



All Our Relations: Emerging Stronger Together

Assembly of First Nations • Executive Report 2019–2020



The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national body representing First Nations governments and approximately one million people living on reserve and in urban and rural areas. The National Chief is elected every three years and receives direction from the Chiefs-in-Assembly. The AFN is dedicated to advancing the priorities of First Nations through review, study, response and advocacy on a broad range of issues and policy matters.

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*AFN Annual General Assembly artwork by Loretta Gould
This piece is entitled, "All Our Relations."*

Loretta Gould is a Mi'kmaq Quilter and Painter known for her love of bright, vibrant, and beautiful colours. Born in 1976, Loretta was raised in Waycobah First Nation by her parents, Annie Catherine (Katie) and Joseph Googoo. At the age of seventeen, Loretta married Elliot Gould and together they raised five children: Dakota, Shianne, Sipu, Phoenix, and Ivy Blue.

Loretta was inspired to begin her quilting journey after spotting a quilt at a mall. Unfortunately, she could not afford to purchase the quilt, so she decided to try her shot at making one herself. She worked in this medium for ten years and since 2010, she has made a living off her beautiful art quilts. Loretta's quilts are hung in the art gallery, Friends United, owned by Rolf Bouman. It was Rolf's insistence coupled with the unfortunate breaking of her sewing machine that first drove Loretta to try her hand at painting in 2013. She has been painting ever since.

Loretta's work has been admired and sold internationally in countries such as Germany and Finland. She hopes that her art will be shared and loved around the world. Through her art, she expresses her spiritual feelings.

Painting is a family practice as she and her husband, Elliot, will work on pieces together that demonstrate their care, commitment, and family unity.

Loretta is entirely self-taught. She uses cotton fabrics for her quilts and acrylic paints on canvas.



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National Chief Report



Report from National Chief Perry Bellegarde Assembly of First Nations

Chiefs, Councillors, friends, relatives, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, I hope that you are safe, in good spirits and surrounded by loved ones.

The wellbeing of our people is always paramount. Given the risks and challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we chose to postpone our Annual General Assembly (AGA) in July and are instead gathering virtually in December. I am very proud and grateful for the hard work of the staff here at the AFN and in our regional offices for working quickly to adapt and continuing to drive our advocacy efforts aimed at improving the lives of all First Nations. I believe we have been highly successful.

On top of reiterating important commitments made in 2019, the government's Speech from the Throne in September offered additional specifics on infrastructure, housing, policing as an essential service, and several other items. We have expressed First Nations support for action on the climate crisis, new legislation ensuring the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and narrowing the gap in the quality of life between our people and the rest of the Canada, and we will work to ensure these commitments are reflected in the mandate letters from the Prime Minister to his ministers, and are included in budget plans.

We continue to press the government to stand firm in its commitments to First Nations. Our election priorities document,

Honouring Promises, remains the main driver of these efforts. It contains many important commitments, including:

- co-developing and introducing legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the first year of the new mandate;
- continuing the work of ending all long-term drinking water advisories on reserve by 2021, and ensuring safe drinking water in every First Nations community;
- co-developing new legislation to ensure that First Nations have access to high quality, culturally relevant healthcare and mental health services;
- work with Canada on a National Youth Mental Health and Suicide Strategy;
- continuing work toward implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples;
- working with Indigenous communities to close the infrastructure gap by 2030;
- ensuring that Canada's governments are living up to the spirit and intent of treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements made with Indigenous Peoples;
- ensuring Indigenous people who were harmed under the discriminatory child welfare system are compensated in a way that is both fair and timely; and,

- continue to invest in First Nations priorities, in collaboration with Indigenous partners.

In addition to pursuing these priorities, the AFN has made progress in other areas through our collective advocacy, such as:

- signing of an implementation protocol with Indigenous Services Canada to support the priorities of First Nations in the implementation of An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families;
- securing a commitment for the co-development of legislation to support First Nations policing services;
- pressing for investments and improvements in pandemic response that ensure that every First Nation can continue to provide for their citizens;
- advancing work on AFN Charter Renewal.

In the 2019 federal budget, new investments in Indigenous People's priorities totalled more than \$4.7 Billion. AFN's advocacy for First Nations budget priorities has been critically important to bringing total investments over the last four budgets for Indigenous peoples to more than \$21.4 Billion (allocated over 8 years). On top of that, an additional \$1.4 Billion in funding for Indigenous Peoples' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, of which First Nations can expect at least \$890 Million;

Those funds are critical as 2020 has presented no shortage of challenges for Indigenous peoples across the country. COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption around the world. Chiefs across Canada have demonstrated superb leadership in mitigating the impacts of this unique public health threat and unprecedented economic shutdown.





I lift up and thank the many Chiefs, Councillors, First Nations leaders, Elders, and all the diligent and dedicated women and men who have protected us and have put us in a position to emerge from this crisis stronger than ever.

Our people have faced blatant acts of violence and racism, including shameful attacks at the hands of RCMP officers; mob violence aimed at Mi'kmaq fishers in Nova Scotia; the backlash against Algonquin efforts to protect moose populations; and the horrific treatment of First Nations people in the healthcare system that has resulted in death. The AFN works every day to fight discrimination in all aspects of society, especially in our policing services, and will continue to press for the First Nations Restorative justice initiative and other reforms to the justice system.

Together we have been successful in having First Nations' priorities become Canada's

priorities. We have reached new heights and worked towards a better future for all and will continue to do so.

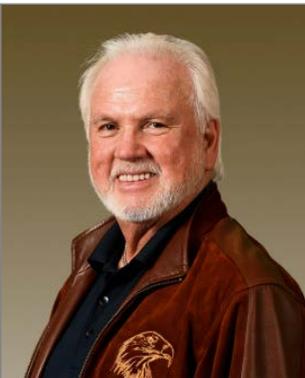
I remain encouraged by the warmth and generosity of our brothers and sisters, as well as by their ingenuity. While I would dearly love to visit your communities in person, I suspect it will be many more months before we can safely gather in person again. In the meantime, I welcome the opportunity to discuss not only the issues before you but the solutions that you see. COVID-19 has forced us into thinking of new ways to serve our people. I am hopeful and confident that we will make it through this trial and will emerge stronger for the journey.

I look forward to the day when we can gather our Nations together once more. Until then, stay safe.

*Kinanāskomitin,
National Chief Perry Bellegarde*



Regional Chiefs'
Reports



Regional Chief Roger Augustine

New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island

Welcome to this virtual edition of the 2020 AFN, Annual General Assembly. The people of the Atlantic region send thoughts and prayers for strength to our people from coast to coast during these trying times. Blessings to those who take care of us, and to those we have lost.

2020 has been a challenging year for our people, not only with the crisis of COVID-19, but the recent challenges to our inherent and Treaty rights – especially to our right to a moderate livelihood. What has been encouraging is the national support from our people in First Nations communities in all provinces and the Fisheries sector of the AFN. I would like to thank the staff at the national office for their reaction to this pandemic as well as their proactive work in preparing for challenges on the horizon. Thank you to all the various committee members for your tireless efforts in your respective departments. We'lalin!

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Fisheries has taken the bulk of our efforts in the Atlantic region. Our cousins in Nova Scotia have taken a positive step forward in asserting their inherent rights. The Chiefs of NB and PEI have offered our support as the matter will have an enormous effect on Treaty rights for our people across Turtle Island. In New Brunswick, Wolostquey bands are taking the government to task on crab fishing and allocations revoked by DFO. We lift up the leadership of these bands who are paving the way for future negotiations.

The Wolostquey Nations of New Brunswick (WNNB) have served notice to the Federal government that they are suing for land covering the southern half of NB. This will play an important part in a potential Treaty renewal negotiation for our region.

Talks are ongoing with the province regarding an inquiry into the deaths of two Indigenous people at the hands of police this past year. Systemic racism is becoming more apparent within all government agencies.

Talks are ongoing with invested parties to establish a carbon engineering plant in the region. This will offset carbon emissions by turning solid waste into synthetic diesel fuel. Indigenous communities will benefit from economic and employment opportunities as well as contributing to a green project.

The regional office is working closely with Workforce Warriors, a newly established group developing a connection between Indigenous peoples and our province's sustainable energy provision. The perfect starter for a larger plan of developing a Workforce Warriors Renewable Energy Installation Technician Program is being piloted in Indigenous communities through our Workforce Warriors tiny green neighborhood/skill-to-work project.

The Indigenous training institute will be working on behalf of First Nations community schools and will not only be an advocacy group but will host a space for industry, community, private sector, government and organizations to share ideas and contribute to First Nations students'

lives in meaningful, personalized ways. This institute, according to Indigenous Services Canada, is the only one of its kind in the world.

National Portfolios

Management Committee (Chairman):

The Management Committee met regularly, per the Terms of Reference. Early in the fiscal year saw an approval for funding to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. A National Task Force was established, and funds were used to hire a coordinator for each region. Virtual meetings are ongoing as we are facing a second wave and the virus has started to affect our communities.

In part due to the pandemic and the affect it had on the Canadian economy, there has been a greater emphasis on the budget for the National office as well as the individual Regions. The finance director and support staff, along with the CEO, have been working tirelessly to ensure that funding for all departments remains at the current levels at the very least.

National Fisheries Committee:

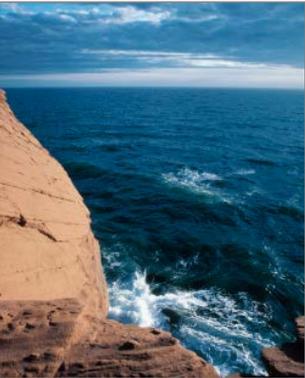
As co-chair of this committee along with BC Regional Chief Terry Teegee, we have seen one of our biggest challenges since the Marshall decision in 1999. Sipekne'katik First Nation in NS developed their community's own Fishery Management Plan and is acting on inherent Treaty rights as well as the Supreme Court decision that allows a

"moderate livelihood." The Federal government has failed to act on stipulations set forth in this decades old decision, as well as the 1984 Sparrow decision that Indigenous peoples of Canada have an inherent right to fish. Many bands have negotiated their own deals, but the end result will have consequences for Indigenous peoples from coast to coast to coast. The NFC has pledged their full support to the efforts of the people of Sipekne'katik and continue to support all First Nations in their struggles to have these rights recognized unequivocally for all. The AFN Fisheries Sector will remain actively involved in lobbying for the governments to recognize and fully implement these decisions on behalf of all of our communities.

The Path Ahead

Looking forward we are faced with the challenge of ever-changing spokespeople within all government sectors. It appears that we have to do the same meet and greet dance whenever this happens. It is difficult to establish a relationship based on this method; therefore, we must step up our efforts to appear united. There is strength in numbers, and it is hard to fight the good fight when we allow ourselves to be divided. Nevertheless, the success stories from our communities are encouraging and gives hope that one day we will be recognized not only as First Peoples, but as a Nation that is determined and willing to talk and work with our allies to a clear path of reconciliation for our future generations. We must continue to take some bumps and bruises because we have to work very hard for everything that is





rightfully ours. We have to remain proactive in protecting the health of our people, mentally, physically and spiritually. As leaders who have dedicated most of our lives to serving our people, we are aware of the toll it takes on our spirits. If we don't have our health, we become weaker and more susceptible. Not everything that we have fought for to date will be there tomorrow. We need to ensure that our quality of life does not regress. I have great faith in our present leadership that they will continue this path forward.

Conclusion:

I am honoured to have battled through this challenging year with my colleagues. I will pray for strength for our new leaders so that they may respect the knowledge and wisdom available to them. Your energy and new ideas will be a great compliment.

*Prayers that we live in Harmony,
Peace and Friendship.*



Regional Chief Paul James Prosper *Nova Scotia and Newfoundland*



Kwe. I am honoured to represent the Mi'kmaq leadership for Nova Scotia and Newfoundland as their Regional Chief. I was elected in September 2020, and the past couple couple months have been an extensive learning experience. Prior to becoming Regional Chief, I was Chief for Paqtnkek Mi'kmaq Nation since 2013.

The last few months have been quite intensive in the Region. The Marshall livelihood fishery has been the subject of much political and legal debate. Leadership in Nova Scotia have been advancing several priority issues through the consultation and negotiation process. Within Newfoundland, several key issues have been identified; however, there is a need for further discussion and engagement. Discussions with AFN National Chief have led to my appointment to the portfolio titled: Lands, Territories and Resources. Weekly Briefings are ongoing along with setup for the AFN Regional Office.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

The following are some key Issues and Activities that have taken place in the Region:

- Marshall Livelihood Fishery:** Discussions with Mi'kmaq Chiefs, Federal Ministers/ staff and AFN Executive/staff are ongoing. AFN submission is before the Standing Committee of Fisheries and Oceans. Participation on various committees and technical briefings involving consultation, negotiation and litigation.
- Membership/ATR:** Regional engagement has led to the identification of these priority issues. These are specific to a part of the region that shares a unique history. These items were advocated at a Ministerial level. A subsequent regional meeting provided further details to these issues
- Community Infrastructure & Housing:** These are key issues that exist throughout the Region. New housing and repairs are priority issues both on- and off-reserve. These items were advocated at a Ministerial level. Regional engagement indicates the distinct need for off-reserve housing repair in isolated and marginalized areas.
- Mi'kmaq Child Welfare Law:** The development of a Mi'kmaq Child Welfare law has been ongoing since 2014. Provincial legislation has been amended to reflect Mi'kmaq families. A draft law is currently under development. Tripartite discussions and implementation of provincial amendments are ongoing.
- Mi'kmaq Health Authority:** The development of a Mi'kmaq Health Authority has been ongoing since 2017. Currently the parties are in the process of negotiating a Tripartite MOU. Incorporation is ready to proceed through approval of leadership. An oversight committee has been established and the legal team is under discussion.



- **INAC Workplan Engagement:** Discussions have taken place with INAC Senior Officials on the development of a joint Regional Workplan. Previous joint efforts within the Atlantic have generated 1.2 Million in Covid benefits. Discussions will center on the development of joint priorities on common regional issues.
- **Native Women and Youth Issues:** The Native Women's Association of Canada and Mi'kmaq youth have expressed the need to be more involved in the affairs and advocacy through the AFN.

As portfolio holder for Lands, Territories and Resources, I am pleased to offer an update on the repeal and replacement of four key policies: The Comprehensive Land Claims Policy, the Inherent Right to Self-Government Policy, the Additions-to-Reserve Policy, and the Specific Claims Policy. We are working to ensure this work is rights-driven, respects the self-determination of all First Nations, however they choose to assert their rights, and that it leads to timely, effective and just outcomes for First Nations. Work on Comprehensive Land Claims and the Inherent Right to Self-Government Policy is currently in the initial stages and is focused on understanding the many different way First Nations choose to approach the recognition and assertion of their rights, including those that fall outside of federal policy. The Additions-to-Reserve Policy continues to create barriers for First Nations because it is time consuming, costly, and requires significant technical expertise. It is imperative that this policy be improved or

replaced with something that allows First Nations to add lands to their reserves so they can grow and develop similar to Canadian cities and municipalities. Our focus right now is on accessing data and analysis to better understand how to address the challenges. We have made significant progress advocating for a truly independent specific claims process. This work was accelerated in 2019 through a national dialogue process with First Nations seeking input on what true independent claims resolution looks like. Our intention is to have a substantive proposal for review by First Nations in 2021.

This is an exciting time in the history of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Leadership has been seeking to advance the implementation of Treaty rights that have been recognized and affirmed by the highest law (the Constitution) and highest court (the Supreme Court of Canada) in this country. Mi'kmaq leadership is also undertaking a number of self-government initiatives involving social, health and child welfare. Regional priorities highlight a need to create a reserve land base to support membership and foster economic and community development. The expansion of Band membership based on history, family networks and community affiliation has also been outlined as a priority. Isolation and marginalization of communities speaks to the need to address the interests of off-reserve membership which are often overlooked through government policy. Assembly of First Nations' priority issues through the Lands, Territories and Resources Unit are ongoing. The four main policy areas



(Additions to Reserve, the Inherent Right to Self-Government Policy, Specific and Comprehensive Claims policy) must be revamped to meet the distinct needs of First Nations. An immediate priority is to change the Specific Claims Policy to be truly independent from government control and intervention.

I am honoured to be part of the AFN Executive and their highly dedicated and capable staff. The past months have been an important learning experience for me in my role as Regional Chief. Our leadership faces unique challenges and there is a need to recognize and assert our sovereignty throughout our territories.

In Recognition of First Nations legal and human rights, wela'lioq!





Regional Chief Ghislain Picard

Quebec-Labrador

Introduction

The period we are going through is putting a strain on the capacity of our First Nations governments to assume our responsibilities towards our populations, regardless of their living environment, both in our communities and in urban settings. While the pandemic has continued to progress throughout Quebec, the hardest hit province in Canada, by far, dramas have directly affected our populations and have brutally brought to light unacceptable situations that have long been denounced by the Assembly of our Chiefs, but without adequate reactions on the part of other governments, particularly the province's government.

The AFNQL is firmly convinced that this extremely difficult context, as well as the tragedies that have directly affected the First Nations population must find meaning, must lead us towards improving our living conditions, while respecting our rights and who we are. This is the essence of the AFNQL's mission.

Regional Issues

Optimizing the AFNQL

Before going further in describing the issues faced in recent months by our Assembly of Chiefs, it is necessary to describe the context of the political relations between the AFNQL and the Legault government, elected two years ago now, in the fall of 2018. The majority government is formed by the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), a relatively

recent party that regroups most French-speaking Quebecers, generally nationalists, without offering an agenda of political separation from the rest of Canada. A party therefore whose electoral clientele is reputed to be rather conservative, faithful to the traditional values of Quebecers, including a deep attachment to the land. A party that is also especially present in the regions of Quebec, in the First Nations territories where most of our communities are located. It was not to be expected that the CAQ, with this electoral base, would be very progressive in its approach to the fundamental issues of First Nations, while respecting rights and territories. That is exactly what happened. Premier François Legault has never really assumed responsibility for Indigenous Affairs, which is the responsibility of the leader of the government and which falls under the Executive Council Ministry, directly under his responsibility. Instead, he delegated the Indigenous Affairs portfolio to a junior minister with no real ministerial responsibility. This is what Quebec Premiers usually do, and this is what the AFNQL systematically denounces. It is sometimes possible for such a junior minister to become, to a certain extent, a valid interlocutor, a useful intermediary in relations with the Cabinet. The person chosen by Premier Legault, however, has never demonstrated the skills necessary to perform such a role. Until it is finally dismissed from these functions, in circumstances to which we will return later, when the Prime Minister does not pay attention to First Nations issues, it is



important to realize that the AFNQL has not had a valid and credible interlocutor with the provincial government for two years.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the insensitivity of provincial authorities to issues specific to First Nations and the lack of effective, high-level communication channels with the provincial government immediately had negative consequences.

The AFNQL recognizes the importance of effective coordination of pandemic response measures by the provincial public health authority. However, the AFNQL insists that this coordination be carried out in a manner that respects and considers the jurisdiction of First Nations. These are not strictly political issues, but rather public health issues: who better than the First Nations institutions put in place by the Chiefs and Councils can adequately respond to the specific needs of the First Nations population?

The AFNQL immediately noticed, as soon as the Public Health measures were put in place, that both governments immediately fell back into their traditional reflexes towards First Nations. The federal government set up an emergency structure, no doubt in accordance with the letter of its mandate, but in which the role of First Nations institutions is secondary, while that of provincial authorities is predominant. Invited to participate in the daily meetings emanating from this crisis structure, the First Nations organizations did not have a clear role, respectful of their mandate and responsibilities.

For their part, the provincial authorities have also reproduced their usual patterns, guided primarily by their concern not to assume responsibilities which, in their view, are those of the federal government in relation to "Indians on reserve". As for the needs of the First Nations population living in urban settings, the provincial authorities consider them to be part of the Quebec population in general, without taking their specific needs into account.

At a time when the measures imposed by the pandemic must be quickly put in place, First Nations authorities must first focus their attention, and correct if necessary, on the actions undertaken by the other two levels of government, which have once again fallen back into their traditional behaviours. On the ground, however, local First Nations authorities immediately took the measures they felt were essential to protect their populations. It is remarkable to note that, in a province very heavily affected by the effects of the pandemic, First Nations communities managed to maintain a very low contamination rate. Despite significant difficulties in establishing and maintaining links with provincial structures in many cases, local First Nations authorities were able to provide the necessary services.

A special effort has been made to physically protect the communities' territories and to establish and enforce sanitary isolation measures. Local First Nations governments that can rely on their own police services were able to put them to work quickly and efficiently. For the others, it was necessary to attract the attention and ensure the active participation of provincial police services, it





was necessary to convince, insist and intervene at the highest level. It is under these circumstances that the AFNQL Regional Chief maintained for several months a constant channel of communication with the provincial Ministry of Public Security and the Sûreté du Québec. The AFNQL, with the active collaboration of all its regional Commissions and organizations, has prepared and will soon make public a Review that describes in detail the progress of regional initiatives taken in support of First Nations governments and local institutions in the context of the pandemic, between March 15 and July 31, 2020.

The Review provides a better understanding of the pandemic issues for First Nations, their governments and institutions. Above all, it allows us to identify means of action to be retained from a first wave and good practices to be developed.

In short, the main principle is that First Nations, their governments, and the local and regional institutions that are accountable to them are best placed to ensure quality services adapted to the needs of their populations. The other government partners must recognize this and make every effort to respect a true government-to-government relationship, to put an end to a paternalistic relationship that does nothing but harm.

Another major issue for the AFNQL is the denunciation and fight against discrimination and systemic racism. These social phenomena, which have always been

present and which poison the lives of First Nations and relations with other groups in society, have taken on an even more concrete and urgent dimension in recent years with the denunciation by First Nations women of unacceptable actions taken against them by members of police forces. The courage to denounce demonstrated by these women has led, on the one hand, to an important movement of indignation and, on the other hand, to a series of defensive reactions on the part of the provincial authorities concerned.

The AFNQL and its Council of Elected Women, as well as Quebec Native Women, undertook a series of high-level meetings with the provincial authorities of the time, notably with Premier Philippe Couillard, in order to bring him to take the corrective action required by the denunciations of reprehensible behaviour on the part of the police forces. The provincial government finally agreed to set up a commission to examine the relationship between “certain provincial public services” and Indigenous people, and appointed a retired judge, Jacques Viens, to do so. Chairman Viens tabled his report on September 30, 2019 to the Legault government. Following Chairman Viens’ often harsh conclusions, particularly with respect to systemic discrimination in access to and quality of services for the Indigenous population, Premier Legault issued an apology on behalf of the Quebec government. However, the implementation of the report’s clear recommendations has been slow in coming.



Under these conditions, and given the seriousness of the issues in question, the AFNQL has chosen to directly address a serious societal problem that the Legault government, and in particular the Premier himself, still refuse to acknowledge, namely the presence of systemic racism in Quebec.

The AFNQL has decided to develop and implement its own Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination. As a first step, the AFNQL commissioned a survey from a specialized firm to measure the opinion and openness of the Quebec population towards First Nations issues. The positive results of this opinion measurement allowed the AFNQL to move forward and seek alliances against discrimination and racism among the Quebec population, its institutions, and groups. The Action Plan is currently underway, and the response is very positive. A dramatic event came to darken the fall of the Atikamekw Nation and all the First Nations of our territories: the death of Mrs. Joyce Echaquan, a mother of seven children, who died at the Joliette hospital. Ms. Echaquan, who was living the last moments of her life, had the courage to film them at a time when the hospital staff was making unbearable racist comments, and to place this extremely dramatic testimony on social networks.

Mrs. Echaquan's gesture had the effect of thunder. It was not in vain, because it generated an impressive series of demonstrations of sympathy and indignation among the population at large. Such a movement, and a series of severe criticisms of his government, even led Premier Legault

to remove from office the Minister of Indigenous Affaires whom he himself had appointed and kept in that position for two years, despite the numerous and serious criticisms of his government.

Conclusion: Where we are going.

The AFNQL, over the next few months, will continue the implementation of its Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination. An unacceptable situation has just been brought to the attention of our Chiefs by our Innu brothers in Labrador, and the AFNQL strongly denounces it. Discrimination and systemic racism will require our organization's constant attention and a capacity to react in which all our Chiefs actively participate.

In terms of relations with the provincial government, the AFNQL is undertaking to rebuild a constructive relationship with the new interlocutors recently appointed by the government. An important work in progress. In terms of the political relationship with the federal government, the AFNQL's attention will continue to be focused primarily on the implementation of the Child and Family Services Act, which, as we know, is challenged by the province, as well as on the proposed legislation on the compliance of federal laws with the UNDRIP.





Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald Ontario

Wahcheeyay, Aanii, Boozhoo, She:kon, Shekoli.

It is my pleasure to provide my Annual Report as Ontario Regional Chief. I continue to focus on leading with a heart-centered approach and at embodying leadership that is grounded in love and care, as well as holding space for respect in all my interactions.

This year has been memorable and will go down in history as world-altering, with the unpredictable COVID-19 global pandemic. We are creating a new reality where we can all live in peace and safety. Our First Nation communities are navigating through these

dangerous times with few precedents. Extraordinary situations like these test our collective will but can also bring out the best in humanity in a world where we need unity like never before. I am proud to say we are moving through this cooperatively, while respecting

each other's decisions and will ultimately persevere, keeping our circle strong.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

COVID-19 Response

A global pandemic was declared on March 11, 2020. I developed goals for my office to guide my work which included my overall goal: To achieve zero new confirmed and zero active COVID-19 cases in First Nation communities. I have participated in a newly formed AFN Task Force on COVID-19.

Ontario Government announced a number of investments to assist First Nations during the pandemic. My office hired a Director of Policy in July 2020 to oversee the COVID-19 Initiatives Team and guide related initiatives, including a discussion paper on the second wave; a guidance document on land-based learning for safe school openings; a contract tracing pilot project by mapping community house relationships; a concept paper on traditional market and food sovereignty; and, a discussion paper on the long-term financial and debt impacts of the pandemic on First Nations. My office has also submitted a Prosperity Table Proposal that speaks to a plan to be a part of the economic recovery of the province post COVID-19.

Bill 156 *Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act*:

We were successful in inserting a non-derogation clause and well as an exception clause into the Legislation for First Nation harvesters to ensure our s.35 Aboriginal and Treaty Rights were protected. The next step is the regulatory process. Minister Ernie Hardeman has advised that the consultation timeframe for input into the regulations has been extended and his office has agreed to provide technical briefings to any First Nation.

Bill 197, *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act*

2020 has been a huge challenge and set-back to the relationship we had been building with Ontario during the pandemic. The Bill included amendment to the Environmental Assessment Act which will negatively impact

“We are in a process of creating a new reality where we can all live in peace and safety.”



our s.35 Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. A number of First Nations have signed on to a legal action to challenge those amendments. I have requested a proper and fulsome engagement process to be funded by the provincial government. The Leadership Council will work with the Chiefs-in-Assembly to define how the engagement process needs to be structured going forward.

Tyendinaga Solidarity Action

On February 6th, members of the Mohawk community shut down freight and passenger rail service in solidarity with Wet'suwet'en hereditary Chiefs. I reached out to the OPP Commissioner to discuss their Framework document for dealing with critical incidents. I had my first one-on-one call with Prime Minister Trudeau during this action and we talked of solutions to the long-standing issues on land rights. My goal was to ensure no lives were lost, no violent arrests were made and that things didn't escalate into other events across Ontario.

Enforcement and Prosecution of First Nation Laws and By-laws

A key action that First Nations have taken is to close their borders. The challenge has been with the enforcement and prosecution of bylaws and BCRs in this regard. In April 2020, we reached out to the Solicitor General who provided a Q&A Factsheet in response to concerns raised by the Leadership Council. We received confirmation that the federal Public Prosecution Service of Canada would prosecute First Nation bylaws. We have received confirmation from Ontario Attorney General, Doug Downey, that tri-lateral table will be established.

Provincial Government Engagement

I continue to work at building and strengthening positive relationships with the provincial government. I am in regular contact with Premier Doug Ford and have facilitated meetings with members of his Cabinet and the Leadership Council including: Minister, Greg Rickford; Minister Jeff Yurek; Minister Christine Elliott; Minister Stephen Lecce; Associate Minister Jill Dunlop; Minister Ernie Hardeman; Minister Rod Phillips; Minister Vic Fedeli; Minister Lisa MacLeod; Associate Minister Michael Tibollo; Attorney General Doug Downey; and Solicitor General Sylvia Jones; IAO Deputy Minister Shawn Batise; and, Deputy Attorney General David Corbett. I had an in-person meeting with Lt. Governor General Elizabeth Dowdeswell. I also met with Green Party Leader, Mike Schreiner to discuss how he could support our advocacy efforts at Queen's Park.

Federal Government Engagement

I had my first one-to-one meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The AFN Executive met with the Deputy Prime Minister (now Minister of Finance) Chrystia Freeland. I am in regular contact with Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller, on a variety of issues. Other Ministers that I have connected with during the last year included: Minister Carolyn Bennett; Minister Bill Blair; Minister Catherine McKenna; Attorney General of Canada David Lametti; Minister Maryam Monsef; Minister Patty Hadju; Senior ADM Valerie Gideon, and, RDG Anne Scotton.





AFN Portfolios

AFN Women’s Council (AFNWC)

I attended the release of the Final Report on June 3/19. In Ontario, we will be initiating a roll-out plan for the National Inquiry Report which will include strategies for implementing the 231 recommendations and taking a “families first” approach. The Leadership Council appointed Anna Betty Achneepineskum, as Ontario representative on the AFN WC following the passing of Chief Celia Echum in April 2020. On June 21st, the Ontario Government announced the Indigenous Women’s Advisory Council and our representative will be Anna Betty Achneepineskum. I regularly attend the AFN WC meetings and one more recently with Minister Carolyn Bennett. I have followed-up with calls to review concerns and actions taken by CIRNAC around the vision for National Action Plan (NAP) and defining the framework; funding inequities that First Nations face; terms of reference for sub-working groups; and a concern that the “families first” approach is not happening. Furthermore, a second NAP is being developed for our All Women in Canada in general outside of the MMIWG2S NAP by the Minister for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) to address gender-based violence. I met with Minister Monsef to discuss how the WAGE NAP and the MMIWG2S NAP can co-exist and complement each other. WAGE is looking for willing partners to work on developing a NAP focusing on intersectional issues (e.g. racism in the healthcare system). On this, AFN had developed a Gender Based Analysis Framework that is now 20-years old. There is opportunity to fund a project to update the framework in 2021/2022.

Water (Co-Lead on Housing/ Infrastructure/Water)

In June 2019, 3 Resolutions were passed 01/2019; 14/2019; 53/2019 directing the AFN to continue to uphold and protect the water rights and interests of First Nations and call on the federal government to remove bureaucratic barriers and systemic failures in guidelines and policies which lead to the denial of the fundamental human right to clean drinking water. The 3rd AFN National Water Symposium and Tradeshow, “First Nations Water Future Post 2010” was held in November 2019. The AFN CCOHI has held regular meetings in response to COVID-19. The issue of clean water arose as one health directive is to wash hands with soap and water which is difficult under BWAs and DNC advisories. Ontario has the highest number of BWAs in the country and the government had committed to end all long-term drinking water advisories by March 2021. We understand that the federal government is changing their deadline to resolve all BWAs until 2029 which is a great disappointment. My office is working with the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC), to chart the path forward to end all BWAs in Ontario. An online Water Summit will be held on November 24th focusing on urgent and emerging water issues from First Nations, including long-term drinking water advisories, and urgent water crises in First Nations.

“I am proud to work with the extraordinary women leaders on the AFN Women’s Council.”



AFN Management Committee and other related issues:

I serve on this Committee with 4 other Regional Chiefs and we meet on a regular basis to address budgets; review financial statements; contracts and RFPs; the 2020 Audit; Committee Terms of Reference; and Annual Budget review.

I volunteered to sit on the Fundraising Committee to look at ways to secure sustainable funding for Regional Offices.

We have been able to maintain adequate budgets for regional offices. This includes \$150,000 to respond to COVID-19. As the Ontario representative, I have raised concerns regarding better communication coming from the AFN and for Regional inclusion in decision-making that has a national impact, as well as Resolutions being passed without meeting the needs of Ontario; and being out voted on matters impacting funding to the Ontario region.

This past year, we also ensured a "Code of Conduct" was adopted for all Regional Chiefs on the AFN Executive.

Sport and Recreation:

In September 2020, I received the national portfolio for Sports and Recreation and received by first briefing. I look forward to the work ahead to support our youth and families as sports and recreation activities support the health and well-being of our communities.

Education (K-12)

This past spring, I stepped back from the AFN Education portfolio so that I could focus my energies and work on matters within the Ontario region. Before that, I was responsible for K-12 issues nationally and co-chaired the AFN Chiefs Committee on Education with Regional Chief Bobby Cameron. The AFN Education Sector held two successful K-12 Education Transformation Forums in May and October 2019. The forms provided platforms for sharing information, exchanging best practices and highlighting regional experiences in education transformation. In August 2019, the Education Partnership Program made recommendations for minor and major changes to the program and are working towards regionalizing the program dollars.

The Path Ahead/Looking forward:

In Fall 2019, First Nations leadership participated in two strategy sessions in which two documents were produced, *Towards a New Relationship (federal)*, and *Stronger Together: Developing Political Strategies That Uplift First Nations in Ontario* (provincial), laying the groundwork for a strategic approach moving forward. It is essential we be more proactive in our approach rather than react to both the federal and provincial governments' priorities.

I'll continue to work at strengthening my positive relationships with both levels of government. My aim is to advocate for individual and collective First Nation needs and shared priorities, and to ensure that First Nations are connected with government officials as required and can work together in a cooperative and collaborative environment.





“It’s essential we be more proactive in our approach rather than react to both the federal and provincial governments’ priorities.”

A number of planned initiatives are underway in Ontario including: the creation of a political process to ensure First Nations are part of the Province’s plan to rebuild the economy (Economic Growth and Prosperity Table); political table comprised of all Women Chiefs; continued support of communities especially during the second wave of COVID-19; a First Nations approach to regaining food sovereignty; and, continued work on enforcement and prosecution of First Nation laws and by-laws.

Conclusion

I want to acknowledge the strength and resiliency of the Leadership, Chiefs and Councils across our region. I look forward to our continued, collective work to protect and preserve the health, well-being and lives of First Nations peoples.

Wishing you peace beyond all understanding.
Ninanaskamon!

RoseAnne Archibald
AFN Ontario Regional Chief

Regional Chief Kevin Hart

Manitoba

It is with great honour that I present my annual report as Manitoba Regional Chief for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN).

On behalf of the AFN Manitoba Region I am honored to continue and advocate on behalf of our communities. During my second term for Manitoba, I have seen many changes and challenges happen in our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities and systemic barriers that our communities face. and they are now are facing a new force that is severely affecting our most precious resource: our people. We will continue to protect our communities with the resources we have to ensure that the safety of all is of the utmost importance.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

COVID-19 continues to impact the work to be completed as our resources (human and financial) continue to be drained which affects our communities' health and well-being. We continue to work towards achieving our goals while respecting all safety precautions regarding COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, the need for reliable critical infrastructure has presented itself as a necessity across the country. Canada and all First Nations must emerge with a plan for the future. Build Back Better is a new initiative created to embrace the opportunity to think big. To get much needed infrastructure investment in our communities, all First Nations must prepare and plan for what their future will look like and work to gain access to infrastructure stimulus funding. More announcements from the federal government's plan to fund

infrastructure are anticipated. The AFN encourages First Nations engagement and inclusion in this process to close the gap for our peoples. The Housing, Infrastructure, Water, and Emergency Services (HIWES) Sector is working with expert groups and First Nations to define the new policy on an Operations and Maintenance (O&M) funding framework beyond 2021. Capacity development of a holistic asset management plan, standard for all First Nations infrastructure and assets, is planned for 2020-2021.

Recent event surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic have emphasized the housing and infrastructure crisis that exists in First Nations. Calls urging the Federal Government to promptly invest significantly in First Nations housing and infrastructure, and advance First Nation's priorities in self-determination, must be ramped up. Immediate federal investments supporting elements of the Strategy are undeniably necessary now.

The creation of a Canada Water Agency (CWA) is a mandated commitment for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and the Minister of Agriculture. This issue is gaining significant national attention regarding the development of this agency. The proposed CWA has far-reaching implications on First Nations water rights, governance, and management. The AFN Water Unit will be working together with the AFN Environment Sector to address this issue and ensure that First Nations are included every step of the way in the planning, development and operations of the Agency.





Social Development Sector

1. Child and Family Services: A work plan was developed with the AFN and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to guide the collaborative implementation of the ISC-AFN Protocol regarding An Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families in relation to the Assembly of First Nations (Entered into June 2020).

2. Jordan's Principle: In July 2020, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) issued a ruling to expand Jordan's Principle eligibility to include more First Nations children. The ruling asked Canada and the Parties to the CHRT to discuss the definition of a First Nations child for eligibility purposes related to Jordan's Principle, including First Nations children without Indian Act status who are recognized as members by their First Nation, and First Nations children without Indian Act status and who are not eligible for status but who have a parent/guardian with (or who is eligible for) Indian Act status.

3 Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC): At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National First Nations ELCC Working Group appealed to the Government of Canada for emergency funding to protect and support ELCC service delivery, develop and provide Covid-19 training for staff, and develop and implement COVID-19 safety protocols for staff, children, and families.

4. Income Assistance: AFN continues to advocate for the reform of ISC's social programs, including the on-reserve income assistance program. We have continued to advance this issue on the political agenda, especially as COVID-19 has significantly impacted First Nations' abilities to work and earn income.

Housing, Infrastructure and Emergency Management Services

1. Water: First Nations continue to face urgent unsafe drinking water issues, which are particularly important in light of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated many of the vulnerabilities that First Nations face due to the lack of access to safe, clean, and reliable drinking water and adequate sanitation, all of which makes it extremely difficult for communities to protect themselves from the negative health effects of the pandemic. Over the last quarter, the focus of the AFN Water Unit has been on continuing the co-development process for repeal and replacement of the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act (SDWFNA), as mandated by the First Nations-in-Assembly at the 2019 AGA in Resolution 14/2019, *Endorsement of the Refined Preliminary Concepts for Repeal and Replacement of the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*. Resolution 14/2019 called for the AFN to proceed with follow-up engagements on key issues and concerns with the repeal and replacement of the SDWFNA. Additionally, the AFN Water Unit is focused on the development of a Long-Term Drinking Water Strategy for First Nations, post-2021, as mandated by the First Nations-in-Assembly, at the 2019 SCA under Resolution 78/2019 *Endorsement of the Preliminary Table of Contents for a First Nations Long-Term Water and Wastewater Strategy Post-2021*. The AFN's Water Unit's proposed next steps, based on the feedback received from First Nations during the engagement process, include a collaborative co-drafting of a renewed Strategy and the repeal and replacement of the SDWFNA with co-developed legislation which will be done through the Joint Working Group.



2. Housing: Over the last quarter, the Assembly of First Nations Housing Unit continued to work towards two activities to enhance federal transparency. The first is further development of performance measures to standardize assessments of Federal Government transparency with First Nations. Secondly, securing a commitment to have an AFN representative receive clearance to participate in drafting the Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) is expected in late 2020 or early 2021. Unfortunately, there has been no progress on both matters since April 2020, due to work resources diverted to COVID-19 related activities. The AFN Housing Unit continues to push for government transparency. I continue to work on the 10-year National First Nations' Housing and Related Infrastructure Strategy (the Strategy) adopted by Chiefs-in-Assembly in 2018. A draft implementation plan has been under development and will provide a path towards the realization of First Nations care and control of housing and related infrastructure. Cost estimates will be supported by data related to First Nations housing and related infrastructure needs. With the Strategy in place and the implementation Plan near completion, many regional First Nations organizations across Canada are already moving towards the goal of self-determination. Moving forward, the Sector is working towards the creation of a First Nations housing policy and research centre, identified as a priority goal in the Strategy.

3 . Infrastructure Unit:

a) Operations and Maintenance Policy Reform (O&M): the AFN infrastructure unit is continuing our advocacy work towards a reformed O&M Policy for First Nations. The ISC-O&M Policy for funded assets on First Nations is outdated and does not adequately address asset repair and maintenance costs. Funding levels need to be increased and should also include the additional assets that First Nations need to protect and service the well-being of their members. The AFN Infrastructure Unit delivered a report of our findings to ISC, called Operations and Maintenance Engagement Sessions - June 2020. This report, along with more engaged discussions with ISC and industry experts, will form the fundamental changes needed to improve funding for First Nations assets.

b) Asset Management: the AFN Infrastructure Unit has delivered a report and findings on Asset Management to ISC entitled The Assembly of First Nations Asset Management Planning Pilot Summary Report - June 2020. This report studied First Nations across all regions investigating the impact of severe O&M under funding and how Asset Management could assist in decision-making surrounding First Nations infrastructure. The study found that removal of funding "information silos" is essential to the success of First Nations adopting asset management approaches. We continue to support regions moving towards an asset management approach for their Nations. In addition, AFN Infrastructure Unit is committed to working on a National First Nations Infrastructure Modernization Strategy, beginning with a national First Nations infrastructure assessment, developed with First Nations.





c) Emergency Services: The AFN has advocated for the recognition of First Nations' right to develop their own programs and institutions that are inclusive of emergency management through the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP). This advocacy also includes the First Nations right to equitable access of health funding and protective equipment under the current COVID-19 pandemic. This work has resulted in enhanced funding and agreements to work with First Nations to assist in the development of their emergency management regimes, as well as working towards the eventual devolution of the role and responsibility for emergency management to transfer to First Nations.

d) Transport Canada: The 2020 Emergency Response Guidebook is an important piece of guidance for First Nations emergency responders who may be involved in disaster and emergency response actions involving the transportation of dangerous goods through train derailments, road, marine, or aviation accidents where there is spillage of dangerous designated substances and exotic chemicals. The guidance presented in the guidebook not only protects first responders, but outlines procedures for the protection and evacuation of populations within a predetermined area of a spill, direction of travel, and the procedures for containment and clean-up.

The Path Ahead/Looking forward:

Looking ahead I will continue to advocate and address the issues and challenges facing our nations, the pandemic has put a spotlight on the gaps facing our First Nations housing, infrastructure, emergency and pandemic preparedness and has highlighted the urgent need for immediate investments in housing

and critical infrastructure in First Nations communities. We will work with our Federal partners to set about identifying infrastructure needs for First Nations in all areas that require help immediately and for the future; this includes operations and maintenance needs to fully protect your assets. First Nations must have access to core infrastructure in order to improve their communities and to better fight the spread of COVID-19.

5. Poverty Reduction - Poverty reduction underlies all of the work that must happen to properly support First Nations. AN AFN-led report found that nearly half of status First Nations children are living in poverty. This fact is absolutely unacceptable; our children deserve better.

Conclusion:

I would like to thank the Executive Committee and staff for adapting and adjusting to what this year has created for us through the COVID-19 pandemic. We will emerge stronger and continue to advocate and advance our nations.

Creators blessings to you, be safe, be well – in Brotherhood.

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, Dēnesų́níné, Saulteaux, the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota in kisiskāciwan (Saskatchewan).

All our Relations, Emerging stronger together is the our theme for our virtual gathering. As leaders, we must always seek to secure and maintain the trust and respect of the First Nations that we have been entrusted to serve. In all that we do, we must reflect a strong sense of direction and purpose. Our collective duty as members of the Executive is to provide clear and focused leadership that supports the priorities and goals of First Nations in accordance with the Charter of the AFN and mandates from First Nations-in-Assembly. The Education sector has continued to advocate for First Nations to have access to safe, sustainably funded, secure, culturally appropriate, and quality education.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Education

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) and the National Indian Education Council (NIEC) are guided by Resolution 16/2016, *Honourable Process to Develop Recommendations to Support First Nations Education Reform*. This Resolution calls for full and meaningful regional First Nations participation on First Nations education reform; it also requires any draft federal legislation on First Nations

education to be ratified by the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly and demands that Canada honour and uphold their constitutional obligation for Inherent and Treaty rights to education. The work of the AFN, CCOE and NIEC are also guided by the Transforming First Nations Elementary and Secondary Education Policy Proposal (2017), passed by First Nations-in-Assembly through Resolution 65/2017 *New Interim Funding Approach for First Nation Education*. First Nations students have the Inherent and Treaty Right to receive education that is in accordance with their culture, values, traditions and languages, and one that is free of racism and discrimination. Quality and culturally appropriate education is a cornerstone to the preservation and vitality of First Nations societies and to the realization of other fundamental human rights of First Nations students who require special measures in order to enjoy their right to education on an equal footing with other Canadian students. This includes the right to equitable funding that meets their specific needs and circumstances, while considering First Nations children's cultural, linguistic and geographical needs and historical realities.

On May 8, 2020, Minister Marc Miller of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) met with the AFN CCOE. The Minister confirmed there would be no delay in funding for First Nations education programs due to COVID-19; he outlined the eligibility



“Quality and culturally appropriate education is a foundation to the preservation and vitality of First Nations societies and to the realization of other fundamental human rights of First Nations students.”



requirements for First Nations post-secondary students for the Canada Emergency Student Benefit, and stated the importance of regionalization and the interim funding formula.

Regional Education Agreements is a priority. The CCOE stated additional support is required in the territories to support First Nations jurisdiction over education. It was requested that there be a meeting between Minister Miller, Minister Bennett, the Territorial governments, and First Nations to address these issues.

On April 22, 2020, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced \$65.5 million to support existing First Nations post-secondary students affected by COVID-19. On April 30, 2020, the CCOE provided a recommendation for a regional allocation of the \$65.5 million. It remains unclear how the Government of Canada determined the \$65.5 million in funding as First Nations leadership was not consulted. The allocations will be administered through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program.

COVID-19 changes the way education is provided in every single First Nation in Canada and we support the back to school plans that First Nations have created across the country. As First Nations continue to transition and adapt to new education practices during this global pandemic, it is imperative that they are supported with investments that ensure they can offer safe learning environments for their students. Despite the funding announcement from the Prime Minister for \$112M for on-reserve schools to support education infrastructure

and programming, First Nations require more resources and investments so that they can provide more space for their students, secure more transportation to improve physical distancing, and ensure they have the appropriate amount of funding to hire additional staff to clean their schools during the pandemic.

First Nations K – 12 Education Transformation, Education Partnerships Program (EPP), and High Cost Special Education Program Review

First Nations are seeking a commitment from the Government of Canada to provide \$609 million to support needs based costs in K-12 education.

Throughout this year, multiple improvements have been made in K-12 education that support First Nations control of First Nations education. In February, a national review began on the High Cost Special Education Program with the intent to identify gaps, costing needs and policy change.

There have also been improvements made in the Education Partnership Program, which has been under review to bring First Nations closer to the decision-making processes and by removing the strenuous reporting requirements for administrators. Regionalization of education programming remains a top priority in order to decentralize funding and have First Nations drive their own education priorities and be the decision makers.

Since First Nations Transformation in 2017, First Nations have made by progress towards



First Nation control of First Nations education. Part of this progress includes the regionalization of First Nations education programs. Part of First Nations control of First Nations education is to decentralize decision making and put it back into the hands of First Nations.

In 2019-2020, the Research and Learning and Innovation in Education Programs were regionalized. First Nations can now determine their implementation approach and adjudication process and look at regional priorities in both research and innovation in education.

The Education Partnership Program has also been under review with minor changes being implement for 2020-2021 and working towards full regionalization of the program for 2021-2022. In 2020-2021, the programs application process was made less stringent and prescriptive, and allowed for First Nations partnerships with eligibility extending to the territories. Regionalization in 2021-2022 would allow for First Nations to set their own regional priorities and selection process.

The co-development of First Nations education policies continues between the NIEC, the AFN, and ISC. The following policy guidelines for 2020-21 continue the work of the Education Partnership Program, Regional Education Agreements (REA), Research and Education, Innovation in Education, and K12 National Program Guidelines.

A review was originally scheduled to coincide with the AFN Symposium on First Nations High Cost Special Education on April 28-29,

2020, in Gatineau, Quebec. Due to COVID-19, the symposium was cancelled and, as such, the review will now proceed with online discussion groups via Zoom videoconference. This conferencing was conducted with Directors of Education, special education service providers, special education teachers, and other delegates. Further to this work, the review will also include interviewing key informants in each region and a survey for those First Nations unable to attend the Zoom videoconference discussion groups.

INDsight Consulting has been hired to conduct the national review with a regional lens. The High Cost Special Education Program Review will assess the current program funding provisions including cost drivers, quality, strengths, gaps, and how it compares to other special education funding. The review will provide costing and recommendations for policy change.

Key Activities and Accomplishments Post-Secondary Education (PSE)

In 2020-2021, First Nations are carrying on the second of three years of engagements on the development of PSE funding models. The AFN will continue to support First Nations and advocate for further policy change for the First Nations post-secondary education funding model engagement with their communities.

The AFN Annual General Assembly being held on December 8-9, 2020 will shed some light on this work through the AFN Resolution *First Nations-Led Local*,





Regional and Treaty-based Post-Secondary Education Models. This resolution will be asking Chiefs for support to start working on a policy proposal and Memorandum to Cabinet with Indigenous Services Canada that secures funding and a clear path forward in Post-Secondary Education that enables First Nations to begin negotiating directly with Canada. The Treaty, local or regional post-secondary models will enable First Nations to implement their vision of holistic education and lifelong learning that best supports their post-secondary students, communities and First Nations established institutes. These models will also respect Treaty and First Nations control of First Nations education as communities will be able to conclude and negotiate their models with Canada.

Education Infrastructure

The AFN First Nations Education Infrastructure Capital Needs Assessment provides essential research to equip First Nations in identifying existing and anticipated education infrastructure needs on-reserve across Canada. Our schools and education facilities have been and continue to be an Inherent and Treaty right for First Nations people. More than ever, our students need additional space, improved conditions and safe learning environments during this global pandemic.

The CCOE has recognized this need over the last year and is currently in the process of increasing First Nations school sizes beyond the national standard and including new spaces for students including language and

culture rooms, Knowledge Keeper offices, counselling spaces, outdoor classrooms and enhanced flexibility for First Nations on new school builds.

The capital and investment required for our schools and teacherages is over \$2.9 billion in the next five years. We will be looking for a commitment from the government of Canada to start funding our schools and education facilities based on the real needs of First Nations. Mandated by Resolution 34/2019 *First Nations Education Infrastructure Review*, First Nations Engineering Services Ltd. was contracted to provide a 15-year capital needs assessment for First Nations schools and teacherages. Over a 15-year period, the overall capital costs required for schools is \$5,068,630,612 and \$1,250,528,346 for teacherages. Policy co-development with Indigenous Services Canada to improve First Nations school standards continues by looking at the School Space Accommodations Standards and the teacherages policy.

The Path ahead/Looking forward:

The Education Sector is committed to continue ensuring that First Nations education authorities have the proper capacity to guarantee a safe return to an education environment either in-person and/or online. Recognizing the need for increased funding, the Education Sector completed national costing for both K-12 Education and First Nations post-secondary institutions on the new costs related to COVID-19 for technology and resources, personal protective equipment, and one-time

costs such as plexiglass and thermometers, and estimate that there is \$317M needed over 3 years.

AFN will continue to support the First Nations vision of lifelong learning and the engagement/development of local, Treaty and Regional post-secondary education models and the implementation of the First Nations Post-Secondary Education Policy Proposal. The Education Sector is exploring the possibility of seeking a mandate from First Nations-in-Assembly to enter into a new Memoranda to Cabinet (MC) process with ISC regarding Post-Secondary education. The MC would provide First Nations with the funding and authority to start implementing their own PSE models and to ensure that First Nations students have PSE supports tailored to their unique needs.

Additionally, the Education Sector will review the REA Guidelines as funding is set to sunset in 2022-23. A plan must be developed to support First Nations who have not entered into a REA by 2023. The CCOE will continue to advocate for additional funding for completion of REAs and the true cost of First Nations Education.

As prioritized by Resolution 34/2019, First Nations Education Infrastructure Review, the work in education infrastructure will continue with a focus on amending existing enrollment projections, classroom sizes, teacherages standards, and addressing the deficiencies in the School Priority Ranking Framework. The AFN will work with ISC to identify Budget Asks and Treasury Board

Submissions needed to support a needs-based approach to high cost special education.

Conclusion:

The AFN CCOE will continue to advocate and remind the federal government that First Nations jurisdiction includes all the sectors that fall under the umbrella of our Inherent and Treaty rights. We will continue to ensure that the education rights are honoured and respected and that our First Nations continue to exercise their sovereignty.

Yours in the Spirit and intent of Treaty and reconciliation



“First Nations students have the Inherent and Treaty right to receive education that is in accordance with their culture, values, traditions and languages, and one that is free of racism and discrimination.”



Alberta Regional Chief Marlene Poitras

Alberta

Tansi,

It is my pleasure to provide my submission to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly Report.

This year brought many significant political and legislative changes. Throughout all of this, my message to government partners has been clear: First Nations must always be at the table driving forward their solutions; Canada and Alberta must be guided by the sacred Treaties they are required to uphold and the minimum standards set out by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

COVID-19 Response

Our Alberta AFN office has made significant efforts to keep First Nations informed about national and regional updates and issues in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 16 to May 31, the office sent daily COVID-19 bulletins with summaries of federal and provincial briefings, notable meetings and calls I participated in, and new information and documents for First Nations. These bulletins continue to be sent to First Nations once a week. Updates and news are also shared on social media, a new COVID-19 webpage on our regional website, and the AFN Alberta mobile app.

I was appointed alternate chair for the AFN COVID-19 Task Force that was established to help the Executive Committee and First Nations receive accurate information, analysis and recommendations for action during the pandemic.

First Nations in Alberta are to be commended for their quick and decisive action in securing their borders to keep their members safe.

Justice and Policing

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted issues that exist with the current First Nations policing regime. Many First Nations scrambled to pass public health laws and set up checkpoints around their borders to safeguard communities from the virus. When law enforcement agencies were called to support these public health measures, some refused, saying First Nations' laws were not enforceable or, worse, were unconstitutional. Throughout the pandemic, I have been leading advocacy to advance First Nations jurisdiction over the areas of law enforcement. I met several times with Public Safety Minister Bill Blair and former Alberta Justice Minister Doug Schweitzer to press for action on growing the Indigenous policing program in Alberta. I also pushed for the recognition of First Nations policing as a legislated, essential service.

Progress towards legislative, policy, and funding reforms accelerated following the surge of the Black Lives Matter movement in June, and reports of police violence against Indigenous people, including Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. Minister Blair publicly declared that Canada would move towards legislation that would entrench First Nations policing as an essential service with funding commitments attached to the legislation. The Alberta government also announced it would expedite its review of the Provincial Police

Act and their “Fair Deal Panel” suggested the establishment of a provincial police force. On July 10, AFN Alberta convened a meeting with the AFN Alberta Board of Directors, the four First Nations and Tribal regions with self-administered policing services, the Treaty-area organizations, and Nations keen to establish their own policing services. The meeting was held to prepare for a provincial and federal ministers’ meeting on the future of First Nations policing in the region. The Regional Chief outlined the AFN’s proposal on policing and justice reform that is seeking funding to establish a policing sector, and for policy work on policing and justice.

Leadership expressed their preference for funding to flow directly to the region and to First Nations, so they have direct input and control over the dialogue on First Nations Policing in Alberta. I was able to coordinate an historic joint meeting with Minister’s Lametti, Blair, Miller and Bennett, as well as Alberta Minister of Justice Schweitzer and the RCMP Deputy Commissioner to discuss outstanding issues related to Justice and Policing in Alberta with Chiefs of Alberta. The July 15 ministers and Chiefs meeting focused on addressing the current policing relationship, jurisdiction concerns, funding inequity concerns for existing First Nations police forces, the right to police, the right to enforce First Nations’ own bylaws, and systemic racism and the way forward. Following the July 15, 2020 meeting, I sent a letter to all federal and provincial ministers present, as well as RCMP Deputy Commissioner summarizing the actions Chiefs expressed they wanted to see from governments to chart a way forward on

policing. I emphasized the Chiefs’ expectations to work directly with Canada and Alberta on reform, and for First Nations to receive funding from both governments to do the necessary policy and legal analysis and coordination to be part of these discussions. I also pressed for a commitment to increase funding for existing First Nations self-administered policing services, so they are on par with other policing services. In addition, I called for funding to be made available immediately for First Nations who are willing and ready to establish their own forces, noting that action on this cannot wait until the new Indigenous policing legislation is introduced, or the review of the provincial Police Act is completed.

Charter Renewal

The AFN charter is being renewed in a phased approach, starting with simple amendments and moving on to more complicated changes that will require more research, dialogue, and considerations. This year, the AFN’s charter renewal team, led by Bonnie Leonard, and the Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal (CCoCR), chaired by myself, is starting to address more complicated changes to the AFN charter after having successfully passed five resolutions at the 2019 Special Chiefs Assembly that made minor amendments to the Charter. Proposed amendments to the



“I have had the opportunity to observe and work closely with Regional Chief Marlene Poitras. During this time, I have seen firsthand the commitment and dedication that she has exhibited to her mandate as Regional Chief.” – Chief Stanley Grier, Piikani Nation, President of Blackfoot Confederacy



AFN Charter are expected to be tabled at the 2020 Special Chiefs Assembly. These amendments will address National Chief election rules, changes to the AFN Knowledge Keepers and Youth council.

Lands, Territories, and Resources:

The AFN Lands, Territories, and Resources (LTR) sector works on four policy areas: Specific Claims, Additions to Reserve (ATR), Comprehensive Claims, and Inherent Rights. As portfolio holder until September 30, 2020 I chaired the Chiefs Committee on Lands, Territories, and Resources (CCoLTR); from October 1, 2020 onwards, Regional Chief Prosper assumed the LTR portfolio.

The CCoLTR provides direction and recommendations for the AFN's work on the four policy areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the AFN's ability to move quickly on the four policies, but the Chiefs Committee and sector are making concerted efforts to adapt their approach and work plans to the new realities.

The AFN engaged First Nations across the country on how the specific claims process can improve in late 2019. A joint technical working group is finalizing a report summarizing these engagements and presenting options for reform. Once complete, the report will go to Chiefs-in-Assembly for review and approval sometime this year. The draft reform options approved by the Assembly will form the basis of AFN advocacy on specific claims at all levels.

Canada is committed to working with the AFN on comprehensive claims and inherent rights policies. A standing agreement is in place to establish a table on reforming these

two policies. Based on initial work, the AFN was planning on presenting a draft work plan to the Chiefs-in-Assembly before proceeding with further work with Canada on this file. In light of COVID-19, the CCoLTR has been asked to provide feedback on scope and ambition of work for 2020, keeping in mind the potential impacts of the pandemic, and the need for First Nations to drive the process around developing any new policies.

As previously noted, as of October 1, 2020, Regional Chief Prosper assumed the LTR portfolio.

Treaties:

Chiefs-in-Assembly have passed more than 10 AFN resolutions dealing with Treaty matters, including recent resolutions calling for new processes for implementation of international Treaties. Resolution 78-2015 calls on the AFN to work with International Numbered Treaty (1-11) First Nations to support the development of a Treaty Commissioner's Office (TCO). Both AFN's Honouring Promises document and Minister Carolyn Bennett's mandate letter speak to the need for creating such a body to ensure Canada meets its Treaty obligations. I continue to work closely with the national office to advocate for funding to support a dialogue process with the International Numbered Treaty First Nations on the Implementation of Treaty, as Nations are moving towards asserting their jurisdiction and authority as sovereign nations.

International:

I share responsibilities for AFN's international affairs portfolio with the National Chief. 2020 should have been a key year for the



movement to increase Indigenous participation at the United Nations (UN). Both the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly were scheduled to formally discuss ways Indigenous peoples can be better represented in these and other UN forums this year. Grand Chief Littlechild represented the AFN at a meeting in Quito, Ecuador held in January to begin preparing and strategizing for these discussions. An interim working group of Indigenous representatives from around the world was struck at the Quito meetings to drive work forward on this issue until a permanent working group was established in April at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. In light of the cancellation of this and other UN meetings, and the current pandemic, the interim working group has committed to keep going until Indigenous representatives can meet again in person to establish a permanent group.

Health:

I was appointed the lead for the national health portfolio in October and have been diligently concentrating my efforts in addressing the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic and advocating to close the gap that exists in health services between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. I am pleased to be able to use my expertise as a healthcare professional to advance the rights of Indigenous peoples on healthcare and looks forward to the work ahead on this file. The success of the health file is critical to upholding quality of life for Indigenous Peoples across the country. Key to this file is the promotion of the understanding and respect for the Treaty right to health and the Treaty 6 Medicine Chest clause.

The Path Ahead/Looking forward:

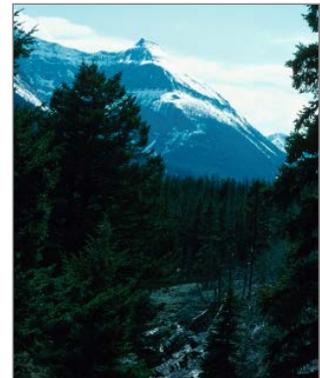
Iskwewak Mentorship Program

Nationally, charter renewal continues to move ahead, while seeing some slowdown due to COVID-19. Treaty portfolio work will continue with advocacy and support for treaty based negotiations as determined by individual and collective First Nations. The Health file will become key as we enter the reality of our second year with a global pandemic. Regionally, police reform and the healthcare system have been key focus areas for First Nations, as the provincial government moves ahead with its plans to make sweeping changes to both of these systems. As Regional Chief, I continue to engage with both Nations in the province and elected provincial officials to ensure the changes that are made in these systems reflect the desires of the Nations they impact.

Conclusion

These are unprecedented times, but our elders have foretold these events and to be prepared. Our strength comes from our culture, beliefs and each other. We are stronger together. I know that if we work together there is much that we can achieve.

*Hai Hai, Nanaskomtin,
Regional Chief Marlene Poitras
Assembly of First Nations, Alberta*





Regional Chief Terry Teegee

British Columbia

Hadih Chiefs, youth, knowledge keepers and leaders. I write to you from the beautiful unceded territory of the Lheidli T'enneh people near Prince George, BC. I hold my hands up to you during these challenging time, but I know we will get through this together as our ancestors showed us the ways.

This past year has been historic. From a new law in BC to support and implement consent based decision making with First Nations governments (i.e. BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2019) to the lock-downs from the COVID-19 virus, First Nations leaders and citizens are on the forefront of changing how Canadians work with us. It has also been a year of reckoning in Canada as the systemic racism in government systems and policing continue to come to light, as has the racism from Canadian citizens toward First Nations. I have served the Chiefs in BC as Regional Chief since 2017 with humility and honour.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

In our region, I have been working on key issues that affect First Nations in BC. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted our focus on securing the health and security of First Nations citizens in BC, it has also shown us how the systemic inequalities in Crown policies and laws affect First Nations jurisdictions and decision-making authorities. We have also seen how First Nations have stepped up to support each other in furthering our rebuilding of our economies and governments.

Key regional issues and activities that the BCAFN has been working on over the last year include:

1) BC Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, 2019. With the mandate of the Chiefs in BC, partnership with the BC government, and collaboration with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and First Nations Summit, we saw the Royal Assent in December 2019 of a new law in BC to further support First Nations inherent and treaty rights. While there is much work yet to do to change laws in BC, we are prioritizing changes needed in child welfare, forestry, environmental assessment, justice and policing.

2) Fisheries Management. As Co-chair of the AFN National Fisheries Committee I have been meeting with Crown counterparts to advocate for the priority access to First Nations over commercial and recreational interests. Fraser sockeye returns in 2020 have been the lowest on record - this is due a variety of issues including climate change, Big Bar landslide, fish farms, habitat destruction and mis-management by DFO. First Nations jurisdiction to decide, manage, monitor and enhance fisheries management - First Nations are furthering their jurisdiction on these matters including rebuilding commercial interests to take back the wealth from their territories.

3) Child Welfare Jurisdiction. The BCAFN has supporting the trilateral work between Canada, BC and First Nations to build the mechanisms to implement C-92. Our children are the most important issue for

First Nations in BC - we must continue to press the Crown to properly resource our communities to take care of our children in care.

4) Gaming Revenue Sharing. After decades of denial, the BC government has committed to gaming revenue sharing with First Nations in BC. The initial 7% secures about \$100 million per year for the signatory First Nations in BC according to a formula. First Nations are using these funds to support community projects such as housing, cultural projects, etc.

5) Emergency Management MOU Implementation. In 2019 the BCAFN, UBCIC, FNS, Canada and BC signed an MOU on Emergency Management. A Technical Working Group has been meeting frequently to prioritize changes in emergency management partnerships, jurisdiction and capacities needed by First Nations. The COVID-19 pandemic has further demonstrated the capacities and supports First Nations citizens need during an unprecedented emergency. A virtual Emergency Management Forum is being planned before March 2021, to build networks and information about improving emergency management with First Nations.

In addition to these regional issues, there have been countless more including COVID-19 response and recovery planning, forestry reform, opioid crisis (more people in BC have died from overdoses than from COVID-19), supporting youth and elders forums, and economic development.

Further, I have also been advocating and advancing issues at the national level on the following portfolios:

1. Justice and Policing
2. Gaming
3. Economic Development
4. Cannabis
5. Human Resources and Development – ISETS

Justice and Policing

This has been an exceptional year of showcasing the system racism in the justice and policing systems in Canada. Most First Nations have been aware of these issues for decades - these systems were designed to oppress our cultures, languages and laws. While there is not an official AFN Chiefs Committee for Justice and Policing, the portfolio is held by both Regional Chiefs Picard (Quebec and Labrador) and Teegee (BC), and have been working together to support national AFN in the call for a National First Nations Justice and Policing Strategy and Action Plan.

Since the pandemic, we have seen excessive force from the RCMP in the murders of several indigenous peoples across Canada. The Regional Chiefs (Picard and Teegee) have been pressing Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet Ministers (particularly Ministers Lametti and Blaire) to work with Chiefs in affirming and implementing indigenous legal orders, as well as reform the justice and policing systems in Canada. Pre-COVID we saw the heavy hand of the RCMP against the Wet'suwet'en, while we recently witnessed





the RCMP dramatically unprepared to deal with a mob of white fishermen attack Mik'maq people on the east coast.

In July, Regional Chief Teegee and Picard presented to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on the subject of systemic racism in policing in Canada. There have been at least 13 reports since 1967 that have looked at this issue - they addressed almost every facet of systemic racism in policing in Canada, but there is one undoubtable result: Canada has failed. There are also countless academic papers that further support the need for changes in policing in Canada. There are key areas that can be focused on for the systemic changes.

Economic Development

As Chair for the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development (CCED), we continue to lead and guide the AFN on advice related to the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery, procurement, agriculture, trade, natural resources and the economy.

CCED activities have included:

- Advocating federal Ministers on the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for the inclusion of First Nations in the design of economic stimulus programs and economic recovery planning, the far-reaching First Nations business impacts on the economy, and on the investments needed in a First Nations economic strategy.

- Advance increased First Nations procurement opportunities and benefits, monitoring the federal government changes to the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business (PSAB) and considering options for the federal commitment to a 5% federal government Indigenous procurement target.
- Continue to build a First Nations Agriculture Strategy including gap analysis on the agri-foods sector.
- Continuing to provide advice on working with Natural Resources Canada to track progress on building relationships, capacity development and improvements on engagement in and with the natural resource economy.
- Advocating for First Nations participation in international trade. The CCED continues to consider how to address the gap for trade services, programs and incentives needed for First Nations businesses. The CCED has advocated for an Indigenous Peoples and Trade Chapter in the Canada United States Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and other international trade agreements.

Non-Medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

Efforts of the Chiefs Committee on Cannabis (CCC) to develop a federal First Nations jurisdiction framework were interrupted by the pandemic. However, the CCC resumed meeting in October with new momentum to press for legislative changes. The CCC is seeking meetings with federal ministers

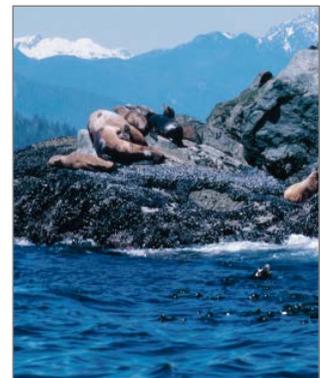
and will be considering legislative options shortly. The AFN is also seeking funding to support the national effort that will be required to develop and advance this strategy with the government.

In the BC Region, the BCAFN continues to press for recognition of jurisdiction and targeted economic supports for First Nations cannabis businesses. These, along with revenue sharing and taxation remain key priorities, both regionally and nationally. We have been made aware of increase in compliance and enforcement activities against First Nations businesses, not provincially or federally licensed, including those supported by First Nations governments. The CCC is concerned that these violate inherent and treaty rights of First Nations jurisdiction in the cannabis sector.

Recently, some important progress has been made in BC in the use Section 119 of the BC Cannabis Control and Licensing Act . This allows BC to enter into government-to-government agreements with First Nations for the cannabis sector. This particular agreement (between BC and the Williams Lake Indian Band) allows the First Nation to own both a processing and retail facility, and conduct farm to gate sales. This is otherwise prohibited under existing provincial legislation. First Nations across Canada are faced with different provincial regulations and lack of federal recognition of First Nations jurisdiction - a cannabis toolkit and webinars will be offered in winter 2020.

Human Resources and Development - ISETS

- First Nations labour market organizations are working to implement the First Nations Labour Market Strategy (FNLMS) stream which is part of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program. This year, with the economic closures and impacts to work, it was important that local and regional labour market delivery networks would have the flexibility within their funding agreements so that organizations could respond to some of the unforeseen changes and needs of workers and trainees. Our work included advocating for flexibility. FNLMS organizations have also been considering how best to administer the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative funding given the introduction of the new federal framework for Indigenous Early Learning Child Care.
- We also prepared a draft paper that speaks to innovation and the social economy to address persistent socio-economic challenges and barriers to employment for First Nations citizens.
- In addition, we have continued to build on the research from the previous fiscal year aimed at understanding the scope of issues and supporting First Nations persons with disabilities and access to local environments, economies and labour markets. This work is at early stages as we examine Canada's Accessibility Act, how it applies to First Nations, and distinctions-based approaches. The work proposes to include outreach to First Nations





governments, individuals and families. However, given the pandemic, timing and methods are being revised.

- First Nations may need more data on skills and workplace opportunities, this is an area that can be further examined with the Chiefs Committee on Human Resources and technical networks.

The Path Ahead/Looking forward:

As we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, we work to ensure our elders, youth and members are safe, healthy and supported. I am looking forward to supporting all 204 Chiefs in BC, and all 600+ Chiefs across Canada. The rebuilding of our economies and social systems in Canada must include First Nations in a new and different way.

We cannot go back to the way things were, and we will walk together based on respect for the implementation and affirmation of inherent and treaty rights; understanding and support for First Nations cultures and heritage; management of First Nations wealth and investments to be competitive in the green economy.

Canada's political system is also broken. First Nations rights should not be something debated among political parties of the NDP, Green or Conservatives. These are non-partisan issues that must have First Nations governments and our leaders as decision-makers at the table. Perhaps it is time to discuss broader changes of governance, representation and human rights in Canada - we will be there waiting for you to join us.

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to thank the Chiefs in BC for their support, my Board of Directors, my staff and the staff at the national AFN office. Your commitment to defend, support and advocate for First Nations is humbling, and I will stand with you. I'd also like to thank National Chief Perry Bellgarde, and all the RCs!!

Musi Cho

Awetza

Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Regional Chief Kluane Adamek

Yukon

On behalf of the AFN Yukon Region (AFN-YR), I acknowledge the Elders, Veterans, Matriarchs, Chiefs, Leaders, and Youth from across the Yukon who support our office's work. I'd also like to acknowledge the First Nations from coast-to-coast-to-coast who have accomplished so much this year, despite facing such adversity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified many pre-existing challenges that our people deal with on a daily basis, including inadequate access to housing and infrastructure, health services, insufficient access to mental wellness supports, the detrimental impacts of climate change, and more. We know that Indigenous and other marginalized communities have been hit the hardest by this virus and we stand strong with and extend strength to those nations and families who continue to face these challenges especially during times of loss. Through this all, we continue to see the true resiliency of our people in this new COVID-19 rhythm.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

In January, Yukon First Nations (YFN's) leadership passed a Resolution declaring 2020 the "Year of the Youth," dedicating the year to lifting up the emerging leaders and rising youth in our communities, celebrating their successes and leadership, and recognizing that we have a lot to learn from our young people. The Resolution was passed in recognition of the fact that our youth are some of our greatest assets and that they have limitless potential as leaders for our people. AFN-YR has entered into a MOU with Bringing Youth Towards Equality (BYTE),

a "by youth, for youth" organization in the Yukon, to explore opportunities in 2020 and 2021 to celebrate the successes of youth, and also empower them to make a difference in our communities.

In mid-February, AFN-YR held the first-ever Yukon First Nations Climate Action Gathering in Whitehorse, YT, and had over 150 participants, including representation from each of the 14 Yukon First Nations as well as transboundary First Nations from Northern British Columbia and the Northwest Territories. The Gathering began with "The Shared Heart," a full day dedicated to elevating and connecting the voices of over 50 Youth and Elders. Participants contemplated the challenges of climate change in the North, joined various sessions grounded in ceremony and worked on a collaborative art piece while Youth participants began drafting the foundation of a Youth Declaration on Climate Action. The Gathering had a keynote address on Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, provided feedback on the latest draft of the Yukon Government-led Climate Change, Energy and Green Economy Strategy, had a panel presentation on Energy in Communities as well as had an Indigenous Knowledge Systems workshop. A series of themed breakout sessions profiled a range of climate action activities currently underway in our communities. The Yukon First Nations Climate Action Gathering served as the foundation for the Yukon First Nations Climate Vision & Action Plan. This regional climate strategy will prioritize direction



“Now, more than ever, young people – especially women – need to see themselves in all we do!”



provided from the Yukon First Nations Climate Emergency Declaration and the Youth Declaration signed at the Gathering and uphold a youth-centred approach to responding to challenges and impacts presented by climate change.

In early March, the AFN-YR hosted the AFN National Climate Gathering to unite First Nations from across the country on the issue of climate change and discuss the innovative solutions being implemented in First Nations communities across Canada. Regional Chief Adamek provided welcoming remarks and participated in a panel discussion on a First Nations Climate lens and the National First Nations Climate Action Strategy. Inspiring information was shared via keynote and plenary speakers as well as concurrent breakout sessions highlighting and showcasing Indigenous climate action. The event concluded with an evening film screening and a Yukon community tour. We are so proud to have hosted this green event, and offset carbon footprints by planting a culturally-relevant tree for each of the 350+ participants!

Over the past two years, the AFN-YR has held a series of Chiefs Summits to continue to strengthen the Regional Office and support all Yukon First Nations in advancing their priorities nationally. The purpose of these Summits is to foster a sense of unity and shared identity among Yukon First Nations, identify and build consensus around their priorities for action, and discuss approaches to issues that affect Yukon First Nations regarding national policy initiatives, legislation, and northern considerations. We have held AFN-YR Quarterly Chiefs Summits in January and due to the pandemic held virtual summits in May, July, and most recently in November

2020 including the launch of the 2020 AFN-YR Leadership Awards. The second annual AFN-YR Leadership Awards will be hosted virtually this year, these awards and their legacies are to reflect a 'Yukon that Leads,' and to recognize, celebrate, honour and acknowledge the incredible efforts made by Yukon First Nations citizens and Indigenous people who call the Yukon home. We are pleased to share photos of some of our 2019 Leadership Award Winners!

Health

I am honoured to have served as Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Health and as Co-chair of the AFN National Taskforce on COVID-19 through the first wave of this global pandemic. I look forward to continuing to support this important work regionally and nationally to ensure that our people are safe, supported and protected during this unprecedented time.

To best protect themselves from the pandemic, Yukon First Nations adapted and created their own governing policies including limiting access to settlement lands, ensuring adequate supplies of food and other staples, and providing economic support to communities. The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) has also provided important public health information for and about Yukon First Nations, as well as financial and program support throughout the pandemic.

As Co-Chair of the COVID-19 Public Health Working Group on Remote and Isolated Communities, I worked with colleagues to address gaps around social stigma, food security and mental wellness in the North. In the wake of the pandemic, Yukon First Nations continue to focus on mental health

and its intersections with physical health, relationships, self-esteem, and the toll it has taken on our citizens battling addiction and substance abuse.

Following the tragic passing of Joyce Echaquan, we continue to actively seek ways to address systemic racism, specifically within our health care systems, to ensure the health services provided for and within Yukon First Nations are safe and relevant to our community members.

I'm pleased to pass along the Health Portfolio to Alberta Regional Chief Marlene Poitras who, as a healthcare professional, will bring important perspectives and great experience to this role.

Environment and Climate Change

As the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change, I am committed to advancing climate action solutions that are led and driven by First Nations, through a rights-based approach. This past year has marked a reckoning point in the global discourse on climate change, evidenced by the impacts we are witnessing on our traditional lands, waters and animals from coast-to-coast-to-coast. We must not lose this opportunity to advance a better future for our future generations, driven by First Nations.

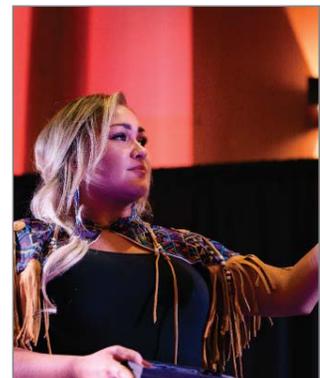
In the face of a global pandemic and ongoing climate crisis, Indigenous knowledge systems and climate leadership are needed now more than ever to achieve a more equitable, just and responsible future. The climate crisis, now exacerbated by COVID-19, is inseparable from the daily realities of First Nations, and we must be actively leading

climate action solutions as we collaborate to build back better. The AFN Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE) supports a rights-based approach to climate action with the guidance of the Knowledge Keepers, Elders Chiefs, Youth and experts.

The AFN Environment Sector is working closely with ACE committee members to develop a National First Nations Climate Strategy in advancement of First Nations-led and driven climate action solutions. In order to advance this, and in light of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the AFN has worked to incorporate different techniques such as a national Survey and a series of six webinars across Turtle Island to advance its development. This is an important starting point, but additional work will begin in the new year leading to the hosting of the next National Gathering in fall 2021.

Modern Treaties

Following the November 2019 Northern Nations Summit, the AFN-YR Office hosted a national Modern Treaties Forum that welcomed speakers from the Yukon, Northwest Territories, British Columbia and Québec to discuss the future of First Nations governance and moving beyond the Indian Act. The Forum provided reflections from communities on advancing nation rebuilding and self-determination through Modern Treaty and Self-Government Agreements. The Forum brought together First Nations to



“First Nations have been stewards of this land since time immemorial and respecting that tradition includes providing a seat for our leaders at that table.”



exchange their experiences, perspectives, and recommendations with an interest to learn from each other and to advance First Nations rights and interests with the Crown.

Following the December 2019 Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa, the Yukon First Nation Priorities: Discussion Paper, was developed, which outlines shared urgencies held by Yukon First Nations with respect to their Modern Treaty, Inherent, and Aboriginal rights. The Discussion Paper serves as a valuable resource to be used as a foundation for discussions between First Nations leadership, Ministers, and other government officials.

Youth

As the Portfolio holder supporting the AFN National Youth Council, I have had the opportunity to join their meetings and support the development and implementation of their Strategic Plan. I am so grateful for the opportunity to witness the work of the Council and I continue to be truly amazed by the leadership of our young people. I want to acknowledge the AFN-YR Youth Reps, Kelvin Magun and Jessica-April Mazur for their great job representing Yukon First Nations youth at the national level. And I want to acknowledge and hold up the great work that the AFN Youth Council National Co-Chairs, Rosalie LaBillois (Eel River Bar First Nation) and Cedric Gray Lehoux (Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation) have done leading the work of the Council and for their ongoing work advocating with the AFN National Executive.

I am excited to share that as part of our 2nd annual AFN Yukon Regional Leadership Awards we have added two additional award categories for: Emerging Leader 19-30 (2 awards) and Rising Youth 12-18 (2 awards). We are excited to honour some great young leaders. Nominations are open now at: <http://afnyukon.ca/afn-yukon-regional-awards/>

Executive and Management Committee

The AFN Executive Committee has been incredibly supportive in advancing our important work on various portfolios including health and climate action. I also sit on the AFN Management Committee with my colleagues Regional Chiefs Augustine, Cameron, and Archibald. The Management Committee is an exciting opportunity for me to flex some management skills as I put my MBA to work.



Looking Ahead

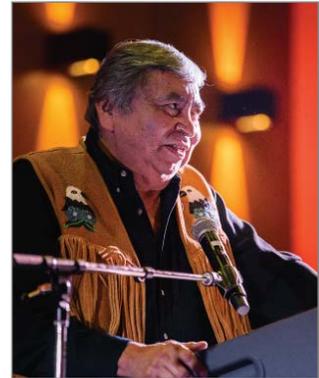
Much of our time and attention looking forward to the next year will be spent protecting the health, safety, and security of our communities. We will continue to work towards providing comprehensive plans for climate action, fostering leadership opportunities for our youth, and providing health and wellness support for our community members, especially for womxn, youth and those needing support with mental health and wellness. As Regional Chief, I am committed to doing this work and supporting my colleagues at the AFN, as we continue to rely on each other, work together, and lean on one another to support our people and adapt.

Reflecting on the past years' accomplishments, as well as all the great work that is to come, makes me optimistic and energized for a post-COVID future, and how we will lead and build this future, together.

Conclusion:

I acknowledge and thank each of the Yukon First Nations and the AFN-YR Executive for their continued support and guidance during this extraordinary year. I would also like to commend First Nations leadership from across the country for their enduring hope and perseverance through these trying times.

*I am incredibly optimistic for the future of our communities.
Dak'anútà jè (take care)
Gunalchéesh*



“I look forward to working with federal and territorial government colleagues to support the commitment to legislate net zero emission and to find balance between a healthy economy and a thriving environment.”



Regional Chief Norman Yakeleya

Northwest Territories

ǂedlanet'e!

I am honoured to join my colleagues in welcoming you to a much different Assembly of First Nations gathering than what we've become used to. Moving an event of this size to a virtual platform accessible to 600+ First Nations communities is no small feat. Thank you to the AFN team who worked tirelessly to ensure we could come together, and to all of you for continuing to adapt to these new ways of meeting while we have to be physically apart.

Indeed, this entire year has required us to adapt greatly. Adaptation and resiliency is something we Dene know innately. Our ancestors were always adapting to the land, the seasons, and changes in natural patterns. I am proud of how we've walked in their footsteps by taking swift, decisive action across our communities to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and finding innovative ways to promote physical distancing and other cautionary measures. We have fared far better than most during this pandemic as a result of these efforts.

The pandemic forced us to shift focus from many of our priorities so we could support the immediate needs of our people during this unprecedented time. While COVID-19 has disrupted progress on key initiatives, it has presented an opportunity to set a better path for the future, and to build more constructive partnerships with government.

Regional Key Issues and Activities

Dene Nation Constitutional Reform Commission

The Dene Nation organization is marking its 50th anniversary this year. We would not have reached this significant milestone without the leaders and Elders who, for decades, have devoted themselves to unifying our people and strengthening our collective voice. To them I offer my deepest gratitude for their efforts to revitalize our nationhood. I know I speak for so many Dene when I say we are deeply humbled to follow in their footsteps and continue their legacy. I continue to work with leaders across Denendeh on a way we can honour this important anniversary, safely, as COVID-19 continues impacting us.

As part of this anniversary, we are conducting a constitutional reform commission and by-law reform to ensure the Dene Nation continues advocating with one voice on issues important to the Gwich'in, Satu, Deh Cho, Tłı̨ch , and Akaitcho. A commission is preparing recommended amendments to bring our governance documents up to date and developing a draft unity document outlining the foundational principles of our organization. The commission will present their final work at the 2021 Dene National Assembly.



On-the-Land During COVID-19

When concerns about COVID-19 were mounting at the beginning of the year, Dene leaders turned to our Elders to ask what we should do to keep our communities safe. Their instructions were simple: go back to the land. Not only did their advice align with the physical distancing measures public health officials were recommending, it also supported reconnecting our people with who we are as Dene.

By unifying to make a strong case for federal and territorial partners to support our people in preventing the spread of COVID-19, we secured \$2.6 million in funding for families to access resources they needed to get out on the land during the pandemic. Funding was provided by Canada to the territorial government, and flowed directly to Akaitcho Territory Government, Dehcho First Nations, Gwich'in Tribal Council, NWT Métis Nation, Sahtu Secretariat, Tłı̨ch Government, K'atl'odeeche First Nation, Acho Dene Koe First Nation, Salt River First Nation, and Délı̨ne Got'ı̨ne Government. This initiative should become a model for how governments support First Nations with on-the-land programming. I am grateful for the

wisdom and advice our Elders gave us and commend our Chiefs and communities for their leadership in heeding their call.

On-the-Land Healing Resource

The Dene Nation was proud to launch Dene Medicine: An On-the-Land Healing Resource for Dene Communities on June 29, 2020. This guidebook includes Dene Laws, Dene Medicines, safety checklists, and information on how to properly prepare for going on-the-land. Several Elders and knowledge keepers worked with us to develop the content for the guidebook. I thank them for the wisdom and teachings they are sharing with our people. My hope is that this guidebook will encourage on-the-land learning for Dene families and youth and be a supportive resource for those beginning their journey towards our traditional ways.

Education

The Dene Nation hosted a virtual education summit July 27 to 29, 2020. It was the first time the Dene Nation brought together leaders to work on a shared vision for education in Denendeh. The summit featured dialogue on furthering Dene jurisdiction over



education and sharing best practices from across the North. Discussions held at the summit are being summarized into a draft Vision and Priority document that will help guide education planning, processes, and programs, as well as collaboration needed from federal and territorial partners.

Protecting Waters in Denendeh

A variety of field monitoring and testing activities on transboundary waterways between Alberta and N.W.T. were suspended this year because of the pandemic. Many of these decisions were made with minimal to no involvement from impacted First Nations in Denendeh, or the territorial government. I have been collaborating with the N.W.T. government on interim measures we could take to ensure our waterways are monitored, including proposing the territory take over monitoring on three critical testing sites under federal jurisdiction close to the Alberta-N.W.T. border.

The Dene Nation will continue to advocate for full Dene involvement in the monitoring and protection of sacred waterways in Denendeh, including pressing for better representation of our communities on decision-making bodies. We are actively working on organizing the first Northern Leaders Water Summit where we will invite the Inuvialuit, Métis, and Government of Northwest Territories to discuss such transboundary issues and, more broadly, ways we can work together to protect this most valuable resource we all share.

Portfolio Update

Residential Schools

As a signatory to the Indian Residential School Settlement, the AFN continues working with other parties to the settlement agreement on seeking out judicial guidance regarding outstanding issues from the residential school settlement.

I was pleased with the news that Parliament introduced legislation to establish September 30 as a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The AFN has long been calling for this action, which is outlined by the TRC's Calls to Action. I am hopeful that other provinces and territories will follow suit. Earlier this year, the Dene Nation called on the Government of Northwest Territories to mark September 30 as a commemorative date to discuss the ongoing impact of day and residential schools, and colonization more broadly. I will continue advocating with survivors for jurisdictions across Canada to appropriately memorialize this painful chapter of our shared history. As our Elders often say, we can only move forward if we know the full extent of our past.

With the support of the Alberta region, our region introduced a resolution last year calling for action from Canada to develop a national monument in honour of residential school survivors, and those who never made it home. As Canada continues considering how it can support education about this history, it must move forward on this and other TRC Calls to Action about how it should honour and remember the legacy of residential schools.



Day Schools

The nation-wide class action settlement on Federal Indian Day Schools is ongoing. As of October 2020, more than 86,600 claims were filed, and approximately 27,500 level one and 400 level two to five compensation cheques have been issued to claimants. It is estimated that more than half of the anticipated settlement claims have been received by the claims administrator.

Much like the '60s Scoop and Indian Residential School settlements, the claims process is lengthy, and can be very burdensome for many survivors. The pandemic is compounding these challenges. The process has been slow because it takes several weeks for the claims administrator to process and initially review the claims, to ensure there is consistency in their decision-making process around claim levels, and make the claim less likely to be appealed. Further, Canada has a four to six-month period to respond to a claim once it is sent to them. The higher the claim level, the higher the level of scrutiny a claim undergoes, meaning timelines become even longer for more substantial claims.

Many communities have raised concerns regarding the limited resources and skilled people assisting survivors and their families with the process, and a lack of trauma counselling. As national portfolio holder, I have been pressing for survivors to receive more direct support in filling out claim forms, so revisions or additional information is not required from them. I'm pleased to report that the claims assistance program is now providing telephone and online services and is developing protocols to safely resume community clinics.

Veterans

Far too often, First Nations veterans do not receive the proper recognition or benefits they deserve for taking up arms beside their Canadian brothers and sisters. As the veterans portfolio holder, I've been working with First Nations veterans to advocate for more education about their contributions and, at the same time, for Canada to provide for our veterans, and make them aware of all the post-service benefits they're entitled to.

I am pleased that a resolution is coming forward at this assembly to formally establish an AFN Veterans Council. This is a significant step to ensuring that First Nations veterans are properly represented and recognized within our national organization. It will also give them a formal forum at the AFN to discuss and advocate for issues impacting them.

A class action is coming forward for members and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces who experienced sexual harassment in their work before November 25, 2019. In the year ahead, I will work with the AFN and First Nations veterans to determine how we can best support our veterans through this class action.

Elders

Since the inception of the National Indian Brotherhood and transition to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), there has always been a place of honour and distinction for Elders that is evident within the Charter of the Assembly of First Nations. The AFN Knowledge Keepers Council provided both spiritual and political guidance in the formation of the organization, its structures and its Charter.





The Council helped to shape AFN policies and the relationship with the federal government and other national and international organizations. The Council includes representatives from each of AFN's 10 regions. The Council is essential to our lives and our day-to-day business; they are the keepers of our traditions, values, languages and history. Throughout the year, the Council has continued to focus their work on the development of their Terms of Reference (TOR) and participated in the AFN's Charter Renewal. Members of the Council actively participated on several discussion panels throughout the three-day gathering, which included ceremony, reconciliation, language and culture, MMIWG, climate change, and children and family.

The Path Ahead:

Throughout this pandemic, I've witnessed First Nations people honour their duty to community like never before. I am grateful for all the people in our respective Nations who, without question, are ensuring our Elders are safe and cared for during these uncertain times, preparing meals and supplies for people that need extra support right now, giving their time to guard border checkpoints, and who continue to support their community's response to this global crisis in different ways.

The winds of COVID-19 have blown us all off course. Now we need to set a new and better sail towards our destination. The economic and social recovery will be a long-term commitment of all sectors and governments, who keep talking about how we need to "build back better." The Dene too want to transform the status quo of the post-COVID-19 world. That is why we developed

a plan that will ensure Northerners seize this transition moment and use it to create strong and long-term conditions for economic development in the Northwest Territories. I look forward to working with our leaders to ensure this plan takes into full consideration their priorities and vision for life after the pandemic.

Across Turtle Island, we must do what we can to support each other in setting a new destination towards a better future. I am committed to working with my colleagues at the AFN to keep pressing for action from government and other partners to close the gap that exists between our communities and Canada.

Conclusion

It continues to be my great honour to serve the Dene and our leaders as their National Chief and AFN Regional Chief. We are many hearts beating to one Dene drum. Every day, I commit to furthering that spirit of unity in my work.

May the Creator continue to keep you safe and healthy in 2021.

*Mahsi Cho,
National Chief Norman Yakeleya (yak'e? ula)*



Council Reports



Knowledge Keepers Council

Hello, today I would like to provide you with an update on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations Knowledge Keepers. The Knowledge Keepers have asked me to provide the update as the portfolio holder for the Knowledge Keepers council.

It has been an extremely difficult year and time for everyone including our Knowledge Keepers, this Pandemic that we are currently battling shows no regard for age and many are at risk. While Covid 19 has restricted our ability to meet in person, the Knowledge Keepers continue to show their resilience by meeting by teleconference and are now setting up to use Zoom meetings.

Since the inception of the National Indian Brotherhood and transition to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), there has always been a place of honour and distinction for Elders that is evident within the Charter of the Assembly of First Nations. The AFN Knowledge Keepers Council provided both spiritual and political guidance in the formation of the organization, its structures and its Charter. The Council, helped to shape AFN policies and the relationship with the federal government and other national and international organizations.

During the past 38 years, the AFN's leadership has relied upon the historical and cultural knowledge of the Council, especially in matters relating to Treaty rights and First Nations governance. This role continues today. The Council includes representatives from each of AFN's 10 regions.

The Council continues to play an important role in all facets of the AFN and its operations. It is the role of each region to

support and appoint an Elder to sit as part of the Knowledge Keepers council in accordance with regional protocol.

The Knowledge Keepers Representatives are:

- British Columbia Dr. Gwendolyn Point, kowkale First Nation,
- Yukon representative Charles Hume, Champagne and Aishihik First Nation,
- Northwest Territories John Bekale, Gameti,
- Alberta new representative Lawernce Courterille
- Saskatchewan Joseph Quewezance,
- Manitoba Ernie Daniels, Long Plain First Nation,
- Ontario Edmond Sackaney, Fort Albany First Nation,
- Quebec/Labrador William Sunday, Akwesasne Reserve,
- New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island and Chair - Eldon Bernard,
- Nova Scotia/Newfoundland Phyllis Googoo Waycobah First Nation.

The Council has adopted a Terms of Reference which is a working document. While not regulated by this document it helps to provide an orientation to the important role they contribute. 2019-2020 has been a very busy year for the knowledge keepers. Some of the key activities and accomplishments that they have been working on including the following:

The Council as a group continues to meet bi-annually at AFN Annual General Assembly and AFN Special Chiefs Assembly to discuss issues and challenges facing the Council and to bring together new ideas.

The Council is essential to our lives and our day-to-day business; they are the keepers of our traditions, values, languages and history. They are guides to our leadership and future leaders. They speak with honour and with a great deal of pride.

The Council will always encourage First Nation leaders and champions to continue to enlighten and inform forums such as the Chiefs Assemblies on their experiences, issues, successes and challenges. It is all our responsibility to ensure prosperity and the safety of the little ones, just as our ancestors did for us. They continue to engage with other elders in their regions, to share information, and to communicate national messages to the grassroots. The Council participated in the National Gathering of Elders that was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, September 9-13, 2019.

Members of the Council actively participated on several discussion panels throughout the three-day gathering, which included ceremony, reconciliation, language and culture, MMIW, climate change and children & family. Throughout the year the Council had continued to focus their work on the development of their Terms of Reference (TOR) and participated in the AFN's Charter Renewal. They've also participated in various Chief's committees in advisory roles and providing elder services.

In regions across Canada, First Nations are revitalizing traditions and ceremonies through gatherings; the Council continues to advocate that First Nations traditions, languages, and ceremonies are shared and kept alive as it is the foundation to building stronger Nations.

The Council addressed covid-19 and delivered a message urging people to stay home and to self-isolate. The Council advised people should they return to their Ancestral lands to social distance themselves. The Council continues to meet via teleconference calls and Zoom meetings updating keeping each other apprised of key activities in their respective regions.

Moving forward and what lies ahead for the up coming year of 2021

The Knowledge Keepers council will continue in their current role of advising the AFN Executive Committee, staff and support the activities of the Tri-Councils.

- The Council will continue to be active participants and provide guidance and vision to AFN Tri Council meetings with the Women's and Youth Councils.
- The Council will continue their collaboration with the Tri-Council with a focus on finalizing and advancing their collective strategic plan.
- The Council continues to meet and contribute to the development of protocol, roles and responsibilities.
- The Council will continue to assist with meetings and participate as required.
- Finally the council is committed to helping out and participating in special projects and initiatives of importance to the organization.





AFN Women’s Council

In this time of uncertainty facing our communities from COVID-19, First Nations peoples are dealing with stress and anxiety about the future. First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA are impacted especially hard because they are at a higher risk of experiencing violence. What the pandemic has shown us is that there are not enough shelters and safe spaces to access. This highlights why we need a National Action Plan to increase the safety and security of First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.

AFN Women’s Council MMIWG Background

- Last year, Chiefs-in-Assembly passed Resolution 67/2019:
 - o Giving the mandate to carry out an engagement process using a “Families First” approach.
 - o The AFN was directed to seek out appropriate resources to support the work of the AFN Women’s Council to co-ordinate our own engagement with First Nations on a National Action Plan and to use a regional approach with engagement in every region.
 - o The regional engagement sessions to develop a First Nations-led National Action Plan must include input from the regions and First Nations survivors, families, grassroots coalitions and advocates who have the experience in this area. The approach must be respectful of any Nation, women, or regional-led initiatives when planning engagement sessions.
 - o The final directive is to ensure that the AFN Women’s Council continue their involvement in the selection process and work to implement the National Inquiry’s Calls for Justice.

- Driven by the mandate from Chiefs-in-Assembly, the AFN Women’s Council developed a proposal for an engagement strategy on how to carry out a national engagement approach.
- Initially, we had been planning on holding large in-person forums across the country. However, once the pandemic happened, we had to put our plans on hold and re-evaluate our approach, thinking about the health and safety restrictions in place.

CIRNA Parallel Process

- While this work was underway with the AFN Women’s Council, a parallel process was happening from the Federal Government as they looked to develop a way to write a National Action Plan in the spirit of the National Inquiry’s Calls for Justice.
- Towards the end of August 2020, the AFN Women’s Council were asked to participate in a distinctions-based working group coordinated by Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA).
- While this process with CIRNA has been ongoing over the fall months, it has not provided a clear vision or framework to develop the National Action Plan.
- Witnessing what felt like daily occurrences that Indigenous women and girls are victims of brutal crimes, have gone missing, or have been killed - the AFN Women’s Council recognized that we could not wait any longer to restart the work of holding engagement sessions with the regions.

AFN Women’s Council Engagement Process

- Being mindful of the public health restrictions, we knew that we were limited to holding virtual engagement sessions.



We have redesigned our approach to focus our efforts on prioritizing immediate actions needed on the ground with a focus on prevention and education.

- In the future when we can meet safely in-person we want to hold larger in-person forums to discuss the longer-term systemic reforms that are needed to breathe life into the Calls for Justice.
- The engagement strategy that we have been following is to work with the AFN Regional Chiefs office to co-ordinate in the region.
- We hold 2-to-3 planning sessions with stakeholders in the region to agree on the number of virtual sessions needed, identify a facilitation team that includes mental health supports, cultural supports, session facilitator and a writer that people in the region feel comfortable with.
- We have a generalized engagement guide that we share with the region and work to tailor it to the needs of the region.
- The AFN Women's Council is mindful of using a trauma-informed approach to engagement. We don't want to repeat the National Inquiry. We want to focus on the next step of prioritizing the 231 Calls for Justice.
- After we have finished engagement in a region, we will write regional engagement reports that we hope will help support the work that is happening. These reports will help to develop a First Nations Action Plan and will feed into the overall National Action Plan, complimenting the work by CIRNA.
- We have been working with Regions who expressed interest in starting first. We have held meetings with AFN Regional offices and planning sessions in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, working from West to East. We have been accepting invitations to provide updates in Ontario to prepare them for a January start for planning meetings, along with engagement in the north.

National Action Plan

- The AFN Women's Council believes that the National Action Plan must go beyond demonstrating the work that is currently being done, and use the Calls for Justice to group the action items which are causes or contributing factors to endangering the safety and security of First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
- We believe that the National Action Plan should include immediate, medium and long-term strategies and clearly identify the supports, key players and resources needed to achieve full implementation of each strategy.
- As a starting point, we believe that prevention and education should be a key focus of the creation of an immediate strategy to combat violence against First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people.
- Finally, we believe that the National Action Plan should indicate set deadlines for achieving implementation of each strategy for each individual action item.

Closing Remarks

- Too many First Nations families across the country have been affected by tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. The loss of a loved one in this way is a traumatic experience that impacts all generations – from children to elders, and even those yet unborn.
- Many of us have experienced the tragic loss of a loved one or know families and friends who are still looking for answers to what happened to their beloved mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, aunty, niece or cousin.
- The AFN Women's Council continues to advocate that the voices of the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are heard and respected.



National Youth Council

Rosalie LaBillois, Eel River Bar, and Cedric Gray Lehoux, Listuguj Mi'gmaq First Nation are the co-chairs of the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council.

While this year looks very different than the AGAs we are used to attending, we are grateful for the opportunity to connect with you all and provide an update on the National Youth Council's activities from the past year.

As always, we acknowledge our portfolio holders, Regional Chief Adamek, and Regional Chief Picard. We hold you up for all of your hard work and dedication to the youth portfolio!

Like many of you, we have been working toward adjusting to these difficult times. Nonetheless, our focus and mission remains on establishing greater visibility and representing the voices of our young emerging leaders.

Throughout this time, as a council, we've emphasized the importance of continuing to connect with each other and push our priorities forward while centering our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs to help us move through the pandemic successfully.

This past year has been a crucial time in advocacy. We have all been on the frontlines of countless movements to fight for our Peoples.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Joyce Echequan, our Miqmaq fishers in Migmagi, our Algonquin brothers and sisters calling for a moose moratorium, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and all those who are fighting the good fight.

Amid these challenging times, we have seen the true power of coming together and showing up for one another. We support our allies leading the Black Lives Matter movement and those fighting against the systemic racism that continues to strike Black, Indigenous, and people of colour.

We've accomplished many things this year:

- In March 2020, members of the NYC met for a youth specific meeting ahead of the National Gathering on Climate in Whitehorse, Yukon, where we discussed how to push forward climate action recommendations from the previous National Youth Summit on Environment last year.
- Since April, many of us have been undertaking volunteer work in our communities to assist during the pandemic.
- At the national level, we have been involved in working virtually with Chiefs Committees and working groups to ensure the youth perspective is represented in all areas, especially in discussions related to COVID-19.



- Our commitment to life promotion has resulted in a close working relationship with AFN Health and the First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework Implementation team.

We've also established our own UN Declaration working committee who has participated in a youth-focused engagement session held by Canada's Department of Justice regarding developing legislation for implementing the UN Declaration. We were lucky enough to meet with Chief Littlechild ahead of time to prepare for the session. Looking ahead for the future, there's still a lot that we want to accomplish. Some of the new priorities that we've identified include:

- Increasing AFN-NYC network: building allies and connections with Inuit, Metis and Indigenous Internal Youth Councils, as well as connecting with the Prime Ministers Youth Council.

We also want to enhance our presence on online social media platforms to really connect with youth across the Nation and spread awareness about the work the National Youth Council does.

As emerging leaders, we recognize the deep importance of leading by example and paving the way for our future generations; we look forward to all that we can contribute for the years to come.

We thank you again for providing us the time to give our update and hope everyone is staying well. We look forward to seeing you all in person, once again.

Thank you



ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS



CEO Report



Chief Executive Officer

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

It is remarkable how quickly this year has gone by despite the trials we have had to face. I am proud that even though we have been forced to adapt almost everything about our daily lives, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) continues to deliver action on key issues affecting First Nations. Throughout 2020, we have risen to the challenge of working remotely in the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that our advocacy for First Nations has continued and our work remains ongoing. It is the utmost priority of the AFN that First Nations' inherent and Treaty rights are upheld now and in the future. I am beyond proud of the work the AFN staff has achieved and continues to achieve for First Nations across Canada.

This year has brought no shortage of challenges for First Nations. On top of ensuring the safety and health of our peoples from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen societal unrest in response to injustice and violence against Indigenous Peoples. The issues of miseducation on Treaties and First Nations rights coupled with continued systemic racism permeate Canadian society and must be dealt with in order to fully achieve reconciliation. Despite the impacts to our rights, we remain strong. It is easy to feel burnt out when times feel so bleak, but I believe there is still much to celebrate and take pride in.

In particular, I am exceptionally proud of First Nations' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has asked quite a lot from us, including closing our borders, instilling curfews, and limiting travel to ensure the safety of our members. Through this we

have continued to demonstrate that we as First Nations have all of the knowledge and skill to best protect our peoples. The actions taken to reduce the spread of the virus have protected us and we continue to call on Canada to ensure First Nations are adequately equipped. With continued commitment and vigilance, we will overcome this trial and keep our Nations safe.

In response to the threat of COVID-19, the AFN Executive Committee established the AFN COVID-19 National Task Force in April 2020. The Task Force continues to be engaged in dialogue with experts, leadership and First Nations citizens to provide credible, useful information to support First Nations leaders in their efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. To further these efforts, the Task Force developed three working groups composed of First Nations experts, government representatives and AFN staff: Pandemic Plan, Data, and Reopening. I extend my sincere gratitude to all First Nations leaders, experts and workers involved in the AFN's COVID-19 response. This continues to be our priority.

Looking forward, we must continue to support our First Nations through the winter months and the next waves of the pandemic. It is crucial that First Nations are part of the recovery process and are not left behind. The Task Force will continue to identify regional issues and concerns to ensure First Nations have adequate resources to respond to and recover from the pandemic. We must also remain vigilant despite the onset of pandemic fatigue. It is absolutely critical that we continue to wear our masks, practice diligent hand washing or sanitizing,

and follow all proper physical distancing protocols. Our actions today will help keep our communities, neighbours, and loved ones safe.

Though we have not been able to host the Annual General Assembly (AGA) in person this year, I am thrilled that we have found a way to come together on a virtual platform. This AGA will be the first of its kind for many of us and I am thankful for all of those who are working so hard behind the scenes and in front of the screen. The theme of this year's Assembly, All our Relations: Emerging Stronger Together is especially important now more than ever. It is my hope that the virtual AGA will still create a sense of belonging and community for our attending First Nations leaders, members and guests alike. Together, we will continue the advocacy efforts of the AFN and ensure that our First Nations' interests, goals, and inherent and Treaty rights are upheld and respected.

It is an honour to continue to serve the Chiefs and First Nations of Canada. With continued commitment, cooperation and the confident leadership of the National Chief, Executive Committee, and Chiefs in Assembly, the AFN will continue to succeed in its mandate to improve the lives of all First Nations peoples. I am grateful to continue my tenure as CEO for such a dedicated organization. We will continue to make it through this trial and will emerge stronger together. I hope that you and your loved ones are in good health, physically, mentally and spiritually. I look forward to joining you all on-screen at the December AGA and in-person once again when it is safe for our Nations to gather once more.

Miigwetch, Wela'lin, Nai:wen, Mahsi'Cho, Hiy Hiy, Guneshcheesh, Howa'a, Kinanaskomitin,

Janice Ciavaglia
Chief Executive Officer





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