



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

BCAFN NEWS

BC Assembly of First Nations

Winter/Spring 2026



REGIONAL CHIEF

TERRY TEEGEE

Chiefs, Leaders, Knowledge Keepers, Elders, Youth, & Community Members

Hadih,

The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) has been working in partnership with the other members of the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) to push back against Premier David Eby's short sighted threats to amend and weaken the *Declaration Act*. In response to the *Gitxaala v British Columbia* appeal decision, the Province has stated its intention to amend the *Declaration Act* in ways that no longer capture the spirit or substance of the original goal of the legislation: to commit to true reconciliation in BC by ensuring that the laws of this province are in line with the basic human rights of First Nations. BCAFN and the FNLC will continue to support First Nations leadership in responding to the Province of BC and calling on the Premier Eby's government to uphold First Nations inherent rights, title and interests and cease from making any efforts to gutting the *Declaration Act*.

Beyond our work to directly engage with cabinet ministers within the provincial government, the BCAFN has also been active in reaching out to influential environmental, civil society, and labour organizations. We have built a strong grassroots movement to support and defend the *Declaration Act* against the fear and paranoia being peddled by the Conservative party, the Mayor of Richmond, and some industry groups.

BCAFN has also been active at the federal level, engaging with Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament to advance First Nations' rights. Visits in February included Joanne Thompson, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) with discussions focused on the increasing anti-Indigenous racism as a result of misinformation of the Salmon Allocation Policy as well as the need for urgent funding to advance the 11 DFO-related Action Plan Measures under the *UN Declaration Act*. I also met with Gregor Robertson, Minister of Housing and Infrastructure and urged the Minister to commit to working with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to close the infrastructure gap for First Nations and address the homelessness crisis. Rebecca Alty, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and I met to discuss urgent funding top ups for Specific Claims research and Additions to Reserve policy reform. Tim Hodgson, Minister of Natural Resources and I met to discuss the impacts of the *Building Canada Act* and the need to seek First Nations' free, prior and informed consent for any nation-building project

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federal government. I also spoke with Sean Fraser, Minister of Justice to discuss a National Inquiry into the deaths of Indigenous Peoples and the Minister's support for legislating anti-Indigenous racism as a criminal act under the Criminal Code. I also met with Mandy Gull-Masty, Minister of Indigenous Services to discuss the urgent need for a Children and Families Long-term reform settlement agreement that meets the needs of First Nations from coast to coast and ends Canada's discrimination against First Nations children. I also advocated for the urgent re-introduction of the First Nations Clean Water Act that upholds the human right to water and support for passing Bill S-2.

In February I joined a Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico. This mission is the largest in Canadian history, and one of the first to include official First Nations representation, including BCAFN, the Manitoba Southern Chiefs Organization, and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. While in Mexico, I worked to build relationships with Mexican Indigenous groups, explore opportunities for BC First Nations trade in Mexico, and connect with Minister Leblanc, Minister Miller and the Global Affairs Canada team ahead of the 2026 compulsory review of the Canada-US-Mexico Agreement. This work followed direction from Chiefs found in Resolutions 04/2025, 28/2024, and 07f/2019, all of which aim to uphold the UN Declaration and Free, Prior and Informed Consent when it comes to economic activities and international trade.

You can read more about BCAFN's work in this newsletter, including a summary of significant legal decisions (Gitxaala, Cowichan, and Mowi) impacting First Nations in BC over the last year. Mussi Cho!



Regional Chief Terry Teegee networking during the Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle

Ongoing work on the Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) and Jordan's Principle at the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) continues to be a priority. On August 20, 2025, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued [2025 CHRT 80](#), which ordered Canada, the Caring Society, and the AFN to submit plans and remedies for long-term national reforms to FNCFS – either jointly or separately. In December, 2025, Canada submitted their 22-page plan without any consultation or collaboration with First Nations. The National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC), the Caring Society, and the AFN collaborated on a 109-page Plan called "Loving Justice", supported by direct engagement and contributions from First Nations rights holders. BCAFN advocated and clarified BC First Nations position emphasising the need for meaningful regional variations within a strong, First Nations-led national framework rather than negotiating regional agreements based on the already rejected Final Settlement Agreement. The BCAFN continues to support the ongoing work of the NCCC and future engagements on Long-Term Reform via BCAFN Resolution 27/2025 "Support for Regional Consultation on Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services." Deliberations at the CHRT concerning Jordan's Principle are temporarily on-hold while matters related to the FNCFS are resolved and there has been little meaningful action from government partners concerning this critical issue facing our communities. There are approximately 140,000 outstanding Jordan's Principle requests across Canada and there is still no functional means to triage the urgency or severity of requests. The BCAFN is fully committed to engaging with both provincial and federal officials to see the unreasonable burden of this backlog lifted from First Nations organizations, children, families, and caregivers.

Children and Youth in Care and ELCC Tripartite MOU

As per BCAFN Resolution 28/2025, we have continued to support the joint table addressing the unique needs of First Nations Children and Youth in Care via collaboration with the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), FNLC partners, and the Ministries of Child and Family Development and Education and Child Care. At this table, the BCAFN continues its commitments to address policy and legislative reform to ensure that the needs of First Nations children and youth in care are met, and that adequate funding and privacy provision are secured to best meet the needs of both individuals and communities.

Alongside the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, First Nations Education Steering Committee, and FNLC partners, the Early Learning and Childcare Tripartite MOU tables have continued to meet regularly to support self determination and First Nations jurisdiction over early learning and childcare in BC.

Tripartite First Nations Children and Families Working Group and AOPSI

Most recently meeting on November 14th, 2025, engagement with provincial and federal governments has continued through the Tripartite First Nations Children and Families Working Group. Alongside FNLC partners, key matters discussed included addressing the Jordan's Principle backlog, resumption of jurisdiction, and shared objectives in the Reconciliation Charter.

Alongside FNLC partners, work is underway to support the recently appointed Steering Committee members tasked to revitalize the Aboriginal Operational and Practice Standards Initiative (AOPSI). Together with the Our Children Our Way Society, current pursuits focus on the establishment of Steering Committee processes and seeking the necessary funding and resourcing for updating AOPSI and reenvisioning AOPSI into a fully rights-based framework.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Following the warm spring weather in February across much of British Columbia (BC), Environment and Climate Change Canada's latest global mean temperature forecast predicts that 2026 will likely be one of the hottest and driest years on record. Climate change is not a future problem; it is a pressing reality of our current moment. Despite this evidence, Crown governments continue to downplay the climate emergency. Current policies, including Canada's 2025 Climate Competitiveness Strategy, signal a stronger shift to technological and market-driven solutions, prioritizing economic development over urgent climate action. These misguided decisions are leading to a significant reduction in climate investments, including funding for First Nations climate resilience, conservation efforts, and land and water stewardship. Regional Chief Terry Teegee and BCAFN staff are dedicated to implementing the climate mandates set forth by the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly.

In 2025, Regional Chief Terry Teegee, alongside Regional Chief Andrea Paul from Nova Scotia, took on the role of co-chair for the AFN Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE). Together with four political appointees from BC and one technical appointee, Regional Chief Teegee continues to advocate for the rights and priorities of BC title and rights holders in federal climate and environment policy and programming.

From Vision to Action: the BC First Nations Climate Leadership Agenda (BC FNCL Agenda)

Although Canada withdrew their commitment to the [BC FNCL Agenda](#), which was endorsed by Chiefs in Assembly in March 2025), the BC FNCL Agenda has still enabled First Nations in BC to host three Nation-led climate gatherings in line with BCAFN Resolutions 05/2025 and 04/2024. In January 2026, the Stelat'en First Nation held the inaugural *Indigenous Water Keepers Gathering*. This was followed in early February by the *Lower Fraser Watershed First Nations Climate Gathering*, hosted by the Sólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance (STSA) and Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SRRMC) in collaboration with the Stó:lō Tribal Council (STC) and the Lower Fraser Fisheries Alliance (LFFA). The

third gathering, the *First Nations Leadership Conference: Transformative Change* was hosted by the Gitxaala First Nation at the end of February 2026. These climate gatherings aim to empower First Nations' governance, build collective resilience, promote holistic solutions, and influence climate discussions.

International Engagement, Indigenous Partnerships and Reversing Nature Loss

Through the [Building Climate Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives Project](#) (BCRIP), a four-year Indigenous-led initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada (2024 – 2028), BCAFN is engaging in international advocacy alongside global Indigenous partners to promote Indigenous rights and Indigenous-led, locally-based climate action. The BCRIP project will also fund ten (10) Indigenous-led Nature-Based Solutions partnership projects in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Guatemala co-designed and co-implemented in partnership with First Nations in BC and Indigenous Peoples in Canada. These projects will focus on knowledge sharing, relationship building, and joint advocacy opportunities to enhance climate resilience, combat climate change and halt biodiversity loss. A public announcement of the ten projects is scheduled for Spring 2026.

BCAFN's international advocacy aims to fulfill our mandate outlined in BCAFN Resolutions 05/2021 and 32/2023. In 2025, BCAFN participated in several key events with a dedicated delegation, including the [IUCN World Conservation Congress 2025](#), the inaugural World Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nature: "Our Knowledge is the language of Mother Earth" held in Abu Dhabi in October; the [Adaptation Futures](#) (AF2025) from October 12 to 17 in Aotearoa (New Zealand), and the [UNFCCC COP30](#) held in Belem in November. At these forums, delegations of Chiefs, knowledge keepers, youth representatives, and technical staff highlighted the climate and conservation leadership of First Nations in BC. They stressed the need for governments and stakeholders to respect First Nations' rights while advocating for Indigenous-driven solutions globally. The delegations also met with federal government officials to address pressing issues, such as the effects of new federal

legislation on constitutionally protected rights and Canada's climate and biodiversity commitments, and expressed concerns about the insufficient support for First Nations representation in international policy discussions and for initiatives led by First Nations.

BCAFN's international engagement allows for a detailed analysis of international policies to identify gaps in domestic policies that could enhance First Nations' interests and ensure government accountability to First Nations in BC

Low-Carbon Transportation Project

The BCAFN Climate Change Portfolio continues to implement Phase 2 of the [First Nations Low-Carbon Transportation Project](#) (2022 - 2027). A project supported by the BC Ministry of Energy and Climate Solutions aimed to improve First Nations' access to safe, affordable, reliable, accessible low-carbon transportation.

The [Transportation Assessment Report and Action Plan](#), was completed and endorsed by Chiefs via [Resolution 35/2025](#) in October 2025. The report presents 47 recommendations grouped into 10 themes to tackle barriers and enhance equitable access to low-

carbon transportation across the province. BCAFN is currently developing an implementation plan for these recommendations to ensure effective advocacy for improved policies, shared decision-making, and investments that advance a just, accessible, safe, affordable, and low-carbon transportation system for First Nations in BC.

Additionally, the BCAFN is supporting six Pilot Project Communities as part of Phase 2: Tsawwassen First Nation, Skidegate Band Council, Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Nanoose First Nation, Chawathil First Nation, and Penticton Indian Band. The selected Nations are each receiving \$65,000 to develop a self-determined Low-Carbon Transportation Plan and Gap and Opportunities Analysis Report. All Nations have begun their planning processes, and the BCAFN has held two meetings with the Pilot Project Communities to date. BCAFN will continue to provide ongoing support to the Pilot Project Communities in the development and implementation of their plans through regular meetings and in-person visits.



Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico: Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Marc Miller, Minister of Official Languages and Grand Chief Jerry Daniels, Southern Chiefs' Organization.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The BCAFN Economic Development team is working to action the resolutions set by the Chiefs-in-Assembly. Over the last year BCAFN advocacy has focused on economic reconciliation, sovereignty, and long-term prosperity for First Nations in BC. The portfolio's critical priorities include food security, trade, forestry, cannabis, mining, and energy, with a focus on self-determination in the context of regulatory and legislative shifts to streamline projects.

Trade

Regional Chief Teegee attended the Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico, the largest in Canadian history and one of the first to include an Indigenous delegation. The focus of the mission was establishing relationships with Indigenous peoples in Mexico, and liaising with the Minister of Internal Trade of Canada, the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc; Minister of Canadian Identity and Culture, the Honourable Marc Miller; and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Honourable Heath MacDonald. Mexico is a market of opportunity for trade and diplomatic relationships, particularly in advance of the upcoming Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement review.

The participation of Regional Chief Teegee advanced BCAFN resolutions, on inclusive trade, and increased participation for First Nations on missions including [Resolution 04/2025: Upholding First Nations Rights and Title in Canada-U.S.](#) Trade Considerations and Countermeasures, [Resolution 28/2024: Supporting First Nations Participation in International Trade and Economic Self-Determination](#), and [Resolution 07\(f\)/2019: The Right To Access International Markets and Trade](#). Regional Chief Teegee also took part in an Indigenous leader's roundtable at the Canadian Embassy, bringing together leaders from Mexico and Canada to identify shared priorities for trade, economic development and opportunities for future collaboration.

BCAFN is developing a First Nations trade mission to Aotearoa/New Zealand in June 2026 with the Maori partner organization, Federation of Maori Authorities (FoMA). The project is supported through

Global Affairs Canada's Indo-Pacific Regional Connectivity Envelope. The mission will support BC First Nations' export-ready businesses connecting with Māori businesses in Aotearoa, with a travel subsidy for delegates to ensure common barriers to trade are reduced. The partnership between BCAFN and FoMA brings together First Nations' organizations to foster sustained connections in Aotearoa, building long-term Indigenous-to-Indigenous trade networks grounded in shared values.

Annual Economic Development Forum

BCAFN is pleased to host its annual Economic Development Forum, *Interwoven Futures: Thread of Resilience in Sovereign Economies*, on March 18-19, 2026, at the Fairmont Waterfront in Vancouver, BC, located on the unceded and traditional territories of the *xwməθkwəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), and *səlilwətaʔ* (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. A

British Columbia
Assembly of First Nations

**2026
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
FORUM**

REGISTRATION
AVAILABLE

FAIRMONT
WATERFRONT
VANCOUVER

**INTERWOVEN FUTURES: THREADS
OF RESILIENCE
IN SOVEREIGN ECONOMIES**

MARCH 18-19, 2026

EVENTS.BCAFN.CA

Fashion Show and Networking Reception will be held at the Vancouver Hotel during the evening of March 18, 2026. Register here: events.bcafn.ca

The BCAFN Economic Development Forum brings together First Nations leaders, community members, policymakers, entrepreneurs, youth, government representatives, and industry partners to share knowledge and strengthen relationships. Through delegates will explore a wide range of topics aligned with First Nations' economic development interests

in BC, and beyond. The forum will also celebrate the achievements of First Nations-led enterprises, encourage cross-sector collaboration, and reinforce a shared vision for long-term prosperity grounded in cultural strength and economic resilience.

For further information, please contact sarah.behn@bcafn.ca, hannah.cripps@bcafn.ca or nikki.saadat@bcafn.ca.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee met with Minister Rebecca Alty, Crown-Indigenous Relations, in Ottawa in early February 2026.

FIRST NATIONS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The First Nations Centre of Excellence (FNCOE) is strengthening partnerships and delivering practical, community-based economic development support to First Nations across British Columbia. Through its current funding agreement, FNCOE is working directly with Nations and their development corporations to provide tailored services such as

economic planning, project management, governance advisory, and funding alignment. FNCOE has also successfully secured funding from PacifiCan, providing important operational stability as the organization continues to build a sustainable, long-term funding foundation. This focused approach ensures each partner community receives meaningful,

results-driven support aligned with its unique priorities and timelines.

Continued Operations

FNCOE held its inaugural Board of Directors meeting on January 26, 2026, marking a significant milestone in its transition to an independent organization. Transition planning remains underway, with ongoing efforts focused on governance, legal frameworks, and organizational development. FNCOE is working closely with BCAFN Administration to coordinate the transfer of key logistics and administrative functions as part of this process.

Operations and service delivery continue without interruption. The team remains dedicated to supporting partner Nations while advancing transition activities in parallel. In recent months, FNCOE has hosted in-person engagement sessions with partner communities and participated in the Natural Resources Forum in Prince George from January 20–22, 2026. At the forum, FNCOE strengthened relationships with partner Nations and their economic entities and built new connections with government, industry, and community leaders to expand economic opportunities for First Nations.

FNCOE is also collaborating with Global Affairs Canada on the First Nations Young Indigenous Leaders Exchange Pilot Phase, which will see up to 24 Indigenous youth travel to the Indo-Pacific region. In addition, CEO Harlan Schilling is representing FNCOE at the Arctic Summit – Securing Sovereignty and Investment in Whitehorse, Yukon, in February 2026. This gathering brings together global leaders,

industry partners, and Indigenous organizations to share strategies and foster international partnerships.

These initiatives and partnerships are helping FNCOE generate new ideas, opportunities, and resources to further support First Nations–led economic growth in British Columbia.

FNCOE remains committed to advancing collaborative, practical, and responsive economic development services that meet communities where they are. For more information, visit fncoe.ca.



FNCOE CEO Harlan Schilling



FIRST NATIONS
Centre of Excellence

fncoe.ca

FIRST NATIONS CITIZENSHIP/MEMBERSHIP

BCAFN continues to advocate for the elimination of sex-based discrimination in the *Indian Act* in a manner that respects First Nations self-determination and the standards of the *UN Declaration*, as mandated by BCAFN Resolution 01/2023 Ending Sex Discrimination in the Indian Act in alignment with the UN Declaration, BCAFN Resolution 26/2025 Ending Sex Discrimination in the Indian Act and Implementing the UN Declaration.

Since June 2023, BCAFN has been one of 17 Indigenous organizations participating in the Indigenous Advisory Process (IAP), established under the Collaborative Process on the Second-Generation Cut-Off and Section 10 Voting Thresholds by the former Minister of Indigenous Services Canada. The IAP supports Canada's commitment to co-develop consultation processes addressing registration and band membership reforms, in accordance with First Nations priorities under the *UN Declaration*. In September 2025, the IAP was renewed, and BCAFN, together with the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), launched a letter campaign calling for the end of sex-based discrimination in the *Indian Act* and the adoption of a single-parent rule and on December 12, 2025, co-hosted a webinar to share information with BC First Nations members and impacted families.

This webinar addressed the ongoing impacts of sex discrimination in the *Indian Act*, including the second-generation cut-off rule and Indian Status transmission inequities, while discussing potential solutions to address ongoing discrimination. The session included remarks from Cheryl Rule, BCAFN Regional Chief Terry Teegee, Chief Marilyn Slett, Sharon McIvor and Harmony Johnson. The webinar highlighted the importance of Bill S-2, which seeks to remove the second-generation cut-off and advance equitable transmission of Indian Status for First Nations women and their descendants. It further provided an overview of sex discrimination in the *Indian Act*, emphasizing the historical and ongoing inequities faced by First Nations women, the impacts on family and community ties, and the importance of self-determination over citizenship and membership. In addition, participants were encouraged to actively

engage in the ongoing letter-writing campaign and broader advocacy efforts to ensure the full passage and implementation of Bill S-2.

The session concluded with a call to action: First Nations communities must continue to advocate for legal reform, the restoration of rights, and self-determination over citizenship, recognizing that these efforts are essential to preserving culture, governance, and community well-being for current and future generations. Resources and recording of the webinar is available on the [BCAFN website](#), and support is accessible through ISC's Registration Reform Team via email (Reforme-de-linscription-Registration-Reform@sac-isc.gc.ca) for First Nation communities or impacted individuals. The BCAFN would like to thank our presenters, special guest, and all of those who attended and supported our webinar.

BCAFN continues to monitor the former Bill C-38 (introduced December 2022) *An Act to Amend the Indian Act* (new registration entitlements), which was terminated on January 6, 2025, when Parliament was prorogued. Identical legislation has now been reintroduced in Parliament as [Bill S-2](#). Bill S-2 seeks to address the following four issues: enfranchisement; voluntary deregistration; natal band reaffiliation; and the removal of outdated and offensive language related to dependent persons. On Dec 04, 2024, the Senate has passed Bill S-2 with amendments to first repeal the second-generation cut-off and to implement a one-parent rule. The second amendment would also eliminate the unknown paternity clause, which is if a status mother does not name the father of her child, that child is presumed to be non-status. Under the changes, those children would be granted Indian Status. The final amendment is for children born after 1985 who currently have 6(2) Indian Status would be upgraded to 6(1)—ensuring their children would also inherit status, even if the other parent is non-status. These amendments respond to concerns raised by First Nation communities, and First Nation organizations during 50 or more virtual engagement sessions hosted from August to December 2022 by Indigenous Services Canada as part of the consultation process for former Bill C-38.

Despite the broad support for S-2 as amended Canadian Government appearing to hesitant to support the Senate’s proposed amendments, citing a need for further consultation with First Nations. The BCAFN and other First Nations organizations are urging Parliament to move more quickly. The FNLC have called for the passage of Bill S-2, as amended in the Senate, to ensure and restore Indian Status rights can be passed on to future generations. As of February 10, 2026, Bill S-2 continues to be deliberated before the House of Commons and under review by the Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) Committee. The bill must complete third reading in the Senate before proceeding through three readings and committee review in the House of Commons, after which it is anticipated to return to the Senate, potentially as early as April 2026. The bill continues

to advance despite encountering procedural delays, including calls for additional consultation despite engagement processes that have been ongoing for decades.

Ongoing advocacy by BCAFN and First Nations in BC and across the turtle island remains critical to ensure the intent of the proposed amendments is preserved and that the voices of First Nations individuals and communities continue to be heard throughout the legislative process. The BCAFN and like-minded organizations encourages individuals and organizations to submit letters of support for Bill S-2 as amended for consideration by Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. The template letter can be found [here](#).



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The BC Assembly of First Nations, through the First Nations Leadership Council, continues advancing negotiations toward a multilateral emergency management agreement with Canada, represented by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and the Province of BC, which is represented by the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness. Phase 2 is now focused on developing a rights-based multilateral framework aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as implemented through the federal *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDA) and British Columbia's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (DRIPA), including relevant Action Plan commitments related to emergency management reform, co-development of legislation, and strengthening First Nations governance and jurisdiction. To support this work, partners are reviewing existing emergency management services delivered under bilateral agreements to confirm what is currently being provided, where gaps exist, and what those

services actually cost. This analysis is informing the development of the multilateral governance structure and a joint business case with Canada to secure long-term, sustainable funding. At the same time, extensions to existing bilateral agreements are being negotiated to ensure service continuity during the transition, supported by BCAFN AGM Resolutions 31/2025 and 32/2025 (Oct 28-30, 2025) endorsing the multilateral EM timeline extension and First Nations jurisdiction in fire stewardship/cultural burning. Additionally, Regional Emergency Management Coordinators met in early February 2026 and are working toward a more streamlined structure to strengthen communication between the multilateral table and communities.

Looking ahead to this summer, seasonal forecasts indicate near-normal snowpack overall (~96% provincial average as of Feb 1, up to 127% in some basins earlier), lingering drought risks in northeast/Okanagan regions, and elevated heat/wildfire potential due to warmer/drier outlooks. With

SAVE THE DATE
FNLC Emergency Management Forum 2026:
From Determination to Action

March 11-12, 2026
River Rock Casino,
Musqueam Unceded
Territory (Richmond)

Scan QR to register



Visit events.bcafn.ca for more details

First Nations Leadership Council



Mitigate Prepare
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
Recover Respond

Emergency Preparedness Week approaching May 3–9, 2026, communities are encouraged to review emergency plans, update contact lists, and confirm coordination protocols with regional partners.

The FNLC Emergency Management Forum: From Determination to Action will take place March 11–12, 2026, at the River Rock Casino on unceded Musqueam Territory (Richmond). The Forum will provide technical updates on Phase 2, outline bilateral extensions and costing considerations,

and share provincial and federal updates on service delivery and the Emergency Disaster Management Act. The agenda includes a province-wide seasonal outlook, multilateral presentations and Q&A, regional breakout discussions on priorities and cost pressures, and updates from key First Nations organizations. More details are available on the [BCAFN website](#). For further information, please contact nikki.saadat@bcafn.ca.

FISHERIES

Regional Chief Terry Teegee and the BCAFN continue advancing coordinated advocacy on wild salmon recovery, fisheries governance reform, and the protection of First Nations' rights and jurisdiction. As Salmon Allocation Policy tensions, funding uncertainty, and major project acceleration increase pressures on BC watersheds, BCAFN's efforts have focused on advocating for salmon allocation that upholds First Nations' title and rights, ensuring conservation and rights-based governance remain central to federal decision-making.

Salmon Allocation Policy Review

BCAFN has been closely monitoring the federal review of the Salmon Allocation Policy (SAP). The review is unfolding in a heated public environment, with misinformation circulating about proposed changes. Regional Chief Teegee met with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Joanne Thompson, in February to clarify that the SAP review is about policy reform that upholds the Ahousaht Decision.

The decline of Pacific salmon requires structural change in management practices, with conservation and rebuilding as the priority.

Fisheries Act Review and UN Declaration Alignment

Following Regional Chief Teegee's fall appearance before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in November 2025,, BCAFN continues to advocate for substantive amendments

to the Fisheries Act. Regional Chief Teegee continues to call on Canada to ensure that the *Fisheries Act* is modernized in full alignment with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration) and the UN Declaration Act Action Plan that upholds First Nations' laws and decision-making including strengthened protection of First Nations' Knowledge

Federal Program Stability and Budget Concerns

Funding uncertainty remains a serious concern for salmon recovery and stewardship. Through National Fisheries Committee discussions, First Nations raised concerns regarding:

- The sunseting of the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative.
- Uncertain renewal of the Indigenous Aquatic Habitat Participation Program.
- Limited long-term commitments for Species at Risk funding.
- No significant new federal investments for salmon recovery or habitat protection in Budget 2025.

Federal public service reductions also raise concerns about DFO's capacity to conduct stock assessment, enforce habitat protections, and uphold consultation obligations.

Major Projects and Marine Risk

BCAFN continues to monitor the implications of the *Building Canada Act* and proposals that could

increase tanker traffic on the BC coast. Accelerated timelines and shifts in DFO's decision-making role raise concerns about cumulative effects assessment, habitat protection, and meaningful consultation. Protecting salmon and marine ecosystems must remain paramount.

Strengthening First Nations Coordination

BCAFN continues to work with the First Nations Fisheries Council to strengthen political-technical coordination on key files, including the SAP review, *Fisheries Act* reform, and watershed security. Unified advocacy is essential as fisheries governance enters a period of significant change.

Looking Ahead

BCAFN remains focused on:

- Rights-based reform of the Salmon Allocation Policy.
- *Fisheries Act* amendments that enable shared governance.
- Stable, long-term funding for salmon recovery

and habitat protection.

- Strong oversight of major projects affecting salmon and watersheds.

Regional Chief Teegee and the BCAFN will continue elevating these priorities through Ministerial engagement, the National Fisheries Committee, and collaboration with First Nations across BC.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee met with Minister Joanne Thompson, Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard in Ottawa in early February 2026.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

The housing and homelessness crisis continues to significantly and disproportionately impact First Nations in British Columbia, both on reserve and in urban centers. In November 2025, the federal government released its Budget 2025 and here in British Columbia, the provincial budget will be released later this February 2026. Despite reference to urban, rural, and northern Indigenous housing and the Build Canada Homes initiative in the federal budget, no new First Nations-specific, distinctions-based housing funding was announced. The Assembly of First Nations has estimated that \$70 billion is required in BC alone to close the infrastructure gap by 2030. Budget 2026 falls far short of this target.

Here in British Columbia, with the Premier attempting to walk back on previous commitments to reconciliation and alignment with the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UN Declaration), there has been no recent movement on the FNLC's work with the Province to align its housing and

legislative initiatives with the *UN Declaration*. Access to affordable housing and dependable infrastructure is critical to ensuring a better future for First Nations. Therefore, Regional Chief Teegee, alongside the First Nations Leadership Council, continue to advocate for upholding the *UN Declaration* and the *UN Declaration Act* passed into law by the government of BC in 2019.

Finally, the BC Chiefs Housing and Infrastructure Advisory Committee (BC-CHIAC) is now operational and providing strategic direction to BCAFN, FNHIC, and the FNLC on matters of housing governance, jurisdiction, and service transfer. The committee has developed its work plan for 2026 and will continue to work within its mandate to protect and advance First Nations' inherent rights to self-determination in housing, homelessness, and infrastructure. We encourage Chiefs and proxies from the Salish and Interior regions to respond to the upcoming call out to fill the final two positions on the Committee and look forward to providing updates to BC First Nations at future meetings.

JUSTICE

Regional Chief Terry Teegee continues to hold the justice portfolio with the National Assembly of First Nations and is co-chair of the AFN's Chiefs Committee on Justice. This portfolio is now shared with Regional Chief Francis Verrault-Paul from Quebec, and Regional Chief Abram Benedict from Ontario. Regional Chief Teegee's mandate includes advocating for the implementation of the national Indigenous Justice Strategy and calling for policy and legislative reform to ensure that Canada's justice system is responsive to the rights, jurisdiction and interests of First Nations across Canada. Major priorities identified by the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly include essential services designation for First Nations Police Services, the implementation of a national inquiry into First Nations Deaths by police forces and the criminalization of residential school denialism. Regional Chief Teegee, the BCAFN, the FNLC, and the AFN continue to work alongside one another to advance the mandates set out in resolutions passed by First Nations in British Columbia and across Canada.

Residential Schools/Denialism

Racism, anti-First Nations hate, and misinformation continue to be amplified and widely circulated by elected political officials in British Columbia. Residential school denialism continues to be used as a tool to gain political support, while demonizing and dividing British Columbians and BC First Nations. This behaviour is highly unparliamentary and has no place in our highest decision-making bodies, which have a responsibility to represent all British Columbians. Such actions must be condemned, and those disseminating such hate must be held accountable.

OneBC and MLA Dallas Brodie have been travelling around British Columbia to host denialist events on university campuses. These demonstrations have occurred at Thompson Rivers University, the University of Victoria, the University of the Fraser Valley, and, most recently, at the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus on the traditional territory of the Musqueam First Nation. At each of these events, OneBC and Dallas Brodie were met with sizable counterprotests in support of residential

school survivors, with the largest protest occurring at UBC. At each of these events, students, staff and community members stood in solidarity, driving the individuals who seek to perpetuate hate away from their campuses. The BCAFN commends and supports the actions of the counter-protestors at each of these events, who peacefully and respectfully stand with survivors and all BC First Nations. As noted in the January 23rd BCAFN press release, the BCAFN called upon UBC and all BC Universities to take a strong stance against residential school denialism, to bar individuals like Dallas Brodie and her supporters from continuing to create public forums to spread misinformation and hate against First Nations. First Nations continue to be underrepresented within post-secondary education institutions, and the ongoing existence of these events does not foster positive or safe learning spaces for First Nations students, staff, faculty or their allies.

Throughout the last year, the BCAFN has received a clear mandate to advocate for the criminalization of residential school denialism through several resolutions brought forward by the Chiefs-in-Assembly. Regional Chief Teegee and the BCAFN continue to call for the resignation of Dallas Brodie and are working alongside the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nations Summit to continue to challenge and address the rise in anti-Indigenous rhetoric and hate.

FPT on Justice and Public Safety

On October 15, 2025, BCAFN Board Member and the BC Representative on the AFN Chiefs Committee on Justice, Chief Jerry Jack from Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nation, travelled to Treaty 7 territory to attend the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety, in Kananaskis, Alberta. At the meeting, Chief Jack represented the national AFN on behalf of RC Teegee, alongside Regional Chief Francis Verreault-Paul, National Chief Cindy Woodhouse-Nepinak, and representatives from the Metis National Council and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. Chief Jack spoke to his career in law enforcement and personal connections to the justice system, calling for reform to ensure

First Nations are no longer criminalized by officers. He advocated for the immediate and meaningful implementation of the National Indigenous Justice Strategy, citing the urgent need for long-term reform. Chief Jack provided concrete examples of systemic discrimination and racism embedded within the justice system, highlighting the ongoing issues with the existing justice system. Chief Jack's testimony was greatly appreciated by several Ministers in attendance, as it provided greater context for the ongoing calls for reform from the AFN and the BCAFN.

Bail and Sentencing Testimony

On October 21, 2025, RC Teegee attended the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice as a witness to the proposed amendments to Bill C-14, *An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act* (bail and sentencing). The Act seeks to create reforms in two primary areas: stricter bail laws to address violent and repeat offending, and tougher sentencing laws for serious and violent crimes. During his testimony, Regional Chief Teegee reminded Canada of their obligations to ensure this legislation is consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous*

Peoples. He also highlighted the need for bail and sentencing for First Nations offenders to be aligned with the National First Nations Justice Strategy and echoed previous calls for Canada to commit to the implementation of this framework.

BCAFN AGM 2026

At the BCAFN Annual General Assembly in October of 2025, the Chiefs-in-Assembly brought forward and passed Resolution 30/2025, Support for the Implementation of the National First Nations Justice Strategy. Since the release of this strategy in June of 2025, Canada has not broadly acknowledged the strategy, nor have they committed to a clear implementation plan or identified a sufficient funding source. This resolution reaffirms calls from the national AFN to implement this strategy. In February of 2026, Regional Chief Teegee drafted a letter to Canada, calling for the implementation of this strategy and demanding that Canada share an implementation plan that supports initiatives that allow First Nations to lead the proposed reforms to the justice system outlined in the strategy.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee interviewed on CBC's Power & Politics in Ottawa during the AFN Annual Special Chiefs Assembly, Dec. 2025.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee, the BCAFN, and the FNLC remain committed to advocating for the revitalization, strengthening, and expansion of the distinct languages of BC First Nations. BCAFN continues to support the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Chiefs Committee on Language (CCOL) and Technical Committee on Languages (TCOL), where BC representatives advocate in support of BC First Nations' priorities and interests.

In November of 2025, the BCAFN was alerted by the First Peoples' Cultural Council to critical information regarding funding for First Nations languages. FPCC received notification that the Department of Canadian Heritage had extended the interim funding formula agreed upon by the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly and the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly, which was set to expire in March of 2026. This was due to an AFN request to extend the existing formula, as ongoing research on the formula factors would not be completed by March 2026. This notification prompted additional urgency for the CCOL and TCOL to discuss the Regional Allocation Funding Formula as soon as possible.

The CCOL and TCOL most recently convened on December 1, 2025, on the traditional and unceded territory of the Algonquin people during the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly. Here, committee members received an update from the Commissioner of Indigenous Languages, Ronald Ignace, who is Secwepemc and former chief of Skeetchestn Indian

Band. During this update, committee members expressed their grievances to the Commissioner regarding the Regional Allocation Funding formula, as noted in the official complaint previously drafted by the AFN. The committee continued with a review of relevant resolutions and ended with a brief discussion on the Regional Allocation Funding formula.

The CCOL and TCOL will meet on March 17 and 18, 2025, in Mi'kmaq territory, also known as Halifax, Nova Scotia, to revisit the Regional Allocation Funding Formula in preparation for the impending expiry of the interim formula, now in 2027. BC representatives remain committed to advocating for the unique needs of BC First Nations, in respect to the wide diversity of languages indigenous to our region. Further discussion is needed regarding the weighting of the proposed factors of the formula; an area the committee has previously struggled to achieve consensus on due to the highly diverse needs of First Nations across Canada.

Within British Columbia, provincial First Nations language legislation remains a high priority for the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC). The FNLC have drafted a letter to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation outlining the urgent needs for this legislation, to ensure First Nations language and culture are upheld and preserved at the provincial level.



LEGAL UPDATE

Cowichan Tribes v Canada (Attorney General), 2025 BCSC 1490

August 7, 2025

In August 2025, the BC Supreme Court (BCSC) released their landmark decision in the Cowichan Tribes case, granting Aboriginal title to the Cowichan Tribes over the historic village of Tl'uqtinus, located in modern-day Richmond. The Court granted the Cowichan declarations to confirm and give legal effect to their Aboriginal rights and title, and a timeline of 18 months to come into effect. They confirm that the Cowichan have Aboriginal title over specific portions of Tl'uqtinus, minus the YVR Fuel Delivery Project Lands, and that Canada and Richmond's fee simple title and interests over specific lots are defective and invalid due to the historic unjustifiable infringement of their Aboriginal title. Canada and Richmond both owe a duty to negotiation in "good faith reconciliation" over the fuel delivery lands and over third-party fee simple interests and the soil and freehold interests held by Richmond. Finally, the Cowichan descendants have a Section 35 Aboriginal right to fish the south arm of the Fraser River for food purposes with no time limits. The Cowichan did not seek to invalidate the fee simple title interests of private landowners or recover those lands. However, the Court confirmed that fee simple interests are not superior to Aboriginal title, but as long as fee simple interests exist, they constrain the ability of the Cowichan to exercise Aboriginal title.

The Court gave 18 months for the declarations to come into effect, leaving Canada, Richmond and Cowichan time to prepare for implementation. In October 2025, BC applied to appeal the decision.

Nicholas v Attorney General (Canada), 2025 BCSC 1596

August 19, 2025

In June 2021, 16 plaintiffs filed a challenge in the BCSC against the Attorney General (Canada) alleging that the Indian Act unjustifiably infringed their Charter rights, specifically Section 15(1) on the basis of race of origin. The plaintiffs are descendants of

Indian women who married Indian men, but were enfranchised when their husbands enfranchised, thus forcing the women to lose their status through no choice of their own. Canada offered a negotiation strategy, to enshrine this change in an amendment to the Indian Act; the parties agreed. The result was Bill C-38, which was introduced in 2021 and finally died on the table when Parliament was prorogued in early 2025. Since that time, Canada has re-introduced Bill C-38 in its entirety as Bill S-2.

Given the stagnation of the bill, the plaintiffs moved forward with the legal action in May 2024. At the BCSC in August 2025, the Court sided with the plaintiffs. Canada requested an extension of 12 months to complete the changes, but it was reduced to 10 months. The Court gave them until the end of April 2026 to reinvigorate the legislative process, which they have. Bill S-2 has passed through the Senate with amendments to remove Section 6(2) of the Indian Act completely, and is now at Second Reading in the House of Commons.

Gitxaala v British Columbia (Chief Gold Commissioner), 2025 BCCA 430

December 5, 2025

In 2023, the Gitxaala Nation and the Ehattesaht First Nation sought declarations with respect to the inconsistencies between the Mineral Tenure Act's, the Crown's duties under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, the Honour of the Crown, Section 3 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and the rights under DRIPA and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In December 2025, the BC Court of Appeal affirmed that UNDRIP is not just an interpretive aid. The Court focused on the intent of the legislators when incorporating UNDRIP into provincial and federal law, and concluded that although it does not create or confer new substantive legal rights or obligations arising from UNDRIP, it affirms it the legal interpretive lens that BC laws must be measured against. Importantly, the Court stated that DRIPA incorporates UNDRIP into the positive laws of BC and has immediate effect. DRIPA also

imposes a statutory duty on the Crown to consult and cooperate with Indigenous peoples to address unresolved inconsistencies between UNDRIP and the laws of BC.

The Court gave BC or the Chief Gold Commissioner 18 months to consult and design a system that allows for consultation. In February 2026, BC applied to appeal the decision.

Lummi Nation v. Canada (Attorney General), 2025 FC 1986

December 17, 2025

The Lummi Nation, located in Washington state, brought a case before the Canadian Federal Court against the Attorney General (AG) and the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority. As a nation affected by the colonial border separating their land, resources and relations, the Lummi claim that they are an “Aboriginal people of Canada” with Section 35 rights. In this case, they assert that as Section 35 rights holders, they are owed the duty to consult and accommodate and challenged Canada’s approval of the Roberts Bank terminal in Delta, BC, which they claim, will impact their established treaty rights in the US and asserted Aboriginal rights in Canada. The project was approved by an Order in Council which stated that the Crown was satisfied that its consultation process was consistent with the honour of the Crown and that any potential impacts to interests, including established and asserted Aboriginal and treaty rights, were appropriately accommodated.

The Court applied the Desautel (2021) decision to determine if the Crown has a duty to consult with a group outside of Canada and Haida (2004) for the test for triggering the duty to consult. The Court found that both tests were met and agreed with the Lummi that Canada owed them a duty to consult, but the Court was satisfied that Canada had fulfilled its duties to the Lummi. Despite missteps by both sides, the consultation was “reasonable, meaningful and honourable.” The Court dismissed the application for judicial review and ordered the Lummi Nation to pay Canada’s costs.

Mowi Canada West Inc. v. Canada (Fisheries, Oceans and Coast Guard), 2026 FCA 19

January 29, 2026

In 2023, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard (DFO) refused to re-issue aquaculture licenses to open-net salmon farms operating in the Discovery Islands. Mowi Canada West Inc. (a Norwegian company), two other open-net salmon farm operators and the We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum First Nations challenged the decision claiming that the Minister had predetermined the outcome and breached the audi alteram partem rule by considering information obtained after the official consultation process which deprived them of the opportunity to respond. The Federal Court dismissed the application for judicial review and Mowi appealed to the Federal Court of Appeal and asked whether the Minister’s decision was procedurally fair and reasonable.

Since 2020, the DFO Minister began implementing a phasing out of open-net salmon farming in the Discovery Islands to protect wild salmon, releasing a statement confirming that all licenses would expire in June 2022. The Minister cited the 2012 Cohen Commission, which identified the Discovery Islands as a high-risk area for disease transmission to wild salmon, as well as numerous calls for the end to open-net farming by environmental groups and First Nations. At the Federal Court of Appeal, the Court determined that the Minister was explicitly entitled to consider applying a precautionary approach when deciding to renew the license, that the Minister has broad discretion under the Fisheries Act to make decisions in the public interest even where there is scientific uncertainty, and concluded that the Minister’s decision was procedurally fair and reasonable. Mowi’s appeal was dismissed.

NATURE & BIODIVERSITY

BCAFN continues to support First Nations leadership in the stewardship and protection of biodiversity across British Columbia. As biodiversity loss accelerates alongside climate pressures and fast-tracked development, BCAFN's work remains focused on ensuring that First Nations' rights, laws, and governance systems shape conservation policy at both provincial and federal levels.

Regional Chief Terry Teegee has joined as Co-Chair of the AFN Nature Portfolio, strengthening BC's voice nationally on biodiversity, conservation, Species at Risk, climate change and other initiatives. Regional Chief Teegee, along with BCAFN staff, continues to attend and provide updates through the AFN Advisory Committee on Climate Action & Environment (ACE), ensuring BC First Nations' priorities are reflected in national advocacy.

First Nations Nature Table (FNNT)

BCAFN continues to participate in the First Nations Nature Table (FNNT), the joint AFN-Environment and Climate Change Canada technical forum.

At the January 2026 meeting, significant concerns were raised regarding:

- Uncertainty around continued funding for the FNNT beyond March 2026.
- The broader sunseting of federal nature funding.
- The risk that biodiversity commitments, including 30x30 targets, will not be matched with stable, predictable investments.
- The need for meaningful co-governance under the Species at Risk Act, rather than managing from a framework of "acceptable loss".

First Nations' representatives emphasized that conservation cannot advance without stable capacity funding, early engagement, and recognition of First Nations jurisdiction.

Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (TFANC)

BCAFN continues active participation in the Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation (TFANC), working alongside FNLC, federal and

provincial partners to advance shared commitments on species recovery, habitat protection, and ecosystem health.

Work is currently underway to finalize and release the second annual TFANC report this spring. The report will outline progress to date, ongoing implementation priorities, and areas requiring strengthened coordination and investment.

BCAFN remains focused on ensuring that TFANC implementation reflects First Nations' rights, governance, priorities, and measurable conservation outcomes.

Advancing Resolution 42/2025 - Wildlife Act Reform

This winter, BCAFN advanced advocacy under Resolution 42/2025: Amendments to the *Wildlife Act*, carried by consensus at the 2025 BCAFN AGM.

Through this resolution, Chiefs-in-Assembly reaffirmed that First Nations in BC hold inherent and constitutionally protected title, rights, and jurisdiction in wildlife governance. The resolution calls for:

- True co-development of *Wildlife Act* amendments.
- Recognition of First Nations laws and jurisdiction within provincial legislation.
- Moving beyond consultation-based approaches toward shared and consent-based decision-making consistent with DRIPA and UNDRIP.

BCAFN continues to press the Province to ensure legislative reform reflects First Nations' governance authority and stewardship responsibilities in the face of the ongoing biodiversity crisis.

Biodiversity Policy and Major Project Pressures

BCAFN continues advancing biodiversity policy analysis in BC, identifying key gaps in the provincial landscape, including:

- The Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Framework remains stalled.
- Fragmented conservation funding mechanisms.
- The need for full alignment with DRIPA and consent-based decision-making.

At the same time, federal reforms under accelerated project frameworks raise concerns about cumulative impacts on biodiversity and the adequacy of safeguards. In February, BCAFN convened a Dialogue Session with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (IAAC) and the Major Projects Office (MPO) to support informed discussion with First Nations in BC on proposed changes to federal impact assessment processes and fast-tracked project delivery models. These discussions highlighted ongoing concerns regarding early-stage project sequencing, capacity funding, substitution to provincial processes, and the protection of Section 35 rights in accelerated timelines.

First Nations have stressed that conservation and development cannot proceed on separate tracks.

Strengthened biodiversity protections and meaningful Nation-to-Nation engagement must accompany any acceleration of major projects.

Looking Ahead

BCAFN remains committed to:

- Advancing First Nations-led biodiversity governance nationally and in BC.
- Securing stable, predictable funding for nature initiatives.
- Supporting effective implementation of TFANC and its annual reporting commitments.

BCAFN will continue working to ensure that biodiversity protection in British Columbia reflects First Nations' inherent rights, responsibilities, and long-standing stewardship of lands and waters.

TOXIC DRUG CRISIS

Advancing a First Nations-Led Strategy on the Toxic Drug Crisis

Following the All-Chiefs Meeting on the Toxic Drug Crisis hosted by the FNLC in July 2025, staff continue to advocate for First Nations-led, trauma-informed responses to the ongoing public health emergency. A *What We Heard Report* summarizing key recommendations and calls to action generated by participants has now been developed. The discussions underscored that trauma, not substance use, is the root cause of the toxic drug crisis and called for a fundamental shift from short-term treatment models to long-term, land-based, culturally rooted healing with no arbitrary time limits. Chiefs and participants affirmed that the current provincial and federal responses have been inadequate and that the toxic drug poisoning crisis continues to have significant impacts on First Nations communities. Therefore, First Nations must lead all aspects of response, with federal and provincial governments playing a supporting role, not a dictating one.

Chiefs rejected the current fragmented jurisdictional responses and demanded direct, flexible funding that flows to communities without intermediaries. They

endorsed the development of a comprehensive First Nations-led strategy grounded in self-determination, cultural safety, and the *UN Declaration*. Key priorities include expanding Indigenous-led treatment and aftercare centres, investing in transitional housing and second-phase recovery, and establishing youth-specific prevention programs. The existence of wraparound supports was identified as essential to breaking cycles of harm.

As directed by Chiefs, over the next year, BCAFN staff will work with FNLC counterparts to establish an All-Chiefs Task Force on Public Health and Justice. This task force is intended to transform the strategic recommendations captured in the *What We Heard Report* into a concrete, implementable action plan. Central to this work will be multi-ministerial engagement with federal and provincial counterparts, including the Ministry of Health, Indigenous Services Canada, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, and the Ministry of Education and Child Care, to secure sustainable resourcing and ensure that First Nations jurisdiction over health and wellness is respected and operationalized. Please read the full report on the FNLC Toxic Drug Crisis website [here](#)

UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - DECLARATION ACT (PROVINCIAL)

During the February 4, 2026, All Chiefs' virtual meeting, the First Nations Leadership Council urged First Nations Chiefs, leaders and organizations to sign an online statement opposing any amendments by the BC Government to the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Over 90 First Nations and organizations have already endorsed it. The statement emphasizes that the *Declaration Act* provides vital certainty, supports reconciliation, and fosters economic stability in BC. It warns that amending the Act or appealing related court decisions would create uncertainty, increase conflict, and hinder progress. The FNLC calls on Premier Eby to uphold the Act, collaborate with Indigenous leaders, and maintain the path of negotiation and

shared prosperity rather than backtracking to conflict. The statement was reissued on February 9, aiming for more signatories to demonstrate unity. Read the full statement at bcafn.ca

In addition, BCAFN is currently running a letter writing campaign asking Premier Eby and the BC government to uphold their commitment to First Nations and stop their plan to amend the *Declaration Act* and undermine First Nations' right to hold the government accountable in court. Please add your voice to the call to support Indigenous human rights and send your MLA a message today by visiting bcafn.ca



BC legislature in 2019 when the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* passed unanimously. Photo Province of BC.

UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - UN DECLARATION ACT (FEDERAL)

Regional Chief Teegee holds the national AFN portfolio for the federal implementation of the *United Nations Declaration Act* (UNDA), chairs both the FNLC-DOJ Political Table on a BC-Specific Process on UNDA Implementation and the AFN Chiefs Committee on UNDA and remains a strong advocate for federal action on UNDA implementation.

On June 21, 2021, the 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 *UN Declaration* is the most comprehensive articulation of the human rights of the world's

indigenous peoples, and it presents a comprehensive framework to address the historic and ongoing legacy of colonialism in this country.

The BCAFN continues to believe that the fulsome and comprehensive implementation of the Act and its associated action plan has the potential to significantly advance reconciliation across this country and make significant progress in addressing many of the priorities and interests of First Nations in BC.

Despite this, progress on the Act's implementation has been slow, ad-hock and lacking critical transparency and accountability mechanisms. This has never been more apparent than in Canada's failure to align the development and content of several important bills, including Bill C-5, the *One Canadian Economy Act*, and Bill C-9, the *Combating Hate Act*.

Regional Chief Teegee has met with the new Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Sean



Regional Chief Terry Teegee speaking to Prime Minister Mark Carney from the floor of the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly, December 2025.

Fraser, three times over the last 6 months, identifying these missed opportunities and advocating for renewed commitment to implementing the UNDA and the FNLC-DOJ BC-Specific Process for UNDA implementation.

This FNLC-DOJ table was first identified in 2023 in a Letter of Understanding (LOU) between Minister Lametti and the FNLC. Under this LOU, the FNLC has developed a TOR of reference and an initial joint work plan with Minister Lametti and, later, Minister Virani. This TOR committed DOJ and the FNLC to the establishment of a BC-Specific Bilateral Process between Canada and the FNLC to identify priorities and actions for UNDA implementation.

The intention of these tables was to support Canada in aligning its laws with the *UN Declaration* and to ensure that the perspectives, priorities, and interests of First Nations in BC guided legislative amendments, APM development, and the implementation of the act. To guide this work, the FNLC submitted a list of prioritized legislation and APMs, aligned with FNLC resolutions, for co-development and implementation.

Progress in bringing other federal departments to the table to work on co-development has been slow. This slow implementation pace, combined with successive DOJ UNDA Annual Reports and the AFN's own independent reporting, has found that implementation of the UNDA is slow, lacks transparency, urgency, clear cross-government guidelines and the allocation of necessary funds to achieve the goals of the legislation.

The FNLC have identified five key areas requiring immediate action in order to support the implementation of the UNDA, being the co-development of:

1. Alignment of Laws processes and mechanisms;
2. Accountability mechanisms;
3. First Nations capacity funding mechanisms;
4. Legislative alignment and action plan prioritization processes;
5. Whole-of-Government approach.

BCAFN is pleased to report that Minister Fraser has committed to working with the FNLC on these shared-priority areas and to revising the FNLC-DOJ workplan to reflect them.

The implementation of the *UN Declaration* and the UNDA must represent a significant, systemic shift from the status quo. It necessarily requires the recognition of First Nations' Rights to self-determination, FPIC, and the right to self-government in the development and decision-making over laws, policies, and practices that impact our rights. The BCAFN continues to advocate for this important shift and the mechanisms which will support it.



Regional Chief Terry Teegee being interviewed by the media outside of the BC Caucus room at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly, December 2025.

WATER

The *First Nations Clean Water Act* (Bill C-61) was tabled in Parliament on December 11, 2023, reflecting the federal government's 2018 commitment to co-develop legislation with First Nations and fulfilling obligations arising from the 2021 First Nations Safe Drinking Water Class Action Settlement Agreement. As a result of the snap federal election, Bill C-61 died on the Order Paper. During the subsequent election campaign, Prime Minister Mark Carney pledged to formally recognize and legislate First Nations' right to water. Since forming government, the Minister of Indigenous Services, Mandy Gull-Masty has committed to introducing legislation, however the Minister has not confirmed if there would be a re-introduction of previous legislation or an amended version. Timelines on introduction of First Nations' safe drinking water legislation remains unknown, however BCAFN will continue to monitor and update Chiefs, leadership and technicians when more information becomes available.

In response to Prime Minister Carney's platform commitments, the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly supported BCAFN Resolution 33/2025 which endorses BCAFN's Position Paper entitled, *Legislating the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water for First Nations*, which calls on the Federal Government to:

1. Formally enshrine the human right to safe

and clean drinking water as a binding legal obligation;

2. Recognize and affirm First Nations' jurisdiction over water and water/wastewater infrastructure;
3. Embed free, prior and informed consent and shared decision-making within the legislative framework; and,
4. Guarantee long-term, sustainable, and equitable funding for water and wastewater systems.

Since the passing of BCAFN Resolution 33/2026, Regional Chief Terry Teegee continues to advocate to the federal government to legislate the human right to water in his advocacy. BCAFN has also prepared a communications campaign for release in Spring 2026 to gain more awareness of safe drinking water impacts in First Nations communities, and apply public pressure to the federal government to re-introduce safe drinking water legislation that upholds the *UN Declaration* and First Nations right to safe drinking water.



WOMEN & 2SLGBTQQIA+

National Indigenous-FPT Roundtable on MMIWG2S+

The British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) participated in the Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous (FPTI) Roundtable on MMIWG2S+ on February 11-12, 2026. Day One focused on combating human trafficking, advancing the Red Dress Alert, and addressing the impacts of major projects on First Nation women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. BCAFN's Women's Representative emphasized that meaningful implementation of the Calls for Justice in British Columbia must prioritize justice system reform, equitable healthcare, sustainable funding for holistic victim services and culturally safe shelters, and prevention initiatives grounded in First Nations

knowledge. Addressing human trafficking requires coordinated, cross-jurisdictional, and First Nation-led solutions that move beyond crisis response to tackle systemic drivers, including infrastructure gaps, online exploitation, and poverty.

Discussions on the Red Dress Alert highlighted the need for First Nations jurisdiction and rapid response mechanisms for missing women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. BCAFN called for dedicated funding and legislative support to establish a BC-based, First Nation-led alert system that ensures families are partners in response efforts. In examining major projects, participants underscored that resource development must embed gender and cultural safety at every stage. This includes enforceable

SAVE THE DATE

BCAFN Women Chiefs and Leaders Caucus Meeting

Building Safety and Equity in BC Resource Development

March 24-25, 2026

9:00AM - 4:00PM

Hotel Eldorado, Kelowna
and via Zoom

Visit events.bcafn.ca for more details



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

safety standards, strengthened impact assessments, and binding commitments within Impact Benefit Agreements to prevent violence and exploitation. Governments and industry must also invest in long-term community safety, infrastructure, and services to ensure economic development does not come at the expense of First Nation women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Day Two focused on leadership contributions from First Nation partners, reflections on “What We Learned,” and discussions on building partnerships and next steps. BCAFN Women’s Representative, highlighted that the First Nations Gender Equity Strategic Action Plan is grounded in the priorities of BC First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The Plan advances three key goals: strengthening representation and leadership; restoring wellness, healing, and cultural identity; and eliminating systemic discrimination. Across all areas, the message is clear — representation without resources is not equity. Sustainable, multi-year funding and core operational support are essential to translate commitments into measurable outcomes. Nationally, leaders underscored the urgent need to address the disproportionate impacts of major projects, service inequities, housing shortages, and gaps in infrastructure that increase vulnerability to violence. Concerns were raised regarding jurisdictional barriers, limited victim services, inadequate culturally grounded mental health and addictions care, and connectivity challenges. Across the discussions, a consistent theme emerged: listening must lead to action. BCAFN Women’s Representative called for coordinated legislative reform, strengthened oversight aligned with the Calls for Justice, and long-term investments in community safety, infrastructure, and culturally grounded supports.

The Roundtable reaffirmed that this work is generational. Achieving meaningful progress requires stable funding, legislative reform, reliable data, and enduring partnerships with First Nations women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. With strong leadership, accountability, and sustained investment, we can ensure safety, dignity, and self-determination for First Nations women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people across our territories.



BCAFN Women’s representative, Cheryl Rule, at the AFN Annual General Assembly, September, 2025.

BCAFN Women’s Representative Cheryl Rule (Syəmyjɪm), Coldwater Indian Band

As BCAFN’s Women’s Representative, it has been my honour to serve BCAFN and to advance issues of key importance. I descend from a long line of N̄eʔkəpm̄x ancestry, I have spent much of my early life hunting, fishing, and harvesting medicinal and food plants with my family. This instilled in me a deep love and respect for my people and the Tmix (the land).

I continue to provide a trustworthy, transparent, and strong voice for human rights, universal dignity, environmental justice, compassion, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples across our territories. Serving my second term as Women’s Representative with the BCAFN remains a profound honour and responsibility. I remain actively engaged in BCAFN’s Gender Equity work and continue to advocate for the implementation of the BCAFN First Nations Gender Equity Strategic Action Plan. Nationally, I advocate for the interests and priorities of First Nations in BC as a member of the Assembly of First Nations Women’s Council. Additionally, I continue to attend monthly AFN Council Meetings and the Chiefs Committee on Justice to stay informed on developments, legislation, and initiatives impacting First Nations across Turtle Island.

December 2025 was a particularly busy and meaningful time, as I had the honour of chairing the BC First Nations Citizenship Webinar. This session was critically important, as many First Nation women and families continue to be impacted by the second-generation cut-off under the Indian Act. With Bill S-2 moving forward with amendments, there is a renewed opportunity to eliminate discriminatory provisions and advance long-overdue reforms that address inequities affecting our women and future generations.

In January, BCAFN officially launched the BCAFN Women's Council, with members selected and are now developing Terms of Reference to ensure transparency, regional representation, and accountability. Securing funding for the Women's Council was one of our significant accomplishments in 2025, and this milestone strengthens a sustainable platform for women's leadership within BCAFN governance.

In early February 2026, I participated in the BCAFN First Nations Gender Equity Strategic Planning Meeting alongside the BCAFN 2SLGBTQQA+ Representative. This time allowed us to reflect on 2025 accomplishments, including funding secured for the BCAFN Women's Council and other key initiatives, while aligning on shared priorities and upcoming gatherings. In addition, we deliberated coordinated advocacy for the National Indigenous-FPT Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People (MMIWG2S+), ensuring that BC perspectives remain strong and unified at the federal-provincial-territorial level. Another important focus has been the internal development of tools to support strong governance and leadership continuity within BCAFN. We are working to create a comprehensive orientation kit for BCAFN representatives to ensure a systematic, effective transfer of knowledge between outgoing and incoming leaders. This guide will help empower future BCAFN Women's representatives with the understanding, capacity, and resources needed to succeed, while fostering alignment with BCAFN and AFN governance structures and by-laws. While it will not replace all human resources functions, it will serve as a foundational resource to promote stability,

accountability, and continuity. Over the past months, we worked to finalizing the "What We Heard" Report from the June 2025 Dialogue Sessions to ensure that our advocacy continues to be grounded in the voices and lived experiences of First Nation women and 2SLGBTQQA+ people across BC.

Although this work is demanding, I remain deeply committed to listening, understanding, and responding to the needs and concerns of First Nation women in BC. I look forward to continuing this important work at the federal level and within our First Nation communities as we collectively advance safety, equity, dignity, and justice for First Nation women and 2SLGBTQQA+ people across our territories.



BCAFN Knowledge Keeper's representative, Dr. Gwendolyn Point, speaks to Chiefs and leaders during the BC Caucus at the AFN Annual General Assembly, September, 2025.



BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative: Orene Askew, Squamish Nation

Also known as DJ O Show, I come from a very diverse background being both Afro-Indigenous, a proud member of the Squamish Nation, and a 2-Spirit person. I have embraced both cultural backgrounds and incorporated the teachings from each of these positions into everything I do.

I am deeply honoured to continue serving as the BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Representative on the AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council. The AFN council was established in 2021 following the passage of Resolution 15/2021 at a Special Chiefs' Assembly,

marking a significant step toward formal recognition and advocacy for First Nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples at the national level. I am proud to be one of two self-identifying women serving on the National Council.

My work remains focused on advancing visibility, safety, equity, and self-determination for First Nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. I regularly report to Chiefs at BCAFN Special Chiefs Assemblies, Annual General Meetings, Women Chiefs and Leaders Caucus Meetings, and Dialogue Sessions, ensuring transparency and accountability in this portfolio. Nationally, I actively participate in AFN meetings



and gatherings and recently had the privilege of moderating a panel at the 2nd Annual AFN Natural Resources Forum. As the Council member holding the economic development portfolio, I have contributed to informing resolutions related to economic development and to strengthening the Terms of Reference for the Chiefs Committee on Economic Development. The AFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council meets monthly and engages directly with federal ministers and national organizations, including Egale Canada, to address legislative and policy barriers that impact the health and well-being of First Nations 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

Since my re-election, I have participated in the BCAFN First Nations Gender Equity Strategic Planning Meeting, where we reflected on 2025 accomplishments — including securing funding for the BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Council and the completion of the BCAFN 2SLGBTQQIA+ Flag — and aligned on shared priorities and upcoming initiatives. A key focus has also been on strengthening governance and leadership continuity

within BCAFN through the development of a comprehensive Orientation kit to support effective knowledge transfer between representatives. In addition, I have been engaged in planning the upcoming BCAFN Women Chiefs and Leaders Caucus Meeting in Kelowna, BC, and I look forward to advancing the recommendations emerging from the recent Dialogue Session report from BCAFN Dialogue Session last June.

I remain committed to proactively leveraging opportunities that drive systemic change and intentionally support First Nations Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender- and sexually-diverse people. This includes championing existing successes, strengthening partnerships with regional 2SLGBTQQIA+ organizations, and continuing to advocate for sustainable funding and culturally grounded programming. Central to this work is ensuring the creation and maintenance of safe, affirming spaces for 2SLGBTQQIA+ people within First Nation communities across British Columbia.

YOUTH

BCAFN welcomes its newly appointed interim Male Youth Representative, Peyal Laceese, who will serve in this role until the BCAFN Annual General Assembly in September 2026. Peyal is Tsilhqot'in from Tlesqox First Nation and works closely with leadership as a Chief's Assistant and Tsilhqot'in Youth Ambassador. He has also previously served as a Cultural Ambassador, supporting youth in various capacities. As a BCAFN Youth Representative, Peyal aims to strengthen Nation-to-Nation youth connections across BC through meaningful collaboration between youth and leadership, ensure rural and remote youth voices are heard, and help create clear pathways for youth perspectives to inform BCAFN and Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council discussions. BCAFN Female Youth Representative Crystal Starr-Lewis will support Peyal's transition, and together they will continue advocating for First Nations youth across BC.

Advancing a BCAFN Youth Council

With support from BCAFN staff, the BCAFN Youth Representatives continue moving forward [BCAFN Resolution 33/2023: Support to Establish a BCAFN Youth Council](#). Building on feedback from last year's dialogue session, BCAFN is developing a BCAFN Youth Council strategic plan with support from a Youth Advisory Circle (YAC). The YAC helps ensure the strategic plan is by-and-for youth, so the Council embodies First Nations youth perspectives, priorities, and interests. BCAFN Youth Representatives and staff are continuing to seek long-term, sustainable funding to support the implementation of the BCAFN Youth Council.

2026 BCAFN Youth Gathering

First Nations youth across BC have emphasized the importance of an in-person regional First Nations youth gathering to connect, share experiences, and

discuss policy priorities and challenges. BCAFN Youth Representatives and staff are in the early planning stages of a 2026 BCAFN Youth Gathering to help ensure youth perspectives are included in decision-making and BCAFN's policy advocacy.

Bringing First Nations Youth Perspectives to National Tables

BCAFN Youth Representatives continue to bring the perspectives of First Nations youth in BC to national discussions through their participation in the Assembly of First Nations National Youth Council. They share regional priorities at the national table and bring key discussions and updates back to First Nations communities and youth across BC. This helps ensure BC First Nations youth priorities are reflected in national advocacy efforts and are informed by ongoing dialogue at the community level. BCAFN Youth Representatives remain committed to keeping First Nations youth across BC informed, connected, and meaningfully involved in shaping our shared priorities.



UPCOMING EVENTS

BCAFN Events

FNLN Emergency Management Forum: From Determination to Action

March 11 & 12, 2026

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

River Rock Casino Resort, Richmond, BC

BCAFN Youth Forum 2026

March 17, 2026

8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Fairmont Waterfront, Vancouver, BC

Economic Development Forum 2026

Fairmont Waterfront, Vancouver

March 18 & 19, 2026

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Fashion Show/Networking Reception, Vancouver Hotel - March 18, 2026

BCAFN Women Chiefs and Leaders Caucus Meeting

March 25 & 25, 2026

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Hybrid: Hotel Eldorado, Kelowna and online via Zoom

Go to events.bcafn.ca for registration, updates and more details on these events.

Other Events

AFN First Nations Fire Protection Strategy Webinars:

Funding, Reporting & Data Collection

March 19, 2026

Online Via Zoom

AFN Annual General Assembly 2026

July 14 - 16, 2026

Rogers Centre, Ottawa, ON

AFN 4th National Climate Gathering

October 5 - 8, 2026

Hamilton Convention Centre, Hamilton, ON

AFN Special Chiefs Assembly 2026

December 8 - 10, 2026

Rogers Centre, Ottawa, ON

Go to afn.ca for registration, updates and more details on these events.

BCAFN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir
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Chief Jerry Jack
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BCAFN REPRESENTATIVES

2SLGBTQIA+ Knowledge Keeper
Sempulyan Stewart Gonzales
Squamish Nation

Knowledge Keepers
Harvey McLeod
Upper Nicola Band
Dr. Gwendolyn Point
Sto:Lo Nation

Women's Representative
Cheryl Rule
Coldwater Indian Band

2SLGBTQIA+ Representative
Orene Askew
Squamish Nation
Swxwú7mesh Úxwumixw

Youth Female Representative
Crystal Starr-Lewis,
Squamish Nation-
Swxwú7mesh Úxwumixw

Youth Male Representative
Peyal Laceese
Tlesqox First Nation

BCAFN STAFF

REGIONAL CHIEF

Terry Teegee
regionalchief@bcfn.ca

ADMINISTRATION

Chief of Staff
Vanessa West
vanessa.west@bcfn.ca

Executive Assistant
Victoria Austin
victoria.austin@bcfn.ca

Administration & Records Management
Ada Madam
ada.madam@bcfn.ca

Finance Manager
Rayna Barter
rayna.barter@bcfn.ca

Communications Officer
Annette Schroeter
annette.schroeter@bcfn.ca

POLICY

Sr. Policy Director
Maureen Buchan
maureen.buchan@bcfn.ca

Associate Director
Sophia Iliopulos
sophia.iliopulos@bcfn.ca

Associate Director
Matthew Norris
matthew.norris@bcfn.ca

Economic Development Manager
Sarah Behn
sarah.behn@bcfn.ca

Sr. Economic Development Policy Analyst
Nikki Saadat
nikki.saadat@bcfn.ca

Jr. Economic Development Policy Analyst
Hannah Cripps
hannah.cripps@bcfn.ca

Children & Families Policy Analyst
Landon Wagner
landon.wagner@bcfn.ca

Policy Analyst & Regional Climate Change
Coordinator
Patricia Rojas
patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca

Jr. Climate Action Policy Analyst
Charlotte Bull
charlotte.bull@bcfn.ca

Jr. Climate Action Policy Analyst
Alyna De Guzman
alyna.deguzman@bcfn.ca

Environment Policy Analyst
Kristi Denby
kristi.denby@bcfn.ca

Regional Nature Coordinator
Aaron Wood-Lyons
aaron.woodlyons@bcfn.ca

Policy Analyst
Rochelle King
rochelle.king@bcfn.ca

Policy Analyst
Aiden McGrath
aiden.mcgrath@bcfn.ca

Housing Policy Analyst
Mobi Atolagbe
mobi.atolagbe@bcfn.ca

In-House Legal Counsel
Laura Beaudry
laura.beaudry@bcfn.ca

Jr. Environment Policy Analyst
Alexa Kerr-Warner
alexa.kerr-warner@bcfn.ca

CONTACT BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

Lheidli T'enneh/Prince George Office:
(250) 962-1603 • 1-877-621-1603 • fax (250) 962-9552
1992 Landooz Road, Prince George, BC, V2K 5S3

