

Draft Mandate of the Kelly Lake Government

Introduction

The Kelly Lake Government exists to serve and represent our people, uphold our inherent rights, and work towards the prosperity and well-being of our community. Grounded in Cree traditional values and anchored by the Kelly Lake Declaration, we work to preserve our culture, protect our land, and ensure the sustainable development of our community for present and future generations. Our government will work diligently to establish recognition and secure resources necessary for our wellbeing and self-determination.

This mandate exists to support transparency between the Government and our community, clearly outlining the expectations placed on Council members and the Government as it assumes office. As the Government advances the priorities specified in this mandate, it is anticipated that specific Governance and Financial policies will evolve and ultimately supersede this initial mandate. This progression ensures that our governance framework remains dynamic and responsive to the changing needs and aspirations of our community.

Guiding Principles

Our community identified and approved four guiding principles for our government:

1. Respect

We honor all our relations by practicing mutual respect in our daily lives and governance. Every member of our community—youth, Elders, and all others—has a role to play in shaping our future. We are all responsible for fostering unity, strengthening cultural connections, and protecting our land and relations. Our governance reflects the voices and contributions of all community members, ensuring that everyone sees themselves as part of our collective work. We create and uphold safe spaces for open and honest discussions, walking forward together in a good way.

2. Transparency

We govern with openness, integrity, and accountability. Transparency is built into our structures and processes, ensuring community members are informed and engaged. We commit to regular meetings, clear communication, and multiple ways of sharing information. Our decision-making is guided by respect and good intentions, with the community actively involved in shaping our path forward.

3. Unity

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We are one people, one family. We welcome and respect all community members, fostering a deep sense of belonging. Our strength comes from working together in the best interests of the whole community, rather than as separate families or groups. We recognize that unity does not mean sameness, but rather a shared commitment to supporting and uplifting one another. Through cooperation and collective action, we build a strong and resilient future for Kelly Lake.

4. Protecting our Cultural Heritage and Connection to the Land

Our culture, language, and lands are inseparable from who we are as a people. We are committed to protecting and revitalizing our language, customs, and traditions. As stewards of the land, we uphold our responsibility to protect it, as our survival and identity depend on this connection. Through intergenerational learning and the practice of our ways, we will sustain and strengthen our relationship with the land.

Governance Structure

The Kelly Lake Government shall consist of five elected officials, serving as the leadership body responsible for representing and advancing the interests of our people. Each official shall serve a term of four years. The officials will work collaboratively to implement our priorities and ensure the transparent and accountable governance of our community.

Key Priorities

1. Community Development

- Advocate for and secure funding to address urgent housing needs.
- Develop plans for sustainable infrastructure and essential services.
- Work to support increased access to health and wellness services and supports.
- Emergency management planning and implementation.
- Support economic initiatives that provide employment and prosperity for members.

2. Government Relations

- Pursue official recognition as a self-governing Indigenous entity.
- Establish and maintain productive relationships with provincial, federal, and regional governments.
- Build partnerships with other Indigenous communities and institutions to strengthen our collective rights and opportunities.

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- Create a structured approach for negotiations and partnerships with other governments.
- Ensure the community has representation in regional and national Indigenous political forums.

3. Cultural Protection

- Promote the teaching and use of the Cree language.
- Support cultural programs, ceremonies, and knowledge-sharing between generations.
- Safeguard our traditional practices and intellectual property from external exploitation.
- Research and document the history of our community, ensuring the preservation of our ancestors' stories, knowledge, and contributions for future generations.

4. Land Preservation

- Assert our inherent rights over traditional lands.
- Protect natural resources and promote sustainable environmental stewardship.
- Engage in land-use planning that reflects our values and long-term vision.

5. Constitution and Policy Development

- Develop a foundational governing document that clearly outlines the powers, functions, and responsibilities of the government.
- Develop and implement policies that reflect our community's values and priorities.
- Develop policies in key areas including:
 - Financial Management: Establish sound fiscal policies, budgeting frameworks, and accountability measures.
 - Human Resources: Create employment policies, fair labor practices, and capacity-building initiatives.
 - Membership & Citizenship: Define criteria for membership, rights, and responsibilities of members.
 - Land & Resource Management: Develop policies to regulate land use, conservation, and sustainable development.

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- Health & Social Services: Establish policies to support wellness, mental health, and social programs for members.
- Education & Youth Development: Promote policies that strengthen educational opportunities and youth engagement.
- Housing: Develop policies to address housing shortages, ensure fair allocation, and promote sustainable homeownership opportunities for members.
- Governance: Establish policies related to elections, the conduct of meetings, leadership responsibilities, and a code of ethics for elected officials.
- Dispute Resolution: Develop systems for addressing conflicts within the community, including mediation, community justice initiatives, and legal recourse.

6. Industry Relations

- Engage with industries operating within our traditional territory to ensure responsible resource development according to the principle of Free, Prior, Informed Consent, as enshrined through UNDRIP and DRIPA.
- Advocate for economic partnerships that benefit our community while protecting our land and culture.
- Develop agreements that prioritize environmental sustainability and community interests.

7. Transparency and Accountability Measures

- Establish mechanisms for financial reporting, community consultations, and leadership accountability.
- Create and implement communication processes for regular, timely information sharing with community members.
- Ensure all major community decisions are communicated to members through accessible and transparent processes.

8. Community Engagement

- Implement a process for ongoing community participation in governance, policy development, and community planning.
- Ensure that decision-making reflects the needs, concerns, and aspirations of community members.

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Implementation and Accountability

The Kelly Lake Government is committed to transparency and accountability in its operations. Regular community consultations, reporting mechanisms, and adherence to traditional and contemporary governance best practices will ensure that our leadership remains responsive to the needs and aspirations of our people.

It is essential that individual members of the Government live up to this mandate. To ensure all members act in accordance with community values and responsibilities, a formal oversight process will be developed to address instances of non-compliance or misconduct by any member, including absenteeism, rogue behavior, actions contrary to the community's best interests, misrepresentation of the community, or financial mismanagement. This policy will outline the procedures for reviewing such behaviors and, if necessary, the steps for possible removal of a government member. The development of this oversight policy will be a collaborative effort, with proposed drafts presented to the Elders Committee and community for feedback and final approval, ensuring that the governance process remains transparent and community driven.

Compensation

Upon appointment, Council Members should be aware that there is no guaranteed compensation. Serving on the Council demands a significant commitment of time, both during and outside of regular working hours. As circumstances permit, the issue of compensation will be reevaluated and any proposals for remuneration will be presented to the community for approval.

Conclusion

This mandate is a commitment to building a strong, recognized, and self-sustaining community that honors its past while forging a path toward a thriving future. With unity, determination, and respect for our traditions, we will work towards a government that serves our people with integrity and purpose.