



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

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Message from Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Chiefs, Hereditary Chiefs, Grand Chiefs, Elders, Youths, and community members,

Hadih! Greetings from beautiful Lheidli T'enneh territory.

First, I would like to acknowledge the 215 unmarked graves at Tk'emlups te Secwepemc. This discovery has sent shockwaves throughout the general population in Canada and beyond. But for our communities and our families, we always knew this history. We knew this to be true. Apologies from Church or governments are not enough, we need to see real support and action to identify additional sites throughout this country.

It's been over a year since the COVID-19 pandemic changed 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. Yet, we remain resilient and strong. Most importantly, we have not allowed this pandemic to take our focus away from the many other critical issues that we face as First Nations leaders.

On behalf of the 204 First Nations in British Columbia and the BCAFN Board of Directors, I am proud to present an update on my portfolio areas and ongoing work in our region.

Bill C-15, which will implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* at the federal level has been passed. We understand that C-15 is not a cure-all for centuries of colonial injustice. Still, this bill is a step in the right direction. In our home province, the BCAFN continues to work with the government of British Columbia to implement the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* and we will continue this ongoing work and implement engagement plans with Chiefs throughout the summer which will feed into and inform the draft Action Plan.

In March, we held our Special Chiefs Assembly online. The BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed 19 Resolutions covering critical issues including anti-Indigenous racism in healthcare, COVID-19 immunization planning, community-based climate leadership, policing reform, the National Action plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+, and more.





"Talking Rock," located by Highway 27, Nak'azdli Whut'en traditional territory

In the Economic Development portfolio, the BCAFN continues to advocate heavily for First Nations economic development at all scales. Like the rest of the world, we have had to pivot to an online platform to deliver Business Forums. The latest was held in April on Economic Recovery. At the national level, I act as the Chair of the Chiefs' Committee on Economic Development. COVID-19 economic recovery is the central focus of this table and will continue to take precedence.

For Cannabis Legislation and Regulation, the Chiefs Committee on Cannabis' efforts were interrupted by the pandemic. However, we resumed meeting in the fall of 2020, with new momentum to develop a federal First Nations jurisdiction framework. We are currently seeking meetings with relevant federal ministers and will be considering legislative options soon. The AFN is also seeking funding from Indigenous Services Canada to support the concerted effort required to develop and advance this strategy with the federal government.

In Justice, the AFN has moved to strike an AFN Justice and Policing Task Force, which intends to prioritize and advocate for increased community safety, reforming

police services, First Nations jurisdiction, and alternatives for police services and the legal system. I co-chair the Justice portfolio along with Quebec-Labrador Regional Chief Ghislain Picard. We are collectively advancing several essential issues, including implementing the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into federal legislation, increasing funding to First Nations policing, and a First Nations specific National Action Plan on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People. In BC, we have collaborated with the Assembly of First Nation's Women's Council, co-facilitators Racelle Kooy and Chastity Davis-Alphonse, and regional partners to hold eight engagement sessions with survivors of violence and loved ones of those who have gone missing or been murdered, to gather recommendations for the implementation of the Calls for Justice in the BC region. The last session was held on June 1. On June 18 and 19 the BCAFN hosted two "What we heard" report back sessions, and our report will be released shortly which will inform BCAFN's advocacy as we continue to seek strategic, coordinated, and well-resourced action for families and survivors in BC.

For Fisheries, BCAFN advocates 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. As Co-Chair of the National Fisheries Committee, I implored action on the ground from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and offered open support to the affected Mi'kmaq communities. Recently, the DFO Minister announced \$647 million over 5 years for the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI). The PSSI has the potential to impact First Nations economic, cultural, social and ceremonial components of life. While the news of funding is long overdue and a step towards addressing conservation and stewardship, salmon enhancement, harvest transformation, and integration and collaboration, there remain some concerns. First Nations have been sounding the alarm on the state of wild salmon in the region for many years. Communities have been waiting for action from the DFO while struggling to implement their rights because of industry and government interventions that undermined their right to fish.

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



In the fall, over 100 First Nations in B.C. came together to call for the removal of open-net pen fish farms in the Discovery Islands. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans announced that the farms would be removed by 2025 and that no licenses will be renewed. Industry has subsequently challenged the order, and the BCAFN will continue to advocate for the order to stay.

In human resources and development, we have focused on advocating for support to cope with the ongoing pandemic. The AFN met with technical-level networks and organizations to discuss how COVID-19 had impacted program delivery and services to First Nations citizens.

First Nations and Labour Market Agreement Holders had to develop new strategies and redirect resources to accommodate safety needs, new training strategies, virtual learning environments, and more. Additional funding of 144 million dollars was identified in the Fall Economic Statement (2020) to provide extra support.

As we begin to come out the other side of this pandemic, we continue to work to implement and advance our Title, Rights, Treaty Rights, and interests. BCAFN ensures clear and open communication with the chiefs and leaders. We endeavour to work collectively towards the same goals. And, slowly, we see our work deliver real change for our communities.

I want to conclude by acknowledging the BCAFN Board of Directors, Knowledge Keepers, and Women's and Youth representatives for their continued support, energy, and effort.

Mussi Cho.



"It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Commissioner Dr. Ronald E. Ignace on his appointment to the inaugural Office of the Commission of Indigenous Languages," said Regional Chief Terry Teegee. "Our languages are an integral part of our cultures, histories, and future of our Nations. The creation of this Office is a promising step toward ensuring Indigenous languages are reclaimed, revitalized, and protected for years to come."

"Singing Our Stolen Children Home" Every Child Matters memorial event on Nak'azdli Whut'en Territory



Economic Development

BCAFN has submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation to continue the work under the Economic Development Portfolio, which remains of critical importance especially during the economic building back period that Canada is currently in.

Many strategic initiatives are outlined in the proposal, including a BC First Nations Centre of Excellence for Economic Development. This concept has been created following feedback from engagement sessions over the years and would champion collaboration, thought leadership and capacity development. Staff drafted a preliminary briefing and engaged in 4 rounds of sessions- 3 with First Nations Organizations and 1 with provincial and federal players. A fulsome concept paper for review by the Chiefs will be drafted later in the summer following conversations with other potential partners.

Further investigation and scoping of a BC First Nations Wellness Index is also highlighted within the proposal. The first paper (LINK) outlines economic valuation models used globally that are more representative of the wellbeing of populations as opposed to gross domestic product (GDP). Now, it is time to dig further and establish the data needed to construct a more equitable index for measuring wellness in BC, grounded in First Nations values. Staff have been

staying engaged on developments in this area of economic valuation.

On April 7th 2021, the second online BCAFN Business Forum took place with a focus on economic recovery and First Nations. Participants heard from Indigenous tourism leaders, infrastructure specialists and finance professionals to understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on the First Nations community in BC and the pathways for expedited economic reconciliation as the country moves into recovery.

BCAFN is engaging on the investment policy for the InBC Strategic Fund, a \$500 million triple bottom line fund which is the first of its kind in the province, in order to ensure that the fund is accessible for First Nations and supports the articles within the Declaration Act. Other engagement with federal and provincial initiatives are heavily entrenched in trade, including a new UK agreement following BREXIT and a potential Indonesian comprehensive economic partnership agreement. BCAFN is also designing a trade pilot project to provide a case study for international inter-tribal trade and the implementation of the right to trade.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst





Louisa Housty-Jones BCAFN Women's Representative

Womens' Representative Update

Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Dialogue Sessions

The 2021 Dialogue sessions were held virtually on April 13, 14, 15, and 22, 2021 and included themes of gender identity, allyship, self-care, wellness, and reclaiming our distinct roles and responsibilities. In response to dialogue at the 2020 Dialogue Sessions, the 2021 sessions were renamed to, the Women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People's Dialogue Sessions in recognition of BCAFN's efforts to hold space that is inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities, and upholds the diversity of unique identities.

A number of individuals were instrumental in advising on the planning for the 2021 Dialogue Sessions, in particular: Deb Foxcroft, Deborah Baker, Dr. Gwendolyn Point, Kukpi7 Rosanne Casimer, Racelle Kooy, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, Chief Sharleen Gale, and Orene Askew. "I am grateful for your support and guidance."

These Dialogue Sessions provided space for Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to come together to support one another and gain strength to thrive in our political, business, family, and community contexts. Our planning advisory committee felt this was especially important this year, as many of us find ourselves grieving,

fatigued, and isolated. Our theme for this year's sessions was "Nourishing Hope and Belonging". Through the dialogue and interactions of this event, our hope was that those joining might receive nourishment, and that their sense of hope and belonging would be uplifted.

BCAFN is currently in the final stages of preparing a summary report of the 2021 Dialogue Sessions. Our intention with this report is to share more broadly the perspectives and immense wisdom from the knowledge keepers, cultural support individuals, panelists, facilitators, session leaders, graphic recorders, and participants and outline how BCAFN intends to carry forward the dialogue with action in several key areas.

Thank you to all of those who were involved in making this year's Dialogue Sessions a reality, in particular, we are grateful to those who contributed to the visioning and planning of these sessions in our early stages to set us on a good path.

Regional Engagement on the Development of the MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ National Action Plan

In May and June, 2021 the BCAFN and the AFN Women's Council co-hosted a series of virtual engagement sessions on the development of the National Action Plan on MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+. A "What we Heard" report based on these sessions and the written, audio, and video submissions that were received is currently in the final stages of preparation, and will be made widely available shortly. This report will also be integrated into the AFN Women's Council's contribution to the National Action Plan, "Breathing Life into the Calls for Justice". It will also serve as a foundation for BCAFN's advocacy at the provincial and federal levels.

The co-facilitators for these sessions, Racelle Kooy and Chastity Davis-Alphonse adopted a families and survivors-centred approach that incorporated the following principles:

- Respecting History of Activism and Work Completed to Date on MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+
- Culturally Relevant and Trauma Informed Principles: Safety, Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer support, Collaboration, Empowerment, voice, and choice, and Cultural, historical, and gender issues
- Creating a Safe and Brave Space
- Action and Implementation Oriented

These engagement sessions consisted of four phases:

1. 4 Pre-engagement sessions with key political organizations and stakeholders,
2. 2 Information sharing sessions with MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ family members and survivors,
3. 8 MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ BC engagement sessions, accompanied by the opportunity to make written,



Dakeh Elders attending the 'Wiping of the Tears' ceremony at the Lejac Residential School site.

video, or audio submissions.

During the sessions our co-facilitators opened up dialogue around several guiding questions, in addition to other areas participants may wish to discuss. Questions included:

- What areas need to be addressed immediately in your region to end violence against MMIWG2S+?
- How do you see First Nations values, knowledge, and culture woven into the National Action Plan? Regionally? Locally?
- How can governments (federal, provincial, municipal, First Nation) better support family members and survivors while the implementation of the National Action Plan happens?
- Are there examples of addressing violence in your community or region that are working well? Please share. How do you see them being expanded or enhanced?
- Is there anything else you would like to share to contribute towards development of the National Action Plan?

4. 2 Report back sessions.

These sessions reported back to MMIWG2S+ family members and survivors what was heard in the eight engagement sessions as well as what was shared through written, audio and video submissions. From the "Reclaiming Power & Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" the Calls for Justice were identified under 16 themes. The responses from BC Engagement Process were organised under each

of the 16 themes:

- A. Human and Indigenous Rights and Governmental Obligations
- B. Culture
- C. Health and Wellness
- D. Human Security - Economic
- E. Human Security - Housing
- F. Justice
- G. Media and Social Influencers
- H. Health and Wellness Service Providers
- I. Transportation Services and Hospitality Industry
- J. Police Services
- K. Attorneys and Law Societies
- L. Educators
- M. Social Workers and Those Implicated in Child Welfare
- N. Extractive and Development Industries
- O. Correctional Services
- P. All Canadians

While the "What we heard" report is still underway some early thoughts and discussions included:

- Need for counselling, mental wellness, support groups, and missing person response supports for families
- Need to address systemic issues like racism, and make changes in the justice system, child welfare system, education system
- Need for ongoing dialogues on the issue of MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ and raising awareness
- Calling for immediate action on behalf of all governments
- For Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ specific organizations to receive ongoing core funding and capacity building support. Building capacity is a major, consistent theme we hear.
- For the need to fully implement Bill S-3 and ensure everyone who is entitled to registration can be quickly registered.

I would like to express our gratitude to all the MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+ family members and survivors who participated. This process captured your voices, knowledge, wisdom, and lived experiences. Your experience, voice, and perspective are so important as all governments, sectors of society, and indeed all people in Canada must work to implement "Reclaiming Power & Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Calls to Justice" in partnership with Indigenous people, and with the leadership of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, family members, and survivors.

I also wish to recognize and thank:

Elders and Knowledge Keepers Carleen Thomas, Pauline



Waterfall, Bill White, Sandy Laframboise, and BCAFN Knowledge Keeper Dr. Gwendolyn Point;

- Partners and staff within the AFN Women's Council, Julie McGregor, Kyrie Ransom, and Brittany McMaster;
- 2021 BC regional engagement co-facilitators Chastity Davis-Alphonse and Racelle Kooy;
- 2021 BC regional engagement session wellness support: the MMIWG2S+ Coordinators. Thank you Jodi August, Chas Coutlee, Connie Greyeyes, Gail Jones, Margaret Peters, Susan Landell, Lisa Watts, Wendall Williams from the First Nations Health Authority, Indian Residential School Survivors Society, Tsow Tun Le Lum, and Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council; Lorraine Naziel from the First Nations Health Authority for coordinating support; and Shannon Alfred from the Namgis First Nation;
- The facilitators for the dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA+ session, Percy Lezard and Corrina Sparrow;
- Those from the Family Information Liaison Unit who journeyed with us in many of the sessions Brenda Wilson, Freda Enns, and Teddy Antoine;
- Graphic recorders Michelle Buchholz and Janice Keyes; and,
- Note taker Kelsey Guenette.

Each of you added invaluable aspects to these engagements and your involvement was truly a gift.

We raise our hands to each and every one of you for your courage, vulnerability, and faith in being a part of this process. We recognize the deeply personal nature of this crisis, and the decades of advocacy of so many.

At the same time, we acknowledge that this process was not perfect, and will work on ensuring BCAFN's advocacy can be more representative and inclusive. We also acknowledge and respect those who chose not to participate in this process.

We also recognize the outstanding need for more action. On June 3, 2021 the organizations and governments that are working to develop and implement the National Action Plan released their contributions towards this plan. Immediate short term priorities include a range of legal, advocacy and wellness supports for victims and families, creating a nationwide emergency number, Indigenous-led prevention and healing programs, education, training, and awareness campaigns, creating a National Task Force to re-investigate unresolved cases of MMIWG2SLGBTQQIA+,

implement an annual liveable income, support high speed internet infrastructure, increase accessibility to cultural knowledge and 2SLGBTQQIA+ programs and services, recognition and supports for jurisdiction over children and families, establish an accountability mechanism for human rights violations, 24 hour in person wraparound mental wellness services for trauma and addictions, sustainable housing, shelters and second-stage/transition housing, and make the National Inquiry's public record accessible and report to Parliament annually on the implementation of the Calls for Justice. However, it is not yet clear how these priorities will be implemented as the federal government noted that the "implementation" portion of the plan is still under development. The result is a document that is largely aspirational and falls short of what is needed to end this crisis. As many have publicly noted, the plan is incomplete and lacks concrete actions, timeframes, funding, and coordination of roles and responsibilities.

BCAFN is committed to advocating for improvements to the process of developing and implementing the National Action Plan, and to seeing the regional perspective that this report speaks to included in the concrete actions of this plan. Provincially, BCAFN is also seeking to improve communication and collaboration with the province of BC to ensure that what we heard is included in planning, and actioned on.

On June 3, 2021 the government of BC released "A Path Forward: Priorities and Early Strategies for B.C. June 2021 Status Update". It sets out 28 Actions under the key themes of:

- Safe Spaces and Safety Plans
- Healing Support
- Strengthening Relationships with Partners
- Access to Resources and Recommendations

In closing, I know that much work for healing and justice remains, but I believe we are in a time of change and that we have hope. The Calls for Justice and all the truths that were shared will never be forgotten. I raise my hands to all of you, and hope that this work can honour the lives that have been lost, those who are survivors, and the family members and loved ones who carry on the legacy of those who have gone missing or been murdered. To see change is our highest goal, and I will do what I can in my role to support this change, and go about this in a good way.

Louisa Housty-Jones, BCAFN Women's Representative

BCAFN Youth Update

Youth Representative's Statement on the Recovery of the 215 Lost Children at the Former Kamloops Indian Residential School:

The news that came out from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc of the unmarked graves of 215 children at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School has been devastating and a major wake up call for Canada while gaining attention from across the world. We will continue the healing process that we, as Indigenous people, must undertake for the rebuilding of our nations and future generations. We give thanks to our elders, leaders, and every Indigenous person who has had the strength to move forward through all the trauma while continuing to preserve our cultures and help our communities heal.

wai limlimt

Justen Peters

Mussi Cho

Taylor Behn-Tsakoza

BCAFN Youth Forum and Training Sessions

The BCAFN Youth Representatives, Justen Peters and Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, worked alongside BCAFN staff in the planning and preparation of the BCAFN Youth Training Sessions and Youth Forum held on March 26th and 27th, 2021. The two online events were open to all First Nations youth in B.C. ages 16-29.

Taylor and Justen had a goal to host an event that would provide tools and resources for First Nations youth to operate and engage in online platforms during the pandemic and beyond. Based on this goal, three key themes emerged for the BCAFN Youth Training Sessions and Forum: social media, mental health and entrepreneurship. Under these themes, BCAFN hosted three vibrant keynote speakers including Shayla Stonechild, Madeline Terbasket and Siobhan Detkavich who shared their experiences and

perspectives as Indigenous youth leaders.

Part of the Youth Forum focused on what First Nations youth want to see from their elected Youth Representatives. Climate change, 2SLGBTQQIA+ representation and mental health were all identified as key priorities for the youth attending the forum. The Youth Representatives will work throughout 2021/22 to develop ideas on how to best address these priorities going forward.

National AFN Youth Council

BCAFN's Female Youth Representative, Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, was appointed to the Assembly of First Nations Youth Council Co-Chair Executive. This marks a historical moment for the Youth Council which now has its first all-female identifying Executive. BCAFN sends our congratulations to Taylor and looks forward to her leadership on the Youth Council.

BCAFN Youth Website

In order to promote Indigenous youth-specific content and develop increased awareness about BCAFN and the role of Youth Representatives, Taylor and Justen worked with the BCAFN staff and consultants to develop a youth-specific website.

The website launched on National Indigenous Peoples Day on June 21st, 2021. This website will help promote Indigenous youth-centred content including events, contests, opportunities and BCAFN priorities for Indigenous youth in B.C. To stay in touch with Justen and Taylor and to learn more about First Nations youth-related information and events please go to youth.bcafn.ca



Food Security

BCAFN received its first mandate at the March Special Chiefs Assembly to advance food security issues in BC, as per resolution [13/2020](#), *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. An opportunity to engage in international negotiations at the Council on World Food Security will take place in October 2021. A regional resolution will be forthcoming on this front.

A draft framework is currently being developed by BCAFN to establish culturally and contextually relevant indicators of food security and sovereignty for use by communities to evaluate their own food systems. The research gathered to inform these indicators will also provide a basis for further advocacy work on the food security file.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst

Indigenous Languages

In alignment with BCAFN Resolution [11/2019](#): *Support for Co-Developing Provincial Indigenous Languages Legislation* BCAFN collaborated with regional partners on the development of a proposal to support this work, which remains underway, and supports the inclusion of this work in the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan*.

BCAFN will continue to take direction from Chiefs and leadership and collaborate with regional political organizations and First Nations regarding the implementation of this mandate going forward.

Sarah Froese, Policy Analyst

Homelessness

The housing crisis in BC continues to deepen with real estate prices sky-rocketing and more people finding themselves in precarious housing situations. People settled in an encampment in Prince George faced eviction from a public space in June, causing an outcry at the lack of supportive services and alternatives for residents. Regional Chief advocated heavily for a cease to this practice and continues to demand that the right to public space is upheld for those experiencing homelessness.

Indigenous peoples in BC are most likely to find themselves homeless or at risk of homelessness. BCAFN took a role in steering the Housing Services Association of BC's forum on Indigenous Experiences with Homelessness on June 10th 2021. Given the relatively recent mandate (March 2020) to engage on a homelessness and housing issues, BCAFN is now ready to engage more heavily on this front and is scoping opportunities for collaboration.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst

"Together We Stand!" protest for Prince George City injunction to remove George St. encampment



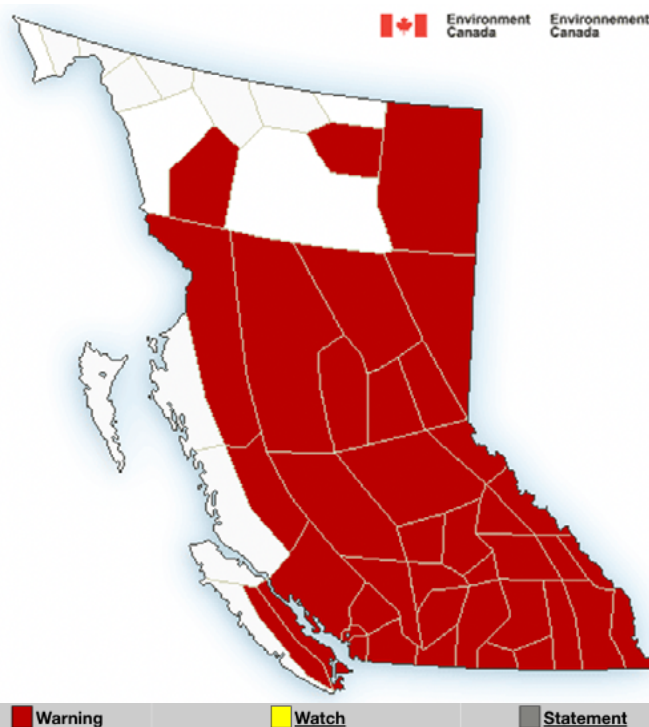
Climate Emergency

BC has experienced unprecedented high and dangerous temperatures during recent days, reaching over 48°C in some places, resulting in several heat warnings and with an unprecedented number of reports of sudden and unexpected deaths throughout BC ([more than 700 people](#)). The record-breaking temperatures increased heat-related illnesses, floods due to glacier melt and wildfires due to drought conditions. The fires remind us about the power of climate change. To date (July 5, 2021), there are more than 196 active fires across the province. The 2017 and 2018 wildfires, which left more than 2.5 million hectares burned, cost over \$1.2 billion in fire suppression and contributed more than 362 Mt CO₂e of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions released to the atmosphere, representing more than 270% of BC's total human-made emissions for both years. Extreme weather events are predicted to increase in frequency and severity as a result of global warming. They warn us how important and urgent it is to halt GHG emissions and to ensure we are prepared to cope with the inevitable climate effects.

The BCAFN Climate Change Portfolio has focused in recent months on supporting First Nations community-based climate initiatives, as directed by the Chiefs-in-Assembly ([Resolution 05/2021](#)). We hosted two climate action webinars during 2021 and a third webinar will take place at the end of July. The climate action webinars aim to provide comprehensive information to First Nations governments on opportunities (federal, provincial and otherwise) to support their own climate action and initiatives.

We continue to share climate information with First Nations and engage the federal and provincial governments to advocate for major investments specific for First Nations to strengthen their capacity to carry on their self-determined climate responses. A specific request is to support the creation of a Climate Coordinators Network in BC with representation of communities and/or Tribal Councils, similar to the Great Bear Initiative Climate Action Network and connected to the AFN network of Regional Climate Change Coordinators (RCCC). We also continue to liaise with our local partners, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) and the First Nations Summit (FNS), and our national counterpart, the Assembly of First Nations and the RCCC.

Mainly, we are monitoring and responding to government processes related to climate initiatives such as the development of the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy, the BC Flood Strategy, the CleanBC Roadmap, the BC Forest Carbon Emissions Offsets, the implementation of the federal Strengthened Climate Plan, and other initiatives on clean energy, energy-efficiency



Map source: [Public Weather Alerts](#) for British Columbia. Image June 24, 2021.

SAVE THE DATE: JULY 14TH, 2021



THE FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL IS SEEKING FIRST NATIONS YOUTH INPUT
ON THE BC FIRST NATIONS CLIMATE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

YOUTH & CLIMATE CHANGE ENGAGEMENT SESSION

10:00AM - 3:00PM (VIA ZOOM)

HONORARIA & DOOR PRIZES AVAILABLE

SESSION OPEN TO FIRST NATIONS YOUTH IN BC AGES 16-30

REGISTER AT [YOUTH.BCAFN.CA/EVENTS/CLIMATE](https://youth.bcafn.ca/events/climate)

and low-carbon transportation. We pointed out that reconciliation goes beyond hosting engagement sessions and gathering information on Indigenous perspectives to be included in climate plans and reports. The government's legal obligations to First Nations require actions to align climate policies, plans and programs with the Declaration Act and the *UN Declaration* and incorporate empowered First Nations at decision-making tables. The climate crisis demands a shift in the government's approach to one rooted in First Nations' values and worldviews, and which ensures climate response is just and effective.

With the support of the Pacific Institute of Climate Solutions, we welcome Alyna De Guzman as a BCAFN

Climate Intern to support our Climate Change Portfolio work. Alyna is also collaborating with the FNLC Project Team in the development of the BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan (Strategy). The FNLC is also hosting a [Youth & Climate change Engagement Session](#) on July 14 to inform the Strategy. In the weeks following, the first draft of the Strategy will be shared with First Nations for feedback.

[Register](#) for the Youth & Climate Change Engagement Session

Patricia Rojas, Regional Climate Change Coordinator



Water

During the 17th Annual BCAFN Special Chiefs Assembly, two water-related resolutions ([06/2021](#) & [07/2021](#)) were unanimously adopted which mandate for continued advocacy for First Nations water rights and First Nations co-development of provincial and federal initiatives including the provincial-led Watershed Security Fund, Watershed Security Strategy as well as the Canada Water Agency. The Chiefs-in-Assembly also supported the mandate to revise and update the First Nations Leadership Council BC First Nations Water Rights Strategy which was developed in 2013. This work will be underway throughout 2021/22.

In March 2021, the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) held two Regional Water Engagement Sessions for First Nations in BC. These sessions focused on gaining feedback on the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act reform and input on AFN's National Water Strategy. Updates from the AFN will soon be released regarding the outcomes of the sessions including information on upcoming engagement sessions.

Environment and Climate Change Canada have encouraged First Nations communities to engage on the upcoming Canada Water Agency but have yet to determine how these engagement processes will take place. BCAFN continues to advocate for early and meaningful engagement to take place with sufficient resources for First Nations communities to co-develop water-based priorities and objectives of the future Canada Water Agency.

BCAFN is developing a new Climate Change and Water monthly Newsletter. This newsletter will feature updates, community-led projects, and share funding opportunities for environmental community-based initiatives. If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter or have a community environmental initiative you would like featured in the newsletter, please email sophia.iliopulos@bcfn.ca or patricia.rojas@bcfn.ca for more information.

Sophia Iliopulos, Regional Water Coordinator

Shared Territories and Overlaps

On March 11-13, 2021 the FNLC hosted a forum for First Nations Chiefs, hereditary/traditional leadership, and technicians/experts to discuss shared territories and overlaps. However, the forum was interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it concluded early on March 12, 2021. Notably, this meant that delegates did not fulsomely discuss the potential for an Indigenous-led institution to support First Nations with these issues, or next steps as was set out in the agenda. A number of materials were prepared for the forum, and notes and graphic recordings were developed to ensure that there is a record of what was discussed, which have been circulated to Chiefs and leadership, and are also available from the BCAFN.

Since then, the FNLC has been working to support First Nations in their efforts against COVID-19, and has worked to advance our respective mandates in the midst of this challenging time.

Planning is now underway for a FNLC Shared Territories and Overlaps forum on November 24-25, 2021.

- This event will be held virtually via zoom.
- Three delegates from each First Nations are invited, including BC Chiefs, hereditary/traditional leadership, and technicians/experts
- A travel subsidy will be available for those who need to travel locally to access internet services in order to join the virtual meeting

In preparation for this forum the FNLC will be convening two focus groups on July 29 and August 5, 2021 to seek guidance and input on the agenda and content for the November forum. The FNLC will engage a representative sample of First Nations leadership and subject matter experts to participate in these focus group conversations. Future notices will be sent to BC First Nations Chiefs and leadership with updates on planning and materials for the upcoming November forum as they are developed. Until then, we invite you to review the materials from the 2020 forum, the graphic recordings, and detailed notes of the proceedings and breakout sessions; and to connect with the FNLC regarding any feedback you may have at this point.

Sarah Froese, Policy Analyst



Participants at the "Every Child Matters" drumming circle at the Lheidlie T'enneh Memorial Park

Bill C-15

In April, the BC Assembly of First Nations launched a campaign in support of Bill C-15, *An Act Respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. This historic legislation would compel the Canadian government to ensure that federal laws are consistent with the *UN Declaration*. The BCAFN's campaign used social media to encourage members of the public to contact their Senators and urge them to support the bill. First Nations were provided with a template letter to send Senators, voicing their support for the bill. The campaign also emphasized that Bill C-15 would fulfill the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 43rd Call to Action at the federal level, which called upon governments to fully adopt and implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the framework for reconciliation.

Additionally, Regional Chief Terry Teegee published an opinion piece in Canada's largest online news site, the *Toronto Star*. Our collective efforts to have Bill C-15 passed into legislation were successful.



Fisheries

BCAFN celebrates the rejection of Cermaq Canada Ltd.'s application to transfer Atlantic salmon from Cecil Island to Venture Point and Brent Island and to extend their finfish aquaculture licenses into 2023. This rejection is consistent with the policy announced in December 2020 to phase out aquaculture operations in the Discovery Islands by June 2022, a policy which was advocated for and championed by First Nations across the province.

BCAFN welcomes the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' Minister Jordan's announcement of \$647 million over 5 years for the Pacific Salmon Strategy Initiative (PSSI). For collaboration to occur, First Nations must be

positioned to play a meaningful role in the execution of this program which must include investing in First Nations governance. In order for that to happen, capacity must be built and appropriate structures must be enabled for proper engagement.

An FNLC survey from the Wild Salmon Steering Committee will be forthcoming for community fisheries experts to establish priorities for pacific wild salmon and to inform a regional strategy for the rehabilitation and management of the stocks.

Margaret Mills, Economic Development Policy Analyst

Justice

The AFN has moved to strike an AFN Justice and Policing Task Force, which is intended to prioritize and advocate for increased community safety, reforming police services, First Nations jurisdiction, and alternative for police services and the legal system. I am co-chair of the Justice portfolio along with Quebec-Labrador Regional Chief Ghislain Picard. We are collectively advancing important issues including:

- Implementing the *United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* into federal legislation;
- Working on a bilateral mechanism and legislative framework with the Assembly of First Nations regarding restorative justice;
- Addressing minimum mandatory penalties,

conditional sentencing to increase flexibility, and providing resources for community-based initiatives;

- Expanding both the quality and quantity of Gladue Reports;
- Increasing funding to First Nations policing, including acknowledging it as an essential service and not just a program;
- Co-developing new legislation regarding First Nations policing and providing funding for this work to be undertaken; and;
- A Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Action Plan that incorporates policing injustices.



Photo from Canadian Press

Non-medical Cannabis Legalization and Regulation

National Advocacy

On the National level, the Federal Cannabis Act will undergo a review in October, 2021 (a review occurs every three years) with comment being sought for changes. The FNLC Cannabis Working Group plans on holding a virtual engagement session with First Nations in BC in early August to solicit feedback on changes we would like to see made. The FNLC will then prepare a submission on proposed changes to the legislation for the October review, and will also bring these recommendations forward to the AFN Chiefs Committee on Cannabis.

BC-FNLC Cannabis Working Group

The FNLC was successful in their funding proposal to BC that outlines a workplan that will include work for 2021-2022 and includes provision to develop a BC First Nations Cannabis Strategy. This has allowed us to recently hire a dedicated Cannabis Policy Analyst, Derek Odgers, who is situated at the BCAFN and will be able to provide full time support for this portfolio.

At this table, key priorities remain jurisdiction and targeted economic supports for First Nations cannabis businesses. BC has indicated a willingness to advance the conversation on jurisdiction more fulsomely. These topics will be discussed more fully among First Nations in FNLC-hosted engagement sessions slated for August and October, 2021. The August session will help inform the fall sessions, and will allow for input on potential federal and provincial legislative changes. The fall sessions will seek specific input on the topics of health and safety, jurisdiction, law-making, enforcement, taxation, revenue sharing, and the potential role of a BC First Nations cannabis institution. The dialogue at these sessions will contribute toward the development of a BC First Nations Cannabis Strategy. Once the first draft of the Strategy has been developed there will be an opportunity for feedback before the final version is drafted for endorsement.

At the same time, the FNLC continues to press for the recognition of First Nations rights and jurisdiction in alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and is in discussion with

the Community Safety Unit regarding the importance of respecting the authority of First Nations governments within their respective territories.

The FNLC has continued with the development of its Strategic Partnership Initiative (SPI), a tripartite initiative, to help address gaps in access to resources, information, and capital for First Nations cannabis business in BC. With some good news, on June 22, 2021 the FNLC and our provincial and federal collaborators were successful in moving to the next stage of developing this initiative. The FNLC is also continuing to work with the BC Cannabis Secretariat on other initiatives, including an Indigenous-led Cannabis Market Access research project. The FNLC also continues to advocate for First Nations interests with respect to the Indigenous Shelf Space program, direct-delivery, and farm gate.

BCAFN Cannabis Toolkit

The BCAFN is nearing the completion of the Cannabis Toolkit. 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 case 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.

Derek Odgers, FNLC Policy Analyst

Energy and Mining

In the energy and mining portfolio, the BC Assembly of First Nations continues to actively work with the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) partners and with the support of the First Nations Energy and Mining Council (FNEMC) to advocate for the recognition and implementation of First Nations inherent rights, title, and Treaty rights, and responsibilities.

Energy

In the energy sector, over the last several years, our advocacy has centered on ensuring that processes and outcomes from the Review of BC Hydro recognize and align with the rights, title, interests and priorities of First Nations in BC. The Provincial government's BC Hydro Review began in 2018 and has three phases.

The BC Hydro Phase 1 Review did not include any participation or consultation with First Nations, despite making findings and decisions that profoundly affect First Nations, including the indefinite suspension of a program that made possible BC Hydro's purchase of clean energy from First Nation-owned clean energy projects (the "Standing Offer Program"). During the Phase 2 Review, Chiefs in BC called on the government of BC to overhaul the process until a meaningful and sustained engagement with First Nations was part of the process (Resolution 25/2019).

During this time, the FNLC noted in several letters to BC that the Province's Indigenous engagement approach failed to comply with the government's obligations as set out in the BC Declaration on the *Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (Declaration Act)* and in other commitments made the province to reconciliation.

In addition, the FNEMC has also been engaging the province and advocating that the *Declaration Act* guide participation in BC Hydro's preparation for an Integrated Resource Plan, which is a 20-year plan for the power system to ensure future customer electricity needs are met with clean reliable and affordable power. The IRP is expected to be submitted to the BC Utilities Corporation by December 2021.

To address those concerns, in June 2020, the FNLC suggested to BC a restart identifying the following suggested priorities:

1. Re-setting this process to ensure it is consistent with the *Declaration Act*.
2. Resource revenue sharing on BC Hydro projects.
3. Compensation from the impacts of past infringements
4. Ownership in:
 - Transmission lines
 - Independent power projects
 - Other utilities such as the local distribution system
5. Participation in governance, employment, and contracting with BC Hydro.
6. Transition from diesel to renewable power generation in remote First Nations communities in BC.
7. Legislative, regulatory and policies amendments to achieve the above.
8. Other issues as determined by the parties.

The Province of BC through the Ministry of Energy Mines and Low Carbon Initiative (EMLI) has committed to re-set the

relationship, through a new process called the Indigenous Clean Energy Opportunities Engagement. This new process is still in the early stages of development and it is unclear if it will address the priorities identified by the BCAFN/FNLC in 2020.

Mines

In 2020, provincial government introduced Bill 6, the *Mines Amendment Act*. Bill 6 disregards the *Declaration Act* and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* ("UNDRIP"), ignoring First Nations' jurisdiction and authority over their ancestral lands. Reform and modernization of all relevant pieces of legislation related to mining in BC (e.g., the *Mineral Tenure Act*, the *Mines Act* and the *Code*) must be done with the consultation, cooperation and collaboration of First Nations, consistent with the *Declaration Act*. Instead, BC made minor changes to the structure within EMLI (i.e., split functions within the Ministry to create a "chief auditor" and a "chief permitting officer") but did not fulfill the Auditor General's May 2016 recommendation for independent regulation of exploration and mining after the Mt. Polley disaster.

The piecemeal approach to amending the *Mines Act* without even the courtesy of a notice to First Nations leadership and First Nations rights and title holders mirrors EMLI's (before EMPR) approach with Indigenous peoples since November 2017 with the *Mineral Tenure Act* and the *Code*. The *Mineral Tenure Act*, the *Mines Act* and the *Code* combine to be the legislative underpinning for the entire placer and mineral exploration and mining sector in British Columbia. Reform and modernization of the three pieces of legislation must be done with the consultation and cooperation and, indeed with the collaboration of First Nations.

Bill 6's conflict with the government's *Declaration Act* and UNDRIP is deeply troubling. Section 3 of the *Declaration Act* stipulates in no uncertain terms that the BC government "must take all measures necessary to ensure the laws of British Columbia are consistent with the [UN] Declaration". The government has ignored its own statute in the process of drafting Bill 6 and its tabling in the legislature. Since the unanimous passage of the *Declaration Act* in 2019, the BC government has regressed in its dealing with First Nations rights and title holders. First Nations have been relegated to bystander status as the current government unilaterally develops, determines, and implements amendments to exploration and mining laws and policies that will irreversibly impact every First Nation community and individual in the province.

The BCAFN continues to advocate for reform to BC's mining laws and works with the FNEMC to advance respect for the rights, interests and priorities of First Nations in BC.

Patricia Rojas, Regional Climate Change Coordinator

Paul Blom, First Nations Energy and Mining Council

Contact BCAFN

Regional Chief Terry Teegee
regionalchief@bcagn.ca

Special Advisor to the Regional Chief
Jaime Sanchez jaima.sanchez@bcagn.ca

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

Executive Assistant
Victoria Austin victoria.austin@bcagn.ca

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

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

Policy Advisor
Sarah Froese sarah.froese@bcagn.ca

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

Finance Manager
Melanie Lyons melanie.lyons@bcagn.ca

Communications Officer
Annette Schroeter annette.schroeter@bcagn.ca

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

FNLC Cannabis Policy Analyst
Derek Odgers
derek.odgers@bcagn.ca

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

Administrative Project Support
Joanna Prince joanna.prince@bcagn.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. We look forward to opening our offices up again in the upcoming months.

Wildfire Preparedness

Ensure your family knows what to do in an emergency.

Use the "Get Prepared" website to create an emergency plan for your family and home. Creating and printing the on-line plan will only take you about 20 minutes.
fnass.bc.ca

Upcoming Events

BCAFN Annual General Meeting 2021
Online
Save the Date! September 14 - 16, 2021

FNLC Youth Climate Change Engagement Session
July 14, 2021, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
[Register](#)

BC Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering
Save the date!
November 30 & December 1, 2021

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



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BCAFN websites at
bcagn.ca
&
events.bcagn.ca

Check them out!