



# Our Path Forward

2024 Progress Report  
on Reconciliation

 Northwestel

BRIAN KOWIKCHUK, *UUMINGMUK, MUSKOXEN*  
2023 DIRECTORY ART WINNER, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES



# Our vision

Northwestel is proud to serve 97 northern communities, each with a rich and unique Indigenous history, culture, and identity.

We exist to help ignite the power of these First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities through the very best communications technology and services. We are committed to doing so in true partnership and consultation with Indigenous governments and other northern Indigenous partners in a way that creates shared benefits for people in the north.

2024 MOOSEHIDE GATHERING,  
TR'ONDEK HWÉCH'IN GOVERNMENT,  
ARCHBOULD PHOTOGRAPHY







# Art of the journey

This year, our reconciliation report is illuminated by the creative vision of Inuk artist, David Aglukark. Through his powerful and thoughtful reflections – presented in both English and Inuktitut (Baffin dialect) – we deepen our commitment to reconciliation by centring Indigenous narratives, voices and experiences in an authentic and meaningful way.

The artist's work brings to life our four commitments to reconciliation through powerful visual interpretations and flows seamlessly throughout the entire report. Delicate motifs and vibrant elements from the images are woven into various sections, creating a cohesive narrative that ties together the themes of this report.

Through an abstract and vibrant mix of colour and form, the images speak to the heart and mind, inviting us to look beyond the surface and uncover deeper meaning in each piece. They beckon us toward a greater understanding of one another's stories and cultures and shine with optimism for the future we are building together.

As you explore this report, we invite you to experience Aglukark's artwork as deeply as the words and data on each page.

Featuring Aglukark's work is more than a design choice; it is a commitment to honour Indigenous voices and perspectives in our reconciliation journey. In uniting art with our vision, we reaffirm that reconciliation is a living breathing process—one that heals, builds understanding, and lights the path we walk together toward a future bright with hope.

**Learn more about David Aglukark and his artwork on page 22.**



PHOTO TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE TA'AN KWACH'AN COUNCIL AND KWANLIN DÜN FIRST NATION

# A letter from our President

Back in 2022, we took an important step by unveiling our first-ever Reconciliation Plan, Our Path Forward. As I now share our 2024 progress report, I'm proud to highlight how our work has evolved and the tangible impact we're seeing in our communities.

Our efforts in education have helped transform the learning experiences of young students entering tech, while our initiatives to expand access to jobs and training have deepened our connection with the people we serve. One memorable milestone in 2024 was the opening of our new Whitehorse headquarters, in partnership with Chu Níkwän LP, built on the Settlement Land of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN). This state-of-the-art, 41,250-square-foot facility, developed by Chu Níkwän LP as part of KDFN's Chapter 22 Final Agreement, is now a vibrant hub where over half of our Yukon team comes together each day. It stands as a powerful symbol of what we can achieve when we work in true partnership with our communities.

We're also on the cusp of another historic moment towards economic reconciliation. Soon, Northwestel will be acquired by Sixty North Unity, a consortium of Indigenous organizations from across the North.

This transition will transform our company into a 100% Indigenous-owned enterprise and the largest Indigenous telecommunications provider in the world, marking a landmark achievement in economic reconciliation and community empowerment.

Our infrastructure initiatives continue to make a difference for the 97 communities we serve. We increased speeds across our fibre-powered communities to 700 Mbps and unveiled our most affordable unlimited internet plan for those who don't have a need for top speeds. We also partnered with OneWeb, Swedish Space Corporation and Det'on Cho Corporation to launch the OneWeb Satellite Network Portal in Yellowknife. Affectionately dubbed "the giant golf balls" by locals, this facility aims to reduce latency and improve connectivity even in the most remote areas, all while boosting local economic growth.

A big area of focus for us in 2024 was improving network reliability. With climate change causing more wildfires and floods than ever in Northern Canada, we need to continue to invest to protect our network and keep northerners connected. A major milestone for our company was the completion of the Canada North Fibre Loop, which has now significantly increased our network resiliency by reducing serious internet and cellular service disruptions.

In today's complex global landscape, the need for homegrown Canadian solutions is clearer than ever. With over 500 dedicated team members, we empower local communities to shine on the global stage. Every challenge fuels our creative spirit and drives us to develop solutions that meet the evolving needs of our people.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our employees, Indigenous partners, and our Community Advisory Board.

Your passion and perseverance are the lifeblood of our progress. Together, we will continue Our Path Forward, building a more inclusive, connected, and promising future for all Northerners.

**Gunalchéesh. Masi cho. Shāw Nithän. Qujannamiik. Thank you.**

*Curtis Shaw*

Curtis Shaw  
President, Northwestel

# Meet our Community Advisory Board

In 2020, Northwestel created a new governance structure to ensure Indigenous leadership and Northern perspectives are well represented at the highest level of the company.

Northwestel's Community Advisory Board (CAB) advises our management teams with valuable insight and guidance, including service delivery, Indigenous community needs, Indigenous government relations, as well as community and public relations campaigns.

The board provides a distinct Northern perspective that informs Northwestel's strategic priorities, serving as a sounding board for new ideas and providing feedback on issues and concerns at the community level.



**Roberta Joseph**  
(Tr'andek Hwech'in First Nation)

*"First Nations are key economic drivers in the Yukon and across the North. Already, we see examples of the Yukon and NWT partnering with Northwestel, and there needs to be more opportunities like these."*



**Darrell Beaulieu**  
(Yellowknife Dene First Nation)

*"I am looking forward to being a part of a northern and Indigenous team of community members because it's an opportunity for northerners to participate in the further development of the communications industry, which has unlimited potential."*



**Randy Qamaniq**  
(Qikiqataaluk region of Nunavut)

*"Embracing the essence of the North and the wisdom of Indigenous communities, I eagerly anticipate joining a team that reflects our diverse heritage. Together, we'll shape the future of the communications industry, tapping into its boundless possibilities and ensuring our voices resonate across vast landscapes."*







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**Artist statement**  
*I combined a traditional qulliq (oil lamp) with both modern and traditional dwellings to represent an understanding of not just the culture, but also the people. This reflects awareness of Inuit history and the challenges they have faced, both in the past and present.*

OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

# We will deepen our understanding of the North's unique Indigenous cultures

We learn from those who've called this land home for millennia. We will meet the future with a deeper understanding of the north's Indigenous cultures, governance, histories, and traditions. Our employees will understand the history of Indigenous people in the North, and the impacts of colonialism and residential schools have had. We will celebrate Indigenous culture and amplify it to the North.





# Our 2024 key accomplishments

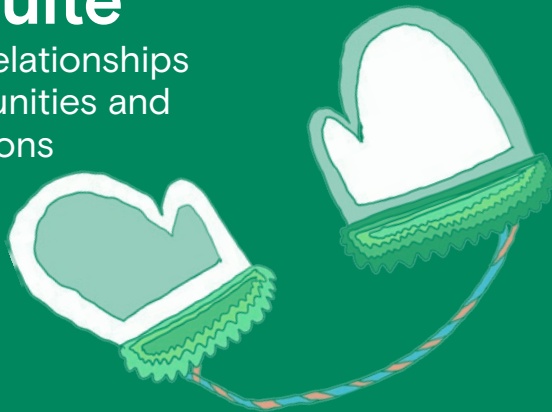
- Educational products produced and educational partnerships **expanded to more areas**



- Education program **integrated** within grade school



- Northwestel has a **diversified suite** of mutually beneficial relationships with Indigenous communities and development corporations



■ COMPLETED INITIATIVES/  
ACHIEVED OUTCOMES

▲ PARTIALLY COMPLETED  
INITIATIVES



- Social and economic outcomes in **all 97 communities**

we serve improve as education, health care and businesses utilize world class Internet

- ▲ Northwestel constructs Fibre-to-the-home in Atlin in partnership with Taku River Tlingit First Nation (nearly completed, but still underway)



- Northwestel has increased access to **jobs, training, and education opportunities for Indigenous people within the company,** and provided Indigenous communities long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects



- Building world-class, accessible, and affordable networks** empowering connection across the 97 communities we serve

- Northwestel has provided Indigenous communities **long-term sustainable benefits** from economic development projects



- Indigenous mentorships for new employees



- Communities have access to 50 Mbps download/10 Mbps upload or faster Internet speeds (this initiative is completed in most areas across our operating area, except for Nunavut)

## HIGHLIGHTS

# We will seek a shared pathway to an even better North

## A new era for telecommunications in Northern Canada

**We are on the brink of a critical transformation. With Sixty North's Unity acquisition of Northwestel from Bell, we will become 100% Indigenous owned, the largest of its kind in the world. This historic change is more than a corporate evolution; it represents our steadfast commitment to bridge the digital divide and empowering northern communities through true partnership and significant investment in modern infrastructure.**

In partnership with Bell Canada, we are committed to elevating digital connectivity throughout the North by bringing 1 Gbps speeds, expanding high-speed coverage, and deploying cutting-edge Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite technology to reach even the most geographically challenging areas.

This new ownership model will ensure decision-making stays in the North and future investments prioritize the North. Leaders from Sixty North Unity across our operating areas have voiced their enthusiasm and confidence in this transformative journey:



**Tiffany Eckert-Maret (Ta'an Kwach'an Council)**, representing the Yukon, reflected,

*"As Indigenous people, we have long believed we are best placed to make the necessary decisions affecting services in our communities. The acquisition of Northwestel will give us the autonomy to make those investments and choices to serve our telecommunications needs into the future."*



**Darrell Beaulieu (Yellowknife Dene First Nation)**, in the Northwest Territories, shared his perspective,

*"Indigenous partnerships with industry have continued to evolve and expand. This collaboration across all three territories will allow us to own and operate a leader in northern telecommunications services and is the next logical step in the development and growth of our businesses. Bell has provided us the support necessary to realize this important opportunity."*



**David Omilgoitok (Kitikmeot region of Nunavut)**, emphasized the broader impact,

*"This acquisition allows us to take the lead in continuing to address the critical gap in telecommunications services in our northern communities. Expanded investments in fibre and Low Earth Orbit (LEO) infrastructure could transform the North and put us on equal footing with the rest of Canada."*

## HIGHLIGHTS

# We will connect communities to each other and to the world through world-leading technology

## Transforming connectivity in Atlin, BC



**Atlin is close to heart for many Yukoners, and it just made sense to become its telecommunications service provider in 2023. Since then, we extended our fibre network from Tagish to the Northern BC community to connect its first ever cellular tower.**

Next up for Atlin is to be connected to fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) Internet. The project is progressing as we work toward a mid-2025 launch in collaboration with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

When ready, community members will enjoy the fastest home internet in the North with unlimited monthly data and Northwestel TV Plus.

“Atlin is a part of the North and it just makes sense for them to be a part of the Northwestel family too. We don’t want to stop at voice service. Our vision is to upgrade Atlin to full FTTH internet so they can get the same fast, unlimited internet and live TV as many of our northern communities have.”

**Curtis Shaw**, President, Northwestel

Our progress in the region has been significant. Approximately 113 kilometres of new fibre-optic cable have been installed from Tagish, Yukon, to Atlin, embedding the community within a robust digital framework. A key component of the Atlin project is the repurposing of a former diamond mine central office (CO). Originally part of the Snap Lake Diamond Mine in the Northwest Territories, this roughly 12-by-16-foot building was relocated from Whitehorse to Atlin in August 2024 by crane and truck.

Implementation Manager **Griffin Newson** explained:

“The most challenging aspect of the move was coordinating between the various parties, the crane operator, construction contractors, and our technicians. I greatly appreciate the safety-conscious and professional approach of everyone involved.”

Director, Broadband Deployment, **John-Eric Petersson** added:

“With the Northwestel building in place, we can now start deploying the FTTH in-community infrastructure that will ultimately serve homes and businesses with fast, unlimited internet. Once that is done, we will decommission and remove the old TELUS building in Atlin.”

With the CO now in place, our next steps include installing commercial power, transport fibre equipment, access hardware, and FTTH terminations to ensure a seamless transition ahead of the Atlin FTTH launch.

We remain fully committed to delivering reliable, cutting-edge connectivity that meets the unique needs of communities across Canada’s North.

## HIGHLIGHTS

# We will deepen our understanding of the North's unique Indigenous cultures

## Be a Good Ancestor - Embracing Indigenous wisdom for a better future



PHOTO TAKEN BY CARLA LEWIS  
PHOTOGRAPHY IN T'SIL KAZ KOH TERRITORY

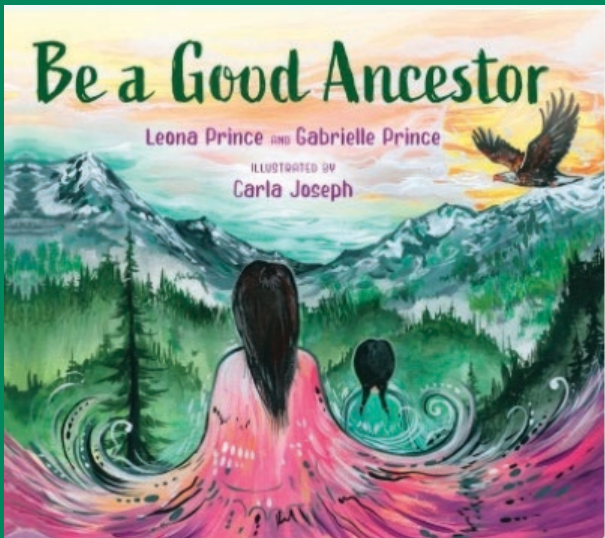
In 2024, as part of our commitment to deepening our understanding of the North's unique Indigenous cultures, we hosted a virtual Indigenous Speaker Series session for our Northwestel teammates in honour of National Indigenous Peoples Day. We welcomed Leona Prince, a Dakelh woman from the Lake Babine Nation and Nak'azdli, a respected educator, storyteller, and best-selling author. Her presentation, "Be a Good Ancestor," offered a thoughtful reflection on how our everyday decisions shape the future.

Drawing on the enduring wisdom passed down from her great-aunt and grandfather, Leona connected traditional teachings with the modern challenges we face at work. Her insights encouraged us to examine the legacy we are creating and to recognize the profound impact our actions have on future generations. As she explained:

*"To be a good ancestor means understanding that every decision we make today echoes into the future. In our workplace, we have the unique opportunity to honour our heritage and build a legacy of unity and respect for generations to come."*

Her powerful words served as a call to action, sparking heartfelt conversation among our team and reinforcing the importance of integrating Indigenous perspectives into our daily practices. The Northwestel team was reminded that reconciliation isn't just about acknowledging the past, it's about taking deliberate, respectful steps today that pave the way for a more inclusive and unified tomorrow.

By embracing the insights Leona shared, we have enriched our perspective and deepened our commitment to learning from Indigenous wisdom. This session has given us a renewed sense of purpose to create positive changes, ensuring that our decisions honour our heritage while building a sustainable future for all.



'Be a Good Ancestor' by Leona Prince and Gabrielle Prince



## HIGHLIGHTS

We will strive to have our operations reflect the communities we serve

### Northwestel's Indigenous training initiative – Empowering futures

As an organization operating in 97 communities, it's critical that our workforce is representative of the communities we serve, so we're growing the next generation of home-grown tech talent. In partnership with Yukon University, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Government, and other trusted Indigenous groups, we launched a six-week training program in 2023 that is now in its second year.



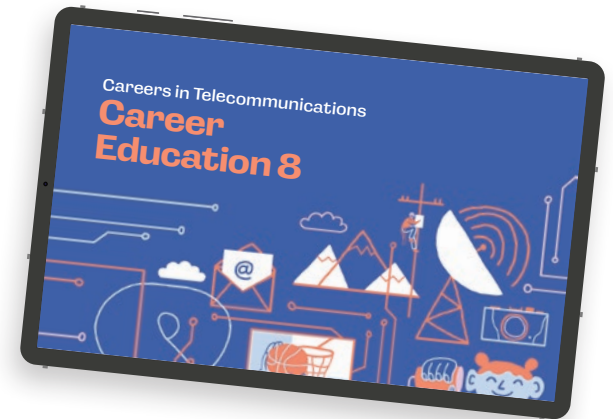
Our goal was to shift away from the traditional “years of experience” model and offer a hands-on, practical approach that truly prepares participants for a career in telecommunications.

In this program, participants are paid to learn while they gain essential technical skills and complete two university-level courses, an experience designed to pave the way toward permanent roles with Northwestel.

One story that stands out is that of **Sylas Bowlby**, a proud member of the Wolf Clan of the Ross River Dene. In August 2024, Sylas joined our team as a full-time Customer Service Representative at our Whitehorse office. For Sylas, the training was about more than just acquiring technical skills, it helped him balance education, work, and cultural identity. “The North is vast, and seeing how much Northwestel is working to connect my people with reliable services is truly a sight to see,” he shares. He also values the time he spends with his family, whether exploring how technology enhances communication or enjoying quiet moments by local lakes. This balance has given him the confidence to grow professionally while staying true to his roots.

**Kerry Newkirk**, our Director of Government Relations, sums it up perfectly:

“Providing Indigenous youth with hands-on learning, career guidance, and direct job opportunities is a meaningful step toward ensuring long-term representation in our industry. We're proud to have Sylas as part of our team and look forward to seeing more Indigenous employees thrive in telecommunications.”



At Northwestel, we're proud to help build a more inclusive future in telecommunications, one opportunity at a time. The hiring process is strategically low-barrier, and we have established an interactive career discovery tool ([www.nwtel.ca/pathfinder](http://www.nwtel.ca/pathfinder)) to support Indigenous youth as they navigate opportunities.

# Honouring the call to truth: A journey of healing, art, and reconciliation

At Northwestel, reconciliation isn't just a concept, it's a daily commitment that shapes how we connect communities, learn from our shared past, and uplift Indigenous voices.

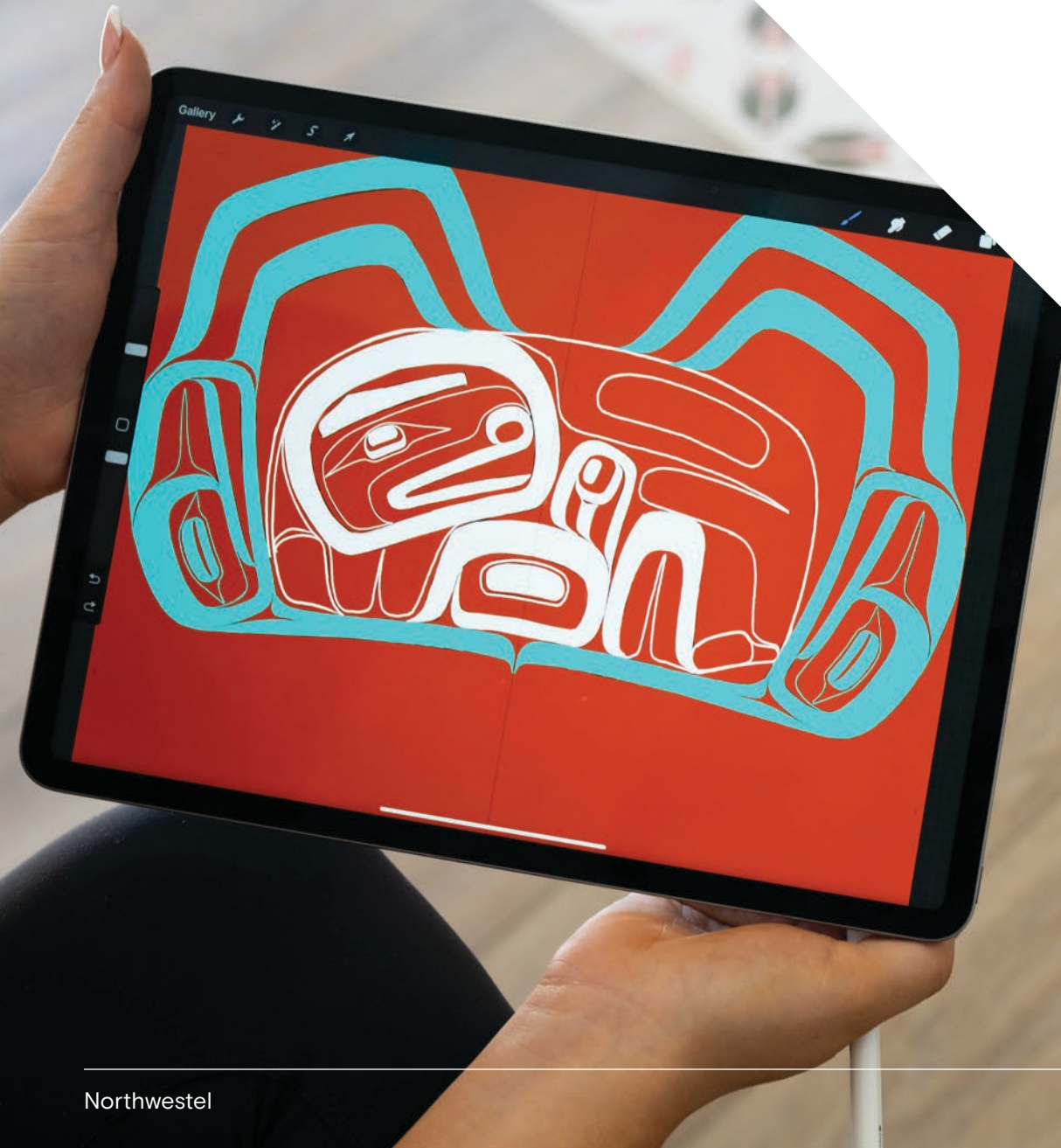




PHOTO TAKEN BY ZOYA LYNCH ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF KUNAXA, SINKI, STONEY, SECWEPÉC, OKANAGAN AND CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF THE COMILLE

**On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in 2024, we had the privilege of working with Tlingit artist, dancer, and educator Guná Jensen on our annual Orange Shirt project. We gifted these shirts to our team to wear proudly.**

## The story behind the design

A year ago, Guná shared a message on social media that struck a deep chord with many:

"I don't really know what reconciliation means to me. I just know that I feel deep sadness, because this is what it's like to know the truth."

Guná wrote these words after learning that 15 potential grave sites had been discovered on the grounds of Choooutla Residential School in Carcross, Yukon, a place that lies within her traditional territory. For her and many Indigenous people across Canada, this news was a stark reminder of the enduring pain inflicted by the residential school system. Moved by this revelation, Guná felt compelled to contribute her art to Orange Shirt Day, a time set aside to

remember and bear witness to the suffering that continues to impact our communities.

## A design rooted in love and protection

Guná's artwork centres on the image of a young child cradled in two turquoise hands. For her, these hands represent Haa Shagoon, the spirits of the sacred natural world, who lovingly guide and protect the child. "They represent all the spirits of our sacred natural world, holding this child with infinite love and supporting them on every step of their journey," she explains. This image is a powerful reminder that, despite the attempts to erase Indigenous culture, our connection to the Creator, the land, and our ancestors remains unbreakable. She passionately adds,

"No matter what forces may try to ignore the consequences of these atrocities, divine justice cannot be breached. The love our Creator has placed in the hearts of our young ones, taken too soon, endures forever."

## A shared commitment

When Guná unveiled her design, it quickly became a potent symbol of our collective journey. The 2024 Orange Shirts, featuring her heartfelt artwork, were shared across our network, from our Whitehorse offices to the most remote communities we serve. Wearing the Orange Shirt sparked important conversations about truth, healing, and our shared duty to confront history.

Guná's vision and passion have deeply influenced our commitment to ensuring Indigenous voices are at the forefront as we

shape the future of telecommunications in the North. As we continue our journey, we carry her parting thoughts with us:

"Today, tomorrow, and every day that follows, I will feel as I need to feel. I hope others will do the same. May this design offer warmth and an endless prayer for everyone affected."

"I hope the love and empowerment woven into this work touch you as deeply as it has touched me."

Her words remind us to embrace our emotions and remain steadfast in our pursuit because every project, every conversation, and every moment of reflection brings us closer to a future where the strength of our communities is celebrated, and Indigenous voices lead the way forward.

2024 NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, NORTHWESTEL CALL CENTRE, WHITEHORSE  
IMAGE TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL LANDS OF THE KWANLIN DUN FIRST NATION AND THE TAAN KWACH'AN COUNCIL





NORTHWESTEL WHITEHORSE HQ GRAND OPENING, CHU NÍKWĀN PLACE  
 IMAGE TAKEN ON THE SETTLEMENT LAND OF THE KWANLIN DŪN FIRST NATION



2024 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY AT THE KWANLIN DŪN CULTURAL CENTRE, WHITEHORSE  
 IMAGE CAPTURED BY MAUN KEGGENHOFF ON THE SETTLEMENT LAND OF THE KWANLIN DŪN FIRST NATION

# United in focus: Capturing our shared journey



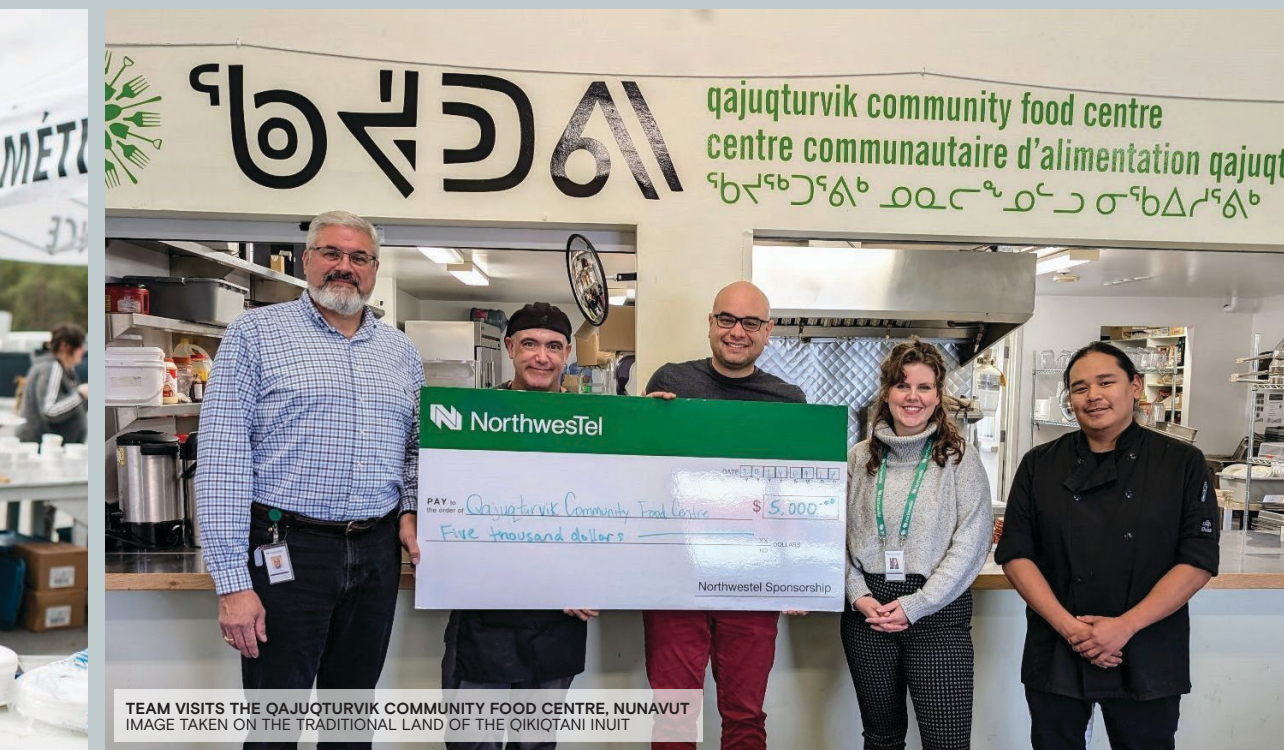
PERFORMERS AT THE 2024 ALIANAIT ARTS FESTIVAL  
 IMAGE TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL LAND OF THE QIKIQTANI INUIT



2024 NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY EVENT  
 CAPTURED BY GEOFFREY RODRIGUEZ ON THE TRADITIONAL LAND OF THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION



PERFORMERS AT THE NORTHERN ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE 40TH ANNIVERSARY SHOWCASE, YELLOWKNIFE CAPTURED BY BILL BRADEN ON THE TRADITIONAL LAND OF THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION




TEAM VISITS THE QAJUQTURVIK COMMUNITY FOOD CENTRE, NUNAVUT  
IMAGE TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL LAND OF THE QIKIQTANI INUIT



2024 ARCTIC DEVELOPMENT EXPO  
IMAGE TAKEN ON GWICH'IN SETTLEMENT AREA AND THE LANDS OF THE INUVIALUIT AND METIS PEOPLE



DYAN WHITE, ᑕᐃᐃᑦ ᐅᐃᐃ, MY ICE HOLE, ᐃᑦᓂᓂᑦ  
2023 DIRECTORY ART WINNER, NUNAVUT



# Thank you for coming on this journey with us

Thank you for joining us on our path toward reconciliation and a more connected North. We appreciate your support and invite you to continue the conversation. For any questions or feedback, please contact us at: [communityrelations@nwtel.ca](mailto:communityrelations@nwtel.ca)

got'áorezá qt'e! • Harelyú Sekul Bet'óréza Xa Hultágh • Tâpwêkam kahkiyaw ohci awâsis • Tr'iinin at'aownyaanch'uu giniliji niilh  
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 Dunèna Ke Shàkwàthan K'aanäta Jè'! • Chaque Enfant Enfant Compte • Every Child Matters • Dunèna Ke Shàkwàthan K'aanäta Jè'!  
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