

GOOZIH DUSLUS



Sept / Oct 2024

Bringing Our Children Back Home

Reconnecting children in
care and those living away
with their culture and
community

Stories of Hope and Strength Premiere

Nah Zul Deez T'iah

Take a look at activities from this
year's AGA in Burns Lake



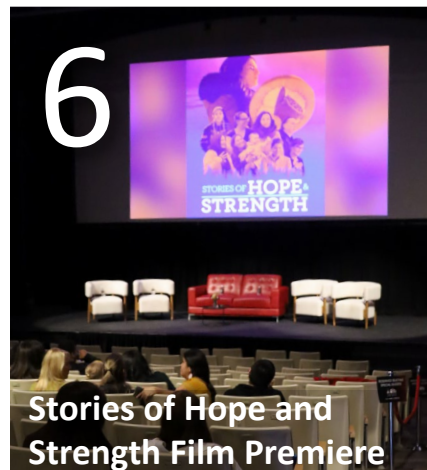
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On the Cover:

Emma Palmantier
being acknowledged
at the CSFS 2024
AGA in Burns Lake

Writer / Editor / Designer: David Sikobe
Writers: Olamipo Bandele
Beth Neufeld
Meagan Howard-Gibbon
Editorial Director: Marlaena Mann
Managing Editor: Jordan Cryderman
Editors: Andrea Palmer
Brooke Wiebe



A Message from our COO

Mike
Bote

As we commemorated the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, we were reminded of our collective responsibility to protect Indigenous children, honour the survivors, families, and communities of residential schools, and remember those children who never returned home. On this significant day, CSFS participated in several initiatives aimed at promoting healing and cultural renewal. These actions are vital parts of our ongoing commitment to justice and well-being across the communities we serve.

It was a privilege to present my first annual report as Chief Operating Officer during our 2024 Annual General Assembly held in Burns Lake. This event was a crucial opportunity for us to come together, hear updates on ongoing CSFS projects, and engage in meaningful dialogue about our strategic goals. I was particularly moved by the theme, Nah Zul Deez T'iah – Your Spirit is Precious, which echoed throughout our discussions, emphasizing the importance of nurturing our spirits while we build strong, healthy communities.

Our departments have been hard at work. Child & Family Services has forged a partnership with the

Nicola Valley Institute of Technology to train future social workers—a step that promises to enhance our professional capacity significantly. Our IT and Housing teams are rolling out exciting technological innovations to upgrade our infrastructure effectively. Communications has launched the "Healing Hands" campaign, which has already started to increase awareness of the positive impacts of CSFS services. Meanwhile, our Justice team is making significant advances on crucial projects like the Calls to Action from the Highway of Tears Symposium, and their upcoming film series, Stories of Hope and Strength, will showcase powerful stories of resilience and recovery.

This past year has marked a significant evolution in our organization, highlighted by changes in our Executive team designed to enhance our operational effectiveness. My role as COO was introduced to allow our CEO, Warner Adam, to focus more on our long-term goals of achieving Jurisdiction while I oversee the daily leadership of key departments. This structural shift has already resulted in streamlined operations and more focused service delivery. My commitment is to ensure that we not only meet but exceed our goals

in rebuilding the Nations' capacities and providing innovative, high-quality services that are deeply rooted in Carrier and Sekani culture.

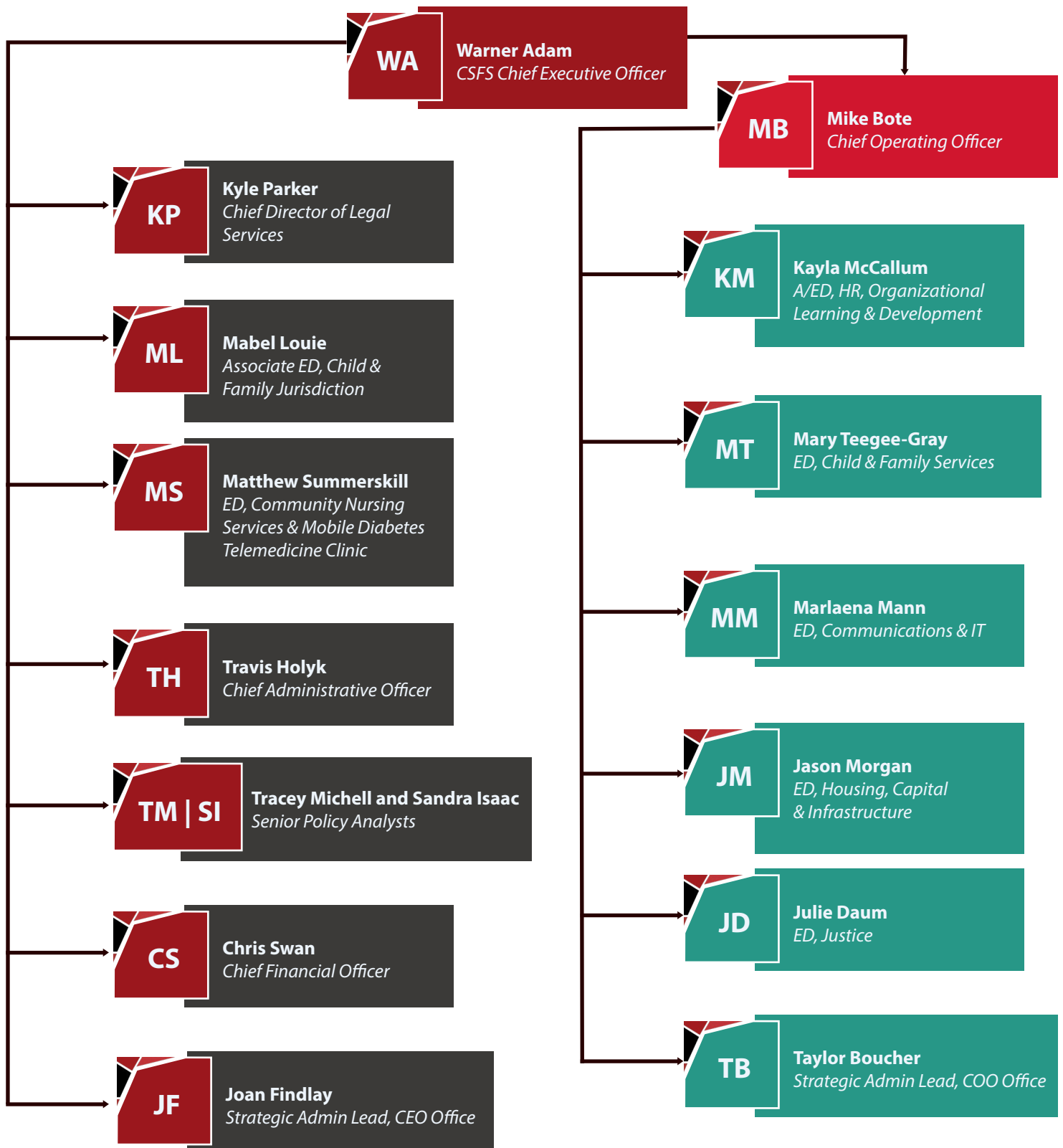
Mussi Cho for your continued support. I am excited about the path ahead and look forward to achieving more together as we continue to strengthen the Nations we serve.

Mike Bote



COO Mike Bote sharing his report at the CSFS 2024 AGA in Burns Lake

CSFS Executive Organizational Chart



Jurisdiction: Kahe dee'zeelhe – Our Journey

Bringing Children Back Home

Reconnecting children in care and those living away from community with their families continues to be a priority for many Nations. Between navigating geographic barriers, communication between multiple parties, and scheduling conflicts, this is a task that can prove quite the challenge, to say the least.

As shared by Travis Crowther, a Band Designated Representative for Nee Tahi Buhn, community events and culture camps are proving to be catalysts for sparking reconnection to the land, community and family.

Born and raised in Calgary, Alberta, Travis and his family made the decision to move to British Columbia with hopes to reconnect with his wife and son's community and culture. Since beginning his work with Nee Tahi Buhn, a primary focus for Travis has been helping children reconnect with the community.

Can you explain the work you have been doing to reconnect kids with their community?

Whenever there are special events like culture camp and events where we want to include the entire community, we send out an email and post on Facebook. We ask anyone with children or low-income families who would like to attend to contact us at the office so we can arrange travel and accommodations.

I reach out to all the foster parents to make sure they are invited and receive the same supports from the Nation. I have also mailed and delivered the Wet'suwet'en dictionary to all head of households – this includes making sure children in care receive a copy, too.

Additionally, I attend all 90-day visits and anything that involves

the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). This allows me to mention cultural events or activities on the territories to the foster parents directly. I find that anything I mention at these meetings is usually put on the record, so they know that the opportunities are there for the foster family to participate in.

Why do you feel reconnecting children with their home community is important? And how does this impact the greater community?

It's important to bring children to their home community and to these big events because they have an opportunity to meet family. And very often, they are meeting family for the first time. I think this experience plants the seed for these children to one day bring their own family to the territories and carry on the tradition.

We had two foster parents and their child come out from Vancouver, and a low-income mother and her two kids join us from Edmonton. One of the families have come out twice now, and both times they've really enjoyed riding horses. You can tell just by watching them that they've gotten better. Another one of the foster parents learned how to cook bannock while they were here this year, and last time they learned some songs on the drum. Activities like this can't always happen in an urban environment.

Reconnecting these kids with their families is important for the community because it reminds them why we are doing all this work in the first place: for the next generation. The relationships formed at these cultural events might last a lifetime.

What has been the most rewarding part of this work?

The most rewarding part is spending time with the children. I get called "Uncle Travis" a lot and it melts my heart. When I explain to a child, "Hey that's your aunt," or "That's your grandpa," and they meet them and hug them for the first time, you can't really replace that feeling you get. The parents always tell me that the children are already planning for next year's culture camp right after the current one just finished. Last year we had 40 people come out, and this year we had 70. It's become something families really look forward to.

What advice would you give to other Nations who are working to reconnect children with their community?

Make sure leadership is on board and that they know the importance of doing this. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and ask for help. I always ask for help! I wouldn't be able to do my job if it wasn't for all the amazing people that always pick up the phone and answer my questions.

Working with people and with vulnerable populations can be difficult sometimes. Don't take anything personal or let anything negative discourage you. Find someone you can debrief with and talk to, preferably someone in the same role.

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Band Designated Representatives are the experts of their community, and their passion and dedication for bringing children home is at the heart of good practice. CSFS provides Band Designated Representatives with training and regular check-ins to help connect reps to a network of peers. Contact Joan Conlon at (250) 562-3591 or jconlon@csfs.org for more information.



Travis Crowther (Designated Band Representative) and Family from Vancouver

Calls for Justice Updates

Stories of Hope and Strength Premieres in Prince George

The *Stories of Hope and Strength* film series officially launched at an in-person premiere event on October 17, 2024 at the Prince George Playhouse. The series highlights stories of hope and strength from Indigenous women across the country, and urges people to consider how they can address the 231 Calls for Justice to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQ+ and will highlight stories of hope and strength from Indigenous women across the country.

Following the premiere the Hope and Strength campaign will be running on Social Media from October-December 2024 with all 9 short films and photo stills being launched in this time. Please follow along here: <https://www.facebook.com/storiesofhopeandstrength>

If you have questions about the social media campaign, please email kspears@csfs.org or cshuvera@csfs.org.



Stories of Hope & Strength film series cast at the premiere event in Prince George

Board of Directors Youth Advisor Opportunity

Are you an Indigenous youth ready to share your unique voice and make a real impact with Carrier Sekani Family Services?

CSFS is seeking a youth from one of the 11 member Nations to join our Board of Directors as a Youth Advisor. In this role, you'll bring fresh perspectives and energy, ensuring that our initiatives resonate with younger generations. Your input will shape programs and policies that empower and engage youth in the Nations we serve.

As Youth Advisor, you will be joining our other two advisory roles, Elder Advisor and Urban Representative Advisor, who our Board of Directors will rely on for providing input into the strategy and planning of our organization and advise on policy and practice to enhance the health and well-being of member Nations.

If you are interested in applying for this position, please email a one-page letter to Joan Findlay at jfindlay@csfs.org outlining your interest in becoming a youth advisor for the

CSFS Board of Directors and include any relevant experiences or history you would like us to know about.

Help be the change for the next generation.

Parts of the Body

Wet'suwet'en Dialect

Bighen

(Head)



Bide

(Mouth)

Bile

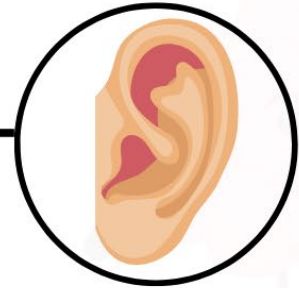
(Hand)

Bikwit

(Knee)

Bikë

(Foot)



Bidzek

(Ear)



Bit

(Stomach)

Bikëcin

(Leg)

Meet the CSFS Vancouver Office Team

The Vancouver team opened their doors in 2022, and have been offering support to member Nations residing in the lower mainland ever since. Their passion shines through their work, which is focused on supporting families who are involved with MCFD or at-risk of being involved with MCFD, and they offer a variety of services that support families in their health and well-being with a holistic care model. Some of the programs they offer are Women's Group, Anger Stress Management, When Love Hurts, Parenting Programs and more. Along with Urban Family Preservation, our Policy Analyst & Projects Development department operates out of Vancouver. This team conducts research, analyzes data, and provides expert recommendations to guide the development and evaluation of policies that impact our organization. Get to know the team serving the Lower Mainland and surrounding areas!



Robyn-Anne Tsonis, Family Prevention Worker

Robyn is originally from Merritt and moved to Vancouver at 17. She obtained her Certificate in Addictions Counselling, where she initially worked with men seeking sobriety, finding the work both rewarding and challenging. Two years ago, she joined CSFS, where she now focuses on advocating for and supporting off-reserve families in Vancouver, helping them thrive with cultural support and essential services. One of her favourite aspects of her role is ensuring families stay together. She finds joy in the weekly food hamper program that brings smiles to those in need.

Sandra Wilson, Practice Manager

Sandra is from the Gitksan Nation and a member of the Wolf Clan. She began her career with CSFS in 2008 as a Guardianship Social Worker in Prince George. She became the Supervisor for the Guardianship Program in 2014, a role she held until 2021 when she relocated to Vancouver to establish the new CSFS office, build a team, and oversee the Urban Family Preservation Program. In 2022, Sandra became the Practice Manager for the Vancouver Family Support Program, where she leads efforts to support families from CSFS's 11-member nations in the Lower Mainland, focusing on holistic care and well-being.



Prithvi Rathod, Administrative Assistant / Receptionist

Prithvi is passionate about his role as an Administrative Assistant because it allows him to support those making a positive impact on people's lives. He is proud to contribute to a team that provides hope and strength, while also having the opportunity to learn, grow, and foster a sense of connection and shared purpose within a community he is proud to be a part of.



Carrie Ann Louis, Family Preservation Supervisor

Carrie Ann is from the Stelat'en First Nation and a member of the Luksilyu clan. Passionate about supporting families and advocating for those who have struggled to find their voices, she takes pride in working alongside community members to remind them that they and their voices matter. Inspired by her late mother, Violet Kennedy, and her aunts, who taught her the strength of being a Dakelh woman, she is driven to create positive change for future generations. In her spare time, she enjoys attending concerts and events with family and friends.



Sandra Isaac, Senior Policy Analyst & Projects Development

Sandra is a research consultant on matters affecting the well-being of Indigenous families and communities. Her extensive research on land-related issues has led to numerous successful Land Claim settlements across Canada. Her current area of focus is the design and construction of Clan Houses with the Nations we serve to provide family and child protection and end the overrepresentation of Indigenous children taken from their families, communities, and cultures.



Tracey Michell, Senior Policy Analyst & Projects Development

Tracey loves to spend time with her family and extended family. She enjoys her job, especially being among members in the community, sharing and learning information about new and ongoing initiatives. Imbedding culture into policy is a strength and an asset that CSFS offers, and is thrilled to be involved in this endeavour



You can find out more about Urban Family Preservation in Vancouver at <https://www.csfs.org/ufp-vancouver>.

CULTURE CORNER

Back to the Land

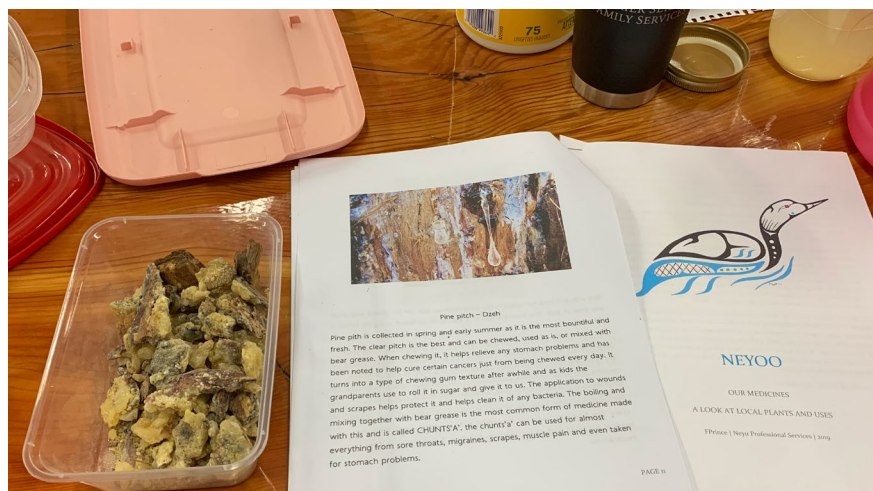
The Sk'ai Zeh Yah Youth Drop-In Centre is excited to offer a 'Back to the Land' program for youth. This crucial program provides youth opportunities to reconnect with traditional practices, strengthen cultural identity, and promote healing.

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The Carrier and Sekani Peoples have had a long-standing relationship with the land, guided by respect and reciprocity. Many Elders say that Indigenous peoples are the caretakers of their ancestral territories since time immemorial, and this inspired Youth Services to help youth reconnect with their heritage and strengthen peer relationships.

In honour of National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, leadership from Youth Services encouraged the team to create an event based on the 94 calls to action. Call to Action #22 was chosen:

We call upon those who can effect change within the Canadian health-care system to recognize the value of Aboriginal healing practices and use them in the treatment of Aboriginal patients in collaboration with Aboriginal healers and Elders where requested by Aboriginal patients.

"Our team shared an understanding of the importance of the medicine nature provides and the cultural connections," says CSFS Intensive Youth Social Worker Krista Soles.



Pine Pitch - Dzeh. Part of the 'Back to the Land' activities is identifying plants, learning about traditional medicines from knowledge keepers.

"The team believed that these were crucial elements in the healing process for our clients, fostering a sense of unity and a shared vision. Some of our activities include working with medicines such as devils club, birch bark, labrador, red willow, pine and spruce pitch, yarrow, soapberries, and low bush blueberries. Through these activities, we concluded that traditional healing methods of Indigenous people are equally as valuable as Western medicine."

Through the Back to the Land program, youth learn environmental stewardship practices essential for preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. They develop a sense of responsibility for caring for the land.

"We have done some kayaking, and nature walks for plant identification and spent time with knowledge keepers from the Nations. Staff have had several training opportunities to learn more, such as how to set nets and process fish, hunting, canning, juicing, mushroom identification, and other things to enhance our abilities and pass this down," continues Krista.

Before any community outings, Youth Services staff request appropriate permissions to teach or collect in the surrounding territories and knowledge of the community's authority and the Elders who safeguard these traditions.

Intensive Youth Social Worker Krista Soles and Youth Services Workers Keisha McKenzie and Nadine Patrick recently completed a foraging course with Moose Mushrooms, and Mud, where they learned about edible plants in Prince George. During the course, they discovered tooth jelly fungus, lobster mushrooms, shaggy maine, puff balls, bunch berries, high bush cranberry, rosehips, plantain seeds, yarrow, labrador tea, bog cranberries, ox-eye daisy leaves, and false solomon tea.

Krista, Keisha, and Nadine are gearing up to gather labrador tea, known for its calming effects that can help alleviate sore throats, relieve chest congestion, ease coughs, and more!

"We are excited to explore the stunning unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh and are eager to share this experience with the youth," shares Keisha.

Sk'ai Zeh Yah has recently acquired a \$10000 grant through Northern Health. With the funding, the Youth Drop-In Centre has purchased all the required equipment, honorariums, and travel costs for knowledge keepers to join in on Back to the Land activities.

CSFS Staff Honour Orange Shirt Day

In honour of Orange Shirt Day on September 30, CSFS staff showed their support by wearing their orange shirts! CSFS is proud to support Indigenous children because every child matters.

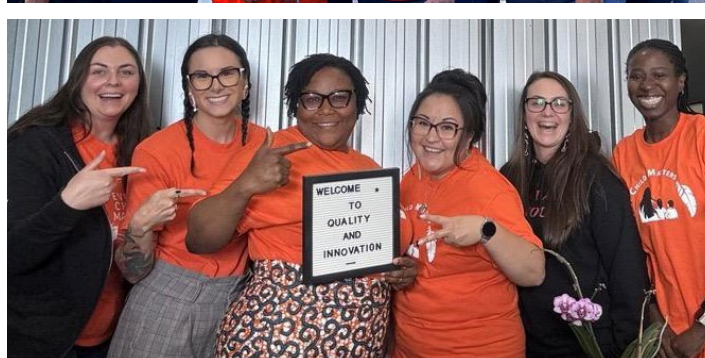
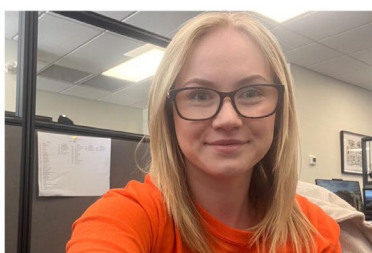


Photo Submissions



Photo By: Loretta West



Photo By: Veronica Leah



Photo By: Kelly Rose Mercer

Want to share your photos?

Send us your best photos, and we'll include a number of them right here in the next issue!
Submit your photos to David Sikobe at dsikobe@csfs.org.

2024 AGA: Nah Zul Deez T'iah - Your Spirit Is Precious

The Annual General Assembly (AGA) is always an exciting time for Carrier Sekani Family Services. It serves as an opportunity to build trust, transparency, and accountability with the communities we serve. It also allows executive leadership and management to present on the organization's strategic initiatives, financial performance, and overall achievements this past fiscal year.

The theme for this year's AGA was *Nah Zul Deez T'iah (Your Spirit is Precious)*. This theme was chosen to remind community members of the collective strength that lies in the spirit of every individual whose contributions, passion, and energy are vital to our shared success.

The two-day event held at the Gathering Place in Burns Lake welcomed community members who listened to reports from each department, asked questions about service delivery, and provided feedback to leadership. Program booths were available for community members to learn more about our diverse programming and to connect with staff.

To conclude the first day of the AGA there was a line-up of entertainment held at the 80's Gala night. From a fashion show by Indigenous designer Gladys Michell, to live music by Joel West. There were plenty of prizes to go around courtesy of CSFS programs and our sponsors.

Mussi cho to everyone who attended and to all our sponsors who made this year's AGA possible.

Interested in viewing the 2023-2024 reports? Check out the 2024 AGA booklet here: www.csfs.org/2024aga

If you missed the event or our live stream, you can watch the playlist on YouTube in the coming weeks.

Follow our YouTube channel: [Carrier Sekani Family Services](https://www.youtube.com/CarrierSekaniFamilyServices)



