



WINTER 2025

# SAMQWAN SAMAQAN + SAGE

Leading progress, innovation, and a long-term solution for water and wastewater management for Atlantic First Nations communities.

The Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA) is a not-for-profit, Wabanaki Nations water utility that is owned and operated by First Nations, for First Nations. Our goal is to provide clean drinking water and safe wastewater services to participating First Nations communities.

AFNWA is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and capital upgrades of all water and wastewater assets in each participating First Nations community. We are committed to helping build stronger First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada, and supporting long-term planning initiatives.

## PROGRESS UPDATE

» **Certifications:** Give a round of applause for Operators who recently reached the next levels of their individual certifications. Dillon Francis, Bilijk, and Blade Sylliboy, Eskasoni, both earned the Wastewater Collection Level 1; Gary West, Superintendent of Operations, earned his Wastewater Level 2. In Water Distribution, Mark Francis of Bilijk reached Level 2. Great work, team!

» **FMB NPO:** It is another first for the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA), and another milestone in our journey. The First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB) has issued an opinion of compliance under FMB's Nonprofit Organization (NPO) standards, making AFNWA the first Indigenous not-for-profit organization in Canada to be compliant.

The FMB has developed a set of financial management standards and financial performance measures specifically tailored for Indigenous not-for-profit organizations (NPOs), including tribal councils operating as NPOs. Their NPO Standards build upon the FMB's experience as a standard-setter for First Nation governments. FMB announced the first exposure draft of its *NPO Standards* in June 2020 with identified stakeholders for input, later becoming effective September 2021. This milestone marks a significant moment for Indigenous-led organizations and the broader non-profit sector, as the FNFMB's rigorous standards are designed to uphold financial integrity and foster sustainable growth for First Nations and their affiliated organizations.

AFNWA began its pursuit of compliance in 2021 when the Standards were first introduced by FMB. Following an audit in 2023, AFNWA still had processes to finalize, but enhanced its approach in 2023–24 fiscal to amend and refine outstanding

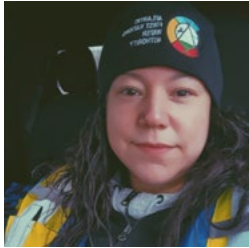
policies and procedures. A follow-up audit would see a recommendation made to the FNFMB Board to issue a letter of compliance to AFNWA in December 2024. The Compliance opinion for AFNWA will reinforce existing relationships with government and funders, while opening doors to new relationships by establishing immediate acknowledgment for AFNWA's transparency, accountability, and governance excellence.



Chantal LeBlanc and Derek Alison accept certification from Natalia Valeev, CPA, CA Director, Certification, FMB.

## PROGRESS UPDATE

» **New HQ:** It is still over a year away, but AFNWA is confirmed to have a new home in Millbrook. Plans are underway for the eventual construction of our new headquarters at the corner of Abenaki Rd. and Treaty Trail, across from the Super 8.



» **New staff:** Welcome (back) to Javenny Francis as the new AFNWA Safety & Security Coordinator! Javenny was part of our team in 2024 as Junior Security Coordinator, and we are very happy to have her back on board as of February.

» **UV pilot project:** Working with Dalhousie University's Centre for Water Resources Studies (CWRS) to test a new technology in drinking water and wastewater disinfection, we're using advanced UV systems that use light-emitting diodes (LEDs) to produce UV light that can disinfect pathogens in water. Small UV LED systems have been installed in the Potlotek Water Treatment plant to compare this new treatment with the current mercury UV system. Water samples are taken weekly to compare the treatment performance and learn how the new systems perform over the long-term. Together, we're leading the way on testing environmentally friendly treatment systems!

» **Balanced scorecard:** The utilization of a balanced scorecard (BSC) to measure organizational performance is considered a best practice. It was introduced to organizations in the early 90s in recognition that the sustainability of organizations required balance across a wide spectrum of social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

AFNWA staff are continuously developing and improving mechanisms to measure and monitor performance. The balanced scorecard describes the measures that have been put in place to date that will allow the AFNWA to monitor success over the long term.

» **Eskasoni water treatment plant (WTP):** We commend the AFNWA Operations Team for their exceptional work in January transforming an empty sea-can into a fully operational workspace that brought the temporary water treatment plant (WTP) in Eskasoni online, using a PW2 water pump! As design plans are underway for a new WTP in Eskasoni, the Operations sea-can will mobilize and assist our teams in other communities. Well done, everyone!

The Operations team who constructed the workspace also shared the incredible photo featured below!



## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### James MacKinnon, MPA, Director of Engagement & Government Relations

James MacKinnon is the Director of Engagement & Government Relations of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA). His career began with Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat

(APC) in 2012 and he has held positions of increasing responsibility including Director of Housing and Infrastructure. During his years at APC, James led early engagements and assessments in the development of the AFNWA. James is also proud to serve on the Board of Directors of the Millbrook Economic Development Corporation.

A two-time Dalhousie University Alumnus, James graduated with a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Chemistry and Sociology, and Master of Public Administration.

His role and responsibilities can take him out of the province one day, to a meeting with Chief and Council the next day, and then offering a presentation somewhere in between.

James is a lifelong Nova Scotian; a proud Caper born and raised in Coxheath, Unama'ki, and now resides in Halifax with his partner Laura.

When he's not busy in the office or travelling around the region, James can be found on a golf course or tennis court enjoying one his favourite pastimes.

## COMMUNICATIONS + OUTREACH

» **Woliwon + Wela'liq:** The first AFNWA Community Satisfaction Survey is in the books. We thank all community members who completed the survey. Your feedback is needed, and results will soon be shared with everyone. Wela'liq + Woliwon!

» **Branding plans:** An important project wrapping up in 2025 will see community infrastructure featuring new signage and branding. Starting in Eskasoni this winter and then wrapping in Biliik in summer, community members can expect to see the AFNWA logo displayed on current and new water and wastewater service locations throughout all 13 member communities.

» **Sponsorships:** We wish to remind Indigenous communities and organizations in Mi'kma'ki and Wolastokuk that AFNWA is a regular sponsor of events and grassroots initiatives. Please contact us using Facebook messenger or by emailing [communications@afnwa.ca](mailto:communications@afnwa.ca) with your request.

» **Practice safe flushing:** AFNWA strongly advises residents to NOT flush any materials down the toilet except for the 3Ps—pee, poop, and toilet paper. Your toilet is a:



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