



Indigenous Economic Reconciliation in New Brunswick Region

Energy and Mining Focus Specific

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Executive Summary

The New Brunswick Assembly of First Nations (NBAFN) consists of 15 First Nation communities in the New Brunswick (NB) region. It is a regional organization affiliated with the national Assembly of First Nations whose members include 633 First Nations across Canada. The New Brunswick Regional Chief (RC), Joanna Bernard, sits on the AFN Executive Committee where her role is to ensure NBAFN members' concerns are addressed. RC Bernard also holds specific portfolios that deal with National policy issues and concerns.

Over the past several months NBAFN has gathered the NB Chiefs to discuss Economic Reconciliation and what it means moving forward. This document provides insights to a structured approach for First Nations engagement in Economic Reconciliation specifically within the energy and mining sectors in New Brunswick. Meaningful economic reconciliation in New Brunswick involves a combination of legal, economic, and social actions aimed at addressing historical injustices and creating equitable partnerships with Indigenous communities. It goes beyond symbolic gestures to focus on tangible, Indigenous-led initiatives that build sustainable, inclusive prosperity for all residents of the province. Economic Reconciliation needs to be tailored to the unique context of NB's Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqey communities, outlining practical steps, models, and mechanisms to ensure meaningful participation and shared benefits in the province's energy transition and mineral exploration sectors.

The document highlights the importance of respecting Indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, and self-determination within Canadian law. It emphasizes early and ongoing engagement, Indigenous-led processes, and the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into project planning. Key mechanisms include Joint Ventures (JVs), Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs), Community Development Corporations (CDCs), and procurement targets to promote Indigenous ownership, governance, and supplier diversity.

Capacity building is central, with recommendations for strengthening Indigenous economic development offices, financial literacy, data sovereignty, and education pathways in STEM fields. Environmental stewardship and social outcomes are prioritized, ensuring projects align with wildlife conservation, water protection, and cultural continuity.

This document also provides a practical checklist for any interested parties looking to develop projects within NB. It also provides simplified example scenarios, such as Indigenous equity participation in renewable energy projects and royalty-sharing arrangements in mineral exploration. It concludes with resources and next steps for leveraging provincial and federal programs, legal guidance, and examples of solid partnerships with the Province of New Brunswick and the Energy Sector to support Indigenous-led economic development in NB.



Definition: Indigenous Economic Reconciliation

Economic Reconciliation refers to the process of addressing historical and ongoing economic disparities faced by Indigenous peoples through inclusive, rights-based approaches that promote equitable participation, ownership, and benefit-sharing in economic activities. In the context of energy and mining projects, it means creating pathways for Indigenous communities to exercise self-determination, access capital, build capacity, and share in the governance and financial returns of resource development, while respecting cultural values and environmental stewardship.

The Four Pillars of Economic Reconciliation

1. **People:** This pillar focuses on supporting Indigenous individuals and communities through capacity building, education, skills development, and leadership opportunities. It emphasizes fostering economic empowerment and self-determination, ensuring that Indigenous voices are central in decision-making processes.
2. **Lands:** Recognizing Indigenous rights, stewardship, and connection to traditional territories, the Lands pillar promotes respectful engagement in land use and resource development. It advocates for the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), environmental protection, and the assertion of treaty rights in economic activities.
3. **Finances:** This pillar addresses equitable access to capital, revenue sharing, and financial literacy. It includes mechanisms such as joint ventures, royalty agreements, and procurement targets, enabling Indigenous communities to participate in ownership, governance, and benefit-sharing within energy and mining sectors.
4. **Governance:** Governance emphasizes Indigenous-led decision-making structures, self-government, and the creation of institutions that support economic development. It involves establishing frameworks for accountability, transparency, and partnership between Indigenous communities, industry, and government.



Together, these pillars provide a foundation for meaningful participation, shared benefits, and sustainable development in energy and mining projects, while upholding Indigenous sovereignty, cultural values, and environmental stewardship.

Regional Context and Key Stakeholders

New Brunswick is home to 15 First Nations, including Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik communities located along the Bay of Fundy, St. John River, and western regions of the province. These communities are guided by historic treaties and contemporary self-government considerations. Key stakeholders include:

Mi'kmaq Communities

- Elsipogtog (Big Cove)
- Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church)
- Fort Folly (Amlamgog)
- Indian Island
- Metepenagiag (Red Bank)
- Natoaganeg (Eel Ground)
- Oinpegitjoig (Pabineau)
- Tjipogtotjg (Buctouche)
- Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar)

Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Communities

- Matawaskiye (Madawaska)
- Neqotkuk (Tobique)
- Bilijk (Kingsclear)
- Sitansisk (Saint Mary's)
- Welamukotuk (Oromocto)
- Wotstak (Woodstock)

Tribal Councils and Regional Organizations

- **Wolastoqey Nation in New Brunswick (WNNB):** Provides technical support and advice to Wolastoqey communities on Aboriginal and Treaty Rights, consultation, and resource development.
- **Wolastoqey Tribal Council Inc.** Provides support on empowering the Wolastoqey communities through capacity building, training improved access to social services.
- **Mawiw Council:** Represents Elsipogtog, Neqotkuk (Tobique), and Esgenoôpetitj, focusing on governance, health, employment, and training initiatives.
- **North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council:** Supports Mi'kmaq communities in energy, employment, and supply chain development.
- **Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqn Inc. (MTI):** Represents nine Mi'kmaq communities, advocates for rights, and provides mapping and knowledge-sharing resources.

National Organizations

- **New Brunswick Assembly of First Nations (NBAFN):** Regional affiliate of the national Assembly of First Nations, representing NB First Nations at the federal level.

When discussing Economic Reconciliation our leaders have focused discussions on energy and mining opportunities in New Brunswick. Clean energy transitions, grid modernization, storage solutions, and the development of renewable resources are topics of discussions. These areas offer significant potential for Indigenous-led initiatives, partnerships, and equity participation.

Within the mining sector, emphasis was placed on exploration and resource development, with a strong focus on environmental stewardship, procurement practices, and promoting local employment, all serving as strategic leverage points for New Brunswick First Nation communities.

Engaging First Nations in New Brunswick Region

First Nations Guiding Principles for Engagement

- The legal and policy environment is shaped by Canada's constitution and treaties, which inform rights and consultation processes. Unlike other regions, *Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)* is not universally applied in NB; rather, consultation and accommodation follow jurisprudence, modern treaties, and government policies. Federal and provincial programs are available to support Indigenous-led economic development, enhance access to capital, and build capacity.
- Sovereignty and self-determination are recognized within the framework of Canadian law, ensuring Indigenous rights and treaty obligations are honoured.
- FPIC principles are applied where relevant, enabling meaningful consent processes for projects with potential impacts on Indigenous lands and communities.
- Economic justice is promoted through inclusive procurement practices and pathways for Indigenous ownership and governance.
- Cultural integrity and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) are integrated into project planning.
- Long-term partnerships are built on transparency, accountability, and the sharing of benefits.
- Local capacity building, data sovereignty when possible, and environmental stewardship are emphasized throughout the project lifecycle.

Policy and Frameworks to Leverage

- Engagement and Consultation: Initiate early, ongoing, and culturally appropriate engagement with NB First Nations, using Indigenous-led processes for community involvement, impact assessment, and project design.
- Rights Recognition and Agreements: Respect existing treaties, rights, and land/resource interests by employing mechanisms such as Joint Ventures (JVs), Revenue-Sharing Arrangements, and Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs).
- Impact Assessment and FPIC: Conduct social, environmental, and cultural impact assessments, incorporating FPIC-like engagement where mandated by law or best practice.
- Procurement Targets: Establish measurable Indigenous supplier inclusion targets for both energy and mining supply chains.

Models and Mechanisms Suited for NB First Nations

- Joint Ventures with Indigenous Communities: Facilitate Indigenous equity stakes in energy generation projects (such as solar, wind, or small hydro) and mineral ventures.
- Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) and Benefit Agreements: Secure commitments for local employment, training, environmental protections, and revenue sharing through formal agreements.
- Community Development Corporations (CDCs): Support NB Indigenous-led entities that manage investments, procurement, and community programs.
- Procurement and Supplier Diversity: Develop NB-specific supplier diversity programs to increase Indigenous participation in construction, operation, and maintenance activities.
- Land Access and Resource Agreements: Design land-use arrangements and access rights that respect Indigenous stewardship and generate economic benefits.

Capacity Building and Governance

- Community Economic Development Offices: Create or strengthen Indigenous-led economic development bodies equipped with dedicated staff and resources.
- Financial Literacy and Governance: Provide training in budgeting, auditing, reporting, risk management, and corporate governance.
- Data Sovereignty: Enable communities to control data related to lands, resources, and economic activities whenever feasible.
- Education and STEM Pathways: Offer scholarships and programs to build expertise in energy, geology, mining engineering, environmental science, and trades.

Environmental Stewardship and Social Outcomes

- Align project development with environmental stewardship, wildlife conservation, and water protection measures relevant to NB First Nations.
- Integrate TEK and Indigenous stewardship practices into planning and monitoring activities.
- Track social outcomes related to education, housing, health, and cultural continuity.

Initial Steps for Engaging First Nations in New Brunswick

1. Map and Engage Key Communities: Identify Mi'kmaq and other First Nations communities in the project area and initiate early dialogues with community leadership and development offices.
2. Co-Design a Framework: Collaborate with First Nation Communities to design ownership structures, benefit-sharing arrangements, and governance models such as JV, IBA, or CDC.
3. Define Clear Benefits: Specify Indigenous ownership percentages and revenue sharing agreements. Identify employment opportunities, training initiatives, local procurement goals, community funds, and governance roles including board seats.
4. Legal and Financial Structuring: Draft agreements (JV, IBA, or revenue-sharing mechanisms) with clear milestones and dispute resolution processes.
5. Capacity Building Plan: Establish training funds and long-term capacity building programs, with support for financial governance.
6. Accountability and Transparency: Implement reporting dashboards, independent audits, and grievance mechanisms.
7. Environmental and Cultural Protections: Include TEK-based safeguards, protections for sacred sites, and collaborate with environmental authorities.
8. Scaling and Knowledge Sharing: Begin with pilot projects (such as a small renewable energy initiative or mineral exploration venture), learn from experience, and scale up regionally.
9. Integrate TEK and Indigenous stewardship practices into planning and monitoring activities.
10. Track social outcomes related to education, housing, health, and cultural continuity, and grievance mechanisms.
11. Environmental and Cultural Protections: Include TEK-based safeguards, protections for sacred sites, and collaborate with environmental authorities.

Quick Start Checklist

- Identify NB First Nations communities and leaders in the project area.
- Clarify rights, treaties, and any required consultation processes.
- Develop a community-led governance and ownership plan (JV, IBA, or CDC).
- Establish Indigenous procurement targets and capacity-building commitments.
- Create a financing package with blended funding, including Indigenous equity options.
- Implement TEK-informed environmental and cultural safeguards.
- Set up governance, reporting, and grievance mechanisms.
- Plan for skills development, education, and youth pathways.

Example Scenarios (Hypothetical)

- A wind energy project forms a joint venture with the NB Mi'gmaq Nation, granting 30–40% Indigenous ownership, setting local hiring targets, establishing a community fund, and providing a training pipeline for trades transitioning from diesel to electric.
- A mineral exploration project signs an IBA with a NB First Nation, guaranteeing a training fund, employment quotas for community members, and a royalty-sharing arrangement managed by a community development corporation.

Resources and Next Steps

- Utilize provincial and federal programs supporting Indigenous economic development and energy/mining partnerships.
- Seek legal guidance on FPIC, consultation, and rights-based frameworks relevant for NB.
- Review case studies from NB or Atlantic Canada on Indigenous-led energy or mining ventures.
- Additional supports include engaging with Indigenous business networks and economic development agencies, such as the Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) or the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat, to leverage expertise and funding opportunities. Collaborate with local colleges and training institutions to develop tailored programs for youth and adult learners, emphasizing pathways into renewable energy, mining, and related trades. Consider establishing mentorship programs and internships to facilitate practical skill-building and long-term career growth within Indigenous communities.

Acknowledge Land Claims and Title Assertion

First Nation land claims and the recognition of Aboriginal title are foundational to meaningful economic reconciliation in New Brunswick. These claims address the historic and ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their traditional territories, which has had lasting impacts on their communities' social, cultural, and economic wellbeing. By resolving land claims and affirming Aboriginal title, Indigenous nations gain the ability to exercise control over their lands and resources, opening pathways for economic development that align with their values and priorities.

Securing land rights enables First Nations to participate equitably in resource and infrastructure projects, negotiate joint ventures, and benefit from revenue-sharing arrangements. This not only supports community self-determination and prosperity but also fosters trust and partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, industry, and society. Recognizing and respecting Aboriginal title is a critical step in redressing past injustices and building a more inclusive, sustainable economy for all Canadians.

Elsipogtog First Nation Land Negotiations and Title Assertion

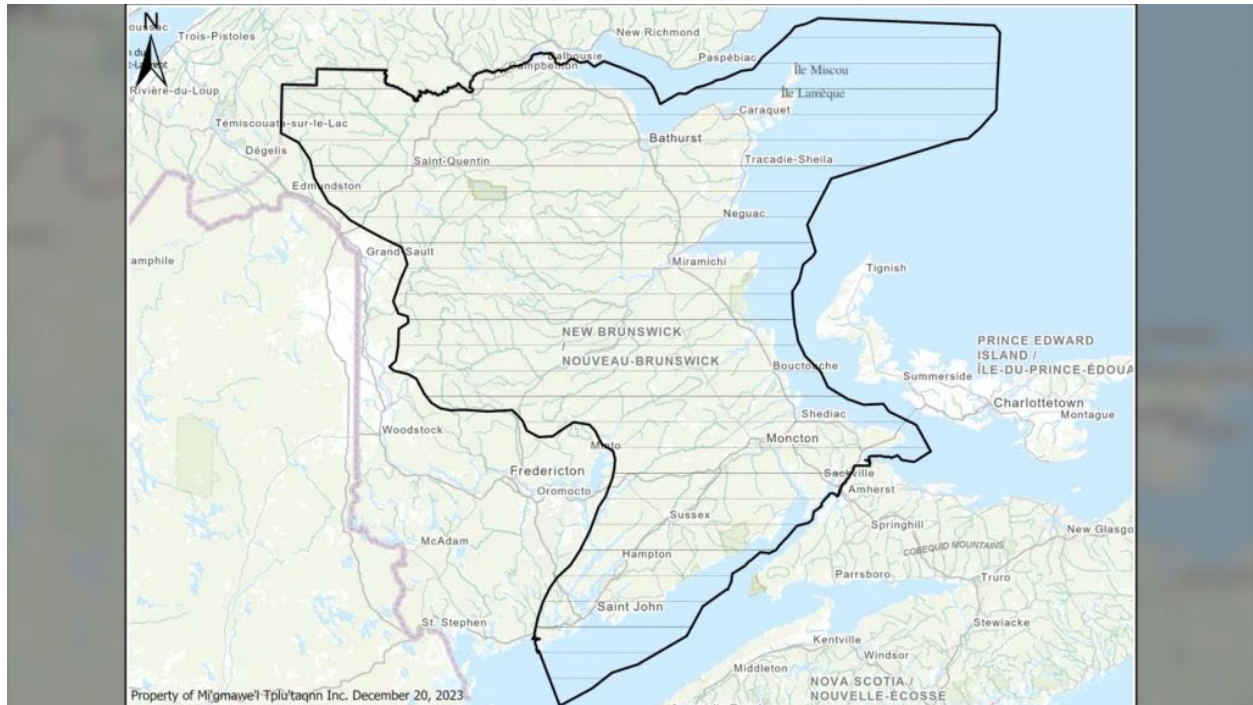


Elsipogtog First Nation

Elsipogtog is negotiating with New Brunswick and the federal government over Indigenous title and historical land loss. The claim underscores the ongoing effects of reserve land reduction and the need to address unceded territory in New Brunswick. Elsipogtog First Nation's lands have decreased from 51,200 to 4,600 acres.

Photo: elsipogtog.ca

Mi'gmaq Land Negotiations: A Visual Perspective



Mi'gmaq Land Negotiations

Eight communities represented by Mi'gma'w-e'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated, (MTI) - Amlamgog (Fort Folly) First Nation, Natoaganeg (Eel Ground) First Nation, Oinpegitjoig (Pabineau) First Nation, Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation, Tjipôgtôtjg (Buctouche) First Nation, L'nui Menikuk (Indian Island) First Nation, Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar) First Nation and Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation — presented the NB government documentation and maps showing the unceded, ancestral lands and waters of the Mi'gmaq within the province of New Brunswick, showing their claims to the land.

Wolastoqey Nation's Title Claim

The Wolastoqey Nation's title claim is to the Wolastoq (St. John River), its watershed and the surrounding area.

The claim is grounded in the Nation's members' and ancestors' use, occupation, protection and stewardship of this territory from time immemorial.

Wolastoqey title to their lands has never been ceded or surrendered, nor has it been extinguished. From 1725/1726 to 1778, the Wolastoqey negotiated and entered into Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown. Unlike certain treaties

made with First Nations in other parts of Canada that purport to cede land, the Peace and Friendship Treaties do not provide for the surrender of lands to the Crown. Instead, the Treaties outline each party's obligations to the other at the end of periods of conflict between the British and the Wolastoqey and their allies. The 1725/1726 Treaty explicitly acknowledges Wolastoqey title by acknowledging the need for a lawful settlement process if colonists wanted to settle on Wolastoqey lands.



Current Partnerships in New Brunswick Region

Mi'kmaq Communities

- **Amlamgog (Fort Folly) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Joint venture with NB Power and other Mi'kmaq communities; six wind turbines generating nearly 100 GWh annually, powering ~8,000 homes. Active in distributed energy systems and habitat protection (Big Salmon River declaration).
 - **Habitat Recovery:** Leadership in Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCA) for Big Salmon River watershed.
- **Esgenoôpetitj (Burnt Church) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Metepenagiag (Red Bank) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Ugpi'ganjig (Eel River Bar) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Oinpegitjoig (Pabineau) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Natoaganeg (Eel Ground) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Indian Island First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **Tjipogtotjg (Buctouche) First Nation**
 - **Neweg Energy Project:** Partner in wind energy development.
- **North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council (NSMTC)**
 - Supports seven Mi'kmaq Nations in clean energy projects, including technical support and supply chain development. Received federal funding for capacity building in energy sector.

Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Communities



The U.S. Department of Defense awarded Northcliff Resources \$15 million (USD) under the Defense Production Act to advance the Sisson tungsten and molybdenum mine project in New Brunswick, Canada, which aims to provide critical minerals for North American supply chains. The funding, part of a larger \$29 million joint Canada-U.S. investment, supports efforts to secure domestic access to these vital minerals for technological and defense applications. The project has faced opposition, including concerns from some Indigenous communities and environmental groups. On

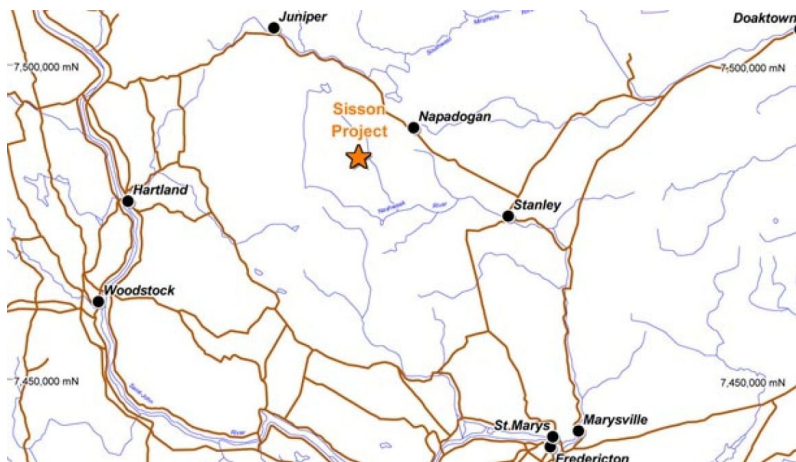
The Sisson Brook mine project in New Brunswick has faced significant controversy with the Wolastoqey and other First Nations communities, who expressed concerns about the project's potential impacts on traditional land use, access, and rights. Despite the project being approved environmentally, ongoing issues include a lack of meaningful consultation with First Nations, inadequate mitigation measures for environmental impacts, questions about the economic

viability, and concerns about the long-term stewardship of the land. As of 2025, the project's future remains uncertain, with some suggesting that a genuine partnership with First Nations is a necessary condition for any future development.

Partnership is key in a potential path forward. The current CEO Andrew Ing of the project has stated that there is "no path forward without a robust, authentic and genuine partnership with our First Nation communities".

"NEW BRUNSWICK'S MINING INDUSTRY HAS A LONG AND PROUD HISTORY — AND THE NORTHCLIFF SISSON PROJECT IS A SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD ON THAT HERITAGE WHILE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE. THIS PROJECT WILL CREATE GOOD JOBS, DRIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HELP POSITION CANADA AS A RELIABLE SUPPLIER OF CRITICAL MINERALS. TOGETHER, WE ARE SHIFTING OUR ECONOMY FROM RELIANCE TO RESILIENCE."

***THE HONOURABLE DOMINIC LEBLANC
PRESIDENT OF THE KING'S PRIVY COUNCIL FOR CANADA AND MINISTER
RESPONSIBLE FOR CANADA-U.S. TRADE, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND ONE
CANADIAN ECONOMY***



Joint Initiatives & Agreements

- **Tax Revenue Sharing Agreement (2025)**
 - 14 First Nations (8 Mi'kmaq, 6 Wolastoqey) signed a provincial agreement for revenue sharing from on-reserve businesses, supporting economic reconciliation and local development.



Community Development Corporations

Examples of Indigenous-led corporations managing investments and partnerships in energy projects:

Wolastoqey Resource Developments Inc. is the economic development corporation for the Wolastoqey Nation. Governed by the elected Chiefs of the six communities, Wolastoqey Resource Developments Inc. has been established for the purposes of advancing economic development and projects on behalf of the Wolastoqey Nation



Salmon River Wind Project currently one of the largest Indigenous-owned renewable energy projects in Canada.

Mi'gmaq United Investment Network (MUIN) is the economic development corporation representing nine Mi'gmaq First Nation communities in New Brunswick. It explores economic opportunities, investments, and partnerships to create prosperity and benefits for the participating communities and their members.



Groundbreaking Ceremony for Neweg Energy Project

Summary

This document highlights the importance of partnership with First Nation communities in advancing economic reconciliation and sustainable development projects. A key achievement in 2025 is the Tax Revenue Sharing Agreement, under which 14 First Nations (eight Mi'kmaq and six Wolastoqey) entered into a provincial agreement to share tax revenues from on-reserve businesses, fostering local growth.

Indigenous-led community development corporations play a pivotal role, with Wolastoqey Resource Developments Inc. and Mi'gmaq United Investment Network (MUIN) cited as leading examples. These organizations, governed by elected Chiefs, facilitate investments and partnerships in major energy projects, such as the Salmon River Wind Project—one of Canada's largest Indigenous-owned renewable energy initiatives—and the Neweg Energy Project, which recently held its groundbreaking ceremony. The document also notes regular NBAFN Chiefs Meetings are key to strengthening unity and demonstrates ongoing dialogue and strategic planning.

First Nations unity, exemplified by regular NBAFN Chiefs Meetings, plays a crucial role in strengthening economic reconciliation efforts. By coming together to share knowledge, coordinate strategies, and support collective initiatives, these communities are able to amplify their impact and ensure that economic benefits are distributed equitably. This collaborative approach not only fosters mutual support but also enhances the ability of Indigenous-led corporations to pursue large-scale development projects and advocate effectively for community interests.



Energy 101

Nuclear Innovation Institute
Philip Craig
March 26th, 2025
Delta Fredericton



NBAFN Chiefs Meeting

March 25th and 26th, 2025
Delta Fredericton, Fredericton, NB

Discussions with PNB Natural Resources and Energy Development

NBAFN Chiefs Meeting

Delta Fredericton, Fredericton, NB

July 28th, 2025

