



Strengthening Our Relations

ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS
ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024





The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is a national advocacy organization that works to advance the collective aspirations of First Nations individuals and communities across Canada on matters of national or international nature and concern. The AFN hosts two Assemblies a year where mandates and directives for the organization are established through resolutions directed and supported by the First-Nations-in-Assembly (elected Chiefs or proxies from member First Nations).

In addition to the direction provided by Chiefs of each member First Nation, the AFN is guided by an Executive Committee consisting of an elected National Chief and Regional Chiefs from each province and territory. Representatives from five national councils (Knowledge Keepers, Youth, Veterans, 2SLGBTQQIA+ and Women) support and guide the decisions of the Executive Committee.

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*Moose/Respect: Acrylic painting, 36 X 48 inches
Frank Polson, Long Point First Nation, Winneway Québec*

Frank Polson is a natural leading artist in his community. Once he embraced his artistic journey twenty-five years ago, he never lost sight of his goal to express himself and share the beauty of life through the prism of traditional Anishnabe culture. In 2016, The Seven Grandfathers Exhibition opened the door to the museum network. In 2017, he produced images for the successful Royal Canadian Mint coin collection: Thirteen Grandmother Moon Teachings. Today he is a well-respected artist that fulfills his elder's duty of transmitting his knowledge to the next generation with his wonderful artwork.

The moose is the biggest mammal of our boreal forest. Like the buffalo out west, it symbolizes respect, one of the seven sacred teachings in the Seven Grandfathers legend. Ancestors could feed whole village with its meat and used all parts of the animal for clothing, tools, jewelry and so on. No waste. In this painting, one finds features characteristic of the artist's art work in the Woodland Art style. On top of illustrating the cycle of life and the importance of the medicine wheel in traditional culture, the circle represents the sun which light is vital to all life on Mother Earth. The connection lines remind us that everything is linked in nature which we are a part of, as well as plants that feed and cure.

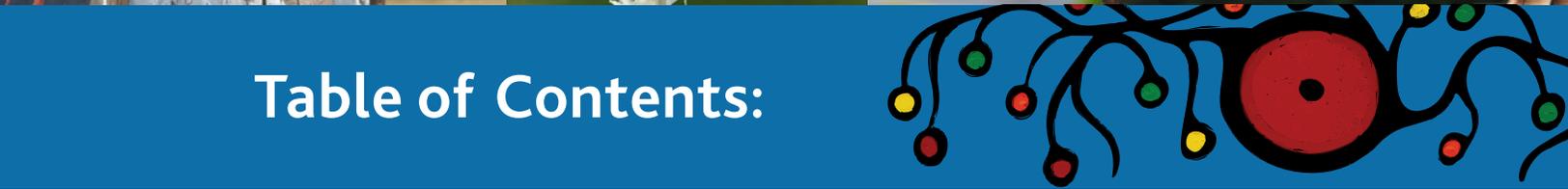


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NATIONAL CHIEF'S REPORT





AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak

We are all Nation Builders

Aneen, Aaaniin, Pjil'asi, OKI, Kwe kwe, Boozhoo, Tan'si, She:kon, Wachiya, Greetings,

It is an honour to present a report on my first six months as National Chief.

There is much to do, but with the collaborative work environment at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the AFN Executive Committee, the future of the AFN is stable and has a strong vision-forward.

Several top priorities from my campaign include restoring transparency, accountability, and good governance. These are the core values we must uphold as an organization, and I am personally committed to them.

Unity and Positive Change

As National Chief, I recognize the strength that lies in the unity of all First Nations across Canada. Our voice is more powerful when we stand together to advance our shared goals and rights. By working together, we can more effectively address the issues that impact our people, from health and education to economic development and environmental protection. We will ensure that the AFN will strive to ensure our actions reflect meaningful change and that we implement processes built on First Nations' values, traditions, and ceremony.

We all acknowledge the work of New Brunswick Regional Chief Joanna Bernard during her time as interim National Chief. She helped rebuild the organization's foundation. Under her leadership, we

realigned priorities and re-engage with government partners and Nations. It was not an easy job, but she approached it with strength and determination. Meegwetch Regional Chief Joanna Bernard.

We are committed to continuing the important work she began with support of the AFN Executive Committee. We will advance First Nations' priorities and restore confidence in our organization to better serve the Chiefs, the cornerstone of this organization that originated as a grassroots organization—a voice for our people.

We cannot forget that. The AFN is more relevant than ever before. Our organization has roots in our communities, and it shows in the work we do.

A Proud History

The AFN has served First Nations from coast-to-coast-to-coast for many decades. Initially formed as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) in 1970. Our history is marked by leadership and advocacy for positive change—a need that continues to grow.

As Nations, we must continue to empower each other to achieve meaningful change.

Achievements

These achievements reflect the continuous efforts and commitment of the AFN to advocate for the rights and recognition of First Nations in Canada.

- **1968:** First Nations leaders from Status and Treaty groups formed the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB).
- **1969:** First Nations organized and successfully defeated the federal government's White Paper, which sought to assimilate First Nation into Canadian society and eliminate their constitutional status.
- **1972:** The NIB successfully gained support for "Indian Control of Indian Education" policy paper to implement First Nations self-determination over education.
- **1978:** The NIB held the first All Chiefs Conference on Indian Self-Government. During the second All Chiefs Conference, the Chiefs declared that the conference would serve as "the one and only voice of Indian people in Canada."
- **1982:** The NIB changed its name to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and re-structured the organization to become an organization of First Nations Chiefs, establishing the AFN as a forum for First Nations-in-Assembly to participate in collaborative decision-making and reach consensus on national priorities through a structured resolution process.
- **1982:** The AFN played a significant role in the First Ministers' Conference on Aboriginal Rights, leading to the addition of subsections (3) and (4) to Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizing and affirming existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights.
- **1990:** The AFN played a role in the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1991, which published a comprehensive report in 1996 with recommendations for a renewed relationship between Canada and First Nations.
- **2003:** The AFN successfully negotiated the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which included compensation for former students of residential schools, the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and funds for healing and commemoration.
- **2005:** The AFN signed the First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord (the Kelowna Accord), setting a "rights-based agenda" with the Canadian government.
- **2007-2016:** The AFN helped develop the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. In 2016, as a result from continued advocacy by the AFN, Canada committed to adopt and implement the Declaration without qualification.
- **2009:** The AFN advocated for the establishment of National Indigenous Day in Canada, celebrated on June 21st annually.
- **2015:** The AFN played a crucial role in the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and 94 Calls to Action, advocating for acknowledgment of the residential schools' impact and for concrete steps towards reconciliation.





- **2017:** The AFN signed the AFN/Canada Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Permanent Bilateral Mechanism with the Prime Minister, establishing an agreement to meet regularly to identify joint priorities.
- **2019:** The AFN played a crucial role in the passage of the Bill C-91, *Indigenous Languages Act*, recognizing and supporting the preservation and revitalization of Indigenous languages.
- **2019:** The AFN was a strong advocate for National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), aiming to address systemic issues and justice for victims and their families. The Inquiry led to a Final Report in 2020 with 250 Calls for Justice for governments, institutions, and the public.
- **2019:** The AFN strongly advocated for Bill C-92, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families*, to establish new national standards for child and family services.
- **2021:** The AFN's successful advocacy helped lead to the creation of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day.
- **2021:** The AFN advocated for the implementation of Bill C-15, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, in Canadian law. On June 21, 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act received Royal Assent.
- **2022:** The AFN and 13 First Nation delegates travelled to the Vatican to receive an apology from Pope Francis for the Survivors and families of the Indian Residential Schools system.
- **2023:** The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) approved the Final Settlement Agreement providing compensation and addressing historical injustices and discrimination for First Nations children and families that experienced discrimination through the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and narrow application of Jordan's Principle, with a total value exceeding \$23 billion. In 2024, the Federal Court of Canada approved the Distribution Protocol for the removed children and their parents or caregiving grandparents relating to the \$23 billion final settlement agreement.
- **2024:** The Supreme Court of Canada has found that *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, formerly Bill C-92, including the recognition of First Nations' inherent right to self-government and jurisdiction over children and families, is entirely constitutional. The AFN played a crucial role in advocating for this legislation to protect and promote the rights and well-being of First Nations across Canada.

Highlights as National Chief

Here are some highlights of the work we have been doing with the support and guidance from the leadership of the AFN Executive Committee and mandates from Chiefs-in-Assembly.

Justice and Calls to Action

Preventing violence against First Nations women, girls, and gender-diverse people remains a critical priority for me. On the 5th anniversary of the National Inquiry into MMIWG Final Report, the AFN released a progress report evaluating the advances made in implementing the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Calls for Justice is far from complete.

Significant and substantive action is now more urgent than ever to enhance safety for First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people and ensure justice for Survivors and families. We have called on all levels of government to recommit implementing the Calls for Justice and to ensure that First Nations are meaningfully included, based on the principles of justice, respect for human rights, and good faith, to improve the safety of our people.

In support for advocates, families, and the memory of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit (MMIWG2S+), the AFN has been advocating to ensure the Robert Pickton evidence is preserved. I met with the Minister of Public Safety, Dominic LeBlanc, and called on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to withdraw their court application in this matter.

We have also been continuously lobbying the federal and provincial governments to search the Prairie Green Landfill for our lost sisters. We are pleased to see that the

families will see some justice as the government announced funding and the authority to start the search. This is a testament to what can be achieved when trilateral tables come together for a common goal. We lift up Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Grand Chief Cathy Merrick who led this process and fought tirelessly for these results.

Community Building

Since the December election, we have made it a priority to visit communities and hear directly from Chiefs from coast-to-coast-to-coast. During a break in the House of Commons sessions in Ottawa, I had the honour of visiting First Nations from East Coast to the Pacific Coast.

In March, it was an honour to meet with Quebec Chiefs and speak at the First Nations Women's Leadership Summit in Montreal, Quebec. In recognition of International Women's Day, we demanded immediate action on the MMIWG National Inquiry's Calls for Justice. It is essential that we create a future where all women can thrive without fear, with their rights fully recognized and their contributions celebrated. We extend our thanks to Grand Chief Mandy Gull-Masty and the Cree Women of Eeyou Istchee Association for organizing this memorable event.

In April, I was pleased to visit New Brunswick to meet with Chiefs and members of St. Mary's First Nation, also known as Sitansisk. I enjoyed lunch with Elders and listened to a performance by Sisters of the Drum. We were inspired by the strength, resilience, and





good spirits of everyone we met and am very thankful to Chief Polchies for his hospitality.

In May, we were honoured to visit the Gitwinksihlkw Village in the beautiful Nass Valley in northwestern British Columbia for Nisga'a Nation's 2024 Special Assembly. On behalf of the AFN, I delivered congratulations and gratitude to President Eva Clayton, the Nisga'a Lisims government, and all conference participants for the 14th Anniversary of the historic Nisga's Final Agreement Treaty.

Building Partnerships

The AFN regularly meets with federal ministers, deputy ministers, Members of Parliament from all parties, as well as Indigenous and mainstream media, advocate for the rights, interests, and priorities of First Nations, as directed by First Nations-in-Assembly, and ensure their voices are heard and respected on matters affecting their Nations.

Empowering Women and Girls

Aligned with International Women Day in March 2024, we participated in the United Nations 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York City, New York. The priority theme of the CSW was, *"Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective"*. The AFN was pleased to share our perspectives as part the productive discussions at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. By working together, we can ensure that concrete steps will be taken to address gender inequalities and the unique challenges faced by First Nations women and gender-diverse people and ensure the protection of all women's and girls' human rights.

Emergency Preparedness

Climate change is the greatest crisis of our time. The natural world is facing catastrophic devastation that has left our future and Mother Earth in jeopardy. First Nations are uniquely sensitive to the impacts of climate change because we live in the regions already experiencing rapid change and because of our intrinsic relationships with and dependence on land, waters, animals, plants and natural resources. Our youth are calling for increase action. A key part of addressing this crisis is ensuring that governments set effective climate action goals and provide First Nations with the necessary tools to achieve these goals.

At the 2nd AFN National Emergency Management Forum in March 2024, we heard first-hand how crucial it is for First Nations to have access to resources to develop Emergency Readiness Plans. We are the stewards of this land, yet our families and Nations are hit hardest by floods and wildfires.

The AFN will continue to advocate to ensure that First Nations have the capacity and funding to develop and regularly update emergency management plans, which include necessary personnel, equipment, and training. We will also continue to call on all levels of government to strengthen First Nations' control over emergency management to long-term resilience and sustainability within our Nations.

Auditor General Reports

In March 2024, the Auditor General of Canada released two reports that revealed a distressing and persistent pattern of failure in the federal government's management of the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program (FNIPP) and housing conditions within First Nations communities.

The policing report highlights serious concerns with Public Safety Canada's (PSC) management of the FNIPP. While First Nations were urgently requesting much needed funds to continue to operate their police services while millions of dollars from PSC went unspent. Policing and community safety is a top priority for me as National Chief, and we will continue to work with all parties to guarantee First Nations policing is supported as an essential service, and that equitable funding is provided for these services.

The housing report also revealed significant gaps in the government's allocation of funds and implementation of housing programs, leading to a critical shortage of safe and adequate housing. It is estimated that 55,320 new housing units and repairs to 80,650 existing units are necessary to address the housing needs of First Nations.

United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Right to Safe Drinking Water

On April 8, 2024, I met with the Mr. Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Right to Safe Drinking Water, to discuss critical issues concerning First Nations' rights to water and sanitation. During this meeting, we discussed the need for proactive measures to preserve water for future generations and the introduction of Bill C-61, the First Nations Clean Water Act, as an important step in securing water and sanitation services. We also discussed the need for continued partnership and

dedicated investments to improve overall community well-being.

Throughout the meeting, we advocated for the recognition of First Nations' inherent right to self-government over our water sources, and communicated that as natural stewards, First Nations are uniquely positioned to oversee and protect their water. We requested Mr. Arrojo-Agudo's support in holding Canada accountable for its commitments and helping ensure that First Nations can exercise control over their critical water resources.

Closing the Infrastructure Gap

Leading up to the federal budget in April 2024, the AFN released "Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030" report. This critical report, developed in collaboration with industry experts and over 400 First Nations, outlines the national capital and operational investments required from the Government of Canada to fulfill its mandate of Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030. First Nations require \$349 billion to close the gap by 2030.

National School Food Program

Our children, our most valuable resource, require love, guidance, and safety. They need supportive communities, proper nutrition, and equal access education in order succeed to be the leaders for the future.

We were successful in advocating the federal government for dedicated funding for First Nation students under the Government of Canada's National School Food Program. This is important step towards ensuring that all First Nations children have access to the





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nutritious food they need to thrive. Food insecurity remains a significant issue within First Nations, with rates that exceed the national average. Many Nations across Turtle Island face unique challenges, such as high food costs, delivery to remote geographic locations and infrastructure challenges in schools, including the lack of kitchens, cafeterias, and suitable food preparation stations.

The program's effectiveness will depend on the direct involvement of First Nations through its planning, implementation, and evaluation. We look forward to working with the federal government on this national school food program and invite them to dedicate further funding for First Nations from other significant budget priorities, including housing, policing and infrastructure.

First Nations Major Projects Coalition

In April 2024, I participated in the 7th Annual First Nations Major Project Coalition Conference (FNMPC) in Toronto, Ontario. I thank the Chiefs of the FNMPC for their dedication to strengthening and advancing the economic priorities of First Nations.

Just a week prior to the conference, on April 16, 2024, the federal government announced \$5 billion in loan guarantees through the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program. This initiative, which was a direct result of advocacy by First Nations and the FNMPC and its members, will greatly assist First Nations in accessing affordable capital.

Partnerships and investments represent progress toward reconciliation and pave a way towards a more inclusive and equitable future for all. The AFN continues to advocate for economic policies and programs that respect First Nations' self-determination in the national and global markets and the traditional economies of First Nations.

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

In April, I attended the United Nations 23rd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum (UNPFII) on Indigenous Issues in New York City, New York. The priority theme of the UNPFII was, "*Enhancing Indigenous Peoples right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous youth*".

I engaged with various representatives from national and international governments and Indigenous organizations, advocating to secure meaningful enhanced participation for First Nations in the UN. I also highlighted key priorities, including addressing funding inequities, promoting First Nations-led policing, improving housing by urging Canadian support for direct investments, and addressing cross-border issues through Jay Treaty rights. I also had the opportunity to meet with Mark Macarro, President of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), to discuss strengthening tribal relations and collaborating on shared priorities at the UNPFII.

Air Canada Protocols

Following a distressing incident where Air Canada mishandled my ceremonial headdress, I want to thank the Chiefs, First Nations, and Canadians for their support. This incident violated First Nations' rights and highlighted systemic discrimination and gaps in Air Canada's handling of sacred items. In response, I called for mandatory cultural sensitivity training, protocols for sacred items, a First Nations board representative, and a meeting between Air Canada's board and First Nations Elders to discuss cultural competency. The AFN is prepared to work with Air Canada to implement these changes.

Leaders Meeting under the Assembly of First Nations-Canada Permanent Bilateral Mechanism

On June 5, 2024, I, along with AFN Regional Chiefs, met with Federal Cabinet Ministers in Ottawa, Ontario. This meeting aimed to strengthen our relationship and advance priorities that improve the quality of life for First Nations and close long-standing socio-economic gaps. This joint meeting, the first in five years, reinforced the value and importance of hosting regular meetings to ensure effective progress on joint priorities and highlighted the crucial role of regional perspectives in advancing the needs and interests of First Nations.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Government of Canada toward a renewed relationship as we advance these mutual priorities that will benefit First Nations and all Canadians for generations to come. We look forward to our next Leaders Meeting in fall 2024.

Weeneebayko Area Health Authority Hospital

On June 17, 2024, I attended a press conference, alongside Minister of Indigenous Services of Canada, Patty Hajdu, where the federal government announced \$1.2 billion for the Weeneebayko Area Health Authority (WAHA) Hospital Redevelopment Project. We welcome this funding as a significant advancement in honouring a long-standing commitment. However, the delay in prioritizing the health and well-being of First Nations highlights the urgent need for culturally informed care that upholds First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights, and our right to self-determination. Moving forward, the AFN expects the government to continue fulfilling its commitments to First Nations by ensuring transformative change towards First Nations-led health care programs and services.

Historic First Nations Child and Family Services Settlement – Compensation Distribution Protocol

Protocol for the removed children and their parents or caregiving grandparents relating to the \$23 billion final settlement agreement that will compensate First Nations children and families that experienced discrimination through the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and narrow application of Jordan's Principle.

This was an important step forward for First Nations children and families. We have fought for years in court for the acknowledgement of harms done to our families by discriminatory practices. The approval of the Distribution Protocol is one of the final legal steps required before compensation can begin reaching eligible First Nations children and families. We have also secured a commitment from the Prime Minister of Canada for a formal apology in the House of Commons this fall.

We would like to thank the representative plaintiffs for their resilience throughout this process. They have been pillars of strength and advocacy for the thousands of children and families who experienced discrimination. We would also like to thank the Settlement Implementation Committee and Class Counsel for the Representative Plaintiffs for their work. They put forward a strong motion for approval in the Removed Child and Removed Child Family Classes.

Although no amount of money can make up for the harms experienced, we can soon begin to see compensation flowing to eligible children and families. The Administrator (Deloitte) will now have six months to finalize the claims process before





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applications become available. Application forms should be available before the end of 2024.

Federal Budget 2024

After many weeks of meetings and sustained advocacy, the federal government presented Federal Budget 2024 on April 16, 2024. Federal Budget 2024 committed a total of approximately \$9.062 billion over five years, with \$2.952 billion identified for the fiscal year 2024–25 as part of new spending priorities. While we welcome new investments for First Nations health, children, education and loan guarantees for large projects, the budget's proposals for housing, policing, roads and water fall far short of closing the long-standing infrastructure gaps.

In response, I have engaged in discussions with leaders of opposition parties, including Conservative Leader, Pierre Poilievre, and New Democratic Party Leader, Jagmeet Singh, to address what is missing from the Federal Budget. Additionally, I have reached out to the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of finance, Chrystia Freeland, to discuss potential solutions and a way forward. I have also renewed my call for the Prime Minister Trudeau to organize a First Ministers meeting in the coming year, which is essential for addressing First Nations priorities and advancing reconciliation.

Moving forward, the AFN will continue its budget advocacy efforts. We plan to participate in the pre-budget submission process, where we will outline specific requests in several priority areas. These areas are aimed at addressing both urgent and long-term needs and funding requirements, as identified by First Nations through resolutions.

Our Work on the Legislative Agenda

We continue to call for the withdrawal of Bill C-53, which remains a top priority for our Nations. First Nations have been loud and clear about their concerns with Bill C-53, which fails to respect the perspectives and consultation requirements of the First Nations it would affect. Bill C-53 must be withdrawn, in alignment with AFN Resolution 44/2023, *Protect First Nations Rights and Interests from Unfounded Métis Rights Assertions*. Further, the Government of Canada must properly engage and consult with First Nations rights holders to ensure the potential effects of any similar legislation on First Nations inherent, Treaty, and section 35 rights are considered.

Together with Regional Chiefs and AFN leadership, we will continue to meet with federal Ministers and opposition leaders to clarify various elements of the federal budget and plans to roll out funding for First Nations housing, education, health, child welfare, policing, languages, and infrastructure investments. Given our relationship, we expect a First Nations component will be implemented within each of the budget's major investments.

I am prepared to work with any government, regardless of political party. First Nations' priorities are Canada's priorities. We are ready to collaborate with political party committed to advancing First Nations priorities and aspirations.

In addition to our legislative efforts, we are committed to strengthening the AFN an organization to better serve you, the Chiefs. We are implementing Resolution 43/2023, which calls for a review and recommendation of an audit of the AFN's financial and management policies, as well as previous audits over the past 10 years. Identifying and addressing these issues is essential for maintaining stability within the AFN and

upholding transparency, accountability, and good governance. This will ensure the organization operates effectively. Additionally, we are dedicated to advancing the strategic direction and mandates set forth by the First Nations-in-Assembly.

As National Chief, Education remains a top priority. First Nations require youth significant investments to ensure they receive the same opportunities that other Canadians are provided. We met with federal leaders to ensure specific investments for First Nations youth as part of the National School Food Program announced in April, and I am pleased that we were successful in these efforts. Economic reconciliation is another crucial area of focus. We must ensure that First Nations are fully supported to participate in economic development opportunities. While some First Nations are already well advanced in this area, other Nations require additional supports and resources to be full participants in economic development.

What's Next

Annual General Assembly and Special Chiefs Assembly

We look forward to engaging with the Chiefs at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) in July, where the AFN will provide updates on several critical issues and introduce over 70 new resolutions for discussion and deliberation. These resolutions will shape the work of the AFN and its Executive Committee in the coming months and years.

In September, we will gather for a Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) to deliberate on reforms to the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and to vote on proposed measures. We will keep you informed about updates regarding the SCA. I strongly encourage all Chiefs to participate in the SCA, as your perspectives and feedback are essential to the AFN's efforts. Ultimately, as decision-makers, the Chiefs will set the direction for the proposed reforms and the settlement agreement, guiding the AFN according to your mandates and resolutions.





National Chief's Report



In Closing

We are continuing to implement your mandates and we are proud of what we have accomplished together. We have weathered difficult times before and will do so again in the future, but we have always pulled through together. Despite these challenges, we have found new and innovative ways of working together. We have worked with transparency and integrity to advocate for the priorities set by the Chiefs, and we have made a real difference for the future of our children.

The strength of the AFN is the strength of unity. Our foundations are strong. But we cannot afford to be complacent. If we are to prevail, we must remember our teachings and ceremony, and we must remain united. There is much work ahead, but united, we can achieve anything. As the first First Nations mother to be elected as National

Chief, I believe I possess a certain responsibility to nurture, teach, learn from those that came before, and hold a vision for the future.

Please feel free to reach out to me at nationalchief@afn.ca for any assistance or inquiries

Meegwetch,

*Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
National Chief of the Assembly of
First Nations*



Strengthening Our Relations

REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS





Regional Chief Andrea Paul

Nova Scotia

Pjilata'q! I am proud to be able to provide this report to you on behalf of the Mi'kmaq Chiefs of Nova Scotia.

Introduction:

Welcome Knowledge Keepers, Chiefs, Councillors, Youth, Veterans, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Staff, and friends. I am honoured to be able to present my report to you all. I have been recently elected as Regional Chief for Nova Scotia and am currently six months into my role.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

I have participated in a couple of tours visiting communities and organizations in the region. I have been joining Senator PJ Prosper on his Senator Tour, and also Executive Director, Janice Maloney, Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative on her community visits. The focus of the tours is to hear from Chiefs, Councils, and organizations on their issues, priorities, and successes. These tours have been a wonderful way to bring everyone together to align the regional priorities and issues and to be proactively prepared for provincial and federal conversations.

Key issues identified include Housing and Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions, Economic Development, Lands, Culture and Heritage (language), and funding challenges. This list is just a tip of the conversations, and a full report will be completed after the summer by the Senator's office which will be shared with all communities, organizations, and governments. Wela'liek Senator PJ, Claudine, Jennifer, Janice, and Michelle.

I am also proud to have spoken at youth gatherings, including one hosted by the Atlantic Policy Congress for the Wabanaki Youth Council and another by Mi'kmaq Kinamatnewey. I was very honoured to be invited to their forums and to spend some time with them.

In January, I attended the Indian Residential School Gathering in Vancouver and was able to deliver opening remarks. This gathering was well attended with participants from all over Turtle Island. As a descendant, I was not able to participate in this healing journey with my father so to be able to learn, listen, and connect with survivors brought me to a level of healing and understanding for my personal journey as a daughter of an Indian Residential School survivor. Thank you to everyone who I met and the presenters at the gathering. You are all so empowering, welcoming, and most of all, loving.

In February, I was able to join the Mi'kmaq Women Fisher's Gathering and I spent the evenings teaching beading to those that wanted to learn. I was incredibly touched and proud to witness our women who fish, either through Moderate Livelihood fishing, or for their communities. The resilience and pride they carry as fishers was humbling to witness. They shared their journeys, challenges, struggles, and love for this industry. I look forward to future gatherings to be able to learn more from our women.

In March, I attended the Juno Awards in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I was also happy to participate in the Indigenous Honouring Ceremony the day before and provide opening remarks on behalf of AFN and our region. It is such an incredible feeling watching the audience and seeing all our



brothers and sisters who were nominated for their incredible talent. I am very proud that Morgan Toney was nominated and was performing all weekend at different events. I wanted to say thank you to National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak for recommending me to attend on her behalf. It was exciting to attend all the red carpet events and meet so many artists. Thank you to Destination Indigenous and Juno Awards for the hospitality.

In April, I met with Minister Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, along with the Nova Scotia Chiefs. This was an opportunity for the Chiefs to share their concerns, questions, and priorities with the Minister. The Chiefs and I also held a similar meeting with Minister Brian Wong, Minister of L'nu Affairs, Province of Nova Scotia, which allowed the Chiefs to bring forward issues, priorities, and questions.

In April, I attended the Tajikeimik Health and Wellness Gathering, held in Membertou, Nova Scotia. This was a two-day gathering with Chief and councils, organizations, and provincial and federal partners. The gathering was very well attended with sharing information that was heard during their community visits. The gathering was also nice because they had talking circles to go over questions regarding health and wellness concerns, visions, priorities, etc.

In May, I attended the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey L'nui'sultinej Conference, held in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, with educators from across the Atlantic. I was proud to give closing remarks on behalf of the AFN Regional Office.

National Portfolio #1 - National Fisheries Committee

Fisheries (East Coast):

I was appointed to the National Fisheries Committee in January 2024 as a representative of the East Coast and have been enjoying my new role as Co-Chair alongside AFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee, who has been in regular communication with the Chiefs and citizens of his respective region and will be delivering reports on his own activities.

On the East Coast, Salmon remains a priority for all affected First Nations. Our stocks have been experiencing long term declines due in part to over-fishing, habitat loss and degradation, competition for food sources in the ocean, environmental contaminations, and climate change which is resulting in warmer than usual waters both in our rivers and lakes but also in oceans. We are working with the Atlantic Policy Congress on a resolution to support their salmon rebuilding efforts, which includes stock restoration and habitat protection.

The Elvers fisheries closures of 2024 have had devastating impacts on affected First Nations and their citizens who rely on those fisheries. We have heard multiple reports of seizure of gear, equipment and harassment. We have communicated our concerns directly to Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) Conservation and Protection division and plan on collaborating as much as possible with DFO to lower tension and raise public awareness. The Elvers fisheries are rights-based fisheries and DFO owes a duty of care to co-manage those fisheries with affected First Nations.





Fisheries Act Review

In June 2024 the Government of Canada is required to undertake a legislative review the Fisheries Act (FA). This is our opportunity to advocate that this be done to ensure the provisions of the FA are consistent with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. With that in mind, the National Fisheries Committee heard updates in March 2024 from several DFO leads on their Action Plan Measures (APM), which includes APM 36: "Pursue amendments and reforms to fisheries legislation, regulation, or policies to support self-determination and the meaning implementation and exercise of Indigenous fishing rights".

Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation

DFO initiated a Request for Interest between February 2024 and April 2024 to take over the ownership and governance of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC). This was also discussed in Scantbury, Manitoba, when the National Fisheries Committee and AFN Fisheries Sector hosted an Inland Fisheries Rights-Based Framework engagement.

The National Fisheries Committee has been kept apprised of updates from interested First Nations answering the Request for Interest and understand support or advocacy may come as a request in the form of a resolution for the Annual General Assembly. The AFN Fisheries Sector has been invited to observe several meetings between affected First Nations and DFO in regard to the Request for Interest and has updated the National Chief's office.

A common theme that we hear at the National Fisheries Committee is that education is required for all members of the public and for all levels of DFO to address fisheries reforms, which includes systemic racism. Indeed, this was discussed in detail at the NFC meeting in March 2024 and will

likely form part of the National Fisheries Committee's Strategic Plan for 2024-2027. One of our goals must be to pursue mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency of the federal government and the Crown to fully implement rights-based fisheries across all of Canada. The full implementation of rights-based fisheries must include the implementation of Supreme Court Decisions and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

National Portfolio #2 - Health:

The AFN Health Sector advocates for First Nations' rights to health and well-being. It promotes wholistic, culturally-based, and strengths-based approaches, aiming for First Nations to control their own health systems with sustainable funding. The focus is on self-determined, culturally appropriate care to improve health outcomes. The following are key updates and developments from the past year:

Chiefs Committee on Health (CCOH) & National First Nations Health Technicians Network (NFNHTN)

The CCOH and NFNHTN continue to hold regular meetings focusing on articulating and validating a vision for First Nations. The priorities have included Health Legislation, Accessibilities, Long Term and Continuing Care, Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), Mental Wellness and Public Health.

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB)

The NIHB program is a key focus for Health. Recommendations from the AFN's NIHB National Dialogue Session, hosted in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in October 2023, guide advocacy in alignment with AFN Resolution #61/2022 *Reforming Non-Insured Health Benefits Travel Policies*. The AFN continues to coordinate and participate in the NIHB Joint Review Steering Committee (JRSC) to ensure enhancements



to Medical Transportation, which have been under review this past year. The Health Sector continues to support the NIHB Navigators and provide regular opportunities for their discussions and collaborations. Additionally, the AFN continues to seek expansion of the NIHB coverage to include allied health services and ensure wholistic approaches to healthcare.

Mental Wellness

The AFN, in collaboration with the First Peoples Wellness Circle co-hosted a National Wellness Gathering for Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Survivors in Vancouver, BC, February 2024. At this gathering, IRS Survivors voiced their continued advocacy for the permanent funding of the IRS Resolution Health Support Program. Mandated by AFN Resolution 63/2023 *Conduct a Longitudinal Study on Strengths-Based Indicators of Mental Wellness*, the First Nations Mental Wellness Data Working Group is developing a workplan to address data access challenges on mental wellness and identifying opportunity for collaboration with partner organizations.

Long-term and Continuing Care

The AFN Health and Social Development Sectors collaborated with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to co-develop policy recommendations for the reform of the Assisted Living and First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Programs. The AFN presented these recommendations via AFN Resolution #98/2023 *First Nations-created Policy Recommendations for a Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Framework*, which received approval from the AFN Executive Committee. Subsequently, the recommendations were submitted to ISC for inclusion in their Memorandum to Cabinet (MC).

Public Health

The AFN participates in national and international committees on tuberculosis elimination and undertakes strategic work with partners to improve a First Nations public health continuum.

Health Legislation

The AFN is liaising with the Government of Canada on Indigenous health legislation, advocating for equitable and meaningful dialogue on principles, analysis, and proposals to align health legislation with Treaty and Inherent rights. The AFN and the CCOH are actively engaged in articulating a First Nations Key Elements document to anchor AFNs position and recommendations.

Accessibility/Disabilities

The Health Sector released surveys on accessibility and disability inclusion for First Nations Persons with Disabilities (FNPWD). The gathered data and research will serve to inform Distinct First Nations Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Law and Framework. Additionally, the Health Sector prepared a submission to the United Nations Special rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the issues of misdiagnosis facing FNPWD.

Ongoing Efforts

The Health Sector will continue to focus on First Nations Health Legislation and health equity. It will collaborate with First Nations regions and ISC to determine the process for dispersing the Indigenous Health Equity Fund. The sector also plans to host a National Health Forum in winter of 2025, to address achievements and identify persistent challenges to First Nations health programs and services. Furthermore, a National Forum on Homelessness and Mental Wellness will be coordinated in collaboration with the Housing & Homelessness Sector.





National Portfolio #3 - Languages:

The advancement and enforcement of the Indigenous Languages Act (the Act) is priority for the Languages Portfolio, including highlighting the government's commitment to providing adequate, sustainable and long-term funding to support First Nations languages. The historic and continuous underfunding of First Nations languages is inconsistent with the purposes of the Act and creates significant implementation challenges.

The Languages and Learning Sector (the Sector) has advocated for increased funding in line with the AFN's 2024 Pre-Budget Submission (PBS) seeking \$3.8 billion over five years to support language initiatives outside of schools. However, only a total of approximately \$85 million is available to support for First Nations languages annually. Revising the regional allocation formula for First Nations languages funding, as well as developing a long-term vision for improving data sources are priorities for the AFN and the Chiefs Committee on Languages and Technical Committee on Languages. The AFN has also engaged with First Nations and the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) to amend guidelines for DCH's Indigenous Languages Component, which provides funding for First Nations languages, to ensure greater flexibility.

The First Nation National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages was ratified in April 2023 through AFN Resolution 10/2023 *Support for the First Nations National Action Plan for the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-23)*. In keeping with the resolution, the AFN's 2024 PBS sought \$1.07 million in funding to support IDIL-related initiatives, however no IDIL funding has been announced. Chiefs Committee on Languages.

AFN to make certain the Government of Canada provides funding to First Nations to build new schools, renovate and expand existing facilities, and operate and maintain existing education infrastructure. Education infrastructure can include school facilities such as classrooms, gyms, science labs, sports fields, home economics and shop facilities. AFN ensures First Nations own and operate education facilities on reserve and are responsible for managing projects to renovate or build new facilities.

Path Ahead:

As I continue to navigate this role and the portfolios, I look forward to continuing the great work that I have witnessed thus far. The dedication and advocacy by our Chiefs and Councils, AFN, Secretariat, Councils and organizations, towards the advancement for our priorities is unwavering and heartfelt. In our region, during the last five months, there have been several regional priorities identified, and I look forward to working with our Chiefs to advance the changes necessary for the well-being, health and financial prosperity for our people. As the Regional Chief for Nova Scotia, it has been important for me to connect with our people by attending events, conferences, and gatherings so that we can continue the work tasked to us by our communities.

Conclusion:

I want to acknowledge and thank all levels of leadership for joining us today as we continue to advance, advocate, and strengthen our communities, in unity and clarity.

Wela'liq emsit.

*In peace and friendship,
Nova Scotia AFN Office*





Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell

Newfoundland

I bring greetings from the traditional, unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People of Newfoundland. Our Region continues to be grateful for our participation at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), alongside other Provinces and Territories.

Introduction:

The AFN Newfoundland Regional Office continues to support the important work of the AFN. The roles of the National Chief, the Executive Committee, and the Management Committee are crucial to the success and development of the AFN on behalf of First Nations. The AFN Newfoundland Region will continue to actively participate and support the initiatives undertaken by the AFN and will be in full support of National Chief, Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, whose leadership we trust and support.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

The Office of the AFN Regional Chief for Newfoundland is represented in two locations, at Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River and at a satellite office located in Corner Brook, both located in Newfoundland.

The Office of the AFN Regional Chief has recently welcomed Paulette Brinston as Executive Assistant. Paulette is in the final stage of thesis writing and will soon complete a Masters Degree in Communications. She has previous work experience in the areas of Human Resources and Communications. Paulette is engaged in supporting the Regional Office and the AFN, as required.

The Office of the AFN Regional Chief has also filled roles related to the Women's Initiatives Coordinator and the UNDA Coordinator. These roles have been filled by Chief Joanne Miles and Keith Cormier. Chief Miles joins our team with extensive experience regarding women's issues and is the current co-chair of the AFN Women's Council. Keith Cormier has served previously under former Regional Chief Paul Prosper as Coordinator for work regarding the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous People. He is a former Vice-Chief at Qalipu First Nation. Keith has been assigned to the Chief's Committee on UNDA as the Technical Rep for Newfoundland. Other positions yet to be filled are related to upcoming grants for work on climate change and water.

The Board of Directors for the Office of the Regional Chief held a meeting in Corner Brook on April 12, 2024.

This meeting provided the opportunity to explain to Board members the function and workings of the AFN and to establish roles and responsibilities. As per the Charter, four Board meetings will be held annually.

Key Issues:

Housing continues to be a significant concern for First Nations. The persistent housing crisis and challenges related to homelessness continues to be a relevant topic in Newfoundland and throughout our Nations elsewhere in Canada. The cost of living in Newfoundland is high compared to some provinces and families struggle to cover the basics of shelter, food, and heating.



Another area of concern is ensuring adequate funding to operate the Regional Office. While this item is being addressed by the National Chief in her conversations with Government officials, concerns continue to be raised at the Executive Committee. We require sustainable funding and a longer-term funding approach to support the AFN and its Regional Offices.

National Portfolio #1 – Housing and Infrastructure

In 2024, Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell assumed the role of AFN portfolio holder for Housing and Infrastructure. Since then, Regional Chief Mitchell has attended several meetings with government officials to advocate for investments for First Nations to address their housing and infrastructure needs, including meeting with Indigenous Services Canada Minister, Patty Hajdu, on April 15, 2024. Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell also participated in the AFN's press conference on April 17, 2024, to respond to the 2024 Federal Budget, which fell short of meeting the investments required to close the First Nations housing and infrastructure gap.

In December 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly approved the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan with the vision that First Nations deliver wholistic and culturally safe services so their citizens can access safe and supportive housing. To support this, Regional Chief Mitchell participated in a meeting with the Federal Housing Advocate and federal representatives on March 20, 2024, to advocate for dedicated resources for First Nations-led responses to chronic and unsheltered homelessness.



Closing the First Nations housing and infrastructure gap is critical to ensuring the health and well-being of First Nations. In April 2024, Regional Chief Mitchell supported the launch of the AFN's "Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030" report. As the AFN Housing and Infrastructure portfolio holder, Regional Chief Mitchell will continue to push for the investments needed for First Nations to address infrastructure needs in their Nations, and to ensure all citizens have access to safe and adequate housing.

National Portfolio #2 – Management Committee

The Management Committee continues to meet regularly to address the regular business activities of the AFN, in conjunction with the Secretariat and Senior staff. Recently, the Management Committee was assigned the responsibility of that of the Hiring Committee for the search for a full-time CEO. Currently, Craig Gideon is the Interim CEO, and he has the full support of the Management Committee. During April, Robert Half Executive Search was contracted to conduct the CEO search. The Management Committee met three times with the contractor. The National Chief has participated in one meeting with the contractor. The overall search process will



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take three months. The contractor will generate a short list of candidates who will be interviewed. The Management Committee, in conjunction with the contractor will eventually recommend a candidate to the Executive Committee.

Path Ahead:

The Newfoundland Region will continue to establish workplans for the coming months. The Office of the Regional Chief is now appropriately established and is positioned to assist the AFN affiliates in Newfoundland and the AFN National Office. Additional hiring will occur throughout June as the Office will seek applicants for the position of Climate Change and Water Coordinator. Other positions will be filled as grant funding becomes available. The summer period will be busy as the powwow season begins in Newfoundland. Further, community visits will be regular occurrences as the Office of the Regional Chief engages with AFN affiliated members.

The Newfoundland Region's citizens hope to be visited by the National Chief during late Summer or early Fall. The upcoming 45th AFN Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Montreal, Quebec, is expected to have several representatives from Newfoundland attending. The Chief's Committee on Housing and Infrastructure will conduct a meeting and strategy session during the 45th AFN AGA as the topic of Housing and Infrastructure will have heightened emphasis.

Conclusion:

The Newfoundland Region is grateful to be part of the AFN and to have a voice at this important National table. The Region will endeavour to be supportive of AFN initiatives and will foster relationships with other Regions and Governments at all levels on behalf of the AFN to the extent possible.

I wish the National Chief, Executive Committee and Staff an enjoyable and safe Summer.





Regional Chief Joanna Bernard

New Brunswick

'Qey/Kwe', I begin by acknowledging that we are gathering on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, whose presence dates back to time immemorial.

Introduction:

Greetings Knowledge Keepers, Chiefs, Councillors, and friends. It is my honour to present my report to First Nations-in-Assembly. It has been a busy year since we last gathered. I was appointed Interim National Chief in July 2023 at the Annual General Assembly in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I would like to express my appreciation to the New Brunswick Chiefs for their patience and support during that time. Also, I wish to extend special thanks to Chief Rebecca Knockwood for her support throughout my tenure as Interim National Chief and for stepping into the role of Proxy Regional Chief for several of my responsibilities.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Call for New Relationships

The New Brunswick Assembly of First Nations Regional Office (NBAFN) met with the provincial Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Mike Holland, on April 30, 2024. The NBAFN reiterated the importance of fostering a new positive relationship that promotes dialogue and addresses the unique needs of the First Nations. The NBAFN also expressed concerns regarding the Government of New Brunswick's approach to First Nations engagement. NBAFN will continue to urge New Brunswick Premier Blaine Higgs and his government to engage with First Nations leaders, recognize and acknowledge their inherent rights, and provide a space to foster trust, understanding, and reconciliation. NBAFN promotes actively involving First

Nations leaders in the decision-making processes and providing platforms for their voices to be heard to demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity and empowerment.

Safe Drinking Water

NBAFN, in partnership with North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council, hosted a one-day gathering "Weso'tmk Mawio'mi" in Moncton, New Brunswick, on February 27, 2024. We will continue to work closely with the AFN to address the repealed safe drinking water legislation in Canada. This work includes addressing the gap in water rights and protection for First Nations. It's essential that we continue to voice our priorities, concerns, and recommendations. As we move forward, our key priorities include securing funding, resources, ownership of First Nations data, involving First Nations leadership, capacity requirements, and implementing succession planning. We must always remember the message from our Knowledge Keepers that "Water is sacred to all peoples and must be protected."

Climate Change

NBAFN supported the 2nd Annual Indigenous-Led Energy Symposium, hosted by North Shore Mi'kmaq District Council on October 24-26, 2023, in Moncton, New Brunswick. The symposium brought leaders from First Nations, utility companies, government, and industry professionals to participate in two days of dialogue. The focus of the Symposium was the "Three Horizons of Opportunities" in the energy sector, including opportunities that exist today, opportunities that are on the near-future horizon, and future opportunities. The Symposium explored each of these horizons, highlighted disruptive technologies that are



poised to contribute to the net-zero pathway, and created an environment for two-way dialogue on Indigenous involvement opportunities. We look forward to continuing this partnership and supporting the 3rd Annual Indigenous-Led Energy Symposium on September 18-20, 2024, in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal

The purpose of the Chiefs' Committee on Charter Renewal (CCOCR) is to engage with Chiefs in every region through the appointed representatives to review and propose amendments to the Charter of the AFN. The AFN Charter is the foundational governing document for the AFN organization and has seen only a handful of amendments since its creation in 1980. Given the shifting political landscape, significant legal decisions in the courts and changes in sociopolitical viewpoints across the country and the world, it is important to ensure the AFN Charter is reflective of the modern social and political environment in which we conduct our business as the AFN.

The CCOCR was tasked with overseeing resolution 43/2023, *Review of the Past Ten Years of the Assembly of First Nations/National Indian Brotherhood Audits*. We developed a request for proposals (RFP), modeling the request after the tasks outlined in the resolution. The AFN issued the RFP but only received one proposal. A scope of work was created in cooperation with the successful proponent (BDO) and it was reviewed and approved by the CCOCR. BDO has been working to complete the initial financial review so that we could determine whether a forensic audit is necessary as directed by resolution 43/2023. As Chair of the CCOCR, I have recused myself from the meetings where this topic was discussed to ensure that I am complying with the terms of the resolution. There will be a report of the findings provided by BDO during the July 2024 AFN Annual General Assembly.

First Nations Child and Family Services Long-Term Care Reform

In October 2023, the Federal Court of Canada approved the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS), Jordan's Principle, Trout and Kith Class Settlement Agreement. This agreement was reached between the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), the Moushoom and Trout class actions plaintiffs and Canada, with the support from the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. The agreement included a total of \$23.34 billion in compensation for First Nations children and families who were harmed by the discriminatory underfunding of the FNCFS program and those impacted by the federal government's narrow definition of Jordan's Principle.



This was a very important milestone in the process towards compensating First Nations children and families for the harms they suffered. This agreement could not have been reached without the hard work of the AFN, Parties, and First Nations leadership, who never wavered in their dedication and determination that First Nations children and families receive compensation. I thank the representative plaintiffs for their strength throughout these proceedings, as they are long overdue for an acknowledgement of the harms experienced. There is still much work to do to ensure these discriminatory practices never happen again, and I thank all those involved for their continued efforts on behalf of our communities. As we move forward to the next phase of compensation distribution, it is important that we listen to First Nations-in-Assembly to ensure this process is driven by our leadership.



Economic Development

As the AFN portfolio holder for economic development, my responsibilities with the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development (CCOED) include a wide range of files. These files include procurement, labor market, trade, cannabis, connectivity, gaming, natural resources, agriculture, and tourism. The Chiefs Committee on Economic Development has been actively working to advance resolutions related to these economic development areas. Additionally, we have engaged in advocacy efforts during various ministers' meetings at both the provincial and federal levels.

Central Bank Network for Indigenous Inclusion

In September 2023, an AFN delegation visited Aotearoa-New Zealand where, as interim National Chief on behalf of AFN, I presented at the Central Bank Network on Indigenous Inclusion's 2nd Symposium on Indigenous Economies. The delegation had arranged several meetings to discuss various policy areas, that may include Trade and International Agreements, Procurement and Business Definitions, World Intellectual Property Organization and Data Sovereignty, Access to Capital, and Indigenous Women in Business. Discussion with the Māori people in New Zealand were valuable in gaining insight on similar challenges and also offered examples of best practices to be explored and incorporated around economic reconciliation in Canada.

Other Notable events since the Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) December 2023:

- AFN Special Chiefs Assembly and NBAFN Annual General Assembly – December 5-9, 2023
- Mi'gmaq/Maliseet Atlantic Youth Conference (MMAVC) – February 23-25, 2024

- Weso'tmk Mawio'mi (Water Gathering) – February 27, 2024
- WNNB and WTCI AGA – February 27-28, 2024
- NBAFN Energy/Natural Gas Discussions – April 15-16, 2024
- Atlantic First Nation Water Authority (AFNWA) monthly board meetings, Atlantic Health Partnership meetings, and APC Executive and All Chiefs meetings

The Path Ahead and Looking Forward

Moving forward, the NBAFN will continue to address the critical issues facing First Nations in New Brunswick. Our focus areas include environmental concerns, nature and climate change, safe drinking water, and long-term reform of First Nations child and family services. I will continue to support First Nations leadership in New Brunswick, especially as they continue to navigate their relationship with the provincial government. The Chiefs of New Brunswick continue to affirm their willingness to cooperate with all levels of government and we will stand united in ensuring healthy and safe communities and the protection our future generations.

Conclusion

The past year has been filled with invaluable learning, training, and many meetings. I wish to thank the NBAFN Chiefs, AFN staff and the AFN Executive Committee for their commitment and dedication in advocating for all First Nations. I look forward to continuing to serve the New Brunswick region.

Woliwon/Wela'lin
Regional Chief, Joanna Bernard



Water is Life; Water is health.

Fresh water is sacred and requires protection.

Seven Generations!



Regional Chief Wendell LaBobe

Prince Edward Island

It is my honour and privilege to present my first Annual Report to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Although I was recently appointed Regional Chief, I have been thoroughly briefed at our annual meeting held on May 3, 2024, at the Prince Edward Island (PEI) Office of the Regional Chief in Scotchfort, Prince Edward Island.

Introduction:

Kwe! I am deeply grateful to Chief Junior Gould and Chief Darlene Bernard for appointing me as the PEI Regional Chief. This opportunity to serve the interests of the PEI First Nations at the Executive Level is truly an honour. I am committed to working alongside the National Chief and the other 11 AFN Regional Chiefs to advocate for our people and address the challenges our Nations face. With a sincere dedication to serving our First Nations, I am eager to contribute to positive change and advancement. Thank you for this privilege to represent and support our First Nations.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Over the past year, the AFN has made significant strides in strengthening its structure under new leadership and garnering attention from across the country. The Code of Conduct implementation at AFN events has been crucial in upholding the organization's reputation. The National Chief has been actively engaged in various initiatives and is seeking support from all Regional Chiefs through their portfolios. As the Executive, we have been and will be working hard to support the work. It is our roles as Regional Chiefs to support this work.

Although we are coming from across the country we have our own specific interests to bring to the table. It is the Chiefs Resolutions that guide us. The Chief's priorities are our priorities!

Key issues that demand our attention include health, housing, economic development, culture, education, justice and languages, early learning and childcare, protecting our Treaty rights, and especially, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and Two Spirit. If we can work in unity to address these issues and make clear plans, we will be on the right path.

National Portfolio #1 – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

The PEI Region has been entrusted with the crucial Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) portfolio by the National Chief, highlighting the importance of this file. Following the briefings from the AFN Justice Sector, we are prepared to dive into this essential work. Our involvement in public awareness events like "Red Dress Day" on May 5, 2024, in PEI underscores our commitment to raising awareness and seeking justice for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, collaborating with the AFN Women's Council in St. John's, Newfoundland, and engaging with the family of Annie Mae Aquash has provided invaluable insights and strengthened our resolve in this endeavor. We are dedicated to supporting this critical issue and express gratitude to the Justice Sector for their ongoing updates and support.



National Portfolio #2 – Fisheries

The PEI Region, represented by Interim Regional Chief Darlene Bernard, held the fishery portfolio this past year. Interim Regional Chief Darlene Bernard chaired the National Fisheries Committee and made fisheries a top priority at the national level where the committee identified three priority areas for action:

1. The transition away from Open-NET Pen Fish Farms in British Columbia Coastal waters by 2025 in accordance with the Federal Aquaculture Act.
2. Full implementation of the Marshall Decision and the recommendations outlined in the Peace on the Water Report.
3. The prioritization and implementation of fisheries-related measures in the UNDA Action Plan.

The Committee aims to address key issues such as conservation, sustainability, and economic development in the fisheries sector.

Path Ahead:

The path ahead for the PEI Region involves collaboration with the Executive and support for resolutions put forth by First Nations-in-Assembly. By working together with unity and solidarity with all regions, the PEI Region aims to make a difference in the well-being of First Nations across the country. This collective effort and shared commitment to advancing the interests and right of Indigenous peoples will be crucial in achieving positive outcomes and creating a better future for all First Nations.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I want to thank National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak and the AFN Executive Committee for their gracious welcome and acknowledgement. I especially want to thank Regional Chief Gould and Regional Chief Bernard for entrusting me with this new path. Welalioq!

In closing, Welalin to our Creator and to my family for the support as always!





Regional Chief Ghislain Picard

Quebec-Labrador

Grand Chiefs and Chiefs of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL), and their Councils and all First Nations, are pleased to welcome First Nations leaders throughout the country to their territories. The AFNQL is proud to host the 45th AFN Annual General Assembly. The AFNQL hopes that the gathering will be productive for the well being of our populations, in respect of our ancestral and Treaty rights.

Introduction:

The well being of First Nations and the respect for ancestral and Treaty rights is always what drives and unites our Assembly, the AFNQL. This is the mandate we have received from our people, those who live in our communities as well as those in urban areas, and it is this mandate that our collective of Chiefs.

However, in the current political atmosphere, relations with other governments and the provincial government have imposed a conflicting agenda with our Assembly, forcing us to be constantly on the defensive by investing a considerable amount of energy and resources, which is often to the detriment of our own priorities.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

First Nations governments in the Quebec Labrador region are constantly grappling with intergovernmental relations. On the one hand, a federal government that, at long last and timidly, seems to be gradually loosening its historical and colonial grip on First Nations governments, and on the other hand, a provincial government, that of the province of Quebec, that totally and

aggressively rejects the very principles of the existence, legitimacy, and capacity of First Nations governments.

For example, the federal government, in passing the *Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (C-92)*, simply recognized the facts underlying the existence of First Nations laws, enabling these same First Nations to exercise their responsibilities toward their own children. The provincial government has used every legal means at its disposal, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, to try to invalidate this federal law and render the First Nations laws that are based on it inoperative. With the Supreme Court having largely confirmed the validity and relevance of the Act, the provincial government, not content with having delayed its application for four years, with no concern for the negative consequences of its action on First Nations children, is now turning to other forms of obstruction, including administrative and procedural.

The objective is always the same and can be found at every level of provincial relations with First Nations governments, which is to impose the supremacy of its laws, policies, and orientations on First Nations, to maintain a colonial relationship that can't be called anything else, whether it be in 2024, 1924, or 1824, to impose the authority of its Children's Rights Commissioner on the rights of First Nations children.

The provincial government also imposes its laws, demonstrating its supremacy, in matters of public safety, land management, and planning, energy development, forestry, and mining development, protection of



species essential to First Nations, and carrying a sacred creature such as the caribou. The provincial government covers all angles, neglecting no opportunity to make clear to First Nations who is the boss on "its territory," the provincial government.

The amount of energy and resources the AFNQL, First Nations governments, and regional organizations and institutions accountable to the Chiefs must devote to countering this veritable provincial offensive against First Nations' self determination is scandalous. It is outrageous because it deprives First Nations of resources that could, and should, be put to much better use for the benefit of First Nations populations.

With the very clearly stated aim of bringing the provincial government to its senses, of convincing it that First Nations self determination is not a threat to the province of Quebec, but rather a set of opportunities for partnership and mutually beneficial development, the AFNQL has never neglected its efforts, and continues to do so. We have proposed the implementation of Policy Tables. We have repeatedly proposed directly to Quebec Premier, Francois Legault, to hold a National Assembly Special Commission on the relationship with First Nations. None of these proposals were received by Premier Legault's government with the seriousness they deserved, with the respect that a formal proposal from the Grand Chiefs and Chiefs of all First Nations in Quebec Labrador should always command. Recently, the assembled leadership of the AFNQL turned its attention to the project of a policy forum. By pooling their forces in an even more engaging way, First Nations governments will be better positioned to advance their issues.

In such a context, the AFNQL expects the Crown, represented by the federal government, to fulfil its role more courageously as a trustee and privileged

counterpart of First Nations, and to exercise indispensable leadership in matters of intergovernmental relations. In this respect, the AFNQL is regularly disappointed by the federal government's procrastination, as it fails to fulfil its own legislative commitments. An example of this is Policing. The AFNQL continues to exert the necessary pressure on a government that, for the moment, announces more than it delivers.

National Portfolio #1 – Environment and Climate Change

At the national level, I share my responsibility for the Justice and Public Safety portfolio with British Columbia Regional Chief, Terry Teegee.

In terms of public safety, and more specifically First Nations policing, the issue of First Nations self determination versus provincial/territorial jurisdiction has recently been, and will undoubtedly remain, at the heart of discussions in the coming months.

In a recent letter to the National Chief, the Minister of Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs, Dominic Leblanc, has finally clarified the long-awaited and essential First Nations policing legislation. In his letter, the federal minister specifies that the legislation will reaffirm the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. The National Chief's response and her objections, based on First Nations self determination, set the tone for future discussions, which will involve a major commitment from the two Regional Chiefs who hold this important national portfolio.

The Justice Sector and the committees are continuing their work in accordance with the resolutions adopted and the mandates provided by First Nations-in-Assembly.





Regional Chief Glen (Gwiingos) Hare

Ontario

Aanii, Boozhoo, He, Kwekwe, Shekoli, Sekoh, Waachiyaa. I want to thank the Elders for their prayers and words of wisdom. I want to acknowledge and recognize that we are gathered in the City of Montreal (Tiohtià:ke), on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, the original stewards of this land.

Introduction:

I want to reiterate that my familiarity with key provincial and federal government levels is what I bring to the table. After all, the advocacy at the Chiefs of Ontario (COO) and Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is crucial to addressing First Nations priorities. I do not do this alone. I rely on First Nation Chiefs to advise what they need and seek their input as we address resolutions. I also work collaboratively with the other Regional Chiefs to look at the areas of concern that require us to look for solutions. We are not doing this work alone; we must continue to collaborate with our Treaty partners and Government partners.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Regionally, Ontario has faced some barriers progressing on different files, including Mining, Housing, Policing and Métis rights assertions. Regardless, leadership in Ontario continues to advocate for its members and communities. Currently, we are concerned with the timing of legislation related to Policing and Métis rights assertions at both the federal and provincial levels. At the time of writing this report, Ontario is supporting leadership in advocacy against Bill C-53, and

we are hopeful for positive developments by the end of the Annual General Assembly.

Like the portfolios at the national level at AFN, Ontario also has portfolios shared amongst the COO Leadership Council. Representation is shared to ensure the various portfolio holders have timing and capacity to dedicate to the files and ensure all regions are represented. These priority issues are brought to the attention of the Regional Chief, which in turn, are raised with the AFN Executive and respective portfolio holders to assist in advocating to the federal government.

Ensuring Transparency:

1. Ensuring the COO and Leadership Council are abiding by the new COO Charter.
2. Providing space for an overview and discussion on existing mandates and COO Committees.
3. Providing an opportunity for the COO Leadership Council to articulate new areas of interest or concern that would benefit from a COO initiative.
4. Advising the COO Leadership Council on critical issues that demand an urgent response and making a judgement call on the decisions, as required.



National Portfolio #1 – Safe Drinking Water

The Safe Drinking Water Portfolio falls under the AFN Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure. Key concerns include Bill C-61: *First Nations Clean Water Act*, closing the infrastructure gap, Homelessness Action Plan, and Federal Housing Advocate Encampments, with the latter three being led by the Housing and Infrastructure Portfolio holder. Regional Engagements on the issue of clean drinking water (Bill C-61) legislation were completed in 2019 and AFN has been advocating to include critical requirements as supported by Resolution 23/2022 as passed by First Nations-in-Assembly. These include recognition of rights over source waters, binding national standards, committed funding, liability protection for First Nations governments, water governance structures led by First Nations, and mechanisms for managing trans-border water sources. Since September 2023, AFN has been working with Canada to co-develop draft legislation to replace the current version. In December 2023, a draft version was shared under non-disclosure and contained significant additions raised by First Nations.

National Portfolio #2

I held the Health Portfolio until the recent election at the AFN in 2023. As the portfolio holder, the Chiefs Committee on Health advocated for:

- Culturally safe and appropriate healthcare closer to home.
- Mental health and wellness supports.
- Non-Insured Health Benefits reform.

- Recruitment and retention of Indigenous health human resources to address inequalities of First Nations in accessing quality, timely and specialized care, particularly in northern and remote communities.
- Accessibility funding for First Nations to adhere to the Accessible Canada Act.
- Distinction-based Indigenous Health Legislation.

As First Nations have a Treaty-based relationship with Canada, the government is obligated to ensure First Nations can access quality healthcare in alignment with inherent and Treaty rights. Successive federal governments have not recognized the Treaty right to health and view services like Non-Insured Health Benefits as arising from governmental goodwill rather than fiduciary duty. First Nations have also expressed concerns with distinctions-based health legislation process and would like assurances that it will be co-drafted. Several health-related investments will also cease in 2024, including Indian Residential School Resolution Health Program and Anti-Indigenous Racism in Health, necessitating targeted advocacy for Budget 2025.





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National Portfolio #3 – Lands, Territories, and Resources (LTR)

In December 2023, I transitioned from the Health Portfolio to Lands, Territories, and Resources (LTR). The key focus of the Chiefs Committee on Lands, Territories and Resources (CCoLTR) is restitution of lands to First Nations, including Additions to Reserve (ATR), Specific Claims reform, and supporting self-determination over lands. Work is being done to identify immediate ATR process improvements by 2025 while ensuring First Nations are fully engaged in development of any new policy framework. The AFN and Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), working together as the Specific Claims Implementation Working Group, are working to co-develop a consensus-based model for the creation of the Independent Centre for the Resolution of Specific Claims. They continue to meet and develop a joint proposal for engagement with First Nations. Since becoming the portfolio holder, there has been one meeting in-person meeting of the CCoLTR.

Path Ahead:

I want to conclude by highlighting my supportive and collaborative work advocating for progressive and visionary First Nations leaders across the region. In the year ahead, Ontario will continue to focus on the direction of the Chiefs in Ontario and from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Conclusion

I thank the Leadership for joining us this week. I know you all have busy schedules and I acknowledge you have many decisions you make on a day-to-day basis with your Councils for your communities. I am honoured to be part of the AFN. We have many, many challenges ahead of us.

Have a great assembly and travel safely. Until we meet again – baamaa pii.





IN THE SPIRIT OF
PEACE AND RECONCILIATION
TO ALL NATIONS
LET IT STAND
BY THE
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
AND THE
NATIONAL SYSTEM OF PUBLIC LANDS



Interim Regional Chief Sheldon Kent

Manitoba

Greetings to all the Leadership, Knowledge Keepers, and First Nations citizens. Your tireless efforts are both valuable and appreciated.

Introduction:

I am currently serving as the Interim Regional Chief for Manitoba, representing all 63 First Nations in the region. Since assuming this interim role in October 2024, I have gained valuable insight and engaged in meaningful dialogue as a member of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Executive Committee. I hold two portfolios, including the Management Committee and Social Development.

As we come together at the AFN Annual General Assembly, let us engage in meaningful discussions, share knowledge, and work toward building a future that upholds the principles of traditional governance. It is through these collective efforts that we can ensure the well-being and prosperity of our communities.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Working in unity with other political organizations in our region is vital for the betterment of our First Nations communities. We engage in quarterly meetings to enhance community well-being. These collaborative efforts are essential for fostering positive change. Together, we share ideas, knowledge, and resources, which has led to a deeper understanding of the challenges that exist within our region. Our collaborations also include engagements with the Manitoba Premier's Office and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

As Interim Regional Chief, I have attended:

- Chief and Council Inaugurations
- Headdress Ceremonies
- Powwows
- Grand Openings
- Ground Breaking Ceremonies
- Community visits requested by Chiefs
- Chief Assemblies
- Ministerial Meetings

National Portfolio #1 – Management Committee

As one of the five Regional Chiefs appointed to the Management Committee, we have focused on the selection process for the hiring of a new Chief Executive Officer for the AFN. Other work includes reviewing and approving contracts for various assemblies, gatherings, and forums hosted by different sectors at the AFN, and review budgets that are presented to the Executive Committee.

National Portfolio #2

AFN Resolution 07/2022, *Reform of the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program*, validated the First Nations-created policy recommendations, which were submitted to ISC to support their Memorandum to Cabinet for the reform of the Income Assistance (IA) Program in January 2023. The First Nations-created policy recommendations include:



- First Nations governance over the IA Program to meet IA client and family needs.
- Increasing IA rates to account for the true cost of living on-reserve.
- Strengthening wrap-around supports for IA clients and their families including a particular focus on those with special and additional needs.
- Increased resources and resourcing to support administration and case managers; First Nations-designed data strategies and collection.
- Infrastructure investments to enable First Nations to develop and administer their own IA Programs.

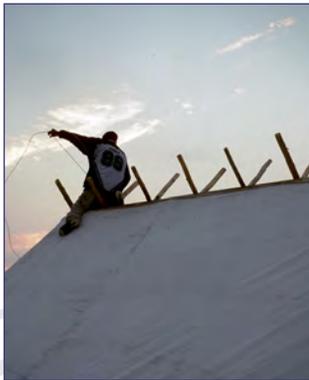
In December 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 85/2023, *Support for the Technical Working Group on Social Development (TWGSD) to Continue Income Assistance Program Reform*, which called for the TWGSD to oversee the costing and transition of the IA Program using the First Nations-developed policy recommendations. In March 2024, the AFN submitted a funding proposal to ISC to acquire funding to complete this work.

Budget 2024 invested \$596.2 million over five years for IA Program integrity funding, including \$117.6 million over three years for case management and pre-employment supports integrity funding, new funding of \$213.5 million over five years, and an additional \$49.8 million per year ongoing, to implement income supports for eligible persons with disabilities, aligned with those provided in all provinces and the Yukon.

National Portfolio #3

The AFN and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) co-developed a Storyline Policy Document to inform the reform of the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care (FNIHCC) and Assisted Living (AL) Programs. The document provides a suite of overarching priority recommendations to achieve excellence in First Nations health and social supports and services. The policy recommendations in the Storyline Policy Document were informed by extensive region-specific First Nations engagement initiatives held between 2020-23. The recommendations were endorsed by the AFN Executive Committee through AFN Resolution 98/2023, First Nations-created Policy Recommendations for a Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Care (LTCC) Framework. In April 2024, the policy recommendations were submitted to ISC with the expectation that ISC would include them in the MC.





The policy recommendations include:

- Culture as the foundation for LTCC services to First Nations.
- Wholistic care from preconception to end of life.
- Restructuring and advancing health and wellness infrastructure in First Nations.
- Scalable and sustainable resources including integrating both formula-based and needs-based funding mechanisms.
- Building and supporting health and social human resources.
- Support governance and First Nations self-determination.
- Create equitable access to services across Canada.

Upon reaching the age of majority and 'aging out' of Jordan's Principle eligibility, youth often encounter limited or non-existent supports, services and/or programs. This situation effectively recreates the very gap that Jordan's Principle was intended to bridge. There is a dire need for adequate supports to sustain services for clients aging out of Jordan's Principle, which a LTCC framework must address.

National Portfolio #4

This file, which was relatively quiet during the COVID-19 pandemic, is now seeing an increase in workload and attention. The AFN is building on its work with federal funding partners and advice rendered on Indigenous sport-related initiatives before the pandemic. The AFN is being asked to sit on the selection committee for Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) program Stream 2 (\$3.6 million) and Stream 3 (\$2.5 million) funding. There is up to \$249,999 available for two-year projects between 2024-202 for Indigenous organizations and communities that promote sport and recreation, Indigenous women, girls and Two Spirit People.

There is no direct current funding in place to support the AFN's work on Sports and Recreation. The AFN is writing to the Hockey Hall of Fame and the National Hockey League (NHL) to support retired NHL players Reggie Leach and Jim Neilson. The AFN keeps a shortlist of other eligible Indigenous players for the future, in line with Resolution 31/2023, *Advocate for First Nations Athletes Induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame and Other Sports Halls of Fame*. The AFN is also drafting letters to support Hockey Indigenous to request organizational capacity development funding dollars from the federal government, Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport and hockey organizations, in line with Resolution 62/2023, *Support for the Development of Hockey Indigenous*.



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Path Ahead:

Moving forward, I will continue to advocate for all First Nations. Income Assistance is an important aspect of supporting our communities. It aims to provide financial support to individuals and families who may be facing economic challenges. By advocating for adequate and equitable income assistance programs, we can help address poverty and promote the well-being of First Nations.

First Nations sports and recreation is a pivotal way to promote community well-being, cultural preservation, and youth development. Sports and recreation activity play a vital role in fostering physical health, mental well-being and a strong sense of community in First Nations. Advocacy is essential to ensure that First Nations have access to adequate sports and recreation facilities, funding, and resources.

It is important to raise awareness about these issues, engage with policy makers, and support organizations that are working towards positive change. By amplifying the voices of those affected and promoting inclusive policies, we can contribute to a more just and equitable society for all.

Conclusion:

Continuing to work together as leaders and community members is essential. By collaborating and pooling our strengths, we can address common challenges and find solutions that allow us to create strong communities. Unity allows us to amplify our collective voices and advocate for the needs and rights of our communities.

Meegwetch! I am wishing you all safe travels and a productive assembly.





Regional Chief Bobby Cameron

Saskatchewan

Tansi, edlanet'e, Hau, tonesked yaun? On behalf of the 74 First Nations, Veterans, Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Executive, Staff, and Senate, I extend greetings from the ancestral lands and unceded territories of the Cree, Dēnesųłíné, Saulteaux, the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota in kisiskâciwan (Saskatchewan).

Introduction:

Education is a Treaty Right. First Nations are sovereign and have an inherent right to control all aspects of education, from early childhood through post-secondary. The responsibility of First Nations students fall entirely with the Crown, as part of First Nations Treaty rights.

We provide the framework for reform by clarifying roles and responsibilities, strengthening governance and accountability, and addressing the need for committed and sufficient funding, which is crucial to ensure high-quality education for First Nations students.

We will continue to work together to address First Nation education matters on the national level and support the development of wholistic, culturally responsive, high-quality education for First Nations students, including providing political direction, advice, and recommendations.

Equitable, safe, and culturally relevant education to advance quality of life for First Nations through the control of education and adequate funding is fundamental to creating education systems that support the success of First Nations students. Language and culture are vitally essential for the

successful development, education, and well-being of First Nations students.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Budget 2024 allocated \$242.7 million over three years, starting in 2024-2025, to enhance access to post-secondary education for First Nation students through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

Over 150 years of inadequate education and funding gaps have significantly affected the socioeconomic outcomes of First Nations. Poor education contributes to unemployment, which can lead to poverty, poor housing, substance misuse, family violence, and ill health. We are committed to addressing these educational gaps to mitigate their impacts. Too often, education systems fail to respect the diverse cultures and needs of First Nations. It is crucial to fund and support teaching, learning, and assessment. Without changes in these areas, the financial sustainability of colleges and universities will continue to be at-risk. Continued dedicated attention and a commitment by all levels of government to work together is required to address the educational gap between First Nations and other Canadian learners. When students identify as being First Nations, they not only do they gain a sense of pride in their culture and connect with others from similar backgrounds, but they also are able to receive the various supports available for their education and future.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) remains committed to restoring and improving the Treaty relationship between First Nations and the federal government. Treaties provide a framework for living together and sharing



the land within our traditional territories. These agreements lay the foundation for cooperation and partnership as we advance our education systems. Canada must honour our Treaty relationship, based on the recognition of rights and respect to achieve reconciliation with First Nations. Addressing the education gap requires collaboration among federal, provincial and First Nation jurisdictions. However, there is an urge to break down the current jurisdictional obstacles to First Nation education to improve the social and economic well-being of First Nations on-reserve.

National Portfolio #1

A high-quality education is one of the best ways to ensure that every child has a fair chance at the best possible life. High-quality, culturally appropriate education is especially important if we aim to secure a brighter and more prosperous future for First Nations children, youth, and communities. With First Nations being among the youngest and fastest-growing populations in Canada, investing in their success is investing in Canada's future.

Budget 2024 proposes new investments in First Nations kindergarten to grade 12 education programming and infrastructure, including \$649.4 million over two years, starting in 2024-25, to improve elementary and secondary education on-reserve, and ensure funding formulas meet the needs of growing communities; and \$545.1 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, for K-12 infrastructure to build and renovate safe and healthy learning environments for First Nations students.

The budget also proposes to increase support for First Nations post-secondary students by \$242.7 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to increase access to post-secondary education for First Nations students through the Post-Secondary

Student Support Program (PSSP). The AFN continues to advocate and assert First Nation rights and responsibility to direct and make decisions regarding all matters relating to First Nations lifelong learning as an inherent and Treaty right. We assert an inherent and Treaty right to education that is in accordance with our cultures, values, traditions, and languages. The AFN will continue to work to strengthen the relationship with Canada to support First Nations post-secondary education and ensure First Nations control of First Nations education.

National Portfolio #2

National unity on education requires that Canada fulfills its obligation to respect and uphold First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights. This rights to education as specified in treaties and self-government agreements. The nation-to-nation relationship between First Nations and the Government of Canada is rooted in historic Treaties, numbered Treaties, self-government agreements, section 35, guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and informed by the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and its 94 Calls to Action.

National Portfolio #3

The AFN will continue to advocate to ensure that the Government of Canada provides funding to First Nations to build new schools, renovate and expand existing facilities, and operate and maintain existing education infrastructure, including school facilities, such as classrooms, gyms, science





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labs, sports fields, home economics, and shop facilities. The AFN will also continue to call for First Nations-led education facilities and the development and renovation of new or existing facilities.

National Portfolio #4

Provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada unfairly restrict First Nations from full participation in gaming unless that participation is under the authority of the provinces and territories of Canada. As a result, most First Nations cannot take advantage of the revenue opportunities offered by the gaming industry. The AFN has been advocating for greater inclusion within the gaming economy, whether through increased opportunities and benefit-sharing from land-based gaming enterprises, online gaming opportunities, or single sports betting opportunities. The AFN will continue to explore a process focused on enhancing participation of First Nations in the gaming economy, while strengthening opportunities for First Nations to exercise self-determination over the regulation of gaming.

Activities in the gaming portfolio are limited and resources are needed to support AFN's advocacy related to First Nations inclusion in the gaming industry. The AFN is planning to host a National Gaming Conference in 2024-2025, which will invite First Nations and those in the gaming industry to participate.

Path Ahead:

We will continue to advocate for the protection of inherent and Treaty Rights to education. We will advance First Nation jurisdiction over First Nation education, establish and carry out effective strategies regarding First Nation and other networks, provide political and strategic advice regarding First Nation educational matters to the National Indian Education Council (NIEC), AFN, and AFN Executive Committee, carry out recommendations on the work of the NIEC and the AFN, and identify and address issues concerning First Nation education.

Conclusion:

Our priority will always be our Inherent and Treaty Right to Education and asserting First Nations jurisdiction.

Hiy Hiy, ekosi

Bobby Cameron
AFN Regional Chief for Saskatchewan
Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations



Regional Chief Terry Teegee

British Columbia

Chiefs, Hereditary Leaders, Knowledge Keepers and youth!

Hadih, and greetings from beautiful Lheidli T'enneh territory. On behalf of the 204 First Nations in British Columbia (BC) and the BC Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Board of Directors, I present this Annual Report which provides an update of the ongoing work in our region as well as in my portfolio areas.

Introduction:

This past year has been highly productive year for our Nations. Thank you to the Chiefs, leaders, and staff who have directed and achieved the important accomplishments within the BCAFN. I would like to acknowledge the BCAFN Board of Directors, including Chief Jerry Jack, Brian Assu, Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, Chief Lynda Price, and Chief Maureen Luggi, as well as Knowledge Keepers Dr. Gwendolyn Point, Dr. Robert Joseph, and Sempulayan Gonzales. Thanks also to the Women's Representative, Louisa Housty-Jones, 2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative, Orene Askew, Male Youth Representative, Kyle Alec, and Female Youth Representative, Cystal Starr-Lewis.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

As I begin my third term as Regional Chief, after being acclaimed in September 2023, BCAFN continues its momentum, advancing work on priorities and addressing urgent issues. I travelled to Ottawa last fall, in November 2023, to attend the AFN Executive Committee meeting, where we met with several federal ministers, including the Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, and the

Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. We have continued to meet as an Executive in the first half of this year to ensure continued advancement of First Nations Title, Rights, Treaty Rights, and interests.

Collaborative efforts between the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), Premier Eby, and Ministers early this year focused on key areas such as Mineral Tenure Act reform, aligning legislation with Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act), developing new fiscal models, enhancing emergency management, and addressing the climate crisis. On March 7 and 8, 2024, the BCAFN hosted our 20th Annual Special Chiefs Assembly. Premier David Eby, Minister Murray Rankin for Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Minister Nathan Cullen for Water, Land, and Natural Resources Stewardship, and provincial government representatives updated Chiefs and leaders on various important matters. Federal Minister Gary Anandasangaree, overseeing Crown-Indigenous Relations, actively engaged with Chiefs and leaders to address critical



"For the first time a Crown government has recognized Aboriginal title through agreement, all while innovatively balancing the interests of fee simple land owners on Haida Gwaii with the inherent rights and title of the Haida Nation."

- RC Teegee



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concerns. A number of resolutions were passed including:

- 01/2024 *Support for BCAFN to Implement the First Nations Gender Equity Strategic Action Plan*
- 02/2024 *Support for the WLRS Relationship Protocol with the FNLC*
- 03/2024 *Support for Relationship Building Between the B.C. First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development and Yukon First Nations*
- 04/2024 *Support for Hosting Regional Spiritual Knowledge Keepers Gatherings on Climate Change*
- 05/2024 *Indigenous Rights and Border Mobility*
- 06/2024 *Addressing Underfunding of BC First Nations Languages and Support for the Development of a B.C. First Nations Languages Act*
- 07/2024 *Ensuring Free, Prior, and Informed Consent for FNCFS Long-Term Reform and Compensation Distribution*
- 08/2024 *Support and Endorsement for Phase 1 of the First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council's Housing Framework*
- 09/2024 *Call to Extend the Safe Drinking Water Settlement Claim Deadline*
- 10/2024 *Support for Tea Creek to Access Funding*
- 11/2024 *Governance Committee Appointments to Fill Vacancies*
- 12/2024 *Amendment of the Heritage Conservation Act*
- 13/2024 *Support for the B.C. First Nations Critical Minerals Strategy*
- 14/2024 *Model for Multilateral Emergency Management Services Funding Negotiations*
- 15/2024 *Protection for the Northern Spotted Owl and Its Old-Growth Habitat*
- 16/2024 *Support for Families and Survivors of MMIWG2S+*
- 17/2024 *Call for Municipalities to Implement the UN Declaration*

National Portfolio #1 – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

On June 21, 2021, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA) came into force. This Act requires the Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to:

- Take all measures necessary to ensure that federal laws are consistent with the Declaration (Section 5).
- Prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration (Section 6).
- Develop annual reports on progress and submit them to Parliament (Section 7).

On December 10, 2021, Canada launched its consultation, cooperation, and engagement process. The Minister of Justice has been identified as the designated minister for purposes of the Act, with the obligation to take measures to ensure consistency of federal laws and to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Act. Other federal ministers are involved as needed.



On June 20, 2023, the Department of Justice tabled the UNDA National Action Plan (NAP) to Parliament as mandated by Section 6 of the UNDA. On December 5, 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 78/2023 to transition the Ad- Hoc Chiefs' Committee to become a standing Chiefs Committee on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, and direct the AFN Executive Committee to appoint, and in some cases reappoint, existing members as needed, to the Chiefs Committee on the UNDA, in accordance with Article 7 (3) of the AFN Charter, to provide advice and direction on matters relating to the implementation of the UN Declaration. The Chiefs Committee will hold its first meeting on May 28-29, 2024, to discuss advocacy efforts related to the UNDA NAP, and develop and finalize the Terms of Reference and planning for a National UNDRIP Forum.

National Portfolio #2 – Justice and Policing

Beginning into the new year, the landscape of justice and policing for First Nations continued to shift and evolve. First Nations continue to advance work that will support the establishment and maintenance of their own justice systems and reduce the negative effects of the colonial justice system. BCAFN continues to uphold the importance of culture and the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction as a foundational element of this work. As co-chair of the AFN Policing Taskforce alongside Regional Chief Ghislain Picard, we continue to advocate strongly for the advancement of First Nations jurisdiction and control over community safety. The Taskforce includes experts in First Nations Policing, regional representatives, and executive members from the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association across Canada. In British Columbia, this work is supported by Chief Jerry Jack and Chief Dean Nelson.

“The 204 First Nations in B.C. are at the forefront of dealing with the impacts of climate change and adequate support is essential to advance First Nations realization of their right to self-determination, which in turn will ensure adaptation measures are attainable and effective.”

- RC Teegee

The Taskforce’s mandate is to provide support and guidance for the co-development of First Nations Policing Essential Services legislation. Recently, we encountered several challenges with the Department of Public Safety regarding the co-development of the legislation. Minister Dominic LeBlanc has reopened the door for negotiations related to the legislation, however, has reinforced the idea of provincial responsibility and jurisdiction, which unfortunately is completely misaligned with





the federal government's commitment to align all federal legislation with UNDRIP.

The Chiefs Committee on Justice, established by Resolution 11/2022, will be working towards justice reform and reclamation of First Nations justice systems, legal traditions and customary laws. The next meeting will be held in July 2024 before the AFN AGA.

Progress continues on the National Indigenous Justice Strategy. Last fall, the B.C. First Nations Justice Council and the First Nations Leadership Council held engagement sessions with communities and experts to gather feedback and input into the strategy. Recently, Minister Virani committed to extending the timeline to complete the strategy to fall 2024.

National Portfolio #3 - AFN National Fisheries Commission (NFC)

Co-Chair with Regional Chief Darlene Barnard

The AFN National Fisheries Commission (NFC) has been working to implement a national fisheries strategy, and support First Nations inherent and Treaty rights to fisheries resources and management for:

- Aquaculture - ocean and in-land (fresh water).
- Federal programs such as the Oceans Protection Plan, Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative.
- Federal policies and legislation.

We have identified three priority areas for discussion with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO):

1. Drafting the Aquaculture Act and transitioning away from Open-Net Pen Fish Farms.

2. Fully implementing the Marshall Decision and the recommendations outlined in the Peace on the Water Senate Report.

3. Prioritizing and implementing the fisheries-related Action Plan measures in the UNDA.

On May 22-23, 2024, the NFC held a hybrid Strategic Planning Session to discuss key focus areas with strategic directions and success indicators, including:

- Exploring Core Purpose, Mission and Vision statements.
- A proposed "Strategic Plan" with key anticipated outcomes, timelines and accountabilities.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on the updated NFC Terms of Reference.

In July 2024, the NFC will reconvene to finalize these plans and to host a dialogue session on rights-based approaches to Elvers Fisheries on July 8, 2024.

Path Ahead:

As the first half of this year progressed, I had many opportunities to advance First Nations interests and priorities. A significant milestone occurred on February 9, 2024, with the appointment of Justice Leonard Marchand from the Syilx/Okanagan Indian Band as the Chief Justice of British Columbia by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, marking him as the first Indigenous person to hold this position in B.C. In early February, I attended the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs meeting in Treaty One territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba, to strategize on safeguarding First Nations Rights and Title. I was honoured to speak at the AFN and First Peoples Wellness Circle National Gathering for Indian Residential School Survivors event in Vancouver, B.C., earlier this year.



In April 2024, I also had the opportunity to advocate for First Nations rights and title and the implementation of UNDA at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples in New York. Additionally, in June 2024, I had the opportunity to participate at the AFN-Government of Canada Permanent Bilateral Mechanism Table in Ottawa, Ontario, with federal ministers to advance First Nations interests, including ensuring the fulsome implementation of UNDA and related Action Plan Measures, jurisdiction and control over First Nations membership and citizenship, consistent and meaningful languages funding support, and transitioning away from open-net pen fish farming by 2025.

As we continue our work in B.C. with an upcoming provincial election, we strive to maintain the momentum with the implementation of DRIPA and the UNDA,

ensuring that the priorities of First Nations in B.C. are recognized at provincial, federal, and international levels.

Conclusion:

As we continue to advance our collective efforts for the recognition and implementation of First Nations Title, Rights and Treaty Rights, and as we approach a federal election, now is the time to press and advocate for strong commitments and actions from the federal government. I look forward to collaborating with other leaders across the country to continue this important work.

Mussi Cho!

“I raise my hands for all Two-Spirit and Indigenous 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and the First Nations leaders in B.C. who advocate and are inclusive to all within their community.”

- RC Teegee on 2SLGBTQQIA+ Celebration and Awareness Day





Regional Chief Kluane Adamek

Yukon

Dä`nnch'e!

On behalf of the AFN Yukon Region, I would like to thank the Matriarchs, Yukon First Nation Chiefs, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth, and community leaders who continue to demonstrate what it means to be a Yukon that leads!

Introduction:

Since returning from leave in early 2024 following the birth of my daughter, Tayāna Copper Jane, I continue to feel the support for our growing family.

On behalf of my husband and our families, we thank you for your warm wishes. I have felt incredible support from Yukon First Nations, as well as leaders from coast-to-coast-to-coast during this very special time. I raise my hands with gratitude to everyone who has supported the work of the AFN Yukon Regional Office over the past year. As I transition back to the office, I look forward to advancing and pressing for real change on the ground and within our communities.

“The right approach is always a rights-based approach.”

– AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Aagé

I want to deeply thank and acknowledge former Regional Chief and Knowledge Keeper, Mary Jane Jim, who served as the Yukon Regional Chief during my absence. Knowledge Keeper Mary Jane is an incredible leader who continues to support the next generation. Gunalcheésh, Shà`w níthän for all you do for our people!

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Together with the leadership from all 14 Yukon First Nations, the AFN Yukon Region continues to work towards the advancement of various regional and national priorities, including addressing the ongoing Yukon River salmon crisis, advancing youth climate leadership, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) implementation, securing equitable languages funding, Arctic sovereignty and Northern defense, Modern Treaty implementation, and more.

This year, the AFN Yukon Region hosted AFN Yukon Chiefs Summits where leaders from across the territory gathered to discuss the key challenges and areas of priority for their First Nations, both individually and collectively. At each of these Summits, Yukon First Nations Chiefs and leadership consistently delivered clear direction to our Regional Office on the urgent matters that they are facing. As Regional Chief, it is my responsibility to take this direction from Chiefs and leaders and work within the AFN Yukon Regional Office's mandate to support them with actionable solutions.

The Yukon Chiefs have mandated the AFN Yukon Regional Office to pursue the creation of a simplified, coordinated bilateral process for regular meetings between Yukon First



Nations leadership and federal ministers and representatives. This work is essential to creating a distinct and meaningful forum, specifically with Canada, that focuses on Yukon First Nations' priorities. Creating this direct, permanent bilateral forum between Yukon First Nations and the federal government remains a key interest that our Regional Office continues to advocate for with national partners, in addition to sufficient, predictable core funding to support Yukon First Nations priorities.

There continues to be great momentum coming from Yukon First Nations driving change with respect to their rights, priorities, and solutions in their communities. The AFN Yukon Regional Office team, including myself, are honoured to work with the Yukon Chiefs and leaders to support the advancement of this work.

National Portfolio #1 – Environment and Climate Change

The Yukon Region continues to lead through the advancement of the Yukon First Nation Climate Action Plan, the Reconnection Vision. I am deeply proud of the climate leadership emerging from Yukon First Nations, particularly from Youth, which has garnered national excitement and international attention over the past year.

Following their graduation in 2023, the Yukon First Nation Climate Fellows, the Children of Tomorrow, spent time in January and February in Aotearoa, New Zealand on a culture and knowledge exchange opportunity focusing on climate, water, and the environment. As a member of the Fellowship's Steering Committee, the AFN Yukon Region is incredibly proud to have been able to support the Fellows in this rich cultural experience hosted by Revitalizing Indigenous Virtues for Earth's Regeneration (RIVER). We are looking forward to continuing this partnership with

RIVER, as our office is now supporting work to advance the Fellows' Reconnection Vision, formalize the Fellowship curriculum, and develop the next iteration of the curriculum for future cohorts of Yukon First Nation youth climate leaders!

Joining the AFN Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (the ACE Committee) retreat in March was also an exciting opportunity to discuss regional and collective strategic planning and priorities with other climate leaders from coast-to-coast-to-coast. The AFN National Climate Strategy was approved by First Nations-in-Assembly in July 2023, and the First Nations Climate Lens remains critical to confronting the climate crisis for the next seven generations. It is time that Indigenous climate leadership be at the forefront of climate planning, policy-making, and action, and we invite Knowledge Keepers Chiefs, Leaders, Youth, Matriarchs, Climate leaders, experts, and those committed to Climate Action, to join us at the 3rd AFN National Climate Gathering themed "*Catalyzing First Nations Climate and Conservation Leadership for Transformative Change*," on October 7-10, 2024, in Calgary, Alberta.





Regional Chiefs' Reports



As portfolio holder, I remain committed to advancing the important community-led climate solutions being developed by First Nations across Turtle Island.

National Portfolio #2 – Modern Treaties and Self-Government Agreements

The Yukon Region is proud to be a national leader when it comes to First Nations modeling self-government, with almost half of Canada's Modern Treaties based in the Yukon. However, implementation of these Modern Treaties continues to require significant work. More than a year ago, the Government of Canada announced the Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy, which supports clear direction for federal officials, improved communication with First Nations across federal departments, and commits to co-develop independent implementation mechanisms with Modern Treaty partners. The UN Declaration Action Plan also includes several measures focused on implementing Modern Treaties and Self-Government Agreements, and this work is far from complete.

We must also continue to advance the work of self-government for those who are interested in exploring pathways other than Modern Treaty development. First Nations from across Canada need to be able to collaborate with and learn from each other to determine how they will choose to exercise their inherent and legislated rights to self-government.

Path Ahead:

Yukon First Nations continue to chart their own paths, and there is so much important and exciting work still to be done. The AFN Yukon Regional Office remains committed to supporting the work of all 14 First Nations, at the direction of Chiefs and leaders, to work with Crown government partners to address and advance these priority areas. While this has been a challenging year, with losses of Matriarchs, Knowledge Keepers, and young people taken far too soon, it is our collective teachings, ceremonies, hope, and kinship that continues to bring us together through the most challenging of times. I remain proud of the leadership, solutions and vision that continues to emerge from Yukon First Nations and remain confident that innovative thought leadership and action planning will continue to drive forward the necessary change. Once again, on behalf of myself and the entire AFN Yukon Regional Office, thank you to the leaders, Matriarchs, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth and citizens who continue to demonstrate what it means to be a Yukon that leads!

“Yukon Chiefs said to the Youth: ‘Go and make a climate plan; it’s for your futures’. And they did it.”

–AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Aagé



Conclusion:

Gunalchéesh, Mä` hsi' cho, Sógá sénlá', Shä` w níthän, Niyę sáw níidhín ,Tsin'ij choh to the Matriarchs, Yukon First Nation Chiefs, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth and community leaders who consistently live according to their values. I'm honoured to walk the trail that was blazed by those who came before us, and I hold up the countless youth who are emerging as the leaders of today and tomorrow.

I look forward to the work that is ahead of us. In unity, Dak`anutà jè', take good care.

"It's never about the right now, or just tomorrow. We should make decisions based on seven generations into the future."

–AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Aagé





Regional Chief Gerald Antoine

Northwest Territories

On behalf of the Dene Nations, I extend greetings to all of you. I am grateful for this opportunity to share Dene issues and updates on the portfolios assigned to me.

Introduction:

As the elected Dene National Chief, part of my role and responsibility is represent the Northwest Territories (NWT) Region at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). As the representative of the NWT Region, I hold substantial responsibilities to the member Nations that I serve. I am tasked by my people to uphold the principles of the Dene Declaration (1975) and the longstanding position and directive of our Elders.

I am pleased to highlight some key updates on the AFN's activities and priorities.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

The NWT Region is complex and has various Treaties that cover our Territory. While some Nations have entered into Comprehensive Claim Agreements with Canada, others continue to live in Treaty No. 8 or No. 11 territories. The Dene have concerns about the impacts to the Treaty Territories and the Rights Holding members of Dene Nation.

The numbered Treaties, along with the pre-confederation Treaties made between 1871 and 1921, play a fundamental role in the government-to-government relationship between Original Nation governments and the Crown. These Treaties solidify internationally recognized government-to-government relationships between these two Nations. Many Original Nations

continue to uphold their duties under these sacred covenants. There is a long history of political rhetoric utilized by Canada that Treaties extinguished "claim" to the land and authorized colonial expansion and possession. There is also a long history by Original Nations since Treaty making, that contests Canada's title to and claim of our Territories and jurisdiction. These Treaties were complex diplomatic processes and were made to respect each other's sovereign jurisdiction, a process as depicted by the Two-Row Wampum that demonstrates the nation-to-nation relationship. Signifying how the two would treat one and other and live together. Unfortunately, Canada, as the settler state inheriting the Treaty obligations from the imperial Crown, has embarked on a relentless colonial project that has caused harm to our Original Peoples. The Indian Residential Schools is one of example of evidence of this genocidal process.

The federal government process seeks to attain certainty for the state and assimilate our Original Peoples. What is now different from previous governments, is that current policies are couched in the language of "reconciliation" alongside apologies for the "cultural" genocide suffered by Original Peoples. These are simply a gentler form of ongoing assimilation through policy and law. The issue here is that these are being developed under the guise of "co-development." The solution then would be the implementation of Treaty as per the Spirit and Intent, the process for implementation would be Treaty-based funding.



National Portfolio #1 – Indian Residential School System

The nature of the Indian Residential School System was a destructive and genocidal framework. A civilizing program designed to “kill the Indian in the Child” and to destroy our culture and way of life, implemented by the Settler State and administrated by the churches and enforced by police services. As Survivors, we know first-hand this vicious framework, the devastation and effects continuous to be reflected through the traumas that our family people suffer from. I extend my deepest gratitude and celebrate your dedication to all your family people, for ensuring Survivors are heard and voices of our young ones who never came home are represented with care.

Following the 2022 Papal visit, expectations for follow-up work have been wide ranging for Survivors. The sacred work that Survivors and Nations are leading has revealed an urgent need for meaningful restitutions, restoration, and rebuilding as being key priorities. It is our sacred responsibility to create and foster the relationship forward. There have been ongoing challenges but we are committed to continuing to listen to and learn from Survivors, families, and communities. The work forward requires necessary resources to support and assist these sacred responsibilities.

Powerful moments of our work together have begun to be felt around the world, for which our next seven generations will benefit and know that we showed up for them. As there is still work to be done our people will come together helping to fulfill and follow-through with the dreams of our ancestors. This involves the family’s functions and responsibilities as directed by family leadership.

National Portfolio #2 – Truth and Reconciliation

As of January 2024, I have been assigned to the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) portfolio, building on my previous experience with the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) portfolio. In December 2023, the AFN developed two funding proposals to support the evaluation and monitoring of progress on the TRC Calls to Action and to support the establishment and coordination of an AFN Chiefs Committee on IRS. In July 2024, the AFN released their TRC Calls to Action Progress Report, which monitors the progress of each Call to Action. To date only 13% of the 94 Calls to Action have been initiated. As portfolio holder, my goals include:

- Providing additional support and services to fully respond to the Spirit and Intent of all TRC Calls to Action.
- Advocating for services that will contribute to intergenerational and community healing for Survivors.
- Advocating for additional supports and services determined by First Nations to support the work of locating missing children and unmarked burials.
- Ensuring the release records and documents from church archives and other holdings.





“Family gatherings have been important in sharing our stories, our shared experiences, and making lasting friendships. We learn and discover collective strengths through each other.” - Author Unknown

- Calling for the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.
- Continuing work on Bill C-29, National Council for Reconciliation Act

This work must be part of a broader effort to realign and develop relationships to address the needs of families.

National Portfolio #3 – Emergency Management

On January 24, 2024, I was assigned the Emergency Management portfolio. I accepted this responsibility as an opportunity for continued advocacy to ensure the protection and well-being of families remains top priority. Last summer, approximately 70% of the population in Denendeh (NWT) experienced traumatic evacuations.

The core objectives of AFN Emergency Management are Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. In February 2024, the AFN met with National Indigenous Organizations (NIOs), federal and provincial ministers to develop relationships, communications planning, and inter-agency engagement. During the AFN Emergency Management Conference, Chiefs and representatives gathered to discuss the latest in emergency preparedness, planning, and processes.

The voices of First Nations families are essential for the path forward, particularly in addressing emergencies such as floods, droughts, wildfires, severe weather, pandemics, food, and water shortages as aspects of climate change.

National Portfolio #4 – AFN Knowledge Keepers Council

I have had the opportunity to listen and work with the members assigned to the Knowledge Keepers Council. In the short time that we grew together, their insights revealed traditions that gives us a strong sense of our place in the world, the love of our home place, and the wisdom transmitted to us by our Elders and family leadership. Collecting this faith greatly influenced our compassion for all people, including those who oppressed us. We need to draw from these foundations as we develop as sense of how to emerge from the oppression and how to conserve and replenish our beliefs.

This multi-dimensional way of learning has helped to strengthen our understanding about of our Original Knowledge. We need to embrace this acknowledgment of their key role as family leadership in our path to create and foster relationships forward.



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National Portfolio #5 – AFN Veteran’s Council

The AFN Veterans Council continues to be actively engaged in various initiatives and engagements to support and honour our First Nations Veterans and their contributions. As the result of this sustained advocacy by the AFN, the Minister of Veterans Affairs signed the Letter of Understanding (LOU) that outlined four key pillars that will create AND foster relationships forward. These pillars include, but are not limited to:

- Assessing and expanding outreach activities for First Nations Veteran and their families.
- Establishing clear point of contact for First Nations Veterans matters at VAC.
- Increasing Indigenous representation in commemoration related activities.
- Supporting the establishment of a historical record needed for First Nations Veterans and soldiers who have served in times of war, military conflicts, and peace.

Path Ahead:

The AFN was created out of a desire among First Nations leadership for a strong and effective collective advocacy organization and is guided by the Charter of the Assembly of First Nations (2003). The Executive Committee is accountable to, reports to and takes direction from the Confederacy of Nations and the First Nations-in-Assembly

and the functions are to” ... bring to the attention of the First Nations, the First Nations-in-Assembly and the Confederacy of Nations; any matters which may jeopardize the security, survival, rights, aspirations, and jurisdiction of First Nations.” Maintaining this relationship with our member Nations, will support and assist the stability to continue creating and fostering the relationships moving forward.

The unique Original Nation history, culture, and governance, must be acknowledged, recognized and respected to truly strengthen the implementation of the Spirit and Intent



“Our Family, like branches on a tree, we all grow in different directions, yet our roots remain the same.”

of Treaty relationship with the Crown. Today, it is reflected to the voices of people as the truthful way to move forward. I am very proud of our peoples’ consistency with their strength, empathy, resilience, and most of all united through their voices. We must continue to listen to our peoples’ narrative to reconnect as family and be guided by our family leadership to implement support and assistance in a way that meets the needs of families, and their functions and responsibilities.

Conclusion:

Now, more than ever, coming together is crucial. Drawing on our experience is necessary to show what works, what doesn’t, and why. Through these collective engagements, genuine connections can be built.

Let us be united in peace and strength for all our future depends upon it.



Strengthening Our Relations

AFN COUNCIL REPORTS





Knowledge Keepers

Portfolio Holder: Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, NWT

Introduction

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Knowledge Keepers Council (KKC) is a vital organ of the AFN, as established in the AFN Charter. The KKC is an advisory body to the AFN Chiefs' Committees, the AFN Secretariat, and the AFN Executive Committee.

The KKC is made up of three Knowledge Keepers from each of AFN's affiliated regions across Canada, representing male, female, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities. The KKC's function is to offer assistance, advice, and support to the National Chief, the AFN Executive Committee, and First Nations-in-Assembly. Each member of the KKC oversees at least one AFN Sector and Portfolio.



Knowledge Keepers Council Representation

The Council elects two co-chairs annually. As of January 2024, the KKC is represented by co-chairs Gwendolyn Point, of British Columbia, and Chuck Hume of Yukon.

The Council includes:

- Yukon – *Chuck Hume (Co-Chair), and Lorraine Netro*
- British Columbia – *Dr. Gwendolyn Point (Co-Chair), Robert Joseph, and Sempulyan Gonzales*
- Northwest Territories – *Grace Blake and John Bekale*
- Alberta – *Ivy Raine and Lawrence Courtoreille*
- Saskatchewan – *Joe Quewezance*
- Manitoba – *Mike Muswagon*
- Ontario – *Teri Fiddler, Ma-Nee Chacaby and Barney Batise*
- Quebec and Labrador – *Bill Sunday*
- New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island – *Eldon Bernard*
- Prince Edward Island – *Judy Clark*
- Nova Scotia and Newfoundland – *Dr. Calvin White*

Key Activities and Accomplishments

The KKC has re-engaged with portfolio discussions and has ensured that each AFN portfolio has an accompanying Knowledge Keeper to provide guidance. The AFN continues to update the KKC on their portfolios at the Annual General Assembly and Special Chiefs Assemblies. The Council continues to meet to ensure they remain updated on current events that impact First Nations across the country.

The Council continues to advocate for First Nations languages, traditions, and ceremonies, ensuring that they thrive as they are the foundation for creating and maintaining stronger Nations. The Council is essential to the AFN's day-to-day activities to keep First Nations' traditions, values, languages, and history at the fore. They work to ensure the success and well-being of the youth, just as our ancestors did for us. The Council continues to engage, provide support, and share information with Elders within their regions.

Activity #1

Updating Terms of Reference

The KKC is updating their Terms of Reference (TOR). The TOR will enable the Council to continue to provide assistance and support activities of the AFN Secretariat, AFN Executive Committee, Chiefs' Committees, and Councils.

Activity #2

Updating the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Charter

The KKC will provide feedback to the Chiefs' Committee on Charter Renewal as they work to update the AFN Charter. These updates will allow the Council to advance their work and continue to meet to review and update protocols, traditions, ceremonies, roles, and responsibilities.

Activity #3

Aligning Sector Portfolios

The KKC assigned portfolios to each Council member, ensuring that each AFN portfolio is supported by a Knowledge Keeper who provides necessary guidance and participates in sector meetings as needed.



Activity #4

Information Sharing

Working alongside the First Nations Veterans Council, the KKC publishes and distributes the "Council Flyer," a bi-annual newsletter designed to promote and share information about the Council's progress, activities, and achievements of the KKC to First Nations-in-Assembly.

Next Steps Moving Forward

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the KKC will continue to provide support and guidance to AFN Chiefs' Committees, the AFN Secretariat, and the AFN Executive Committee, ensuring that all activities move forward in a good way. The KKC will continue to meet as required, including at the AFN Annual General Assembly in Montreal, Quebec, in July 2024, and the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa, Ontario, in December 2024.



Women's Council

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Women's Council works to unify and create healthy, happy, and harmonious communities through cultural identity and cultural teachings based on respect, love, courage, wisdom, honesty, humility, and truth. The AFN Women's Council also establishes a gender-balanced perspective within First Nations communities, and within all entities dealing with First Nations, that honours the rights and aspirations of First Nations women.

The objective of the Women's Council is to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of First Nations women inform the work of the AFN. Specifically, Council Members fulfill their portfolio responsibilities and participate in a wide range of panels, presentations, and forums that are relevant to First Nations women and the issues that affect them. For example, at the 2023 Annual General Assembly in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Women's Council supported Resolution 67/2023, *Denouncement of Manitoba Decision on Landfill Search for Remains of First Nations Women*.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

On July 31, 2023, the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women met with National Indigenous Leaders and Representatives (FPTI). The AFN delegation included Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard, Newfoundland's Women's Council Representative Chief Joanne Miles, and the family of Chantel Moore. Discussion at the FPTI on the Status of Women included the need for a Red Dress Alert, an oversight body to monitor the 231 Calls for Justice, and increasing access to healing services. Interim National Chief Bernard also urged support for immediate action to search for the

missing and murdered First Nations women at the Prairie Green Landfill.

In September 2023, Canada hosted the Fifth Convening of the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls (the TLW). In 2016, the Governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States had committed to coordinated action to address the disproportionate levels of violence faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people throughout the region and, in 2018, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recognized the TWG as an important regional effort that should be sustained. For this September 2023 convening, Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard and AFN Women's Council Quebec-Labrador Representative, Grand Chief Savanna McGregor, attended TLW as AFN delegates. Key themes that were addressed involved human trafficking and access to justice. Grand Chief McGregor participated throughout question-and-answer periods, along with making statements relating to solutions that could alleviate human trafficking and increase access to justice.

The AFN Women's Council representative also participated in the inaugural Chiefs Committee on Justice meeting held in September 2023, in Victoria, British Columbia. The Chiefs Committee on Justice provides advice and guidance on matters relating to justice reform and reclamation of First Nations justice systems, legal traditions, and customary laws. During this meeting of the Chiefs Committee on Justice, there was specific discussion around the development of *AFN Recommendations for a First Nations Justice Strategy* and planning the next steps in co-development of a First Nations Justice Strategy.

On October 6, 2023, the AFN Women's Council met with the consulting firm 'Innovation Seven' to offer insights and input regarding the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) National Reconciliation Pathway. This Reconciliation Pathway is an initiative by the RCMP to involve the national coordination of reconciliation, and strategic planning to enhance the representation of Indigenous employees across their organization, across various sectors and within divisions and detachments at the community level. During discussions, the Women's Council advised that there needs to be a monitoring process in place for reconciliation as the responsibility to reconcile should not be solely on the shoulders of front-line workers. Similarly, AFN Women's Council members flagged that the RCMP must be more mindful of developing non-biased competences and prioritize the inclusion of more voices from First Nations communities in their engagement attempts for their RCMP National Reconciliation Pathway.

The Ministerial Special Representative (MSR), Jennifer Moore Rattray, met with the AFN Women's council on December 6, 2023, in Ottawa, Ontario, to discuss the Call for Justice (CFJ) 1.7 Interim Report. With that, the AFN Women's Council provided feedback pertaining to the importance of ensuring CFJ 1.7 sets out parameters to create separate spaces for the National Indigenous Human Rights Tribunal and the National Indigenous Human Rights Ombudsperson where each has its own resources, tools, and funding to carry out the important work that has been flagged by First Nations communities. The Women's Council believes that each aspect, the Human Rights Tribunal and the National Indigenous Human Rights Ombudsperson, should be created as its own mechanism and that they should have the capacity to work in harmony with one another.

On February 7 and 8, 2024, the AFN Women's Council attended Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs' (CIRNA) MMIWG2S+ Roundtable, in Ottawa, where AFN Women's Council Quebec-Labrador Representative Grand Chief Savanna McGregor contributed to discussion items related to the Red Dress Alert, the Oversight and Monitoring Report by Innovation Seven, and Ministerial Special Representative's Call for Justice 1.7 Report. For developing and implementing the Red Dress Alert, Grand Chief McGregor flagged the importance of ensuring there are measures developed in response to jurisdictional challenges and systemic racism, along with including the lived experiences of First Nations women, girls, and gender diverse people.



On October 26, 2023, and March 21, 2024, the AFN Women's Council met in-person with the AFN's 2SLGBTQIA+ Council to discuss joint priorities. During these meetings, both councils provided insight and feedback on an AFN internal working group for Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) GBA+ Committee, First Nations GBA+ training, the CIRNA MMIWG2S+ Roundtable and Red Dress Alert, the Ministerial Special Representative Interim Report, and the RCMP Pathway to Reconciliation. During these meetings, it was established that the 2SLGBTQIA+ Council will be looped in for future activities on the MMIWG2S+ advocacy work and development of GBA+ tools and resources.

From February 27 to 30, 2024, the AFN Women's Council attended the AFN Education and Linguistic Conference, in Calgary, where AFN Women's Council Northwest Territories Representative Brenda Gauthier participated in discussions on



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dismantling First Nations stereotypes within education. Workshops attended at the forum on the first day included themes surrounding transforming tripartite education agreements, the unique roles of Indigenous institutes, the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, education models, and

regional education agreements. The second day included workshops filled with discussion surrounding language planning, culture planning, and the First Nations National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

As mandated by AFN Resolution 05/2022, *Support for the Assembly of First Nations Women's Council Mandate and Funding*, the AFN Women's Council has taken a lead on guiding work related to the National Caucus of Women Leaders (NCWL). Work related to the NCWL is part of the Women's Initiative Project with the main objective being to increase the number of elected women leaders across Canada. Both Co-Chair positions of the NCWL are held by members from the AFN Women's Council, including Newfoundland Representative Chief Joanne Miles, and Quebec-Labrador Representative Grand Chief Savanna McGregor. The Women's Council participated in the AFN's three-part First Nations Women in Leadership Virtual Speaker Series and are providing valuable insight into the development of a leadership onboarding toolkit and mentorship program.

Next Steps – Moving Forward

It has been five years since the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released their final report and 231 *Calls for Justice*. The AFN Women's Council will continue to advocate that the voices of survivors and families be heard and continue to be engaged during the process of implementing the National Action Plan. The AFN Women's Council will also be collaborating in developing GBA+ frameworks for AFN's internal GBA+ Working Group.

Looking ahead to 2024, the AFN Women's Council anticipates much of its work will be devoted to carrying out the mandates in Resolutions 08/2021, 27/2022, 49/2022, 52/2022, and 67/2023 by continuing to advocate for implementation of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report and *Calls for Justice* and development of a reporting framework to evaluate the implementation of the *Calls for Justice*.

The AFN Women's Council will also continue to guide the work in developing leadership tools and resources for aspiring First Nations women leaders and those newly elected to their leadership roles.





National Youth Council

*Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Yukon
National Chief RoseAnne Archibald (Interim NYC
Portfolio Holder)*

Introduction

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Youth Council (NYC) is a vital organ of the AFN, as established in the AFN Charter. The NYC is an advisory body to the AFN Chiefs' Committees, the AFN Secretariat, and the AFN Executive Committee. The Council represents First Nations youth from across the country on issues that impact them and strives to influence the direction of the AFN by promoting equality and working with all levels of leadership to create opportunities for personal development and empowerment for future generations.

NYC Membership and Representation

The Council elects two co-chairs and two executives annually at the Annual General Assembly (AGA). The two current Council co-chairs are Rosalie LaBillois-Wysote (Eel River Bar First Nation, New Brunswick) and Ethan Lavallee (Ta'an Kwäch'än, Yukon Territory).

The NYC is currently comprised of the following members:

- Yukon – *Ethan Lavallee and Nikita Sawrenko-Bailey*
- Northwest Territories – *Jackson McDermitt and Shayla Snowshoe*
- British Columbia – *Kyle Alec and Crystal Lewis*

- Alberta – *Roman Buffalo and Khianna Ribbonleg*
- Saskatchewan – *Hailey Rose and Brock McLeod-Waditaka*
- Manitoba – *Ashley Daniels and Carson Robinson*
- Ontario – *Kieran Davis and Tehya Quachegan, Alternates: Pierre Debassige and Katelyn Peters*
- Quebec and Labrador – *Liam-Nico Awashish, Marie-Philippe Ménard, Véronik Picard, and Kananish McKenzie*
- New Brunswick – *Rosalie LaBillois Wysote and Darren Saulis*
- Prince Edward Island – *Vacant*
- Nova Scotia and Newfoundland – *Billie Julian and Isaiah Bernard*

Between 2023 and 2024, former Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard was the interim NYC Portfolio Holder. In 2024, AFN National Chief Cindy Woodhouse-Nepinak did not appoint AFN Regional Chief Portfolio Holders.

Updates to the process of decision-making and quorum.



Key Activities and Accomplishments

The NYC members are involved in various AFN priority areas. Each member holds a portfolio to stay current and engaged in their assigned sector's work. NYC members continue to update the Council on their portfolios at both the AGAs and SCAs.

Activity # 1

One Young World Summit

In October 2023, the former AFN Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard and NYC co-chairs were invited to attend and present on First Nations concerns, opinions, and solutions at the 2023 One Young World Summit in Belfast, Northern Ireland. In 2024, the AFN Executive Committee moved to accept AFN Resolution 103/2023, Support for One Young World Summit 2024, to support the AFN participation in the One Young World Summit in Montreal, Quebec, on September 18-21, 2024. The resolution calls on One Young World to work with the AFN and the NYC to ensure that First Nations protocol, performers, speakers, and guidance are included in the 2024 One Young World Summit and directs the NYC to attend the event based on available funding. The resolution also supports the AFN National Chief to provide opening and closing remarks at the Summit.

Activity #2

National Wellness Gathering for Indian Residential School Survivors

The AFN, in partnership with First Peoples Wellness Circle, hosted a National Wellness Gathering for Indian Residential School Survivors in Vancouver from February 13 to 15, 2024. The event provided a space for Indian Residential School Survivors and their families to reconnect, share, learn, and heal and generated insights, support, and direction in determining a path to

permanency for Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program past the current mandate ending in April of 2024. A member of the NYC participated in the event and provided closing remarks.

Activity #3

AFN National Emergency Management Forum

A member of the Council participated in the AFN 2nd National Emergency Management Forum – Floods, Wildfires, Severe Storms, and Pandemics: Are First Nations Ready? on March 5-7, 2024, in Gatineau, Quebec. The Forum offered discussions, presentations, and updates from First Nations emergency management practitioners, shared successful emergency management initiatives and projects, and offered networking and information-sharing opportunities. The forum also included dialogue on issues and challenges with developing care and controlling culturally relevant emergency management.

Activity #4

AFN Languages and Learning Youth Gathering

The Council worked closely with the AFN Languages and Learning Sector to host the Languages and Learning Youth Gathering in Wendake, Quebec, March 16-17, 2024. The Council contributed to developing the event theme, location, keynote, and other youth participants. The event provided a platform for discussions, workshops, and keynotes on experiences in lifelong learning, focusing specifically on Indigenous language revitalization, Kindergarten to Grade 12 and post-secondary education. The participants shared how the AFN can best support and





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advocate for young people in their lifelong learning journeys. Many interviews were conducted throughout the event and will be featured in the Languages and Learning advocacy and communications plans.

Activity #5

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

A representative of the NYC was appointed to attend the 23rd Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) on April 15–26, 2024, in New York City, New York. The thematic focus was “Enhancing Indigenous Peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: emphasizing the voices of Indigenous Youth.” The priorities for the Council were advocacy for support in food security for First Nations, including innovations for seed banking to safeguard traditional foods, cultural and ceremonial medicines, and creating more opportunities for youth to participate in global food security initiatives. Due to their committed focus on Indigenous seed banking, UNPFII allowed the AFN youth representative to connect with international allies to strengthen relationships, including the New Zealand delegates.

Next Steps Moving Forward

In the 2024-2025 year, the NYC will:

- Review and revise the NYC Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.
- Update the NYC strategic plan.
- Work to maintain a visible and substantial presence and strengthen youth portfolio holder responsibilities, including attending AFN Secretariat meetings, conferences and various AFN committees and working groups.
- Collaborate with the AFN Executive Committee on amplifying youth priorities.
- Collaborate with the AFN Knowledge Keepers Council, Women’s Council, 2SLBTQQIA+ Council, and Veterans Council.
- The NYC will meet at the AGA in Montreal, Quebec, July 9-11, 2024, where an election will be held for the co-chair and executive positions.





First Nations Veterans Council

Portfolio Holder: Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, NWT

Introduction

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) First Nations Veteran's Council (FNVC) is a vital organ of the AFN, as established in the AFN Charter. Established in December 2020, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 02/2020, *AFN First Nations Veteran Council*, the FNVC comprised of First Nations veterans within Canada and the United States of America, as well as First Nations within the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Canadian Department of National Defense, First Nation Peacekeeper societies, First Nations police forces and First Nations who have served in other law enforcement agencies.

The Council represents First Nations veterans from across the country on issues that impact them and aims to promote the recognition of contributions of First Nation veterans in Canada made in all conflicts as allies to Canada, to educate First Nations about the history of First Nation veterans, and to engage in efforts to advance reconciliation and healing.

FNVC Membership and Representation

The Council includes membership from each of AFN's affiliated regions across Canada. As of January 2024, the FNVC is chaired by Percy Joe, representative for British Columbia.

The Council includes:

- British Columbia – *Percy Joe, Chair*
- Yukon – *Carl Sidney*
- Northwest Territories – *Tim O'Loan*

- Alberta – *Henry Raine*
- Saskatchewan – *Emile Highway*
- Manitoba – *Chief Lawrence Letandre*
- Ontario – *Wendy Jocko and Gerald (Gerry) McGregor*
- New Brunswick – *Eldon Bernard and Chief Terry Richardson*
- Prince Edward Island – *Keptin James (Jimmy) Bernard*
- Nova Scotia and Newfoundland – *Alan Knockwood and Deborah (Debbie) Eisan*
- Quebec and Labrador – *Vacant*



Key Activities and Accomplishments

Activity #1

Updating the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Charter

The FNVC continues to provide feedback to the Chiefs' Committee on Charter Renewal to update the AFN Charter, which allows the Council to advance its work and continue to review protocols, traditions, ceremonies, roles, and responsibilities.

Activity #2

Developing a Terms of Reference

The FNVC is developing a Terms of Reference (TOR) dedicated to its ongoing work. This TOR will ensure there is a unified voice for concerns raised by Veterans suffering from the trauma of service and the impacts on their families.



AFN Council Reports



Activity #3

Advancing Priorities through the Letter of Understanding with Veterans Affairs Canada

On April 3 and 4, 2024, the FNVC met with Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) to discuss and identifying priorities and best practices needed to advance progress through the Letter of Understanding (LOU). This meeting included discussions with the Atlas Institute of Veterans and Families, the Last Post Fund, and the Department of National Defence, highlighting the need for a First Nations-led approach to commemoration. The FNVC is currently drafting Phase Two of the LOU, which aims to ensure the development of tangible outcomes and service delivery to effectively address the needs of First Nations veterans, their families, and communities.

Activity #4

Stories of Our Veterans

The FNVC has begun a “Stories of Our Veterans” storytelling project that allows each Council member to share their experiences during service. This project will also create a legacy board to be showcased at the AFN Office in Ottawa, Ontario.

Activity #5

Information Sharing

In celebration of 75 years of peacekeeping missions, the FNVC contributed an article titled ‘A Shared History, A Shared Responsibility’ to the Canadian Peacekeeping Veterans Association anthology “PK75: Stories of Canadian Peacekeepers” in November 2023. This article highlights the importance of recognizing and honouring the contributions of First Nations veterans and aims to enhance understanding among all Canadians, including veterans.

Activity #6

Research Update

Since May 2023, the AFN has been conducting research to develop a historical record of First Nations veterans and soldiers who served in times of war, military conflicts, and peace, including those not documented by Canada. This research is one of the four pillars of the Letter of Understanding (LOU). To date, the AFN has identified over 15,000 Indigenous individuals using reliable sources from the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the Canadian War Museum, the Veteran Wall of Honour, and other sources.

Moving Forward

The FNVC will continue to guide the AFN as needed and will meet throughout the 2024-25 fiscal year, including at the Annual General Assembly in Montreal, Quebec, in July 2024, and at the Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa, Ontario, in December 2024.

In 2024-25, the FNVC will continue to:

1. Review the outreach activities and effectiveness of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) in reaching veterans at the community level.
2. Continue its work to establish a national record of First Nations soldiers who enlisted and served Canada.
3. Conduct meetings between the FNVC and VAC to further develop the work on implementing the four pillars of the Letter of Understanding.
4. Plan commemoration activities for 2024-25.



2SLGBTQQIA+ Council

Portfolio Holder: Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, NWT

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Asexual Plus (2SLGBTQQIA+) Council was established by AFN Resolution 15/2021, *AFN Charter Amendment – Establishment of a 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council*. The realities and lived experiences of 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons are unique and require a distinct space, place, and voice within the decision-making structures and processes at the AFN.

The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council adopted their Terms of Reference at their annual meeting in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Terms of Reference outline the Council's mandate, purpose, and role within the AFN.

The objective of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council is to offer recommendations and provide guidance to the AFN to ensure fair representation and lend their voices and expertise to solving issues such as domestic violence, suicide, HIV/AIDS, and missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples in North America. They also seek to create safe spaces, and to apply a 2S+ lens in representation and advice to the AFN.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

In September 2023, the AFN and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council publicly denounced New Brunswick and Saskatchewan's pronoun policies in schools. These policies discriminate and endanger 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth. In Saskatchewan, students under 16 are required to obtain parental consent for preferred names and pronouns, while New Brunswick's policy mandates consultation with a school psychologist or social worker for students below 16 who wish to discuss pronouns without parental knowledge.

These policies are deemed problematic by the AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council as they prioritize parental rights over the safety of 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth, potentially leading to involuntary outing or misgendering, and exacerbating the already high suicide rates among First Nations, particularly within the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

In October 2023, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council adopted their Terms of Reference. As per this guiding document, the Council is required to develop a strategic plan and ensure that any priorities identified in that strategic plan are implemented. The AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council gathered again in March 2024 in St John's, Newfoundland, to develop their initial strategic plan. The plan outlines the Council's vision, values, and principles that will guide their work. During the strategic planning session, the Council identified four potential priorities that could guide their objectives and activities for the next several years:

1. **Truth Telling**—to address the role colonization has played in the marginalization and displacement of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community and ensure that 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are not treated as an afterthought in areas like health, research, and policy development.
2. **Moving the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council Forward**—to ensure the Council has the tools and resources required to affect change and implement its strategic plan for future generations.





3. Collaboration and Relationship

Building—to work in collaboration with other AFN Councils, governments, regional organizations, and nations to respond to the needs of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

4. Education and Knowledge Translation—

to combat the growing intolerance movement in Canada by advocating for education that normalizes and celebrates 2SLGBTQQIA+ community and culture.

Once finalized, the Strategic Plan will be a living document that is reviewed and updated on a regular basis to respond to the unique and dynamic needs of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

Next Steps - Moving Forward

The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council is committed to addressing vacancies in the AFN Regions, specifically Alberta, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island, while also finalizing their Strategic Plan.

Looking ahead, the Council will intensify efforts to support initiatives concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. Recognizing the importance of inclusion in the National Inquiry's work on MMIWG, the Council will also work towards contributing their perspectives to implementation efforts and ensure government accountability in addressing the root causes of violence against their community. Advocacy will prioritize Calls for Justice with a specific focus on the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community.

Strengthening Our Relations

CEO REPORT





She:kon, Aaaniin, Pjil'asi, OKI, Kwe kwe, Boozhoo, Tan'si, Gilakas'la

Chiefs, Proxies, honoured guests, and delegates, my name is Craig Gideon and I am a member of Missanabie Cree First Nation and the Acting CEO for the AFN. I am pleased to welcome you all to the 45th Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Annual General Assembly (AGA). I am grateful to *Mohawks of Kahnawake* for hosting us all on their traditional homelands and I look forward to enjoying their hospitality. It is my hope that you are able to take advantage of all this beautiful territory has to offer.

It is always encouraging to see so many different Nations together in one space, and I look forward to the work we will accomplish over the course of the AGA. We have an ambitious agenda before us, with many resolutions to consider and federal leaders Ministers in attendance to speak with First Nation leadership and answer questions.

I would like to acknowledge all the AFN staff working behind the scenes to ensure the AGA is a success—without your hard work and dedication, this gathering would not be possible.

Though my term as Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has been brief, I am proud of all that we have accomplished and thankful for the diligent work of my predecessors.

The achievements of the AFN Secretariat are successes that we all share and benefit all First Nations.

Among those accomplishments were the following:

- Electing our National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
- Successfully advancing the Final Settlement Agreement negotiations on long term reform of First Nations Child and Family Services.

- Federal Court of Canada approval of the Distribution Protocol for the removed children and their parent or caregiving grandparents relating to the \$23 billion final settlement agreement.
- Working with the Executive Committee members to update the priorities listed in the Permanent Bi-lateral Mechanism with the Prime Minister and AFN.
- Working with the Chief's Committee on Charter Renewal to develop amendments to the AFN core governing document that will improve the organization for the benefit of all First Nations.
- Supporting the Executive Committee in their advocacy efforts where mandated by First Nations-in-Assembly via resolutions from the December 2023 Special Chiefs Assembly.
- Monitoring new legislation introduced by Canada and reviewing various related reports and studies to ensure AFN is informed and ready to respond with valuable meaningful input.

In closing, I would like to thank you all for your continued commitment, cooperation, and leadership. Your dedication to improving the quality of life for all First Nations is evident in the ways that you show up for your people. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve you as Acting CEO of the AFN, and it is my hope that our combined efforts of advocacy ensure that the interests, goals and rights of First Nations are prioritized, upheld and respected.

*Nia:wen, Miigwetch, Wela'liog, Mahsi'Cho, Hiy Hiy, Guneshcheesh, Howa'a, Kinanaskomitin, Craig Gideon
Acting Chief Executive Officer*

Strengthening Our Relations

BRANCH REPORTS





Branch Reports



Economic Development and Infrastructure Branch

The Economic Development and Infrastructure Branch's (EDI) aims to enhance the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over infrastructure, fisheries, and economic development while improving program and service delivery quality.

The EDI Branch is composed of three (3) sectors, each led by a Director. Each sector plays an important role in supporting First Nations' leadership, access to the economy, and infrastructure development. A Senior Director provides overarching leadership for the entire branch.

Protecting First Nations' economic capacity to exercise their jurisdiction, improve economic well-being among First Nations, and advocate for control over programs and services in the areas of economic development, fisheries, and infrastructure are critical. This advocacy is essential to close the socio-economic gap. Long-standing advocacy areas, including fisheries, hunting, forestry, and food harvesting rights, inform emerging policy areas, like cannabis and clean energy. These areas are crucial for achieving economic reconciliation with First Nations.

Economic Development Sector:

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Economic Development Sector advocates for economic policies and programs that respect First Nations' self-determination within the market and traditional economies of First Nations and for the advancement of economic recovery, prosperity, inclusion, and sustainability. Current advocacy efforts include cannabis, connectivity, gaming, natural resources, the labour market, trade, and procurement.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Labour Market

The AFN reviewed the Pay Equity Act and the Employment Equity Act to inform the Employment Equity Act Review Task Force. Additionally, the AFN provided input to the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program Evaluation. The AFN has re-engaged the ISETS agreement holders, and hosted a national First Nations ISETS conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, in February 2023.

Procurement

Under Resolution 72/2023, *First Nations-Led Procurement Organization and the National Benefits Sharing Framework*, the AFN participates on the First Nations Procurement Organization Steering Committee, coordinated by the National Aboriginal Corporations Association (NACCA), with other National Indigenous Economic Organizations. A business plan has been drafted, and a law firm has been engaged to incorporate the First Nations National Procurement Organization.

Natural Resources

In line with Resolution 72/2023, *First Nations-Led Procurement Organization and the National Benefits Sharing Framework*, the AFN and Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) are working towards fully involving First Nations at all levels of decision-making. The AFN has participated in the national engagement sessions on the National



Benefits Sharing Framework and the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program, advocating to ensure First Nations priorities and concerns are included and addressed.

Trade

In line with Resolution 99/2023, *Opposition to Investor-State Dispute Settlement Mechanisms*, and Resolution 37/2019, *Support for Treaty and Inherent Rights to Tax and Tariff Exemption*, the AFN continues to work collaboratively with the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Arrangement (IPECTA), with the goal is to expand trade related economic opportunities and market access for First Nations goods and services internationally and inter-nation. The AFN plan to appoint an AFN representative to the IPECTA Council, which has recently outlined a work plan featuring items that align with the AFN's mandates.

Connectivity

Under Resolution 08/2023, *Government Support for First Nations Digital Connectivity and Spectrum*, the transition to virtual technologies and landscapes has highlighted the need for improved digital connectivity. Although the Government of Canada has committed to connecting 100% of Canadians to high-speed internet by 2030, First Nations continued to remain largely disconnected. The AFN released its report, "Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2023" in April 2024 which identifies that \$5.2 billion is required to connect First Nations to high-speed internet and cellular. Additionally, the AFN is calling for a moratorium to be placed on spectrum licensing over First Nations territories. The moratorium would be in effect until consultations are conducted with First Nations to ensure licensing processes align with the minimum standards outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration).

Gaming

The AFN is working to identify capacity supports to assist in implementation of Resolution 18/2022, *Support for Criminal Code Amendments Regarding Gaming Jurisdiction*, which states that the Criminal Code of Canada prevents First Nations from entering the gaming sector unless they have a licence from a province of Canada. The AFN is also advocating for amendments to section 207 of the Criminal Code of Canada to recognize First Nations jurisdiction over gaming. This includes calling on Canada to support any consequential amendments to federal legislation required to give effects to specific amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada.



Cannabis

Through Resolution 12/2020, *First Nations Representation in Cannabis Legislation*, the AFN participated in the legislative review of the Cannabis Act to support First Nations considerations, engagement, and dialogue in relation to Cannabis legislation. The AFN also developed a legal analysis and scoping paper focused on First Nations health and economic priorities, including jurisdiction, taxation, revenue sharing, businesses, regulations, and licenses.

The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

The AFN will continue to work on all economic development and related areas mandates that have been put forward by First Nations-in-Assembly. This includes advocating for First Nations-specific connectivity funding, criteria, access to connectivity programs, and training to provide opportunities for the ownership and control of the spectrum and wireless technology to First Nations

The AFN will also continue to advocate for the reduction of barriers and the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction in Cannabis legislation and seek to work with the



Branch Reports



Government of Canada on a framework to amend the Cannabis Act. The work will be supported by the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development.

By 2031, NRCan's 2 Billion Trees program will invest up to \$3.2 billion in tree planting efforts, of which \$500 million is for an Indigenous Funding Stream. First Nations input and direction on the development and implementation to create the inclusive governance model ensures First Nations benefit from the 10-year program. The AFN will continue to advocate for distinct First Nation dialogue and the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development is the vehicle for engagement with the organization.

In gaming, Bill S-268, currently in the Senate, proposes amendments to the *Criminal Code* and the *Indian Act* to affirm First Nations jurisdiction over gaming activities on reserve lands. The AFN is conducting a legal analysis to support this legislative advocacy.



Fisheries Sector

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Oceans – Oceans Protection Plan (OPP)

The OPP Subcommittee was re-established and met virtually on Feb 7 and Apr 26, 2024. A best practices framework that includes indicators was developed to assess First Nations' participation and partnerships in the OPP. Guiding questions for initial interviews and a widespread survey were developed to engage First Nations involved with the OPP broadly.

Resolution 52/2018, *First Nations Inclusion in Canada's Oceans Protection Plan*: The AFN continues to work collaboratively with Transport Canada (TC) and the Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) to address long-term core and capacity funding for First Nations and regional work related to the OPP, and advocate that legislative, regulatory, policy, and program reform related to the OPP respect First Nations inherent rights, Treaties, title and jurisdiction, and recognize First Nations' everlasting responsibilities to their traditional territories.

Governance and Administration

Resolution 73/2023, *Transition from Open Net-Pen Fish Farming*, has been a focus of the Joint Planning Tabled between AFN and DFO. Regular exchanges of information have taken place in respect to the Transition Plan in BC as well as the draft Aquaculture Act. The Minister of DFO has indicated a release of the Transition Plan by 2025.

Resolution 6/2021, *Yukon River Chinook Salmon of Canadian-origin*, continues to be an active mandate, with a pending submission from the AFN as a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, who is currently studying the sustainability of the population stocks of salmon in the Yukon.



Resolution 65/2019, Recognition of the Marshall Decision, is a consistent topic of advocacy for the AFN. It was the focus of a Dialogue Session in July 2023 in Halifax as exploration of the Senate Report titled “Peace on the Water”. It is a constant call to DFO to recognize and affirm its outstanding obligation to fully implement rights-based fisheries across Canada that are not subject to licences issued under the Fisheries Act.

Resolution 18/2018, Support for further study on the targeted management of seal and sea lion populations and the development of targeted management strategies, has been discussed at the AFN-DFO Joint Planning Table. The call for targeted management strategies is also stated in a pending letter intended for issuance to the Minister of DFO, in connection with a current study by the Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

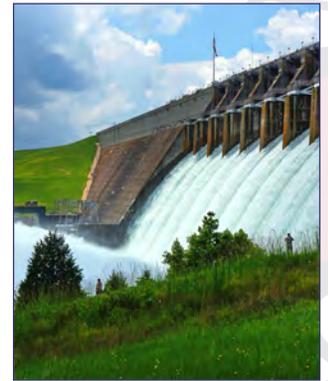
Inland Fisheries Working Group of the National Fisheries Committee

As directed by AFN Resolution 73/2023, *First Nations Rights-Based Inland Fisheries Framework*, the AFN, under the guidance of the National Fisheries Committee, held a successful meeting in the traditional territory of the Brokenhead Ojibway First Nation of Manitoba on November 21-23, 2023, to begin discussing the development of a Rights-Based Inland Fisheries Framework. Funds for this work were provided by the Indigenous Habitat Protection Program of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The elements of the framework were discussed along with other pressing issues such as the sale of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, the Natural Resources Transfer Act of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta respectively.

Conclusion - The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

The AFN will complete its work on developing indicators to assess First Nations’ participation and partnership in the OPP to address long-term core and capacity funding for First Nations and advocate for reform that respects First Nations’ rights. The AFN-Transport Canada-Canadian Coast Guard working group will administer a widespread survey and conduct initial and follow-up interviews, as well as analyses of funding agreements and program documents to identify assessment indicators, with guidance from the OPP Subcommittee. The AFN will host regional engagement sessions to solicit input and feedback from First Nations on the OPP assessment and indicators to incorporate into the final report.

In addition, the National Fisheries Committee will be undertaking a strategic planning session with a view to identifying priorities over the next three years. This will include a review of existing mandates and terms of reference. It will also include a legislative and regulatory priorities-setting, such as the upcoming five-year review of the Fisheries Act. Finally, the AFN will support the continued advocacy needed for the full recognition of Rights-Based First Nations fisheries across the country, both coastal and inland.





Housing and Infrastructure Sector

The AFN Housing and Infrastructure Sector is responsible for advocating for major federal government investments in housing, community infrastructure, and homelessness and the creation of related First Nations-led policies and solutions. The Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure (CCoHI), chaired by Newfoundland Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell, along with Water Lead Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare, provide direction to the Housing and Infrastructure Sector.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Housing

The AFN works closely with Regional Technicians, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Infrastructure Canada (INFC) through the Joint Technical Working Group (JWG) to develop approaches for First Nations care and control of housing in line with the First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. With a continued focus on the need to close the housing gap, the AFN co-developed a distinctions-based approach to the CMHC's Urban Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy with housing technicians, endorsed by First Nations-in-Assembly, and submitted to CMHC for direct funding to benefit First Nations citizens.

The AFN also:

- Shaped the Auditor General's report on First Nations Housing, highlighting the government's failure to improve housing conditions in First Nations communities.
- Developed a National First Nations Housing Skills and Development Needs report informed by roundtable workshop discussions.

- Convened a well-attended Housing and Homelessness Forum that provided an opportunity for housing and homelessness professionals to network, obtain the latest information and resources to aid in advancing their work.

Homelessness

In alignment with the First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy, the AFN undertook extensive research, engagement and ongoing discussions with First Nations, service providers and government to complete the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan which was approved by First Nations-in-Assembly. Activities to support the development of the Action Plan included:

- Engaging in dialogue on First Nations homelessness needs and priorities, including a session in Victoria, BC, with persons with lived experience, housing technicians and service providers.
- Negotiating a regional approach for administering First Nations distinctions-based homelessness funding under *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy* and continuing to support regions in negotiating agreements with Infrastructure Canada for this funding.
- Developing a cost estimate report that indicates \$37 to \$46 billion is required over the next decade to eradicate First Nations homelessness.

Infrastructure

Closing the First Nations infrastructure gap is critical to attaining equitable socioeconomic outcomes and upholding First Nations' rights. This year, the AFN launched the milestone report "Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2023" on April 15, 2024, ensuring Canada understands the estimated cost of \$349.2 billion required to meet First Nations infrastructure needs.



Other initiatives completed that advance First Nation infrastructure include:

- A First Nations Responders gathering on May 19, 2024, that focused on advancing First Nations fire protection priorities and explored how best to address increasing fire dangers faced by First Nations
- The ISC/AFN codeveloped First Nations Fire Protection Strategy for 2023 to 2028, which was released during the First Nations Responders gathering. The strategy builds upon earlier strategies to combat increasing risks from climate change and promotes modern technology for fire prevention planning, tracking, and management.
- Collaboration with ISC through the Joint Technical Working Group on ISC's Tendering Policy, that resulted in several key changes to create more opportunities and flexibility for First Nations in tendering processes including new evaluation criteria, implementation of alternative bids, contract security measures, and adjusted dollar value thresholds for general contracting, construction management, sole-source contracts, and professional services.

Water and Wastewater

The AFN has several significant mandates from the First Nations-in-Assembly since 2013 focused on developing new legislation that is adequate to First Nations' rights, jurisdiction, priorities and needs. Starting in 2019, the AFN coordinated regional engagements across Canada. The 2021 National Class Action Settlement significantly expedited the work of developing new legislation.

As a result of sustained advocacy by the AFN and First Nations, the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) worked closely with her colleagues to advance the updated

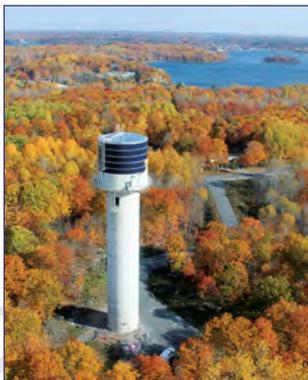
consultative draft that incorporates right-holders' priorities. The proposed legislation includes the minimum critical requirements called for by the First Nations-in-Assembly through **Resolution 23/2022, Re-Commitment to Co-Development of Replacement Legislation for Safe Drinking Water for First Nations**.

On December 11, 2023, Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare attended the press conference announcing the tabling of the Bill C-61 An Act respecting water, source water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands (Short Title - First Nations Clean Water Act). The proposed legislation is currently in the parliamentary legislative process and does address the critical requirements as the necessary minimum for successful First Nations water and wastewater legislation: recognition of rights over source waters; minimum binding national standards; commitment to funding; liability protection for First Nations governments; water governance structures led by First Nations; and mechanisms to address management of transboundary source waters. The AFN's most recent mandate in this file, **Resolution 47/2023, Proposed Federal First Nations Drinking Water and Wastewater Legislation**, includes bringing the draft legislation to a future Assembly for approval.

Key activities for 2023-204:

- AFN AGA Plenary: Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Legislation Update on July 13, 2023.
- AFN 2023 Youth Water Summit: Securing Safe Water For All First Nations on August 17 and 18, 2023.
- 4th Annual Virtual Water Summit: A National Dialogue on Urgent and Emerging Water Issues Facing First Nations on November 22, 2023.





- National Operators Forum: Water Operators and Water Operators in Training was held on April 15, 2024.
- 7th Annual AFN Water Symposium and Trade Show on April 16 to 18, 2024.

The mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly that guide this work include:

Resolution 53/2019, Human Right to Clean Drinking Water

Resolution 27/2021, Meaningful Engagement and Involvement in the Co-Development of a Canada Water Agency

Resolution 28/2021, Support for First Nations Decentralized Infrastructure

Resolution 60/2022 advocates for First Nations to co-develop the Federal Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, while ensuring funds respect First Nations jurisdiction.

Resolution 32/2023 seeks to Modify CMHC Tender Security Bond Requirements for First Nations construction companies to bid on tenders and contracts.

Resolution 66/2023 seeks First Nations control of URN funds, aligning with the UN Declaration and maintaining First Nations sovereignty.

Resolution 75/2023 approved the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan, giving the AFN received a renewed mandate for implementation. The Action Plan fulfills **Resolution 79/2019's** requirements for a First Nations Homelessness plan on and off-Reserve.

Resolution 53/2023: First Nations-led Process for National Water Stewardship and the Canada Water Agency called on Canada to halt the creation of the Canada Water Agency, and seeks commitment from Canada to adhere to the standards of the UN Declaration to work with First Nations to co-develop and implement any such Agency.

Conclusion - The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

There's still significant work required to advance First Nations rights and jurisdiction over housing and infrastructure while ensuring Canada meets its budget and policy reform commitments to close the infrastructure gap. The AFN will continue advocating for investments and conducting essential work to advance our mandates including measuring and reporting on the infrastructure gap, research on skills and development needs, analyzing investment impacts on the economy and implementing the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan. The proposed water legislation also requires further co-development in funding frameworks, governance institutions and standards. First Nations must remain co-development partners and lead the way towards water and wastewater systems.



Environment, Lands & Water Branch

The Environment, Lands, and Water (ELW) Branch works to protect and preserve the Sacred Circle of Life by applying traditional knowledge and values—integral to all relationships within Creation—in the conservation of the environment, and all lands and water.

Key Issues and Activities:

For First Nations, the environment—all lands and water—are life. Each is inseparable, reflecting our reciprocal and lasting connection to our lands, water, and territories. The goal of ELW is to support the right to self-determination of First Nations as they seek to reclaim jurisdiction and authority based on their Inherent, constitutionally protected, and Treaty rights and title. We prioritize the continued acknowledgment of First Nations as leaders in the areas of environment, lands, and water.

To do this, we advance the following five interrelated strategic outcomes:

1. Ensure federal legislation and regulations pertaining to environment, lands, and water uphold and advance First Nations' Inherent and Treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction.
2. Advocate for equitable, sufficient, and direct funding related to environment, lands, and water to enable First Nations to fully implement their Inherent and Treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction.
3. Improve federal policies and programs related to environment, lands, and water to enable First Nations governments to exercise their Inherent and Treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction, while creating space for the assertion of First Nations-led policies and programs.

4. Facilitate the creation of machinery or processes related to environment, lands, and water that support the attainment of First Nations-identified long-term outcomes, while respecting the Inherent and Treaty rights, title, and jurisdiction of First Nations.
5. Support First Nations in the development of strategies related to environment, lands, and water, and advocate for their full consideration in federal decision-making processes.



Environment Sector

The AFN Environment Sector actively works to position First Nations as leaders in environmental action, driving transformative change across a range of issues, including climate change, conservation, biodiversity, and environmental health. This includes supporting the recognition of First Nations' Inherent rights, title and jurisdiction and the application of First Nations' self-determination and jurisdiction in legislative, policy and program development, with the guidance and leadership of the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE).



Branch Reports



Accomplishments in 2023–2024

Conservation and Biodiversity

Following the successful negotiation of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) in December 2023, Canada has refocused efforts on halting and reversing biodiversity loss. The AFN has provided high-level technical submissions and input to the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)—Canada’s response to, and action plan toward, achieving the commitments of the KMGBF. The AFN’s involvement strengthened the processes of planning conservation strategies and served to further uplift First Nations leadership as stewards and caretakers of the lands, waters, ice, and air, and everything that lives there.

Through our advocacy, the AFN has sought to position First Nations as leaders in conservation throughout Canada’s Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy calls for First Nations leadership and, where appropriate, the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in the recovery planning of species at risk, area-based conservation, and water stewardship. The AFN’s advocacy culminated in the sharing of a First Nations perspective in relation to nature: the established extractive and colonial relationship is damaging Mother Earth, and that a return to holistic and reciprocal relationships is required.

In accordance with Resolution 57/2022, *First Nations Nature Table*, the AFN continues to advance the creation of a joint technical First Nations Nature Table (FNNT), which held its inaugural meeting in February of 2024, with a primary focus on the domestic implementation of the National Biodiversity Strategy, among other nature priorities.

Environmental Health

First Nations have a unique, intimate, and sacred connection to the environment and all living things. This reciprocal relationship with Mother Earth supports the health and well-being of First Nations and is informed by our innate understanding of the connections between the health of the environment and the well-being of our people. To this end, the AFN has continued to expand efforts on key environmental health matters. Our efforts this year have included ongoing participation in the development of a Right to a Healthy Environment Implementation Framework, advancing efforts to enhance education and awareness about the negative impacts of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) on deer and caribou, and continuing to examine the relationship between the environment and the health of First Nations children through the Food, Environment, Health and Nutrition of First Nations Children and Youth (FEHNCY) study.

Major Projects and Impact Assessment

Following the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision in Reference regarding the Impact Assessment Act (IAA), 2023 SCC 23, which deemed parts of the IAA unconstitutional, the Government of Canada sought to make amendments to the IAA through the *Budget Implementation Act, 2024*. The AFN continues to monitor legislative amendments, and regulatory and policy implementation under the IAA. The IAA presents tangible opportunities for First Nations to be involved in impact assessment and decision-making regarding major projects. These opportunities include the development of an Indigenous Knowledge Policy Framework, Indigenous Capacity Support Programs, and Indigenous Co-Administration Agreements. The AFN will continue to support and coordinate interventions and participation of First Nations, including regional engagements being planned for Spring and Summer of 2024.



Climate Action

Since the passing of Resolution 05/2019, *Declaring a First Nations Climate Emergency*, the AFN has advanced priorities related to First Nations climate leadership. The AFN National Climate Strategy, developed in collaboration with the ACE, was endorsed by the First Nations-in-Assembly and released publicly on October 18, 2023. The AFN is working with the ACE, and other First Nations' Councils, to develop a National Climate Implementation Strategy, and plan its 3rd National Climate Gathering, in Calgary, Alberta, from October 7–10, 2024.

The First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda (FNCLA) originates, broadly, from the work of the Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA), framing First Nations Climate Leadership as a new way of thinking about climate solutions, shifting towards positioning of First Nations' climate priorities and leadership at the core of climate action. This includes flexible, nation-based funding arrangements that directly transfer resources, capacity, and authority to First Nations. Currently, First Nations Regional Leads are engaging in regional discussions as a part of this process, many of which are scheduled for Spring and Summer 2024. The FNCL Agenda will be a stand-alone document that summarizes the priorities and solutions described by Regional Leads and through national joint recommendations. This will be developed collaboratively between Regional Leads with support from the AFN. The FNCL Agenda would also be annexed to the federally prepared Memorandum to Cabinet (MC), which will be submitted to Cabinet in Fall 2024.

The JCCA continues its in-person work to advance First Nations' interest in federal climate policies and plans. The joint technical committee is preparing to publicly release its Annual Report for 2023 and 5-Year Review to the National Chief and Prime Minister in Spring 2024.

Additionally, an AFN delegation attended the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 28) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in the United Arab Emirates in December 2023. A position paper titled, *Advancing and Affirming First Nations Climate Leadership at COP 28*, was prepared to outline First Nations priorities, advocating for urgent and transformative climate action. An e-bulletin detailing AFN's attendance at COP 28 was released in January 2024.



Key Resolutions

- Resolution 22/2023, *First Nations Engagement on Canada's 2030 Emissions Reduction*
- Resolution 23/2023, *Prohibit Oil and Gas Exploration and Development in the Sacred Calving Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd*
- Resolution 24/2023, *Support for an Equitable Carbon Tax on Industrial Fossil Fuel Protection*
- Resolution 25/2023, *Call for Exemption to the Federal Carbon Levy for First Nation Governments in Rural and Remote Communities*
- Resolution 36/2023, *Urgent and Transformative Climate Action through the AFN National Climate Strategy*



Lands Sector

For First Nations, our attachment to specific lands and territories is inseparable from our fundamental Indigenous and human rights, including our traditions, languages, and ceremonies. The return of lands to First Nations is a basic precondition to the exercise of the Inherent right to self-determination.

Working under the guidance of the Chiefs Committee on Lands, Territories and Resources (CCoLTR), the AFN Lands Sector is focused on supporting First Nations' self-determination over their lands, territories, and resources through advocacy, policy, and legislative initiatives, and by facilitating the cross-pollination of First Nations approaches through critical analysis and information sharing. While our work is often focused on addressing barriers to effective redress in existing policies, such as the Specific Claims Policy, the Additions to Reserve (ATR) policy, and the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy (CLCP), we also seek to identify and elevate the many creative solutions First Nations are pursuing to address the impacts of colonialism on their lands, territories, and resources.

Accomplishments in 2023–2024 **Specific Claims**

AFN Resolution 09/2020, *Jointly Develop a Fully Independent Specific Claims Process*, mandates the AFN to co-develop with the Government of Canada a new, fully independent specific claims process consistent with four key principles: Honour of the Crown, independence of all aspects of claims resolution, recognition of Indigenous laws, and no arbitrary limits on compensation.

The AFN – Canada Specific Claims Implementation Working Group (SCIWG) was formed in 2022 to advance the co-development of an independent centre for the resolution of specific claims (the Centre). The SCIWG met regularly through 2023-24 resulting in the release of a joint discussion paper summarizing areas of alignment towards the creation of the Centre. The discussion paper envisions fundamental reforms that would establish flexible negotiations and diverse pathways toward claims resolution, as determined by First Nations. In 2023, to provide guidance to the SCIWG and support concrete reforms that respect and give due recognition to Indigenous laws, traditions, customs and land tenure systems, the [Council of Experts on Indigenous Laws](#) (CEIL) was established. The CEIL is positioned to provide ongoing guidance and advice to the AFN on the critical issue of Indigenous laws.

While co-development advances, the AFN continues to advocate for solutions to pressing challenges in the existing Specific Claims process, such as the 2023-2024 research funding shortfall and ongoing access to information challenges. The AFN continues to engage with senior federal officials to advance equitable access to information and funding that meets the needs of First Nations pursuing justice.

Additions to Reserve (ATR)

In 2023-24, the AFN continued to work with the Government of Canada to advance a redesign of the ATR policy. First Nations have made it clear they expect transformative change. AFN Resolution 37/2023, *Returning First Nations Lands through Additions to Reserve Reform*, prioritizes the return of lands to First Nations and mandates the AFN to advance First Nations' objectives related to ATR through research, analysis, and engagement.



To advance the AFN’s mandates, the Lands Sector initiated work to gather updated data on the needs and priorities of First Nations for ATR reform. In January 2023, the Lands Sector advanced several ATR case studies with a diverse range of First Nations, from differing regions and land regimes, who have completed ATRs or are currently moving through the ATR process. Working with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), the AFN held interviews with ISC regional representatives to discuss their perspectives on obstacles, challenges, and opportunities in the implementation of the current ATR policy. These discussions, informed by experience and observations across regions, will support the AFN’s analysis and recommendations for redesign.

Momentum is currently growing towards the co-development of a new ATR policy, and work completed in 2023-2024 will provide a strong evidence-based foundation for continued advocacy.

New Band and Band Amalgamation Policy

The AFN continues to advocate for clear, transparent, and accountable mechanisms that ensure the rightful recognition of First Nations who have been wrongfully amalgamated or unrecognized due to Government conduct. The Government of Canada’s New Band and Band Amalgamation Policy (NBBA) remains one of the few avenues for First Nations to achieve recognition as Bands under the *Indian Act*; yet, it remains flawed and broken. This past year, the AFN and ISC initiated a technical NBBA working group to discuss policy redesign. In spring and summer 2024, the AFN will begin engaging with affected First Nations to understand challenges and barriers to inform future work and advocacy towards a redesigned NBBA policy and process.

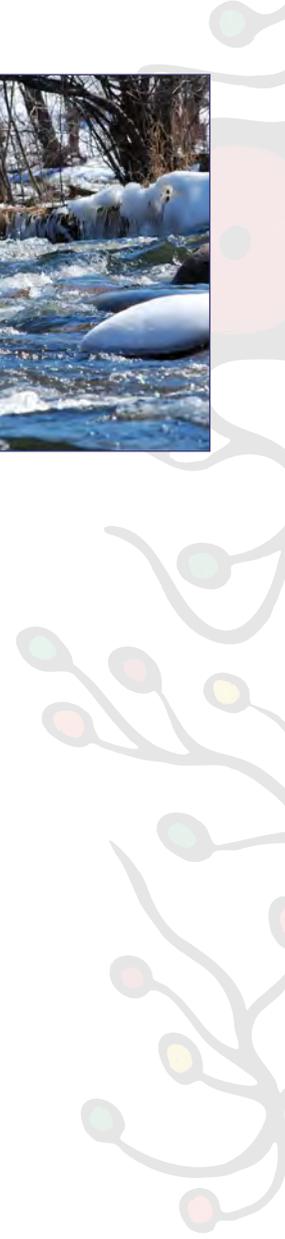
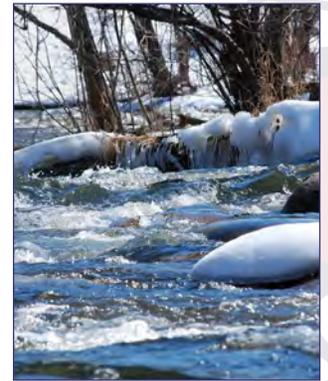
Indigenous Laws Gathering

In June 2023, the Lands Sector hosted an inaugural Indigenous Laws Gathering on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh territory, in Vancouver, British Columbia, with the support of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). The Gathering brought together the Council of Experts in Indigenous laws (CEIL), First Nations leaders, technicians, academics, and experts in Indigenous laws to share perspectives and discuss the importance and inclusion of Indigenous laws within a reformed specific claims process. Plans are underway to host such Gatherings annually.

Comprehensive Land Claims and Inherent Rights Policy

Working collaboratively with the AFN Rights and Governance Sector, the Lands Sector continues to advocate for the repeal of the Comprehensive Land Claims and Inherent Right to Self-Government Policies resulting in a public commitment from the Government of Canada to withdraw both policies in the United Nations Declaration Act (UNDA) Action Plan. In addition, the AFN Lands Sector advocated for greater transparency respecting the existing policy framework (Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination and Discussion process) guiding federal negotiations of First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights and title. This work resulted in a commitment to clarify the existing approach in the UNDA Action Plan.

Finally, consistent with AFN Resolution 25/2019, *Support for a First Nations Led Engagement Process on Nation Building*, the AFN Lands Sector continues to advocate for a Nation-driven engagement process to identify distinctions based processes that are flexible, accessible, and facilitate and advance Nation-to-Nation discussions on





First Nations title and self-determination, consistent with the Honour of the Crown, the full recognition of First Nations title and self-determination, and the minimum standards of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration).

Key Resolutions

- Resolution 17/2023, *Prioritize Land Back Through All Federal Laws, Policies and Programs*
- Resolution 21/2023, *Replacing First Nations Lands Lost due to Climate Disaster*
- Resolution 37/2023, *Returning First Nations Lands through Additions to Reserve Form*
- Resolution 38/2023, *Recognize First Nations Laws and Legal Orders in Specific Claims Process*
- Resolution 80/2023, *Immediate Review of the Specific Claims Research Funding Shortfall*

Water Sector

The AFN Water Sector advocates for First Nations' stewardship over inland and marine waters, supporting initiatives focused on water protection and conservation. This includes supporting the recognition of First Nations' Inherent rights, title, jurisdiction and the application of First Nations' self-determination and jurisdiction in legislative, policy and program development, with the guidance and leadership of the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE).

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Conservation and Biodiversity

In close collaboration with the AFN Environment Sector, and guided by the ACE, the Water Sector advocated for First Nations' leadership in domestic and international biodiversity and conservation initiatives, meaningfully incorporating First Nations' perspectives, knowledge, and governance systems. Mandated by Resolution 41/2021, *Marine Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas*, the Water Sector has been working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Parks Canada Agency to advance Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) in marine and coastal waters with First Nations.

In February 2024, a meeting was held with Minister of Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard, Diane Lebouthillier, to advocate for sustainable funding to First Nations, aligning with relevant Action Plan Measures (APMs) in the *United Nations Declaration Act* (UNDA) Action Plan. The AFN will continue to work with DFO to implement the recommendations in the [AFN 2023 Marine IPCA Report](#). Additionally, the AFN provided feedback, through a technical working group of the ACE, on proposed regulations for National Marine Conservation Areas, advocating for flexible



and collaborative governance structures that respect First Nations' rights.

Sustainable Development

Over the past year, the AFN has worked with the External Advisory Committee for Together Ensemble 2023, Canada's national conference on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the SDG Summit in September 2023, the AFN delegation advocated for the early inclusion of First Nations in the development of post-2030 SDGs, especially given the lack of First Nations engagement on the 2030 Agenda. First Nations can promote development that reflects our concepts of sustainability and respects our decision-making authority and priorities, ensuring that no First Nation is left behind. Building on the 2022 Virtual National Forum on SDGs, which highlighted priorities such as land rights, climate change, and cultural revitalization, the AFN will plan further engagement sessions with First Nations and organize a First Nations Forum on SDGs in late 2024.

Water Protection

Climate change, industrial growth, and pollution remain persistent threats to essential surface and groundwater resources, significantly impacting the well-being of First Nations. In November 2023, the Government of Canada introduced legislation to create the Canada Water Agency (CWA). In December, a meeting was held with Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, to discuss a collaborative pathway forward from AFN Resolution 53/2023, *First Nations-led Process for National Water Stewardship and the Canada Water Agency*, and to advocate for sustainable long-term funding for First Nations-led water stewardship, including the development of a First Nations-led water stewardship task force. This was followed by a meeting with Parliamentary Secretary Terry Duguid in April 2024 to further advocate for both regional

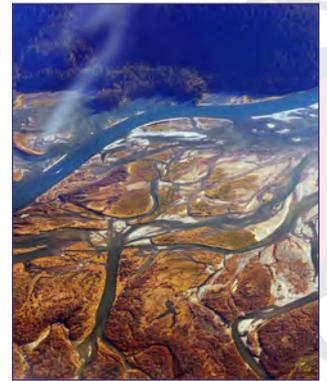
and national support to reflect the unique realities of water management for First Nations, which will be key in the upcoming modernization of the *Canada Water Act*.

Nuclear Waste

Under AFN Resolution 52/23, *Securing Accountability of Nuclear Technology, Waste, Transport and Storage*, the AFN hosted four in-person regional dialogue sessions on the transportation and storage of used nuclear waste in Fredericton, Toronto, Thunder Bay, and Vancouver between April and June 2024. The purpose of these dialogue sessions was to provide information and listen to First Nations' concerns and priorities about nuclear waste transportation and storage plans. Public awareness materials, including a booklet on session topics and an infographic on the nuclear fuel process, were distributed to all session participants and will be available on the AFN website in fall 2024. The Water Sector is currently compiling a report synthesizing the feedback provided at these sessions, with further virtual and in-person sessions planned for the end of 2024 and beyond.

Key Resolutions

- Resolution 50/2023, *Addressing Impacts from Mining Activities*
- Resolution 52/2023, *Securing Accountability for Nuclear Technology, Waste, Transport and Storage*
- Resolution 53/2023, *First Nations-led Process for National Water Stewardship and the Canada Water Agency*





Branch Reports



Conclusion - The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

The Environment, Lands, and Water Branch will continue to advance land- and water-based, and environmental interests to further support First Nations in their efforts to achieve justice over their territories. This will include:

- Hosting an inaugural AFN Water Walk on September 20, 2024, in the Ottawa area, to raise national awareness regarding the increasingly critical state of water, while also empowering women, gender-diverse individuals, and youth to actively engage in water protection.
- Develop the basis for a fully independent Specific Claims resolution centre based on the minimum standards for redress outlined in the UN Declaration.
- Hosting the 3rd AFN National Climate Gathering, from October 7-10 in Calgary, Alberta, with an anticipated audience of over 700 people.

These and other initiatives form the basis of an advocacy plan that aims to support First Nations as we seek to bring First Nations' interests and jurisdiction to the forefront of national and international action.





Rights and Justice Branch

The Rights and Justice Branch works towards the full affirmation and manifestation of First Nations' Inherent and Treaty rights and jurisdiction. Rights, justice, and governance are fundamental to the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction and self-determination.

The Rights and Justice Branch is made up of two sectors: the Rights and Governance sector and the Justice sector. Both sectors are actively engaged in new and ongoing mandates to address the Crown's chronic underfunding and under prioritization of Nation-building, the revitalization of First Nations' justice systems, and asserting First Nations' rightful jurisdiction. Current priorities include First Nations policing, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, asserting First Nations control over Citizenship, and Government-to-Government and fiscal relations.

Branch Key Issues and Activities:

Rights and Governance

The AFN supports the exercise of First Nations rights and jurisdiction through First Nations-led alternatives to laws, policies, and programs that promote the rights, safety, and security of First Nations. The AFN promotes Nation-to-Nation and Treaty-based fiscal relationships between First Nations and Canada, advocating for First Nations rights to self-determination, lands, territories and resources, culture, and identity. A key priority to the AFN is advancing the right to self-determination over citizenship, as this right is a critical element of governance.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Since its adoption by the United Nations in 2007, implementing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) has been a priority for First Nations. Following decades of advocacy by the AFN and First Nations, Bill C-15, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA), received Royal Assent in Canada in 2021. Two years later, the Government of Canada released an Action Plan to implement the UNDA in 2023.

AFN Recent Advocacy

Since the passing of the UNDA and the release of Canada's National Action Plan, the AFN has worked to ensure the implementation of the UNDA Action Plan is First Nations-led and supported with adequate funding for First Nations full participation. In Spring 2023, the AFN hosted a Special Chiefs' Assembly focused on the UN Declaration. During this assembly, three resolutions were passed to hold the Government accountable for the UNDA.

In 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed three resolutions to further the work of the AFN in holding the Government to account on the UNDA. This included Resolution 20/2023, *United Nations Declaration on the*



Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Draft National Action Plan, which called on the Government of Canada to proceed without delay to amend the UNDA on an annual basis and provide adequate funding to ensure First Nations lead the advancement of the Action Plan. In December 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 77/2023, *Call for Canada to Consult on All Amendments Pursuant to the UNDRIP Act*, which called on the AFN to demand Canada obtain the free, prior, and informed consent of all First Nations and consult on all amendments to federal legislation, policy or regulation which may affect First Nations rights. The resolution also directed the AFN to advocate for the full implementation of the UNDA Action Plan Measures. Additionally, Resolution 78/2023, *Establishing a Chiefs' Committee on the UN Declaration Act*, mandated the creation of a Chiefs' Committee on the UNDA. The Committee had their first inaugural meeting in Vancouver in May 2024.

The AFN continues to work towards full collaboration between Canada and First Nations for the effective implementation of the UNDA. This includes regular communications and coordination with the AFN regarding the implementation of the UNDA, its Action Plan, and the Action Plan Measures (APMs).

Progress on key Action Plan Measures (APMs)

Since the UNDA was enacted on June 21, 2021, Canada has yet to identify a process to work with First Nations to align its laws and policies with the articles of the UN Declaration. The Action Plan, developed with input from First Nations, covers the period from 2023 to 2028 and includes 181 APMs across five chapters.

First Nations Citizenship and Identity Rights

First Nations citizenship and self-determination are intricately connected concepts that reflect the rights, identity, and autonomy of First Nations. Citizenship rights are affected by legislation such as the *Indian Act* and are subject to concerns regarding meaningful consultation, consent, and recognition of Inherent rights. Advocacy efforts are focused on empowering First Nations to determine their citizenship criteria and assert control over their identity, in alignment with broader frameworks like the UN Declaration.

Identity Rights: Bill C-53, Recognition of Certain Métis Governments in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan and Métis Self-Government Act

Introduced by the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations in June 2023, Bill C-53, *Recognition of Certain Métis Governments in Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan and Métis Self-Government Act*, seeks to recognize the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S), and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) as representative Métis governments. It also seeks to grant them potential self-government rights under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*. The AFN and First Nations have expressed concerns regarding Bill C-53, including the failure to safeguard First Nations rights; insufficient consultation; lack of free, prior, and informed consent; and the recurring burden on First Nations to prove their Inherent and Treaty rights to their lands.

AFN Resolution 44/2023, *Protect First Nations Rights and Interests from Unfounded Métis Rights Assertions*, passed at the AFN Annual General Assembly in July 2023, urges the Government of Canada to pause Bill C-53 to allow for consultations with First Nations. It also called for a national advocacy campaign led by AFN in collaboration with AFN regions. At the 2023





Special Chiefs' Assembly, First Nations-in-Assembly gave further direction through AFN Resolution 81/2023, *Urgent Protection of First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights from Ongoing Illegitimate Rights Assertions*, directing the AFN to support engagement with First Nations who oppose illegitimate rights assertions within their territories.

AFN Recent Advocacy

The AFN has been active in advocating for First Nations' interests regarding Bill C-53. This includes supporting the Chiefs of Ontario in organizing and participating in a demonstration against Bill C-53 on Parliament Hill in September 2023.

In October 2023, the AFN Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard wrote to the Prime Minister urging the Government to halt the Bill until adequate consultations with First Nations are conducted and consent is obtained. Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard later represented the AFN before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs in November 2023, calling for the withdrawal of Bill C-53 and creation of a comprehensive national consultation process with First Nations.

In the spring, the AFN hosted four online regional engagement sessions on Bill C-53. These sessions provided a platform for First Nations leaders and technicians to exchange insights, discuss potential amendments to the bill, and strategize on upholding and protecting First Nations' Inherent, Treaty, and section 35 rights.

First Nations Citizenship

The AFN is also participating in a multi-partner engagement process called the Indigenous Advisory Process (IAP) on the second-generation cut-off in the *Indian Act*. The IAP, which formally launched on November 20, 2023, brings together First Nations regional and national organizations

to provide guidance to ISC on how to consult and cooperate with First Nations to address the second-generation cut-off. The AFN is pursuing opportunities with ISC to support First Nations to engage in reforming elements of the *Indian Act* related to enfranchisement, deregistration, the second-generation cut-off, and to promote First Nations' rights to self-determination over citizenship. This work may also include developing a broad engagement strategy to engage and support First Nations to co-develop opt-in alternatives to *Indian Act* registration and citizenship.

AFN Recent Advocacy

First Nations-in-Assembly passed AFN Resolution 42/2022, *Demand for Consultation on Amendments to the Indian Act (1985)*, which calls on the Government of Canada to not table any legislative amendments until it has adequately consulted with First Nations and provided the necessary resources for community engagement.

A New Fiscal Relationship

The objective of the New Fiscal Relationship work is to ensure that First Nations governments are adequately supported to provide essential services to their citizens. Improving fiscal and governance capacity empowers First Nations to exercise greater control over their affairs and pursue self-determination in areas such as governance, land management, and economic development.

Following Resolution 66/2017, *AFN-Canada Joint Report on Fiscal Relations*, the AFN and Canada co-developed the New Fiscal Relationship Transfer, an opt-in funding mechanism designed to offer First Nations an alternative to funding through contribution agreements. As of May 2024, 154 First Nations have opted into the grant.



The AFN continues to make progress on developing options for First Nations' input on the following recommendations from the 2019 Report of the Joint Advisory Committee on Fiscal Relations in the following areas:

- **NFR Grant:** The AFN is working with ISC to expand the grant to include Tribal Councils and Health Authorities.
- **Governance Modernization:** The AFN and ISC are currently working to support First Nations governance capacity through the modernization of ISC's governance capacity programs.

Emergency Management

The AFN continues to advocate for equitable emergency services for First Nations, control of culturally relevant emergency management regimes, and access to direct-fund First Nations-led emergency management programs and services.

This work is informed by resolutions put forward by First Nations-in-Assembly and ensures that First Nations have access to relevant capacity building, training, and funding resources to deal with emergency management events in their Nations and territories.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

A highlight of the year was the success of the AFN 2024 Emergency Management Forum held in Gatineau, Quebec, in March 2024. The Emergency Management Forum was attended by 257 participants and featured 30 presentations from First Nations, First Nations organizations, federal government departments, and non-governmental organizations, including the Canadian Red Cross.

The AFN has been actively engaging with ISC on its Steering Committee for the

Implementation of ISC's Management Action Response Plan to the Office of the Auditor General's (AG) Report 8 on First Nations Emergency Management. This committee, comprised of representatives from First Nations, community emergency management coordinators, and practitioners, has contributed to the development and implementation of actions to address the AG's recommendations to improve outcomes for First Nations. As a result of this work, the entire Steering Committee was nominated for the 2024/25 Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award, Canada's highest national award for emergency management practitioners in Canada. Additionally, David Diabo, AFN Special Advisor—Emergency Management, received the 2022-23 Exemplary Service Award for his contributions to the Steering Committee on First Nations Home Flood Insurance Initiative. Moving forward, this committee will transition into the ISC Advisory Committee on Emergency Management.

Since 2015, AFN's advocacy has resulted in funding for Emergency Management Coordinator (EMC) positions in high-risk communities. There are now 253 direct EMC or support positions that are being funded in First Nations.

Justice Sector

The AFN supports First Nations in asserting jurisdiction in justice-related systems, including policing, restorative justice, and prevention and harm reduction strategies. This work aims to end the overrepresentation of First Nations in the criminal justice system and advocates for social justice reforms and systemic change as outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) Calls for Justice. The AFN is committed to achieving





meaningful changes that demonstrate a holistic approach to the social, economic, and political well-being of First Nations.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Social Justice

In October 2023, the AFN hosted a four-part Virtual Speaker Series on Justice, completing three years of national engagement expanding on the themes of previous years engagement, including the revitalization of Indigenous legal traditions, the reclamation of First Nations jurisdiction over justice systems, and First Nations legal traditions and the Canadian Criminal Justice system.

In September 2023, the AFN also held the inaugural meeting of the Chiefs' Committee on Justice, which was established to provide guidance on justice reform and revitalization of First Nations legal traditions. The Chiefs' Committee on Justice provided input into the design of the Virtual Speaker Series, conducted additional outreach during the Special Chiefs Assembly to validate findings from AFN's national engagement, and provided an outline of the AFN's recommendations for a First Nations Justice Strategy. An update was provided during the December 2023 Special Chiefs Assembly, with a dialogue session and engagement table as part of the Circle of Trade.

The work of the AFN Justice Sector is guided by the following resolution mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly:

- Resolution 07/2020, *Call for Reform to Address Institutional Racism in the Justice System*
- Resolution 10/2020, *Support for First Nations to Administer Justice*
- Resolution 36/2021, *Call for Recommitment, Funding, and Clear Timeline for Development and*

Implementation of a National First Nations Justice Strategy

- Resolution 11/2022, *Establishing a Chiefs' Committee on Justice*
- Resolution 12/2023, *First Nations Alternative Approaches to Justice*
- Resolution 55/2023, *Support for the Reform and Enforcement of First Nations Laws*

First Nations Policing

In 2023, the AFN completed three years of national engagement to inform the co-development of federal legislation recognizing First Nations policing as an essential service. This process identified the following key priorities that must be included in any legislation:

- **Rights Recognition:** Recognition of First Nations self-determination in accordance with First Nations Inherent, Treaty and Constitutional rights consistent with UNDRIP/UNDA, while complementing provincial/territorial policing legislation and regulations.
- **Essential Services Designation:** Recognition that First Nations police services are integral to community safety and security and that an "essential services" designation is one of the necessary preconditions to ensuring these services are backed by legislation and adequately resourced to provide culturally relevant and responsive policing services.
- **Equitable Funding:** Recognition that First Nations police services must be sufficiently funded to do their work and that such funding should be at a level consistent with their recognition as essential services.



During the last year, the First Nations Policing Task Force met and identified a Legislative Working Group to develop a legislative framework on First Nations policing based on these key priorities. However, co-development with Public Safety Canada on the legislation stalled with a lack of consensus on the recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over policing. The AFN has since developed a position paper based on the Legislative Working Group's work, using it as an advocacy tool regarding the legislation.

The work of the AFN Justice Sector is guided by the resolutions and mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly, including:

- Resolution 07/2021, *Creation and Implementation of First Nations policing as an essential service.*
- Resolution 34/2021, *Support for Regionally Developed First Nations Policing Service.*
- Resolution 41/2023, *Support for Equitable Funding for First Nations Policing.*
- Resolution 42/2023, *Support for the Legal Challenge by Three First Nations Police Services.*

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ People (MMIWG2S+)

The AFN has continued to advocate for the full implementation of the National Inquiry's Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) and its 231 Calls for Justice. This advocacy included the developing a 5-year review of implementation activities for the Calls for Justice, which was released on June 3, 2024, on the anniversary of the National Inquiry's

release of their Final Report. The AFN also participated in the MMIWG2S+ Roundtable coordinated by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA) to provide feedback on the development of a Red Dress Alerting system.

In Parliamentary Advocacy, Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard appeared before the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples on December 7, 2023, providing testimony on Call for Justice 1.7 and the establishment of Indigenous and Human Rights Institutions.

The work of the AFN Justice Sector is guided by the following resolutions and mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly:

- Resolution 08/2021, *Implementation of the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQIA People*
- Resolution 27/2022, *Support for the Family of Chantel Moore and Implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice*
- Resolution 49/2022, *Support for Sustainable Funding and Accountability for the Implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice*
- Resolution 89/2023, *Call for Canada to Implement the National Inquiry's 231 Calls for Justice relating to MMIWG2S+*

Truth and Reconciliation

The AFN continued to monitor implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action and released its 9th Report Card. Additionally, the AFN made a submission to the Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves as part of their Truth Gathering engagement. The Special





Interlocutor released their final report on June 11, 2024. The AFN plans to incorporate the Special Interlocutor's recommendations into its advocacy efforts on the TRC Calls to Action.

In Parliamentary Advocacy, Regional Chief Antoine appeared before the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs and the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples regarding Bill C-29, *An Act to establish the National Council for Reconciliation* (NCR). Despite multiple interventions, no amendments were made to the legislation to address the AFN's concerns regarding the composition of the NCR and the lack of long-term sustainable funding.

The work of the AFN Justice Sector is guided by the following mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly:

- Resolution 01/2021, *Demanding Justice and Accountability for the Missing and Unidentified Children of Residential Schools*
- Resolution 29/2022, *Establishment of an AFN Chiefs Committee on Indian Residential Schools*
- Resolution 34/2022, *Justice and Reconciliation for Indian Residential School Survivors and Missing Children and Unmarked Graves*

Conclusion – The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

The AFN will continue to advance rights-based advocacy to achieve full recognition and manifestation of First Nations governments' Inherent and Treaty rights and jurisdiction. We look forward to our work in the year ahead, which will include:

- Strengthening the implementation of the UNDA, through enhanced reporting processes, developing indicators for measuring progress, fostering dialogue between First Nations leadership and government officials, and hosting a UNDA Forum for First Nations Chiefs and technicians in September 2024.
- Continuing to monitor any laws or policies that affect First Nations rights regarding their citizenship, including Bill C-53 and Bill C-38, *An Act to amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements)*.
- Supporting First Nations as they grapple with the increasing severity and frequency of the effects of climate change, by advocating for enhanced stable and predictable funding and First Nations care and control of emergency management responses.
- Fulfilling the AFN's mandate for a co-development process on the Indigenous Justice Strategy, aiming for a First Nations Justice Strategy to be released by Canada by fall 2024.
- Advancing the development of a legislative framework for First Nations policing that builds on the requirements of rights recognition, essential services designation, and equitable funding.



Social Branch

The aim of the Social Branch is to advance the overall vision, mission, and strategic outcomes of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) by focusing on social programs delivered by First Nations governments to their citizens or by the Government of Canada to First Nations.

As Indigenous Services Canada works toward its own obsolescence, having these issues in one Branch supports a focus on how jurisdiction over these services is taken up by First Nations governments and supported for success in a holistic manner. The Branch aims to increase recognition of First Nations jurisdiction over these issues while improving the quality of program and service delivery.

The Branch is composed of three sectors, each mandated by their own set of resolutions. These sectors are Health; and Social Development; and Languages and Learning.

Branches Key Issues and Activities:

Health Sector

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Health Sector is committed to advocating for First Nations' Inherent, Treaty, and international rights pertaining to their health and well-being. The sector promotes holistic, culturally-based, and strengths-based approaches to supporting First Nations wellness. Central to the Health Sector's vision is the aspiration for First Nations to control their own health systems, supported by adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding. These ongoing efforts are essential, as self-determined, culturally appropriate care is the best way to improve health outcomes and advance health equity for First Nations families and communities.

Accomplishments 2023/2024

Chiefs Committee on Health (CCOH) and National First Nations Health Technicians Network (NFNHTN)

The Chiefs Committee on Health (CCOH) convened regularly to focus on articulating and validating a vision for First Nations Health Legislation, with support from the Health Technicians. This collaborative engagement with chiefs and technicians is critically important to developing and implementing complex mandates within the Health Sector.

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB)

The AFN's work on the NIHB Program focuses on a client-centered approach and a continuum of quality care. Notably, recommendations from the October 2023 NIHB National Dialogue Session have been instrumental in guiding advocacy in alignment with AFN Resolution 61/2022 *Reforming Non-Insured Health Benefits Travel Policies*. Currently, the NIHB Joint Review Steering Committee (JRSC) is working to enhance NIHB Medical Transportation. Collaborating closely with partners, the AFN is proposing solutions to address other NIHB challenges, alongside efforts to create a culturally appropriate and accessible communications plan to increase First Nations awareness on NIHB changes and updates. Advocating for holistic approaches to healthcare remains a priority as well, including Resolution 97/2023, *NIHB*





Coverage for Naturopathic Medicine. Finally, the AFN continues to seek expansion of the NIHB coverage to include allied health services.

Mental Wellness

A significant achievement was the successful co-hosting of a National Wellness Gathering for Indian Residential Schools (IRS) Survivors in 2024, in partnership with the First Peoples Wellness Circle. The gathering focused on

continued support for IRS Survivors and the need to permanently fund the Indian Residential Schools Resolution Health Support Program.

To advance AFN Resolution 63/2023 *Conduct a Longitudinal Study on Strengths-Based Indicators of Mental Wellness*, the First Nations Mental Wellness Data Working Group met to develop a comprehensive workplan to address data access challenges on mental wellness and identify opportunities for collaboration with partner organizations.

Long-term and Continuing Care

The AFN Health and Social Development Sectors collaborated with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to co-develop of policy recommendations for the reform of the Assisted Living and First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Programs. These recommendations were informed by extensive region-specific First Nations engagement initiatives held between 2020 and 2023, aiming to achieve excellence in First Nations health and social support services. The AFN presented these recommendations through AFN Resolution 98/2023, *First Nations-created Policy Recommendations for a Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Framework*, which received approval from the AFN Executive Committee. Subsequently, the

recommendations were submitted to ISC for inclusion in their Memorandum to Cabinet.

Public Health

The AFN continues to participate in national and international committee work on eliminating tuberculosis (TB), which is defined as 1 case per 100,000 people. National attention to case activity of TB in the First Nations population translates into strategic work with partners along the First Nations public health continuum.

Health Legislation

The AFN is mandated to liaise with the Government of Canada on federal distinctions-based Indigenous health legislation. AFN Resolution 79/23, *Reconsider Proposed Distinctions-Based Indigenous Health Legislation Process*, calls on Canada to invest in equitable and meaningful dialogue on principles, analysis, and proposals to align health legislation with Treaty and Inherent rights. The AFN and the CCOH are actively engaged in articulating a First Nations Key Elements document to anchor the AFN's position and recommendations.

Accessibility/Disabilities

In the Fall 2023, the AFN released several surveys on accessibility and disability inclusion for First Nations Persons with Disabilities (FNPWD) and various professionals who support them. These surveys are beginning to fill an important data and research gap and will serve to inform the development of a Distinct First Nations Accessibility and Disability Inclusion Law and Framework. A plain language summary of the analysis of these surveys will be released in the coming months. The AFN also prepared a submission to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the issues of misdiagnosis facing FNPWD.



Sports and Recreation

The AFN has been promoting funding opportunities for Indigenous sports to increase Indigenous athletes' representation in hockey and sports halls of fame. The AFN sits on the Sport for Social Development in Indigenous Communities (SSDIC) Indigenous-led selection committee at the Department of Canadian Heritage, Sport Canada, Indigenous Sport Unit to select Indigenous projects for funding in the next two years. This advocacy is called for in the AFN Resolutions 31/2023, *Advocate for First Nations Athletes Induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame and Other Sports Halls of Fame*, and Resolution 62/2023, *Support for the Development of Hockey Indigenous*.

Conclusion – The Path Ahead / Looking Forward

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the AFN will focus on the following priorities:

- Articulate and validate a First Nations Health Legislation position to entrench Treaty and Inherent rights to health as the lever to facilitate health equity.
- Work with First Nations and ISC to determine the process for dispersing the Indigenous Health Equity Fund.
- Host an National Health Forum to celebrate achievements and identify persistent challenges to First Nations health programs and services.
- In collaboration with the Housing and Homelessness Sector, plans are underway for a national forum aimed at identifying links between homelessness and mental wellness and bolstering cross-sector analysis and service provision. The forum is tentatively set for November 2024.

Social Development Sector

The Social Development Sector advocates for First Nations control and jurisdiction over holistic and sustainable social development programs and policies across the life course.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Compensation and Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) and Jordan's Principle

With direction from First Nations leadership in Resolution 28/2022, *Final Settlement Agreement on Compensation for First Nations Children and Families*, and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) order 2022 CHRT 41, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and other Parties negotiated a revised Final Settlement Agreement (FSA) on compensation for First Nations children and their caregivers affected by Canada's discrimination under the FNCFS Program and Jordan's Principle. The First Nations-in-Assembly approved the revised FSA, valued at over \$23.3 billion, in April 2023 via Resolution 04/2023, *Revised Final Settlement Agreement on Compensation for First Nations Children and Families*. The revised FSA received approval from the Federal Court of Canada on October 24, 2023, and subsequently, the AFN led consultations on the Distribution Protocol for the Removed Child and Removed Child and Family Classes in early 2024.

Pursuant to Resolution 40/2022, *To Ensure Quality of Life to the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and Jordan's Principle*, the AFN received advice from tables such as the National Advisory Committee on FNCFS Program Reform and participated in intensive negotiations towards an FSA on long-term reform that recognizes First Nations' inherent rights and jurisdiction, and ensures discrimination in FNCFS does not recur.





Full and Proper Implementation of Jordan's Principle

In December 2023, the Caring Society filed a non-compliance motion regarding Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) failure to properly implement Jordan's Principle, resulting in delays for children. The AFN is participating in the non-compliance proceedings at the CHRT and continues to advocate for the full and proper implementation of Jordan's Principle to ensure that the needs of First Nations children are met. The AFN continues to advocate for investments in Jordan's Principle post-majority supports, pursuant to Resolution 84/2023, *Continuation of Funding at Actuals for Post-Majority Support Services and Support for High Needs Jordan's Principle Recipients*.

Implementation of An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families (the Act)

The AFN continues to support the implementation of the Act and advocate for First Nations self-determination and jurisdiction, in accordance with Resolution 16/2019, *An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families – Transition and Implementation Planning*. The Supreme Court of Canada upheld the Act in a landmark February 2024 decision, pursuant to the AFN's advocacy, alongside Regional Chief Ghislain Picard and the AFN of Quebec and Labrador.

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)

In accordance with Resolution 08/2022, *Early Learning and Child Care Legislation*, the AFN continues to advocate for First Nations control and determination over ELCC. Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard appeared as a witness to the Senate of Canada's Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science, and Technology to emphasize First Nations rights over ELCC for the study of Bill C-35, *An Act respecting early learning and child care in Canada*, which received Royal Assent on March 19, 2024.

The AFN continued developing a First Nations-determined funding model for ELCC, as mandated by Resolution 05/2021, *Allocation of Early Learning and Child Care Investments in Budget 2021*, and previous resolutions. The National Expert Working Group on First Nations ELCC is leading the development of a results and evaluation framework, which is a key strategic action in the First Nations ELCC Policy Framework, to collect useful information on First Nations ELCC, monitor outcomes, and inform future advocacy.

Income Assistance (IA)

The AFN, ISC, and the Technical Working Group on Social Development co-developed policy recommendations to reform the IA Program to support First Nations governance, implement holistic supports, and increase resources to meet the needs of clients and administrators, which were endorsed via Resolution 07/2022, *Reform of the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program*. The AFN continues to advocate for IA reform, as directed by AFN Resolution 85/2023, *Support for the Technical Working Group on Social Development to Continue Income Assistance Program Reform*. The AFN advocated for \$2.34 billion over 5 years for the IA Program to continue inflation relief benefits for IA clients; however, Budget 2024 investments were limited to IA program integrity and establishing a new disability benefit for First Nations.

Poverty Reduction

Pursuant to Resolution 98/2019, *Poverty Reduction for All First Nations in Canada*, the AFN completed a study on First Nations-specific poverty indicators with the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, which will be presented at a future Assembly. AFN will continue work with federal partners to co-develop First Nations-specific indicators of poverty and wellbeing.



Assisted Living (AL)

As mandated by Resolution 44/2022, *Co-development of Policy Options with ISC for a Memorandum to Cabinet on the Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Care Framework*, the AFN Health and Social Development Sectors collaborated with ISC to co-develop policy recommendations for the reform of the AL and First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care Programs. Informed by comprehensive engagements that took place between 2020-2023, a suite of recommendations to achieve excellence in First Nations health and social support services were supported via Resolution 98/2023, *First Nations-created Policy Recommendations for a Wholistic Long-term and Continuing Framework*. The recommendations were submitted to ISC to inform a Memorandum to Cabinet; however, despite AFN's advocacy for \$278 million over 5 years to maintain program integrity and account for population growth and inflation while reform is underway, Budget 2024 did not make new investments in AL reform.

Conclusion - The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

In the 2024-25 fiscal year, the AFN will focus on the following priorities:

- Advocate for a timely, trauma-informed compensation process as we seek approval of the Distribution Protocol for the Removed Child and Removed Child and Family Classes at the Federal Court in June 2024.
- Pursue long-term, sustainable reforms to end and prevent discrimination under FNCFS and the full implementation of Jordan's Principle.
- Continue to work with ISC on the reform of the IA and AL Programs.

- Continue to collaborate with ESDC to advance poverty reduction amongst First Nations.

Languages and Learning Sector Accomplishments 2022-2023

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Languages and Learning Sector advocates for First Nations control of First Nations education, the inherent and Treaty right to education, and the right to equitable funding that meets the needs and circumstances of First Nations and their learners.

The sector also advocates for the establishment of long-term, sustainable, consistent, and appropriate approaches to support First Nations in their effort to recover, reclaim, maintain, and normalize First Nations languages through the implementation of the *Indigenous Languages Act (ILA)*.

The Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) and the Chiefs Committee on Languages (CCOL) provide recommendations to advance advocacy and support mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly.

Accomplishments 2023-2024:

Review Workplan 2023-2024

General

The AFN provides support and advocacy for several vital priorities and mandates, including elementary and secondary education (K-12), post-secondary education (PSE), education infrastructure, languages revitalization, and implementing the First Nations National Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL). In 2023/2024, the AFN hosted over 20 meetings between the CCOE, CCOL, National Indian Education





Branch Reports



Council (NIEC), and Technical Committee on Languages (TCOL), which resulted in improving various program guidelines, draft amendments to the NIEC/CCOE Terms of References, and recommendations to support the development a regional allocation formula for languages funding.

The AFN successfully hosted the Languages and Learning Forum, *Exploring First Nations Education and Linguistic Connections*, in February 2024, which brought together almost 400 First Nations educators and language experts to share information, exchange best practices, and highlight regional experiences in developing local, regional and/or Treaty-based education and language agreements.

Languages

Supporting the implementation and strengthening of the ILA remains a focus for the AFN, which includes preliminary discussions with the Joint Implementation Steering Committee on the review process for the ILA. The AFN also supported the TCOL and CCOL in seeking national consensus for implementing a regional allocation formula.

The AFN continues to support and implement the First Nations National Action Plan for the IDIL. In 2023/2024, this included participating in the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Task Force selection process for the IDIL and supporting the CCOL and AFN Executive in recommending First Nations Task Force members.

Elementary and Secondary Education (K-12)

In keeping with education transformation, the AFN provides support to First Nations in negotiating and concluding the Regional Education Agreements (REAs) as required. There are currently ten completed REAs and over 70 underway. Approximately 30% of

First Nations are currently under an agreement.

The AFN has initiated several research projects, including the AFN K-12 Transformation Cost Analysis and the AFN Adult Education Program and Capital Needs Assessment, which will review the K-12 education funding landscape since the implementation of REAs and identify the gaps, challenges, and needs in First Nations adult education.

Post-Secondary Education

Throughout 2023/2024, the AFN prioritized budget advocacy in Post-Secondary Education (PSE) to ensure the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) would avoid a significant funding decrease due to an expiring investment from Indigenous Services Canada. This advocacy helped support an estimated \$15 million increase for PSSSP, which was announced in the 2024 Federal Budget, and ensures more First Nations students will receive financial support to complete their PSE.

The AFN continues to work with First Nations to identify policy and funding requirements to implement PSE models and other priorities outlined in the 2021 *PSE Policy Proposal*.

Education Infrastructure

The AFN made significant progress to improving access for education infrastructure capital in First Nations education agreements by completing several engagements from coast-to-coast-to-coast to discuss and identify education infrastructure capital reform, priorities, and needs. These engagements provided the basis and support for amending national guidelines to ensure capital and funding for capital can be included in REAs.

Additional co-development efforts are nearing completion that seek to improve



ISC's School Space Accommodation Standards, the School Priority Ranking Framework, and other critical education infrastructure policy documents that are prioritized by First Nations.

Other Resolutions that guide this work:

- AFN Resolution 10/2023, *Support for the First Nations National Action Plan for the United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-32)*
- AFN Resolution 11/2023, *Right to Education*
- AFN Resolution 56/2023, *Unilateral Education Programming Decisions by Indigenous Services Canada*
- AFN Resolution 57/2023, *National Unity on Education*
- AFN Resolution 65/2023, *Affirmation of First Nation Education Sovereignty*
- AFN Resolution 76/2023, *Support for Urgent First Nations Languages Funding*

Conclusion – The Path Ahead / Looking Forward

In the 2023-24 fiscal year, the AFN will focus on the following priorities:

- First Nations Education Forum in August 2024 (TBC).
- First Nations Languages Conference in February 2025 (TBC).
- Activities to support the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Task Force and Ad-Hoc Working Groups.

- Ensuring First Nations full involvement in the Standing Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples' review of the ILA.
- Finalize the AFN K-12 *Transformation Cost Analysis* and the AFN *Adult Education Program and Capital Needs Assessment* research projects.
- Ongoing promotion of the AFN It's Our Time Toolkit mobile application.
- Co-developing First Nations education infrastructure capital processes reform.

Conclusion - The Path Ahead / Looking Forward:

The Social Branch will focus on achieving outcomes in 2024-2025 which follow up on First Nations-in-Assembly mandates, and will work to:

- Advocate in support of First Nations' inherent and Treaty rights, legislation, policies, and programs related to Health, Languages and Learning, and Social Development.
- Seek out engagement with First Nations to improve on policies and programs that support First Nations' jurisdictions, priorities, and objectives for Health, Languages and Learning, and Social Development; and
- Advocate to participate in and inform processes, such as parliamentary studies or joint working groups at officials' levels, that include activity to arrive at legislation, new investments, and better policies and programs for First Nations Health, Languages and Learning, and Social Development.





Strengthening Our Relations

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF THE
NATIONAL INDIAN BROTHERHOOD

MARCH 31, 2024



Financial statements of National Indian Brotherhood

March 31, 2024

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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Executive Committee of National Indian Brotherhood

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of National Indian Brotherhood (the "Corporation"), which comprise the statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024, and the statements of operations, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies (collectively referred to as the "financial statements").

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Corporation as at March 31, 2024, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards ("Canadian GAAS"). Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements* section of our report. We are independent of the Corporation in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Corporation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Corporation or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Corporation's financial reporting process.

Other Information

Management is responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon, in the Annual Report.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information identified above and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

We obtained the Annual Report prior to the date of this auditor's report. If, based on the work we have performed on this other information, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact in this auditor's report. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian GAAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian GAAS, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Corporation's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Corporation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Corporation to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

The logo for Deloitte LLP, featuring the word "Deloitte" in a cursive script followed by "LLP" in a plain sans-serif font.

Chartered Professional Accountants
Licensed Public Accountants
July 8, 2024

National Indian Brotherhood

Statement of operations

Year ended March 31, 2024

	Schedules	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue			
Indigenous Services Canada	A	39,741,262	39,978,172
Women and Gender Equality Canada	B	2,682,261	1,837,312
Environment and Climate Change Canada	B	2,557,217	628,385
Public Safety Canada	B	1,489,619	597,879
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	B	1,349,459	655,294
Employment and Social Development Canada	B	1,291,926	1,987,681
Canadian Heritage	B	811,566	971,484
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	B	275,131	282,849
Nuclear Waste Management Organization	B	253,324	303,148
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	B	189,618	162,406
Justice Canada	B	188,282	6,947
Veteran Affairs Canada	B	142,827	132,297
Transport Canada	B	129,000	35,142
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada	B	123,261	276,369
Health Canada	B	105,929	29,513
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	B	85,299	—
University of Ottawa	B	47,786	84,036
Parks Canada	B	18,989	127,827
Public Health Agency of Canada	B	—	553,960
Natural Resources Canada	B	—	309,305
Interest revenue	B	2,230,221	1,506,108
Registration fees	B	1,327,325	1,212,771
Miscellaneous revenue	B	559,173	943,380
Trade show fees	B	328,081	221,113
		55,927,556	52,843,378
Expenses			
Advertising, promotion and publications		579,787	473,068
Amortization of capital assets		199,095	89,615
Insurance		49,625	35,345
Loss on disposal of capital assets		119,339	—
Miscellaneous		76,477	101,289
Office expenses		1,175,726	1,104,117
Professional fees		8,495,203	10,828,464
Regional service delivery		8,224,903	9,435,935
Rent		1,753,965	1,197,675
Salaries and benefits		21,737,606	18,354,671
Travel and meetings		12,459,327	10,183,816
	A and B	54,871,053	51,803,995
Excess of revenue over expenses		1,056,503	1,039,383

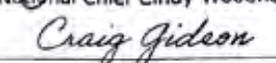
The accompanying notes and supporting schedules are an integral part of the financial statements.

National Indian Brotherhood
Statement of financial position
As at March 31, 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash		32,143,128	52,138,756
Grants and contributions receivable	4	8,869,710	2,246,775
Other accounts receivable	6	2,637,131	275,990
Sales tax recoverable		739,431	1,704,578
Prepaid expenses		790,735	1,169,761
		45,180,135	57,535,860
Asset held in trust	3	17,600	16,680
Prepaid expenses		14,891	13,567
Capital assets	5	4,153,993	348,397
		49,366,619	57,914,504
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities		8,876,227	10,350,879
Government remittances payable		621,427	534,016
Deferred revenue		40,791	93,894
Deferred contributions	7	26,006,985	33,893,294
Excess contributions	8	2,748,511	5,854,184
Current portion of deferred lease inducement	6	179,062	—
		38,473,003	50,726,267
Deferred lease inducement	6	2,647,956	—
Liability held in trust	3	17,600	16,680
		41,138,559	50,742,947
Contingencies and commitments	9 and 10		
Net assets			
Invested in capital assets		1,326,975	348,397
Internally restricted		3,852,948	5,800,000
Unrestricted		3,048,137	1,023,160
		8,228,060	7,171,557
		49,366,619	57,914,504

The accompanying notes and supporting schedules are an integral part of the financial statements.

On behalf of the Executive Committee

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak

Acting CEO, Craig Gideon

National Indian Brotherhood
Statement of changes in net assets
Year ended March 31, 2024

	Notes	Invested in capital assets \$	Internally restricted \$	Unrestricted \$	2024 Total \$	2023 Total \$
Net assets, beginning of year		348,397	5,800,000	1,023,160	7,171,557	6,132,174
Excess of revenue over expenses		—	—	1,056,503	1,056,503	1,039,383
Internal transfer	17	—	(1,947,052)	1,947,052	—	—
Acquisition of capital assets		4,124,030	—	(4,124,030)	—	—
Loss on disposal of capital assets		(119,339)	—	119,339	—	—
Amortization of capital assets		(199,095)	—	199,095	—	—
Proceeds receivable from inducement for leasehold improvements		(2,249,095)	—	2,249,095	—	—
Amortization of inducements for leasehold improvements		(577,923)	—	577,923	—	—
Net assets, end of year		1,326,975	3,852,948	3,048,137	8,228,060	7,171,557

The accompanying notes and supporting schedules are an integral part of the financial statements.

National Indian Brotherhood**Statement of cash flows**

Year ended March 31, 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Operating activities			
Excess of revenue over expenses		1,056,503	1,039,383
Items not affecting cash			
Amortization of capital assets		199,095	89,615
Loss on disposal of capital assets		119,339	3,421
Amortization of lease inducement		577,923	—
		1,952,860	1,132,419
Changes in non-cash operating working capital items	11	(17,824,458)	10,518,901
		(15,871,598)	11,651,320
Investing activity			
Acquisition of capital assets		(4,124,030)	(199,674)
Net (decrease) increase in cash		(19,995,628)	11,451,646
Cash, beginning of year		52,138,756	40,687,110
Cash, end of year		32,143,128	52,138,756

See additional non-cash transaction in Note 5.

The accompanying notes and supporting schedules are an integral part of the financial statements.

1. Description of the organization

National Indian Brotherhood (the "Corporation") was incorporated under Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act* on September 29, 1970. In June 2014, the Corporation received a certificate of continuance under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act*. The Corporation has the following objectives:

- To assist and to work toward solutions for problems facing the First Nations people;
- To operate as a national body to both represent the First Nations people and to disseminate information to them;
- To study, in conjunction with First Nations representatives across Canada, the problems confronting First Nations and to make representations to the government and other organizations on their behalf;
- To assist in retaining the First Nations culture and values; and
- To act as the national spokesperson for First Nations throughout Canada.

The Corporation acts as the secretariat to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

The Corporation is a not-for-profit organization and, as such, is not subject to income taxes.

2. Accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations and include the following significant accounting policies:

Basis of presentation

The financial statements do not include the accounts of those of the Future Generations Foundation (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund), which is controlled by the Corporation. Summarized financial statements of the Future Generations Foundation are disclosed in Note 12 of the financial statements.

Revenue recognition

The Corporation follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions.

Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue of the appropriate program when received or receivable if the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue of the appropriate program in the year in which the related expenses are incurred.

Contributions received toward the acquisition of capital assets are deferred and amortized to revenue on the same basis as the related depreciable capital assets are amortized.

Interest revenue is recognized in the period in which it is earned.

Financial instruments

Initial measurement

Financial assets and financial liabilities originated or exchanged in arm's length transactions are initially recognized at fair value when the Corporation becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument. Financial assets and financial liabilities originated or exchanged in related party transactions, except for those that involve parties whose sole relationship with the Corporation is in the capacity of management, are initially recognized at cost.

2. Accounting policies (continued)

Financial instruments (continued)

Initial measurement (continued)

The cost of a financial instrument in a related party transaction depends on whether the instrument has repayment terms. The cost of financial instruments with repayment terms is determined using its undiscounted cash flows, excluding interest and dividend payments, less any impairment losses previously recognized by the transferor. The cost of financial instruments without repayment terms is determined using the consideration transferred or received by the Corporation in the transaction.

Subsequent measurement

All financial instruments are subsequently measured at amortized cost with the exception of cash and investments which are recorded at fair value.

Transaction costs

Transaction costs related to financial instruments subsequently measured at fair value are expensed as incurred. Transaction costs related to other financial instruments are added to the carrying value of the asset or netted against the carrying value of the liability and are then recognized over the expected life of the instrument using the effective interest method. Any premium or discount related to an instrument measured at amortized cost is amortized over the expected life of the item using the effective interest method and recognized in net earnings as interest income or expense.

Impairment

With respect to financial assets measured at cost or amortized cost, the Corporation recognizes an impairment loss, if any, in net earnings when there are indicators of impairment and it determines that a significant adverse change has occurred during the period in the expected timing or amount of future cash flows. When the extent of impairment of a previously written-down asset decreases and the decrease can be related to an event occurring after the impairment was recognized, the previously recognized impairment loss is reversed to net earnings in the period the reversal occurs.

Capital assets

Capital assets are recorded at cost. Contributed capital assets are recorded at estimated fair value at the date of contribution. Amortization is provided on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the assets as follows:

Computer equipment	3 years
Office equipment	3 years
Leasehold improvements	Term of lease

Lease inducement

The lease inducement is amortized over the term of the lease and account for as a reduction to the rent expense.

2. Accounting policies (continued)

Excess contributions

The excess of revenue over expenses of some programs may require repayment and is recorded as a liability. When approval to retain the funds has been received, the excess is then recorded as revenue when expenditures are incurred or recorded back in deferred revenue.

Allocation of expenses

Allocation of administrative expenses between the programs or funding agencies is done in accordance with the stipulated basis of allocation and maximum amounts or percentages mentioned in each of the different contribution agreements entered into by the Corporation.

Use of estimates

The preparation of these financial statements in conformity with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and the accompanying notes. In the opinion of management, these financial statements reflect, within reasonable limits of materiality, all adjustments necessary to present fairly the results for the years presented. Assumptions are used in estimating the collectability of grants and contributions receivable, other accounts receivable, the useful life of capital assets, the amount of certain accrued liabilities and the allocation of expenses. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

3. Asset held in trust

The Corporation is holding in trust an education fund totaling \$17,600 (\$16,680 in 2023) for Kelly Morrisseau's children. These funds were donated by individuals and organizations.

4. Grants and contributions receivable

Grants and contributions receivable are as follows:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Indigenous Services Canada	6,030,133	353,714
Fisheries and Oceans Canada	557,243	651,118
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada	477,551	489,157
Canadian Heritage	449,253	—
Nuclear Waste Management Organization	285,636	131,083
Women and Gender Equality Canada	238,315	—
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada	193,837	70,576
Environment and Climate Change Canada	173,424	12,928
Health Canada	150,000	29,513
Employment and Social Development Canada	107,002	165,113
Natural Resources Canada	100,000	124,950
Parks Canada	72,174	127,827
Transport Canada	35,142	90,796
	8,869,710	2,246,775

National Indian Brotherhood
Notes to the financial statements
March 31, 2024

5. Capital assets

	2024	2023
	Cost	Accumulated
	\$	amortization
	\$	\$
	Net book	Net book
	value	value
	\$	\$
Computer equipment	254,385	236,769
Office equipment	342,848	337,769
Leasehold improvements	4,467,314	336,016
	5,064,547	910,554
	17,616	5,079
	4,131,298	4,131,298
	348,397	348,397

Cost and accumulated amortization as at March 31, 2023 amount to \$1,225,515 and \$877,118, respectively.

6. Deferred lease inducement

In September 2022, the Corporation entered into a 180-month lease agreement expiring on August 31, 2038 for premises. The lease provided for leasehold improvement allowances and rent-free period. As at March 31, 2024, the unamortized balance is \$2,827,018 (nil in 2023).

As at March 31, 2024, an amount of \$2,445,139 (nil in 2023) in leasehold improvement allowances was receivable from the landlord and is included in Other receivables.

7. Deferred contributions

Changes in the deferred contributions balance are as follows:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Balance, beginning of year	33,893,294	33,545,372
Contributions received during the year	43,596,447	49,307,928
Contributions recognized during the year	(51,482,756)	(48,960,006)
Balance, end of year	26,006,985	33,893,294

The balance, end of year is composed of the following:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Indigenous Services Canada	17,251,830	25,253,295
Employment and Sococial Development Canada	3,019,789	2,943,608
Environment and Climate Change Canada	1,946,598	1,793,093
Justice Canada	1,304,771	993,053
Women and Gender Equality Canada	836,027	925,410
Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	309,075	253,427
Health Canada	264,558	2,755
Nuclear Waste Management Organization	261,853	—
Veteran Affairs Canada	224,875	367,703
Canadian Heritage	176,423	—
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The	161,069	350,687
Public Safety Canada	87,954	897,763
Parks Canada	73,185	—
University of Ottawa	61,778	—
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	27,200	112,500
	26,006,985	33,893,294

National Indian Brotherhood
Notes to the financial statements
March 31, 2024

8. Excess contributions

Excess contributions are as follows:

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Indigenous Services Canada	1,471,219	4,174,408
Canadian Heritage	711,416	1,132,031
Status of Women Canada	195,142	195,142
Parks Canada	132,414	70,240
Public Safety Canada	106,884	106,884
Nuclear Waste Management Organization	85,570	85,570
Women and Gender Equality Canada	33,266	—
Fisheries and Ocean Canada	12,600	8,425
Environment and Climate Change Canada	—	58,720
Health Canada	—	12,764
Public Health Agency of Canada	—	10,000
	2,748,511	5,854,184

9. Contingencies

The Corporation receives funding from various government agencies based on specific program needs and budgets and allocates certain expenses to the various programs. In many cases, the funding agency has the right to review the accounting records to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of their programs. At this time, no estimate of the requirements, if any, to reimburse the agencies can be made. Management of the Corporation believes that its allocations of expenses are fair and appropriate in the circumstances. Adjustments to the financial statements as a result of these reviews, if any, will be recorded in the period in which they become known.

From time to time, the Corporation is involved in claims in the normal course of business. Management assesses such claims and where considered likely to result in material exposure and, where the amount of the claim is quantifiable, provisions loss are made based on management's assessment of the likely outcome. The Corporation does not provide for claims that are considered unlikely to result in significant loss, claims for which the outcome is not determinable or claims where the amount of the loss cannot be reasonably estimated. Any settlements or awards under such claims are provided when reasonably determinable.

10. Commitments

The Corporation is committed to future minimum lease payments under operating leases for office space and equipment maturing in 2038, for which minimum annual payments for each year are as follows:

	\$
2025	1,590,736
2026	1,588,824
2027	1,588,824
2028	1,588,824
2029	1,640,216
2030 and thereafter	15,080,378
	<u>23,077,802</u>

National Indian Brotherhood
Notes to the financial statements

March 31, 2024

11. Changes in non-cash operating working capital items

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Grants and contributions receivable	(6,622,935)	4,493,213
Other accounts receivable	(112,046)	(39,614)
Sales tax recoverable	965,147	(473,086)
Prepaid expenses	377,702	(486,392)
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	(1,474,652)	1,157,036
Government remittances payable	87,411	520,401
Deferred revenue	(53,103)	93,894
Deferred contributions	(7,886,309)	347,922
Excess contributions	(3,105,673)	4,905,527
	(17,824,458)	10,518,901

12. Controlled entity

The Corporation appoints the trustees of the Future Generations Foundation (formerly National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund), a registered charity under paragraph 149(l)(f) of the *Income Tax Act*, to administer the Youth Healing Fund, the Research Sponsor Fund, the Heroes of Our Time Fund, the Education Fund, the Métis Fund, and the Education Legacy Fund. The Future Generations Foundation is deemed a non-profit organization under the *Income Tax Act* (Canada), and accordingly is not subject to income taxes.

The summarized financial statements of the Future Generations Foundation are as follows:

Summarized statement of financial position

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Assets	266,618,607	244,136,794
Liabilities	3,374,904	2,899,740
Fund balances	263,243,703	241,237,054
	266,618,607	244,136,794

Summarized statement of operations

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Revenue	39,112,361	6,192,316
Expenses	17,105,712	13,413,497
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	22,006,649	(7,221,181)

12. Controlled entity (continued)

Summarized statement of cash flows

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
Operating activities	(4,316,760)	5,056,412
Investing activities	4,505,001	(4,339,229)
Net increase in cash	188,241	717,183
Cash, beginning of year	1,444,943	727,760
Cash, end of year	1,633,184	1,444,943

As at March 31, 2024, the balance due from the Future Generations Foundation was \$7,729 (nil in 2023).

For the year ended March 31, 2024, the Corporation received nil (\$653 in 2023) from the Future Generations Foundation for services relating to the administration and management of the Future Generations Foundation and \$15,162 for the rental of office space (\$48,110 in 2023). In addition, the Future Generations Foundation continued to share office space with the Corporation in Akwesasne at an annual cost of \$15,162.

The transactions with the Future Generations Foundation have been recorded at their exchange amount which is the amount in accordance with the agreements signed between the parties.

13. Executive salaries

By virtue of an annual general assembly resolution (62/98), the National Chief of the AFN receives a salary which is adjusted annually in connection with the consumer price index. Similarly, by virtue of a Confederacy of Nations resolution and an Executive Committee resolution, each Regional Chief is allocated a director's fee. Management and unelected officials are compensated within average industry remuneration levels for their positions.

14. Pension plan

The Corporation contributes to a defined contribution pension plan for its employees. Contributions are up to 8% of an employee's salary. The employer's contributions for the year were \$1,202,379 (\$1,038,619 in 2023).

15. Credit facility

The Corporation has a banking agreement which establishes a demand credit facility for general business purposes up to a maximum of \$2,500,000, bearing interest at prime plus 1%, renewable annually. The credit facility is secured by a general security agreement representing a first share over all of the Corporation's assets. The balance outstanding at year-end is nil (nil in 2023).

16. Financial instruments

Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of the Corporation's financial instruments will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. Market risk is comprised of currency risk, interest rate risk and other price risk. The Corporation is not exposed to market risks.

Credit risk

The risk arises from the potential that one party to a financial instrument will fail to discharge an obligation and cause the other party to incur a financial loss.

The Corporation's various receivables represent credit provided for the Corporation's programs. The credit is provided mainly to the federal government and accordingly presents minimal credit risk to the Corporation.

The maximum credit exposure of the Corporation is represented by the fair value of various amounts receivable as presented in the statement of financial position.

17. Capital management

The Corporation considers its capital to consist of net assets. The Corporation's overall objective is to effectively use resources to maximize the ability to achieve its vision, fund tangible capital assets, future projects and ongoing operations. The Corporation manages net assets by establishing internally restricted funds and appropriating amounts to the restricted funds for anticipated future projects, contingencies and other capital requirements. These allocations are disclosed in the statement of changes in net assets.

The Corporation is not subject to externally imposed capital requirements.

Internally restricted net assets

Net assets are internally restricted for specific operating purposes as authorized by the Board of Directors from time to time. Internally restricted balances are supported by a clear statement of purpose, and an anticipated time frame for the accumulation and draw down of the balance at the time established.

The purpose of any internally restricted balance is consistent with the objectives of the Corporation's strategic initiatives and operating plans, as well as identified risks to the achievement of these objectives.

For the year ended March 31, 2024, nil (nil in 2023) was internally restricted for the above-mentioned purposes.

During the year ended March 31, 2024, an amount of \$1,947,052 transferred from internally restricted net assets to unrestricted net assets to fund the new office move.

National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule A - Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (continued)

	FN and Inuit Summer Work Experience	Bill C-92, Act Respecting FN, Metis & Inuit Children	Consultation Committee on Child Welfare	IFCS Phase 3/ Reform of the FNCFS Program	Economic Reconciliation & FN Involvement in Economy	Water Symposium & Tradeshow	Housing and Infrastructure Secretariat	Infrastructure Senior Policy Analyst Position	AFN Regional Water Coordinators
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue									
Contributions/grants	—	8,357	974,752	74,249	697,760	45,174	966,587	39,555	825,000
Contributions/grants - prior years	59,712	345,098	264,407	747,392	560,253	—	1,271,297	95,908	—
	59,712	353,455	1,239,159	821,641	1,258,013	45,174	2,237,884	135,463	825,000
Expenses									
Advertising, promotion and publications	3,018	5,881	7,543	3,968	16,209	25,928	25,094	1,763	—
Allocation of administrative expenses	—	32,129	142,605	74,688	164,089	—	—	—	—
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance	353	832	549	433	1,864	—	2,832	236	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Office expenses	1,943	6,809	18,110	11,205	46,103	104	54,342	1,945	—
Professional fees	—	—	315,048	372,443	8,497	18,160	248,745	—	—
Regional service delivery	—	—	150,500	—	—	—	25,000	—	825,000
Rent	7,043	17,332	13,941	12,111	47,635	—	73,476	5,403	—
Salaries and benefits	47,355	290,077	201,890	207,380	740,945	—	1,335,275	125,457	—
Travel and meetings	—	395	388,973	139,413	232,671	982	472,661	659	—
	59,712	353,455	1,239,159	821,641	1,258,013	45,174	2,237,425	135,463	825,000
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	459	—	—

**National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations**
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule A - Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (continued)

	Enabling FN Children to Thrive	Safe Drinking Water for First Nations	FN Long Term Water and Wastewater	Engagement and Think Tank Housing	Infrastructure Training and Awareness Implementation	National FN Skills & Capacity Needs Assessment	National Housing Strategy & Implementation	Operationalizing the Strategy: Future Needs	Updating FN Housing Needs Data	National FN First Responders Gathering
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue										
Contributions/grants	1,909,912	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10,919
Contributions/grants - prior years	(62,069)	149,359	721,470	38,370	175,327	28,986	200,000	174,012	30,000	476,822
	1,847,843	149,359	721,470	38,370	175,327	28,986	200,000	174,012	30,000	487,741
Expenses										
Advertising, promotion and publications	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Allocation of administrative expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Office expenses	—	2,925	125	23,340	—	412	922	—	—	13,946
Professional fees	—	78,558	369,184	—	175,327	—	—	94,350	—	53,210
Regional service delivery	—	—	250,000	—	—	—	—	59,425	30,000	—
Rent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Salaries and benefits	—	67,876	102,161	15,030	—	—	—	20,237	—	420,585
Travel and meetings	—	149,359	721,470	38,370	175,327	28,986	200,000	174,012	30,000	487,741
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

**National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations**
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule A – Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (continued)

	AFN Social Programs Reforms	Full & Proper Implementation of Jordan's Principle	FN Education and Engagement Capacity	Engagement on NAP to End Violence	Indigenous Resilience and Stand Alone Report	AFN Emergency Services Project	Flood Insurance	Steering Committee on FN Home Risks	2024 Total	2023 Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue										
Contributions/grants	—	701,335	—	—	64,809	—	—	—	24,490,262	24,581,277
Contributions/grants - prior years	46,223	—	2,558,853	285,346	—	593,204	534,084	—	15,251,000	15,396,895
	46,223	701,335	2,558,853	285,346	64,809	593,204	534,084	—	39,741,262	39,978,172
Expenses										
Advertising, promotion and publications	3,413	1,810	34,823	6,724	—	7,631	—	—	396,705	359,400
Allocation of administrative expenses	3,079	63,758	—	—	5,892	59,220	—	—	1,347,073	867,130
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12,543	8,891
Insurance	515	117	3,032	821	—	928	—	—	37,375	33,187
Miscellaneous	—	—	4,397	—	—	—	—	—	5,189	20,345
Office expenses	4,167	22,980	73,912	30,667	—	13,384	402	—	818,376	887,129
Professional fees	4,904	29,588	218,030	624	1,247	—	54,546	—	6,398,399	8,759,921
Regional service delivery	(126,400)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,463,561	7,381,423
Rent	11,648	6,305	82,481	21,916	4,429	21,155	—	—	875,439	1,048,906
Salaries and benefits	111,455	139,051	1,311,527	250,414	37,714	356,751	1,900	—	16,012,608	13,823,408
Travel and meetings	33,442	437,726	830,651	(25,820)	15,527	134,135	477,236	—	8,373,535	6,790,516
	46,223	701,335	2,558,853	285,346	64,809	593,204	534,084	—	39,740,803	39,980,256
Excess (deficiency) of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	459	(2,084)

**National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations**
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule B – Other funding agencies

	Women and Gender Equality Canada - Women's Program	Women and Gender Equality Canada - Gender Based Violence Prevention	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Transforming Species at Risk Conservation	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Participation in the National Steering Committee	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Conserving Nature Working Group	Environment and Climate Change Canada - AFN Chronic Nature Working Group	Environment and Climate Change Canada - JCCA Website	Environment and Climate Change Canada - First Nations Nature Table
Revenue								
Contributions/grants	1,790,117	—	—	—	45,007	—	31,974	527,030
Contributions/grants - prior years	609,190	282,954	248,945	97,374	—	51,367	—	1,356,284
Interest revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Registration fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trade show fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	2,399,307	282,954	248,945	97,374	45,007	51,367	31,974	1,883,314
Expenses								
Advertising, promotion and publications	553	—	3,076	1,017	184	209	5,613	21,996
Allocation of administrative expenses	205,470	38,944	22,631	3,005	2,026	4,670	2,907	171,210
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance	39	—	362	125	22	24	—	1,106
Loss on disposal of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Office expenses	12,175	—	3,270	969	522	1,645	1,768	22,069
Professional fees	94,328	—	68,792	2,500	1,500	24,400	500	28,601
Regional service delivery	1,575,000	203,560	—	—	—	—	—	1,000,000
Rent	8,530	—	9,862	3,052	506	590	2,436	25,696
Salaries and benefits	205,332	695	140,766	78,416	10,382	17,408	18,750	451,842
Travel and meetings	297,880	39,755	186	8,290	29,865	2,421	—	160,794
	2,399,307	282,954	248,945	97,374	45,007	51,367	31,974	1,883,314
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule B – Other funding agencies (continued)

	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Emissions Reduction Plan	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Right to Healthy Environment	Environment and Climate Change Canada - Pre-Engagement on the Canada Water Act	Public Safety - Canada - First Nation and Inuit Policing Program	Fisheries and Oceans AAROM	Fisheries and Oceans Canada - MIPCA	Employment and Social Development Canada - Labour Code and Pay Equity	Employment and Development Canada - Co-development of FN Indicators of Poverty and Well-Being
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue								
Contributions/grants	37,071	525	161,640	591,856	945,289	404,170	—	—
Contributions/grants - prior years	—	—	—	897,763	—	—	51,443	39,007
Interest revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Registration fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trade show fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	37,071	525	161,640	1,489,619	945,289	404,170	51,443	39,007
Expenses								
Advertising, promotion and publications	209	—	—	8,111	10,920	2,534	—	—
Allocation of administrative expenses	858	—	26,101	121,255	15,849	52,170	5,512	4,179
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance	25	—	—	896	1,257	271	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Loss on disposal of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Office expenses	121	—	1,802	39,653	25,460	6,742	481	—
Professional fees	1,500	525	2,500	531,612	144,540	60,919	45,071	34,828
Regional service delivery	—	—	—	300,000	—	—	—	—
Rent	590	—	—	20,564	33,346	8,141	—	—
Salaries and benefits	33,768	—	131,237	101,268	457,273	191,343	379	—
Travel and meetings	—	—	—	366,260	256,644	82,050	—	—
	37,071	525	161,640	1,489,619	945,289	404,170	51,443	39,007
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

**National Indian Brotherhood
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Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule B – Other funding agencies (continued)

	William & Flora Hewlett Foundation - First Nations' Stewardship of Land & Water in Canada	Justice Canada - FN Justice Strategy Framework	Veteran Affairs Canada - Veteran & Family Well-Being	Transport Canada - Oceans Protection Program	Impact Assessment Agency of Canada - Policy and Guidance	Health Canada - Engagement Stream - First Nations Scoping Paper: Cannabis Act	Canada and Mortgage and Housing Corporation - First Nations Control: Housing	University of Ottawa - First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue								
Contributions/grants	—	—	—	129,000	123,261	105,929	—	35,022
Contributions/grants - prior years	189,618	188,282	142,827	—	—	—	85,299	12,764
Interest revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Registration fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous revenue	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trade show fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	189,618	188,282	142,827	129,000	123,261	105,929	85,299	47,786
Expenses								
Advertising, promotion and publications	3,167	—	—	151	2,019	1,251	—	934
Allocation of administrative expenses	21,853	—	7,238	—	11,206	—	—	4,344
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance	362	—	—	20	259	176	—	117
Loss on disposal of capital assets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Office expenses	2,415	13,795	—	293	4,640	1,022	—	842
Professional fees	2,500	48,375	—	—	34,824	59,603	62,350	2,500
Regional service delivery	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rent	9,266	—	—	794	6,820	4,026	—	2,973
Salaries and benefits	139,281	—	—	88,476	53,841	32,168	—	35,728
Travel and meetings	10,774	126,112	135,589	39,266	9,652	7,683	22,949	348
	189,618	188,282	142,827	129,000	123,261	105,929	85,299	47,786
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

**National Indian Brotherhood
Schedules - Statement of operations**
Year ended March 31, 2024

Schedule B – Other funding agencies (continued)

	Parks Canada - National Marine Conservation Area Regulations	Parks Canada - General Class Contributions	Other	2024 Total	2023 Total
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$
Revenue					
Contributions/grants	18,492	497	—	6,035,274	5,352,683
Contributions/grants - prior years	—	—	—	5,706,220	3,629,151
Interest revenue	—	—	2,230,221	2,230,221	1,506,108
Registration fees	—	—	1,327,325	1,327,325	1,212,771
Miscellaneous revenue	—	—	436,345	559,173	943,380
Trade show fees	—	—	328,081	328,081	221,113
	18,492	497	4,321,972	16,186,294	12,865,206
Expenses					
Advertising, promotion and publications	301	—	86,500	183,082	113,668
Allocation of administrative expenses	—	—	(2,289,613)	(1,347,073)	(867,130)
Amortization of capital assets	—	—	186,552	186,552	80,724
Insurance	55	—	3,722	12,250	2,158
Loss on disposal of capital assets	—	—	119,339	119,339	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	71,288	71,288	80,944
Office expenses	235	408	140,460	357,350	216,988
Professional fees	—	—	161,901	2,096,804	2,068,543
Regional service delivery	—	—	(113,658)	2,761,342	2,054,512
Rent	998	—	653,408	878,526	148,769
Salaries and benefits	16,903	—	2,348,367	5,724,998	4,531,263
Travel and meetings	—	89	1,897,722	4,085,792	3,393,300
	18,492	497	3,265,928	15,130,250	11,823,739
Excess of revenue over expenses	—	—	1,056,044	1,056,044	1,041,467





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