



ATIKAMEKSHENG  
**ANISHNAWBEK**

## **COMMUNITY STORY**

*November 2019*

**First Draft**

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## OUR VISION

Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will thrive together as a strong and proud Nation by honouring our gifts of Anishinabemowin and the Life of the Land.

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***Note: We are still in the process of trying to collect these names. As of 4 December 2019, this is the most current list of participants.***

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## INTRODUCTION

Atikameksheng Anishnawbek people have a long history that goes back thousands of years in our connection to our traditional territory and in what happened to our people as a result of European settlement and colonization.

The story of all those things that happened to us, and also the impact of what happened, needs to be told in order for us and those we work closely with to understand where we are now and what we need to do in order to achieve sustainable wellbeing and prosperity for our people today and for future generations.

Essentially, the Atikameksheng *Anishnawbek Community Story* is a participatory needs assessment process through which our community members can look in the mirror of their own lives and that of their families and fellow community members, can consider what life is like now in all of its aspects, can consider what parts of that life are working well for people and what parts are not and need to be changed, can consider how the way things are now came about because of things that happened in the past, and can consider what life would be like in the future we want for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek people.

***This last—the imagination of the future we want—is fundamental to making a long-term comprehensive community plan (CCP). We need to be able to imagine together where we want to go. The power of our collective imagination and our unity of thought and purpose will help us immensely in creating the pathways we need to follow in order to achieve our dreams.***

### The Role of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story in Developing a Comprehensive Community Plan

Our *Story* is the story of what happened to our people in the past and our understanding of how that past has shaped who and what we are today. It is also the story of what is happening to us today (i.e., the present) in the lives of our children and youth, and our family and community relations, in our social and cultural life, and in our political and economic life. But the story would be incomplete without also talking about the future we want. What will our community look like when we achieve our goals? From the *Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story*, we will be able to see clearly where we need to go and what we need to do to get where we want to go.

### *Living Document and Next Steps*

This is the very first draft of the *Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story*, based on one round of consultation with community members on reserve as well as the findings of a *Rapid Review of Capacity Building and Community Development* carried out in July 2019. The findings of the draft *Community Wellness Strategy* developed in September 2019 were also considered. The 2013 Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Plan also provided valuable input. Community members living off reserve still need to contribute their stories and analysis to the ongoing development of the *AA Community Story*. The process will continue as follows.

- Consultation with community members in Toronto and Sudbury.
- Preparation of the second draft *Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story* that can be circulated to all community members for verification.
- Completion of the verification process and preparation of a final draft to be approved by the CCP Steering Committee.

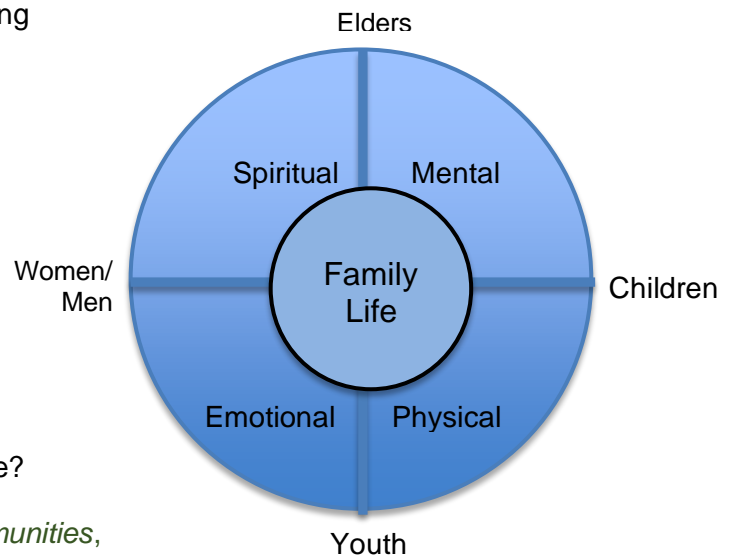
### Why this process?

Our story is now held in many pieces, like a puzzle. Different people hold different important pieces of the puzzle. The *Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story* is a way for all of us to come together, to fit our pieces of the story into a larger whole that we can all share.

The *Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community* process uses a medicine wheel framework to facilitate a highly interactive dialogue about the following

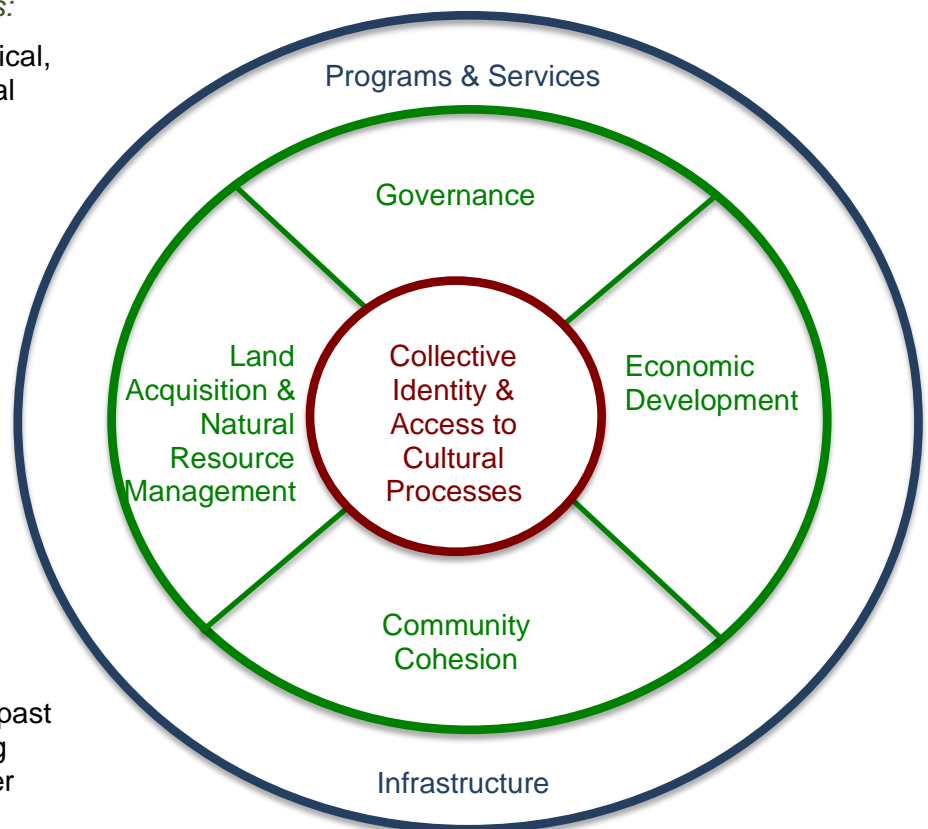
*Part One: The wellbeing of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek people, using four main questions:*

1. What is going on in the life of Atikameksheng children, youth, women, men and Elders? How healthy and strong are their families?
2. What can we learn from the past that can help Atikameksheng individuals and families fulfill their potential for balanced, happy and prosperous lives?
3. What will things be like in a positive future for Atikameksheng individuals and families?
4. What are the steps that can be taken to support the realization of this positive future?



*Part Two: Prosperity and Health for our Communities, again using four main questions:*

1. What is going on in the political, economic, social and cultural life of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Are the community's programs, services and infrastructure meeting the needs of individuals and families? Is the community managing its natural resources in a way that contributes to present-day prosperity without compromising the wellbeing of future generations? Are wise alliances and partnerships moving the community to greater prosperity? What else is needed?
2. What can we learn from the past that can help Atikameksheng Anishnawbek achieve greater wellbeing and prosperity?



3. What will things be like in a positive future for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek in terms of how we function as a community and Nation?
4. What are the steps that can be taken to support the realization of this positive future?

### **Organization of this current draft of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story**

This document is organized into the following sections or chapters.

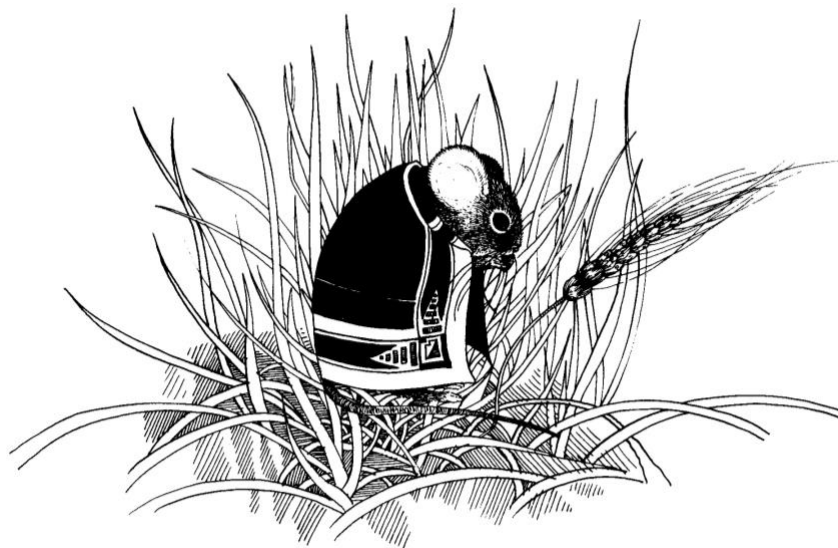
- The life of children
- The life of Youth
- The life of Women
- The life of Men
- The life of Elders/seniors
- The life of Families
- Community Governance and Political Life
- Community Economic Life
- Community Social life
- Community Cultural and Spiritual Life
- Community Infrastructure Development & Management
- Land and Natural Resource Management

Each of these topics is a section about what life is like now, but we can learn from the past, what things will be like in a positive future as well as some of the steps that can be taken to support the realization of this positive future.

### **Steps**

As stated earlier, this report is a living document. It will never really be "finished". As we learn new things or discover new needs and realities about our community, these thoughts will be added or edited into the document, which will serve as a foundation from which Comprehensive Community Planning can be carried out. The next steps in the planning process are as follows.

1. Consultation with community members off reserve.
2. Development of the second draft of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story Report.
3. Review and verification of the second draft report by community members and the CCP Steering Committee.





## CHILDREN (AGED 0 TO 12)

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The following questions guided discussion about Atikameksheng Anishnawbek children.

### 1. *What is life like now for children?*

- Are they healthy (mentally, emotionally, physically & spiritually)?
- Do children have a strong sense of identity as members of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- Are they safe?
- Are they learning what they need to?
- What needs do they have that are not being met?
- What are their assets and strengths?
- Is life different for girls than it is for boys? If yes, how?
- Are community services meeting the needs of children?

### 2. *How were things different for children in the past?*

- What was expected of children then?
- What can we learn from the way that children were raised in the past?
- What can we learn from the past that can help youth have a good life? What will help them grow into adults who live well and contribute to their communities?

### 3. *What will things be like for children in a positive future?*

- What would a truly healthy child be like (mentally, emotionally, socially, physically, spiritually)?
- What would it be like to be a child in a healthy family and community?
- What would have to change in order to achieve a healthy future for all children?
- Who has to be involved in making these changes?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local community do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of children?
- What sort of learning is needed? Who needs to learn?

### 4. *What are the main goals to be achieved to improve the future of our children?*

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?

What follows is a summary of the many insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story meeting.





## 1. What is life like now for children?

### 1.1 *Our children are disconnected from our on-reserve community.*

- Members of our community are choosing to raise children off-reserve because there is not enough housing, and because of this, they are disconnected from community events such as this Community Story meeting. They need to be encouraged to attend existing community meetings and events in order to learn our culture and to make connections. It is important to come together as a whole for the wellbeing of our people and our community.

### 1.2 *The new generation is losing our traditional teachings and way of life.*

- Our children are growing up not knowing our traditional foods or practices like trapping and hunting. They need to be exposed to foods like deer, moose and rabbit. As Anishnawbek people, we need wild meat in our diets. We need to keep these ways of life going.
- Currently, Anishnawbek culture is being taught in our schools, but there is way more information to be shared and we need more progress on this. Parents need to be held accountable for passing down teachings to our children because our schools can't teach everything—most things are learned through experience. Our children need to be spending time in the bush.
- Key people are needed in order to pass down traditional ways of life to our children. These people should offer training to our people and take families out with them to learn things like making a fire, trapping, hunting, etc.

### 1.3 *Technology is an increasing problem.*

- In general, our children are spending too much time with technology and there need to be other components in their lives. There is too much information at their fingertips, and this isn't necessarily positive. Our kids need to be kids.
- The world is changing and our children have access to more information than ever before. They are exposed to things such as other cultures and, as a result of this, they have become more accepting of other cultures, ways of life, and disabilities. They are more open than we ever were, and that is tremendously positive.
- Video games are being played for hours on end and, because of this, children's physical and mental health is generally poor. Our children should be spending time in nature and learning our traditional ways of life.
- Technology is preventing us from doing things together like going over to each other's homes to hang out, play cards and talk. We are not visiting as much as we used to.

### 1.4 *Physical and mental health is suffering.*

- Exercise and play in our community are lacking—it simply is not done. When we were children, we were constantly out in the streets or in the bush. The whole community was our playground. There has been a visible decrease in the amount the community basketball court is used over the last few years. We also used to walk everywhere because we didn't have cars to drive us. Now it's like a city here.
- Our children's diets are an issue. They do not eat a balanced diet, especially when it comes to fruits and vegetables. Currently, as working parents, we find it difficult to find

the time to prepare nutritious meals for our children, and often send our children to school with prepackaged, processed foods such as Lunchables. We acknowledge that it is up to us as parents to teach our children healthy eating habits. We just need the knowledge and resources about how to do so.

- Generally speaking, substance use is becoming more prevalent in our community. There is a lot of partying and drug use that our children are constantly being exposed to. During a talk with Nicholas Deleary, he explained that using substances in front of our youth teaches them that we condone that type of behavior and makes it more acceptable for our children to do the same. If we want our youth to have the best possible future, we must teach them that these things do exist out there, but that leading a healthy lifestyle in terms of our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing is living in accordance with our traditional teachings.

### *1.5 Our children do not feel safe in our own community.*

- On reserve, our children do not feel safe. Individuals in our community drive drunk any time of day, and our children avoid doing things for fear of getting hurt. They know they are not safe to do simple things like walking to grandma's house. Our generation was never afraid like that.
- We have a campsite our at our powwow grounds each year, and this year someone crashed it, destroyed the tent and the police were called. Something like this had never happened in the past.
- One of our community member's house burnt down over night, and some of our community suspected it was due to arson. This lack of trust and sense of fear has made our children especially afraid. One of our children asked his mother, "Mom, would someone do that to our home?".

## **2. How were things different for children in the past?**

### *2.1 In the past, we spent more time together as a family and community.*

- Dinner time was a social time where we spent time together without distractions. Today, technology distracts our children from wanting to spend time together.
- Parents, especially mothers, were able to spend more time with their children as they did not have to work. It was easier to spend time together before, and now we have to be mindful to make the time.

### *2.2 Our children used to have more responsibility.*

### *2.3 Our children did not have all the technology or material possessions that they have now.*

- There is an increasing emphasis on material things today, including things like technology. In the past, our children had to earn them and would value them more because they had worked for them. Our children were also taught to value things besides the material, and did not place significant importance on having these items. Today, it is almost expected that these are part of the norm.

### *2.4 Residential schools and the 60s scoop affected our children's connection to their community and culture.*

- In the past, our children were taken from families by Child and Family Services (CFS), placed outside of the community, and prevented from learning our traditional ways. Today, if a child is taken by CFS, there is more of an effort to place them with a family in the same community, or in another one of our communities in an attempt to retain our culture and teachings.
- We were never allowed to speak our language or maintain anything that represented us as a people, such as making bannock or practicing ceremonies. Today, it is encouraged as a sense of pride. Our children and youth should be encouraged and taught to speak our language and to participate in cultural practices.

### *2.5 Our children had little input in shaping their futures and we want that to change.*

- We want our children to have more involvement in government, to be given access to meaningful discussions, and to be asked to provide feedback. If their input into decisions is considered now, they will realize that their voice matters and they will begin to get more involved. Our children are the future leaders of our community and our people.
- Involvement in important discussions and decision-making processes builds pride and ownership. When children have a sense of pride and ownership, crimes like vandalism decrease.
- The creation of a Youth Council would help encourage community involvement later on.
- A page for children in our community newsletter would encourage more youth buy-in, and increase readership.

## **3. What will things be like for children in a positive future?**

### *3.1 Our children will grow up with balanced physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental health.*

- We want our children to be substance free, to have confidence in themselves as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, and to take pride in our community, as well as their families, work and culture.
- We want our children to have structure and discipline. We believe this will teach them responsibility and a good work ethic, and will help instill a sense of pride and ownership in what they do and what they already have.
- We want our children to grow up learning about good nutrition and healthy lifestyles.
- Our community needs to heal. In the future, our children will no longer be affected by the intergenerational trauma that is causing us to lash out in lateral violence. Families will provide the safety and support that is needed for young children to grow into healthy adults instead of being a source of trauma. As adults, we need to learn the skills to be able to call out unhealthy behaviour.
- As adults we hold a responsibility to ensure that our traditions and teachings are passed down to our children so that they have a strong sense of who they are. We need not be negative, for hatred destroys you. We need to be patient and to listen to our children with positivity and encouragement when it comes to discussing issues within our community.

- Our children will learn healthy interpersonal communication skills through positive interactions with the adults and community Elders.
- Children will be praised for their positive achievements and actions.
- Our children are more stressed than ever before because of things like peer pressure to use substances. In the future, our children will be taught about the dangers of using substances and learn healthy ways to cope with these stressors.

*3.2 Our children will find their voice and be involved in decision-making processes within our community.*

- When we are elders, we want them to ask us for our input in the same way, so why should we treat them any differently? We must teach them the importance of youth and elder feedback when making decisions that affect everyone.
- Community administration is currently doing a lot to support our children with increased focus on education and programs like a youth group. These initiatives are tremendously positive, and we will work towards improving their effectiveness and accessibility.

*3.3 Our children will place less and less importance on being “online” and instead will be involved in community life.*

- Being on social media is not positive, and a lot of our children and youth spend time engaging in negative behavior online. Our children need to be spending more time engaging in the community and in nature, and learning to be a positive role model in the real world.
- Social media platforms are getting increasingly negative, and we want our children to realize it only enforces negativity and does nothing to improve their lives.

*3.4 Our children will feel safe in our community once again.*

**4. What are the main goals to be achieved to improve the future of our children?**

*4.1 A specific timeline for goals was not developed at this time.*

## YOUTH (AGED 13 TO 25)

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The following questions guided the discussion about Atikameksheng Anishnawbek youth.

**1. *What is life like now for our youth?***

- How healthy are they (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)?
- Are they safe?
- Are they learning what they need to learn?
- Do youth have a strong sense of identity as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- What problems/obstacles do youth face?
- Is it different for girls than it is for boys? If yes, how?
- In order to be healthy and balanced, what do the youth need?
- What are their assets and strengths?
- Are community services meeting the needs of youth?

**2. *What can we learn from the past about life for youth?***

- How were things different for youth in the past? What was expected of youth then?
- What can we learn from the way that youth were raised in the past?
- What can we learn from the past that can help youth have a good life? What will help them grow into adults who live well and contribute to their communities?

**3. *What will things be like for youth in a positive future?***

- What would a truly healthy youth be like (mentally, emotionally, socially, physically, spiritually)?
- What would it be like to be a young person in a healthy family and community?
- What would have to change to achieve a healthy future for all youth?
- Who has to be involved in making these changes?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local communities do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of youth?
- What learning must be done? Who needs to learn?

**4. *What are the main goals to be achieved to improve the future for today's youth and for the next generations of youth coming up?***

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?

What follows is a summary of the many insights and ideas shared by the participants of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story meetings.



## 1. What is life like now for our youth?

### 1.1 *Our community continues to struggle with wellness issues.*

- Addictions (especially opioids), mental health challenges such as depression and anxiety, and domestic violence are prevalent. These issues are visible signs of the burden of trauma that our members carry and they are having a negative impact on our youth.
- Not all of our youth are living in healthy families and this puts them at risk of mental health issues.
- It is not possible to have healthy youth without healthy adults. Youth are inheriting the intergenerational trauma that the adults around them have not resolved for themselves.
- Youth are at a very impressionable age. They are therefore susceptible to influence of both their peer group and the behaviour and attitudes of the adults around them.
- As a result, many youth are involved with addictive substances.
- As well, youth are engaging in sexual activity at an early age without an understanding of the consequences for themselves and others. As a result, our children are having children.

### 1.2 *Many youth have lost connection with their culture and language.*

- As a result, youth struggle to achieve a healthy personal and cultural identity.
- We no longer have the ceremonies that marked transitions in a person's life, such as when children become youth or youth become young adults.

### 1.3 *The way that our youth are involved with social media is creating issues.*

- Social media is too often contributing to isolation because it is taking the place of face-to-face interaction with family and peers and can also be a source of anxiety due to posts that spread untrue rumours or make bullying comments.
- On the other hand, we want our young people to have electronic media skills because they are important for higher education and many workplaces.
- Many young people have not yet found a balance in their relationship with social media.

### 1.4 *Youth do not feel that they have a strong voice in the community.*

### 1.5 *More programming is needed for youth between the ages of 13 and 21.*

- Sometimes there is duplication of services sponsored by different programs or agencies. This means that resources are not being effectively used.
- Programming needs to be scheduled for after school and on weekends.
- Peer support programs are needed. Programs can also benefit from having an elder in residence and our young people need help learning about how to approach and interact with elders.
- Lots of the physical activity programming for young people is geared to males.

- Our programming for youth does not always balance mental, emotional and spiritual needs with the physical activities that are available.
- Not all supports need to be part of formal programs. Youth also need adults to step forward to take them fishing or to other similar activities that used to be such an important part of community life.
- Our young people can also benefit a great deal from being involved in activities outside our community that broaden their horizons.

*1.6 Youth are not always accessing the resources that are available in the community.*

- In some instances, youth do not know about the services that they could use.
- A lack of public transportation is another barrier that keeps youth from participating in healthy recreational and other programs that meet their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual needs.

*1.7 It is not always safe for our young people to be out in the community.*

- For example, cigarette shops are bringing lots of strangers onto the reserves.

*1.8 Our youth have many strengths.*

- Their ideas are fresh and they can work around a problem. They have energy and creativity.

## **2. How were things different for youth in the past?**

*2.1 The community was safer.*

- Now, with more strangers coming onto the reserve, it is not clear what their intentions are and how to protect young people from bad influences such as drug dealers and sexual predators.

*2.2. Family life was ordered and consistent.*

- Youth were expected to be home by 7:00 p.m.
- Families ate meals, worked and played together.

## **3. What will things be like for youth in a positive future?**

*3.1 Our families and the community as a whole will become healthier so that our youth are growing up in a positive environment and with many strong adult role models.*

- Parenting programs will help families better support their youth.
- We will have comprehensive wellness strategies that target all age groups so that we can break the cycle of intergenerational trauma.
- One suggestion that was made during the Community Story consultations was to consider declaring a specific year for the different age groups in the community; e.g. the year of the child, of the youth, of women, of men, and of Elders.



*3.2 We will have programs and other supports for our youth that address the full range of the issues they face, including challenges with addictions and mental health.*

- Sexual health and addictions education will be a strong part of our programming for youth.
- A crisis intervention facilitator will support youth to get the help they need when they need it.
- We also have a youth emergency shelter to provide refuge for youth who are facing physically or emotionally unsafe circumstances.
- Parenting programs will be available to prepare youth for family life and to support those youth who already have children.
- Our youth will be aware of the services and other types of support that are available to them.
- Our youth will have many chances to interact with youth from other reserves and to gain exposure to the opportunities that are out there in the wider world.
- Parents will be actively involved in helping their youth participate in programming in the community.
- We will have a permanent, stand-alone facility for a youth centre.

*3.3 We will have effective communication strategies to ensure that youth are informed about what is happening in the community and that they know how they can become involved and have a voice.*

- One option could be a youth newsletter (like a “youthzine”) that includes poetry, art, and stories, as well as information.
- Information that is distributed to the community will have “reader-friendly” material that is accessible for youth.

*3.4 Youth will play a strong and positive role in our community life.*

- For example, youth will be encouraged to contribute their time and creative energy to work with children as they can be strong role models and also know how to interact effectively with those younger than them.
- Community leadership, including the Chief and Council, will actively support youth opportunities for becoming more involved in community decision-making and activities.

*3.5 The community will be culturally strong.*

- We will have a spiritual cultural centre on the grounds where the church used to be. This site is on high ground. It would be a place to celebrate important milestones using the ceremonies that we used to practice. We could use solar power so that the centre demonstrates our stewardship of Mother Earth.
- We will dedicate one week a year as a special time for ceremonies and other cultural teachings. During this time, the Band office would be closed so that all community members could participate.

- All of our members will have access to programs to help them become fluent in Anishnawbek. Our language is sacred and contains all our teachings. Our language will empower us.
- Our history, including our creation story, which reminds us that we were always here and that we were always human, will be taught in many different contexts through community programming for all ages. These teachings will help us be confident and secure in a strong personal and cultural identity.
- Our ceremonies will teach us about the seven stages of life, and when we understand this, we will be able to raise healthy children and youth. Our ceremonies will also remind us of the four gifts that all of us receive: our name, our clan, free will and peace.
- We will have special programs for our youth to learn their culture such as an annual camp.
- Our youth will see their parents and other adults actively involved in cultural activities and in learning the language, and this will inspire them to participate as well.

### *3.6 Our youth will be prepared to become the leaders of tomorrow.*

- We will involve youth in all our significant community consultations and decision-making processes.
- We will have specific leadership training programs for our youth.
- We will support the formation and functioning of a Youth Council that gives youth the opportunity to learn leadership skills and also to be a channel for the voice of youth in community decision-making processes.

## ***4. What are the main goals to be achieved to improve the future of our youth?***

### *4.1 A specific timeline for goals was not developed during the Community Story consultations.*

## WOMEN (AGED 26 TO 55)

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The following four sets of questions guided the discussion of the groups discussing the theme of women.

### **1. What is life like now for women?**

- Are they healthy (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)?
- How does family life affect them?
- How does the community's social, economic, political and cultural life affect them?
- What are the main issues/problems/challenges women are facing today in our communities?
- What are the main needs women have in order to be healthy and balanced? Are these needs being met? What are the obstacles?
- What are their strengths and assets?
- Do women have a strong sense of identity as members of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- Are community services meeting the needs of women?
- Which groups/categories of women are having the hardest time getting their needs met? Why?

### **2. How was it different for women in the past?**

- What was life like for women in the past? What was expected of them?
- What can we learn from the past that can help women have a healthy and balanced life?
- What is needed so that the women are able to develop their full potential, and to fulfill their professional, family and community roles?

### **3. What would life for women be like in a positive future?**

- What would life be like for women in a healthy family and community?
- What would a healthy woman be like?
- What changes to current practices must be done to achieve a healthy future for our women?
  - Personal level (i.e. the self of the woman)?
  - Interpersonal level (i.e. the significant relationships the woman is involved in)?
  - Organizational level (i.e., what the agencies do)?
  - Community level (i.e., how the community inter-relates and organizes itself)?
- Who has to be involved in making these changes?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local communities do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of women?
- What sort of learning is needed in order for these changes to occur? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to heal, transform, and improve the lives and conditions of women?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



What follows is a summary of the insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process concerning the lives and needs of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek women.

## **1. What is life like now for women?**

### *1.1 Women are having health challenges.*

- Participants in the Community Story session described issues related to health such as having funding denied for health treatments (such as a needed surgery) or being unable to afford a prescribed drug because it was not covered under non-insured health benefits.
- Participants also spoke about the health clinic being too “institutionalized” and the hospital not being culturally friendly in terms of working from an Anishnawbek perspective.
- There appears to be an increase in cancer and other serious illnesses, but better statistics are needed to get an accurate picture.
- Health staff do not have all the training they need to support community members

### *1.2 Women need better education to improve their health and wellbeing*

- Although, on the whole, women are better educated than in the past, they still need more education related to wellness issues.
- An important part of this learning is reconnecting with the history and culture, as well as learning the language.

### *1.3 Special support is needed for grandmothers raising their grandchildren.*

- Grandmothers often have their own health challenges and they are not getting the support they need to stay healthy themselves and to take on this vital role of caring for their grandchildren when the parents are unable to do so.

### *1.4 There are not enough economic development opportunities for community members to improve their lives*

- More community businesses are needed to employ members.
- As well, members need better support to start their own businesses.
- Community members want transparency about what the Nation is doing with the resources it receives from agreements it has reached with outside partners or from other revenue sources. They want to be able to have a voice in how these funds are being used and to ensure that some of it is being used to improve the health and prosperity of members.

### *1.5 A clear response to the issues raised by the national inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is needed.*

- Community members are asking for information about the process that will be used to repatriate their deceased family members.

- They also want more information about the support that will be available for the families that have lost loved ones.

#### *1.6 Some addition community infrastructure is needed to meet the needs of women.*

- There is not sufficient housing in the community to meet the needs of all single individuals and families.
- A community day care is an urgent priority.
- A “safe house” is needed where women can get the assistance they need to achieve better mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health (including healing from the impacts of intergenerational trauma) and where they can learn about their culture.
- This facility or an additional one is needed to provide emergency care for children so they can stay in the community when their parents are unable to care for them at that time.

## **2. How was it different for women in the past?**

### *2.1 In many ways, life was easier in the past.*

- Gender roles and responsibilities were clear. Women took care of the family. In traditional culture, women were the water keepers and men were the fire keepers.

### *2.2 Women experienced systemic racism*

- Women lost their status when they married a non-Indigenous man (Bill C-31). A community story participant shared an incident from some time in the past when the RCMP came to forcibly remove a woman from the community who had been disenfranchised.

### *2.3 Families were larger and more tight knit.*

- Family violence was minimized because extended families lived in the same house. Men were taught to value women. Men were taught that they were less of a man if they hit a woman.
- Homes were made of timber and had an open concept living area.
- Women worked collaboratively on many activities, such as making blankets and doing crafts.
- Women supported each other rather than putting each other down through gossip or other types of lateral violence.
- The elder women made baskets and gathered maple syrup.
- Family members supported each other, and so there was a sense of cohesion.
- Picnics and feasts were a common activity within families and among families within the community.
- Families used to visit each other, and this does not happen as much anymore.

## **3. What would life for women be like in a positive future?**

### *3.1 The community a facility (house) for women.*

- This will be a safe place for women to work on their wellness issues through learning. Mutual support and various kinds of learning opportunities.
- Cultural and language teachings will be an important activity.
- This facility could also be an emergency safe home for children whose parents are unable to care for them at that time.

### *3.2 Women will be able to meet the daily living needs with dignity*

- All women, and especially young mothers, will have access to appropriate housing (affordable and sustainable) with clean water.
- Women will have different kinds of meaningful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities so that they will be able to be financially stable.

### *3.3 Women will be a valued and respected part of the community.*

- Boys and men will be taught from an early age to relate to women with respect and what the boundaries are for appropriate behaviour.

### *3.4 Traditional ceremonies will be a central part of our family and community lives.*

- Coming of age ceremonies will again support women to understand their roles and gifts. These ceremonies will be held in the new community cultural centre.

### *3.5 Our LGBTQ members will have a safe and respected place in our community, and all community members will have a better understanding of their issues and gifts.*

### *3.6 We will have repatriated the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from our community who are now only a number where they are buried in Toronto and their loved ones will receive the support they need to heal from this trauma.*

### *3.7 Our community members will achieve better wellbeing.*

- We recognize that there are many reasons why women feel anxious and have mental health challenges, but we will have many different kinds of support to work toward stronger health and balance between the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of our being and to learn to support each other.
- We will be honoured for our gifts and have the opportunity to share these gifts within our families and community.

## **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to achieve a healthy future for women?**

Specific goals within a defined timeframe were not identified for all of the issues mentioned above. This will be the work of subsequent consultation session. The following goal was, however, specified as essential for the next 10 years.

### *4.1 Women would be able to achieve a balanced lifestyle.*

- This includes finding balance between work and family life, and the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of life.

- Alcohol would only be used in moderation.

#### *4.1 Health services will meet the needs of women.*

- Leadership will undertake advocacy for improving access for women to needed health services.
- A feasibility study will be undertaken related to improving health services for women in the hospital.
- A baseline will be in place for tracking the incidence of chronic diseases and other health issues and statistics will be collected at least annually to track changes. An important part of this process will be collecting case studies about the health challenges that women have and the capacity or lack of capacity of the services to adequately address those challenges.



## MEN (AGED 26 TO 55)

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The following four sets of questions guided the discussion of the groups discussing the theme of men.

### **1. What is life like now for men?**

- Are they healthy (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)?
- How does family life affect them?
- How does the community's social, economic, political and cultural life affect them?
- What are the main issues/problems/challenges men are facing today in our communities?
- What are the main needs men have in order to be healthy and balanced? Are these needs being met? What are the obstacles?
- What are their strengths and assets?
- Do men have a strong sense of identity as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- Are community services meeting the needs of men?
- Which groups/categories of men are having the hardest time getting their needs met? Why?

### **2. How was life different for men in the past?**

- What was life like for men in the past? What was expected of them?
- What can we learn from the past that can help men have a healthy and balanced life? What is needed so that they can develop to their full potential and to fulfill their professional, family and community roles?

### **3. What would life for men be like in a positive future?**

- What would life be like for men in a healthy family and community?
- What would a healthy man be like?
- What changes to current practices must be made to achieve a healthy future for our men?
  - Personal level (i.e. the self of the man)?
  - Interpersonal level (i.e. the significant relationships the man is involved in)?
  - Organizational level (i.e., what the agencies do)?
  - Community level (i.e., how the community inter-relates and organizes itself)?
- Who has to be involved in making these changes?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local communities do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of men?
- What sort of learning is needed in order for these changes to occur? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to heal, transform, and improve the lives and conditions of men?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



What follows is a summary of the insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process concerning the lives and needs of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek men.

## 1. What is life like now for men?

### 1.1 *There is little support for our men.*

- Too many of our men have gone through school without having healthy mentors, teachers, or role models and because of this, our men walk with self-doubt and without self-love or a positive concept of who they are. They are lacking resources which will help them find that love for themselves again.
- Different members of our community say that there isn't any programming for men, especially when it comes to our health.

### 1.2 *Many of our men are suffering from poor mental or physical health.*

- Some of our men are living month to month, and are unable to go anywhere due to lack of money and inadequate transportation options. Because of this, they have to rely on those who do have access to a vehicle to take them to where they need to go. Sometimes, asking for help can make some men feel ashamed and they are left feeling isolated and depressed.
- Many men are currently living in our Independent Living Centre (ILC). Young men who are 18 or older and who have a permanent physical or mental disability live there, as well as men who are 50 years or older. The general feelings of the men at ILC is expressed as isolation and deep sadness.

### 1.3 *As time goes on, the role of men in our community is changing.*

- The role of the men in our community used to be the providers—we used to fish, and hunt and be responsible for keeping our families safe. Now, it means finding jobs and having money in order to be able to provide for ourselves and our families.
- Our women are working now, and the roles are now shared. Men are now having to clean and do other duties around the home.
- Our younger men have strength and good intentions, but they still need training and education.
- We are not sure of the cause, but our men seem to be maturing 15 years later in life as far as having the ability to take care of their families.
- Our men are spending less and less time with the younger generation, and this is just perpetuating these problems. Men need to be spending more time on the land with our children and youth, and teaching them our traditions. Grandchildren aren't going into the bush anymore, unless it is the Grandmothers or other women that are taking them.

### 1.4 *Our men are suffering from unresolved intergenerational trauma.*

- As men, we have the responsibility of uncle-hood, or to mentor the younger generation. When we were young, some individuals would try to give us advice, but they were not so nice to us and did bad things. We have to be able to find a healthy way of learning

to process and heal from these traumas in order to fulfill our roles in our families and community.

- The wounds we have experienced as Indigenous peoples run deep, and we have been hurt and abused our entire lives. We are afraid to heal and transform because we are afraid of being judged and feeling shame and guilt.

## **2. How was life different for men in the past?**

### *2.1 The role of men in our community used to be specific and defined; now it is changing and unclear.*

- Our men used to be mentors, but now we are suffering from the effects of intergenerational trauma and we cannot live up to our responsibilities to teach the younger generations our traditional ways of life. We used to take the children out into the bush to learn how to hunt and trap in order to provide for our families. Now, we are expected to have a job and get paid in order to provide.

### *2.2 Technology is affecting our perception of who we are.*

- There is a perception in our community that the man with the most “toys” wins or is seen as being more successful, which is a mentality that we have inherited from the western world. This also affects how we perceive ourselves. People place all of their importance on money to get new things, whereas before we never have to worry about this because they simply didn’t exist.

### *2.3 Access to good paying jobs is affecting our ability to live a good life.*

- We don’t have practical life skills like a good work ethic, and this is affecting our sense of self and our identity. We need to reconnect to what it means to be an Atikameksheng Anishnawbek man.
- Before, we spent our time on the land and with our families and community. Now, we need a good paying job and most of the time those are found off the reserve. We need to travel far to get a job to support our family, but then we aren’t able to spend time with them and be there as a positive role model.

### *2.4 We used to be more connected and confident in our traditional ways of life.*

- We used to spend time with our Elders and learn about the land and how everything is interconnected. They would teach us how we were responsible for protecting the land and how to respect and honour the ecosystem while in the bush. Now we spend less time with our Elders and do not maintain this way of life.
- We fear that our land is going to begin being sold or leased for profit. We never had to worry about that before.
- We used to practice our ceremonies, rites of passage, and learning about our deep relationship with the land and Creator. Now, the younger men are ridiculed for following the ways of our people. They see it as being stuck in “old” ways or not moving on, but we are forgetting who we are and where we came from.

## **3. What would life be like for men in a positive future?**

3.1 *We will be more connected to our teachings and to what makes us members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek.*

- We will begin to reconnect to our fundamental teachings, like the Seven Grandfather Teachings.
- We will see our young men grow up understanding our traditions, our way of governance, our history, and our reciprocal relationship with the land.
- We will be the environmental leaders of Sudbury and the surrounding region.
- In order to get back to a healthy way of life, we will reconnect to the gifts Creator has given us, like the land, our community, and our families. We will use these relationships as a way to measure our happiness instead of material wealth.

3.2 *We will heal from our deep traumas as individuals and as a people.*

- We will recognize that we need healing on all levels (spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental) in order to be the individuals and community we have the capacity to be. We will acknowledge that the past has happened and learn healthier ways of coping than the ways we have become accustomed to.

3.3 *We will have access to good paying, long-term employment.*

- We will train and mentor people in our community to do the jobs that are already here, instead of putting an emphasis on getting a degree. Our men need to shift their attitude to realize that they already have these capacities within them. We will encourage our men, build them up, and give them something to be proud of.
- We will learn the practical life skills we have been missing and utilize the programming that is designed to help us.

3.4 *We will have access to the programming and services we need.*

- We will have healthy and culturally competent mentors in our community for our younger men, and will also build our capacity to be strong mentors, teachers, and leaders ourselves.
- Proper mental health programming will be accessible to us, and we will not be afraid or ashamed to seek out these services. They exist to benefit us as individuals, as families, and as a community.
- We will have access to transportation that will take us to where we need to go.

## **4. What are the main goals to a healthy future for men?**

4.1 *A specific timeline for goals was not developed during the Community Story consultations.*

## SENIORS/ELDERS (AGED 55 PLUS)

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The following four sets of questions guided the discussion of the groups discussing the theme of seniors/Elders.

### **1. What is life like now for seniors?**

- Are they healthy (mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)?
- What are the main issues/problems/challenges seniors are facing today in our communities?
- What are the main needs seniors have in order to be healthy and balanced? Are these needs being met? What are the obstacles? What are their strengths and assets?
- Do seniors have a strong sense of identity as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- Are community services meeting the needs of seniors?

### **2. How was it different for seniors in the past?**

- What was life like for seniors in the past? How have things changed for today's seniors?
- What can we learn from the past that can help seniors have a healthy and balanced life, to be able to develop their full potential, and to fulfill their family and community roles?

### **3. What would life for seniors be like in a positive future?**

- What would a truly healthy senior person be like (mentally, emotionally, socially, physically, spiritually)?
- What would life be like for seniors in a healthy family and community?
- What would have to change in the ways things are now in order to achieve a healthy future for our seniors?
  - Personal level (i.e. the self of the senior)?
  - Interpersonal level (i.e. the significant relationships the senior is involved in)?
  - Organizational level (i.e., what the agencies do)?
  - Community level (i.e., how the community inter-relates and organizes itself)?
- Who has to be involved in making these changes?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local communities do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of seniors?
- What sort of learning is needed in order for these changes to occur? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to heal, transform, and improve the lives and conditions of seniors?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



What follows is a summary of the insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process concerning the lives and needs of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek seniors/Elders.

## **1. What is life like now for seniors/Elders?**

### *1.1 Many seniors experience isolation.*

- More volunteers are needed to provide transportation to Elders/seniors so that they have the opportunity to participate actively in any family or community activities that they wish.
- Community members need to make the effort to visit Elders/seniors to decrease their isolation and to build the relationships that will help our seniors to play their role as wisdom keepers and guides. Even small informal visits can make a big difference. During these visits, one small task can be performed that will make a difference in the quality of life of our seniors/Elders.
- The summer student program could be used to set up such a visiting program

### *1.2 Some seniors/Elders require practical help.*

- Family and other community members need to step up to help Elders/seniors get their groceries or medications.

### *1.3 Our community does not have all the services that our Elders/seniors need.*

- We need a long-term care facility, an Elders/seniors Lodge, that provides care 24 hours a day. We talked about this over eleven years ago, and we hope that we are not still talking about this 10 years into the future. We need to think carefully about exactly what kind of building this would be.
- We need more in-home support for our seniors/Elders who can still remain in their homes.
- We need to provide training to our community members related to caring for seniors/Elders.
- Some of our programs and services end up isolating seniors/Elders. For example, the Wednesday Tea ends up being attended primarily by Elders/seniors because of the time of day that it is held. We also need events that bring seniors/Elders into contact with all the other age groups in the community.
- There is not enough transportation to help seniors/Elders access all the services that they need and the programming that they would like to attend.

### *1.4 Families need education and support to do long-term planning for the care of their seniors/Elders.*

- It was noted that we are an aging community, and we need to plan for the supports and facilities that we will need.
- Families need to know how to talk with their aging family members so that they will know exactly what their wishes are and how best to arrange for their care.



- We need to find ways to bring youth and Elders together to talk about how to care for the older members of the community.
- 1.5 *Seniors/elders need support to once again play their traditional role in their families and the community.*
- Because of breakdowns within families and the focus on formal programs and services rather the volunteer spirit and informal support systems that were so common in the past, Elders are not being called upon to provide guidance and to pass on cultural and survival skills like they did in the past.
- 1.6 *Seniors/Elders are being impacted by the wellness issues in the community.*
- Some families are deeply divided and care for the seniors/Elders falls through the cracks.

## **2. How was life different for seniors and Elders in the past?**

- 2.1 *The role of Elders/seniors in the community has changed.*
- In the (more recent) past, seniors/Elders were expected to be seen but not heard. They had lost their role as mentors and guides for younger generations and as knowledge holders for the language, cultural teaching and survival skills.
  - In the more distant past, Elders/seniors played a very important role in family and community life. They ensured that cultural and survival knowledge and skills were passed on to the younger generations. They also contributed to the family's wellbeing through the work that they contributed in terms of managing households
- 2.2 *The community was more united and there was less gossiping behind people's backs.*
- This meant that Elders/seniors were part of families that worked together and communities were families helped each other during hard times.

## **3. What would life for seniors/Elders be like in a positive future?**

- 3.1 *We will have a comprehensive Elder/senior care strategy and plan.*
- This plan will involve a service that ensures that all Elders/seniors receive support to get groceries and medications. This could be in the form of transportation if they are able to do their own shopping or a delivery service if they are unable.
  - Transportation services will also ensure that Elders/seniors are able to participate fully in community events and programs.
  - The plan will also include in-home support for daily living for those Elders/seniors still in their own home.
  - An Elders/seniors Lodge will have 24-hour a day support for them through the different levels of support that they need as they age.
  - Hospice will also be available for end of life support, not only for seniors/Elders, but also for any other community members in that situation.



- Families will receive the information and support they need to develop and manage a plan for ensuring that their elder family members are able to have all their needs met as they age.

### *3.2 The community will be united and members will have higher levels of personal wellness.*

- The incidences of addiction, mental health challenges, domestic violence and other wellness issues in the community create an environment that is not always safe for Elders/seniors.
- As well, seniors/Elders do not always receive the care they need when their family and other community members are in crisis themselves.

### *3.3 Elders will play their traditional role in the community.*

- Elders and youth will have deep connections, with the Elders passing on their wisdom and knowledge to the youth, and the youth offering service to the Elders to assist them with their daily living needs.
- Elders will have a clear role in all the decision-making processes in the community and in the designing and implementing of programs and services.

## **4. What are the main goals to achieve a healthy future for seniors/Elders?**

### *4.1 1 to 2 years: We will have a systematic plan/program to ensure that all our seniors/Elders who require support will receive it.*

- There will be arrangements in place to make sure that seniors/Elders will have their medications and groceries picked up for them, or that they will have transportation and support to do their own shopping.
- Seniors/Elders will have support for their daily living routines.

### *4.2 5 to 10 years: We will have the facilities we need to care for our seniors/Elders.*

- An Elder/senior long-term care facility will be built and operating.
- There will be more community housing that is suited for seniors/Elders.
- Seniors/Elders will have access to more options for care in their own homes.

### *4.3 10 and onward: Our comprehensive Elder/senior care program will be fully functioning.*

- Our long-term care facility will provide 24-hour care.
- Hospice care will be available in that facility or another one built especially for that purpose.
- We will have an ongoing training program through which youth and other interested individuals can be trained in Elder/senior and hospice care.

## FAMILY LIFE

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In discussing family life for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, the Community Story participants were guided by the following four sets of questions.

### **1. What is life like now for families?**

- What is really happening to family life in our communities? Is it healthy & strong?
- What is happening in the key relationships that make up strong, healthy families such as:
  - husband and wife?
  - parents and children?
  - grandparents and children?
  - between children (brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.)?
  - extended family (aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces)?
- What are the basic minimum needs that have to be met for a family to be healthy?
- Are our families getting their needs met? What are the strengths and assets families bring to their own wellbeing and to community life? Explain.
- Do families have a strong sense of identity as part of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek? Is this important for their wellbeing?
- Are community services meeting the needs of families?

### **2. How was it different for families in the past?**

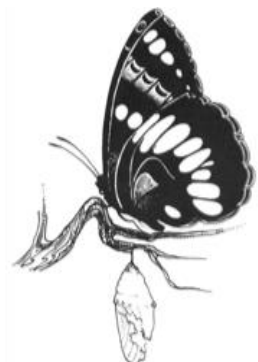
- What has changed from the way families used to be in the past?
- What can we learn from the past?

### **3. What would family life be like in a desired future?**

- What would a truly healthy family be like (mental, emotional, spiritual, physical)?
- What are the key things that will have to change in order to achieve a healthy family life for our communities:
  - Personal level (on the level of individual members of the family)?
  - Interpersonal level (i.e., the significant relationships within the family and among families)?
  - Organizational level (i.e., what the agencies do)?
  - Community level (i.e., how the community inter-relates and organizes itself)?
- What other development issues are connected to building healthy families (political, economic, social, and cultural/spiritual). Be specific.
- What must be done to get from where we are now to where we want to go?
- Of those changes, what can families and their local communities do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the healthy development of families?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to heal and develop our families so they are healthy and strong?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



What follows is a summary of the many insights and ideas shared by the participants of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story meetings.

## **1. What is life like now for families?**

### *1.1 Not all Atikameksheng Anishnawbek families are healthy.*

- Too many families in the community are struggling and have broken apart.
- Wellness issues, such as addiction and other mental health challenges, among family members are placing children at risk.
- In some cases, families have lost their parents, and this grief and trauma is impacting their unity and capacity to live well. The elder members of the family were the ones that kept everyone together, but once they are gone, family members have tended to go their own ways.
- Youth are struggling from low self-esteem. They don't have a lot of positive reinforcement in their lives.
- Family members are not as physically active as they used to be. We used to play lots of games/sports outside and we used to walk to get from place to place because most of us didn't have cars. Another reason we don't walk as much is because it is dangerous. There is too much traffic, and not everyone drives safely.

### *1.2 Some families are struggling to meet their daily living needs*

- Some families are struggling with poverty. They don't have jobs and can't make ends meet.
- In some cases, family members do not have the education they need to live well and to secure the employment they need.
- Some families do not have housing and there is not enough housing on the reserve to accommodate all the members. (The question was raised about how many members would actually want to live on the reserve if there was enough housing, and also whether having more members living on the reserve would contribute to making the community a safer and more unified place.)

### *1.3 The community does not come together in the way that it used to.*

- Families and other community members used to spend time visiting each other, playing games or just hanging out and talking. Now people are too involved in technology.
- We don't have community gatherings like we used to, to which everyone contributed food (potluck). Now nobody wants to bring food.
- We need to create opportunities to celebrate community and not just rely on programs to organize community events.

### *1.4 The community has lots of services for families, but they are not well used.*

- There could be many reasons why families don't use the services and programs that are available. In some cases, people are very busy just trying to make ends meet. Some families don't have transportation to get to the programs and services that might be helpful to them. Community member may not also trust community services

because they don't feel that the workers have the right skills or because they do not feel that confidentiality will be preserved. Even divisions within families can keep some people from participating if someone from a different family, religion, economic status, etc. will be there.

### *1.5 Too many of us have lost our language and our connection to our culture.*

- Our culture and language are key to keeping our families and community strong. Ceremonies are being reintroduced and our pow wow continues to be held. We need to continue to make strong efforts to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in ceremonies and to learn the language and cultural teachings. This will help make our families strong again.
- We have some strong cultural resources in our community and we need to recognize and appreciate them. For example, the arbor that has been built by one family in the community is a strong

## **2. How was it different for families in the past?**

### *2.1 Families were not focused as much on material possessions.*

- In the past, families spent time together and with other families visiting, playing outdoor games and other activities. Today, families are so involved with trying to acquire material possession and with using social media and other technology that they are becoming much more isolated.
- Since we didn't have cars, we would walk everywhere. Now our community is more like a city. There's too much traffic, and especially the traffic of people coming to use our tobacco stores or to bring drugs on to the reserve is making it unsafe to treat our reserve like a safe neighbourhood like we used to.

### *2.2 Members of the extended family played a big role in the lives of the children.*

- Aunties and uncles, as well as the Elders, had important roles in family life in terms of helping care for, educate and guide the children as they grew up. Families were "tight". But over time, we isolated ourselves into our nuclear families and we lost that "co-parenting".
- Extended family members took the place of the kinds of formal programs and services that we now have. We used to just help each other, and not wait for some official program.

### *2.3 Our cultural teachings were at the heart of family life.*

- Cultural teachings taught us how to respect and care for each other.
- Cultural teachings taught us the skills and knowledge we needed to survive.
- Cultural teachings taught us our identity and our responsibilities to our families and the community.
- Cultural teachings were a source of unity since they brought us together around a common set of values and beliefs.

### *2.4 There were more family-oriented community events.*

- We used to have bed races, a bike rodeo, three-legged races, and Indian ball.
- We would interact with other communities by having softball tournaments.
- Volunteerism thrived and that is how we organized our family-oriented community events.
- When we gathered at the old community hall, everyone brought potluck food.
- We didn't need incentives to participate in community meetings.
- Rental for the community centre used to be free.

### 2.5 *We had less formal education.*

- We had fewer graduates from high school or post-secondary institutions.
- Students didn't have jobs
- We lost our on-reserve school.

## 3. **What would family life be like in a desired future?**

### 3.1 *Our families will be free from addictions.*

- If we look closely, we can see that there has been some improvement over the past years. There used to be a lot of "party" houses, but this doesn't happen as much anymore.
- This does not mean, however, that we don't still have a long way to go in terms of becoming a community that is free of addictions.
- We will have a Healing Lodge and medicine people will come there to give teachings.

### 3.2 *Families will again be spiritually centered.*

- This will occur either through a stronger connection to traditional ways or to other spiritual path such as the Christian churches. People of all backgrounds would treat each other with respect.
- Our families will understand the teachings of the Eagle staff, which includes a representation of our clans.

### 3.3 *Families will spend time with each other*

- Sunday dinner every week will bring families together to talk. As one participant of the Community Story session put it, "This is where we came from and this is where we are going."

### 3.4 *The community will be unified.*

- Families will respect each other, even if they have differences.
- Social media, like Facebook, will not be used in ways that criticize others or spread rumours.

### 3.5 *Families will help each other.*

- For example, if a member of someone's family becomes ill and has to go to Toronto for treatment, other community members will help raise the funds so that a family member will be able to accompany that person.

### *3.6 Families and family members will have access to educational opportunities*

- Family members need many kinds of education, including practical skills such as how to manage money

### *3.7 The community will have more family-oriented events.*

- In the past, there were family-oriented events in the community like on Labor Day when there were various kinds of games. These types of events will again be organized and community members will step forward to help make them happen.
- We will have another family support worker who will be able to focus on promoting more family-oriented activities in the community.
- The complex will be open more often, for example for a family gym night.
- There will be a building where the seniors/Elders can meet and do the activities that they like to do.

### *3.8 We will have more community facilities.*

- We will have a Healing Lodge.
- We will have an Elders/seniors Lodge.

### *3.9 Transportation will be improved.*

- Our children won't have to walk out to the road to catch the bus to take them to school.

## **4. What are the main goals to achieve a healthy future for families?**

### *4.1 In the next 1 to 2 years*

- Our children will understand how important education is.
- Our children, and not just our children, but all members of our families. Will have strong self-esteem.
- Our families will be a place to learn healthy eating and exercise habits.
- Our families will participate in the community programming that is designed to support them.
- There will be more family-oriented programming in the community.
- Our family members will use technology in a balanced way.

### *4.2 In the next 5 years.*

- We will continually be increasing the housing in our community according to an annual housing plan.
- We will have a community daycare.

- We will have a cultural centre within the community.
- The complex will be upgraded to better accommodate family-oriented activities.
- We will build on the potential of the current community land-based school

#### *4.3 In the next 10 years.*

- We will have a new administration centre, or at least an addition to the existing one.
- We will have our own school so our children can be educated in their own community.
- We will have stronger Indigenous education in the schools our children attend and special Indigenous education programming for families.
- We will have a clean and attractive family centre where families will be able to share their talents, like music.



## GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL LIFE

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The following questions were used to guide discussions by community participants focused on governance and political life.

### **1. What is political life in the community like now?**

- Are the members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek where you live organized in some way to work together on common issues? If yes, describe how that system is working. If not, reflect on the issues that arise because of the lack of working together and having a common voice.
- How are members of the community involved in the political and governance life of the Nation as a whole?
- How effective is the governance and political life as it plays out now in supporting priority needs and issues?
- How effective is the governance and political life now in representing the Nation to provincial and federal governments?
- How are these political realities affecting the human and community development of our people?
- What is the quality of ordinary people's participation in shaping what happens in the community? Does everyone have a meaningful voice in shaping decisions that affect him/her? Who does and who does not decide about money and other important things? To what extent do people being served by programs or other kinds of help get asked to help design, implement and evaluate those programs?

### **2. How was our political system different in the past and what can we learn from that?**

- What can we learn from our traditional governance and decision-making system and way of doing things in the long-ago past.
- What can we learn from our recent governance and political history and experience?

### **3. What would political life be like in a positive future?**

- What is a truly healthy community like politically, both in terms of how our citizens organize themselves locally and how they govern themselves as a Nation?
- What will have to change in order to bring about the politically healthy future we want: personal level (i.e., personal growth); interpersonal level (i.e., the quality of our relationships); organizational level (i.e., what the government agencies do); community level (i.e., how the community interrelates and organizes itself and how it relates to the outside world)?
- Of all of these changes, which parts can local communities and the Nation as a whole do for themselves?
- Which sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek related to development of a healthy political system?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to create a politically healthy future?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



What follows is a summary of what the some 125 participants in the Community Story process at Atikameksheng Anishnawbek said about governance and politics.

## **1. What is political life in the community like now?**

### **1.1 *Community participation in governance***

- Many both on- and off-reserve members feel included and that their voices are being heard in governance and community decision-making, but it wasn't always like this.
- Communication has significantly improved between the council and community members because of Facebook, flyers, online newsletters and regular meetings.
- Nevertheless, there are still a significant number of members who do not feel included, and who are still not being reached by the governance process.
- The label "off reserve" feels divisive to some people. We should be talking about "community members" or "citizens" but not dividing each other up by labels. Other labels that also divide us are related to family names, Bill C 31, etc. We need to see ourselves as one people, one extended family.
- Some "off reserve" people feel that the only time they are needed and engaged is when it is time to vote.
- Many community members don't understand where the money is going from our IBAs and agreements with resource extraction companies working in our traditional territory. They want to know why the money cannot be invested in community development, education, employment ,etc.

### **1.2 *Current Trends in the Political Culture***

- The current Council is proactive and much more community oriented than past councils. Their initiatives and programs are more community-based than we saw in the past. They are doing more to benefit the community such as the business park, the new rink pad, etc.
- There is still a need for Chief and Council to be more directly involved with youth or those who are in need.
- Everyone can see that the current Council is very busy and working hard.
- Despite obvious efforts to reach out on the part of Chief and Council, there is no longer an open-door policy that allows community members to stop in and talk.
- When it comes to monthly and bimonthly band meetings, we have to fill out a form. Sometimes people just need the chance to speak their minds, not to fill out a form.
- The management of the administration actually runs the day-to-day affairs of the reserve, but their function isn't the same as that of political leadership. There is a need for political leaders to bring themselves much closer to the grassroots people and to be in constant dialogue with them.
- Sometimes leadership and senior administration don't seem to be open to hearing questions in a nonjudgmental way.
- Now if we want to make complaint, we have to follow a formal process at Band meetings. For some, speaking out at Band meetings is personally challenging and

there need to be other ways that complaints can be made.

- There is a kind of separation and lack of collaboration between the Trust office and the administration office that needs to be bridged.

## **2. How was our political system different in the past?**

### **2.1 *The long-ago past***

- Every person had a voice within our traditional governance system through family-based and clan consultation.
- Traditional governance wasn't just about talking, it was also about doing and getting results. Results were not just the responsibility of leaders, but rather the responsibility of everyone.
- There was a close connection between traditional governance and our traditional spiritual beliefs and values such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings that were used to guide our interactions with each other
- There was a strong role for women, and especially elder women, in governance in our Anishnawbek traditional system.
- In general, decision-makers did not isolate themselves from the people in their process of making decisions. They consulted constantly, and also received and carefully considered the counsel of wise elders and spiritual guides.
- Decisions were made collectively on the basis of consensus. There was no top-down, autocratic decision-making.
- Every individual was cherished and valued, but not at the expense of the good of the whole community.
- Traditional leadership rallied the energy, intelligence and skills of the collective for the common good, guided by consensus.
- Every individual was a contributor to the traditional governance system, and to play this role adequately, everyone had to prepare themselves for a life of service above self.

### **2.2 *The Recent Past***

- When we accepted the Chief and Council system under the Indian Act, we gradually lost touch with our traditional values and practices related to governance and leadership.
- In the recent past, our political system became quite hierarchical, sometimes top-down, autocratic and disconnected from the community it served.
- Within past Councils, there was a lot of conflict and negativity that paralyzed the council's functioning, and turned much of its attention and energy inward.
- Essentially, the same dysfunctional patterns of human interaction that came out of our history of intergenerational trauma and directly impacted our families, such as addictions and abuse were also playing out in our governance system—patterns of interaction such as fear, mistrust, manipulation, lateral violence and other hurtful behaviour—it was all there.

- The community did not receive much information about what Council was doing. Leadership seemed to operate in isolation.
- There was also significant breakdown in trust and cooperation between Council and administration. Chief and Council often tried to micromanage day-to-day administrative decisions and activities.
- Despite all the above challenges, past councils worked hard on bringing good things to the community such as the business park.

### **3. What would political life be like in a positive future?**

- Governance would be completely community-oriented and community-driven.
- There would be open, transparent and accountable sharing of information in a continuous flow between community members, administration and leadership.
- There would be a healthy balance between formal systems and mechanisms of conducting business to ensure fairness and accountability and an open-door policy that makes it easy for community members, leadership and administration to talk together as human beings about our community and its needs.
- Open houses and community meetings would be frequent.
- Council would not place itself above the community, but rather would frequently sit with community members in dialogue with them about our shared interests and concerns, hopes and dreams for our community. Home visits would become a regular part of the governance process.
- Council would hold coffee house type gatherings where community members and elected leaders could just sit and talk.
- We need to open up the flow of communication between everyone who has a stake in the governance system (community members, committee members, community entities, staff, leadership) by creating both formal mechanisms and platforms (such as consultation sessions modelled after the community story meeting, focus groups, task group meetings, committee meetings, open band meetings, etc.) as well as more informal opportunities for dialogue and consultation.
- Part of the communication challenge we face is effectively including our community members living in other centres, and this is well within our reach with modern media platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype and other videoconferencing tools. We now need to set up a regular system through which we incorporate these tools into our routine patterns of communication and consultation.

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to create a politically healthy future?**

#### **4.1 1 – 2 Year Horizon**

- There will be a much greater emphasis on youth engagement in governance by supporting the flourishing of the Youth Council and ensuring that there are Elders to work with them.
- Councilors will be assigned portfolios focused on age and demographic groups; i.e., someone responsible to engage children, youth, women, men, and elders.

- Opportunities for community members and leadership to dialogue in a much more relaxed atmosphere will be created.
- The participant limit for programs and events will be increased so that everyone who wants to attend and participate is able to do so.
- Non-status community members will be included and engaged in all of our governance activities. We need to treat everyone like family.
- Our leadership will be directly involved in cases related Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- A local lottery or some other system through which projects can receive modest funding for community initiatives will be established.
- Experiments with community dialogue meetings that are inclusive, informal and through which anyone that wants to participate can find their voice will be conducted.
- Community members living in Toronto and elsewhere will be engaged in our governance process through both local meetings and media-based engagement.
- Political leadership will be increasingly assertive in standing up for our rights in terms of getting our fair share from economic activities taking place on our traditional lands. This will require us to be much more assertive in terms of holding Canada and Ontario to account for our rights under the law.
- Focused work by leadership will strive to move towards greater respect and mutual acceptance in our political culture, so that everyone can have a voice, without fear of criticism, attacks, ridicule, putdowns, lateral violence or other negative behaviours. Strong ground rules based on the Seven Grandfather Teachings will gradually be introduced.

#### 4.2 5 – 10 year horizon

- A single well-designed and spacious office complex to house political leadership, administration and programs as well as Trust offices will be built
- Our own Election Code with the power to move to four-year election cycles will have been ratified.
- We will have our own Citizenship Code, that allows us to exercise our own sovereignty in deciding who is and who is not a member of our community, regardless of Indian Affairs status recognition. We need to be able to recognize and embrace all of our relatives and family members as being part of us, and to ensure that everyone has access to the rights, privileges and responsibilities of membership, which need to be specifically defined in this code.
- A long-term governance and political development strategic plan will be in place that moves us systematically towards increased sovereignty and decreased controlled by Indian Affairs.
- We will have both youth and Elder representatives on Council.
- We will make a very conscientious effort to engage our youth in the process of governance reform, as we move toward a future without Indian Affairs government—a future that the next generation will inherit.
- Ground rules and ethical behavioural standards for elected leaders and staff based on

the Seven Grandfather Teachings will be codified, and everyone will be expected to honour these agreed-upon standards. The code will include processes to deal with and consequences for flagrant violations.

- An important goal is to create a political culture based on respect, love and service above self.
- The political culture of our community will be one of love , encouragement and mutual support between community and its leadership.
- We recognize that our political sovereignty is directly interrelated with our fiscal sovereignty. There will be a great emphasis placed on the creation of own-source revenue through Band-owned businesses and investments so that, by the end of 10 years, the money we get from Federal and Provincial Governments will be less than half of the total income of our community, most of which will be drawn from our own businesses and enterprises. A significant portion of this money will be utilized for the ongoing human and community development of our people.

## ECONOMIC LIFE

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The following questions were used to guide discussions by community participants focused on economic life.

### **1. What is economic life and community like now?**

- How well-off are Atikameksheng Anishnawbek families today? Do people have what they need in order to live a healthy, balanced life? Can people afford the basic necessities?
- How are people getting what they need in order to live (to meet their basic needs)?
- How are the people's personal, social, spiritual and other kinds of development being affected by the way they are obtaining money and the material things they need to live?
- What are the main economic barriers, obstacles and problems faced by community members? What are the assets and strengths members have that can contribute to a sound economic foundation?
- Who are the worst off economically in our communities? Why is that?
- How is the way people are earning a living affecting the natural environment (air, water, earth, plants, animals)? How is the environment influencing the people's economy? What is happening in the people's relationship with the natural environment?

### **2. What can we learn from the past about economic life?**

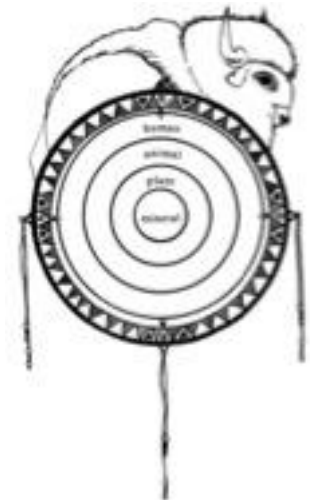
- How did our people survive and thrive economically in the traditional past?
- What can we learn from that past that would help us today?
- What, if anything, of our economic past has been lost that is important to recover for today?

### **3. What would economic life be like in a positive future?**

- What would a truly healthy Nation be like economically?
- What are the key things that will have to change in order to achieve a healthy economic future for our members and the Nation as a whole: personal level (i.e., the individual members of the community); interpersonal level (i.e., significant relationships among community members); and organizational level (i.e., what the government, agencies and businesses do)?
- Which other personal and community development issues must be worked on to effectively address the challenge of economic development?
- Which strengths do we have as a community that we can build on for a better economic future?
- Which changes are needed to achieve sustainable economic prosperity for all?
- Who has to be involved in making the changes that are needed?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support economic development for its members and the Nation as a whole?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved in order to create a future that is economically healthy and sustainable?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?





- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?

What follows is a summary of the many insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story meeting related to economic life.

## 1. What is the economic life of the community like now?

### 1.1 *Many people are struggling.*

- We are still living in a third world situation. Many of our families are living below the poverty line. Many have a very hard time making ends meet. People on social assistance and other fixed income are especially struggling.
- For many of our individuals and families, even basic necessities are out of reach. Even for those who work, the basic cost of living often exceeds our incomes.
- Some of us pretend that everything is okay economically, but it is really not okay.
- Some people even resort to selling drugs just to earn money.
- Housing is a huge issue. Some can't even afford to pay rent, and for many, building a home is out of reach. We need an affordable housing program.
- Barriers to individual and family prosperity include low levels of education, wellness issues and dependency thinking, as well as a lack of opportunity in the form of available jobs and support for small business initiatives.

### 1.2 *Not enough support for small business*

- There's a lot of federal funding for big business but not much for small and medium-size enterprises.
- There seems to be no effort being made to support our people to start successful small and medium-sized businesses that could occupy the industrial park, give employment to some people and enrich our community.
- Those of our members who are entrepreneurial are very passionate about their businesses, and that is a resource that could be used to encourage others.
- We have a lot of smoke shops, but why don't we create other opportunities, such as a restaurant or coffee shop, a dollar store, etc.?
- Why is the Solar Park not operating? Why is it taking so long for the Industrial Park to be opened for business?
- On-reserve businesses should be paying taxes to the reserve, and paying for the utilities and services they use. This does not seem to be happening.
- There is very little communication from the administration office in support of community economic development.

### 1.3 *Economic development and the Environment*

- Some of our Indigenous loggers now refuse to work in the industry because logging companies are not following guidelines and rules for the health of the environment.

- Forestry operations are cutting down too many trees and disturbing traditional medicine plans and resources. They should be held accountable, at least on our traditional territory.
- We need more attention to how we are treating the land. We get all the resources that everybody lives on from the earth.
- We need to pay attention to our traditional teachings about this.
- The Creator made us stewards of the land that He gave us, and we need to carry out our traditional responsibility for stewardship. Our economic development needs to be based on sustainable land use and land management policies and practices.
- We should never let the land be abused. She is our Mother.
- We are not now teaching our young people to respect and care for the land, and we need to do this.

## 2. What can we learn from the past about economic life?

- In the long-ago past, our people were intimately connected with the land, and all of their economic activities were conducted in relationship to the animals, fish, water and seasons.
- Our people lived in two modes. Small family groups spread out across the land in the same way that the game spread out across the land. They were very careful not to have too many people in one place using up all the resources. Each family group was assigned its traditional territory, and no other group would encroach on that territory without permission, although people always helped each other in time of need.
- The second mode was when we came together in large encampments, mostly in the summer and midwinter seasons for ceremonies, fishing, and consultation about important matters affecting all of us.
- We took care of each other. There was no individual poverty. If one family was poor, we all helped out. If some of us had food, it was shared with everyone. Some people being poor and others not among us was unknown until the settlers came and we began to change.
- At least two lessons can be taken from this pattern. First, our people perfectly adapted their economic activity to the reality of the conditions within which they lived. As the conditions changed, they changed. Secondly, they never gave up their close ties with one another or their core values, even for economic reasons.
- Younger generations learned the knowledge and skills they would need for hunting, gathering, and the making of tools, clothing, shelter and other things that were needed. They learned by watching closely what the Elders did and listening deeply to what the Elder said. There was constant and disciplined attention to preparing the next generation for successful economic activity.
- Our ancestors were extremely strict with themselves regarding how they took care of the land. They never took all of anything. They always left some for others and to reproduce. They used everything that they took and wasted nothing. For thousands of years they lived close to the land, and all that time until the European settlers arrived, the land remained in a pristine state, always ready to provide with the people needed.

- In the more recent past, our people prided themselves on their self-reliance. They hunted, trapped, built their own houses, grew gardens and helped one another. If a man started to build a house or a barn, pretty soon everybody else would be out there helping, women would be cooking, and even the children would be eager to help.
- In the past, our economic strength was based on our ability to support one another (which some people call social capital) and our intimate knowledge of the land and the resources it offered us.

### **3. What would economic life be like in a positive future?**

- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will have dozens of businesses and many agreements with the corporations using our lands and resources.
- From these businesses, our people will have jobs, and Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will have a wealth-production engine that will be sustainable into the future.
- None of our people, no matter where they live, will be living in poverty. There will be economic opportunities for all.
- There will be considerable emphasis on training human resources for economic success, beginning where people are today and helping them to grow their way into a better life.
- Our own-source income will at least equal the amount of money coming from Federal and Provincial Governments so we could safely make our own decisions.
- Our economy will be culturally based and green. We will become the first community in Canada to have our entire economy based on green energy.
- All existing businesses will be contributing to the wellbeing of the community through a fair and equitable tax regime. We will have several agreements that will enable all taxes paid by our people living off reserve to be returned to us.
- Existing businesses on reserve will be accountable for the services they receive, such as garbage collection, water, recycling, power, etc.
- All new businesses will be encouraged and supported to incorporate traditional values.
- Our community will be off the grid in terms of dependency on Ontario Hydro. We will produce our own electricity from solar energy and other sources.
- Those of our members want to live closer to the land will be supported to do so.
- A strong environmental management program will ensure that our forestry resources and other natural resources on our traditional territories are protected from poaching.
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will be holding other jurisdictions and corporations to account for sewage and wastewater treatment and other activities that affect our environment.
- We will be moving towards carbon zero community infrastructure.

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to create a future that is economically healthy and sustainable?**

#### **4.1 In the next 1 to 2 years**

- Community members will be engaged in making a long-term economic development strategic plan based in a green energy focus and guided by our cultural values that will see steady movement both toward sustainable prosperity for individuals and families and a shift from managing poverty to managing wealth because of sustainable business and other wealth production activities on the part of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek.
- We will secure funding and technical support in so that we can be successful with environmentally friendly business based on our own cultural and environmental strengths.
- We will conduct an in-depth assessment about how all of our families are doing economically and what they need in order to prosper.
- We will begin a pilot initiative aimed at helping to get our families who want to progress economically out of poverty and onto the ladder of success.
- We will begin a human resources development initiative aimed at creating broad participation of our citizens in moving towards economic success and sustainability.
- We will make existing businesses more accountable financially and environmentally, so that they can contribute to infrastructure and community growth.
- We will develop a sustainable housing plan and begin to implement it.

#### *4.2 In the next 5 years*

- We will have achieved full implementation of the economic development strategic plan.
- We will engage community members in evaluating progress on the economic plan.
- We will reduce the need for affordable housing by 25%.
- We will launch an effective small business development support program that helps at least one new business get started or existing business expand every month.
- We will launch a human resources training and development program that can help people move from dependency, addiction and disbelief in themselves toward a better life for themselves and their families.
- We will launch and operate a vigorous employment development program and reduce unemployment by at least 10% every year (which would mean 50% in five years and 100% in 10 years).
- We will establish an Atikameksheng Anishnawbek wealth production engine that creates joint ventures, business enterprises, investment funds, and spinoff programs to help families become financially literate and economically secure.
- We will establish policy and legislation to guide, secure and ensure safe investment of all Band revenue, with a portion set aside for future investment and another portion set aside for investment in people and community development.

#### *4.3 The next 10 years*

- We will establish an Atikameksheng Anishnawbek economic development corporation at arm's length from politics.
- We will engage community members in renewing the economic plan every five years.

- We will establish Atikameksheng Anishnawbek enterprises in city centres such as Sudbury and Toronto.
- We will establish an Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Heritage Trust Fund that is only drawn upon in lean times.
- We will negotiate tax agreements that will allow Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to recoup taxes paid by Atikameksheng Anishnawbek citizens in Ontario and Canada.

## SOCIAL LIFE

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The following questions were used to guide discussions by community participants focused on social life.

### 1. *What is the social life of our communities and the Nation like now?*

- What is the current reality of social wellbeing in our communities? Consider the following aspects of this question: family wellbeing/health; levels of substance abuse; levels of communal violence; levels of crime against property and people; levels of physical and sexual abuse; levels of mutual support and a climate of encouragement; levels of gossip and backbiting; levels of cooperation and volunteering; how the community responds to emergencies or crises; how the community forgives those who break the rules or offend people; how the community deals with diversity, minority views, and those who are different; etc.
- Is the community unified or divided (common vision, shared plans, sense of identity, feelings of belonging, mutual support and love)?
- Does the community have control over those things that lead to health (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual, environmental, etc.)?
  - Is there a strong sense of collective awareness, decision-making and action related to health?
  - Is there a strong emphasis on the promotion of human wellness (mental, emotional, physical, spiritual) and the prevention of sickness or injury, or is most "health" money and energy focused on the medical mission of sick care?
- Is education as it is now meeting the learning needs of the people?
  - Are kids dropping out of school?
  - Are school leavers able to contribute usefully to their own (economic) upkeep and to community development?
  - Is there a portion of the population that education is not serving well?
  - Does the community provide opportunities for life-long learning for its members?
  - What needs to change about the educational system?
- Are current social welfare and child protection programs effective? Why or why not? What needs to change?
- Is the justice system (i.e., the police and the courts) working? If not, what changes are needed?
- Do health, education, welfare or justice program initiatives address the people's real social development needs? What should change in the way these programs work?

### 2. *What can we learn from the past about social life?*

- How is what is happening today different from the way it was in the past? What, if anything, was lost that we need today?

### 3. *What would social life be like in a positive future?*

- What would a socially healthy community be like?
- What will have to change in the way we live and carry on our community life in order to create socially healthy and viable communities?
  - Personal level (i.e. personal growth, healing, learning)?



- Interpersonal level (i.e. the way we relate to one another)?
- Organizational level (i.e. what the agencies, programs and community organizations do)?
- Community level (i.e. how the community organizes itself, interacts and relates to the outside world)?
- Of those changes, what can local communities and the Nation as a whole do for themselves?
- What sort of help is needed from the greater society to support the process of making these changes?
- What should the priorities be of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek to support the development of healthy social life?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

#### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to create a future that is socially healthy?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?

*Social life refers to community wellbeing and health, to how the community cares for those in need, to the processes of educating the next generation, and to prevailing patterns of social interaction, community solidarity and unity. Western society has organized social development into three main categories of work: 1) health, 2) education and 3) helping the needy (welfare). The questions above touched on those three areas, but also on the more basic issues such as unity, caring, sharing and community identity. The participants of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process put forward the following observations and suggestions related to the social life of the community.*

### **1. What is the social life of the community like now?**

#### **1.1 Wellness: a significant challenge**

- We have a high rate of addictions. Roughly 70% of our households have at least one person who is using alcohol and/or drugs to a level that causes harm to themselves or others.
- This means that a high proportion of the community's children are living in high risk situations. Physical and sexual abuse often accompany addictions.
- People are driving drunk or high in the community.
- Drug trafficking is occurring on a regular basis.
- Opioids are seriously harming some of our people, and there have been deaths.
- Many of our community members say they feel helpless. There is a pervasive feeling of desperation in the community. There is a tendency to focus on the negative and not the good things that are happening. Many people do not know how to find balance and peace in their lives.
- Lateral violence is common (gossip, backbiting, criticism, ridicule, putdowns, spreading rumours and lies, disrespecting).
- Family breakdown is becoming far too common.



- When looked at as an interconnected pattern, some people are saying we are experiencing a wellness crisis in our community.
- Many, if not all of our wellness issues are connected to trauma that is passed on from one generation to the next and is therefore still very much alive and impacting us today.

### *1.2 Wellness issues connected to other social challenges*

- There is an undercurrent of disunity and conflict between some individuals and families. Some of this separation has been happening for generations, and the reasons are often lost in time. Some of it is personal, some of it political or religious, but no matter what the cause, disunity between our members weakens our capacity as a community to work together for the good of all. It needs to be healed.
- Many of us have lost our Anishnawbek identity and a sense of connectedness to our history and culture.
- Many can no longer speak or even understand Anishinawbemöen.
- Some of our families have retained their connection to our Anishnawbek roots, our traditional spiritual and cultural teachings, and our ceremonial life. Others identify with various Christian churches. This split has been a source of deep misunderstanding and separation between some of us. It needs to be healed.
- Dependency thinking—a false sense of entitlement and learned helplessness—fundamentally adding up to an expectation that others must take care of you (the Band Office, the Government, etc.) is preventing many of our people from realizing their true potential as human beings.
- The lack of housing in our community is a serious social issue affecting the wellness of many people.
- Wellness is also connected to the chronic poverty that a significant portion of our families are experiencing.
- Parenting skills were lost within some of our families because of residential schools and, even today, many of these families are affected by wellness issues.
- An over engagement with technology may be contributing to isolation and lateral violence in the community.
- For families without a vehicle, transportation is very difficult on weekends, and this creates social isolation.

### *1.3 Community social strengths*

- We have many people who have dedicated themselves to serving the community in order to make life better for everyone. Some of these are Elders, but not all. These individuals have given of themselves for the benefit of the community year after year, often without recognition. They do it because it is the right thing to do, and because that's who they are.
- When there is a crisis, our people come together, and for the most part, we put aside our differences to work together for solutions.
- We have a considerable number of people who are pipe carriers and traditional knowledge holders, and who are willing to share what they know for the benefit of

individuals, families or the whole community.

- We have a significant number of our community members who are addictions free, relatively healthy, have experienced their own healing journey, and are willing to give of their time and energy to support the wellness journey of others. (These people have not yet come together as a force within the community, but they represent a tremendous potential resource.)
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek has a large number of highly capable and promising young people—youth with hopes and dreams and visions, who, if given the right kind of support, can be a tremendous force for good.

#### *1.4 About education*

- A significant portion of our young people are dropping out of school before they finish grade 12. Many just don't understand the importance of completing high school.
- Education funding is too low to allow for students to purchase laptops, which are becoming essential for school success in the older grades.
- Students who are doing well are not sufficiently recognized and encouraged by the community. We should have annual education awards.
- Many of our students need stronger academic and social support in school than they are now getting. It needs to be recognized that young people who come from homes with wellness issues have barriers to overcome for which they need to be supported.
- Even after successfully completing high school, many of our young people know little to nothing about our Anishnawbek culture, history and language. We need to find a way to change this.

#### *1.5 About our Social Programs*

- We have a lot of programs operating, both from within Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and from outside agencies that work closely with our community. But despite all these programs and workers, we have a lot of wellness issues, and in some ways, things seem to be getting worse.
- The programs that are operating are disconnected from most community members. Some community members lack trust in service providers. These members don't want to use our local providers for fear of a breach of confidentiality (which has happened in the past). Another challenge is that there can be a high worker turnover and this can create a lack of consistency in programs and services.
- Communication about which programs are available and what benefit they can actually bring to individuals or families is intermittent and inconsistent.
- There's a tendency in some of our social programming to focus on the individual and forget about the family and community level; i.e., to try to help the individual to have a better life without realizing that the struggles individuals are experiencing are connected to the patterns of thinking and acting that are prevalent in his/her family or in our community. (The healing and development of individuals and the healing and development of their families and community must go hand-in-hand.)
- Our community programs are operating in silos rather than working together.
- There is a disconnect between our members who live on reserve and those who live in

other centres in terms of accessing social programs.

## **2. What can we learn from how social life was in the past?**

- Families paid a lot of attention to helping their young people learn what they needed to learn in order to be good mothers, fathers and community members. Extended family played a strong role, in that uncles and aunties what often helped educate young people as they were growing up.
- We had rites of passage as our young people were growing from childhood through the period of youth into adulthood, and with each step, they acquired new skills and assumed a greater level of responsibility.
- In the more recent past, our families were much stricter. Young people didn't just run around doing what they wanted. They had responsibilities to the family. There was not that much alcohol use, and many of our families spend quite a lot of their time in the bush.
- Our community did a lot of visiting house to house. There was no TV, no radio, and no telephone. We had to make our own entertainment. Sometimes we had large social gatherings like at Christmas and New Year's.
- Children were raised not just by their mother and father, but by their uncles, aunties, grandparents, and also other community members. You couldn't get away with much mischief, because someone would see you and news would get back to your parents quite quickly.
- When our boys went off to World War I and World War II, some came back, but many didn't. We pulled together to support all the families who had losses.

## **3. What would our social life look like in a healthy future?**

- Most of the extreme wellness issues we see today, such as high levels of addiction, abuse, violence, and mental health challenges such as depression and chronic anger will have disappeared and been replaced by high levels of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness within individuals, families, and across the whole community. We would become known for this.
- We would have high levels of love and unity among our members. The separation of the divide that is now over family politics, religion and other fault lines will be healed.
- We will be living the Seven Grandfather Teachings in terms how we treat each other.
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will play a much stronger role in the education of our young people, particularly to ensure that children and youth grow up connected to their Anishnawbek identity, language and culture.
- Our human service programs will be totally integrated, and effectively able to address the root causes of the social problems we see today in order to prevent them from recurring.
- We will have many community gatherings in which we celebrate the unity of our community and work together for the betterment of ourselves and future generations
- We will also take the time to have fun together, as well as to nurture our connection to our historical and cultural roots.

## 4. What should our goals be for social development

### 4.1 *In the next 2 years?*

- Develop and implement a comprehensive community healing Strategy that utilizes both the professional program resources and the community resources we already have.
- To introduce in-depth training related to healing and recovery from trauma based wellness challenges
- To reduce our addiction rate by 10% each year
- To create and pilot targeted programs for healing and wellness recovery for children, youth, and families
- To develop a strategy for healing the separation and disunity between individuals and families, and to begin testing and refining the strategy.
- To implement a series of monthly community gatherings that include feasting, cultural teachings, laughter and play and serious talk.
- To develop a comprehensive Lifelong Education Plan for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek that reflects the community's vision, values and capacities in working together with education institutions at every level to ensure that AA children and youth are learning what they need to learn, and appropriate adult education and training is available to our community members.

### 4.2 *In the next 5 years*

- to establish a local detox and treatment program
- to ensure that a strong aftercare program is in place.
- To continue reducing addictions rates by 10% a year
- to connect healing and wellness recovery to individual and family improvement in critical areas of life related to housing, economic prosperity and cultural connection and social support.
- To develop a community-based language and cultural learning centre with programs for people of all ages
- To renew the community healing strategy every year after thorough evaluation of progress to date.

### 4.3 *In the next 10 years*

- to establish a community insurance program to make up the gap for uninsured health benefits
- to continue reducing addictions rates by 10% a year so that by the 10th year, the addiction rate is at or near 0%.
- To implement a lifelong health and wellness learning initiative for individuals and families, so that everyone learns how to stay mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy.

## SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

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The following questions were used to guide the discussion of the participants in the Community Story process on the topic of spiritual and cultural life.

### **1. What is the spiritual and cultural life of the community like now?**

- Do we have a healthy sense of who we are as human beings and Anishnawbek people, and do our members, wherever they live, have a sense of their identity?
- What is the current condition of our traditional culture (such as language; spiritual knowledge and practices; healing arts and knowledge; survival technologies and knowledge; music, arts and stories)?
- Do our young people respect and learn about the old ways from their parents and the Elders?
- What is the relationship like between our traditional ways and the churches? What impact are the churches having on life today? What is good and what needs to change about the way the churches and our traditional people interact in our community?
- Do our people have a shared/common vision of what kind of communities we want to build and about who we want to be in a healthy future? Do we have a clear idea of what moral and philosophical principles we need to live by in order to develop our potential as human beings? In short, do we know where we need to go (as human beings and as communities) and how to get there?

### **2. What can we learn from the past about cultural and spiritual life?**

- To what extent are we drawing on the cultural knowledge, wisdom and resources from the past to help us solve critical problems of today?
- Is it useful or important to do so?

### **3. What would spiritual and cultural life be like in a positive future?**

- What would our Nation and our local communities be like if they were truly healthy and strong in the area of culture and spirituality?
- What will have to change in order to achieve this ideal?
  - Personal level (i.e., personal growth, healing, learning)?
  - Interpersonal level (i.e., the nature and quality of our relationships)?
  - Organizational level (i.e., what the agencies, community organizations and churches do)?
  - Community level (i.e., how the community inter-relates and organizes itself and how it relates with the outside world)?
- Of those changes, what can the Nation and our local communities wherever we live do on our own? What actions are needed?
- What should the priorities of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek be to support the spiritual and cultural life of its members?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved to create a future that is culturally and spiritually healthy?**

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



The participants of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process put forward the following observations and suggestions related to the spiritual and cultural life of the community.

## **1. What is the cultural and spiritual life of the community like now?**

### *1.1 Connection to our Anishnawbek identity, teachings and cultural practices*

- There is greater awareness and presence of our culture in many aspects of community life. We see it in what is offered through our programs, in what our children are learning in school, and in the general visibility of culture in the life of the community in events such as the inauguration of a new Chief and Council, or even the holding of the Community Story community gathering as we begin work on our new Comprehensive Community Plan.
- A lot more families are paying attention to their cultural connections than was happening a generation ago. The fact is, however, that not many of us know very much about our culture, traditional ceremonies, history, or teachings. We can't share with our children what we don't know.
- Our community does have a fair number of traditional knowledge holders, pipe carriers and ceremonial leaders. There are various kinds of ceremonies such as the "walking in" ceremony or the "strawberry fast", as well as sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies and healing ceremonies all happening, but it's kind of quiet and in the background.
- Some of our families follow the Christian way in the Catholic or some other church and some families follow the traditional way. There are also a growing number of families who don't follow any spiritual path.
- There is less division over religion than there was a few generations ago.
- Many of the Elders that knew the old stories have already passed away, and there are only a few left. It's urgent that we write down the stories now.
- We don't have a book that tells our history as a community, where we lived before, how we used the land, how we organized our life together, etc., and we need to write that history down for ourselves and future generations.
- We have a few sweat lodges and the Teaching Lodge, but these are all connected to a particular family. If we want to make our culture strong for the whole community, we need a community designated place to meet where lodges can be set up, meetings and ceremonies held. etc.
- Culture is not just about ceremony. Culture is the way people have learned to live in the world; it is our connection to our past, to the land, to one another, and to the Creator. Yes, there are teachings and ceremonies connected to culture, but culture is deeper than that. Culture is who we are.
- Many of our workers are incorporating elements of culture into their programs and services, but we don't have a cultural program per se, dedicated to recovering our historical memory, our history, our cultural practices, and our language.

### *1.2 Anishnawbemoen*

- We have almost no fluent Anishnawbek speakers from our community. There are a few



people who are fluent who live here, but they are from Wikwemikong, a community that has kept their language strong.

- We do have quite a lot going on connected to language such as a language program in the schools, language classes in the library, the option to take Ojibwe rather than French in school, etc.
- Trying to learn our Ojibwe language by taking a class is an almost impossible way to try to do it. It had to be immersed. It has to live all around you. If it's not happening in the home, it's not going to happen for people unless they find some way to be immersed. Some people have tried to learn the language by taking classes but it's very difficult.
- We don't have a comprehensive language strategy, and we need one if we ever expect to get our language back.

### *1.3 Music, arts and crafts*

- We certainly do have people who know how to make drums, and who know traditional songs, but we don't have a drum group or a teaching program for our young people.
- Some of our older people know quite a lot about gathering and making medicines or beading and making regalia and many other things. Some of this knowledge stays within families, but for the most part we don't have a systematic way for people to learn these things if they want to.

## **2. What was cultural and spiritual life like in the past?**

- In the long-ago past, everyone received the teachings, learned the ceremonies, participated in the gatherings, and internalized the roadmap for life that a strong culture provides.
- Much of this was lost during the colonial period when our people lost connection with our land, lost our language, were forbidden to practice our ceremonies, and when many of our people joined churches.
- Those of our people who did retain the knowledge of our traditional teachings and ceremonies kept everything fairly hidden. People practiced only in their own homes, or deep in the forest where they could not be seen or heard.
- The importance of our spiritual and cultural teachings cannot be overestimated. They animated every individual and all of our people with the connection to the Earth, with the Creator, and with each other, and these teachings taught us how to live. They gave us a roadmap for life and a moral compass to guide our way. From this we can learn that part of the reason many of our people are so lost today is because they have not internalized the spiritual and cultural teachings that are so necessary for a good and healthy life. These teachings help us understand who we are as human beings and how to walk through life in a good way—a way that leads to health and wellbeing for us and all those around us.

## **3. What would our cultural and spiritual life be like in a positive future?**

- We will begin teaching our language either in our homes or in early childhood education programs, and they will be immersion programs for the first important years



of education. We will have many more fluent Ojibwe speakers.

- Our spiritual teachings and our culture will be at the centre of our community life. We will have our own cultural development department, and the community will have built a cultural centre with facilities to accommodate ceremonies, large meetings, a library and museum, and possibly culturally based businesses.
- We will have completed a book and related media-based learning materials that tell the story of our people: where we came from; where we lived; how we survived and thrived for thousands of years; how our political, economic, and social life was organized and functioned; and then what happened to us as a result of European settlement and colonization, the formation of Canada, the Indian Act, the formation of reserves, residential schools, 60s scoop—everything that happened to us and the impact it all has on life today.
- We will have systematic programs through which children and youth are introduced and become steeped in our traditional knowledge, teachings, ceremonies, history and language. These programs may run within and/or parallel to the formal education system.
- Our intimate connection to the land and particularly our traditional territory will be at the heart of our cultural recovery process.

#### **4. What should our goals be related to cultural and spiritual life?**

##### *4.1 In the next 1 to 2 years*

- Establish a cultural recovery and language learning department.
- Begin holding language and cultural learning classes for children, youth and adults.
- Commission the research and writing of our history.
- Designate lands to be used for sacred/cultural activities and begin using those lands by putting up and utilizing traditional teaching lodges, sweat lodges, etc.
- Make plans for building a significant facility to house the Nation's cultural and language development work.

##### *4.2 In the next five years*

- Establish a yearly round of cultural events, including language learning immersion camps, classes, cultural teaching retreats, ceremonies, cultural learning courses, etc. and begin offering these to community members and anyone else who is interested.
- Ensure that, to the extent possible, programs and materials are available through online services to community members living in other centres.
- Complete and begin utilizing the new Cultural Centre planned in the first two years.
- Begin focused research aimed at strengthening the cultural foundations of the community's work in areas such as governance, health and wellness, economic development, justice and education in collaboration with decision makers in those areas. As this knowledge is organized, support its integration into the work of those sectors.

#### *4.3 In the next 10 years*

- At least once a year, evaluate the progress of cultural development and the strength of the connection of community members to cultural identity and teachings in the process of nation building.
- Hold cultural gatherings for the whole Nation at least once in every season.

## INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT

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The small groups that worked on the topic of infrastructure development and management used the following four sets of questions to guide their discussion.

**1. *What is the current infrastructure in the community like?***

- What are our current assets in terms of infrastructure?
- How are these assets benefiting Atikameksheng Anishnawbek members—living on reserve, living off the reserve?
- How is our infrastructure being developed and managed? Who makes these decisions? Who is left out of these decisions?
- What is working and what is not working about the community's infrastructure and how it is being managed? What are our major challenges with respect to the development and management of infrastructure? What are our greatest opportunities and assets?
- What are our needs in terms of the development of new infrastructure? How are these needs different for Atikameksheng Anishnawbek members living on and off the reserve?

**2. *What can we learn from the past about infrastructure development and management in the community?***

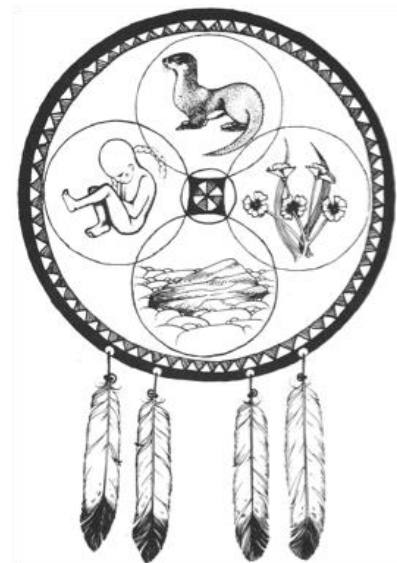
- What can we learn from how we developed and managed infrastructure in the past?
- How have the decisions of the past shaped our current situation in terms of community infrastructure (e.g. housing, recreation, Band programs and services, etc.).

**3. *What would the community's infrastructure be like in a positive future?***

- What would the future be like if Atikameksheng Anishnawbek had the infrastructure it needed? What would this infrastructure be used for? How would the development of new infrastructure have changed the community?
- What will have to change in the way the community operates in order to create a future in which infrastructure is developed and managed in such a way as to bring prosperity and health to the community?
- What can the community do without much outside help to bring about this future?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

**4. *What are the main goals to be achieved with respect to infrastructure development and management?***

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?



The participants of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story process put forward the following observations and suggestions related to the development and management of the community's infrastructure.

## 1. What is the current infrastructure in the community like?

### 1.1 *We take pride in our community.*

- Many of our community members take pride in their homes and they are well maintained. If something needs fixing, it generally gets done right away.
- The road maintenance in the community is very good. We try to maintain it by keeping it ploughed in winter. There could be more grading on the back road but, generally speaking, it is in good condition.
- We have been able to keep the community clean and relatively litter free, which is an improvement from how things used to be. We use the dump now, and there isn't stuff lying around everywhere like before. We have a new gate system and it allows us to have control over who can or cannot get in, and it gives us peace of mind to have this control.

### 1.2 *We want the growth in our community to reflect our growth as a Nation.*

- We recently got a new subdivision that is very beautiful, but we would like to see more homes being built, especially apartment buildings. There are so many people that want to live here but can't because we do not have enough housing for them.
- We currently share a sewer system, and it exudes an unpleasant smell when you first enter the reserve. Getting our own sewer system would help this and also help support the development of more housing.
- We need the Early Years building and the Independent Living Centre to be upgraded, along with security systems that are always running.

### 1.3 *We need better communication in terms of where our money is being spent.*

- There is no transparency when it comes to funding—how much funding do we have for infrastructure? How much of it is being used and for what? Are there funding restraints that are inhibiting our growth? We thought we were a wealthy community, so where is this money going?

### 1.4 *Accessibility is lacking.*

- Some of our people have mobility challenges, and most of our homes and buildings are not easily accessible to them. This limits them in where they can go because some doorways aren't big enough to accommodate their wheelchairs or there is no ramp leading up to the door.
- Lots of our buildings have a number of stairs to get in and out, and our Elders have expressed that they are nervous when it comes to going in and out of buildings. Last winter, one of our Elders fell and cut his head because of this. This should never happen.

## 2. What can we learn from the past about infrastructure development and management?

### 2.1 *We need to realign ourselves with being the original stewards of the land.*

- In the past, we used to have lunches on the shore and go on long trips without producing much waste. In present times, it's difficult to reduce the amount of trash we are producing—everything we do creates waste. We need to get back to being a waste-free community.
- We used to rely on Mother Earth to provide us with all that we needed to live a good life, and we have lost many of our ways of life that nurture this relationship. Some families in our community are living off the land and doing it well, but we all need to be doing it more.

## *2.2 We need to learn from our past in order to better understand what infrastructure needs our community has.*

- As individuals and as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, we are experiencing challenges that we didn't always have to deal with. Some of our members deal with mental and physical challenges, such as addictions or other health issues and have to seek special help in order to heal.
- In the past, we all had homes and strong support systems, but for many of our people, this simply isn't their reality. Some homes act as toxic environments that will not offer them the time and space that is needed in order to heal. We need transitional housing that is a safe space for those who are coming out of the hospital or treatment centre in order to receive the support they need.

## *2.3 Our people must be a part of our own infrastructure growth.*

- In the past, we were expected to get help from outside of our community and that has done nothing to contribute to our success. We need to be employing our own people as our infrastructure grows. More people working in our community will mean that there is more of us who are able to attain economic success, and our people can be proud again.
- We need to ensure that we have adequate staff for the amount of work that needs to be done. Currently we have approximately 47,000 acres of land that only three staff members are in charge of their maintenance, and this simply is not enough. Even if we expand the Band office, we will need more staff so that things run properly.

## **3. What would the community's infrastructure be like in a positive future?**

### *3.1 Our community will be a place in which our Elders can be safe and comfortable.*

- Our Elders have worked their entire lives, and they deserve a safe, beautiful place to live where they can sit back and enjoy themselves.
- Our sidewalks and roads will be improved to ensure that our Elders or those with other mobility issues have an easier time getting around.

### *3.2 Our infrastructure will expand and improve as our community grows, bringing our people back home.*

- We will build more housing, especially multi-unit homes. If we want our community to grow, we have to bring our families home and they need homes to come back to. This will strengthen our sense of community and shared identity as members of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek.

- We will have housing that meets the different needs of our people, such as places to live that are accessible to those with compromised mobility, homes for those who are living alone (apartments), and places to live for those who have families.
- We will have our own sewer system which will support our current infrastructure as well as holds the possibility to support the expansion of our community.

*3.3 Our community will be a place that is safe for our children, and will be a place in which they are proud to call “home”*

- We will improve the measures in which we keep our children safe such as proper lighting around the ball field and around our Community Centre.
- We will have more resources that allow our children to get outside more and spent more time with each other, such as an ice rink.

**4. What are the main goals to be achieved to develop and manage our infrastructure?**

*4.1 A specific timeline for goals was not developed during the Community Story consultations*

## LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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The following questions were used to guide participants and their focus discussion on the topic of Lands and Natural Resource Management

**1. *What is the current situation with respect to the management of the community's lands?***

- What are our current assets in terms of land and natural resources?
- How are these assets benefiting Atikameksheng Anishnawbek members—living on reserve, living off the reserve?
- How are our land and natural resources being managed? Who makes these decisions? Who is left out of these decisions?
- What is working and what is not working about how our land and natural resources are being managed? What are our major challenges with respect to land and natural resource management? What are our greatest opportunities and assets?

**2. *What can we learn from the past about land and natural resource management?***

- What can we learn from how we managed our lands and natural resources in the past?
- How have the decisions of the past shaped our current situation in terms of land and resource management (e.g. economic development, environmental stewardship, etc.).

**3. *How would we manage land and natural resources in a positive future?***

- What would the future be like if Atikameksheng Anishnawbek fully utilized its land? What would this land be used for?
- How will Atikameksheng Anishnawbek manage its natural resources in a healthy and balanced future?
- What will have to change in the way the community operates in order to create a future in which land (including traditional territory) and natural resources are managed in such a way as to bring prosperity and health to the community?
- What can the community do without much outside help to bring about this future?
- What sorts of learning are needed? Who needs to learn?

**4. *What are the main goals to be achieved with respect to land selection and natural resource management?***

- In the next 1 to 2 years?
- In the next 5 years?
- In the next 10 years?

What follows is a summary of the many insights and ideas shared by the participants in the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek Community Story meeting.





## **1. What is the current situation with respect to the management of the community's lands and natural resources?**

- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek is richly endowed with good land that includes forests, lakes, plants for medicine and gathering of traditional food—plenty of land for our use into the foreseeable future.
- There's a lot of community tension around the issue of land-use, however. Participants feel that current policies don't allow members to use the land so that it could benefit them.
- At the same time, we see some prime land going to loggers and leases to private businesses or non-member individuals.
- Community members feel they are not receiving enough information to understand what is going on with land management. Why are decisions being made as they are? What are the rules? What are the policies? These things are not at all clear to the public. Much more transparent communication is needed.
- There are some obvious land-use and environmental issues. For example, loggers and some community businesses are not paying fees associated with their work, our dumpsite is already overcapacity, and non-bandmembers are illegally dumping.
- There is big need for Chief and Council to work in a transparent and collaborative way with community members to establish a workable land-use plan, policies and rules that are fair and beneficial to all.
- Right now, the administration does not have enough human resources to do the job that needs to be done. What is needed is a full department of qualified professional staff.
- What is needed is a land-use plan which includes policies, rules, environmental regulations, monitoring procedures and consequences rule breaking. Everyone would then have to follow this plan, including Chief and Council.

## **2. How did we manage our lands and territories in past?**

- In the long-ago past, our people had a deep and intimate knowledge of the land; of which resources could be found where; of the carrying capacity of the land; of the movement of animals, birds and fish in the different seasons—everything they needed to know in order to live within the land, as part of it. We need our land-use policies, practices and plans today to be made in the light of our traditional knowledge and stewardship responsibilities.
- Our ancestors understood where the limits were in terms of what could be taken from the land sustainably. We need to know that as well. Whatever we have to do to learn these things again, we need to do it.
- Part of the management of the land in the past, was the management of people; i.e., the organization of how the people would use the land. All the people had their traditional hunting and trapping territories, and these were generally respected by everyone else. At the same time, the community worked together and shared certain activities because it was more effective and efficient to do that. The wise use of the land required wise management and organization of the people. We need to organize ourselves so that everyone can benefit from the land without hurting the longest term

sustainability of our natural inheritance. We need to think ahead seven generations.

### **3. What would our lands and natural resource management look like an ideal future?**

- In the future, our people will understand that we are not entitled to do whatever we want on the land; that our responsibility is to be stewards of the land; and that to be wise stewards, we must understand deeply how the land must be protected and cared for and which uses are sustainable and which are not.
- Businesses and community members using our land will routinely report back to the community on what they are doing and how they are using the land and ensure that they are replenishing what they are taking. We will understand clearly that we can't just keep taking from the land. We have to give back as well.
- We will have a land-use plan that has been made collectively through open and participatory community consultation with everyone, informed by wise stewardship practices, and administered with complete transparency, so that everyone knows what the rules are, what the policies are, and what the procedures are for applying to use our land, whether for personal, family use, or business use.
- We will have a strong land management and environmental team that will enforce environmental regulations and ensure fair and equitable use of the land for all within the legislative framework, policies and regulations.
- Atikameksheng Anishnawbek will purchase land in nearby cities for community use and benefit. For example, land could be purchased for building affordable housing for low income members and students. Land could also be purchased for the purpose of creating businesses and enterprises that would create employment for our members.

### **4. What are the main goals to be achieved with respect to lands and natural resource management?**

#### *4.1 In the next 2 years*

- A moratorium needs to be set on land selection and land development because there are now no rules or policies in place to guide what happens. Everyone wants to see progress in our community, and part of that means using the land differently than we are using it now, but at the same time, we want to see progress in ways that are sustainable.
- A shift needs to happen in the way the community deals with controversial issues, and particularly this one. If there are policies, rules and other relevant documents that guide decision-making, these need to be made available to everyone, so everyone knows what's going on. If a decision is given to a band member, then the policy referred to in the decision should be made available as well.
- Community consultation will be held to develop a land use and environmental management plan. Appropriate technical experts will also be consulted, but the plan will be completed and at least piloted in the next two years. People have their lives on hold, waiting to take the next step, which depends on if, when and how they can use the land.
- Part of the land-use plan needs to be a stewardship plan that engages community

members and professionals, including youth in ensuring that our land-use and environmental guidelines are followed.

- A fee schedule as needed to ensure that those who use our land and resources are returning something to the community.

#### *4.2 In the next 5 years.*

- Our land-use and environmental management plan will be finalized and enshrined in legislation.
- Our lands and environmental management department will be fully staffed, trained and equipped to administer community applications for land use in a timely manner, so that decisions are at arm's-length from politics and fair and equitable to all, while at the same time happening within the rules, regulations, and environmental guidelines established in the legislation.
- A system of ensuring that all businesses and land users give something back to the community will be instituted in the form of fees and a taxation regime.
- Part a land-use plan will be zoning that puts businesses in places that do not interfere with family life in the community's ongoing activities. In this regard, many feel that the smoke shops should be moved to the industrial park so that there will be less traffic in the community residential areas.
- Chief and Council are advised to create a lands and environmental management committee to exercise decision-making at arm's-length from politics. Chief and council need to be completely transparent and accountable for their decisions, and so also would such an arm's-length committee need to be accountable through regular community reports and meetings.

#### *4.3 In the next 10 years*

- Evaluate and refine the land-use planning system to ensure that it is transparent, fair to all, and operating in ways that honour our traditional values related to stewardship and sustainability. If changes are needed, a new round of community consultations should be implemented.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate what is happening to the land as a result of our land use to ensure that, despite all our good intentions, we are not having unintended negative consequences.
- Purchase lands in nearby cities and towns for various social and economic enterprises.