

The Artificial Intelligence Experts' Roundtable

Summary Report

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS • ASSEMBLÉE DES PREMIÈRES NATIONS

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Executive Summary

In May 2026, an Experts' Roundtable was convened to inform the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) development of a National First Nations Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy, as mandated by AFN Resolution 45/2025, *Support for a First Nations Approach to Artificial Intelligence*. The roundtable brought together 23 experts in the field of AI with experience in sectors such as academia, language revitalization, geography, education, and law. The experts were joined by representatives from the Government of Canada's Department of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, as well as the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Participants emphasized that AI should be developed to address clearly defined community needs rather than be adopted for its own sake, and that sustained, predictable funding is essential to support long-term planning and implementation. The table stressed the importance of respecting First Nations' autonomy in decisions regarding AI adoption, while also recognizing the need to improve AI literacy, particularly among leadership, as a critical success factor. The discussion highlighted the need for agility and flexibility to keep pace with rapid AI developments, as well as significant investments in infrastructure, which is currently insufficient to support fully sovereign First Nations AI systems. In addition to technical capacity, political expertise was identified as necessary to advance the fiscal and policy reforms needed to support AI initiatives. Finally, participants noted that many communities would benefit from suggestions and a description of specific pathways, workflows, and considerations for AI development and use, helping First Nations navigate where and how to begin.

Overall, the AFN was informed that a First Nations AI strategy should be used to provide guidance for, and empowerment of, First Nations who wish to develop community specific approaches to AI. First Nations will have their own specific priorities for AI that will vary from coast to coast to coast, and any national strategy must respect the digital sovereignty of all nations, including their ability to reject AI in part or whole. Though there are many ways to approach this technology, it is not immediately clear where to begin for most communities. A First Nations AI strategy should therefore provide a road map to support users on the development and use of AI.

The event concluded that a First Nations-based strategy should reflect the priorities and opportunities, highlight and mitigate the fears, and address the broader ethical concerns shared by many First Nations. Throughout the discussion, specific examples of First Nations implementations of AI were shared. These examples demonstrate a trend toward targeted and ecologically responsible systems that can be emblematic of a First Nations approach to AI.

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First Nations Mandates

In December 2025, First Nations-in-Assembly ratified Assembly of First Nations Resolution 45/2025, *Support for a First Nations Approach to Artificial Intelligence*. This resolution calls for the development of an AI strategy that centres the needs, priorities, and diversity of First Nations. An AFN First Nations AI strategy is not a national policy and will not specify how any community might use, pursue, or reject any AI initiative. Instead, it will provide suggestions and advice on how communities might develop their own policies.

Following the Experts' Roundtable, AFN Resolution 35/2026 *Protecting First Nations Environment, Sovereignty, Knowledge Systems, and Data in the Era of Artificial Intelligence* was passed by First Nations-in-Assembly in July 2026. This resolution calls for, among other things, the upholding of First Nations data sovereignty, the protection of First Nations' waters, and the development of strict and binding regulations.



Case Study: Haíłzaqv Salmon Monitoring

Monitoring salmon populations has always been challenging in British Columbia with its extensive coastline, numerous salmon-bearing rivers, and high costs required for manual fish counting. As climates shift dramatically, Pacific salmon are increasingly struggling to adapt to unpredictable environments, making the monitoring of its population more crucial than ever. The Haíłzaqv Nation has begun using AI to aid in this practice. Technologies are helping to address challenges by automating the identification and enumeration of salmon through video and sonar data collected at fish weirs and other monitoring sites. This technology is already implemented at the nation's Koeye River Weir. The data gathered by this technology have allowed the community to predict the number of sockeye salmon to return to the area and justify investment in their harvest. This harvest resulted in roughly 500 sockeye salmon being distributed to elders in the community.

Weirs have traditionally been used by First Nations as a method to manage Salmon for thousands of years. The practice was however banned through the original Canadian Fisheries Act, which prioritizes commercial fisheries and canneries. The loss of these practices contributed to a decline of First Nations' authority over their fisheries and reduced opportunities for communities to apply their own knowledge and approaches. This integration of traditional weirs into emerging technologies, including AI, has helped revitalize these longstanding practices while allowing First Nations to efficiently manage their resources.

When combined with traditional monitoring methods and Indigenous knowledge, AI is providing cost-efficient and timely population data needed for conservation efforts, fisheries management and First Nations-led decision making. Importantly, AI does not replace Indigenous governance or expertise, but rather complements them by providing additional tools for communities to monitor salmon populations, strengthen data sovereignty and make informed decisions supported by traditional knowledge and modern technologies.

The resolution opposes the expansion of data centres onto First Nations lands without First Nations consent and calls on the AFN to uphold the principles of Ownership Control Access and Possession (OCAP®) in the collection, governance, use, sharing, commercialization, and disposal of First Nations data. It also calls on the AFN to advocate for the Duty to Consult in regards to AI infrastructure. The resolution further calls for the protection of drinking water, as well as advocacy for and the development of strict regulations and sustained funding for AI infrastructure projects.

Prospective Guiding Principles

Based on feedback from the Chiefs Committee on Languages[1], four prospective guiding principles were presented to the convened experts. These principles were presented to frame the discussions at the Experts' Roundtable:

1. **Authenticity:** First Nations efforts in AI should reflect their values, customs, priorities, and identities.
2. **Community:** AI should serve First Nations communities, not only individualist interests.
3. **Respect:** Any First Nations AI strategy should respect all involved in its creation. This includes not only the individual and the community, but also the earth, waters, airs, and animals that are affected by the use and development of AI technologies.
4. **Reciprocity:** Individuals who contribute to the creation of an AI system must be reimbursed for their contribution. This should include any party whose work was used to train a model.
   As previously mentioned, this is a holistic principle: just as an individual must receive benefit from their

1 The Chiefs Committee on Languages is made up of chiefs from each AFN region and advises the AFN Secretariat on issues of language and culture.



Case Study: Buffalo in Motion

First Nations are leaders in the applications of AI. The Buffalo in Motion project is an ecological sustainability initiative that makes use of geospatial data, location tracking, drone surveillance, soil sensors and camera traps to support the rematriation of buffalo onto First Nations lands. The platform provides monitoring of land health, vegetation growth, and wildlife behaviour to ultimately empower stewards of the land to reclaim and restore their environments. The platform also provides information on population dynamics, migrations patterns, and carbon/climate reporting.

Importantly, Buffalo in Motion is designed by and for First Nations. The project is built with reliability in mind, specifically in remote and rural areas where buffalo rematriation necessarily occurs. Further, the project offers the ability for communities to own and control their own data. The program was built from the ground up with data sovereignty in mind, and strict protocols exist to ensure this. This project is the result of First Nations involvement in AI. As one participant commented, projects like this simply would not be proposed, funded, or implemented under the currently dominant technology industry. Without First Nations leadership and innovation, initiatives like Buffalo in Motion simply would not exist.

contribution, so too should the community that hosts a service. The relationship with the environment must also be reciprocal. AI should not rely on the exploitation of our planet, but should be developed with the intent to provide value back.

How can First Nations get to AI equity?

Motivation

Participants stressed that AI must not be a solution without a problem. While AI is currently experiencing rapid growth, the choice for how – or whether – a First Nation should invest in AI should stem from a clearly identified problem.

Regardless of the strongly justified criticisms of AI, the technology has real world applications. Participants mentioned a variety of use cases ranging from wildlife tracking, speech transcription, as well as language and culture revitalization. It should be these (and similar) efforts that guide a community's use of AI.

Ecological Considerations

All participants agreed that the ecological ramifications of AI cannot be ignored. AI infrastructure that is developed without ecology in mind disrupts the migratory patterns of animals, the natural biomes of plant life, and the flow of waterways. Further, siphoning off massive amounts of energy in areas that already do not have sufficient energy supplies will shape the past, present, and future of First Nations people. Infrastructure and use of AI must consider the short and long-term effects of AI on the lands,



Case Study: Awtij

First Nations-owned Awtij is a marine technology company based out of Nova Scotia that makes use of AI in the form of computer vision, marine sensors, and machine learning algorithms to help automate the keeping of records for commercial fishing operations. Focusing on Lennox Island off the coast of Prince Edward Island, Awtij's technology solutions allow for marine crews to operate as normal while recording and identifying each and every catch. In addition to saving crew time, this technology is more accurate than a logbook. Information about what is caught, where it is caught, when it is caught, and what conditions were observed at time of catch is recorded. Awtij technology is also used in fuel optimization, vessel electrification, and defence and surveillance practices.

Awtij grounds itself in First Nations knowledge and ways of being; data sovereignty is at the core of its work. Awtij does not retain ownership of any data its technology observes, and the company prides itself on empowering First Nations to benefit from both their labour and their data. For example, when First Nations use Awtij technology, the Nation can use the data gathered to certify its catch as sustainable, which can earn a premium at market, and it can use this technology to make its own decisions about how to operate its own enterprises.

waters, and skies. Mitigation of effects should be considered at all stages of engaging with AI, and a high priority should be given to AI systems that least disrupt local ecosystems.

Alternative methods

Participants stressed that making use of alternative learning systems, such as knowledge graphs, is an important priority. In some cases, the use of AI systems that require massive amounts of data and energy are not the only, nor the most efficient, solution. Many forms of machine learning predating neural networks are highly efficient and effective. First Nations should consider what problems they are looking to solve when looking into the use of AI.

Human capacity building

During the Roundtable, speakers made clear that there is a significant lack of AI literacy among the general First Nations public. Concerningly, there is an especially pronounced lack of understanding among First Nations leadership about what AI is, the opportunities it offers, and the risks it may pose. These observations are supported by data from one report,[2] where over half of all Indigenous entrepreneurs reported a lack of access to digital training of any sort.

First Nations cannot create opportunities or plan for risks without informed leadership. It may not be realistic for every leader to have an in depth understanding of the technical aspects of AI, but they should understand what is possible, and what risks are likely. This may partially be achieved through the work of support technicians, but direct, short-term, education programs are required.

2 https://www.indigenousfoundation.ca/blog/digital-access-report



***Case Study:** Alpha-El*

Alpha-El is a First Nations-owned technology firm that focuses on the use of AI-based computer vision. The company's CORAX VISION platform offers a number of monitoring tools for First Nations. CORAX VISION Wildlife provides First Nations with monitoring of various wildlife species. Alpha-El's combination of sensors and software specializes in the recognition of caribou, moose, and bears. Together, Alpha-El's offerings allow for real-time monitoring of wildlife to aid in the production of permits, regulatory compliance, land use assessments and identification of wildlife disturbances. These data can provide users with concrete evidence of how wildlife and the environment interact, and how proposed or existing projects are affecting the ecology of an area.

Using similar technology, Alpha-El's CORAX VISION Fire System uses computer vision to survey forests to detect wildfires as they happen. This technology provides First Nations and firefighters with both real-time and predictive data. Importantly, Alpha-El has a focus on renewable energy. This means that Alpha-El's CORAX VISION system is operable in remote and extreme environments. For communities that already have hardware solutions, Alpha-El offers the flexibility of integrating only their AI processing modules.

Participants also identified that children require more education in AI, though in a different way. Participants reported that children of all ages are making extensive use of AI. Unfortunately, the ethical use of these tools is not always communicated to children and issues of plagiarism, abuse, and general academic dishonesty are commonly reported. The education of children also presents an opportunity to link youth with already-trained elders and other leadership. These relationships offer benefits beyond technical training by facilitating the transmission of language and culture.

Importantly, Roundtable participants underscored that the field of AI changes incredibly quickly and that new technologies are constantly emerging. What was impossible today may be possible tomorrow. Success in AI will rely on the ability to not only work quickly, but to often change direction.

Infrastructure capacity building

In addition to human capacity building, the development of adequate infrastructure was repeatedly highlighted. According to the Roundtable participants, infrastructure funding and training is of the utmost importance. As with many novel digital technologies, large scale data centres are required for AI systems. Although cloud-based data centres are available, most centres are based outside of Canada. This creates concerns over data privacy and data sovereignty. First Nations may not want to host their data or AI systems under foreign governments that may not respect the privacy of First Nations' sensitive data. In some cases, there are legal restrictions on what data can be stored on servers outside of Canada; however, in many cases there is simply not enough Canadian hosting infrastructure to meet the emerging needs of AI.



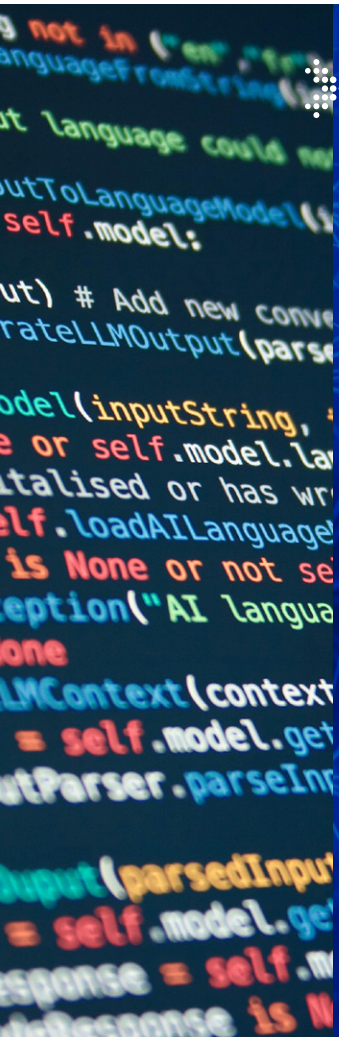
***Case Study:** Nadlii*

First Nations are also using AI to enhance their self-determination. In the Yukon, Dana Tizya-Tramm and his company Nadlii champion the use of modular, decentralized data centres. Rather than focusing on the creation of massive data hubs, Nadlii has focused on the commissioning of small scale, independent, modular data centres housed in standard shipping containers. These shipping containers not only forego the consumption of water for cooling and cover a substantially smaller footprint than traditional data centres, but also enable First Nations to control AI infrastructure without the need for large, multi-year, capital investments. These modular data centres require such little power that they can be operated by a consumer grade truck's battery, rather than a new electricity plant.

One of the many uses of these modules, as described by Tizya-Tramm, is in the creation of land use plans based on the Yukon's *Umbrella Final Agreement*. Using the modular systems, a community can process publicly available satellite data alongside the Yukon's *Umbrella Final Agreement*, which describes a framework for Yukon First Nations land claims, to create land use calculators and plans. Because these modular data centres are decentralized and could be owned directly by First Nations, communities can train AI to meet their specific needs. Tizya-Tramm suggests these specialized AI systems could be used to educate citizens on agreements between First Nations and other entities, including treaties and land agreements. These specialized AI tools may also help reduce reliance on consultant firms, which often cost First Nations significant amounts of money each year.

Relatedly, First Nations often lack basic infrastructural capacity compared to other jurisdictions. According to the AFN's *Closing the Infrastructure Gap 2030*[3] report, 61% of First Nations communities surveyed lacked access to basic broadband service (defined as at least 50 Mbps downstream and 10 Mbps upstream) and addressing this gap is expected to cost roughly $3.3 billion. This statistic is indicative of the technological status quo of many First Nations. As more data centres become operational, there will be a significant increase in the need for energy production. New energy production plants, be they water, oil, coal, solar, or air-based, will be needed. First Nations lands bear access to many of these resources, and so will likely be implicated in the development of new energy infrastructure. More funding for First Nations-led developments is required to support First Nations and Canadian sovereignty over their natural resources; otherwise, this resource extraction is likely to be the subject of foreign investment. Without this basic infrastructure, the development of cutting-edge technology will remain hampered not only for First Nations, but for all Canadians.

3 https://afn.ca/economy-infrastructure/infrastructure/closing-the-infrastructure-gap/digital-connectivity/



Case Study: Kama.ai

Kama.ai is an AI platform that centres emotional sensitivity that can be used to support businesses in the same way that agentic platforms like ChatGPT can. The company is majority owned by First Nations and headed by its CEO, Brian Ritchie of Chapleau Cree First Nation. Unlike more common approaches to AI, Kama.ai's platform makes use of explicitly defined relationships, resulting in verified and more accurate output, particularly regarding language and culture. Large Language Models (LLMs) learn through statistical inference, essentially predicting relationships between concepts based on whatever training data is presented to it. This reliance on inferred statistical probabilities, rather than deterministic truths, to represent relationships means that agentic AI platforms like ChatGPT may provide different responses to an identical input. Moreover, these systems are noted for creating relationships where none were observed. This process is known as hallucination. In 2024, an LLM based customer service agent for Air Canada hallucinated the existence of a special fare rate. The LLM agent suggested the customer apply for the special rate after the flight had occurred, something not allowed by Air Canada. When the customer followed the LLM's advice, the airline rejected the customer's claim, resulting in legal action. Hallucinations cannot, at time of writing, be fully eradicated, as they are a fundamental part of the technologies underlying LLMs.

In contrast, Kama.ai's knowledge based systems are explicitly defined; therefore, hallucinations are not only unlikely, but not possible. Explicit encoding of relationships is done by subject matter experts and ensure accuracy and reliability. This also allows for the embedding of cultural values and worldviews that are often unrepresented in the massive training sets used to develop LLMs. This explicit encoding also reduces the energy and water consumption common to most LLM based AI systems. Kama.ai's innovative approach to AI is the result of its owners' and operators' lived experiences as First Nations people. Instead of focusing entirely on profit, Kama.ai has forged an alternative path in the agentic AI space.

First Nations across the country are considering the implications of the digital infrastructure gap. In many cases, First Nations have opposed the development of their lands and waters for large data centres, as seen in Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation's opposition to a multi-billion dollar data centre located nearby on Treaty 8 territory. Other nations, such as the Upper Nicola Band in British Columbia, are in favour of the responsible development of a data centre in their community. The data centre, to be developed by Bell, is set to use 296MW and occupy up to 150 acres of land. The community is projected to benefit from the deal through the creation of 2000 temporary jobs in building the facility and 200 permanent roles. The band will receive revenue through industry taxes. There are significant risks to hosting data centres, particularly in terms of environmental impacts; although, Bell claims that the proposed data centre on Upper Nicola Band land will create no pollution and will use no water for cooling. If true, this data centre offers significant potential to the band and provides an opportunity to provide Canadian data storage and processing. The process for approving this project has been one carefully considered by the community, including through the holding of a vote on whether to accept Bell's proposal.

Privacy and data sovereignty

Participants raised concerns over First Nations privacy and sovereignty. First Nations must be the stewards of their data. In some cases, data sovereignty may be achieved through total control of data storage, processing, and usage. In other cases, strict agreements with external parties may be required.

Sets of principles like the First Nations Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession principles (OCAP®) can aid First Nations in pursuing data sovereignty, but participants expressed concern that OCAP® is not equipped for the current context of AI. In addition, participants explained there are no set *standards* for First Nations data sovereignty.

Sovereignty and ownership include prior and informed consent. Any First Nation should have a detailed understanding of what it is agreeing to when they decide that they would like to take part in AI. This is not always respected, and doing so may require leadership education as previously described. Participants pointed out that in the public sphere, AI is largely unregulated, meaning user protections are at the discretion of developers or companies. This means that informed consent is often ignored in practice. Even if all parties in an agreement have each other's best interests in mind, without rightsholders being educated on the topic, true consent may be difficult to fully achieve.

Even when rightsholders understand the agreements and technologies they are faced with, a central question remains and must first be considered before any strategy can be drafted:

How would data sovereignty be achieved, and how would rights-holders assert this sovereignty?

Rights-holding collectives need to be defined and considered from an information governance perspective. Any First Nations strategy should exist to support the development of policies and practices for individual First Nations rather than some sort of Pan-Canadian operation. Data are not apolitical objects; responsible data collection is done with consent and thus its products come with responsibilities and limitations. Protocols should be in place that clearly describe how data can be used. Consent is not a default assumption; if a narrative is recorded for instructional purposes, those recordings should not be used to develop an AI agent. Members of the Roundtable agreed that sovereignty includes not only the right to participate, but also the right to withdraw or pause consent at any time for any reason.

First Nations knowledge systems have the possibility to impact the development of AI policies and strategies. Participants suggested that First Nations should consider whether productivity and capitalism will be the core drivers of AI. Although these principles are at the core of many Western-style initiatives, they do not need to be the guiding principles of a First Nations strategy.

For example, AI and data sovereignty may be used as a form of digital repatriation. Under this process, one may reclaim cultural heritage through digital representations. This is a powerful technique for cultural revitalization, but this comes with risks regarding who controls data. Under a profit motive, issues of data control and how to use/store cultural knowledge are not central; however, a First Nations motivation might focus more on respect for community or reciprocity as core drivers. The outcomes that result from these disparate motivations may create novel developments paths, use cases, and insights.

Political Advocacy

Developing AI is a costly process. Most, if not all, First Nations lack the funding pathways required to meet these needs. According to participating experts, an important component of any sort of development regarding AI will need to focus on advocacy to develop programs and unlock funding pathways for First Nations AI. Advocacy intersects with the need for leadership education. Proper advocacy requires informed advocates. Any approach should include a recommendation on whom is best to advocate to, as well as what forms that advocacy can take. First Nations may wish to consider creative advocacy to seek infrastructure dollars outside of the currently limited pots. For example, prior to Canada's national strategy on AI, the federal government announced roughly $2 billion to support Canadian compute capacity under its *Sovereign AI Compute Strategy*. Participants in the Roundtable highlighted that despite this significant investment, there have been no specific streams targeted to First Nations. This leaves First Nations to compete with much higher resourced institutions, organizations and partnerships. In particular, First Nations would benefit from a First Nations specific stream under the $300 million AI Compute Access Fund. This stream would enable First Nations and First Nations organizations to access compute infrastructure without the overhead cost of supporting and hosting physical machinery. Similarly, a First Nations carve-out under the $700 million *AI Compute Challenge*, which aims to support the establishment of commercial AI data centres, would encourage equitable development of sovereign compute infrastructure rather than supporting middle and large scale corporations who may not have the same need. Finally, Canada supports the *AI Sovereign Compute Infrastructure* Program through an $890 million investment. This program seeks to support the creation of a national supercomputer network. First Nations specific streams under this program would help ensure diverse and unique inputs for this initiative beyond the routine proposals from larger institutions. As in the previous examples, inclusion of First Nations is an issue of equity.

As in all issues, a nation-to-nation approach to policy with the government is required to collectively respect needs and aspirations. Although a First Nations AI strategy must not prescribe advocacy rules, support and direction is required.

Relationship Building

There are many ways to approach AI in First Nations, and it is not immediately clear where to begin for most communities. Developing a process by which a community can begin engaging with AI, including specific and reproducible steps, will be important for a First Nation who may wish to seek partnership with those who are already involved and invested in AI frameworks that align with their respective community's needs. Participants suggested that descriptions and recommendations of vendors or partners can reduce the research burden for First Nations across Canada. It was stressed that leveraging knowledge that exists but is not regularly documented, such as a list of reliable partners, is a simple and cheap way of supporting AI development.

According to the Roundtable, key partners may include educational institutions (for human capacity building, technical training, etc.), other governmental (provinces, and Canada) organizations, other First Nations (the concept of a major-project coalition that can be developed, funded, and implemented was suggested as a future advocacy initiative), and private organizations. Some participants warned against the idea of partnering with large, particularly American, for-profit organizations, though it is up to each individual First Nation to determine who they are comfortable partnering with.

AI in Canada

Participants were also joined by Jordan Zed, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of Artificial Intelligence, Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED). Assistant Deputy Minister Zed gave a presentation regarding the then-unpublished national strategy on AI.

As part of their engagement process, Canada sought all demographics, including First Nations, to be a part of the development of the strategy. Assistant Deputy Minister Zed highlighted major themes including the need for AI to serve a collective benefit, and described safeguarding of democracy, and how people could be empowered to adopt AI.

Six pillars were presented as the basis of Canada's national AI strategy:

1. Protecting Canadians and Safeguarding our Democracy
2. Empowering Canadians
3. Powering AI Adoption for Shared Prosperity
4. Building a Canadian Sovereign AI Foundation
5. Scaling Canadian Champions
6. Building Trusted Partnerships and Global Alliances

These pillars were confirmed to have made their way into the final draft of Canada's *AI for All* strategy, published soon after the Experts' Roundtable.

Senior Assistant Deputy Minister Zed was instructed by participants that any national strategy *must* respect and align with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Further, experts highlighted how a Canadian AI strategy that includes and upholds First Nations languages and cultures will provide a stronger and more unique approach to AI. Participants mentioned that First Nations require material digitization before any work on AI can begin.

Participants emphasized the importance of Canada respecting and working with First Nations on training and development. Because AI is progressing so quickly, it is easy for efforts to be duplicated. Given that there is a marked insufficiency of funding, duplication of efforts is a serious concern. As well, participants underlined that Canada's investment in AI infrastructure and products needs to consider insights and gains already made by First Nations. Experts then sought insight on how much of an investment First Nations could expect and how much it might compare with Francophone AI funding and Anglophone AI funding. Assistant Deputy Minister Zed was unable to provide any insight into this.

Assistant Deputy Minister Zed described Canada's position that AI is an area of investment. Experts' Roundtable participants reminded the Assistant Deputy Minister that Canada is currently making cuts to the budget across all sectors, especially towards infrastructure projects, undermining Canada's claim to be prioritizing AI. Experts suggested that Canada's national strategy should ensure First Nations can access sufficient funding for their projects. This includes not only total dollars, but also realistic timelines. For example, according to experts, funds for software licensing are often only applicable for agreements of two years or less; however, industry licence agreements often require a minimum of three years.

Key Findings

The Experts' Roundtable provided a number of insights to help the AFN pursue a national strategy. These insights are as follows:

1. AI is most effective when it is developed to solve a specific problem.
2. Funding must be sustained and adequate. Short-term or unpredictable funding streams make the sort of planning required for AI projects difficult.
3. First Nations autonomy must be respected, regardless of how they choose to engage with AI.
4. AI literacy is very low, especially among leadership. Building AI literacy among leadership is paramount to the success of any AI initiative.
5. Agility and flexibility are required to compete in the field of AI.
6. Infrastructure is currently insufficient to build full-scale sovereign First Nations AI.
7. In addition to technical expertise, political expertise is needed to advocate for political and fiscal reform.
8. First Nations may benefit from a road map on the development and use of AI. There are many ways to approach AI in the community, and it is not immediately clear where to begin for most communities. Defined workflows can provide structure for nascent AI initiatives.

Building from these insights, a First Nations AI strategy is preliminarily envisioned to contain the following components:

1. Sample AI development roadmap (including leadership education)
2. Support for networking
3. Sample political advocacy plan
4. Technical and human resource checklist
5. Facts, statistics, and considerations

These components will provide a foundation on which First Nations can build their own strategies and directions in navigating the quickly changing world of AI.

In addition to these insights, participants also highlighted and championed a number of First Nations-led AI initiatives in Canada. These initiatives, included here as case studies, provide tremendous value to Canada. Businesses like Atwij, Buffalo in Motion, and Alpha-El provide economic benefits to their communities without requiring hundreds of millions of dollars in investment; however, these companies' benefits go beyond the purely monetary. The projects demonstrate ways in which sovereign Canadian AI can be used to benefit First Nations economies, lands, and waters. These initiatives demonstrate that First Nations AI goes beyond the recent trend of LLMs and probabilistic chat agents that are highly resource intensive. Instead, First Nations AI often considers smaller scale, lower-cost, focused projects. These projects are significantly less resource demanding, provide novel approaches to the use of AI that set Canada apart, and have direct real-world impacts today, rather than in some undefined point in the future.



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