



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

# Newsletter

B C A s s e m b l y o f F i r s t N a t i o n s

## Message from Regional Chief Terry Teegee

*Chiefs, Hereditary Chiefs, Grand Chiefs,  
Elders, Youths, and First Nation members,*

We are in a time of change again. Recent events all over Canada have demonstrated to the world that First Nations have a role in the Canadian and global economy. Canadian society is dynamic and the institutions and laws created in era of colonization must be changed. Moreover, we need to properly educate Canadians on First Nations contributions – to the sciences, arts, politics, and commerce. The racist backlash throughout Canada should concern us all. I personally have been thinking about how Canadian society has changed in the past 30 years, the past 60 years, and the past 120 years. We seek reconciliation through dialogue, peace and justice – the foundation of Canada was based on not only on genocide and oppression of First Nations peoples, it was based on sacred partnership, mutual responsibilities and order.

As the elected Regional Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations, which is part of the BC First Nations Leadership Council, we have the responsibility to advocate on behalf of all B.C. First Nations and create a better future. Moreover, First Nations leaders are doing their best working with the imposed Indian Act, and their own laws of their people – inherited, sacred and required for Canada to evolve into the next level of good governance. We are all here to stay. The United Nations assisted our people in defending our laws, and human rights through the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This minimum, international standard, already shows the path – we will continue to walk this path with our partners. The evolution of commerce and governance in the era of consent based decision-making will be difficult, but not impossible.

But we don't back away from these difficulties. We embrace them, because we know that through the hard work and conflict we can come to agreements that build us up, make connections with our neighbours, and creates a just society.

That's why I say reconciliation is not dead. Reconciliation was never going to be something that could be given to us. We still need to fight for it. And through our fight, I believe we will come to reconcile the tragedies of the past with the promise of our improved collective future.

With this optimism and perseverance, we wish you good health and safety during this difficult time.



## Inside

- Our Gathering 2020
- Justice
- Women in Leadership Dialogue Session
- Economic Development
- Climate Emergency
- Non-Medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation
- Shared Territories and Overlaps
- Contact BCAFN
- Upcoming Events



## Our Gathering 2020

On January 21st to 23rd the First Nations Leadership Council and the Government of Canada Ministries of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada co-hosted Our Gathering. The 8th annual gathering was held on the unceded traditional territories of the Xwməθkwəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwx̱ w.7mesh (Squamish) and SəliX lwaṭaʔt/Sel.X lwtulh (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. The Our Gathering name in the hən̓qəmin̓əm̓ and Squamish languages is kexwkexwntsút chet, and tə sqaqip ct.

Our Gathering is a place for First Nation community leaders and government officials to respectfully and openly discuss issues and ways of working together. The event was attended by over 800 representatives from First Nations in BC and the governments of Canada and BC. Plenary and breakout sessions focused on a wide range of issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the upcoming First Nations Leadership Council shared territory and overlap issues forum, Implementing the Children and Families Act, a New Fiscal Relationship, Specific Claims, the Implementation of the Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights Policy for Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia, and a number of social and economic initiatives. Crown representatives provided insight into their mandates, and Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde also addressed delegates.

The gathering was well-attended by youth, who provided a report out on their priorities and experience. This gathering marked another successful dialogue and we hope you will join us next year.

*Sarah Froese, Policy Analyst*



**First Nations, federal and provincial leaders**  
at the First Ministers Meeting on Justice and Public Safety

## Justice

On January 22nd, Regional Chief Terry Teegee attended the First Ministers Meeting on Justice and Public Safety in Victoria, BC. As Co-chair (alongside Regional Chief Ghislain Picard) of the Assembly of First Nations' Chiefs Committee on Justice, Regional Chief Teegee was invited to address provincial and federal justice officials and leaders. He spoke of the urgent need for legal reform in the justice system to address Canada's increasing incarceration rates of Indigenous Peoples. Regional Chief Teegee's comments highlighted the recent release of Canada's Correctional Investigator, Ivan Zinger's, report. Indigenous men and women are being imprisoned at a rate that is now surpassing 30 per cent, even though Indigenous people make up less than 5 per cent of the total Canadian population. Indigenous women account for a shocking 42 per cent of the female inmate population. Despite a long history of government commitments on improving the issue of Indigenous incarceration in Canada, the rates have continued to increase and are now at an acute level.

Regional Chief Teegee shared his message that a fundamental requirement for reversing the incarceration trend is the creation of federal legislation enshrining the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration includes articles affirming the right of Indigenous peoples to create their own social systems and participate in all decision-making that affects their interests. Indigenous responsibility, control and resources for laws and justice in their own communities will begin to break down the systemic issues that lead to and overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the Canadian justice system. In support of these messages, Doug White Kwul'a'sul'tun spoke on behalf of the BC First Nations Justice Council, and introduced some of the key components of the Council's Indigenous Justice Strategy. Both Regional Chief Teegee and Mr. White reiterated the need for governments to work with Indigenous communities to create and implement culturally appropriate structures that respect and reflect Indigenous approaches to conflict resolution, reconciliation, and the maintenance of harmony and good order.

*Emmy Beaton, Special Advisor, Policy and Government Relations*





## Women in Leadership Dialogue Session

On January 24, 2020 the BC Assembly of First Nations' Regional Chief Terry Teegee and Louisa Housty-Jones welcomed 150 delegates and presenters to the 3rd Women in Leadership Dialogue Session. Chiefs, Councilors, traditional and hereditary leadership, matriarchs, elders, youth, administrators, community leaders, grassroots activists, and front-line service providers gathered to gain strength by truthfully examining the challenges faced by women and gender-diverse individuals in leadership and by celebrating successes in a spirit of mutual partnership.

The day was full of dynamic speakers and conversation. Many political leaders reflected on the struggle to persevere against lateral violence. They spoke to the importance of surrounding yourself with a supportive community, and shared strategies for creating positive change in persistent issues like gender-based discrimination and bullying. Community, government, and grassroots leaders also discussed their work to eliminate violence against women, sharing vision and creating awareness. Others shared their experience in building community capacity and economic development. We also honoured the Women's Declaration that was borne out of our first two Dialogue Sessions, and invited comments on how this document can be built upon to be made more inclusive and impactful.

With such a diverse set of leaders present we were able to bring together unique experiences, cultures, skills, interests, and visions for how to create positive change. I believe this helps make us strong. Many were deeply encouraged by the spirit of respect, curiosity, and commitment to how we can support one another as we lead in our various realms.

BCAFN invites everyone to read the forthcoming report on the Dialogue Session, including a summary of comments received regarding the Women's Declaration.

The planning and implementation of this event was supported by BCAFN Women's Representative Louisa Housty-Jones, BCAFN Knowledge Keeper, Dr. Gwen Point, Chief Councilor Marilyn Slett, and Chief Rebecca David. BCAFN looks forward to the next Women in Leadership Dialogue Session!

*Sarah Froese, Policy Analyst*

Photos top to bottom: M'Girl performing at the Welcome and Pre-registration Evening event, Heiltsuk women presenting, and the youngest participant with mom..





## Economic Development

### Moving Forward in a Good Way: Business and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act

BC Assembly of First Nations held another Business Forum in beautiful Lheidli T'enneh Territory (Prince George, BC) on February 6th. After a warm welcome to the territory, the forum began with a panel discussion on the certainty that the recently passed Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in BC Act offers to businesses in the province. This panel included Cheryl Casimer, First Nations Summit Political Executive who helped to bring the Declaration into law. While addressing articles such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and questions from the crowd, it became clear from the panel, that the Declaration facilitates moving forward with non-Indigenous counterparts in a good way. As mentioned by Regional Chief Teegee, we are moving closer to an era of reconciliation and relationship building, and of recognition of Indigenous Rights and Title.

As acknowledged by various presentations, building relationships takes time, energy and the ability to sit in discomfort as connections grow and change over time. We heard from Tahltan Central Government about the beneficial socio-economic impacts that carefully established partnerships and agreements can generate in communities. Congruently, a representative from the ground-breaking Indigenous Intern Leadership Program established by the Champions Table highlighted the importance of connecting Indigenous students with high performance businesses in the province in order to grow the students' skillset, knowledge base and connections. Simultaneously, this

*Photos left top to bottom:* Guest Speaker Latash - Maurice Nahanee at the evening Welcome event, Regional Chief Terry Teegee opening the BCAFN Business Forum 2020, Taryn Hiltergerke, Owner of Fine Feathers Vintage Clothing, presenting at the youth panel at the Business Forum.





BCAFN Business Forum Lheidli T'enneh/Prince George 2020 Participants

program demonstrates to those businesses the capacity that exists within our young Indigenous professionals.

This month's forum also boasted a heavy youth focus. Often, at business conferences and forums, there is significant talk of the importance of involving youth in business and related events. BCAFN decided to bring Indigenous youth into this forum in a meaningful way- in the form of a panel of youth entrepreneurs, presentations from youth leadership and a young technology/ communications specialist. The youth entrepreneurship panel acknowledged the vital importance of mentorship and the inclusion they experienced in their communities and from their leaders. It must be noted that this panel was the only presentation to receive a standing ovation from the crowd. Building on this momentum, we look continue with a strong youth presence at our subsequent events.

BCAFN looks forward to hosting our next Business Forum and we hope that all that are interested will choose to attend! Check our events calendar to stay apprised of the details as they become available, or join our mailing list by contacting Samantha Seymour. You can also offer your input for consideration as we plan our upcoming Business Forum in our survey here.

Maggie Mills, Economic Policy Analyst  
Derek Hansom, Economic Policy Analyst

Photos right top to bottom: FNS Political Executive Cheryl Casimer, Tribal Chief Mina Holmes, Chief Dan George, Chief; Chief Rick McLean; and Councillor Brian Tibbets with Grand Nephew.







Cowichan Valley Flooded Farm February 2020

## Climate Emergency

Climate change is one of the most important environmental challenges of our generation, and timely and urgent responses are needed. The BCAFN is working hard to do its part to address this crisis. Some of our work, along with the FNLC, over the past year has included participating in national-level climate committees with the AFN, and seeking funding to develop a First Nations Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, as mandated by Resolution 04/2019. The development of the Strategy and Action Plan would include bringing together First Nations leaders from across BC to gather around the issue of climate change. The work has already begun through the delivery of a First Nations Climate Change Survey, completed last year, and whose results will inform the Strategy.

The BCAFN has also been advocating with both the Federal and Provincial governments on the issue of climate change. Although the Province of BC is seen as an international leader when it comes to climate change response, much work remains to be done by BC to include First Nations as active partners in the planning and creation of climate change responses. Climate change plans developed by the Province (e.g. the CleanBC, the provincial climate risk assessment and the BC Hydro Phase 1 Review) were prepared without meaningful engagement or partnership with First Nations. As a result, the Province is wholly missing Indigenous perspectives (vision, needs, barriers and priorities) when planning its response to climate change, including in its plan to a just transition low – carbon economy.

The FNLC continued advocating that BC change its approach when planning climate change responses. This led to the establishment of a Technical (staff-level) Working Group (TWG) between the Province and the FNLC in November 2019. The TWG is intended to ensure the parties engage in dialogue, exchange information, develop recommendations,

provide strategic advice and review progress on Provincial climate change actions undertaken by the Province and First Nations. The TWG does not represent title and rights holders, and works in parallel to direct engagement with all First Nations.

When it comes to climate change the BCAFN's primary goal is to advocate for the interests of First Nations laid down in our Resolutions. This includes ensuring the recognition and implementation of the inherent First Nations rights and title and the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge into planning and legislative changes to protect the health and sustainability of Mother Earth to provide food, shelter, spirituality and happiness for future generations. We continue our diligent work to achieve these important aims.

*Patricia Rojas, Regional Climate Change Coordinator*



**BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**

### **DEVELOPING AN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS FRAMEWORK WORKSHOP**

**Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre**

**1000 Burrard Street, Vancouver, BC**

**Tuesday March 10, 2020**

**3:30 - 8:00 PM**

Join us for dinner and an exploration of what is Indigenous Knowledge? What is the respectful role for Indigenous Knowledge in government decision-making? and what should be in an "Indigenous Knowledge Framework?"

To register visit [bcafn.ca](http://bcafn.ca) or Eventbrite: [www.eventbrite.ca/e/96966341939](http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/96966341939)



## Non-Medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

As Co-Chair of the AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis (CCC) we have been actively engaged and working on this as a priority item. The CCC held its inaugural meeting in September during the AFN National Cannabis Summit. Since then, the CCC has engaged various networks and perspectives, including those representing legal, health, social, and economic development related interests and concerns. The CCC is currently compiling a regional report on First Nations participation in the cannabis industry, and developing potential frameworks for First Nations jurisdiction regarding cannabis, including proposals for federal legislative amendments. The CCC will meet with key federal Ministers shortly to discuss these matters. Chief Harvey McLeod

serves as BCAFN's representative on the CCC. The BCAFN also participates in the BC-First Nations Leadership Council Working Group on Cannabis and is represented by Chief Harvey McLeod. The First Nations Leadership Council's mandate is informed by the BC First Nations Cannabis Framework and Action Plan that was endorsed via Resolution at BCAFN's AGM in September 2019. The BCAFN continues to prioritize conversations on jurisdiction and revenue sharing, including Section 119 agreements, and elevates them to the political level. The FNLC is also engaging in policy development surrounding economic development capacity such as Indigenous product sourcing, farm-to-gate sales, direct delivery, and access to capital.

## Shared Territories and Overlaps

The Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), working together as the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), are planning to convene a three-day province-wide All Chiefs' Forum on March 11-13, 2020 for First Nation leaders to come together for a solutions-oriented, strategic dialogue on Shared Territories and Overlaps.

At recent meetings of the FNS, UBCIC and BCAFN, First Nations leaders have passed a number of resolutions that mandate the organizations to explore constructive approaches to addressing boundary, overlap and shared territory issues, including the establishment of Indigenous-led institutional supports. This dialogue will build upon existing principles and recommendations that came from All Chiefs' Forums in 2007 and 2014, as well as the May 2019 UBCIC Symposium: Implementing our Title and Rights - Upholding Self-Determination through Nation-to-Nation, Consent-Based Negotiations and Agreement-Making

by providing an opportunity to discuss, evaluate, and recommend options for the resolution of boundary, overlaps and shared territory issues. A preparatory session was held during Our Gathering on January 21-23, 2020 and will also be discussed during the upcoming Special Chiefs Assembly on March 4-5, 2020.

Location: Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre 1088, Burrard Street, Vancouver BC – Xwməθkwəy əm (Musqueam), Skwxw.7mesh (Squamish) and SəliXlwətaʔɬ/Sel.X lwtulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Territories

Who: For BC Chiefs and Councillors, hereditary/traditional leadership, and technicians/experts. Three travel subsidies will be made available per First Nation for one Chief, one hereditary/traditional leader, and one technician/expert.

Registration, logistical information, and relevant documents available here:

[www.nmtcevents.com/sharedterritoryandoverlapsforum](http://www.nmtcevents.com/sharedterritoryandoverlapsforum)

### BCAFN Black Books on First Nations Economic Development

Regional Engagement Sessions

### SPRING 2020

- Prince Rupert-Apr. 7 • Smithers-Apr. 8
- Fort St. John-Apr. 14 • Nanaimo-Apr. 28

**Register now as space is limited!**





## Contact BCAFN

Regional Chief Terry Teegee  
[regionalchief@bcfn.ca](mailto:regionalchief@bcfn.ca)

Special Advisor to the Regional Chief  
Jaime Sanchez [jaime.sanchez@bcfn.ca](mailto:jaime.sanchez@bcfn.ca)

Chief of Staff  
Vanessa West [vanessa.west@bcfn.ca](mailto:vanessa.west@bcfn.ca)

Executive Assistant  
Victoria Austin [victoria.austin@bcfn.ca](mailto:victoria.austin@bcfn.ca)

Senior Policy Advisor  
Maureen Buchan  
[maureen.buchan@bcfn.ca](mailto:maureen.buchan@bcfn.ca)

Policy Advisor  
Sarah Froese [sarah.froese@bcfn.ca](mailto:sarah.froese@bcfn.ca)

Economic Development Policy Analyst  
Derek Hansom [derek.hansom@bcfn.ca](mailto:derek.hansom@bcfn.ca)

Economic Development Policy Analyst  
Maggie Mills [margaret.mills@bcfn.ca](mailto:margaret.mills@bcfn.ca)

Finance Manager  
Melanie Lyons [melanie.lyons@bcfn.ca](mailto:melanie.lyons@bcfn.ca)

Communications Officer  
Annette Schroeter  
[annette.schroeter@bcfn.ca](mailto:annette.schroeter@bcfn.ca)

Regional Climate Change Coordinator  
Patricia Rojas [patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca](mailto:patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca)

Carbon Specialist  
Michelle Connolly  
[michelle.connolly@bcfn.ca](mailto:michelle.connolly@bcfn.ca)

Administrative Support Worker  
Samantha Seymour  
[samantha.seymour@bcfn.ca](mailto:samantha.seymour@bcfn.ca)

Administrative Project Support  
Joanna Prince [joanna.prince@bcfn.ca](mailto:joanna.prince@bcfn.ca)

## Upcoming Events

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic all events are cancelled or postponed.



## BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

### Head Office:

(250)962-1603 • 1-877-621-1603 • fax (250)962-9552  
1004 Landooz Road, Prince George, BC, V2K 5S3

### Vancouver Office:

(778)945-9911 • 1-833-381-7622 • fax (778)945-9916  
1020 - 1200 West 73rd Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V6P 6G5

We have a  
new website!

**bcfn.ca**

Check it out!