



# The Alliance

INDEPENDANT FIRST NATIONS ALLIANCE  
JUNE 2024

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## FEDERAL BUDGET NEARS APPROVAL FOR CRUCIAL PIKANGIKUM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT



### TECHNICAL SERVICES

In April, the government unveiled their federal budget including pivotal funding for the Berens River Bridge and Road Project, a significant development for Pikangikum First Nation and six neighbouring communities.

This allocation signifies a major step toward final approval of the funding. The total estimated cost is \$76.4 million, and while the exact value of the government funding commitment is yet to be confirmed, all necessary designs, studies, and permits are in place, making the project 'shovel ready'. The project will commence as soon as funding is secured.

The Berens River Bridge and Road Project involves construction of a 194m engineered timber bridge across the Berens River and a 15km all-season road to Pikangikum. Currently, Pikangikum and the six northern communities—Deer Lake, Keewaywin, McDowell Lake, North Spirit Lake, Poplar Hill, and Sandy Lake First Nations—experience extremely limited road access, relying on a brief winter road season that spans only 2-6 weeks.



Rendered Image: Future Berens River Bridge Project

The project will benefit over 10,000 residents in these remote communities with improved access to essential services, employment opportunities, and increased safety. The bridge and road will enable more reliable transportation, facilitating better access to medical, social, and educational services, while also lowering the costs of goods and services.

As the final approval process unfolds, Pikangikum and its partners eagerly anticipate breaking ground on this transformative project.

*“After working on the Berens River Bridge and Road Project for 20 years, we are beyond excited to see the project included in the Federal budget. Our community is one step closer to making a better life for our people and closing the gap between us and the rest of Canada.” - Chief Shirley Lynne Keeper*

### SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF



WHITESAND



LAC SEUL



KITCHENUHMAYKOOSIB  
INNINUWUG



MUSKRAT DAM



PIKANGIKUM



## PHYSICIAN TEAM GROWS: INTRODUCING DR. BARTUCCI AND DR. NICOLLE MAMOW HEALTH



Mamow Health is pleased to add two doctors to its current team, please join us in welcoming Dr. Michael Bartucci and Dr. Eileen Nicolle. Dr. Bartucci is returning to our team after some time away and Dr. Nicolle had her first visit to Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug in early May. We are always grateful when a new doctor joins the team, and we know that soon they will feel the same pride in helping our communities that our other doctors already do.

Dr. Nicolle is originally from Toronto and is now based in Kingston when she is not travelling to the community, but she has been all over the world, working in places like Malawi, Ethiopia and Brazil. In her spare time, she enjoys playing ultimate frisbee and mountain biking with her partner and kids. Dr. Bartucci is from the Toronto area and works regularly with northern communities as well as at-risk populations in Canada and around the world.

Look for these two, and the other Mamow Health physicians and don't be afraid to say HI!

## GET THE HELP YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD DESERVES NEW ONLINE OPTION



Jordan's Principle stands as a legal rule for First Nations children to get the support they need when they need it. In alignment with this principle, IFNA has stepped forward to provide support to families from member communities in accessing Jordan's Principle funding. Through our dedicated Jordan's Principle team and easy online request form, we aim to empower community members in securing the help their children rightfully deserves.

Central to our efforts is the new online request form for IFNA community members in Ontario. Individuals can fill out the form to the best of their ability, then our team will support you through the next steps.

Our team can also assist with obtaining necessary items or services to ensure faster access to essential care. Aiding families in fronting costs for incurred health expenses, IFNA can help relieve the financial strain of waiting for reimbursement from Indigenous Services Canada.



**IFNA is dedicated to supporting you and creating user-friendly processes, we strive to uphold the spirit of equity and justice, ensuring that no child is left behind.**

Scan above OR visit [ifna.ca/jordans-principle-form](https://ifna.ca/jordans-principle-form)

## NEW VANS ENHANCE HEALTHCARE TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR IFNA COMMUNITIES HEALTH SERVICES



IFNA has made a significant advancement in transportation and healthcare access as requested by member communities. The Jordan's Principle Transportation Van Initiative, which began in December 2022, received approval in July 2023, and now in 2024 the vehicle deliveries have begun.

Additionally, IFNA has introduced two mobile medical clinic vans, stationed in Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay. These medical vans will travel to member communities and/or community members, bringing essential healthcare services directly to those in need. The mobile clinics are set up as 'doctor's offices on wheels,' complete with exam beds to ensure a clean, comfortable environment for patients and healthcare providers

*"The introduction of new vans ensures all community members can access the support they need efficiently and comfortably. This project reflects our commitment to improving the quality of life and healthcare access across IFNA communities." - June Trout, IFNA Jordan's Principle Program Manager*



## CONNECTING WITH OUR ROOTS EDUCATION



The Home Away Program continues to emphasize the importance connecting with our culture. Students have been spending time on the land with Elder Nick and Land-Based Worker Steven Dumonski. Activities have included fishing, teachings, stories, and songs, fostering an appreciation for their cultural roots and the land.



## CONGRATULATIONS 2024 GRADUATES



Among the accomplished Grade 12 Home Away graduates are **Daniel Linklater, Jacob Morris, Matthias Beardy, and Marek McKay** from Muskrat Dam, as well as **Carmen Beaver, Deanna Heartly, and Gavin Quequish** from KI.

**Diego Chapman** who sadly passed away this past year will be honoured with his high school diploma as well.

We look forward to seeing the positive impact you will have on your communities and beyond.

## HOME AWAY PROGRAM GRADS VISIT EDMONTON

As part of the Home Away Program, our Grade 12 students visited the city of Edmonton in May. This trip provided an excellent opportunity for the graduates to explore post-secondary education options, including visits to the University of Alberta and Concordia University.



In addition to these educational experiences, the students enjoyed visiting various museums and engaging in some well-deserved shopping.

## EMPOWERING FOOD SECURITY: NIDAWEKICHIGEHWIN INITIATIVE TAKES ROOT STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



IFNA has embarked on a journey to address food security issues within member communities. The Nidawekichigehwin Initiative is a strategy combining infrastructure, education, health information, and economic development with the goal to create a multi-generational impact.

In April 2024, a project milestone was achieved with the IFNA Chiefs Council signing a Resolution approving the Nidawekichigehwin Initiative. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI) leads the way with a feasibility study set for completion in June 2024. Following KI, Whitesand and Lac Seul are also preparing to launch their projects.

The initial phase targets growing enough food to feed 30% of each community's population, with a long-term vision of increasing output to cover 100%. This approach aims to improve food access and quality, while also promoting economic growth by creating jobs and new revenue opportunities.

*"The Nidawekichigehwin Initiative will empower IFNA communities to grow their own food, which will help combat health issues such as diabetes and reinforce the independence and resilience of member communities."*

*- Jonathan Gregg, IFNA Strategic Initiatives Director*





## INCREASING LIFE-SAVING CAPACITY IN PIKANGIKUM

### INTEGRATED EMERGENCY SERVICES



Life-saving training has been delivered to students at Eenchokay Birchstick School (EBS) in Pikangikum, bringing the important lifesaving skills of CPR and AED to community members. An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is a device that can restart a heart during cardiac arrest, and its immediate use in an emergency can significantly increase survival rates by restoring a normal heart rhythm until emergency personnel arrive. By learning how to operate and apply this device, students can become lifesavers in critical moments. IFNA's Integrated Emergency Services (IES) team plans to expand this crucial training, to all our member communities.

Furthermore, IES's Advanced Care Paramedic Gurkan Ozel will be in community on a full-time basis. He is engaging stakeholders as part of planning for the Pikangikum Pediatric Medical Assistance Team funded by Jordan's Principle. PMAT is focused on the school-age children in-community and their health needs.

In a significant development, IFNA's application to the Ministry of Health (MOH) for a 911 paramedic ambulance service has been successful. The approval marks a groundbreaking achievement, with planning, paramedic recruitment, equipment purchases, and the creation of an administrative building structure already underway.

The service is tentatively set to go live in the fall of 2024. Beyond filling a critical gap in life saving support for Pikangikum, the initiative is expected to bring substantial downstream benefits, including the potential to scale and expand into four other IFNA communities.

*"The goal of PMAT is to ensure that timely and appropriate emergency care is in provided for vulnerable children in need of immediate medical attention. The services include establishing appropriate and safe transportation means for essential medevacs." - Gurkan Ozek, IFNA Advanced Care Paramedic*

## NURSING STATION SECURITY GAIN IMPORTANT SKILLS

Nursing Station Security Guards and other staff in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug recently completed a comprehensive Standard First Aid course, which included CPR, AED, and Naloxone training. The training, essential for ensuring the guards are well-equipped to serve the communities, is part of an ongoing initiative to enhance the skills of Nursing Station Security Guards.

Since 2021, this training has been facilitated by 2J2, an Indigenous-owned and operated organization based in Saskatoon. Their collaboration has extended to various training in both Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and Pikangikum, as part of IFNA's commitment to community safety and preparedness.

## FOREST FIRE SEASON OUTLOOK

A significant change in the weather has greatly diminished the forest fire threat, reducing danger for IFNA member communities. Following one of the wettest Mays on record, the current conditions have mitigated what was expected to be a challenging forest fire season.

Despite this more positive outlook, it is important to stay ready! Ensure that you are aware of potential risks and prepared for potential challenges that may arise.



## INDEPENDANT FIRST NATIONS ALLIANCE

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