



FIRST VOICE  
Urban Indigenous Coalition

# Our Shared Vision

A Path toward Truth and Reconciliation in  
St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023-33

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**February 2023**

An Urban Indigenous  
Community Action Plan

#42Calls





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- Government of Canada
- First Light: St. John's Friendship Centre
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# Land Acknowledgement

First Voice respectfully acknowledges the land on which its Partners, Community Advocates, Contributors, and supporters gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, whose culture has now been lost forever.

We acknowledge the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. And we acknowledge Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. We recognize all First Peoples who were here before us, those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come.

As First Peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home. As we open our hearts and minds to the past, we commit ourselves to working in a spirit of truth and reconciliation to make a better future for all.



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## About the Cover Image



<b>Title:</b>	"Cultural Awakening"
<b>Mi'kmaq Artist:</b>	Marcus Gosse
<b>Mi'kmaq Name:</b>	Ala'suinu - Traveller
<b>Medium:</b>	Acrylic on Canvas
<b>Size:</b>	4 feet (width) x 3 feet (height)
<b>Date:</b>	Completed: 2022
<b>Commission:</b>	Artist in Residence, First Peoples Policy Forum, Winter 2022 (December 12-13)

### Description

The image that appears on the cover of this Community Action Plan is a painting titled "Cultural Awakening". It displays four people honouring and embracing the cultural rights of Mother Earth. The Elder and youth are drumming to honour cultural rights, and to show honour to the land, their ancestors, and each other. The other people in the painting are embracing policy as a means of recognizing and advancing our cultural rights. They are also praying that all Indigenous people will have their rights and freedoms to express their culture respected.



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In their hands is a copy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which describes the inherent rights that all Indigenous Peoples have to practice, develop, and teach their spiritual traditions, customs, and ceremonies.

This painting displays petroglyphs (carvings in stone) such as the Mi'kmaq Eight-Pointed Star, double curve designs, and appliqué patterns. The Mi'kmaq Star represents unity amongst all the cultures of the world. The double curve designs symbolize the lifecycle of human beings and all living things. The curve on the left represents youth; the centre middle age; and the curve on the right represents becoming a senior or Elder. The connection between the double curves represents people holding hands, supporting their culture and each other. The appliqué patterns are commonly found on traditional women's peaked hats and men's long coats.

The rocks and the peoples' clothes both contain these Mi'kmaq Petroglyphs. The artist's intention is to show that the people are connected with the land and their culture. The rocks, painted in black and grey, are intended to replicate the petroglyph landscape at Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia to show the importance of preserving our cultural knowledge for future generations.

Together, these symbols represent the need to embrace culture, connect with our community, preserve our cultural knowledge, and honour the land, our ancestors, and each other.

Msit No'kmaq (All Our Relations; We Are All Connected).



### About the Artist

Marcus Gosse is a Newfoundland Mi'kmaq Artist, and a member of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band in Newfoundland. Marcus' grandmother, Alice Maude Gosse (maiden name Benoit), is a Mi'kmaq Elder, who was born and raised in Red Brook, NL (Welbooktoojech) located on the Port-au-Port Peninsula. In 2005, Marcus was given his native name Papamikapow, which means "Traveler" (he who travels, not only physically, but, spiritually) from an Ojibway-Cree Elder from Sandy Lake First Nation, Ontario. Marcus incorporates the ancient Mi'kmaq Star, Mi'kmaq Petroglyphs, Hieroglyphs, and various double curve designs into the landscapes of his paintings.

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# Executive Summary

This Community Action Plan (the “Action Plan”) has been developed to support the First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition’s main goal of advancing truth and reconciliation at a local level in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. With a ten-year time horizon, our Action Plan takes a broad, community-driven approach that includes monitoring and refining the Plan as circumstances evolve.

With community input and stakeholder engagement, we have structured our Plan around the following four Action Areas:

- Education, Training, and Employment;
- Housing and Homelessness;
- Infrastructure and Service Delivery; and
- Justice and Human Rights.

Each Area includes goals to reach – what we’ve termed “Calls for Change.” These Calls were drafted by dedicated committees that have held extensive discussions among and between community members, service providers, academics, policy experts, and officials at all levels of government. They were also informed by community values and common themes that emerged throughout the process of building First Voice as a coalition and our engagements with Indigenous rights-holders and stakeholders.

All of the 42 Calls for Change in this Plan are tied to one or more of 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 principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Our own Calls aim to provide a framework for advancing truth and reconciliation, under the leadership of the urban Indigenous community, and for the benefit of all residents of St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. In line with community expectations, many of our Calls for Change include elements informed by a holistic approach to health and wellness.

There is much to be done. Every resident of the City has a role to play in implementing the Calls for Change over the next decade. Our Plan’s success will require regular monitoring, evaluation, and reassessment. Through a community-driven and collaborative coalition structure, we have arrived at a shared understanding of common objectives and shared responsibilities. We have the resources, capacity, and community support to achieve our vision for the future.

**Now it is time to act.**

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## Message From the Partnership Table



The development of this Action Plan took more than three years and includes the insights shared with us by the community we serve. Through this journey, we have learned much about the important role that honesty, accountability, and consensus-building will play in supporting the urban Indigenous community's aspiration of achieving truth and reconciliation for generations to come, beginning with actions that we ourselves can take over the next ten years. This document represents First Voice's commitment to walking a new path alongside the urban Indigenous community in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our first goal was to get organized and reach out to the community. We held a Community Feast in September of 2019 and invited all members of the St. John's urban Indigenous community to share their priorities, insights, and challenges with us. From there, we began to build with the community.

Truth and reconciliation will be a difficult but necessary journey in St. John's. Much hurt has been done. Entire cultures were suppressed. Some were extinguished forever. Despite – and even because of – this difficult legacy, First Voice remains committed to working toward truth and reconciliation in our community for current and future generations.

The passion we have for reaching this ambitious goal and our commitment to get there by prioritizing urban Indigenous voices has informed every page. It is in that context that we thank all rights-holders, stakeholders, and supporters who came together to craft this Action Plan and to work with us to make our Calls for Change a reality.

On behalf of First Voice and the many support staff, funders, volunteers, contributors, and supporters who have so generously provided their time and resources to building our coalition, we the members of the Partnership Table are proud to present *Our Shared Vision: A Path toward Truth and Reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023-33*.



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# Introduction

In recent years, Canada has signalled its intention to forge a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – one that is rooted in mutual understanding and respect.

To move towards such an ambitious but necessary goal, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada concluded there must be a widespread “awareness of the past, an acknowledgement of the harm that has been inflicted, atonement for the causes, and action to change behaviour.”<sup>1</sup>

Efforts to advance truth and reconciliation are being undertaken nationally. But they must also be made provincially, municipally, and personally to have any lasting effect.

## Community by Design

In 2019, what was initially called the St. John’s Urban Indigenous Coalition was launched as a loose network of 30 organizations comprising Indigenous groups, service providers, federal and provincial government departments, and the City of St. John’s.

Under the leadership of First Light Friendship Centre working in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada, the coalition – now known as First Voice – has grown into a tight partnership of twelve local, provincial, and national organizations working alongside nine Community Advocates to promote truth and reconciliation in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador. Over the last three years,

dozens more organizations and more than 100 individuals have consistently contributed to a wide range of coalition projects and initiatives, including the development of this Action Plan.

Our name in English is *First Voice*. In Mi’kmaq it is *Amskwesewey kelusik*. In Inuktitut, *Sivullipâk Nipilik*. In Innu-aimun, *Ueskat Kaeimit* (Sheshashiu dialect) and *Uskatsh kaianmuetsih* (Mushuau dialect). Our name was chosen to reflect our coalition’s guiding principle: **prioritize the voices of the urban Indigenous community**. All parts of this Action Plan were crafted with that in mind.

This Action Plan is intended to be a living document. Its implementation will involve ongoing review, monitoring, and reassessment to ensure a continuing and coordinated commitment to advance truth and reconciliation in St. John’s. This is the promise made by the members of our Partnership Table.

## Pathfinding: Developing the First Voice Community Action Plan

St. John’s has the fastest growing urban Indigenous community anywhere in Canada. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the St. John’s metro region is home to the largest and most diverse Indigenous community, with 7,000 Indigenous people living here.<sup>2</sup> There are nearly 40,000 more Indigenous people living in communities, both urban and rural, across the province. Nine percent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians identify as Indigenous.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), p. 6. Available online at [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf).

2 Statistics Canada. “Census Profile, 2016 Census: St. John’s CMA, Newfoundland and Labrador.” Available online at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMAC&Code1=001&Geo2=PR&Code2=10&Data=Count&Search-Text=St.%20John>.

3 Statistics Canada. “Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census: Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.” Available online at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-PR-Eng.cfm?TOPIC=9&LANG=Eng&GK=PR&GC=10>.



The process of planning and developing the main themes and objectives of First Voice meant creating opportunities for Indigenous people – and especially members of the urban Indigenous community in St. John’s – to lead every step of the way. To build an Action Plan that would enjoy widespread support, community engagement guided our efforts from the very beginning.

At a **Community Feast** held in September 2019, the coalition kept a Conversation Wall open and invited members of the St. John’s urban Indigenous community to attend and share their thoughts on the most pressing challenges they faced. Their ideas were grouped into common themes and general approaches, strategies, and values that the community wanted to see us adopt to address their priorities.

Following the Community Feast, a **Community Workshop** was held in November 2019 to decide the shape and focus of the coalition. At this event, a variety of organizational stakeholders joined with members of the urban Indigenous community to discuss the ideas that were collected at the Community Feast and to draft formal Terms of Reference for the coalition, now called our Coalition Charter, found at [Appendix A](#). Working on the basis of consensus, participants at the Community Workshop decided that truth and reconciliation would be the guiding vision for the coalition’s work, along with five key values: Respect, Self-Determination, Holism, Collaboration, and Humility. They also identified several broad thematic areas where the coalition would focus its efforts.

Then, in November 2020, the **Decolonize YYT: Pathways to Reconciliation** virtual policy conference was held. During this event, members of the urban Indigenous community again participated alongside community organizations, service providers, and government to shape objectives and strategies based on the broad thematic areas that were identified at the



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Community Feast and further developed at the Community Workshop.

**Committees** were then launched by the coalition in March 2021. They were charged with researching and refining specific, actionable objectives in each of the broad thematic areas.<sup>4</sup> Guided by the overall vision of a world in which the inherent rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador are recognized and actively supported by all, the committees charted a collaborative and inclusive roadmap for advancing truth and reconciliation in St. John's.

Finally, the Action Plan was endorsed at a joint meeting of the First Voice Committees held on December 6, 2022. It was subsequently approved by the First Voice Partnership Table on December 14, 2022.

The insights gathered throughout this process for establishing a stronger relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – one that is based on mutual understanding and respect – are laid out in this Action Plan.

The goals and objectives that are outlined in this Action Plan are substantive and far reaching. They were developed through many levels of community and stakeholder engagement. The Action Plan is rooted in national and international standards of truth and reconciliation. While it is a living document and is bound to change over the next decade, it provides a necessary starting point for challenging systems of colonialism and establishing a dynamic process of local, Indigenous-led approaches to truth and reconciliation in St. John's.

## Weaving a Braid of Common Themes

Throughout our engagements with the urban Indigenous community, three common themes consistently emerged: the importance of culture and storytelling, the need to incorporate a wide range of objectives to improve health and wellness, and promoting truth and reconciliation as the framework for addressing the ongoing legacy of colonialism.



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<sup>4</sup> Based on the initial input gathered at the Community Feast, four Standing Committees were launched to discuss objectives in the following broad thematic areas: education, training, and employment; health and wellness; housing and homelessness; and infrastructure and service delivery. Because of the coalition's holistic approach to health and wellness, and the intersecting and multidisciplinary nature of many objectives that the responsible committee identified in this area, the Partnership Table decided to redistribute the health-and-wellness-related objectives across the four Action Areas that are now set out in this Plan. The work of the original Standing Committee on Health and Wellness also directly informed the strategy for pursuing the Calls for Change through focused Action Circles as described on page 20 of this Plan.

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## Culture and Storytelling

Members of the urban Indigenous community were clear that they do not want to be portrayed, much less understood, solely through the lens of cold statistics. While there is a place for demographic data to be used in order to measure the scope of the challenges faced by Indigenous people in – and progress being made toward improving – areas such as health, homelessness, and justice,<sup>5</sup> statistics alone cannot convey the lived experiences that urban Indigenous people have with colonialism.

Our province has a uniquely dark and problematic colonialist history. The lands that are now known to most people as Newfoundland and Labrador were, like much of Canada, stolen from Indigenous Peoples without their consent. In our province these peoples are the Inuit, the Innu, the Mi'kmaq, and the Beothuk. As the first overseas territories to be colonized by the British Empire, it was here where the culture of the Beothuk was extinguished forever.<sup>6</sup> And as the last province to join Confederation with the rest of Canada, it was here where Indigenous Peoples were excluded from the Terms of Union in 1949. This denial of the very existence of Indigenous people limited access to programs and services that otherwise would have been available to Indigenous people, communities, and nations in Newfoundland and Labrador.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of this history on Indigenous Peoples is far-reaching. Colonialism has done great harm since first contact and its ongoing

legacy has created significant social, economic, and health disparities that Indigenous people across the province continue to live with every day. Members of the urban Indigenous community consistently expressed a desire to have these experiences conveyed in more holistic ways, including by increasing the visibility and understanding of Indigenous art, histories, languages, and personal stories.

## Health and Wellness

**Just as the lived experiences of colonialism must be shared in more holistic ways, so too must its ongoing legacy be addressed in the same manner. Throughout our engagements with the urban Indigenous community, a strong consensus emerged that health and wellness must be placed at the centre of any Action Plan. Community members were equally clear that health and wellness must not be understood in narrow terms by focusing, for example, only on improving the delivery of healthcare services.**

Understood more holistically, health and wellness is about connection to culture and community. Making progress to address the ongoing legacy of colonialism means expanding cultural spaces to ensure that urban Indigenous people are appropriately represented – and able to participate fully – in a wide range of areas such as healthcare, education, government, the professions, and public spaces. It means improving food security and strengthening connections to the land. And it means ensuring that non-Indigenous people who occupy

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5 See, for example, Calls for Change 11, 12, and 30.

6 A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), p. 24. Available online at [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Supplementary-Report\\_Genocide.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Supplementary-Report_Genocide.pdf).

7 See, for example, Adrian Tanner et al., "Aboriginal Peoples and Governance in Newfoundland and Labrador: A Report for the Governance Project, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples" (1994), esp. pp. 26-27: "The 1948 Terms of Union of Newfoundland with Canada contain no reference to aboriginal people. This was despite the fact that the Proceedings of the National Convention include a series of statements by various delegates concerning the implications of Confederation for the assumption of federal responsibilities towards aboriginal peoples. Moreover, during the 1947 negotiations between representatives of Canada and the Newfoundland National Convention, a special joint committee discussed Indians and Inuit, and concluded that they should become a direct federal responsibility as in the rest of Canada. Eleven conditions were listed which would apply to aboriginal people if union occurred." Available online at [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-41-79-eng.pdf.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2016/bcp-pco/Z1-1991-1-41-79-eng.pdf.pdf).

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positions of power in these areas are properly informed about the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples, including especially the ongoing harms from residential schools and intergenerational trauma.

For these reasons, many health and wellness-related threads have been woven into all four Action Areas that are set out in this Plan.

### **Truth and Reconciliation**

There is broad agreement in the community that the way forward to address the ongoing legacy of colonialism is already well studied and well known – what is needed now is substantive action. We consistently heard calls that First Voice’s work in this regard include a focus on improving public education and awareness about the necessary changes that had already been identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, later, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). We have therefore taken these documents as foundational to our work as a coalition.

Reconciliation will not be achieved easily, nor even during the ten-year time horizon of this Action Plan. Rather, it will be a multigenerational journey – one which we all must advance as much as possible in our own time. If the many and diverse peoples who now call Newfoundland and Labrador home are to coexist on these lands, truth and reconciliation is the only path forward. Walking that path must not fall solely upon Indigenous people. Rather, it is a responsibility to be shared by all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

### **The Partnership Table: Decolonizing Decision-Making**

First Voice is led by the Partnership Table – a unique approach to governance and leadership that is founded on the idea of enacting truth and reconciliation. It brings together Community Advocates, representing the diverse experiences and perspectives of the urban Indigenous community in St. John’s, along with the leaders of organizational Partners, many of whom are stakeholders and decision-makers in areas where the community has identified the need for change.

Operating on the basis of consensus, the Partnership Table has committed not to make any substantive decisions unless a majority of Indigenous members are present and have had the opportunity to share their thoughts and perspectives on the issues at hand.

By bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, decision-makers with community members, and those with lived experience of colonialism with those who have little or none, the Partnership Table strives to be an example to others of what decolonized decision-making can look like. These fundamental values and principles were all incorporated into our Coalition Charter, which can be found at [Appendix A](#).





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# Reading Notes

## How to Use This Document

This document reflects a tremendous effort by our coalition members and supporters to make Newfoundland and Labrador a better place for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike. In developing our Action Plan, we recognized the imperative to demonstrate action, measure our impact, and ensure accountability for results. Ultimately, this document is meant as a response to the challenging question,

*“What would it mean to achieve truth and reconciliation at a local level in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador?”*

In response, this document sets out objectives in four Action Areas for our coalition to pursue over the next 10 years as our work takes shape to co-design a better future for all residents of St. John’s. Each Action Area lists key objectives that will drive action toward truth and reconciliation in St. John’s. Echoing both the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the 2019 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we have termed these objectives our own “Calls for Change.” Direct linkages between our Calls and those of the TRC and MMIWG, as well as the articles of UNDRIP, are identified in the Alignment Matrix found at [Appendix C](#).

Reconciliation will be an ongoing process. First Voice is confident that, by putting in place an Action Plan that has been informed by our community and Partners, we can set a new

standard for advancing truth and reconciliation in our city, our province, and even for other urban Indigenous communities across Canada. Our Action Plan will guide us, our Partners, our allies – and, we hope, all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – as we walk that path together.

## Terminology

**Indigenous:** For the purposes of this document, the term “Indigenous” means Métis, First Nations, and Inuit people regardless of legal status.

**Urban Indigenous:** For the purposes of this document, the term “urban Indigenous” refers to self-identifying Indigenous people living in St. John’s while also recognizing the diversity that exists between and within Indigenous Peoples in the city and beyond.

**UNDRIP<sup>8</sup>:** The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the UN General Assembly on September 13, 2007. The Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of the Indigenous Peoples of the world. It also elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous Peoples.

**MMIWG Calls for Justice<sup>9</sup>:** After decades of mothers, daughters, grandmothers, aunts, and cousins calling for an end to violence against Indigenous women, the National Inquiry

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8 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)” September 13, 2007. Available online at: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

9 “Calls for Justice.” In Reclaiming Power in Place: Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Available online at: [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls\\_for\\_Justice.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls_for_Justice.pdf).

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into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was established in 2016. It was launched in response to Call to Action 41 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The Inquiry ran for three years, from 2016 to 2019, with the Final Report published on June 3 and the Inquiry officially concluding on June 30.

More than 2,000 people participated in the MMIWG Truth Gathering Process. Participants included survivors and family members, experts, Knowledge Keepers, officials, artists, community members, and more. The Report found that persistent and deliberate human rights violations and abuses are the root cause of Canada's staggering rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people.

The MMIWG Calls for Justice describe necessary steps aimed at ending this violence – ending what the National inquiry called genocide, addressing the root causes of violence, and making systemic changes to improve the quality of life for all Indigenous people.

**TRC Calls to Action<sup>10</sup>:** In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) published its Final Report detailing the experiences and impacts of the residential school system, creating a historical record of its legacy and consequences.

The TRC recorded testimony of more than 6,000 survivors affected by residential schools. It estimated that over the course of more than a century approximately 150,000 Indigenous children were separated from their families and communities and forced to attend one of 139 residential schools across Canada, including five such schools in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To address this terrible legacy and the intergenerational trauma it has caused, the TRC put forward 94 Calls to Action across a wide range of areas including child welfare, education, health, justice, language, and culture. The TRC Calls to Action address the ongoing impact of residential schools on survivors and their families. They describe a path for systemic changes in public policy that are necessary for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to move forward together with a shared vision of reconciliation.

**Reconciliation:** For the purpose of this document, reconciliation is defined as the conscious, deliberate effort to achieve a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, while ensuring equality and understanding that improves the lives of all urban Indigenous people in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

## Our Members

**First Voice is grateful to our Partners, Community Advocates, and Contributors for their dedication to truth and reconciliation and their ongoing work to make it a reality.**

### Lead Partners

- First Light St. John's Friendship Centre
- Indigenous Services Canada

### Supporting Partners

- City of St. John's
- Eastern Health
- Memorial University
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and Homelessness Network

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<sup>10</sup> "Calls to Action." In *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (2015), pp. 319-337. Available online at [https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive\\_Summary\\_English\\_Web.pdf](https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Executive_Summary_English_Web.pdf).

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- Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission
  - Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women
  - Public Health Agency of Canada
  - St. John's Status of Women Council
  - Stella's Circle
  - YWCA St. John's

### Community Advocates

- Angelica Vincent (2020-21)
- Charlotte Winters-Fost (2020- )
- Curtis Blackman Mpame (2021-22)

- Daphne March (2020- )
- Draco Dunphy (2020- )
- Jordan Lawrence (2020- )
- Lisa Smith (2021- )
- Max Liboiron (2021-22)
- Michael Lannon (2020-22)
- Sharon Harvey (2021-22)
- Susan Onalik (2022- )

### Contributors

The full list of Contributors to this Action Plan can be found at [Appendix B](#).





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## A Vision for the Future



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

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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 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 have been cross-referenced with the TRC Calls to Action, the MMIWG Calls for Justice, and the principles of UNDRIP. A full list of our Calls for Change and their alignment with TRC, MMIWG, and UNDRIP can be found at [Appendix C](#).

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 this 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**

**Achieving the lasting systemic change that First Voice envisions begins with decolonizing education, training, and employment. Ensuring the delivery of appropriate content on the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador is critical not only for challenging racist attitudes but also for ensuring that all residents and citizens fully understand what decolonization is, why it is needed, and how best to go about achieving it. This is the truth that must precede reconciliation.**

All across Canada Indigenous people are overrepresented in terms of unemployment,<sup>11</sup> and underrepresented in postsecondary education programs.<sup>12</sup> Decolonizing education, particularly at the post-secondary level, will help to reduce these disparities in key areas, such as government and the professions. By further supporting efforts to decolonize the workplace, First Voice aims to ensure

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11 Statistics Canada, "Labour force characteristics by region and detailed indigenous group" (2022). Available online at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1410036501>.

12 Statistics Canada, "The educational attainment of Aboriginal peoples in Canada" (2011). Available online at [https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003\\_3-eng.cfm](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-012-x/99-012-x2011003_3-eng.cfm).

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that urban Indigenous people have an equal opportunity to become leaders and decision-makers, both inside and outside government.

The complete list of our Calls for Change in this Action Area can be Found at page 25.

## Action Area 2: Housing and Homelessness

**Poverty, intergenerational trauma, and a lack of adequate and culturally appropriate programs and services drive many urban Indigenous people into homelessness. In the St. John's metro region, Indigenous people are twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to the non-Indigenous population. The lack of safe, secure, and affordable housing only exacerbates the vulnerabilities experienced by Indigenous people.<sup>13</sup>**

In seeking to advance the overall goal of ensuring that all members of the St. John's urban Indigenous community are able to access safe, secure, and affordable housing, First Voice will focus on both improving the quality of services that are available to members of the urban Indigenous community who are experiencing homelessness while also supporting existing efforts to end homelessness altogether by addressing its root causes.

Key components of the Calls for Change in this Action Area include ensuring that decision-makers at the municipal and provincial levels have access to the demographic data that they need to develop sound, research-based public policy; educating members of the urban Indigenous community on their rights as tenants; providing the necessary tools, training, and guidance documents to appropriate stakeholders, such as private and public service providers; and challenging systemic racism in the rental market.

Coordinated action within our own community and at all levels of government is essential for ending homelessness. For this reason, First Voice is committed to supporting national advocacy efforts and campaigns to achieve innovative and sweeping policy change, such as calls for the federal government to implement an urban Indigenous-specific housing strategy and enact a universal basic income.

The complete list of our Calls for Change in this Action Area can be Found at page 26.

## Action Area 3: Infrastructure and Service Delivery

**Part of the ongoing legacy of colonialism in St. John's is a cityscape where urban Indigenous people are not well represented in public spaces. Such systemic under-representation – and at times even outright erasure – of a thriving urban Indigenous community helps reproduce the widespread belief among residents that there are few Indigenous people who live in St. John's, or even other parts of the province. The view that there are “no Indians in Newfoundland,” as Joey Smallwood declared in 1949, remains disturbingly common.<sup>14</sup>**

First Voice seeks to challenge these colonialist assumptions by improving the visibility of Indigenous Peoples in general, and the urban Indigenous community in particular, throughout the City of St. John's. As a result, the Calls for Change in this Action Area are far-reaching: they include decolonizing architecture, monuments, place names, green spaces, education, healthcare services, and municipal policies and bylaws.

The complete list of our Calls for Change in this Action Area can be Found at page 27.

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<sup>13</sup> CBC News, “Solution to Indigenous homelessness in St. John's about more than shelter, say housing advocates,” March 15, 2022. Available online at <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/indigenous-homelessness-st-johns-nl-1.6380243>.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example: John Nick Jeddore, “Getting Recognized,” *The Independent*, October 21, 2011. Available online at <https://theindependent.ca/traditional-voice/getting-recognized/>.

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## Action Area 4: Justice and Human Rights

The over-representation of Indigenous people in Canada's criminal justice system is at a crisis point. Despite making up only 4.1% of the overall Canadian population, Indigenous people represent 28% of the total inmate population – and Indigenous incarceration rates continue to rise year-over-year.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Indigenous people are vastly more likely to be the victims of crime. Indigenous women, for example, are 12 times more likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to go missing or to be murdered.<sup>16</sup>

The 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples revealed that the colonialist outlook underlying Canadian criminal laws, policies, and practices was the greatest determinant of this overrepresentation.<sup>17</sup> To address colonialism within the justice system,

First Voice will work to ensure the availability of appropriate cultural and security supports for urban Indigenous people while at the same time pushing for systemic change in policing and the legal system at large. First Voice is committed to advocating for and supporting work that aims to bring all laws at every level of government into alignment with the minimum human rights standards for Indigenous people as set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). These standards include commitments from all levels of government to respect the inherent rights to self-determination and sovereignty of Indigenous Peoples, including the urban Indigenous community.

The complete list of our Calls for Change in this Action Area can be Found at page 28.



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15 Scott Clark, "Overrepresentation of Indigenous People in the Canadian Criminal Justice System: Causes and Responses" (2019). Available online at <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/oip-cjs/oip-cjs-en.pdf>.

16 Marion Buller et al. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019), Vol. 1a, p. 55. Available online at [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final\\_Report\\_VoL\\_1a-1.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_VoL_1a-1.pdf).

17 Department of Justice, "State of the Criminal Justice System Dashboard: Understanding the Overrepresentation of Indigenous People in the Criminal Justice System," (2022). Available online at <https://www.justice.gc.ca/socjs-esjp/en/ind-aut/uo-cs>.



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# Achieving Our Vision

## Our Commitment

To achieve our vision, First Voice commits to engaging Partners, Contributors, and supporters in our planning while regularly tracking progress on each Call for Change to ensure that our priorities and strategies remain relevant and effective. We will participate in existing committees, support existing projects, and amplify the voices of any groups and individuals whose values align with ours and who are calling for the same kinds of changes that are described in this Action Plan.

First Voice will aim not to reproduce any work that is already underway to advance truth and reconciliation that is in line with our Calls for Change. Rather, we will work with the community to develop precise timelines, build strategic partnerships, and secure the necessary resources to achieve each of our Calls for Change.

## A Sharply Focused Approach: Advancing Change through Action Circles

At times, organizations – even with the best intentions – can become distracted by day-to-day work and lose sight of their actual mission. There is always a risk that what appears urgent will displace what is important. To ensure that our focus remains sharp and progress continues toward realizing our Calls for Change, we commit to establishing dedicated **Action Circles** to advance work on specific Calls for Change or groups of closely related Calls.

Every Action Circle will have clear terms of reference to guide its work, with members drawn from First Voice Partners, Community

Advocates, Contributors, and supporters who have a stake in the relevant Calls for Change. In close collaboration with the Partnership Table, all Action Circles will be responsible for defining more detailed goals and objectives tied to their Calls for Change and establishing their own measures of success.

They will carry out their work in a way that is consistent with the five values that are articulated in our Coalition Charter and will approach the Calls for Change within the context of the three common themes that emerged throughout our engagements with community: culture and storytelling, health and wellness, and truth and reconciliation.

These Action Circles will be established by (and held accountable to) the Partnership Table as community and organizational relationships develop, as changing circumstances warrant, as opportunities present themselves, and as resources become available. We have already successfully piloted this approach with the establishment of the First Voice Working Group on Police Oversight seeking the realization of Call for Change 39.<sup>19</sup>

## Sparking Change: Our Approach to Advocacy

Recognizing that truth must come before reconciliation, First Voice has already adopted a strong advocacy position on some of our Calls for Change, such as 39 and 40. Our advocacy efforts, now and into the future, will aim to educate policy- and decision-makers as well as the broader public about the history and ongoing legacy of colonialism in Newfoundland

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<sup>19</sup> See: First Voice, Building Trust, Restoring Confidence: MMIWG Recommendations for Strengthening Police Oversight in Newfoundland and Labrador (October 2022). Available online at <https://firstvoicenc.ca/site/uploads/2022/12/Building-Trust-Restoring-Confidence-Final-Report-Second-Printing.pdf>.

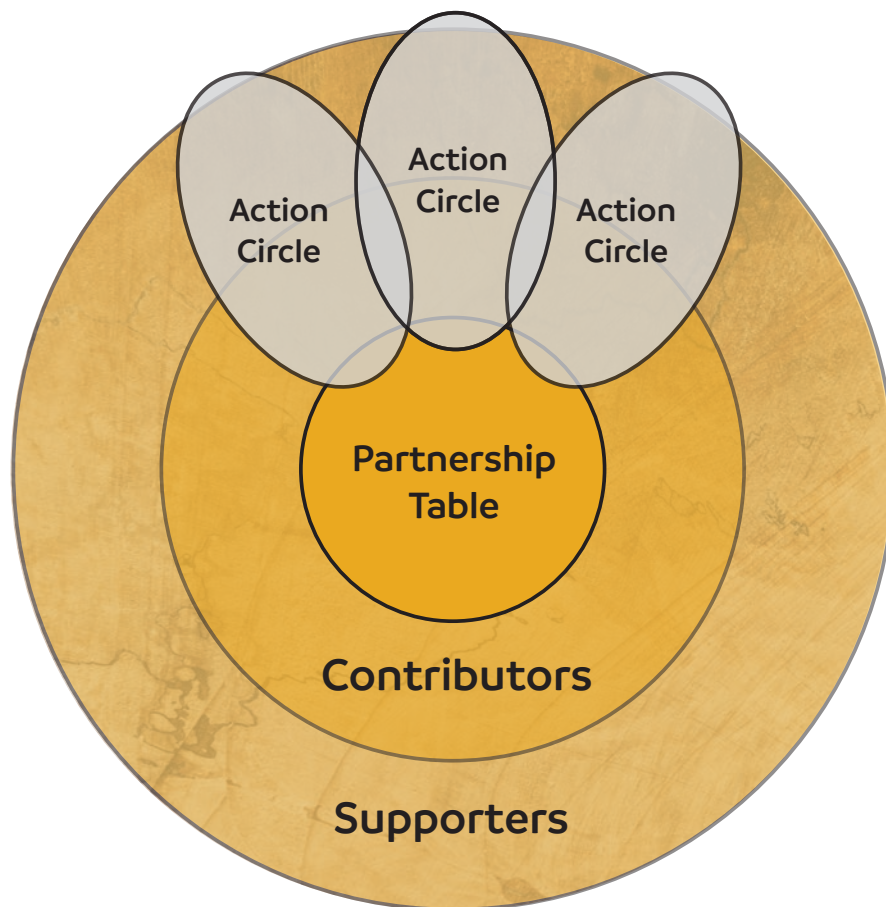
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and Labrador. At the same time, we will remain solution-oriented by highlighting the ways in which our Calls for Change seek to build a better future for all residents of St. John's, and indeed all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Our advocacy approach will be firmly grounded in relationship-building, including with those who may hold views that are different from our own. We commit to maintaining an open and ongoing dialogue with anyone who is willing to engage with us and the St. John's urban Indigenous community in a respectful way. On a political level, this will often mean working with our Partners to engage with elected officials and other government entities to push for the kind of meaningful and lasting change that is described in this Action Plan. We will hold

bilateral meetings, participate in relevant committees, and conduct regular follow-ups with decision-makers.

In cases where decision-makers – whether in government or elsewhere – prove unable to act on our Calls for Change, we will remain open to collaborating with them to secure whatever support they may need. In cases where they are unwilling to act, we will mobilize our networks and organize at the grassroots level until our Calls are addressed. We will do so by engaging members of St. John's City Council and members of the Opposition in the House of Assembly, and by leveraging traditional and social media to build public support. In all of our advocacy efforts, we will remain committed to centring and amplifying urban Indigenous voices wherever we can.



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## Monitoring and Review

No matter what the project, measuring impact and progress toward key milestones is critical. First Voice commits to regularly collecting information about, and publicly reporting on, our activities. We will also review and assess our progress in terms of key performance indicators to measure the impact of our work. These processes will ensure that we remain accountable to the urban Indigenous community while also allowing us to learn and adjust course as needed throughout the lifecycle of this Action Plan.

The Partnership Table commits to an annual review of the Action Plan. More work still needs to be done in defining with more detail the relative priorities, timelines, responsibilities, and actions associated with the Calls for Change in each Action Area. This work will involve developing and designing the systems to track, measure, and report on the Plan's Action Areas. Internally, this work might involve reporting to the First Voice Partnership Table semi-annually with an annual outcome of providing a public update report for the St. John's urban Indigenous community. Then, where necessary, First Voice will review, refresh, add to, and celebrate the successes of the Action Plan to demonstrate our continued commitment to advancing truth and reconciliation in St. John's.

Commitment to this Action Plan requires all stakeholders – including Partners, Community Advocates, Contributors, and supporters – to have a shared understanding of common goals and responsibilities. Public reporting and updates to this document will include quantitative measurements and qualitative data related to short-, medium-, and long-term objectives and goals.





# **Calls for Change**





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

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## 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.
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.

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## 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 Peoples' 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 the 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*.<sup>18</sup>
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.

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<sup>18</sup> See Appendix D.



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## 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.

# Appendices



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# Appendix A: First Voice Coalition Charter

Adopted on February 24, 2020 // Updated on December 14, 2022

## VISION

First Voice envisions a world where the inherent rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador are respectfully recognized and actively supported by all.

## MANDATE

First Voice is a coalition that exists to serve the St. John's urban Indigenous community. In carrying out its work, First Voice shall always seek to retain and prioritize the values, perspectives, and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples.

## VALUES

In pursuit of its Vision, First Voice shall be guided by the following Values:

- **Respect:** A process of honouring the land, the waters, and all the peoples and cultures who inhabit it, including Indigenous knowledge and teachings.
- **Self-Determination:** An affirmation of the inherent right of all Indigenous Peoples to determine their own futures and to participate fully and actively in all decisions that affect them.
- **Holism:** A recognition of the essential interconnectedness of all things and a striving for balance and harmony with respect to the mind, body, and spirit.
- **Collaboration:** A commitment to include all voices and perspectives and to work together in an open and transparent way.
- **Humility:** A willingness to trust, engage with, and learn from those with diverse experiences and perspectives.

## OBJECTIVES

The major Objectives of First Voice include:

- Leading, coordinating, and promoting the implementation of the coalition's Calls for Change as set out in *Our Shared Vision: A Path toward Truth and Reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023-33* and producing annual scorecards to measure and publicize progress;
- Promoting and supporting the implementation of 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);
- Advocating alongside the St. John's urban Indigenous community for systemic change in the areas of public policy and service delivery;
- Strengthening relationships and sharing knowledge between and among rights-holders, stakeholders, and decision-makers; and
- Organizing public events to engage the broader community on urban Indigenous issues.

## MEMBERSHIP

### i. Composition

First Voice welcomes the participation of all who are committed to advancing its Vision, Mandate, Values, and Objectives. This includes:

- Federal and provincial departments and agencies;
- Municipal governments;
- Indigenous governments and organizations;
- Community organizations;
- Businesses and business organizations; and
- Individuals.

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## ii. Roles

Membership in First Voice varies based on organizational affiliation and level of commitment. It consists of the following roles:

- a. Partners:** Organizations that agree to participate actively and regularly in the coalition, including contributing to its governance and strategic direction, for a period of at least two years. Partners may also be expected to make material contributions from time to time to support the coalition's work. Terms of membership for Partners are renewable.
- b. Contributors:** Organizations that agree to participate in a narrower capacity, such as serving on one or more Action Circles or Working Groups. No specific term of membership is required for Contributors.
- c. Community Advocates:** Individuals without specific organizational affiliations who agree to serve for a specific period of time and to participate actively and regularly in the coalition. Terms of membership for Community Advocates are renewable.
- d. Special Members:** Individuals with or without specific organizational affiliations whose rights, responsibilities, and terms of membership are determined by the Partnership Table on a case-by-case basis.

In addition, First Voice may from time to time invite other individuals or organizational representatives to participate in the coalition as non-member **Observers**. There are no specific rights or responsibilities associated with such status.

## iii. Representation

All Partners and Contributors shall designate a single Principal Representative to serve on their behalf at the coalition. Principal Representatives must be either decision-makers or influencers within their own organizations. They are responsible for the following duties:

- Preparing for and participating in all meetings as required;
- Representing the interests and perspective of one's own organization at the coalition;
- Moving information shared at the coalition through one's own organization;
- Undertaking to learn about the Indigenous cultures of Newfoundland and Labrador; and
- Promoting action within one's own organization and the broader community in pursuit of the coalition's Vision and Objectives.

Principal Representatives may further designate a single Alternate Representative to carry out any or all of the above duties from time to time. This includes orienting Alternates and keeping them informed of coalition business. Neither Community Advocates nor Special Members may designate Alternates.

## iv. Admission

The process for admitting new members depends on their desired role. An organization wishing to join as a Partner must be nominated by a current Partner and then be confirmed by the Partnership Table. An organization wishing to join as a Contributor must be invited by a current Partner. An individual wishing to join either as a Community Advocate or as a Special Member must be nominated by a current Partner and then be confirmed by the Partnership Table.

## v. Code of Conduct

Everyone who participates in First Voice agrees to abide by its **Code of Conduct**.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Available online at <https://firstvoicenl.ca/documents/>.



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## STRUCTURE

First Voice shall carry out its work through the following bodies:

### i. Partnership Table

Comprising all Partners and Community Advocates, the Partnership Table serves as the coalition's general decision-making body. It may designate from among its members up to two Co-Leads to serve as First Voice representatives on specific issues or projects. The Partnership Table shall meet on a monthly schedule, or as otherwise determined by its members.

### ii. Action Circles

In the interests of efficiency and focus, work to advance the coalition's Calls for Change shall be led by designated Action Circles established at the discretion of the Partnership Table. Participation in all Action Circles shall be open to all First Voice members as defined in this Charter and must include at least one organizational Partner and one Community Advocate. All Action Circles shall operate on the basis of clear terms of reference as defined by their own membership and as approved by the Partnership Table.

### iii. Working Groups

From time to time, the Partnership Table may strike ad-hoc Working Groups to address a specific question or to coordinate specific projects or events. Working Groups are not standing committees and an end date for their work should be specified upon their formation. The composition of Working Groups shall be determined by the Partnership Table.

### iv. Assemblies

Regular assemblies of all Partners, Contributors, Community Advocates, and Special Members shall be convened to share updates on the coalition's work and to engage members of the broader Indigenous community and the general public. Assemblies shall take place on a quarterly schedule, or as otherwise determined by the Partnership Table.

## DECISION-MAKING

### i. Process

First Voice shall adopt an inclusive and collaborative process that ensures all participants have the opportunity to share their perspectives with the group before any substantive decision is made. Participants shall endeavour to achieve consensus, meaning that everyone:

- Feels they have been heard;
- Understands the reasons for the decision and the need to take action; and
- Can support the final outcome, even if they personally hold an opposing view.

Observers are not entitled to participate in or be present during the decision-making process.

### ii. Quorum

No substantive decision shall be made at any meeting of the Partnership Table, Action Circles, or Working Groups unless a majority of Indigenous members who are entitled to attend are present.

## SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

Alongside Indigenous Services Canada, First Light is a Lead Partner in First Voice. Through its Research and Strategic Partnerships Division, First Light shall provide all necessary secretariat support and hold accountability to all funders.

The Research and Strategic Partnerships Division is responsible for the following duties:

- Coordinating and chairing all meetings, including compiling and circulating agendas, meeting minutes, and other meeting papers in a timely manner;
- Facilitating information-sharing between and among participants and other stakeholders, including completing and disseminating reports;
- Identifying funding opportunities and developing appropriate proposals;

- 
- Performing research to support the coalition's decision-making;
  - Implementing the decisions of the coalition;
  - Ensuring compliance with this *Coalition Charter* and the *Code of Conduct*; and
  - Serving as spokespersons for First Voice as necessary and appropriate.

## AMENDMENTS

This ***Coalition Charter*** is intended to be a living document. It may be amended in writing after discussion at any regular meeting of the Partnership Table and ratification at the following regular meeting.

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## Appendix B: List of Contributor Organizations

The following organizations served as Contributors in the development of First Voice as a coalition and the Calls for Change that are included in its Action Plan:

- Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation
- Choices for Youth
- Community Sector Council NL
- Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Department of Health and Community Services
- Department of Justice and Public Safety
- End Homelessness St. John's
- Food First NL
- Indigenous Affairs Secretariat
- Innu Nation
- Mind the Gap Consulting
- Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador
- Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network
- Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour
- Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation
- Safe Harbour Outreach Project
- Service Canada
- Trades NL
- Unifor
- Violence Prevention Avalon East
- Workforce Development Secretariat

## Appendix C: Calls for Change Alignment Matrix

The following Alignment Matrix identifies the linkages between First Voice’s Calls for Change and 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 articles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). While recognizing that all residents of the City of St. John’s have a role to play in advancing truth and reconciliation, this Alignment Matrix also identifies key decision-makers who hold power to implement each of the Calls for Change.

No.	Call for Change	Decision-Makers	TRC	MMIWG	UNDRIP
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	10, 62, 63	11.1	13, 15
2	Promote and support the addition of appropriate Indigenous content in early childhood education, including cultural practices, stories, languages, and land-based activities.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	12	2.3	13, 14
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.	Post-Secondary Institutions; Professional Associations	10	7.6	-
4	Promote and support the development of post-secondary courses and degree programs in Indigenous languages.	Post-Secondary Institutions	14, 16	2.2, 2.3	13, 14
5	Promote and support the establishment of designated Indigenous seats in essential post-secondary programs such as health, law, education, engineering, and public policy.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Post-Secondary Institutions	7	-	-
6	Build strategic partnerships to support the development and delivery of sector-specific antiracism training in essential areas such as health, law, education, engineering, and government services.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Professional Associations	57	7.6	-



No.	Call for Change	Decision-Makers	TRC	MMIWG	UNDRIP
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.	Professional Associations	24, 27, 24, 57, 90, 92	17.8	-
8	Promote and support the development, implementation, and enforcement of inclusive human-resources policies.	Businesses	92	-	17
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.	Businesses	92	-	-
10	Support the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people into essential industries and professions such as medicine, law, education, engineering, and government services.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Professional Associations; Businesses	23	1.4, 6.1(iii), 7.7, 9.3, 12.12, 16.8, 16.33	21
11	Lead, support, and coordinate research on the demographics of homelessness in St. John's.	End Homelessness St. John's	-	1.1, 18.24	-
12	Ensure that demographic data drives program evaluation and delivery of services to the homeless population in St. John's.	City of St. John's; End Homelessness St. John's	-	4.1, 4.7, 18.24	-
13	Collaborate with service delivery agencies to ensure that Indigenous residents in nonmarket housing have access to culturally appropriate programming and spaces.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's	-	4.7, 12.7	-
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Businesses	-	4.1	-
15	Promote the implementation of a no-discharge-into-homelessness policy by the provincial government.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	-	18.25	21
16	Support provincial and national efforts to implement a universal basic income.	Community	-	4.5	-

No.	Call for Change	Decision-Makers	TRC	MMIWG	UNDRIP
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.	City of St. John's	-	4.8, 8.1, 17.9	-
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's	-	4.1, 4.7, 12.4	-
19	Decolonize the City of St. John's municipal plan and all related processes, procedures, and policies, including the heritage bylaw.	City of St. John's	79	4.1	31
20	Work with all levels of government to ensure that National Indigenous Peoples' Day is recognized as an official and statutory holiday.	Government of Canada; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's	47, 80	-	-
21	Work with the City of St. John's to Indigenize place names.	City of St. John's	47	-	13
22	Work with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reclaim Indigenous place names.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	47	-	13
23	Promote and support formal Indigenous stewardship of public green spaces in the City of St. John's, such as parks and gardens.	City of St. John's; Community	-	-	25, 26, 29
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's; Community	82	-	-
25	Promote and support the availability of Indigenous healing practices and other appropriate cultural programming within the healthcare system.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	22, 23, 24	7.4	24
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	10, 12	-	-

No.	Call for Change	Decision-Makers	TRC	MMIWG	UNDRIP
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's; Businesses	62, 92	-	-
28	Promote and support efforts to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and other colonialist concepts such as <i>terra nullius</i> .	Community	45, 47	2.4, 6.1, 9.1, 15.2	-
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.	City of St. John's; Community	43	1.2, 2.1	-
30	Ensure that municipal and provincial policy-making is shaped and informed by appropriate demographic data.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's	39, 55	-	-
31	Promote and support urban Indigenous participation on critical governance and advisory boards.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's; Businesses	-	1.4, 9.8, 16.41, 17.14	19
32	Promote and support the expansion of interpretation services that are used locally to include Mi'kmaw, Innu-aimun, and Inuktitut.	Post-Secondary Institutions; Businesses	-	2.1, 2.2	13
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Community	-	-	2
34	Promote and support the full participation of Indigenous businesses, including social enterprises, in government procurement processes at both the municipal and provincial levels.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's; Businesses	92	-	-
35	Ensure the availability of Indigenous cultural programming within the corrections system.	Government of Canada; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	35, 36, 37	5.1, 5.11	-
36	Promote and support the implementation of an Indigenous navigator position within the criminal justice and child welfare systems.	Government of Canada; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	-	5.6, 5.13	-

No.	Call for Change	Decision-Makers	TRC	MMIWG	UNDRIP
37	Promote and support the availability and use of restorative justice programs.	Government of Canada; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; Community	42	5.11, 17.27	-
38	Promote and support the implementation of Gladue reports in sentencing.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	30	5.15, 14.5, 16.28	-
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	-	5.7, 9.2(iii)	-
40	Advocate for the adoption and full implementation of UNDRIP at all levels of government. <sup>21</sup>	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; City of St. John's	43, 44	1.2	1
41	Advocate for the legal recognition of Mi'kmaw, Innu-aimun, and Inuktitut as official languages of Newfoundland and Labrador.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	-	2.2	13
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.	Government of Newfoundland and Labrador	45	-	-

<sup>21</sup> With the passage of Bill C-15 in 2021, work is now underway to implement UNDRIP at the federal level.



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# Appendix D: Declaration in Support of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2020)

Adopted Unanimously (9-0) by St. John's City Council on September 21, 2020.

*In order to promote and strengthen mutually respectful relationships with the urban Indigenous community in St. John's and with all other First Peoples in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the City of St. John's hereby recognizes that:*

- The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, of which the City of St. John's is the capital, exists on the ancestral homelands of the Inuit, the Innu, the Mi'kmaq, and the Beothuk;
- The culture of the Beothuk has been lost forever and can never be recovered;
- Indigenous Peoples continue to endure many hardships and injustices that began with first contact and that have created significant social, economic, and health disparities;
- Indigenous Peoples were excluded from the Terms of Union when Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada in 1949, which limited access to programs and services that otherwise would have been available to them;
- Indigenous Peoples have distinct and diverse histories, cultures, and identities;
- Self-determination is an inherent right of all Indigenous Peoples; and
- St. John's has the fastest growing urban Indigenous population in Canada.
- Recognize and celebrate the many contributions that Indigenous Peoples have made and continue to make to our City, province, and country;
- Maintain membership in First Voice while continuing to build equal partnerships with Indigenous organizations in the City;
- Collaborate with the urban Indigenous community to develop, promote, and implement a shared Community Action Plan and to report annually to Council on progress toward achieving its objectives; and
- Work with all levels of government, including the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Government of Canada, to recognize, support, and advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

*Acting therefore in support of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the City of St. John's hereby declares its commitment to:*

- Support and promote the implementation of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (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);
- Work to decolonize the City by making indigenization and antiracism priorities with respect to its governance, municipal services, and infrastructure;





**FIRST VOICE**  
Urban Indigenous Coalition

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For more information visit  
[www.firstvoicenl.ca](http://www.firstvoicenl.ca)

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