



ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN FIRST NATION

K'AI TAILÉ

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MESSAGE FROM CHIEF & COUNCIL

Edlanete to all ACFN Members,

As we reflect on 2023, we cannot help but think about the incredible resiliency of Denesuline people, including the Members of our Nation. 2023 presented some significant challenges, and as always our people rose to meet them in the most remarkable ways.

Denesuline people have faced challenges for thousands of years, from the distant past when colonization threatened to tear our Nation apart, to the eviction of our people from Wood Buffalo National Park, to the intergenerational impacts of the residential school system, to recent natural disasters such as the wildfire that caused the entire community of Fort Chipewyan to evacuate for the first time in history. And yet, despite all these challenges, we continue to fiercely protect our Treaty rights, our lands, and our traditional way of life and language.

There is resiliency in this, and a deep core of determination that is a hallmark of the Members of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. We do not accept the status quo, whether that is a government that would rather forget or gloss over how a national park was formed through the displacement of the very Indigenous people who called it home or a government regulator that would rather we overlook their failure to communicate a serious tailings pond leak that presents significant risks to the environment and all those who care about it.

In 2023 we faced new challenges while we challenged the status quo. We challenged those who tried to infringe on our rights, our health and well-being, and our Nation. We stood together when flames began to creep ever closer to our homes, and we gathered to foster the healing process for the deep scars left by residential schools.

Our work is ongoing. To be honest, it will never be done, as while we will make progress on all the priorities we have identified we know that we will always face new challenges – but there will always be new opportunities, too. We continue

to seek ways to improve the lives of our Members, providing opportunities to connect, share our history, culture, traditions and language and celebrate who we are as a Nation.

As your Chief and Council, we are deeply honoured to represent and serve you. We think of you every time we tackle a challenge and embrace an opportunity. We take pride in how all of you come together to celebrate and support our Nation and each other.

In this year in review newsletter, you will see stories of our Members, and information on how our ACFN departments worked to serve you over the past year. As always we are delighted to share these stories and showcase this work because our Nation is not only about you – our Nation is you, and all those who are part of our past and all those who will be part of our future.

While we look back, we also look ahead with excitement, determination and anticipation for 2024 and all it will bring – challenges, opportunities, and everything in between. We want to thank you for your support, your participation, and your interest in achieving everything that our Nation can be.

We are so very proud to be ACFN.

Marsi cho,

Chief Allan Adam
Councillor Flossie Cyprean
Councillor Hazel Mercredi
Councillor Mike Mercredi
Councillor Teri Villebrun

CEO UPDATE

Edlanet'e!

Over the course of 2023, the administrative team at ACFN worked in every area of our mandate to achieve the vision, mission and priorities defined by Chief and Council. This year in review newsletter showcases some of the progress we have made in achieving these goals while also serving ACFN Members during some incredibly difficult experiences.

The full community evacuation of Fort Chipewyan and subsequent evacuation of communities in the Northwest Territories threw the lives of many ACFN Members into disarray, and those Members who experienced the 2016 evacuation of Fort McMurray knew this feeling well. Our team stepped up to ensure that every Member was not only accounted for but taken care of, meeting their needs during a time when things seemed so uncertain. Our team was proud to undertake this work as we put into practice the emergency management plans that we have developed for these very scenarios.

2023 was more than fires, of course. There were also so many moments of celebration, such as Treaty Days, Dene Days, member parties and gatherings, and the wide array of programs, classes and other events offered to Members. Every single opportunity to gather and connect reminded us of how important these moments are, especially as we begin to move past the days of the Covid-19 pandemic and the many connections it paused.



As we head into 2024, we are excited to explore new opportunities for our Members, constantly seeking to forge ahead while also reflecting on all we have learned in the past few years.

I want to thank Chief and Council for their unwavering support, guidance and leadership, as all as the entire ACFN DLRM team for all their work and efforts over the past year. Finally, I want to thank all ACFN Members for your kind support even during the most challenging times and for allowing us to serve you.

Marsi cho,
Maggie Farrington
ACFN Chief Executive Officer

HAVE YOU MOVED?

**Please remember
to update your
address with ACFN's
Membership Registrar.**

membership@acfn.com

COO UPDATE

Edlanet'é,

I am happy to provide an update from the previous year. It has been quite busy, especially with the forest fires impacting Fort Chipewyan and the Northwest Territories, which led to the displacement of more than 300 ACFN members. In response, the ACFN Administration promptly united and aided those affected.

The administration has also been occupied with the development and refinement of policies, serving as a vital aspect of our nation's governance function. ACFN's Chief and Council updated and approved the following policies and more:

- Funeral Financial Support Policy (*Updated*)
- Bereavement Financial Support Policy (*New*)
- Compassion Financial Support Policy (*New*)
- Sports and Recreation Financial Support Policy (*New*)
- Terms of Reference for Committees (*updated*)
- Home Renovation Grant/Home Ownership Grant (*Updated*)
- Band Member Assistance Policy (*Updated*)

For those who have recently completed a Post-Secondary Education Program or High School Diploma ACFN offers a program completion incentive. For more details, please reach out to education@acfn.com.

In 2023, ACFN's Council enhanced both the Home Renovation Grant and Home Ownership Grant by increasing them to \$25,000. The deadline for submitting a Home Renovation Grant falls between Feb 1 and April 15 each year. For further details regarding these grants, individuals can visit acfn.com and navigate to Member Services, Departments and Forms, or they can reach out via email to housing@acfn.com.

Throughout the past year, ACFN has actively participated in the Holy Angel's Truth Scanning Project. Numerous truth-finding events have been conducted in Fort Chipewyan. These events supported healing and community togetherness.

Elder Alice Rigney remains committed to leading Dene classes via Zoom every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday at noon, while ACFN's Dene Linguist, Josh, conducts a Dene Grammar class on Fridays at noon. All are warmly invited to participate in these sessions, as there is an ongoing opportunity to engage in Dene language learning. Moreover, ACFN has secured funding from Heritage Canada to sustain the K'aitailé Denesųliné Dictionary project.

Thanks for reading,

thá huna (*live long*),

Michelle Voyageur
Chief of Operations

HOUSING UPDATES

ACFN's Housing Department has been very busy over the last year with renovations, new building and maintenance. Training has been a focus of the department and we currently have two first year Carpentry Apprentice, one second year Carpentry Apprentice, and one second year Electrician Apprentice.

Home maintenance was a priority for the department and furnace maintenance was completed to help with managing the winter season. Next the team will begin hot water tank maintenance in all rental units.

In line with our commitment to sustainability, we have implemented energy-efficient upgrades for ACFN rental units. This includes the installation of energy-saving lighting, smart thermostats and smoke/co2 detectors. The installation of new exterior motion lights to all rental units will begin late February 2024, and new fire extinguishers will be distributed to all units.

Housing approved fourteen Home Renovation Grants to members and two Home Ownership Grants. If you wish to apply, please go to the ACFN website under housing to apply for either grant. Applications for the Home Renovation grant are Feb 1 - April 15 each year. Home Ownership Grant applications are received year round.

The new Housing and Maintenance shop will be ready mid-March for move in. We look forward to the new space where we can house all our materials under one roof, as ACFN's current housing shop is over 50 years old.

Marsi Cho,
Linda Berry
Housing Director



MESSAGE FROM LISA TSSESSAZE DIRECTOR OF DLRM



Greetings ACFN Members,

2023 was quite the year - a lot happened.

One of the most memorable was the fires across Alberta and Canada. DLRM took action and assisted our Members during the evacuation in Fort McMurray. This evacuation even allowed us to hold our first Elder meeting in Fort McMurray. The meeting was very well attended; Elders who normally couldn't travel to Fort Chipewyan were able to see firsthand the files and work we do for them.

A first as well was the ACFN Treaty Days combined with the DLRM Dene Days. It was a wonderful three full days of events. The staff all came together working long hours to pull it off. Every activity was completed and the Members loved it.

Also during the year, ACFN signed onto a Caribou Stewardship Elders Declaration. This Declaration work will assist us in the protection of Caribou on our Traditional lands. This work was initiated by signing a Species at Risk agreement with Canada where we were able to complete a Stewardship Report for the Caribou. It clearly identified protective measures and the importance of working to manage this species at risk. Ultimately, we need to hold both levels of government accountable and find out what Industry can do better to protect them.

December was the launch of our Book called *"Remembering our Relations"*. This book discusses the displacement of our Denesuline families from the Wood Buffalo National Park. There are active generational impacts from this displacement and WBNP was formed without our consent. Parks Canada still has not corrected this historical injustice. We would like to thank our Members, leadership, staff and elders on all the hard work it took to complete the book in a timely manner. The book is dedicated to our late Elders Pat Marcel and Alec Bruno. Their immense work for ACFN pushed our files to the forefront. This book is a beautiful way to honor the voices of our ancestors.

Lisa Tsessaze
Executive Director
ACFN DLRM

HUMAN RESOURCES

The Nation employs a total of 78 employees, and 48 (61%) are ACFN Members; 13 are Indigenous (First Nation and Metis), for a total of 61 (79%) of an Indigenous workforce combined. Compared to the last update, the total number of members employed increased from 45 to 48 ACFN members despite two (2) recent departures. Over the next quarter, it's anticipated our workforce will increase with 3 new hires.

On that note, employment of ACFN members is a strong preference, including with our industry partners. We encourage members to advise us of their availability for employment, and with your permission, we will refer your candidacy to our industry partners. Please contact our team at HR@acfn.com, as there are numerous opportunities, from apprenticeships (welding, heavy equipment technician, millwright, etc.) to training and education opportunities.

All job postings are advertised on acfn.com, ACFN's Facebook page, and occasionally on the "Members Only" section on acfn.com. ACFN's industry partners are keen to hire members, and we strongly encourage you to self-identify as an ACFN member.

I wish you and your family all good health and a prosperous 2024!

Marsi chogh,

R. Shirley Cardinal
Human Resources Director

NEW TO THE TEAM



Jake Carter
Plumber - ACFN

Jake joined the Housing Department in the Plumber position on January 29, 2024. He has 12 solid years of experience in the plumbing trade and started as an apprentice,

then lead hand to foreman. In his spare time, Jake enjoys DJing and fishing; his goal is to save for his daughter's post-secondary education. Welcome to the Housing Team, Jake.



Dorothy Voyageur
Dene Yatié Coordinator - ACFN

Dorothy joined TEAM ACFN on November 27, 2023, as the successful candidate for the newly created position of Dene Yatié Coordinator. She is an ACFN member and holds a certificate in Dene Language;

a High School Diploma; and is currently enrolled in her second year in the Bachelor of Arts in Dene Language and Culture, University of Blue Quills. Dot is a language warrior and believes "if we don't do anything about preserving our language and culture, it will be lost to future generations of ACFN." She is committed to bringing our language back to the community. Congratulations, Dorothy, and a warm welcome back to Fort Chipewyan and to the TEAM!



Janelle Flett
Resource Development Advisor - DLRM

Janelle (she/her) joined TEAM DLRM on January 8, 2024, in the newly created role of Resource Development Advisor. She is an ACFN member and Gwich'in; and holds a Bachelor of Science

in Environmental Science, Mount Royal University, 2021. Janelle enjoys sharing food with friends and family, reading, and playing volleyball. Her passions include protecting our lands and pursuing a just energy transition for all. Wishing you much success in your new role Janelle and welcome to TEAM DLRM.



Christine Kindopp
Finance Clerk - ACFN

Chrissy was declared the successful candidate for the Finance Clerk role and started on January 29, 2024. She is a proud ACFN member and brings multi-talent from payroll,

contract supervision, to supporting/coordinating business operations experience over the last 10 years. Chrissy and her husband are parents to their two daughters and in her spare time she is pursuing a Bachelor of Commerce. Welcome to TEAM ACFN, Chrissy!

CAPITAL PROJECTS



Head Start Building.

- The building has sat empty for several years and had experienced flooding from frozen water lines.
- The Engineering report on the condition of the building was received January 11, 2024.
- It was recommending not to spend more funds on the building.



104 MacKenzie Ave.

- 2 single family homes are slated for completion end of March.
- Exterior decks, grading, driveway and serving will be completed in the spring.



Lot 20.

- AE Engineering provided a lot layout, grading plan a budget estimate for this.
- A report on types of Foundations that are suitable was completed by Ralph Corbett. (A&E Group did the report on the Daycare.) They suggested DYWIDAG (anchoring dowels) drilled and grouted into the rock.
- A&E Engineering is preparing a quote on the costs to prepare engineered drawings for foundations based on the Corbett suggestion.

Maintenance Shop

- Completion of the Shop is slated for end of February with move by 2nd week of March.
- Final grading, painting of exterior doors and frames will be completed in the spring.

YOUTH & ELDER LODGE

Youth Elders Lodge department has been busy over the past year with programs, capital projects at YEL site.

These included:

CAPITAL PROJECTS:

- Water & Sewer - It was an ongoing problem with freezing/backup sewer. Housing Crew did the maintenance work to replace pipe corrosion on the holding tank and insulated the area
- Furnace - Replaced 2 furnaces and replaced with one furnace for CVC, completed February 2, 2024
- Security cameras, motion sensors installed
- C-can Trailer - leveled and secured on localized at YEL yard
- Projector Screen - Setup at CVC

PROGRAMS:

- Fish Harvest
- Spring Harvest
- Fall Harvest

- Sewing Classes
- Dene Language
- Dene Yati
- Dene Dictionary
- Dene Cookbook
- Pickling & Canning
- Elders Luncheon (monthly)
- Food Hampers (Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- Good Food Boxes - Seniors 65+
- Resumes March 2024
- Staff Training - HR Policy, Excel level 1, First Aid, Staff Retreat
- Pendleton Jacket Workshop
- Ceramic Class

EVENTS:

- Elders & Youth Gathering (Jackfish)
- Dene Days
- Treaty Days
- ATC Gathering
- National Gathering of Elders – Edmonton
- Numerous Joint programs within ACFN teams/ Departments.

Marci!

CONDOLENCES

Our condolences to the families of Roger Deranger, Brittany McGillivray and Correen Lemaigre who all passed away in December 2023. As well to the families of Shaun Krawec who passed away in January 2024. Our condolences and prayers to the family and friends for their loved ones.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE

The SETS committee welcomed ACFN's Band Administrator, Patricia Lepine aboard in March 2023. Patricia brings a wealth of knowledge to the Skills, Employment and Training Committee with her 24+ years of experience, working with the Nation.

She is the direct supervisor of both the Education and ISET coordinators, Rianna Flett and interim, Mattea Flett who, occasionally also sit on this committee.

As a SETS Committee alternate, Shirley Cardinal, ACFN's Director of Human Resources brings the team together through mentorship and strategic planning.

Milestones of 2023

- October 18, 2023- ACFN DLRM Job Fair and conference at Shell Place.

This one-of-a-kind conference was amazing to organize and even more wonderful to bring to life. The conference featured a fashion show, Indigenous performers, vendors, and entrepreneurs.

Stay tuned for more exciting developments for future ACFN conferences coming to a venue near you!

For resume writing or job search please reach out to Mattea Flett at: employment@acfn.com

Post Secondary students or new graduates, please contact Rianna Flett at: education@acfn.com

For Employment opportunities within ACFN, please contact Shirley Cardinal at: hr@acfn.com

When applying for employment with Industry, please include your resume and job posting number and contact ACFN's Employment Liaison, Kristi Deranger at: kristina.deranger@acfn.com

It is strongly encouraged for all ACFN members to self ID when applying for employment opportunities with industry and to contact Kristi so she can liaise in candidate referral.

Marsi cho



SOCIAL DEPARTMENT

Our Social department had a busy year in 2023 supporting our on and off reserve members.

Through a combination of direct assistance, advocacy efforts, and systemic change, ACFN's social program strives to uplift our members and empower our community. We work tirelessly to provide a wide range of support services to individuals and families facing adversity. These services encompass various domains, including mental health support, access to healthcare, housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, and more. By offering practical assistance and emotional support, our social team helped individuals navigate through difficult circumstances and build resilience.

In addition to providing direct support services, ACFN's Social Development serve as advocates for social justice and equality, working to dismantle systemic barriers and address the root causes of social inequality our band members face. Through advocacy efforts at all levels that impact our members, we seek to strengthen the voices of our community and drive meaningful change in policies and practices that affect our members.

ACFN along with our community partners Canadian Mental Health Association, offered a Trauma Informed event to our Fort McMurray Members. Trauma-informed care is rooted in understanding the complex ways in which trauma can shape a person's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. By learning about trauma, we are able to help ourselves understand our reactions and responses. These training sessions are just one of the ways we are supporting our community to be stronger, build resiliency, and support ourselves to be the strong Dene people we are!

We have also made multiple partnerships with Wood Buffalo organizations to bring programs to Fort Chipewyan. The Hub, CMHA, and Big Brother Big Sisters of Wood Buffalo, to name a few, have now started to offer their programs in community! More programs for our communities bring more opportunities for our people!



YOUTH UPDATE

In the past year, various programs were offered, including:

- Colour Me Mine
- Paint Nights
- Street Dance Party
- Beach Volleyball
- Safe Halloween
- Oilers Watch Parties
- Winter Survival
- Santa Skate

and more!

ACFN took 14 youth to watch the Arctic Winter Games. In July, the focus shifted to volleyball, soccer baseball, and tie-dye.

Arctic Winter Games training began in September, with sessions held twice a week. ACFN, in collaboration with RMWB, MCFN, and Metis, assisted youth with registration, hotel bookings, and flights for 9 youths to attend winter game trials on December 4th in Slave Lake.

The Arctic Winter Games Committee has a plan and budget to support Jaiden Cyprien, Kailen Marten, Michael Boudreau, Chase Marcel, Colby Courtoreille, and Reid Marcel-Wylie to attend the games on March 10-16, 2024, in Alaska.



EDUCATION UPDATE

What an incredible year it has been! In the period of 2022-2023, ACFN provided funding for a total of 63 students! During the Winter term of 2023, ACFN supported 49 students pursuing various fields of study such as Indigenous Business Leadership, Bachelor of Arts in Criminology, Bachelor of Law with a focus on Indigenous studies, Film Production, Academic Upgrading, Bachelor of Arts in Dene Language, Heavy Duty Mechanic Apprenticeships, Master of Education Degree, and other remarkable programs! Witnessing the success of our very own ACFN members in their educational pursuits brings us immense joy!

ACFN has recently updated its education policy, introducing several changes. If you would like to obtain a copy of the policy for your reference, please reach out to the ACFN Education Coordinator.

Here are some important education reminders from ACFN: High School Graduates: Ensure to submit a copy of your high school diploma to qualify for the high school completion incentive of \$1,000.00.

High School Continuing Education Incentive: If you've recently graduated from high school and are immediately transitioning into post-secondary studies, kindly inform the Education Coordinator to receive a one-time incentive of \$1,000.00.

Post-Secondary Completion Incentive: If you've recently completed a post-secondary program, please inform the Education Coordinator to receive a one-time incentive. A crucial reminder: All new applications must be submitted on or before the following deadlines:

March 31st for the Spring/Summer term.

July 31st for the Fall term.

November 30th for the Winter term.

For further information on any education-related matters, feel free to contact:

Rianna Flett

Office: 780.697.3730

Cell: 780.370.7585

Email: education@acfn.com



STRATEGIC ADVISORY SERVICES

2023 Year in Review for Strategic Advisory Services

2023 was another year for the history books. It was action packed and established many positive benchmarks. We will continue to build on this positive momentum while remaining focused on a bright future ahead!

ACFN joined other ownership groups and ATCO representatives for a tour of Alberta Powerline in Spring 2023. This was an opportunity to fully appreciate the engineering required to overcome many challenges along the infrastructure route. The powerline continues to operate well and recently received a credit upgrade given its ongoing strong performance.

Fall 2023 marked the second year of ownership for the Northern Courier Pipeline. This asset continues to deliver long term revenue streams to ACFN. This was our first investment under the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation (AIOC) program. The AIOC provide a provincial loan guarantee that greatly reduced borrowing rates for this asset.

Fall 2023 was the one-year anniversary for the Enbridge pipeline transaction. This minority ownership in seven pipelines located across northeastern Alberta continues to provide revenue to ACFN, among other ownership groups.

ACFN was the beneficiary of a SREP grant through Natural Resources Canada. Through this funding, we are able to add a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) to each of the existing solar farms at Coaldale, Monarch and Vulcan. Construction remains ongoing, but we anticipate term conversion beginning in late-Spring and continuing throughout the summer. ACFN continues to explore creative ways to maximize revenue generation using BESS, while enjoying long-term revenue from the solar farms.



INDUSTRY RELATIONS

Imperial Tailings Seep a Year Later

On February 7, 2023, the Alberta Energy Regulator issued an Environmental Protection Order (EPO) to Exxon Imperial Oil due to the largest tailings spill in Alberta's history. It was then that the Nation learned there had been industrial wastewater seeping outside of their Kearl lease. Almost a year later, this protection order is still in place.

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has been at the forefront of ensuring that Imperial is compliant with our agreement and has been vocal and consistent in our message. Our message has always been this is an environmental issue and a health issue, there is a community at the other end of the river that depends on clean water.

In addition to DLRM's quarterly Environmental Management Committee meetings, we have added additional monthly meetings dedicated to the EPO. In these meetings, we ask the tough questions we hear from members regularly and ensure that we receive answers. We also compare our lab results to ensure compliance with water quality standards.

From the very beginning of the EPO, members stated trust had been broken with Imperial. To ensure the community was satisfied with the data being communicated by Imperial we knew we had to conduct independent sampling. DLRM is well on its way to a regular monitoring program with Imperial. During this monitoring program, we have our staff on-site with Imperial and take water samples on and off the lease. We then analyze that data, to see if there are any exceedances. We also compare our results with Imperial's to ensure there is a match and ensure what they tell ACFN is accurate and true.

Since the community was unsure of the quality of the drinking water, DLRM needed to analyze the data provided by the Fort Chipewyan Water Treatment Plant. This means that an independent toxicologist reviews the water data monthly and ensures the water meets health standards. This stemmed from a new initiative from DLRM called the

Fort Chipewyan Water Treatment Data Analysis Tool. This tool will allow members to look at the data for themselves and understand how the chemicals and metals in the water affect human health. This brings the power back to the community by empowering members to look at and understand the water sampling results for themselves and push for better water quality standards.

All departments in DLRM have been working on the Imperial file and it has stemmed further tailings conversations with other industry partners, as well as all levels of government. The Imperial disaster has been the catapult to ensure environmental protection in the oilsands and help work with our partners and government to solve our greatest issue to date: Tailings. ACFN and DLRM will always take input from our elders, members, and youth bring issues forward, and push for strong environmental and treaty protection. We always strive to hold industry and government accountable and will grow from the strong foundation DLRM has built for over 20 years.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

By all accounts 2023 was a tough year for ACFN, but also "a year like no other where we able to demonstrate our sovereignty like never before. The year was filled with catastrophes big and small, and one by one we tackled them all. Here's a rundown of just some of the events that shaped the year 2023.

IMPERIAL TAILINGS SEEPAGE/SPILL

In March we were informed that Exxon-Imperial's Kearl site was seeping tailings fluid underground for over 9 months before they notified us, and we were only notified due a separate incident that saw a 5.2-million-liter overland spill. ACFN's emergency management and industry relations team worked around the clock to ensure water testing was done onsite, off lease, and at the Fort Chipewyan water treatment plant. We held both Exxon-Imperial and the Alberta Energy Regulator to account in the media and at multiple federal environment committee meetings in Ottawa. We have been pushing for the following: 1) a full geotechnical analysis of all tailings ponds in the oil sands, 2) a comprehensive human health study, 3) more environmental testing throughout the region and 4) preventing any sort of treat and release of tailings into the waterways. Mitigation efforts by Imperial are still underway to stop the seepage but ACFN continues to monitor the situation to make sure the water remains safe to drink.

FIRE EVACUATION

June saw the entire evacuation of Fort Chipewyan to Fort McMurray. For over a month ACFN Members helped battle the fire, protect Fort Chipewyan with fire suppression measures, and looked after the displaced ACFN Members in hotels across Fort McMurray. This was one of the largest efforts ever undertaken by ACFN Members and staff and we are so grateful for all the cooperation and support. Sadly 5 ACFN cabins were lost to the wildfire. We really came together as a Nation to ensure our community remained safe, and the evacuees were supported during this terrifying time. The lessons we learned were almost immediately put to the test when a month later Northwest Territories evacuated.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES EVACUATION

In August multiple wildfires threatened numerous towns and cities in the Northwest Territories that affected over 100 ACFN members. Like the evacuation in June we worked with our Members to make sure everyone had a safe place to go. This evacuation was logistically more difficult as we were helping people all over the North evacuate to many reception towns in Alberta, whereas the Fort Chipewyan evacuation was from point A to point B. Thankfully only one ACFN Member lost their business to wildfire.

UNHOUSED POPULATION

Unfortunately many of the unhoused people living on the streets of Fort McMurray are ACFN Members. These people lived in communities that they made along roadways and rivers in downtown Fort McMurray. In Spring of 2023 these encampments were being removed by the RMWB and many of the people were being relocated to transitional housing by Wood Buffalo Wellness Society. Unfortunately, not everyone was able to be relocated and there were still people left with significant needs. Throughout the summer ACFN emergency management staff were able to deliver food to the various encampments around town to help make sure people were getting enough food and water.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

This year the Athabasca Tribal Council declared a state of local emergency due to a mental health and addiction crisis that was taking the lives of many in the community. This problem was exacerbated by an influx of drug dealers and has resulted in gang violence in Fort Chipewyan. ACFN has been working with law enforcement to try and counter the violence, but we have also been investing in increased social programs and treatments for those suffering with mental health and dependency issues. ACFN will continue to do whatever it takes to keep our families safe from the violence and the scourge of drugs.

MISSING MURDERED AND EXPLOITED INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

In November of last year we had a report of a ACFN Member who had gone missing. Thankfully we were able to locate her using innovative technology that sent a robocall out to every phone number in the RMWB asking for information on her location. This technique was able to locate her within the hour, much faster than the efforts from the local RCMP. This technology is now on standby for any family who has a member who goes missing and is concerned about their welfare.

We are taking all the lessons learned from 2023 and using it to prepare for 2024. Wildfire season is upon us, and we will rely on our growing expertise and relationships we have made with neighboring Nations and other levels of government and their emergency management agencies. We are exercising our sovereignty by not waiting for others to act, we are preparing ourselves ahead of time, so that we are in a position to exert our sovereignty in the event that our Nation is threatened.

Sincerely

Councilor Flossie Cyprean and Councilor Mike Mercredi
Directors of Emergency Management

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The 2023 wildfire season brought with it the Rocky River Wildfire, and the complete evacuation of Fort Chipewyan in June. Through this challenging time, we witnessed DRLM and ACFN quickly respond and rise to the occasion of not only handling the immediate crisis on the front line, but also opening up reception centres, organizing hotel rooms, and supporting the needs of all our evacuee members.

For nearly a month, we had brave staff, community members, and elected leadership stay behind in Fort Chipewyan, working in coordination with other Nations and levels of government to protect the community and battle the wildfires. Meanwhile in Fort McMurray, all hands were on deck, and virtually all day-to-day operations shifted to providing food, events, activities, and support to ACFN members. Through the hard work of everyone involved, we finally received the signal that it was safe for our community

members to return to Fort Chipewyan. Yet again, we saw staff rise to the call, working in collaboration with other parties to ensure a smooth, safe, and successful return back to Fort Chipewyan over a three-day period.

This experience showcased not only the resilience of our members and the community of Fort Chipewyan, but also the immense dedication and commitment that our staff have for the health and wellbeing of the Nation. We are proud to have such a strong team, and want to say a big marsi cho to everyone involved!

HEALTH ADVOCATE AND PREVENTION

The Health and Prevention Advocate's primary objective is to enhance the overall well-being of ACFN members by prioritizing preventive measures and fostering healthy lifestyles. Through a combination of education, advocacy, and the implementation of preventive strategies, we aim to mitigate the risk of illness and disease within the community.

Our team has been actively engaged in delivering various programs aimed at promoting health awareness and preventive measures. We provided vital support during the third Truth Scanning Gathering in Fort Chipewyan, where over 200 community members participated. Additionally, our prompt response and mobilization during the evacuation caused by fires underscore our commitment to assisting community members during crises. We provided essential aid, facilitated daily activities, and offered assistance to evacuees with disabilities.

Collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Art Council of Wood Buffalo, ATC, and the HUB has been integral to our efforts. Together, we've implemented programs that not only strengthen community relationships but also promote health and well-being. The weekly Bead and Heal sessions, for instance, have seen a notable increase in attendance, reflecting their positive impact on community engagement and holistic wellness.

Furthermore, our commitment to the well-being of vulnerable community members is evident through our monthly social home visits to ACFN elders and follow-up visits to members returning home after hospital discharges. These visits ensure that individuals receive necessary support and resources, including safety equipment, to maintain their health and safety.

DENE YATIE LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

- On-Line Dene Language with Alice Rigney (MTW), Josh Holden (f) at noon.
- In-Person Dene Language with Janette Jones-Flett Tuesday's in Fort McMurray, Alberta
- Dene Challenge at News Elders Gathering, Fort Chipewyan.
- Word a Day on Social Media.
- In Person Elders Interviews on Denesuline Language
- Kia Taile Dictionary verification is on-going.
- Creating Denesuline Language materials: Dene Reader, Posters
- New Program starting at Day-Care: Dene reading and Crafts.
- Dene Revitalization Language Conference in Cold Lake Alberta.

Marci

FORT CHIPEWYAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

2024 is already over 3 months in and the Fort Chipewyan Community High School has not slowed down since the start of the School Year. To summarize some of the FCCHS student's accomplishments with numbers: Semester One accumulated over 500 credits, Semester Two already has nearly 400 credits, and there are already two confirmed High School Graduates, to date. Additionally, FCCHS expects approximately 10-15 more students to complete their High School education before the end of the School Year. Two huge scholastic dates are approaching for FCCHS that all friends, family and community are invited to attend: June 25th is the annual FCCHS Awards Night and July 6th is the FCCHS Graduation Ceremony. Please note that the FCCHS Graduation Ceremony has been moved up two months, being celebrated at the start of July, rather than the end of August.

Alongside educational achievements, FCCHS staff and students have still been able to fit in a ton of fun, partaking in bush camps, fishing trips, a Northern Cree performance, Jasper ski/snowboard trips, a cosmetology course, gaming tournaments, teen nights and the classic, monthly seasonal celebrations. Additionally, FCCHS students have also had the opportunity to visit Fort McMurray's Westwood High School again to check out the robotics and coding program, their second year in a row!

With 3 months left in the School Year, there are still several activities planned and the year has never looked so busy! (Keep an eye on the FCCHS Facebook page for continued updates on the family dance at the end of April with DJ Shub!) As per usual, FCCHS thanks all students, parents, and community members for their continued support and participation to ensure the year is a success! Have a great spring!



ACDEN UPDATE

Hello all,

I'd like to share a few of Acden's successes over the past year. We continue to work hard on recruiting new team members and retaining our invaluable workforce. Our HR team's recognition by Canadian HR Reporter Magazine as an "Innovative HR team of 2023" stands as a testament to our commitment to fostering employment opportunities and breaking down barriers. As the community-owned business of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN), Acden prioritizes the provision of employment and training opportunities for Indigenous peoples. With assistance from ACFN's HR team, we have removed unnecessary barriers to employment and simplified the recruitment process, resulting in a 42% increase in employment offers to Indigenous applicants.

Moreover, our HSEQ team's exceptional efforts were celebrated with two prestigious awards: the Canadian Occupational Safety 5-Star Psychological Safety Award and the Alberta Construction Safety Association Trailblazer Award for the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo region. These accolades reaffirm our commitment to safety, excellence, and the well-being of every member of our Acden team.

We are grateful to everyone who provided guidance and shared their knowledge with us this past year as we continued to create opportunities for Acden staff to learn about and experience Indigenous culture. We offered Indigenous Awareness Training to staff, leaders and partners both virtually and in-person so employees from all worksites could attend. Thanks to Hazel Mercredi and Krissie Anderson who taught moccasin-making and beading workshops and to Norma-Jean Keeping who taught a Dene language class. Special thanks to Peggy Laviolette who supported many of our events by sharing knowledge and providing an Elders Prayer. Finally, staff at the Taiganova building were lucky enough to be taught hand games by Elder Rene Bruno.

2023 also saw the launch of our Journey Rewards Program which was designed to incentivize and recognize employees by formally celebrating personal and professional achievements, like anniversaries, and other significant milestones during their time with Acden.

Amidst these accomplishments, I'm thrilled to announce that 2024 will mark a monumental milestone for us— it's Acden's 30th anniversary. Three decades of growth, resilience, and evolution pave the way for an exciting year ahead. We are planning lots of exciting initiatives, and we can't wait to celebrate with you.

Alongside this milestone, we have embarked on an Economic Development Strategic Planning Project with ACFN, a transformative initiative that will define future opportunities for sustainable growth and success in an ever-changing global economy. Through collaborative engagement with ACFN and its entities, we will develop a fully aligned strategic plan to drive sustainable growth and prosperity for the benefit of current and future generations.

The timing for this project couldn't be better as ACFN welcomed a newly elected Chief and Council in October. Led by Chief Allan Adam, ACFN's Chief and Council play a pivotal role within our organization - they are not only leaders of the Nation but also fulfill the role of Acden's Board of Directors. Their expertise and guidance are essential in maintaining our values and helping to steer our company, ensuring the benefits we generate are maximized for the Nation for many decades to come.

The beginning of 2024 marks a transition within our leadership team as Bobby Thibodeau has stepped into the role of Chief Financial Officer for Acden. Bryn Botham has stepped down from his position as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer and has a new role as an advisor to Acden Group. Bryn has been an integral part of Acden's journey of the past 19 years and we extend our gratitude for his leadership, strategic vision, and immense efforts in shaping Acden into one of Canada's largest Indigenous business organizations.

Acden continues to grow and expand our service offerings throughout the region and beyond. The business development team put in momentous efforts last year to develop new partnerships. In 2024 we will surpass 20 companies as two new partnerships were signed in February, and we expect at least two more to be signed within the next few quarters.

This year we will look both backward and forward, celebrating the past 30 years while strategically planning for the future. As we step into this monumental year, let's carry forward the themes of collaboration, trailblazing, and care for each other. The successes we've achieved together speak volumes about our collective strength, and I'm confident that the coming year will be marked by even greater accomplishments.

Here's to an exciting journey ahead and the continued success and prosperity of Acden and ACFN.

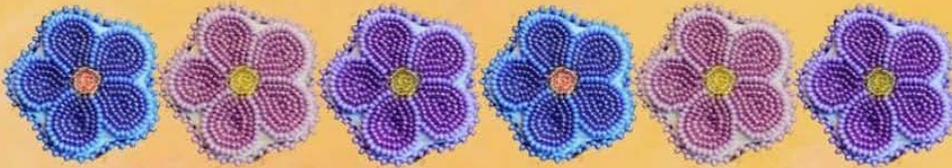
Warm regards,

Garry Flett
President and Chief Executive Officer
Acden



ACFN Treaty Day 2024

Commemorating 125 Years



SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 13TH AND 14TH

FORT CHIPEWYAN, AB



ACFN
ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN
FIRST NATION



ACFN ENTREPRENEUR'S SUCCESS

Reflecting on 2023, we take immense pride in our entrepreneurial community's remarkable achievements within the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. Throughout the year, we have persistently supported our entrepreneurs, providing a nurturing environment for their aspirations. Notably, ACFN facilitated visibility and networking opportunities, showcasing our entrepreneurs at events like Fort Chipewyan's career fairs. Additionally, enlightening panel discussions in Fort McMurray empowered new business owners with invaluable insights from seasoned entrepreneurs.

In addition to offering avenues for visibility and networking, ACFN extended support to our entrepreneurs by providing financial aid and recognition, helping them grow and innovate. The allocation of \$245,000 in business grants underscores our dedication to fostering entrepreneurship among fifteen talented entrepreneurs. These grants not only help businesses expand but also inspire hope for future success. Additionally, we celebrated our entrepreneurs' achievements through newsletters and website profiles, sharing their inspiring stories of resilience and dedication to positive change within our community. Looking ahead, ACFN continues to support and empower our entrepreneurs as we move towards the future.

At this pivotal juncture, ACFN is embarking on a journey to better understand the needs of our entrepreneurs. Through a comprehensive database initiative, we aim to gather insights that will enable us to tailor support and promotion strategies effectively. We invite you to participate in our recent survey to share your valuable feedback. By clicking the link below, you not only contribute to shaping our efforts but also stand a chance to win an exciting prize!

Google Form Survey Link
https://docs.google.com/forms/u/1/d/e/1FAIpQLScQHm4_FIJBOEQPHOs_4UDCFnmI9EF8WxLdCKoHnLrW1TV_bQ/viewform?usp=send_form



INSPIRE BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES

Cayla Gillis – Aurora College
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation
Office Administration Diploma

Cayla attended Aurora College's Office Administration program. While at Aurora College, Cayla was awarded the student seat on The Board of Governors, and was chosen as the Student Association President in her first year and lead for two years. She was also selected to be Valedictorian of the 2022/2023 graduating class Aurora College, Thebacha campus.

"It's important for companies to support programs like Indspire's because it can help make college more accessible and affordable for students. This bursary relieved some of the financial burden on myself and I was able to focus more on my studies and spend more time with my family."

My advice to Indigenous youth looking to apply for an Indspire scholarship would be to research the program, investigate the eligibility requirements, application process, and any specific criteria they may have. Take time to understand what they are looking for and tailor your application fittingly. Reach out to mentors, teachers, and community members who can support you. They can provide guidance and help you showcase your unique strengths and experiences.

Higher education can open so many doors and provide Indigenous youth with valuable knowledge and skills. Remember, you have unique perspectives and experiences to bring to the table. Don't be afraid to chase your dreams and make a difference in this world!"

ACFN ELDERS YEAR IN REVIEW

DLRM has engaged with our Elders throughout the year of 2023. We received feedback on our research, our reports and drafted policies with them. Our team looks forward to meeting with the Elders Council and all Elders meetings four times throughout the year. We look forward to the continued work to protect our lands and Treaty Rights for our future generations.

DLRM recommended ACFN Elder Rene Bruno for the annual RARA (Regional Aboriginal Recognition Awards) event in March of 2023 where he was acknowledged and honored for being a keeper of our traditional knowledge. Elder Rene has shared numerous stories on the signing of Treaty. Stories that were shared with him by his family. It is important that we document and continue to share our understanding of Treaty and understand our inherent Rights as original Denesuline People from this land. We are grateful to have Elder Rene pass down his teachings and stories.

Our most memorable events for 2023 are the Annual New Years Elders Celebration and our Annual Dene Days. We focus here on fun and sharing our culture. We proudly showcase our Dene Language, our traditional foods and cultural teachings such as dry fish making and beading. It's beautiful to watch our elders share these teachings with our future generations. We can't wait for the next event, and we hope you can join us here in the community of Fort Chipewyan.



RARA AWARDS

Jaylah Mercredi (Cr. Mike's daughter)
Odie Tootoosis (Rosanna's daughter)
Garry Flett, Acden CEO



MIKE MERCREDI AWARD

Congratulations to ACFN Councillor Mike Mercredi on receiving an Indigenous Student Community Engagement Award from the University of Saskatchewan!

You can read more about Councillor Mercredi's achievement here: <https://students.usask.ca/documents/asc/2024isaa.pdf>

Mike Mercredi

SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY
MASTER OF SUSTAINABILITY IN ENERGY SECURITY
Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

Mike Mercredi is in his second year of the Masters of Sustainability in Energy Security. He was recently elected council of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations (ACFN). He received a Regional Aboriginal Recognition Award from his community. Mike's professional experience has allowed him to work with community members, government officials, and Elders/Knowledge Keepers. Mike has shown incredible growth in the program. Mike had limited expertise in academics, online education, or overcoming technological requirements when he first started. His academic performance can be attributed to his determination and passion to address the pressing need for capacity building in Indigenous communities. Researching issues related to renewable energy initiatives that are significant and pertinent to Indigenous peoples is what motivates Mike.









ACFN

DENE LANDS AND RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT (DLRM)

2024 QUARTERLY ELDERS DLRM INFORMATION SESSIONS

Q1 - March 13th



Q2 - June 5th



Q3 - September 11th



Q4 - December 4th

Charlie Voyageur Conference Centre

For more information contact:

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