



Assembly of First Nations
Prosperity for All
2025 General Election Priorities



Assembly of First Nations Prosperity for All 2025 General Election Priorities

Message from the National Chief



First Nations are the original and sovereign peoples of this beautiful country, placed here by the Creator (Charter of the Assembly of First Nations). Our cultures, languages and distinct forms of governance are diverse and as old as human memory.

The Creator bestowed on First Nations sacred duties and responsibilities. These include helping other people in times of need – without forfeiting our sovereignty nor our sacred responsibilities and relationship to the land and waters. This we have done by entering into Treaty with the Crown, establishing other forms of nation-to-nation cooperation, and always requiring accountability from the Crown in its relations with us and the Earth.

First Nations' core values are the antithesis of colonialist and imperialist mindsets. First Nations expect cooperation and respect from all nations. Our values of mutual responsibility among peoples and duties to all Creation, inform every aspect of our international diplomacy, intergovernmental relations, laws, policies and worldview.

Our lands, our distinct laws, cultures, languages and ways of life anchor our place as distinct nations here in Canada and the broader international community. Our values strengthen us as distinct peoples. Our knowledge traditions are based on the land. They strengthen our inherent sovereignty, jurisdiction and title over our land and territories.

Our relationship with Canada, as a successor colonial State, is complex and evolving. Every day, First Nations are exercising the right to self-determination. We are restoring our laws and inherent authority over our people and our traditional lands. We are busy dismantling old colonial ways and mindsets embedded in federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Every First Nation is determined to build a new relationship with the Crown – one built on mutual respect, sharing and full implementation of our Treaty rights, our inherent rights, title and jurisdiction, and our rights as peoples under international law.

Federal elections provide an opportunity for First Nations to engage with each federal party to explore options and propose next steps for rebuilding a strong and mutually beneficial relationship between the Crown and First Nations. There is much to do.

We have sacred Treaties to implement. We have a significant housing and infrastructure gap to close. We have many unmet federal commitments. Ten years out from the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, there are still many unimplemented Calls to Action. The same applies to the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Canada has a significant distance to travel to comply with the minimum human rights standards of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and its own implementation legislation.



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We need to do all of this work together.

The 2025 federal election could be the most significant election ever held in Canada. There are serious economic and political risks and imperialist threats from our southern neighbour. We can use this challenge as an opportunity to reflect on what is most important. We can discuss next steps to shape our future and set a course to strengthen the well-being of First Nations and Canada for generations to come.

This document sets out key policy priorities where First Nations are seeking commitments:

- Advancing economic reconciliation and sustainable development
- Ensuring compliance with s. 35 rights, our right to self-determination, and the Crown's consultation, accommodation and consent obligations
- Working with all governments in Canada to implement outstanding Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls
- Ensuring the well-being of children, families and future generations
- Ensuring clean drinking water for all First Nations
- Working to close the First Nations infrastructure and housing gaps by 2030
- Affirming and supporting First Nations inherent jurisdiction over essential services (including water and First Nations policing)
- Reviewing, renewing and updating the federal Action Plan for Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Updating the AFN-Canada MOU on Joint Priorities

The Assembly of First Nations calls on all candidates to listen to First Nations during this election and for their parties to make clear, firm, specific commitments responsive to First Nations priorities.

We expect all federal parties, the next government and the next Parliament to work with First Nations to make this land a secure, safe and prosperous place for First Nations and for everyone.

In the days ahead, all leaders should ask themselves this question, posed by the late Justice Murray Sinclair, *Am I taking action to be a good relative to future generations?*

Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
National Chief, Assembly of First Nations
March 2025



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About the Assembly of First Nations

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national advocacy body of 639 First Nations. The AFN is dedicated to advancing the collective priorities and aspirations of diverse First Nations as determined by Chiefs (First Nations-in-Assembly). First Nations citizens comprise approximately 1.5 million people living on reserves and in urban, northern, rural and remote communities in our Territories, from coast to coast to coast.

The AFN provides a national forum for First Nations leadership to review, respond and advocate on matters of common concern. Each Chief is entitled to vote in AFN Assemblies and in elections for National Chief. The National Chief is elected for a term of three years and receives direction from First Nations-in-Assembly. The AFN holds Assemblies at least twice a year where Chiefs deliberate on policy proposals and adopt resolutions to provide mandates and guide collective action. The AFN National Executive is made up of the National Chief and 10 Regional Chiefs, and works with Chairs of the AFN Elders, Women, Veterans, Knowledge Keepers, Youth and 2SLGBTQIA+ Councils.

As nations, First Nations have a unique and special relationship with the Crown as manifested by the Royal Proclamation of 1763, First Nations-Crown Treaties, the Constitution Acts of 1867 and 1982, Canadian common law as well as international law including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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AFN Resolutions are mandates provided by First Nations, as determined through votes by elected Chiefs or their proxy representatives. These resolutions guide our priorities, policy positions and calls for government action. To access AFN Policy Resolutions, [Click Here](#).



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This document communicates key policy priorities of the Assembly of First Nations (informed by Resolutions of First Nations-in-Assembly) in four main areas of action:

- 1. Economic Reconciliation with First Nations**
- 2. Completing the Calls to Action & Calls for Justice**
- 3. Wellbeing of First Nations Children, Families, and Future Generations**
- 4. Community Safety and Security**

Meaningful action in these areas will benefit First Nations and Canadians. The AFN urges all Canadians to hold leaders and governments accountable for progress on Canada's relations with First Nations.

It should be noted that the priorities highlighted in this document are not exhaustive of the concerns and objectives of First Nations. First Nations governments and First Nations organizations across the country regularly communicate their respective priorities and needs.



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Economic Reconciliation

Economic Reconciliation with First Nations

Global economic, political and trade upheavals are front and centre in the 2025 federal election. Canada and First Nations are not insulated from this turmoil. Nurturing the nation-to-nation relationship between Canada and First Nations has never been more important.

Respectful economic partnership is essential to drive mutual prosperity for Canada and First Nations.

Increasing First Nations participation in the economy requires action on several fronts, such as:

- renewing the nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations rights holders
- jointly developing proper intergovernmental fiscal arrangements to deliver sufficient, predictable, and sustainable funding
- capacity building, employment, and training strategies for the jobs of the future
- inclusion of First Nations governments in economic and regulatory decision-making (and in discussions of any reforms to these regimes) while meeting the standard of free, prior and informed consent
- following the lead of First Nations in how to support the exercise of our right to self-determination, the development of strategies, and taking action.



First Nations are an integral part of the economic fabric of this country. First Nations business contributed over \$56 billion to Canada's GDP in 2021 – and increase of 10% from the previous year.

Federal Budget Decisions contribute to improved First Nations Socio-Economic Outcomes

Several factors have made the federal government a critical source of funding for essential programs and services for First Nations:

- The taking of First Nations lands and resources without consent
- Structural inequalities (explicit and systemic discrimination and colonial control)
- Ongoing exclusion of First Nations from intergovernmental arrangements such as equalization and other transfer payments.

For decades (under Liberal and Conservative governments), chronic underfunding of essential services for First Nations and two decades of capped increases entrenched the socio-economic gap between Canadians and First Nations.



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Economic Reconciliation

Canada has begun a transition to a more respectful relationship. Awareness of First Nations social and economic development priorities is a first step to advancing economic reconciliation. When the federal budget is responsive to First Nations priorities, it is a valuable tool in addressing longstanding structural inequalities and fuelling First Nations development in all aspects.

Ensuring First Nations funding arrangements are appropriately structured as flexible intergovernmental funding agreements, able to deliver essential and culturally relevant government services, is an ongoing challenge. Conflicts can lead to litigation when negotiations fail or when the Crown (federal or provincial) refuses to negotiate more equitable arrangements.

Despite these longstanding challenges, recent data does show the positive difference increased federal investments in First Nations can make. Let's look at budgetary decisions and socio-economic trends before and after 2016.

For at least two decades, federal budgets did not respond to the reality that the First Nations population has been growing at a much faster rate than the overall Canadian population. As a result, federal studies showed negligible improvement from 2006 to 2016 in closing the socio-economic gap between First Nations and Canadians. The gap in Human Development Index (HDI) scores between First Nations and other Canadians decreased only slightly during this period. Compared to 189 countries, the international ranking of First Nations consistently has been much lower than Canada's overall ranking.¹ These outcomes show the shortfall in Canada's performance to end discrimination, colonialism, and poverty (as required under UN human rights treaties, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, to name a few).

In 2016, the federal government adopted a new approach and began making significant new investments in First Nations. The results are encouraging. The federal Community Well-Being Index (CWB) reveals the largest decrease in the socio-economic gap in four decades.



Overall CWB scores and all 4 component scores for First Nations communities increased over the long term (1981 to 2021) and the short term (2016 to 2021). Significant gaps between First Nations and non-Indigenous communities persisted between 1981 and 2021. However, between 2016 and 2021, the gap in overall CWB scores narrowed, marking the largest gap closure in the past 4 decades.”²

1 Cooke, M. (2019). Application of the United Nations Human Development Index to Registered Indians in Canada, 2006–2016. Ottawa: Indigenous Service Canada.

2 Indigenous Services Canada. [Overview of the Community Well-Being index, 1981 to 2021](#).



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Economic Reconciliation

Canada and First Nations must work together to maintain and build on this recent momentum. Significant gaps persist in access to basic human rights such as clean drinking water and other essential government services (such as health, housing, sanitation, infrastructure, policing, and education). First Nations overall remain more than 16 points behind non-Indigenous communities - even after the narrowing in the gap achieved between 2016 and 2021.

AFN's 2025 Pre-budget Submission outlines specific investments to fuel more positive change – [AFN's 2025 Pre-Budget Submission](#).

In fiscal negotiations with First Nations, the Honour of the Crown is always at stake, as recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions show. The Crown has some discretion, as do First Nations, but the Crown cannot adopt take-it-or-leave-it positions with First Nations or refuse to negotiate at all. (*Ontario (Attorney General) v. Restoule*, 2024 SCC 27; *Quebec (Attorney General) v. Pekuakamiulnuatsh Takuhikan*, 2024 SCC 39.)



Indigenous gross domestic income (GDI) increased by 57% between 2011 and 2021 to \$56.1 billion in 2021. The rest of Canada grew by 37.6%. Indigenous GDI represented 2.4% of Canada's total in 2021.



Commitment 1: If elected, would your government commit to working with First Nations to establish equitable, sustainable funding arrangements and co-developed legislation to support First Nations essential services (e.g. clean drinking water, First Nations policing and community safety)?

Resource Revenue Sharing and Shared Resource Regulation

First Nations lands hold vast deposits of critical minerals, forests and freshwater supplies that sustain communities on both sides of the border. We retain our original sovereignty in those lands and territories.

Canada's wealth and gross domestic product are generated from our lands and resources in which First Nations hold Treaty rights and inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction. This is reflected in international law. International law affirms and protects First Nations right to self-determination, including our resource rights (under various instruments including the UN



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Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, common article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the OAS American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Under Canada's constitution and common law, economic reconciliation is a legal obligation. It is also an economic prerequisite for Canada's success. Implementing economic reconciliation is a strategic advantage to benefit future generations.

Our Treaties and other constructive agreements are rooted in respect of our rights, mutual respect, and sharing. They must be honoured. Various barriers prevent the full implementation of our Treaty and inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction. Economic reconciliation that leads to First Nations prosperity requires access to the benefits of our lands and resources through structured arrangements with the Crown.

Views on how to balance environmental protection and economic development are diverse, and often divisive. Nevertheless, we must meet this challenge together. The well-being of future generations depends upon the ability and willingness of all governments in Canada to work together and develop systems to co-regulate sustainable use of lands and resources. This requires joint decision-making between First Nations and the Crown to ensure respect of Treaties, our inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction, and our right to self-determination.

Canada most recently reaffirmed its obligation to fully implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration) and the TRC Calls to Action in its July 2024 submission to the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Canada's oft stated commitment to human rights, the rule of law, a rules-based order, and multilateral institutions requires that it live up to its obligations and commitments to Indigenous peoples. This means that any federal legislative or regulatory proposals relating to resource regulation or to the environment must meet:

- The minimum human rights standards of the UN Declaration
- The consistency requirement in s. 5 of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*³
- All constitutional requirements respecting Treaty and "aboriginal" rights.

³ S.5 reads "The Government of Canada must, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the Declaration."



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Commitment 2: Building prosperity for Canada and First Nations through sustainable resource development is front and centre on everyone's agenda.

Is your party committed to working with First Nations to implement s.5 of the UNDA and the Crown's constitutional obligations by establishing a joint process with First Nations to review any proposed changes to federal resource regulation, environmental assessment and protection?

Would a government led by your party convene a First Ministers Meeting with First Nations leadership to assess and advance approaches to resource revenue sharing with First Nations; and discuss options and best practices to improve the inclusion of First Nations in resource regulation?

Will your party commit to the full participation of First Nations in federal discussions with provinces and territories on resource regulation and environmental protection at officials and ministerial levels?

Mechanisms for Priority Setting and Intergovernmental Cooperation

The 2017 AFN-Canada Memorandum on Joint Priorities (the MOU) established a "permanent bilateral mechanism" to identify and advance mutual priorities for action. The MOU is an ever-green document intended to be periodically updated through discussion. Some of the priorities currently listed have been completed, such as co-development of Indigenous languages legislation and passage of federal legislation to support implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Some important items are outstanding, such as action on policing and community safety and implementation of all the TRC Calls to Action.

There also has been joint work between Canada and AFN to measure progress to close the socio-economic gap. Joint dialogue and work need to continue. We need to update the list of priorities and Canada must ensure funding to support engagement with First Nations rights holders.

Commitment 3: If elected, would your government commit to working with First Nations to update the AFN-Canada MOU on Joint Priorities?



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Trade and International Relations

International trade and investment agreements, and activities under these, can impact First Nations rights, our security, our lands and our resources. First Nations leaders must be included in First Ministers Meetings and other intergovernmental meetings on these matters - not as guests to be tolerated for a short time, but as full participants. There is no Team Canada without First Nations at the table.

In the past, First Nations have engaged with Canada and provided input into drafting of international trade agreements, including CUSMA, to protect First Nations rights and interests in international trade.

Compared to the 2017 CUSMA negotiations, Canada and First Nations face a much more serious set of challenges now: punishing tariff impositions and retaliations, the upending of longstanding global trade relationships, and threats to the shared sovereignty of Canada and First Nations. Canada and First Nations face a U.S. administration that is antagonistic to traditional allies, disinterested in multilateral institutions and even the rule of law, and the protection of basic human rights. First Nations have strongly condemned the actions of the current Trump administration.

Inflationary pressures on food, combined with climate change and climate emergencies, threaten the security of First Nations and our food security. Disruptions to transportation and food supply chains arising from the current trade upheavals could further aggravate that situation. It will be important to establish communications and linkages between First Nations and the recently established National Supply Chain Office. During the pandemic crisis, many valuable lessons were learned and much cooperative action between Canada and First Nations took place. We can build on that cooperation to again protect First Nations.

In challenge often lies opportunity. Canada and First Nations are longstanding allies and partners. We can chart new paths to secure the well-being and prosperity of Canada and First Nations. We can support each other in navigating trade and other threats, dismantle trade barriers within Canada, and develop new and better trade relations around the globe. There are positive examples internationally. We note that the EU, Canada's 2nd largest trading partner, has a detailed policy⁴ that affirms its commitment to implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The EU often reaches out to our leadership on the status of human rights implementation by Canada.

4 European Union. 2017. [EU Council Conclusions on Indigenous Peoples](#). Other important EU statements and studies on the rights of Indigenous peoples can be found here Including "[An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic](#)".



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Commitment 4: If elected, would your government include First Nations fully in First Ministers meetings and other FPT meetings on Canada/U.S. border security, trade, and strategies to repel sovereignty threats? Will you ensure mechanisms for First Nations to have input into trade agreements drafting? Will you work with First Nations to include in trade agreements that no provisions may undermine the rights of Indigenous peoples, including those affirmed by the Constitution and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and include general exceptions that clearly confirm that Canada can take measures to fulfill its legal obligations to Indigenous peoples?

First Nations Infrastructure Gap

The First Nations infrastructure gap is well documented. This gap acts as a break on economic and social development. Removing this barrier would help fuel the national economy and the well-being of First Nations. Closing the First Nations infrastructure gap involves action on the basics of development. To thrive, First Nations must have access to adequate infrastructure, such as clean water, quality housing, reliable roads, power supplies, schools, and high-speed internet.

The AFN recently commissioned a [report from the Conference Board of Canada](#). It makes the business case for addressing the First Nations infrastructure gap. Key findings are:

- \$349.2 billion in capital and operating investments over seven years is required to close the First Nations infrastructure gap
- Closing the infrastructure gap has the potential to generate \$635.3 billion in economic output over the next seven years and 338,300 full-time jobs per year
- Every dollar spent would contribute \$1.82 in economic output to Canada
- This investment has the potential to generate an estimated \$308.9 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) over the seven-year period. This boost could propel Canada from last to first among G7 countries in average annual GDP per capita growth between 2023 and 2030.



Commitment 5: If elected, would your government commit to take the necessary action and work with First Nations to close the First Nations infrastructure gap by 2030 and create over 300,000 jobs?



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First Nations Housing Gap

The Auditor General of Canada's March 2024 report documented distressing problems in the federal housing programs for First Nations that are blocking progress:

- Canada's Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the federal government have no plan to close the First Nation housing gap
- 80% of the First Nations housing needs remain unmet and the total number of homes in need of repairs and replacement is largely unchanged
- CMHC and federal government housing formulas are out of date. Some regions are being short-changed by over \$100 million
- First Nations with the most housing needs often receive the fewest funds

It is time to take the First Nations housing file off the "too hard" pile.

Commitment 6: If elected, would your government:

- *work with First Nations to transfer control of the First Nations Market Housing Fund and other programs to First Nations?*
- *invest in First Nations-specific affordable housing solutions on and off-reserve that are developed by First Nations?*
- *increase funding for First Nations-led homelessness programs to align with the level of need?*
- *add value to the housing supply chain by training First Nation youth in the construction, design and development trades?*





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Employment Training

First Nations are also one of the youngest demographics in Canada. Indigenous youth make up over 8% of all young people in Canada and one-sixth of the entire Indigenous population (StatsCan, 2023).

As Canada shifts its public policy agenda towards strengthening domestic economies, there is a clear window to develop an impactful strategy to engage First Nation youth in addressing chronic skills shortages in the nation's fastest-growing economic sectors, driving economic reconciliation and a more resilient Canadian economy.

Between 2016 and 2026, more than 350,000 Indigenous youth will turn 15, the ideal point at which to be engaged on pathways into the Canadian labor market.

Recent forecasts predict that key sectors within Canada's digital economy, including clean energy, information technology, cybersecurity and digital media, will face demand for hundreds of thousands of additional tech jobs.

Without the skilled talent needed to fuel the growth of Canadian firms in these spaces, we risk squandering this potential. A First Nations-led vision for skilling and upskilling youth into high-demand roles in Canada's innovation economy is needed to meet this surge in demand.



Commitment 7: If elected, what steps will your government take to help tens of thousands of First Nation youth transition into high-demand roles in the innovation economy over the next four years?



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Major Projects: Decision-Making & Equity

Over the next decade, \$560 billion of projects (primarily in the resource sector) are forecast to be launched on the traditional territories of First Nations in this country. The benefit to Canada of these projects is in the trillions of dollars and would fuel decades of economic growth and innovation which must include First Nations.

While we welcomed the increase of up to \$10 billion in the First Nation Loan Guarantee program – it must be expanded. To realize the potential of these nation-building opportunities, we estimate those guarantees need to be in the range of \$100 billion.

With respect to project approvals, the Crown has legal consultation, accommodation, and consent obligations under Treaty, the Constitution, and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Beyond the infrastructure gap, we will call on the next federal government to support First Nations ownership of major infrastructure projects on our territories.

Commitment 8: If elected, what steps will your government take to enable First Nations ownership of major infrastructure projects in our Territories and build on the current First Nations Loan Guarantee program?

What other measures will you introduce to ensure First Nations receive sustainable benefit from projects on our lands?

Will your party work with First Nations to strengthen the Impact Assessment Act to ensure it meets the consistency requirement of s.5 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act?

Would your government work with rights holders to improve federal approvals processes and ensure First Nations rights are upheld and the standards of the UN Declaration met?





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Economic Reconciliation

Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (and Identity Fraud)

The next federal government will have to address the problem of fraudulent Indigenous identity claims in the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business. Canada's broad and vague standards for assessing First Nations identity for the purpose of accessing business programmes and procurement is reducing the opportunities for legitimate First Nations businesses. Properly deployed, these programmes can support emerging First Nations economies and advance economic reconciliation. Defining First Nation citizenship must be controlled by First Nations.

Commitment 9: If elected, what steps will your government take in the first year to ensure First Nations lead the federal procurement authentication processes based on definitions set by First Nations?



Will your government reestablish the 5% First Nations procurement target across all federal government departments? What steps will your government take in your first year to finally transfer responsibility for the determination of First Nations citizenship to First Nations instead of federal officials?



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Protecting the Environment

Environmental degradation, climate change and government neglect threaten our lands, waters, and resources. First Nations source waters increasingly are at risk of contamination. Atlantic and Pacific salmon have reached a crisis. Climate change is increasing the rate of severe weather emergencies and natural disasters and disproportionately affecting First Nations, our business, tourism, and community safety.



There are more than 1,000 active contaminated sites across 335 First Nations in Canada. Close to 200 are classified as high priority for action.

Commitment 10: If elected, would your government commit to the following:

Continue cooperative work with First Nations on climate action, including the work of the Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA), the full implementation of the AFN National Climate Strategy, and convene a discussion between the National Chief and Prime Minister to examine the First Nations climate priorities raised by the JCCA, including the implementation of the AFN National Climate Strategy?

Commit to work with First Nations to strengthen federal environmental protection and impact assessment legislation and regulations?

Ensure that all major projects, including the development of critical minerals, meet the Crown's engagement, consultation, accommodation and consent obligations to First Nations rights holders?





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Protecting Water and Implementing First Nations Water Rights

For generations, First Nations have cared for the rivers, lakes, and streams - knowing the health of our waters reflect the health of our communities and the land we share. Water sustains not just our bodies, but our spirits, our traditions, and our way of life.

Water is life. It is not a mere resource or commodity to be traded or consumed; it is a gift from the Creator, flowing through the veins of this land, connecting all living beings. Access to clean water is a fundamental human right. Without it, there is no health, no prosperity, no future.

The long-awaited First Nations Clean Water Act (Bill C-61) was not passed in the 44th Parliament. This Bill would have affirmed the jurisdiction of First Nations in relation to water, source water, drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on, in and under First Nations lands. There were some important areas that required strengthening, such as ensuring the FPIC standard is not undermined.



Boil water advisories in First Nation communities have lasted for generations. We are a long way from being done, but there have been significant reductions. As of March 1, 2025, 33 First Nations communities have boil water advisories.



Commitment 11: If elected, will your government work with First Nations to introduce a bill like Bill C-61, the First Nations Clean Water Act, within the first year after a joint assessment to ensure the bill upholds the minimum standards of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Will your government develop a plan to address the remaining boil water advisories?



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Completing the Calls and Honouring Promises

Completing the Calls and Honouring Promises

The next government must ensure full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, the Calls for Justice from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) National Inquiry, and the United Nations Declaration Act on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice

Indigenous women and girls are six times more likely to be murdered than other groups of people in Canada. Between 2009 and 2021, Indigenous women and girls made up of 2% and 3% of the Canadian population but were 5% and 7% of homicide victims. The AFN continues to support all survivors, families, and grassroots organizers. First Nations survivors of gender-based violence, and families with missing loved ones, have waited too long for meaningful action to address the root causes of violence. There is an urgent need for “wrap-around” services and resources immediately after experiencing violence or a loved one going missing. Overcoming violence and loss is an ongoing process that requires culturally responsive support and resources to heal.



The AFN's June 2024 Progress Report on the Implementation of the MMIWG Calls for Justice indicates just 2 of the 231 Calls for Justice have been fully implemented. The majority have seen minimal or no progress.



Commitment 12: If elected, will your government commit to establishing an FPT-First Nations process at a ministerial level to assess progress, identify performance measures and next steps to advance implementation of the Calls to Action and Calls for Justice?

Reconciliation is not an Aboriginal problem – it is a Canadian one. It involves all of us. It is about respecting one another and learning from one another. But before we can have reconciliation, we must have truth.

***– Justice (Calvin) Murray Sinclair, Mazina Giizhik-abun
The One Who Speaks of Pictures in the Sky***



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Completing the Calls and Honouring Promises



Commitment 13: If elected, what accelerated steps will your government take over the next two years to implement the Calls for Justice with First Nations, Survivors and their families? Will you invest in First Nations-led implementation?



The AFN Progress Report on the Implementation of the TRC Calls to Action indicates that, as of June 2024, only 14 of the 94 Calls to Action have been implemented

TRC Calls to Action

The critical work of implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report, and the Special Interlocutor's Indigenous-Led Reparations Framework, provides a path for the recovery, identification and commemoration of our missing children and protection of unmarked burial sites in a way that respects First Nation sovereignty and our traditional practices.



Commitment 14: If elected, what steps will your government take to provide funding support for First Nation-led searches for unmarked graves and the commemoration of children who never returned from Canada's Indian residential schools?



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Completing the Calls and Honouring Promises

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – Compliance and Full Implementation

Developing a federal Action Plan with First Nations for implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a statutory requirement of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA). The government acknowledged that the current Plan was put together quickly and needs improvement. It also committed to work with First Nations to do that. In addition, there needs to be a joint process to review priority federal legislation for amendment or overhaul to comply with the minimum standards of the UN Declaration and s.5 of the UNDA.



Commitment 15: If elected, will your government commit to undertaking a joint review of federal legislation impacting First Nations with First Nations; as well as a joint process to update and renew the federal Action Plan, and provide the requisite funding to support First Nations wishing to participate?



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Well-being of Children, Families, and Future Generation

Well-being of Children, Families, and Future Generation

For too many years, First Nations have been fighting in court to fix Canada's discriminatory child welfare system that compounded the harms of the Residential Schools system.

The AFN reached a historic turning point in 2023 with the largest compensation settlement in the history of this country. Unified, we secured a \$23.3 billion agreement for children and families forced to suffer through this injustice. Eligible claimants for the Removed Child and Removed Child Family classes can submit applications at www.fnchildclaims.ca.

We now need work together on Long Term Reform of Child Welfare to prevent discrimination in the future.



Commitment 16: If elected, will your government commit to a negotiating mandate aligning with AFN's mandate for long term reform of the FNCFS program and return to the negotiations with the AFN's newly appointed National Children's Chiefs Committee as soon as possible?



Commitment 17: If elected, will your government issue a public apology to those affected by discrimination in Canada's First Nations Child and Family Services Program and narrow application of Jordan's Principle?

"Since time immemorial, First Nations have kept our children well, healthy, and balanced with the land, with our language, and with our waters. Making sure children and their families have a healthy start in life will continue to be our top priority because First Nation children continue to be taken from their family, their community, language, and culture."

– Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak - National Chief, Assembly of First Nations



Assembly of First Nations

Prosperity for All

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Well-being of Children, Families, and Future Generation

Jordan's Principle

Jordan River Anderson and his family gifted First Nation children and families with Jordan's Principle. Jordan's spirit and his legacy have positively improved the lives of tens of thousands of children across this country. While Parliament passed a motion 17 years ago affirming Jordan's Principle, it has failed to uphold its full meaning and intent. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal found that Canada was discriminating against

First Nations children in 2016 and has made subsequent compliance orders since then. No child should face delays or barriers to the care and services they deserve. No child should face delay, denial, or gaps in services due to administrative red tape.



Commitment 18: If elected, how quickly will your government honour its legal obligations to provide long-term funding for Jordan's Principle and resolve the critical backlog of applications and payment delays? Would your government extend the age of eligibility to 30?

Education

Canada's education system was used as a tool to try to erase our cultures, take our languages and break our spirit. Today, education must be a tool that empowers First Nations and uplifts our children. The most effective way to secure the future success of First Nation children and our economy is to invest in education and skills training, starting at an early age and all the way through adult learning. The AFN's most recent analysis (January 2025) highlights several funding gaps in the regional funding formulas currently used to fund our schools.



The AFN's K-12 First Nations Education Transformation Costing Analysis Report shows that 50% of First Nations' actual education needs remain unfunded. Half of all 200 First Nation schools are overcrowded.



Commitment 19: If elected, what steps will your government take over the first two years to:

- strengthen regional education agreements?*
- enhance funding for Special Education programs?*



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Well-being of Children, Families, and Future Generation

Health

Too many First Nations have declared states of emergency due to mental health and addictions crises illuminated through illicit drug use, opioid overdose and increased violence. First Nations health leadership have expressed the need for transformative change towards First Nations-led health care programs and services through sustainable funding, increased capacity and improved relationships.

The health status of First Nations falls below national standards, with high morbidity and mortality across population health indicators, and often face bias and jurisdictional ambiguity. To achieve equitable health outcomes, it is crucial to remove barriers and gather evidence to support the expansion of the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program. This program is vital for providing essential health services not covered by other insurance plans, and its expansion could significantly benefit First Nations communities. Supporting traditional healing methods within First Nations communities and integrating them into the NIHB program can also play a vital role in addressing chronic diseases and prescription drug misuse. By doing so, First Nations can leverage their cultural knowledge to improve health outcomes.

The next federal government must work with First Nations to identify tangible plans to address the mental wellness crisis, which includes strengthening the mental wellness workforce to provide culturally sensitive care. Mental health issues are a pressing concern in many First Nations communities, often exacerbated by historical trauma and ongoing systemic challenges. By investing in culturally appropriate mental wellness programs and ensuring they are aligned with First Nations values, Canada can take significant steps toward improving the overall wellbeing of First Nations.



Commitment 20: If elected, what steps will your government take to reform and expand the Non-Insured Health Benefits program, invest in mental health, prevention and addiction, and deliver culturally appropriate care closer to home?



Assembly of First Nations Prosperity for All 2025 General Election Priorities

Community Safety and Security

Community Safety and Security

First Nations citizens have rights under the Constitution and international law to safety and security. Too often, discriminatory police action leads to serious injuries or deaths, over-policing, under-policing, and overrepresentation of First Nations people in federal corrections.

First Nations must be included in intergovernmental/ministerial discussions on safety and security as well as emergency management. Systemic discrimination has been confirmed by courts, human rights tribunals, and countless commissions of inquiry, federal and provincial.

In addition, severe weather events create growing community safety and security challenges for First Nations. We are on the front lines witnessing the devastating impacts of climate change and can be part of the solution to monitor and mitigate natural disasters.

Intergovernmental coordination and timely responses to protect First Nations communities often falls short because of our systemic exclusion from intergovernmental and ministerial discussions.



Climate-related disasters have cost Canada \$28 billion between 2000 and 2017. Between 2009 and 2023, First Nations experienced over 2,100 natural hazard emergencies, with floods and wildfires accounting for 71% of all emergencies.

The failure of federal and provincial governments to end discrimination in our First Nation policing and justice systems contradict the spirit of Reconciliation. It is time to say once and for all that First Nation lives matter in this country.

– Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak - National Chief, Assembly of First Nations



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Community Safety and Security

Policing

For years, First Nations have been challenging the federal government's discriminatory First Nations Inuit Policing Policy (FNIPP) in Courts and before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Litigation has also challenged provincial governments approach. As recently as December 2024, Canada's Supreme Court sent a message to provincial and federal governments it is no longer acceptable to underfund First Nations policing. In March 2024, the Auditor General of Canada weighed in with her most recent audit of the FNIPP. Her audit confirmed:

- The RCMP is receiving First Nations police funding for officers that do not exist.
- Canada has no fair formula to allocate policing dollars.
- While police funding has increased, there are little results.
- \$13 million in budgeted police funding lapsed in 2022-23 alone.
- RCMP and public safety officials do not communicate well with First Nations.

Since last summer, at least 12 First Nations have died in the custody of non-First Nations police across Canada. At the AFN's December 2024 Assembly, Chiefs were united in calling for an Inquiry into discriminatory policing practices.



Commitment 21: If elected, will your government urgently introduce legislation that affirms First Nations' jurisdiction over policing on-reserve, recognizes First Nations policing as an essential service and includes a commitment to long-term, sustainable and equitable funding? Will your government launch a National Inquiry into Systemic Racism in Policing, including an examination of the alarming rate of recent in-custody deaths across Canada?



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Community Safety and Security

Justice System

Dozens of commissions of inquiry over decades have documented that First Nations experience significant, intolerable systemic discrimination and racism when interacting with the Canadian justice system – from police, to courts, to corrections. Reforms are needed to address the overrepresentation of First Nations people in the Canadian justice system. The Indigenous Justice Strategy may provide a framework to advance meaningful reform to address systemic discrimination and must be implemented in a way that respects First Nations laws, legal traditions, and self-determination. A distinct strategy needs to be developed with First Nations.



Commitment 22: If elected, will your government support the First Nations Justice Strategy as part of Canada's Indigenous Justice Strategy by allocating long-term, sustainable resources for its implementation?

Emergency Management

Climate change is increasing the frequency of severe weather and natural disasters, disproportionately affecting First Nations. Increased investment in mitigation and preparedness will save lives and reduce long-term costs.



Commitment 23: If elected, would your government work with First Nations to implement our proposals to improve mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities for First Nations in response to climate-related emergencies? Will you support emergency management coordinators for First Nations who do not currently have fully funded positions? Will you ensure First Nations leadership is included in intergovernmental and ministerial meetings on emergency management and the climate crisis?



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Conclusion

The Assembly of First Nations looks forward to working with all Parliamentarians in the next Parliament to build a stronger Canada, one built on a stronger nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations. Decisions made by the next Parliament will be critical for First Nations and everyone who shares these lands. We encourage all candidates to meet directly with First Nations leadership to hear their perspectives firsthand.

Achieving equitable, shared prosperity means a federal government committed to jointly developing legislation, policy and operational practices that affirm and protect First Nations' inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction. First Nations voices must be at the table of national discussions about trade relations, pipelines, national energy corridors, or becoming an energy superpower.

We need to create mechanisms for First Nations to directly share in resource revenues and benefit from the sustainable use of resources on our ancestral territories. We must protect and be a good relative to future generations.

In these challenging times, we look forward to advancing our shared priorities to build a better future for all. Unlike the pandemic – which separated and isolated us – this new era of U.S. colonialism is unifying and bringing us together.

First Nations are an integral part of the economic fabric of this country and First Nations voters can make a significant difference in the outcome of this election.

We are sharing the priorities outlined in this document with each Party Leader and asking for a response. We will also attempt to work with their campaigns to facilitate direct dialogue with Chiefs during the campaign period. We will publish any responses we receive to ensure that First Nations voters are informed before they cast their votes.



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