



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

Inside

- BCAFN & COVID-19
- Economic Development
- Non-medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation
- Womens' Representative Update
- BCAFN Youth Update
- Justice
- Fisheries
- Climate Emergency
- Water
- Contact BCAFN
- Upcoming Events

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, First Nation members and honoured guests,

Hadih, and greetings from beautiful Lheidli T'enneh territory. It's been almost a year since COVID-19 began impacting all of our lives. So many of us have suffered the loss of loved ones. Some of us have lost our businesses or livelihoods. Every one of us has felt the worry, sadness, and fatigue caused by the pandemic lockdown.

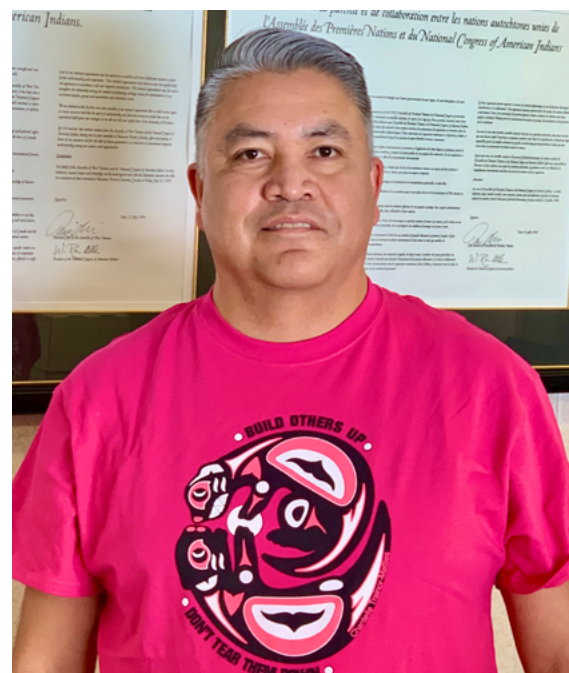
Yet we soldier on. We can see the light at the end of tunnel as vaccines begin to roll out. Many of us have learned new ways of doing business that will make our lives easier. Most importantly, we cannot allow COVID-19 to take our focus away from the numerous other crucial issues we face as First Nations leaders.

Last weekend another of our young people was killed by police. 28-year-old Julian Jones, a well-known member of the Tla-o-qui-aht Nation, was killed after police were called to investigate an incident. My heart is heavy with this news, especially since this is the same community that lost Chantel Moore last year. The BCAFN, and our partners at the First Nations Leadership Council and the Nuuchahnulth Tribal Council, are continuing to push for a serious overhaul of policing. These deaths are preventable, and we will not sit by as they continue. We need to see commitment from the province and the federal government to support our call for Indigenous-led police forces, and de-escalation training for non-Indigenous forces.

This spring, our office at the BC Assembly of First Nations is focused on passing Bill C-15, which will implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the federal level. This human rights instrument will help to secure our rights to self-determination, cultural protection, traditional governance, and ownership over our lands. We are not naïve. We know that C-15 is not a cure-all for centuries of colonial injustice. But it is a step in the right direction, and we need to see it passed.

As I have said, we continue to soldier on through the loss and pain. Slowly we see our work make positive change for our communities.

Mussi Cho!





Landscape scene from BCAFN vaccine public service announcement advertisement, artwork by Derek Edenshaw

BCAFN and COVID-19

Like everyone else, COVID-19 has changed how we work at the BCAFN and Regional Chief Terry Teegee and the staff have been holding and attending meetings online. Progress continues to be made in BCAFN's priority areas.

Since the pandemic lock-down was put into place in March, 2020, information about the governments' response has been communicated quickly. The BCAFN, First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC), and the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) are sharing as much information about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccines that is available. Health information relevant to the virus is found at the [FNHA website](#). Information about community closures, resources and supports can be found on the the [FNLC website](#). If you would like to receive the BCAFN COVID-19 weekly bulletin, contact [Annette Schroeter](#)

In addition, BCAFN has been sending out a weekly updated bulletin with helpful news, links to supports, information and news about vaccines, and resources related to the pandemic to our email lists. News and information is also shared on the BCAFN [Facebook page](#) and [BCAFN website](#). The first wave of the pandemic had little effect on First Nations in BC but the second wave has been devastating with many community outbreaks and deaths over the fall and winter.

In recent months, COVID-19 variants have emerged simultaneously around the globe that are even more infectious and may fuel an upcoming third wave of the pandemic in BC. Vaccinations may curb this third wave and we encourage you to take this opportunity to protect yourself, Elders and your community by getting inoculated as soon as it is made available to you.

Over last summer, and again this winter, BCAFN engaged with media in the fight against COVID by running radio advertising on Canada's First Nations Radio (CFNR) featuring messages by Regional Chief Terry Teegee and Knowledge Keepers, Dr. Gwen Point and Chief Dr. Robert Joseph. In addition, BCAFN is releasing a television advertisement to combat vaccine hesitancy that will run on a number of networks over the coming weeks. This public service announcement will feature artwork by Derek Edenshaw (Haida) and music by Kym Gouchie (Dakelh).

This past fall the BCAFN closed their offices as a result of rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in our province. There is no one to answer calls in the Prince George Office and we ask people to call our Administrative Support worker, Samantha Seymour, at 778-281-2224 and she will be able to assist with enquiries. We apologize for this additional process as we are unable to forward calls from the office due to technical limitations with our phone provider.



Vaccine needle from BCAFN public service announcement advertisement, artwork by Derek Edenshaw

Economic Development

Regional Chief Teegee continues to advocate heavily for First Nations economic development at all scales. At the national level, Regional Chief is the Chair of the Chiefs' Committee on Economic Development; this committee continues to meet to discuss priorities of regional and national importance and to advocate on behalf of First Nations. COVID-19 economic recovery is the major focus of this table currently and will continue to take priority.

Home in BC, economic recovery is also a topic of extreme importance. BCAFN has had to pivot to an online platform in order to deliver Business Forums, with the next one being held on Economic Recovery on April 7th 2021. The first online Forum focused on BC First Nations as leaders in the sustainable economy and took place in the fall of 2020 with welcome reception and excellent feedback from participants.

In November 2020, "Centering First Nations Concepts of Wellbeing: Towards a GDP-Alternative Index" was released. This report highlights the potential for a holistic framework to measure economic activity and wellbeing that is informed by BC First Nations ways of being and rejects GDP as an all-encompassing metric for measuring the value of an economy. BCAFN will be looking to further develop this concept in the coming years.

Considering the vast interest BCAFN has heard from its delegates in pursuing trade relations, an international, inter-tribal trade pilot project is currently being designed by staff with project support. The project plan is expected to be completed in the spring time, with implementation taking place over the next couple of years.

These initiatives have underscored the need for a BC First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development; a standalone centre for resources that communities could use to advance their economic autonomy and development. Currently, scoping for the centre focuses on its function as policy thinktank and social innovation hub. A

dialogue session regarding this concept will be held in the spring or summer to ensure that the concept for the centre addresses the needs and priorities of our membership.

COVID-19 has changed the way that we do business and broken the status-quo. A window of opportunity exists to reinvent the economy, with increased First Nations participation and leadership. BCAFN has developed a strategy to advance economic self-determination over the next 3 years, with focus on the following items:

- Further development and implementation of a BC First Nations Wellness Index;
- Creation of a branding and marketing strategy for First Nations goods and services for distribution at all scales, including to international markets that emulates BC as a destination for business;
- Scoping and establishment of the first stages of a BC First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development to assist in capacity building and recovery;
- Continuing to distribute and engage on the Black Books Toolkits to ensure that they stay evergreen in nature to respond to economic realities and community needs;
- Engaging with other jurisdictions to support trade networks for BC First Nation businesses and foster partnerships;
- Economic Development/Business forums
- Policy support materials.

Further updates on all of these endeavors will be provided as the portfolio moves along and gains momentum. Regional Chief will continue to meet with relevant provincial and federal ministers, and in some instances, US and New Zealand officials to advocate for BC First Nations economic development.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst

Save the Date

**First Nations Economic Recovery and Reconciliation
An Opportunity for British Columbia**

April 7, 2021 from 10 AM to 2:30 PM

For more information contact [Maggie Mills](#), Economic Development Policy Analyst
Go to [BCAFN Events](#) for more information and updates.



Photo from Canadian Press

Non-medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis

Efforts of the Chiefs Committee on Cannabis to develop a federal First Nations jurisdiction framework were interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the committee resumed meeting on October 6 and November 24, 2020 with new momentum to see the required legislative changes through.

The committee is seeking meetings with relevant federal ministers, and will be considering legislative options shortly. The AFN is also seeking funding from ISC to support the concerted effort that will be required to develop and advance this strategy with the federal government. The intention of the committee is to develop a workplan and strategy to guide meetings and advocacy with the federal government.

BC-FNLC Cannabis Working Group

At this table, key priorities remain jurisdiction and targeted economic supports for First Nations cannabis businesses. BC has indicated a readiness to discuss jurisdiction more fulsomely and discussions are underway to determine how the working group can contribute to the implementation of the UN Declaration and the Action Plan.

The FNLC submitted a funding proposal to BC that outlines a workplan for 2020-2022 and includes provision to develop a BC First Nations Cannabis Strategy. We anticipate being able to host engagement sessions to support the development of this strategy this summer.

The FNLC is also in the midst of developing a Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI) with Health Canada and BC, and other potential partners, to help address gaps in access to resources, information, and capital for First Nations cannabis business in BC. This initiative could be launched

in fall 2021. The FNLC also continues to advocate for First Nations interests with respect to the Indigenous Shelf Space program, direct-delivery, and farm-gate policy announcements made by BC in fall 2020.

BCAFN Cannabis Toolkit

During our BCAFN Cannabis Toolkit Webinar on February 23rd, BCAFN launched a suite of governance and economic development resources and templates, building on BCAFN's broader Economic Development Strategy and the Black Books.

The Cannabis Toolkit is composed of four parts. First, a discussion paper on First Nations Stories of Economic Development and Cannabis explores a number of cases studies from First Nations people and Nations and provides a high-level view of the landscape. Next, an in depth-legal memo introduces a more nuanced understanding of the legal and economic challenges and opportunities First Nations are faced with. Finally, two draft template pieces are put forward for discussion and as a potential jumping off point for Nations who are exploring how they may wish to regulate, make agreements, or make laws with respect to cannabis in their territories.

The opportunity to continue the dialogue, collaborate, and gain strength through the sharing of our stories and expertise is an exciting one, as First Nations press to participate in and occupy the emergent cannabis sector. We look forward to supporting First Nations as they determine their path forward on cannabis governance and economic development.

Sarah Froese, Policy Analyst



Louisa Housty-Jones BCAFN Women's Representative

Womens' Representative Update

National Action Plan on MMIWG2S

The federal government has established a Core Working Group and Family and Survivors Working Group to lead the visioning and development of the National Action Plan. This work is supported by a number of Sub-Working Groups regarding Data, 2SLGBTQQIA People, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, Urban, Provincial/Territorial, and Federal. The Chairs and Co-Chairs of each of these Sub-Working Groups form the Core Working Group, along with the Chair of the Family and Survivors Working Group. The members are focusing on the development of the core framework for the National Action Plan and intend to release this on June 3, 2021 – the second anniversary of the release of the Final Report. The Plan will then continue to be built out as more information and planning is undertaken.

Chief Connie Big Eagle (Chair of the AFN Women's Council) is Chair of the First Nations Sub-Working Group, and the Women's Council members constitute the membership of the Sub-Working Group. The Assembly of First Nations Women's Council is working with regional representatives to host engagement sessions in each region to contribute to the development of the National Action Plan on MMIWG2S.

In collaboration with the BCAFN Women's Representative, Louisa Housty-Jones, and BCAFN staff, the AFN held

three engagement planning meetings with BC regional representatives, MMIWG2S advocates, family members, survivors, and front line service organizations in September and October of 2020. A presentation was also made to the BC MMIWG2S Coalition.

At these planning sessions a draft engagement framework was presented and adapted based on feedback received. BCAFN received many valuable comments and input. However, throughout the course of planning it became clear that more time was needed to determine the best approach to hosting engagement sessions on the National Action Plan in BC.

BCAFN is in the process of planning for this work, and will begin by engaging with key regional partners to seek guidance and collaboration. We are pleased to be working with Chastity Davis-Alphonse and Racelle Kooy, who will be the lead co-facilitators supporting this process.

Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Sessions

The annual BCAFN Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Dialogue Sessions will be held virtually this year. Several short pre-sessions during the second week of April will lead up to the full day main-event on April 22. This year's planning is being guided by a small advisory committee of women Chiefs and community leaders. The sessions will focus on a number of priorities topics, including nourishing holistic wellness, supporting women and gender diverse people in community leadership, supporting gender diversity and inclusive conversations, and strategic planning for the development of BCAFN's strategy around women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ equity.

Please note this in your calendars and stay tuned for further information, which will be sent out shortly.

Indigenous Gender Based Analysis Plus

BCAFN is in the process of implementing an Indigenous Gender Based Analysis Framework for the organization. IGBA+ is "an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives." Early approaches focused specifically on gender. Now, the "plus" in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA+ goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. We all have multiple identity factors that intersect to make us "who we are", and GBA+ considers these too.

BCAFN's activities have the potential to impact First Nations, who naturally have many other identity factors that should be taken into consideration if BCAFN's advocacy is to be intersectional, relevant, effective, and equity-seeking.

The first step in implementing this framework involves IGBA+ training. BCAFN staff, board, and elected representatives are currently participating in this training.

Future steps will include establishing a staff-level working group to further IGBA+ within the organization, selecting a “pilot” initiative among BCAFN’s activities in which to focus on building IGBA+ capacity, conducting a needs assessment, and establishing how IGBA+ progress will be tracked. As BCAFN develops its capacity in this area, we hope to be able to support interested First Nations as well.

AFN Charter Renewal and Investigative Review

AFN Resolution 13/2020 Becoming A Role Model in Ending Sexual Orientation and Gender-Based Discrimination Within the Assembly of First Nations directs the AFN to support an investigative review on this topic. The Women’s Council must appoint an independent individual to participate in a three member panel overseeing this review, and is currently concluding this appointment process.

The BCAFN is also mandated to support the AFN in its charter renewal process to ensure an organization that is free from gender-based and sexual-orientation based discrimination

BCAFN Policy Review

BCAFN is in the process of reviewing our governance documents with the goal of ensuring they promote an organization that is free from discrimination, gender-based violence, and lateral violence.

A preliminary review was conducted as per Resolution 2020/11 Support for Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People Declaration and Strategy. The review and recommendations may be used to support changes to BCAFN governance policy documents. The documents were evaluated according to 13 guidelines outlined in the Gender-Based Violence, Harassment, and Bullying: Workplace Policy Guidelines for Response and Prevention resource produced by the Ending Violence Association. As a first step, BCAFN will work to improve the Human Resources Manual, as it is practically tied to the operational processes of the BCAFN. BCAFN will then look to engage a broader conversation about the Governance Manual and Constitution and Bylaws.

SAVE THE DATE

Women & 2SLGBTQQIA+ People’s Dialogue Sessions

Lead-up Sessions

April 13, 14 & 15, 2021

Session 1- April 13, 10:00am-12 pm

Session 2- April 14, 12:00 -1:00 pm

Session 3- 7:00 -8:00 pm

Session 4- April 15, 1:00 -3:00 pm

Main Session- April 22, 9:00 am -2:00 pm

Main Event

April 22, 2021

Online via Zoom

The BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) will be hosting the annual Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People’s Dialogue Sessions virtually via Zoom this year.

We envision these Dialogue Sessions as a day where First Nations Chiefs, councillors, matriarchs, youth, and Indigenous community leaders from across British Columbia who identify as women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ can come together to support one another and gain strength to thrive in our political, business, family, and community contexts.

Check out [BCAFN Events](#) for further details and updates as they become available.

BCAFN Youth Update

As we move forward in transitioning to an online world, the BCAFN Youth Representatives, Justen Peters and Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, have been finding creative ways to engage and connect with First Nations youth through various online platforms through funding provided by the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation (MIRR).

Over the past six months, the BCAFN Youth Representatives have been involved in the oversight and development of youth.bcafn.ca, which will be a website solely dedicated to First Nations youth-related content, information, event promotion and career development opportunities which will be launched in March 2021.

Justen and Taylor have also been working with the BCAFN staff to develop a BCAFN Youth Facebook group that is

exclusive to BC First Nations youth which will work as a forum for youth to connect, engage and share information. Through this network, the BCAFN Youth Representatives have launched a series of First Nations youth-specific contests geared at drawing more youth to the group and growing a larger communication network online.

The final project from the funding provided by MIRR is the BCAFN Youth Forum and Training Sessions (Online) that will be held on March 26th - 27th, 2021 which is open to all BC First Nations youth between the ages of 16-29. The theme of these events focuses on how First Nations youth can optimally connect and lead the way in the virtual world. For more information go to BCAFN [events](#).

**OPEN TO FIRST NATIONS YOUTH IN BC
AGES 16-29**

HONOURARIA AND DOOR PRIZES FOR PARTICIPANTS!



MARCH 27TH, 2021

BCAFN YOUTH FORUM

Join us for our first virtual BCAFN Youth Forum. The theme of this forum is focused on how First Nations youth can optimally connect in a virtual world. We will have keynote speakers and breakout sessions to unpack both the advantages and difficulties in leading through a virtual world and connect with your peers. We will have live entertainment at lunch, door prizes and honouraria available for participants. Register by March 15th for your chance to win a \$100 Prepaid Visa Giftcard.

**OPEN TO FIRST NATIONS YOUTH IN BC
AGES 16-29**

SPACE IS LIMITED! REGISTER EARLY! DOOR PRIZES!



MARCH 26TH, 2021

BCAFN YOUTH TRAINING SESSIONS

2:00PM - 4:00 PM How to Engage: Interactive Games and Icebreakers
In today's virtual and online world, interacting with others has posed significant challenges for most of us who like to engage in person. This session will help youth learn some tricks of the trade to successfully lead, engage and facilitate meetings online through a variety of interactive methods that will keep your audience both entertained, connected and engaged.

4:30PM - 6:30 PM How to be a Confident Speaker: Improv Session
This training session will provide youth with the tools to be able to speak to an audience with confidence through a variety of exercises that will help you loosen up and be bold in front of your audience through a series of improv games that will strengthen your skills and connect with your fellow youth leaders.

7:00PM - 9:00 PM How to Decompress: Grounding and Meditation
If we have learned anything from the past year, it is that operating purely in a virtual world can leave us drained and defeated at times. Now more than ever, it is important to learn how to take care of your mind and body and learn how to ground yourself after a jam-packed day, week or month. This session will focus on techniques to assist with meditation styles and grounding techniques that will be sure to leave your final training session rested and recharged.

Justice

On December 9, 2020, the Legislative Assembly appointed the Special Committee on Reforming the *Police Act*. The mandate of the Committee is to examine, inquire into, and make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on the following:

- Reforms related to independent oversight, transparency, governance, structure, service delivery, standards, funding, training and education, and any other considerations which may apply respecting the modernization and sustainability of policing under the *Police Act* and all related agreements.
- The role of police with respect to complex social issues including mental health and wellness, addictions, and harm reduction; and in consideration of any appropriate changes to relevant sections of the *Mental Health Act*.
- The scope of systemic racism within British Columbia's police agencies, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, independent municipal police and designated policing units, and its impact on public safety and public trust in policing.
- Whether there are measures necessary to ensure a modernized *Police Act* is consistent with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), as required by section 3 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

The Special Committee will report back to the House by October 8, 2021.

The Committee has invited community advocacy organizations, service providers, Indigenous communities, and subject matter experts to provide their input on public safety and policing in BC. The Committee will be reaching out to additional stakeholders soon and inviting all British Columbians to share their input beginning March 1.

If you would like to receive updates please contact the [Parliamentary Committees Office](#).

The First Nations Leadership Council will be presenting to the Special Committee on March 26. The BC First Nations Justice Council will also make a presentation.

Fisheries

Regional Chief Teegee continues to advocate for full harvesting rights of fish and salmon stock restoration. 2020 brought to light the lack of rights implementation in Canada as Mi'kmaq fishers exercised their inherent, constitutional and Supreme Court affirmed rights to harvest lobster. Tensions, fueled by anti-Indigenous racism rose to the point of violence, with inadequate intervention on the part of the Crown to uphold the Mi'kmaq's rights. Regional Chief Teegee, as Co-Chair of the National Fisheries Committee, implored action on the ground from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and offered open support to the effected Mi'kmaq communities.

In the fall, over 100 First Nations in BC came together to call for the removal of open-net pen fish farms in the Discovery Islands because of their harmful impact to wild salmon stocks and threat to First Nations ways of being. Department of Oceans and Fisheries Minister Jordan announced that the farms would be removed by 2025 and that no licenses will be renewed. Industry has subsequently challenged the order and BCAFN will continue to advocate for the order to stay.

The Wild Salmon Steering Committee (WSC) has been meeting since April of 2020. Some progress has been made on this file and as the new mandate for a BC Fisheries Strategy was endorsed by Chiefs in the fall, the focus will be on incorporating the work of the WSSC into the regional Strategy. The regional Strategy will also feed into a National First Nations Fisheries Strategy, where progress has been slowed by the pandemic and the inability to convene a national meeting.

On the international front, Regional Chief continues to push for protection of Indigenous knowledge and protocols at the table for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post 2020-Framework. The progress on the CBD has similarly been stalled by the pandemic, although virtual meetings continue to take place. Regional Chief is pushing for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge with adequate intellectual property protections, the recognition of Indigenous peoples as separate from local communities with distinct rights. Advocacy on this file uses a heavy marine biodiversity lens and will be ongoing.

Food Security

BCAFN received its first mandate at the March 2020 SCA to advance food security issues in BC, as per resolution 13/20, *Support for First Nations in BC Food Security, Sovereignty and Economic Development*. The resolution stipulates advocacy, research and engagement with organizations and other entities at all scales.

On the international front, a staff member been attending meetings of the North American Civil Society Mechanism, an advisory body to the Committee on World Food Security, an entity that reports to the UN General Assembly and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization. National and regional advocacy has been ongoing on this file since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic considering the economic impacts experienced by BC First Nations as a result of the pandemic.

In order to mobilize and create a foundation for further policy work on this new file, a project has been designed

by staff and subsequently funded by ISC, titled, *Strong Indigenous Food Systems*.

The project focuses on filling the knowledge gap that exists in terms of the state of community food systems. Existing data will be used to identify where the gaps exist and subsequent data will be generated using a survey and key informant interviews. Using the data collected, a draft framework will be developed to establish culturally and contextually relevant indicators of food security and sovereignty for use by communities to evaluate their own food systems. This assessment tool will be able to help in identifying solutions for communities. Data collected during this research will further inform BCAFN's work on this critically important subject.

The project is expected to be completed in the spring and the tool will be distributed to communities for their use.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst





Climate Action: Electric Vehicle (EV) charging station in Williams Lake

Climate Emergency

Climate change continues to be a priority for Regional Chief Terry Teegee and the BCAFN. We continue working to advance the recognition of First Nations' inherent Rights in government initiatives and more broadly in the climate discussion, and are focusing on a number of projects outlined here.

We also continue engaging the provincial and federal governments to advocate for how to respectfully implement their respective climate plans, and liaising with the AFN's other Regions and their National Office through the Regional Climate Change Coordinators Network, the Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (**ACE**) and the Joint Committee on Climate Action (**JCCA**).

Developing the First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan (Climate Strategy). To advance the development of the Climate Strategy, in the last two months BCAFN, alongside our FNLC partners, have been busy preparing materials and organizing community engagement sessions. We received extremely valuable information from various First Nations during the three virtual engagement sessions held in February (coastal, interior and north regions). We also put out a call for Expressions of Interest for a **First Nations Climate Action Technical Advisory Group (Technical Advisory Group)** and are excited to announce the make-up shortly.

The FNLC Climate Strategy Project Team is also offering one-on-one meetings for First Nations who could not attend the engagement sessions or prefer this form of engagement. Drafts of the Climate Strategy will be sent to all First Nations in BC for their

review and feedback between April and June, to then be approved by Chiefs during the following FNLC assemblies. For more information, please contact [Patricia Rojas](#).

Supporting First Nations Climate Leadership.

Support communities in the development of their own climate responses is the core of the BCAFN Climate Change Portfolio. In this regard, we are continuing to facilitate information-sharing with First Nations on important funding and training opportunities, climate events and other relevant information to foster First Nations climate leadership. The information is shared via:

- The BCAFN *Climate Change Distribution List* (contact Patricia if you want to be added to this).
- The BCAFN website. We are currently working on a new climate change section called *First Nations Climate Innovations Videos* to highlight First Nations' climate initiatives and to share information between communities. We are looking for more videos to share, so please contact us if you think you have a video that could be shared!
- The delivery of *Climate Action Webinars*. We hosted our first webinar in January on installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and accessing provincial funding. We are planning more webinars in April-May which will focus on opportunities for retrofitting houses and public buildings to improve energy efficiency, and how to use public climate data to develop climate action initiatives in adaptation.

Patricia Rojas, Regional Climate Change Coordinator



Water

While 2020 was a year of considerable upheaval, it was also a year that government-supported water initiatives have made notable headway at both the provincial and national levels. However, while the Federal and Provincial governments have made commitments towards investing in water security, it is imperative that these initiatives include First Nations at the forefront of co-developing legislation, policy, strategies and action plans and that First Nations inherent jurisdictional water rights are acknowledged, affirmed and upheld by all levels of government.

At the National level, the BCAFN has been working with the AFN to engage with First Nations communities on the co-development and reform of the *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act*. Formal engagement sessions will be held virtually in BC on March 30th and 31st, 2021. More details will be available on events.bcafn.ca.

At the end of 2019, the Federal Government committed to creating the Canada Water Agency (CWA). The purpose of the CWA remains ambiguous which leaves some cautiously optimistic while others remain skeptic and uncertain. The upcoming CWA consultations have been announced by the Federal Government to commence from December 17th, 2020 to March 1st, 2021. To date, there has been no known First Nations-specific engagement planned in BC and the BCAFN and the AFN have been advocating for the Federal government to initiate meaningful and

participatory engagement with First Nations communities beyond the March 1st, 2021 deadline.

At the Provincial level, addressing water security in BC made headway in the BCNDP's platform commitments in the fall election. As part of the mandate letters released in December 2020, the BCNDP has committed to the development of a Watershed Security Strategy to effectively "manage and protect BC watersheds for the public good while making sure BC gets fair rates for the bulk sale of water moving forward". As part of this strategy, the BCNDP committed to creating a Watershed Security Fund to help support water initiatives led by Indigenous, local and regional authorities and organizations.

With the above commitments made by the Provincial Government, it is imperative that First Nations are included in the decision-making and co-development of all initiatives, policy and legislation that impact Aboriginal and Treaty rights and interests. The BCAFN will advocate for the Provincial Government to coordinate and implement effective engagement and co-development frameworks for the critical work that is needed to ensure that First Nations are engaging on collaborative governance with matters pertaining to all policy, action plans and strategies that shape water use, management and protection in BC.

Sophia Iliopulos, Regional Water Coordinator

SAVE THE DATE



Regional Water Engagement Sessions March 30 & 31, 2021

Contact BCAFN Regional Water Coordinator [Sophia Iliopulos](#) for more information.
Go to [BCAFN Events](#) for more information and updates.

Contact BCAFN

Regional Chief Terry Teegee
regionalchief@bcfn.ca

Special Advisor to the Regional Chief
Jaime Sanchez jaimе.sanchez@bcfn.ca

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

Executive Assistant
Victoria Austin victoria.austin@bcfn.ca

Administrative Support Worker
Samantha Seymour
samantha.seymour@bcfn.ca

Senior Policy Advisor
Maureen Buchan
maureen.buchan@bcfn.ca

Policy Advisor
Sarah Froese sarah.froese@bcfn.ca

Economic Development Policy Analyst
Derek Hansom derek.hansom@bcfn.ca

Economic Development Policy Analyst
Maggie Mills margaret.mills@bcfn.ca

Finance Manager
Melanie Lyons melanie.lyons@bcfn.ca

Communications Officer
Annette Schroeter annette.schroeter@bcfn.ca

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

Carbon Specialist
Michelle Connolly
michelle.connolly@bcfn.ca

Regional Water Coordinator
Sophia Iliopoulos sophia.iliopoulos@bcfn.ca

Administrative Project Support
Joanna Prince joanna.prince@bcfn.ca

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

This past fall the BCAFN closed their offices as a result of rising numbers of COVID-19 cases in our province. There is no one to answer calls in the Prince George Office and we ask people to call our Administrative Support worker, Samantha Seymour, at 778-281-2224 and she will be able to assist with enquiries. We apologize for this additional process as we are unable to forward calls from the office due to technical limitations with our phone provider.

Upcoming Events

BCAFN Youth Forum & Training Sessions

Online Training sessions March 26, 2021
1. How to Engage 2-4 PM
2. How to be a confident speaker 4:30 - 6:30 PM
3. How to Decompress 7-9 PM
Youth Forum March 27, 2021
9 AM - 3 PM

Regional Water Engagement Sessions

Save the dates!
March 30 & 31, 2021

First Nations Economic Recovery and Reconciliation: An Opportunity for British Columbia

Online
April 7, 2021, 10 AM - 2:30 PM

Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Dialogue Sessions

Online Lead-up sessions:
April 13, 14 & 15, 2021
Main event: March 27, 2021

Information and registration for all BCAFN events can be found [here](#)

WE WILL GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER

Have health related questions about COVID-19? Visit the **First Nations Health Authority** website

fnha.ca

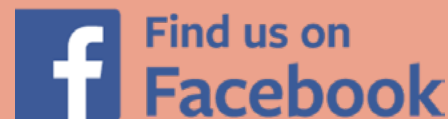


British Columbia
Assembly of First Nations

Looking for resources, supports & news? Visit the **First Nations Leadership Council** new website

fnlc.ca

"Please listen to and heed our hardworking health professionals' and authorities' advice for good health practices. Mussi Cho!," Regional Chief Terry Teegee.



BCAFN website at

bcfn.ca

Check it out!