

ʔAKISQ'NUK FIRST NATION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



VISION STATEMENT

**Kømakqa ksuktuḥa·k kukqani ø kitqakiḥ haqa ksiḥḥ
øxa ḥa·kḥukqaḥis ksukiḥḍukaḥmi·ka kiḥin Ktunaxa
naḥs ḥamakḥis.**

Qus piḥaks ø naḥs øxaḥ yaqanakiḥ haqaḥki.

**Kitqawiømu kakiḥwiøkiḥ ḥamakḥis kisnikøik
køxaḥ qa kiḥkkaxuxami·k kitqakiḥ haqa ø kisḥin
ḥaknumuøtiḥḥis.**

Strong healthy citizens and communities speaking
our languages and celebrating who we are and our
history in our ancestral homelands, working together,
managing our lands and resources as a self-sufficient,
self-governing Nation.

ʔAKISQNUK FIRST NATION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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Nasu?kin Donald Sam

Ki?su?k Kyukyit ?AKISQNUK *Greetings
?AKISQNUK*

Ki?su?k kyukyit ?a? ka kna?u *Greetings
guests and neighbors*

Ki?su?k kyukyit Ka swu na?ta *Greetings
all of our friends*

**Hu qa?wiyni hu? qsamuna?amna?a.
Hu? ?it'qawxanu?wiyna?a. Hu?ina?a
?akisqnuunik.**

*I would like for us to help each other to bring
our hearts together. We are ?akisqnuunik.*

Hu Na?ta?ni Ktunaxa *We are Ktunaxa*

There has been tremendous growth in our Community over the last year with many challenges and successes. Stemming from 2023 with Council initiating an organization review that would assess the current structure and positions, as well as staff retention, we have been in a growth phase bringing on a number of new positions. This increase in capacity will enhance the services to membership.

Historically, the roles of Chief and Council have been blurred with roles of administration - leading to micro-managing, confusing direction to staff, and a high turnover. Although the Band Office originally came from an external need and implementing Federal Indian affairs policies - managing poverty and assimilation, it has grown into a tool for us to realize the Nation Vision focused more on Governance



work both internally and externally. Our 2025-2026 Strategic Plan provides the high level direction for administration to deliver programs and services that are relevant to membership.

The Band Office is no longer just implementing Indian affairs policy, we have structured our organization in a way that can raise the bar for reconciliation of Ktunaxa culture and values through policy and procedures. The staff are learning about our values traditional cultural values with the lens of trauma informed approaches so they are able to approach members in a respectful manner. They are being challenged to look at their own personal biases and society's systemic racism to advance strategic priorities of the people you vote for. We are not done we're just starting. There is no quick fix however, you

the membership should expect to be treated in a fair and equitable manner according to policy. You should expect to have confidence in decision making that you are supported. You should also rest assured you have the opportunity to meet with your Chief and Council.

Leadership

Chief and Council are the governance body responsible for setting strategic priorities, defining goals, and providing high-level direction. To be the leadership you expect from your Elected Chief and Council, we have developed Council Profiles that outline the Duties and Responsibilities of each Chief and Council. We have developed Council Portfolios that we are evolving to better represent membership, to demonstrate transparency, fairness, accountability and good governance. We aspire to grow more sophisticated, more disciplined and more proactive in

protecting our section 35 rights and title, advancing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and revitalization of our language and culture to protect the inherent wealth of our lands and our people. Oversee strategic governance areas essential to ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation's self-determination, focusing on these five Portfolios which are:

- Leadership, Nation-to-Nation Relations, External Relations, and Fiscal Governance – Nasuʔkin Donald Sam
- Health, Wellness, and Community Development – Councillor Janice Alpine
- Economic Prosperity and Financial Sovereignty – Faro Burgoyne
- Lands and Resources Stewardship – Allan Nicholas
- Education, Language, and Culture Governance – Darcy Fisher

GOVERNANCE



Sets laws
& by-laws



Approves
long-term plans
& budgets



Creates
communitywide
policies



Holds
strategic
accountability

ADMINISTRATION



Runs day-to-day
programs



Hires, manages
staff



Develops internal
procedures
(HR, finance)



Reports to
Council via CAO

Envisioned Future

From our Strategic Planning session, in our envisioned future we are a thriving, inclusive, and united community that embraces both tradition and innovation. We inspire inclusion and respect, celebrate our families, and invest in our children, ensuring they grow to become resilient and respectable elders. Our community is guided by our traditional knowledge, wisdom, and values, and we are deeply connected to our lands, cherishing them for generations yet unborn.



Governance Goals:

At our 2025 Strategic Planning session, the following goals for Governance were identified: these goals are driving the work of AFN the Chief and Council table.

- 1.** Enhance the well-being of Nation members through strong governance practices by ensuring policies, decision-making, and leadership prioritize community interests, cultural preservation, and sustainable development.
- 2.** Assert and protect the Nation's inherent rights and title by actively engaging with all relevant governments, Crown corporations, and stakeholders to ensure recognition, respect, and adherence to our rights.
- 3.** Establish a strong and influential political presence by developing and maintaining strategic relationships, advocating for Nation priorities, and ensuring our voice is represented at all decision-making levels.
- 4.** Negotiate agreements with key government bodies, Crown corporations, and neighbouring First Nations to enshrine recognition of our rights, advance reconciliation, and secure beneficial partnerships.
- 5.** Develop and implement policies that strengthen governance structures and decision-making processes by revising, updating, and enacting policies that reflect best practices, community priorities, and legal frameworks.
- 6.** Clearly define the relationship between the Chief and Council, Administration, and Staff to ensure an effective governance model that supports collaboration while respecting distinct roles and responsibilities.
- 7.** Foster meaningful community engagement in governance by ensuring transparency, accessibility, and participation in decision-making processes that impact Nation members.
- 8.** Adopt and uphold best practices in financial governance by fully complying with the Financial Administration Law and ensuring fiscal responsibility in managing Nation assets.
- 9.** Establish Council portfolios and governance structures that enhance leadership accountability, provide focus on key areas, and ensure informed decision-making.
- 10.** Invest in leadership development and succession planning by mentoring and preparing future leaders to ensure governance continuity and long-term sustainability.
- 11.** Strengthen governance training and professional development for the Chief, Council, and Administration to clearly understand governance roles, responsibilities, and evolving best practices.
- 12.** Define and formalize relationships with regional governments, municipalities, and institutions to create structured and mutually beneficial partnerships that support the Nation's interests.
- 13.** Advance Nation-led law making and regulatory authority by establishing laws and bylaws that align with our values, governance priorities, and self-determination.
- 14.** Implement a robust governance evaluation and monitoring system to ensure accountability, measure effectiveness, and continuously improve governance processes.

Progress

As Chief, I am often contemplating: “are we making a difference?”. And as I have reported in previous reports, I come back to my four main priorities that were relevant when I came into office:

1) Investment in Membership

Create an environment for our people to flourish. If at the end of the day, our language and culture are to survive, we must invest in the health and wellness of our people. An environment where you are safe, included, valued. Hu naʔaʔniKtunaxa. I would assess this first priority as needing the most effort, and as the capacity in the organization has grown, now we are better positioned to provide opportunities for wellness in our people so we can all flourish. We as a people must conquer the lateral violence and come together - in spite of the generations of colonization, trauma and discrimination. The saying “crabs in a bucket” must end with us filling the bucket with water to free ourselves and future generations of Ktunaxa people. This is the only way for us to increase the linguistic and cultural competencies of our people. Hurt people hurt people, but do healed people heal people? We can.

2) Relationship of employees of AFN

Raise the expectations of staff, recognize and retain good workers leading to professional and passionate a team that are here for Membership and can implement the direction of Leadership. With the tremendous growth in capacity of the organization are opportunities to better serve the needs of ʔakisq̓nuknik. We really need to teach new employees that we are Ktunaxa and Qapiqapsin kin ʔitkin, hin ʔisti Ktunaxa. Everything you do you do for the Ktunaxa people. They have chosen to work with us, as Allies in serving ʔakisq̓nuknik. Recent work on the Windermere and Columbia Lakes Stewardship planning is a testament to what can be done when Staff understand Membership desires.

3) Chief and Council

Focus our leadership roles as Disciplined, Collaborative, Visionary, Advocacy, Decision makers. Leading with purpose and vision as opposed to reactionary and fear based. If we are clear in our processes, and vision, we will forge effective relationships. With all council now being considered full-time with portfolios and reporting,

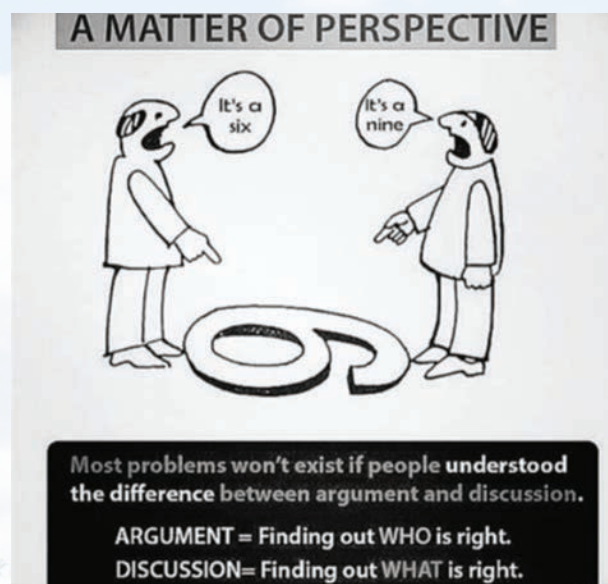
council is empowered to participate in the fields we are passionate about. I have witnessed some great things with the council table in terms of ability to work together. We operate on consensus basis and we are closer to real collaboration than I have seen before.


4) Prosperous Economic Development

Enough with spending money on managing poverty, we are more than that. We have set up AFN Enterprise with a Board of Directors that operate as business should while sheltering ?akisq̓nuk from liability of the business entity. Through the AFN Enterprise we purchased the building in Invermere providing the Nation publicity and exposure. They are developing the lot in Windermere and operating the AFN Recreation Center and Campground. KEL has acquired the remaining 49% of Kettle River Contracting, which does a lot of work in the Elk Valley.

These overarching priorities are meant to address much of the historical conflict between the Administration, Council and Membership. Everyone is right but we all have various perspectives. I have reviewed previous Chief and Council strategy sessions and previous AGM reports, Community

dialogue and engagement sessions, HR Conflicts... The common themes around serving the members, building capacity, strategic decisions, moving forward and thriving is woven throughout our history. For more detailed reports, you can view council monthly reports available online. As I look back and recall the divergent views of council over the past years, despite the challenges, we are making headway to a progressive leadership that prioritizes transparency and accountability to the membership. In making decisions, we are conscious of the collective - past present and future ?akisq̓nuknik. This new Leadership along with our CAO, supported by staff that implement the direction- I hope you feel the progression that is transpiring for our First Nation.



Issue	Where are we	What is the Progress?
AFN Staffing- confident staff are operating professionally in alignment with a common vision to support you the Membership.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract, recognize and maintain talent throughout the organization. • Strategic plan directing staff operational workplans • Reporting and accountability • Quality of Service Standards – Serving our Members formally approved June
Staff appreciated and recognized for going above and beyond		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing the right tools incentives and motivations. • Department Directors that understand the roles of their department. • Currently revising the AFN HR policy, continued recruitment.
Governance- Strong Council disciplined and reliance on policies,		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on governance matters such as Rights and Title, Community relations (safety), Neighboring relations- ?Akisqnuuk image and Profile. • Revisions of <i>Governance Policy</i> as the overarching guiding document. Profiles listing our roles and responsibilities, portfolios that focus on issues. • Training on Governance will continue to develop capacity and use of policy and law. • Strengthened Chief and Council meetings with briefing notes, focused discussion, decision making. • Working on consistent reports from council. • We recognize and minimize administrative or operational items from creeping into council meetings.
Community Wellness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started inviting conversations and visits. Safe and engaging . • Increase in the number of Community Dialogue sessions for open conversations and inclusion. Open to all ?Akisqnuuknik through in-person and Zoom- Band Meetings, IBE, OSR, Master Dev Plan, AFN Enterprise engagement. Treaty and KNC Relations are in the planning stage. • Communications though newsletter and social media • OSR policy ensuring Membership benefits from the wealth of our Lands, personally, through AFN operations and saving for future generations. • Language and Culture Position incorporates Ktunaxa values into AFN programming and services. • Use our positions to lift each other up • Utilization of Wiyu Lodge for Member services and activities
Economic development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AFN Limited Partnership operational and Board of Directors • Economic Development aligned with AFN priorities (Housing, visible Presence, relationship building). • Recreation Center, Campground. • Acquisition of Invermere Property • Community Information Sessions.

Councillor Janice Alpine

Ki?su?k kyukyit ?akisq̓nuknik. As I reflect on the year, I'm intrigued that we have met a lot of our goals as a council and personal goals. The following are some highlights.

Governance:

I'm pleased to report that we are finalizing our portfolio process. We need to ensure we have this in place to ensure the "full-time elected official paid positions" (Feb 2024 AFN Custom Election Regulations (6.a)) holds a sense of security and accountability to the membership. Currently I hold Health and Education that covers a large gamut of areas that includes Child and Family, Housing, Education. My duties don't end there because these topics are near and dear to my heart, I am still involved in areas of Lands, Economic, Justice and Emergency and Safety.

Not only am I supporting local concerns but there are national issues that require ?akisq̓nuk to be at the table for instance the Long Term Child and Family Reform, Bill C-92, Jurisdiction Funding Model



presented by the Ministry of Child and Family (MCF), Supporting First Nations Child and Family Services and Jordan's Principle Settlement, Toxic Drug Crisis (locally and nationally). One message I continue to share at these national tables is that the ministries cannot work in silo. We need the ministries to recognize it takes multiple support on any given topic when addressing concerns with First Nations. For instance, when we work with a child, housing, justice, education and community development and finance need to be considered.

Internally we continue to address encroachment. One message I shared with our Ktunaxa First Nations is that the biggest encroachers is the mining industry.



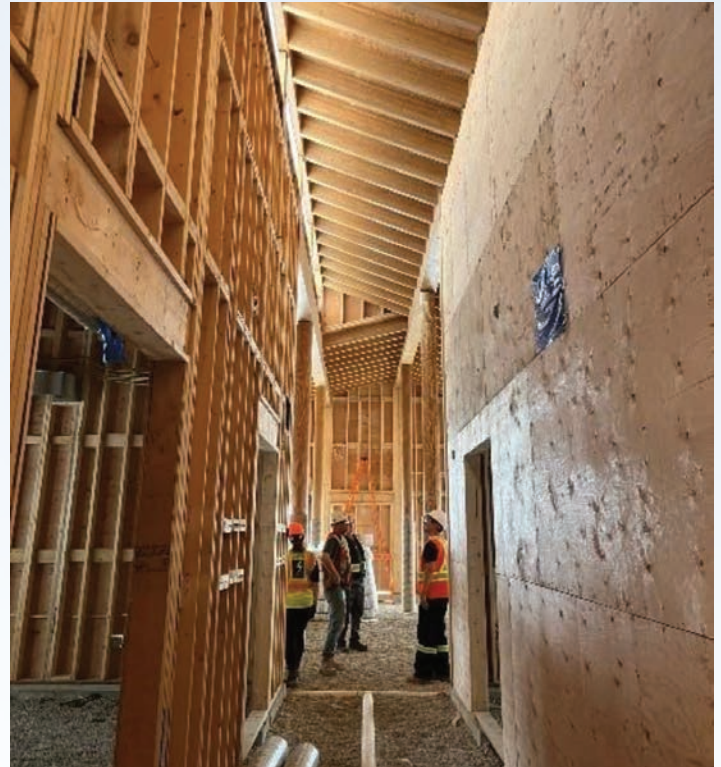
FNHA Spring Caucus



Treatment Centre Construction & NSETCS

We are meeting directly with all levels of mining to insert our values and input.

We are also strategizing how to address the daily encroachment of other First Nations. We are in conversation with Invermere and local businesses. We have also incorporated and task force that includes members to begin tasks. One important piece in encroachment is enforce and I'm determined to find a way to put something in place. At this time, I'd like to thank concerned members who see signage and send what they capture to Chief and Council. It helps and it also demonstrates that membership is aware this is being addressed. I'm actually looking forward to engagement with membership to develop a plan and implementing it.



AFN New Admin Building

As we engage in this process, we are mindful that there are several outcomes one being land acknowledgments from our western partners and stakeholders. This comes with understanding the history of ʔakisq̓nuk.

Financial Responsibility:

As the AFN advances Chief and Council have a fiduciary responsibility and as a Council member, I take this seriously. I continue to represent Council on Finance Audit and Investment Committee. This year we will be able to provide an audited financial statement to membership. It has been long time coming with the transition we have been undertaking. That's included bringing on staff that can support us advance in many ways such as trusts, investments, and efficient accounting processes. We have developed and renewed our relationships with external stakeholders such as First Nation Financial Management Board.

One expense is Capital projects that includes the construction of the new administration building. We are a growing competitive organization that offers programs and services to its membership and want to ensure the staff are in one location to better



EVR Mine Tour - IJC Governing Body



FMB Certification Session

communicate and collaborate. It is my responsibility to know where those grants and resources are being drawn from. Another responsibility is to ensure we maintain a relationship with our Enterprise to support in economic development.

I haven't forgotten that there are numerous conversations that include land that need our attention when it comes to our future.

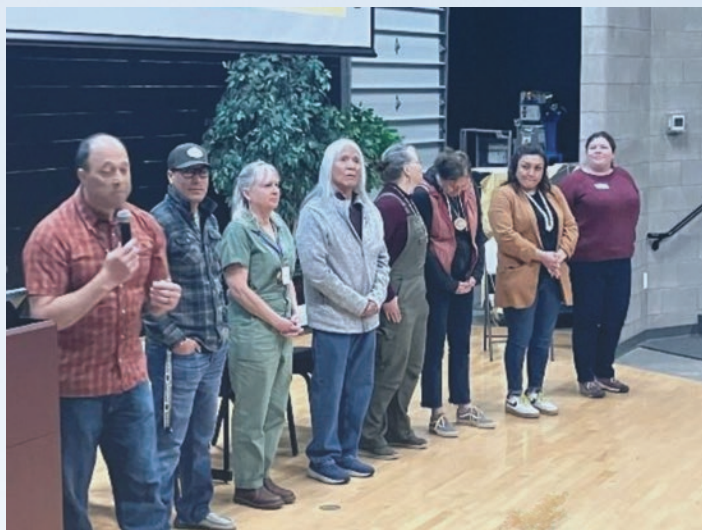
Communication:

Communication is multi-level because we went to ensure we are conveying the right messages to get the best results for the people. Band meetings are one method to receive feedback and the best method to get consensus on issues. I have offered my email and phone number and schedule when in the office to foster one on one communication. So far, the best method has been by chance, when I'm passing by whether it be on the road or on the street. Again, whatever gets the best results.



KNCS Leadership Strategy

When I first began my work on Council, I noticed that the policies were not consistent and firm on its purpose to guide AFN. Earlier I mentioned that we have increased capacity in many departments to support us in advancing to meet the many demands that we face. We were able to secure capacity to support our work in updating and understanding the different mechanisms and tools we can incorporate besides policies. For instance, as sovereign nation we can make law. In this, we can certainly consider laws in Membership, Justice, Enforcement, the list goes



Crown Managers Partners

on. This work would require the cooperation from the other Acts that have been imposed by the Feds and BC.

At the most recent Band meeting I was intrigued that membership stepped forward to develop a Band Meeting protocol. It's important that Chief and Council hear from membership to ensure their concerns are incorporated into strategic planning. Our commitment to this is revising the Comprehensive Community Plan.

Ktunaxa Values:

Ktunaxa Creation has guided me on how I shape my world view of my people. I'm also a practitioner of my culture and practices. The practices as handed down from my family. AS I sit at the man tables internally and externally (National) Ktunaxa venues are embedded and guide me in how I approach each topic. Culture also includes the traumas that shape us as a community and individual and take those into aspect as well.

HUYAS!



Janice Alpine, Councillor
?akisq̓nuk First Nation
(250) 417-7895

I recognize I'm within the homelands of my people the Ktunaxa who have occupied these lands since time of Creation that includes the Rocky and Purcell Mountain ranges and into Montana and Idaho.

Councillor Faro Burgoyne

Ki?su?k kyukyit qapiniski?,

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer.

It's been a good year. For me a year of learning. Starting with the Council position. This position is unique in many ways. It requires an understanding of our nation, our community, our culture, our territory, business, governance, team work, social science, conflict resolution and leadership to name a few. With such a wide scope I don't believe there is any specific education or job description that could have prepared me for this position. In addition to learning on the job day by day I've had to draw from my lived experience here in ?akisqnuq, working in various fields and my entrepreneurial endeavors to adapt and feel confident as a representative of our Nation. Being involved in leadership has given me a pulse check on our community and broader nation. It has given me a clear understanding of the lasting effects of the intergenerational trauma that has been forced on us. In regard to healing. We have a long way to go. However, I believe we are headed in the right direction so long we continue to keeping up with the necessary hard work and continue to make well informed and productive decisions. Step by step. One foot in front of the other we will get there. This hard work is not only on the hands of leadership and the organization but it is on every single one of us ?aqtmaknik. We must be the change we want to see. My perspective from inside AFN as an organization is that there are many hard-working people that genuinely want to make our lives better. It is our responsibility as membership and leaders to make sure our resources and capacity are being applied in the most productive way. There is always room for improvement but criticism and nit picking with no proposed solutions doesn't help. I have seen many convocations with in our community and at the nation level that had potential to be very productive but get sabotaged by poor behavior. Fortunately this is becoming less frequent as the year



has progressed. We are too hard on our selves and each other. ?akisqnuq has a long way to go but we have also come along way. We need to celebrate our successes rather than dwell on our failures. I have brought this up before and I will continue to because I believe that in order for us to get to where we need to be. We need to trust each other. Our Council needs to trust each other. Our membership has to trust Council and both Membership and Council need to trust the Organization. We cannot trust industry and we cannot trust the Provincial and Federal governments. All we have is each other. Trust is earned and I know this will take time but I can say in confidence that over this year the trust amongst our Council table has grown significantly. And my trust with the organization is headed in a positive direction.

Most of my work this year has consisted of reading emails preparing for and attending various types of meetings. Regular Council meetings, KNCS leadership meetings, ongoing Governance strategy meetings, meetings with SEIS (South east initiative Secretariat BC Government), meetings with EVR (Elk Valley Resources) formally Teck, Encroachment working group, meetings with lawyers, adhoc and emergency meetings, membership engagements, board and committee meetings, as well as attending training sessions, strategic sessions, and speaking

at community events, AGAs, and events in which we are invited to speak at on behalf of AFN. I have attended a hand full of conferences which I have found very valuable and I am happy so say all but one has directly impacted my work. This year council has been working on all business together for the most part. This has been good for me to work on and learn about of the full scope of AFN. We are currently developing our portfolios which will help guide our work but not will limit us to what they entail. We will all have a focus/interest and we will be accountable for reporting and supporting our respective portfolio. We also established that we are all welcome to take interest and involvement in any council matters and to work with each other out side of our portfolios when appropriate. My assigned portfolio is Economic Prosperity & Financial sovereignty. Councillor Allan Nicholas is the alternate and I am the alternate for his portfolio, Cultural Resurgence & Environmental Stewardship.

Throughout this year we have been transitioning into a full-time council. In my opinion council has always been full time and always will be. My experience with it so far is that at the beginning of my term we attended the regular bi weekly council meetings, KNCS leadership meetings and ad hoc meetings here and there. Now we have meetings most days of every week which is increasing productivity establishing a larger presence in the broader community. More frequent meetings especially the governance strategy session have made our council meetings more efficient considering most of our longer convocations carry out in other meetings or can be differed to more appropriate times and places. Excitement has been expressed by reps from local organizations, municipalities and the regional government in regard to the increase in our participation at events and on boards and with our growing capacity which is allowing us to be involved in initiatives that we were not able to be a part of just a few years ago. We are still working on our governance philosophies and practices. In the last year AFN has gone through two governance directors and KNC has hired and let go of one. This tells me that we must be to ones that figure our how to govern ourselves. The greatest Ktunaxa experts are Ktunaxanintik. I am very open to any learning opportunities but the responsibility

of becoming a self-determining sovereign nation lies solely on us.

We report verbally at bi weekly Council meetings, and provide written reports monthly, and quarterly which are posted on our web page under the governance section at akisqnuk.org Please refer to the web page for detailed reports of my work I hope you enjoy the AGA.

Highlights from this year:

- Land Declaration
- Group Benefits Plan for Membership Approval
- Purchase of Matyas Tañiy property
- Use of Wiyu lodge
- Hiring of new CAO at KKCFSS

On-going work:

- CCP
- Policy review and development
- Portfolio development
- Multi-purpose facility construction
- Indian Beach Estates lease renewal
- VORR/Lake Stewardship plan
- Creation of Guardians program
- Development of Windermere Property

Current Boards and Committees that I sit on:

- SEM Hold Co
- Lands and Infrastructure Committee
- Alternate for KKCFSS Board
- Jay Border Treaty Executive Committee
- Columbia Valley Economic Development Advisory Commission
- AFN Enterprises
- Alternate for Ktunaxa Nation Legacy Trust
- Indian Beach Estates Working Group

Councillor Allan Nicholas

Welcome to this year's gathering!

I would like to start by introducing myself: My name is Allan Nicholas and I am a 5th generation member of the ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation. My family:

My Parents: Martina Nicholas & Mansell Hall

My Grandparents: Catherine Sam, Sophie Nicholas, Alice White, Martina Nicholas, Dominic Nicholas (Alice White, Dominic Nicholas, and Joseph Nicholas all served as Chief of ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation).

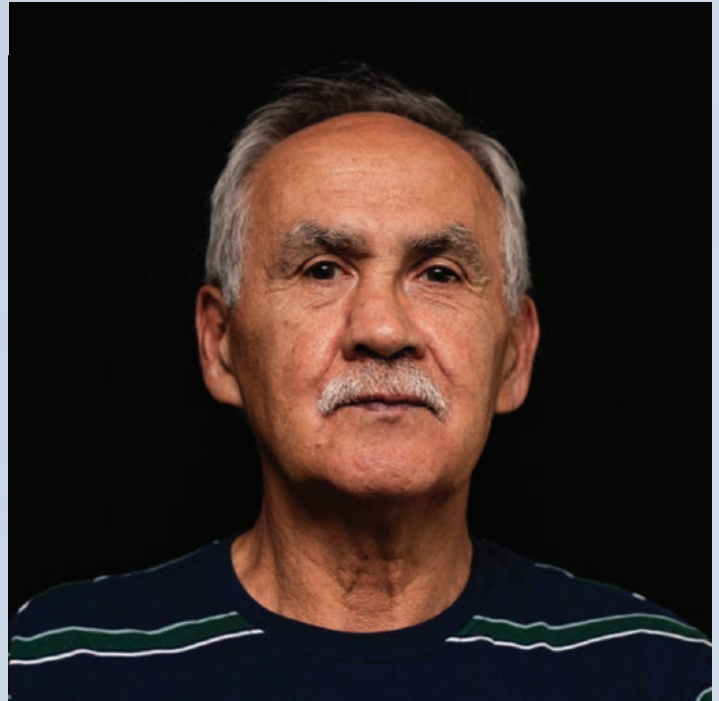
My Siblings: Lucille Shovar, Joseph Nicholas, Lloyd Nicholas, Marty Nicholas, Lillian Rose, David Nicholas, John R. Nicholas, Wes Nicholas, Solo Nicholas, Patrick Nicholas, and Sophie Nicholas.

I have been married to Sherree Nicholas for 24 years and we have one daughter, Lisa Bowler.

I have been involved with the community leadership as a council member on and off since moving back into the community in 2008. I am an avid outdoors person and enjoy hunting, fishing, hiking, and driving the thousands of kilometers of back roads within ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa, as well as watching the wildlife.

For a number of years now I've been involved in domestic and wildlife animal rescue; dogs, cats, rabbits, eagles, basically any animal that needs help.

I also have my own contracting business specializing in Wildlife Habitat Restoration, Wildfire Mitigation, Civil Infrastructure, Water/Sewer, Road Construction/Maintenance, and Forestry Silviculture.



Roles & Responsibility

Councillor Portfolio:

Lands and Resource Stewardship

Environmental Stewardship – The Right to Belong
Responsibilities include:

- Lead policy oversight on territorial land claims, water rights, and environmental protection initiatives.
- Represent ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation in land use agreements and natural resource agreements.
- Develop the Governance Framework for the Nation's Land Stewardship including: Land Code and land stewardship policies.
- Oversee governance policies and efforts related to Emergency Preparedness and Response, Land Use and land conservation.
- Ensure Land and Resource governance policies are developed and/or enforced in alignment with Nation stewardship principles, ensure environmental sustainability is part of resource management.
- Maintain external relationships with government agencies and AFN Business interests.
- Advocate for protecting Indigenous Land and

- Resources based rights and access.
- Provide strategic oversight and advocacy of the Lands and Resource Programs, ensuring compliance with government priorities.
- Alternate for the Economic Prosperity and Financial Sovereignty - The Right to Thrive.
- Columbia Lake Stewardship Working Group
- Ducks Unlimited Working Group
- BC Parks Conservation Program
- FWCP BC Hydro Fish & Wildlife Compensation Program
- Caribou Conservation Alliance/Habitat Restoration Breeding

Boards & Committees

- ʔakisq̓nuk Chief & Council.
- KNCS Leadership 20 member Leadership, CRT, EVR Resources IMBA, Certainteed IMBA
- FAIC Finance Audit Committee
- AFN Enterprise Share Holders
- AFN Natural Resource
- AFN Specific Claims
- AFN Economic Investment
- AFN Encroachment Working Group
- AFN Multi-purpose Building Group
- AFN Multi-purpose Finance Review Group
- AFN Commercial Property Working Group
- BCAFN – National Assembly of First Nations
- AFN – IBE Head Lease Negotiating Group
- AFN CIMA Master Plan Group
- Lake Windermere Ambassadors (Lake Stewardship)
- Living Lakes Working Group
- Kootenay Connect/Badger and Bank Swallow Projects
- Lake Windermere Stewardship
- Columbia Wetlands Stewardship Working Group
- Invermere and Area Seniors Fund Raising Group
- Local animal rescue groups: Little Mittens Golden BC, Meant To Be Loved Cranbrook BC, GALS (Global Animal Lovers) Invermere BC

In closing I would like to thank everyone who attended and participated in person or virtually!

To those of you who had to travel to be here I wish you a safe journey back home and to those who attended online I look forward to meeting you in person someday soon!

From myself and my family take care and be safe,

Allan Nicholas

I welcome everyone attending in person and online to take the time to contact me and introduce yourself or just say 'hi':

Email: anicholas@akisq̓nuk.org
Cell Phone: 250-688-9489

Councillor Darcy Fisher

Ki?su?k kyukyit qapiniski?,

It is with deep respect and gratitude that I present this Annual Report for 2025. This marks the closing months of my current term (2022–2026) on Council, having also previously served from 2016–2020. Across these terms I have been honoured to contribute to shaping the direction of our Nation, strengthening governance systems, advancing cultural practice, and helping prepare the way for generations to come.

This has been one of our busiest and most significant years. Together we have made progress in governance, cultural practice, and collective planning. Much like the seasonal round, our responsibilities are never finished. Each cycle brings new challenges and opportunities to ensure that decisions today prepare the way for those who follow.

My guiding thought remains constant: “So that one day our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will look back and say — they knew we were coming.”

This year has also reaffirmed for me that our work is about more than management. It is about building a Prosperity Plan: ensuring that we leave intergenerational wealth in financial, educational, cultural, and spiritual forms for generations yet to come.

Governance and Leadership

Council has advanced several important initiatives this year:

- **Full-Time Governance Transition**
Membership’s decision to move toward full-time Chief and Council roles has continued to take shape, strengthening accountability, accessibility, and visibility.
- **Portfolio Development**
Portfolio discussions have been ongoing and evolving in a positive way. This collective work is clarifying responsibilities now while laying a foundation that will guide the next generation of leaders in a good way. Because portfolios are being developed together, they provide not only structure but pathways of self-governance that will resonate for years to come.
- **Governance Policy and Remuneration Alignment**
Policy work continues with the goal of building frameworks that are transparent, defensible, and culturally aligned. It is important that our language and culture are embedded in all policies with appreciation and not appropriation.

- **Nation-Level Engagement**

Our presence at Ktunaxa Nation leadership tables has been consistent and visible this year, ensuring ʔAkisq̓nuk perspectives are well represented in collective Nation priorities.

- **Community Connection**

Council has increased participation at all band meetings and community engagements. The Council Remuneration Community Engagement on August 8 and the Indian Beach Estates Member Engagement on August 7 were both well attended. I am grateful that members are taking the time to engage, ask questions, and learn more about the present and future of their Nation. These gatherings show that prosperity planning is already alive, rooted in dialogue and shared responsibility.

- **Regular High-Level Governance Meetings**

In addition to scheduled meetings, Council has begun hosting focused high-level sessions to address strategic issues. These gatherings separate daily administration from long-term planning and create space for clear communication and direction.

- **Legal and Policy Work**

Continued involvement in specific claims negotiations and encroachment response, alongside policy development to protect land, resources, and cultural identity.

Cultural Engagement and Intergenerational Learning

Leadership is carried not only in chambers but in the lived practice of culture. This year I engaged in:

- SD6 Cultural Learning Day at Wi'yu's Lodge (Feb 26) — sharing teachings with students and reinforcing kinship ties with our Shuswap neighbours.
- Fish Tanning Camp (June 16–27) — reconnecting with harvesting and cultural processing.
- Grave Prairie Nation TKL Event (June 13) — supporting plant medicine teachings and policy dialogue.

- Land Stewardship Visioning Gathering (Apr 8–9) — a deeply moving space where Elders, youth, and Guardians together shaped our long-term stewardship approach.

Alongside these events, the sense of family that came from gathering with others from the Nation was equally important. To come together in a shared space, to reconnect through experience, and to learn from one another's life journeys is itself a form of governance. These gatherings created room for healthy interaction, respectful dialogue, spirit, and culture. They remind us that prosperity begins when we gather as one family, and they set a hopeful example for more such opportunities in the future.

These moments reaffirmed that governance and cultural knowledge cannot be separated. Our personal connections and investment in this work are not incidental. They are reflections of our driving goals, vision, and integrity. My daughter's words at one event — "They cut that mountain in half. I hope they do not do that to our mountains." — remind me why each decision we make must protect the inheritance of those who follow.

Environmental Stewardship

Land is not a program or sector. It is the foundation of all prosperity.

This year's work included:

- **Traditional Knowledge and Healing**

Continued dialogue and practice around traditional plants and medicines, on-the-land healing, and ensuring access to sacred and culturally relevant sites. Access must not be limited to political events, but be made available for cultural, ceremonial, and wellness purposes.

- **Nation Land Declaration**

The Nation Land Declaration was a significant step and accomplishment at the KNC level. It affirms our collective voice and reinforces our inherent relationship with ʔamakʔis Ktunaxa.

- **Encroachment and Stewardship Work**

Active participation in encroachment response working groups and advocacy for sustainable land management and ecological restoration.

- **Presence Across Territory**

A strong need remains for more presence across all areas of our territory. This includes equipping our people to be active on the land and ensuring we have adequate representation in all reaches of our territory, while continuing to exercise our Section 35 rights in practical, visible ways.

- **Nation-Based Land Stewards**

Looking forward, there is a clear opportunity for ?Akisq̓nuk to have trained Land Stewards who are equipped with knowledge of the Nation Land Declaration and supported with legal and regulatory qualifications. These stewards could lead in asserting jurisdiction, exercising enforcement, and carrying cultural and ecological responsibilities. They would serve as a bridge between ancestral law and contemporary governance, ensuring that ?Akisq̓nuk voices are not only heard but enacted on the land itself.

- **Cross-Portfolio Stewardship Approach**

Advancing stewardship as a responsibility across all portfolios, ensuring that health, education, governance, and culture are connected back to land.

In every case, the guiding question has been: How do our decisions ensure intergenerational wealth in land, water, culture, and the responsibilities that flow from them?

Strategic Reflections

Four themes have been central this year:

1. **Human-Centered Governance**

Policies must reflect the lived realities of our members. This requires pathways of communication that are open, safe, and culturally rooted.

Clarity and Accountability in Leadership

2. Portfolios, policies, and remuneration structures provide not only governance clarity but also pathways of self-governance, equipping future leaders with a framework that will endure.

3. **Intergenerational Continuity**

Youth are not only future leaders. They are leading today. Governance must continue to make space for their voice, confidence, and contributions.

4. **Language and Knowledge as Living Responsibilities**

Our language, ?a·kʔukaq̓wum, carries ancestral memory and responsibility. Embedding language and culture ensures governance reflects appreciation and never appropriation.

Best Hopes for the Future — A Prosperity Plan

My best hopes for the future are rooted in what I call a Prosperity Plan — a living framework that ensures we leave behind intergenerational wealth for our people.

Prosperity is not measured only in finances. It must also include education, health and wellness, housing and belonging, spirit and ceremony, language and culture, and the ability to walk confidently in both Indigenous and Western worlds.

This Prosperity Plan should be shaped through community gatherings. From these gatherings I hope to see the rise of community champions who help guide specific pieces of the plan. Some possible discussion points include:

- **Health and Wellness Champion** — advancing care, prevention, and land-based healing.
- **Language and Culture Champion** — carrying forward words, teachings, and traditions.
- **Lands Champion** — protecting, stewarding, and teaching about ?amakʔis Ktunaxa.
- **Economic Champion** — fostering prosperity that is sustainable and reinvested in our people.

- Housing and Belonging Champion — ensuring homes reflect safety, self, and identity, not just shelter.
- Spirit and Ceremony Champion — safeguarding sacred practices and grounding governance in spiritual connection.
- These will not be the only champions. There may be more, fewer, or different areas altogether. The important part is that champions serve as discussion points for members to decide where leadership and guidance are most needed.
- At the same time, the Prosperity Plan must open pathways of growth for every member:
- Self-Realization — discovering one's gifts and voice.
- Self-Actualization — using those gifts in service to family, community, and Nation.
- Self-Governance — building the skills and cultural grounding to lead with integrity.
- Communication and Direction — ensuring that all members see and understand the path we are walking together.

Why a Prosperity Plan through Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)? Because it ensures these pathways are not left to chance. It ties short-term action to long-term vision, protects culture from being sidelined, and sustains continuity through leadership transitions. Most importantly, it ensures that the wealth we pass on — financial, educational, cultural, and spiritual — reflects the voices of our people and sustains generations yet to come.

Closing

This has been one of our busiest years, and I am grateful for the dedication shown by Council and staff. We have a team willing to tackle issues with integrity, determination, and care.

I am honoured to be part of a Council that is forward-thinking and, for the most part, aligned in vision. Each member brings expertise and awareness, contributing to the overall health, wealth, and direction of our Nation. Our collective strength ensures that leadership is not carried by one, but by many.

Notable work includes the policy development now underway, which I hope will continue to reflect our people and voices in a good way. Our language and culture must be embedded in all we do, approached with appreciation and never appropriation. These principles give our governance its depth and continuity.

As we move forward, my commitment remains clear: to carry leadership with humility, empathy, and cultural responsibility, ensuring prosperity that is measured in intergenerational wealth across all domains of life.

So that when our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren look back, they will say:

“They knew we were coming.”

Hu sukiᑦ ᑕᑦᑎᑎᑦ,
Darcy Fisher
Council Member, ᑭᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦᑎᑦ First Nation

CAO, David Bach

Ki?su?k kyukyit qapiniski? and welcome to the ?akisqnu? First Nation's 2025 Annual General Assembly.

Our theme at last year's Annual General Assembly was ?usmik Kuktqapnam, or New Beginnings, and my report largely spoke to the evolution and growth of the organization.

We had just completed an organizational review, which saw the formation of new departments and refinement of position descriptions across the organization.

At the time, a number of director, and departmental, positions were vacant and we were focused on filling out the team. I am happy to report that we have made great progress in these areas over the last year – each of the previously vacant director positions has been filled. Most departments across the organization are either at or near capacity. Turnover, more common in years past, is down.

Having made significant strides in building out our staffing, we are now able to more directly focus our collective energy on matters important to ?akisqnu? and the Nation, matters which are captured nicely in this year's theme – Our Land, Our People, Our Connection.

This focus is reflected throughout the achievements and outcomes of this past year, which I invite you to explore in greater detail in this report. It is also reflected in the current year's operational budget, where member distributions represent our single largest expense allocation. Among departmental allocations, (i) Health & Wellness, (ii) Member Services, and (iii) Lands each receive the largest



investments, at roughly comparable amounts. These are followed by allocations to the Core Services, Infrastructure and Finance departments.

We remain committed to building a strong and resilient organization to best serve the interests of ?akisqnu? First Nation, ?akisqnu?nik, Ktunaxanintik and the Ktunaxa Nation – while honouring our ancestors and respecting and strengthening ?amak?is Ktunaxa.

Having made significant progress in building out our staffing, we are now turning our attention to strengthening our processes, procedures and organizational work norms.

We recently brought on a Policy Coordinator to support Council in passing ?AFN Laws and organizational policies; and to assist staff in implementing these laws and policies through the formalization of operational procedures. We are also in the final stages of establishing and filling a new Director of People and Workplace Culture position to assist with HR matters, ensure our workplace norms are aligned with Ktunaxa values and protocols, and that the organization is truly living the statement Qapiqapsin kin ?itkin, hin ?isti Ktunaxa

“Everything we do, we do for the Ktunaxa people”. This new Director position will also work to strengthen staff skills and workplace satisfaction, in recognition that a strong and supported team is essential to providing excellence in service to membership. We are committed to ensuring our spaces are safe and welcoming for our membership, staff and guests.

I welcome all comments and questions on this report and invite you to reach out to myself or any of the other contributors at any time.

I am proud of what the organization has achieved, and will continue to achieve for Our Land, Our People, Our Connection.



Core Services

Director Donna Melnychyn

The Core Services Department has significantly evolved over the past year. We have aligned our growth with that of the overall administration within ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation. Since onboarding in June 2024, I have embraced the challenge of building a new department intended to offer support services to the operational needs of our organization. This leadership role oversees and guides the essential core services central to AFN's operations. The Director of Core Services (DCS) coordinates these services across all AFN departments, ensuring they meet project needs and support business operations. The DCS aims to foster collaboration and integrate these services to enhance efficiency and effectiveness throughout the organization

The following areas of responsibility fall within my purview:

Communications

Communications is dedicated to managing and enhancing the organization's internal and external communications. This team crafts, designs and delivers clear, consistent messaging across all platforms, including digital, print, and social media. By fostering strong relationships with stakeholders and the community, Communications ensures that the organization's voice is effectively represented, and that key information is communicated to the right



audiences. We have refined the process of generating a monthly newsletter for AFN membership, defined procedures for notifications to the community, sought engagement of members on various topics with the purpose of enhancing the AFN website as well as offered additional informational tools for outreach.

Event Coordination

The Events Coordinator oversees the planning and execution of events, activities, and projects for all AFN departments. Acting as the central hub for event coordination, this role collaborates across departments to develop, organize, and execute a variety of events and cultural activities. The coordinator is key in fostering community participation, preserving cultural identity, and promoting unity among ʔakisq̓nuk members by celebrating and honoring the community's traditions and heritage. An 'Annual Calendar of Events' has been created as a planning tool within our administration. We have successfully organized many events, activities, training and meetings over the past year. We are both excited and appreciative of member participation and guidance on several events including the Ktunaxa Artisan Showcase, Winter Solstice, Singing Back the Buffalo at the Invermere Film Festival, Earth Day, AFN Open House, Wiyu Lodge activities and finally, the AFN Annual General Assembly.

Information Technology (IT)

Our IT Coordinator provides technology solutions that drive efficiency and support the growth of our organization. We ensure secure, reliable, and scalable IT infrastructure, while delivering exceptional support to meet the evolving needs of our teams. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, we empower our employees to achieve their goals and enhance overall productivity. We have responded to the day to day functional IT needs of staff as well as Chief and Council; be it laptops, cell phones, softphones, smartboards, etc within the past year's organizational growth and amidst the challenge of supporting several physical office locations. Advance planning has been ongoing for the roll out of essential data and technological services within the Multi-Purpose Facility. Our goal is to provide a seamless transfer of staff and technology without interruption to the organization upon move in.

Executive Assistance

The Executive Assistant provides high-level administrative support to the CAO as well as coordinates day to day oversight of Administrative Assistants and Receptionists who offer a variety of organizational services to each operating department enhancing strategic goals. This role involves managing complex situations and multiple tasks simultaneously while ensuring the smooth operation of daily administrative functions. Efforts have been focused this past year on developing procedures to deliver continuity of service to the various operating departments within administration. EA's have identified, consolidated and created updated methods for record keeping, digitization of AFN files as well as preparing the historical preservation of documents to be moved to the new building's secure, fire safe document storage room.

Administrative Assistance

Administrative Assistants offer high-level support to each operating department, Chief and Council, playing a crucial role in the day-to-day operations of the ʔakisq̓nuk Administration Office. They handle a wide range of administrative and clerical tasks, including maintaining records, coordinating schedules, and ensuring effective communication both internally and with external parties. Working closely with Directors and staff, they help ensure the smooth functioning of their assigned departments. Standardization of basic services and cross training has enabled the AA's to support any department, filling in when needed depending on peak workloads or during staff absences.

Receptionists

As the first point of contact for members and the public, this role represents the office and its culture. Responsibilities include managing the front office, greeting visitors, handling mail, processing payments, preparing boardrooms for meetings, and supporting general administrative tasks to ensure the smooth daily operations of the office. In preparation for the move to the new MPF as well as adapting to this past year's staff growth, we have evolved to utilizing a softphone platform. This process has experienced some challenges; however, we continue to refine and test it to ensure members, staff and external callers may efficiently reach the correct department or person.

Collectively, the Team and I look forward to offering on time, reliable and effective support to both AFN Operating Departments as well as the AFN Membership Community.

Health & Wellness

Director Rachel Bach

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The 2024–2025 year was a time of action, growth, and connection for the Health & Wellness Department. Guided by our five-year Health Plan (2024–2029), we moved from planning into full implementation — expanding programs, deepening partnerships, and strengthening our team to better meet the needs of ʔakisq̓nuknik.

Strengthening Services and Supports

Over the year, we welcomed new staff in clinical care, community wellness, healthy child development, and food sovereignty. This growth has allowed us to expand on-site services, increase home and community care, and broaden wellness programming.

Members accessed:

- Recovery Circles and harm reduction supports
- Monthly Elder shopping trips to Cranbrook
- Mobile clinics including mammograms, diabetes care, mobile eye exams
- Regular in-house clinics, including family doctor, reflexology, acupuncture, and foot care
- Home visits, mobility planning, and medical transportation support
- Workshops on food preservation, grief and loss, trauma, and ancestral skills



These offerings, alongside regular health navigation and advocacy, support accessible, culturally safe supports for members of all ages.

Cultural Safety and Training

This year, we took concrete steps to strengthen cultural safety and trauma-informed practice across our programs. Staff participated in Wraparound Care and Privacy & Security Awareness training, continued Ktunaxa language lessons, attended Ktunaxa Person-Centered Services Framework sessions, and presented at a Cultural Safety Workshop for local physicians and Interior Health staff. These initiatives build the capacity of our team and our partners to deliver care that reflects ʔakisq̓nuk values and worldview.

Cultural Wellness and Community Connection

Cultural safety and land-based healing remained at the heart of our work. Wiyu Lodge continued to evolve as a site for wellness, learning, and gathering — hosting everything from fish leather tanning to canning workshops to beading circles. Working closely with community members, Elders, and partners, the Health and Wellness department helped bring to life events

such as the Ktunaxa Artist Showcase, Wellness Days, Singing Back the Buffalo film screening, and Two Spirit Pride breakfast, creating spaces for connection, cultural celebration, and belonging.

Healthy Child Development

?akisq̓nuk supported early learning and family well-being through:

- Seasonal and back-to-school kits with culturally relevant materials
- Field trips and family events
- Two seasonal Elders & Kids Playgroups that blended gardening, crafts, gym play, and environmental education, introducing children to composting worms, bees, and pollinator care
- Publication and distribution of Haꞑiꞑat̓ik, a seasonal Ktunaxa-language family wellness magazine, with over 500 copies shared across BC, Alberta, and the Pacific Northwest

These programs strengthen the connection between young families, Elders, and culture while supporting healthy child development.



Food Sovereignty in Action

Our Food Sovereignty branch continued to grow, with the new Community Garden and kitchen at Wiyu Lodge becoming vibrant hubs for skill-building, healthy eating, and connection to land. This year saw the hiring of garden staff, construction of raised beds, installation of a wildlife fence, and the planting of fruit

trees, berry bushes, and pollinator-friendly spaces. The garden came alive with bee hatching huts, bluebird houses, and new Ktunaxa-language signage, alongside a newly built garden shed and upgrades to the Wiyu kitchen.

Community members joined for work bees, tree planting, and hands-on learning for all ages. The garden also provides low-barrier employment and training opportunities, giving members the chance to learn practical skills in food production, preservation, and land stewardship.

Beyond the garden, our Food Sovereignty work included:



- Monthly Good Food Box support in partnership with Social Development
- In-house meal preparation for programs, embedding food as a form of care
- Elk Days with Elders, youth, and knowledge keepers — featuring butchering, waꞑkna making, and canning
- Providing a Taste of Ktunaxa at the Singing Back the Buffalo film screening with the Invermere Film Festival

We are excited for more harvesting, canning, garden parties, and supporting the upcoming Salmon Festival. We invite all members to get involved — whether by working, advising, volunteering, or simply visiting — and be part of this growing movement toward food sovereignty.

Member Benefit Plan – Investing in Our People

In 2025, ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation launched a new Member Benefit Plan — a milestone in our commitment to investing in the health and wellness of every member.

Why we did it

Despite the Band Member Assistance Policy, FNHA supports, and others, many members continued to face barriers in accessing health, dental, vision, and wellness services not fully covered under existing programs.

How it came together

The plan was the result of over a year of research and engagement. We looked at best practices, ensured alignment with our Health Plan, and built a model that could grow with our community's needs. The plan was approved by Council in early 2025.



What it offers

At a glance, the plan provides:

- Additional coverage for prescription drugs, dental care, vision care, and a wide range of paramedical services
- A Lifestyle Spending Account, which can be used for cultural care, family care, fitness, pet care, sustainable living, and more
- Easy claims processing online, through an app, or by paper

How to sign up

All ʔakisq̓nuk members are eligible to enroll. To get started, send your first and last name, address (including city, province, and postal code), date of birth, and gender to healthcentre@akisqnuk.org or call the main office. You will receive your coverage card and more information in the mail.

Looking Ahead

The Health & Wellness Department will continue to focus on holistic, community-driven programming and care — blending clinical services, cultural connection, and wellness opportunities so that every member can thrive. Our priorities include:

- Expanding access to clinical and allied health services
- Growing our food sovereignty and traditional food programs
- Strengthening cultural safety across all programs and partners
- Supporting families through early childhood and intergenerational initiatives



Infrastructure

Director Wade Melnychyn

The Infrastructure Department is a newly formed department within AFN's Administration organization and is assembled into three of the following divisions:

Public Works

Key Responsibilities:

Operating, maintaining and repairing existing water infrastructure (wells and pipelines) and roads relating to ongoing repairs and winter ploughing and sanding.

Groundskeeping - mowing and beautification.
Wood cutting/splitting and distribution.
Input into Capital Projects relating to Design and Operation.



Capital Projects (Includes 4-Plex and Multipurpose Facility)

Key responsibilities:

Project Planning/Scheduling, Bid tendering and awarding
Budget Management
Team Management and Communication
Quality Control and Risk Management
Client and Stakeholder Relations
Documentation and Reporting



Facility Maintenance (All AFN Buildings and Housing)

Key responsibilities:

Maintenance Planning and Scheduling
Team Management and Supervision
Operating and Maintenance Budgeting
Facility Inspections and Safety Compliance
Vehicle Fleet Management
Emergency Repairs and Troubleshooting
Vendor and Contract Management

Capital Projects (Current and Proposed)

New Multi-Purpose Building

As result of a thorough tendering process, AFN has selected the following vendors for the construction of the 20,000 square foot Multi-Purpose Facility, which includes a Health Centre, Band Hall and Administration Building:

Scott Builders - Primary contractor
Unison Architecture
QSSI – Quality monitoring Surveying
L&M Engineering Ltd
Introba Engineering Ltd.
Equilibrium Consulting Engineering Ltd.



The ceremonial groundbreaking of the Multipurpose Facility was on August 23, 2024 on the first day of last year's AGA.

The construction process involved not only the building of the new Multipurpose Facility but the demolition of the previously constructed Band Hall. As a cost saving measure, utilizing the existing foundation of the Band Hall for the Multi-purpose Facility was implemented.

Even with the project delays relating to Bats occupying the old Band Hall, specifically the Little Brown Myotis, which under SARA (Species at Risk Act) are a protected Species, the anticipated completion date of the Multi-purpose facility is still scheduled to be at the end of the first quarter of 2026.



New Housing Four-Plex

To complement AFN's existing 15 housing units, which consists of one 6-plex and three 3-plexes, is the recently completed 4-plex.

The complex, located on Kootenay Road 3, has four 1-bedroom units and was officially sanctioned with a grand opening ceremony held in June 2025.

The project was completed under budget.

North Community Water System Upgrades

Brief Project Description

The proposed water system improvements include:

- Remove existing temporary chlorination container and demolish existing pump control shack
- Rehabilitate wells 1 & 2
- Install new well pumps in wells 1 & 2
- Construct new well control and water treatment building
- Construct new treated water storage
- Construct 300mm water main and control wires between the well control and the reservoirs
- Tie-in to existing reservoir
- Upgrade existing distribution pipe size to 200mm

Recent correspondence from ISC (Indigenous Services Canada) on the previous Project Approval



Request (PAR) submission, have resulted in updates to the PAR application, which includes engineering drawings. Once the full engineering drawing package is complete, a PAR resubmission to ISC will then be made in September.

South Community Water System

Project scope is currently being defined for a new water system at the South end of the community. Once details have been solidified, this will be brought to Council for direction.

Infrastructure Yard and Shop

Plans are currently underway to design and construct both a Maintenance Shop and Yard. The purpose is to securely store AFN's tangible assets, which will include fleet vehicles and equipment, while providing a functional shop to repair and maintain these assets. The shop will also include office space for the infrastructure staff.

Finance

Chief Financial Officer Robby Roy



Ki?su?k kyukyit qapiniski?,

My name is Robby Roy and I currently sit as your new Chief Financial Officer, since December 2024. I feel very grateful to have been received with open arms by the ?akisqnuknik community, Chief and Council (C&C) and ?akisqnuk First Nation (AFN) staff. I hope to continue to work alongside, meet and interact with many of you for years to come.

These last 8 months have seen many positive changes within the Finance Department and the overall AFN staff team. Our Finance Department has added multiple Certified Professional Accountants, including Lorena Aquino (Director of Finance) and Tina Heal (Accountant). We also added Lauren Nordquist, Cherrie Burke and Mykola Perun to the team. Our team has been working on improving processes and timely reporting to ensure financial compliance and integrity to all stakeholders.

One of my goals as part of the Senior Leadership Team and the Finance Department is to meaningfully contribute to the long term prosperity and self-sustainability of the AFN. I believe that our team as C&C & AFN staff is very strong and becoming more and more united on many fronts.

With the continued inclusion, guidance and direction of the AFN Membership, I feel very good about the health and the direction of the organization, presently and for many years to come.

2025-2026 Budget

At the beginning of the calendar year, C&C and the Senior Leadership Team came together to update the strategic planning and budget preparation for the next fiscal year. The general framework for this begins with the guidance from the last Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) and is intended to guide the strategic planning and decision making of C&C.

From the strategic planning sessions came the workplans designed for each department directors and accompanying budgets.

The overall 2025-2026 budget was then created, recommended by the AFN’s Finance, Audit & Investment Committee and approved by C&C.

A big portion of the budget this year has been allocated to the completion of what we are calling the “Multi-Purpose Facility”. This beautiful building will consist of a Health Centre, Band Hall, and Administrative Offices. While a big portion of this facility has been paid by way of third party grants and donations, we still needed to allocate part of the 1/3 OSR (slated for services/operations/capital) to it.

Own-Source Revenue (OSR) Policy & Prosperity Fund

In accordance with the OSR Policy (that became active in March 2024), the Nation is in a very fortunate position to continue to allocate 1/3 of OSR to its Members, 1/3 to a Savings Account (Prosperity Fund) and 1/3 for services/operations/capital. The intention is to balance the Nation's funds for the present and the future.

The Prosperity Fund is now active and in trust with the FNB Trust, with an initial contribution of \$35MM. An additional contribution (1/3 of OSR from 2024-2025 audited financial results) will be made in few months. The investments within the trust are being managed by Beutel, Goodman & Company Ltd, and investment management company. Both FNB Trust and Beutel, Goodman & Company Ltd will be presenting at this year's AGA.

2024-2025 Financial Audit

Let me start by saying that this year's audit is one to be very proud of. It was conducted by MNP LLP for the second year in a row. The audit process started early and with a new and eager Finance Department, we were ready for it.

Despite some complexities in gathering historical data, working with aging, less than efficient technology, and not having a full staff for much of the 2024-2025 fiscal year, Lorena and the rest of the team put in a lot of hours and work into solving every problem and providing the auditors with what they needed to complete the audit in record time.

As of the date of the AGA, the 2024-2025 audited financials of the AFN are completed and have been signed off by C&C. I will present some of the highlights of our 2024-2025 financial results at this year's AGA.

Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP)

As mentioned in last year's annual report, a CCP is a foundation document formed through extensive community engagement that is intended to guide the strategic planning and decision making of C&C.

This document is very important for all of the AFN and it is a great opportunity for all Members to contribute to the vision and the future of our Nation.

In 2025, we are starting the process of creating a new CCP. It will be created with all of your help, thoughts and suggestions. Keep on the lookout for future engagements with our CCP team.

Financial Management System (FMS) Certification

Lastly, I would like to mention that we are currently going through the process of being "FMS Certified" with the First Nations Financial Management Board. This is a big deal. An FMS Certificate proves that our C&C, community members, lenders, business partners, and AFN staff use the good governance and finance practices as outlined in our Financial Administration Law (FAL). It also allows borrowing members to remain in good standing with the First Nations Finance Authority (FNFA).

The process is an audit to ensure that certain policies and procedures are updated, in place and followed.

Our goal is to become FMS certified by the end of the fiscal year 2025-2026.

Lands & Resources

Director Lorne Shovar

Ki?su?k kyukyit,

The Lands department has experienced substantial growth and transformation over the last year that has positively impacted the work we have been able to accomplish. Based on community feedback, we have also transitioned some of our priorities to better address community concerns.

The Department

Since the last AGA report we have added several new people and positions. We had promoted our Regulatory Engagement Coordinator (REC) to a Biologist role and we backfilled the REC. Since then, the Biologist has moved on and we have hired a new Biologist who began in mid-July. We also hired a Lands and Environment Manager and a Natural Resource Manager, who have both been with us since September of 2024. Currently, we are recruiting for the Guardian Program Manager, Water Stewardship Coordinator, and a Community Researcher.

Priorities

This past year saw a shift in some of our departmental priorities, primarily towards the need for better stewardship on Columbia and Windermere lakes, which has become a main focus for the Lands department.



We will be seeking funding from the province for the lake stewardship work, specifically for gathering information about the lakes and their current conditions to fill current knowledge gaps. One thing we will be seeking to better understand will be why the burbot have not recovered as expected.

We are also continuing to advance FireSmart and the ongoing fuel reduction work to keep the community safe from wildfire. Additionally, we have conducted some habitat restoration work to enhance wildlife in and around the community.

IMBA

In cooperation with KNC, we have been working on an Impact Management and Benefits Agreement (IMBA) for the Kootenay West Mine. The negotiations on this have been slow. The company is also working on developing a rail load out in Canal Flats, and we are in discussions on that as well.

Regarding the Revelstoke 6 Generating Station, we have been in discussion with BC Hydro along with KNC on this project. One possibility for this will be to have an Indigenous monitor on site for most of the project; we are aiming to fill this position with an AFN staff stationed in Revelstoke, where we will also be looking to have office space.

AFN Properties

As AFN holds several properties outside of the reserve, we are seeking to have some of these added to the reserve. The other will remain as fee simple for various reasons. The ones we are seeking to have added to the reserve are the Wiyu and Madias properties. The process for this is long term and could take 3-5 years or longer, depending on the federal government. There is a forest service road (FSR) that runs through the Madias property and we are working on having that decommissioned or removed from FSR status and added back to the property prior to the adding it to the reserve.

SARA

For the new building we required a Species At Risk Act (SARA) permit, which included regular ongoing monitoring for the badgers in the area. During the initial assessment, we also found there were potentially protected bats in the old building. The bats caused a bit of a delay as we had to wait for them to leave on their own for hibernation. We also had to have bat houses installed for when they returned, which has also required ongoing monitoring during the construction.

Windermere Creek Water Rights

AFN has water rights from Windermere Creek that we have not been able to access since the early 90s. Regaining access has been an extremely slow process, as we have to work with multiple different ministries at the provincial level, and it has been difficult to get them all on the same page. The Ministry of Transportation has been the most challenging to work with on this file. We hope to see some resolution to this file within the next year.

Specific Claims

We have several specific claims at various stages. The Madias Tatley claim is in the middle stages of negotiations. We also have 2 highway claims that are in the very early stages. One has been accepted for negotiations and we are waiting on decision for the other. These are for Kootenay Road 3 and Highway 93/95. We are also in the very early stages of the Mission Farmlands claim.

Members on the land

We have been working with the Health and Member Services departments to develop activities to get members back on the land. We are in the process of developing a fishing camp for later this fall, and we are also working on a possible hunting camp, however this one may not be until next year. We have also been working on a seasonal harvesting calendar. One of our goals is to develop teachings for other types of harvesting (plants, trees, berries, etc), which would include what, when, and how, as well as practicing ?a'numu?ti?i?.

In May we hosted Lake Days, which was an opportunity for members to get out on the lake and talk about the impacts that are currently happening on the lake. It was also an opportunity to learn more about the area and the importance of the lake to ?akisqnuq. We hope to have many more session like this and other in the near future.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to stop by the Lands table or call/email any of the Lands staff.

Taxas.

Environmental Damages Fund

The Federal government fined a large-scale mining company for environmental damages. ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation will receive funding through the Environmental Damages Fund to support projects chosen by AFN that help fish and fish habitat. These funds must be used for research, restoration, education, or habitat improvements—and will be rolled out over a five-year period.

Land Guardian Program

Chief and Council have approved a new Land Guardian program for ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation—a major step forward in strengthening our role as stewards of land and water. A two-phase training plan is ready, and recruitment for Guardian positions is expected this fall or winter. The goal is to have trained Guardians on the ground by spring 2026.

Guardians will lead and support many initiatives in the traditional territory. A dedicated Guardian Program Manager will help guide the program and ensure our Guardians are supported, trained, and empowered. We hope many ʔakisq̓nuknik apply!

Area-Based Management Plan – Elk Valley

AFN participated in the process for updating the Elk Valley Area-Based Management Plan (ABMP), which was originally created in 2014 to manage mine discharge into the Elk River system. AFN had representation at three levels: the Government Steering Committee, the Strategic Advisory Group,

and the Technical Advisory Committee. The revised plan is now led by the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, not industry. Selenium levels in the water continue to be a key concern. The Minister approved the new 2025 Elk Valley Water Quality Plan. This latest version has expanded responsibility beyond Teck/EVR to include all mining companies in the region.

Elkhorn Barite Mine

The Elkhorn Barite Mine, partly located on reserve, has been abandoned in a hazardous state for many years. AFN has been working with the Province to push for proper mine closure and site remediation. Several inspections have been completed, most recently by the Inspector of Mines in August 2024. The Province now has the legal authority to seize bond money and proceed with cleanup, after the former permit holder failed to respond.

Kootenay West Mine: Rail Loadout Amendment

AFN is engaged in the environmental review of CertainTeed's proposed amendment to move its rail loadout station from Invermere to Canal Flats. The Canal Flats location is an existing historical rail loadout station that was previously used for shipping gypsum, the same material that CertainTeed mines. This move would reduce highway traffic and improve road safety. AFN has participated in monthly meetings with the Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) and has received capacity funding to support this review work. The mine has an expected lifespan of 43 years and produces 400,000 tonnes of gypsum annually.

Climate Adaptation Study

ʔakisq̓nuk collaborated with BGC Engineering to investigate the local effects of climate change. The project is assessing risks such as extreme heat, wildfire, flooding, drought, and water availability (surface and groundwater). The findings from this work will help guide land-use planning and emergency preparedness.

Traditional Use and Interest Study

AFN continues to document oral histories, cultural stories, and long-standing use of the lakes and lands by ʔakisq̓nuknik. This work will shape how we plan, protect, and advocate for our territory. We are currently hiring for a Community Researcher position.

Groyne Study – Lake Windermere

We've partnered with Reciprocity to investigate the cultural history of the Groyne structure in Lake Windermere. Public Services and Procurement Canada is proposing to remove the fish dam. We are reviewing historical documents to prove this structure holds cultural or archaeological significance. If it was built by Ktunaxa ancestors, it could qualify for protection. Many community members have expressed concerns about the health of the lakes, and this study is part of a broader effort to gather traditional and technical information.



Revelstoke 6 – BC Hydro

BC Hydro proposed installing the 6th final generating unit in the last empty bay at the Revelstoke Dam. Consultation with First Nations involved participation in the environmental review for BC Hydro's extension application for their Environmental Assessment Certificate. Our team raised strong concerns and did not fully support the plan as it was initially presented. Feedback was provided, and some input was incorporated. Ultimately, the EAO approved BC Hydro's extension certificate, and the sixth generator unit will be installed at the Revelstoke Dam.

Though the EAO granted approval, AFN will continue to monitor the project. We will be hiring an Indigenous Environmental Monitor to oversee the work over the next five years, and we will stay involved as we codevelop various management plans with BC Hydro.

Lake Stewardship Plans

AFN has formally requested to co-develop Indigenous-led Lake Stewardship Plans with the Province of BC. These plans will guide the long-term health and sustainable use of Columbia Lake and Lake Windermere, beginning with direct collaboration between ʔakisq̓nuk and the Province. Regional and local governments will be invited in later phases, once the foundation is set.

We've been advocating for lake plans that reflect ʔakisq̓nuk values and priorities. The Lake Stewardship Plans must center on Indigenous decision-making, include stronger law enforcement, and address concerns related to recreational pressure, development, and water quality. Work has already begun, and this process will continue to evolve.



Marina Dredging Opposition – Lake Windermere

?akisq̓nuk was recently involved in a court case challenging a proposed marina dredging project on Lake Windermere due to serious concerns around consultation, ecosystem impacts, and the cumulative pressure on the lake.

Although the court decision prompted a pause, the same marina proposal has been resubmitted. We have requested that this and all similar applications be suspended until meaningful Indigenous-led stewardship plans and enforcement measures are implemented.

Moratorium Demand

AFN formally requested a moratorium on all new and proposed lake developments until the comprehensive, Indigenous-led Lake Stewardship Plans are in place.

Leadership met with the Deputy Minister to outline our goal of protecting the health of Columbia Lake and Lake Windermere from further degradation while plans are being developed. Until those plans are in effect, we are calling for a full halt on all new proposed projects that affect the lakes

Vessel Operation Restriction Regulation (VORR)

Transport Canada has approved AFN to proceed with applications for Vessel Operation Restriction Regulations (VORRs) on Columbia Lake and Lake Windermere. These regulations would aim to restrict “wake mode” operation on both lakes to protect shallow ecosystems from deep wave action, which stirs up sediment and harms aquatic life.

AFN will act as the Local Authority in this process. We’ve completed the Preliminary Assessments and, as part of the process, are preparing to engage the broader public for spring 2026. This initiative has not yet been made public, and the Lands and Resources Department intends to engage with AFN members

before releasing the information to the public. Please look for upcoming Lake Stewardship information and engagement sessions that will be coming soon.

Referrals

AFN continues to review provincial and proponent based referrals through our Lands Department, guided by Council priorities and strategic goals. Referrals allow First Nations to review proposed activities—like land use, mining, forestry, and water developments—to assess potential impacts on Rights, Title, and stewardship values.

Our Regulatory Engagement Coordinator tracks, organizes, and prioritizes incoming referrals and works closely with proponents and other Ktunaxa Nations to advance long-term stewardship goals. This includes our involvement in the Ktunaxa Strategic Land Vision, which outlines shared Nation priorities across ?amak?is Ktunaxa.



Spill Notification System

AFN is now subscribed to BC’s Hazardous Spill Notification Service, which alerts us in real time to any spills or hazardous incidents within our defined territory. These notifications help us respond more quickly and investigate any environmental concerns. Our team monitors spill alerts that pose a risk to land, water, or community health.

CBT Block Ecosystem Restoration and Elk Project

The CBT Ecosystem Restoration project aims to improve forest health and elk habitat. The goal of this project is to open up the canopy through different timber harvesting methods, thereby improving forest health and increasing the amount of forage for local



Elk have already been seen utilizing a strip within the CBT Block

elk. The bulk of the timber harvesting work was completed in May 2025, with some thinning planned for the fall of 2025. We have been collecting images from wildlife cameras placed throughout the block to determine how the timber harvesting will affect the use of the area by the elk. We now have wildlife camera data from before the harvesting which will be compared to data collected over the next several months (post-treatment data) to determine if there has been an effect of the timber harvesting on the elk's use of the area. In addition, we will be comparing how the understory vegetation changes after the forestry treatments through vegetation surveys. We look forward to analyzing all of our data and determining if we have improved the elk habitat.

ʔakisq̓nuk completed the mechanical harvesting phase this past winter on our elk habitat restoration project on reserve that is predicted to greatly improve forest health and benefit the local elk population. Most of the area was strip-thinned: cut into 15 m wide strips, followed by 15 m retention strips. Some of this area will be further hand thinned this fall to open up



Example picture from one of our Reconyx wildlife cameras

the grown-in, dense forest. This treatment will reduce the fuel load, encourage the establishment of grasses and improve browse for the local elk.

ʔakisq̓nuk have a total of 20 Reconyx wildlife cameras that we are using to determine elk occupancy. The cameras have been placed randomly, stratified by treatment type: strip thin, thin from below, etc... There are also 5 cameras placed adjacent to the block in a "control" polygon that is not being treated. This design allows us to compare between treatments and to compare each treatment with the control. In addition, all of the cameras were installed prior to the forestry treatments. This allowed us to gather data prior to treatment which will also act as a "control" so that we can compare before treatment elk occupancy with post treatment elk occupancy.

These are high-end wildlife cameras that are frequently used in wildlife studies. They are motion activated and set to take 5 pictures in succession when triggered. They work during the night as well. The photos from the cameras need to be analyzed using a camera trap specific software. The software has some AI built in to help sort through images and flag ones that likely have an animal in the frame. It is common to get false triggers from vegetation moving in the wind so the AI is very helpful. The person analyzing images will identify the species, sex, behavior, health and any other data that is relevant. After all images are analyzed, statistical software is used to determine occupancy.

ʔakisq̓nuk have initiated this program to monitor elk use and to figure out how this forestry treatment will affect how often elk use this block. Our new biologist will be very busy over the next few years collecting this vital piece of information.

Columbia Lake East Side (CLES) Projects

Columbia Lake East Side Wildlife Management Area

We have been working with KNC and the Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship (WLRS) on a Strategic Habitat Plan for the Columbia Lake East Side Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This is a culturally significant area for ʔakisq̓nuk and therefore we have been participating at the leadership table to ensure our voice is heard. We hired a contractor to complete a habitat values assessment of the WMA which was successfully completed in May 2025. This assessment identified key values in the area and ranked how different threats may impact the values (for example, climate change, recreational impacts, invasive species, etc.). We are now moving to the next phase which will include ground-truthing through fieldwork, and recommendations for future management and ecosystem restoration.

Provincial Park

We have been working with BC Parks and KNC on a restoration plan for Columbia Lake Provincial Park. The Park is largely ingrown and requires substantial thinning and a burn to restore the health of the ecosystem. We have been working with BC Parks to create the restoration plan and have been sitting on the steering community to ensure that the ʔakisq̓nuk voice is heard throughout the project. During the summer of 2025, a comprehensive archeological and cultural assessment of the park will be conducted by both an external contractor, KNC Guardians and Ktunaxa members. Community members are encouraged to join the assessment if they are interested.

Lot 48

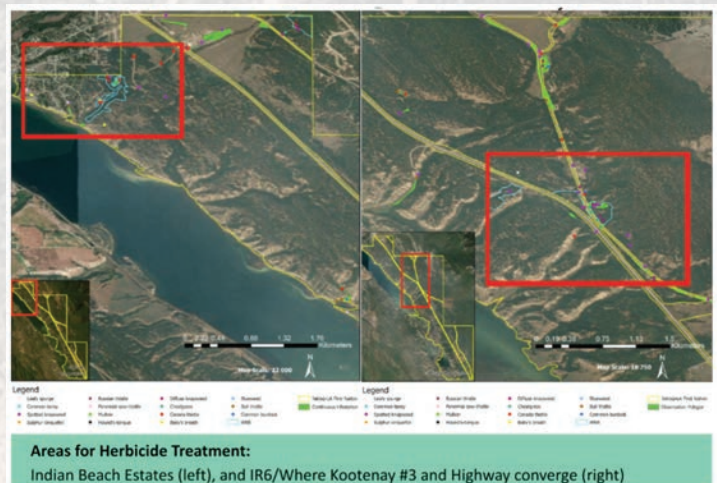
Similar to the other CLES projects, we are working with KNC and a land manager to restore the ecosystem on the east side of Columbia Lake. Lot 48 is owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and they are working with us and KNC to thin and

burn the forest, restoring the land to its historic state. We have been involved in creating the ecosystem restoration plan, including the burn plan. The lot has been thinned this winter (2025) and it is scheduled to be burned in the spring of 2026.

Invasive Species Work

We are working with the East Kootenay Invasive Species Council to manage and treat invasive plant infestations throughout the reserve. EKISC is a local group that specializes in invasive species management throughout the East Kootenays. A comprehensive invasive species inventory was conducted in 2024 and it identified all incidences of invasive plant species on reserve. From this inventory, we identified priority areas where high-ranking invasive plants are present and/or there is a high potential for invasives to spread and establish. During June of 2025, we treated some of these high priority areas and we will begin to treat others in the Fall, including the knapweed infestation by the triplexes. This knapweed infestation can be treated by hand-pulling and therefore, we are planning a community weed-pull event in September that will include some invasive plant species education by EKISC.

It is likely that invaded areas will need to be treated more than once given their aggressiveness and, therefore, invasive plant management will continue over the next several years. It is our goal to eliminate as many invasive plant infestations as feasible to ensure that the land can once again be filled with native plants which create the foundation of a healthy ecosystem.



Invasive species are a significant threat to global biodiversity and ecological integrity. They are considered the second largest driver of species extinction after habitat loss. The ability to grow rapidly and reproduce quickly allow invasive species to out-compete native species for resources.

The Lands Department worked with the East Kootenay Invasive Species Council (EKISC) to conduct invasive plant treatments on reserve. Two areas were treated using herbicide in late June.

Collaborative Projects

Fire Research UBC

We have been working with Dr. Jen Baron, a fire ecology researcher from UBC, to initiate a study on the juniper-saskatoon rust that is present throughout the Valley and the restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems. Jen began her field reconnaissance on reserve in June. We look forward to working with Jen on various projects, including cultural burns, throughout the reserve and territory.

Caribou Working Group

We have been working with the WLRs caribou recovery team on caribou recovery throughout the territory. The primary focus has been on habitat protections in the northern Selkirk mountains where there currently are few. Mountain caribou are reliant on old growth forests to survive and much of these forests have been logged. We have worked to define areas of critical habitat and are now looking to implement habitat protections from a legal and legislative point of view. We as a Nation have provided a letter of support to the BC Government stating that we support the protection of 100% of the identified critical core caribou habitat in this northern region. We look forward to seeing these habitat protections implemented; a critical first step in protecting these animals.

Chronic Wasting Disease Group

In 2024, WLRs created a Ktunaxa table to discuss chronic wasting disease case updates and management. We have been actively participating at this table to ensure that ʔakisq̓nuk voices are heard at all stages of the response and management of this disease within the Territory. Most management decisions have been concentrated in the southern territory, where the confirmed cases have been found. This table has been valuable for staying up to date on the situation and for sharing the ʔakisq̓nuk perspective on management decisions.

Kootenay Connect

The Kootenay Connectivity Working Group aims to develop policy to identify, establish and recognize a formal ecological corridor in the Columbia Valley. The corridor would encompass the area from the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy, east across the Columbia Lake area, up to Kootenay National Park, facilitating animal movement from the Wilderness Conservancy, over to the National Park. We have been working with Kootenay Connect to develop the corridor boundaries and best management practices within the corridor for different land-user groups. The group has been very receptive and inclusive of ʔakisq̓nuk values and goals and they recognize and emphasize the cultural importance of this area. We look forward to continuing to work with the group to establish an ecological corridor through the Columbia Valley, helping to sustain a variety of wildlife species.

Columbia Lake Bighorn Sheep

We are working with local wildlife biologist, Brian Gustafson to study the Columbia Lake Bighorn Sheep herd. This herd, like many others in BC, have experienced declines in numbers and are facing numerous threats. In order to safe guard this herd for generations to come, we need to better understand their key characteristics, such as their key habitats, movement patterns and population demographics. We will work with Brian, a local wildlife veterinarian and our Guardians to collect this information which will inform future management actions.

BC Wildlife Federation Wetland Stewardship and Restoration

In June 2025, BC Wildlife Federation (BCWF) staff conducted field reconnaissance with staff from ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation and the Columbia Wetland Stewardship Partners, to evaluate potential wetland restoration sites. The team observed extensive evidence of historic beaver activity, but many former dam structures are now degraded due to the absence of beavers and other cumulative impacts from logging, road development, recreational use, and the decline of traditional land stewardship practices. These factors have contributed towards reducing the region's natural water storage capacity. Among the areas assessed, a site along Findlay creek was identified as a high-priority wetlands restoration site, located in a 2020 burned area with a relic beaver dam and a long, incised stream reach. Preliminary assessments at the Findlay site indicate that this system has strong potential for water table recovery and habitat improvement through applying proven wetland restoration activities. We will work with BCWF staff to repair the breached historic beaver dam and improve capacity for water retention in the system and restore upstream water pooling.

C2 Block Fuel Reduction Project (Adjacent to Reserve)

Following up with last year's 51 hectares of mechanical harvest, we completed approximately 17 hectares of hand treatment along with grass seeding of the landings and roadways. Our treatment was a newsworthy event and in mid-April our story was picked up throughout news outlets in BC and nationally by the Canadian Forest Industries magazine as well as Canadian Biomass magazine. There are some remaining piles to burn later this year and that will bring a conclusion to this project that has successfully established a landscape level fuel break for the community.

Indian Beach Estates Fuel Reduction Project (On Reserve)

Successfully hand treated 6 hectares between the Subdivision road and the residences at Indian Beach Estates. This fuel reduction work will help protect homes and reduce the chance of a catastrophic wildfire. The contractor who completed the work was ʔa-kinq̓uku Fire Services with several Ktunaxa members helping to complete the contract.



C2 Block before work initiated, September 2022.

C2 Block after work completed, March 2025.

Forestry Volumes

ʔakisq̓nuk recently signed a non-replaceable forest licence for 5,000 m³ per year for 5 years in the Golden Timber Supply Area (TSA). Additionally, we have 13,500 m³ per year replaceable forest licence in the Invermere TSA. Both of these licences will be tendered to market to see what economic value we can generate.

In addition, we will be hosting a community-wide weed pull to begin mechanically treating the fields next to the duplexes/east of the Rec Centre. Please stay tuned for more information about our community weed pull!

Research Partnership with University of British Columbia Okanagan

ʔakisq̓nuk has formed a research partnership with the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO). The shared objective of the partnership is to understand how wildfire mitigation and ecosystem restoration efforts can be used to manage for social, ecological, and cultural values and ensure resilience to a changing climate.

The Project will highlight ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation-led efforts at reducing wildfire risk and stewarding for social, ecological, and cultural values both on- and off-reserve lands. Anticipated outcomes include the development of new tools, knowledge, and best practices on how specific restoration activities impact wildfire behaviour, fire effects, and ecosystem outcomes for flora and fauna; how restoration may contribute to other management objectives and response operations; and the potential trade-offs of different restoration and mitigation approaches.



Emergency Department

Over the winter and spring we were able to train several staff members and council members with the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) training series that was led by Holistic Emergency Preparedness & Response. The course was offered in five parts – Operations, Logistics, Finance, Planning and a council-specific component. Many staff participated throughout, in the parts most applicable to their regular duties and/or their field of interest. Overall, the training was a success. With the increase in staff numbers over the past year, we would like to give consideration to running this program again next winter and spring. From this training we are building a list of staff and position logs that will assist in an emergency situation requiring the activation of our EOC.

The largest of the grant projects underway this year has been the CBT Community Wildfire Readiness project. This project is ongoing and is expected to wrap up over the fall. Major purchases include a new wood chipper, chain saws and accessories, fire-related PPE, and a Type V skid mount fire suppression unit. The original plan for this grant contained some different types of pumps and equipment but, with approval, we altered the plan after revisiting the specific needs of the community and what would better serve to protect us in a wildfire situation. Over the next couple months this project will see the addition of more equipment, PPE and training before wrapping up.

Both Janicé and Kevin were able to participate in the Indigenous Safety Conference in Vancouver last fall. Each participated in several training sessions, sat in on lectures/keynote speakers and took advantage of the networking opportunities. Both are scheduled to attend the next event which will be hosted in Calgary this October.

Beginning last spring, we have been collaborating with the RDEK to plan a large-scale Hazard, Risk & Vulnerability Assessment which will see assessments and reporting for the entire East Kootenay region and First Nations communities therein. The project started with a small team made up of both RDEK and

ʔakisq̓nuk emergency program coordinators reviewing proposals from ten potential HRVA providers, discussing the merits of each, short-listing the best options for our unique respective needs, conducting interviews and ultimately selecting the best fitting candidate. It was decided that KPMG would be contracted to execute the HRVA project. This analysis and report will take approximately 14 months to complete and will sporadically encourage input from community members, especially elders, in order to ensure that ʔakisq̓nuk is accurately, pertinently and respectfully represented in the final report. This project is funded entirely by a grant, in collaboration with the RDEK. The final product, when complete, will give us a much more detailed and accurate overview of the unique hazards in our area, and will positively influence the future layout of our own Emergency Response Plan.

Less noteworthy but still important, the emergency team has created and/or participated in site safety initiatives. This includes updates and upgrades to the AED's present in all public buildings, along with creating a maintenance schedule. Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in all public buildings and AFN offices have now been brought up to code (with the bulk of the credit for this action belonging to the public works department). Future inspections and maintenance of the extinguishers will be contracted to a certified third-party contractor. A joint occupational health and safety committee was formed and the members are collectively attending training sessions, ensuring first aid kits are available in all required locations, completing building assessments, mitigating any issues and areas of concern, and creating evacuation and muster plans for all buildings and offices. The work of this team will be continuous, year-round.

Present and ongoing projects include updates to the current emergency response plan, updates and organization of the EOC designated laptops, building of a business continuity plan, and building of a recovery plan. As well, the emergency departments c-can storage container has been cleaned and organized and will continue to operate as a base for ESS/Emergency supplies. Our intention is to

continue to grow our supply cache and create a supply base that would allow our community to remain self-sufficient for several days in the event of an emergency in our area, or offer the ability to become a safe place of refuge for other communities that may need to depart their own area.

Currently, we are working to retrace and settle out all existing grants and projects left over from 2024, as well as regularly updating ContractSafe as needed. This is an ongoing project and expected to continue into the fall before considering all outstanding projects as completed. Interim and final reports are being filed as they arise. We are looking forward to sourcing funding opportunities for future projects and ideas, and to collaborating with the other departments in our organization. Some notable projects and plans include: funding and installation of an emergency generator to the rec centre; ESS plan for use of rec centre as a reception centre and, once outfitted with backup power, an emergency shelter in collaboration with the Canadian Red Cross; further staff training to include more EOC training and, for specific staff members, wildland fire training, advanced first aid, etc; purchase and outfitting of an emergency response/rapid response vehicle dedicated to in-community disasters and emergencies.

Upon Kevin's return, FireSmart initiatives will continue throughout the community. Past years have seen a primary focus of FireSmart work being conducted on private residences. Home ignition zone assessments have now been completed on all but six properties. This work will continue on an ongoing basis, as needed, but will also see a focus on public and commercial buildings as well. Critical infrastructure assessments were done on the health center, daycare, recreation center and the north water system.

Kevin took the initiative to ask residents if he himself could do the mitigating around their house and on their property, starting with the elders and people that he knew may allow him access to their property. To date, he has mitigated ten homes on the reserve, and removed as much fire fuels as property owners would allow. With several homeowners being elders, Kevin plans to continue this process as much as is feasible

and practical in the future. Houses 2887, 2885, 2590, 3501, 2551, 2500, 2478, 3253, 2471, 2450 have been mitigated.

FireSmart public education events were held in conjunction with the AGA as well as offered on a one-on-one basis throughout the year. Future plans for public education include a presentation to the preschool age group, continuing education to overlap with existing public events (AGA, etc), a staff education segment, and continuous education through interaction.

Our intention is to begin moving Kevin into an emergency program coordinator role and to fill the FireSmart position while he has the ability to crossover with the new representative. Both Kevin and Janicé have been actively participating in continuing education courses from the JIBC as part of the Emergency Management certificate program. We estimate that both will have completed the certificate program over spring 2026. Future training initiatives for this team may include health and safety programs.

Member Services

Director Darryl Harsch



Introduction

I joined the ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation team in January 2025, and it has been inspiring to witness the strengths, knowledge, and resilience of the community. Every member I have had the privilege to engage with has provided insight to help guide our work in enhancing the quality of life for Nation members. Our approach is to provide practical, accessible, and high-quality services that support individual and collective well-being. The Member Services Department encompasses Housing, Culture & Language, Education & Workforce Development, Social Development & Programming, and is currently developing a new Community Safety & Justice department. Together, we work collaboratively to address immediate needs while building long-term strategies that reflect the distinct values and aspirations of the ʔakisq̓nuk First Nation.

Department Goals

Our department is guided by goals that seek to enhance the quality of life for Nation members through accessible, high-quality services, while optimizing efficiency across program areas to strengthen service delivery and maximize impact. We work to develop innovative programs that respond to evolving community needs, and we are committed to empowering youth through leadership and skill development opportunities. Strengthening cultural identity is central to our work, embedding traditional knowledge, values, and practices into all services, while ensuring fairness, equity, and respect in all interactions. We also recognize the importance of governance as a strength in policy development, honour community protocols by integrating traditional practices into service models, and strive to create culturally responsive service delivery models that reflect the unique priorities of the ʔAkisq̓nuk people.

Program Area Highlights

Housing Department

The ʔakisq̓nuk community has 59 units, including 34 individual homes, 19 rental units, and 6 social housing units. Over the past year, we reviewed the

funding, and established transparent processes for repairs, renovations, and grant delivery. A highlight was the celebration of the new four-plex opening in June 2025. We are reviewing key policies such as the Land Allotment, Homesite Land Allocation, New Home Construction, and Land Use policies. Applications have been submitted to the Housing Support Program to hire an inspector and address home deficiencies, and we purchased a storage seacan for surplus materials, household items, and tools, which will be inventoried for member in need.

Culture, Language & Elder Programs

The Culture, Language & Elder Programs team organizes monthly Elders Meetings and Arbor Committee gatherings, and coordinated elder participation, travel, and accommodations for significant events such as the Ktunaxa Rites of Passage Gathering in May, the Kootenai Falls Annual Gathering in June, and the WAVES 2025 Global Indigenous Languages Summit in August. Upcoming events include the BC Provincial Elders Gathering in August, the Bringing Home the Salmon Gathering in September, and the National Elders Gathering in October. The department continues to support Ktunaxa language revitalization through events, workshops, and knowledge-sharing, while working toward an ʔakisq̓nuk-led wellness strategy grounded in Ktunaxa values and cultural safety.

Social Development & Programming

The Social Development & Programming team continued to deliver the monthly Good Food Box program and administered Assisted Living, Income Supports, Family Violence Prevention, and Jordan's Principle Claims. We provided guidance and advocacy for members navigating the legal system and child welfare agencies, and successfully launched the Farmer's Market Coupon Program, which has been well-received. Collaboration with the Indigenous Policing Unit led to the development of youth initiative days beginning in September 2025, and preparations are underway for Community Day at Lakeshore in October. Hardship funds, recreation donations, and regular support to members on PWD and income assistance remain a vital part of our work.

Education & Workforce Development

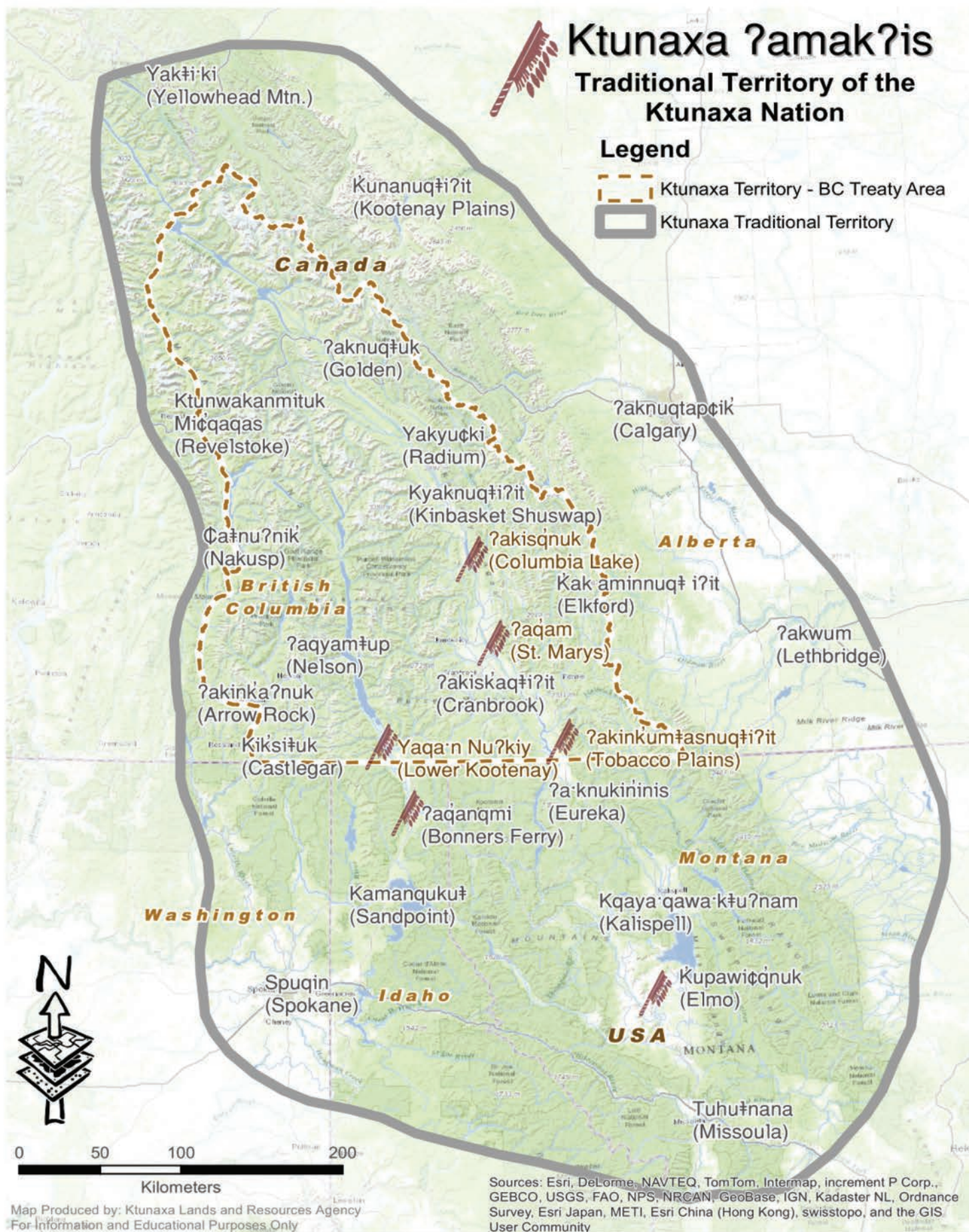
The Education & Workforce Development Department managed the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, while advancing the draft Local Education Agreement with School District 6. Cultural programming included the Every Child Matters flag raising, community dinners, graduation recognition, and Learning on the Land days. A partnership with KNC delivered the Office Administration Program, and early planning began to align youth programming with food sovereignty goals. Looking forward, plans include expanding the Homework Club, launching monthly youth nights with RCMP collaboration, creating a Maker Space for hands-on skill building, and advocating for the inclusion of Ktunaxa language in schools alongside expanded curriculum resources.

Community Safety & Justice (In Development)

The development of the Community Safety & Justice Department is underway, with a focus on a community-led, trauma-informed, and culturally safe planning process. Collaboration with the RCMP will support safety liaison work, monitoring, and rapid response. Proposed initiatives include a 24/7 Safety Hotline, the creation of a Community Safety Liaison position, enhanced community wellness supports, and the delivery of safety and self-protection training.

Closing Remarks

The 2024–25 year for Member Services has been one of building foundations, strengthening relationships, and planning for growth. Our focus remains on culturally safe, equitable, and responsive service delivery that reflects the values and needs of the ʔakisq̓nuk people. By working closely with other departments, Council, and community members, we are laying the groundwork for stronger housing, expanded cultural programming, enhanced social supports, improved education outcomes, and a future Community Safety & Justice Department that prioritizes wellness and protection for all.



TAXAS!



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OUR LAND, OUR PEOPLE, OUR CONNECTION

