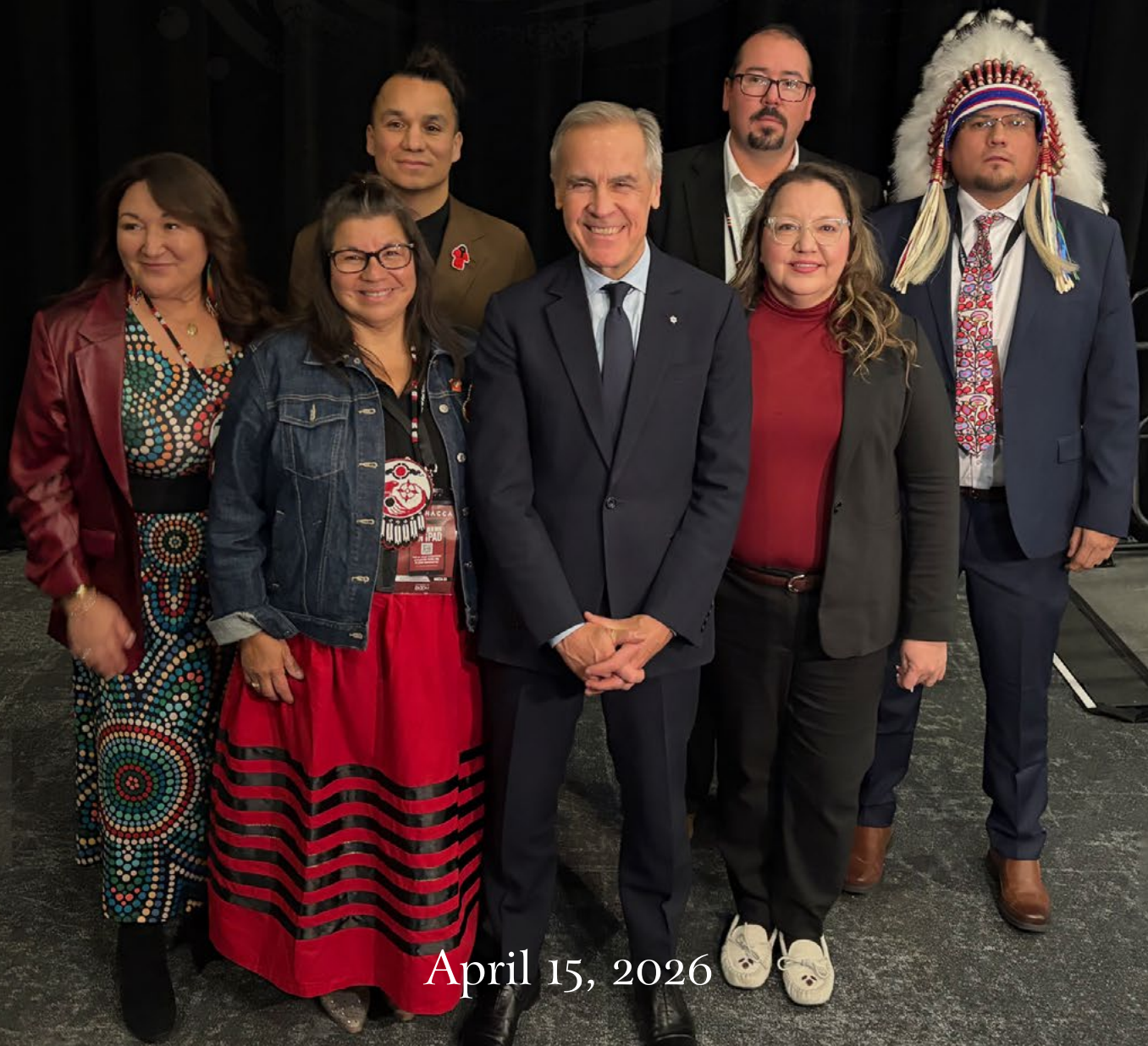




First Nations Technicians and Leadership Town Hall: Upcoming First Nations-First Ministers' Meeting *Summary Report*



April 15, 2026



First Nations Technicians and Leadership Town Hall: Upcoming First Nations-First Ministers' Meeting



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Introduction

In December, Prime Minister Mark Carney committed to the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly that he would convene a First Ministers Meeting in 2026 to bring together First Nations leadership with the Prime Minister and the Premiers. The Prime Minister also committed that First Nations would drive the agenda.

This commitment builds on sustained advocacy by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), including the National Chief's engagement with Premiers in summer 2025 following the passage of Bill C 5. It also reflects efforts by the AFN Executive to advance a First Nations-led, leadership informed process.

Since the announcement, the AFN has prioritized early and meaningful engagement with Chiefs and leadership nationwide to shape shared priorities, identify jurisdictional challenges, and inform approaches to federal, provincial, and territorial engagement.

As part of this broader engagement strategy, the AFN has convened national forums on education, economic development, and natural resource development, and launched a series of Virtual Town Halls to provide leadership and technical experts with an opportunity to share perspectives, ask questions, and collectively inform the emerging First Nations First Minister Meeting (FNFMM) agenda.

On April 15, 2026, the AFN convened a Virtual Town Hall open to all First Nation leadership and technicians as the second session in this series. Building on the initial leadership focused discussion held on March 11, this session expanded participation to include First Nations technicians to enable more in depth policy discussion and technical analysis.

This report summarizes the key themes, insights, and considerations raised during the April 15, 2026, Virtual Town Hall.

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Virtual Town Hall – Meeting Purpose

The purpose of the April 15 Virtual Town Hall was to discuss the views of First Nations leadership and technicians in order to:

- Continue strategic preparation for an FNFMM in Fall 2026
- Examine key jurisdictional challenges across four priority policy areas
- Seek guidance on the scope and focus of FNFMM agenda items

This session focused on key topics with significant challenges related to the jurisdiction between the federal and provincial/territorial governments and created an open forum for participants to share their views and considerations related to the structure and agenda for an FNFMM.



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Opening Remarks from National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak recognized the unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabeg people, thanked Elder Leonard Weasel Traveller for his opening prayers and welcomed Chiefs, leadership, and technicians.

She reaffirmed the importance of inclusive planning for the FNFMM and emphasized that both leadership and technical expertise are essential to shaping a strong First Nations position.

She emphasized that having an opportunity for an FNFMM has been a priority for her and many of her predecessors, noting it has been 20 years since such a gathering has taken place - making the point that First Nations should not have to wait that long for quality dialogue with the Prime Minister and Premiers.

The National Chief recognized the extensive efforts of First Nations leadership and the AFN Executive, staff and technicians who have worked tirelessly for decades to ensure that First Nations have a voice at tables such as these.

She confirmed that the AFN is advocating for the meeting to take place in Fall 2026, to ensure time for regional engagements and critical dialogue at the Annual General Assembly. She also noted that discussions about an FNFMM were also incorporated at recent national AFN forums on topics such as Education, Natural Resources and Economic Development.

The National Chief also emphasized that the AFN is encouraging federal government officials to lay the groundwork with their provincial and territorial counterparts.

The National Chief shared that the goal of the FNFMM Virtual Town Halls series and all future engagement is to collectively strategize on how First Nations can organize, prepare and advance priorities together.

She welcomed all leadership and technical teams in attendance, stressing how critical it is to ensure that leadership direction translates into concrete options and proposals. The substance of the work happens before the actual meeting through careful planning, preparation and coordinated engagement with federal and provincial governments to build support. The National Chief also recognized that a federal majority government provides stability and continuity for these commitments.

She reiterated that through her dialogues with First Nation leadership, several emerging themes were highlighted: the importance of not rushing the planning process, ensuring the meeting is part of ongoing dialogue rather than a one-time event, and that the Elders strongly advised that ceremony must be incorporated throughout this process.

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She highlighted the importance of working together to create a structure that makes room for everyone, and this will be a big focus moving forward. She closed by thanking all participants for coming, noted that the next leadership Virtual Town Hall is scheduled for May 19, 2026, and that she is looking forward to a productive discussion.

Process Recap and Overview of FNFMM Preparation

A [presentation](#) was provided by the meeting facilitator that outlined the planning underway in support of an anticipated FNFMM in Fall of 2026.

It was noted that this Virtual Town Hall is the second in a series of planned engagements to ensure that the process and agenda for the FNFMM is

First Nations-driven and focused on creating a sustained relationship with federal, provincial and territorial leaders, rather than a one time event.

The importance of allowing sufficient time for regional engagement and national dialogue, including at the upcoming AFN Annual General Assembly, was also emphasized.

At the first [Virtual Town Hall on March 11](#), panelists were invited to share their experience with First Nations-driven processes, in particular, the Kelowna Accord. Panelists underscored that the most critical work occurs before the meeting itself. Key themes included the value of unity among First Nations leadership, disciplined focus on a limited number of priorities, strong relationships with decision makers, and the need to secure follow through, accountability, and public reporting mechanisms. Considerations such as meeting design, logistics, speaking opportunities, ceremonial elements, and inclusive participation were also highlighted.

Leadership discussion captured in the presentation emphasized the need for clear regional priorities, designated speakers, and outcomes focused agenda setting. Initial priority policy areas identified included lands and waters, infrastructure, justice reform, emergency management, economic development, implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and treaty relationships.

The presentation concluded by outlining next steps, including Virtual Town Halls, regional engagements supported by targeted funding, national discussions at the July 2026 AFN Annual General Assembly, and the development of a draft agenda to advance discussions with Premiers. It also noted that the logistics of the actual FNFMM remain the subject of ongoing engagement with both First Nations and the federal government.



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Presentation Summaries

Economic Prosperity for First Nations

This [presentation](#) emphasized that economic prosperity for First Nations is fundamentally tied to respect for First Nations jurisdiction. Ongoing Crown disregard for First Nations authority over lands and resources continues to undermine economic development mandates.

Key points included:

- Jurisdictional barriers remain the primary obstacle to achieving AFN economic development mandates.
- The importance of avoiding an overly broad FNFMM agenda that would dilute impact and messaging.
- Reference to the National Chief's May 2025 letter to the Prime Minister regarding review of Natural Resources Transfer Agreements.
- The need to develop clear frameworks for natural resource benefit-sharing agreements in advance of the FNFMM.
- Alignment between Canada's stated economic ambitions and the necessity for First Nations to equitably benefit from development occurring on their territories.

The presenter stressed the importance of ensuring First Nations citizens and communities are directly reflected in economic discussions. There is an interest in understanding barriers to advancing priorities, and what potential commitments should be sought from the Prime Minister and Premiers.

Engagement questions included:

- What are your top priorities with respect to economic development?
 - How are these priorities aligned or misaligned with federal and provincial priorities?
- What are the key barriers to advancing your priorities in this space?
- What is the number one commitment you would seek from the Prime Minister and Premiers?

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Community Safety, Policing & Justice

This [presentation](#) reinforced that First Nations policing cannot be separated from community safety, justice, and self-determination.

The existing AFN mandates confirm:

- First Nations' inherent right to exercise jurisdiction over policing
- The need for co-developed federal legislation recognizing First Nations policing as an essential service
- Persistent inequities within the First Nations Policing Program
- The requirement for equitable, long-term, and needs-based funding
- Accountability mechanisms, including RCMP accountability

The presentation invited feedback on gaps in government support and examples of successful First Nations-led safety models.

Engagement questions included:

- Where are the biggest gaps between governments in supporting community safety, and how should they be fixed?
- What First Nations-led safety approaches are working, and how can governments better support them?
- How do policing practices affect access to health, education, and social services, and what needs to change?



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Post-Secondary Education

This [presentation](#) underscored that First Nations post-secondary education (PSE) remains chronically underfunded and continues to limit the realization of Treaty and inherent rights.

Key messages included:

- PSE investments are directly linked to workforce development and Canada's infrastructure objectives
- Over 32,000 eligible First Nations students remain unfunded
- Recommended policy approaches for the FNFMM included:
 - Funding community-based PSE programs
 - Increasing First Nations student support funding
 - Providing stable, core funding for First Nations institutions
 - Re-investing in adult education programming

The presentation invited feedback on how to advance First Nations jurisdiction, governance, and decision making authority in post-secondary education, including priorities and non negotiables to be brought forward at the FNFMM.

Engagement questions included:

- What barriers do you see in your communities that limit access to post secondary education or skilled trades training, and what supports would make the biggest difference?
- How do you engage with First Nations Institutions in your region, and what resource gaps or needs have been identified?
- From your perspective, are there other investment needs related to post-secondary education or infrastructure that we should be highlighting?

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First Nations Health

This [presentation](#) described the current First Nations health system as fragmented, jurisdictionally complex, and misaligned with First Nations priorities.

Key challenges identified:

- Federal health transfers flow through provinces and territories, with Indigenous-specific investments absorbed into existing systems
- First Nations are largely excluded from decision-making while bearing administrative burdens
- Regionally inconsistent access and outcomes persist

The FNFMM was identified as a possible opportunity to pursue system-level transformation, with potential priorities including:

- Legislated distinctions-based tripartite governance
- Direct-access funding models
- A new First Nations health policy framework
- First Nations-led data and accountability systems
- National consistency with regional adaptability

The presentation invited feedback on how to advance First Nations jurisdiction, governance, and decision making authority in health systems.

Engagement questions included:

- What national priorities should be brought forward to First Nations-First Ministers Meeting?
- What level of authority and decision-making must First Nations have in FPT system governance?
- What are the non-negotiables we must advance?



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Technicians and Leadership: Technical Discussion

Participants emphasized that the FNFMM must move beyond programs to address constitutional issues, including First Nations' inherent rights, title, jurisdiction, and Treaty relationships. Socio economic gaps are linked to unresolved constitutional and jurisdictional challenges.

A participant called for economic development approaches rooted in consent, ownership, and decision making authority over lands and territories. Participants cautioned against reliance on grants and short term funding, calling instead for long term fiscal arrangements aligned with First Nation jurisdiction like resource sharing, co management, regional institutions, and equitable access to economic opportunities for all First Nations and not only those near major projects.

Education was repeatedly identified as a treaty right and a lifelong responsibility. Participants highlighted gaps in adult, vocational, and in community education supports, inequitable funding formulas, and infrastructure shortfalls, particularly in smaller and under resourced communities. Capacity building through education was seen as essential to self determination.

Participants emphasized that community health and justice outcomes are directly tied to economic success. Mental wellness, chronic illness, and discrimination, particularly within provincial health and court systems, were identified as critical barriers. Participants called for First Nations led health and justice systems and reforms that extend beyond policing.

Participants expressed concern that federal and provincial governments are advancing impact assessment and economic development legislation too quickly, limiting meaningful First Nations input. Trade missions, major projects, and streamlined approvals affecting First Nations territories were cited as examples where early and full involvement is lacking, undermining autonomy and environmental stewardship.

There was strong encouragement to limit the FNFMM agenda to a small number of interconnected priorities that require federal provincial alignment and cannot be addressed elsewhere. Suggested focus areas included implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with a clear accountability framework, a new fiscal relationship aligned with jurisdiction, and economic reconciliation grounded in consent and equity.

Participants supported framing the FNFMM as the beginning of an ongoing, structured multilateral process rather than a one time event.

Frustration was expressed about repeated meetings that produce limited to no results. Participants expressed a strong desire for the FNFMM to "do something different," deliver meaningful progress, and renew confidence in national level engagement.

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Key Takeaways

Based on presentations and discussion, emerging themes included:

- The FNFMM must address issues that cannot be resolved elsewhere, particularly constitutional and jurisdictional matters
- It is important that the FNFMM moves past dialogues and into concrete commitments, accountability mechanisms and follow-up processes.
- Focused, disciplined agenda-setting will increase the likelihood of concrete outcomes.
- Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples across federal and provincial jurisdictions, with an accountability framework
- A new fiscal relationship that reflects First Nations jurisdiction and governance is needed.
- Economic reconciliation is grounded in consent, equity, and benefit-sharing.
- First Nations-led health and justice system reform is critical.
- Education across the lifespan is a Treaty and inherent right.



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Next Steps

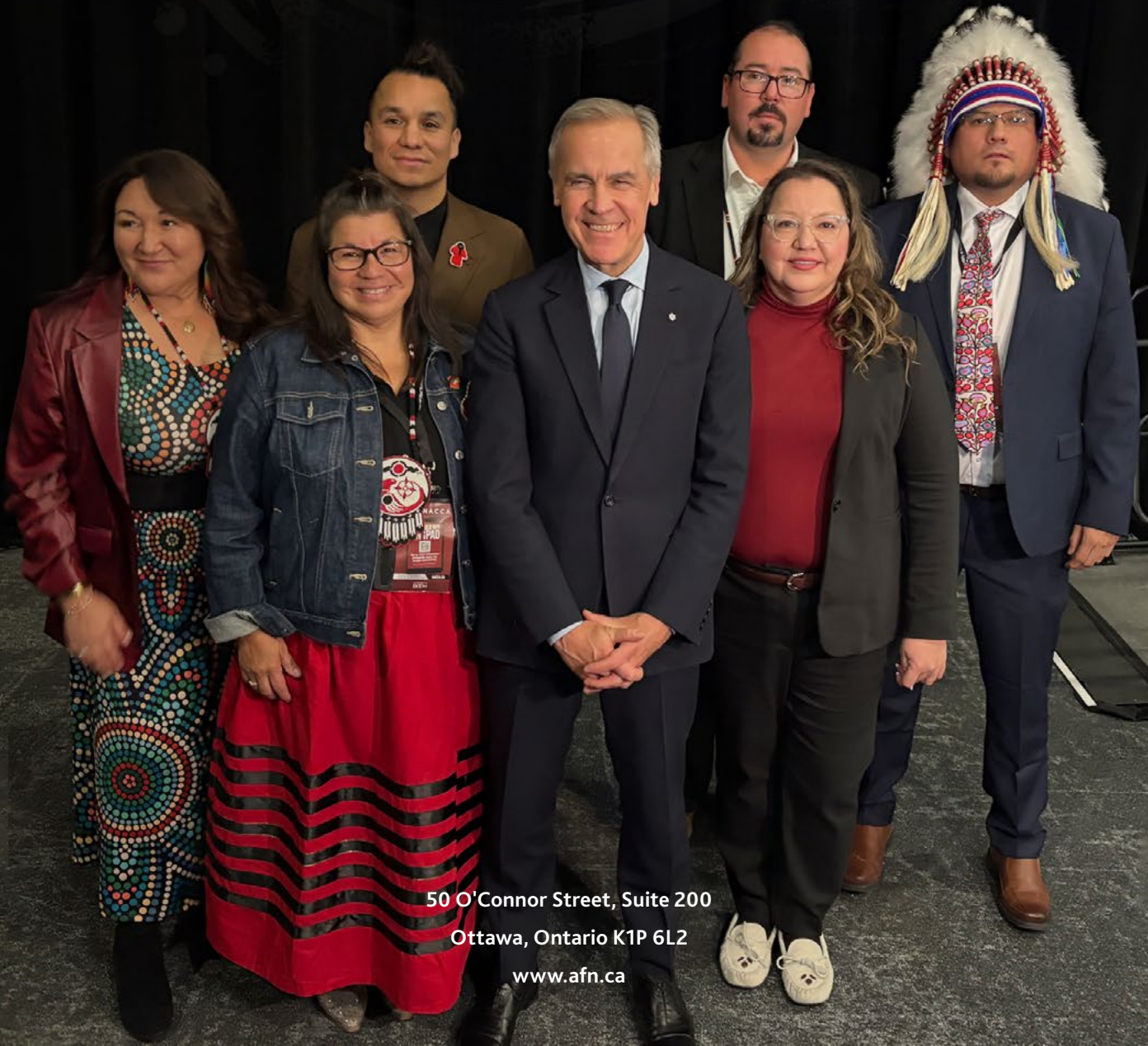
Moving forward, the AFN will work to secure a confirmed date and location for the First Nations-First Ministers' Meeting and report back to First Nations leadership.

Regional and national engagement will continue with ongoing efforts to secure resources to support the process. Continued engagements will support the refinement and validation of priority areas and inform the development of the draft FNFMM agenda.

The third Virtual Town Hall for leadership is scheduled for May 19, 2026.

The AFN Executive will meet to review feedback, discuss strategy and next steps.

Preparations are underway for the AFN Annual General Assembly, which will serve as a key milestone to advancing FNFMM planning, refine agenda priorities and secure mandates through the direction of First Nations-in-Assembly.



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