

News release

For immediate release

Coming into force, Tsq̓ésceñ First Nation's child wellbeing law, *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe*

December 23, 2024 — Tsq̓ésceñ First Nation, Canim Lake, B.C., Indigenous Services Canada and the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development

Tsq̓ésceñ First Nation is proud to breathe life into their child well-being law, *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe*. They have always upheld and practiced their laws, teachings, and responsibilities in caring for, protecting, supporting, and uplifting Tsq̓ésceñ (Tsq̓ésceñ people, “people of the broken rock”). The law, which is an expression of Tsq̓ésceñ jurisdiction and legislative authority over child and family services, came into force on December 21, 2024.

T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe is a result of decades of work by Tsq̓ésceñ leadership, staff, and community, with advice and guidance from Tsq̓ésceñ's Elders and traditional knowledge keepers. It is grounded in Tsq̓ésceñ's stories, teachings, practices, and language, and centered on the nurturing of connection to family and community. *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe*, means "Law of the Valerian Plant" in Secwepemctsin—a plant used traditionally by Tsq̓ésceñ to soothe and comfort babies. The law enshrines within it the principle that "re Tsq̓ésceñ me7 yecwemíns re xwexwéyt te Tsq̓ésceñ ell Secwépemc," meaning that Tsq̓ésceñ have responsibility to guard and care for all Tsq̓ésceñ and Secwépemc stsmémelt (children), tutuwíwt (youth), and kweskwéltkten (families) regardless of location. This is consistent with Tsq̓ésceñ's tradition and practice of going to, providing aid to, and retrieving Tsq̓ésceñ te stsmémelt ell tutuwíwt in their times of need.

With the coming into force of *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe*, Tsq̓ésceñ can continue this practice through the delivery of Syecwementwécw (dedicated resources, programs, services, supports, and ceremony) for Tsq̓ésceñ, guided by the teachings of Xexe7úlecw (a sacred teaching from Tsq̓ésceñ that emphasizes foresight, preparation, and the responsibility to equip children, youth, and families with resilience and strength to face life's uncertainties.) Syecwementwécw will be administered and delivered by Tsq̓ésceñ First Nation's child and family well-being agency, Élksts re Kíkwe.

As the Northern Secwépemc te Qelmúcw Declaration Author, Matriarch Elizabeth Pete, reminds us: *“Ne mitk’y-kt wel me7 yews. Skectels-kuc le q’7es te qelmúcw. Le q’7eses le st’ext’ex7e7m-kt, m-tskexmens le tsuwets ell stselxmems. Tselxem7uysts re ctckten’-kt. Kukwpi7stem es relrats re st’ext’ex7e7m-kt ne sxwexeytes re sw7ec ell tsuwets.”* *‘We carry the blood of our ancestors, and in turn, it is passed down to the next generations. The importance of family is shown and practiced through daily family life—*



from the Elders to the parents and to the younger generations. Families are proud of their strong roots, are loyal to relationships, and share in the responsibility of caring for children, for Elders, and for those in need. There is a deep sense of respect for the sacredness of body and of life. As Secwépemc, we fight for what we believe in. Mothers, Fathers, Uncles, Aunts, Children, and honoured Elders all participate and contribute to the community and its well-being. The practice of sharing assures that all needs are taken care of. Many Elders are models of traditional teachings meant to secure the well-being and continuance of Secwépemc.”

These words carry the essence of this journey.

Quotes

“We have been walking this path for generations, guided by the strength of our ancestors and the clarity of Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ mandate since creation. Our work is rooted in the laws and teachings that have always defined who we are as Secwépemc. It is not just about governance or jurisdiction—it is about living our values, honouring our responsibilities, and ensuring the health and well-being of our stsmémelt (children), tutuwíwt (youth), and kweskwséltkten (families). We journey—not toward something new, but toward the continued fulfillment of our sacred responsibilities. Together, we walk with purpose, ensuring our future generations grow in strength, identity, and connection.”

Kukpi7 Helen Henderson Chief
Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ First Nation

“Congratulations to Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ First Nation on the enactment of their child and family services law, *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe*. Indigenous children deserve to remain connected to their families and communities. This legislation honours all Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ children and their families whose well-being is inextricably tied to the future of the nation. We look forward to continuing this partnership and concluding a coordination agreement in the near future. This milestone is an important step towards self-government, and for children's futures.”

The Honourable Patty Hajdu
Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for FedNor
Government of Canada

“This agreement upholds Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ First Nation's inherent rights and is a significant step on their jurisdiction journey as they continue working on behalf of the safety and wellness of their children and youth. Reaching this milestone in under a year highlights Tsq̓ésceṇ̓ First Nation's commitment to make sure their children and youth thrive in community, close to family, within their culture, and based on their own laws.”



Jodie Wickens
Minister of Children and Family Development
Province of British Columbia

Quick facts

- For most Indigenous children, child and family services are provided under the legislation of the province or territory where the children and families reside.
- On January 1, 2020, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families* (the Act) came into force. The Act affirms the inherent right to self-government of Indigenous Peoples, which includes jurisdiction over child and family services, provides a pathway for Indigenous communities to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services and sets out principles applicable, on a national level, to the provision of child and family services to Indigenous children.
- British Columbia's *Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act* was passed into law November 25, 2022, making British Columbia the first province in Canada to expressly recognize the inherent right of self-government of Indigenous communities including jurisdiction over child and family services.
- Tsq̓ésceñ First Nation is the 7th Indigenous governing body in British Columbia to enter into coordination agreement discussions and the 13th in Canada to bring its own child and family services law into force. *T'kwenm7íple7tens re Kíkwe* is an expression of Tsq̓ésceñ and Secwepemc law.
- Tsq̓ésceñ, Canada and British Columbia are negotiating a coordination agreement pursuant to *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*.
- Tsq̓ésceñ and British Columbia signed a bilateral "interim coordination agreement" on December 21, 2024 to ensure that child and family services to Tsq̓ésceñ children, youth, and families are coordinated between them until a tripartite coordination agreement is signed.

Associated links

- [*An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*](#)
- [Reducing the number of Indigenous children in care](#)
- [Notices and requests related to An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families](#)
- [B.C.'s Indigenous Self-Government in Child and Family Services Amendment Act](#)

- 30 -



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