee. Wellow sileh. En be bah lats uze, “Del Dza Tse Kiy”*

*Sbeb, Ben Charlie Sr. Dzut nein.*

*La mal yas isleeh. Sc’iy Dan Manuel hayilhnee Siskak tahnee zeh ‘indzin. Syez Chelsea t’la Kenzie t’la Violet Rose habatnee. Syez ‘at Erika hilyilhnee t’la syunden Moad hilyilhnee.*

*S chiy yu Tamara t’la Layla habatnee.*

*Wagoos be winic’lehn gen Tk’emlups te Secwepemc haba yintah.*

*Weyt-kp Xwexweyt-ep*

*Bernie Charlie, ren skwekst.*

*Le7 te swiktem ne7e leye ne Secwépemculucw. (wah elk wa welk stwen) te Secwépemc Child and Family Services, Kinship Team Leader.*

— — —  
**G**reetings, Chiefs, noble people and my relatives. My name is Bernie Charlie, I come from the Bear Clan of my people. My father clan are the Cariboo clan. My mother and father are both now in the spirit world. I am married to Dan Manuel.

I have three children, Chelsea, Kenzie and Violet Rose. My daughter-in-law is Erika and my son in law is Moad. My granddaughters are Tamara and Layla. Thank you to the Tk’emlups te Secwépemc people for allowing me to be a guest on their unceded and ancestral lands.

Dr. Cindy Blackstock and I have a few things in common. First, we are both Gitxsan. My maternal great grandmother’s lineage originates from the Hazelton area.

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*“She was a fierce advocate for the foster parents she worked with and worked to ensure there was open, honest, and fair communication with foster parents. One foster parent described Bernie as an extremely dedicated, caring, nurturing soul, who always had a positive outlook on situations.*

*“Here’s an example of Bernie’s cultural practice while advocating for foster parents:*

*“While discussions were ongoing about a transition of a child to parents, the foster parents had a difficult time understanding the process and felt their voices were not heard. Bernie explained to the team that the foster parents are Indigenous, they know the family dynamics, have had the child for several years and have information to share that would help the team with the plan to transition the child safely.*

*“She further explained that the last thing the foster parents want is for the child to be returned quickly, due to the parents not understanding the child’s needs, and with the child ending up back in foster care. Bernie encouraged the foster parent to use his voice to explain his frustration and she would be there to provide support. Bernie encouraged the team to listen with respect and listen to understand. With open respectful communication, the foster parent was heard. This open communication was based on Bernie’s cultural practice of respect and telling truths. A transition plan was developed with all involved and developed for the best interest of the child.*

*“I respectfully submit my nomination for my beautiful caring colleague, Bernie Charlie, for the Dr. Cindy Blackstock Service Award 2022. Bernie lives her culture and incorporates her culture in her social work practice. Bernie is deserving of this award as an Indigenous social worker. Bernie carries herself with dignity and is approachable and shows respect to her team and to our Resource Team when she is acting Team Leader for Gail.”*



Bernie was gifted a traditional Secwépemc fishing harpoon in recognition of the Dr. Cindy Blackstock award, and Dr. Blackstock herself sent well wishes via video link.

*She is Gitxsan- Wetsuweten. Secondly, we both were born in Likislyu territory, the area around Burns Lake. And third, we both know the value of advocating for children and family under a heavy colonial blanket of policies that do not serve Indigenous People.*

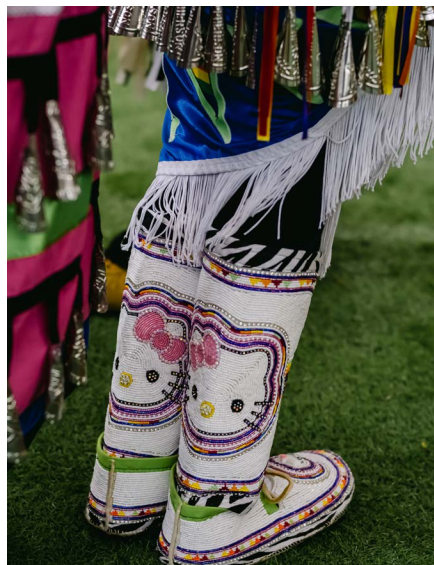
*Not one Indigenous Person alive today is not affected by these colonial policies. From 1831 to 1996, many colonial policies such as Residential Schools, the ‘60s Scoop, leading up to our current child welfare system, has impacted and traumatized Indigenous people. In 1973, almost 50 years ago, I was just a baby when my parents were already involved in child welfare by taking on additional children, nieces and nephews to prevent them from being adopted out into the care of strangers. My parents, who by the government standards of the day were “too poor” and living in poverty, were not the first choice of the Indian Agents and “Welfare Administrators” to place my cousins with. Fortunately, they had strong advocates in the community to stand up and say, “These children belong with family.”*

*This been the historical practice of child welfare. The important work that Dr Cindy Blackstock is doing in calling upon governments in the unequal distribution of funding for Indigenous children and families inspires me in the*

*work that I do in child welfare. I am so grateful for people like Dr. Cindy Blackstock for blazing trails for so many people to advocate for equality and equal access of resources for Indigenous children and families in modern society. Because of the work that she has done inspiring people in this realm of child welfare, little people like my 5-year-old cousin is safely back in the care of her big sister and out of foster care as of last year. The ways of our Ancestors are slowly being acknowledged. Our way of life of in caring for our children and families, our language, our songs and our dances are finally being acknowledged in federal legislation through Bill C-92. I am proud to be among the many good people who do this work for our children and families — our Elders council, our youth advisory council, my colleagues who do this thankless work for our children and families. I see you, I hear you and I respect you for walking this path with us. Most importantly, to the communities we serve, thank you for trusting us to walk along side you as we do our best to “not make the same mistake twice.” I want to acknowledge my mentor, my inspiration and now my chosen Aunty, Sharon, for this nomination. Thank you for teaching me all that I know in doing this work, Awitzech, Mesiy, kukwstsetsemc, all my relations.*



# WINTER GATHERING



## New Faces New Places

Meet some of the newbies who have recently joined the agency



**CASSIA MCLEAN**  
Community Caseworker  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc  
**WHAT'S YOUR PASSION?** "I am passionate about advocating for children and families to overcome challenges and navigate complex/unjust systems."



**ELIZABETH THOM**  
Direct Support Worker  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Xaxli'p First Nation in Lillooet  
**TELL US MORE**  
"I'm excited to be working one on one with our children in community and to gain more knowledge."



**MARSHA SPINKS**  
Jordan's Principle Coordinator  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Lytton  
**TELL US MORE**  
"I am looking forward to reconnecting with the Secwépemc Nation."



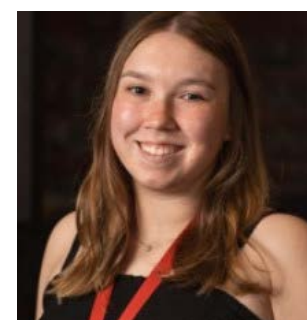
**TRENA GAUTHIER**  
Early Years Intervention Specialist  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Born in Hay River, NWT  
**WHAT'S YOUR PASSION?** "I love being outdoors and being on water. Time with my family, friends, community, and animals is important to me."



**BRITTANEY WATERS**  
Family Preservation Caseworker  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Inuvik  
**WHAT'S YOUR PASSION?**  
"I am very passionate about advocacy and working with partners to raise awareness about current and historical colonization."



**TRENT GILLESPIE**  
Float Caseworker  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Kamloops  
**WHAT'S YOUR PASSION?**  
"I have a passion to help the youth and kids of Kamloops and be a better influence for them than the previous generations."



**KAYLA ROSETTE**  
Family Preservation Caseworker  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc  
**TELL US MORE**  
"I am excited to work alongside families through their paths of healing and growth as I undergo my own professional growth."



**MOHAMMAD GHANIM (left) and JERRY JOHANSEN**  
IT and Data Management Team Leader (Mohammad) and IT Coordinator (Jerry)  
**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?** Amman, Jordan (Mohammad) and Prince George (Jerry)

Some great shots of our Winter Gathering Powwow courtesy Magalie Knopf. The first powwow since the pandemic was a great success, with dancers and drummers coming from as far as Saskatchewan. Check out our Facebook page for more pics.



# NEW BUILDING GRAND OPENING



It was so such a treat to welcome so many to our new building for our Grand Opening, which represents an exciting new chapter for our Agency and the children, families, and communities we serve.



# CARVING SECWÉPEMC LANDMARKS



We had an amazing time this summer carving with our kids at the Secwépemc Landmarks Trailhead Post Workshops on the shores of Adams Lake. The purpose of the project is to highlight Secwépemc stories, voices, and relationships with the landscape from past, present, and future generations. The Landmarks project will eventually feature 100 trailhead posts installed on trail systems throughout the Shuswap.

