

Emergency Band Member Assistance Policy

December 11, 2024



1 Purpose of the Emergency Band Member Assistance Policy

- 1.1 The Chief and Council of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) recognize the importance of supporting the well-being of First Nation members by providing financial assistance during times of need. This policy has been developed to ensure the responsible, equitable, and effective allocation of funds designated for member assistance. To uphold principles of accountability and transparency, the Chief and Council have established the Band Member Assistance Review Board to oversee the administration of this policy and its associated funds.

2 Policy Objectives

- 2.1 The primary objective of this policy is to create a clear, fair, and accessible framework for the application, evaluation, and administration of **emergency** assistance funds. This ensures that members of the ACFN community have access to support in a manner that is consistent, transparent, and aligned with the values and governance of the Nation.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 In this Policy:

- (a) "Administration" means the persons employed by the "First Nation" who are delegated responsibility for the implementation of laws and policies enacted by the "Chief and Council";
- (b) "Band Member Assistance Review Board" means the board or committee of three (3) persons from "Administration" one of which will be a member of the finance team, appointed by the "Chief and Council" to make decisions on "Member" requests for assistance under this "Policy";
- (c) "Assistance Fund" means the fund created by this "Policy" as may be budgeted for and allocated by the Chief and Council in a given "Year" to fulfil the purposes of this "Policy";
- (d) "Chief and Council" means the governing body of the "First Nation" duly elected in accordance with the "First Nation's" customary election laws then in force;
- (e) "Emergency" means an urgent and unanticipated situation or event that poses a direct and immediate threat to the health, safety, or basic well-being of a "Member" or a child under the "Member's" care, including but not limited to:
 - Housing Needs: Risk of eviction or loss of safe and appropriate shelter due to unforeseen circumstances.
 - Food Security: Insufficient access to adequate and nutritious food for the household.
 - Health Crises: Severe or life-threatening medical or mental health conditions requiring immediate attention when no alternative

resources are available.

- Safety Concerns: Situations involving domestic violence, abuse, or other threats to physical or emotional safety.
- Utility Disconnection: Imminent disconnection of power or utilities, especially in households with children, posing a threat to their health and well-being. The current month of arrears will be covered under the BMA policy, members are expected to enter repayment plans.

- (f) "First Nation" means the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation;
- (g) "Household" means a family that resides in the same household unit;
- (h) "Max Assistance" means the member was provided a max of \$3,000 in financial supports;
- (i) "Member" means a person who has been recognized as a "Member" by the "First Nation" pursuant to the applicable Membership Law or Code in force at the relevant time regardless of residency;
- (j) "Policy" means this Band Member Assistance Policy; and
- (k) "Year" refers to a 365-day period calculated from the date of the assistance request. For example, if a request is submitted on January 1, 2024, any assistance received between January 1, 2023, and January 1, 2024, will be considered when evaluating eligibility and usage.

4 Program Description

- 4.1 Commencing in the fiscal year in which this Policy is formally approved, the Chief and Council will establish the Assistance Fund and appoint the Band Member Assistance Review Board.
- 4.2 Any Member seeking assistance must apply by way of a written communication (preferably by way of an email to info@acfn.com) to the Band Member Assistance Review Board with a full explanation of:
 - (a) The reasons they are seeking assistance;
 - (b) The amount of assistance they are seeking;
- 4.3 A Member seeking assistance should provide all supporting documentation related to their request to info@acfn.com.

All Member requests for assistance shall be referred to and determined by the Band Assistance Review Board. Member requests for assistance shall be emailed or forwarded to info@acfn.com. Members may send requests directly to the designated email address and any person in Administration or Chief and Council

who receives a Member request shall forward all such Member requests for assistance which they have received to the designated email address.

- 4.4 info@acfn.com shall be checked at least once every 24 hours, except for weekends and long weekend in which it will be checked at least once every 48 hours.
- 4.5 Member applications and determination by the Band Member Assistance Review Board require a minimum of seven (7) business days to process.
- 4.6 The max assistance a member can receive is \$3,000 in one Year.
- 4.7 The Band Member Assistance Review Board shall review the Member request and may, in the exercise of their absolute discretion:
 - (a) Decide to provide the Member with assistance in the form of a grant which does not need to be repaid to the First Nation;
 - (b) Decide that it does not have sufficient information to assess the request and ask the Member for additional information; or
 - (c) Decide not to provide the Member with assistance of any kind.
- 4.8 In considering and assessing a Member request for assistance, the Band Member Assistance Review Board shall consider the following factors:
 - (a) Whether the Member's request is in respect of an Emergency;
 - (b) If the member has exceeded the max assistance under the Emergency Band Member Assistance, then the request will be denied;
 - (c) The amount remaining within the Assistance Fund when the request is made;
 - (d) Whether the Member has access to other potential sources of aid and the extent to which the Member has attempted to secure assistance from other sources like:

Community Resources:

 - Accessing local food banks or community kitchens.
 - Utilizing shelters or housing support services for temporary accommodation.
 - Engaging with community health programs for medical or mental health support.

Government Programs:

 - Providing evidence of an application for Income Support or similar provincial assistance programs.

- Accessing benefits through Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) for eligible medical or prescription needs.
- Applying for childcare subsidies, housing allowances, or other government-provided financial aid.

Charitable Organizations:

- Requesting support from organizations that provide emergency relief, such as the Red Cross, Salvation Army, or similar charitable agencies.
- Reaching out to Indigenous support organizations for targeted assistance.

Insurance and Legal Options:

- Confirming claims have been submitted to applicable insurance providers for covered emergencies (e.g., home, health, or vehicle insurance).
- Seeking restitution or support from legal aid services if the emergency results from injury or liability.

Family and Social Networks:

- Exploring informal support options from extended family or friends for temporary relief.

Employment Benefits:

- Accessing emergency funds or benefits available through the Member's employer, such as sick leave, employee assistance programs, or union supports.

Indigenous-Specific Supports:

- Applying for funding or services through Indigenous organizations, such as Jordan's Principle, where applicable for children and youth.
- Utilizing regional Indigenous health or social service programs.

- (e) Whether a Member in the same household has received assistance for same request;
- (f) The overall reasonableness of the request having regard for the high demand for Member assistance; and
- (g) Any other factor which the Band Member Assistance Review Board considers necessary or reasonable in the circumstances.

4.9 Any decision which the Band Member Assistance Review Board makes pursuant to section 3.8 shall be made upon the consensus of all the Board members. If the Band Member Assistance Review Board is unable to come to a unanimous decision on a Member request for assistance, then the request is deemed to be rejected and a decision not to provide the Member with assistance as described in section 3.7. This decision shall be recorded.

4.10 If a member of the Band Member Assistance Review Board must recuse themselves from deliberation due to a conflict of interest, then the remaining two

members of the Band Member Assistance Review Board may decide on a member request for assistance. If two or more members of the Band Member Assistance Review Board must recuse themselves by reason of conflict of interest, then the Member request shall be deemed to be refused, and the Member may appeal pursuant to Part 4.

- 4.11 The Band Member Assistance Review Board shall advise the Member of its decision by written communication (such as by letter, email, or text message) or telephone call, but is not required to give any reasons or explanation for its decision.
- 4.12 The Band Member Assistance Review Board shall conduct its **duties under this Policy during regular business hours** as required to determine Member applications for assistance. The responsibilities of the Band Member Assistance Review Board shall be deemed to form part of the employment responsibilities of its members and their duties are to be discharged in their normal working day. No individual member of the Band Member Assistance Review Board shall be entitled to separate compensation by reasons of their duties under this Policy.
- 4.13 The Band Member Assistance Review Board may conduct its business by meetings, telephone calls, email exchanges or any other mode of communication convenient to the Band Member Assistance Review Board in order that it may provide timely responses to Members seeking assistance.
- 4.14 Member assistance requests that are over \$3000.00 will reviewed by the Band Member Assistance Review Board on a case-by-case basis. The Band Member Assistance Review Board **may** recommend that a request over \$3000.00 be presented for a decision by Chief and Council at their next regular convened meeting.

5 Appeals

- 5.1 A Member who has made a request under this Policy may appeal a decision of the Band Member Assistance Review Board to the Chief Executive Officer, if the Member:
 - (a) Has been refused assistance by the Band Member Assistance Review Board pursuant to section 3.7;
- 5.2 A Member who appeals a decision of the Band Member Assistance Review Board to the Chief Executive Officer must provide a copy of their original request for assistance and provide a written explanation as to why they believe the decision of the Band Member Assistance Review Board was wrong.
- 5.3 Appeals will be considered within seven days of being received.
- 5.4 In the event that the Chief Executive Officer must recuse themselves from

deliberation of an appeal due to a conflict of interest, then the Chief of Operations will decide on the appeal.

- 5.5 The Chief Executive Officer shall advise the Member of its appeal decision by a written communication (such as by letter, email, or text message) but is not required to give any reasons or explanation for its decision.

6 Program Funding

- 6.1 Funding for the Assistance Fund will come out of general revenues. Once the budgeted amounts for the Assistance Fund have been used, the program will be discontinued for that fiscal year. In special circumstances and depending on the financial circumstances of the First Nation, the Chief and Council may increase, reduce, or discontinue the Assistance Fund in the exercise of their absolute discretion.

7 Review and Amendment

- 7.1 This Policy may be reviewed, amended, or discontinued by the Chief and Council at any time without notice to Members.

8 Coming into Force

- 8.1 This Policy is approved by the Chief and Council and effective as of the signing date set out below:

Date of Signing and Effective Date of Policy: December 11, 2024.

Chief Allan Adam

Councillor Flossie Cyprean

Councillor Mike Mercredi

Councillor Teri Villebrun

Councillor Hazel Mercredi



Consent to Disclosure and Use of Personal Information

Authorizing Person: _____

Affected Member: _____

Information: _____

I am the Authorizing Person or the parent, guardian or representative authorized by law of the Affected Member.

I authorize and consent to Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation disclosing the Information to ACFN Administration for the purposes of advocating for or facilitating access to services that may be of benefit to me or the Affected Member, determining eligibility, or to assist in appeals or dispute resolution. I further authorize and consent to Lori Stevens disclosing and using the Information for these same purposes.

I recognize and acknowledge that this consent is voluntary and that I may withdraw this consent at any time by giving written notice to that effect.

I also understand that withdrawal of consent may impact the level of service available to me or the Affected Member from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation.

Name: _____ Signature: _____