



Assembly of First Nations

6th Annual National Forum on Income Assistance:

*Leveraging Regional Variations: Innovating
Income Assistance for Future Generations*

AGENDA

February 3-5, 2026

Richmond, British Columbia



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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FEBRUARY 3-5, 2026 • RICHMOND, BRITISH COLUMBIA



Dear participants:

On behalf of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), I am pleased to welcome you to the Assembly of First Nations Sixth Annual National Forum on Income Assistance (IA), taking place on the lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nation.

Building on discussions at previous IA Forums, the theme of the 2026 IA Forum is "*Leveraging Regional Variations - Innovating Income Assistance for Future Generations*," which will share best practices for administering the IA Program. First Nations know best how to resolve the critical gaps and challenges in the IA Program. The IA Forum is a key venue to learn about opportunities and advancements that First Nations are making in various regions to ignite discussions towards the design and implementation of solutions that work for your communities.

In recent years, the AFN has spearheaded research in partnership with the Technical Working Group on Social Development and the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy to understand the true cost of reforming the IA Program in First Nations. Too often, decisions are taken by policymakers without understanding the context of the programs and services serving First Nations. This research is fundamental to elevating the voices of those who know the challenges best – you, as administrators, case workers, and frontline staff – to create real and lasting change.

Taken together, discussions at the annual IA Forum and First Nations-led research are grounding forces for the AFN's continued advocacy to reform the IA Program. This year's Forum will advance these important conversations amongst case managers and administrators from across Turtle Island to come together, exchange knowledge, learn about reform research initiatives, and share regional priorities and considerations to strengthen First Nations' collective advocacy. Together, we will shape the future of the reformed IA Program.

Your continued dedication to this work makes a lasting difference in our communities. Thank you for your commitment to advancing the wellbeing of our Nations and for your active participation in such an important Forum. I look forward to the discussions, learning, and collaboration that will help move this important work forward for the benefit of future generations.

Sincerely,

National Chief Cindy Woodhouse
Assembly of First Nations





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Dear participants:

As the Assembly of First Nations Manitoba Regional Chief and Social Development Portfolio Holder, it is my honour to welcome you to the Sixth Annual National Forum on Income Assistance (IA): Leveraging Regional Variations - Innovating Income Assistance for Future Generations, here on the lands of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) Nation.

This year's Forum comes at a crucial time as we continue advancing First Nations-led reform of the IA Program. Investments into the IA Program continue to fall short of the AFN's advocacy while, at the same time, our communities face economic uncertainties due to tariffs, inflation and other factors. First Nations are resilient, and we must continue to work together to advance IA Program reform.

The IA Forum provides a meaningful opportunity to gather case managers and administrators from across Turtle Island to learn about and discuss how each region envisions reform. The current funding approach for the IA Program reflects provincial and territorial rates of support and is not adequate for our nations. It is time that our communities come together to determine solutions.

The Forum will provide a space to learn about regional variations to IA Program administration, and to connect with other First Nations administrators and case workers to discuss key priorities, core program elements, and share best practices to guide the principles for reforming the IA Program.

Your work within your communities is vital to the wellbeing and future of our Nations. The knowledge and insights shared during the Forum will identify key areas to enhance the AFN's advocacy and advance First Nations-led reform of the IA Program. I look forward to listening and learning alongside you, and I extend my appreciation for your continued dedication to this essential work.

Sincerely,

Willie Moore
Manitoba Regional Chief &
Social Development Portfolio Holder

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AGENDA

PRE-FORUM: February 2, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Pre-Registration

Foundations - DAY 1: February 3, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
8:00 am – 4:00 pm	Registration
8:15 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast (provided)
9:00 am – 9:40 am	Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drum • Elder Larry Grant • National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak • Manitoba Regional Chief Willie Moore, Portfolio Holder • BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee (TBC) • Host Chief Wayne Sparrow, Musqueam, BC (TBC) • Facilitator Heather Swan, Swan Planning Consultancy
9:40 am – 10:00am	Overview of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Advocacy on Income Assistance (IA) Program Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torri Weapenicappo, Senior Policy Analyst, AFN
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Updates from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on Income Assistance Program Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephan Aucoin, Manager, Income Assistance, Health and Social Sector, Indigenous Services Canada
10:30 am – 10:45 am	Wellness Break
10:45 am – 11:30 am	Income Assistance Costing Presentation from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Helaina Gaspard, co-founder and Managing Director, IFSD Advisors Ltd.
11:30 am – 11:45 am	Energizer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Bingo



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Foundations - DAY 1: February 3, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
11:45 am – 12:30 pm	Using Data and Innovative Approaches, Including AI, in the Income Assistance Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nordeen Elbakkouri, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, 360 Nation Administration Solutions
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch Break (provided)
1:15 pm – 2:45 pm	Workshop: Lateral Kindness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shannon Beauchamp, Facilitator, Eagle Feather (Migizi Miigwan) Facilitation & Coaching Inc.
2:45 pm – 3:00 pm	Wellness Break
3:00 pm – 4:35 pm	Workshop: Lateral Kindness Continued
4:35 pm – 4:45 pm	Day 1 Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator Heather Swan, Swan Planning Consultancy

Understanding Our Present - DAY 2: February 4, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
8:15 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast (provided)
9:00 am – 9:10 am	Day 2 Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator Heather Swan, Swan Planning Consultancy
9:10 am – 10:40 am	Panel Presentation: Regional IA Administration Variances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amanda Kubrakovitch & Gene Bercier, West Region Tribal Council, Manitoba Fran Okasikewiyin, Saskatoon Tribal Council, Saskatchewan Nina Dickson, Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation, Yukon
10:40 am – 10:55 am	Wellness Break
10:55 am – 12:30 pm	Panel Presentation: The Impact of Funding Agreements on IA Policy Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florence Kanhai, Thunderchild First Nation, Saskatchewan Ruth Levi, Elsipogtog First Nation, New Brunswick Millie Thunder, Little Pine First Nation, Saskatchewan
12:30 pm – 1:15 pm	Lunch Break

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Understanding Our Present - DAY 2: February 4, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
1:15 pm - 1:40 pm	Plenary Presentation: First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle Compensation Claims Process and Supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seneca Stacey-Allen, Information Desk Team Lead, AFN
1:40 pm - 2:30 pm	Panel Presentation: Self-Governance and IA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief David Monias, Pimicikamak Cree Nation, Manitoba (TBC) Chief Leroy Denny, Eskasoni Mi'kmaw Nation, Nova Scotia TBC
2:30 pm – 2:45 pm	Wellness Break
2:45 pm – 4:20 pm	Plenary Presentation: Reducing First Nations Poverty Through IA Program Reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jolene Andrew, Director of Community Development, Lil'wat Nation Breakout Session: Identifying First Nations innovative responses to supporting IA clients to address the gaps within the IA Program.
4:20 pm – 4:30 pm	Day 2 Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator Heather Swan, Swan Planning Consultancy

Envisioning Our Future - DAY 3: February 5, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
8:15 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast (provided)
9:00 am – 9:10 am	Day 3 Opening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator Heather Swan, Swan Planning Consultancy
9:10 am – 9:30 am	Guest Presenter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBC
9:30 am – 11:00 am	Panel Presentation: Guaranteed Liveable Income (GLI) and First Nations Perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victoria Caravaggio, Chiefs of Ontario (COO) Staci Williams, Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA) TBC



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Envisioning Our Future - DAY 3: February 5, 2026

Time (PST)	ACTIVITY/SESSION
11:00 am – 11:15 am	Wellness Break
11:15 am – 11:30 am	Plenary Presentation: Looking Ahead <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Torri Weapenicappo, Senior Policy Analyst, AFN
11:30 am – 12:00 pm	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak• Manitoba Regional Chief Willie Moore, Portfolio Holder• BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee (TBC)• Host Regional Chief Wayne Sparrow (TBC)• Elder Larry Grant• Drum
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch (provided)



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SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Overview of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Advocacy on Income Assistance (IA) Program Reform

The AFN will set the stage for the National Forum with an overview of advocacy and recent mandates for the reform of the IA Program including, updates on national-level work towards reforming First Nations social supports and programming, and the vision for the path forward.

Updates from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on IA Program Reform

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) will share updates on the reform of the IA Program with National Forum participants including, an overview of the status of IA Program reform, Budget 2025's federal commitments to reform, and next steps on implementing change to First Nations social programs.

Income Assistance Costing Presentation from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy

In this session, participants will hear an update from the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) on the IA Costing work including the findings from the regional program analysis, the data collection efforts and analysis, and the vision for the end of the project.

Using Data and Innovative AI Approaches in the Income Assistance Program

The presentation will provide an overview of how data collection can support program administration and advocacy. It will also provide customizable AI-assisted income assistance tools developed for supporting First Nations with case management, reporting, and service delivery. In addition, it will demonstrate how AI-enhanced data tools can support informed planning, identifying local needs and priorities to tailor solutions unique to each First Nation, while upholding OCAP® principles and First Nations data sovereignty.

Plenary Workshop: Lateral Kindness

Participants will take part in an interactive workshop on the practice of lateral kindness as a strength-based alternative to lateral violence. Through culturally grounded teachings and guided activities, participants will reflect on the impacts of lateral violence, explore resilience and healing practices, and build practical tools to foster kindness, respect, and accountability in their work and communities. The workshop is designed to support participants in creating healthier, more supportive environments rooted in self-care, relational connection, and collective well-being.

Panel Presentation: Regional IA Administration Variances

Participants will hear from First Nations in various regions on their experiences administering the IA Program, sharing the differences caused by regional policies. The discussion will highlight the impact of regional policy on the administration of the IA Program, including best practices



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and innovative solutions taken to navigate the differences. Following the panel, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue on how regional variances affect service delivery and reform efforts.

Panel Presentation: The Impact of Funding Agreements on IA Policy Administration

Participants will hear from panelists administering social programs through various funding agreements and the impact the agreements have on the administration of IA within their communities. Following the discussion, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in dialogue on the challenges and opportunities created by these agreements.

Plenary Presentation: First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle Compensation Claims Process and Supports

In this session, participants will receive information on the First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle Settlement, including how to submit a Claim for Compensation, the supports available and updates on the launch of the remaining seven Classes. This session will not include a Q and A as we want to encourage participants to visit the Information Booth outside the main plenary for more tailored support.

Panel Presentation: Self-Governance and IA

This panel will highlight First Nations self-governance models administering the IA Program across different regions. Participants will hear from panelists representing various regions on the diverse ways social programs are administered, including the ways the Assisted Living Program is administered through the health or social streams, and the best practices and lessons learned from self-determination of social programming.

Plenary Presentation and Breakout Session: Reducing First Nations Poverty Through IA Program Reform

Participants will engage in a plenary session with Jolene Andrew, Director of Community Development with the Lil'wat Nation, on the innovative approach to implementing various programs and services to provide additional support through the development of a social safety net for IA Clients. Following the plenary session, participants will break out into smaller groups to discuss their experiences navigating the gaps in the IA Program, share innovative approaches to accessing other social support programs, and identify areas requiring better coordination between programs and services that are crucial for reducing poverty for First Nations IA Clients.

Panel Presentation: Guaranteed Liveable Income (GLI) and First Nations Perspectives

In this session, participants will learn about GLI models and hear from various First Nations and organizations about the work being completed on GLI, including First Nations perspectives, concerns and priorities as it relates to the use of GLI as a poverty alleviation strategy within First Nations.





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