

2022
2023

ANNUAL REPORT

EMPOWERING INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY GROWTH



ABORIGINAL FINANCIAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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ABORIGINAL FINANCIAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

NEW AFOA BC STRATEGIC PLAN

OUR MISSION

TO BUILD CAPACITY TOGETHER

1 Building Capacity with Individuals & Community

- ▶ Build the capacity of First Nations individuals through professional development and education
- ▶ Be the go-to guiding partner for First Nations communities that are building capacity for self-governance and financial stability

2 Building Relationships

- ▶ Build relationships with members to continue to find ways to grow our membership and continue to provide value to members
- ▶ Build relationships with individuals by engaging other member groups, including youth, and providing added benefits
- ▶ Build relationships and collaborate with other organizations serving First Nations communities
- ▶ Build relationships with corporations to enhance corporate membership and sponsorship

3 Building Internal Capacity

- ▶ Build the capacity of the Board of Directors to ensure the success and longevity of AFOA BC
- ▶ Ensure staff have the capacity to execute strategic priorities
- ▶ Establish a sustainable funding model
- ▶ Align with the right partners to increase efficiencies

OUR VISION

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND
CULTURAL PROSPERITY FOR
ALL INDIGENOUS PEOPLE
AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AND EDUCATION



Barbara Joe
AFOA BC
President



Wendy Ham
AFOA BC
Executive Director



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT AND OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the last fiscal year, we refreshed AFOA BC's five-year strategic plan, met with AFOA Canada and other provincial chapters to strengthen relationships, launched a second cohort in the Indigenous Financial Management Certificate (IFMC) program, and fostered youth development at the spring conference, all while returning our regular training activities to pre-pandemic levels.

REFRESHING OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

"Our Board of Directors developed a new strategic plan in July 2022," says AFOA BC Board President **Barbara Joe**. "From a governance perspective, our priorities continue to focus on building capacity and relationships to expand expertise in the communities we serve, as well as internally at AFOA BC."

"One of the key relationships we want to strengthen is with AFOA Canada," adds AFOA BC Executive Director **Wendy Ham**. "We began a review of our memorandum of understanding with the national organization to better align ourselves as partner organizations."

"We participated in AFOA Canada's national conference in February 2023, where we spoke with provincial chapters about creating cross-country relationships to reduce redundancy, share resources, and achieve economies of scale that give everyone a stronger voice and return on investments."

"We have also broadened relationships with sponsors and the federal and provincial governments; we are talking with government about putting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into legislation."

EXPANDING OUR NEW EDUCATION MODEL

"We launched a second cohort of 23 students in our IFMC program, which was really exciting," says Wendy. "Our first cohort graduated in April 2023 and every one of them hugged me after the last course. I understand the program was life-changing for students, which is more than I envisioned for the cohort, and we're delighted with their success." (Hear from three graduates on pages 10-11.)

This program has attracted attention at senior levels of the federal government to explore how they can build capacity in a similar way.

DELIVERING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are celebrating a return to pre-pandemic levels of engagement at our conferences and workshops. Zoom was a great tool for training during the pandemic but doesn't take the place of face-to-face conversations. Participation is about more than numbers, it's about the experience.

Transportation challenges and snowstorms everywhere did not stop participants from attending our audit prep roadshow, which we delivered across BC in January and February this year. We also delivered our community-based capacity building courses in six First Nation communities throughout the year.

This spring, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) hired AFOA BC to develop new regional training workshops for economic development officers, so stay tuned for more news next year. The goal is to create capacity for First Nations to build wealth and prosperity in their communities.

ENGAGING THE NEXT GENERATION

We partnered with Chartered Professional Accountants of BC (CPABC) at our spring 2022 conference to have eight Indigenous youth attend with chaperones. We held a fun offsite event at a trampoline park and closed the conference with a blanketing ceremony for the youth. It was wonderful to see these high school students engaging in the process and seeing finance as an exciting career path.

Thanks to CPABC for funding the travel, accommodation, registration, swag bag, and youth event costs!

We are also partnering with Bears Lair TV, APTN's new Indigenous business reality show, to hold a Youth Entrepreneur and Job Fair, an inaugural event developed for Indigenous youth to keep the momentum going.

SETTING ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

"Indigenous communities have been taken advantage of during many years of dealing with an unequal playing field," says Barbara. "From my perspective as an Indigenous person, AFOA BC is providing communities with knowledge that can stay in the community and enable people to create a more balanced playing field."

"This work is meaningful to me and to our members in Indigenous communities, who recognize the value of retaining knowledge locally. We're here to build capacity together and ensure Indigenous leaders have the training to manage the governance work they are stepping into."

"Our goal is to find new, innovative ways to build capacity for First Nations to manage their wealth, instead of poverty, and to partner with like-minded organizations," adds Wendy. "We'd like to explore how we can build on our cohort—it's been such a success—and nurture the next generation of Indigenous leaders, entrepreneurs and finance professionals."

**"WE'D LIKE TO EXPLORE HOW WE CAN NURTURE
THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDIGENOUS
LEADERS AND PROFESSIONALS."**



AFOA BC CONFERENCES

We were delighted to deliver four provincial conferences in 2022/23, our first time fully back to regular in-person events since the pandemic began. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to once again network with peers, with 74 nations represented at these gatherings.

BUILDING FIRST NATIONS ADMINISTRATION CAPACITY

We held our summer 2022 conference on June 14-16, 2022, at the Marriott Inner Harbour Hotel in Victoria, with 39 participants. Our presenters offered sessions on:

- ▶ **Operating as a Government versus Business** – Reviewed differences and similarities in starting business within an economic development corporation or under government management to achieve socioeconomic prosperity
- ▶ **Working in the Post-Covid-19 Era** – Discussed returning to in-person, hybrid, and remote work models
- ▶ **Putting Indigenous in ESG Standards** – Explored the importance of Indigenous participation in setting sustainability standards under new international environmental, social and governance reporting requirements
- ▶ **Group Benefits, Supporting Mental Health and Maximizing Government Programs** – Examined strategies to support employees' mental health via group benefit plans and integrating government programs to reduce costs and add support
- ▶ **How Virtual Meetings Have Changed Work** – Discussed the impact of online approaches adopted during the pandemic on the ways people work
- ▶ **Risk Management** – Provided an understanding of how to identify, assess and manage risk in financial management systems
- ▶ **Peacebuilding and Peacemaking** – Shared information on wise practices to revitalize ancestral knowledge, skills and peacemaking/peacebuilding practices within First Nations
- ▶ **Strategic Planning** – Reviewed how to put a strategic plan into action with business plans, budgets and work plans
- ▶ **Emergency Preparedness and Planning** – Provided recommendations for community planning, training programs and equipment needs

STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

We hosted 65 people at our fall 2022 conference, on September 14-15, at the River Rock Resort in Richmond. Our presenters offered sessions on:

- ▶ **First Nations Budgeting** – Showed how to create five-year budgets tied to the nation's strategic priorities
- ▶ **Legal Issues in the Workplace** – Provided a road map for managing mental health challenges to ensure legal compliance and to create an inclusive, respectful workplace
- ▶ **Governance Best Practices** – Reviewed how administrative staff have supported a governance shift in the Upper Nicola Band
- ▶ **Cultural Safety in Housing and Homelessness Work** – Discussed the importance of cultural safety in housing and provided an update on Indigenous homelessness
- ▶ **Best Practices: Respectful Workplaces and Investigations** – Summarized commitments to workplace respect and principles/practices for conducting an investigation when necessary
- ▶ **Human Resources Rooted in Culture** – Shared perspectives on putting culture into HR workplace practices
- ▶ **Panel Discussion** – Reviewed grant and funding opportunities available to First Nations
- ▶ **Overcoming Organizational Challenges by Investing in Operational Excellence** – Explored ways to resolve interconnected challenges—governance, succession planning, capacity building—to build resilience
- ▶ **Igniting Indigenous Entrepreneurship in the Community** – Described ways to support community members to start small businesses and increase job opportunities



INCREASING FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

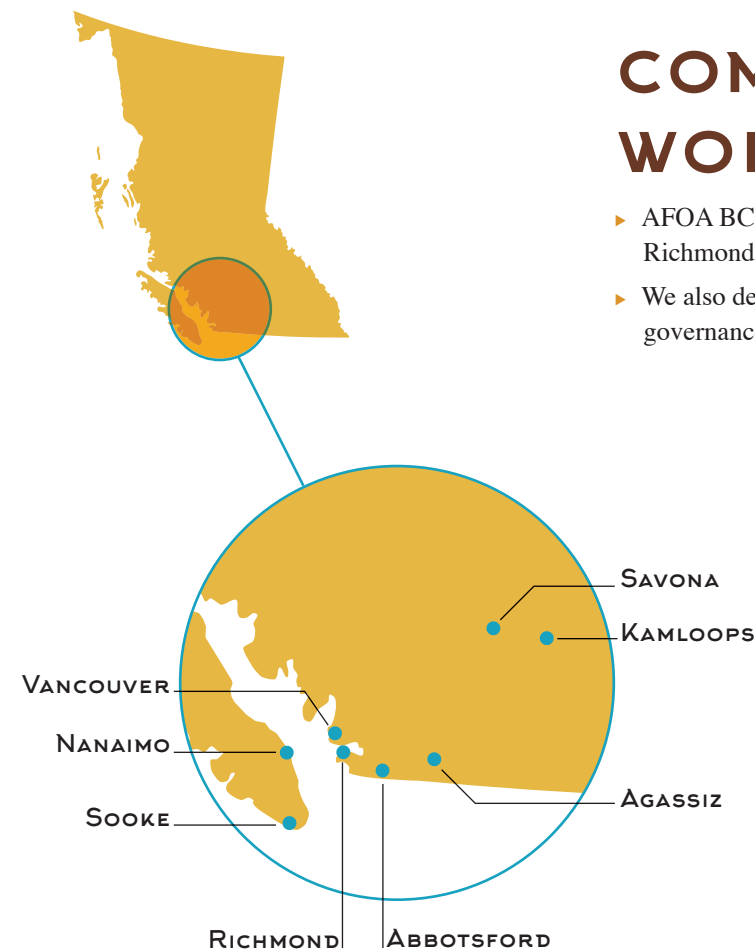
Seventy-nine people came to the 2022 AFOA BC winter conference on December 6-8, at the Coast Coal Harbour Hotel in Vancouver, where our presenters provided sessions on:

- ▶ **Keynote Presentation: Wellness, Balance & Goal Setting** – Shared Suzette Amaya’s personal journey of overcoming adversity, committing to wellness, and pursuing self-love, goal setting and positive thinking
- ▶ **Automation for First Nation Finance Departments of the Future** – Explored the potential of technological innovation to improve Indigenous finance functions and wealth management
- ▶ **Lateral Violence + the Path to Lateral Kindness** – Discussed the historical root causes of lateral violence in colonization and healthy ways to decolonize communication
- ▶ **Audit: Emerging Issues & Economic Development** – Outlined prep for financial statement audits and the impact of economic development on First Nations financial reporting
- ▶ **Supporting a Finance Department in a Time of Change** – Reviewed ways to improve finance department attraction, engagement and retention
- ▶ **Fraud and Finances** – Discussed some current frauds in BC and policies and procedures to reduce the chance of being defrauded
- ▶ **Indigenous Services Canada Update** – Examined ISC financial reporting requirements and funding opportunities
- ▶ **Disaster Management** – Provided financial data on Indigenous impacts and solutions related to wildfires, floods and climate change in BC

GROWING FIRST NATIONS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

We held our spring 2023 conference on March 7-9 at the River Rock Resort in Richmond, with 48 people in attendance. Our presenters offered sessions on:

- ▶ **Managing First Nation Economic Development** – Reviewed economic development objectives, project management, partnerships and risk assessments
- ▶ **Squamish Nation Economic Development** – Chief Gibby Jacob shared ED successes and challenges Squamish Nation has faced over 40 years
- ▶ **Business Readiness & Tax Obligations** – Discussed business structures for on reserve and off reserve businesses and reporting requirements for government tax related accounts
- ▶ **Sharing the Journey: Creating a Brighter Future for Indigenous Youth** – Examined current programming and funding available to support Indigenous youth
- ▶ **Indigenous Procurement Overview** – Explained the role ISC plays in federal Indigenous procurement and its Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business
- ▶ **Get in the Know on Crypto** – Reviewed how the BC Securities Commission handles regulation and educates investors about fraud risk in crypto investment markets
- ▶ **Charging Towards a Clean Future: EV Fast Charging in Indigenous Communities** – Discussed how electric vehicle charging can increase economic activity in Indigenous communities and incentives to subsidize EV infrastructure costs
- ▶ **Cannabis Panel** – Outlined factors for Indigenous businesses to consider in the cannabis industry
- ▶ **400 Drums project: Weaving Digital Spaces with Places, People and Culture** – Explored how digital spaces enable Indigenous artists, language teachers and businesses to access new markets
- ▶ **Nation Led Real Estate Development** – Provided an overview of different avenues for First Nations to acquire and develop fee simple lands and maximize reserve land value
- ▶ **Financial Fitness Foundations** – Shared value-based budgeting, wants versus needs, and the meaning and importance of economic reconciliation



COMMUNITY-BASED WORKSHOPS

- ▶ AFOA BC delivered four **Regional Budgeting Workshops** in Nanaimo, Richmond, Vancouver and Kamloops
- ▶ We also delivered seven community workshops to build financial and governance capacity within five BC nations:
 - **First Nations Essentials of Financial Management** with Secwepemc Family Services on June 1-2, 2022
 - **First Nations Budgeting** with Seabird Island Band on November 29-30, 2022
 - **First Nations Financial Governance and Planning for Chief and Council** with Sumas First Nation on January 10, 2023
 - **First Nations Budgeting** with Skeetchestn Indian Band on January 30-31, 2023, plus **First Nations Essentials of Financial Management and First Nations Financial Governance and Planning for Chief and Council** on March 13-14, 2023
 - **First Nations Budgeting** with Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay) First Nation on March 28-29, 2023

Shona Nelson



2022 AFOA BC BAND ADMINISTRATOR AWARD

The winner of the AFOA BC 2022 Band Administrator Award for outstanding leadership and financial management is **Shona Nelson**, Band Manager with the Doig River First Nation (DRFN) since December 2013.

In that time, Shona has supported the band through several successful accomplishments, most recently the creation of DRFN’s Urban Reserve in Fort St. John. She has advocated for member support to remove the barriers many Indigenous people have been taught through intergenerational trauma and empower the strengths within individuals. Her caring nature has provided a sense of pride and belonging for members to believe in themselves and their potential.

In addition, Shona has ensured DRFN attains access to equal opportunities to build capacity through major industry and government initiatives.

Congratulations Shona! She receives a recognition plaque and a \$1,500 certificate to use toward AFOA products, conferences or community workshops.

“Shona has been an exceptional leader and mentor to our community, members, and staff. She has a profound passion for the Tsáá? Ché Ne Dane culture and traditional values and works from a decolonizing approach to create meaningful change and social justice.”
Chief Trevor Makadahay, on behalf of Doig River First Nation Council



2022 BEST PRACTICES AWARD WINNERS

Our Best Practice Awards recognize long term excellence, based on community size. These communities also receive a recognition plaque and a \$1,500 AFOA BC certificate. Congratulations to the 2022 winners!



SNAW-NAW-AS FIRST NATION

Snaw-naw-as First Nation has successfully negotiated two treaty agreements and three forest agreements and operates several businesses that provide jobs for members and own source revenues. The most recent addition is a Shell gas station with a convenience store and a Tim Hortons, beside Highway 19, which has raised awareness of this small community. The nation is in Stage 5 negotiations to formally ratify an agreement that will provide additional capital for future social services and economic development on their lands.



SKOWKALE (SQ'EWQÉYL) FIRST NATION

Sq'ewqéyl First Nation is implementing a five-year capital and financial plan—linked to its Comprehensive Community Plan—that includes:

- ▶ A new 39-lot subdivision already half full of member-owned housing
- ▶ A multimillion-dollar health and community centre (located on Skowkale and owned by Skowkale, Aitchelitz and Yakweakwioose nations)
- ▶ A 44-seat childcare centre (under construction)
- ▶ Upgraded streets, lighting, playgrounds, community trail, hatchery and bus shelters
- ▶ A 1,000% increase in staff, including language preservationists
- ▶ New own source revenue streams
- ▶ Attaining Financial Management System certification with the First Nations Financial Management Board
- ▶ Establishing an Economic Development Board



WE WAI KUM FIRST NATION

Wei Wai Kum First Nation is a major economic driver in the Campbell River area, with numerous businesses on their lands that include a shopping centre with major anchor tenants, marine fuel services, a marina, and logging operations.

Individual members are embracing homeownership through the community's housing program. And Wei Wai Kum leaders are proactive in protecting rights and title in their Traditional Territory.



WELCOME NEW BOARD & STAFF MEMBERS

Gordon Holley joined the AFOA BC Board of Directors in December 2022 and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this role from his position as President and CEO of Humanity Financial Management Inc. His firm works exclusively with First Nations, social purpose, and Indigenous serving organizations to build internal financial capacity.

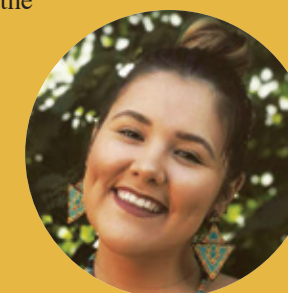


Humanity Financial is a proud sponsor of AFOA BC and AFOA Canada; team members have facilitated several accounting workshops at AFOA BC conferences. Gordon also leads the Certified Non-profit Accounting Professional Program in Canada. And Humanity Financial is currently working on its Progressive Aboriginal Relations Certification through the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

Tamika Tallio joined us this year as a Project Coordinator to oversee special projects with Indigenous Services Canada (stay tuned for details of the new workshop for ED officers!). She is from the Nuxalk Nation in Bella Coola and holds a Bachelor of Tourism Management Degree from Thompson Rivers University.

"I enjoy working with AFOA BC because supporting Indigenous organizations enables me to use my education to help develop Indigenous-based knowledge in the communities we serve," says Tamika.

We're grateful to the New Relationship Trust for helping AFOA BC secure funding for this position.



EXPANDING OUR NEW CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

MEET THE FIRST GRADUATES

In April 2023, **Vanessa Nelson, Shana Dennis** and **Terriesa Feyer** were among the first group to graduate from our new **Indigenous Financial Management Certificate** program—a partnership we offer with Langara College and AFOA Canada. IFMC combines accredited accounting courses with Indigenous cultural teachings to reduce barriers to post-secondary education for Indigenous students.

To start, students spend a week together at Langara College for an AFOA Canada course on Indigenous content, with talking circles, cedar brushing, mentorship and peer support. Then students take accounting courses online through Langara, so they can continue working during the 18-month program.

In addition, IFMC is the first step toward achieving higher levels of financial education like the Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM) designation.

Given the success of the pilot program, we welcomed our second cohort of 23 IFMC students in November 2022. We connected new students with graduates from the first cohort to provide mentorship and networking support.

But first, let’s congratulate Vanessa, Shana and Terriesa on their recent graduation!

VANESSA NELSON

A Namgis First Nation member, Vanessa has been involved in finance for 26 years. She studied bookkeeping and office administration, but was one course short of a certificate. Vanessa also acquired on the job training, but missed the validation of having a certificate on her resume. Then a colleague told Vanessa about the new cohort program, and she applied, not expecting to get in. But she did, and the results have changed her entire life.

“I’m from a remote island and a small town girl at heart,” says Vanessa. “When I went to Vancouver and met everybody in the program for first time, I hadn’t been to the city in forever and felt really shy in such a big gathering. When we spoke in a circle, I felt scared to talk and emotionally overwhelmed. But since then, I’ve gained so much confidence and become a different person. I’m not afraid to travel to Vancouver by myself anymore or to speak to new people in professional settings.

“At work, I had a lot of self-doubt without a certificate. But now I feel I can speak with some authority, based on the marks I got in my courses. I can give myself more credit than I used to.

“I’ve also made a few lifelong friends and we’ve become like a little family. I got teary eyed in our final gathering, thinking we’re actually done and not getting together again. I hope the second cohort has the same feeling when they finish.

“It took a lot of discipline and hard work to get through and still work full time, but this program was a really good experience for me. I’m thankful to AFOA BC and all invested parties for providing this opportunity and to Namgis First Nation for supporting me to participate in the training.”

SHANA DENNIS

For Shana Dennis, the IFMC courses provided a broader lens on her role as band administrator for the Tahltan First Nation—helping her understand the importance of strategic planning, financial planning, accounting systems, and community development. She already had a bookkeeping certificate from Okanagan College, and this program seemed like the right next step.

“Financial literacy and financial management are key to building community capacity,” says Shana. “And I love numbers and budgeting and accounting. Plus, I didn’t have to relocate my family to take the training and could stay in the community.

“The experience helped me improve my personal life and my professional life. In the beginning, I was smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. Now, 18 months later, I haven’t had a drink for over a month and haven’t smoked in a year. Our cohort supported one another and the friendships we built contributed to being healthier; building my skills made me want to use that knowledge to better myself.

“The talking circles, cedar bow ceremony and crafts we did together in Vancouver were helpful in grounding ourselves and learning about other First Nation cultures. At the time, we had a loss in my family and it was hard to be away from home. To hear stories and songs and feel supported by peers helped me process the grief.

“Through this program, Wendy [Ham, AFOA BC Executive Director] nominated me as a candidate to attend the CPA Canada conference. I had never been to Toronto and had a great time and gained new experience.

“Now, I no longer need to look for work; work is looking for me. I’m really happy and excited.” [During the course, Shana decided to become self-employed. She still handles bookkeeping for her nation, plus works with other First Nations now.]

TERRIESA FEYER

One of Terriesa Feyer’s colleagues at Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) suggested she apply to the IFMC program. While Terriesa has years of experience in accounting, she had never been offered an opportunity to combine work and education. So, she jumped in and really enjoyed the experience.

“We worked as a team,” says Terriesa, who is non-Indigenous, but has worked with CSFS since 2019. “It was uplifting to share with the other women in the cohort. What they brought to the table was phenomenal and helpful. Our backgrounds didn’t matter; it was more of a family environment.

“People learn differently. If I was struggling, another person would step up to help, while I was able to help others struggling with accounting. For example, our first class was on strategic planning. I worked in accounts payable and had no background in planning, so it was hard to offer input, but my classmates encouraged me to share my thoughts. And the Indigenous history course was an eye opener for me, because Canadian history didn’t teach these truths when I went to school.

“A couple of years ago, my sister lost her house and belongings and had to start over. She has a strong family to support her, which makes a big difference. I can’t imagine being taken from my parents at a young age or the impacts of intergenerational trauma. But now I have more awareness and compassion and stand up more to defend against racism.

“Most importantly, the training gave me a better understanding of clients we support at CSFS. It was a fabulous experience and I have some coworkers I’d like to convince to take the program too.”

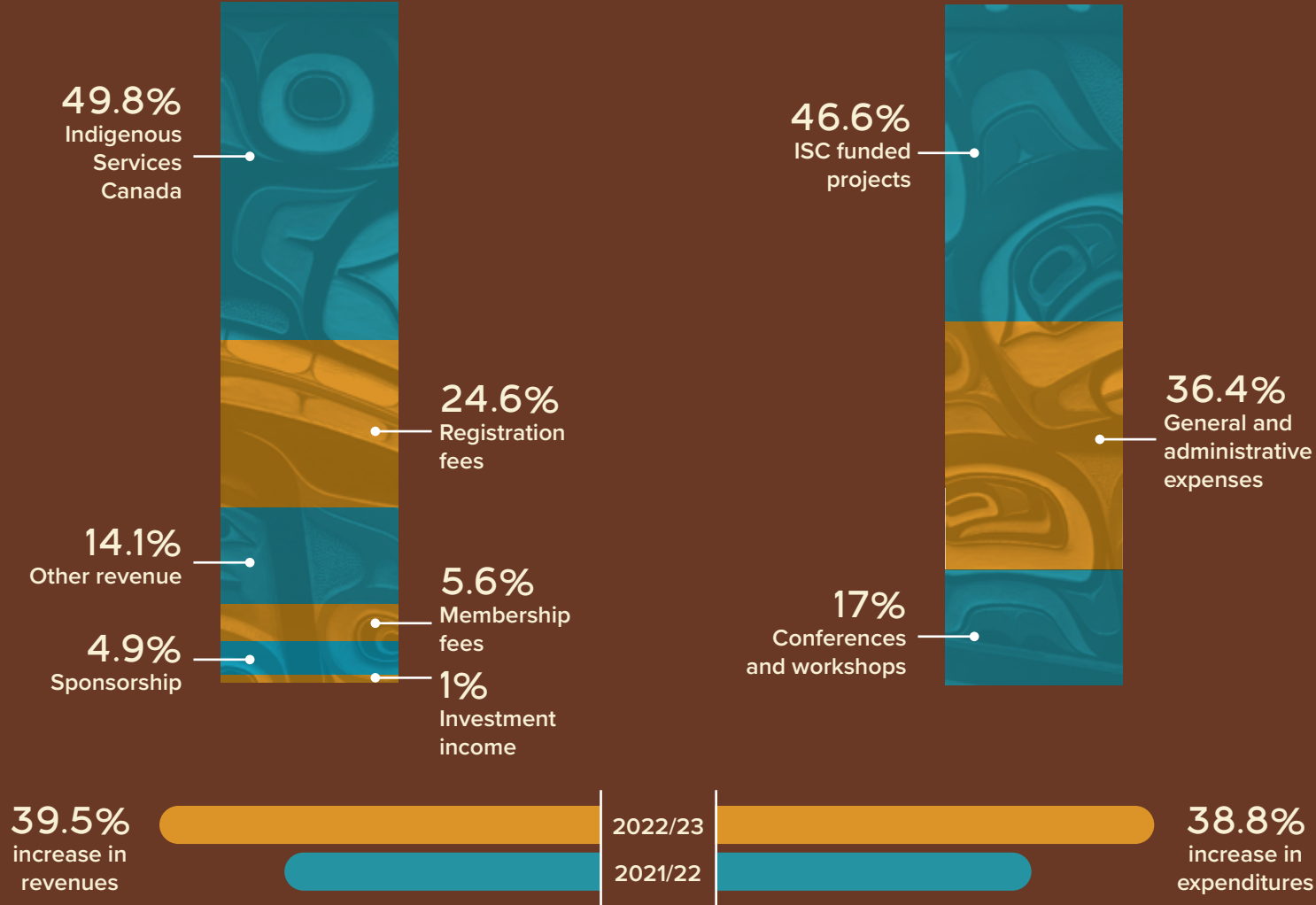


AFOA BC 2022/23 FINANCIAL REPORT

ASSETS: \$1,320,749 LIABILITIES: \$654,815 NET ASSETS: \$665,934

REVENUES: \$1,358,250 Total

EXPENDITURES: \$1,287,033 Total



Audited financial statements available upon request

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS



MEET OUR TEAM

AFOA BC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

We acknowledge our Board of Directors and staff for their dedication to building relationships and capacity among First Nation individuals and communities to help them achieve prosperity and self-determination.



Barbara Joe (CAFM), AFOA BC President; Principal Consultant, Barbara Joe Inc.



Trevor Morrison (CAPA), AFOA BC Vice President; President, Indigenous Business Innovations



Carol Reimer (CPA, CGA, CAFM), AFOA BC Vice President; Retired



Sukhvinder (Sukhi) Chouhan (CPA, CA, CAFM), AFOA BC Treasurer; President, Chouhan Accounting Ltd.; Financial Controller – Consultant, Skeetchestn Indian Band; Chief Financial Officer – Consultant, Knucwewtwecw Development Corporation



Heather Fader (CAPA, CHRP), AFOA BC Secretary; President, Fader Consulting

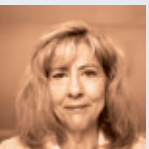


Gordon Holley (CPA, CA, CPB) AFOA BC Director; President and CEO, Humanity Financial Management; Vice-Chair and Treasurer, Community Foundations of Canada



Teri Muldon (CAFM, Business Administration Diploma), AFOA BC Director; Controller, Kispiox Band Council

AFOA BC STAFF TEAM



Wendy Ham CPA, CGA, CAFM, Executive Director



Krysta Elliott BA, Capacity Development and Communications Manager



Candise Johnston Program Coordinator



Tamika Tallio Project Coordinator



Paul Flesher Accountant

“OUR GOAL
IS TO FIND NEW,
INNOVATIVE WAYS
TO EDUCATE
FIRST NATIONS
TO BUILD
CAPACITY
AND WEALTH.”

Wendy Ham, AFOA BC Executive Director



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