



Vancouver, British Columbia  
May 16-18

Our Gathering • kexwkexwntsút chet  
• tə sǫǫǫip ct • 2023

# SUMMARY REPORT



BC Assembly of First Nations



First Nations Summit



Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Canada

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Message from the First Nations Leadership Council, Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada on Our Gathering 2023, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sqaqip ct.*

Thank you all who joined the event either in-person or virtually this year. We are pleased to share with you a summary report, with highlights on key activities, speakers, attendees, session summaries and participant feedback. It was great to come together with you in a good way and in-person again. The event was an excellent opportunity to foster new relationships, strengthen existing ones, share best practices and engage in dialogue to advance the interests of First Nations across British Columbia.



BC Assembly of First Nations



First Nations Summit



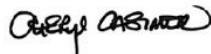
Union of BC Indian Chiefs



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Hugh Braker  
Political Executive



Chief Marilyn Slett  
Secretary-Treasurer

## Event summary

Our Gathering 2023, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə s̓q̓q̓ip ct* (previously called Joint Gathering), was held May 16-18, 2023, on the unceded, traditional, ancestral territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), x̓m̓əθk̓əy̓əm (Musqueam), and sə́lílwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations at the J.W. Marriott Parq Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia. This year marked the 10th annual gathering, co-hosted by the First Nations Leadership Council, which is comprised of First Nations Summit, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, together with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC). The event was planned with event management support from Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council.

The event is part of Canada's long-standing commitment to joint discussion and action on issues of common interest to First Nations in British Columbia. In 2020, the previous event name, Joint Gathering, was changed to Our Gathering, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə s̓q̓q̓ip ct*, to honour our relationship with our partners and the traditional territories on which the event is held.



## Attendees and session overview

**850** participants attended the 3-day event, including **150** virtually. Among the attendees were First Nations Chiefs, Councillors, administrators, Elders and youth representing **133** First Nation communities, delegates from various Indigenous organizations, other government departments, and members from the First Nations Leadership Council. There were also **145** ISC and CIRNAC employees, including Ombuds, Deputy Ministers, and other senior management who were on-site to listen, present and support the event.

The agenda included **5** plenary sessions and **12** interactive breakout sessions. There were also opportunities to participate in a conversation with the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson, along with a message from the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services. Over 3 days, panelists and attendees spoke candidly on behalf of their communities and organizations. The interactive sessions provided participants an opportunity to share successes, lessons learned and best practices while encouraging Elder and youth delegates to share their perspectives about the issues raised.



Tiaré Lani, Graphic Recorder

**46** First Nation and Métis Elders representing **36** communities attended the 2023 event. Elders were invited to attend the plenary and breakout sessions to listen, learn and share their wisdom. Elders were also invited to attend Elders' Tea and the Self-Care and Wellness Across Generations session. Elders' voices were shared through a graphic recording created by Artist, Tiaré Lani, in the main room for all to witness.



22 youth delegates representing 19 communities attended the 2023 event. Youth were invited to attend many youth-specific sessions. This included a Q and A with Chiefs, Podcasting with Jelly Academy, Conversation with British Columbia Regional Leaders, and an Indigenous Entrepreneurship Panel. On the last day, they shared a powerful podcast reflecting on their time during the event, their vision for youth engagement and ways they want to be involved at future events.



*Kyle Alec, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations - Youth Representative*

Recordings from each of the sessions can be accessed via the Hawk Communications App through the Apple Store or Google Play Store.

### Cultural protocols

The conference was opened each day by a respected Elder. Thank you to Elder Martin Sparrow from Musqueam First Nation, Elder Sam George from Squamish Nation, and Elder Bob Baker from Squamish Nation who offered a greeting, prayer or drumming welcome each morning. Elder Bob Baker also attended the Elders’ Tea with his dance group, Eagle Song Dancers on Day 1. The attendees were blessed with beautiful lunch time prayers and/or songs from Elder Sam George and his brother from Squamish Nation, Chris Silver, and Katisha Paul, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs youth representative.

To close the event days in a good way, there were cultural presentations from a drumming group led by Elder Martin Sparrow from Musqueam First Nation and Chesha7 iy Iha muns, a group of 4 generations of mothers and daughters sharing songs and stories from their Nations, and showcasing their rich cultural diversity and strength from their ancestors. They strive to bring positive elements of life givers to the communities they present to.



*Elder Bob Baker, Squamish Nation*



*Chesha7 iy Iha muns Performer*



*Drumming Group led by Elder Martin Sparrow, Musqueam First Nation*

Over the 3 days, staff from the Indian Residential School Survivors Society were available on-site to give 1-on-1 support and cultural brushings to all attendees.



## Open house and exhibitor fair

Creating new relationships and building existing ones through networking is an important part of the event. Participants had an opportunity to visit and learn more about exhibitors including departmental staff across program areas within ISC and CIRNAC, representatives from other government departments and Indigenous organizations. Delegates also had an opportunity to arrange a meeting with ISC and CIRNAC staff through the *Ask Me Booth* and visit the *Secured Certificate of Indian Status* intake booth to submit their status card application.

The event welcomed a number of Indigenous organizations and other Government Departments, including:

- Aboriginal Financial Officers Association of British Columbia
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society
- British Columbia Aboriginal Network on Disability Society
- British Columbia First Nation Housing and Infrastructure Council
- British Columbia Housing
- Canada Revenue Agency
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- Canadian Heritage
- Canadian Armed Forces / Department of National Defense
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
- Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- First Nations Education Steering Committee
- First Nations' Emergency Services Society
- First Nations Financial Management Board
- First Nations Health Authority
- First Nations Market Housing Fund
- First Nations Public Service Secretariat
- First Peoples' Cultural Council
- HAWK Communications App
- Health Canada
- Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors Secretariat
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Justice Canada
- British Columbia Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- Moose Hide Campaign
- New Relationship Trust
- Public Service Commission of Canada
- Reconciliation Canada
- Service Canada
- Statistics Canada
- Transport Canada



50 Exhibitors tables were on site during the three-day event.

## Other highlights

### Event app

In partnership with Nautsa' mawt Tribal Council, Hawk Communications App was used as the official event app for the event. The app was developed for First Nations to manage communications directly with their members in real time with community updates/news, resources, events and registration. **364** users downloaded the Event App for the event. Event resources such as presentation materials and recordings from sessions can still be accessed by registered attendees through the app.



### Social media

ISC and CIRNAC promoted Our Gathering 2023, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǫǫǫip ct* via several different social media platforms. Participants were encouraged to post information, ideas and thoughts on their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram while using the #OurGathering2023 #kexwkexwntsút chet and #tə sǫǫǫip ct hashtags. The Departments' social media accounts also promoted the plenary sessions, speakers and events as they took place over the 3-day event. To further encourage sharing of information and ideas, all Instagram and Twitter posts that used the #OurGathering2023, #kexwkexwntsút chet and #tə sǫǫǫip ct hashtags were highlighted in real time on a feed displayed on screens throughout the venue.

### 10-Year anniversary video

In recognition of the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the gathering, a look back video was shared during the Day 1 Welcome. The video can be accessed [here](#) with password: OG Video.





## Session summaries

The plenary, breakout, Elder and youth sessions are included below, along with a brief description, highlights of what was heard, as well as any action items:

### Specific claims reform

#### Speakers

- **Chief Dalton Silver**, Chair, British Columbia Specific Claims Working Group
- **Stefan Matiation**, Director General, Specific Claims Branch, CIRNAC
- **Jody Woods**, Admin and Research Director, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs

What was heard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stefan Matiation described how the resolution of Specific Claims has accelerated thanks to operational reforms; however the process needs to change and be more credible for First Nations</li><li>• Canada is looking for more collaboration during claims assessment with earlier meetings and finding ways to efficiently bundle claims and streamline internal processes. The federal focus is on reconciliation, such as abandoning the “modern surrender” approach and delivering Ministerial-level apologies</li><li>• Canada is working with First Nations on the development of an independent centre for the resolution of Specific Claims that would handle the intake of claims and funding to First Nations, provide support including mediation services, and further the inclusion of Indigenous laws and customs, reducing Canada’s role in deciding matters related to the process</li><li>• Jody Woods acknowledged the work underway with Canada and underlined its importance. Jody also announced projects to look at the impact of reserve creation on Indigenous women and the human and cultural costs of not settling claims</li><li>• The Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs has also been outspoken about departmental changes to the application of Privacy and Access to Information acts that are hindering the process. At the time of the plenary, the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs had just received a response from Minister Miller on these issues and needed to review it more closely</li><li>• Chief Dalton Silver acknowledged the work mentioned by the 2 other presenters and how long the process has taken. Canada needs to accept the importance of a “land back” approach and move away from requiring First Nations to “prove” they had occupied lands.</li></ul> <p>From the Q and A, we heard that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Doctrine of Discovery has been repudiated but unravelling its impacts requires more work</li><li>• Funding, including moving away from loan-based funding, are matters being looked at in conjunction with a centre for a resolution of Specific Claims</li><li>• Federal and judicial turnover slows the process and makes evidence sharing difficult</li><li>• First Nations do not want a cap on the amount of compensation available</li></ul>
<b>Action items</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stefan Matiation, Director General, Specific Claims Branch to follow up with the 2 First Nation representatives about the status of their Specific Claims as requested</li></ul>

## Conversation with Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson

### What was heard

- Deputy Minister Daniel Quan-Watson acknowledged that reconciliation is an ongoing process that will never be complete
- The Deputy Minister commented on several noteworthy steps in the right direction, including: the leadership shown by First Nations in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic response; the federal government's changes to Section 87 tax laws for modern Treaty Nations and long-overdue federal investments in Indigenous language and culture revitalization and in the resolution of Specific Claims
- Questions and comments from attendees focused on simplifying the processes and timelines involved in the return of lands by the federal government, on the difficulties facing Nations with significant overlap of territorial claims; and on gaps between CIRNAC's Departmental Plan goals and results achieved
- Deputy Minister Quan-Watson acknowledged that while progress is being made to meet the needs of First Nations on all of these issues, more could be done. He emphasized that the federal government will bring every tool at its disposal to the table when it sits down with First Nations, and that no solution will be reached without the full engagement of First Nations in British Columbia.



## First Nations Leadership Council United Nations Declaration Act National Action Plan submission with Department of Justice senior officials

### Speakers

- **Chief Marilyn Slett**, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
- **Hugh Braker**, First Nations Summit
- **Merle Alexander, K.C.**, Legal Counsel, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
- **Laurie Sargent**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice Canada, Indigenous Rights and Relations Portfolio
- **Keith Smith**, Director General, Justice Canada, United Nations Declaration Act Implementation Secretariat

### What we heard

- Chief Marilyn Slett, Hugh Braker and Merle Alexander provided highlights from the First Nations Leadership Council's (Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, First Nations Summit, and British Columbia Assembly of First Nation) submission for the *United Nations Declaration Act* National Action Plan
  - Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs' submission highlighted changes to the language, mechanisms for consistency of laws, redress, environment, climate change and recognition of First Nations jurisdiction
  - First Nations Summit's submission highlighted inclusion of the Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights policy, repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and joint development of replacements for the Comprehensive Claims and Inherent Rights policies
  - British Columbia Assembly of First Nation's submission highlighted that the action plan be comprehensive, coherent, progressive and have clarity of scope, as well, it should include redress, binding standards for recognition of Aboriginal title and rights, return of lands, and recognize legal plurality. It was noted that the Action Plan is a beginning point and that implementation is where advocacy begins
- Laurie Sargent and Keith Smith shared that this is a whole of government effort with over 25 departments and agencies implicated in the Action Plan. It was noted that the priorities identified in the submissions received from the First Nations Leadership Council and First Nations in British Columbia helped shape the Action Plan, and are reflected in the updates, especially in the Vision and Goals sections. They also shared that work will continue with implementation of the Action Plan and that there is a Letter of Understanding with the First Nations Leadership Council to work collaboratively together. They acknowledged that First Nations in British Columbia will need to be supported on working on Action Plan items
- There was discussion on the time frame for release of the *United Nations Declaration Act* Action Plan, non-disclosure agreements *United Nations Declaration Act* and legislative changes to align with United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It was noted that the Action Plan will be released by June 21, the First Nations Leadership Council had signed an *United Nations Declaration Act*, and that there is to be consistency of laws with the United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

## Housing resources for First Nations in British Columbia

### Speakers

- **Jessica Gordon**, Acting Senior Director, Housing and Infrastructure Service Reform Directorate, ISC
- **Michael Sadler**, Executive Director, First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council
- **Rod Hill**, Acting Director Indigenous Relations, BC Housing
- **Marcel Vautour**, Director, Indigenous and Northern Housing Policy, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

### What was heard

- Presenters provided a high-level overview of their various housing support programs, recent budget announcements to support First Nations with their housing needs, and how First Nations can access the various funding programs
- Information gathered from various engagement sessions with First Nations have highlighted the housing priorities, gaps and needs within communities. Some of the actions taken by the organizations who presented include, but are not limited to the following. The Government of Canada announced \$223 million over 5 years in Budget 2022 for First Nations capacity maintenance enhancement funding including the housing management subsidy, training and certification, and technical services. ISC is working to reform policies and

strategies to better support First Nations self-determination and provide control over housing funding priorities and decision making of long-term asset management planning to First Nations

- The First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Council continues to work with ISC to develop its organization to take on the care and control of First Nations housing and infrastructure as part of the Government of Canada's larger transfer of service objective. They also continue to engage with First Nations partners to identify gaps and propose solutions to create an organization which will provide services that are environmentally sustainable, fair, transparent, include diversity, and provide support for on and off-reserve members
- BC Housing has 3 programs to support First Nations with achieving their housing goals:
  - *Homes for People* – A commitment of an additional \$4.2 billion over 3 years on top of the previous \$7 billion over 10 years
  - *Community housing funds for on and off-reserve* – A commitment to build 20,000 homes over the next few years while taking into consideration the model of social housing providing a sense of community. The next call is summer 2023, leaving it open for longer giving space for feedback
  - *Indigenous Housing Fund* – Has supported 3,500 units across British Columbia and plans to support an additional 2,200 units, recognizing this is a small number but a step in the right direction
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation introduced the Urban Rural Northern Housing Strategy which is co-developed with its Minister and First Nations partners, and is a standalone strategy to the National Housing Strategy. To support the strategy, Budget 2022 announced \$300 million over 5 years and Budget 2023 announced an additional \$4 billion over 7 years

#### Action items

The question and answer period highlighted the following issues, that ISC will work with other regional funding partners to better incorporate into their respective housing programs:

- **Environmental and Health concerns** – Housing Program delivery and funding should address and include adaptability on environmental concerns, especially with ongoing changes in climate
- **Co-development** – Emphasis should be placed on working with partners to understand what they mean by co-development and to take a co-development approach in order to achieve an Indigenous led process
- **Closing the Funding Gap** – Parties should explore options for a funding mechanism that supports closing the gap. Infrastructure reform provides 1 potential option, however, co-development with First Nations partners should be a fundamental principle in developing new policies and tools moving forward

## Launching infrastructure reform

### Speakers

- **Nelson Barbosa**, Director General – Community Infrastructure, ISC
- **Willie Charlie**, Chief Executive Officer, Sts'ailes First Nation
- **Jason Calla**, Executive Director, First Nations Infrastructure Institute
- **Greg Shea**, Executive Director, Capital Projects, First Nations Health Authority

### What we heard

- ISC shared information on the Infrastructure Reform initiative which includes program reform, increased availability of financial tools, and expansion of updated programming to other government departments. The initiative aims to address the significant gaps identified through a variety of resources, including initial engagement with First Nations, and how to reform current approaches to be both more modern, and to align with First Nations vision of self-determination and reconciliation. Options for development to include longer-term monetization and transfer of service to First Nations
- Sts'ailes First Nation presented their vision of Infrastructure Reform, which includes monetization as a central pillar in support of longer-term asset management through capital investments
- The First Nations Infrastructure Institute outlined how they can assist First Nations pursuing support from the financial sector for their infrastructure projects
- First Nations Health Authority provided an overview of how they leveraged supports in order to build their most recent health building

### Action items

- ISC staff to initiate more in-depth dialogue regarding Infrastructure Reform with First Nations in British Columbia. A letter and information product will be sent to First Nations Chief and Council to schedule regional engagement sessions







## Child and Family Services: Celebrating success in community prevention programming

### Speakers

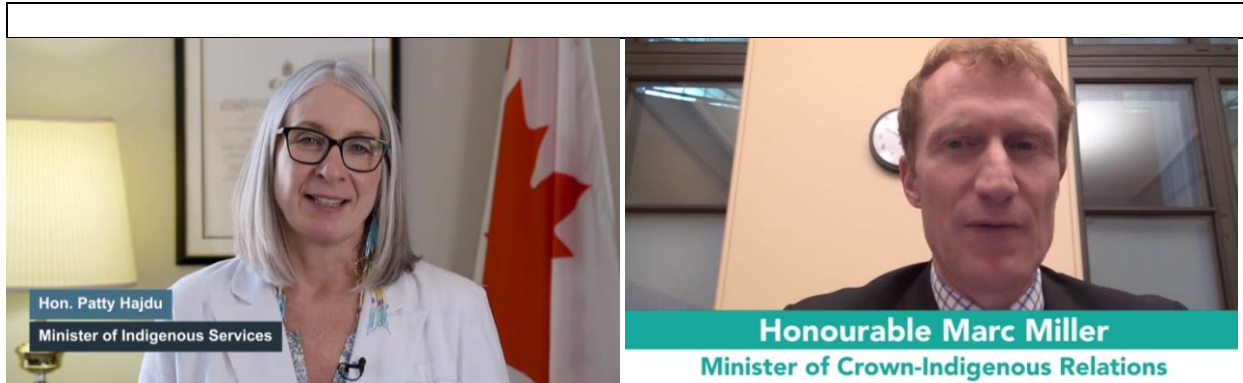
- **Catherine Lappe**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Child and Family Services Reform, ISC
- **Kelley McReynolds**, Executive Director, Ayas Men Men Child and Family Services and member of Indigenous Child and Family Services Directors Secretariat Executive
- **Priscilla Naziel**, Social Development Acting Manager, Witset First Nation
- **Lolly Andrew**, Director of Health, Seabird Island First Nation
- **William (Bill) Yoachim**, Executive Director, Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services

### What was heard

- Catherine Lappe provided background information on the Child and Family Services Agreement In Principle on Long Term Reform, the nation-wide implementation of the *Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families*, and shared an update on the ongoing negotiation of the final settlement agreement and Jordan's Principle
- Kelley McReynolds spoke on behalf of the Indigenous Child and Family Services Agency Directors – Our Children Our Way Society. She discussed the history of prevention funding in British Columbia, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal order for Prevention Funding, and highlighted the value of providing culturally based prevention programs and practices to reduce and eliminate the need for more intrusive responses
- The other speakers shared success stories, statistics and examples from the different prevention programs and activities that have been implemented in community with Child and Family Services Prevention funding
- Some of the key messages we heard were:
  - The importance of listening and engaging youth voices
  - The importance of breaking down internal silos to provide holistic, wrap around prevention services
  - Culture is the foundation of prevention

### Action items

- Share more information with First Nations, leadership and community about available funding supports
- Create space for communities to come together to learn from each other
- Create space for collaboration between ISC, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, First Nations and other partners



## Message from the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services

### What was heard

- The Minister shared a reflection of her time in British Columbia over the past year. Weeks prior to the event, the Minister was joined by the Prime Minister in British Columbia. They joined the First Nations Health Authority and the First Nations Health Council to announce the 10 year funding agreement with the First Nations Health Authority. In late March, the Minister visited Splitsin to sign the first coordination agreement in British Columbia for First Nations children and families, and joined Kúkpi7 Rosanne Casimir and Colleen Erickson of the First Nations Health Authority to announce a new healing centre at Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc
- A priority that the Minister shared is continuing to support safe and adequate housing for Indigenous Peoples. The Minister recognizes the significant gaps in this area, and expressed immense gratitude to be a witness at the groundbreaking for the Señákw Development Project
- The Minister also provided an update on the proposed *First Nations Safe, Clean Drinking Water and Wastewater Act*, and highlighted 5 key priorities where new legislation is being considered
  1. First Nations inherent rights are recognized
  2. Government of Canada commits to long term, sustainable and adequate funding
  3. Water sources are protected throughout Canada, especially waterways that flow into First Nations
  4. Co-develop minimum standards of clean drinking water and the Government of Canada support First Nations in maintaining these standards
  5. Create a First Nations Water Commission to support governance, water training and monitoring

## Conversation with the Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations

### What was heard

- The Honourable Minister Marc Miller thanked attendees for the opportunity to meet with them and advance joint priorities of First Nations in British Columbia and the federal government
- Among the many priorities of Crown-Indigenous Relations, the Minister cited implementation of the *United Nations Declaration Act* Action Plan; the investments being made to address the ongoing crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people; the ongoing work to identify unmarked graves at former residential school sites; reforms to the Specific Claims process and the development of Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy

- During the Q and A, attendees raised several questions and concerns, including on funding amounts to alleviate poverty facing First Nations communities on outstanding Specific Claims with their individual Nations; and on the ongoing crisis facing Indigenous women and girls. Attendees also requested more opportunities for consultation on *United Nations Declaration Act* and other initiatives
- Minister Miller acknowledged that, in an environment where multiple urgent priorities compete for funding and attention, the resources available will never be as much as he would like but he is committed to continue working to bring more resources to First Nations communities struggling with these issues
- On poverty and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people especially, Minister Miller acknowledged the severity of the situation facing many Indigenous communities and reiterated the federal government’s commitment to a trauma-informed, cross-jurisdictional approach to resolving these crises

#### Action items

- CIRNAC will continue engagement with First Nations to resolve outstanding Specific Claims
- CIRNAC and federal partners will share information about policy developments, including the *United Nations Declaration Act* Action Plan, with First Nations

## Strengthening Communities: An open dialogue on collaboration in residential schools

### Speakers

- **Patrick Ballay**, Director, Residential Schools Missing Children Program, CIRNAC
- **Tamatha French**, Takla Nation
- **Elder Henry Alexander**, Takla Nation
- **Ashley Whitworth**, Project Director, Squamish Nation

#### What was heard

- Patrick Ballay provided an overview of the Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund and showcased how funding can aid both lead and non-lead communities in their initiatives addressing residential schools
- Tammie French and Elder Henry Alexander gave a presentation on Takla Nation’s community-based residential school initiative, including a video-documentary showcasing their “Coming Home” ceremony held for Takla’s survivors and their families
- Ashley Whitworth gave a presentation of Squamish Nation’s initiative, specifically as a lead investigator of a residential school. This presentation featured maps showcasing how individual residential schools impacted a wide range of communities, emphasizing the need for collaboration in research, community engagement, as well as commemoration and memorialization activities
- Participant feedback on the presentations reflected the devastating impact of the residential school system, highlighting several resulting struggles including: erosion and loss of culture, division of families, complex trauma, violence, and addiction. Some participants expressed disappointment with the limited channels between Indigenous communities and the Canadian government to provide feedback on residential school programs. Suggestions for government support included increasing resources and funding to address: survivors’ and intergenerational trauma, community education, day schools and Indian hospitals, access to missing children registries, development of wellness centers, and language revitalization initiatives
- With regards to the Residential Schools Missing Children Community Support Fund, participants also emphasized the need for:

- in-person meetings
- flexible funding
- mental/cultural wellness support for effective engagement and consultation

## Indigenous, federal, provincial collaboration to address missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people: A focus on prevention and support

### Speakers

- **Mary-Luisa Kapelus**, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy and Strategic Direction, CIRNAC
- **Hilda Anderson-Pyrz**, Chair, National Family and Survivors Circle
- **Erna Mazer**, Senior Policy Analyst, Indigenous Justice Secretariat, BC Attorney General Office
- **Taryn Walsh**, Assistant Deputy Minister, Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General
- **Leslie Varley**, Executive Director, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres

### What was heard

- This session was an opportunity for Federal and Provincial governments to provide an update on their current work on addressing violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people
- There was also an emphasis on the importance of grassroots organizations, and representatives from the National Family and Survivors Circle and the BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centres were invited to speak to their work and vision for addressing violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people
- Hilda Anderson-Pyrz, Chair of the National Family and Survivors Circle, spoke to the importance of placing families and survivors at the core of all of our work. Hilda stated, "It is very difficult to build pathways if you are excluding those with lived experience"
- Leslie Varley from the BC Aboriginal Association of Friendship Centres, shed light on the work communities are doing in creating culturally informed and Indigenous-led community safety plans
- The theme of collaboration was woven throughout the session. It was reinforced that collaboration is needed from all levels of government to work together to address the tragedy of violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQI+ people

### Action items

- During the Q and A, a question was asked about inter-provincial collaboration. It was discussed that a follow up to the January 10, 2023, Federal-Provincial-Territorial-Indigenous Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ People is anticipated for the Fall of 2023. Discussions will include cross-jurisdictional approaches to preventing violence against Indigenous women, girls and 2S+ people
- It was also discussed that there was a need for education and cultural awareness in policing and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The [Annual Progress Report](#) to the Federal Pathway on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ People, released on June 3, 2023, includes updates from other federal departments on short-term violence prevention. It was also stated that CIRNAC has mandatory cultural competency training for all employees



## Recognition and implementation of Indigenous nations' inherent rights through *United Nations Declaration Act* Action Plan measures 23 and 24

### Speakers

- **Carla McGrath**, Director General, Policy Development and Coordination Branch, Treaties and Aboriginal Government, CIRNAC

### What was heard

- Carla McGrath provided an overview of progress made over recent years to support the recognition and implementation of Indigenous rights through innovative rights-based approaches, including the Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self-Determination discussion tables, and the Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights Policy For Treaty Negotiations in British Columbia
- There is still work ahead to meet partners' expectations and implement rights through flexible agreements, and the federal government's Action Plan to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* is 1 important vehicle to realizing these shared goals
- Since the publication of the draft Action Plan in March 2023, the government of Canada has been working with Indigenous partners to reflect their input ahead of its final release in June. The Action Plan is intended to be a co-developed, evergreen document that will provide focus and priority to advancing self-determination and rights implementation
- Draft Action Plan Measures include:
  - 23. Issue a public statement of Canada's rights-based approach for the negotiation of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements to replace the Comprehensive Land Claims and Inherent Right Policies



- 24. Co-develop approaches for the implementation of the right to self-determination through negotiated agreements, new policies and legislative mechanisms
- Draft Action Plan Measure 23 seeks to formally recognize the end of the Inherent Right and Comprehensive Land Claims policies, which have long been criticized as premised on rights denial, and not adequately recognizing Indigenous peoples' existing laws and systems of government. Draft Action Plan Measure 24 will enable the co-development of new tools to address barriers to reaching agreements, and to support First Nations in moving away from the *Indian Act*. Solutions will be advanced through co-development with Indigenous peoples
- Participants highlighted issues impacting negotiations, such as territorial overlaps and lengthy approval processes; and requirements for capacity funding to enable communities to engage in the development of the federal government's Action Plan to implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*. Participants stressed the importance of working collaboratively to resolve these issues, as well as the importance of recognizing and implementing First Nations' inherent rights

## Emergency management seasonal preparedness and resources to support First Nations emergency management in BC

### Speakers

- **Wayne Schnitzler**, Executive Director, First Nations' Emergency Services Society
- **Rob Schweitzer**, Executive Director, BC Wildfire Service
- **Ian Cunnings**, Senior Director, Regional Operations, Ministry of Emergency Management, Province of British Columbia

### What was heard

- Panelists from the Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness, First Nations' Emergency Services Society, BC Wildfire Service and the River Forecast Centre provided an outlook for the upcoming wildfire season in British Columbia. The session was technical and focused on sharing information
- With a drier than normal May and low rainfall forecast for June, staff are anticipating a dry summer with a likelihood of drought conditions and a heavy fire season. Panelists outlined available supports, directed attendees to preparedness guides, and provided contact information of key staff who can support First Nations during emergencies
- Questions from attendees focused on the need for increased funding and backup communications for communities facing emergencies. Attendees also stressed the need for increased communication within government, funding for preparedness, and clarity on jurisdiction

### Action item

- The Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness to follow up on policy changes that could be made currently to support cultural burning without waiting for modernized legislation to be passed in the fall of 2023



## Overview of the BC First Nations Development Corporation Association: Lessons learned and best practices on economic development corporations

### Speakers

- **Paul Donald**, Executive Board Member, BC First Nations Development Corporation Association
- **Carol Danielson**, Chair, Tahltan Nation Development Corporation and Director, BC First Nations Development Corporation Association

### What was heard

- A small percentage of participants in the room have an established Economic Development Corporation, but many are interested in establishing 1
- The BC First Nations Development Corporation Association is an important venue/platform to discuss common opportunities and challenges. The [First Nations Business Development Association](#) website provides links to a number of governance and design making tools for anyone interested in establishing their own Economic Development Corporation
- There are significant economic opportunities in the short and long term available to First Nations. The opportunities have to provide sustainable financial returns for communities
- The BC First Nations Development Corporation Association promotes the Government of Canada's 5 percent Indigenous Procurement target and is establishing a procurement office position to assist communities in accessing opportunities. Only 1 person in attendance verified that they had a federal procurement contract

### Action items

- ISC to continue supporting the First Nations Development Corporation Association to ensure more communities access future workshops. Invitations will be issued out to interested communities. Please register at <https://fnbda.com/>



*"It's never too late to establish an Economic Development Corporation."*  
**– Paul Donald**

Foundations for communications: Community-to-community sharing, moving to managed communications

Speakers

- **Ah-jeh-ma-thot (Davis McKenzie)**, Communications Director for Tl'amin Nation and Principal, Tox<sup>w</sup>ox<sup>w</sup> (Becoming Clear) Communications
- **Ellena Neel**, Communications Manager, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs
- **Tamlyn Botel**, General Manager, Citxw Nlaka'pamux Assembly
- **Hazel Desharnais**, Communications Manager, ISC British Columbia Region

#### What was heard

- The panelists discussed harnessing the power of communications to amplify and retell First Nations' narratives through traditional and social media while also setting boundaries online. In addition to being proactive and disseminating thoughtful messages, the panelists emphasized the importance of self-care, especially when managing emergency communications
- Some of the lessons learned from the session:
  - There is a broad spectrum to communications, from informing members to seeking consent. It is important to build the necessary communications tools to engage members, get community buy-in and gain support for decisions
  - With growing societal awareness, changing newsrooms, and United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there is an unprecedented opportunity to use communications to amplify and retell First Nations stories about their territories, governments, people and history
  - It is important to reflect on how communication messages and products are received by audiences. Simply sending out stuff (SOS) via social media, websites and emails is not always an effective way to engage audiences
  - For emergency communications, be compassionate and proactive, have in-stock messages and provide regular updates when a crisis occurs, as they can be a lifeline to community members

**Action items**

- The First Nations Public Service Secretariat and Davis McKenzie will host a hybrid course, *Foundations of Professional Communications*, in January 2024
- The First Nations Public Service Secretariat will also develop a *Communications Toolkit* in 2024
- Participants asked for funding to build communications capacity and infrastructure within their communities. Those requests were conveyed to ISC officials who can provide funding support



Child and Family Services – Implementation of the act: First Nation perspectives from capacity development and coordination agreement discussions

Speakers	What was heard
<p><u>World Café tables</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Simpcw First Nation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carmen Hance, Social Development Manager</li> <li>• Allen Cummings, Simpcw First Nation</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was an interactive World Café style session, with 3 20-minute rounds for participants to visit a table with conversation hosts. There were 5 tables, 3 of which were hosted by First Nations with different experiences working towards resuming jurisdiction over child and family services. ISC and the Ministry of Children and Family Development</li> </ul>

<p>2. <b>Cowichan Tribes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Sarah Morales, Cowichan Tribes member and University of Victoria Faculty of Law Associate Professor</li> </ul> <p>3. <b>Tzeachten First Nation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Derek Epp</li> <li>• Tyler Epp, Associate Director of Operations for the Sto:lo Service line through Xyolhemeylh (Fraser Valley Aboriginal Children and Family Services Society)</li> </ul> <p>4. <b>Province of British Columbia, Ministry of Child and Family Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Penny Lloyd, Acting Executive Director, Indigenous Agreements</li> <li>• Tiffany Hamilton, Director, Indigenous Engagement</li> <li>• Jackie Robinson, Acting Director, Indigenous Engagement</li> </ul> <p>5. <b>Indigenous Services Canada</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nora Gibson, Acting Manager and Table lead, Coordination Agreement Discussions</li> <li>• Katie Lloyd, Regional Program Manager, British Columbia</li> </ul>	<p>also hosted tables to answer questions about child and family services jurisdiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas of interest for the participants included hearing about the different pathways to exercising jurisdiction provincially and federally; the scope of jurisdiction (geographically, as well as the scope of services) and hearing the experiences of First Nations who have started building capacity and revitalizing Indigenous laws</li> <li>• Conversation hosts highlighted the importance of connecting with other First Nations to share knowledge and experiences, and their experiences working with First Nations Child and Family Service agencies as they work towards exercising jurisdiction. They also highlighted that this work is challenging and brings up feelings of loss, and it is important to have trauma-informed supports available</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>Action item</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISC to share materials related to exercising jurisdiction under the <i>Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families</i> with those who have expressed interest</li> </ul>
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## Bill C-38: From litigation to legislation

### Speakers

- **Ryan Beaton**, Lead Counsel, Juristes Power Law
- **Noelle Bauman**, Social Policy Researcher, Registration Reform, ISC

### What was heard

- A session attendee asserted the *Indian Act* needed to be repealed in its entirety instead of being tweaked – piecemeal changes to the *Indian Act* are just not enough and Nations know best about what their communities need. An Elder and residential school survivor who attended shared fear over what would happen to Indigenous rights in Canada without the *Indian Act* in place – highlighting that many Nations and Elders feel vulnerable as they begin to broach the reality of a future beyond the *Indian Act*
- Many Indigenous individuals understand that these small changes are important, and that people - like the plaintiffs in the Nicholas Civil Litigation - who are experiencing discrimination because of the *Indian Act* deserve to have their rights articulated through legislative change. That said, the incremental changes must be made with simultaneous work done on transitioning away from the *Indian Act*
- Consultation, co-development and cooperation matters. Progress must align with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Rights-holders are to be consulted, not just National Indigenous Organizations
- The second reading on the Bill needs to occur quickly; second-generation cut-off has not yet been addressed; and any current consultation must be designed through the lens of the *United Nations Declaration Act* and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples with adequate co-development and cooperation



## Additions to reserve policy overview and redesign

Speaker

- **Darryl Neufeld**, Manager, Additions to Reserve Engagement, CIRNAC

### What was heard

- The speaker highlighted the importance of accelerating ongoing work with First Nations to redesign the federal policy on Addition to Reserves
- The speaker identified engagement as an important first step in developing policy and process options. Participation should be broadened to include Indigenous organizations, First Nations and other government organizations. Through engagement with First Nations, considerations and recommendations will contribute to developing options for the Addition to Reserve policy redesign. The First Nation-led engagement includes opening a national call for proposals, continuing outreach with Indigenous partners and supporting pilot projects. Funding has been made available to CIRNAC to work with Indigenous partners, and other stakeholders
- The policy review is not anticipated to be completed until 2025
- First Nations representatives highlighted the significance of First Nations looking to engage in the Addition to Reserve process. There was discussion and comments from First Nations on the challenges they have faced with completing an Addition to Reserve under the existing policy

### Action items

- Engage First Nations in Addition to Reserve redesign
- Employ different engagement methods
- Allocate funding for meaningful engagement to take place
- Advance and support Canada's commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* through redesign





### Comprehensive community planning

Speakers

- **Elaine Alec**, Transformative Storyteller + Facilitator, Naqsmist
- **Guinevere Sanderson**, Manager, Community Initiatives, ISC

What was heard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elaine Alec shared her experience and success stories about leading Comprehensive Community Planning. She detailed her achievements and described how having a connection with the community, bringing people together, and listening as a form of healing, were all keys to success. A lesson learned that was noted many times, is that for Comprehensive Community Plans to have lasting impacts, they need to be community driven</li> <li>• Guinevere Sanderson and the Community Initiatives Team provided an overview of the ISC Regional approach to Comprehensive Community Planning. The overview highlighted that Comprehensive Community Planning, which is at the heart of good governance, is a process that engages community members in planning and implementing the long-term vision of their community. Comprehensive Community Plans are community-based, community-driven, comprehensive, holistic, flexible and responsive</li> </ul>

### Gender-Based Analysis Plus with the BC Assembly of First Nations

Speakers

- **Chastity Davis Alphonse**, MA
- **Dr. Natalie Clark**, M.S.W., PhD
- **Sarah Froese**, Sr. Policy Analyst, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations

What was heard
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chastity Davis Alphonse and Dr. Natalie Clark began the interactive session with a land acknowledgement and invited roundtable introductions to understand who was in the space and their perspective</li> </ul>

- The British Columbia Assembly of First Nations provided context regarding the current collaborative work to develop a GBA+ Toolkit that centres First Nations’ approaches to inclusion, diversity, justice, and intersectionality and how resources like this can support First Nations’ work
- In order to further develop understanding of the toolkit, Chastity Davis Alphonse and Dr. Natalie Clark presented an overview of Gender-Based Analysis Plus, Indigenous Gender-Based Analysis Plus and First Nations approaches to Gender-Based Analysis Plus and opened the floor for questions
- Participants were invited to take part in an exploration exercise and a series of questions looking at *reaching back, where we are now* and *reaching forward*. Questions and feedback regarding experiences, teachings, and cultural knowledge were insightful and offered a rich conversation that will contribute to the development of the Toolkit



## Revitalizing First Nations languages, arts, cultures and heritage

### Speakers

- **Magie-Mae Adams**, Language Revitalization Coach, The First Peoples’ Cultural Council
- **Glenn Jim**, Language Revitalization Coach, The First Peoples’ Cultural Council

### What was heard

- The First Peoples’ Cultural Council provided an overview of its structure and programs focused on revitalizing Indigenous arts, culture, and language in British Columbia
- Magie-Mae and Glenn Jim discussed The First Peoples’ Cultural Council’s language and art program strategies, including the Language Technology Program and the Language Revitalization Planning Program. In addition, they shared information on the Language Immersion Program that helps teach Indigenous languages to learners and the Open-Strategy Program which assists with language revitalization
- They also provided information about the Arts Program strategies which support individuals, organizations, collectives and musicians to revitalize arts practice and intergenerational transfer of knowledge between generations. Within their Heritage Program Strategies, they highlighted heritage repatriation funding

supporting First Nation efforts to repatriate their ancestors and cultural treasures, the Braided Knowledge Grant, the Heritage Stewardship Program, and the Heritage Infrastructure Program

- Through a holistic revitalization and reclamation approach, the First Peoples' Cultural Council encourage communities to move away from the standard approach of siloed projects to an integrated plan-based model of revitalizing language, arts, and heritage

### Elder session: Elders' tea

- **Opening Prayer:** Elder Bob Baker, Squamish Nation
- **Dancers:** Eagle Song Dancers
- **Welcome and Opening Remarks:** James Moxon, Associate Regional Director General, ISC
- **Facilitators:** Wayne Roberts and Michelle Robinson

#### What was heard

- Elders were asked to reflect on what they "wish they would have known...in their earlier years" and what advice would they give themselves that they would like to share with youth. Tiare Lani captured the information in a graphic recording that will be shared with all First Nations Communities in British Columbia. The Elders took the group on one of the longest journeys from the heart to the head
- Elders spoke about the effects of residential schools and hospitals and how they tore families apart, and changed how the Indigenous people feel about themselves and the world around them. Elders felt safe to share. They supported 1 another with prayers, songs and drumming. The Indian Residential School Survivors provided cultural brushing
- Elders talked about "Hope", "Love", and "Strength". A few quotes from the Elders are; "Don't be so concerned about what people think about you. Don't be afraid to be yourself.", "Be careful with your words. You can really damage someone's spirit with words, which is much worse than hitting someone.", "Don't be afraid to fight for what belongs to you.", "Water is our first medicine and our best medicine. Physical training helps, cultural trainings can start at a very young age.", "Come together as one voice.", and "Love yourself"

#### Action items

- ISC to email a copy of the graphic recording to First Nations Band offices in British Columbia once received from Tiare Lani, Artist.





## Elder and youth session: Self-care and wellness across generations

*Speaker*

- **Michelle Robinson**, Community Initiatives Advisor, ISC

### What was heard

- The facilitator asked Elders to think about their lives and share what advice they would give themselves in their earlier years that they can share with youth today. The graphic recording captured their stories, their paths and their vision. It is the hope that the youth can use this guide from the Elders to help them on their journey
- Elders and youth were asked to share how they take care of all aspects of themselves: Mind, Body, Spirit and Emotions. They engaged in storytelling, drumming, singing, and constructive conversations highlighting the importance of pursuing self-care through growth, bonding, and caring for the community
- Elders shared wisdom and teachings on pursuing self-care and spiritual cleansing of trauma. They highlighted overcoming silence and opening up about emotions in order to improve well-being and ensure continuity of wisdom and knowledge
- Youth described how they are stronger because they are learning culture, language, and using their voice. The session ended with the sharing of 3 songs from an Elder, a youth and Indian Residential School Survivor





## Youth session: Q and A with chiefs

### Speakers

- **Chief Lynn Kenoras-Duck Chief**, Adams Lake First Nation
- **Chief Ken Watts**, Tseshaht First Nation

### What was heard

- Youth delegates met with Chief Lynn Kenoras-Duck, Chief of the Adams Lake First Nation and Chief Ken Watts from Tseshaht First Nation. This session provided an opportunity for youth to ask questions to 2 First Nation Chiefs about leadership, the role of youth in communities and how Indigenous youth can advance their priorities. The Chiefs had the opportunity to hear from youth and learn what was important to them, and share their advice and experiences
- Chief Lynn Kenoras-Duck Chief stressed the importance of self-care, health and well-being, familial connections, education and spirituality
- Chief Ken Watts noted the importance of youth involvement in Council
- Both Chiefs recognized the importance of involving youth in the community and agreed youths' time should be valued and compensated

*"Take every moment you see with people you trust and respect and build your own toolbox. I built my own toolbox and learned how to do things differently. My dad tried to negotiate a modern treaty, which isn't my path, but I still took information from these leaders and made my own toolbox. Be a sponge and absorb everything you can to build your own toolbox!" - **Chief Lynn Kenoras-Duck Chief***

*"My biggest advice to get involved is to just show up and be respectful. ...participation is so important. You need to ask the tough questions. There is no such thing as a bad question. I love it when the youth ask questions." - **Chief Ken Watts***



## Youth Session: Podcasting with Jelly Academy

### Speakers

- **Darian Kovacs**, Lead Instructor, Jelly Academy
- **Brayden Dyczkowski**, Podcast Instructor, Jelly Academy

### What was heard

- Youth delegates had an opportunity to learn how to plan, record and launch a podcast with Jelly Academy, a local Indigenous-owned digital marketing school
- Over the course of 2 sessions, youth learned how to record audio using either advanced recording equipment or a cell phone, had the opportunity to practice interviewing skills with each other, and were taught how to use various software and online tools to edit recordings to create a podcast
- On day 3, youth delegates launched the first episode of their podcast "[Indigenous Youth Voices](#)" which was presented as part of the event's Closing Remarks. The podcast featured the voices of youth, including what they saw as highlights from the Our Gathering, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǫǫǫip ct* and what they felt was important for everyone to know



*"...it's time to put our youth in the panel[s] solving problems... I'm ready to go to work. Let me give my opinions. I want more productive conversations."*

*"We always hear the youth are our future. We hear it all the time. If youth are our future, you need to treat us like we are."*

## Youth Sssion: Indigenous entrepreneurship

### Speakers

- **Senaqwila Wyss**, Owner and Ethnobotanist at Raven and Hummingbird Tea Co.
- **Tiaré Lani**, Artist
- **Katisha Paul**, Union Of British Columbia Indian Chiefs youth Representative (Facilitator)

### What was heard

- Youth delegates had an opportunity to connect with Indigenous youth entrepreneurs and hear about their experiences as owners and operators of their own businesses. Through a Q and A panel discussion, youth learned about the skills, tips and tricks to be an entrepreneur, lead on their projects, while balancing their personal life

Among the valuable lessons and best practices that were shared:

- Tiaré Lani highlighted their insights on reflecting deeply and truly considering one's own values when making business decisions
- Senaqwila Wyss attributes her success to remaining connected with family and involving them in the day-to-day business. She demonstrated this by holding her young infant in her arms while speaking as a panelist during the session





## Youth session: Your voice, your vision – breakout session with British Columbia regional leaders

### Speakers

- **Terry Teegee**, Regional Chief, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations
- **Angela Bate**, Director General, CIRNAC
- **Allyson Rowe**, Regional Director General, ISC
- **Taylor Behn-Tsakoza**, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations Youth Representative (Facilitator)

### What was heard

- British Columbia Regional Leader panelists and youth delegates had an opportunity to get to know each other through a Bingo icebreaker, followed by each British Columbia Regional Leader sharing information on the work their organization does and about their journey
- Taylor Behn-Tsakoza, British Columbia Assembly of First Nations youth representative, led youth and regional leaders in a Soar activity. Youth and leaders shared their thoughts on each other's Strengths, Opportunities, and Aspirations. Together, participants came up with Results, laying out next steps and ideas on how each of the organizations can better support youth and their priorities
- During the brainstorming session, ideas were suggested and thoughts were shared, such as holding events for youth by youth, ensuring the continuation of co-op programs, networking with youth councils, and youth wanting to be treated equally and getting the same opportunities as adults. Concerns were also raised such as the lack of funding for education and mentorship programs, and overall cost of living
- Youth and leaders expressed each other's appreciation for their time and agreed the conversations should continue and real action should take place to make positive changes

### Action items

- Youth recommended having a similar session with leadership at the next Our Gathering, *kexwkexwntsút chet, ta sqəqíp ct* so that youth can continue to have a platform and be heard by executive leaders
- It was proposed that the momentum should continue so that conversations can keep going, youth and leaders can keep collaborating and youth can feel more supported  
Youth expressed wanting more involvement in the main plenary sessions with all delegates such as participating as a panelist, representing the voice of their generation, or leading the conversation with topics that are important to them





## Evaluation highlights

Delegate feedback about Our Gathering 2023, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǫǫǫip ct* was collected throughout the 3 days via evaluation forms. Highlights of the feedback are listed below.

### What did you like about the event?

- Sense of community and learning new things
- Variety of choices with breakout sessions, plenary and booths to ask questions
- It was nice to have Ministers speak and answer questions
- Panel discussions and the openness with the Ministers to hear our stories and move into action for those communities that feel left behind
- It was nice to have the status team at the event
- Great to have the opportunity to speak with people from so many communities, and good variety of topics on the agenda. The Elders Tea and the messages from youth, cedar brushing, the art representing the Elders Tea
- I did really enjoy time I got to spend with other youth and the Elders Tea room. This did provide a very grounded and safe place for me to listen to elders wisdom and I was overstimulated

### What topics are you interested in hearing next year?

- More about language and culture, including revitalization
- I would like to hear more on how we can easily access funds for our nations without going through too many loops from ISC... I would like to see more action on land back
- Community healing and wellness, needs/opportunities/successes/resources. How to communicate with Indian Affairs and finding solutions
- Emergency preparedness because it changes every year. Statistics from the previous year and new resources
- More sessions on housing initiatives and infrastructure using real time examples; child and family services; economic development, First Nation Land Management Framework Agreement – operation and implementation; on reserve environment issues and resolutions; additions to reserve
- Managing wealth; specific claims trusts; 10-year grand best practices; repeal and replacement of the *Transparency Act*
- Residential school community updates and plans from CIRNAC for funding supports
- More about ISC mandates, programs and funding, along with ISC roles as a whole
- Land claims and reconciliation
- Perhaps progress on the same topics

### What can we do to make the event even better next year?

- Having the Ministers attend in-person would go a long way. It really makes the situation and the issues we're talking about and fighting for feel undermined when political representation is not represented
- Better answers to the hard questions being asked. What one representative from a community asks a question, and the answer is "lets continue this conversation afterwards 1on 1", the rest of the audience doesn't get the benefit of the answer, when often times, it's just as relevant to them/us

- Having speakers and presentations focusing more on the “how” than the “what” – steps, lessons learned, recommendations
- Focus on specific topics so there is more time for discussions

**Please share any additional comments or suggestions.**

- Looking forward to next year. Thank you so much for hosting such an important event
- It was very thoughtfully planned for youth, elders and everyone. It was an excellent event and thank you very much
- The food was a true feast, and sharing those meals created a great foundation for connections between us all
- I enjoyed every minute of the conference. I am happy that you had elders and youth participate. As the youth mentioned, let them participate in the big room
- Continue to be creative in use of different facilitation techniques by doing more preparation/design work to ensure the technique achieves the intended purpose of informing the participants in advance besides presentation then Q and A
- It was a true pleasure to connect with First Nations in BC giving updates on where we are

## Conclusion and next steps

First Nations have consistently affirmed the importance of communities sharing their successes and challenges as well as the desire to hear from Elders and youth. The agenda of future Our Gathering, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǰəǰip ct* events will continue to incorporate suggestions and recommendations that respond to the diverse needs of First Nations communities.

If you have suggestions that allow us to continue with the dialogue, engagement and networking of Our Gathering, *kexwkexwntsút chet, tə sǰəǰip ct*, please let us know by email at [ourgathering@sac-isc.gc.ca](mailto:ourgathering@sac-isc.gc.ca).