Łuéchogh Túé Newsletter

October 2026 Edition

NOT SO FAST!

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Chief Jacko Invites Prime Minister to Visit CLFNS



Chief Kelsey Jacko informally meets with Prime Minister Mark Carney during a reconciliation event in Edmonton. Photo supplied.

During an event in Edmonton on Sept. 30 marking the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Chief Kelsey Jacko had the opportunity to speak with Prime Minister Mark Carney and extend a formal invitation for him to visit Cold Lake First Nations. The exchange highlighted the Nation's continued call for meaningful dialogue, direct engagement and respect for its Treaty relationship with the Crown. Chief Jacko personally handed Prime Minister Carney a letter inviting him to visit the Nation and sit down with leadership for a conversation about CLFNS priorities and concerns.

After receiving the letter, Carney responded, *"now, that, is a formal invitation," before placing it in his pocket.*

While the encounter was informal, the message behind the invitation was significant. Cold Lake First Nations (CLFNS) continues to emphasize that meaningful dialogue and consultation with federal leadership are essential to addressing issues affecting First Nations rights, Treaty commitments, lands and the future of their communities.

For the Nation, the Treaty relationship is not simply a part of history. It continues to shape the relationship between First Nations and the Crown today. Decisions made by federal and provincial governments can have lasting implications for Indigenous Peoples, making direct communication with First Nations leadership an important part of ensuring their perspectives and concerns are heard.

The timing of the exchange added another layer of significance. The National Day for Truth and Reconciliation honours residential school Survivors, remembers the children who never returned home and recognizes the lasting impacts of residential schools on Indigenous families and communities. It is also a reminder that reconciliation requires more than remembrance. It calls for meaningful action, honest conversations and respect for the commitments made between First Nations and the Crown.

Chief Jacko's invitation reflects the Nation's continued position that reconciliation must be supported by meaningful engagement and a willingness to listen. CLFNS looks forward to the opportunity to welcome Prime Minister Carney to the Nation and continue discussions about its priorities, Treaty relationship and the future of its Members.

CLFNS Agricultural Benefits Settlement Vote Passes

Cold Lake First Nations Members voted in favour of the Agricultural Benefits Settlement Agreement and Trust Agreement on Oct. 5, 2026, marking a major milestone in the Nation's longstanding Cows and Plows Claim. After years of historical research, negotiations and community engagement, the successful vote brought the Nation one step closer to finalizing the settlement with Canada and moving towards the eventual distribution of funds.

The official ratification results confirmed that the required voting thresholds had been met. Of the 2,492 eligible voters, 1,462 ballots were cast, representing a voter turnout of approximately 58.7 per cent.

A total of 1,357 Members voted yes, 94 voted no and 11 ballots were spoiled. The yes votes represented 54.45 per cent of all eligible voters, exceeding the required threshold for the settlement to pass.

The Cows and Plows Claim addresses Canada's failure to provide the agricultural benefits and instruction promised to the Nation under Treaty 6. These benefits were intended to support the Nation's transition to an agricultural lifestyle and economy, but historical research showed that the promises were not adequately fulfilled. The settlement represents an important step in addressing this outstanding Treaty obligation.

What Happens Next?

Following the successful vote on Oct. 5, a five-day appeal period was required before the next steps could proceed. Once the appeal process is complete, and if no appeals were filed, Chief and Council can sign the final documents with Canada to advance the settlement.



~ Historical photo of CLFNS memebers farming.

After the documents are signed, Canada has up to 45 days to distribute the settlement payment. However, the actual timing can vary. The Nation's legal counsel indicated that payments have sometimes been processed in as little as seven days, although this is not guaranteed. The timeline depends on the process, and no confirmed payment date is available at this time.

Once the funds are received, the Nation will be responsible for managing distribution in accordance with the Trust Agreement. Further details about how and when funds will be distributed will be shared with Members as the process advances.

The claim was submitted to Canada on May 11, 2021, and accepted for negotiations on Jan. 29, 2024. Negotiations began in July 2024 and continued as the Nation worked towards a

settlement. Reaching this stage reflects years of work to address the historical shortfall in agricultural benefits promised under Treaty 6.

The successful ratification vote was an important moment for CLFNS and the Members who participated in the process. CLFNS thanks everyone who took the time to vote and engage with the settlement process. Member participation helped bring the Nation to this milestone, and the focus now turns to completing the remaining steps with Canada.

Updates will be shared as the appeal period concludes, the final documents are signed and more information becomes available about payment and distribution.

Sawmill Cleanup Prepares Site for Future Development

Cold Lake First Nations is moving forward with the cleanup and decommissioning of the former sawmill and training centre site, an important step in assessing the property's potential for future development.



~ Aerial view of the decaying lumber at the mill site. Photo supplied.

and help determine its suitability for potential future use.

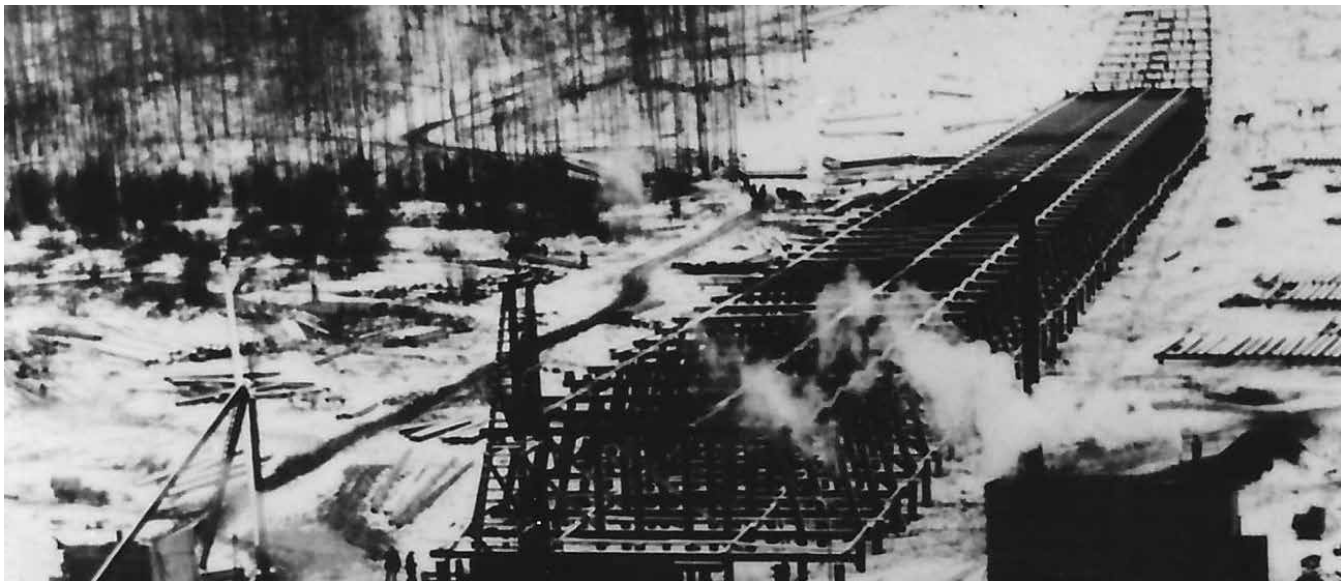
Cleanup work is expected to continue over the coming months and potentially into spring 2027. Given the significant volume of material accumulated at the site, the process will require industrial grinding equipment to break down the existing log decks into smaller material that can be loaded and hauled away. Several derelict buildings will also be removed to provide the access and space needed for the next stage of work.

Addressing Safety Concerns

In addition to preparing the property for assessment, removing the large accumulation of old wood will help address the current fire hazard at the site. The volume of material, combined with the site's proximity to the community, makes the cleanup an important step in improving conditions in the area.

The work will involve significant equipment and hauling activity, and members should expect increased traffic around the site

Sawmill Cleanup Prepares Site for Future Development (cont)



~ Construction of the Beaver River Trestle using timbers harvested from CLFNS' traditional territory.

as crews proceed. Work may take place for 12 to 14 hours per day, five to seven days a week, depending on the work schedule and progress.

The work will also include the removal of log decks from two locations in English Bay where ATCO materials are stored. These areas will require similar equipment and removal processes, contributing to the increased activity members may notice in the coming months.

Forestry Operations Will Continue

Although the former sawmill and training centre site is being decommissioned, this does not mean Cold Lake First Nations is leaving the forestry business. Forestry has long been an important part of the Nation's approach to livelihood, and the work at this particular site is connected to its potential future use rather than an end to forestry operations.

In the meantime, the firewood mill will remain at its current location for at least the next year. Firewood will continue to be available to CLFNS members throughout the cleanup process, so the work will not mean an immediate end to firewood services at the site.

Looking Ahead

The cleanup represents an early but necessary stage in evaluating the property's future. Removing old wood, clearing derelict buildings and making room for environmental sampling will allow the required assessment and feasibility work to move forward. The findings will help inform decisions about whether the site is suitable for redevelopment and how the Nation may proceed with its plans.

CLFNS recognizes that the work will bring increased activity to the area over an extended period and thanks members for their patience and cooperation while crews complete the removal process. Updates will be shared as the work progresses and more information becomes available about the site's assessment and potential future development.

John N.A. Janvier School Update

After asbestos concerns at John N.A. Janvier School, Cold Lake First Nations finished abatement and is upgrading ventilation and repairs. Knowing findings, test results, and next steps is vital for Members as the Nation ensures a safe school and plans replacement.



Representatives from Indigenous Services Canada provide an update on the proposed school project during a community information session. Photo by Isabella West

John N.A. Janvier School has served Cold Lake First Nations since 1973. With concerns about asbestos and safety, efforts have focused on addressing identified materials, cleaning affected areas, making repairs, and keeping the community informed. Stella Calahasen, education manager for Children, Families and Learning, noted asbestos was common in buildings from the school's era.

"From the '70s to '90s, almost every building contained asbestos," Calahasen said. "It's not unusual for John N.A. Janvier School today."

This history doesn't lessen the need to take asbestos seriously. Dr. Lauren Bilinsky said the discovery can cause concern since schools are places families expect to be safe.

"Finding asbestos is anxiety provoking," Bilinsky said. "It's linked to cancer and other illnesses."

Understanding What the Testing Found

Asbestos is a natural mineral fibre used in older buildings for strength, soundproofing, and fire resistance. Health risks arise when disturbed fibres become airborne and inhaled.

Bilinsky explained illnesses usually come from long-term exposure, with symptoms developing years later. Most evidence comes from workers regularly handling asbestos.

In December 2025, testing found asbestos fibres in two of 12 surface dust samples at the school, not in air samples. Air testing showed no asbestos fibres.

The positive surface samples showed asbestos dust in specific spots, but didn't reveal how long it was there or what disturbed it. Bilinsky said asbestos wasn't widespread, but since the dust's history was unknown, exposure risk had to be addressed.

John N.A. Janvier School Update (cont)

Results must be understood with these limits. Air samples were clear, but surface dust meant further checks, cleaning, and remediation were needed.

Why the Cleanup Was Necessary

Asbestos removal started in February 2026 and finished in May. It involved removing or sealing asbestos materials, replacing ceiling tiles, cleaning surfaces and furniture, and cleaning ventilation ducts. Additional cleaning and inspections continued.

The goal was to remove affected materials, clear contaminated dust, and prevent fibres from becoming airborne during work. Bilinsky said when exposure history is unclear, the priority is to stop exposure and complete remediation.

This meant halting school activities, removing exposed items, cleaning, repairing, and sealing asbestos materials.

Further testing followed. Air samples before and during removal found no asbestos fibres. Later tests also found no asbestos in dust or air after extra cleaning. These results show conditions at testing time but can't confirm how long asbestos dust was present before discovery.

What Happens Next?

Though asbestos removal is done, more work is needed before the school can reopen safely.

Ventilation upgrades began in June 2026, replacing terminal boxes that control classroom airflow and temperature. The system should provide proper ventilation and heating, expected to finish by early December.

The fire alarm system was defective and can't be repaired. A new system is needed, and coordinating contractors and repairs has delayed reopening.

An Asbestos Management Plan is being created, including regular inspections, monitoring, and annual air quality tests, with results shared with the school and Nation. Contractors will be informed about asbestos materials to avoid disturbing them.

Dr. Bilinsky stressed asbestos materials shouldn't be disturbed. Drilling, damaging surfaces, or touching insulation can create risks. Anyone concerned about exposure or health should consult a primary care provider.

Planning for a New School

Alongside current work, planning for a replacement John N.A. Janvier School continues.

A 2024 feasibility study explored options. The March 2025 report recommended replacing the building and identified a potential site.

In August 2026, CLFNS proposed a different site. Environmental and geotechnical assessments are underway to check suitability.

Once the Nation picks a site, the project will enter the national approval process to secure funding and start design, expected in 2027.

The new school is a long-term project, separate from immediate safety and infrastructure needs.

Keeping Members Informed

The asbestos findings raised questions among students, families, staff, and the community. Testing results, abatement work, and planned monitoring provide key information, though the dust's exact history is unknown.

We will keep sharing updates as repairs and new school plans progress. The focus is on safety, informing Members, and building a school for future generations.

EBay Land Designation: A Decision Led by Chief and Council

Chief and Council are proposing a land designation at English Bay to create opportunities for future leasing and economic development. Members will have the final say through a referendum on Oct. 28th.



~ From left: Councillor Pam Janvier, Chief Kelsey Jacko and Cheryl Phaff, COO and Co-founder of Cancube Industries. Photo by: Isabella West.

The proposed land designation at English Bay is an initiative of Cold Lake First Nations (CLFNS), brought forward by Chief and Council as a step toward making the identified lands available for potential leasing and development. The decision to propose the designation comes from the Nation's leadership, while the referendum process gives Members the opportunity to decide whether it should proceed.

The proposal covers approximately 61.92 acres (25.06 hectares) of reserve land at English Bay (149B). The land designation referendum is scheduled for Oct. 28, 2026, and eligible Members will be asked to vote on the proposed designation.

Why Is ISC Involved?

Questions have been raised about the role of Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) in the designation process. Its involvement is required under the Indian Act and the Indian Referendum Regulations, which establish the legal procedures for designating reserve land.

Under sections 37 and 38 of the Indian Act, reserve land generally must be designated before it can be leased or an interest in it granted. Section 39.1 sets out the requirements for a valid designation, including approval by a majority of electors voting in a referendum, a recommendation from Chief and Council, and acceptance by the Minister. LINK: https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/I-5/page-4.html

ISC's role includes appointing the Electoral Officer and supporting the required referendum process. At the most recent Oct. 7 information meetings, ISC representatives were available alongside Nation representatives to explain the designation and leasing process and answer Members' questions.

ISC's role in administering

EBay Land Designation: A Decision Led by Chief and Council (cont)

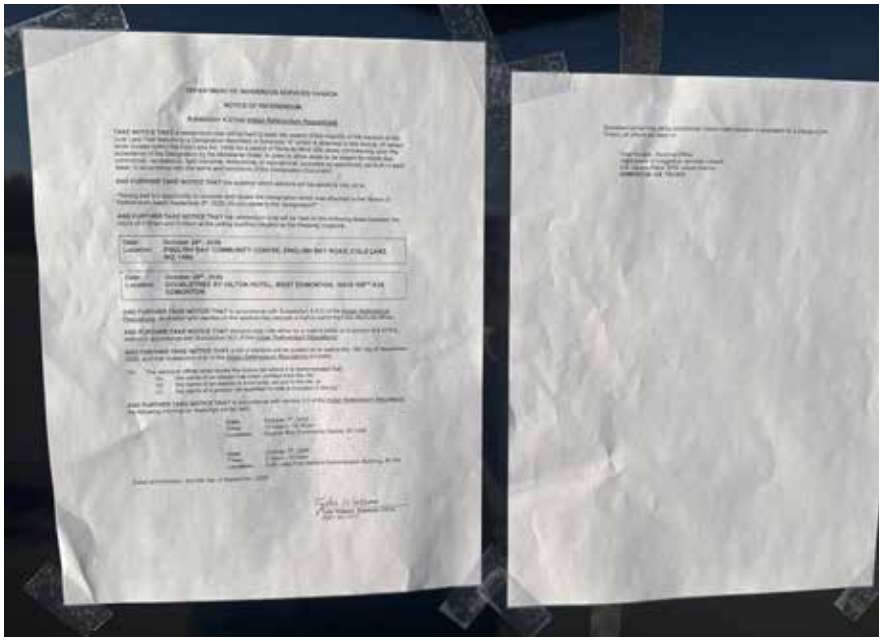
the process does not mean the proposal originated with the federal department. Chief and Council are bringing the proposed designation forward, and Members will have the opportunity to vote on it.

What Does a Land Designation Mean?

A land designation allows a First Nation to make specified reserve land available for leasing under defined terms. It is not the same as an absolute surrender or the sale of reserve land. Under a designation, the land retains its reserve status.

The proposed designation would allow the identified parcels to be leased for business and commercial development, such as a gas station, convenience store, restaurant, hotel or other businesses. The designation would set the framework for leasing the land, while the specific terms of any lease would determine how it could be used.

A successful vote would not, on its own, complete the process. If Members approve the proposal, Chief and Council would consider signing the designation document and recommending that the Minister accept it. The designation would take effect only after ministerial acceptance.



~ The official notice of ratification posted at the Administration Building. Photo by: Daniel Mclaughlin.

Members Have the Final Say

The referendum is an important part of the process because eligible electors must have the opportunity to review the proposal, ask questions and make an informed decision.

Members can vote in person on Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at either of the following locations:

English Bay Community Centre, English Bay Road, Cold Lake No. 149B

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 16615 109th Ave., Edmonton

Eligible off-reserve electors may vote using the mail-in ballot provided. All mail-in ballots must be received by 8 p.m. on Oct. 28th to be counted. Members voting in person must bring valid identification.

The proposed designation is being brought forward by Chief and Council, but the decision rests with the eligible electors. CLFNS encourages Members to review the designation and information documents, ask questions and understand the process before casting their vote.

Together We Heal: A Community Gathering

Hosted by Horelyu Dene Ts'edi Kue (Integrated Services), the Together We Heal Conference brought community Members together on Sept. 25 at the Agriplex Hall in Cold Lake for a day centred on healing, wellness and connection. Featuring guest speakers, cultural perspectives, workshops, community resources and live music, the gathering created space for conversations about the many ways individuals and families can find support throughout their lives.



Nipîy Iskwew shares her personal healing journey with attendees. Photo by Isabella West.

With the theme "Be Heard. Be Seen. Be Empowered," the Together We Heal Conference brought together people with different experiences and perspectives to explore topics affecting individuals, families and the wider community. From mental health and addiction recovery to cultural connection, personal growth and youth and family support, the day offered opportunities to learn, reflect and engage with resources in a welcoming environment.

The event featured a variety of guest speakers and entertainers, including Nipîy Iskwew, YB Nakota, the STR8 UP team, Timeless and country artist Reegan Dehid. Special guests Brooke Metchewais, Melina Blackman and Dallas Arcand also joined the gathering, contributing to a programme that combined presentations, workshops and entertainment.

The day began with an opening prayer and welcome from Jonathan Martial and Chief Kelsey Jacko, followed by a STR8 UP workshop. Attendees heard keynote presentations and took part in entertainment throughout the day, with opportunities to connect with vendors, enjoy meals and participate in door prizes and bingo. The gathering concluded with musical performances and closing remarks.

Sharing Stories and Finding Understanding

Among the day's guest speakers was Nipîy Iskwew, who shared her life story and personal experiences, offering attendees a look at the challenges, lessons

Together We Heal: A Community Gathering (cont)

and moments of understanding that have shaped her journey. Her presentation touched on the importance of understanding where people come from, how past experiences can influence family relationships and the role that forgiveness can play in moving forward.

One part of her story focused on her relationship with her father and how learning about his experiences helped her see their relationship in a different light. She reflected on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the opportunity it gave residential school Survivors and Elders to share their stories.

"When I realized what [my dad] went through, it was because of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and that was such a beautiful and powerful movement, because for the first time, our Elders, all of our survivors had an opportunity to share their stories," she said.

Listening to Survivors describe what they had endured helped her recognize the trauma her father had experienced and how it had affected their family.

"Instantly I knew that it wasn't something I did, but something that he also had to endure," she said.

Her reflections highlighted one aspect of healing: understanding the experiences of others can change how people see their relationships and themselves. The impacts of residential schools have extended across generations, and the opportunity to hear Survivors' stories remains important as families continue to navigate that history.

Nipîy Iskwew also spoke about forgiveness, explaining that it does not mean excusing the harm someone has caused.

"When we do forgive others, it doesn't mean that what they did was right, but it means that we release those shackles that hold us back," she said.

She shared that her name, meaning *"water woman,"* was given to her by a medicine man 12 years ago, who told her she would spend her life discovering its meaning and learning how to honour it.

"A healing journey is a continuous act, it's not linear," she said.

Her message reflected the broader purpose of the conference: healing looks different for everyone, and each person's journey takes time. Whether through personal reflection, cultural teachings, professional support or conversations with others, finding a path forward can begin in many different ways.

Continuing to Build Connections

The Together We Heal Conference offered more than a series of presentations. By bringing speakers, artists, resources and community Members together, Horelyu Dene Ts'edi Kue created an opportunity for people to learn from one another while exploring supports related to wellness, recovery, culture and family life.

For Cold Lake First Nations, supporting community well-being includes recognizing the different challenges people face and the importance of having spaces where they can access information, feel heard and connect with others. Events like this help bring those conversations into the community and encourage continued engagement with available supports.

Social Development Calendar

English Bay Calendar

Health Centre Calendar

Emergency Contact List

POLICE EMERGENCY CALL 911

HEALTH LINK
DIAL 811

Cold Lake R.C.M.P.
24 Hours 780-594-3301
Office Hours 780-594-3302

Victims Services
Dave Zimmerman 780-594-3302 ext.3

Emergency Medical Services
911

Cold Lake Healthcare Centre
780-639-3322

Bonnyville Health Centre
780-826-3311

CLFN Emergency Management
780-594-7184

CLFN Health Centre
780-594-2473

Dene Wellness
780-594-1471

FCSS
780-594-7186

Youth Center
780-594-7111

John N.A. Janvier School
780-594-3733

Social Development
780-594-6723

Public Works
780-594-1073

Dangerous Goods
24 Hours 1-800-272-9600

Poison Centre 24 Hours
1-800-332-1414

CANADA SUICIDE PREVENTION
988

Power Outages Atco Electric
1-800-668-5506

Gas Emergencies Northeast Gas
780-826-4002

Alberta One-Call
1-800-242-3447

Petro Canada Station
780-594-1661