

# NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

## **Our Children, Our Future.**

"Secwepemc communities are leading the way to solve the historical problems concerning children in care," said Chief Wayne Christian. "With the Stsmémelt Project, we've started a community-driven, Nation-based approach to exercising full jurisdiction over Secwepemc children and families," he added.

"The Stsmémelt Project Team goes to our communities and listens to the stories told by our elders and families about their child welfare experiences," he said. "I'm encouraged by the progress made: in just four months, there has been a 10% decrease in the number of Secwepemc children in care," he added.

"This work began in 2009, when all 17 Secwepemc chiefs declared their commitment to care for our children and families in a way that embraces our culture," said Chief Christian. "Then, at this year's Summer Solstice, we hosted a Reconciliation Ceremony, attended by Minister Mary Polak (Children and Family Development), where over 140 children in care we welcomed to the Nation. We thanked the foster parents for their work too," he added.

"Our success is in stark contrast to the failure of the Aboriginal Peoples Family Accord, a top-down process that didn't listen to our Nations' voices," said Chief Christian. "Precious time and money was lost and many children still suffer the consequences," he added.

"Each day, more people see that the community-driven, Nation-based approach is working," said Chief Christian. "Our children and families are the heart of our Nation. They are our future. And the future is now," he added.

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