



ANNUAL REPORT
2024

***MOVING
FORWARD
TOGETHER
IN UNITY***

Regional Chief Joanna Bernard
NB AFN



'Qey/'Kwey,

'Qey/Kwe', I begin by acknowledging that we are gathering on the unceded and unsundered Wolastoqey/Mi'kmaq/Peskotomuhkati territory whose presence dates back to time immemorial.

Greetings Chiefs! It is my honor to present my annual report to you, at the New Brunswick Assembly of First Nation Regional Annual General Assembly. (NBAFN – AGA).

First, I'd like to thank the New Brunswick Chiefs for trusting in me to represent you as your Regional Chief for the next 3 years. I am honoured, privileged and humbled to be a leader of one of the, if not the, most beautiful regions on Turtle Island. I do not take this responsibility lightly, and I will endeavor to represent you with the utmost transparency, fairness and boldness. I am always open to new perspectives regarding the governance of this region, and I welcome each of you to reach out to me when ever you want to discuss an issue.

I want each one of my Chiefs to know that I will continue to:

- Protect and advance the rights and interests of our First Nations;
- Preserve, promote and protect First Nations cultures and traditions;
- Develop policies and identify resources to enhance the economic, social, and cultural wellbeing of our First Nations; and
- Work in collaboration with regional, national and international organizations to support and advance the collective interests of our region as well as;
- Move the Climate, Nature and Safe Drinking Water
- I look forward to engaging with you and hearing your thoughts and ideas over the next 2 days and continue to encourage you to move forward, together, in unity.



Board of Directors



Chief Rebecca Knockwood
Amlamgog Nation
(Fort Folly First Nation)



Chief Gabriel Atwin
Bilijk First Nation
(Kingsclear First Nation)



Staff



Lisa Tomah
Executive Assistant



Tawnia Morin
Financial Clerk



Regional Key Issues and Activities:

Safe Drinking Water

NB Regional Chief Joanna Bernard appointed Maggie Stothart, P. Eng, as the Regional Water Coordinator (RWC) for New Brunswick (NB) on December 6th, 2022, at the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa. Maggie Stothart is a Professional Engineer registered with the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of New Brunswick and has worked for the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council since 2017 as a technical advisor for infrastructure projects.

The role of the RWC is to ensure regional participation and the flow of regional information to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in support of water related projects that are national in scope. The RWC attends meetings, conferences, and reports back to the NB Regional Chief on initiatives and upcoming engagements sessions that would benefit water related projects for the First Nations in the NB region.

During this fiscal, the RWC has attended and/or participated in monthly RWC meetings, quarterly CCoHI meetings, the AFN Annual General Assembly, and the 7th AFN Water Symposium. The major focus this fiscal has been on Bill C-61, An Act Respecting Water, Source Water, Wastewater and Related Infrastructure on First Nation Lands. AFN NB has organized and facilitated two engagement sessions focusing on Bill C-61 and water related projects in the region and reported the findings to the AFN. A third engagement session will once again be hosted by AFN NB and is being planned for winter 2025.

Over the past few years in this position, the RWC has reported a large capacity issue arising for people working directly on the ground with our water infrastructure projects. Consultants are at capacity and because of this, fees are at a premium and all project budgets are inflated. These costs are taking away from the actual work and projects for our First Nations. Government funding is tied-up in overhead and feasibility studies that are not required, and they are losing sight of the actual goal. First Nations are growing both residentially and commercially and succession planning to ensure safe water should be included in every single program and project moving forward. Water is life.

AFN NB encourages and welcomes all feedback on this report. The RWC is available to assist with information flowing to the First Nation Chiefs, Councillors, Leaders, Directors, Managers and Operators. Wela'lin.

Climate Change

NBAFN supported the 3rd Annual Indigenous-Led Energy Symposium, hosted by North Shore Mi'kmaq District Council on September 18th, 19th and 20th, 2024, in Fredericton, NB. The Symposium brought together leaders from Indigenous communities and organizations throughout Atlantic Canada with private sector players, utilities, financial and government agencies for conversation and collaboration focused on advancing Indigenous leadership and participation in the Energy Sector, for the betterment of the sector as a whole. This year, the 3 day event shone a light on Indigenous-led projects that are defining the energy landscape in Atlantic Canada, and dove deeper into emerging opportunities on the near-term horizon.



Nature Table

The NBAFN 1st Annual Nature Gathering was held on April 23rd, 2024, at the Maqiyahimok Centre in St. Mary's First Nation. The event, themed 'Exploring Biodiversity through an Indigenous Lens,' brought together leaders, experts, and community members to discuss and share knowledge on biodiversity and environmental stewardship. The gathering aimed to highlight the critical role of Indigenous perspectives in biodiversity conservation and to foster collaborative efforts for sustainable environmental practices.

The agenda for the NBAFN 1st Annual Nature Gathering included a variety of sessions focusing on different aspects of biodiversity and environmental stewardship. The event began with a hot breakfast buffet, followed by an opening prayer and comments from key leaders. The morning sessions covered the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and species at risk in the NB region. After a lunch break, the afternoon sessions featured project showcases by NB First Nations, a wrap-up discussion, and a closing prayer.



Passamaquoddy Bay

First Nations Child and Family Services Long-Term Care Reform

On July 11, 2024, the Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario, Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and the Government of Canada reached a Draft Agreement on Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program (the “draft FSA”). The draft FSA remains subject to approval by leadership at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly (“SCA”), to be held October 16th, 17th and 18th, 2024.

The AFN also conducted regional engagement sessions regarding the draft FSA from July to September 2024, leading up to the SCA. This was a very short timeline for engagement on such an important and lengthy draft agreement. The draft FSA was negotiated without CFS and regional experts at the table, so it is essential that regional experts, leadership, and service providers have sufficient time to review it to ensure it will meet the needs of families now and into the future.



Dr. Cindy Blackstock

NC Cindy Woodhouse, Nepinak, and Dr. Cindy Blackstock were gifted a beaded eagle feather for their leadership, commitment and vision to continue this journey for our children.



NC Cindy Woodhouse

In the NB Region, the engagement session was held in St. Andrews New Brunswick on August 12, 2024. Many issues were raised and discussed by special guests NC Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, Dr. Cindy Blackstock, NB Chiefs, CFS Agency Directors and support staff. This was followed by a special three-day meeting in Calgary, in a bid to secure national support for the \$47.8 billion agreement reached with Canada in July. First Nations Chiefs and proxies from across Canada voted down a resolution to fully accept the final settlement agreement on long-term reform of First Nations child and family services. The event heard varying perspectives on the proposed deal, Chiefs held a lengthy

debate on a resolution titled “Our Children, Our Future — Draft Agreement on reforming the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. It called to fully support and approve the final settlement agreement (FSA), and to support the AFN in seeking an order from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal confirming that it fully satisfies its orders. The Chiefs faced competing resolutions to endorse the reform deal or to reject it until changes are made. A separate resolution to delay the decision for 90 days was withdrawn and elements were incorporated into other amended resolutions.

The resolution “Our Children, Our Future — Draft Agreement on reforming the First Nations Child and Family Services Program” was defeated, with 267 chiefs and proxies voting in opposition. There were 147 votes in favour, with one abstention.





First Nations Policing as an Essential Service

On July 9, 2024 NB Leadership met with members from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Province of New Brunswick. During the meeting many issues were raised. A recurring theme heard from the Chief was that First Nation community wellness and safety is much more than policing. It involves building language and culture, recognizing historical trauma, and practicing in a trauma-informed way. It also means having proper resourcing. The path forward also involves building positive and strong partnerships with policing and safety partners in a way that is built on trust, communication, and respect. Importantly, and at a foundational level, the path to community wellness and safety must be spearheaded by the communities themselves as we know ourselves and our communities best. Partners can play a respectful and supportive role.



Elder Edward Perley



National Portfolio – Economic Development

Labour Market

The Economic Development sector is supporting the First Nations, Indigenous Skills, Employment & Training Program agreement holders, focusing on engagement, partnerships, labour market information, and Employment and Social Development Canada policy and program issues.

Natural Resources

The AFN is working towards further advancing First Nations participation at all levels of decision making regarding Natural Resources Canada's program and policy areas. The Economic Development sector will host a Natural Resource Forum in March 2025 to discuss critical priorities relating to regulatory coordination, First Nations partnerships, natural resource economic policy and program delivery.

Trade

The AFN is working on expanding trade-related economic opportunities and market access for First Nations goods and services internationally and between Nations. Focusing on the development and inclusion of Indigenous-specific sections/chapters in the Central Bank Network for Indigenous Inclusion, Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, and the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement.

Cannabis

The AFN is advocating for the Government of Canada to work with First Nations to implement the recommendations outlined by the Expert Panel in the Cannabis Act legislation to support First Nations participation in the Cannabis sector.

Gaming

The AFN is monitoring the progress of Bill S-268 An Act to Amend the Criminal Code and the Indian Act, which proposes similar amendments as Resolution 18/2022 to affirm First Nations jurisdiction over gaming. The AFN is developing a legal analysis of the bill as part of AFN's advocacy on Bill S-268.

Procurement

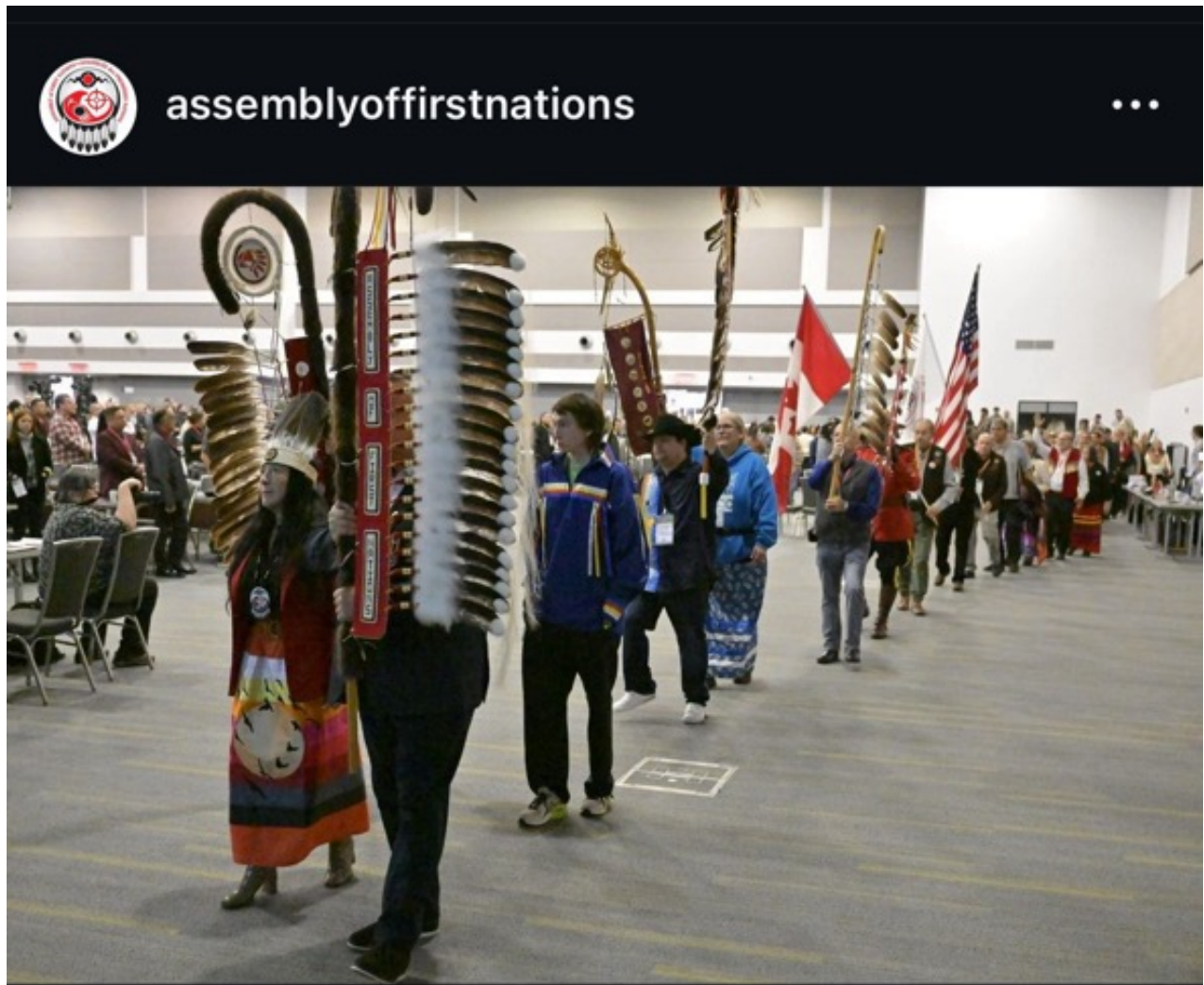
The AFN is supporting the creation of a First Nations-led Procurement Organization as mandated by Resolution 72/2023, First Nations-Led Procurement Organization. The FNPO will maximize procurement opportunities and outcomes for First Nations businesses and communities by advocating for improvements and access.

Connectivity

The AFN continues to advocate for First Nations access to spectrum and the call for a moratorium on spectrum licensing in service areas above First Nations. Meaningful consultations with First Nations on licensing processes is required to ensure consistency with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Moving Forward

The AFN Economic Development Sector plans to host a National Forum on natural resources to bring together First Nations leaders and technical experts, senior government officials and industry to discuss priorities and issues relating to the natural resource sector.





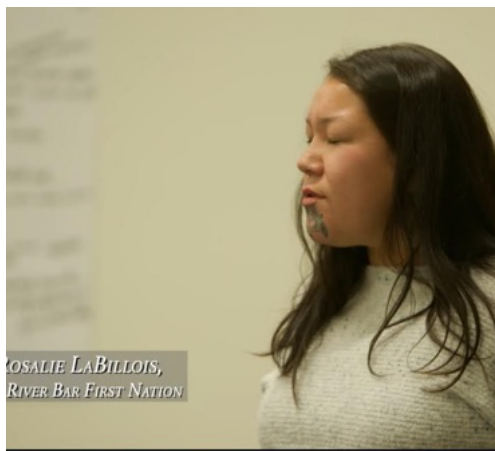
Dear Rosalie,

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for your service as our New Brunswick and National Youth Council Representative. Your commitment to advocating for the voices of Indigenous youth has made a significant impact in our region and nationally.

Your passion and dedication have not only inspired those around you, but you have also paved the way for meaningful change. Thank you for your hard work, resilience and the positive influence you brought to our youth and First Nation Communities at large!

Woliwon/We'lalin,

*Joanna Bernard
Regional Chief NB*



Other Notable events:

Health Partnership Meetings – January 31 – Feb 1, 2024

Atlantic First Nations Health Conference – February 13, 14, 15, 2024

WNNB and WTCI AGA – February 27th and February 28th, 2024

Weso'tmk Mawio'mi – February 27th, 2024

Energy and Natural Gas Discussions – April 16th, 2024 1st

Annual Nature Gathering – April 23, 2024

NBAFN Chiefs Retreat – May 17th, 18th and 19th, 2024 AGA – July 9th, 10th and 11th, 2024

Health and Wellness Transformation Summit – Aug 13th, 14th and 15th, 2024

One Young World – September 15th – 21st, 2024



The Path Ahead and Looking Forward

Moving forward, the NBAFN will continue to address the critical issues facing First Nations in New Brunswick. Our focus areas include policing, environmental concerns, nature and climate change, safe drinking water, and long-term reform of First Nations child and family services. I will continue to support First Nations leadership in New Brunswick, especially as they continue to navigate their relationship with the provincial government. The Chiefs of New Brunswick continue to affirm their willingness to cooperate with all levels of government and we will stand united in ensuring healthy and safe communities and the protection of our future generations.







New Brunswick Regional Office of AFN