



FIRST VOICE
Urban Indigenous Coalition

A VISION FOR
THE FUTURE:
**OUR CALLS
FOR CHANGE**

February 2023

About This Document

This document is a summary of First Voice's 2023-33 Calls for Change. It may be cited as follows:

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More details about how we plan to achieve the Calls for Change that are outlined in this document may be found in our comprehensive Community Action Plan, released in February 2023. To obtain a copy of that document, entitled *Our Shared Vision: A Path toward Truth and Reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023-33*, please contact First Voice by phone at 709-726-5902, by email at info@firstvoicenc.ca, or by letter at the following address:

First Voice
c/o First Light: St. John's Friendship Centre
40 Quidi Vidi Road,
St. John's, NL A1A 1C1

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About First Voice

Launched in 2019 by First Light in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada, First Voice is a coalition of Indigenous Peoples, service providers, and all levels of government working together to advance truth and reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. Our name reflects the self-determining principle that meaningful action on urban Indigenous issues requires prioritizing the values, perspectives, and lived experiences of First Peoples.

How we Developed Our Calls for Change

TRC, MMIWG, and UNDRIP

First Voice is driven by the vision of a world where the inherent rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador are respectfully recognized and actively supported by all. We believe that this vision can be achieved by building on the extensive work that has already been done by many others in pursuit of this same vision. This work includes the following:

- The Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC);
- The Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG); and
- The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Taken together, these documents were decades in the making and engaged Indigenous Peoples from across Canada and around the world. They describe a vision for a better future where Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples coexist together in mutual understanding and respect.

There is no need to reproduce the work that led to these documents; instead, we must breathe life into their Calls and principles. For this reason, First Voice has adopted all three documents as foundational to our own work to advance truth and reconciliation locally in St. John's. The commitments that follow in our Calls for Change are deliberately and directly aligned with these foundational documents.

Action Areas

In order to ensure that First Voice would remain true to its commitment to prioritize the voices and lived experiences of urban Indigenous people living in St. John's, we drew on the following inputs to ensure that our work would stay focused on the things that matter most to the community:

- First Light's own assessment of the community's needs, based on nearly 40 years of experience working with and serving the urban Indigenous community;
- Direct input gathered at a Community Feast held on September 18, 2019;
- The results of facilitated discussions held during the Decolonize YYT virtual policy conference on November 5-6, 2020; and

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- Extensive discussions carried out at four Standing Committees working in the areas of education, training, and employment; health and wellness; housing homelessness; and infrastructure in service delivery.

As a result of the above, we have grouped our Calls for Change into the following four Action Areas:

- 1. Education, Training, and Employment;**
- 2. Housing and Homelessness;**
- 3. Infrastructure and Service Delivery; and**
- 4. Justice and Human Rights.**

The general objectives and goals that were gathered in these areas through community input were then further refined into focus areas that helped to define specific, actionable Calls for Change. Together these Calls for Change would serve as a roadmap for advancing truth and reconciliation in St. John's. These efforts were led by the First Voice Partnership Table working in close collaboration with the committees that were launched in 2021.

Because community engagement consistently showed a desire among members of the urban Indigenous community to ensure that our local efforts in St. John's would align with national and international efforts, the Calls for Change in each Action Area are directly

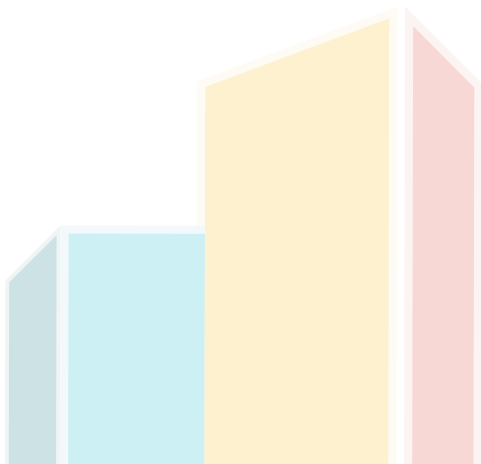
connected to the TRC Calls to Action, the MMIWG Calls for Justice, and the principles of UNDRIP.

The way forward in realizing our Calls for Change – including carrying out specific actions, determining timelines, and assigning responsibilities – will depend in part on the willingness of policy- and decision-makers to implement our Calls as well as opportunities for First Voice to engage with those who have the means and authority to take action. No doubt the following Calls for Change, and even the four Action Areas, will evolve further over the coming decade. First Voice as a coalition, however, will remain steadfast in our commitment to walk the path of truth and reconciliation with any and all willing partners.

First Voice will leverage our comprehensive Community Action Plan to drive focused and coordinated work in research, policy development, and advocacy. As our local context evolves in terms of public education, public policy, and resource availability – and as we begin to achieve the implementation of our Calls for Change – so too will our goals and strategies adapt to changing circumstances over time.

Action Area 1: Education, Training, and Employment

We envision a city where all residents have a sound understanding of the diverse histories and cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador and where they mobilize such understanding to close gaps in education and employment outcomes. To realize this vision, we call on all residents of St. John's to help advance change in the following ways:



Focus Area A: Curriculum Development and Deployment

1. Promote and support the redevelopment of the K-12 curriculum so that it includes appropriate content on Indigenous histories, cultures, stories, and languages as well as a discussion of colonialism and its legacy in the province. This process must be undertaken with the collaboration of all Indigenous groups in the province, including urban Indigenous people.
2. Promote and support the addition of appropriate Indigenous content in early childhood education, including cultural practices, stories, languages, and land-based activities.
3. Collaborate with post-secondary institutions to ensure that programs in essential areas such as health, law, education, engineering, and public policy incorporate mandatory content on antiracism and the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples.
4. Promote and support the development of post-secondary courses and degree programs in Indigenous languages.

Focus Area B: Professional Training and Development

5. Support and promote the establishment of designated Indigenous seats in essential post-secondary programs such as health, law, education, engineering, and public policy.
6. Build strategic partnerships to support the development and delivery of sector-specific anti-racism training in essential areas such as health, law, education, engineering, and government services.
7. Collaborate with professional licensing bodies in essential areas such as health, law, education, and engineering to establish appropriate requirements that encompass antiracism and the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples.

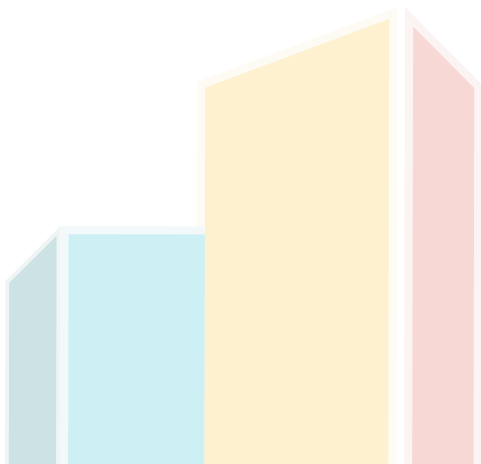
Focus Area C: Employment Equity

8. Promote and support the development, implementation, and enforcement of inclusive human-resources policies.
9. Create and support a network of businesses and business stakeholders to promote training and the sharing of wise practices in alignment with TRC 92.

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10. Support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people into essential industries and professions such as health, law, education, engineering, and government services.

Action Area 2: Housing and Homelessness

We envision a city where all members of the urban Indigenous community enjoy access to safe, secure, and affordable housing. To realize this vision, we call on all residents of St. John's to help advance change in the following ways:



Focus Area A: Service and Program Development

11. Lead, support, and coordinate research on the demographics of homelessness in St. John's.
12. Ensure that demographic data drives program evaluation and delivery of services to the homeless population in St. John's.
13. Collaborate with service delivery agencies to ensure that Indigenous residents in nonmarket housing have access to culturally appropriate programming and spaces.
14. Collaborate with service providers, including those in the private rental market, to ensure that Indigenous people have equal access to secure and affordable housing that is free of discrimination.
15. Promote the implementation of a no-discharge-into-homelessness policy by the provincial government.

Focus Area B: Poverty Reduction

16. Support provincial and national efforts to implement a universal basic income.
17. Support efforts to ensure that Indigenous people and members of other racialized and marginalized communities have access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation throughout the city.

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18. Promote and support efforts to improve access to safe, stable, nutritious, and affordable food sources for the urban Indigenous community. This includes wild game, country foods, and other culturally significant sources of nutrition.

Action Area 3: Infrastructure and Service Delivery

We envision a city that reflects the histories and cultures of the Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador and one where members of the urban Indigenous community are able to access essential services free of discrimination. To realize this vision, we call on all residents of St. John's to help advance change in the following ways:

Focus Area A: Expanding Cultural Spaces

19. Decolonize the City of St. John's municipal plan and all related processes, procedures, and policies, including the heritage bylaw.
20. Work with all levels of government to ensure that National Indigenous People's Day is recognized as an official and statutory holiday.
21. Work with the City of St. John's to Indigenize place names.
22. Work with Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reclaim Indigenous place names.
23. Promote and support formal Indigenous stewardship of public green spaces in the City of St. John's, such as parks and gardens.
24. Establish a highly visible monument in the City of St. John's to honour the survivors of residential schools and those who never made it home to their families.
25. Promote and support the availability of Indigenous healing practices and other appropriate cultural programming within the healthcare system.
26. Decolonize policies and regulations in early childhood education to ensure access to culturally appropriate programming. This must include expanded access to land-based programming for Indigenous children.

Focus Area B: Systemic Discrimination

27. Promote and support the establishment of full-time, paid Indigenous advisory positions in essential areas such as health, law, education, engineering, and government services.
28. Promote and support efforts to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and other colonialist concepts such as terra nullius.
29. Ensure the full implementation of the City of St. John's commitments under Council's 2020 *Declaration in Support of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.
30. Ensure that municipal and provincial policy-making is shaped and informed by appropriate demographic data.
31. Promote and support urban Indigenous participation on critical governance and advisory boards.
32. Promote and support the expansion of interpretation services that are used locally to include Mi'kmaw, Innu-aimun, and Inuktitut.
33. Work with healthcare providers and community organizations to ensure that urban Indigenous people are able to access services related to mental health, addictions, and recovery free of discrimination.

34. Promote and support the full participation of Indigenous businesses, including social enterprises, in government procurement processes at both the municipal and provincial levels.

Action Area 4: Justice and Human Rights

We envision a city and a province where urban Indigenous people enjoy equal protection of the law and equal access to justice. To realize this vision, First Voice calls on all residents of St. John's to help advance change in the following ways:

Focus Area A: Cultural and Security Supports

35. Ensure the availability of Indigenous cultural programming within the corrections system.
36. Promote and support the implementation of an Indigenous navigator position within the criminal justice and child welfare systems.
37. Promote and support the availability and use of restorative justice programs.
38. Promote and support the implementation of Gladue reports in sentencing.

Focus Area B: Law Reform

39. Advocate for the implementation of stronger civilian oversight of police services, including the creation of a Police Oversight Board that is independent of police, civilian-led, politically neutral, and representative of the province's diverse communities.
40. Advocate for the adoption and full implementation of UNDRIP at all levels of government.
41. Advocate for the legal recognition of Mi'kmaw, Innu-aimun, and Inuktitut as official languages of Newfoundland and Labrador.

42. Seek a formal apology from the provincial government for the legacy of harm that resulted from the exclusion of Indigenous Peoples in the Terms of Union with Canada in 1949. Such an apology must be drafted in full collaboration with all Indigenous groups in the province, including urban Indigenous people, and should become a foundation for establishing a renewed relationship between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Indigenous Peoples in the province.



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For more information visit
www.firstvoicenl.ca

First Voice Project Office

40 Quidi Vidi Road
St. John's, NL A1A 1C1
709-726-5902

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