



WECÎTOYAHKI KAKASKÎTANANO ELTS'RAIDI GROWTH & PARTNERSHIP

2020/2021
Annual Report



Serving Our Communities

Mission

Athabasca Tribal Council serves our Nations by providing relevant and innovative programs and services that enrich the well-being, health, and prosperity of our people. We are committed to ensuring the protection of our inherent rights, our Treaty rights, and our Traditional Territories. While respecting the autonomy of each Nation, our strength is our unity.

Vision

Athabasca Tribal Council, in collaboration with our Nations, honours our Treaty and supports a thriving, healthy, and self-reliant future for Cree and D ene people.

Values

Collaboration, Respect, Integrity, Service, Unity, Innovation, Excellence



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Tawow, Sini'e Daniya N'id'a, Welcome

Board of Directors

(in photo from left to right)

Chief Mel Grandjamb // Fort McKay First Nation
Chief Allan Adam // Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation
Chief Vern Janvier // Chipewyan Prairie First Nation
Chief Peter Powder // Mikisew Cree First Nation
Chief Ron Kreutzer // Fort McMurray 468 First Nation

Photo Credit: Joey Podlubny

Message from the Board

To our respected elders, community members, and partners:

Growing together, challenges that we overcame in the last few years pushed us further to adapt and grow. Through it all, the Athabasca Tribal Council has brought together people, communities and nations to support each other and rise above the obstacles along our path.

2021 was an important year for reconciliation in Canada. As the unmarked graves of Indigenous children were located at Residential School sites across the country, people from all walks of life joined Indigenous community leaders to recognize survivors and mourn those lost. Inspired by Chief Janvier's 500-kilometre walk to Ottawa, ATC created the Orange Path, a movement to have both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people learn the truth about the history of Canada, and its lasting effects on Indigenous people. Chief Janvier brought a strong message to Ottawa about the importance of truth and self-determination for Indigenous people. The Orange Path will continue to highlight actions people can take on the path toward reconciliation.

Keeping each other safe through the COVID-19 pandemic has remained a primary focus for ATC. The Health Department continued to operate two COVID-19 isolation care centres, serving individuals needing support to reduce the spread of the virus to family and community members.

In addition to the care centers, we launched the ATC COVID Clinic this year. The clinic offered support to members released from the hospital with COVID-19. Members utilizing clinic services received additional medically supervised support to assist in their recovery before returning home.

Throughout 2021, the Board of Directors encouraged further development and delivery of ATC services that are provided directly to communities alongside the expansion of ATC's advocacy profile within the regional municipality, the province and the federal government. This ambition shows the strength of the communities ATC serves.

ATC will continue to provide first-class service to community members and continue to develop new and innovative ideas to better serve them. This work is possible only with the passion of the entire ATC staff led by CEO Karla Buffalo, who as a team serves community members. I would like to personally thank them for their dedication and resilience in the face of the challenges we have overcome, and those that lie ahead.

Hiy hij. Marsi cho.

Chief Allan Adam

President of Board of Directors,
Chief - Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation



Message from the CEO

Tân'si, Edlánat'e members, friends, and funders,

The pandemic has taught us an important lesson: we are stronger when working together. Since COVID-19 swept around the globe in 2020, ATC and the communities we serve have constantly been adapting and working to bring people and Indigenous communities together. And together - we are rising.

Over the past year, the Athabasca Tribal Council's passion and dedication to the primary mission of serving the five communities of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, Fort McKay First Nation, Fort McMurray 468 First Nation, and Mikisew Cree First Nation has been unwavering. Through the pandemic, the resourcefulness of the ATC team created modified programming allowing ATC to continue to provide ongoing continuous support to community members.

Our partnerships with stakeholders, businesses, and communities expanded this past year, and ATC will continue that growth through 2022. These partnerships are especially important for connecting members of our communities with family programming, health services, education and cultural support, along with career opportunities that better sustain individuals and their families.

Family is at the core of Indigenous communities, and ATC's primary goal is to support healthy and thriving families that are connected to their communities, culture, and traditions. Indigenous people have faced systemic oppression, and ATC understands that each family is on their own journey to healing. The Child and Family Services department supports

strengthening connections through family programming, including supporting parents and caregivers who are building on their strengths. ATC supports the growth of parents by offering services and workshops that strengthen parenting support systems. ATC works together with families and communities where family strengths are recognized, and support is provided to develop nurturing, safe environments for children, youth, and individuals.

Many students continued to learn in a virtual environment and as a result, the need for tools that support virtual classrooms was apparent. ATC received funding for the Off-Reserve COVID-19 Laptop Program, which provided off-reserve members enrolled in education or training courses with new laptops to support their learning.

The community benefit of ATC's education programming is illustrated in the partnership between ATC and Medika North. An integral partner during the pandemic, Medika North has been providing medical support services to the ATC Isolation Care Centers, ATC COVID Clinic, and providing rapid testing for staff and community events when needed. They also helped raise \$60,000 as the title sponsor for the 2021 Golf



Classic, which helped to eliminate barriers to education for post-secondary students. This also brought Robyn Villebrun's, President of Medika North, partnership full-circle as a past beneficiary of ATC's post-secondary education support. When Indigenous students have the opportunity to achieve their goals, Indigenous communities become stronger, more prosperous and self-reliant. ATC looks forward to fostering partnerships like this through 2022 with Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses alike.

Through it all, ATC worked in partnership with our communities with passion, of which I am personally very proud. I thank the entire staff for the commitment they have brought to their work over the past year and our Board for constantly pushing us toward a brighter vision for the future. I am excited for another year of growth, collaboration and partnerships as we keep rising together.

Marsi cho. Hiy hiy.

Karla Buffalo

CEO Athabasca Tribal Council





Partnering Together Through the Pandemic

2

**ISOLATION
CARE
CENTRES**

PROVIDED 24-HOUR,
7-DAY A WEEK SERVICES

125

**COMMUNITY
MEMBERS
AND FAMILIES
SUPPORTED**

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS
ADMINISTERED AT ATC
VACCINATION CLINICS

915

974

**HEALTH APPOINTMENTS
FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

98

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS ENGAGED
IN HEALTH TRAINING AND
AWARENESS PROGRAMS**



Providing Health Care in a Pandemic

Ensuring that our communities remain safe through the pandemic is a top priority for the First Nations ATC serves. In 2021, ATC Isolation Care Centres supported 125 individual community members. This, in turn, helped families by allowing community members to safely isolate while recovering from COVID-19. The Care Centres' success is primarily due to the strong partnership between ATC and Medika North, the medical service provider for the care centers. ATC chose to partner with Medika North because of their commitment to patient-centred care that focuses on assessing the individual as a whole instead of only treating a symptom or disease.


One of the best ways that people can help protect themselves, and others, from the spread of COVID-19, is by getting vaccinated. ATC was able to facilitate COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics at our office location in Fort McMurray, where 915 first and second doses of the vaccine were administered to community members.

During one of the 2021 waves of COVID-19 infections, the regional hospital was overwhelmed with patients, often discharging those who were improving, but would still benefit from medical support, so they could accommodate more severe patients. Through the direction of the ATC Board of Directors and the pandemic planning committee, ATC once again partnered with Medika North to create and operate the ATC COVID Clinic. The Clinic was conveniently located in the parking lot of the Oil Sands Discovery Center in Fort McMurray. It provided support to Indigenous community members living in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) who had been recently released from the hospital with COVID-19 and were still experiencing symptoms. It featured 24-hour-a-day medical staff and medical equipment, including oxygen and IV fluid support. This assisted with assessment, monitoring and recovery. The Clinic operated for a total of 73 days during the height of a surge of COVID-19 infections in the region.

To pursue the collective goal of lowering the infection rates within the region, ATC initiated a virtual emergency meeting between community leaders, organizations, industry, and the municipality. The “Let’s get Wood Buff-a-low!” and “Grab COVID by the Horns” campaigns used bright graphics with bold headlines to outline simple tasks individuals could take to lower the infection rate of COVID-19 in the region. The campaign was packaged and distributed to a broad group of businesses, organizations, community groups and leaders, along with social media influencers. Local leaders also promoted the campaign, by calling for residents to participate in the challenge through a video message.

ATC’s Health Department continued to provide community members with essential services, support and programs. 974 health appointments were booked and 3006 vouchers for accommodations, meals, and travel were provided to ensure community members received the health support they needed. ATC also received COVID-19 support funding, which was used to deliver 1000 food baskets to 585 people in Fort McMurray and 415 people across five different communities.

Health awareness and support training programs also continued, bringing knowledge and skills to communities. There were 75 participants in Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders which focused on providing knowledge and support to individuals and their communities. Focusing on preparing families for success, ATC also offers prenatal classes to expectant mothers and couples, as well as creating capacity within First Nations communities by providing Doula training, which is making traditional knowledge and support for birthing mothers accessible within communities since December of 2021.



Education, Culture and Language

Growing together as people, communities and nations

In 2021, the Education Department continued to strengthen its focus on ensuring community members across the five First Nations that ATC serves are supported through quality lifelong education while staying connected to Indigenous culture and language.

Land-based learning is at the heart of the Education and Culture department, and in June, ATC and its partners hosted a camp at J. Howard Pew Park in Fort McMurray that taught 240 students traditional ways of living off the land. In November, ATC partnered with Holy Trinity Catholic High School and Father Patrick Mercredi Community High School to host a Moose Hide Camp. At the camp, 40 students learned how to flesh a moose hide with tools, create a fire and wood chopping safety, played traditional hand games, craft making, and smudging with all four sacred medicines.

ATC's Sports and Recreation team has been focused on supporting people in staying active through the pandemic. Through the summer, ATC partnered with Tuccaro, Kanatech Industrial, Fort McKay First Nation, Mikisew Group of Companies, Melanie Galea of Remax Fort McMurray, and Command North Construction Group Ltd. to support a Junior Golf Camp at Miskanaw Golf Club. The Wood Buffalo Junior Golf Camp provided opportunities for Indigenous youth aged 7-13 from across the region's Indigenous communities to learn the game of golf and create lasting friendships that will nurture the next generation of Indigenous leaders across communities. In the fall, ATC provided programming for youth Hockey Camps in the communities ATC serves. One of the highlights of the year's virtual programs was the Indigenous Speaker Series, which welcomed inspiring Indigenous athletes to share their stories and advice with youth to help them tackle the challenges ahead.

The Education Department continues to support both high school and post-secondary students who are pursuing higher education to bring continued growth and prosperity to their communities. The Boarding Home Program had 11 high school students from remote communities stay in homes with urban community members, so they had access to high schools and programs to better their education.

The Post-Secondary Education Student Support Program saw 57 students attend Universities and Colleges across Canada this year. The program assists students with financial support to remove barriers to higher education, allowing students to pursue their dreams.



57

**POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION STUDENTS**

\$60,000

**RAISED TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS
POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS**

240 STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN LAND-BASED LEARNING WORKSHOPS

2021 was an important year for advocacy for ATC. Bringing together First Nation community members, social service organizations, Indigenous businesses, and government, ATC supported increased awareness around Missing, Murdered and Exploited Indigenous People (MMEIP). Through a marketing campaign that included social media and the local newspaper, ATC encouraged people across the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo region to start a conversation with their family, friends and coworkers about MMEIP. The main event for the MMEIP campaign took place on May 5th with a live broadcast on Facebook and YouTube of a meaningful dialogue featuring a panel of local experts on Indigenous perspectives. The panel included representatives from Pawâmiw Creative, Waypoints, YMM Pride, The Centre of Hope Fort McMurray, McMurray Métis, and International MMEIP Advocate and Fort McKay First Nation Member Stephanie Harpe. ATC supported the panel by working with them to develop the agenda of topics and create a meaningful discussion that would support and be sensitive to survivors and families while bringing awareness to a larger audience on the subject of Murdered, Missing and Exploited Indigenous People. The Arts Council Wood Buffalo partners with the group to support cross-broadcasting the





panel's discussion on Facebook Live and YouTube pages. Multiple partners including ATC, the Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre, McMurray Métis, and The Centre of Hope Fort McMurray hosted the discussion live with many more organizations and individuals sharing the broadcast to this day. The panel focused on understanding systemic oppression and was designed to create change.

With the confirmation of 215 unmarked graves at the site of a former residential in Kamloops, the need to support Indian Residential School survivors, descendants, and the community became more significant than ever. On June 2, 2022, in collaboration, ATC joined with the Fort McMurray Métis Trading Post, McMurray Métis, Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre, and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo to support community members who needed to share their grief and experiences by creating a gathering at Snye Point Park. Elders and survivors and community members had the opportunity to publicly share how Indian Residential Schools impacted their lives then, and now. Representatives from New Dawn Métis Women's Society and Nipiy Iskwew Consulting also spoke to those gathered. ATC provided live streaming support of this powerful and emotional gathering on Facebook and YouTube to allow community members who could not attend in person to participate.

Following the gathering at Snye Point Park, the Fort Chipewyan community hosted their own gathering vigil at Doghead Arbour, the Holy Angels Residential School site in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. ATC supported the vigil with live streaming support so all community members could participate or watch.

The work started by ATC, McMurray Métis and Nistawayou Association Friendship Centre to support IRS survivors and descendants continued through the summer. To raise more

public awareness of the growing number of confirmed graves on residential school grounds, a memorial was set up on the steps of Jubilee Plaza. Shoes and teddy bears were placed to represent the children who never returned home. Flameless candles were provided at the site, and community members, along with the public, were invited to place a candle beside a shoe or bear on the steps.

On July 1, 2022, Canada Day, Chief Vern Janvier started a week-long walk from Janvier to Snye Point Park with community members by his side. ATC supported the walk with tipis set up daily along the route and social media updates on the progress of the walk. On July 7, approximately 350 Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous supporters from all backgrounds joined the Walk in Solidarity with Chief Vern Janvier for the last 20 kilometers. At the end of the walk to Snye Point Park, over 1000 people united at the Memorial Gathering in Solidarity to listen and learn from Residential School survivors. As well, Indigenous leaders spoke to the public, demanding action to address the acts of genocide from governments, and churches, to create a better future for Indigenous people in Canada.





1000+ PEOPLE

ATTENDED THE MEMORIAL
GATHERING IN SOLIDARITY

Chief Janvier pledged to bring this message to the Canadian Government. Together with a group of community members, he arrived 500 kilometers outside of Ottawa and began walking. In response, ATC helped gather support from Indigenous communities, including Treaty 8 in Alberta and the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation in Ontario. As more graves were confirmed, many people from all backgrounds searched for a way to support change, recognize survivors and mourn the lost children who never returned home. This inspired ATC to create “The Orange Path,” a movement that helps each person shape their own path toward truth and reconciliation. A website and broad engagement campaign was developed to support people in taking action for change.

The Orange Path collected 2900 signatures from across Canada, calling for changes to the Indian Act. The newly created National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2022, provided an opportunity for The Orange Path to engage with the public about the actions they can take through self-education to continue their own personal journey to truth and reconciliation. ATC worked with Elders, Métis, Indigenous organizations and community members to create a 100+ item resource listing. Materials are sorted by age-appropriateness and searchable by category. They include readings, podcasts, and audio books and video recordings so people can learn in the way that best suits their journey and process.

The National Day for Truth & Reconciliation for community members is a solemn day to gather and heal. A committee of Elders, Métis, Indigenous organizations and our community members collectively hosted virtual cultural workshops to support survivors, descendants and communities. As a result, 413 people participated in 8 different workshops while IRS Survivors Wellness Packages were delivered to local survivors of Residential Schools.

413

IRS SURVIVORS & FAMILY
MEMBERS PARTICIPATED IN
NATIONAL DAY OF TRUTH &
RECONCILIATION ACTIVITIES





Employment & Training

Creating Opportunity at Home and in Our Communities

The ATC Employment & Training Department's goal is to support Indigenous people who are currently marginally employed, or unemployed. The staff developed customized employment training programming to remove barriers Indigenous people face when applying for job opportunities or achieving their career goals. Additionally, a bi-weekly employment and training bulletin is sent out, connecting people with new opportunities and resources.

During the pandemic, regular employment and training programs had to adapt to ever-changing restrictions and guidelines to keep clients and instructors safe. This created even stronger relationships between stakeholders, service providers, funders and communities as, collectively, everyone was focused on supporting the successes of clients and communities.

“Don’t be afraid to try something new... who knows what kind of amazing things are right around the corner for you!” –JoAnn B.

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VITAL EARLY
LEARNING CHILDCARE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

4



**11 GRADUATES WITH EMPLOYMENT
FROM THE SECURITY GUARD PROGRAM**

9

**PEOPLE COMPLETED THE
INDIGENOUS DRIVER
TRAINING PROGRAM**

CLASS 1 CLASS 2S MELT CLASS 3
ATV TRAINING



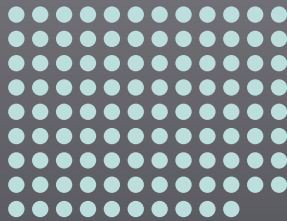
11

GRADUATES OF THE INDIGENOUS HAUL TRUCK PROGRAM



106

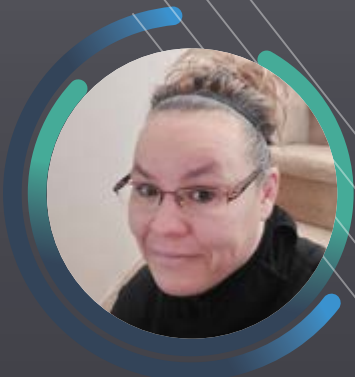
PEOPLE ENGAGED
IN DRIVER TRAINING



GRADUATES OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROGRAM

8

Inspiring Success:



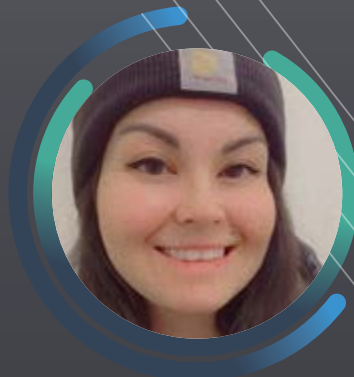
JoAnn B., an Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation member, found information for the Security Guard training program through ATC's Facebook page. The 47-year-old enrolled in the online program and found each day of learning to be new and exciting. The highlight: passing her security exam.

Today she is employed with GardaWorld, and is grateful for all the local employment opportunities in this field so she can stay close to her home and community. When asked what she would say to someone thinking of enrolling she said, "Don't be afraid to try something new... who knows what kind of amazing things are right around the corner for you!"



Dolores D., a 58-year-old Métis woman, made a decision to change her career path after seeing a post on ATC's Facebook page. She enrolled in the Urban Indigenous Employment Preparation Program (UIEPP) with her son, Gary. Here, she was able to complete her General Education Development (GED).

Her journey didn't end there. Dolores enrolled in the Class 2S Melt Training program. Before, she was intimidated by buses when they would drive beside her on the road. After the training, she was comfortable behind the wheel. Dolores was employed in her new field just a few weeks after she finished the course. For anyone thinking of enrolling she says, "Man, go for it. Get the hands-on experience. If I can do it at my age, so can you. I would remind the kids how lucky we are to have these programs. It does offer more opportunities for employment."



Robyn D., a proud band member of the Fort McMurray 468 First Nation, was always interested in becoming a Haul Truck driver. When the 29-year-old found the Haul Truck Operator course offered through Keyano College advertised on ATC's Facebook page, she immediately enrolled.

During the program, she worked with instructors, learned from computer-based training and practiced on a truck simulator. The course also offered soft skills training, including resume and cover letter writing, health tips and tricks, as well as basic computer knowledge. Now she is working for Syncrude and has the training and confidence to be a successful Haul Truck Operator.

Child & Family Services

Creating Stronger Connections

The Department of Child & Family Services at ATC works with families and communities to support safe, nurturing, environments for children and youth.

The goal of the ATC Child & Family Service team is to have children remain with their families and in their home community. The CFS department works closely with family members to support children's needs. Child & Family Services caseworkers work with many families to help identify community resources and supports to help children remain safe in their homes and to prevent intrusive measures.

Families who are experiencing challenges providing children with care are supported by the community through the ATC Kinship and Foster Care Program. ATC works with extended family members who have the ability to open their homes to children in need from their community or family. This support provides families space and opportunity to heal and become stronger, while children maintain their connection to community and culture by staying with a caregiver who is a family member or community member. When the family is strong enough, there is a transition to reunification.

Keeping children in care connected to their families is an important part of the support and healing process. To create an opportunity for families to have a positive and meaningful connection, ATC's Child & Family Services department hosted a Christmas Party, bringing together children in care, those children receiving other supports through CFS, their biological family, and their foster caregiver family together for the weekend and experiencing a whole day of fun activities hosted by the CFS department staff. With 150 guests in attendance, children and families were able to share a meal and then participated in a day of traditional craft making, games, and drumming sessions. The party's highlight was a memorable Polar Express-themed train ride to meet Santa at the North Pole. The delight and excitement of the event created lasting memories and strengthened the bond between biological families and foster families.

Throughout 2021, the Child & Family Services Prevention team developed virtual programming designed to help build on family strengths that was delivered each month to the Nations ATC serves. The programming that ATC's Prevention unit provides supports strong family connections, improves coping skills, offers parenting support, and increases families' cultural connections. Workshops focusing on grief and trauma were offered along with parenting and healthy relationships courses, babysitting classes and cyber safety sessions, among many others.





ATC has continued to create opportunities for families and communities to have strong connections during the pandemic. When the organizing committee of the annual Bright Nights Christmas Event invited ATC to join, leadership saw the event as a wonderful opportunity to spread Christmas cheer to community members and families through a COVID safe drive-thru event. ATC provided transportation to rural communities to come into Fort McMurray and view a festive Christmas lights display, see Santa and receive their ATC Family Christmas Package. Community members who could drive themselves were also invited to attend the drive-thru. ATC Family Christmas Packages contained a pizza kit, cookie dough, and other goodies aimed at families spending time together and building positive memories after a challenging year of dealing with the pandemic.

Not all community members could attend the Bright Nights event, so deliveries were done to rural communities with distribution provided by First Nation administration and staff. ATC flew 300 Family Packages to Fort Chipewyan through a partnership with McMurray Aviation. ACFN, MCFN and the Fort Chipewyan Métis Association members distributed ATC Family Christmas packages to families and Elders in the community. Spreading the joy of family togetherness during the Christmas season is one of the highlights for staff each year.

**4 NEW KINSHIP
& FOSTER CARE
HOMES OPENED**



227

**PARTICIPANTS IN
VIRTUAL PROGRAMS
AND ACTIVITIES**

**150
GUESTS**

**AT OUR CHILD AND FAMILY
SERVICES ANNUAL CHRISTMAS
PARTY FOR CHILDREN IN CARE
AND THEIR FAMILIES**



Operations & Finances

Delivering services and programs to the communities ATC serves requires fiscal responsibility, budgeting and efficient operations.

This year ATC received funding from Indigenous Services Canada, Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Strategy - Service Canada and the Government of Alberta.

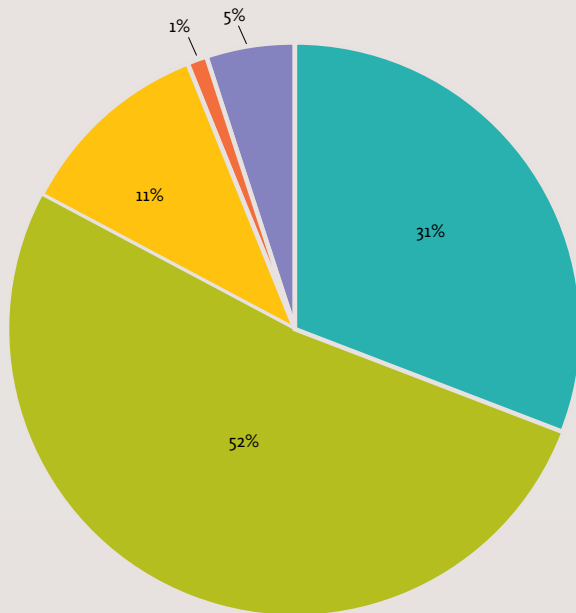
ATC's funding is approved through an annual Board approval process and is expended based on the strategic direction of the Board and the requirements of the agreements and grants.

In 2021 the fiscal year closed with surplus funds that will be redirected into programming costs over the 2022 year.





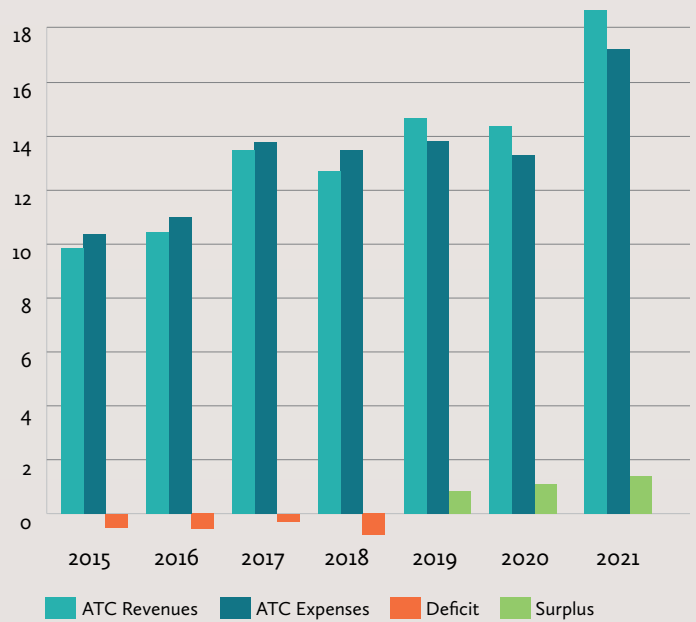
ATC 2021 Funding



- 31% Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)
- 52% First Nation Inuit Health Branch
- 11% ASETS
- 1% Government of Alberta
- 5% Others

Audited Year Over Year

Revenues versus Expenses Comparison





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AFTER HOURS ESSENTIAL SERVICE CONTACT INFORMATION:

Edmonton Medical Transportation
1-800-514-7106

Child & Family Services On Call
587-645-3437

Child & Family Services Crisis Unit
1-800-638-0715

