

# GOOZIH DUST'IUS



May / June 2025

**Skak ha ba bay /  
Nezkeh ba  
(For the Children)**

Community relationship  
building and dialogue  
sessions on the future of  
child and family services

**Welcoming  
New Generations**

Amazing Baby Welcoming  
ceremony photos from Nadleh  
Whut'en, Yekooche and Takla

**Foundry Youth  
Soccer Camp in  
Burns Lake**





**9 - 12 YRS: AUG 12 - 15  
AUG 19 - 22**

**9AM - 4PM**

**FREE**

# SUMMER DAY CAMP

## ACTIVITIES

- Connection to Culture •
- Physical Activity •
- Horseback Riding •
- Arts & Crafts •
- & MORE! •

### Up and Coming Events

#### Summer Day Camp, 9-12 year olds

**Location:** Connaught Youth Centre 1491 17th Ave, Prince George

**9-12 Years: August 12-15, August 19-22**

Looking for a fun kid's summer camp? Our Middle Years Program in Prince George is offering summer day camps for kids ages 9-12 in August 2025. Enjoy days full of activities, culture, and more!

Registration required.

**Healthy snacks & lunch provided!**

**Contact:** Priscilla Prest - [pprest@csfs.org](mailto:pprest@csfs.org) or 672-983-9445

**Healthy snacks &  
lunch provided!**

**REGISTRATION  
REQUIRED**

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# A Message from our COO

Mike  
Bote

**H**adih!

We are pleased to share that the CSFS 2025 Annual General Assembly (AGA) will take place on October 2-3, in Nadleh. This annual gathering is an important opportunity for reflection, accountability, and celebration of our shared progress. More details on the agenda and registration will be provided over the coming months.

We are excited to welcome Cheryl Thomas to the executive team as the new Executive Director of Child and Family Wellbeing (EDCFW). This role is essential to guiding our strategic transformation in child and family services. The EDCFW will oversee



**Cheryl Thomas, Executive Director of  
Child and Family Wellbeing (EDCFW)**

the coordination and delivery of culturally grounded, holistic programs that support children and families across the Nations. A key part of Cheryl's leadership will include working in close partnership with member Nations to ensure services are responsive to local priorities and aligned with CSFS's long-term vision of transitioning into full jurisdiction over child and family wellbeing.

In support of this development, the recruitment for the Director of Child Safety is actively underway. This role is critical to supporting community safety and upholding the integrity of our service delivery models across Nations.

We are also pleased to announce the creation of a new position: Clan House Manager, which will report directly to the Director of Child Safety. This role will provide operational leadership across all 11 Clan Houses and ensure they are safe, culturally grounded, and responsive to the needs of children and families.

A key immediate focus for the Clan House Manager will be to lead the Nation-specific operations planning process for the Clan Houses. This planning work is essential to align service delivery with community priorities, ensure readiness, and build strong foundations for the

reinvigoration of traditional care models rooted in Carrier Sekani law and values.

CSFS continues to advance work on Child Protection (C6) delegation using a phased implementation approach. Rather than a simultaneous rollout across all communities, we are focusing on readiness and capacity building within each Nation. This ensures our services remain strong, sustainable, and community led. The phased strategy supports workforce development and allows us to grow responsibly, in alignment with our values and the unique timelines of member Nations.

The goal is to return full jurisdiction to the member Nations, restoring their authority to govern their lands, people, and affairs in line with their own laws and traditions. It's about reclaiming self-determination and ensuring decisions are made by the community, for the community.

Thank you to all our partners and community members for your continued support and dedication. Together, we are creating a stronger, more culturally rooted future for our children and families.

Mussi cho,

Mike Bote, Chief Operating Officer



# Youths in Downtown PG to Benefit from City of PG Grant

The Sk'ai Zeh Yah Youth Centre, operated by CSFS, has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the City of Prince George to support two of its core programs: So' Co' Nye Dagilyegh (Peer Recovery Group) and Dunene Najeh - Men Are Healing (men's group). These initiatives play a vital role in supporting young adults who access the centre.

Located in downtown Prince George, Sk'ai Zeh Yah is a drop-in centre serving youths aged 16 to 29. It welcomes individuals from

all backgrounds, with a focus on providing culturally safe, wrap-around supports for at-risk youth and young adults.

The So' Co' Nye Dagilyegh and Dunene Najeh programs provide safe, inclusive spaces and support programming that allow youth to connect through shared experiences, traditional teachings, group activities, and mutual support.

"We are deeply grateful to the City of Prince George for recognizing the

importance of youth-led wellness and recovery programs," says Kara Myers, Youth Services Supervisor. "This grant will help us continue to empower young people with the tools, support, and activities needed to thrive."

The grant will also support a variety of youth-led activities, including community outings such as group lunches, park visits, bowling, and swimming at the pool all designed to foster connection, healing, and personal growth.





## Program Highlight: Indian Residential School Survivor Support Program



### Supporting Residential and Day School Survivors in the North

**T**he CSFS Indian Residential School Survivor Support Program is helping Residential School, Day School, and other survivors access the justice and recognition they deserve. Focused on assisting individuals with compensation claims, the program ensures that survivors are not left to navigate complex legal processes on their own.

Serving CSFS member Nations, this mobile outreach initiative brings direct, culturally sensitive support to communities by meeting survivors where they are. It is especially impactful in areas where internet access and legal resources are limited. The program's approach emphasizes

one-on-one support, documentation assistance, and guidance through each step of the application process.

At the centre of the program is Shawna Laroque, a dedicated Residential School Support Worker. She travels from community to community, offering hands-on support to survivors and their families. Her main responsibility is to assist with filling out application forms, explaining eligibility requirements, collecting supporting documents, and submitting completed packages to the appropriate law firms. Through her work, she complements and extends the program's reach by ensuring no one is left behind due to barriers like age, distance, or accessibility challenges.

The compensation support services are offered in response to real and



**Shawna Laroque, CSFS Indian Residential School Survivor Support Worker**



ongoing needs among residential school survivors. It covers several key compensation streams, including:

- **Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA)** – Now closed but still supporting appeals and document submissions.
- **Indian Day School Settlement** – Closed in 2023.
- **Unvalidated Excluded Day Schools** – Recently settled in June 2024, with a list of eligible schools expected between June 25–27.

Applications can take between six to eight months to process.

Depending on the level of harm experienced, survivors may qualify for government compensation amounts ranging from \$10,000 to \$500,000. Higher compensation levels require additional supporting documents such as school records, medical files, or legal affidavits.

Individuals reaching out to the program are guided to understand result letters, navigate appeals, and respond to requests for missing or additional documentation. Many survivors might feel overwhelmed by the bureaucratic language or

timelines involved but are offered a steady hand and culturally safe presence through accessing the support given by the program.

### Application Support and Process

The program focuses on simplifying and guiding applicants through every step. Those who wish to apply should:

- Gather two valid pieces of government-issued ID, including a Status Card (front and back).
- Collect any relevant supporting records (e.g., school attendance or medical records).
- Complete a compensation application form ([available online in the Deoitte. website](#)).
- Submit the form by mail, online, or with the help of the Indian Residential School Survivor Support Program.

School records can often be obtained through Diocese in Prince George for a small fee. Shawna Laroque also helps applicants understand how to make these requests and ensures the proper documentation accompanies each application.

Residential and Day School experiences cannot be confined to legal processes alone. Survivors

deserve accessible, compassionate support, especially those in farther locations. Compensation approvals are managed by the government, not the program, and may vary based on individual circumstances

By building trust, and offering consistent follow-up, the program is helping to restore dignity and empower individuals to reclaim their stories and rights. Survivors are encouraged to retain their own original documents and stay informed about claim deadlines or updates through official websites like the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#).

With new settlements emerging and the ongoing effects of colonial institutions still being addressed, the demand for this kind of support remains high. Shawna continues to respond to community calls, helping individuals and families who might otherwise be left behind.

We appreciate the continuous support and inquiry from the community to help the Indian Residential School Survivor Support Program's work. It turns a complex and often isolating process into a journey shared with guidance, compassion, and cultural understanding at every step.



Wiping of the Tears event in 2021

For more questions, if you are eligible or have someone who is eligible please contact the Indian Residential Support program on the CSFS website.

[www.csfs.org/residentialschoolsurvivor](http://www.csfs.org/residentialschoolsurvivor)





## Goals On and Off the Field: A Youth Soccer Camp with Foundry Burns Lake

**W**e're thrilled to have kicked off the Foundry Burns Lake Soccer Camp, in partnership with the CSFS Health Promotions program, on May 23 and 24.

Over two action-packed days, UNBC Timberwolves players Morgan and Brityn coached 35 young athletes to sharpen their skills and boost their game. Huge thanks to everyone who participated and brought their energy and enthusiasm. Even the rain couldn't break the mood!

Foundry Burns Lake is here to support youth and families with free, confidential health and wellness services—all under one roof. From mental health support to physical health care, peer support, and social services, Foundry is creating a safe, welcoming space for young people to thrive.

While Foundry Burns Lake is still under construction, engagement work has been underway for several years. This has included a few different initiatives such as visits to local schools at key phases for youth



**Foundry Burns Lake Interior construction late April 2025**

(Grades 5-12) to weigh in on specific aspects of the building itself and help steer the direction of what would make them feel safe in a health care setting.

Foundry Burns Lake is organizing and recruiting for the Foundry Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) that will have their first meeting in September 2025. As part of this committee, youth will not only get the perks of volunteer hours and references but to be an advocate in supporting youth health and wellness in Burns Lake.

If you are interested in joining the YAC, please email [foundry@csfs.org](mailto:foundry@csfs.org), or sign up here: <http://bit.ly/4eT8jbU>

**Stay tuned for more updates as Foundry Burns Lake prepares to open its doors this fall, bringing vital support and services to youth and families in your community.**







# Jurisdiction: Skak ha ba bay / Nezkeh ba (For the Children)

## Community Conversations at the Heart of the Jurisdiction Journey

**T**he jurisdiction project is on the road! Community relationship building and dialogue sessions kicked off in the spring and are making their way through the territory.

Initial sessions have been hosted with Stelat'en, Yekooche and Takla with more on the way. All community members—from children to Elders—are invited to join the conversation and share their vision for the future of child and family services.

These conversations have a key role in guiding the development of services and programming across communities. Participants are provided with an

overview of the jurisdiction project and space to share stories, connect through experiences, and have a say on what they want to see for the next generations of Yinka Dene.

As of June 2025, our team has documented 421 ideas shared by community members at scheduled sessions. You may have also spotted booths at health fairs and AGAs collecting 'drop-in' responses about what children need to thrive. This dialogue is being shared with CSFS leadership to document current challenges, community needs, and shared dreams for the future.

When we talk about 'jurisdiction', what we are really talking about is traditional governance. As Yinka Dene, we never surrendered our right to make decisions about our children. The child and family wellbeing law

being developed together with communities will not be new to our people; we are reawakening the laws that wrapped children in the love and protection of their culture, clan, and community long before colonial policies came to these lands.

This is only the beginning of an ongoing conversation. We look forward to visiting each community and moving this good work forward together.

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Find event details and more information about the jurisdiction journey at [www.csfs.org/jurisdiction](http://www.csfs.org/jurisdiction)



Photo L to R: Executive Director of Jurisdiction, Lincoln Hallgren sharing at a Jurisdiction Session (R) Elder Henry Joseph in attendance at the session in Yekooche.



# CULTURE CORNER

## New Generations Welcomed with Love and Tradition

A new generation of children were embraced at Baby Welcoming Ceremonies held in Nadle Whut'en, Yekooche and Takla over the spring. Children born in the past year, from newborns to those already taking their first steps, were honoured and celebrated.

In Nadle Whut'en, babies were welcomed with traditional drumming and singing, filling the space with love and pride. Parents had the chance to choose animal totems for their children. These symbols connect children to their Indigenous heritage and the natural world. Parents chose a meaningful item like a bear claw, beaver tail, eagle feather, or deer leg.



"We encourage parents to choose animal totems as a representation of the values their kids might grow up with," shared Elder Roy Nooski. "A bear claw symbolizes strength and love for nature; a beaver tail represents hard work and dedication to community; an eagle feather means they'll look after family and protect them; and a deer tail signifies agility and beauty."

In Yekooche, parents brought their babies to meet the Elders, who offered advice and words of wisdom to support them on their parenting journey, encouraging them to raise their children with pride in their Indigenous identity. Babies and

children received hand-made vests, thoughtful gifts, and shared in a delicious lunch with the community. The Takla Baby Welcoming Ceremony was held on the second day of the community's Holistic Health Days event. Families were drummed in and Elder smudged both babies and families with spruce boughs. The ceremony wrapped up with festivities and dinner.

Introducing the youngest members to Elders at an early age is an integral part of these ceremonies. Baby welcoming ceremonies affirm cultural identities, strengthen community bonds and promote the well-being of both child and family.

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# How to Play Lahal

*Lahal is a game traditionally played by adults. Recently, children have been taught Lahal because it allows Elders to teach traditional songs and drum-beats used during various styles of songs.*

During the game you will learn to work together as a team to develop trust, self-confidence, and pride.



## You will need:

A traditional drum.

At least 5 carved sticks per team. Each team should have equal number of sticks. The extra stick is used as the King Pin.

4 carved bones (usually deer, moose or elk bone and about 2 inches long) - 2 bones should be plain, and 2 bones should have a ring around it.



## OBJECTIVE

Get all the sticks from the opposing team.

## TO START

2 players from each team are chosen.

1 player will hold the bones, and another player will guess where the bones are hidden.

The first team to correctly guess where the bones are starts the game.

## PLAYING THE GAME

- Team A mixes up the bones behind their back or under a sweater.
- Team B distracts Team A with their Lahal song and other team members watch Team A closely.
- If Team B guesses where the bones are correctly, they win a stick from Team A.
- If Team B guesses incorrectly, they forfeit a stick to Team A.
- The game ends when one team has won all the sticks from the other team.



# Learning Numbers

Wet'suwet'en Dialect

## 1

Lhk'iy



## 2

Nek



## 3

Tak'iy



## 4

Dīnc'iy



## 5

Kwile'



## 6

Gīstan



## 7

Dik'alt'iy



## 8

K'idīnc'iy



## 9

Lhk'iy ts'et



## 10

Winize



# Calls for Justice Updates

## An inside look at the Strong Women, Strong Community initiative

**W**hen women are strong, communities thrive. That's the guiding principle behind Strong Women, Strong Community, a CSFS-led initiative focusing on physical health and well-being for women, by women.

Dana Thorne, Health Promotion & Physical Activity Manager, and Kelsey Spears, Calls for Justice Outreach Worker, are leading Tse-ké Helth'tus – Wel'eh Kayah Wulth-tus (Strong Women, Strong Community). The program delivers meaningful sport and recreation activities for Indigenous women and girls from all member Nations in the larger Burns Lake area, including Lake Babine Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh, Wet'suwet'en, Cheslatta, Skin Tyee, and Nee Tahi Buhn.

"Women are the ones who hold up their communities, but they often sacrifice their health and wellness to take care of others," Dana explains. "This is our way of helping women care for themselves and allow them to focus on and take ownership of their own health and well-being."

### Five pillars of health

Strong Women, Strong Community is funded through a federal grant for the Sport and Social Development in Indigenous Communities, motivated in response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

The impacts of colonization and forced assimilation continue to affect many Indigenous communities in Canada. These experiences contribute to elevated levels of social and mental distress found across generations.



The Strong Women, Strong Community project acts as a pathway to holistic healing on an individual and community level through all five pillars of health: physical, spiritual, mental, emotional, and social.

The project uses an approach to women's wellness that is premised on Nation rebuilding with culture as the foundation of holistic health. Linked with the Carrier Life Cycle Model—where it is recognized that everything and everyone are interconnected—the five pillars of health approach provides an overarching model of holistic healing that teaches participants how to take ownership of their health and well-being by nurturing all five pillars; both individually and as a whole.

### Holistic health-focused programming

"Our goal is to continue offering preventative care, education, and healing rooted in traditional knowledge in communities," Kelsey

shares. "Participants will have fun learning self-defense, yoga, relationship safety, self-love practices, and much more. We hope these activities will empower women and support them in preventing or reducing feelings of stress, anxiety, or depression."

Dana and Kelsey organize weekly programming in the larger Burns Lake area from May 2025 to March 2026. Various CSFS staff and external contractors/instructors facilitate a series of activities centred around one pillar before transitioning to the next one. The sessions are suited for people of all ages, abilities, and skills levels—no experience needed.

"We are hopeful that this is just the beginning of holistic health-focused programming for women and girls in the communities CSFS serves," Dana adds. "As the months unfold, we'll be planning and adapting activities based on community needs and feedback."

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For more information about the Strong Women, Strong Community initiative, reach out to Dana ([dthorne@csfs.org](mailto:dthorne@csfs.org)) or Kelsey ([kspears@csfs.org](mailto:kspears@csfs.org)). Keep an eye on CSFS' Facebook and Instagram pages for upcoming programming dates and activities.





# Takla Nation

## You're in **healing hands** with Carrier Sekani

### Family Services



CSFS provides a variety of holistic services to member Nations – have you explored all the services we have to offer?

Impact reports have been made for each member Nation to identify community needs and provide information on available services. These reports are a powerful tool for understanding and accessing information. Here are three services that you told us you wanted to know more about:

To view the Takla Nation Report, other Nation impact reports, or to find programs and services in your community, visit [www.csfs.org/healinghands](http://www.csfs.org/healinghands), where the information is available for you.

## 32%

of respondents from Takla Nation have heard of:

- **Mobile Diabetes:** Mobile Diabetes works to bring nurses with specialized knowledge and training in diabetes to clinics across Northern BC and to meet one-to-one with patients. The program provides diabetes screening and assessment, laboratory testing, counselling, endocrinologist consultation, and ongoing follow up.
  - **Who is eligible:** Members living in/away from community
  - **How to access:** In person, virtual
  - **Phone:** 1-866-899-6855 or (250) 562-3591
- [www.csfs.org/mobile-diabetes](http://www.csfs.org/mobile-diabetes)

## 39%

of respondents from Takla Nation have heard of:

- **Home Care:** Counsellors work within a Carrier cultural framework to ensure clients receive services relevant to their needs. The program integrates traditional practices into assessment and treatment services. Support is available for crisis intervention services, as well to National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program workers in member Nations.
- **Who is eligible:** Families living in/away from community
- **How to access:** In person
- **Phone:** (250) 692-2387 or 1-866-567-2333 (Vanderhoof); (250) 563-3360 or 1-800-889-6855 (Prince George)

[www.csfs.org/services/home-care](http://www.csfs.org/services/home-care)

## 67%

of respondents have heard of:

- **Jordan's Principle Service Coordinators:** Jordan's Principle helps to ensure First Nations children living both on and off-reserve can access the products, services, and supports they need when they need them. Coordinators walk clients through every step of the application process, provide clarity about necessary documents, and assist with application completions and submissions. Requests can be submitted by eligible individuals,

## Key Survey Results

### Staff members at CSFS...

...are easy to talk to.

### 78%

answered yes

...are involved in care or treatment options.

### 58%

answered yes

...explain things clearly.

### 73%

answered yes

...deliver high-quality services and programs.

### 75%

answered yes

...treat me with respect.

### 85%

answered yes

...follow up on appointments and action items consistently.

### 63%

answered yes

families, and guardians, and requests can also be submitted for groups of children from multiple families or guardians.

**Who is eligible:** Children/youth (typically aged 6–19) living in/away from community

- **How to access:** In person, virtual
  - **Phone:** (250) 692-2387 or (778) 349-1073; after hours emergency Indigenous Services Canada 1-855-572-4453
- [www.csfs.org/health-and-wellness-counselling-program](http://www.csfs.org/health-and-wellness-counselling-program)



# Photo Submissions



Photo By: Chelsea Rose Hiebert

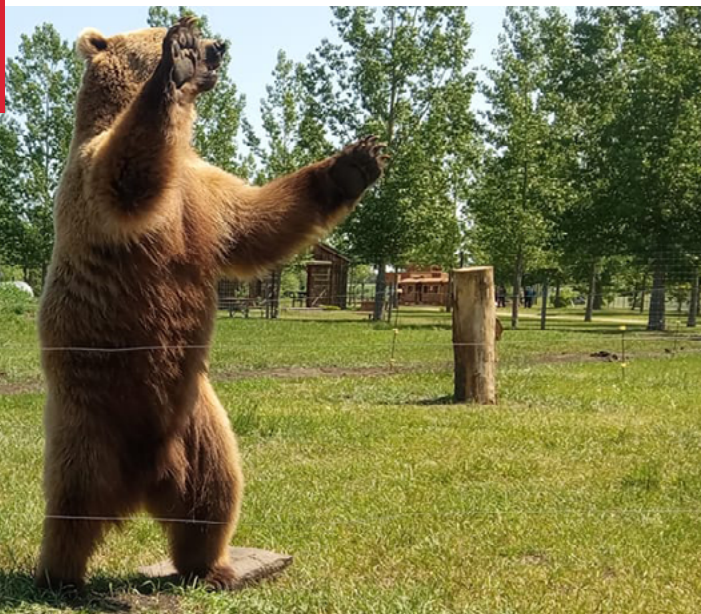


Photo By: Zoe Mottens

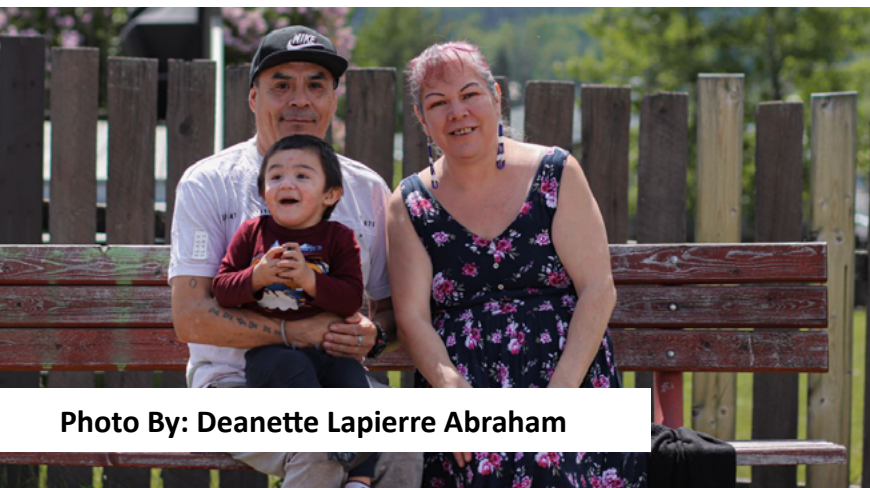


Photo By: Deanette Lapierre Abraham

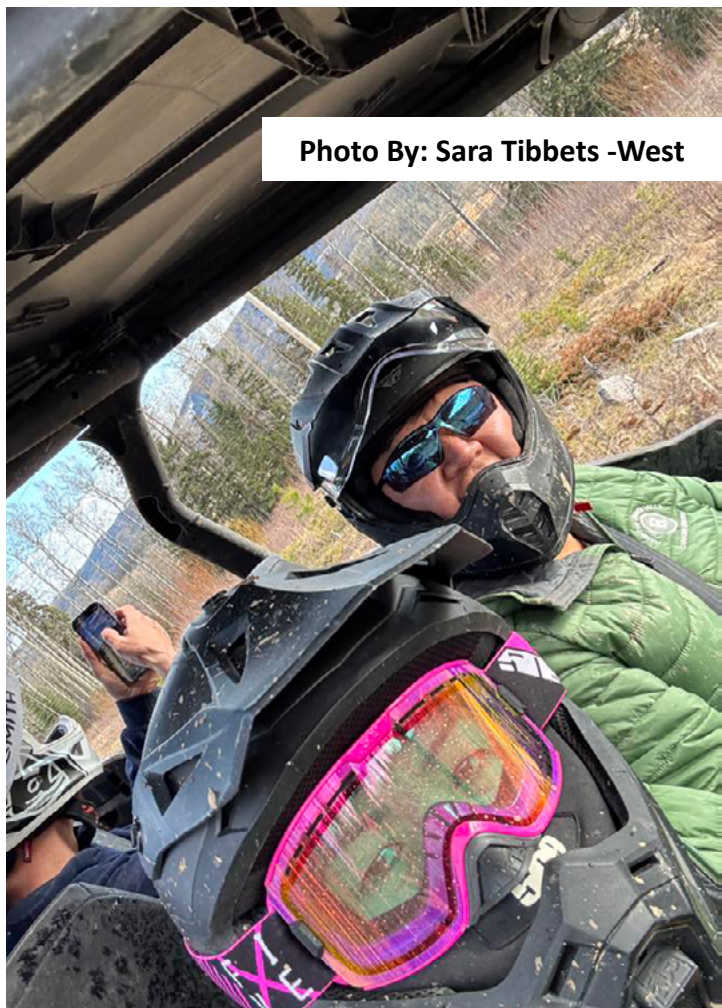


Photo By: Sara Tibbets -West

## 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](mailto:dsikobe@csfs.org).





Photo By: Babus Bensun



Photo By: Jennifer Alexander



Photo By: Mercedes Isadore



Photo By: Rachel Wilson Andrews



Photo By: Toni Mae





CARRIER SEKANI  
FAMILY SERVICES

Photo By: Annette Casimir