



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

Newsletter

BC Assembly of First Nations

Winter 2023

Message from Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Chiefs, Leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, Youths, and community members,



BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee addresses the Chiefs-in-Assembly at the AFN's Special Chiefs Assembly held in Ottawa December 2022.

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As we look forward to spring and summer, and look back on an extremely productive year for our Nations, I want to thank the Chiefs, leaders, and staff who have directed and achieved the important work the BCAFN has accomplished.

We as First Nations continue to be disproportionately targeted by police and the courts, but I remain cautiously optimistic that systems are beginning to change. In my own home of Prince George, in Lheidli T'enneh territory, there will finally be an investigation into RCMP misconduct going back almost 20 years. At a broader level, the BCAFN has been acting on the direction of Chiefs to draft legislative recommendations to continue our ongoing work in decolonizing the so-called justice system. We are excited to be unveiling this approach at the Special Chiefs Assembly, and to implement it this year.

During a time of rising costs, the BCAFN recognizes that economic independence is essential for our Nations. Our economic development team is currently starting up the Economic Development Centre of Excellence, with a number of positions open. The Centre of Excellence will focus on best practices for First Nations to follow in taking central roles in sustainable growth. They are also highlighting the important role

that First Nations play in the BC economy through releasing an economic participation report this spring.

In fisheries, coastal communities continue to work to assert their rights in the face of a consistently inept and often racist Department of Fisheries and Oceans. However, we see some hope in the production of a Senate Report that at least gives guidance to DFO in changing their colonial approach – and we can now track their progress against it. And even as we continue to push against the DFO here at home, there is increasing recognition at the international level that Indigenous peoples are key to protecting ecosystems. I had the opportunity to highlight the importance of First Nations jurisdiction in marine protection and conservation at the Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress held in Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh territory.

We are finally seeing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* implemented at both the Provincial and Federal levels. While the BCAFN is collaborating with our partners at the First Nations Leadership Council on guidance for the federal implementation plan, the national AFN is also conducting engagement with BC First Nations. At the provincial level, the First Nations Leadership Council continues to push for true and meaningful implementation of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act regarding legislation and regulation.

As you will see in this newsletter, the BCAFN continues to implement resolutions to ensure the Calls to Justice on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and two-spirited + are implemented, to develop cannabis jurisdiction, advancing the rights of our 2SLGBTQQIA+ community, protection of wildlife, access to clean water, children and families, addressing the climate emergency, and addressing the ongoing impacts of residential schools. I thank all Chiefs who have taken the time to meet at this Special Chiefs Assembly and look forward to continuing to advance our rights and interests. Mussi Cho !

Regional Chief Terry Teegee addresses the BC Natural Resources Forum on January 18, 2023.



Economic Development

The BCAFN is monitoring key concerns for First Nations in BC, including but not limited to inflation, cost of living increases, equitable access to capital, and shifting economic opportunities. Under the direction of Regional Chief Terry Teegee, the economic development portfolio at the BCAFN is experiencing growth across several key areas. The BCAFN economic development staff continues to provide representation and advocacy on procurement, food security, the new fiscal framework, fisheries, gaming, natural resources, international trade, transportation, and Cannabis. This work continues to provide value in shaping funding programs, legislation, policy, and frameworks that support First Nations in BC in line with the mandates the Chiefs-in-Assembly provide.

BCAFN hosted a hybrid Economic Development Forum in Richmond, BC on January 31st and February 1st. It was well attended, with over 150 participants online and in-person. Much thanks to our excellent presenters, participants and facilitators for your presence. The following forum in 2023 is scheduled for October 2023. The Centre of Excellence (CoE) is coming at a vital time for First Nations, the demands on time and resources from

First Nations for participation across commerce, industry, and the government is increasing. This new entity will be a non-partisan body supporting First Nations' economic development in BC.

The economic participation report commissioned by the BCAFN will be publicly available in the coming months. This report, completed by MNP is intended to provide a baseline analysis of First Nations' economic contributions to the BC economy and identify areas of over and under-representation. This work complements the work of Mark Podlasly, who is leading the non-GDP wellness indicators study. The second chapter of the non-GDP wellness indicators will be available in the first quarter of 2023. The *First Nations Trade Background*, which is being completed in collaboration with the Indigenomics Institute, and the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation will also be available in the first quarter of 2023.

BCAFN staff and board members were invited to participate in two trade missions to Japan. In November of 2022, BCAFN, The First Nations Summit, and the First Nations Forestry Council accompanied Chief Jerry Jack, BCAFN board



Minister Jagrup Brar, State for Trade, BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Minister Brenda Bailey, Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation, and Robert Phillips, First Nations Summit at the 21st Annual BC Natural Resources Forum, January 16 - 18, 2023.

member, on the provincial trade mission with Minister Conroy, previously the Minister of Forests, and the current Minister of Finance. In January the BCAFN accompanied Deputy Chief Harlan Schilling and Minister Wilkinson of Natural Resources Canada on a mission that focused on critical minerals and energy. The value of exports to Japan from Canada increased over 44 % over the last 3 years from \$12.5 billion to a projected \$18 billion this fiscal year.

The Centre of Excellence, funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Diversification, and Innovation for \$1.2 million this year, is in the start-up phase. Currently, there is active recruitment for all roles and preparation work in advance of staffing. We look forward to the opportunities created by the CoE and will be seeking active engagement in the second quarter of 2023.

BCAFN Economic Development Forum

Richmond/Westin Wall Centre - January 31 & February 1, 2023





Women's Representative Update

Louisa Housty Jones
Heiltsuk Nation

Greetings! As BCAFN Women's Representative I continue to bring the perspectives of First Nations women in BC to the dialogue at the AFN Women's Council and advocate with provincial and federal officials regarding the urgent need to prevent and respond properly to violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. In addition to my role with BCAFN I also serve as a Councillor for the Heiltsuk Nation.

On February 14th, I attended the 32nd Memorial March to honor the Indigenous women who have lost their lives to violence and lift up their families. The AFN National MMIWG2S+ Gathering also took place from February 15th to the 16th in Vancouver. This gathering provided space to hear directly from families and survivors, share about BCAFN's work to advance priorities in alignment with the Calls for Justice, and make many valuable connections. It is clear that there is not enough support for families and not enough progress on the Calls for Justice. We need increased resources for advocates and grassroots people who respond to violence, and protect and search for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We also need to ensure accountability and true partnership across all levels of government.

Other areas of work include developing a toolkit to support First Nations approaches to Gender Based Analysis +, planning for the 2023 Dialogue Sessions: Our Power and Place in Action, and preparing for engagement on the draft Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Strategic Action Plan. More details on these initiatives can be found in the Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Initiatives section of this newsletter. Thank you for your continued support!



2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative Update

Orene Askew
Squamish Nation

Hello! I am a proud Afro-Indigenous and 2-Spirit person, who also brings my experiences a previous Councillor for the Squamish Nation and current role as a DJ and motivational speaker. As the BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative I continue to advocate for the creation of safe spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples in First Nation communities. I am passionate about bringing stories of Indigenous joy and excellence to the forefront, and was able to attend the AFN National MMIWG2S+ Gathering to listen to family members and survivors, and share about some of BCAFN's work. This was an impactful experience. I look forward to continuing to bring the perspective of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people forward in regional work and at the AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council, which is still in its formative phase. One initiative I will be working on is to determine a 2SLGBTQQIA+ flag for future BCAFN Chiefs assemblies. Thank you for your support and I look forward to serving in this role and providing updates on my activities moving forward.

Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Initiatives

MMIWG2S+

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Louisa Housty-Jones, and BCAFN staff attended the 32nd Memorial March to honor the Indigenous women who have lost their lives to violence and lift up their families. BCAFN representatives and staff also attended the AFN National MMIWG2S+ Gathering on February 15-16, which brought families and survivors together from across the country to share experiences and priorities for ending and responding to violence. In particular, recommendations were sought regarding an oversight entity for the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice. Regional Chief Terry Teegee helped open the gathering; acknowledging those from his family and community that have been killed or gone missing, and acknowledge the loss and strength of those in attendance. At this gathering there were also valuable regional discussions. Louisa Housty-Jones and Orene Askew, BCAFN Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ representatives provided an update on how BCAFN's advocacy on issues such as policing and justice aligns with priorities we heard in 2021 engagement on the development of the National Action Plan on MMIWG2S+. Leslie Varley, Executive Director of the BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres (BCAAFC) also

provided an update on projects supported through the BC Path Forward Community Fund, which is BC's key response to the Calls for Justice thus far. BCAAFC is administering this fund.

BCAFN continues to connect regularly with provincial and federal officials who are tasked with implementing and coordinating their government's response to the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice. We have also advanced the need for the Calls for Justice to be actioned within broader Gender-Based Violence strategies that are in progress and to ensure coordination with the National Action Plan on MMIWG2S+. In all this work BCAFN has been clear that First Nations must be engaged directly as partners, and that families and survivors must lead and be at the centre of this work.

On January 10 CIRNAC held a Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous roundtable on MMIWG2S+. The intention of the roundtable was to encourage greater coordination among governments and political leadership. Due to lack of commitments to implementation and co-development of the agenda the AFN Women's Council declined to participate. BCAFN staff participated as observers and debriefed with provincial and federal officials on how to improve future roundtables.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee (BCAFN), Grand Chief Stewart Phillip (UBCIC), and Reuben George (Tseil Waututh Nation) at the 32nd Annual Women's Memorial March in Vancouver.

Our Power and Place in Action: BCAFN Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Session

Wednesday, May 24th, 2023

8:00 AM - 4:45 PM

House of Ancestors,
Prince George, BC



We have also engaged the federal government on the need for an oversight body for the implementation of the MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan, a Human Rights Tribunal and Ombudsperson, and support for appropriate implementation planning and coordination. On January 10, 2023, Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, announced the appointment of Jennifer Moore Rattray as the Ministerial Special Representative who will provide advice and recommendations, through engagement with survivors, families, partners and organizations, in support of Call for Justice 1.7 to create an Indigenous and Human Rights Ombudsperson.

Furthermore, Marc Miller announced that Innovation 7, an Indigenous organization, has been chosen to develop recommendations for an oversight mechanism to enhance accountability and progress in ending violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. This represents a tangible step in responding to the calls from survivors and families for greater monitoring and accountability, the National Inquiry's Call for Justice 1.10 as well as one of the short-term priorities of the National Action Plan.

First Nations Approaches to Gender Based Analysis +

BCAFN is developing a toolkit that will include tools and resources for First Nations to help ensure staff and decision-makers consider and include the perspectives, experiences, priorities, needs, and strengths of all people who will be impacted by work that is taking place – including women, girls, and gender diverse people; and to do this in a way that is founded upon our diverse cultures. Several workshops will be facilitated by experts Chastity Davis-Alphonse and Natalie Clark in April and May 2023 to assist in developing the toolkit and BCAFN will be seeking out expressions of interest from First Nations who may be interested in piloting this toolkit shortly.

Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Sessions and Strategic Action Plan

The BCAFN 2023 Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Session: Our Power and Place in Action will be held on May 24 in Prince George. BCAFN continues to work on the development of a Strategic Action Plan to Implement the Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Declaration, with the next phase of engagement on early drafts anticipated in May 2023.



Youth Representative Update

Taylor Behn-Tsakoza
Fort Nelson First Nation

In November 2023, Taylor joined the BC First Nations delegation to COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Taylor was able to participate in several panel discussions throughout the events and advocate for Indigenous youth voices to be heard in the wake of the climate crisis. Taylor also hosted a panel at the First Nations Leadership Gathering in late November alongside youth from the Qwelminte Secwepemc Knowledge Builders Program.

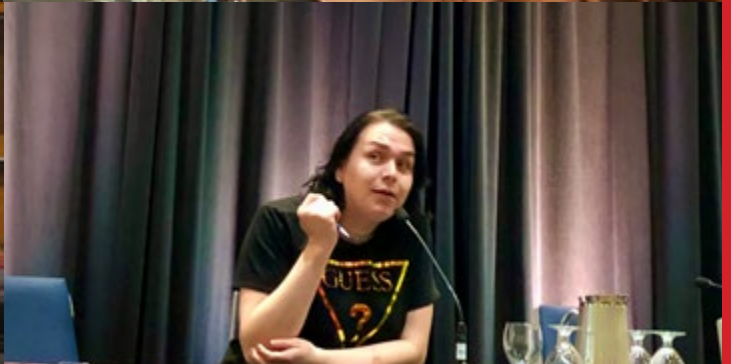
Over the winter, Taylor worked with BCAFN staff to plan, coordinate, and host the annual BCAFN Youth Forum in Richmond, BC, which took

place on February 2nd, 2023. BCAFN received unprecedented interest from youth seeking to attend the forum. Over 70 youth joined the event from across BC aged 18-29. The youth spent the morning learning about BCAFN, the role of the BCAFN Youth Representatives. Taylor invited the Qwelminte Secwepemc Knowledge Builders Program to return for an additional panel featuring youth who completed the program and their reflections on the impact of capacity-building land-based programs geared towards Indigenous youth and “Walking on Two Legs” approaches. For more information on this program go [here](#). The panel was followed by Keynote Speaker, Chelazon Leroux - a two-Spirit Dene First Nations youth and Multidisciplinary Artist. Chelazon’s artistic pursuits include drag, stand-up comedy, and social media content creation. Chelazon uses her Indigenous identity— as a status member of Buffalo River Dene Nation (Treaty 10) and family ties to Fond Du Lac First Nation (Treaty 8) —as the foundation for her creative works. Chelazon is best known for her Auntie persona and TikTok posts. Chelazon uses her social media influence to educate and entertain audiences worldwide. Chelazon provided a mixture of comedy, heartfelt advice, and stories of lived experiences for youth emerging into their identities. Reflecting on the Youth Forum, Taylor noted how uplifting and inspiring it is to be surrounded by a room full of youth leaders.

Taylor currently sits on the AFN NYC as part of the Executive leadership. Taylor also participates in the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective (UAYC), which promotes relationship-building between the Province of BC and Indigenous youth in BC. Taylor continues to work with the BC Coalition to end Youth Homelessness to advocate for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act alignment in BC’s mandates and legislation regarding youth in care and working with the coalition’s working group to develop a Youth Homelessness Action Plan as mandated by BCAFN [Resolution 17/2020](#).

BCAFN Youth Forum

Richmond/Westin Wall Centre - February 2, 2023



Climate Emergency

The BCAFN closed out 2022 participating in the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Both meetings saw progress and backtracking on the work to address the dual climate change and biodiversity crises that is taking us toward a dire and uncertain future. Regional Chief Terry Teegee and BCAFN Board Member Chief Harvey McLeod attended COP27 and BCAFN Board Member Chief Jerry Jack joined the AFN delegation at COP15. At those events, BCAFN leadership advocated for First Nations interests, priorities and rights as mandated by BCAFN Chiefs in Assembly (Resolution 05/2021 and Resolution 04/2020).

At COP27, it was the first time their summary report mentioned food, rivers, nature-based solutions, tipping points and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. However, COP27

made little to no progress on the bold commitments needed to decrease global emissions. COP15 sealed a landmark agreement to halt and reverse biodiversity loss through the headline target of protecting at least 30% of the planet by 2030, which includes an explicit recognition of indigenous land rights. Learn more about the 23 targets and four goals of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#). Read the [AFN Bulletin on COP15](#).

2023 arrived with exciting opportunities to support First Nations community-based climate action. The Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5) took place on the unceded territories of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in February. IMPAC5 gathered Indigenous peoples, governments, scientists and other actors from across

the globe interested in the protection of threatened oceans and sea life. BCAFN staff participated in the [Indigenous Caucus](#) where participants drafted some [recommendations](#) to IMPAC5. Regional Chief Terry Teegee presented and spoke to international leaders at the IMPAC5 and the Leadership Forum on First Nations-led conservation.

In 2023, as part of our implementation work for the [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) (FN Climate Strategy), BCAFN is planning to prepare a report with gaps and opportunities that restrict and assist First Nations in BC to access equitable, safe, reliable, and affordable low-carbon and active transportation and provide recommendations for legislation, policy, and program reform. This work will include the development of a First Nations Low-carbon Transportation Planning Guide to support the developing of transportation plans at the community level. BCAFN will also facilitate

the co-development of a First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda to inform the Indigenous Leadership Agenda, which is a commitment from the Government of Canada to promote the exercise of First Nations' self-determination and inherent rights in the climate space, while supporting the development of a collaboration framework with the Federal Crown grounded in respect.

BCAFN and the First Nations Leadership Council will also conduct a province-wide climate capacity assessment to assess disparities between First Nation communities in their capacity to respond to the climate crisis, identify areas for collaboration and provide recommendations to address capacity challenges.

BCAFN acknowledges the hard work of coastal First Nations to protect their traditional territories and oceans. We acknowledge the 15 First Nations endorsement of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Action Plan Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) and congratulate Mamalilikulla First Nation for establishing the first protected marine refuge to be recognized through the Northern Shelf Bioregion MPA Network planning process. BCAFN continues to support First Nations to achieve their goals to conserve, protect and restore their lands and water as a mean to sustain our culture, values and connections with Mother Earth and fight against climate change and biodiversity loss.



Elena Sterritt, graphic illustrator, presenting her work at the BCAFN Water Engagement Session on February 27, 2023.

Emergency Management

At the provincial level, the BCAFN has been working with the UBCIC and FN Summit, to ensure the Emergency Program Act (EPA) is compliant with DRIPA and inherent and treaty rights. Minister Bowinn Ma is the lead for the new provincial Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and responsible for the EPA, and continues support to improve First Nations jurisdiction in emergency management.

The BCAFN (along with the UBCIC and FNS) has heard from First Nations they haven't been properly engaged or consulted on the provincial EPA. We have raised this issue with Minister Ma and provincial officials. Compliance and alignment with DRIPA are not something to pick and choose from - First Nations jurisdiction for emergency management is an inherent and treaty right. The BCAFN will continue to support legislative reform that includes First Nations governments as equal in decision-making and authorities.

Over the next year the BCAFN will continue to seek changes in emergency management supports and capacity building for First Nations governments and institutions. The First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) has been an important organization providing technical supports to First Nations governments and citizens; the BCAFN looks forward to their work in examining their governance to improve accountability to

First Nations governments, and to evolve their capacities to address the climate crisis we are all facing. Canada has committed to the Sendai Framework, which outlines 7 global targets to be achieved by 2030 including: (substantial reductions targets) a. reduce global disaster mortality, b. reduce number of affected people globally, c. reduce direct economic loss in relation to GDP, d. reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and distribution of basic services, (substantial increases targets) e. increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies, f. substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries, g. increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems. Along with the seven (7) global targets, the Sendai Framework includes 38 global indicators to measure progress made by all countries. The BCAFN (UBCIC and FNS) have taken the position that the Sendai Framework must be included in Crown led emergency management efforts in BC, and nationally. Over the 2023 period, the BCAFN (UBCIC and FNS) have tasked FNESS to assist with developing a First Nations Regional action plan for emergency management. This work will seek feedback and direction from First Nations leadership, and include the work done already on the First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan (2020).



Water

Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act Repeal and Replacement

The Regional Water Coordinator continues to work with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) on the *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* (SDWFNA) reform and supporting the AFN in developing a long-term National Safe Drinking Water and Wastewater Strategy.

On June 23, 2022, Canada formally repealed the *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* (SDWFNA) which was drafted and passed without First Nations' free, prior, and informed consent in 2013. As part of the federal government's commitment to replacing the legislation, the Assembly of First Nations is nationally leading the co-development of the draft legislation slated to replace the SDWFNA this year. Engagements on the safe drinking water legislative reform have been underway since 2018. Additionally, the AFN and BCAFN will be co-hosting an engagement on February 27, 2023, in Vancouver, BC to discuss a draft legislative framework for feedback from Chiefs and leadership.

First Nations Leadership Council Water Rights Strategy

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) has received a mandate to review and amend the FNLC First Nations Water Rights Strategy which was developed in 2013 to reflect changes to provincial legislation, including but not limited to the *Water Sustainability Act* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* which will help inform modernized goals and actions within the strategy.

In April 2022, the FNLC hosted a virtual Pre-Engagement Session to inform preliminary considerations for the Strategy amendments. First Nations Chiefs, leadership, experts, technicians, and community members from across the province were invited to the session to offer preliminary

input on the 2013 Strategy. The FNLC released a [Summary Report](#) of the session. The insights of this report will inform the next FNLC Water Rights engagement sessions, which will be hosted in April 2023.

FNLC Intentions Paper: Towards Revenue Sharing of Water Licence Rentals in BC

In Fall 2022, the First Nations Leadership Council released an Intentions Paper entitled, "Towards Revenue Sharing of Water Licence Rentals in British Columbia," supported by BCAFN [Resolution #27/2022](#), FNS Resolution #1022.15, and UBCIC Resolution 2022-40. The [FNLC Intentions Paper](#) explores what revenue sharing of water licence rentals with First Nations in British Columbia might look like and provides a framework for dialogue with First Nations Rights and Titleholders to advance discussions and negotiations with the BC Government. The FNLC has submitted a proposal and letter to BC in January 2023 to initiate discussions with the Province of BC and will keep Chiefs and leadership apprised of updates.

BCAFN Climate and Water Newsletter

The BCAFN Environmental portfolios have teamed up to distribute a monthly [BCAFN Climate Change and Water Newsletter](#). This newsletter will feature updates, community-led projects, and share funding opportunities for environmental community-based initiatives. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter or have a community environmental initiative you would like featured in the newsletter, please email sophia.iliopulos@bcfn.ca or patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca for more information.



BCAFN Board member, Chief Jerry Jack speaking at the press conference announcing Watershed strategy co-developed with First Nations, \$100 million investment.

Fisheries

The AFN National Fisheries Committee (AFN NFC) is a national level committee of the AFN, which currently co-chaired by Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Regional Chief Joanna Bernard (New Brunswick), and Regional Chief Darlene Bernard (PEI). As part of the ongoing work to implement a national fisheries strategy, the AFN NFC has been meeting to discuss improving First Nations inherent and treaty rights to fisheries resources and management for:

- aquaculture - ocean and in-land (fresh water)
- federal programs (i.e. Oceans Protection Plan, Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative, etc.)
- federal policies and legislation (i.e. wild salmon policy, Fisheries Act, etc.)

Regional Chief Teegee was active this past year on various local, regional, national and international fisheries related forums including recently at the IMPAC5 - Fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress, held in Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh territory, to highlight the role of First Nations in oceans management, protection, conservation and enhancement. The BCAFN commends all the work of coastal First Nations that have reached a new approach for asserting and implementing their inherent rights to protect their ocean and aquatic habitats. Canada must work with First Nations in BC to ensure any conservation or

protections of our ocean and aquatic resources are done with First Nations inclusion as governments, not stakeholders or interest groups. Key to improving fisheries management will be nation-to-nation type of agreements with First Nations. In 2022, we all witness the racism and ineptitude of the DFO and RCMP in protecting the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoquiyik and Peskontomuhkati peoples (Eastern Canada) inherent and treaty rights to their fisheries resources. It reminded many First Nations fishers in BC that nothing has changed with Canada's approach to respectful, rights-based agreements, laws or policies to fisheries management - a Senate Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans report released in 2022 provided an important assessment and recommendations, that not only apply to the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoquiyik and Peskontomuhkati, but to all First Nations in BC in particular; DFO has failed to address the bias in their policies toward commercial and recreational interests (i.e. privilege fisheries), vs a nation-to-nation (i.e. rights-based). The BCAFN will continue to work with its partners at all levels to create the framework for the full implementation of First Nations rights to their fisheries resources and improved management. Canada cannot continue to threaten First Nations food security, cultural and spiritual practices, and support the DFO in their policies that are filled with paternalistic and racist approaches at all levels.

UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Canada)

On June 21, 2021, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA) came into force. This Act requires the Government of Canada, in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to:

- Take all measures necessary to ensure that federal laws are consistent with The Declaration (Section 5);
- Prepare and implement an action plan to achieve the objectives of the Declaration (Section 6); and
- Develop annual reports on progress and submit them to Parliament (Section 7).

The deadline for the Canadian government to table a National Action plan to implement the UNDA is June 23, 2023.

Lead by the Department of Justice, Canada is asking Indigenous nations, governments and organizations across Canada to submit their priorities for inclusion in a National Action Plan (NAP).

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) is developing a Draft FNLC Priorities Paper to articulate some of the priorities issues and proposals facing First Nations in BC as captured within the mandating resolutions of the BCAFN, FNS and UBCIC. This draft will be shared with First Nations in BC for review and feedback on March 11th and will culminate in an FNLC hosted All-Chiefs Forum on March 29, 2023 in Vancouver.

The FNLC will be asking First Nations leaders to review this draft priorities paper and to submit any suggested revisions or additions to the FNLC technical team by March 27 for inclusion. The intention of the FNLC is to finalize the submission to reflect feedback received and the dialogue at the March 29, All Chiefs Forum.

The FNLC continues to advocate to Canada for prioritization of a BC-Specific Process as called for by resolution at the UBCIC, FNS and BCAFN.

The National Office of the AFN is conducting their own engagement with First Nations across Canada with the goal of developing national priorities paper for submission to Canada's NAP engagement process. The AFN's regional engagements are scheduled for:

March 1, 2023

Eastern Region, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (AST)

March 2, 2023

Central Region, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (EST)

March 7, 2023

Northern Region, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (MST)

March 9, 2023

Prairie Region - 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (CST)

March 14, 2023

Western Region - 9:00am to 5:00 p.m. (PST)

You can register to attend these engagements [here](#)

In addition, the AFN is hosting a Special Chiefs Assembly on the United Nations Declaration National Action Plan from April 3-6th at the Shaw Centre Ottawa. Participants can register to attend in-person or virtually [here](#) The objective of this meeting is to provide Chiefs and technicians the opportunity to :

1. Hear from the Government of Canada on Canada's current draft National Action Plan, with opportunity for questions and debate; and,
2. Review, debate and recommend content and recommendations for inclusion in Canada's final National Action Plan.

Implementation of Concrete Actions (2018) and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2019)

Reconciliation and transformative change will occur through tangible and measurable actions and structural changes to the processes and institutions to properly include rights and title holders in policy and legislative measures that may affect them.

The commitments to transformative actions have been described in a set of core policy documents including *Concrete Actions (2018)* and the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan 2022-2027*. A small number of the top priority initiatives include:

- Co-developing a new fiscal framework that recognizes Indigenous rights as outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and which includes immediate improvements in forestry revenue allocation. First Nations have responded to a public discussion paper and participated in a range of sessions to discuss a fiscal relationship that reflects Indigenous title and rights and properly supports the operation of First Nations governments. A “What We Heard” paper and options paper will be released in the coming months for further input.
- Development of a provincial policy to guide their distinctions-based approach, recognizing that only First Nations hold title and associated rights in BC.
- Advancement of section 6 and 7 agreements

through legislative enablement in several sectors. It is imperative that this work be accelerated in a more comprehensive and consistent way.

- Fundamental change to outdated laws that do not reflect the *UN Declaration*, including the *Mineral Tenure Act*, and *Heritage Conservation Act*.

Many other initiatives are also completed or in progress, such as the development of essential training for the public service in Indigenous human rights and the conclusion of civil litigation directives. This year’s *Declaration Act Annual Report*, to be released in June, will include detailed reporting on all *Declaration Act Action Plan* commitments and provide full transparency to leadership on areas of progress and where issues need to be addressed.

Co-development of legislation is critical for coexistence of jurisdictions and the achievement of reconciliation. As a result of the Interim Approach to Implementing the Requirements of Section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (2022)*, First Nations are now being included in dozens of legislative development initiatives. However, further work is required to ensure resourcing for First Nations to participate effectively in these processes, and to ensure there are proper standards for consultation and cooperation guiding all Ministries.



Hunting and Wildlife

Regional Chief Terry Teegee continues to support work and bring attention to environmental, wildlife and biodiversity issues to enhance exercising First Nations’ inherent rights, self-determination and jurisdiction within the context of the natural environment.

BCAFN is mandated to work with like-minded organizations to continue to strongly advocate and advance the recognition of First Nations rights, title, treaty rights and ancient respected protocols related to hunting and wildlife management, specifically related to the Provincial Wildlife Act. ([Resolution 11/2022](#), see also [Resolution 19/2021](#)). The BCAFN staff are monitoring ongoing work by the Province, including the Minister’s Wildlife Advisory Council, that provides advice on implementation of the [Together for Wildlife Strategy](#). On January 23, 2023, the Wildlife Advisory Council provided 22 recommendations to Ministers Cullen and Ralston to advance reconciliation and shared decision making/co-management of wildlife, as well as promoting an “ecosystems first” approach to land use decisions.

Wildlife Act

On January 27th, 2022, FNLC provided a written submission of the Consultation Draft of the [Together For Wildlife Strategy](#), including proposed revisions to the Consultation Draft to the Ministry. The [amendments to the Wildlife Act](#), introduced on March 9, 2022, by the Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, are part of implementing Together for Wildlife. BCAFN staff will continue to monitor the changes to the Wildlife Act as additional amendments are anticipated.

Species at Risk Act

The Federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) provides the legal protection of wildlife species and the conservation of biological diversity, in accordance with Canada’s commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The SARA is also the

only piece of federal legislation that explicitly recognizes the role of Indigenous Peoples in the administration and implementation of the Act. As mandated by [Resolution 04/2020](#), BCAFN staff are monitoring ongoing work on Species at Risk by the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC)

Species At Risk Act (SARA) Consultation, Cooperation, and Accommodation Project

BCAFN technical staff attended the workshop hosted by ECCC and CIER on Southern Mountain Caribou focused on critical habitat. The purpose of this [workshop series](#) is to support Indigenous engagement in the amendment to the [2014 Federal Southern Mountain Caribou Recovery Strategy](#). The workshop sessions focus on caribou critical habitat, including updates to boundaries, categories, and disturbance thresholds, and on outlining a plan for participation and feedback as engagement continues.



The focus of the SARA Consultation, Cooperation and Accommodation Project is on those species that are actively undergoing the listing process or [recovery document development](#). First Nations are invited to set up one-on-one meeting to discuss options for the co-development and First Nations feedback on Critical Habitat for the amendment. Contact Jean Polfus: jean.polfus@ec.gc.ca

Recovery Strategy for the Spotted Owl

ECCC has been working to amend the Recovery Strategy for the Spotted Owl *caurina* subspecies in Canada, which was originally published on the Species at Risk Public Registry in 2006. A revised version based on engagement completed between June 2021 to November 2022 is available and open for comment until March 27, 2023. Access Amended Recovery Strategy [here](#).

Justice and Policing Reform

Federal Legislation for First Nations Policing as an Essential Service

Co-Chaired by Regional Chief Terry Teegee, the Assembly of First Nations Policing Taskforce continues to meet regularly. This work is also supported by BC region representatives Chief Jerry Jack and Chief Dean Nelson. The Taskforce is composed of experts in First Nations Policing, regional representatives, and executive members of the First Nations Chiefs of Police Association. The mandate of the Taskforce is to provide support and guidance for the co-development of First Nations Policing Essential Services legislation. The Taskforce, supported by the AFN, has been focused on co-developing a workplan and shared principles to guide legislative development. However, this work has been delayed due to the federal government's lack of responsiveness around the issue of jurisdiction. Additionally, the signing of the Public Safety Cooperation Protocol between the First Nations Summit (FNS), Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) working collectively as the First Nations Leadership Council, and the RCMP and the BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police is in its last stages. At this time, final clarification on the roles and involvement of additional partners in this area is being conducted.

With the backing of BCAFN Resolution 21/2022, Support for the Findings and Recommendations from the "What We Heard" Report on Police Reform and Policing as an Essential Service, the BCAFN is prioritizing the findings of this report in addressing issues related to policing and justice in BC, in particular as it relates to the proposed federal legislation. This document helps to guide discussions pertaining to policing at all levels and has been critical in giving voice to matters pertaining to chronic underfunding, systemic racism, a lack of responsiveness from all levels of government, both localized and province-wide issues with recruitment and retention, a lack of accountability from key stakeholders, and the need

to rebuild and strengthen relationships with key partners. In collaboration with Indigenous legal experts at Miller Titerle and Co., the BCAFN has developed a draft legislative recommendations position paper to assess our next steps forward on this body of work. This paper will be presented to Chiefs and Leaders at the March 2023 SCA and associated discussion will help provide clarity and direction on First Nations priorities concerning the co-development of federal policing legislation and the current legal and legislative environment.

Bill C-21, An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (Firearms)

The introduction of Bill C-21, concerning federal firearm legislation, on October 21st, 2022, has garnered significant attention over the last months. Concerns over the impact of this new legislation on First Nations peoples has been widely publicized and the distinct lack of consultation and engagement with First Nations on this matter is deeply concerning. Notably, BCAFN Board Member Chief Lynda Price has been on outspoken advocate on this issue and has continued to play an important role in holding federal lawmakers accountable to their commitments set forth in the UN Declaration. There has been sustained contact and correspondence on this issue with Minister for Public Safety Marco Mendicino and the BCAFN will continue to monitor and address any new developments in this area.

Country visit to Canada by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Mr. Francisco Cali Tzay, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, will be making a country visit to Canada from March 1st-10th, 2023, including a visit to Vancouver. In conjunction with the FNLC, the BCAFN submitted a letter to the Special Rapporteur, which requested that he pay special attention to the following issues: 1) the overincarceration and mistreatment of Indigenous

peoples in the justice system, 2) the findings of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+, 3) the legacy of Indian Residential Schools and the recognition of mass graves, 4) challenges related to the implementation of the principle of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), and 5) access to justice for First Nations peoples in Canada. This visit represents an important opportunity to have the concerns of First Nations in BC recognized on the international stage.

Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act

There have been continuing engagements and discussions between BC and the FNLC regarding the implementation of the recommendations from the BC Government's Special Committee on Reforming the Police Act. The provincial government is currently working on implementing the findings of their engagement with First Nations and Indigenous groups which took place during the police modernization engagement planning session in Spring 2023. The full participation of Indigenous partners in this work is of utmost priority for both the BCAFN and the BC Government. More to come in this area in the ensuing months!

BC First Nations Justice Council Forum

The BCAFN is eagerly anticipating the BC First Nations Justice Forum which will be held March 6th-8th, 2023 in Vancouver. The BC First Nations Justice Council is hosting this event and are seeking to bring together First Nations leaders, Rights holders, Knowledge Keepers, and subject matter experts to establish and discuss future priorities and the advancement the implementation of the BC First Nations Justice Strategy. Regional Chief Terry Teegee is expected to address delegates and attendees on matters of policing and justice at the Forum.

BC First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development

Indigenous Languages

The BCAFN is involved in national level languages work through the AFN Chiefs Committee on Languages (CCOL) and its technical committee. Kukpi7 Fred Robbins is the BC region representative on the CCOL and Tracey Herbert is the BC region representative on the TCOL. Regionally, BCAFN plans to advance discussions with partners regarding the implementation of languages related commitments within the Declaration Action Plan.

As the International Decade for Indigenous Languages began in 2022, BC First Nations including, Dr. Lorna Wánosts'a7 Williams (Lilwat7úl) attended the launch in December at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The AFN prepared a draft First Nations Action Plan for the International Decade for consideration by Chiefs at the December Special Chiefs Assembly. The draft First Nations Action Plan sets out a vision; objectives; actions associated with enhancing awareness, increasing engagement, and building community strategies; roles and responsibilities; measurement and indicators; and phases of work. Due to time constraints the resolution was not brought forward, however it received support from the AFN Executive Committee on January 25, 2023.

The Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) is conducting an Indigenous Languages Study to analyze the success of the government compared to the objectives set out in the Indigenous Languages Act. The AFN made a [submission](#) highlighting recommendations regarding funding levels, First Nations control over allocation of funds, and the need for a whole-of-government approach.

In February the Department of Canadian Heritage (DCH) announced that it is accepting applications for time-limited [funding](#) under Sections 8 and 9 of the Indigenous Languages Act. The AFN worked with DCH to develop the application process,

while at the same time advocating for enhanced commitments and longer-term funding.

The AFN TCOL is currently developing revised application processes for the DCH Indigenous Languages Component funding, which will begin to transition to ongoing programmatic, annual and multi-year proposal-based funding in alignment with the First Nations Languages Funding Model. First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) continues to accept applications for funding from First Nations in BC.

The [Band Reparations Class Action](#) settlement related to loss of language and culture at residential schools will not affect funding to communities through FPCC programs. The communities in B.C. which are receiving funds through the settlement case can also reach out for support and advice from FPCC as they develop their language plans by contacting: languagecoaches@fpcc.ca

FPCC has released the [fourth report](#) on the status of B.C. First Nations languages based on surveys completed by First Nations across the province. The report demonstrates a more than 20% increase in learners as well as growth in semi-speakers and language learning opportunities.

Indian Residential Schools/Unmarked Graves

The B.C. Assembly of First Nations welcomed the news that on February 7, 2023, the Province of British Columbia introduced legislation to make September 30 a statutory holiday. Under this new legislation, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation will be enshrined in B.C. law to honour the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and remember the children who never came home. This will be a day for all British Columbians – Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous neighbours – to reflect and breathe life into what reconciliation means and take steps to build a better future together.

On January 21st, 2023, a \$2.8-billion settlement was announced in a class action lawsuit over residential schools. Initially filed by the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc and shíshálh Nations of British Columbia, plaintiffs in the case (involving 325 First Nations) sought reparations for the loss of language and culture brought on by Indian residential schools. The disbursement of funds into a trust is currently pending court approval. This is the first time bands have specifically been compensated. The funds will be used to support the revival, protection, promotion, and wellness of Indigenous languages and cultures.

The 3rd National Gathering on Unmarked Burials was held from January 16th-18th, 2023 in Vancouver. The primary focus of this gathering was to generate discussion and to provide information on Indigenous data sovereignty and community control over information and knowledge in relation to the recovery of missing children. Supported by the work of the Office of the Special Interlocutor, the event offered critical insight into concerns over ownership, control, and access to records, church archives, blueprints and other relevant documents – a significant barrier for communities and families conducting searches.

Special supports and funding are currently being provided to those communities doing investigative work on the sites of former Residential Schools.

However, BCAFN continues to raise concerns over limited funding in this area in meetings with the federal and provincial governments. Since the release of our last newsletter, there have been significant findings and developments in Williams Lake First Nation and Tseshaht First Nation. A list of communities leading or coordinating investigations on the sites of Indian Residential Schools that have shared their plans with the public or have made announcements of their initial findings are as follows:

- Williams Lake First Nation released their preliminary findings of 28 graves at the site of the former St. Joseph's Mission in January 2022. Findings of the second phase of the investigation were released on January 25th, 2023 and indicate 66 more potential burial sites,
- Tseshaht First Nation announced on February 21st, 2023, that its preliminary investigation on the grounds of the former Alberni residential school detected 17 suspected unmarked graves ,
- Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc released their findings at the site of the former Kamloops Residential School in May 2021,
- Ahousaht First Nation has communicated publicly their intention to investigate the site of the former Ahousaht Residential School and Christie Residential School,
- Penelakut Tribe has communicated publicly that they completed an initial GPR survey on the site of the former Kuper Island Industrial School and indicated that work is ongoing,
- 'Namgis First Nation has communicated publicly their intention to investigate the site of the former St. Michael's Residential School,
- shíshálh Nation has communicated publicly that they are currently conducting a search of the site of the former Sechelt Residential School
- Squamish Nation has communicated publicly their intention to investigate the site of the former St. Paul's Residential School
- Stó:lō Nation has communicated publicly their

- intention to investigate the site of the former Coqualeetza Residential School and Indian Hospital as well as St. Mary's Residential School
- Ktunaxa Nation has communicated that they completed an initial GPR survey of the cemetery associated with the former St. Eugene's Residential School and indicated that work is ongoing

The physical, emotional, and spiritual impacts on survivors and their families who are experiencing inter-generational trauma are profound and significant. It is imperative that their health and well-being be supported in the present and for the long-term. Moving forward, the BCAFN will continue to pursue additional funding arrangements for affected communities and will continue to promote advocacy and provide any available supports to survivors, their communities, and their families.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee with fellow panelists for Navigating the Journey: Reflections and Indigenous Experiences Advancing Ocean Conservation and Planning in Canada at IMPAC5 held in Vancouver February 3 - 9, 2023.

Non-medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

Over the last few months BCAFN has been working alongside the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) and FNLC Cannabis Working Group members to advance collaborative discussions between First Nations and the provincial and federal governments on jurisdiction. Regional Chief Teegee also continues to be the Co-Chair of the AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis.

In collaboration with the FNLC, the BC Cannabis Secretariat is undertaking engagement with First Nations through virtual engagement sessions in February and March 2023 as the first step in the implementation of DRIPA Action Plan Action 4.47. Notice of these engagements from the BC Cannabis Secretariat occurred in fall 2022 and in again in February 2023. To support these engagements, FNLC policy staff provided guidance to the BC Cannabis Secretariat on engagement planning and materials, including a discussion paper circulated on February 8, 2023. The engagements began on February 21st and are scheduled for:

Monday, February 27, 2023, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Monday, March 6, 2023, 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Tuesday, March 7, 2023, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
Wrap Up and Report Back Session
Tuesday, March 14, 2023, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm

Health Canada initiated a review of the federal *Cannabis Act*, and established an Expert Panel to “help identify priority areas for improving the functioning of the legislation. This panel includes Lynda Levesque, a nehiyaw iskwew and member of the Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba, Treaty Five territory. Given the fact that First Nations were excluded from the legalization of cannabis this is a critical opportunity to ensure First Nations jurisdiction is properly acknowledged and help alleviate some of the current challenges First Nations are experiencing on the economic and health aspects.

A briefing letter from the FNLC was shared with BC First Nations on November 17th, 2022 and a letter highlighting the importance of directly engaging First Nations on the *Cannabis Act* review was sent to Ministers Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Health, and David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada on November 29th, 2022. A copy of this letter was also submitted to the *Cannabis Act* Review Expert Panel.

Regional Chief Teegee spoke with the Panel Chair in December and at the request of the FNLC the Expert Panel will be meeting with First Nations leaders in BC, the FNLC Cannabis Working Group, and First Nation’s community members on March 28th, 2023.

On August 9th, 2022, the Government of Canada announced its plans to engage with interested Indigenous governments and organizations on a fuel, alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis (FACT) sales tax framework that would support interested Indigenous governments to implement a FACT sales tax within their reserves or settlement lands. On November 21st, 2022, the FNLC sent a letter to Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, advocating for the inherent rights of First Nations to exercise tax jurisdiction on sales of FACT products within their reserve or settlement lands, and a more comprehensive review of the fiscal relationship between Canada and First Nations. The FNLC has not received a response to date.

In fall 2022, the FNS, BCAFN, the province of BC, and the federal government launched the First Nations Cannabis Fund, which will deliver \$7.5 million for First Nations cannabis-related activities over 3 years. This fund is administered by the New Relationship Trust in partnership with three Aboriginal Financial Institutions. Funds are available for community engagement, the development of business plans, as well as capital

grants up to \$250,000. Path-finding supports are also available [here](#)

We see this as an example of positive, tangible collaboration to support challenges in accessing capital, however, acknowledge that there remains much substantive work to be done on a wide range of First Nations' interests including jurisdiction, health, safety, traditional use, taxation, and economic development.

BC First Nation Chiefs provided in-principle support for Strategy Framework in spring 2022. Work is underway to finalize the draft of the Strategy. It is anticipated that the strategy will be brought to Chiefs meetings for review in late spring and/or fall 2023.

Homelessness

As homelessness continues to rise in all regions across BC while Indigenous peoples disproportionately represent BC's de-housed population, BCAFN continues to advocate for culturally relevant, supportive, and low-barrier housing options for our de-housed relatives. BCAFN, alongside the FNLC, continues to meet with BC ministry staff, including Premier Eby, to advocate for these services. Additionally, Regional Chief Terry Teegee authored an opinion piece in the Vancouver Sun calling on new municipal governments to meet their obligations under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The Regional Chief stated, "Local governments also need to consider how their actions contribute to — or hinder — reconciliation, including understanding how each department's budget incorporates reconciliation. Without putting reconciliation directly into budget decisions, there is no way to track the effectiveness of efforts to decolonize municipal governments." Regional Chief Teegee continues to call on all levels of government to address the homelessness

crisis as a multi-barrier issue that is contributed by the drug poisoning crisis, rising inflation, and systemic racism, including the child welfare system.

Nationally, the AFN First Nations-in-Assembly passed Resolution 79/2019, titled "Action Plan for First Nations Homelessness On and Off-Reserve." As part of their draft Action Plan, the AFN has released the following documents:

- A [systematic literature review](#) of First Nations homelessness on and off reserve, including First Nations understandings and experiences of homelessness;
- An [environmental scan](#) of programs, services, and related systems that support First Nations individuals experiencing homelessness; and,
- A [systems map](#) of help services, helplines, benefits, and social programs available to First Nations individuals at risk of/ experiencing homelessness or a lack of housing options on and off-reserve.

For more information on the draft Action Plan, please visit the AFN website [here](#)

COVID-19 Pandemic

While many of us feel like the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, the reality is that First Nations in BC have lower rates of vaccination and boosters than the rest of the population. And according to First Nations Health Authority Data, our youth have among the lowest rates of boosters. The data shows that vaccination is key to reducing the risk of death, complications, and rates of disease transmission from COVID-19, and for this reason the BCAFN has been working to get out the message about the importance of the booster. We have partnered with Positive Living North to deliver a communications campaign targeting First Nations youth that will launch this spring. It features a number of our young people doing the activities they love, and spreading the message that getting the vaccine – and the booster – is the best way to keep our loved ones safe. Look for it on your social media and internet news providers this April and May.

[Check out BCAFN's public service announcements on COVID-19 vaccines on BCAFN Youtube Channel](#)

Children and Families

On November 24th and 25th, 2022, First Nations gathered for the All-Chiefs Meeting on Children and Families, identifying barriers to exercising jurisdiction over child and family services, including ongoing cycles of child removal in First Nation communities; intersectional and socio-economic issues; insufficient funding; legal challenges and appeals, as well as outlining solutions to address these barriers, including recognition of jurisdiction and support for implementation; clear and transparent communication and engagement with First Nation Title and Rights holders, to ensure Free, Prior, and Informed Consent; and involvement of First Nations Title and Rights holders in the co-development and co-creation of all engagement plans and funding decisions. The Tripartite Working Group on Children and Families will integrate these findings gleaned into components of the Fiscal Framework, which is currently in process.

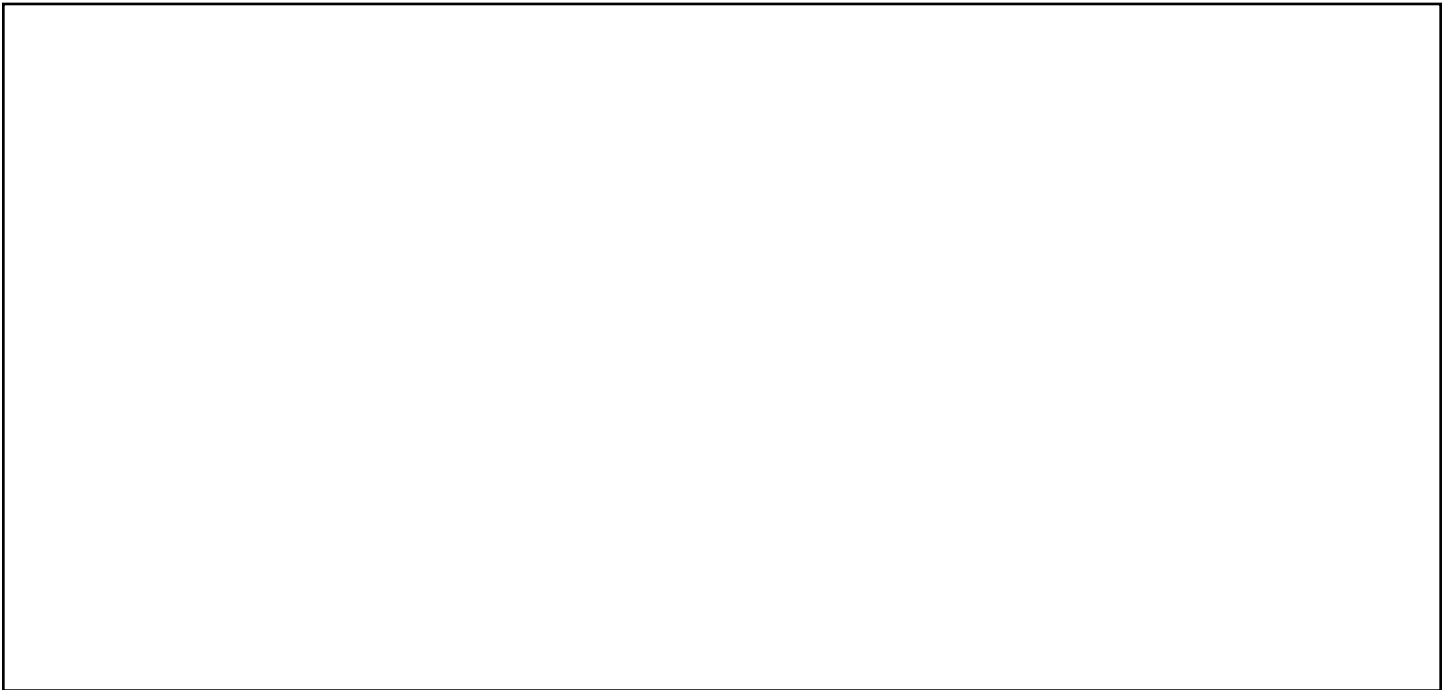
On December 7th and 8th, after being granted intervenor status, the BCAFN, UBCIC, and FNS, through the FNLC, presented oral arguments at the Supreme Court of Canada in the Quebec Reference Case. Arguments were on the specific

issue of how the *UN Declaration* has created new duties and obligations on governments, courts, and others to interpret statutory and constitutional provisions consistent with the rights of First Nations governments and peoples. It is expected that a decision on this reference will be released in Summer 2023.

On December 8th, 2022, in response to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal Letter of Decision on the Final Settlement Agreement (FSA), First-Nations-in-Assembly passed resolutions 28 and 40, at the Special Chiefs Assembly, which: supports compensation for all victims; directs Canada to provide interim and long-term funding; directs the AFN to seek extended opt in/out timeline for eligible FSA claimants; ensures the AFN provides updates and seeks direction from First Nations-in-Assembly; directs the development of evidence-and-policy based options for long-term reform of Jordan's principle; and, calls on Canada to provide funding, ensure FPIC on long-term reforms, develop legislative protections, and continue funding capital. These resolutions will inform negotiations towards a FSA.



BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee speaks at a press conference and stands with Assembly of First Nations colleagues to show support for First Nations in Quebec and Labrador and their right to govern their own affairs regarding child welfare - AFN Special Chiefs Assembly December 2022.



Assembly of First Nations Special Chiefs Assembly

Ottawa - December 6 - 8, 2022



BCAFN Board of Directors

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Upper Nicola

Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir

Tk'emlups Te Secwepemc

Chief Jerry Jack

Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation

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Ulkatcho First Nation

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Daylu Dena Council

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Gwawaenuk First Nation

Dr. Gwendolyn Point

Sto:Lo Nation

Women's Representative

Louisa Housty Jones

Heiltsuk Nation

2SLGBTQIA+ Representative

Orene Askew

Squamish Nation

Youth Female Representative

Taylor Behn-Tsakoza,

Fort Nelson First Nation

Youth Male Representative

Position currently vacant

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BCAFN Events

FNLC Expert Panel Roundtable Review

of the Cannabis Act

March 28, 2023

9:00 AM 4:00 PM

Fairmont Hotel Vancouver & Online via

Zoom (hybrid)

[REGISTER](#)

FNLC All Chiefs Forum: First Nations

Priorities for UNDA National Action

Plan

March 29, 2023

Fairmont Hotel Vancouver and online via

Zoom (hybrid)

[REGISTER](#)

Our Power and Place in Action: BCAFN

Women and 2SLGBTQIA+ Dialogue

Session

May 24, 2023

House of Ancestor, Prince George, BC

BCAFN Annual General Meeting

September 19 - 21, 2023

Location TBD, Vancouver, BC

Information and registration for all

BCAFN events can be found [here](#)

AFN Events

National Hybrid Forum on Income

Assistance: From Surviving to Thriving

March 21-23, 2023

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM (MT)

Enoch Cree Nation Alberta

Special Chiefs Assembly: United

Nations Declaration National Action

Plan

April 3-6, 2023

Shaw Centre Ottawa, Ontario (hybrid)

Save the Date! AFN Annual General

Assembly

July 11 - 13, 2023

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Information and registration for all AFN

events can be found [here](#)

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