



# Matriarchs' Voices

## What We Heard Report



AUGUST 2025



## Hadih!

On behalf of Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS), I want to thank you for your dedication to caring for children, families, and communities. It is a privilege to work alongside Matriarchs whose love and wisdom have been the source of Carrier and Sekani peoples strength since time immemorial.

This is an exciting moment in our multi-generational journey to jurisdiction as we prepare for Nations having the legal authority to be the decision-makers for their children and families. This good work could not be done without the guidance of Matriarchs.

When we talk about 'jurisdiction', what we are really talking about is our own traditional governance and bah'lags laws that existed long before colonial governments came to these lands. Yinka Dene have always taken care of their children and it is Yinka Dene who are the experts when it comes to raising their children in a good way.

In this report you will find an overview of what Matriarchs shared with our team during the engagement session at the fifth Matriarchs' Voices meeting. I thank you all for inviting us to the meeting and sharing your stories with us.

I look forward to more conversations and continuing this good work.

Awetza.

**Lincoln Hallgren**  
Executive Director Jurisdiction



# **Skak ha ba bay | Nezkeh ba (For Our Children)**

## **Project background**

CSFS is working with member Nations on the right to be the decision-maker for child and family services. 'Skak ha ba bay / Nezkeh ba (For Our Children)' represents our collaborative journey to stand up a Carrier Sekani child and family well-being law based in the traditional governance of Nations. This law will serve as a framework for Nations to develop their own community-specific regulations through.

The Carrier Sekani child and family well-being law will not be new to our people. Yinka Dene have had laws since time immemorial. What is new is the legal authority being recognized at a federal level through the passing of 'An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families'. The legal right to jurisdiction over child and family services is outlined in Section 35 of the Constitution Act.

The right to decision-making for children and families is inherent and was never surrendered by communities. Together, we are reawakening laws that cared for our people and saw children raised on their lands, with their families and surrounded by their clan.

**Learn more about the jurisdiction journey at**  
**[www.csfs.org/jurisdiction](http://www.csfs.org/jurisdiction)**



# What we've heard so far...

CSFS is actively hosting community conversations with member Nations to gather feedback on what families need to raise and care for children in a good way. These sessions are key to the development of the Carrier Sekani child and family legislation and planning child and family services for the next generations of Yinka Dene.

A session was hosted at the fifth Matriarchs' Voices gathering to hear from Matriarchs across communities. This report is an overview of what Matriarchs shared with us during the session.



# Matriarchs' Voices V

Jurisdiction Engagement Session, August 20, 2025

Everyone in a community has a part to play in caring for children. Describe which roles and responsibilities you see for the following people in your Nation:

**You said...**

## CHIEF & COUNCIL

- Be a voice for community
- Establish processes to ease leadership changes
- Look after funding and consultations with MCFD

## OTHER

- Foster parents need to bring foster children back to community to learn culture
- All community members need to bring back honour

## HEREDITARY CHIEFS

- Teach and groom future Hereditary Chiefs
- Oversee conflict resolution in the bah'lats
- Teach family lineage



- Teach children their lineage and matrilineal system
- Teach children the importance of holding a name

## CLANS

Share your thoughts on how CSFS and your Nation can work together to keep the braid strong and to better support parents and families.

## You said...

Improve communication with communities about programs, engagements, and CSFS workers in community

Teach traditional practices like food preservation and harvesting, language, ceremony, and land-based teaching



Advocate for families and keep families updated on children in care

Be more present in community and more intentional about relationship building



TRANSFORMING  
to our OWN  
LAWS

Who/what are the people, teachings, or supports that guide children and help them stay connected to their community?

## You said...



Parents teach and support children with living in the home and on the land

Family Camps should be hosted for family healing

Grandmothers, mothers and/or other family members should begin teaching children when they are toddlers

What are the things that children need to carry with them as they grow up and raise their own families?

### You said...

Their genealogy and their family history; children should know where they come from

Traditional food harvesting and preservation; living on the land and respect for living things

Traditional governance (bah'lats), ceremony, and smoke house protocol

Access to cultural knowledge and opportunities to learn

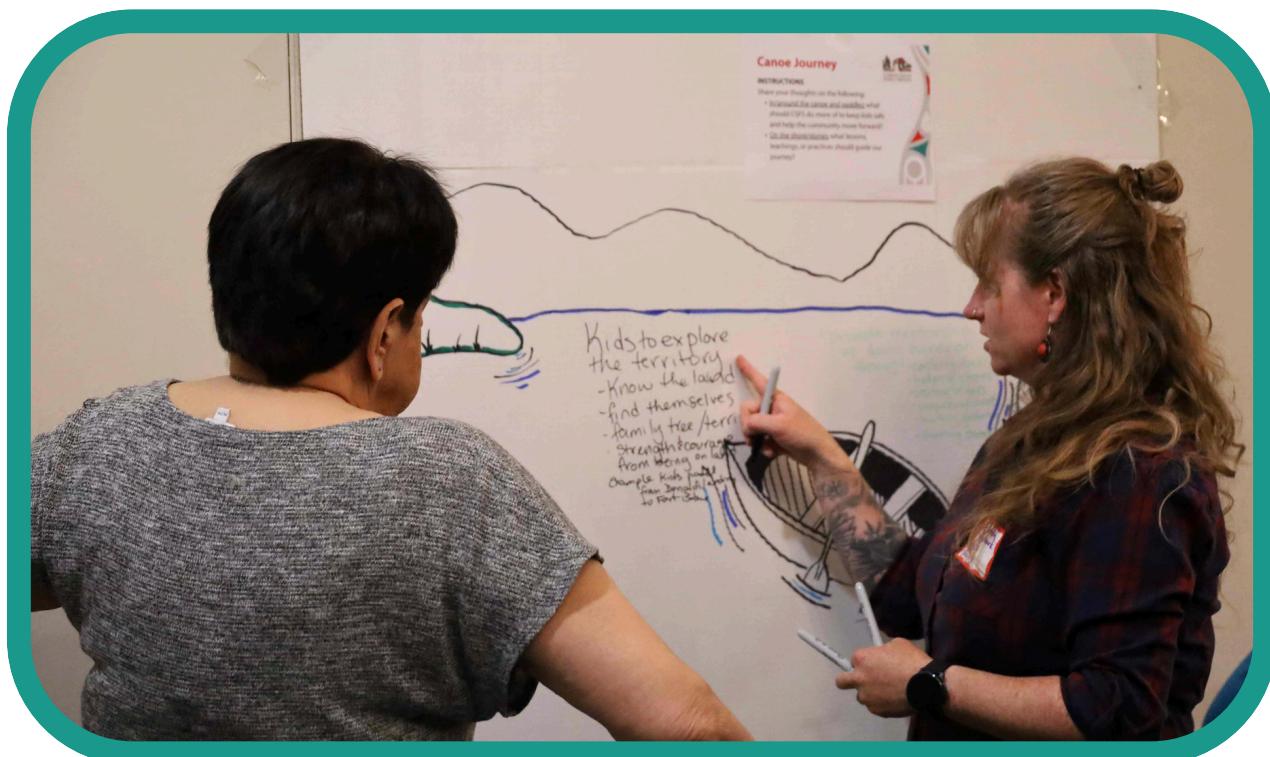


What does your community need more of to be ready to respond to child safety matters?

## You said...

Life skills programs  
for children and  
young adults before  
they age out of care

Sexual education  
and teachings  
about healthy  
intimate  
relationships



Mental health education and support for healing

Role models in community and adults/Elders they can learn from and go to for support



What should CSFS do more of to keep kids safe and help the community move forward?

### **You said...**

Promote mentorship and support life skills programming in community

Provide parenting programs for young families

Prevention and intervention programs that support families in the early stages of an issue

Programs to help families learn to communicate in a healthy way



What lessons, teachings, or practices should guide our journey?

**You said...**

Need to teach children and youth respect for their caregivers, community, and all living things

Children need to spend time on their traditional territory and learn how to be on the land safely

Children need to understand healthy relationships and how to identify unhealthy behaviour

All children need to know who they are, where they come from, and their clan belonging



# Moving forward

We are continuously learning and listening to your feedback on how we can improve this relational process. We want to thank everyone who has shared their input and provided guidance on how we can build trust and a stronger relationship with the communities we serve.

## We commit to:

- Sharing jurisdiction updates to ensure all community members are brought along the journey.
- Honouring the voices of Matriarchs, Elders, Hereditary Chiefs, and Knowledge Keepers whose wisdom guides us.
- Incorporating community feedback into our future planning for each Nation.

## How will my input be used?

The feedback you shared will assist in developing each Nation's unique regulations under the Carrier Sekani child and family well-being law.

Your voice is guiding the development of community programs, service delivery and capacity building as we look ahead to providing child and family services for the next generations of Yinka Dene children, youth and families.





CARRIER SEKANI  
FAMILY SERVICES