




NATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONNECTIVITY INC., (NICI)

Mandate & Governance

This national organization's mandate is to advocate for all remote and rural First Nations across Canada to have access to spectrum and high-speed internet. Please see the attached two (2) background documents relevant to this national organization supported by the National Assembly of First Nations, (AFN) through an AFN Executive Resolution as of April, 2022.

The National Indigenous Connectivity Inc., Board of Directors are made up of FN leadership and business professionals of:

- Christopher, (Chris) Fry, Kwanlin Dun First Nation, Whitehorse, Yukon
- Andrew Victor, Councillor, Cheam First Nation, British Columbia,
- Ryan Robb, CEO, Chiniki First Nation, Stoney Nakoda Calgary, Alberta,
- Leoni Rivers, CEO, NICI, Gitksan/ Squamish Nation, British Columbia & Calgary, Alberta.
- AFN Regional Chief Bobby Cameron, FSIN, Witchehan Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan-TBD
- Chief Michael McLean, Lake Manitoba First Nation, Manitoba
- Grand Council Chief Joel Abram, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (AIAI) Ontario,
- Michael Peters, CEO Glooscap Ventures, Glooscap First Nation, Nova Scotia



In April 2022, the **Assembly of First Nations (AFN)** passed an Executive Resolution supporting a national Indigenous digital consortium. NICI is exemplifying this vision and is aligned with AFN resolution calls for:

- **Indigenous-led Connectivity Solutions** – Urging **Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)** to support NICI in ensuring high-speed internet solutions **developed by First Nations, for First Nations**.
- **Dedicated Federal Funding** – Calling on the **Government of Canada** to create First Nations-specific funding and criteria within the **Universal Broadband Fund**, ensuring long-term investment in Indigenous connectivity initiatives and training.
- **Collaborative Support & Policy Change** – Advocating for **ISC and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)** to work directly with NICI to increase Indigenous service-provider capacities, access to spectrum, market data, and policy frameworks that enable **affordable, community-driven internet solutions**.
- With the **support of 65 First Nations Chiefs** across Canada and **133 First Nations in the East**, NICI has continued to meet with all levels of Government to address its mandate of having all remote and rural First Nations having access to affordable high-speed internet and spectrum for tel-health and tele-education.
- The following **5 Slides provide examples** of why access to high-speed internet is mandatory and why it needs its fiber to be affordable and acquired when building infrastructure and housing on First Nations lands. A sample of a Squamish Nation Resolution on making Elders a priority in Housing Allocations.

Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC)

Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) mandate for First Nations housing is to support First Nations in their self-determination to plan, manage, and deliver housing programs for their communities

While ISC provides significant funding and programs for on-reserve housing, including new construction, renovations, and management capacity, the ultimate responsibility for on-reserve housing rests with First Nations themselves.

Between April 2016 and June 30, 2025, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) made targeted investments totaling \$2.91 billion to support 6,658 housing projects in 611 First Nations communities. This funding is in addition to about \$166 million already provided by ISC every year to First Nations to support a range of housing needs.

ISC's Budget 2022 committed an additional \$223 million over 5 years:

\$157 million as a housing management subsidy to support the critical work of housing managers on reserve
\$66 million over 3 years, beginning in 2024, to enhance housing management capacity on reserve through training, certification and the provision of technical services.

NICI supports rural and remote First Nations to have access to high- speed internet

Source: Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC) Website

State of emergency highlights bigger regional issue, says executive director

Timmins Today reports that with encampments being dismantled in Timmins and overcrowding worsening in remote communities, Mushkegowuk Council says its newly declared state of emergency reflects a crisis that has long been ignored. Mushkegowuk Council CEO Vern Cheechoo spoke with TimminsToday about why the council formally declared a state of emergency on Nov. 17, calling the crisis “ongoing” and worsening across the region. Cheechoo said the decision came as Timmins worked to dismantle an encampment because of snow removal operations, with the city initially setting a Nov. 14 timeline to relocate residents.

“They were afraid that someone could get hurt,” he said. “But they didn't come in there and force anybody out. They worked with the people there and took their time ... They were quite respectful.” Still, he said the dismantling highlighted a bigger regional issue. People experiencing homelessness often arrive in Timmins from remote northern communities, where housing shortages are even more severe. The 2024 Point-in-Time count found that 79 per cent of people experiencing homelessness in Timmins identified as Indigenous. For Cheechoo, the number reflects a system that is failing northern First Nations.

“It's unfortunate, but that's the issue,” he said. “People that don't have homes in their communities come to Timmins and end up on the street. But that's a huge number for us Indigenous people ... We have 26 that are from Attawapiskat alone.”

He said the council has written to political leaders such as Prime Minister Mark Carney, Ontario Premier Doug Ford and multiple federal and provincial ministers to request immediate support. Cheechoo said the crisis highlights a longstanding failure by governments to uphold Treaty 9 commitments guaranteeing housing, health, and safety. “The government has an obligation to meet their fiduciary duties,” he said. “It's tough to work with the government when they say there's no money ... Meanwhile, it's us, the people, that suffer because of that lack of commitment.”

Source: Timmins Today, “State of emergency highlights bigger regional issue, says executive director”

Attawapiskat Project Wins Engineering Award

Northern Ontario Business highlights the recognition of three engineering projects in Northern Ontario that received national acclaim at the 57th annual Canadian Consulting Engineering Awards, held on October 16 in Toronto. These awards, presented by Canadian Consulting Engineer, celebrate excellence, innovation, and imagination in engineering and are considered the highest honor for consulting engineers in Canada.

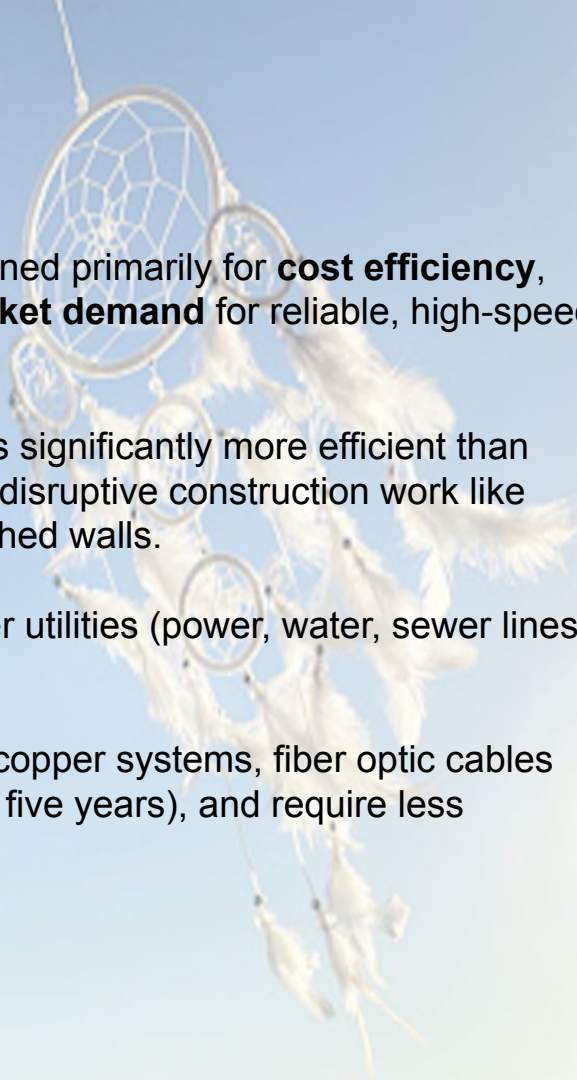
Two projects shared the Engineering a Better Future Award. The first was the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project, led by Hatch, which was completed in 2024. This \$2-billion initiative involved constructing 1,800 kilometers of transmission lines and 22 substations to connect 17 remote First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario to the provincial power grid, thereby eliminating their dependence on diesel-generated electricity.

The second was the Attawapiskat First Nation Emergency Water Supply project, led by WSP. This project successfully installed a new water treatment system in Attawapiskat, preventing the evacuation of 1,500 residents during a water crisis and ending a 17-year boil water advisory.

In the Buildings category, Dillon Consulting received a Top 20 Award of Excellence for revitalizing the Weenusk First Nation Cultural Area in Peawanuck. The project focused on renewing a central gathering space used for powwow celebrations, enhancing cultural and community engagement in the remote community.

Additionally, Associated Engineering was honored in the Special Projects category with a Top 20 Award of Excellence for its report titled Closing the Infrastructure Gap by 2030, prepared for the Assembly of First Nations. The report outlines the infrastructure needs and associated costs required to address critical gaps in housing, clean water, and healthcare across First Nations communities.

Source: Northern Ontario Business, “Attawapiskat project wins engineering award.”



Fiber internet infrastructure should be installed when housing is being planned primarily for **cost efficiency**, to **future-proof** the homes with superior technology, and to meet high **market demand** for reliable, high-speed connectivity.

Avoids Disruptive Retrofitting: Installing fiber during initial construction is significantly more efficient than retrofitting an existing, occupied building, which can involve extensive and disruptive construction work like digging up yards, driveways, and sidewalks, or routing cables through finished walls.

Leverages Existing Work: Fiber can be laid in the same trenches as other utilities (power, water, sewer lines), sharing labor and equipment costs

Long-Term Savings: While initial costs might be comparable to high-end copper systems, fiber optic cables are more durable, have a lifespan of up to 50 years (compared to copper's five years), and require less maintenance, leading to long-term savings.

PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

Title: Squamish Nation Elders Housing Strategic Plan-Priority

Mover (name): Leoni Rivers, SN # 5550074202

Seconder (name): Lenore Baker, SN # 5550179301

Whereas: the Squamish Nations Elders have not been a priority for the Squamish Nation Housing program managed by the Chief and Council. For example, as observed, in Chief & Council's past three housing allocations which reflect on record and in the current Squamish Nation Housing Policy; Elders allocation of only 3 Houses per year when giving other housing categories much higher allocations. and,

Whereas, while the United Nations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) states:

i. Article 21(1) Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including, inter alia, in the areas of education, employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

ii. Article 21(2): states shall take effective measures and; where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of Indigenous Elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.

Therefore, Be It Resolved; that the Squamish Nation develop a Housing strategic plan where the Squamish Nation Elders are the priority when making housing allocations over the next 4 years effective June 2025- June 2029. Direct the Squamish Nation Leadership to urge the Housing Department to work with each other in revising the Squamish Nation Housing Policies and amending the Squamish Nation Housing Allocation Program criteria to better address Squamish Nation Elders' transition into their golden years without the challenges of food security, health issues, medical trips and specifically to secure a safe and secure home, on a limited pension.

Moved By: Leoni Rivers, SN # 5550074202

Seconded By: Lenore Baker, SN # 5550179301

Date: June 01, 2025 - SNPA

Emailed: resolutions@squamish.net April 14, 2025

In Closing:

NICI is an advocacy organization supporting remote and rural First Nations Communities to have access to affordable high-speed internet to have a quality of life that excels in having quick responses to members emergency medical health needs and youth educational tools to succeed in an everyday changing world.

NICI are ordinary people helping each other going forward. For further details on NICI see the links below.

National Indigenous Connectivity Inc.

<https://www.nic-inc.ca/>

NICI submission to ISED:

Comments received on SPB-002-24 - Improving Indigenous Access to Spectrum: Draft Indigenous Priority Window Spectrum Policy Framework

Registration for National Indigenous Connectivity Conference:

National Indigenous Connectivity Conference Tickets, Wed, 25 Feb 2026 at 8:00 AM | Eventbrite

Questions/Answers





Thank You

We appreciate your time, and we hope that you will join us in moving this important initiative forward.

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