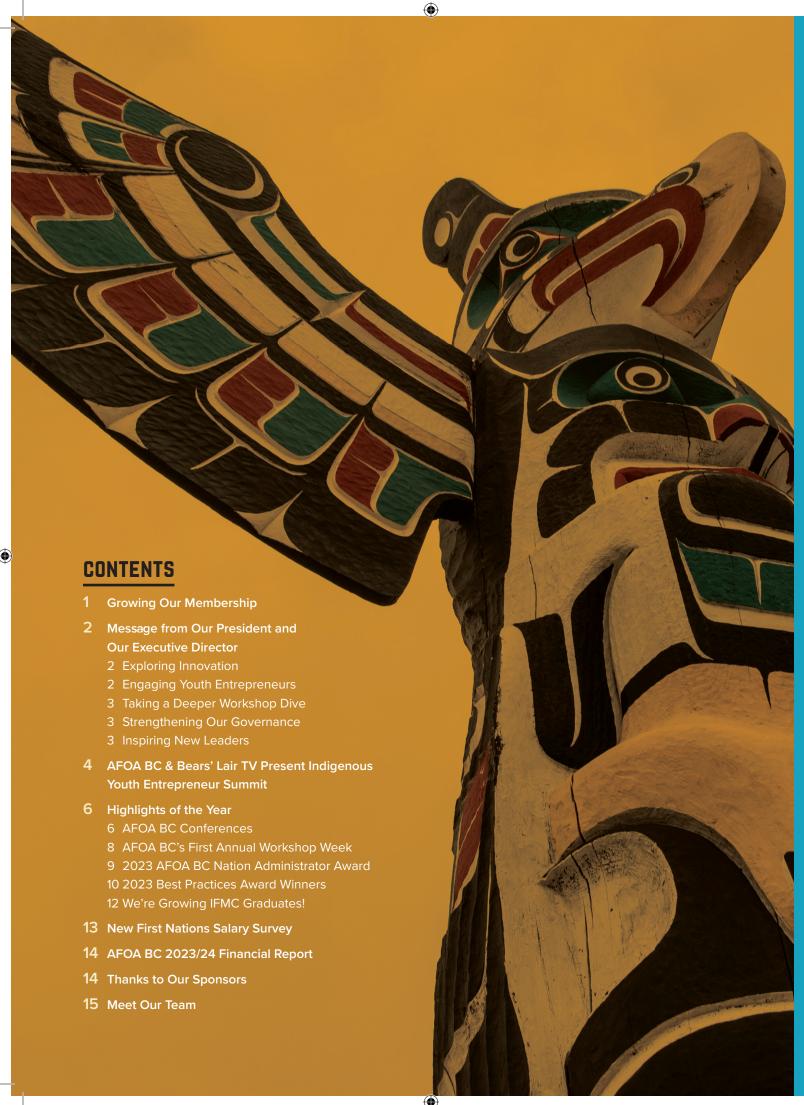


# INSPIRING INNOVATION & LEADERSHIP

2023 - 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

ARORIGINAL FINANCIAL OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH COLLIMBIA





### **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

### 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





# GROWING OUR MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has grown significantly in the past five years. Thanks to all our members for entrusting us to deliver capacity building training that supports personal and professional growth in Indigenous communities and organizations.

27.5%
increase
in AFOA BC membership
over 5 years

324 **413** 2019/20 2023/24

### AFOA BC MEMBERSHIP MAP

Our members join us from across BC and bring a wealth of professional accreditations to the table.





IN THE LAST FISCAL YEAR, **WE LAUNCHED AN INNOVATIVE IDEA TO ENGAGE INDIGENOUS** YOUTH AS ENTREPRENEURS. A **NEW WEEKLONG WORKSHOP** FORUM. AND A THIRD COHORT IN THE INDIGENOUS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE (IFMC) PROGRAM. WE'RE ALSO TAKING SOME IMPORTANT STEPS TO STRENGTHEN OUR **GOVERNANCE CAPACITY.** 

FROM OUR **PRESIDENT AND OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** 



**Barbara Joe** AFOA BC President

Mendy La **Wendy Ham** AFOA BC Executive Director



### **EXPLORING** INNOVATION

"2023/24 was a year of firsts—of exploring new approaches and partnerships," says AFOA BC Executive Director Wendy Ham. "We live in a changing landscape coming out of the pandemic and people have a real appetite for learning in new ways. Our team was on the move from one event to another, looking for new ideas to engage with First Nations—we are making a difference through this work."

### **ENGAGING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS**

"I sit on the Chartered Professional Accountants of BC (CPA BC) Board, where we discuss the challenge of getting young people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, interested in finance careers," adds Wendy. "To create appeal, we partnered with Bears' Lair TV to develop our first Indigenous Youth Entrepreneur Summit, based on their youth dream camps. We co-hosted 28 Indigenous vouth in October 2023, and the event was so successful, we booked a second one for August 2024. (See the full story on page four.)

"The youth took part in three days of intensive training and worked in teams with mentors to create a business pitch, competing for a \$10,000 prize. We brought in corporate sponsors to a job fair, who talked about what they look for in new employees, providing an opportunity to get in front of these businesses looking to hire Indigenous youth.

"Everyone loved this new model. We just need to perfect it now."

### **TAKING A DEEPER WORKSHOP DIVE**

We brought a new twist on our conferences to the workshop week we introduced in February 2024. After attending shorter conference presentations, our members often ask for a deeper dive into some topics. As a result, we developed several in-depth workshops this year, delivered at our Workshop Week as well as regionally across BC. Similar to our two AFOA BC conferences in 2023/24, we had onsite exhibitors and opportunities for people to network with peers at this event.

### **STRENGTHENING OUR GOVERNANCE**

"Wendy and her team are doing an outstanding job," says AFOA BC Board President Barbara Joe. "As a governing board, we are trying to grow and be more effective in supporting her and our staff.

"We see the importance of making time to formulate goals with our Executive Director to enhance the board's diection to staff. Consequently, we're thrilled about the opportunity to learn with the Institute of Corporate Directors in the coming year, seen as the gold standard in governance training.

"The board wants to increase capacity using committees to provide additional support. We want to demonstrate best practices with our Finance Committee, which has been strong for years. We also need to organize our human resources committee and strike a governance committee. We're investigating how these committees can augment our work, because, as a volunteer board, we meet just four times a year and need additional forums to strategize.

"We need to establish effective, measurable goals as a model for the cycle of strategic planning, review and evaluation, which Indigenous communities are crying out for. And the board continues to focus on strengthening our partnership with AFOA Canada to be a winwin for all at the national and provincial levels."

### **INSPIRING NEW LEADERS**

 $\bigoplus$ 

"We are ready to graduate our second cohort from the IFMC program this year," says Wendy. "We now have more than 30 individuals working in Indigenous communities with a financial management certificate, who had no formal finance education before. Many of them want to go on and attain further accreditation.

"Little by little, at a grassroots level, we've helped build capacity and instill confidence through education. We're not done yet: we will enroll students in our fourth cohort in fall 2024.

"We see tremendous momentum engaging youth in leadership, governance, and entrepreneurism, so they can lead the next generation. This is such an integral part of building Indigenous community capacity to navigate wealth management. As impact benefit agreements and specific claim settlements bring significant wealth, Indigenous communities need the next generation taking up financial professions to manage wealth for their communities in a positive way."

# ENTER BEARC' LAIR TV PRECENT

# AFOA BC & BEARS' LAIR TV PRESENT INDIGENOUS YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR SUMMIT

In October 2023, 28 Indigenous youth representing 19 nations competed in groups to wow a panel of distinguished judges with their pitches for a successful business. All eyes were on the **\$10,000 Grand Prize** for the winning team to kickstart a business dream into reality.

We teamed up with Bears' Lair TV to bring Indigenous youth from across the country together to build entrepreneurial skills, at our first annual Indigenous Youth Entrepreneur Summit. Over three days of instruction and a one-day job fair, Indigenous youth aged 18 to 35 took part in:

- ▶ Interactive training Youth took a deep dive into the world of entrepreneurship with training in small business fundamentals, product development, marketing, investment, funding opportunities, import and export legislation, media training, and marketing to equip them with skills needed to thrive in business
- ► Expert mentorship Seasoned Indigenous business leaders shared insights and offered guidance to youth teams on how to succeed in their entrepreneurial journeys
- Hands-on business development Indigenous youth teams tackled real-world business problems, brainstormed innovative ideas, and developed business plans

- Exciting media projects Teams filmed and edited video presentations showcasing their creativity and strategic thinking
- Creative business pitches The groups gained practical experience using the videos to pitch business ideas to the panel of judges
- Networking opportunities Indigenous youth participants had an opportunity to build lasting connections with community leaders, peers and industry experts

The summit wrapped with a Grand Finale Gala where the teams presented their business pitches to the judges, as well as friends and family.



ATTENDEES OF OUR FIRST ANNUAL INDIGENOUS YOUTH ENTREPRENEUR SUMMIT

### Congratulations to Team Bear for winning \$10,000 in sponsored prize money!

- ▶ Jessica Harry, Malahat Nation
- ▶ Tagen Hobick, Canim Lake Band
- Jake Kozlinsky, Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation
- ▶ Tamara Point, Cowichan Tribes/Skowkale First Nation
- ▶ Gene Sanky, Seabird Island Band
- K'odi (Jesse) Taylor, Kwakwaka'wakw and Haida Nations







We hosted two provincial professional development conferences last year, where participants had an opportunity to enhance skills and network with peers from across BC.

### **ENHANCING INDIGENOUS GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

We held our AFOA BC 2023 fall conference on September 6-8, with 51 people from 26 nations attending. Our presenters shared sessions on:

- Wise Indigenous HR Practices & Ways This training program brings Indigenous perspectives to essential HR topics like workforce planning, organizational growth, recruitment, selection, hiring, onboarding and orientation, recognition and performance management
- Transformational Governance Satsan (Herb George), President of the Centre for First Nations Governance, shared insights on transitional steps to implementing First Nations' inherent right to self-government
- Process to Self-governance Howard Grant, Executive Director of the First Nations Summit, shared his experience in the process of becoming a self-governed nation
- Employment Equity Introduced the human rights landscape in BC, focusing on learnings from the Office of the Human Rights Commissioner's Employment Equity Toolkit
- Group Benefit Trends/Mental Health & Addictions/Employee Assistance Programs
- Discussed mental health and addiction stigma, workplace issues, trauma and griefrelated challenges, and strategies to support mental health for employees and dependents through group benefit plans

- ➤ Retaining Indigenous Executives in Indigenous Organizations Examined causes and strategies for reducing Indigenous turnover in executive positions
- Human Resources and Governance
   Structure Explored innovative approaches
   to attracting, hiring and retaining talent in
   a way that aligns with the aspirations of
   Indigenous governments and organizations
- Workplace Wellness Discussed the meaning of cultural safety, workplace identity, two-eyed seeing, and bringing a spiritual approach to work
- Cohort Certificate Programs AFOA Canada provided an overview of existing and new programs, application guidelines, and steps to certification
- Salary Surveys & Compensation Reviewed compensation packages, benefits of participating in the First Nations Salary Survey, and how to use survey data
- Roadmap Discussed the First Nations Financial Management Board's (FNFMB) RoadMap project on creating new paths for nations moving from managing poverty to generating wealth



### STRENGTHENING FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

At the AFOA BC 2023 winter conference and Annual General Meeting on December 6-7, we hosted 98 people from 39 nations and presenters facilitated sessions on:

- ► Keynote: Public Speaking for the Workplace Fiona Forbes, Producer of Global TV's Morning Show, shared real-life tips on having confidence presenting in public
- ▶ Project Financing AFOA Canada taught the foundations of project financing and delivery principles for major infrastructure projects
- ▶ Data Breach: Cyber Insurance for Live Hacking - Reviewed common hacking techniques, cyber claim statistics, and best practices for cyber risk management and coverage
- ► Mastering Pension Plan Management Panel members shared insights on strategies, challenges and solutions for pension and benefit policies
- ▶ Five Stages of Financial Wellness Examined distinct stages of financial wellness for Indigenous organizations and project foci best suited to each stage
- ► Empowering with Financial Governance Explored best practices and systems for attaining a community vision through planning, budgeting, implementing and reporting

- ► Setting Structure for Good Decision Making -Discussed the importance of good governance to investment decisions and best practices for successful investment outcomes
- ▶ Creating Trust and Building Trusts A Path to Economic Reconciliation – Reviewed considerations for managing per-capita distribution from a settlement and establishing a trust to secure the future for the next seven generations
- Business Valuations, Negotiation and Price -Examined how business valuations are prepared, factors to consider in purchasing a business, and ensuring the price represents fair market value
- ▶ Whistleblower Systems: Value and Challenges Investigated how to design a systemic safety net to encourage and protect whistleblowers, the single most effective source in detecting financial fraud, who frequently face retaliation for disclosing wrongdoing

"These conferences give us relevant information and networking we can bring home." AFOA BC member





### AFOA BC'S FIRST ANNUAL WORKSHOP WEEK

We augmented our conferences with expanded workshop training this year, in a new weeklong program held in Vancouver. We ran in-depth, two-day regional sessions on **human resources** and **economic development** concurrently, and added a two-day **budgeting workshop**, so people could choose two of the three courses over four days:

- ► Indigenous Economic Development Officer 36 participants on February 13-14, 2023
- ▶ Wise Indigenous Human Resource Practices 35 participants on February 13-14, 2023
- ▶ Indigenous Budgeting
   33 participants on February 15-16, 2023

In all, 104 people from 33 nations and six organizations registered to attend one or two of the workshops. Based on the success of this first workshop week, we plan to offer an annual event.

AFOA BC also delivered the regional Indigenous Economic Development Officer workshop in:

- ▶ Vancouver with 9 nations represented on March 29-30, 2023
- ► Kamloops with 19 nations represented on June 6-7, 2023
- ▶ Prince George
   with 15 nations represented on September 20-21,
   2023

In addition, we presented the regional **Indigenous Human Resource Practices** workshop in Prince George, also in September 2023, with 11 nations represented.

"I enjoyed this workshop and learned new tools I can use."

**Participant** 



### **Community Workshops**

We visited five BC First Nations in the past year to share six workshops focused on **building financial management capacity**:

- ▶ Sumas First Nation First Nations Financial Literacy workshop on May 9, 2023
- Líl'wat Nation First Nations Budgeting workshop on June 26-27, 2023
- Musqueam Nation Essentials of First Nations
   Financial Management workshop on July 16-17, and
   First Nations Budgeting on August 21-22, 2023
- Gitxaala Nation First Nations Financial
   Management for the New Fiscal Relationship on November 27-28, 2023
- ► Esk'etemc First Nation First Nations Budgeting workshop on March 18-19, 2024

### **Audit Prep Seminars**

This year, AFOA BC partnered with Crowe MacKay as a corporate sponsor and co-presenter of our annual audit prep seminars. We shared materials with 109 participants in all, representing 46 nations and 18 organizations:

- ▶ Victoria with 20 participants on January 23, 2024
- ▶ Vancouver with 41 participants on January 25, 2024
- ► Prince George with 20 participants on January 30, 2024
- ▶ Kamloops with 28 participants on February 6, 2024

We also delivered a **New Fiscal Relationship Grant Session** to teach 74 participants representing 55 nations and eight organizations about this longer-term financing tool to address community priorities on October 4, 2023, in Vancouver.



# 2023 AFOA BC NATION ADMINISTRATOR AWARD



Congratulations to **Stacy McNeil**, Executive Director of Skowkale First Nation, for winning AFOA BC's 2023 Nation Administrator Award!

Stacy began with Skowkale as General Manager in 2015 and is now Executive Director & Lands Governance Director. She joined with a BA in Criminal Justice and Master of Business Administration; she has since acquired the Certified Aboriginal Professional Administrator and Certified Indigenous Leadership designations from AFOA Canada.

In 2015, Skowkale was just opening the doors after significant losses from mismanaged capital projects and housing by previous staff. The Chief's direction to Stacy was to listen to the community and build the organization from scratch.

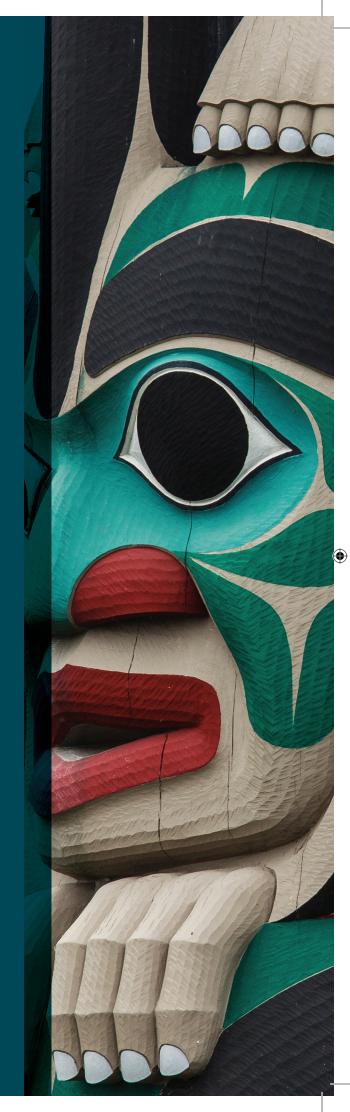
Stacy is the first to say Skowkale's success could not have happened without the right people, right direction, right support, or right heart. But her leadership with staff and ability to engage with the community and Council has resulted in all Skowkale has achieved.

Today, Skowkale has 35 staff—called Dream Weavers by Stacy—and growing. Skowkale was the fastest community in Canada to obtain FNFMB certification, in only three weeks!

Quarterly community meetings were launched to keep people informed. Community committees were struck to write housing, administration, finance, governance, membership and election policies. Skowkale has a Comprehensive Community Plan and land code. Housing renovations began.

A new, debt free, \$13 million community centre houses administration, community and cultural programs, health, recreation and other services for three communities. A shared lands departments is restoring habitats, educating members, and enforcing community laws. Skowkale has a language program, a new childcare centre, a new subdivision for community members, and a second subdivision of homes valued at \$8 million under construction. Own source revenues support post-secondary students to attend their school of choice, support members to play sports, cover medical, dental and home insurance shortages, and more.

"There is no one more deserving of this award than Stacy, and I am so privileged to be part of the journey," says **Lisa Hall**, Senior Finance Officer, Skowkale First Nation.





# **BEST PRACTICE AWARD WINNERS**

 $\bigoplus$ 

Congratulations to the 2023 Best Practice Award winners! We celebrate their community excellence and achievements with a recognition plague and a \$1,500 AFOA BC certificate.



### **Ulkatcho First Nation (UFN)**

We selected Ulkatcho First Nation for the 2023 Best Practice Award for a small community for developing a five-year strategic plan and revamping community economic development efforts. UFN Council:

- Appointed a new board of corporate directors for the Ulkatcho Group of Companies (UGoC) to complete a reorganization and oversee business activities
- ▶ Created the UFN Developments Limited Partnership as a parent company to hold UFN business assets
- ▶ Took over ownership of West Chilcotin Forest Products, a profitable source of revenue for the community, following a 30-year relationship with the company

To diversify own source revenue streams, UGoC has:

- Opened a new UFN Band Store and Gas Bar expansion to increase business
- ▶ Broken ground on a new solar farm and battery bank to sell power back to BC Hydro and eliminate community dependence on diesel generators



### Skwlāx te Secwepemcúlecw (SteS)

AFOA BC recognized SteS as the Best Practice Award for a medium community for its strong economic development practices, especially given the community has experienced wildfire devastation. Its Quaaout Lodge guest wing burned down in May 2022 and 31 homes were destroyed in August 2023. Thankfully, no lives were lost.

In addition to rebuilding the lodge, the community has:

- Renovated and rebranded the community gas station and convenience store as a Chevron station and added a Chesters Chicken to meet growing member and tourism demand and increase own source revenue
- Created Skwlax Resource Management to diversify and improve own source revenues to create a more prosperous, sustainable community. The company:
  - · Offers environmental, civil and infrastructure, industrial and mining, capacity and management, and construction services
  - Took over gravel pit operations and management on reserve lands
- ▶ Partnered with a mill operator on rebuilding in burned areas, while prioritizing environmental needs



### **Penticton Indian Band (PIB)**

AFOA BC chose PIB as the winner of our 2023 Best Practice Award for a large community in recognition of the finance team:

- ► Achieving FNFMB Financial Management System certification
- Adhering to the community's First Nations Financial Administration Law to ensure accountability and transparency
- ▶ Conducting a successful virtual audit to protect the community during the pandemic, leveraging virtual communication platforms and secure documentsharing systems
- Adopting a fully virtual finance environment, while ensuring policies for investments, own source revenues, fixed assets, spending authorization limits, and purchasing were not compromised
- ▶ Employing virtual finance leadership as an opportunity for future growth and succession planning
- ▶ Enabling staff to expand roles and responsibilities within the finance team and foster an environment of cross training and collaborative support

"We seek to enhance and expand current Skwlāx te Secwepemcúlecw enterprises, while also breaking into new fields that can diversify the community's economic strength."

Kupi7 (Chief) James Tomma

 $\bigoplus$ 



### **CAMPUS EVENT WELCOMES STUDENTS**

"We were delighted to welcome a third cohort into our Indigenous Financial Management Certificate program in fall 2023—a successful partnership we first piloted with Langara College and AFOA Canada in 2021," says AFOA BC Executive Director Wendy Ham. "In November 2023, we invited 25 students who work in First Nation organizations across BC to a welcoming event onsite at Langara."

IFMC improves access to post-secondary education for Indigenous students by integrating Indigenous cultural teachings with accredited accounting courses. Students complete seven courses to obtain the certificate, which they can then transfer as credits toward higher levels of financial education in the:

- ► AFOA Canada Certified Aboriginal Financial Management designation
- ► AFOA Canada Indigenous Financial Management Diploma
- Chartered Professional Accountant program

The 18-month IFMC program combines in-person and online learning so students can continue to work full-time. Students come together for a weeklong AFOA Canada course of Indigenous cultural content, with mentorship and peer support, onsite at Langara, followed by online accounting courses through the college.

"I really enjoyed the interactive learning and opportunity to engage with peers and create new friendships," says recent IFMC grad Sadie Leon. "Balancing the coursework with my professional and personal commitments took discipline and time management. But overcoming the obstacles made the achievement more rewarding. I feel earning this certificate validates my effort and motivates me to pursue my best going forward. Thank you AFOA and Langara for a memorable experience!"

"Our first cohort graduated in April 2023, the second in April 2024, and the third will finish in April 2025," says Wendy. "Every time we run the program we receive more applications than we have space for. We'll launch our fourth cohort in fall 2024.

"Our goal is to support professional and personal development among Indigenous students, who go on to build financial capacity within Indigenous governments and communities."

**CLASS OF THE IMFC** COHORT - AN EVENING OF **CELEBRATING SUCCESS** AND ACCOMPLISHMENT.

### **CAPACITY BUILDING SUCCESS**

IFMC – 75% cohort completion, a high postsecondary retention rate

30 new graduates to date, who had no previous finance education

Indigenous communities keep returning to take more AFOA BC training

Conference, cohort, and workshop participants build a network of peers to consult on common concerns









### **NEW FIRST NATIONS SALARY SURVEY**

More than 70 Indigenous organizations shared data on key leadership and employment positions in our latest salary survey, developed for AFOA BC by the Jouta Performance Group. The survey identifies the range of salaries for benchmark positions in Indigenous:

### **Governance and leadership**

**Management and administration** 

Finance and accounting

Human resources

Social development

Health

**Education** 

Housing and infrastructure

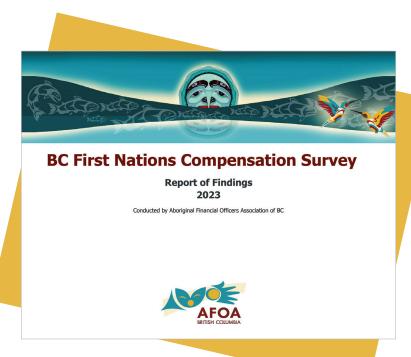
Natural resource management

### **Economic development**

"We paid organizations to complete the survey because it takes time to pull all the data together and to encourage more responses," says AFOA Executive Director Wendy Ham. "Our salary survey covers pay and benefits for each position and is one of a kind in Canada. First Nations can use the results as a guideline for local compensation and benefit planning."

Get a copy of our survey results via this QR code:





# DESIGN

As in previous salary surveys, participants submitted actual pay data for incumbents in a variety of positions in First Nation governments and Indigenous organizations. People were asked to comment on how closely our job descriptions matched their positions, which enables us to level the data with a statistical tool.

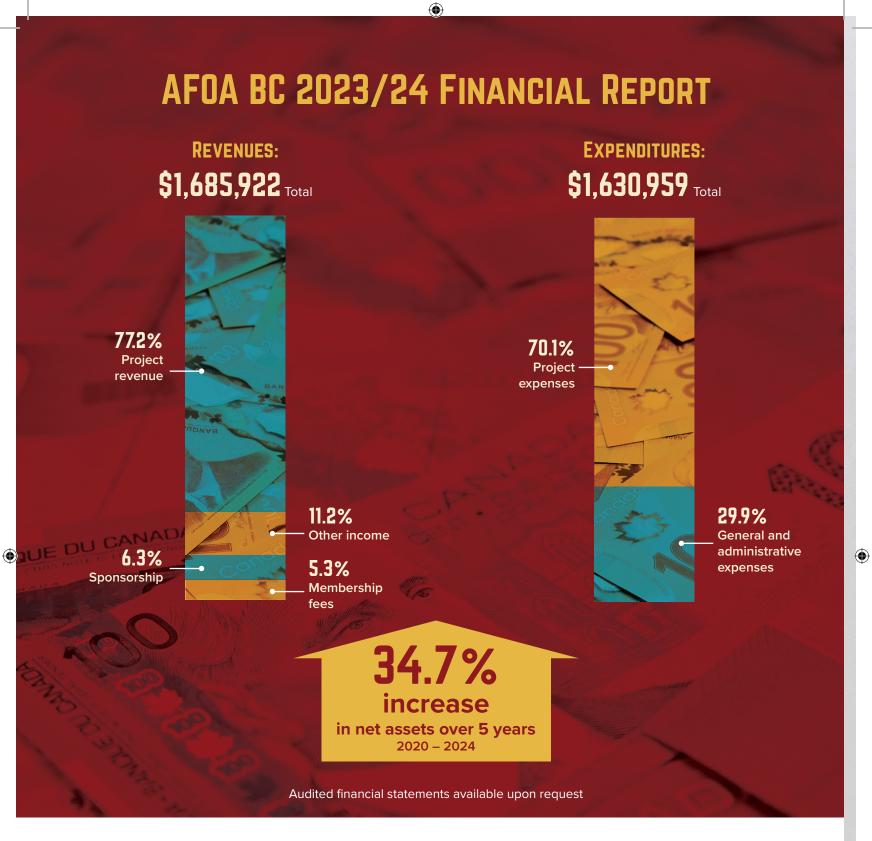
We asked respondents to define the organization's size, based on population, and distance from the nearest municipality to understand how size and remoteness correlate to compensation and benefits.

To gain a more complete picture of total compensation packages, we also asked about group benefits, retirement saving plans, vacation, and paid time off benefits.

For the first time in 2023, we asked participants to categorize each position's work environment as onsite (office), remote (office), hybrid (mix of remote and office), or field work (a majority of the time).

Thanks to Indigenous Services Canada for funding this salary survey!





### THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

















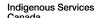


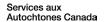
























### **MEET OUR TEAM**

### AFOA BC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

forward to working together to achieve AFOA BC goals.

We would like to recognize our Board of Directors and staff for their commitment to inspiring Indigenous youth, members and nations to build capacity for achieving

community development and self-determination. We also want to welcome new AFOA BC board member Rayna Barter, who joined us in December of 2023. We look



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



Trevor Morrison (CAPA), AFOA BC Vice President; Chief Executive Officer, Lake Babine Nation



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



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



Rayna Barter (BA Commerce, CAFM, CAPA), AFOA BC Director; Finance Manager, BC Assembly of First Nations



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



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

### **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

