



FIRST VOICE
Urban Indigenous Coalition

Coalition Charter

Adopted February 24, 2020 // Updated 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.

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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, NL (2023-33)* and producing annual scorecards to measure and publicize progress;¹
- 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.

¹ Available online at <https://firstvoicenl.ca/documents/>.

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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.

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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*.²

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.

² Available online at <https://firstvoicenl.ca/documents/>.

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 & Strategic Partnerships Division, First Light shall provide all necessary secretariat support and hold accountability to all funders.

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

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- 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.