



BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

1004 Landooz Road
Prince George, BC V2K 5S3
Website: www.bcafn.ca

BCAFN 18th ANNUAL SPECIAL CHIEFS MEETING
March 9 & 10, 2022
Online via Zoom

Resolution 10/2022

SUBJECT: SUPPORT FOR THE INDIGENOUS DIGITAL EQUITY STRATEGY

MOVED BY: TYRONE MCNEIL, PROXY, KAWAW-KAWAW-APILT

SECONDED BY: CHIEF JAMES HOBART, SPUZZUM FIRST NATION

DECISION: CARRIED

WHEREAS:

- A. Despite widespread recognition that digital equity has become an essential issue of human rights, Indigenous peoples in British Columbia continue to disproportionately experience multiple and overlapping digital inequities. The structural and systemic reality of Indigenous experiences of digital inequity serve to further perpetuate other well-established social, economic, and political disparity gaps that have emerged from the legacy of colonial policies, practices, and approaches that fail to respect Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights;

- B. The Covid-19 pandemic has made the urgency of accelerating progress towards realizing digital equity readily apparent. Technology has become integral in facilitating the continued functionality of societies in the face of emergency shutdowns. More than ever before, individuals, communities, and governments rely digital technology to access and disseminate information; to provide and receive education, health and other social services; to maintain social and cultural connections; to exercise and protect freedom of speech; to maintain food supply chains; to create and share art; to practice language and

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 10th day of March 2022

Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

culture; to work and/or operate businesses; to protect and maintain land borders; and continue to engage in land stewardship practices.

- C. In British Columbia, the technology sector's GDP has consistently outperformed the provincial economy throughout the past decade—generating over \$34.9 billion in 2019—while only 1% of workers in the technology sector identify as Indigenous. Further still, despite the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission's recognition that well-developed broadband infrastructure is essential for individuals to participate in the digital economy, only 38% of Indigenous communities in British Columbia currently have access to the minimum service level internet speed of 50/10 Mbps.
- D. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implement through legislation, affirms:

Article 5: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 20(1): Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities.

Article 21(1): Indigenous peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 23: Indigenous peoples have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, indigenous peoples have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.

Article 34: Indigenous peoples have the right to promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 10th day of March 2022



Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief



- E. In recognition that digital technology has become intimately intertwined with policy, law, and economics, the United Nations General Assembly declared access to the Internet a basic human right in 2016. While Canadian law has begun to shift towards specifically recognizing Indigenous rights, the implementation of these rights has been slow and well-behind the pace of other human rights norms;
- F. The First Nations Technology Council (Technology Council) has been mandated to work as the sector council for technology and innovation in BC since 2002, and has a formal working relationship with the BC Assembly of First Nations, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, and the First Nations Summit (working together as the First Nations Leadership Council) through protocol entered in to in 2012 as directed by the Chiefs, whereby the Technology Council and the First Nations Leadership Council agree to work collaboratively on their respective technical and political mandates.
- G. The Technology Council has long called for systemic changes that would meaningfully support Indigenous self-determination through equitable access to digital technology, participation in the digital technology sector, and inclusion in important policy conversations concerning the future of technology; provincial and federal governments have not yet paid sufficient attention to the pernicious barriers that limit the ability of Indigenous peoples to exercise their rights to access, influence, and engage with technology and the digital technology sector.
- H. Technology offers hope in accelerating the implementation, exercise, and recognition of inherent Indigenous Rights, there is concern that—left unaddressed—digital inequities will increasingly become critical impediments in the ability of First Nations to fully exercise and implement their own laws and jurisdiction;
- I. By Resolution 19/2017 the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully support strategies that will eliminate the digital divide faced by First Nations communities in BC;
- J. Several years of Technology Council engagement with Indigenous communities has identified and reinforced the need for a comprehensive, coordinated, and Indigenous-led approach to overcome the systemic digital inequities that are experienced by Indigenous peoples across BC. It is in response to this urgent need, and within the evolving political and legal landscape, that the Technology Council has undertaken work to initiate the co-creation of a comprehensive, coordinated, and Indigenous-led digital equity strategy;

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 10th day of March 2022



Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief



THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly fully supports the First Nations Technology Council in the development of the Indigenous Digital Equity Strategy which will focus on providing actionable policy recommendations that support the realization of digital equity for Indigenous peoples across BC and will call on the government to make all technologies and all available spectrum access to First Nations including licensed spectrum and adequate space with priority access to the Remote Rural Broadband Systems (RRBS) band; and
2. the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly directs the First Nations Technology Council to provide regular updates to the BCAFN Chiefs-in-Assembly regarding progress on the development of that strategy.

Certified copy of a resolution adopted on the 10th day of March 2022



Terry Teegee, BC Regional Chief

