



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

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Newsletter

BC Assembly of First Nations

Spring/Summer 2023



BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee speaking at the UBC House of Learning 30th Anniversary in May, 2023.

Message from Regional Chief Terry Teegee

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

Over the last year, we have seen some exceptional work done in our region. BC has been leading on the development of a National Action Plan to implement the federal *UN Declaration Act*. We saw the National Action Plan tabled in Ottawa on July 20th. This was the result of a great deal of engagement with First Nations leadership here in BC by BC First Nations and the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). The FNLC submitted a number of recommendations and priorities to the government of Canada based on this engagement from this spring. The BCAFN also drafted our own Options Paper that identifies 204 actions and 15 principles. I'm pleased that 2 years in, we finally have an action plan in place. However, given its shortcomings, we clearly must continue to hold the federal government to account and we will continue to advocate and advance BC First Nations priorities and interests.

Here in British Columbia, we have seen some successes with the implementation of the *Declaration Act*. Together with the BC First Nations Forestry Council, we have managed to halt further changes to forestry

legislation and are working with the Ministry of Forests to ensure that regulations that implement recent legislative changes are *DRIPA* compliant.

We are also seeing progress on policing and justice reform through *DRIPA* implementation. The Province of BC is taking our Nations' concerns seriously in reforming the *Police Act* after the release of the report from the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act* report.

Where I live in the territory of the Lheidli T'enneh, I have been directly involved in how to ensure that homeless people on the streets of Prince George are no longer targeted with punitive actions by the City. I was part of a meeting that brought Lheidli T'enneh, the Premier of BC, and the Mayor and Council of the City of Prince George together to work on a solution to the homelessness crisis. I am proud that the Province recognizes that First Nations must be directly involved in these discussions, and that through our advocacy for the homeless, we are making positive changes.

BCAFN staff and leadership are making progress in all areas we are mandated to work on, including cannabis, climate and environment, water, 2SLGBTQQIA+ issues, and the others you can read about in this newsletter.

Thank you for your continued support. Mussi Cho!

BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee speaking at the AFN SCA April, 2023



Singer July Black honoured at the AFN SCA April 2023.



Economic Development

The BCAFN is building the BC First Nations Economic Development Centre of Excellence. It is currently in the final stage of hiring for the executive positions, aiming to have them in place this summer. The centre will work to implement economic initiatives highlighted in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*, develop and distribute best practices and guides to First Nations and provide services to support First Nations communities and citizens' current and upcoming economic opportunities. Through the Centre of Excellence, the BCAFN executed the mandate of the Chiefs in Assembly, found in resolution [31/2021](#): A BC First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development.

The BCAFN continues to advocate for policy changes for Indigenous procurement policies in BC. The policies and objectives of creating a First Nations procurement policy with requisite parameters to measure success must be revamped with First Nations input to ensure that First Nations are adequately represented in the economic makeup of provincial spending. BC Bid, which includes provincial ministries, crown corporations, health authorities and municipalities, make purchases worth an estimated value of \$ 7 billion annually through the marketplace. This is only one facet of provincial procurement, it's vital to ensure that BC First Nations receive fair and equitable representation in line with best practices,

distinctions-based policy, and the spirit of economic reconciliation. In addition, they must be adequately compensated for the disproportionate impact on their traditional territories.

Through the New Fiscal Framework In British Columbia, the BCAFN is working with the FNLC to push MIRR and the Ministry of Finance to increase revenue from forestry and make changes to the *Property Transfer Tax*. Currently, churches and charities are exempt from this tax when purchasing Crown Land, but First Nations-owned businesses are not – and that needs to change.

The BCAFN is also collaborating with the FNLC, the First Nations Energy and Mining Council, and the First Nations Forestry Council at the Regional Energy and Resources Table with Natural Resources Canada to advocate for First Nations voices in British Columbia. First Nations territories bear the total impacts for the vast majority of extraction, and it is time to share in the immense wealth generated by current and future demands. From hydro to critical minerals, First Nations in BC are well-positioned to ensure the impacts on their territories are within their control.

The BCAFN is excited to welcome leadership, technicians, entrepreneurs, and citizens to the BCAFN Economic Development Forum, October 16th-18th, 2023 in Whistler.



Women's Representative Update

Louisa Housty Jones
Heiltsuk Nation

Greetings! My name is Louisa Housty-Jones. I come from the Heiltsuk Nation where I also serve on Council. I am passionate about the wellness and leadership of women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and I am honoured to continue working for safety, justice, and equity for First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. I was very grateful to be able attend the February memorial march for missing and murdered women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. During this time I was able to learn more about the experiences and challenges faced by our peoples in an urban setting. In addition, I also attended the AFN National MMIWG2S+ Gathering in February to listen to family members and survivors and share and respond to questions about the work that BCAFN is involved in. The [final report](#) from this gathering was released in June 2023.

I continue to participate on the AFN Women's Council and meetings on issues related to the province's implementation of the Calls for Justice and policing. I will continue to support the implementation of the Calls for Justice in every way that I can. The AFN Women's Council continues to advocate for their identified priorities and strategize on how to mobilize action on the Calls for Justice. I look forward to bringing our regional priorities forward in these discussions.

You can find more in-depth updates on all of the activities within my portfolio under specific sections in this newsletter. I would also like to thank Melissa Moses, UBCIC Women's Representative, for her support and collaboration and for participating in

the 2023 Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Sessions and the 2023 AFN AGA in my stead. I want to acknowledge her valuable experience, perspective and the good work she always does.

As always, please feel free to connect with me at any time. I believe we are stronger when we work together. The support of our political leadership is so important to bringing about transformative change.



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. From earlier this year to now, it has been an eventful time advocating for and alongside First Nation 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples in BC. Some highlights include...

In February, I 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.

In March, I provided an update at the BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly, including an overview of upcoming work to determine a 2SLGBTQQIA+ flag for future

BCAFN Chiefs Assemblies. This engagement is currently ongoing and we will be seeking further feedback on ideas for a 2SLGBTQQIA+ flag via a survey that will be shared with in BCAFN networks for First Nation people who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community to share their thoughts.

In May, I attended the annual Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Dialogue Session: Our Power and Place in Action in Prince George, BC. I hosted at a roundtable discussion to share the history and the progression of the pride flag in various communities around the world and gather insight into the elements and values a 2SLGBTQQIA+ flag for BCAFN should include. In addition, I and others were able to share 2SLGBTQQIA+ perspectives with others and allies at the event.

In June, I was invited to be a part of a docuseries to share information on BCAFN Resolution 02/2023 – Call for MMIWG2S+ Legislation, which was supported by Chiefs-in-Assembly this past March. BCAFN is working alongside like-minded organizations to advance this initiative. Federal legislation for MMIWG2S+ could offer a specific

legislative mechanism to strengthen and support the rights and safety of First Nation women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples in alignment with the UN Declaration. This was an exciting time and I'm grateful for the opportunity to showcase the good work that is happening.

I have also been attending events hosted by other Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ societies and organizations to advocate, build connections, and learn. During each of the events I have learned something new and gained further understanding and insight into the collective, yet diverse priorities of First Nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. I look forward to strengthening these relationships and integrating these priorities into BCAFN's advocacy moving forward.

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Women/Gender-Diverse/2SLGBTQQIA+ Initiatives

2023 Dialogue Session

On May 24th 2023, BCAFN hosted the annual Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Dialogue Session: Our Power and Place in Action in Prince George, BC on Lheidli T'enneh territory. The theme of this year's Dialogue Session was to advance action around equity and justice for First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We had over 50 First Nations leaders and community members of all genders gather to dialogue on these issues.

The session included a keynote address from Hilistis Pauline Waterfall regarding Heiltsuk cultural teachings on lifecycles and coming of age ceremonies. Presenters from the federal and Provincial government provided virtual updates on the implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice. BCAFN also presented an update on the

development of the First Nations Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Strategic Action Plan and invited feedback on the draft that was shared. Feedback is currently being integrated into a subsequent draft. The final draft will be presented during a What We Heard session and brought to Chiefs for consideration via resolution by March 2024.

Later in the day, various facilitators hosted roundtable workshops, which held collaborative spaces for participants to contribute to a number of ongoing initiatives. Workshop hosts included those whose mandate is focused on ending and responding to violence against First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. Roundtable topics include, Holistic Wellness: Honoring Every Voice, Inclusive Language, and Supporting our Youth, First Nations Approaches to Gender-Based Analysis Plus,



Envisioning the Indigenous Women's Justice Plan, Engagement on a BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Flag, Advancing Equity for Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People in the Workforce, and Where does it hurt? How can we reclaim and mentor women and gender-diverse peoples' roles as healers and leaders?

BCAFN distributed copies of the 2022 Dialogue Session report: Stories Connect Us, which discussed key take-aways and recommendations from the Session. We look forward to preparing the 2023 Dialogue Session report and carrying the dialogue forward in BCAFN's advocacy. Through these reports we hope to foster an understanding of -and action on- First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ experiences and priorities.



First Nations Approaches to Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

Work continues to implement resolution 01/2022 Intersectional Advocacy and Capacity Building Grounded in First Nations Knowledges that was passed by Chiefs-in-Assembly on March 9-10. BCAFN worked with facilitators Chastity Davis-Alphonse, Dr. Natalie Clark, and Dr. Sarah Hunt to hold 6 engagement sessions to inform the development of a toolkit that will centre First Nations approaches to justice, equity, inclusion, and intersectionality throughout the month of June, and one What We Heard session to report back on the knowledge and perspectives that were gathered. A literature review is also underway, and together with the feedback gathered during engagement, will provide the basis for the toolkit.

In May 2023 BCAFN published a Call for Expressions of Interest to First Nation communities in BC for the First Nations Approaches to Gender-Based Analysis Plus Pilot (FNGBA+ Pilot). The purpose of the pilot is to provide a First Nation community the opportunity use the toolkit as a resource for a project that they determine and provide recommendations on the draft toolkit.

BCAFN has identified a First Nation for the pilot and looks forward to sharing updates in the future. The final toolkit and learnings from the pilot will be shared via a webinar in March 2024.



Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2-Spirit +

BCAFN is working to implement Resolution 02/2023 – Call for MMIWG2S+ Legislation. BCAFN belongs to an informal working group focused on this issue along with the Downtown Eastside Women’s Centre, British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, UBCIC (Union of BC Indian Chiefs), and BC Native Women’s Association (BCNWA). In addition, the working group has begun to work with creators of the grassroots MMIWG2S+ database, Midnight Order.

We have begun preliminary work; this includes meeting with various politicians to gain support and recommendations. The working group is also planning to conduct an environmental scan of gaps and strengths in the existing legislative and policy framework, and further analysis exploring legislative mechanisms that could add “teeth” to the federal government’s responsibilities and support coordination and standards among jurisdictions.

This work is also in alignment with BC Chiefs support for the National Inquiry into MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice as well as engagement with families and survivors hosted by BCAFN to support the development of the National Action Plan to implement the Calls for Justice. BCAFN staff also continue to meet regularly with provincial officials responsible for coordinating the province’s response to the Calls for Justice. The province released their 2023 progress [report](#) in June.



British Columbia
Assembly of First Nations



BCAFN 20th Annual General Meeting

September 19 - 21, 2023

Go to events.bcafn.ca for more details and updates.



Image: Banham, J. (1973, January 1) Bear carving in Totem Park, UBC Archives Photograph Collection



Youth Representative Update

Taylor Behn-Tsakoza
Fort Nelson First Nation

BCAFN welcomes its newly appointed Male Youth Representative, Kyle Alec, who will be fulfilling an interim position until the BCAFN Annual General Assembly in September 2023. Kyle is from the Syilx (Okanagan) Nation and Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation and is a member of the Penticton Indian Band in Southern British Columbia. Kyle also served for a short time on council for the Penticton Indian Band and served a three-year term as the Union of BC Indian Chiefs Youth Representative, where he focused on elder abuse advocacy. Kyle was a lead facilitator and junior planner with Alderhill Planning Inc. and is a Transformative Storyteller and Facilitator with Naqsmist. Kyle lives in Penticton, BC, with his partner Sierra and furbaby Scaunson.

Prior to his appointment, Kyle supported BCAFN with hosting its annual Youth Forum in February 2023 alongside BCAFN's Female Youth Representative, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza. Over 70 First Nations youth attended the forum in-person. Taylor and Kyle engaged with youth to determine their priorities for 2023/24 which included pre-engagement on the creation of a BCAFN Youth Council. The BCAFN Youth Representatives continue to work with BCAFN staff to explore options and will update the Chiefs-in-Assembly as progress is made.

Taylor is supporting Kyle's onboarding into his new role, including introducing Kyle to their collective work on the AFN National Youth Council, including their participation at the upcoming AFN Annual General Assembly in Halifax and regional work with the Unified Aboriginal Youth Collective, which promotes relationship-building between the Province of BC and Indigenous youth in BC.

Kyle and Taylor attended Our Gathering in May 2023, co-hosted by the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. Kyle and Taylor provided remarks to leadership, supported the facilitation and moderation of youth sessions, and worked with their peers to create a youth podcast to share with participants at the end of the event.

Throughout the summer, Taylor and Kyle will be working with BCAFN staff to apply for annual funding from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliations to support their engagement efforts with First Nations youth across BC including hosting a Youth Forum in early 2024.



BCAFN Youth Representative Taylor Behn-Tsakoza and Regional Chief Terry Teegee at The Gathering May, 2023.

Forestry

The BCAFN is actively working with the First Nations Forestry Council, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the First Nations Summit to ensure forestry laws in BC comply with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the provincial *Declaration Act (DRIPA)*. This work has been difficult, yet we are seeing some progress through our advocacy and commitment to dialogue with the Province. The BCAFN is not entirely supportive of some of the provincial changes to forestry laws, as they still do not recognize First Nations governments decision-making authorities – the provincial Chief Forester continue to maintain decision-making authorities.

The BC Government has recognized the need to amend their forestry laws for years now, partly as a result of First Nations winning court case after court case; see Haida, Taku, Tsilhqot'in. The forest industry understood the need for reform as well, but they continue to seek changes for their economic bottom line, vs shared-decision-making and improved forest management for ecosystems. The first round of legislative changes did not have adequate First Nations input, and are not *DRIPA* compliant. The *Forest Amendment Act, 2021* removed land from forest tenures held by larger licensees with the aim to redistribute it to smaller players, community forests, and First Nations. The *Forests Statutes Amendment Act, 2021* is the most fundamental change to forest laws in BC in two decades, putting Forest Landscape Plans into effect, and removing the constraints on how much land can be taken out of the THLB for non-timber values (such as preserving areas for cultural activities or harvesting).

But all of this was done with almost no true engagement with First Nations. BCAFN, UBCIC, First Nations Summit and the First Nations Forestry Council, we advocated to the Province to pause their engagement process to ensure proper engagement with First Nations rights holders. The previous reforms were not *DRIPA* compliant, and we are making sure that any future reforms will abide by the requirements for consent laid out in *DRIPA*, including the standard of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

The Ministry of Forests is now working directly with the Forestry Council to ensure that further regulatory changes include engagement with rights holders, respect *DRIPA*, and respect individual First Nations' laws. We are also working with the Ministry of Forests on ensuring that the regulatory implementation of the *Forest Amendment Act* and the *Forest Statutes Amendment Act*. First Nations in BC can expect to be contacted by the Ministry of Forests to ensure that future changes to forestry legislation and regulation abide by *DRIPA*.

Additionally, the BCAFN, UBCIC and First Nations Summit have been pushing for improving revenue sharing under the provincial new fiscal framework discussions, as well as demanding a end to defers for old growth areas. The BCAFN also has mandate from the Chiefs via resolution to see changes to the BC Timber Sales (BCTS) program, as it continues to violate and exclude First Nations decision-making authorities and jurisdiction. Forest management has to change drastically to adapt to the climate emergency – this will include improving forest fuel management including First Nations prescribed burnings throughout the year, using traditional knowledge to improve flora and fauna diversity, as well as protecting water and its cycles. First Nations forestry management isn't about logging to generate the most dollars from a tree; the market for wood products has changed globally. The BCAFN will continue to work with its partners, including the First Nations Forestry Council to ensure First Nations forestry practices, laws and protocols are included in shared decision-making processes.

We are pleased to see that First Nations in BC are continuing to gain access to tenure, and continue to grow our participation in the forest industry. Both Government and industry are demonstrating that they are starting to understand us better through these concrete gains in access to economic benefits.

Climate Emergency

As the global climate crisis intensifies, the consequences become increasingly evident in the traditional territories of First Nations, now known as British Columbia (BC). Early record-breaking heat waves hit this spring, resulting in many flooding and fire-related evacuation orders and alerts. These events serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for robust and collaborative climate mitigation and adaptation actions that are led by First Nations in BC.

Spring 2023, high temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius, 10 to 15 degrees higher than normal in some places in BC.

At the BCAFN 19th Annual Special Chiefs Assembly, two resolutions to address climate change and support First Nations’ leadership passed.

Resolution [12/2023](#) mandates BCAFN to advance First Nations’ access to transportation in British Columbia. To address this mandate and advance the implementation of Pathway Four of the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan, the BCAFN is undertaking the [First Nations Low-Carbon Transportation Project](#) (the Transportation Project) to promote and accelerate First Nations’ equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable low-carbon and active transportation within and between communities, reduce carbon pollution and uphold the rights and well-being of all First Nations peoples as outlined in the federal *UN Declaration Act*, the provincial *Declaration Act*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ Calls to Action and the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. A desktop search is being conducted by Charlotte Bull, a UBC climate intern, and a project kick-off event was held on June 29.

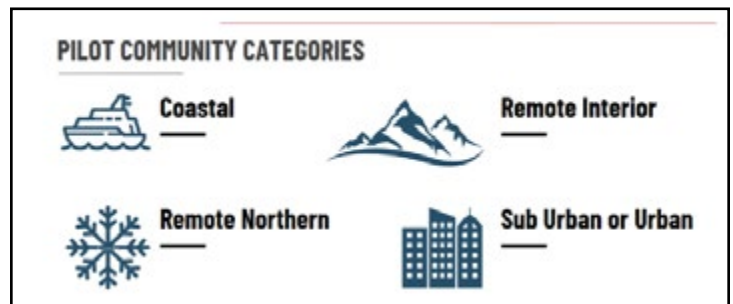
The 2-year Transportation Project will also support five (5) Nation-led pilot projects to develop a low-carbon transportation plan. The selected First Nation communities will receive up to \$65,000

in flexible funding and support from the BCAFN staff. An EOI call will be sent to all First Nations governments in BC to identify the pilot communities.

Resolution [03/2023](#) mandates BCAFN to work with First Nations to facilitate the co-development of the First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda in British Columbia (the BC FNCL Agenda) in 2023 and 2024. Using the [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) as a starting point, the BC FNCL Agenda intends to provide a roadmap consisting of recommendations, policy direction and concrete deliverables to ensure that federal climate policy and legislation are respectful and supportive of First Nations’ exercise of self-determination and constitutionally protected rights; empower First Nations’ meaningful involvement in national climate governance; and ensure appropriate federal support for First Nations, consistent with Canada’s fiduciary obligations. To advance this mandate, BCAFN is in the process of:

- convening a Steering Committee to guide and oversee the BC FNCL Agenda co-development process.
- securing a facilitator to support in-person, virtual, and culturally appropriated engagement activities across the province this year and next.

To make the implementation of the BC FNCL Agenda a reality, BCAFN will participate alongside other First Nations organizations in Canada and federal departments to prepare a Memorandum to Cabinet (MC) and a budget for Cabinet and Treasury Board’s deliberation and approval.



Emergency Management

As the climate emergency continues to impact nations in BC, the BCAFN has been supported by the First Nations Emergency Management Society (FNESS) in our continued advocacy to improve First Nations jurisdiction over emergency management. The FNLC Memorandum of Understanding on Emergency Management with Canada and BC has been a key mechanism to have high level supports on legislative reforms, capacity building and operational requirements by First Nations. This year will see the completion of the first Sendai framework action plan created by First Nations in Canada. Chiefs in BC directed the BCAFN, UBCIC and FNS to develop this with the support of FNESS.

We are also working with FNESS as they undergo structural and governance reform. This will improve the accountability to Chiefs and strategically establish a holistic emergency management approach to support First Nations in BC - there is no other First Nation organization in Canada that has accomplished what FNESS has.

The FNLC are advocating for BC to ensure the *Emergency Program Act* is compliant with *DRIPA* and the UN Declaration on the whole. BC must engage First Nations governments directly in this process. We anticipate new legislation in the fall, which requires new regulations to support First Nations' emergency management jurisdiction.

Update on the Development of the "Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC"

At the conclusion of the 2021 BC wildfire season, the Chiefs in Assembly meetings of the BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit, and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs recognised the need for a Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai) Action Plan to address the unique needs that BC First Nations face in disaster.

Disasters have always happened and will continue to happen. Disaster risk management is the first line of defense against the uncertainty that is coming. While we know disasters can't be prevented entirely, especially as they amplify in intensity and frequency,



DEVELOPED BY
First Nations Leadership Council
British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
First Nations Summit
Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
First Nations Emergency Services Society
Four Directions Management Services Ltd.



there are actions that can be taken to limit levels of devastation.

For example, between 2018 – 2022, ISC spent 3.5x more money on responding to emergencies and helping Indigenous Nations recover from them than it has on preventing and mitigating floods, fires, and other extreme weather events. However, for every dollar spent on preparedness and mitigation, six dollars can be saved in emergency response.

This is where a "Disaster Risk Reduction" lens becomes critical to informing future actions and investments. Reducing disasters should be of paramount importance to ensure that funding, time, and resources are not expended solely on emergency responses but are also importantly invested in preparedness and resiliency strengthening initiatives.

A "disaster risk reduction lens" requires an understanding that vulnerability to hazards determines impact: $\text{Hazard} \times \text{Vulnerability} = \text{Risk}$. Disasters expose societal inequalities because the

more vulnerable a population, the worse a disaster’s impact will be.

An Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC provides the opportunity to better understand disaster risk, strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk, invest in disaster risk reduction for resilience, and enhance disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, including the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge, inherent rights, jurisdiction, and the right to selfdetermination.

The development of the Action Plan emphasizes the importance of engaging communities in disaster risk reduction efforts, building disaster resilience across all sectors, and strengthening preparedness and response capacities at all levels of governance.

An Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction by First Nations in BC has been developed, is currently in final drafting stages, and was specifically tailored to the needs and priorities of First Nations communities in British Columbia. The plan was informed by extensive community engagement and collaboration,

drawing on the perspectives and experiences of community members, leaders, and experts in disaster risk reduction and emergency management.

Based on the best thinking that western science offers and the received wisdom that comes from Indigenous experts, knowledge holders, and the watchful observation over ancestral territories since time immemorial, 30 Calls to Action have been identified and are recommended to be achieved by 2030 in accordance with the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The recommendations are being called the: “30 by 2030: 30 Calls to Action to be Achieved by 2030” and align with the Sendai Framework’s four priority areas.

A completed draft of the Action Plan has been shared with First Nations Emergency Services Society and the three FNLC organizations. The Disaster Risk Reduction Action Plan will be officially presented to the BC Assembly of First Nations for leadership’s review, comment, and endorsement in during the September 2023 AGM. The full draft of the Action Plan will be shared with Chiefs in the weeks prior to the AGM.

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations

In the face of climate change
SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS IN ACCESSING SAFE, AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE AND LOW-CARBON TRANSPORTATION

PURPOSE
As mandated by First Nation Leadership (Resolution 12/2023) and aligned with the implementation of the BC First Nation Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, BCAFN is working to **promote and accelerate First Nations’ equitable access to safe, affordable, and reliable low-carbon transportation** within and between communities.

OUR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS WILL FOCUS ON:

- Assessing gaps & opportunities that restrict and assist access to transportation
- Advocating for changes to uphold First Nations’ Title, Rights and Treaty Rights
- Developing comprehensive community planning guide
- Strengthening community capacity & climate awareness

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING OR FINDING OUT MORE?
We are currently looking for First Nations communities interested in participating in a fully-funded pilot project.

GET IN TOUCH!
Patricia Rojas: patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca or Kristi Denby: kristi.denby@bcfn.ca

British Columbia Assembly of First Nations

SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS TO ACCESS
SAFE, AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE AND LOW-CARBON TRANSPORTATION

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND PROCESS

- Pilot Projects**
Undertake five (5) Nation-led pilot projects. BCAFN will support pilot communities in developing a low-carbon transportation plan to respond to their unique needs, realities and priorities.
- Low-Carbon Transportation Planning Guide**
BCAFN will create a planning guide, informed by the pilot communities, to support all First Nations communities throughout BC in developing their own transportation plans.
- Advocacy & Engagement**
BCAFN will engage First Nations governments, Crown governments and relevant partners to seek support to implement the recommendations from the Transportation Assessment Report.
- Transportation Assessment Report**
BCAFN will prepare a report outlining barriers and recommendations to support First Nations in accessing equitable, clear, active, safe, effective and affordable transportation.

Activities include: Dialogue circles, Desktop research, Interviews, Survey, Pilot projects.

TIMELINE

- 2022: Planning & Research
- JUNE 2023: Kick off & Info Session
- AUGUST 2023: Start Pilot Projects
- DECEMBER 2023: Low-Carbon Transportation Planning Guide
- JANUARY 2024: Transportation Assessment Report (TAR)
- FEBRUARY 2024: Endorsement
- MARCH 2024: Move to Implementation

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 which was repealed on June 23, 2022, as mandated by the [First Nations Drinking Water Class Action Settlement Agreement](#). Specific provisions for the replacement legislation as identified in the Settlement include:

- define[d] minimum standards of water quality for First Nation Water and Wastewater Systems, concerning standards that are directly applicable to First Nation communities;
- define[d] minimum capacity standards for the delivery of water to First Nation communities in terms of volume per individual community member;
- a transparent approach to building, improving, and providing drinking water and wastewater services for First Nations;
- confirm adequate and sustainable funding for First Nation Water and Wastewater Systems; and
- support the voluntary assumption of water and wastewater infrastructure by First Nations.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) released the draft legislation entitled "[Proposal for An Act respecting drinking water, wastewater and related infrastructure on First Nation lands](#)" for consultation with First Nations in February 2023. BCAFN hosted a regional engagement session on February 27th, 2023, to receive feedback from Rights and Titleholders on the draft legislation to help inform its submission and legal analysis to ISC. In May 2023, Minister Patty Hajdu committed to delaying the introduction of the draft legislation and will seek additional mandates to support the incorporation of First Nations feedback received and the minimum requirements as identified in the Settlement Agreement. BCAFN will continue to update the Chiefs-in-Assembly as progress is made on the legislation.

For those who were impacted by a long-term drinking water advisory, the claim period has been extended to **March 7, 2024**. For more information, please go to: <https://firstnationsdrinkingwater.ca/>

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 First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) Organizations through BCAFN Resolution [#27/2022](#), First Nations Summit (FNS) Resolution [#1022.15](#), and Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) Resolution [2022-40](#). The 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 First Nations Leadership Council met with the Honourable Minister Nathan Cullen to discuss the next steps for this important work, including a comprehensive engagement plan with Rights and Titleholders.

Watershed Security Fund

In 2019, the FNLC organizations passed mirrored resolutions to support the development of a Watershed Security Fund through BCAFN Resolution [21\(e\)/2019](#), UBCIC Resolution [2020-22](#), and FNS Resolution [#0619.08](#). As a result of ongoing advocacy by water advocates across BC, including the FNLC, Minister Cullen announced an investment of \$100 million into a dedicated fund to support watershed management and restoration in BC, including a commitment to co-developing the fund with Rights and Titleholders. BCAFN's Board of Director, Chief Jerry Jack (Klakwagiila) attended the announcement in Victoria in March 2023 and continued to call upon the BC government to utilize the fund as a mechanism to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and First Nations inherent, treaty and constitutionally protected water rights in BC.

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.



[Assembly of First Nations and Canada chart new joint path for new and updated priorities on climate action.](#)

News release - June 2023

The Assembly of First Nations and the Government of Canada released the fifth annual report of the Joint Committee on Climate Action (JCCA). This report is a response to the increasing effects of climate change seen across Canada. Through the JCCA, both the AFN and Canada demonstrate their continued commitment to partnership-driven climate solutions, where First Nations are recognized and empowered as leaders of climate action.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee with BCAFN Board of Directors Chief Lynda Price, Harvey McLeod, Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimir, Chief Jerry Jack and BCAFN Knowledge Keeper Dr. Gwendolyn Point at the BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly held March 9 & 10, 2023.



Fisheries

The BCAFN is working to support First Nations involvement in Phase 2 of open-net pen aquaculture transition planning process. Last year the Federal Government committed to phasing out open-net pen salmon farming, and First Nations have been involved in the engagement process around how to achieve this goal while maintaining our rights and title. It's clear from this process that as aquaculture evolves, the businesses that will succeed will have First Nations participation and leadership.

Last February, Regional Chief Teegee presented at the International Marine Protected Areas Congress 5 (IMPAC5), highlighting the importance of Indigenous participation in ocean protection. First Nations are taking the lead in developing new Indigenous Protected Marine Areas up and down the coast. Establishing these protected areas is another piece of increasing jurisdiction not only over conservation, but also over access to fisheries resources.

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 (NAP) to implement the *UNDA* is June 23, 2023.

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

On June 20, 2023, the Department of Justice tabled its *UNDA* NAP in Parliament.

The NAP contains 181 recommendations divided across five distinct chapters: 1) Shared Priorities; 2) First Nations Priorities; 3) Inuit Priorities; 4) Métis Priorities; 5) Indigenous Modern Treaty Partner Priorities. The NAP outlines a whole of government roadmap for advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a national-to-nation relationship. The NAP aims to address departmental injustices, violence, prejudice, systemic racism, and discrimination. The measures also aim to ensure the consistency of all Government of Canada laws and policies with the UN Declaration.

The NAP supports the advancement of self-determination and self-government, treaty implementation, participation in decision-making over lands, territories, and resources, as well as the creation of a healthy environment and the revitalization of languages, cultures, and legal systems.

While The NAP has been acknowledged as a positive step forward in the realization of the rights of Indigenous peoples as articulated by the UN Declaration, many have noted significant concerns regarding particular flaws which require improvement if the NAP is to be successful.

In recognition of these shortcomings the Department of Justice has committed to reviewing and revising the NAP as an evergreen document, in cooperation with Indigenous peoples, to ensure that the document reflects the needs and priorities of Indigenous peoples.

The success of the NAP will be contingent on the specific process and mechanisms utilized by Canada, to co-develop and implement the provisions of the NAP alongside an adequate investment in building First Nations' capacity to undertake what will be a significant amount of work to ensure Canada's laws, policies and practices are aligned with the standards of the UN Declaration.

To ensure that the priorities and interests of First Nations in BC, the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) developed the FNLC Priorities Paper to articulate guiding principles and priorities actions to be included in the NAP. These principles and priorities were developed based on direction and input from First Nations in BC including through resolutions of the BCAFN, FNS, and UBCIC; circulation and review of the principles and priorities by First Nations and sectoral First Nations organizations; and through dialogue at an All-Chiefs' Assembly hosted by the FNLC on March 29, 2023, in Vancouver. The FNLC Priorities Paper was submitted to Minister Lametti on May 3rd.

In summary, the FNLC Priorities Paper called on the Government of Canada to adopt the following principles to guide the development of the NAP and the implementation of the *UNDA*:

1. Comprehensive and Coherent
2. Progressive
3. Clarity of Scope
4. Distinctions-Based

1. Inclusivity
2. Integrative
3. Measurable
4. Expediency

With these principles in mind, the FNLC identified the following five priority areas around which the NAP should be organized, all of which are expanded upon in the submission:

1. Lands, Resources and Territories
2. Self-determination and the Inherent Right of Self-Government
3. Eliminating Indigenous-Specific Racism, Discrimination and Violence against First Nations People
4. Social, Cultural and Economic Well-Being; and
5. Accountability and Implementation.

To complement the FNLC Priorities Paper, the BCAFN draft the Options Paper which compiled a list of action items and guiding principles to be included in the NAP. These principles and priorities were developed based on existing mandates passed through resolution at the regular meetings of the BCAFN. The BCAFN submitted this paper on May 11, 2023.

The BCAFN Options Paper identifies 15 principles which should guide the interpretation of the actions and priorities put forth by the FNLC and should guide the actions of the Government of Canada in the implementation of the UNDA.

In addition to the 15 principles the paper identifies 204 actions divided into the following sections:

1. Self-Determination and Inherent Right of Self-Government

2. Lands, Territories, and Resources of Indigenous Peoples
3. Ending Indigenous-Specific Racism and Discrimination
4. Social, Cultural and Economic Well-Being
5. Participation in Economic and Social System Decision Making
6. Ecological Prosperity and Stewardship
7. Indigenous Justice and Liberty
8. Accountability and Implementation

The FNLC and the BCAFN continues to advocate to Canada for prioritization of a BC-Specific Process as called for by resolution at the UBCIC, FNS and BCAFN, as well as dedicated capacity funding for First Nations, to ensure that the priorities of First Nations in BC are reflected in the ongoing review and implementation of the NAP.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee at the federal government's media event for the UN Declaration National Action Plan (NAP) in June 2023.

**United Nations Declaration
on the Rights of
Indigenous Peoples Act
Action Plan 2023-2028**

CANADA.CA/DECLARATION



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

Reconciliation and transformative change will occur through tangible actions and structural changes to properly include rights and title holders in policy and legislative measures that may affect them, and to enable the coexistence of jurisdictions.

The recent release of the *Declaration Act Annual Report* provides improved insights into how these tangible actions are progressing as per the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan 2022-2027*, and what specific measures have been taken to include First Nations in the co-development of laws, as guided by the Interim Approach to Implementing the Requirements of Section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2022). The Annual Report is available [here](#).

This Report clearly describes the major volume of work underway to advance implementation of the *Declaration Act* in BC. First Nations are being invited to participate in dozens of legislative and policy development initiatives. This is currently being done inconsistent ways across Ministries, and therefore proper standards, consistent and clearer processes, and a transparent way for First Nations to access information about these initiatives are all needed. There have also been significant resourcing pressures on First Nations to participate in these processes, which a new fund administered by the New Relationship Trust will seek to partially address. More information about this fund is available [here](#).

A number of the key priority initiatives we are engaging in both technically and politically include:

- A provincial policy to guide their distinctions-based approach, recognizing that only First Nations hold title and associated rights in BC.
- 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 has been released, and an options paper will be released in the fall for further direction.

- A large array of legislative development initiatives, with specific focus on those that deeply implicate First Nations’ title and rights, are outdated and do not reflect the UN Declaration, and where a strong mandate has been provided by First Nations. These include: *Emergency & Disaster Management Act*; *Heritage Conservation Act*; and, *Mineral Tenure Act*. Other legislative development efforts include the anticipated *Anti-Racism Act* and *Cannabis Control & Licensing Act* although there are many others that First Nations have been asked to comment on.
- Advancement of section 6 and 7 agreements through legislative enablement. It is imperative that this work be accelerated in a more comprehensive and consistent way.
- Development of essential training for the public service in Indigenous human rights, recognizing that consistent and basic knowledge about the UN Declaration and obligations under the *Declaration Act* are core competencies of all public servants.

While progress is being made through these and other initiatives, as the provincial election approaches, it is key to maintain focus on high priority issues and initiatives that can be substantially advanced during this term of the provincial government. The coming year will be a critical time to advance legislative and policy decisions that are long overdue.

Hunting and Wildlife

Regional Chief Terry Teegee continues to advocate and bring attention to environmental, wildlife and biodiversity issues to safeguard First Nations, jurisdiction, self-determination and rights and title. BCAFN is mandated (Resolution [11/2022](#), see also Resolution [19/2021](#)) to collaborate and 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*. Regional Chief Teegee advocates that in Canada and every country, the articles of the UN Declaration and the standard of free, prior, and informed consent must be foundational to conservation planning.

Following up on the [amendments to the *Wildlife Act*](#) introduced on March 9, 2022, the BCAFN staff are monitoring ongoing work by the Province, including the Minister's Wildlife Advisory Council, which provides advice on the implementation of the Together for Wildlife Strategy.

Species at Risk Act and Biodiversity Targets

As mandated by Resolution [04/2020](#), BCAFN staff are monitoring ongoing work on Species at Risk by the Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Wildlife species are central to the health of ecosystems, First Nations' inherent rights, culture, food security and health etc. We are seeing the rising loss of wildlife species across BC, which is strongly linked to the health of our planet and the interconnected climate and biodiversity emergencies.

At COP 15 (2022) in Montreal a landmark agreement, [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#), was signed by many world leaders, including Canada, 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. The BCAFN team is monitoring the progress on the conservation commitments and biodiversity targets,

and advocating for full participation of First Nations in conservation projects in alignment with the UN Declaration's minimum international standard of free, prior, and informed consent.

On May 24, 2023, the [Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society](#) (CPAWS) released its second report card on land and ocean protection progress in Canada. The report, [Building Momentum: A Progress Update on Canada's Nature Protection Targets](#), tracks progress since the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's 2021 report card to protect at least 30% of land and ocean by 2030. It was noted in the report that the federal, provincial and territorial governments have achieved varying degrees of progress since CPAWS' 2021 Report Card. Although, BC has made significant progress since the 2021 report where the province received a C grade, the progress is simply not enough to address the dual climate and biodiversity crises. The report noted that across Canada, Indigenous Peoples have consistently demonstrated their commitment to conserving their ancestral territories on the land and at sea, designing innovative plans and initiatives that weave traditional knowledge and western knowledge.

Spotted Owl

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. 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. Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) just closed the comments on the [Draft Policy on Assessing Imminent Threats under Sections 29 and 80 of the *Species at Risk Act*](#) – terrestrial species. The objective of this policy is to provide consistency in the interpretation of imminent threat(s) to the survival (under section 29) and to recovery or survival (under section 80) of a terrestrial wildlife species under the *Species*

at Risk Act. The BCAFN Environment portfolio team is monitoring ongoing work on the [Federal Recovery Planning for Species at Risk and Species at Risk Listings](#), the [SARA Consultation, Cooperation and Accommodation Project](#) and SARA consultations and engagements including the spotted owl, caribou, grey and fin whale etc.



2022-2032 | INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF
Indigenous Languages

First Nations 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 Chair Khelsilem is the alternate. 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.

The BCAFN and CCOL and TCOL representatives have been working to address concerns with recent work at the TCOL and CCOL to develop a new regional allocation formula for the Department of Canadian Heritage Indigenous Languages Component funding. The new proposed formula would significantly negatively impact the amount of funding for the BC region, and there are outstanding concerns regarding the data and weighting of factors used in the formula.

The AFN made a [submission](#) to Parliamentary Committee on Official Languages regarding amending the *Official Languages Act*, which included the following recommendations:

- Incorporate Indigenous languages as official languages within the context of the *OLA*.
- Incorporate the Indigenous Languages Act within the context of the *OLA*'s provisions on recourse and remedy to the federal court.
- Create an Indigenous exemption on bilingualism requirements for all positions

within federal institutions, including senior management, federal courts, and the Supreme Court of Canada.

However, these recommendations were not accepted by the Committee. The Senate Standing [Committee](#) on Official Languages affirmed the importance of recognizing First Nation, Métis and Inuit languages as the first languages of the land, and noted the barriers that currently exist for Indigenous languages revitalization.

The AFN also released several useful reports:

- AFN Language Policy [Report](#) Research, a comparative report about:
 - federal, provincial and territorial legislation, regulations and policies that concern the revitalization of First Nations languages and other Indigenous languages in Canada, and
 - legislation, regulations and policies that relevant international jurisdictions have put in place for revitalizing Indigenous languages in those places.
- AFN Revitalization First Nations Languages, [A Costing Analysis](#).

The Office of the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages also recently launched their [website](#) (commissionforindigenouslanguages.ca/about) You can find out more about their mandate and work there.

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 from across Canada. The mandate of the Taskforce is to provide support and guidance for the co-development of First Nations Policing Essential Services legislation. Through Resolution [06/2023](#): Support for The Recommendations and Principles of The Federal First Nations Police Services Legislation Strategy Paper Chiefs-in-Assembly provided direction and guidance to the priorities that BC representatives and technicians should bring to this work.

At the Assembly of First Nations 3rd National Policing Forum in Calgary, AB, on May 2-3, 2023, Regional Chief Terry Teegee offered opening remarks. This forum brought together First Nations Police Officers, First Nations Leadership, and stakeholders to build off the themes from the previous Policing Forum and move the discussion towards solutions and next steps for the legislative co-development process. Chief Jerry Jack hosted the Forum's BC regional discussion and presented the recommendations within the Federal First Nations Police Services Legislation Strategy Paper.

At present, a subgroup of the Taskforce has been working to further develop First Nations priorities for the legislation, including through in-person meetings that have been held in Victoria, BC and Québec City, QC. Despite this, the Taskforce has not been able to move collaborative conversations with Canada forward.

On June 12th, 2023, the AFN was granted intervenor status regarding the Indigenous Police Chiefs of Ontario (IPCO) federal court motion.

Three police services, the Treaty Three Police Service, the UCCM Anishnaabe Police Service, and the Anishinabek Police Service, are facing a critical funding shortfall due to stalled negotiations with Public Safety Canada. Several of the communities affected by this disruption have declared a state of emergency. Each of these police services is facing oppressive, coercive, and fundamentally unacceptable treatment by Public Safety Canada in the renegotiation of their funding under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. IPCO has filed a motion asserting violation of Section 5 of the Canadian Human Rights Act through the discriminatory provision of services. There have been no significant signs of cooperation or meaningful engagement from either Minister Marco Mendicino or his negotiating team to address this issue.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Visit and Report

José Francisco Calí Tzay, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, delivered his preliminary report on March 10th in Ottawa following a 10-day trip across Canada. With a meeting held in North Vancouver hosted by the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and attended by Regional Chief Terry Teegee and other representatives of the FNLC, this visit represented a critical opportunity to have the concerns of First Nations in BC recognized on the international stage. In his preliminary report, Mr. Calí Tzay expressed particular concern about the forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women, the militarization of Indigenous lands, the criminalization of Indigenous human rights defenders, and the over-incarceration of Indigenous peoples across the country. He urged Canada to address the systemic issues underlying the poverty-prison pipeline and reduce the drastically disproportionate number of Indigenous children in the child-welfare system. In his address, Mr. Calí Tzay condemned the appalling legacy of residential schools, residential school denialism, and the disturbing reports of violence against Indigenous women and girls. The Final Report from the United

Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is slated to be completed by September 2023.

Provincial Policing and Public Safety

The provincial government is currently working on implementing the findings of their engagement with First Nations and Indigenous groups following the release of the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act* report. The BCAFN is working with the FNLC partner organizations and the BC First Nations Justice Council to advance policing and public safety modernization efforts with BC in alignment with the UN Declaration through the

process outlined in the Interim Approach. The full participation of First Nations in this work is of utmost priority as BC considers legislative and policy changes. The recognition and utilization of recommendations borne from the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act*, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+, and various other Indigenous-led reports and advocacy work will be central in the co-development of any future legislation.

Indian Residential Schools/Unmarked Graves

The 2023 BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly, held from March 9-10th, was an opportunity to support the work and findings of Tseshaht First Nation via Resolution 11/2023: Support For Tseshaht First Nation, Alberni Indian Residential School (Airs): Calls For Truth And Justice. This resolution reflects the initial next steps, actions, and justice for Tseshaht First Nation after their Phase 1 scanning and research of the Alberni Indian Residential School and the ensuing 26 Calls for Truth and Justice. Chiefs-in-Assembly recommended that the Regional Chief support Tseshaht leadership and the Tseshaht First Nation to ensure that the Province of BC, Government of Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and all relevant faiths and churches to meet with Tseshaht and implement all of the Alberni Indian Residential School 26 Calls for Truth and Justice.

On July 6th, 2023, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) hosted engagement sessions across Canada for guidance and recommendations that will help guide the design and development of the Centre's new building and ceremonial grounds. The NCTR was created to preserve the memory of the Indian Residential School system and its legacy. It is located on

the campus of the University of Manitoba and houses all statements, documents, and other materials gathered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

In memory of the lives lost at Indian residential schools, a blackened column carved with children's faces has been created by acclaimed Kwakwuitl carver Stanley Hunt. The memorial pole is covered with rows of children's faces expressing loss and sorrow. At 18-feet tall, the memorial pole has Raven sitting atop, embracing the children. In honour of the Every Child Matters movement, orange bands separate the rows of children's faces. The Canadian maple leaf, a cross, and the acronyms RCMP and NWMP are placed upside down in view of Raven. The memorial pole travelled through several Vancouver Island communities on its way to being installed in Vancouver on Indigenous Peoples Day, June 2021. In each community, the memorial pole was welcomed with ceremonies honouring the children that did not return home.

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, Kimberly Murray, 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. The Independent Special Interlocutor's Interim Report, "Sacred Responsibility: Searching for the Missing Children and Unmarked Burials," was released on June 16th. This Report identifies the common concerns that Survivors, Indigenous families, and communities have identified as they search and recover the missing children and unmarked burials. The Report also details the Independent Special Interlocutor's 48 Findings based on these common concerns. A written submission for the Final Report (June 2024) will be submitted by the BCAFN.

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. As noted in our Spring newsletter, there have been significant findings and recent 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
- shishálh 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.

Non-medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

Over the past year, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) has continued to advance First Nations' title and rights concerning cannabis, consistently emphasizing colonial governments' obligations to respect jurisdiction and joint decision-making processes. In the coming year, the BCAFN will focus on implementing 4.47 to ensure that First Nations fully realize the benefits of the cannabis industry and that BC's laws cease infringing upon Nations' jurisdiction, revenue, and community safety decisions.

In February and March 2023, the BC Cannabis Secretariat collaborated with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) to offer four virtual engagement sessions with BC First Nations. This process is the Province's first step toward implementing the DRIPA Action Plan Action 4.47. A "What We Heard" report was developed to reflect the FNLC's view on the benefits, challenges, and barriers to First Nation communities and entrepreneurs.

In response, the BCAFN continues to work as part of the FNLC and FNLC Joint Cannabis Working Group to advance collaborative discussions between First Nations and colonial governments on jurisdiction. Regional Chief Teegee continues to be the Co-Chair of the AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis and supports our direction toward advancing Section 4.47 and ultimately aligning BC laws with UNDRIP.

In October 2022, the Senate Committee on Indigenous Peoples held hearings to better understand the current Cannabis Laws, economic opportunity, and barriers to First Nation participation. In June 2023, the Committee published their findings and recommendations. Among the other First Nation leaders who spoke so eloquently, the Senate has demonstrated that they listened to our own Chief Watts, who spoke at the hearing.

The Committee found that many of the problems identified by First Nations before the legalization of cannabis have not been addressed. For example,

the federal government has the exclusive power to regulate matters relating to First Nations and their reserve lands. In 2018, while Parliament debated the Cannabis Act, First Nations representatives argued that recognizing their jurisdiction over the regulation, sale and distribution of cannabis was an essential element of their inherent right to self-government and would ensure their full participation in the economic opportunities that legalization was to provide. Instead, Canada abandoned them to the whims of the provinces and territories, some of which have not even responded to First Nations' requests for agreements to produce, sell, and distribute cannabis, leaving First Nations shut out of the cannabis market.

As a result, the Committee recommended that the Minister of Health introduce legislation to amend the *Cannabis Act* to permit First Nations to regulate the possession, sale, and distribution of cannabis on their lands. The Committee also recommended increased funding for policing and enforcement of First Nations cannabis laws and additional funding and training for First Nations police services. These are among the 13 recommendations in the report intended to correct the oversights that have once more left First Nations peoples excluded from full economic participation and development.

The timing of this report is critical to BC First Nations as 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 iskwe and Fisher River Cree Nation member in Manitoba, Treaty 5 territory. Given 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 challenges First Nations are experiencing in the economic and health aspects. The Expert Panel met with BC First Nations in Vancouver on March 28, 2023. They voiced their understanding of the challenges and barriers and

committed to further engagement.

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 three years. The New Relationship Trust administers this fund in partnership with three Aboriginal Financial Institutions. Funds continue to be available for community engagement, the development of business plans, as well as capital grants of up to \$250,000. Pathfinding supports are also [available](#).

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

BC First Nation Chiefs provided in-principle support for a Cannabis Strategy Framework in spring 2022.

The six priority areas identified in the framework include:

1. The recognition of inherent jurisdiction over cannabis.
2. Cannabis Taxation and Revenue Sharing Jurisdiction.
3. Support First Nations Cannabis Businesses and Entrepreneurs.
4. Prioritize Community Safety.
5. Strengthen Health and Wellness advocacy work through First Nations institutions; and
6. The necessary infrastructure, institutions and other supportive resources are required to be successful in the Cannabis market.

The firm of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. has now been contracted to complete the final draft as a tool in the process of aligning laws. The Final Report is anticipated to be completed in late July 2023.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee speaks at the Prince George National Red Dress Day event on May 5, 2023.



COVID-19 Pandemic

As the global community transitions from the pandemic and adjusts to living with COVID-19, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) continues its steadfast commitment to the health and safety of First Nations peoples and communities across British Columbia. While our advocacy efforts in this area have been reduced to address other pressing matters, we want to assure BC First Nations that our communities' well-being remains at the forefront of the BCAFN's priorities.

In this context, the BCAFN strongly encourages all individuals to remain informed and actively seek all available COVID-19 booster doses. We recognize the significance of staying protected and keeping our loved ones safe during these uncertain times. Regional Chief Teegeee emphasizes the importance of our collective responsibility in ensuring and maintaining the health and resilience of our communities.

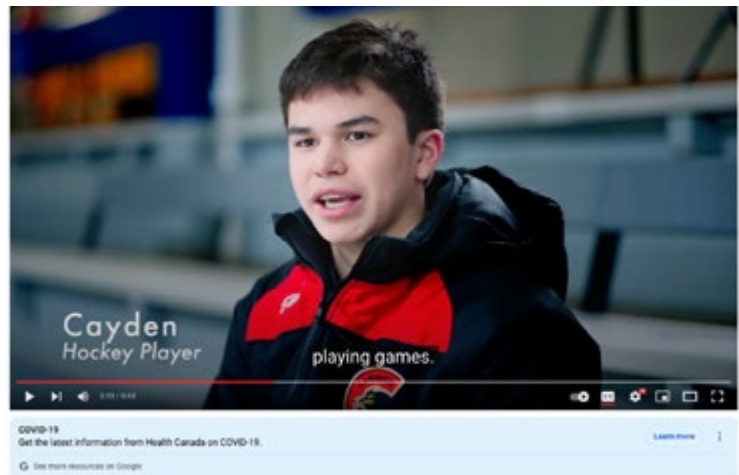
Earlier this year, the BCAFN collaborated with Positive Living North (PLN), also known as No kh̓eyoh t'sih'en t'sehena Society. Based in Prince George, PLN is an Indigenous AIDS Service Organization that provides culturally safe support, education, and prevention services throughout Northern British Columbia. Together, we hired Stance Media, an Indigenous-led video production company, to produce a series of five impactful videos.

These videos share the authentic and personal stories of First Nation individuals who have chosen to receive the COVID-19 booster dose. In less than a minute, they capture the diverse experiences of BC First Nations youth, athletes, entrepreneurs, and members living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. These stories are powerful reminders of the importance of vaccination and its profoundly positive impact on our communities.

As we navigate the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19, alongside other intersecting social,



Jaden's Story - COVID-19 Booster



Cayden's Story - COVID-19 Booster

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

health, economic, and environmental crises, the BCAFN remains resolute in our dedication to advocating for the rights and well-being of BC First Nations. We stand alongside you, amplifying your voices and addressing the concerns that matter most to our communities.

We invite you to watch the BCAFN's latest COVID videos and previous video campaigns by visiting [our YouTube channel](#). Together, let us draw inspiration from these stories of resilience and compassion as we build a healthier future for our communities.

Children and Families

Over the past several months, First Nations have made monumental steps towards resuming jurisdiction over their children and families and achieving unprecedented acknowledgement and compensation for the egregious harms experienced by First Nations children, youth, and families, as a result of Canada's discriminative provision of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) and Jordan's Principle.

In British Columbia (B.C.) several Nations have demonstrated their intent to exercise jurisdiction over child and family services, through exercising legislative authority in relation to child and family services and requesting and negotiating coordination agreements. On March 24th, 2023, Splatsin, Secwépemc Nation was the first Nation in B.C. to enter a coordination agreement, while on April 1st, 2023, Sts'ailes First Nation brought their child and family services law into force within their community.

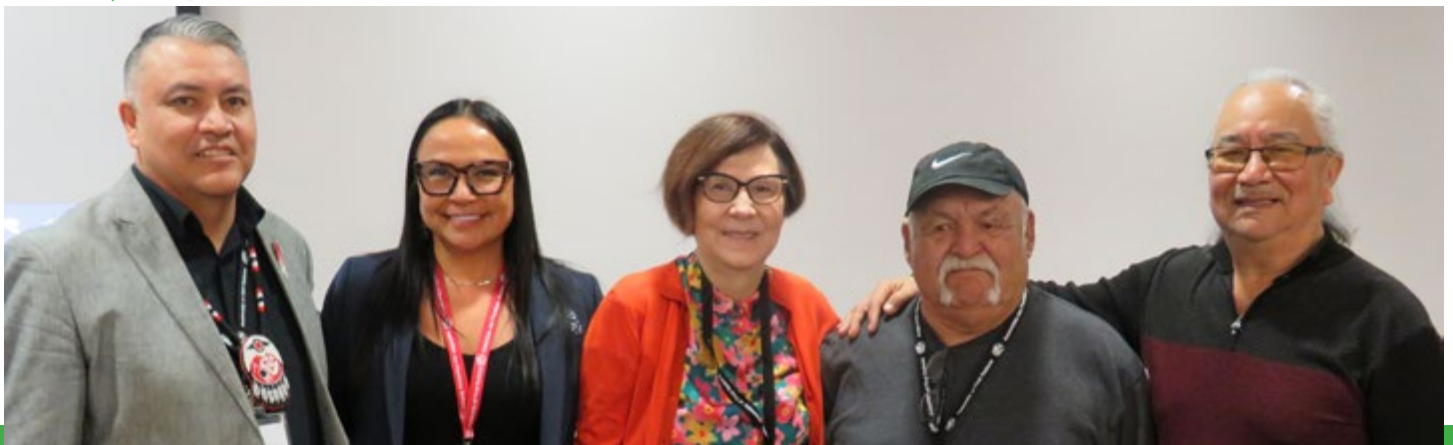
On April 4th, 2023, First Nations-in-Assembly passed resolution 04-2023, at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly, which: Supports the revised Final Settlement Agreement on Compensation (FSA) and authorizes AFN negotiators to make minor edits, as necessary; supports the AFN to seek an order from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal confirming that the FSA fully satisfies its compensation orders; directs the AFN to seek approval of the FSA by the Federal Court of Canada;

Calls on the Prime Minister of Canada to make an apology to the representative plaintiffs, the survivors of Canada's discrimination, and those who have passed away; ensures compensation is paid and supports are provided as quickly as possible; and directs the AFN to return to First Nations-in-Assembly to provide regular progress reports and seek direction where required.

Although much work remains, jurisdictional steps and accomplishments, as well as unparalleled acknowledgement and compensation, are testaments to the relentless dedication of First Nations, who have and continue to demand transformation pertaining to their children, families, and communities.

Other work underway, includes engagements with: the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on the development of a new funding framework for all First Nations child and family services in B.C.; MCFD on investigation into child protection responses involving infants; MCFD on the "reset" of supports and services for children and youth with disabilities; MCFD on the review and reform of "child protection" of First Nations children and youth; and the Ministry of Early Learning and Child Care on First Nations Early Learning and Child Care grant distribution, child care regulation, and development of a Tripartite MOU.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Mary Teegee, Cindy Blackstock, Ray Harris and Chief Mark Point - Skowkale First Nation at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly held in Ottawa April 3 - 6, 2023.



Housing and Homelessness

BC's Budget 2023 has earmarked over \$1.5 billion in operating and capital funding over three years to reduce homelessness, including strategies to prioritize cultural safety, Indigenous and community partnerships, and the inclusion of people with diverse identities and needs. An additional \$228 million will be invested over three years to establish new regional multi-disciplinary teams to support rapid response for regions responding to substantive encampments, including enhancing fire prevention and safety, site management, sanitation, non-profit service-provider support, capacity and training, peer workers to acquire rapid deployment housing in addition to \$44 million to help people who are living in encampments to access temporary modular housing. Despite these investments, First Nations continue to disproportionately represent the growing homelessness population across BC, and housing insecurity continues to be pervasive for many First Nations both on and off reserve.

Regional Chief Teegee, alongside the First Nations Leadership Council Executive, met with the Honourable Minister Ravi Kahlon in June 2023 to discuss critical issues related to First Nations housing gaps and homelessness. In this meeting, he called on the Province to call for a state of emergency in the homelessness crisis to support

efforts for securing additional funding, including federal funding, to address the homelessness crisis in BC. Regional Chief Teegee also met with City of Prince George's Mayor and Council in May 2023 to discuss its proposed Centralized Encampment Strategy. Regional Chief Teegee advocated for a human rights-based approach to encampments, including providing encampment residents with basic needs for survival, including access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and garbage removal. Regional Chief Teegee continues to advocate for municipal governments to recognize their legal obligations to uphold the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, particularly regarding their responsibilities to the human right to housing within their mandates.

BCAFN has received funding to advance its mandates related to housing and homelessness through Indigenous Services Canada, including the hiring of a Housing Policy Analyst, hosting a Housing Forum in Fall 2023, and revitalizing a regional Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure. BCAFN will keep Chiefs and leadership apprised of the developments of these initiatives over the summer months.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee meets with Prince George City Mayor and Council to discuss encampments, housing and homelessness.





Knowledge Keeper Update

Dr. Gwendolyn Point
Sto:lo Nation

Greetings,

In my role as a Knowledge Keeper for BCAFN I continue to share guidance and support with the BCAFN team and provide leadership on the national AFN Knowledge Keeper's Council. I am heartened to see so many working diligently to advocate and bring about the better reality that we envision for the future generations.

I have supported BCAFN's annual Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Sessions for several years; providing guidance in the planning process and support during the dialogue. This year, I was thankful to be able to gather for this event in Prince George in May, and witness the good work that is happening to bring about equity, justice, and inclusion for First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

I have also supported BCAFN's work to gather feedback to inform the development of a Toolkit that will centre the diverse ways that we, as First Nations, work to ensure that every voice is included and valued in the work that we do. I look forward to how this resource can encourage and serve as a helpful tool for our leaders, First Nations staff, and advocates as they look to ensure that their laws, policies, and programs take into account the diversity and uniqueness of our communities.

I also support our AFN Chiefs Committee on Education and attend their meetings throughout the year. It is my honour to witness and participate in all the good work done by the BCAFN and the AFN.

Chief Robert Joseph
Gwawaenuk First Nation

One with the Land

In the early morning of July 04, a small contingent of knowledge keepers and Musgamagw chiefs departed Yalis (Alert Bay) under a greyish dome and calm seas. It was American Independence Day, and the previous day was Canada Day. We were heading to Hada (Bond Sound), the birthplace and very cradle of life for the Kwikwasut'inuxe – Haxwa'mis Tribe. It was here that Tse'kame manifest on this sacred site to become their first ancestor, their genesis.

The chiefs were sombre and serene as we pulled away from the dock of Alert Bay. To us the moment was surreal. We understood the clash of time, history, and place. We remember the glory that was followed by the tumult of colonization and genocide.

Canada Day and US Independence Day celebrations reminded us of how much work needs to be done to restore land, spirit and human dignity.

Our goals for the day as we travelled deep into our traditional territories was to discuss and determine how the Kwikwasut'inuxe – Haxwa'mis could restore their relationships with their lands. To identify their inherent authorities, roles and responsibilities in the care of the same.

As we were making our approach to Hada, monuments welcomed us through the distance. Tsekame stood on a ridge high above the shoreline

over-looking everything and Sisiuł stood at the base between land and sea it seemed.

We made our way to shore and congregated under the shadows of sisiuł, the double headed sea monster.

I spoke first:

"Welcome everyone to this sacred place. We are here again at this divine place that the Creator bequeathed to us."

I paused ever so briefly to take it all in. I saw before me the wonder, awe, power and splendor of it all. The ocean in front of me seemed to wash over me. The forest around me seemed to cradle me. The mountains in the distance appeared like majestic sentinels. I sensed the presence of life and spirit, the animals, birds and fish all at once.

"Our rivers and streams and oceans were never meant to be alone," I said "They are our relatives and we are one with them.

"Our forests and everything there-in were never meant to be alone and we are one with them," I added. "There it was again ... the idea that we and everything are one."

Our ancestors sustained all the land, sea, air and spirit – knowing they sustained us in return. If we are to be custodians of our lands, we need to know this. When we know this, there is a sense of sanctity that grows and all is sacred.

We departed Hada for Gwayasdums and continued our dialogue in one of the oldest if not the oldest gukdzi (bighouse) on the coast. I was mesmerized by all the cackling fire in the middle of that place. The fire spoke and reminded us that our ancestors were there with us. Timeless wisdom was on our side, not fickle science that can be manipulated by greed or other harmful values.

Our travel through the territories was grounding. We experienced that deep and unrelenting sense of connection and belonging. We remembered the better days.

I could sense the whispers of the ancestors: "Always remember who you are and where you come from."

As my daughter Shelley said;

"These are the ancient lands and waters that Bakwum people have been in relationship with for 10's of thousands of years. It is living that relationship out loud and boldly that will elevate life for all of us and mother earth. I dream of a world where all humans adopt the value of Namwayut – We are all one. We could save mother earth. We could save ourselves - heal ourselves. We would love with no conditions and so on and so on. This is what Indigenous people can lead humanity to."

Kwinkwinxwaligedzi-Wakas



Knowledge Keepers Dr. Gwendolyn Point and Chief Robert Joseph speaking at the BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly at Musqueam First Nation held March 9 & 10, 2023.

2SLGBTQQIA+ Knowledge Keeper Representative Update

Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales
Squamish Nation

Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales, I am a 62-year-old Indian Day School & Residential School survivor. I am a father, grandfather and a great-grandfather. I live a Clean & Sober life since April 3rd, 2007, attending a treatment centre on Vancouver Island, as well as, Choices Seminars in July 2005, Givers 1 & Giver 2. This was the start of my healing journey, I have coached at Choices and now Break Free Seminars. I've attended Super Choices & Super Givers, through these personal growth seminars, I've learned to accept myself as a proud Two-Spirit man. I've gone back to college focusing my studies in Child & Youth Care, worked for 8 years with SN Ayas Menmen delivering cultural and language lessons to our youngest population of Squamish Nation, providing the children with Squamish language and sign language together.

I am a member of our Syewen Winter Spirit dancing for 43 years and attended Sundance in Sioux Valley as well as, South Dakota where I received my Sundance name – Eagleday from my Sundance grandfather John Eagleday Sr. Been a member of our Shaker Indian Church since June 1979. I was a Men's Traditional Dancer and travelled throughout Turtle Island aka North America along with my family.

Chen Kwenmantumi – I am grateful



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UBC Sustainability Scholars Intern
Charlotte Bull
Indigenous Youth Intern
Santana Dreaver

BCAFN Events

BCAFN Women & 2SLGBTQQIA+ Strategic Action Plan Update & Engagement
August 30, 2023
1:00 - 3:00 PM
Online via Zoom
[REGISTER](#)

BCAFN Housing Forum
SAVE the DATE!
Fall, 2023
Location TBD

BCAFN Annual General Meeting
September 19 - 21, 2023
Musqueam Community Centre,
Vancouver, BC
[REGISTER](#)

BCAFN Economic Development Forum
SAVE the DATE!
October 16 - 18, 2023
Whistler, BC

Women Chiefs Caucus
SAVE the DATE!
October 31, 2023
Vancouver, BC

Information and registration for all BCAFN events can be found on the [website](#)

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