

# GOOZIH DUST'LUS



CARRIER SEKANI  
FAMILY SERVICES

Sept / Oct 2021

## State of Emergency

Carrier and Sekani Chiefs declare a state of emergency over the ongoing ill effects of the Opioid Crisis in BC

## Reconnecting with Home

Alex Wagstaffe is reconnecting with a culture they didn't know they belonged to

## Cousins Before COVID

To end the pandemic, we need to put our family and our community before COVID





# LET'S PUT **COUSINS** BEFORE COVID.

We are all members of the same community. We are connected as siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles and friends. To end this disease, the bottom line is: **we have to get vaccinated.**

Visit our new COVID-19 Support Centre:

- To find your nearest health clinic
- To make a vaccination appointment
- To get trusted vaccine information

Need a ride? We can drive you to your appointment!

**[csfs.org/covid](https://csfs.org/covid)**

**#CousinsBeforeCOVID**



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# A Message from the Executive Director of Child and Family Services

Mary  
Teegee

**H**adih!

September 30th was a monumental day for Indigenous people and for Canada. This day was the first ever National Day of Truth and Reconciliation – a day for non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to reflect and reconcile the past, and promise to never repeat it by exposing the truth.

The horrors of residential schools are finally starting to be understood by non-Indigenous Canadians. That is why it was crucial for us to screen our new documentary, 'For Love', in Vancouver on this day. I wanted this movie to create awareness about the generational trauma caused by residential schools. But it also celebrates the resilience of our people, and shows how communities across the country are rebuilding family connections and rich cultures.

We wanted to show a reality of what our people have gone through on Truth and Reconciliation Day. One youth told us that he wishes that one day we will no longer have to talk about the impacts of residential school, but rather only read about it.

This film is a labour of love. We filmed across Canada to show how we are still here, how we are so strong. Regardless of the past and ongoing atrocities, including the impacts of residential schools, we are still here, we can still speak our language, we can still say we are Indigenous, and we still have our culture.

This is a pride that all of our children need to feel. It is not okay for our children to be ripped away from their culture, their clan, and their community. They need to be embraced, and the film comes from that place. For us as Indigenous people, our children are our most sacred gift, and what we do is all for the love of our children.

Matt Smiley, writer and director for this film, is a dear friend of mine. Over the years, he has become my brother. As Indigenous people, we know our story and the plight. We know that children are going to sleep every night without their parents. Matt is a non-Indigenous person with an empathetic heart, and lent his non-Indigenous views to the film so that everyone can see what needs to change. This film is the perfect example of reconciliation, and of walking with one foot in both worlds.

I cannot wait for everyone to see our film. We will be screening in more communities throughout the coming months. Watch the CSFS website for when you can see the film in the upcoming year.

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***For Love is co-produced by CSFS, Mary Teegee, and Matt Smiley. Teegee and Smiley also co-wrote the film, and narrated by Shania Twain.***





# CSFS Speaker Series: A Four Pillars Approach to Creating a Community Drug Strategy

Carrier Sekani Family Services is pleased to announce our upcoming CSFS Speaker Series: A Four Pillars Approach to Creating a Community Drug Strategy.

The series will run each Tuesday at 10am-12pm during the month of November. This Speaker Series will be offered virtually over Zoom for community members, Band staff, CSFS Staff, and invited guests to create increased awareness, knowledge and agency for CSFS and Member Nations.

The Four-Pillars Speaker Series will consist of a number of short presentations by experts, knowledge holders, and educators from the field of Harm Reduction, Research, Family & Parenting, Opioid Agonist Therapy, Indigenous Healing and community wellness. Each speaker will be followed immediately by a facilitated brainstorming and discussion group with community participants. These sessions and discussions will create the blueprint for how CSFS and Member Nations can work together through the Four Pillars of Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction and Justice to address addictions, trauma, and health and wellness.

The actionable outcomes of the speaker series will be tailored to each community, as the actions will be created by community members for their communities. This homegrown design concept will be able to reach the heart of the challenge as the knowledge providers will be working from a lived-experience lens. This series will lead to creative solutions that have lasting impactful and positive outcomes for your community.

## CSFS Speaker Series: A Four Pillars Approach to Creating a Community Drug Strategy

**Starting November 2, 2021**

**10am – Noon**

**New speaker every Tuesday**

Hear from five different experts throughout the month of November, and create innovative ways in which your community can reduce the negative impacts of harmful drug use

To register:  
Go to [bit.ly/2ZJZtM](https://bit.ly/2ZJZtM)  
OR  
Contact Jacob Carpenter at  
[jcarpenter@csfs.org](mailto:jcarpenter@csfs.org)







Tachick Lake, Saik'uz First Nation  
Future site of CSFS's new healing facility



# Carrier and Sekani Chiefs Call State of Emergency

**The need for an addictions and mental health treatment centre has reached a critical level for Indigenous people of Northern BC**

**T**he ongoing opioid crisis in British Columbia has been heightened due to the ill-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's mental health. As evidence shows, Indigenous populations in the north are more affected, and are more likely to die due to overdose compared to the non-Indigenous population. Things are not getting better, and in fact, are getting worse. After a number of recent deaths in Carrier Sekani communities due to the use of toxic drugs, several chiefs have declared a state of emergency.

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) is actively working on a constructing a new holistic healing and treatment centre at Tachick Lake, located within the traditional territory of the Saik'uz First Nation. This would serve as a vital service for Indigenous people in northern BC who are suffering from addictions and mental health issues. The centre will operate by using a combination of science-based medicine and culturally-based practices, which would help others heal from ongoing intergenerational trauma from the residential school system.

However, the Tachick Lake project is currently under-funded. As part of

the declared state of emergency, the Carrier and Sekani Chiefs are calling upon the federal and provincial governments to take immediate action to help fund the project.

Chief Corrina Leween, Chief of Cheslatta Carrier Nation and CSFS Board President, says that Carrier Sekani Family Services is ready to expand the Addictions Recovery Program (ARP) to the communities that we serve.

"Carrier Sekani Family Services is poised and ready to increase capacity and services for the Addictions Recovery Program (ARP) with our planned healing/treatment centre, and we have a strong track record of successfully designing and delivering services to the communities we serve. What we require now is a financial commitment from the federal and provincial governments that claim to prioritize Indigenous needs."

Chief Leween states that the ongoing crisis continues to get worse in our region of the province.

"To highlight this – I can share with you that in the past two weeks, communities we serve lost three more lives to this crisis. Three more

people who were loved and were deserving of help. We also know that this crisis is affecting Indigenous children in care, particularly those in the care of the MCFD, and that some of these children are also suffering from addictions and opioid-related deaths. We need this treatment centre as a part of the wrap-around care we endeavour to provide to the clients and families we serve."

Other Carrier and Sekani Chiefs share the same sentiments as Chief Leween, and strongly believe that any long-term solution in our region must include the Tachick Lake treatment centre.

CSFS continues to engage with federal and provincial governments, along with the First Nations Health Authority to seek support in fully developing the healing and treatment centre, which desperately requires sufficient capital commitment. This work is becoming increasingly urgent – the time for governments to act and commit is now.

For more on the Tachick Lake treatment centre, check out our YouTube page for a brief video: <https://youtu.be/0baMjV5442o>.



# Reconnecting with Home

Alex Wagstaffe's story of reconnecting with the Saik'uz First Nation



Alex Wagstaffe was born and raised in Prince George. However, they only recently learned that their family is from Saik'uz First Nation, and is now attempting to reconnect with the culture that they have been without all their life. It wasn't until some help from Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) that they were able to meet their birth family and start to immerse themselves in the Saik'uz culture.

Alex grew up not having a full grasp of their heritage.

"When I was born, my birth mother gave me up to adoption. I was raised by white settler folks. As much as they tried to give me a sense of what

my heritage was, of course they could not give me the full story. So I recently started reconnecting with my family in the Saik'uz community. I've talked to my mother and my sister so far, as well as folks from CSFS."

Alex did not learn about their true heritage until they were in their late 20s, when they found out that they were from Saik'uz First Nation.

"I didn't find out for a very long time that I was Saik'uz. I just knew that I was Carrier. I wasn't sure I wanted to know more about it. It was recently that I have wanted to really understand where I came from and who I belong to."

Today, Alex knows that their mother is Nancy Quaw, their sister is Marie Quaw, and they are Bear Clan.

"Cheryl Vandelaar from CSFS helped me reconnect with my birth mother, and is helping out with that interaction and brought my birth mother to Prince George in order for us to meet properly and reconnect."

Cheryl Vandelaar, a Family Preservation Supervisor at CSFS, says that witnessing the reunion between Alex and their family was beautiful.

"It was the first time they met each other," says Vandelaar. "It was very beautiful to see that, and it answered

a lot of questions for both them. Alex was able to learn from their mom, such as the language they speak is Carrier, and who their siblings are. I feel privileged to be part of that, and happy to do the work that I do.”

To Alex, reconnecting will be about immersing themselves in the culture, and to listen.

“For me, I want to be able to listen. It’s not what I want, it’s more of what can I do for the community. And so, I will listen, I will learn. One of the things that I want to learn the most is some of the stories, and our history, as told from our perspective.”

Alex has also been engaging with others on Twitter on what it means to be Indigenous, and what it means to belong to a community.

“When I was thinking about how people decide who is ‘Indigenous’ or not... There is a lot of debates about who is allowed to say they are Indigenous. I believe my community is the only ones who can say I’m Indigenous – nobody else. Only my people. To claim me as one of their own.”

Due to the uncovering of the unmarked graves of Indigenous children across the country, Alex has noticed a growing discourse around ‘what it means to be an ally.’

“My main advice for someone who wants to be an ally for Indigenous communities is to listen first, and to be humble, and not to take that space... to take a step back and let Indigenous people make their own voice and tell their own stories.”

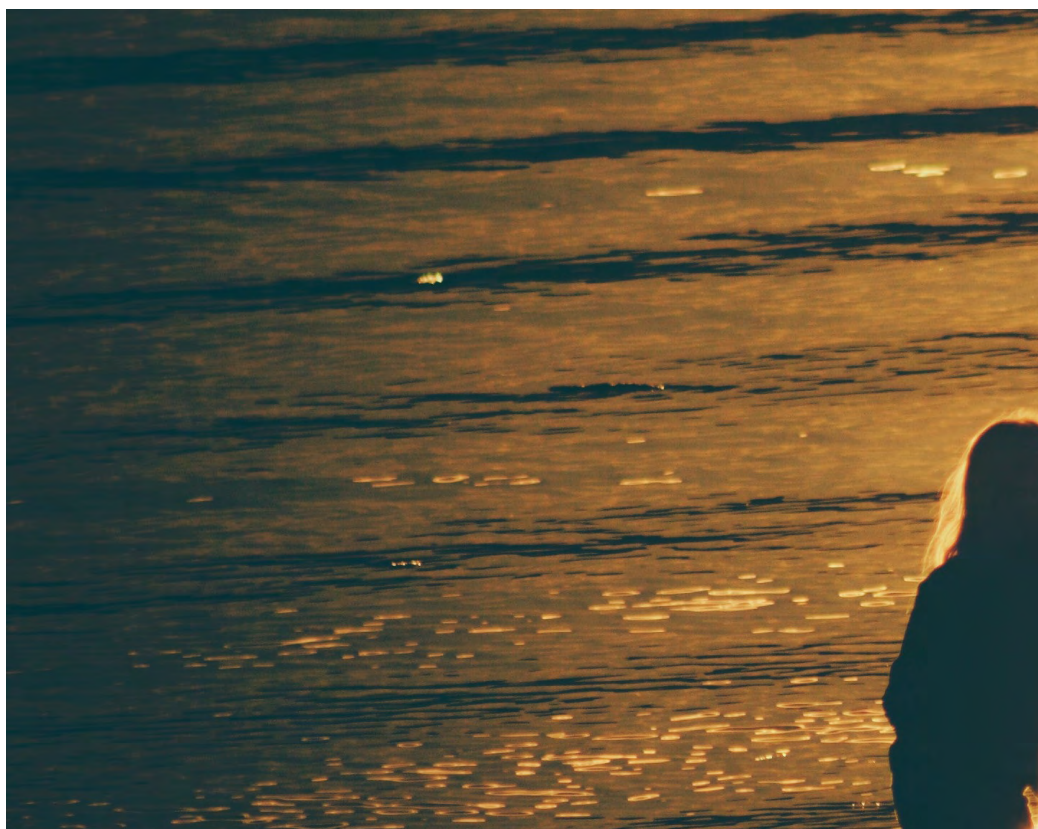
Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alex hasn’t been able to visit Saik’uz, as they are being cautious and doesn’t want to bring the virus into the community. However, as soon as they are able to, Alex will visit and learn as much as they can about their heritage.

“Hopefully I will be able to reconnect with my community, my culture, and one of the main things that I want to do is learn my language. I know very few phrases. I know “mussi” and “hadih.”





# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT



**T**he Wrap Around Parent and Guidance Support (WAPGS) program works with high-risk families involved with MCFD, at risk of MCFD involvement, or families who are seeking support and information on parenting. WAPGS is a strength-based parenting program, offering one-on-one and group support in a very supportive and structured environment. Clients receive hands-on support for 12 weeks, and the option to extend the program if requested. Our workers are dedicated to supporting families in their health

and well-being in a holistic and respectful manner. Transportation is also provided, if required.

The ultimate goal of WAPGS is to strengthen the parent-child relationship by providing new tools for parents and caregivers through the use of role-modeling and coaching of various parenting skills and education.

WAPGS is a result-driven program, with the following goals in mind:

# WRAP AROUND PARENT GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT



- Foster secure parent/child attachment
- Study effective and positive discipline strategies
- Learn about infant and child development
- Understand the importance of consistent structures and routines
- Referrals to community agencies

The COVID-19 pandemic affected how we deliver our program to clients, but we have since been able to resume one-on-one services with

a COVID-19 safety plan in place. We are also happy to announce that the WAPGS is now CARF accredited.

WAPGS has an upcoming program called the Circle of Security Parenting program (COSP), which is an eight-week early intervention, attachment-based program that aims to increase and strengthen the parent/child relationship. This program is backed up by years of evidence-based research on the important foundational skills of the parent/child relationship and attachment concerns.

Clients can receive referrals for the program from MCFD, other professionals, or they may refer themselves. The referral form can be found on the WAPGS page on our website: <https://www.csfs.org/services/wrap-around-parent-guidance-and-support>.



# Youth Services Launches #BreakTheStigma Campaign

CSFS Youth Services is launching a new wristband campaign aimed at reducing the stigma around addictions amongst youth and young adults.

Addictions Awareness week is November 21 – 27. To raise awareness and help end the stigma of addictions, CSFS Youth Services has made wristbands for youth and young adults who wish to participate and share their stories about overcoming and/or struggling with addiction.

Carrier and Sekani Chiefs have declared a state of emergency due to the alarming rates of those who are dying as a result of using toxic drugs. With the ongoing opioid crisis affecting more and more people, we hope to bring attention to the diverse needs of those struggling, but also those who have OVERCOME the constraints of addiction.

Be sure to use the #BreakTheStigma hashtag on social media to show your support, and share your photos on the CSFS Facebook page of you wearing the wristband.

Bracelets will be dispersed to participating CSFS programs, high

schools, and other community agencies. If you wish to join the campaign and have bracelets delivered, please contact:

Erin Weyman at CSFS Youth Services  
eweyman@csfs.org



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## Women's Self-Care Team Featured in Academic Journal

Congratulations to the Women's Self Care team led by Dr. Sheona Mitchell-Foster and our Executive Director of Health Services, Dr. Travis Holyk, for getting published in the International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics.

In partnership with University of British Columbia's (UBC) Northern Medical Program and the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), the team has been leading a research pilot for cervical cancer self-screening in CSFS health centres.

The article examines the unique strengths of remote Indigenous communities in Northern BC, including the multi-generational support systems in health and wellness, connections to the land, and strong cultural foundations. These strengths allow these communities to engage in innovative and empowering health and wellness programs, specifically the CervixCheck North (CCN) pilot project.

To read the full article, head to <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijgo.13915>



# 31st Annual General Assembly

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) hosted its 31st Annual General Assembly (AGA) on October 26th. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this AGA was streamed virtually, much like last year, along with a small in-person gathering of Chiefs and those who presented on the live stream.

We heard updates from our CEO, Warner Adam, on CSFS's future plans, including the desperately-needed Tachick Lake addictions and mental health healing centre. Mary Teegee, the Executive Director and Child and Family Services, provided updates on important initiatives, including the Calls to Justice program. Dr. Travis Holyk, Executive Director of Health Services, discussed how CSFS will be addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, and how CSFS is committed to primary care services, which continues to see growth with a

team of 12 physicians providing care to the Nations we serve. Carol Reimer, Chief Financial Officer, summarized CSFS's expenditures and revenue, which further showed how much CSFS is growing. Marlaena Mann, Executive Director of Communications, IT, and Data Governance, introduced our new directors of Communications and IT, who joined us earlier this year, as well as provided updates on initiatives such as a new intranet. Finally, we heard from Brad Evans, the newly-appointed Executive Director of Human Resources, who summarized how CSFS is actively recruiting for our open positions.

During the AGA, CSFS hosted a COVID-19 panel with professionals in the medical and cultural fields that shared their expertise on the pandemic and vaccines. The panel consisted of Dr. John Pawlovich, Dr. Todd Alec, Jasmine

Thomas, Dr. Nadine Caron, and Sandra Isaac. They also fielded questions from our live chat.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Cindy Blackstock, the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, who joined us virtually and discussed topics such as Bill C-92, Jordan's Principle, and more.

If you would like to view any of the presentations from the event, they will be available on our YouTube page, so be sure to subscribe to our channel and follow us on Facebook to stay up to date!

If you would like to download a copy of the 2021 AGA report, you can do so by going to [www.csfs.org/about-us/annual-general-reports](http://www.csfs.org/about-us/annual-general-reports).





# Photo Submissions

Photo By: Leana Wiebe

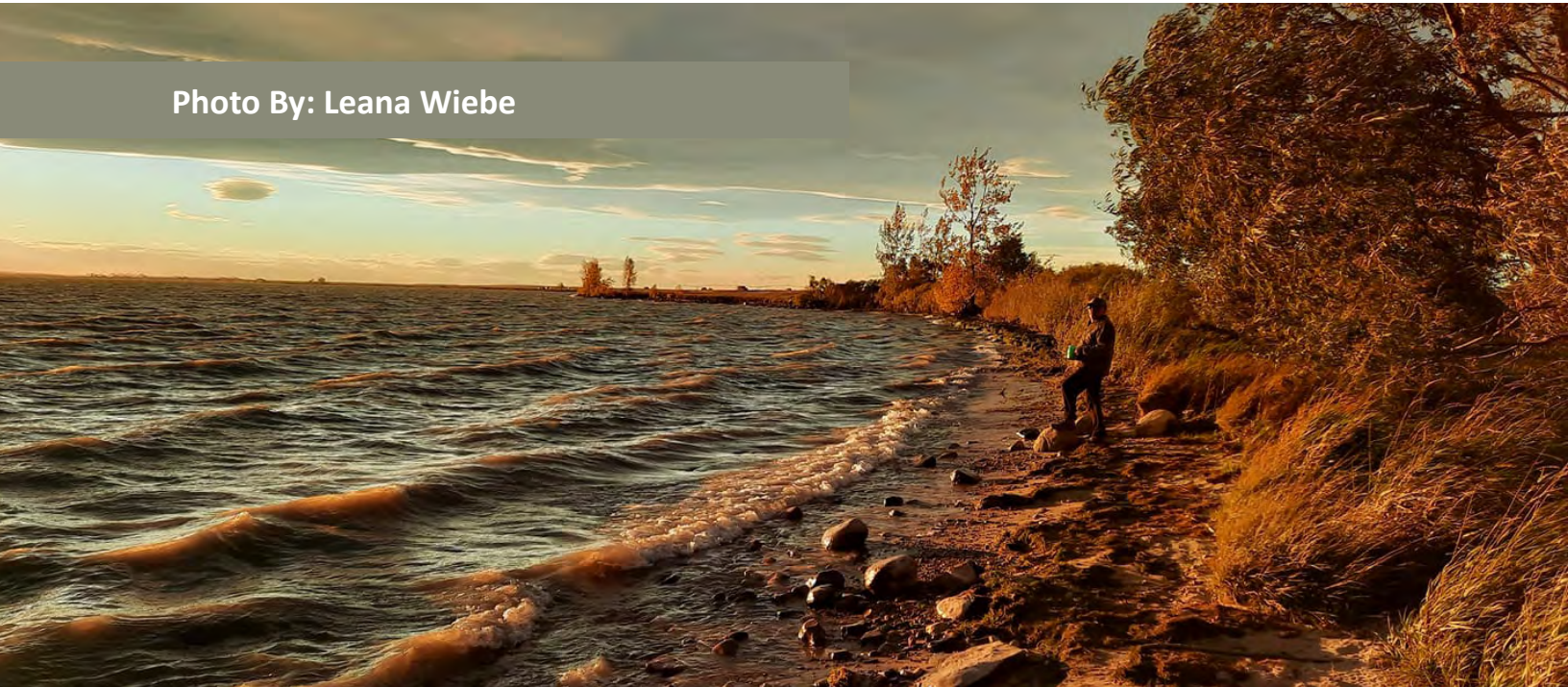


Photo By: Carmen Rae Charlie



Photo By: Shade Robin



## Want to show off 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 Jordan Cryderman at [jcryderman@csfs.org](mailto:jcryderman@csfs.org).





Photo By: Cathy Sam

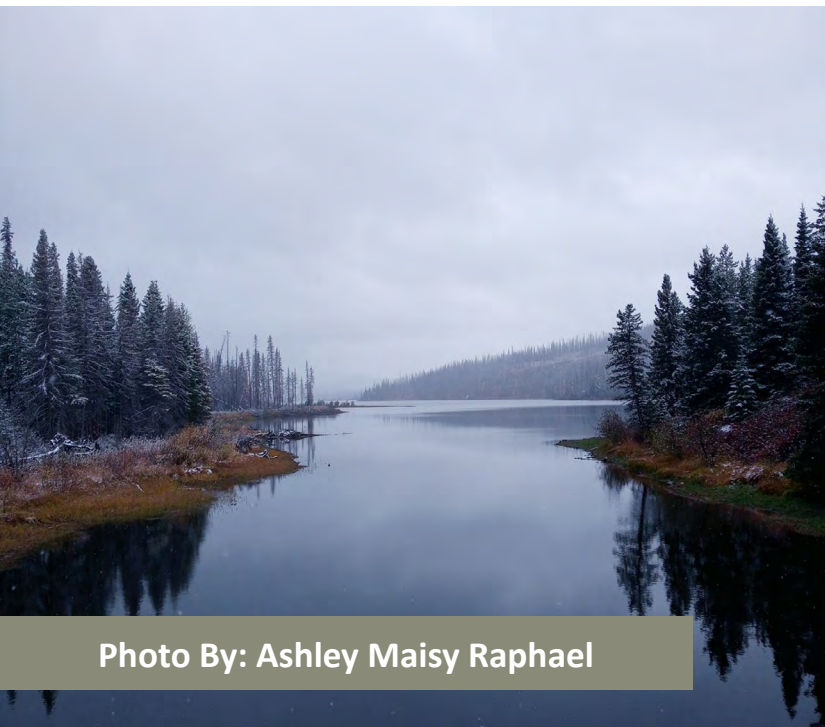


Photo By: Ashley Maisy Raphael



Photo By: Jolene Antonie





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