



Splatsin

PO Box 460 Enderby BC V0E 1V0
5775 Old Vernon Road

Tel: (250) 838-6496
Fax: (250) 838-2131
www.splatsin.ca

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHIEF CHRISTIAN RESPONDS TO HISTORIC RULING BY HUMAN RIGHTS TRIBUNAL

Splatsin (Enderby, BC), Secwepemc Nation, January 27, 2016, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal made a historic ruling on Tuesday recognizing inequities in child welfare management on reserves.

The decision brings forward an issue Chief Wayne Christian has been tirelessly advocating for nearly four decades.

“The Tribunal’s ruling is a vindication of our struggle to have recognition of our law and to secure sufficient funding from Canada to deliver programs and support to all our Splatsin children and families,” says Christian.

In October 1980, Chief Christian led hundreds in a rally through the province to bring political attention to what he knew then were discriminatory laws and policies and underfunded supports at the community level to keep First Nations children in their homes. Splatsin took action and introduced its child welfare bylaw, but the provincial government has asserted its position in wanting to keep control over the community’s children. In October 2015 Splatsin launched a notice of claim for recognition of its law and rallied at the Premier’s office in Kelowna regarding the jurisdiction of children in care.

“It’s forced us to a legal battle with the Province of BC over our right to determine the best interests of Splatsin children in need of care and protection. This federal decision calls for funding and support for First Nations to deliver our own services and coupled with the first five recommendations for the Truth and reconciliation these major initiatives tell us that our people nearly 40 years ago were right and thinking of those yet unborn,” he says.

“We call upon the Province to take heed of the Tribunal’s decision and work with us, instead of against us; to recognize the place of our children in Splatsin/Secwepemc culture. We will no longer tolerate the Federal government and BC making agreements about our children without us.”

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For more information please contact: Kukpi7 Wayne Christian 250.838.6496