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 Betty Albert
This piece is entitled, “Hummingbird Medicine Woman.”*

Betty Albert (Wabimeguil) was adopted and raised by French Canadian parents in Northern Ontario. Circumstances eventually brought her back to her biological parents discovering her birthright as Cree. She spent the next 30 years of her life painting her experiences on her spiritual journey. She now lives in Manitoba where she participates in ceremony, painting and enjoying being a grandmother.
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National Chief's Report
Wahcheeyay Misiway,

I am pleased to provide my first Annual Report as National Chief. I continue to focus on a strength based and heart centered approach while embodying leadership that is grounded in love and care, as well as holding space for respect in all my interactions.

As National Chief for the AFN, I am hopeful about the future, eager to put in the hard work and motivated by the momentum we have built together. I look forward to the journey ahead where we will advance First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights and create a better future for all First Nations across Turtle Island.

This has been a challenging year for many. We are emerging from a global pandemic, wildfires, record heat waves, flooding, a federal election, and collectively grieving the little ones who did not return home from institutions of assimilation and genocide.

We have unprecedented support and empathy from non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. Through our collective grief and hardships, there comes hope and an opportunity for fundamental change. This is what we are calling The Healing Path Forward.

We launched a First Nations priorities document prior to the federal election called, The Healing Path Forward. These priorities offer a strategic direction toward positive and evolutionary change for First Nations and all Canadians.

The commitments we are seeking are not new. Further, these priorities are about how we can build a better future for everyone, one that creates greater equity and prepares us for challenges such as climate change and a post-pandemic recovery.

This is an important time for us as First Nations people across Turtle Island.

Imbedded below is my 100-day action plan report which highlights early successes and accomplishments at the beginning of my term as National Chief.
The 100-day plan was created in the National Chief’s first week in office. The plan represents a condensed version of the National Chief’s Election Platform where early successes could be realized. The goals and strategies identified for action represent a snapshot of high priority items.

The Office of the National Chief (NCO) was able to initiate and complete work on a number of platform priorities as outlined in the 100-Day Plan and The Healing Path Forward document. Gains were made despite challenges during the first 100 days, including: the recovery of our little ones; a hastily called federal election; new COVID waves; funding announcements; national day for truth and reconciliation; and, calls for a papal apology.

**WOMEN, YOUTH AND 2SLGBTQQIA+ PEOPLES**

### National Caucus of Elected Women Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOALS</th>
<th>ACCOMPLISHMENTS &amp; ACTIONS COMPLETED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Reach out for funding to start elected women’s leadership caucus and other supports.</td>
<td>The NCO secured funding to start a National Caucus of Elected Women Leaders and other supports through former Minister Maryam Monsef, Women and Gender, Equality and Rural Economic Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Develop funding proposal to submit to Minister Monsef within first 20 days.</td>
<td>$6.2-million was approved and $3-million of that amount will go directly to the regional offices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✅ Carry out early developmental work to establish a National Caucus of Elected Women Leaders and technical team and plan an inaugural meeting for SCA.</td>
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### 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✅ Begin preparatory work to establish a 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council at the AFN by December 2021. Draft a concept paper and terms of reference to bring forward to the Executive for discussion and support.</td>
<td>A briefing notes was completed and presented to the AFN Executive Committee. The AFN Executive asked the Chiefs Committee on Charter Renewal to pass a motion. Due to lack of quorum, a Chief’s resolution has been submitted on this item and will be brought to the SCA for final decision.</td>
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“Canada has a great deal of work to do to fulfill its promises to help build safe, vibrant communities and a more prosperous society for our Nations and therefore all of Canada.”

National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald
WOMEN, YOUTH AND 2SLGBTQQIA+ PEOPLES

Youth

GOALS | ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIONS COMPLETED
--- | ---
☑ Fully engage youth through empowerment, capacity building and leadership development. | The NCO has met with the AFN Youth Council to determine how the NCO can support their priorities. The youth have committed to a second meeting in December 2021 to outline how the NCO can advance their leadership and initiatives.

CREATE A HEALTHY BOUNDARY BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE AFN

GOALS | ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIONS COMPLETED
--- | ---
☑ Set out a schedule of political (Executive/Leadership Council) and administrative (Secretariat) meetings to be held for the remainder of 2021. | A strategic direction retreat was held on October 4/5 where the NCO presented a vision, values, mission statement and goals. The issue of Healthy Boundaries was also discussed. This work is ongoing.

☑ Initiate a strategic direction planning process through the creation of a 100 Day Plan.

☑ Hold a strategic planning retreat for the Regional Chiefs to discuss healthy boundaries and upcoming work.

National Chief Archibald has recorded over a dozen video messages for First Nation annual general assemblies, youth and LGBTQ events and health conferences and political forums.

National Chief Archibald has also been over 25 national media interviews and brought to light atrocities of the unmarked graves with such international media as the BBC, the London Times and Al Jazeera.

Over the course of three months in office National Chief Archibald visited numerous First Nation communities and took part in ceremonies and events in BC (20), Saskatchewan (4), Manitoba (2), southwestern Ontario (7), Quebec (10), Nova Scotia (5).

National Chief Archibald has also been recording over a dozen video messages for First Nation annual general assemblies, youth and LGBTQ events and health conferences and political forums.

“We’re no longer accepting hollow apologies! Concrete actions and changed behaviours are essential as we walk the healing path forward.”

National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald
“I am committed to working with all parties to ensure that Canada does all it can to help us all to heal and create stronger First Nations and a stronger Canada for all of us.”

National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald

### 100 DAY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

November 2021

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#### National Chief’s Report

- **100 DAY ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

- **November 2021**

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"True reconciliation is about learning, sharing and growing as a country. The more we know about where we’ve come from, our shared history and our responsibilities, the better we can address current challenges and find our path forward together."

National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald

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A CROSS-SECTION OF EVENTS ATTENDED IN PERSON BY NATIONAL CHIEF:

- The Installation of 30th Governor General Mary Simon in Ottawa
- On August 3 in Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba National Chief was there to acknowledge and celebrate Treaty 1 signed August 3, 1871, between the Anishinaabe and Muskegon Cree peoples and the Government of Canada.
- National Chief also attended Molanossa Culture Days near Montreal Lake Cree Nation in northern Saskatchewan where they celebrated 132 anniversary of Treaty #6.
- Most recently National Chief Archibald was asked to be a keynote speaker at the National Congress of American Indians 78th Annual Convention where she reaffirmed the partnership between the AFN and the NCAI.
- National Chief held a meeting with the recently re-elected Squamish Nation Council and was on hand in Ontario for the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850 Gathering ‘Rekindling Our Council Fire’.
- Pre-election, National Chief met with Prime Minister candidates for the Conservate, NDP and Liberal Parties to reinforce First Nation Priorities in the Healing Path Forward Document.
- In October National Chief met with AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Yukon Chiefs and Designates to discuss your issues of importance in the far north such as climate change, depleting Chinoook salmon stock, modern day Treaties, housing, and mental health issues.
- In October National Chief Archibald visited the Union Gospel Mission and Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society in the Downtown East Side of Vancouver, ground zero for the intergenerational trauma suffered by generations of First Nations peoples.
- National Chief was invited by Hereditary Chief Tlakwagiila to gill net fish on the Leigh Creek Tributary in the Mowawachaht Muchalaht territory.
- In early September along with Chiefs/leadership in Nova Scotia, National Chief witnessed and participated in the lobster fishery as the Mi’kmaq peoples exercised their right to fish year round based on the treaties signed in the 18th century.

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### OBTAIN FUNDING & RESOURCES FOR THE RECOVERY OF OUR CHILDREN FROM UNMARKED GRAVES

#### GOALS

- As per Resolution #01-2021, to advocate for justice and accountability for the recovery of our children from former institutions of assimilation and genocide and the appointment of an International Special Rapporteur.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIONS COMPLETED

- In July I spoke separately with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Attorney General and Justice Minister David Lametti to ensure justice and the return of our little children home.
- In August the federal government announced $321-million: to help Indigenous communities search burial sites at former institutions of assimilation and genocide; to support survivors healing initiatives; and, to create memorials.
- Minister Lametti indicated Canada was not prepared to appoint a Special Rapporteur however they would be appointing a Federal Interlocutor. The AFN Executive Committee has rejected the Interlocutor and continues to press for a UN Special Rapporteur.

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### FEDERAL ELECTION

#### GOALS

- To highlight First Nation priorities and influence party platforms in the 44th Federal Election.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIONS COMPLETED

- The Healing Path Forward document was prepared by the AFN secretariat with input from the NCO and regional offices. It was released on August 31.
- The AFN secretariat led the development of a communications strategy with input from the NCO. It included graphics, social media posts, polls and information on candidate and party platforms.

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### NATIONAL PROSPERITY TABLE

#### GOALS

- Develop funding proposal to submit to ISC CIRNA, Natural Resources Canada, and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada within first 60 days.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS & ACTIONS COMPLETED

- The proposal was completed on October 15, 2021 and submitted to the federal government.
- There is still an opportunity for input and feedback from the AFN Executive Committee portfolio holder, and Chiefs Committee on Economic Development.
“True reconciliation is about learning, sharing and growing as a country. The more we know about where we’ve come from, our shared history and our responsibilities, the better we can address current challenges and find our path forward together.”

National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald

A CROSS-SECTION OF EVENTS ATTENDED IN PERSON BY NATIONAL CHIEF:

1. The Installation of 30th Governor General Mary Simon in Ottawa

2. On August 3 in Long Plain First Nation in Manitoba National Chief was there to acknowledge and celebrate Treaty 1 signed August 3, 1871, between the Anishinaabe and Muskegon Cree peoples and the Government of Canada.


4. Most recently National Chief Archibald was asked to be a keynote speaker at the National Congress of American Indians 78th Annual Convention where she reaffirmed the partnership between the AFN and the NCAI.

5. National Chief held a meeting with the recently re-elected Squamish Nation Council and was on hand in Ontario for the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850 Gathering ‘Rekindling Our Council Fire’.

6. Pre-election, National Chief met with Prime Minister candidates for the Conservative, NDP and Liberal Parties to reinforce First Nation Priorities in the Healing Path Forward Document.

7. In October National Chief met with AFN Yukon Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Yukon Chiefs and Designates to discuss your issues of importance in the far north such as climate change, depleting Chinook salmon stock, modern day Treaties, housing, and mental health issues.

8. In October National Chief Archibald visited the Union Gospel Mission and Vancouver Aboriginal Health Society in the Downtown East Side of Vancouver, ground zero for the intergenerational trauma suffered by generations of First Nations peoples.

9. National Chief was invited by Hereditary Chief Tlakwagiila to gill net fish on the Leigh Creek Tributary in the Mowawachaht Muchalaht territory.

10. In early September along with Chiefs/leadership in Nova Scotia, National Chief witnessed and participated in the lobster fishery as the Mi’kmaq peoples exercised their right to fish year round based on the treaties signed in the 18th century.
COVID

Recognition is extended to Regional Chief Marlene Poitras who is leading this file as the Chair of the AFN COVID-19 National Task Force. The task force has worked hard on a national response to the COVID-19 pandemic which has impacted all aspects of our lives – from our social connection, work, education, home aspects, medical care, travel, and our ability to gather in ceremony. COVID-19 has also disproportionately affected First Nations.

Some of us have lost loved ones to COVID-19, other illnesses, and mental unwellness, and some of us had to delay our traditional collective grieving processes because of the pandemic. We need to acknowledge the strain the pandemic has put on our support systems and resiliency, while also recognizing the emphasized strength of Nations and regions and the critical role they play in protecting and supporting First Nations.

The opportunity now rests with the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to co-create a healing path by ensuring equity and equality through collective action that support First Nations Inherent and Treaty Rights including rights to self-determination. We are also committed to working with all regions to build Post-Pandemic Recovery Plans for First Nations.

Vatican Papal Visit

In June, it was announced that the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) and national Indigenous organizations have been working for over two years to send a delegation of Indigenous representatives to meet the Pope. This is now confirmed for the week of December 18, 2021.

In September, the CCCB issued an apology to the Indigenous Peoples of Canada for their role in the institutions of assimilation and genocide. Then on Sept 27, 2021, the CCCB announced a $30 million financial pledge to support healing and reconciliation initiatives.

We have a reasonable expectation that the funds will go directly to the healing initiatives for the survivors and intergenerational survivors. Further, we have reached out to the Bishops of Canada to ensure that First Nations are part of the development of the national principles and strategy, timelines, and the public communication as stated in their announcement. Concrete actions and changed behaviour are essential as we walk the healing path.

On October 27, 2021, Pope Francis announced he would visit Canada to meet with survivors and intergenerational trauma survivors. We have called on the church to make several reparations while the Holy Father is here. These immediate actions include returning diocese land properties back to First Nations on whose traditional lands they are situated and investment into long-term healing initiatives beyond their recent commitment of $30 million to ensure support programs and services for survivors and their descendants.

For over 100 years, the church has played a role in the destruction of the social fabric of First Nations. Now, equal time, energy and resources must be made available to rebuild our children’s lives, our families and communities.
Many First Nations leaders have asked the Holy Father to renounce and formally revoke the “Inter Caetera” 1493 Doctrine of Discovery and replace it with a new Papal Bull that decrees Indigenous Peoples and cultures are valuable, worthy, and must be treated with dignity and respect. We will be sending this message to Rome in December.

**The Recovery of our Children**

The past year was a very difficult time for survivors and intergenerational trauma survivors who are being triggered into old hurts and trauma as we recover our little ones from unmarked graves at the many institutions of assimilation and genocide across Turtle Island.

What is hopeful about this moment is that it can serve as a turning point in our collective healing journey as we build together. We will also continue to call for accountability. Someone must be charged for the deaths of our children and there must be examinations to determine if some of these children were murdered. Canada must be held accountable for their genocidal laws and policies. Certainly, Canada must not be allowed to investigate itself.

As per the AFN Executive motion, the AFN will reach out to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples for the purpose of filing a human rights complaint to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in line with the pursuit of remedies for victims of genocide.

We welcome the government’s financial commitment of $321 million to fund Indigenous-led, survivor-centric and culturally safe efforts, as we recover our little ones from unmarked graves. However, we must ensure that First Nations take the lead on efforts to pursue justice and healing.

**Fisheries**

In early September, along with Chiefs/leadership in Nova Scotia, I witnessed rights holders exercise the right to fish year-round based on the Treaty of 1752. We were surrounded by officers from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who at one point pulled their boats from the water, yet weeks later they returned with a new tactic by punching holes in the tails of lobsters being harvested by Mi’kmaq fishers.

I visited both the east coast and west coast communities where fisheries are a source of sustenance and economic income. I met with Chiefs, Elders and First Nations citizens who have experienced threats and harassment for exerting their right to fish and who call the treatment they are receiving a form of “cultural violence.”

This is a longstanding issue where my office will continue to work with and support First Nations rights holders as they exercise their Inherent and Treaty rights.

**Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action**

Often when governments talk about Reconciliation, they don’t acknowledge that there must be Truth before Reconciliation. The truths that must be told will force us to abandon the beliefs that no longer serve us. When we nullify false narratives, the real work of building a fair and just society will move beyond aspiration to reality.

TRC Call to Action #80 has now been met with September 30th of each year being
designated as a federal statutory holiday known as the ‘National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.’ On this day, we honour the lives of our little ones and those who lived to tell their stories, the Survivors.

On the inaugural day, I participated in the ‘Drum for the Children’ event at the invitation of Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc that called upon people around the world to gather safely to drum and sing for the missing children.

Also, the TRC Call to Action #58 is becoming more of a reality as the Pope has committed to visiting Canada.

On November 5, 2021, the AFN Executive Committee called on the federal government to take concrete action on Truth and Reconciliation by entering into a TRC Calls: Joint Action Plan with the AFN to ensure that we accelerate the implementation of all 94 TRC Calls to Action with an immediate focus on calls #53, #54, #55, and #56.

Women, Youth and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Peoples

The Liberal government fulfilled their promise to hold an inquiry into the MMIWG, though the development of that National Action Plan has experienced delays. While the implementation of the 231 calls has been slow and has experienced setbacks, we can still come together to accelerate the fulfillment of those Calls for Justice in ways that are Indigenous-led, trauma-informed and survivor-centred. Ultimately our goals are to ensure that First Nations women are safe, loved, cared for, respected, and treated with dignity always.

National Caucus of Elected Women Leaders

The NCO secured funding to start a National Caucus of Elected Women Leaders (NCEWL) and other supports through Maryam Monsef, former Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development. The purpose of the NCEWL is to create a supportive environment and structure, both at the AFN and with intergovernmental relations between federal, provincial, and municipal governments, to ensure that First Nations women feel comfortable and supported as they work to implement goals they’ve set for their leadership. The caucus is intended to be a complimentary structure to the AFN Women’s Council, to support the work that they are doing. $6.2 million was approved for this project, with $3 million going directly to AFN regional offices.

Youth

Staff from the NCO met with the National Youth Council to seek direction on how youth engagement can be shaped as a national priority. The youth requested time to deliberate and committed to providing a response in December after their next regularly scheduled meeting. Their response will outline how the NCO can support and advance their leadership and initiatives and it will be rolled into our national strategy moving forward.

2SLGBTQQIA+ Council

In the MMIWG Final Report, Calls for Justice 18.9 tasks First Nations leadership with establishing 2SLGBTQQIA+ Councils. The AFN is answering this call within our decision-making structures and processes to ensure fair representation at all levels of
First Nation governance. This also includes opportunities for 2SLGBTQQIA+ voices and expertise in solving serious issues such as domestic violence, suicide, HIV/AIDS, and murdered and missing Indigenous people. NCO staff put together a draft resolution and draft amendments to the AFN Charter for consideration. These were moved and seconded by Squamish Nation and Serpent River First Nation and will come before the First Nations-in-Assembly at the December SCA for decision.

Languages

As we move into the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), we must pursue significant change. First Nations languages must be lifted up, prioritized, taught and spoken across Turtle Island.

Since the passing of the Indigenous Languages Act in 2019, the Assembly of First Nations has been working on a co-developed distinctions basis to fully implement the Act in addition to ensuring adequate and long-term funding with Canada to develop a new Funding Model to support our languages.

A key milestone in 2021 was the establishment of the Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages. The Office is an independent arms-length entity which will be able to hear disputes and evaluate the adequacy of funding available for language revitalization. Stable resources are required to ensure our languages and cultures are passed on. The AFN is planning a series of engagements in January 2022 to ensure First Nations contributions are reflected and developed within the First Nations Funding Model. Recommendations from these discussions will be brought to our AGA in July 2022.

National Prosperity Table

The National First Nations Economic Growth, Prosperity, and Wealth Building Table aims to bring First Nations, government, and industry together to form strategic investments, create opportunities for long-term social transformation, and improve education and housing for First Nations across the country. The proposal aims to meet our mutual goal of creating healthy and vibrant communities.

As the first of its kind with the Canadian government, the prosperity table will create a space for First Nations’ meaningful participation in the post-pandemic economic recovery in Canada by supporting Indigenous economies so they can thrive and be successful on a local, regional, national, and global level.

On October 15, 2021, a draft proposal was provided to the Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development and to the federal government for input and feedback. It was also shared with the AFN Economic Sector and followed up with a meeting that discussed how the Prosperity Table can support and align with the current activities in the Economic Sector.
Create a Healthy Boundary Between the Administrative and Political Functions of the AFN

The AFN exists to support First Nations as they strive to achieve self-reliance and self-determination. The overall goal is to ensure there is a healthy boundary between the Secretariat and the National Chiefs Office by delineating the administrative and political functions of the AFN. This will be done by eventually moving toward a non-political administrative Board of Directors and a national political Leadership Council.

This work requires adequate funding to undertake a strategic restructuring process which would include strategic planning at all levels with the Chiefs, the Chiefs Committees, the Secretariat, and the AFN Executive Committee. There is a need for a clear path, a healthy boundary that respects everyone’s roles. We need to focus on progressing and upholding our rights, protecting our land, waters, and resources, while fostering the wellbeing of our peoples and communities.

A draft Resolution on this matter has been moved by Curve Lake First Nation and Tetlit Gwich’in Council.

Federal Election

We created ‘The Healing Path Forward: 2021 Federal Priorities for Strengthening and Rebuilding First Nations’ to help influence the federal election and to highlight our priority areas. The plan reflects a shared vision and expression of First Nations’ collective priorities at the national level.

The AFN secretariat led the development of a communications strategy with input from the NCO. It included graphics, social media posts, polls and information on candidate and party platforms. Social media posts were put out every day to help First Nations voters make an educated choice, noting that no party has the First Nations vote.

We congratulate the Liberals and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and all the candidates who ran for office, particularly the Indigenous candidates who won and those who ran for the first time. The AFN and First Nations leadership across Turtle Island have built mainly positive relationships with the PMO and the Ministers and we are a willing partner in moving forward with this government.
Conclusion

I would like to acknowledge all the Regional Chiefs, Grand Chiefs, Chiefs and Councillors, and all levels of leadership who are making a difference across Turtle Island. I’m looking forward to our journey together as we make positive and evolutionary changes where we can realize our vision of happy, healthy children surrounded by the love and care of their families, living in safe and vibrant communities.

I also want to acknowledge the NCO and Secretariat staff at the Assembly of First Nations for your support, your expertise, knowledge and particularly for your commitment. Despite the challenges we have faced, you all have done a tremendous job. You are to be commended on your dedication and work during these unprecedented times.

I am calling for us to be united in our efforts to best advocate and work for the people in our communities. As our Elders say, we must now embrace the great responsibilities and opportunities that are on the horizon. There is great hope and light as we move to rebuild, restructure and heal.

The vision for the future encompasses a healthy Assembly of First Nations organization where everyone feels safe, acknowledged and empowered.

There is a healing path forward and we will get there by working together.

*Ninanaskamon!*

National Chief RoseAnne Archibald
Regional Chiefs’ Reports
Regional Chief Paul Prosper

Nova Scotia and Newfoundland

Opening Greeting:

*Kwe Nituptup. I am honoured to represent the Mi’kmaw leadership for Newfoundland & Nova Scotia as their Regional Chief. Since my last report, much continues to take place on a regional, national and global level. Leadership continues to address and confront many challenges in the midst of a global pandemic and a constantly shifting political landscape.*

Introduction:

The implementation of a moderate livelihood fishery has remained an ongoing priority for the Mi’kmaq. Leadership is engaged in consultations, negotiations and the litigation process to implement their Treaty right to the fishery. Taxation, income assistance, cannabis, education, housing, gaming and Child Welfare represent some of the key issues with leadership. Our Regional Office has hired two additional staff and a sub-office has been established in Newfoundland. The ongoing pandemic continues to limit travel and in-person meetings; however, despite this fact, we have been active on many regional and national initiatives.

Key Issues and Activities:

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

- **Marshall Livelihood Fishery** – ongoing consultations, negotiations and litigation with Mi’kmaq and government officials.
- **Regional Office Set-up and Staffing** – two new staff members have been hired and a sub-office has been set up in Nfld.
- **MMIWG Regional Engagement** – our office has partnered with the Nova Scotia Native Women’s Association to lead engagement with grassroots women’s groups to ensure meaningful involvement and participation.
- **Governance & Strategic Planning** – our Office has organized gatherings with leadership in Nova Scotia incorporating tradition and ceremony with strategic planning on Nationhood.
- **Mi’kmaq Membership** – the Regional Office has been working with First Nation leadership to address membership issues. These issues are long outstanding and require a genuine commitment by the federal government.
- **Mi’kmaw Child Welfare** – the development of a Mi’kmaw Child Welfare law continues in Nova Scotia. The interplay of s. 35 self-government rights and legislation established by Bill C-92 continues to be a subject of discussion with leadership.
- **Self-governance & Income Assistance** – leadership continues to negotiate self-governance over income assistance.
with both levels of government. A MOU was recently reached between the parties and will support negotiations.

- **Mi’kmaq Language legislation** – in partnership with Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey work has begun on the drafting of provincial Mi’kmaq language legislation.

- **COP26** – our Office has recently participated in COP26 in Glasgow. Climate change is possibly the most important issue of our time.

- **Paul Martin Foundation** – our Office has partnered with the Paul Martin Foundation on the administration of pilot projects in the region with input from Mi’kmaq organizations.

- **Systemic Racism and Moderate Livelihood** – our Office continues to work with several Senators and key support persons to identify to treatment of Mi’kmaq harvesters in the livelihood fishery.

**National Portfolio:**

As portfolio holder for Lands, Territories and Resources, I am pleased to offer an update on efforts to replace four key policies: Specific Claims, Additions-to-Reserve (ATR), Comprehensive Land Claims and the Inherent Right to Self-Government. We have made significant progress advocating for a fully independent specific claims process. In early 2021, the AFN developed a draft reform proposal based on First Nations input and AFN resolution 09/2020. We have completed a public review of the AFN proposal and are calling on Canada to work with the AFN to jointly develop a fully independent specific claims center based on four key principles: Independence, Honour of the Crown, recognition of First Nations laws, and no arbitrary financial constraints. The Additions-to-Reserve Policy is time consuming and costly. It is imperative that First Nations add lands to their reserves so they can grow and develop. Budget 2021 included $43 million dollars in new funding to support the ATR process and help facilitate a joint review of the existing policy and process. We are currently working through an AFN–Canada Lands Table to develop a joint draft workplan to guide policy review. AFN mandates clearly reject both the Comprehensive Land Claims and the Inherent Right to Self-Government Policies and call for processes that fully recognize First Nations Title and rights and respect all First Nations regardless of their unique approaches and positions. We continue to seek opportunities to advocate for a First Nations driven process to identify alternatives to the existing policy framework.

**The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:**

The Mi’kmaq recognize the need to advance the recognition of Mi’kmaq rights through a coordinated approach involving consultation, negotiations and litigation. The cumulative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused hardship on leadership and their respective communities. Mental health and addictions combined with a decrease in Band programs and services through a loss in own source revenues, have stretched Band programs and services to the limit. The implementation of the livelihood
fishery continues to create divisiveness with our non-Mi’kmaq neighbours. Priority issues through the Lands, Territories and Resources Unit are ongoing and involve four main policy areas: Additions to Reserve, the Inherent Right to Self-Government, Specific Claims and Comprehensive Claims policies. An immediate priority involves changes to the Specific Claims Policy to be truly independent from government control and intervention. These advancements will help address existing pressures on communities to expand their existing land base to meet community need. All four policies need to be revamped to meet the distinct needs of First Nations across the country. Our children’s future depends on it.

Conclusion:

This past year has been a tremendous learning experience. I truly appreciate the AFN Secretariat and the excellent support they provide. I witnessed how truly dedicated and committed they are in the work they do on behalf of our member communities. As leadership, we must seek out new ways to come together and share to overcome our differences.

In Recognition of First Nations legal and human rights.

Wela’lioq!
Regional Chief Roger Augustine

New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island

Opening Greeting:

On behalf of the Chiefs of New Brunswick (Mi’gmaq/Wolastoqey/Passamaquoddy), I would like to welcome everyone to the 2021 AFN SCA. I send prayers for strength and healing during these difficult times.

Introduction:

As we wade through the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of our Leadership and the leaders across the country, as well as the team at the AFN Regional office. The “new normal” is far from our traditional way of communicating with our people from coast to coast. Nevertheless, we have proven to be resilient and stepped up as leaders to ensure that we put our people on the forefront where they belong so that we can provide them with the tools and information to stay healthy and safe. All the while, our efforts will continue to fight for proper recognition of our inherent rights.

Key Issues and Activities:

While fishing rights remain as the hot topic in the Atlantic region, we have made strides in policing and justice reform. The Justice for Rodney movement showed that we will not sit back and accept the manner in which the justice system treats our people. Discussions are still underway with the governments with respect to UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action. The RCMP have hired local liaison officers which will prove to be an effective tool in dealing with our communities.

Land claim acknowledgement is on the increase. Some First Nations have been successful in the settlement of long-standing claims against the Crown. Subsequently, the Indigenous leadership has shown great vision by creating opportunities that will support self government plans for the future.

The Atlantic First Nations Water Authority was launched this year. The board consists of New Brunswick Chiefs and experts and is designed to address key issues such as Infrastructure and clean drinking water for all communities of the Atlantic Region.

Mental Wellness will be the main focal point for me as I embark on a new path in my journey. Mental Health Support for our people is needed now more than ever. We must always provide a safe space for our people who suffer as a result of physical and mental abuse at residential school, abusive relationships and so on. Our survival depends on it.

An election for a new Regional Chief will take place on November 30, 2021.

National Portfolio:

As Chair of the National Fisheries Committee, I am proud of the committee’s efforts, especially their fight for rights to a moderate livelihood and key areas of food fisheries and conservation. Major changes at the national office coupled with the retirement of key staff did not deter our focus on the continued representation at all levels of government to ensure inclusion and prior consultation with respect to our waters.
and rights. I lift up the fishermen and women who stood on the boats and shores to demonstrate their support for these efforts. I send respect to the fishermen we have lost at sea actively practising this right.

**The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:**

2022 will begin under the leadership of a new Regional Chief. I pray for strength and good fortune for the new leadership. I am confident that the Chiefs of New Brunswick will continue to provide the wisdom and guidance they have shown in the past.

Continued efforts on fishing rights, child welfare, economic development and mental wellness will always be of utmost importance to the people of our region.

Policing and Justice reform must remain a priority for all Indigenous leaders across the country. We must support our national leadership by working towards a more cohesive team. Together we will be much stronger.

**Conclusion:**

It has been an honour and a privilege to be the Regional Chief of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island for 13 years. I aim to continue to support the efforts of our local leadership in their path forward, spiritually, emotionally and physically.

*Stay safe and be well, mentally, physically and spiritually! We’lalin!*
Regional Chief Ghislain Picard
Quebec-Labrador

Introduction

Regional Chief Ghislain Picard is Innu from the community of Pessamit. Since 1992, he has held the position of Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador (AFNQL), a political organization representing 43 Chiefs of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador. RC Picard is the portfolio holder for Justice and Policing and Border Crossing at the AFN. The AFNQL Chiefs have made it a priority to make every effort to protect their population from COVID-19. Limiting access to communities in order to prevent any community outbreak, ensuring the sometimes difficult collaboration with provincial public health officials, ensuring the maintenance of socio-economic conditions—in particular the quality of educational services, food supply and security while enduring shortages and instability— have required the full attention of the AFNQL Chiefs and Councils.

They were able to rely on their local resources particularly in health, education, social services, and public safety, as well as on the regional commissions and organizations in Quebec-Labrador, which are accountable to the Chiefs’ Assembly. As Regional Chief, I would like once again to acknowledge this collective effort and thank all stakeholders.

Joyce Echaquan’s family, her community of Manawan, the Atikamekw Nation, all First Nations and the entire population experienced a shockwave at the end of September 2020 when the 37-year-old mother died under tragic and totally unacceptable conditions in the Quebec hospital system. It is essential to recall and to emphasize that Joyce’s Principle—its acceptance unfortunately slow but gradual—will ensure that together we will find effective ways to prevent human beings from being treated in such a despicable manner in a world that claims to be civilized. Joyce’s Principle is a call to action and a commitment from governments to establish relations free from systemic racism for Indigenous people and the health and social services systems in Quebec and Canada.

The pandemic and the historical reminder of the tragedies experienced in connection with the residential school system have not interrupted the often major political initiatives and developments both in terms of relations with the federal government, including Bill C-15, which has now become an Act of Canada and which governs the compliance of Canadian laws with the UNDRIP, and in terms of the difficult relations with the provincial government. I am encouraged by one major fact: the growing determination of the AFNQL’s Grand Chiefs and Chiefs to exercise their self-determination and the respect and implementation of their rights for the benefit of their people.

Issues and key activities

The federal government, re-elected last October and still in a minority position, has put forward and still maintains its agenda for an essential Reconciliation with Aboriginal
The historical relationship between First Nations and the Crown remains complex and requires the full vigilance of the Grand Chiefs and Chiefs, but the objective of reconciling the respective issues is at least stated and moving forward. It has always been clear and is becoming clearer because of recent debates such as Bill C-15, that the titles and rights held by First Nations do not originate in the Canadian legislative framework. This framework was created much later and cannot limit First Nations rights and title in any way. The review and monitoring of this Bill alone, which has now become an Act of Canada, has required a great deal of attention from the Grand Chiefs and Chiefs and their advisors. Several other initiatives of the federal government, specifically with regard to policing as an essential service, have solicited the attention of the AFNQL’s Grand Chiefs and Chiefs.

The splitting into two entities of what was previously (despite various names over the years) always recognized as the Department of Indian Affairs, the main interlocutor of the First Nations governments, did not really help facilitate relations. Essential and regular administrative contact through regional representatives between our First Nations governments and federal authorities, became confusing, among other things, because of the integration of health services within Indigenous Services Canada.

If the current federal government’s commitment to First Peoples Reconciliation is clear and requires our Chiefs to be extremely vigilant, so too is the commitment in the opposite direction by the current provincial government of the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ), which requires more than vigilance from our Chiefs and Grand Chiefs: it requires action!

On the one hand, the current provincial government is doing everything in its power, particularly before the courts, to impede the exercise of First Nations governments’ jurisdiction. We are awaiting the decision of the Quebec Court of Appeal in the case where the province is requesting that the Canadian Act resulting from Bill C-92, recognizing the capacity of First Nations to implement their own social protection laws with respect to children, youth, and families, be invalidated. The AFNQL is an intervener in this case. Not only on bills with major impacts such as this one, but also on cases of more limited scope, for example in administrative matters such as where the Attorney General of Quebec on behalf of the provincial government, systematically intervenes in any case that would risk recognizing the legitimacy and capacity to act of First Nations governments.

It is not easy to determine whether the current provincial government wants to take us back to 1950 or 1850, but what is certain is that it is looking to the past—a colonial past in which First Nations territories and their resources can be exploited while ignoring and excluding the holders and protectors of these same territories, namely the First Nations.

This backward, colonial attitude is compounded by an equally backward, narrow-minded, and backward-looking version of Quebec nationalism.

If it is legitimate to be proud of one’s language and culture, to defend and promote them, it is illegitimate to do so by establishing the supremacy of one’s language and culture to the detriment of First Nations and their heritage. Yet this is what the CAQ provincial government is trying to do, in a
largely electoral approach, with its Bill 96. The Bill is supposed to be an update of Bill 101, dating from 1977 and defining the Charter of the French Language. As far as the status of First Nations languages is concerned, and the difficulties faced by First Nations members for whom French is their second or third language because their second language is English, the Bill does nothing but provide a status quo. The AFNQL has presented a political position to try to counter the objectives of this Bill, and continues its efforts, despite the obstacles presented by the parliamentary system.

Faced with this context of a provincial government looking backwards, while the First Nations population, especially the youth, are resolutely looking forward, the AFNQL has taken three main initiatives.

The first is the adoption and implementation, in the fall of 2020, of its own Action Plan on Racism and Discrimination. The plan is based on the AFNQL’s conviction that the population of the province of Quebec is generally more progressive than its current government. Without any illusions and based on a rigorous survey, the AFNQL undertook this survey more than a year ago to address the population, groups, and institutions directly. Expectations from this government are low but we expect a great deal from the population, with whom alliances have been developed. The experience is encouraging and continues.

The second initiative of our Assembly of Chiefs is the establishment of a joint political table with the province, the AFNQL/Quebec Table. The objective of the table, even though it is narrow-minded as described above, is to try to make progress, one file at a time, on issues for which provincial participation is inevitable. The Table has so far held meetings on Health and Social Services and Public Safety. Others are to come on Justice and on Lands and Resources. The work of these political tables is supported by technical tables. The observation to date is that it is very difficult with the province to go beyond the status quo, but for the time being, the AFNQL’s Grand Chiefs and Chiefs wish to pursue the process.

The third initiative is the proposal by the AFNQL to convene a Great Economic Circle. The event was held on November 25 and 26 in Montreal. Carried by the spirit that drives the AFNQL’s Action Plan on Racism and Discrimination, and on our conviction that the population, including the major economic stakeholders who took part in the event, are in the vanguard of the backward-looking CAQ government, and that these major stakeholders can point to the way forward.

Finally, allow me to inform you of a major action taken very recently by our Assembly: the adoption of the Declaration of the Chiefs of the AFNQL, affirming Aboriginal and Treaty rights, as well as Aboriginal title to the territory. The Declaration, addressed to the leaders of the governments of Canada and the province of Quebec, will henceforth provide a framework for relations with the First Nations governments with respect to the territory and its resources.
Regional Chief Glen (Gwiingos) Hare

Ontario

Opening Greeting:

Aanii/Boozhoo/He/Kwekwe/Shekoli/Sekoh/Waachiyaa from Ontario.

I look forward to continuing to work with the National Chief and all the Regional Chiefs to advocate for our First Nations on issues and opportunities that will impact our First Nations.

Introduction:

Here in Ontario, we look forward to a progressive year as we continue to maintain vigilance on protecting our most vulnerable during the fourth wave of this pandemic. We are planning and preparing for a fifth wave, as there have been talks of this already occurring in some countries. Throughout this pandemic there have been a number of priority profiles in Ontario including clean drinking water, housing, and infrastructure. Child Welfare has and will always be critical, as well as protecting our children so that we will never have to face the atrocities of the Indian Residential Schools again.

Key Issues and Activities:

The United Nations recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right. Canada has been criticized on the international stage and at home for not upholding this right.

The federal government has also committed to implementing the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This recognizes our rights as Indigenous Peoples to healthy standards of living, and our direct involvement in the provision of services, such as clean, drinkable water. The persistence of long-term drinking water advisories in many First Nations in Ontario and across Canada are a symptom of the failure of colonial policies and attitudes and demonstrates Canada's failure to uphold both human rights and Indigenous rights standards when it comes to First Nations.

The Community Safety and Policing Act (CSPA) is legislation that became law in 2019 to modernize Ontario’s police service delivery. The CSPA is not yet in force or operational. First, the Ministry of the Solicitor General must create and adopt regulations for the CSPA before it can come into force.

Under this new legislation, police are not required to enforce First Nation bylaws. That is because enforcement of First Nation bylaws is excluded from the list of mandatory police function in s. 11(2)(a) of the new law. This issue can be fixed in the regulations. Leadership may wish to ask that First Nation bylaw enforcement be included as a mandatory police function in the regulations. Many First Nations do not receive 24-hour policing. Leadership may wish to ask that this be included as a standard in the regulation. Leadership may wish to ask for a specific requirement that policing in a First Nation be based in the culture of that First Nation. Strong and clear
standards are needed. Policing will be funded to meet the standards set in the regulations for First Nations that have opted-into the legislation. Leadership may wish to advocate for strong and clear standards to support efforts to increase funding. Policing is very different in many First Nations, especially when there is no road access. Leadership may wish to advocate for special training for this work and for standards appropriate for different contexts. More First Nations input is needed, including an opportunity to comment on early drafts of regulations prior to the general public comment period.

Chiefs of Ontario strongly supports the Robinson-Huron Treaty communities. As you call to the Crown to honour the treaty promises of sharing the wealth that came from the land, we echo your same message. I look to the words of one of my predecessors. In 2014, Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy said that Treaties are living things and that through our Treaty making, Canada and Ontario have become very wealthy, while our Nations have seen very minimal returns. Honouring those promises—those waawidiwamaagewin—demonstrates a commitment to building those relationships, to reconciliation, and to a just recovery. It benefits all of us. We are all treaty people, we have held up our end of the deal, and we hope that our partners will do the same.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to launch a feasibility assessment for a proposed National Marine Conservation Area in western James Bay and southwestern Hudson Bay. Shoal Lake Boil Water Advisory ended in September 2021. The Chiefs of Ontario have secured a funding agreement with Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) to facilitate engagement with communities on the proposed Canada Water Agency.

We are building a team to work in support of First Nations accessing burial sites, with the intent of being a longer-term resource. Research and communications to date have provided, and will continue to provide, access to sources of information that will be helpful and essential. Regional meetings are being hosted by the AFN with Regional committee.

The intent of building a Team is to combine the resources and experience of the Secretariat and the Political office to provide the support that Leadership Council has directed. Funding is being sought for the term of ORC to initiate and set in place the Team for the work requested and required.

Survivors and Families of Residential Schools, Day Schools, Industrial Schools and Indian Hospitals can be affected by what is now being recognized and publicly acknowledged, no matter where they live. It will be important to be able to communicate in as many ways as possible to help people find the support they need.

Regional Portfolios:

**Education Portfolio**

Discussion with National Chief August 16, 2021 awaiting the Tobacco Ties. Discussion with Ministry of Education for assisting with development of curriculum in schools across Canada.

**Housing, Water & Infrastructure**

Housing Summit AFN issues; Water summit held on October 27, 2021.
Management Committee

June 29, 2021: attended first meeting; reviewed contracts and review of Financial Policy—deferred to next meeting. July 19, 2021: reviewed contracts and proposal submission declared conflict of interest. Asked for a separate meeting to review the Financial Policy and invite our Chief Operating Officer to provide COO feedback to the policy. Review TOR on Finance Committee.

Child Welfare

This portfolio covers the Indian Residential School mass children burials found. Court decisions on Jordan’s Principle and Children in Care compensation that children were under funded in the CAS system and should be entitled to compensation.

The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

We have witnessed monumental events that will influence generations of First Nations including the COVID-19 pandemic and discovery of mass graves at numerous Indian Residential Schools throughout Turtle Island. These life-changing events will have an impact on what we as Leadership will do for our term in office and how we plan ahead to ensure some events never happen again. We will be making laws to ensure they never happen again to children. With the bad there has also been progress: we recently saw the election of the first female National Chief and the appointment of the first Indigenous Governor General Mary Simon. We will continue to encourage students to not give up on their dreams and remind each other of our teachings of respect. Respecting our women will ensure more women are lifted up to positions like the National Chief and Governor General. Ontario is working to keep our citizens in our communities both on and off reserve healthy and safe with a proactive pandemic response. Moving forward, we will build improved communications with our citizens to ensure we provide better health care and child welfare systems in our First Nations communities.

Conclusion:

We are not going to change the world overnight with what we are doing, but every small change will be a positive change for a better world. A collection of small changes will impact more First Nations as we work together throughout Canada to make those changes and voice those concerns and advocate to the government our needs.

I was reminded by Elders, my mentors who said, “remember who you work for: First Nation citizens.”

“There is much work left to do for our Nations to heal from the legacies of residential schools and cultural genocide. The Prime Minister and the Government of Canada must demonstrate full commitment.”
Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse

Manitoba

Greetings to all First Nations!
I look forward to our work together to improve the well-being of all First Nations and ensure respect and implementation of our Treaty and inherent rights, title, and jurisdiction.

I am honoured to work on issues at the national level and to bring forward the priorities of First Nations leadership in the Manitoba region to the Assembly of First Nations and the federal government.

Introduction

The past year has brought national and international attention to First Nations rights and issues. We have an opportunity to mobilize public support to advance the priorities of First Nations respect economic and social development and implementation and respect of our rights. National level strategies built collaboratively among interested First Nations can help fuel and support respective self-determination strategies.

Within the AFN, I have three key portfolio responsibilities: housing and infrastructure, social development, and emergency management and services. I also work to ensure the voices of First Nations in Manitoba are heard in Ottawa on these and other issues.

Portfolio Responsibilities

Housing and Infrastructure

Housing and Infrastructure continues to be a top priority for all regions. Water treatment plants and sewage management remain important issues for First Nations across the country. We also need to focus on green initiatives to ensure positive environmental impacts as we tackle the housing and infrastructure deficit.

During the 2021 federal election, essential government services such as clean drinking water had a high profile. As of mid-November 2021, there are 43 First Nations with long-term drinking water advisories. The AFN will continue to press the federal government until that number is zero.

As the Chair of AFN’s Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure, and the Chiefs Committee on Emergency Management (CCEM), I am working with Chiefs from each region on advocacy strategies for the next federal budget. The next critical piece of work is developing content for AFN’s pre-budget submission on housing and infrastructure. With my colleagues on the CCoHI and CCEM, I will provide updates as our work proceeds.

I am also working on specific priorities such as green housing initiatives and access by all First Nations to quality broadband connectivity. Connectivity is key to First Nations’ economic development strategies and to quality education for our children. I will be pressing forward on these issues over the coming year.

Emergency Management

Emergency management is a critical issue for First Nations governments to plan to protect
everyone in the face of diverse emergencies. The climate crisis and the pandemic have further stressed the need for such plans. First Nations leadership are at the forefront providing guidance and strategies to protect our people. However, First Nations governments are underfunded in this area, and we must be treated as full partners in planning and implementation of emergency management for First Nations. As Parliament resumes, I will be looking at AFN’s pre-budget submission in this area and pressing for the inclusion of First Nations leadership in federal and provincial planning, implementation, and ministerial level meetings. The AFN Emergency Management sector monitors critical events such as wildfires, floods, and critical infrastructure damage as well as evacuations affecting First Nations across Canada. The AFN assists in the distribution of event notifications throughout AFN regions and the First Nations emergency practitioners’ network.

The climate crisis is generating more extreme weather events in all regions. Federal and provincial governments must include First Nations governments in all decision-making, but especially in federal-provincial-territorial meetings of ministers responsible for emergency management. First Nations must also be included in ministerial discussion on transitioning more quickly to a green and decarbonized economy. All governments must provide more space for First Nations knowledge, laws, and expertise in developing global, national, regional and community level strategies.

Social Development

The AFN’s work on and Child and Family Services is guided by respect for First Nations self-determination, sovereignty, jurisdiction, control as well as partnerships between First Nations and all levels of government.

The Chiefs Committee on Child and Family Services and Self-Determination has provided input for First Nations driven implementation of An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families, passed in 2019. In 2021, the AFN hosted a virtual leadership gathering series focused on this legislation. This event brought First Nations leadership, technicians, experts, and government representatives together to learn about the act and to discuss the path to implementation for interested First Nations.

In litigation, AFN continues to seek a just settlement with Canada respecting our
precedent-setting win on discrimination in the 2016 child and family services case won at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal.

Since 2016, the CHRT has issued several compensation orders that support the positions of First Nations. The latest of these were in August and September 2021. Unfortunately, Canada decided to seek judicial review of aspects of the compensation orders. However, Canada also put a “pause” on its court action in order to resume settlement discussions with the AFN and the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. Former TRC Commissioner Murray Sinclair was retained to assist in facilitating the discussions that began in November.

Work is ongoing on social programs, income assistance and poverty reduction in the AFN technical working group on social development. A study has been undertaken to identify the gaps in data and services in the income assistance program as mandated by AFN resolution 89/2019. There is also a study to identify First Nations determined indicators of poverty and well-being, as mandated by FN resolution 98/2019.

**Early Learning and Childcare**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the AFN pressed the federal government to secure proper support for First Nations early learning and childcare (ELCC). Our ELCC providers must have the resources needed to provide safe, quality and culturally appropriate childcare for First Nations children and families. Our advocacy resulted in a $70 million investment in 2020 to support the safe reopening of First Nations Early Learning and Child Care services. Budget 2021 allocated investments of $2.5 billion over five years for Indigenous peoples’ ELCC. This includes capacity, infrastructure and creating more ELCC spaces. The AFN will continue to push for investments in Budget 2022.

**The Path Ahead/Looking Forward**

Work leading to the 2022 federal budget will be critical. The AFN executive will be working hard to maintain the momentum of new investments that have been made since 2015 (now totalling $45 billion in funding for Indigenous Peoples). First Nations leadership must mobilize continued public support while advancing the strategies of First Nations for self-determination in all aspects of social and economic development.

Across Turtle Island, First Nations litigation strategies continue to yield wins. These successes, along with the 2021 federal United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, will further strengthen our position as we fight for the rights and well-being of our people in all aspects of life. The UNDRIP legislation will have implications not only for legislation that is already on the books, but any federal legislation that may impact First Nations. With a new Parliament in place, the AFN will support First Nations to ensure accountability from the Crown.

*I look forward to working with all First Nations leadership in the months and years ahead.*
Regional Chief Bobby Cameron

Saskatchewan

Opening Greeting:

Tansi, Ɂedlanet’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, Deneųłıné, Saulteaux, the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota in kisiskáciwan (Saskatchewan).

Introduction

Lifelong learning education is a Treaty Right. First Nations are autonomous and have an inherent right to control all aspects of education, from early childhood though post-secondary. Responsibility of First Nations students falls entirely with the Crown as Treaty rights are portable.

Treaties provide a framework for living together and sharing the land within our traditional territories. The treaty agreements provide foundations for ongoing co-operation and partnership as we move forward together to advance our education systems. Canada needs to continue honouring the treaty relationship based on the recognition of rights and respect to achieve reconciliation with our people.

Key issues:

• First Nations control of education and sufficient and predictable funding are fundamental to creating education systems that promote the success of First Nations students. Language and culture are critically important for the successful development, education and well being of First Nations students. Communities want to build First Nations’ capacity to establish educational institutions that will deliver quality, culturally appropriate programs, and services for children.

We are passionate about the significance of treaty education for all Indigenous Peoples. AFN, as the connection between First Nations and the federal government, has focused on rebuilding and enhancing the treaty relationship. Over many centuries, these relationships were eroded as colonial and paternalistic policies and laws were enacted. We embarked on a journey to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. It is a necessary journey to address a long history of colonialism.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

First Nations control of education, and sufficient and predictable funding, are fundamental to creating education systems that promote the success of First Nations students. Language and culture are critically important for the successful development, education and well being of First Nations students. Communities want to build First Nations’ capacity to establish educational institutions that will deliver quality, culturally appropriate programs and services for children.

• Supports similar to those available to children who attend school off reserve
Regional Chiefs' Reports

Special Chiefs Assembly on December 7, 8 and 9, 2021 draft resolutions for the Education file include:
• DR-07: Funding for Post-Secondary Indigenous Institutions and Students
• DR-08: First Nations Control of Federal Funding in Education
• DR-23: 2021 Post-Secondary Education Policy Proposal on First Nations Models

National Portfolio #1: Elementary and Secondary Education

Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE) continues to advocate for elementary and secondary education programs that provide eligible students ordinarily living on reserve with elementary and secondary school education programs equivalent to those in the province. The elementary and secondary education program supports elementary and secondary education for First Nations students, schools and communities by working in partnership with the government to help close the education outcome gaps between First Nations peoples and other Canadians. By providing a more stable funding environment for First Nations education systems, this focus aims to create better and more consistent support for students, schools, communities, educators and First Nations education organizations because we are second to none.

The government has provided funding through interim regional funding formulas and transformative education agreements, such as regional education agreements, education authority agreements or other transformative education agreements.

The High-cost Special education program includes funding for services provided to First Nations students identified as having mild to profound learning disabilities. Families of a First Nations child who is not receiving the services and support that they need may contact the Jordan’s Principle regional focal point for assistance. These are quality programs and services that are culturally sensitive and reflective of generally accepted provincial or territorial standards.

National Portfolio #2: Post Secondary Education

Post Secondary Education

Despite the challenges First Nations continue to face with COVID-19, education directors, technicians, and First Nations representatives have been making great strides in post-secondary education in 2021. First Nations across the country are in the final year of post-secondary education model engagement and are now looking for support from First Nations-in-Assembly on a resolution to support a policy proposal which would enable First Nations to finalize and implement these unique models.

First Nations call for change and control in post-secondary education has spanned decades. This was affirmed through AFN Resolution 20/2021, First Nations Led Local, Regional and Treaty-based Post-Secondary Education Models, which directed the Chiefs Committee on Education to draft a policy proposal that would support First Nations to negotiate their unique post-secondary education models based on their true needs.
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.

Jurisdiction in education has and always will be with each First Nation. Through the knowledge of our leaders, knowledge keepers, education directors and school representatives, we can ensure that each Nation has a post-secondary education model that addresses their local needs. Each Nation knows what they want, and I ask that First Nations-in-Assembly strongly support this Resolution and the accompanied Policy Proposal to begin this transformation for our students.

National Portfolio #3: Education Infrastructure and Capital Needs

Education Infrastructure and Capital Needs

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 that support our holistic ways of learning.

First Nations students have an inherent and Treaty right to education as part of their lifelong learning process.

The CCOE has prioritized this in the last two years and I’m happy to share that new or renovated First Nations schools will not only have larger schools when compared to the national average, but also contain new spaces such as language and culture rooms, knowledge keeper offices, more space for mental health services and outdoor leaning spaces.

Schools are one of the most important parts of our communities and the CCOE continues to advocate for increased funding so that our learning spaces are safe and that a First Nation receives a new school when they require one.

$3.8 Billion is needed over the next five years for education facilities. We will be seeking a commitment from Canada to start funding our schools and education facilities based on the real needs and Treaty rights of First Nations.
The Path Ahead/Looking forward:

We will continue to advocate for the protection of inherent and Treaty Rights to education. We will advance First Nations jurisdiction over First Nations education, establish and carry out effective strategies regarding First Nations and other networks, provide political and strategic advice regarding First Nations educational matters to the National Indian Education Council (NIEC)/AFN Education Sector/AFN Executive Committee, carry out recommendations on the work of the NIEC and the AFN Languages and Learning sector, and identify and address issues concerning First Nations education. These objectives will be carried out within the mandates of the AFN Charter and resolutions adopted by the First Nations-in-Assembly.

Conclusion:

The CCOE will continue to provide political direction, advice and recommendations on educational matters affecting First Nations. The CCOE will also adopt recommendations through a regional lens.

Chiefs, proxies, representatives, I wish you a productive and thoughtful Assembly as we push forward to improve the livelihood of our people and provide new mandates for the Assembly.

Hiy Hiy, ekosi Regional Chief Bobby Cameron, AFN Chief—Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN).

First Nations students have the inherent and Treaty right to receive education that is in accordance with their culture, values, traditions, and languages free from prejudice and discrimination.
Alberta Regional Chief Marlene Poitras

Alberta

Opening Greeting:

Tansi, it is my pleasure to provide my submission to the Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly Report.

Introduction:

We continue to live in unprecedented times. This fall we saw the rise of the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and First Nations bearing the brunt of this wave with active case loads nearly quadruple that of the general population and severe outcomes at nearly two times the rate of the general population. We saw multiple national elections with a Federal Election and the National Chief Election. The dust from those events is settling now and it is time to focus our renewed efforts at driving towards solutions, and First Nations must always be at these tables leading the charge.

Key Issues and Activities:

COVID-19 Response

The AFN Alberta regional office continues to keep information at the forefront in addressing COVID-19 in the region. When the fourth wave hit, our office increased the frequency of its regional bulletin to twice weekly ensuring that First Nations in the region continue to be informed. We started these bulletins the moment the pandemic was declared in Canada on March 16, 2020, and it has been a staple in our regional response since that day. Updates and news are also shared on social media, our COVID-19 hub on afnab.ca and the AFN Alberta mobile app.

The AFN Alberta Region established a high standard for communication, crisis response, and advocacy. The timely release of information is a significant efficiency factor. The continuing evolution of COVID-19 requires multi-level crisis response tactics.

Regionally, Alberta needs to pay attention as it focuses on its Health Services Critical Care Framework (Triage) to assure there is an oversight mechanism in decisions that affect the care of First Nations/Indigenous Peoples. Information needs to be accessible from multiple points and formats and needs to be focused on ease of understanding for the average person.

The pandemic will continue to be a core issue for First Nations long after the disease has passed. We must not roll back the advances we have made in communications and contact with partners during this time. We must continue to work closely with governments to ensure that the infrastructure gap is closed, that racism in Healthcare ends, and that equitable outcomes are achieved for all First Nations peoples.

Elections (Federal, AFN National Chief)

I was pleased to host an AFN National Chief Candidates Virtual forum for the Alberta region on June 17, 2021. All National Chief Candidates participated and had the opportunity to communicate their platforms to the participating Alberta Region Chiefs.
I thank those candidates for their participation and again extend my congratulations to National Chief RoseAnne Archibald on her victory and being the First Isekwewak National Chief. We are starting to see more women in leadership roles, paving the way for future generations to feel confidence in taking their place and restoring gender balance at the leadership level.

During the Federal Election, we saw the shortest possible campaign period which resulted in a rush of work to make sure voters could be appropriately informed ahead of the September 20, 2021 election date. We shared the AFN Federal Elections document seeking commitments from the next federal government to act on priority commitments. We shared information on all party platforms and their commitments made to advance Indigenous issues and we shared information on Indigenous party Candidates. In Alberta, we saw Indigenous candidate Blake Desjarlais win his riding with the federal NDP. I congratulate Blake and his historic achievement as the first Two-Spirit member of parliament.

MMIWG

During the summer virtual meetings with the AFN Justice sector were held as well as numerous communications. We continue work on preparations on a regional report that captures regional specific actions needed to implement the recommendations of the National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This priority needs consult “action”—these recommendations must be actioned now.

Climate Change

I continue to be responsive to the needs and requests of the region regarding Climate Advocacy. In October I wrote to Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Prime Minister as requested by First Nations in the Oil Sands Development Region to request that their Minister include Tailings Ponds in their mandate letter, thereby ensuring that it is a core issue to be addressed by the crown. This is especially vital as industry in the areas pushes for effluent treat and release regulations which would allow them to release tailings into the Athabasca River, a main tributary serving both Northwestern Alberta First Nations but also significant areas of the Northwest Territories. I also encouraged in this letter that the crown work with Indigenous-owned businesses in development of the appropriate reclamation technologies.

Conclusion

While COVID-19 has caused changes in the ways we work together and reach out. We need to make sure that we continue to push forward on all issues that affect First Nations, especially now, while the world watches on and Indigenous issues have claimed a spot at the forefront of political consciousness and humanitarian efforts. Let us not squander this unique opportunity
and point in time to claim our rightful place as the original inhabitants of this land.

National Portfolio #1:

Charter Renewal

National Chief Archibald set one of her Election priorities as the separation of the Political and Administrative Organs of the AFN National Organization and the creation of ‘healthy boundaries’ between the two sides. The Charter Renewal Committee met in October to set a new co-chair and to discuss the establishment of a 2SLGBTQQIA+ council to form a part of the quad-council of AFN.

National Portfolio #2:

Treaties

I continue to work with the National Office to advocate for funding to support a dialogue process with the international Numbered Treaty First Nations on Implementation of Treaty, as Nations move towards asserting their sovereign jurisdiction and authority. There has always been a failure of the Crown to implement the true spirit and intent of the treaties, which has negatively contributed to the socio-economic gap between First Nations and the rest of Canada.

Since meeting with Treaties 1 – 11 leadership in 2019, I have taken their instruction and advocated for funding for a national treaty gathering. I had previously secured a federal commitment from Crown Indigenous Relations (CIRNAC) to fund a gathering in 2020, however, the host First Nation experienced a setback and these initial plans had to be cancelled.

National Portfolio #3:

Health

As the Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Health and the Co-chair for the National COVID-19 Task Force, I have played a key role in pandemic response at both Regional and National levels since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March of 2020. My background in nursing and national work in Health policy, as well as regional work as a Treaty technician and researcher has provided me with strength in this portfolio.

I continue to advocate that First Nations need equitable access and support in all services areas, but especially so in the Health sector where decades of racism and discrimination and the need for systemic change in policies and legislations are finally being addressed. The death of Joyce Echequan, who recorded her abusers, was the catalyst for change and the development of Joyce’s Principle. I mourned with others as the news broke recently from the Quebec coroner’s office that confirmed Joyce Echaquan died due to the systemic racism in the healthcare system.

I am a supporter of a holistic approach to health and the seven generations continuum of care. I will continue to advocate for support in mental health, addictions, family health, food and water security, and use my platform to work for the Treaty right to health for all First Nations. The success of the health file is critical to upholding quality of life changes for Indigenous Peoples all across the Country.
The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

The portfolios I hold will continue to be busy: the Charter will continue to be updated and modernized, the health file will continue to push for the end of racism in Canada’s healthcare system and equitable response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other diseases, and Treaties will be paramount as Nations continue the vital and important work towards true sovereignty.

The pandemic has changed the way in which we work. It has forced us to adapt, modernize, and improvise. We cannot let it slow down or pause the momentum we have on key important files. We need to utilize the opportunity we have in front of us to advance this important work. Justice and Policing, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Healthcare, Housing, Climate, Water, Infrastructure, Child Welfare, the Institutions known as Residential Schools...all this and more. We need to act now while we have this opportunity in front of us.

COVID-19 will continue to be a factor in our work for at least the next few years. Even as the disease itself fades into memory we will have to be focused on rebuilding together and continuing to push to eliminate all the outstanding socio-economic gaps that exist for our people.

Resolution 07/2021, *Creation and Implementation of First Nations Policing as an Essential Service*, mandates the AFN to continue working with Public Safety Canada on the co-development and implementation of a legislative framework that recognizes First Nations policing services as an essential service. The goal of the mandate is to end inequitable programming and funding under the First Nations Policing Program (FNPP), and we will be engaging First Nations in Alberta, providing legal and policy analysis to support their discussions.

Conclusion:

Our strength as a people comes from our culture, our beliefs and each other. We are stronger together. When we work together, united in direction and cause, there is much that we can achieve.

*Hai Hai Nanaskomin!*

“Regional Chief Poitras displays strong leadership in the health portfolio, especially with her strong background in health.”

– Chief Irvin Bull
Regional Chief Terry Teegee  
*British Columbia*

**Opening Greeting:**

*Chiefs, Hereditary Leaders, Knowledge Keepers and youth!*

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

**Introduction:**

This year has been one of the most difficult many of us have had to face. In May, the unmarked graves of 215 children were found at the former site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School, and hundreds more graves have been found across the country since. Our communities are still dealing with a pandemic that seems to never end.

With this persistent virus, getting vaccinated is essential to protect our elders and our children. This summer has been one of the worst on record for wildfires in BC, and we are working to recover. But we carry on. We persevere. This report provides an overview of the work of the BCAFN over these unprecedented times.

**Key Issues and Activities:**

Over the last year we have seen what hard work and perseverance can accomplish. We were essential to the campaign that passed the Act Respecting the United Nations of Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We pushed hard for vaccination among First Nations communities. Our work on climate change, economic development, and cannabis is delivering tools to BC First Nations to reclaim jurisdiction and prosperity.

We continue to demand funding for First Nations policing, and are working to stop the criminalization of the homeless. This year the DFO finally agreed to remove open-pen net fish farms from the Discovery Islands. And we continue to make space for women, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and youth through dialeguessions and programs.

On September 14, 15, & 16, 2021, the BCAFN held our 18th Annual General meeting virtually. Chiefs and leadership were provided updates on the many priority areas including children and families, fisheries and aquaculture, gaming and revenue sharing, education, COVID-19 pandemic, emergency management – wildfires, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples act implementation, climate change strategy and action plan, energy and mining, anti-racism, Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+, residential schools, cannabis and more. Federal Party leaders, Jagmeet Singh and Justin Trudeau addressed the BC Chiefs. Further, the Chiefs-in-Assembly passed 12 resolutions including:

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<td>20/2021</td>
<td>ADOPTION OF THE 2020-2021 AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS</td>
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CALL FOR INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION AND REPORT INTO INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION IN PROVINCIAL PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

SUPPORT FOR CORE AND CAPACITY FUNDING FOR FIRST NATIONS-MANDATED POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTES

SUPPORT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BC FIRST NATIONS REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT - ACTION PLAN AND ALIGNMENT OF LAWS

SUPPORT FOR SAIK’UZ BIODIVERSITY AND IMMEDIATE MEASURES

SUPPORTING ANTI-RACISM LEGISLATION AND FRAMEWORK

WOMEN AND 2SLGBTQQIA+ DIALOGUE SESSION RECOMMENDATIONS

“WHAT WE HEARD” REPORT ON MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+

DEMANDING JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE MISSING

I continue to advocate diligently to achieve First Nations economic self-determination. BCAFN has been able to secure funding in order for the economic development portfolio to build on its momentum. In the next year, leadership can look forward to a revamped tourism policy paper that reflects the realities of COVID-19, a tech paper that illuminates the opportunity for First Nations in the expanding tech sector and more BCAFN business forums, the next one being slated for November. The new funding will allow BCAFN to expand upon the methodology for a BC First Nations Wellness Index, one that incorporates cultural values in assessing the prosperity of a Nation. Additionally, further scoping and design for a BC Centre of Excellence for First Nations Economic Development will be able to be undertaken. The Champions Table will be able to continue to meet to find avenues for improved relationships and mutual benefits between industry and First Nations and for joint projects.

For years, First Nations business leaders have been asking for support to be able to revitalize and modernize inter-tribal trade routes. BCAFN has recently completed the
design work for a trade pilot project, one that will be executed in the next year, that fosters international, inter-tribal trade. Discussions have taken place with the US Consul General's office, with entities in New Zealand and Australia in order to build relationships with those who have similar aspirations on this front.

**National Portfolio #2:**

**Cannabis**

Efforts of the Chiefs Committee on Cannabis to develop a federal First Nations jurisdiction framework were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the committee is seeking meetings with relevant federal ministers, and will be considering legislative options shortly. The AFN is also seeking funding from ISC to support the concerted effort that will be required to develop and advance this strategy with the federal government.

The intention of the committee is to develop a work plan and strategy to guide meetings and advocacy with the federal government. We have also been leading in our efforts at our provincial level working group, which seeks to advance First Nations Jurisdiction when it comes to cannabis, in alignment with the UN Declaration. Taxation and revenue-sharing which would build the capacity to exercise jurisdiction. We will continue to have engagement sessions this fall and winter which will support the development of a BC First Nations Cannabis Strategy.

**National Portfolio #3:**

**Justice**

We have moved to create the AFN First Nations Policing Task Force which is intended to prioritize and advocate for increased community safety, reforming police services, First Nations jurisdiction, and alternative for police services and the legal system. I co-chair the Justice portfolio along with Quebec-Labrador Regional Chief Ghislain Picard and we are collectively advancing important issues including:


b. Working on a bi-lateral mechanism and legislative framework with the Assembly of First Nations regarding restorative justice;

c. Addressing minimum mandatory penalties, conditional sentencing to increase flexibility, and providing resources for community-based initiatives;

d. Expanding both the quality and quantity of Gladue reports;

e. Increasing funding to First Nations policing, including acknowledging it as an essential service, and not just a program;

f. Co-developing new legislation regarding First Nations policing and providing funding for this work to be undertaken

In May 2021 the BCAFN collaborated with the Assembly of First Nation’s Women’s Council, and regional partners to hold eight engagement sessions with survivors of violence and loved ones of those who have gone missing or been murdered, to gather
recommendations for the implementation of the Calls for Justice in the BC region.

At our recent BCAFN AGM the Chiefs-in-Assembly passed a resolution in support of the report and recommendations. What we have heard from this engagement process will inform BCAFN’s advocacy as we continue to seek strategic, coordinated, and well-resourced action for families and survivors in BC.

National Portfolio #4:
Fisheries

Fisheries remains of utmost importance to the BCAFN. I have been advocating alongside my Co-Chair Regional Chief Roger Augustine for significant resourcing set asides for First Nations governance and capacity building within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans’ Comprehensive Wild Salmon Strategy. First Nations have been successfully managing salmon populations since time immemorial and need to be able to exercise their inherent, constitutional and Supreme Court-affirmed rights in order for the Strategy to be effective. Upon writing this report, we have yet to learn who the new Federal Fisheries Minister will be. Once the Minister is identified we will seek an immediate meeting with the National Fisheries Commission to ensure priorities are advanced and implemented.

National Portfolio #5:
Human Resource and Development

In 2020-2021, the focus related to the First Nations labour market, and employment and skills development was to advocate for support to cope with the pandemic and to begin to assess resulting advocacy needs. The AFN met with technical-level networks to discuss program issues they were experiencing and how COVID-19 had impacted program delivery and services to First Nations citizens. The feedback was that serious hardships were witnessed because of the pandemic, this included impacts to training opportunities, workplace training, operational needs, and training programs and individual plans that had to be paused or became impossible to complete for public health reasons and economic closures. First Nations and their Labour Market Agreement Holders needed to pivot to develop new strategies and redirect resources to accommodate the safety needs.

“First Nations have revealed the truth that has been shared through our oral histories and which is now being presented as a continuously growing body of physical evidence.”
The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

After this most recent Federal Election, I am looking forward to advancing and advocating our positions, title, Rights and Treaty Rights. The past year has been one of many challenges but also one of great opportunities. Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is federal legislation that was tabled in the House of Commons in December 2020. This legislation will affirm that the UNDRIP applies to Canadian law. BCAFN will continue to focus on a number of priority areas, both provincially and nationally including Children and Families, Fisheries, Economic Development, Climate Change, Water, Shared Territories and overlaps, Emergency Management, Implementation of the UNDRIP Act, Cannabis, Justice and Policing, Language and Culture, Food Security, Women and 2SLGBQTIA+ Wellness and Leadership, Gaming, and COVID-19 Response.

I look forward to working with our team provincially as well as nationally with our new National Chief Roseanne Archibald and AFN Executive. Over the past year we have seen what hard work and perseverance can accomplish. We were essential to the campaign that passed the Act Respecting the UNDRIP. We pushed hard for vaccination among First Nations communities. Our work on climate change, economic development, and cannabis is delivering tools to BC First Nations to reclaim jurisdiction and prosperity. We continue to demand funding for First Nations policing and are working to stop the criminalization of the homeless. This year the DFO finally agreed to remove open-pen net fish farms from the Discovery Islands. And we continue to make space for women, 2SLGBTQQIA+, and youth through dialogue sessions.

Conclusion:

I am proud of the work done by the BC Assembly of First Nations board, staff, and all the participants in our forums. Please join me in celebrating our accomplishments and committing to continue the hard work ahead.

*Mussi Cho!*
Regional Chief Kluane Adamek, Aagé

Yukon

Opening Greeting:

Dā’nchn’ê! On behalf of the AFN Yukon Region, I’d like to acknowledge the Elders, Matriarchs, Veterans, Chiefs, Leaders and Youth from the Yukon who support the work of the Yukon Regional Office. I recognize the First Nations across the country who continue to lead with strength and grace during this challenging year.

Introduction:

Together, we’ve strengthened our collective voice and amplified our priorities at the regional and national levels, and I am humbled to be acclaimed as Regional Chief of the Assembly of First Nations – Yukon Region. This opportunity to support and amplify YFN priorities is truly an honour, and I am grateful for the continued support. The Yukon Region has led the country on COVID-19 recovery, MMIWG2S+, climate action, and more, and this work could not have been done without Yukon First Nations leadership. In the face of great hardship, Yukon First Nations celebrated many achievements this year, and I raise my hands to all who have shown up.

Key Issues and Activities:

The AFN Yukon Region remains committed to working to advance the priorities and objectives of the 14 Yukon First Nations at the national level while remaining in alignment with AFN Yukon Region’s Strategic Plan (‘A Yukon That Leads’). Over the past three years, the AFN Yukon Region has held a series of Chiefs Summits, including throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not yet completely past the pandemic, we have learned just how crucial these connections and consensus-building meetings are in meaningfully addressing many critical matters identified by Yukon First Nation Leadership. In 2021, we held Chiefs Summits in March, June, and August, with the Annual Summit to be held in November. With the initial unpredictability of COVID-19 behind us, we are re-shifting our focus to the key issues and shared priorities for action that communities have, including climate change, addressing the legacy of residential schools on communities and families, MMIWG2S+ peoples, mental health and wellness, and modern treaty implementation. The AFN Yukon Region has remained focused on taking action in response to climate change and drawing on the values-driven approach of Yukon First Nations in all climate-related work.

Following the launch of the first-ever Yukon First Nation Climate Action Fellowship in partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we have been proud to witness the great work being done by the young fellows who are guiding the future of climate action from a Yukon First Nations-led approach and

Canada is a fabric woven with many complex issues but also many opportunities, and several of those opportunities exist right here in the Yukon.
place of values. The collaboration and integration of traditional knowledge and ways of doing has been invaluable to this work, and the AFN Yukon Region is so proud to support the development of these youth leaders advancing climate solutions in the Yukon and beyond! The recent recognition of the first-ever National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was important for many reasons, and the AFN Yukon Region was pleased to be able to participate in several community events in honour of all those impacted by the legacy of residential schools. However, honouring the children and families goes far beyond just one day of the year. The Regional Office will continue to support all 14 Yukon First Nations and citizens on the healing path towards truth first, and then reconciliation.

**National Portfolios:**

**Environment and Climate Change**

As the AFN National Portfolio holder for Environment and Climate Change, I remain committed to promoting values-based, and rights-based climate action solutions in all places and spaces, including at the federal and territorial levels. Further, in my role on the Net Zero Advisory Board, I continue to press for the increased representation and prioritization of Indigenous perspectives and solutions to the climate crisis, including in the collection of research, report writing, and setting targets for emission reductions. As it has become safer to enjoy in-person visits and meetings with communities, it has been important for the AFN Yukon Region team to connect directly with First Nations climate leaders across the territory to hear about the different priorities, challenges and concerns that vary across the Yukon.

**Modern Treaties**

The implementation of modern treaties and self-government agreements is imperative and remains a priority at the regional and national level. The 2019 National Self-Government and Modern Treaties Forum was a great success, and we must continue to build upon this momentum as we look forward to bringing together those modern treaty and self-governing nations, and all those on the path of pursuing self-government. The Yukon Region has a great deal to offer First Nations across the country who are interested in developing their own treaties and agreements in innovative and rights-based ways.

**National Youth Council**

It has been an honour to witness and work with the AFN Youth Council representatives who bring their energy and insight to the AFN and Executive. The AFN NYC continues to provide important perspectives to the AFN's work at the national level, and I hold up all of the youth who have shown up and contributed to advancing youth interests and the important initiatives across the country. The AFN Yukon Region passed a Resolution declaring 2020-2021 to be the “Year of the Youth” as an opportunity to celebrate youth leadership and provide opportunities for young people to take on leadership roles where their voices can be heard. This program provides leadership development, facilitation training, program and project building that will all come together by way of an in-person youth gathering in 2022. Youth belong at the decision-making tables at the local, regional and national levels, and the AFN Yukon Region is proud to have created various avenues for youth to engage in our regional work, and to lift up their
voices and perspectives as emerging leaders within Yukon First Nations and communities. AFN Yukon has also continued to build a partnership with Bringing Youth Towards Equality (BYTE), a “by youth, for youth” organization in the Yukon, and we will continue to celebrate the successes of youth and search for ways to provide opportunities for further leadership.

**Executive and Management Committee**

In my work on both the AFN Executive and Management Committees, I work to ensure that my actions are always guided by integrity and my values, and that I adhere to the AFN Code of Conduct. I continue to support the AFN in formally changing the name of the ‘National Indian Brotherhood’ to truly reflect the people we serve, including Matriarchs, youth, women, and LGBTQIA2S+ peoples. Additionally, we look forward to the implementation of AFN AGA Resolution 13/2020 and look forward to the AFN becoming a leader in ending sexual orientation and gender-based violence and discrimination. This work is all part of advancing the priorities identified in the MMIWG2S+ National Inquiry Calls for Justice, as well as the Yukon’s MMIWG2S+ strategy, “Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice.” Over the past three years, I have continued to press that our Executive is held to the highest standards of equity, transparency, and fairness, and I will continue to do so. I look forward to continuing to work with the Regional Chiefs and recently-elected National Chief Archibald to this end.

**The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:**

I am incredibly proud of the work and leadership that Yukon First Nations have demonstrated for the past three years, especially during the challenges of the last year and a half and the sadness that has overshadowed the summer of 2021. As we look ahead, we cannot and will not forget the past—where we have been as the First Nations of this land impacts where we are today and where we will go in the future. Each day, we walk gently, keeping in mind the teachings of the ancestors, Elders, Matriarchs, residential “school” survivors, and those who have paved the way for our generation and those that are coming next. Our region leads the country in many ways because of the dedication of Chiefs and community leaders who show up for all Yukoners and Yukon First Nations. I thank them for guiding Yukon First Nations people and communities through the darkness and towards a pathway of healing, wellness, and justice. I look forward to continuing to connect with communities and gather together to discuss how we move forward together in a good way.

**Conclusion:**

Once again, I raise my hands to the Elders, Matriarchs, Chiefs and Youth, who have demonstrated incredible leadership and strength this year. The AFN Yukon Region remains committed to working with communities and leaders to lift up First Nations-led solutions and values to the many pressing challenges that we are facing.

*I look forward to another year of heart work and wish all a safe and healthy holiday season!*
Regional Chief Norman Yakeleya

Northwest Territories

On behalf of the Dene Nation and First Nations of the Northwest Territories, I’d like to extend my regards to my colleagues. As our organization continues the work to uphold and protect the rights and interests of the Dene Nation, know that your tireless efforts to advance our collective interests are recognized.

Introduction:

My priorities as Dene National Chief and NWT AFN Regional Chief have not changed since my 2018 election. My work continues to unite the Dene and enhance our working relationships with our territorial, federal and Indigenous government partners.

My platform, like many of yours, was tested over the last year due to the ongoing challenges related to COVID-19. Nonetheless, we continue to make significant progress on critical files. As I reflect on 2021, I am proud to say that our organization worked hard to provide support to our people throughout the pandemic while continuing to advance our initiatives and fulfill our promises to our people.

Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Despite the unprecedented challenges of 2021, I am pleased to share our progress and achievements over the past year. The Dene Nation continues to be a champion for First Nations in the North where we have made significant strides towards enhancing our collective wellbeing, despite the unforeseen challenges caused by COVID-19. We are continuing to work with our partners at all levels to realize our shared goals of equity, equality, and unity. However, as we reflect and recognize our accomplishments as a Nation, it’s equally important to look forward: more work is needed to achieve long-lasting change for the Dene.

The Dene Nation and the AFN Regional Office have undertaken significant projects over the last year reflected in the following report. Our work as portfolio holder for Indian Residential Schools and Indigenous Veterans rights has put reconciliation and engagement with the people at the forefront of our initiatives. We have answered the call of our Elders to bring unity to all our actions in our Dene way, focusing on collaboration and opportunities for growth, skill-sharing, and communications. The Dene and their governments believe in and practice consensus and collaboration. We recognize the status quo of the last 154 years is not working and that no one government can go it alone in creating the Canada we all want and need. In July of 2021, I had the opportunity to deliver a speech to the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on the recent Residential School discoveries as well as The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (formerly Bill C-15). I expressed to the committee that this work requires full participation from all parties, and though it will not happen overnight, it must start now.

As we continue to advance our work within our traditional territories for our lands and resources, it is equally important that we advance the work to pursue our traditional governance structures that have been dismantled by colonial objectives. We know
that the current system is ripe for change—this is a chance for Canada to right history’s wrongs. It is within this mindset and the platform I was elected on: that the Dene Nation began the process of rebuilding, re-imagining, and self-determining our traditional governance structures through the Constitutional Reform Commission (CRC). In 2018 the Dene nation embarked on an unprecedented campaign to review and reform the Dene Nation Constitution, with the creation of a Commission lead by Georges Erasmus and accompanied by various members from each region of the Denendeh. The draft constitution has been finalized this year and is ready for ratification. In collaboration with our leadership we look forward to updating and improving a constitution that has not been changed for 50 years.

As challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic continue, it allows us to continue to plan for our recovery. This crisis has highlighted the deep inequalities faced by our communities, and I am determined to strengthen our position by holding Ottawa accountable to their reconciliation promises and mandates. Regarding economic recovery, the federal government mandated departments to include input from local, provincial, territorial and Indigenous partners on its development. Hence why the Dene Nation, authored the position paper “Resetting the Sail.”

This past spring, several communities in Denendeh were badly impacted by flooding. Within hours, the team at the Dene Nation began to mobilize and coordinate efforts to assist the communities with their efforts.

Meeting twice a day for several weeks, the team assisted with areas such as regular transportation of cargo to the impacted communities and the acquisition of unique needs such as industrial size generators. We continue to remain committed to serving our communities and prioritizing the health, wellness, and safety of our people. We are very proud of the advocacy that led to Federal Funding for On-the-Land self-isolation of families for Indigenous Peoples. Our Elders’ wish was for people to return to the land as a measure of protection during COVID-19. Prime Minister Trudeau’s message of appreciation to the Dene Nation reflects the nation’s changing attitudes to respecting our way of life and holds promise for the future.

It is a great honour to serve the people of the Denendeh, and we thank all of the people involved with all aspects of the Dene Nation Projects and Files for all the hard work, dedication, and collaboration, especially during this very unique period.

**National Portfolio #1:**

**Indigenous Veterans Affairs**

We continue to uphold our commitment to support First Nations Veterans, families, and communities. In January of 2021, the FNVC met with the Federal Minister of Veterans Affairs Lawrence Macauley. The discussion included the development of a proposed Letter of Understanding which would establish four main pillars for discussion and to move forward with the overhauling of the outreach activities that Veterans Affairs Canada provides to First Nations Veterans.
These include priorities such as the establishment of a record of all First Nations soldiers, assessment of current outreach activities in place within Veterans Affairs Canada, and creation of a resource position within Veterans Affairs Canada, and Commemoration activities.

We continue to work diligently to honour our veterans through monuments and commemoration projects to recognize their sacrifices. On July 12, 2021, a ceremony was conducted in Yellowknife to install gravestones to commemorate the brave souls that gave their lives to protect our rights and freedoms. Additionally, we have secured a grant to install a monument to recognize the Dene contribution to the WW2 CANOL Pipeline Project. This project will document and communicate the true history of the Dene People in the building of the CANOL Pipeline and road during World War II and have commemorative monuments constructed and placed in Norman Wells and at the head of the CANOL Trail.

We look forward to continuing our work with Veterans Affairs Canada and other important agencies in our continued work to serve and support our First Nations Veterans who have sacrificed so much for us.

National Portfolio #2:

Knowledge Keepers Council

The AFN Knowledge Keepers Council continues to provide a thoughtful, and informed perspective while providing a stabilizing presence and contributing valuable historical information. For over 40 years, the AFN leadership has been able to rely upon the historical, spiritual, and cultural knowledge of the Council and its representatives.

This year has seen exceptional challenges with the findings at the former Residential Schools and the continued challenges associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Council continues to meet virtually, bi-annually at AFN Annual General Assembly and AFN Special Chiefs Assembly to discuss emerging issues and challenges facing the Council and to bring together new ideas.

In October 2020, and March 2021, the AFN developed and delivered to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) a draft “Indigenous Knowledge Systems Framework.” The document was presented to the First Nations Knowledge Keepers Council and was reviewed, discussed, and dissected for accuracy, protocol, and tradition. The Knowledge Keepers Council met jointly with officials at ECCC to share their viewpoints and insights on the draft ECCC framework and how to ensure successful implementation. The Council also addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and delivered a message urging people to ensure safety for all First Nations People. The Council advised people to social distance themselves should they return to their Ancestral lands.

Also, the Knowledge Keepers council stood with and continue to provide spiritual support to the Communities, Chiefs, and community members who were witness to the findings of the horrible genocide and legacy of the residential schools in Canada during this very difficult year.
National Portfolio #3:

Indian Institutions

On June 4th, 2020 the Dene Nation organized a march in Yellowknife to honour Residential School survivors and recognize those that did not come home. It is estimated over 4000 people took to the streets to support survivors and express the collective grief at the discovery of unmarked graves. On September 30th, 2021 the Dene Nation hosted a sacred fire from sunrise to sunset in collaboration with local community groups. We sponsored an NWT-wide call-in radio program which featured Elders statements which were shared during the radio program complimented by Indigenous music from across Canada.

The Dene National Office established a new department of Indian Residential Schools which includes the mandate of addressing Indian Residential Schools, Federal Indian Day Schools, Indian Residential School Settlements, Residential Schools and Day Schools in the Northwest Territories, the 60s Scoop, Indian Hospitals, and education on the history and legacy of residential schools and colonization.

We continue to maintain regular contact with all levels of government to advocate for those who were impacted by these institutions. We will continue to push for progress on Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and work towards achieving adequate compensation for those affected.

We have been in regular contact with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) to coordinate a Papal apology and ensure the CCCB is adhering to their stated commitments. There is much work to be done, and we are committed to continuing our work supporting, honouring, and recognizing those who suffered at the hands of these institutions.

National Portfolio #4:

COVID-19 Support & Mitigation

The Dene Nation remains committed to the protection, wellness, and safety of our people during the COVID-19 pandemic. In August of 2021, in response to a concerning increase in COVID-19 transmissions in the NWT, the Dene Nation established a Rapid Response Command Center to serve and support our people during this challenging time. We worked directly with communities and regions to provide essential supplies such as food, personal protective equipment, activity kits, and isolation support to those in need. We received a contribution agreement from Indigenous Services Canada in order to provide ongoing support related to food security, translation services, isolation support, and mental health and wellness.

On October 12th, the Dene Nation hosted an Indigenous Sharing Circle on COVID-19. This virtual sharing circle included epidemiologists, physicians, and clinical psychiatrists from across Canada coming together to share ideas and strategies to protect our holistic wellness during the ongoing pandemic.

We continue to prioritize the health and wellness of our people as we navigate through the pandemic. We are committed to our ongoing advocacy efforts and supports for affected communities.
Regional Chiefs’ Reports

National Portfolio #5:
Dene Nation Economic Secretariat

The Secretariat was started at the height of the pandemic. In early May 2020, the Dene Nation released Resetting the Sail: Dene Nation Post-Pandemic Economic Reset Plan. The plan focused on ensuring that interests of Indigenous communities are prioritized in Federal and Territorial economic planning and restructuring.

The Secretariat’s primary focus was on implementing Resetting the Sail and drafting a Denendeh Economic development strategy, creating a committee to oversee the work of the Secretariat, establishing a Dene Chapter for the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, and developing an engagement plan with Natural Resources Canada.

We continue to be actively engaged with development corporations and community businesses to ensure that we are addressing the rapidly emerging needs of businesses during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

We continue to engage with Territorial and Federal Ministers on a diverse range of policies impacting the Dene, advocating on issues of common concern. We look forward to creating new opportunities and solutions for the communities and people we serve.

The Path Ahead/Looking Forward:

Last year was a time of great trials and challenges, but it also presented us with new opportunities and showed us the best way to move forward. As the National Chief of the Dene Nation and Regional Chief of the NWT, I am proud of our peoples’ strength, empathy, resilience, but most of all, unity. In 2020, we stood closer together than ever before, and now we reap the rewards of our efforts. Today, we celebrate more community investments, strengthened government to government relationships, and enhanced governance. That being said, my work as a leader is still not done and I look forward to continuing along our journey and serving the people as the Regional Chief of the Northwest Territories.

Conclusion:

As we walk down the path of shared understanding and reconciliation, it’s important to remember that we can do great things together. I will not stop in my journey to unite the Dene and amplify our voices as well as build better relationships within the GNWT, Canada and each other.

Many heartbeats, one Dene Drum.

Mahsi Cho,
Regional Chief Norman Yakeleya,
Northwest Territories
National Chief of the Dene Nation

“Many heartbeats, one Dene drum.”
Knowledge Keepers Council

The Assembly of First Nations Knowledge Keepers Council has been a part of the AFN since the early days of the National Indian Brotherhood. To this day, the Council continues to provide a thoughtful perspective and valuable historical knowledge as our Elders, now being recognized as our Knowledge Keepers.

Within the AFN, the Knowledge Keepers offer a stabilizing and calming presence while offering spiritual and political guidance to Chiefs Committees, the AFN Executive, and to those that request it. Their work as a council is to ensure fair and equitable advocacy for First Nations.

The Knowledge Keepers Council has played a significant role in the current policies and dialogue with Canada. For over 40 years, they have ensured that the AFN maintains a positive and stable relationship with other national and international organizations. The Knowledge Keepers Council has had a long and honourable history of helping guide the direction of the AFN, especially during times of need. This has been particularly evident this year with the devastating Residential school findings and ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic.

This year, longstanding Council Chair Eldon Bernard will pass the leadership over to one of the current council members. The new council along with representatives from each of AFN’s 11 regions will carry on our long and rich history.

The Knowledge Keepers Council is comprised of Atlantic New Brunswick representative Eldon Bernard; British Columbia representative Dr. Gwendolyn Point, Skowkale First Nation; Yukon representative Charles Hume, Champagne and Aishihik First Nation; Northwest Territories representative John Bekale, Gameti; Alberta representative Bruce Starlight, Tsuu’tina Nation; Saskatchewan representative Joseph Quewenzance; Manitoba representative Ernie Daniels, Long Plain First Nation; Ontario representative Edmond Sackaney, Fort Albany First Nation; Quebec/Labrador representative William Sunday, Akwesasne Reserve; Nova Scotia/Newfoundland representative Phyllis Googoo, Waycobah First Nation.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

The Council continues to meet bi-annually at the virtual AFN Annual General Assembly and the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly to discuss the issues and challenges they face and to bring together new ideas. This year has seen exceptional and additional challenges with the findings at the former Residential Schools and the continuation of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Council has used Virtual tools to stay in contact and to provide spiritual guidance while continuing to follow pandemic health and safety measures.

The Council has always been essential to our day-to-day business; they keep our traditions, values, languages, and history at the fore. It is our duty to ensure success and the well-being of the youth, just as our ancestors did for us. The Council continues to engage and help other elders within their regions; they share information and ensure
everyone is kept up to date on issues impacting us all.

In October of 2020 and March of 2021, the AFN developed and delivered to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) a draft “Indigenous Knowledge Systems Framework.” The document was presented to the Knowledge Keepers Council and was reviewed, discussed, and dissected for accuracy, protocol, and tradition. The Knowledge Keepers Council met jointly with officials at ECCC to share their viewpoints and more precisely provide comment on the Knowledge Systems Framework being developed by ECCC.

In addition, the Council also advocated for the inclusion of the legacy of shattered treaties, promises, domination, racism, discrimination, and how Indigenous Knowledge will be used and protected in the future. They stressed the importance of safeguarding sacred knowledge, recognizing laws that have prevailed in our cultures for a long time should be recognized in an Indigenous Rights context.

At a second meeting, the Knowledge Keepers Council shared additional perspectives and insights on the draft ECCC framework and discussed next steps, such as how to ensure effective implementation of the framework and potential obstacles that may stand in the way of success.

The Knowledge Keepers released a statement and very direct assessment to Canada on the long-standing fishing disputes and harassment taking place in Atlantic Canada, “First Nations Fisherman’s rights are not being respected.”

The Council also addressed the COVID-19 pandemic and delivered a message urging people to ensure safety for all First Nations people. The Council advised that should people wish to return to their Ancestral lands they must socially distance themselves to keep everyone safe.

Additionally, the Knowledge Keepers Council stood with, and continue to provide spiritual support, to the Communities, Chiefs, and community members who were witness to the findings of the horrible genocide and legacy of the Residential Schools in Canada during this very difficult year.

**Next Steps – Moving Forward**

The Council will continue to provide assistance to the AFN Executive Committee, staff, AFN Chiefs Committees and continue to support the activities of the Quad Council. The Council continues to meet on protocol, roles, and responsibilities.

The AFN will continue to support the efforts of the Knowledge Keepers Council. It is essential that First Nations cultures and perspectives are reflected in the work conducted regionally and nationally, and to fully integrate the input and participation of the Council into all work.
AFN Women’s Council

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

The objective of the Women’s Council is to ensure that the concerns and perspectives of First Nations women inform the work of the AFN. Specifically, AFN Women’s Council Members fulfill their portfolio responsibilities and participate in a wide range of panels, presentations and forums that are relevant to First Nations women and the issues that affect them.

The AFN Women’s Council are currently engaged in various meetings and activities and are responsible for providing direction on important policy initiatives including: the development and implementation of a First Nations National Framework Action Plan, advocacy for redress for First Nations victims of forced/coerced sterilization and human trafficking, gender-based analysis (GBA+), and the economic empowerment and prosperity of First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

The AFN Executive Committee Portfolio holder for the AFN Women’s Council participated in the Federal, Provincial and Territorial meeting of Ministers of Status of Women held virtually on January 15, 2021. This is the fourth time that the Ministers of Status of Women have invited the AFN Women’s Council to participate in this meeting and it provided an excellent opportunity to discuss priority issues and opportunities to build partnerships. The agenda for the meeting included discussions of AFN priority areas such as the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Final Report’s Calls for Justice, the development of a National Action Plan to end violence against First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, as well as the role of Indigenous women in the post COVID-19 pandemic economic recovery.

The AFN Women’s Council also completed work on a draft report entitled First Nations Women’s Economic Security and Prosperity, which will be finalized in September 2021. The draft report examines the many barriers that First Nations women encounter in relation to obtaining higher levels of education, establishing themselves as successful entrepreneurs, and finding employment in management or executive positions. The 2021 Final Report will include a Comprehensive Strategic Framework for action to advance socio-economic issues and to increase the participation of First Nations women in First Nations governance across Canada.
First Nations MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan

Throughout the spring and summer of 2021, the AFN Women’s Council hosted a series of regional engagement sessions to provide input and update the First Nations Action Plan to End Violence Against First Nations Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People. This is a First Nations-led process that is designed using a families-first and trauma informed approach. The regional engagement resulted in the creation of regional reports or regional action plans that explore the unique circumstances, perspectives, regional-led work that is occurring, and priority areas. This work is mandated by Resolution 67/2019, Development and Implementation of a National Action Plan on Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA.

On June 3, 2021, the AFN released a First Nations National Framework Action Plan in response to the 231 Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The First Nations National Framework Action Plan is entitled "Breathing Life into the Calls to Justice" and was developed with direct input from First Nations survivors of gender-based violence and families of missing or murdered loved ones. The First Nations National Framework Action Plan contains action items of national scope devoted to supporting families and survivors, a framework for prevention, and a framework for healing. It also contains action items targeted to the four theme areas from the 231 Calls for Justice which are Culture as Safety, Health and Wellness, Human Security and Justice.

The First Nations National Framework Action Plan contributes to the federal government’s National Action Plan to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and will be a driving force in the implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice. The First Nations National Framework is just one part of the First Nations response to the National Inquiry’s 231 Calls for Justice with a specific national lens to the identified actions. The framework report also includes a regional priority and action plans developed based upon regional engagement.
Next Steps - Moving Forward

The AFN Women’s Council will continue to advocate for the establishment of a gender-balanced perspective that honours the rights and aspirations of First Nations women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Looking ahead to 2022, the AFN Women’s Council anticipates that much of its work will be devoted to advocating for the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and the First Nations National Framework Action Plan.
National Youth Council

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Youth Council (NYC) strives to influence the direction of the AFN through promoting equality. The NYC works with all levels of leadership to create opportunities for personal development and empowerment for future generations.

The NYC is a key organ of the AFN, as established in the AFN Charter, and represents First Nations youth across the country on issues that impact them daily. The NYC acts as an advisory body to the AFN Chiefs Committees, AFN Secretariat, and the AFN Executive Committee on various youth-related and non-youth-related issues.

NYC Membership and Representation

On June 15, 2021, the NYC unanimously passed a motion, that amends their Terms of Reference under the sections of Membership and Representation, to state the following:

The membership of the National Youth Council shall consist of two youth representatives of either the same or all genders/sexes, inclusive of 2SLGBTQQIA peoples, from each of the eleven regions of the Assembly of First Nations.

The National Youth Council shall elect two Chairpersons, who may represent the same or all genders/sexes, inclusive of 2SLGBTQQIA people. The two Co-Chairs will act as spokespersons on behalf of the National Youth Council as required.

AFN Resolution 4/2021: Composition Change

Prince Edward Island directs that Article 17 Composition (AFN Charter) and any other articles that refer to the number of Regional Chiefs, be amended to include Prince Edward Island as a region represented under the Charter. This amendment has enabled Prince Edward Island to appoint two youth representatives to the NYC, increasing the council to 22-members.

The Council elects two co-chairs and two executives each year at the Annual General Assembly (AGA). The NYC 2021-2022 Co-chairs are Rosalie Labillois-Wysote (Eel River Bar First Nation, New Brunswick) and Taylor Behn Tsakoza (Fort Nelson First Nation, British Columbia).

Key Activities and Accomplishments

The NYC members are involved in various AFN files. Each youth member holds a portfolio to stay up to date on their assigned sector’s work. NYC members continue to update the Council on their portfolios at both the Annual General and Special Chiefs Assemblies and through virtual meetings.

AFN Secretariat and Executive Committee

The NYC continues to participate in and advise various AFN Sector Chiefs Committees, working groups and forums coordinated by the AFN Secretariat. This year, the NYC prioritized building awareness and sharing information regarding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (previously Bill C-15) and COVID-19 vaccine uptake.
Strategic Plan 2020-2022

Every two years, the NYC updates their strategic plan which guides their focus and work. The strategic plan for 2020-2022 identifies the following priority areas:

- **Increase AFN-NYC Network**: The NYC seeks to increase its network through the expansion of geographical and demographic engagement and outreach to other national youth councils to amplify Indigenous youth voices.

- **Strengthen Online Presence**: The NYC plans to strengthen its reputation and visibility by strengthening NYC online presence to connect and inspire youth across Turtle Island and form partnerships with key-stakeholders.

- **Capacity & Team-Building**: The NYC prioritizes increasing capacity among council members through professional development activities to ensure they are effectively performing their job duties, alongside planning for the future of incoming NYC members.

- **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Education**: The NYC will focus on information sharing and provide Indigenous youth with the tools and resources necessary to increase their knowledge and engagement on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) and the Act.

- **Quarterly Meetings & Internal Priorities**: The NYC continues to establish collaborative mechanisms to address developing issues and priorities through meetings and communication; this includes updating the NYC Terms of Reference, electing new co-chairs, executive members annually and assigning portfolios.

NYC Support for Other Youth Initiatives

The NYC supports and promotes collaboration with various youth groups within and external to AFN. The NYC attended the AFN Carriers of Hope youth event on First Nations education in March 2021 and has since committed to amplifying the work and communications products on social media and sharing with local First Nations organizations. In addition, the NYC regularly shares opportunities, projects, and showcases regional initiatives during their quarterly meeting updates.
COVID-19

NYC members continue to undertake work in their communities to assist during the pandemic by communicating national updates to the youth in their regions and by promoting COVID-19 communication materials. The NYC participates in meetings and initiatives led by the COVID-19 Task Force.

At the national level, members of the NYC have participated in an AFN public service announcement video that focused on the important role that First Nations youth play in keeping communities safe from COVID-19. This video has since been shown at the AFN COVID-19 Forum in September 2021. This video was a way to share information and spread awareness on the importance of getting vaccinated.

External Engagements

Youth Vaccine Uptake: Members of the NYC remain engaged in an Indigenous Services Canada-led (First Nations and Inuit Health Branch) Sub-Working Group on Youth Vaccine Uptake. The working group is made up of First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners, as well as provinces and territories. The purpose of this group is to bring youth together to discuss outreach to other youth, barriers to vaccination and how to address them, as well as to hear from young people on the existing messaging surrounding vaccination.

Youth Advisory Circle: Members of the NYC continue to participate in an Indigenous Youth Advisory Circle at the Communications Branch at Justice Canada. Members of the NYC, along with other national youth councils, advise and help shape a public awareness campaign by collaborating in a promotional video to highlight youth perspectives on the UN Declaration.

The State of Youth Report: The NYC met virtually with Heritage Canada to discuss the impacts, challenges and barriers related to COVID-19 and expressed how they have adapted and want to move forward post-pandemic. The NYC expanded on the lack of access to leadership opportunities in their community and the importance of being engaged by leadership at the local, band-level and at the federal level.

On August 11, 2021, the first ever State of Youth Report was released and announced by the Minister of Diversity, Inclusion and Youth, Bardish Chagger. Leading up to the release, members of the NYC participated in a 13-member youth advisory group to represent the NYC’s voice and ensure First Nations youth perspectives were included in the final national report.

Truth and Reconciliation Week: On October 1, 2021, members of the NYC delivered a workshop on youth advocacy and empowerment at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation’s ‘Truth and Reconciliation Week’ virtual event. The session discussed various youth perspectives on integrating advocacy and culture and describing the complexities of reconciliation.
**National Chief: Healing Path Forward**

The NYC and the AFN National Chief’s Office have begun discussions on how to best promote the vision and work of the NYC through a national project. The NYC has identified several priorities in their 2020-2022 Strategic Plan and look forward to engaging further with the National Chief on areas such as, youth empowerment, capacity building, and leadership development.

**Next Steps – Moving Forward**

The NYC, in the 2021-2022 year, will continue to:

- Collaborate with the AFN Knowledge Keepers Council, Women’s Council, and Veterans Council;
- Advance priorities listed in the 2021-2022 AFN-NYC Strategic Plan;
- Work to maintain a visible and substantial presence within the activities, meetings, and conferences of the AFN Secretariat and its various AFN committees and working groups, including being responsible for an AFN Secretariat file;
- Support the *AFN Raised Voices: Carriers of Hope* youth advocacy group in amplifying their *Calls to Action on First Nations Education*;
- Engage and report back to the NYC on involvement in internal and external committees and working groups; and
- Collaborate with National Chief’s office on amplifying youth priorities.
First Nations Veterans Council

First Nations Veterans Council (FNVC)

First Nations Veterans have a long and storied history having been part of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) since its beginnings as the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) and through to the eventual transition to the AFN as we know it today. They helped guide and shape the development of the NIB/AFN beginning with the formation of the League of Indian Nations. The pivotal role that they have played within the structure of the AFN was deserving of formal recognition. At the 2020 Annual General Assembly, a resolution was adopted by the Chiefs-in-Assembly that formally recognized the First Nations Veterans as an official member of the AFN Quad Council. The Quad Council meets quarterly to share common approaches and strategies to best support their individual council objectives.

The First Nations Veterans Council (FNVC) strives to assist and provide help to First Nations Veterans, families, and communities. The FNVC is comprised of First Nations Veterans, some of whom have fought in international wars and conflicts, including during peacetime through peacekeeping missions. The intentions of the FNVC are to ensure that they can advocate for Veterans who may have suffered from the trauma of service or war and for the families who are struggling with the resulting intergenerational impacts of such hardship. It is the ultimate hope of the FNVC to develop policy which will have a positive impact on Veterans, families and communities at large.

The FNVC Council is led by Veterans and is supported by the AFN Executive Committee by portfolio holder, Northwest Territories Regional Chief Norman Yakeleya. The appointments to the FNVC committee are done through a regional nomination process. Each region is represented by a nominated Veteran that participates in the work of the council to ensure the regional needs are recognized and addressed.

First Nations Veterans Council members by Region

The FNVC members include AFN portfolio holder, Regional Chief Norman Yakeleya; Ontario representative, Veteran Tom Bressette; Urban representative, Veteran James Eaglet; Yukon representative, Northern Ranger Charles Hume; Manitoba representative, Veteran-Chief Christian Sinclair; Saskatchewan representative, Veteran Emile Highway; Alberta representative, Veteran Henry Raine; New Brunswick/PEI representative, Veteran Atlantic representatives Eldon Bernard & Chief Terry Richardson; Northwest Territories representative, Veteran Tim O’Loan; and AFN Veterans’ technician, Larry Whiteduck.

The National Veterans Spokesman for the FNVC council is Veteran and former Chief Percy Joe. The Quebec and Nova Scotia regional positions are currently vacant.

Strategic activities and action

In January of 2021, the FNVC met with the Federal Ministers of Veterans Affairs Lawrence Macauley. During this virtual
meeting the two organizations discussed how best to work together towards the enhancement of services to First Nations Veterans, families, and communities. The discussion included the development of a proposed Letter of Understanding which would establish four main pillars for discussion and to move forward with overhauling the outreach activities that Veterans Affairs Canada provides to First Nations Veterans.

The four pillars require dialogue, research, and agreement on enhanced service delivery to Veterans. They are:

1) **The establishment of a record of all First Nations soldiers** and veterans who have fought in all major world conflicts including, World War I, II, Korea, recent day conflicts in Afghanistan, Canada’s U.N. Peace-peace keeping efforts worldwide, including undocumented First Nations veterans who fought in pre- and post-confederation conflicts on behalf of the Dominion of Canada.

2) **Assessment of current outreach activities in place within Veterans Affairs Canada** and the effectiveness of these efforts. Are they reaching the intended Veterans recipients, families, and First Nations Communities? Including and understanding the unique needs of post-service trauma. Ensuring FNVC and families are made aware of the current health, housing, and memorial services potentially accessible and available.

3) **Creation of a resource position within Veterans Affairs Canada** to act as a liaison and Veteran’s resource person that will facilitate and help address the needs, concerns of First Nations soldiers, past and present. A resource person designated to work within the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist First Nations Veterans, families, and First Nations communities.

4) **Commemoration activities** ensuring First Nations soldiers will be included in commemoration activities internationally. The First Nations Veterans would propose to undertake a unique pilgrimage and ceremony that would honour fallen soldiers on foreign battlefields.

**Strategic Meetings**

In early 2021, the FNVC met with the Minister of Veterans Affairs to address the common concerns of the First Nations Veterans Council members and allied organizations. The development of a proposed Letter of Understanding (LOU) between Veterans Affairs Canada and the First Nations Veterans Council was conceptualized at this meeting.

The recent Federal election has slightly delayed the process; however it is anticipated that with the naming of the new cabinet we will see the completion of the Letter of Understanding in early 2022.

To ensure the safety and health of the Council during the pandemic, the FNVC hosted 7 conference calls in place of in-person meetings.

Further work of the FNVC includes the planning, identifying and coordinating of First Nations Veterans’ participation in
international ceremonies and the hosting of working sessions to plan key priorities and activities.

Proposed meetings for 2022 will include exploring working relationships with National Veterans Ombudsmen, Dominion Command – The Legion group, Veterans Emergency Transition Services, and Veterans Affairs Canada.

**Advancing Forward**

The AFN will continue to support the efforts of the First Nations Veterans Council. Ensuring the input and participation of the FNVC in assemblies, including the Annual General Assembly and Special Chief Assemblies.

The FNVC will continue to work and provide guidance to the AFN Executive Committee and AFN staff. They will continue to partner with the Knowledge Keepers, Women’s, and Youth Councils and will maintain collaboration efforts as a full Quad Council, focusing on the advancement of their collective strategic plans.

In addition, the proposed Letter of Understanding with Veterans Affairs Canada will allow for the serious advancement of services-delivery through the current outreach initiatives. The FNVC will make every effort to help develop and advocate for the betterment of services being offered to First Nations Veterans, families, and communities.
CEO Report
I think it’s safe to say that we’re all a bit surprised to be hosting our third virtual assembly. We had hoped to be able to come together in person, but while there have been many exciting advancements towards ending the pandemic, COVID-19 is still very much with us and remains a threat to the safe return of our regular gatherings. In spite of this, I am immensely grateful to all of you for your patience, resilience, and dedication throughout this very long haul and am hopeful that if we continue to get vaccinated and follow public safety measures, we will see this difficult time through to the end.

First Nations have truly risen to the challenges of the past 21 months. Thanks to your cooperation and leadership, our virtual assemblies, policy forums, and meetings have been successful and have allowed us to continue to work towards bettering the lives of First Nations people despite the barriers and restrictions that have come along with the pandemic. I am so grateful for each and every one of you.

In my two previous reports, I detailed the work of the AFN COVID-19 National Task Force. This important work continues, and I thank all of those involved for their tremendous support. As we look toward post-pandemic recovery, the Task Force is now focusing more and more on the economic and health supports needed to ensure that First Nations emerge from this crisis strong and healthy.

We saw no shortage of achievements this year. Firstly, I look to the election of our new National Chief, RoseAnne Archibald, the first woman ever to hold the position. With careful planning and months of hard work, the 2021 Annual General Assembly was able to move forward albeit virtually. I want to thank everyone involved throughout the process from those participating in campaigns to the voters to the dedicated folks in virtual attendance. We couldn’t have done it without you.

This fall, we saw the re-election of another minority Liberal Government of Canada following a snap campaigning period. I hope that our platform, The Healing Path Forward, our analysis of federal party platforms and of ridings where our influence could be felt were useful to you during that campaign and allowed you to make a better informed vote.

Things have been busy as ever at the AFN. This past year, the operational restructuring of the AFN Secretariat has continued to take shape and provide benefits at all levels. The new structure has revealed more holistic and deeper insights into how we can better serve First Nations. Through increased flexibility and stronger coordination, reorganizing has allowed the AFN Secretariat to work more efficiently and effectively to better meet the mandates you have provided through resolutions.

This December’s Special Chiefs Assembly (SCA) builds on the lessons we learned from our December 2020 and July 2021 meetings. I am deeply thankful for all those who are working so diligently behind the scenes and on your screens. It is my hope that this virtual SCA creates a sense of belonging and community for attending First Nations
leaders, members, and guests alike. Together, we will continue the advocacy efforts of the AFN to ensure that First Nations’ interests, goals, and rights are upheld and respected.

As always, it is an honour to serve the Chiefs and First Nations. With your continued commitment, cooperation, and leadership, the AFN will maintain and progress on our mandates to improve the lives of all First Nations people. My time as CEO has been such an enriching and exciting experience and I am truly honoured to work for such an admirable and dedicated organization.

Though the pandemic has continued to impact our daily lives, our commitment to work together and ensure that we emerge stronger has not diminished. 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 SCA and in-person when it is safe for our Nations to gather once more.

Wela’liiq, Miigwetch, Nia:wen, Mahsi’Cho, Hiy Hiy, Guneshcheesh, Howa’a, Kinanaskomitin,

Janice Ciavaglia
Chief Executive Officer