



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS  
EXECUTIVE REPORT 2023





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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## INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF'S REPORT





# INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF'S REPORT



## Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard

*Qeu, Kwey. Greetings. As my term as Interim National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) concludes and I prepare to return to my role of Regional Chief in New Brunswick, I am pleased to present this report to reflect on the achievements and progress we've made between July and December 2023.*

### Introduction

As Interim National Chief, my priority has been to uphold the rights, interests, and concerns of First Nations, following the guidance of the First Nations-in-Assembly and the AFN Executive Committee, to address the pressing issues facing our communities, and to ensure that the voices of our people are heard and represented effectively. Most importantly, my priority has been to work to restore accountability, transparency, and upholding the values that guide our governance within the AFN.

I am grateful to the AFN staff for all their support in helping us make tremendous advancements since July. Additionally, I acknowledge 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 responsibilities I previously held. With this, I am pleased to present an update on the work completed to date.

### National Key Issues and Activities

At the AFN Annual General Assembly (AGA) in July 2023, we highlighted the need for meaningful dialogue and a renewed commitment to collaboration, unity, and empowerment. The AGA defined the objectives for the AFN, my role as Interim National Chief, and the priorities of the AFN Executive Committee. Our discussions were aimed at shaping our collective efforts and leadership moving forward.

This period saw significant leadership transitions; throughout this time, we maintained a strong commitment to transparency, accountability, and effective governance. The combined work of the AFN Executive Committee, the National Chief's Office, and the AFN Staff has led to significant progress, creating a strong foundation for our future initiatives.

Our key focus areas included ensuring the stability of the AFN, enhancing transparency in governance, and advancing the mandates set by First Nations-in-Assembly in areas such as rights and justice, land, climate action, and safe drinking water. Through the adoption of a collaborative approach within the AFN Executive Committee, we concentrated on improving policies, onboarding effective leadership, addressing conduct issues, and strengthening our financial structures. We have been diligent in implementing resolutions. We ensured that the perspectives and diversity of First Nations was well represented in all essential AFN discussions and meetings, highlighting our concerns, accomplishments, and goals.

As we prepare to welcome a new National Chief, and as I transition back to my role as Regional Chief for New Brunswick, I remain committed to the AFN's values and objectives. The consistent support and collaboration from First Nations across the country have been invaluable. I am optimistic about our future collaborations as we continue to represent and champion the rights and interests of First Nations.

### National Portfolio #1

#### International Affairs

As Interim National Chief of the AFN, my role is to ensure the voices, concerns, and aspirations of First Nations in Canada at regional, national, and international levels.

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In September, I attended the Central Bank Network for Indigenous Inclusion (CBNII) Symposium on Indigenous Inclusion in New Zealand. The symposium covered crucial issues such as Indigenous financial inclusion, access to capital, Indigenous-led financial approaches, and representation in the financial sector, emphasizing the importance of integrating First Nations' perspectives into global conversations.

In October, I attended the One Young World Summit in Belfast, Ireland, alongside the AFN National Youth Council (NYC), further strengthening the global presence of First Nations youth leadership. I was honoured to accept the baton on behalf of Canada, to host the One Young World Summit in 2024 in Montreal, Quebec, with 2,500 young leaders coming together at the Palais des congrès de Montréal.

I also met with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk. Our discussions spanned a range of issues, from Canada's UN Declaration Act Action Plan to self-determination, the UNDA Action Plan, systemic racism, discrimination, and other First Nations human rights concerns. This engagement allowed us to highlight Canada's human rights commitments and seek the High Commissioner's support for advancing First Nations rights. Further, I participated in the Canada-Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit Reception in Ottawa. Celebrating CARICOM's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the summit aimed to strengthen the ties for a more collaborative future.

## National Portfolio #2

### *Intergovernmental Affairs*

Since July, I have actively engaged in discussions across various governmental levels to ensure First Nations needs and priorities are clearly understood and integrated into Canada's national policy and actions.

In August and September, I met with various cabinet members to discuss key issues for First Nations and to seek commitments that move our priorities forward. This included a phone call with the Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to address issues such as regional multi-year funding, the Manitoba Landfill Search, and Métis Rights Assertions. Additionally, I met with the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services, and Honourable Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations to discuss AFNs 2024 Pre-Budget Submission's funding priorities, closing the infrastructure gap, implementing the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and progress on the health and safe drinking water legislation. I also met with Honourable Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development, to discuss First Nations' rights and jurisdiction over children and families, poverty reduction, and early learning, and Honourable Arif Virani, Minister of Justice, to discuss the Indigenous Justice Strategy and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA) Action Plan. With portfolio holders Ontario Regional Chief Glen Hare and Proxy Yukon Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim, we met with the Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health, to discuss prioritizing First Nations' health, including access to health services and strengthening First Nations-led health initiatives.

Following these meetings, invitations were each extended to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet members to attend a future AFN Executive Committee meeting to strengthen Canada's relationship with First Nations. Ministers Hajdu, Virani, and Anandasangaree accepted this invitation and met with the AFN Executive Committee in October 2023, providing them with an opportunity to receive direct input from the AFN Executive Committee about ongoing priorities for First Nations communities.







# INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF'S REPORT



In October, I had the honour of meeting Canada's Governor General, Mary Simon, alongside other National Indigenous Organization (NIO) leaders to discuss pressing issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the discovery of unmarked burials at Indian Residential Schools, and progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action.

In November, I attended the Indigenous Leaders and Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers (I-FPT) Forum on Economic Reconciliation alongside Ministers Patty Hajdu, Gary Anandasangaree, Dan Vandal, and Provincial/Territorial Ministers, to discuss advancing economic reconciliation.

In early 2024, the AFN and Canada will attend a leaders' meeting through the permanent bilateral mechanism to discuss key issues, assess progress on shared priorities, and advance shared priorities.

## National Portfolio #3

### *AFN National Youth Council (Temporary Portfolio Lead until December 1, 2023)*

The AFN National Youth Council (AFN-NYC) continues to play a crucial role, providing vital perspectives and experiences to shape discussions about key First Nations issues and promote youth initiatives at all levels. Their representation of First Nations youth across the 10 AFN regions ensures the integration of important insights into the workings of AFN Committees, Working Groups, and the AFN Secretariat. Their dedication and representation drive AFN's agenda forward, ensuring that youth perspectives and challenges are routinely advanced at both regional and national levels.

In July 2023, we welcomed new co-chairs, Rosalie LaBillois Wysote and Winter-Dawn Lipscombe. Their participation in the One Young World Summit in Belfast, alongside other international youth leaders, provided an avenue for knowledge and strategy exchange, enhancing the connectivity of the First Nations youth leadership.

The AFN remains committed to elevating youth voices in all regional, national, and international dialogues. We look forward to continuing our important work alongside the AFN-NYC.

## National Portfolio #4

### *AFN Women's Council*

The AFN continues to support the important work of the AFN Women's Council in their advocacy for an inclusive approach to address issues that impact First Nations women, girls, and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, and ensure proper supports to MMIWG Survivors and families, prevention services, and promote healing for our Nations.

In July, I, alongside Chief Joanne Miles of Flat Bay Band and Member of the AFN Women's Council, and Martha Martin, the mother of Chantel Moore of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, participated in the Forum of Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Ministers responsible for the Status of Women. This meeting focused on important issues affecting the status of Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people and provided an opportunity to urge the federal government for funding and support for three national frameworks that Survivors and families have raised as priority areas to address violence against First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.



# INTERIM NATIONAL CHIEF'S REPORT

In October, the AFN Women's Council held two in-person meetings in Winnipeg. The first, which took place on October 26, 2023, was a collaborative session with the AFN Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) Council where they discussed shared priorities, including the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) Framework and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, Transgender, and Gender-Diverse People (MMIWG2S+) Roundtable. The following day, on October 27, 2023, the AFN Women's Council met to discuss internal matters, including the election of a Vice-Chairperson and discussions about portfolios and the National Caucus of Women Leaders. These meetings will provide an opportunity for open dialogue, ensuring our path forward aligns with the needs and perspectives of First Nations women.

## National Portfolio #4

### *Lands, Territories and Resources (Temporary Portfolio Lead until December 1, 2023)*

Following former Regional Chief Paul Prosper's transition to the Senate of Canada in July of this year, I assumed the responsibility of overseeing the initiatives under the Lands, Territories, and Resources portfolio. Our efforts have been focused on progressing in critical areas like Additions to Reserve (ATR) reform, addressing Specific Claims, and pushing forward the implementation of rights through the UN Declaration Action Plan.

Since 2022, we have engaged in a collaborative effort with the Government of Canada to co-develop options to create a fully Independent Centre for the Resolution of Specific Claims. Progress is being made; however, we must continue pushing our counterparts at Crown-Indigenous Relations

and Northern Affairs (CIRNA) to ensure this work remains a priority. Reforming the ATR process remains a key goal, as the existing system often positions First Nations to fail by valuing risk management and the interests of third parties above our land needs. We have learned that CIRNA is committed to reframing the ATR process and will work together with the AFN and First Nations on a new policy framework that prioritizes First Nations goals.

## Conclusion

In the last six months, I have witnessed remarkable dedication from the AFN Staff, AFN Executive Committee, AFN Councils, and First Nations-in-Assembly. As we usher in the new AFN National Chief, I remain committed to ensuring a seamless transition and continued advocacy for First Nations to ensure their voices are amplified at regional, national, and international levels, across all tiers of government and from coast-to-coast. Building on the strong foundation set by the AFN Executive Committee and First Nations-in-Assembly, I am confident that the incoming National Chief will show commitment and dedication to our shared vision, championing stability, transparency, and good governance for the betterment of all our Nations.

*Welalin. Miigwetch, Merci.  
Joanna Bernard,  
Interim AFN National Chief  
AFN Regional Chief for New Brunswick*











## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS





## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



### Interim Regional Chief Andrea Paul and Interim Regional Chief Leroy Denny

#### *Nova Scotia*

Kwe' Nitaptut! Greetings Special Chiefs Assembly attendees! I would like to acknowledge the lands on which we gather, the unceded Anishinaabe Algonquin territory. On behalf of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities of Nova Scotia, the Office of Regional Chief, and Board of Directors, I present our report.

#### **Introduction:**

This report provides a summary of activities undertaken by the Office of Regional Chief (ORC). This is not an exhaustive list; however, it highlights some key initiatives that have been undertaken.

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Nova Scotia Region began coordinating activities and providing information related to climate, water and nature to the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia to support national work plans and to identify regional priorities. Each of the focus areas are unique yet intrinsically linked, so a common process to coordinate the required activities has been the focus. Work is ongoing to develop this, avoid overlap, and address gaps. Moreover, this exploratory process is engaging existing organizations within the region to ensure a coordinated approach.

Exploratory work in developing a Climate, Water and Nature Network (the Network) to connect with each Mi'kmaq community and organization and to collaborate on technical aspects in these areas of focus and understand regional priorities is underway. The creation of specific workplan areas to

formalize development of the Network continues.

The water file has involved working with national and regional entities on the development of new legislation for drinking water in Indigenous communities. Previously, external technical support for this work was undertaken that required the region to collaborate with both organizations to exchange information and support next steps.

The climate file is broad in scope, with the focus being on the development of the AFN National Climate Strategy. While some of the elements of the strategy are led by the national office, other elements are led by the region. A workplan has been developed to achieve this goal.

As the nature file is new nationally, the focus for the region has been to build capacity and participate in initiatives with the federal government on the right to a healthy environment under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) and Canada's 2030 Biodiversity Strategy.

#### **National Portfolio #1: Languages Portfolio**

##### *Interim Regional Chief Leroy Denny*

The Languages Portfolio continues to advance initiatives related to the implementation and enforcement of the Indigenous Languages Act (ILA) and to support First Nations priorities throughout the International Decade of Indigenous Languages, 2022-2032.



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The Languages and Learning Sector is collaborating with the Chiefs' Committee on Languages and the Technical Committee on Languages on the following priorities: continued review of the Regional Allocation Formula for the Indigenous Languages and Cultures Program, collaboration with the Department of Canadian Heritage for a Logic Model and review of potential baselines and targets, and the nomination of a First Nations representative to the International Decade of Indigenous Languages Global Task Force.

The continued chronic underfunding of First Nations languages is unacceptable and must be elevated beyond the bureaucratic level. First Nations have supported the interim First Nations Languages Funding Model and revised factors for the Regional Allocation Formula. It is a priority to build consensus moving forward to support all regions.

The Government of Canada has communicated delays with respect to the three-year Parliamentary Review of the ILA (expected fall 2023). This process, along with the five-year Independent Review, must be prioritized to support the introduction of amendments to the ILA, in line with AFN mandates.

## **National Portfolio #2: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples Portfolio**

*Interim Regional Chief Andrea Paul*

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples (MMIWG2S+) Portfolio continues to implement Resolution 27/2022, Support for the Family of Chantel Moore and Implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice, which calls for the Federal Government to accelerate the implementation of the National Action Plan, 231 Calls for Justice, and to disclose in a transparent manner how

the funding is being allocated. The AFN report, "Connecting Hearts and Making Change: Building on Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice," released on June 3, 2023, keeps survivors and families at the heart of the advocacy work. Support and resources for community-based prevention services focused on at-risk populations remains a priority. A whole government approach is needed to fund a national strategy on prevention services and supports for grassroots initiatives.

The AFN Justice Sector is creating a Calls for Justice Report Card that will be updated annually and released on June 3—the anniversary date of the release of the National Inquiry's Final Report. Development of the AFN Calls for Justice Report card will include input from the AFN Women's Council and AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council.

On October 4, 2023, CIRNA Minister Anandasangaree announced an additional \$740,000 towards further review of a possible search of the Prairie Green Landfill.

With the fifth anniversary of the National Inquiry's Final Report, Survivors and family members are looking for government commitment in carrying out meaningful actions to implement the 231 Calls for Justice and the National Action Plan.

Additional information can be found in the First Nations Action Plan and AFN's submission to CIRNA's Annual Progress Report on MMIWG2S+.







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## The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

Thank you to the Chiefs of Nova Scotia who have completed the process of electing a new Regional Chief. The path ahead will be determined as the new Regional Chief begins the work with the Chiefs and setting the region's priorities.

## Conclusion:

Hosting the AFN Annual General Assembly in Halifax this past summer was a highlight in our region. We were able to showcase our region by hosting three social events highlighting our culture.

We would also like to take this time to acknowledge the support from the team at the Nova Scotia Regional Chief's Office: Jenn, Mike, and Delphine. We would also like to acknowledge our previous Regional Chief, Senator PJ Prosper for his leadership, advocacy, and support to our region. Senator PJ, we are so proud of you!

*In peace and friendship,  
Regional Chief Office*





## Regional Chief Brendan Mitchell

### *Newfoundland*

The Newfoundland (NL) Region is pleased to be provided an update to First Nations-in-Assembly as its own stand-alone AFN region. Our region thanks the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) for its ongoing support in enabling the setup of the Office of the Regional Chief.

#### **Introduction:**

I am pleased to share that, after serving as Interim Chief for the past several months, I have now begun serving a three-year term as Regional Chief. Prior to becoming Regional Chief, I served as a member of the Council of Qalipu First Nation since 2011 and as Qalipu Chief for eight years.

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

Access to adequate health care continues to be a primary issue for the NL Region. Approximately 130,000 residents of NL and Labrador have no family doctor. Additionally, the need for mental health services is growing. At Qalipu First Nation, mental health service demand has increased from \$300,000 to \$1.4 million in just three years, and this growth trend continues.

The scarcity of housing is a key issue throughout our region. Many require housing repairs and maintenance, with seniors representing a vulnerable demographic. Furthermore, the number of First Nations experiencing homelessness is increasing, especially given the dramatically increasing cost of living, which is becoming unbearable for many.

The NL Region continues to advance Mi'kmaq language initiatives and must build upon the successes of initiatives to date. The NL Mi'kmaq are experiencing a cultural renaissance, and this momentum requires financial support to promote language and other cultural activities.

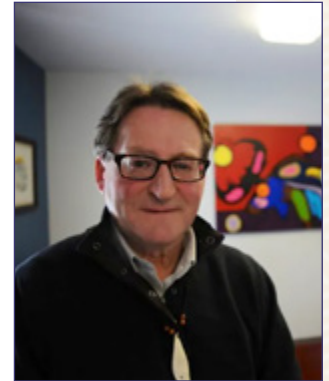
The setup of the Office of the Regional Chief is now underway. An office location is being sought in Corner Brook, NL. An additional office will be located at Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River, NL. The Board of Directors for the Office of the Regional Chief is being established together with the Charter of the Office of Regional Chief and associated by-laws. It is expected that the Office of the Regional Chief will be operational in December 2023.

Committee representation for various National Committees is being addressed. We hope to have NL Region representatives selected by the end of November 2023.

#### **National Portfolio #1:**

##### **Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal (CCoCR):**

The Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal (CCoCR) continues to schedule regular meetings and advance plans to engage First Nations on renewal of the AFN Charter. However, while the CCoCR's principle mandate is to implement recommended changes to the AFN Charter, the CCoCR has decided to prioritize its mandate on the review of AFN finances as per AFN Resolution 43/2023, Review of the Past Ten Years of Assembly of First Nations / National Indian Brotherhood Audits. Consequently,







## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



the CCoCR has also decided to temporarily postpone recommended changes to the AFN Charter until after the December 2023 Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA). An exact date to start this work has not been determined as the AFN has not yet secured funds to undertake charter renewal engagements.

In October 2023, the CCoCR passed a motion to approve a workplan for Resolution 43/2023 and to establish a sub-committee to oversee its implementation. As set out in this plan, the sub-committee worked with the AFN Secretariat to post a Request For Proposals (RFP) through which it has secured the services of an independent, professional contractor to undertake a preliminary audit of AFN finances.

A report on the first phase of this work will be finalized by the end of January 2024. Based on this, and if it is determined that further investigation of AFN finances is warranted, the contractor will be retained to undertake the second, forensic phase. The CCoCR will provide a progress report at the July 2024 Annual General Assembly.

### **The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:**

In the short term, moving forward involves the establishing of the Office of the Regional Chief as per the mandate of the AFN, in accordance with the appropriate governance, accounting, staffing, human resources, and reporting protocols. In association with the Regional Chief's Office, seek out and secure resources to help meet the needs of AFN affiliates in NL.

### **Conclusion:**

I take this opportunity to thank the AFN, the Executive Committee, Management Committee, CCoCR, and staff for the support being provided to the NL Region. On behalf of our Regional AFN affiliates, I look forward to working positively with the AFN in the spirit of friendship, kinship, community, and Reconciliation.

*Looking forward to the December 2023  
Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa, Ontario.*









# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## Regional Chief Joanna Bernard

*New Brunswick*

'Qey/Kwe',

I begin by acknowledging that we are gathering on the unceded and unsundered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence dates back to time immemorial.

### Introduction:

Greetings Knowledge Keepers, Chiefs, Councillors, and Friends. It is my honour to present my annual report to the First Nations-in-Assembly. Appointed Interim National Chief at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) July 2023 Annual General Assembly in Halifax, Nova Scotia, I would like to express my appreciation to the New Brunswick Chiefs for their patience and support in my new role. Additionally, I 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 responsibilities I previously held.

### Regional Key Issues and Activities:

#### *Call for New Relationships*

The AFN and the New Brunswick Assembly of First Nations Regional Office (NBAFN) met with Premier Higgs on September 12, 2023. NBAFN still holds hope that this was a positive first step towards fostering a new positive relationship that promotes dialogue and addresses the unique needs of the communities.

AFN and NBAFN had expressed concerns regarding the Government of New Brunswick's (GNB) approach to First Nations engagement. During the meeting, NBAFN urged Premier Higgs to engage with First Nations leaders, recognize and acknowledge their inherent rights, and provide a space that would foster trust, understanding, and reconciliation. NBAFN also noted that by actively involving First Nations leaders in the decision-making processes and providing platforms for their voices to be heard would demonstrate a genuine commitment to inclusivity and empowerment.

To advance the priorities and mandates of the communities, NBAFN proposed a round table discussion with all 15 New Brunswick Chiefs be held in the coming weeks.

#### *Safe Drinking Water*

NBAFN, in partnership with North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council, continues to work closely with 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 is 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, "Water is sacred to all peoples and must be protected."



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## 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, NB. The Symposium brought leaders from First Nations communities, 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.

## 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 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.

### Other Notable events:

- Summer Powwow Trail
  - Ugpi'ganjig, Eel River Bar First Nation – August 19, 2023
  - Negotkok, Tobique First Nation – July 19, 2023
- NBAFN Chiefs Meetings – July 20, 2023, and August 25, 2023.
- Late Jack Wysote Memorial – August 23, 2023
- APC All Chiefs and Council – September 13-14, 2023
- NB Women in Leadership Conference – November 3, 2023
- St Marys Veterans Day Memorial – November 8, 2023
- JEDI AGM – November 8, 2023
- Bank of Canada Roundtable with Governor MacKlem – November 22, 2023
- Grand Opening of Nignen Shelter – November 30, 2023
- AFNWA Monthly Board Meetings







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### 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, women and gender equality, 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 six months have been a period filled with invaluable learning, training, and attending many meetings. I wish to thank the AFN Staff and AFN Executive Committee for their commitment and dedication in advocating for all First Nations, and Chief Rebecca Knockwood and all the NBAFN Chiefs for their support. I look forward to continuing to serve the New Brunswick region.

*Woliwon/Wela'lin*

*Interim National Chief and  
Regional Chief, Joanna Bernard*

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*Water is Life; Water is  
health. Fresh water is scarce  
and requires protection.  
It will become increasingly  
valuable... 7 Generations!*

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## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



### Acting Regional Chiefs Roderick Gould and Darlene Bernard

#### *Prince Edward Island*

As Acting Regional Chiefs, we bring you festive greetings! It is our honour to have served on the AFN Executive for the past year and it is with our excitement we announce that the Prince Edward Island (PEI) Regional Chief "call for Interest" has been posted, with November 10, 2023, as the deadline to submit.

#### **Introduction:**

As Acting Regional Chiefs, Chief Gould sits on the Chiefs' Committee on Charter Renewal and Chief Bernard holds the Fisheries Portfolio. In addition, there are several Chiefs' Committees and Technical Tables that First Nations in PEI support. As we are a small region, it is challenging to participate on all of these committees, which means priorities must be set. The regional office is working on letters of appointments and will soon fill many of the technical committee positions, so we can rely on our communities' expert leads on important topics that include health, justice, economic development, education and languages, lands, and environment.



#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

Since the beginning of this fiscal year, the Regional Office has hired an Executive Assistant to support its operations. The Region also created its own distinct logo that speaks to PEI First Nations. The logo features the loon as the messenger, the three trees representing the three Chiefs of Epekwitk, the sun representing the eastern door, red clay for the island soil, and the braid of sweetgrass that speaks to health and wellness for our people.

#### **National Portfolio #1:**

Acting Regional Chief Darlene Bernard holds the Fisheries Portfolio. The AFN Fisheries Sector has identified the following three priorities for discussion with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO):

1. The draft Aquaculture Act and the Transition Away from Open Net Pen Fish Farms.
2. The full implementation of the Marshall Decision and the recommendations outlined in the Peace on the Water Senate Report.
3. The prioritization and implementation of the fisheries-related measures in the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA) Action Plan.



# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS

## *National Portfolio #2:*

Acting Regional Chief Rodrick Gould holds the Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal (CCOCR) Portfolio. The CCOCR was established in 2017 with the mandate from the First Nations-in-Assembly to consult with First Nations about the structure of the AFN. The CCOCR continues to develop viable options on AFN restructuring.

## **Conclusion:**

The PEI Regional Chiefs' office would like to express our appreciation to the AFN Executive Staff, the AFN Executive Committee, and the Technical Leads. We offer a huge thank you for your service to the First Nations across Turtle Island! May the Creator continue doing great work through us all.

*Mns't Nokemaq! "All my relations"*







# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## Regional Chief, Ghislain Picard

*Quebec-Labrador*

As First Nations leaders from all our territories prepare to fill the important position of AFN National Chief, the AFNQL's Grand Chiefs and Chiefs wish everyone a meeting inspired by both the wisdom of our ancestors and the expectations of the First Nations people.

### Introduction

First Nations' self-determination is a sacred right. Without restoring self-determination, First Nations will never be able to heal the wounds inflicted by hundreds of years of colonization and subjugation to alien laws and customs. The exercise of their self-determination is the only way for First Nations governments to provide their people with conditions conducive to their development, and with programs and services that truly meet their needs.

Since the election of the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) five years ago, the AFNQL has been faced with a provincial government that has done everything in its power to prevent First Nations from exercising their right to self-determination. The negative impacts of this colonialist attitude are becoming increasingly severe for First Nations people, wherever they live.

### Regional Key Issues and Activities

Despite the CAQ government's clearly stated desire to subject First Nations to its laws and prerogatives, the Grand Chiefs and Chiefs of the AFNQL continue to implement an agenda that is, more than ever, clearly focused on self-determination and respect for the Aboriginal and Treaty rights and title of First Nations in all territories.

From the trial courts to the Supreme Court of Canada, the provincial government vigorously opposes the implementation of First Nations laws, asserting the superiority of its own laws and its desire to exercise illegitimate authority over our children.

Beyond these political and legal considerations, the primary concern of First Nations parents, families, governments and institutions remains the well-being and safety of children and youth, often struggling with provincial structures that contribute to socio-economic gaps.

Following years of insistence on the part of the AFNQL, the reaction of the Quebec population in general, and after tragedies such as those of women of our Nations living in Val d'Or or the racist treatment suffered by Joyce Echaquan, the provincial government finally agreed to entrust a Commission (Commission Viens) with the mandate to examine the treatment reserved for First Nations and Inuit in some provincial government services.

The Commission's report is followed up by the AFNQL and the Protecteur du Citoyen, an ombudsman reporting to the Quebec National Assembly.

Findings on both sides point to a low level of implementation of the Viens Commission's recommendations, while the situation in social services, healthcare, workforce training, and other areas is far from improving.



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The CAQ government's rejection of the very notion of racism and systemic discrimination remains the key issue.

The provincial government's desire to impose its will, laws, and regulations on First Nations is also evident in the areas of cultures and languages, which belong entirely to the First Nations, who in no way recognize the authority of the province.

Cultural safety, especially in health care—which corresponds to the province's obligation to provide First Nations with appropriate services—requires an amendment to the provincial Health Act. Under the pretext of finally fulfilling its obligation, the province is proposing a legislative framework that interferes with cultural content that does not fall within its jurisdiction. Once again, they are attempting to occupy an area that falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the First Nations themselves, namely their cultural prerogatives.

The AFNQL will never accept, and will denounce when necessary, any provincial language initiative that is proposed to the detriment of the First Nations' language rights, as well as the rights of Nations who must use English as a second language, which is about half the population of our territories.

In this case, once again, the AFNQL, with the support of the First Nations Education Council (FNEC)—one of the regional commissions and organizations under the Assembly of Chiefs—is left with the burden of defending language rights, using significant and costly legal resources.

The provincial government recently passed an Act amending the Provincial Charter of the French Language. The AFNQL and the FNEC are in the process of intervening before the Superior Court to formally

challenge some provisions of the Charter as recently amended by the CAQ government.

Public Safety and Justice is an essential issue, in particular, the issue of policing. For a provincial government that denies the legitimacy of First Nations governments, it is inconceivable to accept that police services be placed under the authority of First Nations governments. The provincial government is preparing a reform of the Police Act. The AFNQL must remain as vigilant as possible regarding the developing bill in order to preserve the authority of First Nations governments over police services that meet the needs of their communities.

For its part, the federal government, which is a party in the administrative agreements governing police services, shows no intention of getting involved in promoting First Nations self-determination in matters of public safety. This is evidenced by its desperate inaction in the face of possible federal legislation on policing as an essential service. On the other hand, the federal government is also grappling with the discriminatory situation of police funding, that has been upheld by the court.

The Mashteuiatsh Innu Council is the driving force behind this project, which will benefit all First Nations governments.

## National Portfolio # 1

The AFNQL Regional Chief and the AFN BC Regional Chief are the AFN's co-spokespersons for Justice and Public Safety. Their joint responsibilities focus primarily on the Indigenous Justice Strategy (IJS) and policing issues.





## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



On October 11, the AFNQL Regional Chief participated in the FPT meeting of the Ministers responsible for Justice and Public Safety with Indigenous groups. We deplore the fact that the introduction of a bill on Indigenous policing as an essential service is still pending, particularly when provincial governments are warning the federal government not to intervene in what they consider to be their jurisdiction.

In keeping with his responsibility for Justice and Public Safety, the AFNQL Regional Chief represented the Interim National Chief when the Correctional Investigator of Canada recently released his report.

### Conclusion – Moving forward

For the AFNQL, the provincial-First Nations relationship, which is often difficult for all First Nations, has become even more complex because of Quebec nationalism that is present in all areas of intergovernmental relations. The open and litigious intention of the current provincial government to impose its laws and will on First Nations, and to subject their governments to its authority—an attitude that can be described as colonialist—has direct and daily negative effects on First Nations people. The AFNQL's invitations to concrete political discussions with the province have led to nothing. The initiative of a political table, supported by technical tables, has never been backed by a clear political commitment on the part of the Legault government. The AFNQL's proposal to create a parliamentary commission on First Nations issues was rejected.

As a collective of Grand Chiefs and Chiefs, the AFNQL must be active on all fronts imposed by the provincial government's firm rejection of any form of First Nations self-determination. The AFNQL, supported by the regional commissions and organizations that report to the Assembly of Chiefs, must expend considerable resources in the face of the challenges posed by the provincial government, resources that we would prefer to devote to the needs of our people.

*The Chiefs and Grand Chiefs of the AFNQL wish everyone an enlightening and engaging Special Assembly in the face of the many challenges we must face together.*









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## 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 we are gathered on the traditional territories of the Algonquin Nations.

### Introduction

Over the past year we have been working with provincial and federal levels of government. The Chiefs of Ontario have continued to advocate for education, justice, economic development, health, and water. As one of our Knowledge Keepers says, you can't win alone, so I rely on First Nation Chiefs to advise me on what they need and I seek their input as we address solutions. I continue to work collaboratively with the Regional Chiefs to advance the rights and interests of First Nations.

### Regional Key issues and Activity

Health concerns have affected every aspect of our lives. The COVID-19 pandemic is still impacting us; we had hoped it would begin to wind down, only to find the virus mutate and become more infectious. This year we met with the Health Minister and said very clearly, "Nothing about us, without us!"

We have been taught that water is life; it affects the earth, wildlife, air, and fires. I said I was ready for a challenge, and it has certainly been a challenging year for all of us with many losses in our communities, our families, and our Elders. Despite these difficulties, we continue to look at the issues in our regions to fulfill the resolutions in areas of education, economic development,

health, women's initiatives, social, communications, and policy.

### National Portfolio 1: Water

First Nations from across Canada emphasized the importance of sufficient funding, strong governance, minimum standards, and rights-based recognition. We know that new legislation must address these concerns.

The AFN indicated to Minister Patty Hajdu that new legislation would be supported if an expanded mandate was obtained to address First Nations' concerns. The dialogue table, led by co-leads Phil Fontaine and Linda Debassige, along with AFN and advisors have continued to meet with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to develop a supporting document, entitled the Annex, to support the Minister in successfully obtaining an expanded mandate from her cabinet committee members. Minister Patty Hajdu was targeting introduction of new legislation in November 2023.

The AFN continues to push for water legislation that clearly affirms First Nations source water governance rights to protect us from upstream water polluters. The legislation does not currently safeguard First Nations source water protection rights. Ensuring free, prior, and informed consent requirements is necessary should the Minister make decisions on First Nations water rights. We must have binding minimum standards for drinking water and wastewater the day the legislation comes into force. The First Nations Water Commission must be in place with resources



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to support it. The AFN advocates for immunity provisions that ensure First Nations governments are not held liable for harm caused by systems that continue to be underfunded. We continue to meet weekly with ISC in a co-development process to pursue legislation that respects the direction by the First Nations-in-Assembly.

## National Portfolio 2: Health

### *Distinctions-Based Indigenous Health Legislation*

The Chiefs Committee on Health (CCOH) remains concerned with the process for Indigenous health legislation. Timelines are unrealistic, funding for critical engagement work with our communities is inadequate, and there continues to be a lack of clarity on several items being considered for inclusion in the legislation. The CCOH is currently considering a recommendation that calls on Canada to suspend its work on health legislation until the current flaws with the process are addressed.

The CCOH is also supporting a potential resolution for the December Special Chiefs Assembly that also calls on Canada to suspend the current process. These concerns were scheduled to be brought to the attention of Minister Patty Hajdu in November.

### *Non-Insured Health Benefits*

We continue to hear about ongoing issues with the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program, most recently from the NIHB Navigators who met with the AFN Health Sector in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Racism, lack of understanding from service providers, our people being subscribed the cheapest option for prescriptions, being asked to pay for medication in advance,

medical transportation—all these issues persist. We will continue to press the government to work faster to fix these issues.

### *Long-Term Care*

The AFN is preparing to submit policy recommendations for a wholistic Long-Term and Continuing Care Framework for Chiefs to vote on at the SCA 2024. This set of policy recommendations will aim to ensure First Nations receiving long-term care services can have safe and equitable care in the comfort of their community.







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## The Path Ahead

I want to conclude with highlighting my supportive and collaborative work advocating for progressive and visionary First Nations leaders across the region. In the year ahead, as Ontario Regional Chief, I will continue to focus on:

1. Familiarizing the leadership with the AFN Charter.
2. Appointing Integrity Committees and training.
3. Providing space for an overview and discussion on existing mandates and AFN Committees.
4. Providing an opportunity for the leadership to articulate new strategic plans for the planned funding cuts in several areas of interest or concern that would impact AFN initiatives.

## Conclusion

I want to thank the leadership for joining us, and I acknowledge your dedication, perseverance, and heart on the many decisions you make on a day-to-day basis with your governments for your communities. I am humbly thankful to be part of the Assembly of First Nations.

*We have many, many challenges ahead of us. Stay safe.*









# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse

### *Manitoba*

Greeting Chiefs, Councillors, proxies, and First Nations citizens! As always, the work continues to advocate for the betterment of our communities.

#### **Introduction:**

I have been Regional Chief for the past two years and have been honoured to meet and work with many of you. We all have one collective mindset: to see our Nations succeed. The Assembly of First Nations Chiefs have put forth mandates that we will continue to advocate for. The portfolios that I hold are Emergency Management, Social Development, and Housing and Infrastructure. In the spirit of Treaty and Reconciliation, we know that the work has only begun. We must continue to fight for what is inherently ours!

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

First Nations communities in Manitoba are moving forward and there are many ongoing initiatives to advance our work. It has been a great honour to witness progression within our communities. As the work continues, some of the key priorities have been:

- Working in unity with other First Nations to ensure that we are able to advocate collectively.
- Fighting systemic and explicit discrimination in health services.
- Ministerial meetings to advocate for the housing and infrastructure needs within Manitoba First Nations.

- Continued budget advocacy to ensure that Manitoba First Nations receive adequate federal funding by submitting an Alternative Manitoba First Nation Federal Budget.

We have witnessed a historic moment in our province as Manitobans elected our First Nations Premier, Wab Kinew. We expect Premier Kinew to bring in new era of governance and collaboration in Manitoba, one that strengthens the relationship with First Nations. The safety and security of First Nations women and girls, and addressing systemic discrimination in the justice system, must be remain at the forefront of our efforts.

With the federal commitment and Premier Kinew's support, we look ahead to a future where safety and justice for First Nations women and girls is recognized. The pressing need for culturally sensitive medical care, especially in mental wellness, cannot be overstated. Disparities in health outcomes between First Nations and other Manitoban communities have been widening. This needs to change. We are optimistic about collaborating with Premier Kinew and his Cabinet to support the vision of First Nations leadership in Manitoba. Together, we will address health disparities, housing challenges, systemic discrimination, and ensure respect for the Treaty relationship.



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An important part of our work as leaders is to build and maintain a high public profile for our issues in Canada and internationally. At the September meeting of global leaders at the United Nations on Sustainable Development, I led the AFN delegation and carried a very clear message that First Nations had been severely marginalized in the process leading up to the UN Summit on Sustainable Development. We highlighted how this fact was reflected in the disappointing content of the UN Political Declaration on Sustainable Development. This UN Declaration contains only one minor reference to Indigenous Peoples. On behalf of First Nations, the AFN communicated to Canada and other UN States that the outcome document of the Summit does not comply with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples nor with the commitments to Indigenous Peoples under the UN's Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development. We also indicated to Canada how the content of the Declaration on Sustainable Development could have been improved had the process been more inclusive and respectful of First Nations.

## **National Portfolio #1: Emergency Management (EM)**

The 2023 wildfire season has been devastating and horrific. It finally has begun to calm down. First Nations community members are starting to return home and many hotspots are cooling. The focus now turns to repatriation of evacuees, rebuilding, and lessons learned processes. A key focus area is shifting from a reactive approach to a pro-active approach that values the generational knowledge and expertise of First Nations to guide their people through the impacts of climate change and other hazards.

Much of the work is ongoing, yet there has been specific progress of note, including the Standing Committee for First Nations Oversight on Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) implementation of the Office of the Auditor General Report on Emergency Management in First Nations which began in August. The AFN EM team is working closely with ISC to ensure that the measures as outlined in the report are followed and that engagement with First Nations holders is at the forefront.

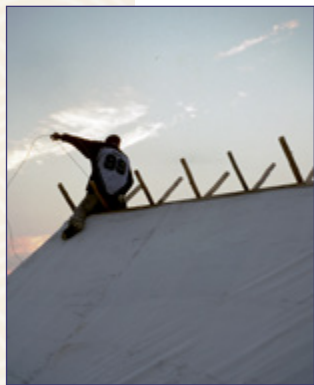
To support the AFN's advocacy for increased allotments in Budget 2024 for First Nations Climate Adaptation for effective resilience to Climate Change, the AFN will be attending the National Adaptation Summit Series on November 2, 2023, in Ottawa, Ontario. AFN continues to plan and coordinate the March 2024 AFN Emergency Management Forum, to be held at the Hotel Lac Leamy in Gatineau, Quebec.







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### National Portfolio #2: Social Development

#### *FNCFS and Jordan's Principle Compensation and Long-Term Reform:*

The AFN continues to advocate for long-term reform of FNCFS and Jordan's Principle in the negotiations towards a Final Settlement Agreement on long-term reform, as mandated by AFN Resolution 40/2022, To Ensure Quality of Life to the First Nations Child and Family Services Program and Jordan's Principle. In April 2023, the AFN and First Nations Child and Family Caring Society proposed revised timelines to negotiate a Final Settlement Agreement (FSA) on long-term reform of FNCFS and Jordan's Principle to ensure sufficient time for research to be completed, and to allow time for engagement with First Nations to uphold their free, prior, and informed consent. The Government of Canada has yet to respond, and as such negotiations on long-term reform have been stalled for over six months. In July 2023, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) approved the revised FSA on compensation, and the AFN the Federal Court approved the FSA on October 24, 2023.

#### *Jordan's Principle:*

The AFN continues to raise compliance concerns regarding Jordan's Principle and the Back-to-Basics approach to ISC, as agreed to in the Agreement-in-Principle (AIP) on long-term reform, including determination delays, backlogs in requests, payment timelines, and denials. Data provided by ISC indicates that British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Northern region each reported a backlog of 1000-2600 cases. The AFN continues to hear from individuals, service coordinators, and professionals about delays in determining requests and issuing payments, in some instances leading to financial hardship and professionals refusing to provide services.

### National Portfolio #3: Housing and Infrastructure

The AFN expects all First Nations housing and homelessness initiatives to align with the National First Nations Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy. As reflected in the AFN's 2024 pre-budget submission, the AFN expects the finance minister to announce an investment of \$349.2 billion over seven years that includes \$135.1 billion for housing to fulfil ministers' mandates to closing the infrastructure gap (CTIG) by 2030. Any expanded time frame to close the gap must be co-developed with the AFN. The AFN expects the CTIG Memorandum to Cabinet to give ministerial authority to provide and deliver new and expanded initiatives, including the First Nations-triggered transfer of control of the minimum seven year CTIG by 2030 funding, new or expanded financial tools, expanded Ministerial Loan Guarantee limit, capitalization of existing and new First Nations lending institutions, and expanded infrastructure investments to match housing development.

The AFN expects a new, co-developed process to add reserve lands where they are needed for new house construction. The expanded monetization of federal transfers to First Nations accessing loan capital from lenders is a useful initiative. However, it will not be available to a large percentage of First Nations until they increase their governance and financial management capacity sometime in the medium- to long-term future. Therefore, the AFN expects federal government acknowledgement and commitment to expanded federal grants, contributions, and forgivable loans for the many First Nations up to and likely past 2030. The AFN expects the federal First Nations housing policy to recognize First Nations inherent and Treaty rights and jurisdiction over housing.



## National Portfolio #4: National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan

Work is being finalized on the development of the Action Plan that aims to improve the delivery of federal government programs addressing homelessness for First Nations people. The Action Plan will represent an advocacy document for long-term and multi-partner solutions to First Nations homelessness, including increased First Nations distinctions-based funding under Reaching Home.

To date, the AFN has carried out several research and engagement activities to inform the development of the Action Plan including a literature review, environmental scan, and systems map, 16 regional engagement sessions, a national survey, discussions with homelessness services providers, as well as two large conferences.

An Action Plan Dialogue Session was held on September 12, 2023, that provided a final opportunity for formal engagement before being presented for approval. Working towards fulfilling the mandate provided by First Nations in-Assembly, the AFN aims to present the draft Action Plan for approval at the Special Chiefs Assembly in December 2023.

## The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

Moving forward, we will continue to advocate for all First Nations with the following priorities:

- Eliminating short and long-term drinking water advisories
- First Nations investment alignment with Canadas Net Zero strategies
- Year-round road access investment
- Climate adaptation investment needs

- Retrofitting on-reserve for handicap/ accessibility
- Digital connectivity
- Policing as an essential service
- Co-Developing Water Legislation

It is crucial that we continue the work where Canada recognizes and honours the inherent Treaty Rights of First Nations communities. These rights are essential for fostering reconciliation, preserving our cultures, and promoting a more equitable and inclusive society. By upholding Treaty Rights, we can build stronger relationships and work towards mutual respect.

## Conclusion:

AFN continues to advocate to ensure that the voices and rights of our First Nations are heard and respected.

*Megwetch! I hope we continue to work in unity and good faith, thinking seven generations ahead.*







# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## Regional Chief Bobby Cameron

### *Saskatchewan*

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

#### **Introduction:**

As portfolio holder for education, it is my firm belief that education for First Nations is a critical issue in the Canadian education system. Education is a Treaty Right. First Nations are autonomous and sovereign and have an inherent right to control all aspects of education from early childhood through post secondary. Responsibility of First Nations students falls entirely with the Crown as Treaty rights.

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

Underfunding of on-reserve schools is historical and ongoing. Immediate additional funding is required to support First Nations model development and implementation, and to continue moving towards First Nation control of First Nation education.

Resolution 46/2022, *Education Infrastructure and Capital Reform*, provides the mandate for the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE), National Indian Education Council (NIEC), and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to lead a co-development process that would improve and reform education infrastructure capital processes.

First Nations have voiced concerns at the last two NIEC meetings over the increased reporting requirements for Regional Education Agreement (REA) funding between last year and this year and we continue to address this issue.

Historically, regions have not had an equitable share of the Education Partnership Program (EPP) funding compared to the CCOE recommendation based on a base plus per capita model. At the 2023 Annual General Assembly, AFN Resolution 56/2023, *Unilateral Education Programming Decisions by Indigenous Services Canada*, was passed by First Nations-in-Assembly; this resolution calls on the Government of Canada to improve and strengthen partnerships with First Nations through an honourable, transparent, and respectful process that supports First Nations control of First Nations education, First Nations decision-making in all processes concerning education, and regional First Nations models of education.

#### **National Portfolio #1: National Indian Education Council**

The NIEC remains committed to discussing priorities in education infrastructure, reporting requirements for REAs, the EPP, and providing regional updates. The NIEC continues to advocate for the education systems for First Nations.

Under existing education systems, many First Nations people suffer long waitlists, discriminatory education practices, low graduation rates, and decreased quality of life. The AFN's Languages and Learning Sector advocates to ensure that students



# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS

actualize their inherent and Treaty right to a high-quality, linguistically and culturally-appropriate education to improve the lives of all First Nations peoples.

## **National Portfolio #2: Post Secondary**

In the last 15 years, First Nations attainment rates in post-secondary have increased significantly at the college and university level with a 26-percentage point increase in First Nations college attainment and 14-percentage point increase in attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher. This is extraordinary and we need to continue to increase this number.

The AFN completed and released the report, "Closing the First Nations Education Gap in Canada: Assessing Progress and Estimating the Economic Benefits – Census Data." It was conducted to assess the state of the educational attainment gap between First Nation peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. This report confirms that there are massive economic gains associated with the closure of key educational and labour market gaps facing First Nations people in Canada. Still, we find that the current rates of improvement in First Nations educational attainment are insufficient to close the education gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous people.

## **National Portfolio #3: Regional Education Agreements (REA)**

REAs are education agreements between the government of Canada and First Nations seeking to control the education of the Nation's children. These agreements can include governance process, education standards, graduation requirements, certification of teachers and schools, and constitution and decision-making requirements.

First Nations have voiced concern over increased reporting requirements to submit work plans to access funding for the REAs. The AFN relayed these concerns and rejected the unilateral changes made by ISC on the REA Guidelines. AFN will invite them to an upcoming NIEC meeting to discuss priorities.

ISC regional office's requests for detailed information are causing delays in the release of funding. These delays prevent First Nations from receiving funding and engaging in the critical work that must be done for REA development. The AFN, NIEC, CCOE, and ISC will jointly review the Regional Education Agreement National Guidelines 2024-25 to ensure that previous provisions unilaterally imposed by ISC are removed and that no additional barriers are added.

The REA Guidelines now include infrastructure planning as an eligible activity for First Nations technical tables. This amendment should provide First Nations with more flexibility in capital planning as capital assessments and other education infrastructure research priorities are eligible expenses.

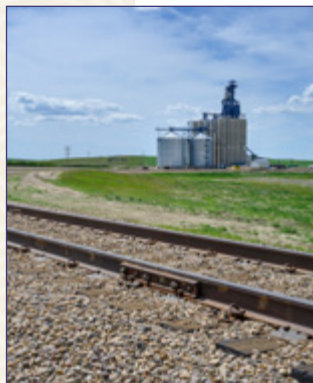
## **National Portfolio #4: Education Infrastructure**

The AFN has been engaging with First Nations, education organizations, transformative education agreements holders, and education experts to develop an interim and long-term approach that provides First Nations with the ability to include capital and education infrastructure processes into new or existing agreements. New amendments to the Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Elementary and Secondary





## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



Education Program Guidelines and Regional Education Agreement Guidelines are being implemented as an interim approach to capital reform while a more formal and permanent approach is sought through stronger authorities.

The AFN and National Indian Education Council (NIEC) have begun work to implement AFN Resolution 46/2022, *Education Infrastructure Capital Reform*, by amending the REA and K-12 National Program Guidelines. On October 18, 2023, a NIEC recommendation was sent to ISC supporting interim changes for capital reform.

Funding for education infrastructure capital has been unevenly distributed across the regions under a flawed process. The AFN is advancing the work to action Resolution 46/2022 to support First Nations in integrating capital costs into their education agreements.

### **National Portfolio #5: Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE)**

The ESE guidelines now state that regional education agreements may reference complementary components such as education infrastructure planning, design, construction, maintenance, and renovation of education facilities. While these complementary components will be considered annexed to the main education agreement, this change provides First Nations another opportunity to submit capital needs outside of the current lengthy process that includes the First Nations Infrastructure Investment Plan and Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program.

### **The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:**

To support advocacy efforts for First Nations education infrastructure capital reform, the AFN has been engaging with First Nations, education organizations, transformative education agreements holders, and education experts to develop an interim and long-term approach that provides First Nations with the ability to include capital and education infrastructure processes into new or existing agreements. New amendments to the ISC Elementary and Secondary Education Program Guidelines and Regional Education Agreement Guidelines are being implemented as an interim approach to capital reform while a more formal and permanent approach is sought through stronger authorities.

### **Conclusion:**

The CCOE will continue to provide advice and recommendations on educational matters affecting First Nations to the National Chief, Executive Committee, and the AFN Languages and Learning Sector.

*Hiy Hiy, ekosi Regional Chief Bobby Cameron,  
AFN Chief – Federation of Sovereign  
Indigenous Nations*

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*The treaties must not be  
forgotten; we must remind  
our children of this.*

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*Taking control of education is  
essential on the long journey  
back to self-governance.*





# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## 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 (B.C) and the BCAFN Board of Directors, I present this annual report which provides an update on the ongoing work in our region and my portfolio areas.

### **Introduction:**

As we look forward to summer and look back on a highly productive year for our Nations, I thank the Chiefs, leaders, and staff who have directed and achieved the important work the BCAFN has accomplished. I also acknowledge the BCAFN Board of Directors: Chief Jerry Jack, Harvey McLeod, Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, Chief Lynda Price, and Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling, and Knowledge Keepers Dr. Gwendolyn Point and Dr. Robert Joseph. Thanks also to the Women's Representative, Louisa Housty-Jones, 2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative, Orene Askew, and Female Youth Representative, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza.

### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

First Nations continue to be disproportionately targeted by police and the courts across Canada. The justice system must change. In my own home of Lheidli T'enneh territory, there will finally be an investigation into RCMP misconduct going back almost 20 years. At a broader level, the BCAFN has been acting on the direction of Chiefs to change the provincial Policing Act. At the federal level, we are advocating for

legislation to support First Nations policing as an essential service.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is slowly being implemented at the provincial and federal levels. BCAFN is collaborating with Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the First Nations Summit on guidance for the federal implementation plan and the draft National Action Plan. At the provincial level, the First Nations Leadership Council continues to push for meaningful implementation of the UNDRIP Act regarding legislation and regulation.

BCAFN continues to implement resolutions that ensure the Calls to Justice on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples are implemented, to develop First Nations cannabis jurisdiction, advance the rights of our 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, protect wildlife, ensure access to clean water, support children and families jurisdiction, address the climate emergency, and address the ongoing impacts of Residential Schools. I thank all Chiefs who have taken the time to meet, discuss, and move our priorities forward.

On March 9 and 10, 2023, we held our 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Special Chiefs Assembly. Thirteen (13) Resolutions were passed, including:

- 01/2023 Ending sex-based discrimination in the *Indian Act* in alignment with the un declaration
- 02/2023 Call for federal MMIWG2S+ legislation



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- 03/2023 Facilitating the co-development of a First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda in BC
- 04/2023 Support for a BC-specific process regarding Canada's UNDA National Action Plan
- 05/2023 Support for the development of a tripartite nature agreement
- 06/2023 Support for the recommendations and principles of the federal First Nations police services legislation strategy paper
- 07/2023 Support for Indigenous Justice Centre Expansion Plan
- 08/2023 CHRT on First Nations Child & Family Services, Jordan's Principle, Reform of Indigenous Services Canada, the agreement in principle, and final settlement agreement
- 09/2023 Advancing a positive path forward on First Nations health governance
- 10/2023 Support for the development of a discussion paper related to the Emergency Management Service Agreement
- 11/2023 Support for Tseshah First Nation, Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS): calls for Truth and Justice
- 12/2023 Supporting First Nations to access safe, affordable, reliable and low-carbon transportation
- 13/2023 Omnibus to adopt four resolutions
- 13(A)/2023 Provincial Emergency Management Legislation

- 13(B)/2023 Support for title and rights holder to take legal action for the opioid overprescribing and the overdose crisis
- 13(C)/2023 Support for Tkémlyps Te Secwépemc bid to host the 2027 North American Indigenous Games
- 13(D)/2023 Alcohol regulation, funding and jurisdiction

## National Portfolio #1

### *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*

This UN Declaration Act (UNDA) 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, prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration, and

develop annual reports on progress and submit them to Parliament. Lead by the Department of Justice, Canada asked Indigenous nations, governments, and organizations across Canada to submit their priorities for inclusion in a National Action Plan (NAP). On June 20, 2023, the Department of Justice tabled its UNDA NAP in Parliament.

The NAP contains 181 recommendations divided across five distinct chapters: 1) Shared Priorities, 2) First Nations Priorities, 3) Inuit Priorities, 4) Métis Priorities, 5) Indigenous Modern Treaty Partner Priorities. NAP outlines a whole of government roadmap for advancing reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through





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a nation-to-nation relationship. NAP aims to address departmental injustices, violence, prejudice, systemic racism, and discrimination. The measures also aim to ensure the consistency of all Government of Canada laws and policies with the UN Declaration. NAP supports the advancement of self-determination and self-government, treaty implementation, and participation in decision-making over lands, territories, and resources. In recognition of these shortcomings, the Department of Justice has committed to reviewing and revising the NAP as an evergreen document, in cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, to ensure that the document reflects the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples.

## National Portfolio #2:

### *Justice and Policing*

This 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 to the AFN Policing Taskforce, we continue to meet regularly. The Taskforce is composed of experts in First Nations Policing, regional representatives, and executive members of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association from across Canada. From BC, this work is supported by Chief Jerry Jack and Chief Dean Nelson. The mandate of the Taskforce is to provide support and guidance for the co-development of First Nations Policing Essential Services legislation. Through the Federal First Nations Police Services Legislation Strategy Paper, Chiefs provided direction and guidance to the priorities that BC representatives and technicians should

bring to this work. At present, a subgroup of the Taskforce has been working to further develop First Nations priorities for the federal legislation. Regional Chief Picard and I attended the FPTI Meeting on October 11, where we discussed the Indigenous Justice Strategy. We expressed that co-development is our preferred model of working together to develop laws and policies impacting First Nations. Most importantly, the final framework that is developed must be consistent with the minimum standards set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDA).

## National Portfolio #3

### *AFN National Fisheries Commission (NFC), co-chair with RC Darlene Barnard*

The 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 (freshwater)
- Federal programs (i.e., Oceans Protection Plan, Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative, etc.)
- Federal policies and legislation

We identified the following three priority areas for discussion with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO):

1. The draft Aquaculture Act and the Transition Away from Open-Net Pen Fish Farms;
2. Full Implementation of the Marshall Decision and the recommendations outlined in the Peace on the Water Senate Report; and



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3. The prioritization and implementation of the fisheries-related measures in the United Declaration.

On November 21-23, we held a meeting specifically related to inland fisheries in Winnipeg, which brought together First Nations inland fish harvesters, youth, and Elders from communities on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and First Nations delegates from neighbouring provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Together, they discussed and developed the elements of a Rights-Based Inland Fisheries Framework within the context of the Natural Resources Transfer Agreements. In the BC Region, the drought has put endangered salmon runs in further peril, as hot, sluggish water reduces fertility and increases mortality. We must continue to push all levels of government to take climate change seriously as it is directly impacting our communities' rights. We are working with our partners to host a Chiefs meeting related to the Trilateral Salmon Accord which seeks to address the decline of wild Pacific Salmon.

## National Portfolio #5:

### *Economic Development*

This year, I have returned to this national portfolio as Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development (CCED). The CCED is working on several national actions including a federal government procurement process for First Nations, international trade, banking regulation, and digital currency.

The CCED has been in flux over the last year, adjusting to the national economic climate and bringing in new leadership on the economic development portfolio. We held a CCED meeting in Toronto in

November to reset the committee and move forward on related resolutions, specifically items related to gaming, cannabis, procurement, pay equity, and international trade.

### *Cannabis*

I continue to serve as co-chair of the AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis. While this committee has been challenged to secure sufficient resourcing, the AFN has advocated for First Nations to be fulsomely engaged in the federal government's review of the Cannabis Act, and efforts are underway to reconvene the committee to meet with the Cannabis Act review Expert Panel. The First Nations Leadership Council supported the Expert Panel to meet with BC First Nations in Vancouver on March 28, 2023. The Panel voiced their understanding of the challenges and barriers and committed to further engagement.





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### The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

I want to take this opportunity to thank the BC Chiefs and Leaders for their continued support as their Regional Chief. I was officially acclaimed for my third term as BC Regional Chief in September. This is historic in the BC Region—no one has been acclaimed into the Regional Chief position and there has never been anyone to move beyond two terms. I look forward to working with my colleagues and partners at the regional, national, and international levels. Finally, I want to acknowledge the Chiefs and Leaders who continue to have confidence in the work of the BCAFN and AFN.

### Conclusion:

As this year draws to a close, First Nations across this country share a commitment to continue our journey of decolonization and the recognition and implementation of our inherent, constitutional, and human rights as First Nations Peoples.

*Mussi Cho!*

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*“On this special day, we celebrate First Nations children and recognize the profound interconnectedness of all generations and families. It is our sacred responsibility to safeguard the well-being and development of our youth.”*

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*“The Nature Agreement presents a foundation towards meaningful reconciliation amongst First Nations and the Crown in BC. I uphold BC and Canada in their commitment to this collaborative partnership, which sets a precedent for conservation mechanisms that uphold First Nations Title and Rights.”*

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## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



### Acting Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim

#### *Yukon*

Since April 2023, I have continued to serve the Yukon as Regional Chief, and I am pleased to share these important updates on behalf of the Yukon Region. This year, Regional Chief Adamek and her family welcomed a beautiful baby girl. We look forward to Regional Chief Adamek's return nearing the holiday season.

#### **Introduction:**

Shāw Nithän to all of the Yukon First Nation Chiefs, as well as leaders from coast to coast, who have shown ongoing support for the AFN Yukon Regional Office. This year, we've advanced work on several priorities and celebrated the accomplishments of Yukon First Nations from generations past and present. Together with the leadership from all 14 Yukon First Nations, we have moved forward on UNDRIP implementation, and continue to work federal priorities including Arctic sovereignty and Northern defense, modern treaty implementation, climate change mitigation, justice, and First Nations policing, and addressing the ongoing salmon crisis.

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

The AFN Yukon Region continues to prove to be a leader in countless ways and I raise my hands to the Yukon First Nations (YFN) Leaders, Elders, and Youth who continue to lead across sectors and spaces to advance their rights and priorities. The AFN Yukon Region works in partnership with each of the 14 Yukon First Nations to advance their priorities and interests at the national level. In May 2023, the Regional Office submitted a report with 23 action-based recommendations to Canada. This report brought together the invaluable insights and

feedback of Yukon First Nations leadership, Elders, Youth, women, 2SLGBTQIA+people, and citizens on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Yukon and Canada more broadly. This work recognized that Canada's implementation of UNDRIP must account for the diversity of First Nations from across the country. It was important that the AFN Yukon Regional Office conduct engagement to reflect the different approaches to self-government and self-determination being pursued by all 14 Yukon First Nations, and we were proud to see that reflected in the final report. This submission could not have been completed without the dedication and contributions of all those who participated in the engagement process of this work.

This summer, we had the honour of celebrating Yukon First Nations graduation in June, where Yukon First Nations students were honoured and acknowledged for their hard work and pursuit of education. The Yukon Region was also proud to have a delegation of Youth, Chiefs, Elders, and leaders travel to Halifax (Kjipuktuk) for the AFN Annual General Assembly in July 2023, where Yukon leaders spoke with great strength, unity, and purpose, supporting the passing of important resolutions and ensuring northern voices were heard.

This year, our region has also expanded its partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and Yukon University, working to transform education and support for Indigenous youth and students in the Yukon through Mastercard Foundation's Yukon EleV Program. The Program aims to support Yukon First Nations education and build capacity through the development of



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education reconnection, a YFN training fund for individuals, a framework for micro-credentialling training, youth-led STEM community programming, and more. Through this partnership, the AFN Yukon Region is supporting the pilot of a Yukon First Nations post-secondary graduation ceremony to recognize the achievements and celebrate the success of all Indigenous post-secondary students in the Yukon. The voices of Indigenous emerging leaders are vital to the future of First Nations, the Yukon, Canada, and beyond, and our Regional Office is thrilled to support their successes and invest in their futures.

Following the direction of the leaders, AFN Yukon Regional Office is currently in the process of working with Canada on meaningful community engagement on Northern Defense, Arctic sovereignty, and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) modernization. Recent incidents such as the downing of an unidentified flying object on the traditional territories of Na-Cho Nyak Dun and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in highlight an urgent need for meaningful Indigenous involvement in security coordination and threat response in the Yukon. Yukon First Nations are increasingly recognizing the potential economic benefits of engaging with partners within the defense sector, and our office is looking to support engagements that will respond to a need for First Nations.

The AFN Yukon Region hosted their Annual Summit in October 2023, where many pressing regional issues were addressed with respect to Northern defense, environment and climate change, Yukon First Nations-led climate strategies, and policy issues related to the environmental impacts of development.

The AFN Yukon Region has continued to support and celebrate the work of the first-ever Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship. The fellowship provided 13

Yukon First Nations youth between the ages of 18-30 with the chance to participate in web-based and land-based training as they collaboratively developed a Reconnection Vision and Action Plan. The AFN Yukon Region has been a key driver of the Fellowship and Reconnection Vision since its inception by providing important support for the coordination of Fellows, key engagement events, communications about the Reconnection Vision, project governance, and more. Our office is now supporting the formalization and accreditation of the Fellowship curriculum, as well as supporting the development of the next iteration of the curriculum. Moving forward, the AFN Yukon Region will also continue to provide crucial project supports, including convening meetings among Chiefs, leaders, Fellows, and Steering Committee members.

## National Portfolio #1:

Almost half of the Indigenous nations in Canada with Modern Treaties are based in the Yukon, making the region a national leader when it comes to First Nations modeling self-government. Therefore, the implementation of modern treaties and self-government agreements continues to be a priority, and the AFN Yukon Region is committed to pressing for national level implementation of all modern treaties and final agreements.





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To support improved implementation, the Government of Canada announced the Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy in February 2023. The Policy was co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Modern Treaty partners, and 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. Additionally, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan included several Action Plan Measures focused on implementing Modern Treaties and Self-Government Agreements.

At the 2023 AFN AGA, Yukon First Nations leadership advocated for the inclusion of a clause within AFN resolutions to ensure AFN mandates are consistent with Modern Treaties and do not undermine or interfere with their priorities.

It is important that we continue to explore ways to bring together modern treaty and self-governing nations, and all those who are interested in exploring pathways of pursuing self-government. Through ongoing collaboration and mutual learning, First Nations from across Canada will be able to chart their own paths forward to exercising their inherent and legislated rights to self-government, continuing to celebrate one another's successes!

We deeply acknowledge the leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, youth, and negotiators, both past and present, for their diligence in bringing the document "Together Today for our Children Tomorrow" forward into their own governing processes over a 50-year period.

### The Path Ahead/Looking Forward

The AFN Yukon Region is incredibly proud of the leadership of all 14 Yukon First Nations both past and present, who continue to chart their own paths and continue to support the advancement of those who choose a different path forward.

In addition to all the wonderful successes and celebrations in the Yukon Region this year, we have also continued to live through some incredibly heavy and hard times. In September 2023, the Yukon Residential Schools Missing Children Project released their report on the ground search at the Choooutla Residential School, located on the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. The conclusion of this report is a testament to the tireless efforts and dedication of the Choooutla Residential School committee members who have devoted their time and expertise to this project. We acknowledge and express gratitude to the survivors, intergenerational survivors, the families of the missing children, and the many individuals and institutions who assisted with this journey toward truth and reconciliation. We raise our hands to you with love and gratitude.

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*"As we remember, learn, and strive towards reconciliation, let us remember that truth is the foundation from which healing and understanding can grow."* – Acting Regional Chief

*Mary Jane Jim*

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## REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS

On behalf of myself as Acting Regional Chief, Regional Chief Adamek, and the entire AFN Yukon Region team, 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."

### Conclusion:

I look forward to continuing to connect with communities, gathering together to discuss how we support one another and move forward together in a good way.

*Wishing all First Nations a happy and healthy end to 2023!*

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*"For generations, Indigenous Peoples have remained custodians of the truth of our shared histories with Canada. This truth has been passed down through the enduring voices of Elders, Survivors, and truth-tellers" –*

*Acting Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim*

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# REGIONAL CHIEFS' REPORTS



## Regional Chief Gerald Antoine

### *Northwest Territories*

It is a great honour to serve as the Dene National Chief and AFN Regional Chief for the Northwest Territories. On behalf of the Dene Nation and First Nations of the Northwest Territories, I'd like to extend regards to my colleagues. As our organization continues its work to uphold and protect the rights and interests of the Dene Nation, know that your tireless efforts to advance our collective interests are recognized.

#### **Introduction:**

The NWT has experienced an unprecedented year with approximately 70% of the population evacuating to northern communities or western Canada as far as 2700 km away. A declared state of emergency affected 14 communities who were evacuated throughout the summer, including Wekweètì, Behchoko, Smith's Landing First Nation, Salt River First Nation, Fort Smith, K'atl'odeeche First Nation, West Point First Nation, Hay River, Kakisa, Jean Marie River, Enterprise, Ndil , Dettah and Yellowknife. Most evacuees were relocated and displaced for many weeks. Our focus continues to be to work with all levels of government on coordinating emergency management.

#### **Regional Key Issues and Activities:**

Connecting our families and creating opportunities for capacity, reconciliation and understanding were the priorities this year. The Vatican delegation of March 2022 provided a path for reconciliation and inspired a new call for the rescinding of the Doctrine of Discovery. We look forward to the continued advocacy for our people and

ensuring these critical issues are addressed in a timely manner.

Last year was a time of great trials and tribulations, however it also presented us with new opportunities and showed us innovative ways to move forward. As the National Chief of the Dene Nation and Regional Chief of the Northwest Territories, I am proud of our peoples' strength, empathy, and resilience. We come together as a family, working toward our common goals in the pursuit of our rights and interests. I am committed to supporting and assisting our Dene families and working tirelessly to provide new solutions and opportunities that align with the needs of our people and the direction of our leadership.

As we begin to work through our own governing practices, it has been equally important to improve the practices of the government we work most closely with; the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). While our relationship continues to improve, further work is needed to better resemble a more genuine nation-to-nation relationship, and not one that is embedded in paternalism. Due to devolution, the GNWT is the first agency to receive federal money before distributing the rest. Therefore, the Dene Nation has been active in redirecting federal funding to Dene communities. We will continue to press this issue to ensure it is a permanent change, to secure predictable and sustainable funding so programming in the communities can reach their full potential.

As Dene, we are strongest when we are together. Family is like branches on a tree; we all grow in different directions, but our roots remain the same. This belief has been,



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and will continue to be, an important message moving forward.

I believe we need to come together as a family, to strengthen and nourish our roots. We need to focus together on initiatives, projects, and policies that directly benefit our families and our Peoples. I know that all of us want the impacts of our work to be directly felt by those we are so privileged to serve. Together, we are taking steps to address historical injustices and move towards creating a future for our children that we can all look forward to. We are still here, we are still strong, and we are still family.

## National Portfolio #1:

### *Indian Residential Institutions (IRI)*

Following the Papal visit in July 2022, expectations for follow-up work have been wide-ranging from both Survivors and political organizations. These expectations include:

- Releasing further records and documents from church archives and other holdings.
- Providing monies in keeping with the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement court rulings.
- Providing additional monies and services as needs are determined by First Nations, especially related to the work of finding and identifying children who died or went missing from Residential Schools run by various entities of the Roman Catholic church.
- Assisting in extradition efforts to bring accused members of the Roman Catholic back to Canada to stand trial for criminal actions towards Indigenous children.

- Providing additional monies and services that will contribute to Survivors, and intergenerational and community healing and reconciliation.
- Providing additional monies and services to fully respond to the spirit and intent of all TRC Calls to Action.

The AFN IRI portfolio requires resources to further the work or support to provide more resources to engage and support a network of partnerships to address the IRI issues.



## National Portfolio #2:

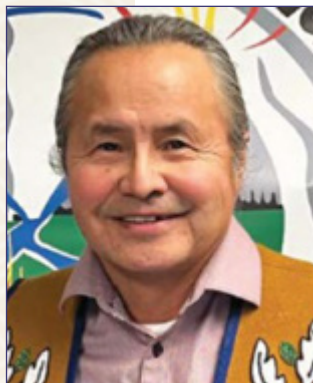
### *First Nations Veterans Council (FNVC)*

The AFN First Nations Veterans Council continues to be actively engaged in various initiatives and engagements to support and honour First Nations veterans and their contributions.

The FNVC gathered in Calgary, Alberta on November 1 and 2, 2023, to engage in important discussions and advance key priorities. During this gathering, the FNVC met with newly appointed Minister of Veterans Affairs Canada to advocate for improved benefits for First Nations Veterans and more responsive outreach and support services and programs.



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*Let us find comfort and strength in our shared values.  
Nourish and strengthen our roots, and recommit with  
energy and determination to truth, justice, and  
reconciliation—an inside out approach.*

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The AFN, First Nations Veterans, and the AFN FNVC have continued to advocate for increased outreach support, equitable opportunities for First Nations Veterans to participate in international commemoration activities, as well as the support for the creation of a First Nations Veterans historical record with the purposes of acknowledging First Nations participation in international conflicts and the sacrifices they made. As a result of this sustained advocacy, the Minister of Veterans Affairs agreed to the joint development of a Letter of Understand to outline these priorities, which was developed by both the AFN and VAC.

The jointly developed Letter of Understanding is comprised of four key pillars including:

1. Assessing and expanding outreach activities for First Nations Veterans and their families.
2. Establishing clear points of contacts for First Nations Veterans matters at VAC.
3. Increasing Indigenous representation in commemoration related activities.
4. Supporting the establishment of a historical record First Nations Veterans and soldiers who have served in times of war, military conflicts, and peace.

### **National Portfolio #3:**

#### **Knowledge Keepers Council (KKC)**

The AFN Knowledge Keepers Council has a long history dating back to the beginning of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) that continued through the transition to the AFN. The Council continues to provide thoughtful, perceptive, and valuable contributions to the AFN.

The Knowledge Keepers provide guidance throughout the organization and across the regions. They have been recognized for their calming influence and historical knowledge as a long-standing organ of the AFN Charter. The AFN leadership confidently relies upon the historical, spiritual, and cultural knowledge of the Council and its representatives.

The Council includes representatives from each of the AFN's regions. Currently, the Council co-chairs are Dr. Gwendolyn Point, representing British Columbia, and Chuck Hume, representing Yukon.

The Knowledge Keepers Council has re-engaged in portfolio discussions and ensured each AFN portfolio has an accompanying Knowledge Keeper to provide guidance. Members continue to update the Council on their portfolios at the Annual General and Special Chiefs Assemblies. The Council will



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continue to provide critical guidance on a diverse range of challenges and opportunities.

## National Portfolio #4:

### *National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund (NIB Trust Fund)*

The past year has been a difficult one for those of us impacted by the effects of Indian Residential Schools. The NIB Trust Fund continues to be a steady support for First Nations, communities, and organizations in helping First Nations people manage and move forward from the traumas of the Indian Residential School System. The Northwest Territories was honoured to appoint Ms. Karalyn Menicoche as the Trustee representing our region. The NIB Trust Fund Board of Trustees remains committed to achieving the vision of today's youth and future generations being grounded in language, culture and a way of life that fosters a strong identity and resiliency. I am confident that the NIB Trust Fund remains vibrant and ready financially and as an organization to be part of the solutions our beneficiaries need.

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*Family, like branches on a tree,  
grows in different directions, yet our  
roots remain the same.*

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## The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

As we move forward, we must remember that we are a family, working together to achieve our common goals. The work being done now has laid the groundwork for our continued growth. I am proud of the work we have done and look forward to the future. Presented before us is the opportunity to share our knowledge and deepen our relationships among ourselves while strengthening new relationships with the government.

## Conclusion:

As we move down the moccasin trail toward reconciliation, we must remember the unity of our family and the great things we can accomplish together. I will continue on my journey to strengthen our relationships and empower our people to have their voices heard.

*Mahsi!*





## Acting Chief Executive Officer Report

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

*Greeting Chiefs, Proxies, Honoured Guests,  
and Assembly delegates!*

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) and the election for the National Chief, taking place on the traditional, unceded, and unsundered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people.

This week is a significant time for us. We will participate in important dialogue, assess progress, and advance the key priorities set by you, the Chiefs. Additionally, we are holding the Election for the National Chief. It is a very important time where Chiefs across Turtle Island will come together to select a national spokesperson. I look forward to our discussions this week and working with the new National Chief in our continued efforts for First Nations.

This past year presented challenges for our organization but despite those issues, our advocacy efforts remained steadfast, and we made progress on First Nations priorities. We faced multiple organizational changes and, as Acting CEO, I am honoured and humbled to support staff and leadership navigate through this transitional period. As Acting CEO, my focus has been on maintaining stability within the organization and supporting the Interim National Chief and the AFN Executive Committee. This includes overseeing the necessary actions for moving the organization forward and providing appropriate human resources support for AFN personnel.

An important development has been the implementation of the Panel 13 Report recommendations. I am proud to say the

AFN is leading in developing processes and policies to improve our workplace, including the new Code of Conduct for event participants as part of our registration process.

I am also pleased to report to you that the AFN is focused on the implementation of the resolutions from previous Assemblies, with all the sectors within the AFN advancing the work in a positive and responsible way.

A significant achievement this year is the Federal Court's approval of the final settlement agreement (FSA) on compensation for First Nations children and families harmed by discriminatory practices in the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) program and narrow application of Jordan's Principle. The AFN's legal team, along with class action Representative Plaintiffs, negotiated a \$23 billion settlement to compensation for over 300,000 children and families. The settlement represents acknowledgement of those harms and decades of wrongdoing and is a step towards ensuring this does not happen again. I acknowledge the courage of the Representative Plaintiffs during this prolonged process and all those who have helped along the way.

As an advocacy organization, the AFN continues to work towards relationship building with government and First Nations, while striving to be understanding, insightful, and a champion for the causes that are identified through resolutions from our Assemblies. We look forward to continuing to serve the Chiefs across Turtle Island with good and positive work.

*Amber Potts  
Acting Chief Executive Office*





## AFN COUNCIL REPORTS





# AFN COUNCIL REPORTS

## Knowledge Keepers

*Portfolio Holder: Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, NWT*

### Introduction

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Knowledge Keepers Council has a long history dating back to the beginning of the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) that continued through its transition to the AFN. The Council continues to provide thoughtful, perceptive, and valuable contributions to the AFN.

The Knowledge Keepers provide guidance throughout the AFN and across the regions. They have been recognized for their calming influence and historical knowledge as a long-standing organ of the AFN Charter. The AFN and First Nations leadership has been able to rely upon the historical, spiritual, and cultural knowledge of the Council and its representatives.



### Knowledge Keepers Council Representation

The Council includes representatives from each of the AFN's regions. Currently, the Council co-chairs are Dr. Gwendolyn Point, representing British Columbia, and Chuck Hume, representing Yukon.

The Council includes:

- Yukon – *Chuck Hume (Co-Chair), and Lorraine Netro*
- Northwest Territories – *John Bekale and Grace Blake*
- British Columbia – *Dr. Gwendolyn Point (Co-Chair), Robert Joseph, and Sempulyan Gonzales*
- Alberta – *Ivy Raine and Lawrence Couroreille*
- 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 – *Vacant*



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## Key Activities and Accomplishments

The Knowledge Keepers Council has re-engaged with portfolio discussions, ensuring that each AFN portfolio has an accompanying Knowledge Keeper to provide guidance. Members regularly update the Council on their portfolios during the Annual General and Special Chiefs Assemblies. The Council continues to meet as required via Zoom and teleconference calls to stay informed about current events affecting First Nations across the country.

First Nations have always upheld protocols, traditions, and ceremonies through meetings. The Council continues to advocate that First Nations languages, traditions, and ceremonies are communicated and kept thriving as the foundation for creating stronger Nations. The Council has been essential to the AFN's day-to-day business to keep traditions, values, languages, and history at the fore and 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.

Throughout the year, the Council continues to make improvements to the Knowledge Keepers Council's Terms of Reference (TOR) and is always prepared to participate in the AFN's Charter Renewal process. The Council also participates and provides an advisory role in the Chiefs Committees by providing Elder services.

## Next Steps Moving Forward

In the 2024-2025 year, the Knowledge Keepers Council will continue to:

- Meet to review and update protocols, traditions, ceremonies, roles, and responsibilities.
- Assist and support the activities of the AFN Executive Committee, AFN Staff, AFN Chiefs Committees, and Councils.

## Conclusion

The Council will meet at the Special Chiefs Assembly on December 5-7, 2023, in Ottawa, Ontario. The Council will continue to provide its guidance as needed to the AFN.





# AFN COUNCIL REPORTS



## 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, NS, the Women's Council supported the 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 on Status of Women). The AFN delegation to the FPTI on Status of Women included the Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard, the Newfoundland AFN Women's Council Representative Chief Joanne Miles, and the family of Chantel Moore. Discussion at the FPTI on Status of Women included the need for a Red Dress Alert, oversight body to monitor the 231 Calls for Justice, and

increasing access to healing services. Similarly, increasing the positive representation of MMIWG2S+ and addressing the overrepresentation of incarcerated Indigenous women is needed throughout Canada. The Interim National Chief also called for support for immediate action to search for the missing and murdered First Nations women whose remains are believed to be at the Prairie Green Landfill.

In 2016, the Governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States committed to coordinated action to address the disproportionate levels of violence faced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people throughout the region. In 2018, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recognized the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women (Trilateral Working Group) as an important regional effort that should be sustained. In September 2023, the Fifth Convening of the Trilateral Working Group was hosted by Canada. The AFN delegation to the Trilateral Working Group included Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard and AFN Women's Council Quebec Representative Grand Chief Savanna McGregor. The two-day meeting with delegations from the United States and Mexico focused on common issues between the countries, including human trafficking and access to justice.

On October 6, 2023, the Women's Council met with the RCMP to carry out an initial engagement on their National Reconciliation Pathway. The purpose behind this meeting was to provide input on the RCMP Reconciliation Pathway, vision, and guiding principles. During discussion, the Women's Council advised there needs to be a



# AFN COUNCIL REPORTS

monitoring process in place for reconciliation as the responsibility to reconcile should not be solely on the shoulders of front-line workers. The Women's Council advised the RCMP to ensure meaningful regional engagement is carried out in updating the RCMP Reconciliation Pathway. Following this meeting, the Women's Council has committed to meeting with the RCMP in December 2023 to follow up on the work that the RCMP is carrying out for this National Reconciliation Pathway.

On October 26, the AFN Women's Council met in-person with the AFN 2SLGBTQIA+ Council to discuss joint priorities. During this meeting, both councils provided insight and feedback on an AFN internal working group for GBA+, ISC GBA Plus Committee, the CIRNA Roundtable and Red Dress Alert, the Ministerial Special Representative Interim Report, and the RCMP Pathway to Reconciliation. During this meeting, 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.

## Next Steps - Moving Forward

It has been over 4 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 and 49/2022, 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*.





# AFN COUNCIL REPORTS



## National Youth Council

*Interim National Chief Joanna Bernard  
(Interim National Youth Council Portfolio Holder)*

### Introduction

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

### NYC Membership and Representation

Annually, the Council elects two co-chairs and two executives at the Annual General Assembly (AGA). The Council co-chairs elected at the 2023 AGA were Rosalie LaBillois-Wysote (Eel River Bar First Nation, New Brunswick) and Winter Dawn Lipscombe (Wauzhushk Onigum Nation, Ontario). Winter-Dawn Lipscombe's term as a regional youth representative for Ontario ended in October 2023, leaving the second co-chair position vacant. A by-election for this position will be held at the Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) in Ottawa, Ontario, on December 4, 2023.

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*
- Québec 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 Vacant*



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In 2022, the AFN Management Committee approved amendments to the NYC Terms of Reference, including:

- Two additional council positions from Prince Edward Island.
- Language reflecting that youth representatives and Chairs may represent any gender/sex, inclusive of 2SLBTQQIA+ peoples.
- Updated decision-making and quorum processes.

## Key Activities and Accomplishments

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

## The NYC Strategic Plan

The NYC developed a strategic plan that guides their focus and work. The NYC is committed to ensuring that cultural health, wellness, and unity are grounded in all aspects of work with First Nations youth at community, regional, and national levels. NYC's strategic plan centers around meeting the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of youth. The main priorities are:

- Supporting culture, wellness, and unity
- Strengthening external relationships, regional and international engagement
- Enhancing communications and reporting
- Building governance and policies
- Increasing funding and opportunities

## Activity # 1: AFN Safe Drinking Water Summit

First Nations youth from various nations in Canada were invited to attend the AFN Youth Safe Drinking Water Conference held in Québec City, Québec, from August 28 to 29, 2023. The purpose of this summit was to bring together diverse youth voices from all nations to share their experiences with water, to learn from experts in water protection and governance, and to develop a youth vision statement for safe drinking water. The primary call-to-action of the NYC and other youth is to address the systemic barriers caused by colonialism and capitalism that hinder access to clean water as well as the immediate improvement of water conditions and treatment facilities in First Nations communities.



## Activity # 2: Housing and Homelessness Dialogue Session

Members of the NYC attended the AFN Housing and Homelessness Hybrid Dialogue Session in Victoria, British Columbia, July 31 to August 4, 2023. The purpose of this session was to bring together service providers, technicians, Elders, those with lived experience, and other youth to discuss future outcomes to address under housing and homelessness of First Nations. The discussions focused on the following three themes: on/off reserve, jurisdiction, and service navigation; governance and partnerships; and holistic services and specific needs.



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## Activity # 3: One Young World Summit

In October 2023, the AFN Interim National Chief 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. The One Young World Summit is an annual international gathering for the leaders of tomorrow that aims to connect and bring together the youngest and most talented people and ensure their concerns, opinions, and solutions are heard and taken into consideration by those in power, including those in government, business, and other sectors.

One of the main outcomes of the event was the recognition of the significance of mandating the AFN and the NYC to support the success of the upcoming One Young World Summit in Montreal, Québec, from September 18-21, 2024. The NYC determined that it is essential that the One Young World organization works with First Nations to include First Nations protocol, performers, speakers, and guidance in the 2024 summit and will be seeking support from First Nations-in-Assembly.

## Next Steps Moving Forward

In the 2024-2025 year, the NYC will continue to:

- Work with AFN Communications on a communications plan to implement components of the 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, 2SLBTQIA+ Council, and First Nations Veterans Council.

## Conclusion

The NYC will meet at the SCA on December 4-7, 2023, in Ottawa, Ontario, where a by-election will be held for the vacant co-chair position. For more information about the NYC, visit the AFN website at <https://afn.ca/about-us/councils/youth-council/>.





## First Nations Veterans Council

*Portfolio Holder: Regional Chief Gerald Antoine, NWT*

### Introduction

First Nations Veterans have a long and unique history that is integral to their role within the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Their contributions have been crucial to the AFN from its early days as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) and the eventual transition to the AFN.

First Nations Veterans played a key role in guiding the NIB/AFN's development, particularly with the establishment of the League of Indian Nations and the adoption of its Declaration in 1980. This work set a guiding philosophy, shaping today's AFN as a forum for coordination, advocacy, and support for First Nations.

The First Nations Veterans Council (FNVC) assists and provides help to First Nations Veterans, their families, and communities. The FNVC is comprised of First Nations Veterans, some of whom have fought in international wars and conflicts, including peacetime, through peacekeeping missions. The FNVC aims to provide a voice to the concerns raised by many Veterans who have suffered from the trauma of service or war and the impacts such trauma has had on families over generations.

### Regional Key Issues and Activities:

#### *FNVC Representation*

The First Nations Veterans Council includes:

- Yukon – *Carl Sidney*
- Northwest Territories – *Tim O'Loan*
- British Columbia – *Percy Joe, FNVC Chair*
- Alberta – *Henry Raine*
- Saskatchewan – *Emile Highway*
- Manitoba – *Chief Lawrence Letandre*
- Ontario – *Wendy Jocko and Gerald McGregor*
- Quebec and Labrador – *Vacant*
- New Brunswick – *Eldon Bernard and Chief Terry Richardson*
- Prince Edward Island – *Vacant*
- Nova Scotia and Newfoundland – *Alan Knockwood*





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## Key Activities and Accomplishments

In April 2023, a Letter of Understanding (LOU) was signed between the First Nations Veterans Council and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). The LOU establishes four pillars that the FNVC recognized as priority areas to create dialogue, research, and agreement with VAC to enhance service delivery to Veterans.

The Four Pillars include:

1. Assess and expand outreach activities for First Nations Veterans and their families. This pillar includes the establishment of a First Nations Veteran Outreach strategy.
2. Establish clear points of contact for First Nations Veterans matters at VAC.
3. Increase Indigenous representation in Commemoration-related activities.
4. Support the establishment of a historical record of First Nations Veterans and soldiers who have served in times of war, military conflicts and peace, including those undocumented by Canada.

With the establishment of the LOU, the FNVC created a working group of FNVC members and VAC representatives to begin the work on implementation. The working group met in May 2023 and again in November 2023.

In the November meeting, the FNVC established a working relationship with the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor.

## Next Steps Moving Forward

In the 2024-2025 year, the FNVC will continue to:

1. Review the work and the current outreach activities provided by Veterans Affairs Canada, and the success rate in reaching the intended recipients Veterans at the community level.
2. Research towards establishing a national record of First Nations soldiers who enlisted and fought on behalf of Canada.
3. Hold meetings between FNVC and VAC for the development of the work plan to implement the four pillars of the LOU.
4. Plan for commemoration activities to be held in 2024-2025.

## Conclusion:

The FNVC will meet at the Special Chiefs Assembly, taking place December 5-7, 2023, in Ottawa, Ontario.



## 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council

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

The objective of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council is to make recommendations to the AFN to ensure fair representation. The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council also contributed their expertise to address various issues, including domestic violence, suicide, discrimination, intersectional challenges faced in services throughout Canada, HIV/AIDS, and missing and murdered Indigenous people in North America.

### Key Activities and Accomplishments

On August 31, 2023, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council met to discuss the Terms of References, Gender Pronoun Policies, GBA+ frameworks, work completed to date, and logistics for their October in-person meeting.

Following this meeting, the AFN supported the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council by conducting research related to new pronoun policy changes, specifically New Brunswick's 713 pronoun policy change and Saskatchewan's new policy surrounding the use of pronouns in schools pose safety concerns for First Nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ youth. Subsequently, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council and the Interim National Chief issued a press release to denounce discrimination in educational settings against 2SLGBTQQIA+ Youth. This press release was followed by a series of media interviews, where 2SLGBTQQIA

Council members reiterated their stance and the actions needed to support the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Youth effectively.

On October 4, 2023, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council met with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to provide input on the RCMP's National Reconciliation Pathway, vision, and guiding principles.

On October 25, 2023, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council met to adopt their Terms of Reference, select their Chairperson and Co-Chairperson. Tyler George from Saskatchewan was chosen as Chairperson for a three-year term, and Duane Gastant' Aucoin from Yukon was appointed as Interim Co-Chairperson, until a full Council is appointed, and a new selection process is held. The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council decided that the Co-Chairperson position will remain interim to provide an opportunity for other Council Representatives to participate in the role. During this meeting, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council discussed the selection of portfolios and the current state of pronoun policy in Saskatchewan. The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council also reviewed the British Columbia (BC) AFN Resolution calling for the AFN to join the National Coalition supporting gender affirming healthcare information. They also discussed logistics to meet with the Trans Care BC to learn about the Information Project, aimed at combating misinformation.

On October 26, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council and the AFN Women's Council met to discuss joint priorities. This meeting was an opportunity for both councils to provide insight and feedback on the AFN internal working group for GBA+, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) GBA Plus Committee, Canada's Universal Periodic Review, the upcoming





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AFN Special Chiefs Assembly (SC), the Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) Roundtable and Red Dress Alert, the Ministerial Special Representative Interim Report, and the RCMP Pathway to Reconciliation.

## Next Steps - Moving Forward

The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council will continue to focus on filling the remaining vacancies for the AFN Alberta, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island Regions. Additionally, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council will increase their involvement in developing AFN's Gender-Base Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework and tools using a diverse and inclusive lens. Advocacy work pertaining to 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples will be carried out through participating in engagements internally, externally, and in collaboration with the AFN Women's Council and AFN Youth Council.

The 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council developed a resolution for the 2023 SCA focused on the traditional role of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people within First Nation communities. This resolution, developed after substantial deliberation, underscores the importance of holding the Government of Canada accountable through addressing the historic impacts of colonial legislation and policies that have negatively impacted the well-being of diverse First Nations.

Moving forward, the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council will be looking ahead to carrying out a strategic planning process and workplan development in the early part of 2024.









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