



Strategic Plan

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation

2022-2026

Prepared by:



Morris Interactive
it starts with people

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On September 21st and 22nd, 2022, at Temple Gardens Hotel and Spa in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation (ACN) Chief and Council, Senior Management, Department Heads, invited representatives from the RCMP, and Elders participated in two days of strategic planning and training. Those in attendance split into two separate groups—Group one: Chief and Council and Band Administration, and Group two: Program Managers and Coordinators—and alternated between “Lateral Violence to Lateral Kindness” training with Buffalo Spirit Consulting, and Strategic Planning, with Morris Interactive’s Facilitators, Sherry Jimmy and Carmen Barry. Council and Administration focused on three strategic priorities: Governance and Operations; Culture, Community, and Traditions; and Economic Development. Program Managers and Coordinators focused on the remaining priorities: Housing, Lands, and Infrastructure; Education and Employment; and Health and Healing.

The strategic planning sessions on September 21st and 22nd, 2022 built and expanded upon the Strategic Plan created in 2021 and the strategic directions and priorities established as a foundation for moving forward to 2026. The purpose of the Moose Jaw session was to further define priorities and establish clear, actionable goals for the future. The planning process focused on a review of the vision, mission, and values, and an update and validation of goals and objectives for six strategic priorities:

- Governance and Operations
- Education and Employment
- Health and Healing
- Economic Development
- Culture, Community, and Traditions
- Housing, Lands, and Infrastructure

The Strategic Plan is outlined as follows:

- Participants reviewed, revised, and updated the Vision, Mission, and Values Statements
- Participants built on the priorities from the previous strategic plan to develop clear objectives. In keeping with the planning process, they identified, prioritized, and assigned actions and tasks, established timelines, and agreed upon desired outcomes.



THE ACN STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2021 - 2026 SUMMARY

MISSION

Protect, preserve, and exert our Treaty and Inherent Rights, reflect the Nêhiyaw Values and Tipi Teachings in everything we do, and work together to improve the quality of life of our people and community.

VISION

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation is a safe, healthy, and prosperous community rooted in Nêhiyaw culture, traditions, and values: "Let us not think of ourselves, but of our children's children"

Governance and Operations

ACTION ITEMS

- Structures, Policies for document storage, delegation of authority, conflict of interest, risk assessment, etc.
- Terms of Reference for C&C, Boards, and committees
- Enhanced Member-centered decision-making/Youth inclusion/ Greater role for Elders
- Past Chiefs' knowledge transfer

Culture, Community, and Traditions

ACTION ITEMS

- More culture camps
- Continue building the arbor
- Incorporate the nêhiyaw laws
- Interagency approach
- Land-based learning to all members
- Support and engage our Elders
- Increased number of Cree speakers

Economic Development

ACTION ITEMS

- Grow economic development
- Create a business charter
- Create partnerships through ACD
- Focus on financial reporting
- Economic benefit for members
- Increase opportunity for Members employment
- Support entrepreneurship

Housing, Lands & Infrastructure

ACTION ITEMS

- Create housing through planning and policy
- Communication with Membership
- Collect accurate housing numbers
- Hire a community planner
- GPS land mapping
- Sovereignty and Inherent rights
- Environmental stewardship

Education and Employment

ACTION ITEMS

- Ensure all types of learners succeed
- Focus on upgrading
- Pursue enriched programs
- Develop Cree/nêhiyaw curriculum
- 5-year education strategic plan
- Ensure members have the skills training they need
- Establish Mentorship programs
- Home building program

Health and Healing

ACTION ITEMS

- Implement a plan for supportive and effective health services
- 5-year strategic health plan
- Mental health emergency/EMR Training
- ACN Health Information System
- X-ray services
- Focus on strength-based
- Interagency approach to health

VALUES

Respect: kistêyihitamowin – P[^]U[^]Ŧ[^]CJΔ[^]

Protocol: age appropriate conduct – ka-ispitisihk isihcikêwin – 6 Δ[^]ΛŦŦ^x ΔŦ^uŦ⁹Δ[^]

Humility: tapahtêyimisowin – C<^uŦŦŦ^Δ

Sharing: nikwatisiwin êkwa mâtinamâkêwin – σ^b·ŦŦ^Δ· ∇^b· LŦ^ΔL⁹Δ[^]

Faith: tâpokêyihitamowin – Ć>⁹Ŧ[^]CJΔ[^]

Kindness: kisêwâtisiwin – P^ΔŦ^Δ·ŦŦ^Δ

Passing on teachings: âniskô-kiskinwahamâkêwin – Δ^σ·Ŧ^Δ P^ΔŦ^Δ·L^ΔŦ⁹Δ[^]



BACKGROUND

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation (herein referred to as 'ACN') is located in Treaty 6 Territory near Shell Lake, Saskatchewan, 72 kilometers west of Prince Albert, and is home to a population of 3,847 members who live both on and off the First Nation. The Nation is governed by a Chief and Council who serve the growing population in the areas of education, employment, housing, lands, health services, culture, and business development. The focus of ACN's governance and administration is grounded in the words of Chief Ahtahkakoop: "Let us not think of ourselves, but of our children's children." That belief was evident throughout the strategic planning session, as all participants expressed a commitment to ensuring children, families, and all members of ACN are supported now and in the future.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This Strategic Plan is a blueprint for focusing on priorities, engaging the community in language and culture, supporting all members in health and healing, strengthening education, increasing employment within the membership, and ensuring strong housing, infrastructure, and purposeful stewardship of lands. In an overview of expectations and outcomes at the beginning of day one, participants expressed the need to find common ground and follow through on the plan.

"The strategic plan. . . is a workplan. . . a living document. It's not just for right now, it's for the future" – Kerrie Gladue, Band Administrator

This plan builds on the strategic plan created in 2021 by adding detail and depth that will help to bring the established strategic goals of member-centered governance and leadership to life. It presents a vision for 2022 and beyond. It is intended to evolve as the needs of the members and community grow. Changes to the plan will be assessed and updated as needed.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

Previous strategic planning identified two distinct goals for the strategic priorities of Governance and Operations; Culture, Community, and Traditions; and Economic Development. Chief and Council and Administration reviewed the goals for each priority and developed action items that contribute to the advancement of each goal.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

Goal 1: Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation is Inclusive and Responsive to all Ahtahkakoop Members

- Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation’s government is member-centered, consults meaningfully, and demonstrates transparency and accountability. Members see how their input is considered and understand their individual roles and responsibilities in contributing to good decisions.

Action Items:

Establish Governance Structures, Policies, and Terms of Reference:

- a. Chief and Council is to develop and adopt a Governance Policy
- b. Review existing Terms of Reference for Chief and Council and all boards and committees
- c. Finalize existing organizational chart and create a chart outlining the delegation of authority to ensure roles and responsibilities are clear to all, including Membership
- d. Eliminate micromanaging
- e. Create orientation training for new members of Chief and Council, boards, and committees
- f. Ensure there is a central, secure place for all documents that follows OCAP principles [the ownership, control, access and protection of Band and member information], while ensuring that members have access to information and data about themselves and their community where appropriate
- g. Disclose conflict of interest through a *Conflict-of-Interest Disclosure Form*
- h. Create and follow a Conflict and Dispute resolution process
- i. Conduct a risk assessment, define risk tolerance, and develop a Risk Management policy
- j. Ensure agendas are created and minutes are kept for all meetings [Improve minute-taking process and ensure attendance, honorariums, etc., are recorded



and communicated appropriately]. Governance Policy and Operational goals will include frequency of meetings, templates for agendas, security of minutes, etc.

Goal 2: Ahtakakoop Cree Nation is a Leader in Governance

- Ahtakakoop Cree Nation, as a First Nations government, is innovative, creative, and responsible for how it governs, making evidence-based decisions in the best interests of members in accordance with Treaty Rights and obligations, while also effectively discharging responsibilities to members, leaseholders, and external partners, seeking integrated and culturally designed approaches.

Action Items:

Enhance Member-centered decision-making, with Chief and Council being the elected body representing all members, in accordance with Treaty Rights, Culture and Traditions:

- a. Identify and define Youth inclusion and involvement in the governance structure
- b. Define the role of Elders in Governance and Administration, Boards and Committees, with consideration to a Council of Elders, Elder's Conference, etc.
- c. Create a method for past Chiefs' knowledge transfer/history
- d. Develop an asset inventory that includes Elders and Knowledge Keepers

CULTURE, COMMUNITY, AND TRADITIONS

Goal 1: Members Feel Connected to Culture

- Ahtakakoop Cree Nation members are connected to our culture, which is flourishing and practiced according to traditional and family teachings that have been passed down by our Elders.

Action Items:

Strengthen Culture as a way of being:

- a. Expand culture camps to run several times a year
- b. Continue building the arbor
- c. Incorporate the Nêhiyaw laws
- d. Teach our history—culture and traditions—the oral history of Ahtakakoop
- e. Continue to utilize the cultural worker in the Recreation department (Powwow dancer)
- f. Develop and implement an Oskâpêwis program



Goal 2: The Community is Cohesive

- Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation members are a cohesive and united community, with strong connections between members living on and off our Lands, and who have constructive relations with non-members.

Action Items:

Develop an interagency approach to culture and community:

- a. Incorporate culture into all departments and ensure it is supported by leadership
- b. Offer land-based learning to all members, not just children and youth
- c. Incorporate more cultural involvement in the local media through the radio station in the community

Goal 3: Elders are Respected

- Elders are respected, supported, and central to the Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation as the keepers of our wisdom, knowledge, and history as the living connection to the past, serving as teachers, healers, advisors, and counsellors.

Action Items:

Support and engage our Elders:

- a. Work to bring our Elders together, listen to them, and then incorporate that knowledge into leadership, operations, and programming
- b. Create a permanent Elders group
- c. Plan for the Elders conference

Goal 4: Our Language is Restored

- Cree is alive and well, spoken throughout the community and used in Ahtahkakoop government as a way of holding close the legacy of our forefathers.

Action Items:

Increase the number of Cree/nêhiyaw speakers in the community:

- a. Research Cree/nêhiyaw language apps
- b. Offer Cree/nêhiyaw classes/online classes
- c. Create a system of Cree/nêhiyaw words for everything
- d. Work with pre-K and the Education department to support language instruction
- e. Assign Cree speaking Elders to young people who wish to learn for 6 to 8 months. If possible, incorporate syllabics in learning
- f. Look for funding to support language learning



- g. Find ways to make learning the Cree/nêhiyaw language fun
- h. Find ways to incentivize Cree/nêhiyaw speaking at home
- i. Label the signage in the community in Cree
- j. Provide a Cree word of the day/language contests on the radio

Goal 5: We are Stewards of the Land, Water, and Resources

- Ahtakakoop Cree Nation upholds its responsibility to future generations by actively maintaining and strengthening our spiritual ties to the land, water, and resources of our traditional and occupied territories.

Action Items:

Strengthen ties to the land, water, and resources for all members:

- a. Create places off-reserve for land-based learning - sacred and unique places which are home to different animals, different plants, etc.
- b. Continue to utilize the *Treaties, Language, Culture (TLC) Program*
- c. Increase access and utilization of the Cultural Center including Sweats in the ACFS (Ahtakakoop Child and Family Services) program

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal 1: Economic Development Reflects our Values and Ethics

- Ahtakakoop Cree Nation has a strategic approach to economic development that is ethical, sustainable, and profitable, in a holistic and interconnected manner that promotes the community's overall vision, goals and priorities.

Action Items:

Grow economic development (ED) in a way that supports our values:

- a. Create a business charter that outlines the roles and responsibilities of Chief and Council and ED entities and businesses in economic development
- b. Create partnerships through Ahtakakoop Cree Developments
- c. Revive the Development company's Articles of Incorporation and ensure there is sufficient financial reporting to leadership and membership
- d. Create a succession plan
- e. Develop and adhere to standards of practice for document use and retention
- f. Target markets outside of our community/more off-reserve/urban businesses
- g. Develop more skilled labour, create jobs/opportunities, etc.
- h. Set indicators for success



- i. Use Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) to invest in sound business ventures—use those funds for economic development purposes
- j. Look at feasibility studies, business plans, risk assessments—all opportunities for CORP (Community Opportunity Readiness Program) money, with consideration to Investigation in owning a Tim Horton’s at the junction, gas station along the Trans-Canada from Swift Current to the US Border, gravel and aggregate, mineral exploration, recycling plant, taking natural assets and monetizing them where appropriate
- k. Reduce economic leakage

Goal 2: All Members see the Benefits of Economic Development

- The economic development initiatives of ACN yield returns that provide a meaningful benefit to all current and future members.

Action Items:

Create real economic benefit for Band Members;

- a. Look at economic development as more than just business opportunities— increase ways it can benefit the membership
- b. Invest in businesses or partnerships/alliances where Members can be employed
- c. Support entrepreneurs in the community
- d. Ensure economic development communication and accountability to the membership

HOUSING, LANDS, AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Goal 1: Ahtahkakoop Members Have a Home

- There are a variety of housing types and ownership options on Ahtahkakoop Lands suited to the needs of all Ahtahkakoop Members.

Action Items:

Create more housing opportunities through planning and policy:

- a. Communicate newly passed Housing Policy to the Membership and address potential challenges/Implement new policy
- b. Create a plan to get and maintain accurate housing numbers—houses, repairs required, number housed, number waiting for housing, overcrowding, etc.



Goal 2: Members Have Access to the High-Quality Facilities They Need

- There are high-quality facilities on Ahtakakoop Lands that build community, improve quality of life, and enable Ahtakakoop Members to flourish.

Action Items:

Implement an integrated approach to community buildings and infrastructure:

- a. Utilize an interagency approach (involving Health, Justice, Housing, Emergency Response, etc.) to community infrastructure planning
- b. Look for planning dollars to close the infrastructure gap
- c. Hire a community planner
- d. Establish GPS land mapping
- e. Ensure Safety of buildings— investigate Community Safety Officer program and CSO services

Goal 3: Lands are Managed With the Future in Mind

- Land is available for future housing and other infrastructure needs.

Action Items:

Strengthen Land management:

- a. Exercise sovereignty and Inherent rights over our lands
- b. Practice Environmental stewardship
- c. Adhere to a Land Use Plan
- d. Protect Traditional Land Holders

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Goal 1: Members are Educated

- Ahtakakoop Cree Nation children are thriving at school and realizing their potential at all grade levels, and Members have the knowledge, confidence, and support to pursue and achieve their education goals through life-long learning.

Action Items:

Ensure all types of learners succeed

- a. Focus on upgrading for students who fall through the cracks in Grade 12
- b. Pursue Gifted/Enriched programs
- c. Ensure a standard that all grades get 20 hours per month of land-based learning
- d. Increase language in education



- e. Develop our own Cree/nêhiyaw curriculum
- f. Create a 5-year education strategic plan

Goal 2: Members are Skilled

- Ahtakakoop Members have the skills and training to pursue rewarding careers, including in the highest management positions at Ahtakakoop Cree Nation and off-reserve.

Action Items:

Ensure members have the skills training they need:

- a. Focus on upgrading for students who fall through the cracks in Grade 12
- b. Establish Mentorship programs
- c. Partner with Housing to implement a home building program

Goal 3: Members are Employed and Self-Reliant

- Ahtakakoop Members have meaningful employment opportunities

Action Items:

Increase opportunities for Membership to become educated, skilled, and employed

- a. Implement a plan for Lifelong learning—'cradle to grave'
- b. Implement an Interagency approach
- c. Create opportunities for employment

HEALTH AND HEALING

Goal 1: Members are Healing

- Ahtakakoop Members are healing from generations of cultural genocide, colonization, and residential schools, breaking the cycle of oppression and addiction, and have the support to achieve mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being.

Action Items:

Implement a plan for supportive and effective health services:

- a. Create a 5-year strategic health plan
- b. Establish Emergency response plans and training for mental health emergencies
- c. Establish protocols for traumatic incidents
- d. Provide Safe work environments for health staff, including confidentiality/OHS training/prevention policy for workplace harassment



- e. Establish an ACN Health Information System that enables access to the Saskatchewan Health Authority digital files
- f. Provide EMR training for staff plus an IT position to support the Electronic Medical Record
- g. Bring in x-ray services
- h. Implement Clinical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Training

Goal 2: Members are Confident and Healthy

- Ahtakakoop Members of all ages are healthy and active and have access to holistic and integrated programs that empower them to achieve their personal well-being goals.

Action Items:

Build Capacity, confidence, and support

- a. Encourage high school students to pursue a career in health care
- b. Focus on strength-based approach

Goal 3: Members Have Balanced Lifestyles

- Ahtakakoop Members balance recreation, family, work, self-care, and spirituality.

Action Items:

Enhance steps toward holistic health:

- a. Implement an Interagency approach to health
- b. Recognize the holistic value of each member



CONCLUSION

Ahtahkakoop Cree Nation Chief and Council, Senior Management, Department Heads, invited representatives from the RCMP, and Elders came together to address the health of the Nation, with a distinct focus on community healing, teamwork, and accountability.

Participants began by ensuring the Nation's mission, vision and values reflect nêhiyaw ways of being, now and in the future. Through Strategic Planning, ACN developed strategies that support the goal of strong and healthy families and community. First, through good governance, ACN will continue with the creation and actualization of structures, policies, and terms of reference that will ensure all operations are member-centered, transparent, accountable, and in-line with the priorities and goals set out in this plan. Strong governance will ensure that all Ahtahkakoop employees have the tools needed to best support the members they serve, beginning with the inclusion of lateral kindness training in the strategic planning process, and continuing with plans to increase staff training, safety, and other supports such as record-keeping.

Second, with a focus on cultural identity and language, ACN will recognize and put into practice, the connection to traditional culture, ceremony, language, and land-based healing through the addition of more land-based camps that reach a greater number of Members. An Interagency approach will be used to expand the use of the nêhiyaw language throughout the community.

Third, to meet its goals and objectives, ACN will expand an Interagency approach to address community health goals, economic development, education, lands, and housing in a fully holistic way. Bringing in Elders and Youth whenever possible, ACN will engage with the community, empower families, and encourage participation from the community.

ACN is focused on the needs of its membership and its community at large. Chief and Council, ACN Leaders, staff and other participants committed time and resources to develop this strategic plan with the focus of planning always centered on the well-being of the community being served. The strategic planning process is ongoing, and this strategic plan is expected to evolve as the needs of the communities grow and change. With this strategic plan as the guide, ACN will measure success and communicate outcomes, while moving toward and expanding upon goals over the next 5 years.

