



Dream Speaker

Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services

Winter 2021 /2022 Edition



On January 21, 2022, the team of SCCFS came together to honour a bittersweet moment – the retirement of our friend and colleague, Robin Croteau. Robin joined the SCCFS team initially in 2011 through a secondment from the Ministry of Children and Family Development. During her secondment, Robin worked within the agency’s Resources team, providing invaluable support to our caregivers. In 2012, Robin was hired permanently by the agency as a Guardianship Social Worker. Wearing her heart on her sleeve and carrying the

passion she has for children, youth and families, Robin built strong, meaningful relationships with our children and youth while working hard to ensure their connection to family, community and culture. Believing strongly in family connectedness, Robin worked tirelessly to connect children to their families, seek out family placements, and pursue permanency plans that would ensure our children and youth would not grow up in care. In her passion for her work, Robin pushed boundaries, looked for loopholes, and consistently thought outside of the box. And in all of this, she was a mentor and a leader to many others within the agency.

In 2013, Robin accepted a Team Leader position within the agency, supporting our non-delegated services and the Resources team. In this leadership role, Robin brought with her the many years of experience she had in fostering herself, as well as her experience in being an adoptive parent. Robin continued to challenge the “status quo” in this role, working hard to hold the important work of our caregivers up and ensure they remained part of the professional team.

As the agency moved through transition, and continued with its growth, Robin was appointed as Senior Team Leader Designate in 2017. Through this appointment, Robin assumed responsibility for managing the agency’s delegated service delivery. This included the supervision, mentorship and coaching of the agency’s Team Leaders while ensuring the vision, mission

and core values of SCCFS were upheld. Robin was an absolute bright star in this role - guiding practice, encouraging creativity, and building a strong delegated team. On any given day, she was “just dandy, ducky, peachy, keen” and consistently brought light and laughter to everyone in the agency. A quick twirl in the mirror and Robin would be off and running, never losing sight of our children and youth at the center of the work of SCCFS.

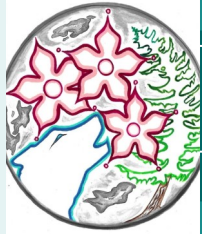
In late 2018, Robin took on the responsibilities of Program Manager on an acting basis, moving permanently into the role in 2019. Robin continued to provide critical support to the agency’s Team Leaders, frontline staff, and was a brilliant member of the agency’s leadership team. Believing strongly in the value of a healthy, supportive team environment, Robin provided coverage for Team Leaders while they were away as well as for the Executive Director. Grounded in an incredibly strong work ethic, Robin never shied away from the work – during times of celebration, or during incredibly difficult circumstances.

Robin, as you move on to do all of the things you have planned for yourself in your retirement, please know that you will be missed deeply at SCCFS. You have offered so many beautiful gifts to our team and to each of us individually. You have stood in true allyship in our communities, creating space for Indigenous ways of knowing and being to guide the work and the care of our beautiful children and youth. You have offered mentorship and guidance rooted in strong values of connection which many practitioners are championing in their practice. You demonstrated time and time again your flexibility as SCCFS continued in its growth, but more importantly, you demonstrated your overwhelming commitment to this organization as a whole, the children, youth, families, and caregivers we are here to support, and the urban Indigenous community.

Best wishes Robin. We look forward to hearing about your new adventures.

Kinanâskomitin!





YOUTH COUNCIL

WRITTEN BY CARMIN BLOMBERG AND EMILY LANE



Keeping Traditional Practices Alive

Surrounded by Cedar's Youth Council partnered with Kinship Rising and lead artist Bradley Dick to create a mural project centered in healing and reclaiming Indigenous land and art-based methodologies and knowledges.

We all collaborated an element from our unique Indigenous cultures while honoring the W̱ÁNEĆ territory and Lekwungen territory of the Esquimalt and Songhees peoples with the guidance of Lekwungen artist Bradley Dick. Because Surrounded by Cedar Child and Family Services stands on the lands between Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, Bradley shared stories of the lands and practices he carries from his family.

The elements of the mural came together to weave a story about identity and sense of belonging. By honoring the past and our resilience moving forward as youth in care, we each found our own ways of being connected to spirit, our ancestors, and the lands we come from and are visiting.

At the beginning we met at Tseycum and created a Medicine Bundle together which offered us a way of building a foundation of our relationships. Each of us put our own energies into the medicines we worked with and wrapped them into hide. This medicine bundle was carried to each gathering to remind us of our connection and intentions.

This bundle was carried to many significant places such as: Open Space, The Heron House, Tseycum Nation, and First Peoples House. Each weekly gathering was filled with new

learnings to better connect to our creative spirits. We shared meals, learned circle guidelines, stepped into leadership roles of practicing sharing a land acknowledgement, and blessing the food.

We uphold one another in our journeys as youth in care. This piece is a visual presentation of our transformation and resilience. The lunar cycle and butterfly symbolize the process of transformation, while the flowers and spirit of the land and animals represent the youth's blossoming connection to culture. The hands around the border symbolize the importance of remembering our stolen sisters Missing Murdered Indigenous Women Girls, Boys, and Two Spirits (MMWIGTSB). The red paint embodied in our resilience to have our voices heard as each of our unique stories illustrate the reclamation of our responsibility to self, land, water and community.

With this beautiful creation of our collaborative spirits, we hope to share the importance of reconnection, reconciliation and restoration of land, sovereignty, culture, and community through resurgence of our traditional practices. Reconnection to relationships land and body sovereignty is crucial transformation for us youth and former youth in care because of the disconnection we all experience. The land will always be there. The land sustains us as it is a relationship that we can always go back to and connect us to our ancestors.



STAFFING CORNER

Welcome to the Team!

Sharlet Strandlund | Guardianship Social Worker

Sharlet is a mother to two beautiful Métis children. Sharlet was adopted at a young age by a mixed European first-generation Canadian family and raised on WSÁNEĆ territory. Biologically Sharlet is Lebanese and Irish and she continues to learn about her heritage. She has a degree in Child and Youth Care from UVic and has experience working in supportive child care, education assistance and child protection. She started at Surrounded by Cedar in the role of guardianship and permanency planning social worker this past October. Sharlet looks forward to connecting with and learning from the children, youth, their families, and their communities.

Jenine Nicholas | Lifelong Connections Worker

As a visitor to the Lekwungen traditional territory Jenine Nicholas, an Anishinaabe Kwe, from Neyaashiinigmiing and Lunaapeew Deleware Nation she is honored to study, live and be a part of the Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services team in the position as Lifelong Connections worker. A grandmother of one and parent to three, a holistic consultant specialized in working in Indigenous communities with hands-on experience in all levels of outreach and community education with extensive knowledge in areas that affect vulnerable populations. Currently she is completing the Bachelor of Child and Youth Care degree at the University of Victoria.

Staff Announcements

Jenna Bailey | Practice Manager

SCCFs would like to announce Jenna Bailey as the agency's new Practice Manager. Jenna started this role January 2022. Jenna is Cree/Métis and has been working with Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services over the last five years. While Jenna's base position at the agency has been that of Guardianship & Permanency Planning Worker, she has also spent a significant amount of time acting in the Guardianship Team Lead role. Jenna is passionate about the work of this organization and rooting child welfare practice in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. She is a strong advocate in the field of Indigenous child welfare and for making positive, substantive change in the lives of our children, youth and families. Congratulations Jenna!

Courtney Norris-Jones | Acting Guardianship & Permanency Team Lead

The agency would also like to congratulate Courtney Norris-Jones for taking on the position of Acting Team Leader for Guardianship & Permanency Planning. Courtney is of British and South African descent. Courtney brings years of experience to her new role, as a Guardianship & Permanency Planning Social Worker with SBC, a Child Protection Worker with VACFSS and a youth worker. As a senior worker with SBC Courtney has shown that she is a skilled, knowledgeable and strong leader.

Megan Saulnier | Youth Council Coordinator

SCCFs would like to celebrate Megan's *permanent* position as Youth Council Coordinator!

Kristy Potskin | Lifelong Connections Worker

Kristy Potskin has left for a one year maternity/parental leave which started in November 2021. We wish Kristy and family the best as they grow their beautiful family.

Brian Garvin | Guardianship Social Worker

SCCFs would also like to announce, as of February 22nd, Brian became a permanent member of the Surrounded by Cedar family. Brian has been a social worker in the child welfare field for over 5 years and has become an integral member of our team. Brian embraces Dutch ancestry on his mothers side, and mixed Scottish, Irish, and Welsh on his fathers side.

SCCFs Face Masks

Available for Purchase at reception!

\$10 each, cash or cheque accepted



CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

SARAH UNDERDOWN & BRANDI LANCASTER

During October, youth and cultural programming staff members engaged in a two-week Hunting experience on Sidney Island, on Tsawout territory. The youth were broken into two cohorts under the direction of Wade Charlie and his son from the Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw people on the Northern tip of Vancouver Island.

Cohort 1 spent 5 days together on the island. Our time was opened in ceremony led by our guides where the youth were cleansed and donned with the protection of ochre on their faces. Each morning was early as we prepared for the days activities. Each day brought new learning as the youth participated in teachings of hunting, fishing, crabbing and ceremony. One youth was successful in harvesting a seal with a perfect rifle shot from the boat. As a team, we came together to process the seal and share teachings of gratitude and leaving nothing to waste. That evening, we were able to share a meal of seal, crab and steak. Every evening brought campfires and song sharing before hitting our tents to prepare for the next day. I am so proud of our youth during this, their first hunting experience. They were hard working, helpful, respectful and committed to the entire experience. We will come together in the spring to process the seal hide.

Cohort 2's trip was cut short due to an incoming storm that wreaked havoc on the waters surrounding Sidney Island. That group spent 2.5 days out on the land, hunting during the night much like our Salish counterparts did once. They walked along the forested grounds looking, listening, and watching for movement of any deer that might be present amongst them.



Youth unloading their seal

The time not spent in the forest was spent on the waters in the boat. Youth learned how to skipper the boat safely and steer it to a nearby island that was filled with an abundance of traditional foods- cormorants, seagulls (eggs can be harvested), seals, otters (for pelts), and more. Our Cultural Support worker came close to nabbing a seal but didn't account for the animal's movements once the shot rang out. Turns out that birds are also very hard to hunt. Youth tried hard to harvest a cormorant as well, but they skirted away once the shot went off. **It was a trip to remember.**

The trip home was eventful, leaving early to keep the kiddos safe and making sure everyone got home safely was a good call, because the winds were wild

once the storm rolled in. Mr. Charlie and his son were excellent skippers and guides, and amazing teachers. They put a lot of time, effort, and work into ensuring everything went smoothly and everyone practiced safety throughout the whole trip for both cohorts. We raise our hands to this duo for their knowledge, lived experiences, and teachings brought to this trip. We look forward to hopefully working together again soon!

Gilakas'da'xw'la for those that made this trip possible for all the youth in attendance. It was quite the memorable trip together.





Sidney Island, on Tsawout Territory.

Building Our Bundles

November: Song sharing with guest Robert Williams via Teams. Robert shared his song learning journey and shared songs from his territory (Kwa'kwak'awak)

December: Gratitude sharing night. We held space right before Christmas break to reflect on what we are grateful for and what we are looking forward to in the new year. The children/youth who participated held some beautiful reflections of gratitude.

Xe'Xe'tuluts'thut- Leadership

October- Youth assisted in putting together proposal ideas for a small grant through ISPARC. This grant will bring physical activities into the program.

November- Held 2 sessions where we had conversations of wellness and how we are each taking care of ourselves.



WINTER FEAST 2021

Brandi Lancaster

The committee for Winter Feast worked extremely hard to bring a COVID friendly 'Solstice Bag' which included art supplies, cookie decorating, gift cards to help with groceries, and/or but not limited to an array of other items included with the bags. Our older youth on AYA/YAG's received a special 'movie night in' packet of treats that included a Cineplex gift card, popcorn, and hot cocoa to stay warm and enjoy something from the comfort of their own home amidst the chilly nights we received after Christmas.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MAREN GRAY

On October 20, 2021, Surrounded by Cedar, once again, hosted its Annual General Meeting in the virtual world.

We were pleased to share space with our members, colleagues and community partners. Our Board welcomed back Natasha Parrish, fulfilling a 3-year term as the Board Treasurer and by way of a one-year appointment, welcomed Jessica Edgar and Carmin Blomberg as the SCCFS Youth Council Representatives. We look forward to having youth voices guide us in the governance of our organization.

The Surrounded by Cedar

Board of Directors are:

- ◇ Bruce Underwood, President
- ◇ Sekwan Wabasca, Vice-President
- ◇ Natasha Parrish, Treasurer
- ◇ Sue Simard, Secretary
- ◇ Coral MacKay, Director
- ◇ Lonnie Gosek, Director
- ◇ Joy Charleson, Nuuchah-Nulth Tribal Council Representative
- ◇ Jessica Edgar, Youth Council Representative
- ◇ Carmin Blomberg, Youth Council Representative

Following annual business, SCCFS honoured members of community that played pivotal roles in supporting the organization throughout 2020/2021. Surrounded by Cedar recognized the support of TLD Computers for their assistance and support in acquiring their unit for the expansion of our offices, TecNet Canada for their ongoing IT support and for quickly assisting the

agency in acquiring the appropriate technological needs to support staff to work at home, as well as Wives Unlimited for their phenomenal work in keeping our offices cleaned, safe and sanitized for our staff and community. We also honoured the MCFD Aboriginal Services Branch for their assistance in acquiring PPE for frontline staff at the beginning of the pandemic and William Strickland of the MCFD Esquimalt Branch for providing resources that would help us navigate a quickly pivoting work environment. The Victoria Native Friendship Center played a critical part in ensuring the

Indigenous community received their Covid-19 vaccinations and created space for the SCCFS team to receive their 1st and 2nd doses, in turn, with staff volunteering at the VNFC vaccine clinics throughout the spring. Surrounded by Cedar was supported by the Indigenous Child & Family Services Directors Secretariat who were instrumental in organizing weekly

meetings for all DAA's in the province, to ensure pertinent information was flowing to all partners. Finally, we were honoured to have Sandra Richardson of the Victoria Foundation join us as we expressed deep appreciation for their communication of funds available to our organization and for their financial support through the Rapid Relief Fund and their Community Recovery Program. These funds helped us mobilize our teams to work remotely from home with the appropriate technology needs and supported the Traditional Foods Basket Program, which saw our team delivering baskets with traditional foods, medicines and activities to our children and youth in care and our young people accessing the YAG and AYA Program. There are no words to describe the profound impact these organizations had on our organization during the pandemic and we are grateful to each and every one of them.

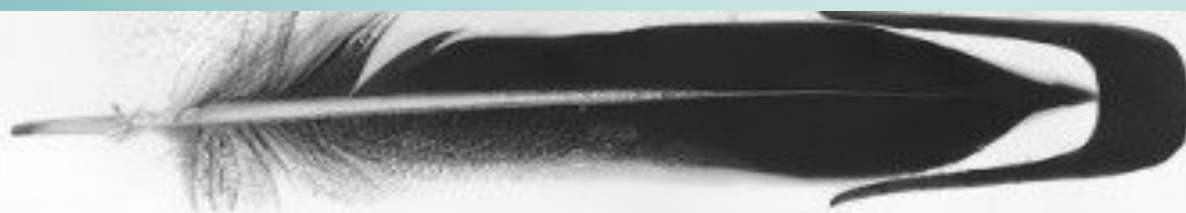


Family Care Homes

There are many different ways you can provide support and care to the children and youth who need either long term or short term placements, emergency relief or even potentially adoptive homes. Becoming a Foster parent or Caregiver is a way to extend our hearts and homes to Indigenous children in the community. As a caregiver, you and the child or youth in your home will receive supports where you can provide a safe and loving placement for them child while they are away from their parents.



Interested in caregiving, or know someone who might be? If yes, please connect with one of our Resource Social Workers at becomeacaregiver@sccfs.com



Lifeguard Digital Health App

The overdose crisis is an unprecedented public emergency effecting the lives of many across BC. Due to the stigma around addictions, many people who use drugs use alone, increasing the risk of an overdose death. The Lifeguard Digital Health app was created to help **prevent overdoses and save lives.**



How does it work?

The app is activated by the user before they take their dose. After 50 seconds, the app will sound an alarm, if the user doesn't hit a button to stop the alarm, indicating they are fine, the alarm will grow louder. After 75 seconds, a text-to-voice call will go to 9-1-1 alerting emergency dispatchers of a potential overdose.

The app can be downloaded for free from the IOS App Store or Google Play.

For more information check out their website: <https://lifeguarddh.com/>

Vancouver Island Drug Checking Project Free confidential drug checking program in Victoria BC

Locations :

Substance 1802 Cook St., Monday—Friday 12pm—7pm

Lantern Services 820 Cormorant St., Tuesdays 11am—5pm

First Nations Virtual Substance Use & Psychiatry Service

Culturally-safe specialist support for your health and wellbeing



1. Ask your health and wellness provider for a referral or call the First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day.



2. You and your provider can call the service together to set up an appointment by video or phone.



3. An assistant will connect you with a specialist to give you the support you need.

Support is available Monday to Friday
Learn more at [FNHA.ca/VirtualHealth](https://fnha.ca/VirtualHealth)



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

COVID-19 Mental Health Resources

News and updates around COVID-19 have been coming at us quickly and it can be hard to remain calm given all that is going on. It is important that we deal with our stress and anxiety and support one another through these challenging times. You know your body and its signs of stress. If you are having trouble managing your mental health, contact your healthcare provider and encourage those you love to do the same.

If you need help, here are a few resources available:

- ⇒ HealthLink BC: Provides 24/7, confidential health information or advice. Call 8-1-1 or visit: [www.Healthlinkbc.ca](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca)
- ⇒ Wellness Together Canada provides an online portal for Canadians to access self –assessments, self-directed, e-mental health tools, peer support and live counselling by telephone, video and text. Visit www.wellnesstogether.ca or call 1-866-585-0445.
- ⇒ Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre: Provides confidential, non-judgmental, free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide. Call toll-free 1 800 SUICIDE or visit: www.crisiscentre.bc.ca
- ⇒ The KUU-US Crisis Responsive Service: Provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous people in BC. Call 1-800-588-8717 or visit: www.kuu-uscrisisline.ca.
- ⇒ Mental Health Digital Hub: A provincial website that provides information, services, education and awareness about mental health and substance use for adults, youth and children www.gov.bc.ca/mentalhealth
- ⇒ Bounce Back: a free evidence-based program designed to help youth and adults experiencing symptoms of mild to moderate depression, low mood or stress, with or without anxiety. Bounce Back teaches effective skills to help people improve their mental health. Call toll-free 1 866 639-0522 or visit www.bounceback.ca