Aseniwuche Winewak Nation of Canada

Background Information for RIRSD Negotiations Table Discussion

As caretakers of the earth we commit to work together ... in unity, in faith, for life.

Executive Summary

In the March 2018 draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Regarding Recognition of Indigenous Rights and Self Determination (RIRSD) Exploratory Table between Aseniwuche Winewak Nation (AWN) and Canada, it states "the objective of the exploratory discussion table will be to explore the Parties' respective interests and identify ways to advance reconciliation through the recognition of AWN rights on the basis of mutual respect, rights recognition, cooperation and partnership." Fourteen preliminary matters for exploration were listed.

The purpose of this document is to provide Canada an introduction to the history, importance and relevance of some the exploratory issues.

1. Recognition of AWN as distinct Indigenous community;
2. Recognition and definition of section 35 rights;
3. Recognition of traditional territory;
4. Expanded and protected land base;
5. Participation in land and resource management of traditional territory;
6. Settlement of legal costs from previous litigation;
7. Self-Governance;
8. Increase capacity to access or deliver programs and services to support strong and healthy communities and sustainable economic development;

This document is not intended to provide an comprehensive background to exploratory issues but rather assist Canada move towards a clearer understanding of who the Aseniwuche Winewak are and why a Nation to Nation relationship must be advanced.

Recognition of AWN as a Distinct Indigenous Community

History:

Our Elders' Oral Histories: "We've always been here."

Arrowheads have been found in the Grande Cache and Wanyandie Flats area that are over 10,000 years old. This matches what our elders tell us. Our elders tell us we come from the mountains and we are "people of the mountains." An elder recently shared this story about the name of the Aseniwuche Winewak:

> A long time ago a woman turned into a rock. She climbed a mountain, she sat down and was crying and turned to stone. That's why we are called the Aseniwuche Winewak. The mountains around us across the river, the mountains to the north, the mountains around Joachim flats, Wanyandie flats, we must be related to [mountain] goats. We've been around this area for a long, long time.

Another elder used to explained, "We've always been here." He could trace the history of his family presence near Grande Cache through the graves of his father and grandfather at Big Grave Flats. Our ancestors graves are located throughout our traditional territory.

Other Indigenous peoples across what is now the western provinces knew our people as the Aseniwuche Winewak ("Rocky Mountain People" in Cree) and still do today.

We have always been respected for our close relationship to and deep knowledge of the land, our skills in hunting and outfitting, and our extensive knowledge and use of edible plants, as well as the medicines that grow in the mountains. We still practice and pass down traditional practices such as hunting, trapping, outfitting, and brain-tanning hides. Every year families go hunting and berry-picking together and share with those who cannot go out for themselves. The majority of Aseniwuche Winewak adults still speak Cree as their first language and on a daily basis. We have adapted to massive changes since the 1960s while actively maintaining our Aseniwuche Winewak Cree values and way of life.

Historical Records

We are the Aseniwuche Winewak. We come from the mountains. Our people exercised a high degree of personal freedom and, like many Indigenous peoples, welcomed in individuals from other Indigenous groups, most often through marriage or adoption. Our ancestors include Beaver, Sekani, and Shuswap people, who originally lived on the Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, Cree and Ojibwa people, and, as most recorded and recognized by outsiders, Iroquois hunters who journeyed west from Kahnawake in the employ of the North West Company, the Montreal-based fur trade competitor of the Hudson's Bay Company, in the last decade of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth. After the merger of

these two companies in 1821, our Iroquois ancestors made the decision to stay in the west and join our distinct community in an area extending from the Athabasca River valley in what is now Jasper National Park and the valley of the upper Smoky River.

Our traditional territory included from what is now the eastern boundary of Jasper National Park to the upper Smoky River just north of the present Town of Grande Cache. While families moved throughout our traditional territory in cyclical rounds according to the seasons, there are historical records of identifiable, self-sustaining communities primarily making their homes near the former location of the trading post, Jasper House, and living near present-day Grande Cache.

In 1907, Canada created Jasper National Park. Our way of life and traditional harvesting activities were at odds with Canada's vision of national parks as wildlife sanctuaries, a consideration that was aggravated by the fact that part of the community's income came from acting as guides and outfitters for hunters coming to the area to hunt. Accordingly, the families living within Jasper National Park were expelled from it in 1910. After having been forced to leave behind their lands and improvements, they received (minimal) compensation for the improvements they had made, but this compensation did not recognize any interest, either proprietary or arising out of occupation, despite the fact this occupation had been well documented for over a century. The Crown did not offer replacement land, simply the offer that they could settle anywhere that was not already claimed or used by anyone else.

The Aseniwuche Winewak families who were expelled from their traditional territory within Jasper National Park managed to stay within their traditional territory but moved closer to their relatives who were living along the path of the Muskeg River northwest of Hinton. Over the remainder of the twentieth century, the Aseniwuche Winewak families began to congregate with their relatives in a triangle formed by Pierre Grey Lakes, the confluence of the Muskeg and Smoky Rivers, and a point on the Smoky River almost due west of Pierre Grey Lakes. We believed that as long as we stayed within this part of our traditional territory, we would not be disturbed again by Euro-Canadian settlement.

However, our ancestors' homeland and way of life continued to be threatened. The first challenge came within five years of arrival, when a repetition of the Jasper experience was threatened with the creation of the Athabasca Forest Reserve and its game regulations. The Aseniwuche Winewak resisted this encroachment on our way of life and eventually the Canada and Alberta agreed not to expel our families yet again. In the 1930s, Alberta attempted to induce the Aseniwuche Winewak to relocate to a proposed Métis Settlement at Marlboro, 200 kilometres to the south and east, but we refused to leave our mountain territory. Perhaps the most difficult challenge arose in the 1960s with the discovery of coal in the Grande Cache area, which led to Alberta establishing rail road, building roads, coal mining and creating the new Town of Grande Cache. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, in response to strong protests by the Aseniwuche Winewak, Alberta signed six unique land agreements with the Provincial Government, setting aside specific parcels of land in fee simple for the use and benefit of the Aseniwuche Winewak family groups in specific areas.

In the face of enormous challenges and imposed change, the Aseniwuche Winewak have maintained our values and way of life as a distinct Indigenous people. We speak a unique dialect of Cree and have our own well developed traditional values, customs and practices. For example, we have our own methods for brain tanning hide, we have area specific knowledge of medicines and ceremony to maintain our wellness, we have our own style of drum making and song, we have our own burial practices, and we have been able to maintain our own unique principles, values, practices and way of life despite the pressures of development and loss of land. We are still the Aseniwuche Winewak. We come from the mountains. We were always here.

The Aseniwuche Winewak know who we are. Our Indigenous neighbours know who we are and recognize our territory and identity. We now seek recognition from the Crown that we are an Indigenous community and that we hold collective rights on behalf of our members, in trust for the generations to come.

Recognition and Definition of Section 35 Rights

The Aseniwuche Winewak have always been people of the land. Hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering and other land uses and practices sustained our ancestors long before such practices were recognized as Treaty rights, or described as Section 35 Rights. The Eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains have been inhabited for thousands of years; up to 10,000 years according to the archaeologists. Historically, the Beaver, Sekani and the Shuswap people populated parts of the region. They had a traditional lifestyle, which consisted of hunting, fishing and gathering. Later, the Cree, Ojibwa and Assiniboine people joined us. These ancestors had a traditional lifestyle, but they were also engaged in the fur trade. In the late 1700's, our Iroquois ancestors joined us. The Aseniwuche Winewak used a wide area stretching from north and south along the eastern slopes between the lower Smoky and Athabasca Rivers and eastward to Lesser Slave Lake to support our livelihood.

Like many Indigenous peoples, the fur trade played a significant role in the life of the Aseniwuche Winewak. Before the arrival of the Europeans, our ancestors depended on animals to provide us with food, clothing and tools. After the fur trade companies arrived, our people traded the furs we trapped to the Europeans for guns, beads, tin pots, flour, sugar, tobacco, and lard. The Grande Cache area was an important fur trade area, especially for lynx, marten and beaver. According to oral history, our people were sometimes paid to hunt and provide meat to the European settlers. For example, Vincent "Vasa" Wanyandie was paid to provide meat to the Hudson Bay Company post in Jasper in the late 1800's.

For centuries, hunting has been an integral part of the life of the Aseniwuche Winewak. Our ancestors hunted for generations, using spears, bows and arrows and before that ancient weapons such as the *atlatyl*. Hunting provided food, clothing and tools. As with many other Indigenous peoples, the Aseniwuche Winewak followed the seasonal rounds way of life. This way of life was practiced well into the twentieth century. Traditionally, the people hunted big game such as bighorn sheep, bear, moose, caribou, mule deer, sheep and goats. Before 1880, the Smoky River Valley was home to a substantial herd of bison or wood buffalo. We also hunted smaller game such as rabbits, squirrels, marmots, porcupine, grouse, ptarmigan, ducks and geese. Our elders have stated that there were no white-tail deer or elk in the area a long time ago. According to our oral history, the white tail migrated to the area over time and arrived in the late 1950's.

The Aseniwuche Winewak also used the abundant fish in the local lakes, streams and rivers to supplement our food supply and provide some variety in our diet. Fish were eaten fresh or sliced and smoked on a rack to preserve for the winter. The streams and rivers provided Grayling, Rainbow Trout, Bull Trout and Rocky Mountain Whitefish, while the lakes provided Bull Trout, Lingcod and Suckers, which were natural to A la Peche, Victor Lake, Grande Cache Lake and Peavine Lake. In addition, there were Lake Trout in Rock Lake and Salmon in Fraser River by Tete Jaune Cache.

Members of the Aseniwuche Winewak Nation continue to carry out these practices, including hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering, to support and nourish the community and to maintain health relationships with the land. These practices are integral to the Aseniwuche Winewak way of life. However, because the Crown has not formally recognized that AWN holds Aboriginal or Treaty rights, our members' ability to continue these practices is in jeopardy. In the past our members have been charged for carrying out the practices of our ancestors, and even when they have not been formally charged, legal uncertainty regarding these practices has curtailed our use of the land. AWN wishes to remedy this uncertainty through Crown recognition of AWN rights to the practices as constituting section 35 rights.

Recognition of Traditional Territory

Our ancestors traveled extensively throughout the Rocky Mountains trapping, visiting, hunting, buying or selling furs or supplies. They would think nothing of traveling long distances to visit someone or get supplies. Their horsemanship skills were well known. In the winter, they broke up into small family groups and traveled to various parts of the country by horse and snowshoe to hunt and trap. In the spring, the furs were taken to trading posts at Entrance and Grande Prairie. In the summer, larger camps were created. Summertime activities included traveling, visiting, building trapping cabins, farming, raising cattle, breaking horses, cutting hay, working hides and drying meat and berries for the winter. Some of these camping spots were located at Jarvis Lake, along Orchard Creek and the Wildhay River. In July, the people would travel to Lac Ste. Anne for the annual pilgrimage and stay for a few weeks or months. In the fall, the people would start again to prepare for the winter hunting and trapping. This included hauling supplies to their trapping cabins and caches and guiding or outfitting hunters.

In 2009, AWN contracted Golder and Associates to prepare a report entitled, “Traditional Lands Boundary Justification and Time Sequence Overview Report”. The purpose of the report was to document the process and rationale used to map the boundaries of the AWN traditional lands which included validating the methods, interviews, and mapping that created the current AWN traditional land boundary.

The report verified the southernmost point of AWN territory is just past the south end of Maligne Lake where a camp was historically in use, likely on one of the two tributaries at the end of the lake. From the south end of Maligne Lake, the boundary runs west along a trail corridor over several passes between Maligne River, the Athabasca River, and the Whirlpool River, to the headwaters of the Fraser River. At the headwaters of the Fraser River, from Tete Jaune Cache to McBride, there are hunting and fishing areas and camps; many associated with the Gauthier family. From there the boundary follows natural land forms and mountain passes to the Kakwa Lake and Cecilia Lake area from which it generally follows the Narraway River, where AWN community member, Paul Wanyandie, used to have a trapline. Towards the northern extent of the AWN boundary, there was a village site at Shettler Flats (Nose Creek), and just beyond the northern edge of the AWN boundary is an area where gatherings took place with people from different communities. This place, located beside Red Willow River, is called “Rio Grande” by Indigenous people in the area and is a very old gathering area. During a small pox epidemic many people died and are reported buried at the site. Also, at the northern end of the AWN territory but east of Rio Grande, is Pipestone Creek, where there is a deposit of pipestone that was used by AWN members. Moving to the south and east of Pipestone Creek is the Musreau Lake, an area known for being excellent moose habitat. Further to the south and east is Bison Flats where there are camping and other traditional use sites. Another historic habitation area is associated with the Chases Flats where the Berland River and Horse River meet. At the eastern boundary of the AWN territory, there are reported burials along the Berland River. Further south, towards the town of Hinton, is Prairie Creek, and Aseniwuche

Winewak settlement prior to the Jasper eviction. To the southwest of Hinton, the AWN boundary includes the Maligne hot springs which are valued as a mineral lick, a moose hunting area and a medicinal site.

Within the boundary area, AWN has verified hundreds of significant, historical and contemporary sites, areas, and trails. Some of these are registered with Alberta Culture others are in an AWN database. AWN's traditional territory is 39,000 km^2. AWN seeks formal recognition of this territory from the Crown, including for the purposes of determining whether to consult AWN regarding Crown decisions regarding land and resource use in or near this traditional territory.

Expanded and Protected Land Base

An expanded and protected land base is the foundation of a self-sustainable nation. Access to land and secure rights over land is fundamentally linked to sustainable development and food security. Most importantly, for AWN, like most Indigenous people, land is inseparable from identity. We live in relationship with our land. It is not seen as a resource just to be used for economic opportunity. Attempts to secure additional land and a meaningful land tenure arrangement have been at the root of everything AWN has done. The current form of tenure, how it came about, and its debilitating effect on AWN's chances of achieving self-reliance have challenged AWN and Alberta for decades.

AWN's land holding is unlike that of any other Aboriginal community or group in the province. It is neither Indian Reserve, Métis Settlement, nor municipal hamlet. The land is not in a contiguous block but consists of seven widely dispersed parcels located north and south of the Town of Grande Cache along an 80Km stretch of Highway 40. During the period 1971-1973 the community, at the behest of the provincial government, organized itself into four Cooperatives and two Enterprises to take legal ownership of these fee simple tracts of land, totalling 4,159 acres.

Three aspects of the land agreements, in particular, have major implications for the community:

1. The land agreements indicate that, should the Cooperatives and Enterprises cease to exist, "*... the lands will revert to ... the Province of Alberta who hereby undertakes to hold the said lands in trust for the use and benefit of the surviving native settlers ...*"

2. The agreements also stipulate that the Cooperatives and Enterprises *"... shall have no right to convey to anyone any interest in any of the said lands without first obtaining an Order of the Lieutenant Governor in Council..."*

3. Membership is restricted by bylaw to: "*...native settlers who settled in the Grande Cache district before the year 1960, their husbands and wives and natural and lawfully adopted children and their descendants; their lawful husbands, wives and natural and lawfully adopted children from generation to generation."*

These lands were clearly set up as a land base to accommodate a distinct Indigenous people who were protesting forced disruption and the real risk of dislocation due to the onslaught of coal mining and rapid Euro-Canadian settlement in the area. The agreements were not the result of a comprehensive bilateral process, but was designed by government officials and a judge, asked by the province to come up with a solution to a "problem".

The Aseniwuche Winewak were forced into a 'take it or leave it' situation where the land agreements were the best of the bad options available at the time. Most Aseniwuche Winewak leaders could not read or write English, as is demonstrated by the number of "X"s used to sign the agreements. They were not provided with adequate information or legal advice to consider future consequences or make an informed decision.

Of note, the land transferred in fee simple to the Aseniwuche Winewak is taxable. After execution of the land agreements between 1971 – 1973, there was initial five-year tax-free period with an additional five-year tax-free period if needed. Between 1973 and 1994, during the existence of Improvement District 16 (a local government jurisdiction under the control of the Department of Municipal Affairs) sizable tax arrears accumulated because no property tax payments were made. The province elected to take no action and by 1995, when the Improvement District #16 incorporated as the Municipal District of Greenview #16 (MD) the amount of tax arrears had grown considerably. The MD started tax recovery action, which under normal legislated processes would ultimately have lead to sale of the land by auction for recovery of the outstanding taxes. The reversionary clause in the land agreements created a unique problem. At that time, the dispute was resolved when Alberta agreed to a one-time payment the taxes. However, the tax issue remains unresolved and AWN's tenure remains subject to taxation and at risk of reversion.

AWN hopes, through this negotiation, to be put on the same footing as neighbouring First Nations through the Crown agreeing to provide additional land (to support community needs) and to provide some form of legal protection to ensure that AWN lands are protected from taxation and seizure. AWN does not insist that these lands be granted reserve status and is open to pragmatic solutions to address these problems.

Participation in Land and Resource Management of Traditional Territory

In 2006, AWN published "Living in Two Worlds: A Balanced Approach to Aboriginal Consultation". Since then, the Alberta government has called this document the "gold standard" for Indigenous Consultation. AWN continues to be a national leader in developing effective Indigenous consultative mechanisms that reflect the values of our people and respect the values of our neighbors.

A balanced approach is the answer to our environmental challenges today. In the past, traditional knowledge helped maintain our symbiotic, beneficial relationship with the environment. The rapid encroachment of development and urbanization created pressures on the environment unknown to previous generations. AWN believes integrating Traditional Knowledge and Western Science can help minimize adverse impacts and restore a balance.

AWN is working towards the integration of our Aseniwuche Winewak values and Traditional Knowledge into current government processes. This ensures industrial developers review and respond to Aseniwuche Winewak interests and concerns. We fully support the development of integrated resource and land management at a landscape level that is inclusive of all values and knowledge. However, we do not want to see additional regulatory or licensing requirements restrict our traditional way of life. We would like to explore co-management/co-stewardship possibilities.

We have the unique challenge and opportunity to impart our ways, thoughts and values into policy development. This recognizes our position as caretakers of the earth and enables us to work in true collaboration with government and industry. We all depend on the land, and we want to make sure that future generations of Aseniwuche Winewak and all peoples on can enjoy the beauty and bounty of the land.

In more recent years, AWN has placed an increasing focus on engaging on policy development that affects our traditional territory. This includes development of the Little Smoky A'la Peche Caribou Range Plan, Government of Alberta's Policy on Consultation with First Nations on Land and Natural Resource Management, Alberta's Land Use Framework and review of the federal Report of the Expert Panel for the Review of Environmental Assessment Processes.

AWN has also drafted a Reclamation Strategy for resource disturbed lands with our traditional land use area. Our reclamation vision is: "*By recognizing our role as caretakers of the Earth and the value of our traditional knowledge, we provide guidance, leadership and work in partnership to achieve environmentally sustainable development and biodiversity, so that future generations can live a traditional way of life."*

Settlement of Legal Costs from Previous Litigation

In 2016 the Alberta Court of Appeal ordered that a lawsuit brought by AWN members on behalf of AWN be dismissed pursuant to Rule 4.33 of the Alberta Rules of Court. That order brought an end of AWN's previous litigation (though AWN subsequently filed a revised Statement of Claim). At the conclusion of the claim, AWN requested that both Alberta and Canada agree to not pursue costs of the litigation against AWN or its members. At that time, both Alberta and Canada indicated that they would not agree to waive costs and expressed the view that, based on the circumstances surrounding the dismissal, that AWN could pursue a claim against its previous lawyers to cover any such costs claim.

Alberta and Canada have not actively pursued or quantified a costs claim against AWN, but Canada has indicated that its potential costs exceed $500,000. As a result of this potential claim, AWN has commenced litigation against its previous counsel – that litigation is ongoing and AWN continues to expend its limited resources on legal fees. These are resources that, in AWN's opinion, would be better spent on community needs and in pursuing a negotiated solution to its long standing claims against Canada and Alberta.

AWN requests that Canada agree to formally waive costs relating to the previous litigation. We suggest that Canada seek a mandate to negotiate this waiver as an "early win" in the RIRSD negotiations – that is a limited mandate that would clearly demonstrate a turning point and a fresh start in Canada's relationship with AWN and Canada's commitment to reconciliation and relationship building with AWN>.

Self-Governance

For generations, the Aseniwuche Winewak utilized a flexible but principled consent-based governance framework to make community decisions when needed. Decision making processes occurred along family lines and each family group had a representative voice. These family groups would also select a spokesperson to speak on the behalf of the community. Over the past hundred years, several people held this position. Elders were respected, and they provided wisdom and direction to families and community spokespersons.

With the incorporation of the Cooperatives and Enterprises, a new governance model was pushed onto the community. This governance model created strains and required some adaptation, but the community maintained the Aseniwuche Winewak governance processes that had worked for centuries. Today, there is a mix of old and new governance processes, which creates challenges for the Cooperatives and Enterprises as the populations and need for decision making continues to increase.

The current governance structure of AWN is unique due to the nature of our land holdings and lack of clear constitutional status. In 1994, AWN was incorporated under the Alberta *Societies Act* by seven corporate members: an appointed chairperson and the leader from each local Aboriginal Cooperative and Enterprise. Our elders tell us that we were always one people but grew increasingly divided once the Cooperatives and Enterprises were formed. Incorporation under the Alberta *Societies Act* was the most available solution at the time.

In 2002, AWN underwent a significant Bylaw change that provided members of the individual Cooperatives and Enterprises direct membership in AWN and gave the opportunity to any member to be elected to a governing board of one President and six Directors, each intended to represent one of the six communities. There are mixed feelings on this change from the communities. We consistently strive to maintain a professional and principled approach in the conduct of all our affairs and have developed and adopted AWN Bylaws; a Governance Code; an Elections Code; a Conflict of Interest Code; and a Statement of Mission, Objectives, Principles, and Goals.

In the winter of 2014, AWN hosted a series of four interactive Constitution-building process workshops. These workshops were in response to community feedback about information needed for a 'community unification process'. The overall goal was to educate, engage and empower interested community members so they could make informed decisions about future governance. Among workshop participants, there was a general consensus that everyone is really part of one community, and it is important to work together. Most participants identified a need for a formal written agreement about governance that clearly sets out roles and responsibilities, ensures transparency and accountability and includes mechanisms to fairly resolve disputes. People wanted to build on existing strengths and incorporate their own traditional principles into governance structures.

Although AWN finds itself needing to develop a new governance model, that better reflects their unique history, principles, values and needs, there are two truths that have underlined AWN's governance for hundreds of years:

1. AWN is a self-determining people. We continue to set our own course and maintain our distinct Aseniwuche Winewak way of life.
2. AWN represents itself. Leadership comes from internal recognition as a leader by the Aseniwuche Winewak, not outside governments.

AWN wishes to continue to develop its governance institutions, with the support of Canada and Alberta, with the eventual goal of obtaining self-governance powers to allow AWN to pursue self-determination on its own terms. To advance to this goal of self-governance, AWN wishes to secure support to develop a constitution and citizenship code and work towards the development of a constituting document to to re-unify our community and to determine the respective roles and responsibilities within the community governance structure. There are several innovative potential scenarios worth exploring to address the unique situation of AWN and its communities. With anticipated funding, AWN will explore and determine relevant policy, legal, political and planning implications through effective community engagement, and facilitated planning.

AWN desires to have well organized and effective governance structures for self-determination. This may include, but is not limited to: Defining our core values and what unites and defines us as a distinct community, clarifying the responsibilities of a central government, the roles and responsibilities of the Cooperatives and Enterprises and how to work together, determining law-making processes and principled ways of change and review, identifying rights, responsibilities and freedoms and defining and identifying our citizens and criteria for citizenship.

Increase capacity to access or deliver programs and services to support strong and healthy communities and sustainable economic development

AWN wishes to increase its capacity to deliver programs and services, with the Crown's support, to improve life in the community and address social suffering within AWN, significant gaps in basic infrastructure and programs and services.

At the time AWN came into existence in 1994, life in our community had a reputation for widespread problems resulting from high levels of unemployment, social dysfunction, and a basic lack of organization, training and economic opportunity. Since that time, AWN has achieved substantial positive change, most notably in terms of economic and social development. Since the development of our first three-year Business Plan in 2000, AWN has made almost unprecedented progress for an Aboriginal community over the same time period. AWN set very optimistic and challenging goals for itself in its first and subsequent three-year Business Plans and has achieved virtually every goal within its control.

The success claimed by the AWN is verified by third party reviews. In 2002, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, ("AAND"), a predecessor of AAR initiated a qualitative evaluation of the capacity building & program delivery initiatives undertaken by AAND and other provincial departments in partnership with AWN. The findings of this review, based on information gleaned from 29 representatives of government departments and agencies, industry, and persons who had a working relationship with AWN in an individual capacity clearly demonstrated the phenomenal progress made by AWN over a short period.

Of significance however, is that this success is largely dependent on availability of grant funding and AWN's ability to successfully compete for and negotiate funding agreements. AWN does not have core funding. AWN must apply annually for minimal operational support funding and must continually seek funding for much needed programs and services for our members. From time to time, AWN is able to offer additional programs and services using industry donations and payments from negotiated agreements. AWN's wholly owned businesses contribute as they are able, but they are dependent on the Alberta economy which has faced significant challenges in recent years.

Although operationally and financially pragmatic, AWN lacks the administrative and financial capacity to meet the needs of our members in areas of infrastructure, housing, social wellness, employment and training, education, cultural preservation, and safety.