



CHESLATA

What We Heard Report



"Why Change is needed"

- too many children in care
- disconnection from family, culture & nation
- decisions made outside the community (foster care)
- we had strong systems but they were disrupted



CARRIER SEKANI
FAMILY SERVICES

APRIL 2026



Hadih!

On behalf of Carrier Sekani Family Services, I want to thank you for sharing your thoughts and your stories with us. We are grateful to all of you for your continued support and guidance on our shared jurisdiction journey.

When we talk about 'jurisdiction', what we are really talking about is our own traditional governance and bah'lats 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 Cheslatta Carrier Nation community members have shared with us on the journey so far. This is only the beginning of an ongoing conversation as we work toward a future of Nation-led child and family services.

CSFS is committed to improving how we communicate with Cheslatta and ensuring all community members have a voice in the future of child and family services. I look forward to more conversations and am excited to see this good work continue.

Awetza.

Lincoln Hallgren

Executive Director Child & Family Jurisdiction

Skak ha ba bay | Nezkeh ba

For our Children

Project background

CSFS is working with Cheslatta Carrier Nation 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 traditional governance. This law will serve as a framework for Cheslatta to develop their own community-specific regulations through, like one large tree with many branches.

This law will not be new to our people; Yinka Dene had laws to protect and raise children in a good way long before colonial governments came to these lands.

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 Act reaffirms our rights as Indigenous people to self-governance as 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 Yinka Dene and saw children raised on their lands, with their families, and surrounded by their clans.

Learn more about the jurisdiction journey at

www.csfs.org/jurisdiction



What we've heard so far...

Working together with Cheslatta, community input is being gathered through group discussions at scheduled events and short-form questions during pop-up activities like health fairs and AGAs.

This 'What We Heard' report captures common themes from responses shared by community members. This report is a living document and will continue to be updated as more voices join the conversation.

173

responses recorded
at scheduled events

26

responses to
short-form
questions



Scheduled Session

March 18, 2026

Community members were asked to share their ideas on community-based governing bodies. These bodies will work together under the new child and family law to strengthen communities and support family wellness.

Whu Neeh Nee “Wise Ones”



A group of representatives appointed by Nations responsible for providing guidance on, and oversight of, ongoing initiatives and regulations under the law.

“How do you see your Nation choosing representatives?”

You said...

Have screening processes in place to review for criminal record and substance use

Look to community leaders from Clans, Hereditary Chiefs, Band staff, and Atsoos

Position the committee so it functions outside of Chief and Council

"What qualities should members have?"

You said...

Strong cultural knowledge and willingness to share teachings

Trusted community members who have strong relationships with Cheslatta families

Conflict resolution, mediation, and emotional regulation skills

Ethical leaders who are accountable and responsible for their actions



"If no one in community is available, how would you want to fill the positions?"

You said...

Consider staff who work at the Wellness Centre

Open positions to family care workers

Have a Band lawyer to support

Look to education providers

Elders Council



A council made up of two to four Elders from each member Nation who make decisions about how children are cared for when consensus cannot be reached among families.

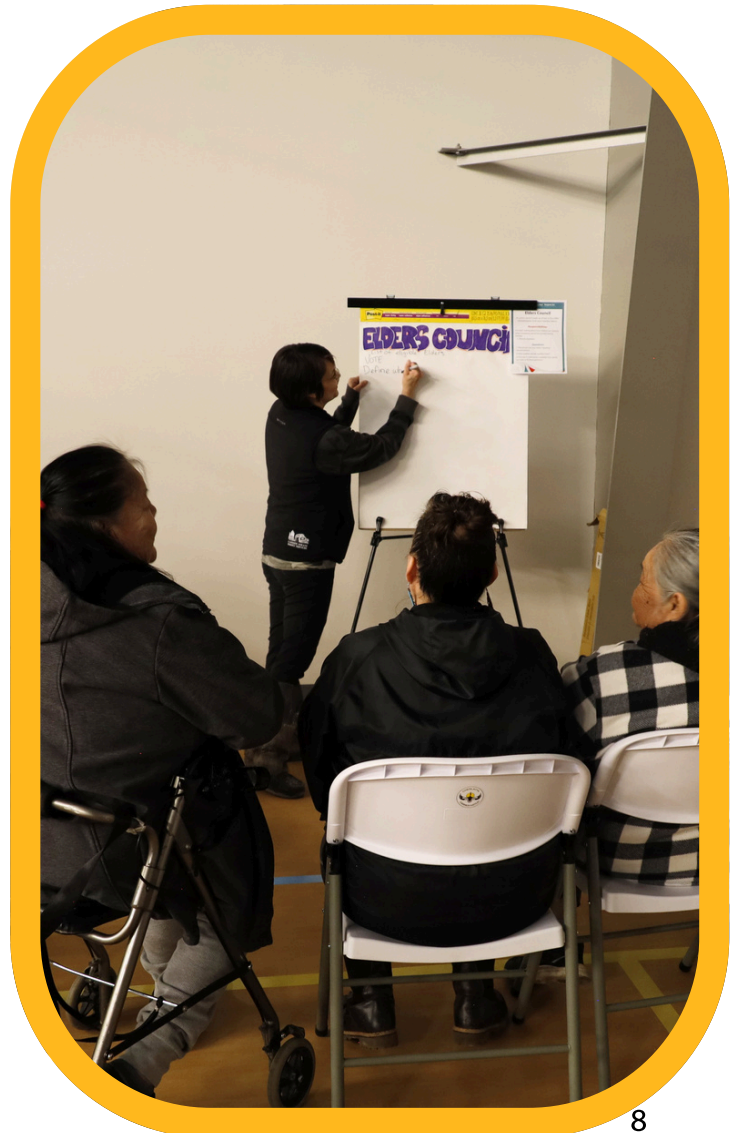
“How do you see your Nation choosing representatives?”

You said...

Create a list of eligible Elders in the community

Have the community vote on membership

Our community needs to define what an 'Elder' is!



“What qualities should members have?”

You said...

Hold and share
traditional cultural
knowledge

Lead a healthy
lifestyle, including
sobriety

Respectful of
everyone and show
humility

Lead by
example and are
accountable

Able to have fun
and seen as
approachable

“If no one in community is available, how would you want to fill the positions?”

You said...

Collaborate and work with neighbouring Nations

Look to Knowledge Holders chosen by the community

Look to counsellors working in the community

Involve foster parents



Community Wellness Team



A community-based group that collaborates with CSFS on prevention programs and monitors the well-being of children and families in the community.

“How do you see your Nation choosing representatives?”

You said...

Have a
community vote

Have a
requirement for
driver’s licence
and reliable
vehicle

Require a criminal
record check, and
decide what
charges make
someone ineligible

Require a signed
agreement to
acknowledge
commitment to
the work



“What qualities should members have?”

You said...

Respectful of all people, kind, and non-judgmental

Trustworthy and reliable

Lived experience with or experience working within the child welfare system

Committed and demonstrates a good work ethic

On a healing path

“If no one in community is available, how would you want to fill the positions?”

You said...

Look to
neighbouring
communities

Open to staff from
health and wellness
centre, social
workers

Get support
from CSFS to
build capacity

Open to non-
community
members



Clan House



A Nation-owned building in the community with culturally-informed services where children and families can go when they are in need of a safe space.

If a child in Cheslatta needed a safe place to stay, what would you want them to experience in a Clan House so they feel safe, cared for, and connected to their family and culture?

You said...

Access to traditional practices and activities to revitalize culture

Cultural spaces and ceremonial infrastructure

Art, music, and recreational activities to promote play

Wellness and self-care activities and amenities



Short-Form Questions

October 29, 2025 | Cheslatta Health Fair

Total responses: 26

We asked you what you think children need to stay safe, happy, and healthy.

You said...

Number of times the theme appeared in responses



Rec activities

9



Family wellness

4



Healthy community

4



Community safety

3



Culture & language

2

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 Cheslatta.

We commit to:

- Working closely with Cheslatta on the jurisdiction project to centre the work in community needs.
- Continue creating opportunities for community members to make their voices heard in a safe and supportive environment.

How will my input be used?

The feedback you share will assist in developing Cheslatta's own regulations under the Carrier Sekani child and family well-being law.

Your voice is guiding the development of community programs, services and capacity building as we work toward Nation-led child and family services for the next generations of Yinka Dene children, youth and families.

Nanyoost'en si!





CARRIER SEKANI
FAMILY SERVICES