



Our Path Forward

2023 Progress Report
on Reconciliation

 Northwestel



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.

PHOTO TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE CARCROSS TAGISH FIRST NATION, YUKON

A letter from our President

We introduced our first ever Reconciliation Plan at Northwestel in 2022. Named *Our Path Forward*, this plan make public commitments towards reconciliation with actionable steps to bring positive change to the North.



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

Today, we're sharing the progress we've made, and the areas we seek to improve, to ensure a better future together.

In 2023, our Northwestel team made meaningful progress towards our efforts to connect more northern communities to the world through world-leading technology in order to cultivate pathways between northern Indigenous communities. In doing so, we have reached some notable milestones, such as the introduction of the first Indigenous owned fibre line in Canada to Whatì, NWT in partnership with the Tłı̨chǫ Government. We were excited to welcome Atlin, BC into our Northwestel family through a partnership with Taku River Tlingit First Nation. This initiative aims to modernize telecommunications

for the community, with the goal of bringing positive changes to enhance the lives of residents.

We also completed our biggest year to date in the "Every Community Project", an initiative that brings high speed unlimited Internet to every community in Yukon and Northwest Territories. 90% of the Northwest Territories and Yukon are now served with fibre-powered technology, exceeding the national broadband objective. This means 32 northern Indigenous communities now get the North's fastest home Internet service, with up to 500 Mbps download speed with unlimited monthly usage.

Chu Níikwän LP and Northwestel are partnering to build a new Yukon headquarters for the northern Canadian telecommunications company, expected to be completed in 2024. The headquarters is located on Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) settlement land, drawing inspiration from Kwanlin Dün artistic and cultural traditions.

Our team is always looking forward to what the future holds and the opportunities that may arise, being mindful of the deep commitment we hold to the Reconciliation Plan. We will continue to improve connectivity in our satellite served communities in order to shrink the digital divide in the far North. Investing in redundancy in the northern Canadian fibre network is a key priority, as it will increase the reliability of our infrastructure. We are also working with post-secondary institutions to build direct pathways and programs for Indigenous youth. This will equip students with necessary skills and create employment opportunities within the industry.

I want to sincerely thank our Indigenous partners and the Northwestel Community Advisory Board, who have played a crucial role in guiding our journey to create tangible, shared benefits for the people of the North. We know there is more work to do. We know each year will bring new

ways to improve and new ways to strive for a better North. We stand committed to continue on Our Path Forward, to create true partnerships with Indigenous governments and other northern Indigenous partners and communities.

It is with great honour to serve you on the traditional territories of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. At Northwestel, we are proud to be a part of this uniquely northern landscape and consider it a privilege to work and walk alongside our many partners. This journey is still the beginning. Let's show the world what we can do when we truly come together to build stronger, more connected communities.

Gunalchéesh. Masi cho. Shāw Nithān. Qujannamiik. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Curtis Shaw".

Curtis Shaw, President

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

"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."



Jordan Peterson

"It is a good day when we can say we are working together to remove barriers to Indigenous participation and success in our future economies – a day of reconciliation in action."



Darrell Beaulieu

"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."



Dr. Karen Barnes

"I am very pleased to be working alongside four northern leaders in supporting Northwestel to achieve its goal to expand connectivity across the north."



Randy Qamaniq

"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."



OUR COMMITMENT
TO RECONCILIATION

We will seek a shared pathway toward an even better North

We believe stronger connections build stronger communities. Just as we strive to have Indigenous communities benefit from quality broadband, we believe they should also share in the economic benefits of investments in the North.

Artist statement

Our inherent connection to Mother Earth has been part of lives since time immemorial. Much like how storytelling has been passed on throughout the generations, its roots connect deeply and profoundly. Like plants and flowers, these relationships require constant care, nurturing, and love. With our strong ties of family and community we can cultivate a shared future that has benefits for all.



Artist statement

The traditions and values that we hold closely evolve and adapt as they always have done. With the advent of technologies such as the Internet, our worlds are more connected than ever before, bringing us closer to our friends, family, and colleagues.

OUR COMMITMENT TO RECONCILIATION

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

We exist to ignite the power of community. Our focus is improving access to high-speed Internet in the north, bringing real benefits to every community we serve. High speed broadband increases access to critical services like education and health care, and leads to more economic opportunities.



Artist statement

Much like the 1613 Teioháte Kaswenta (Two Row Wampum Belt) which stands for equity and respect, this image depicts two boats navigating the river of life, without steering the other. Each boat contains the life, laws, and people of each culture. It represents and records the agreement between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee on Turtle Island (Canada).

Like the story of the Two Row Wampum Belt, we are in this canoe together, sailing along the river of life. This journey is made easier when we paddle together. The sharing of culture and knowledge is depicted here by the gifting of a bowl. This sharing allows for a deeper understanding, respect and appreciation of one another.

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.



Artist statement

Indigenous people across the North are as distinct and beautiful as the landscapes themselves. The four figures represent not only the Indigenous populations but also those who are non-Indigenous. Together, we reflect and represent the rich cultures and heritage from many nations and many different and many different parts of the world who all call the North their home. This brings perspectives and knowledge from a diverse population, that strengthens and unites us.

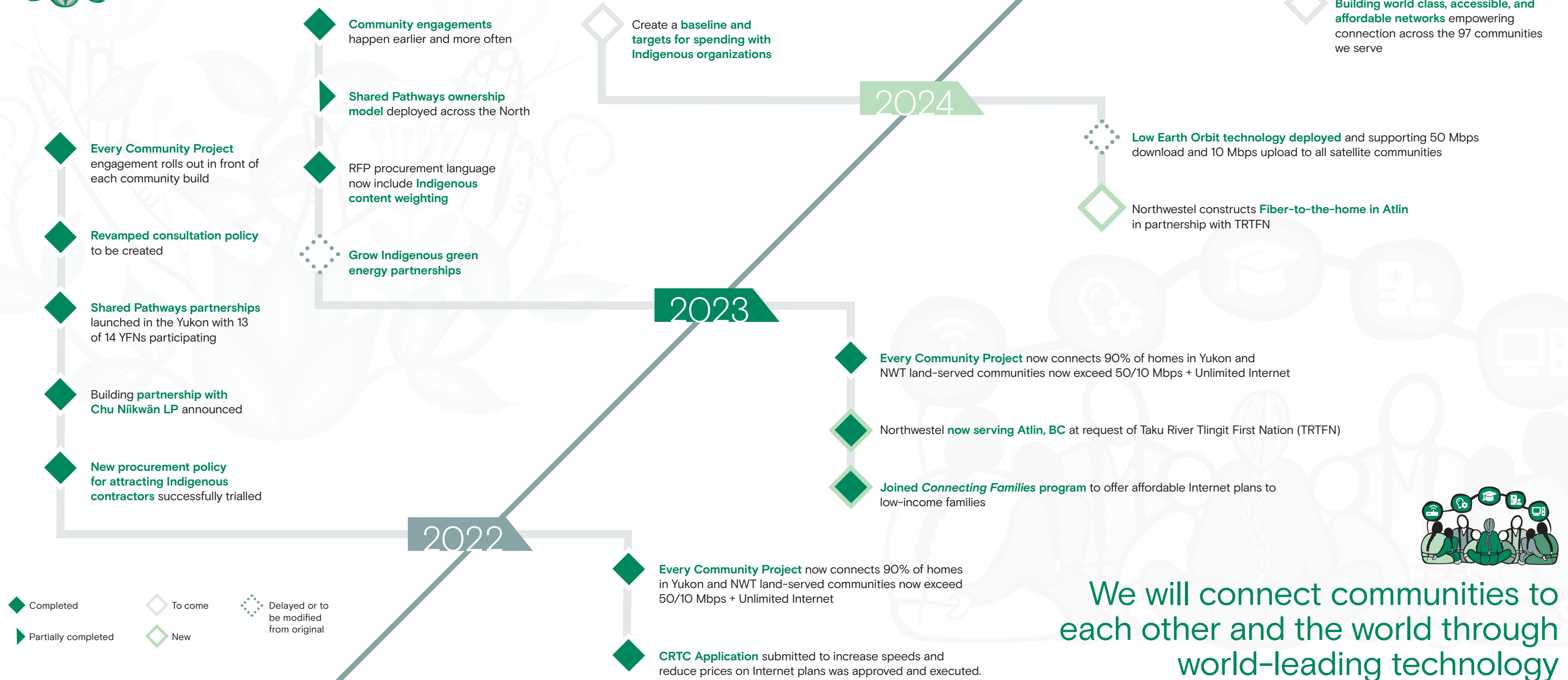
OUR COMMITMENT
TO RECONCILIATION

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

Our North is largely Indigenous, and we strive for our operations to reflect the people we serve. We will prioritize providing access to jobs and training to Indigenous communities and people. Our hiring processes will be accessible and supportive. Our public messaging, including our recruitment and marketing, will be inclusive and representative of the north.

Our Action Plan

We will seek a shared pathway to an even better North



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

Our Action Plan

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



- ◆ Jean Erasmus spoke to Northwestel about allyship, culture, and residential schools
- ◆ Nunavut artist Kaytlyn Amitnak Niego designed Northwestel employee's 2023 Orange Shirt
- ◆ Northwestel team served community food at National Indigenous Peoples Day in Whitehorse and Yellowknife
- ◆ Indigenous Employee Committee created

- ▶ Indigenous Employee Committee created
- ◆ Indigenous Speaker Series created and continues

2022

2023

2024

2025 AND BEYOND

- ◆ Foundation of an Indigenous Education Partnership built
- ◆ Accessibility focused job listings and career planning tools launched
- ◆ Community Advisory Board has been further integrated into operations with increased understanding of telecommunications

Language courses for frontline employees

Internal mechanisms developed to improve workplace satisfaction and hear employee voices

Northwestel workforce fully understands the history of Indigenous people in Canada including the history and legacy of residential schools, UNDRIP, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations

Educational products produced and educational partnerships expanded to more areas

Education program integrated within grade school

Indigenous mentorships for new employees

Educational products produced and educational partnerships expanded to more areas

Increased presence at job fairs, First Nations graduation activities, and the YFN Wildfire Warrior program

First Nations technology upskilling partnership with Yukon University completed

Northern high schools and universities are graduating Indigenous students with telecommunications and corporate skills

Northwestel has an employee base that is 15% Indigenous

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



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

- ◆ Completed
- ▶ Partially completed
- ◇ To come
- ◇ New
- ◻ Delayed or to be modified from original

HIGHLIGHTS

We will seek a shared pathway to an even better North

The first Indigenous-owned fibre line in the North arrives in Whatì, NWT.

“

The partnerships we have fostered with Northwestel, the GNWT, and Canada in support of this project have ensured that the community of Whatì is poised to take advantage of, and participate in, present and future technological innovations. This will assist our residents, especially our youth, in achieving their future goals.”

Chief Alfonz Nitsiza



CHIEF ALFONZ NITSIZA, IMAGE TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE TŁIČHŦO.

In March 2023, Northwestel launched full fibre Internet service in Whatì, Northwest Territories, offering speeds up to 500 Mbps and unlimited data, all at the same rates available in Yellowknife. This was the first time in the NWT where full fibre Internet service to a community flowed over First Nation-owned fibre.

The fibre line, which follows the Tłı̨chų All-season Road, is leased to us, ensuring the Tłı̨chų Government receives guaranteed benefits for 20 years. The fibre line was made possible through significant investments from the Tłı̨chų Government, Northwestel, Canada’s Universal Broadband Fund, and the Government of Northwest Territories.



PAUL GILLARD, IMAGE TAKEN ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE KWANLIN DŪN FIRST NATION AND TAAN KWACH’AN COUNCIL.



Connecting Whatì with Fibre-to-the-home Internet is a testament to the power of partnership in the North. We’re grateful for the support from the Tłı̨chų Government and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada that enabled us to bring 500 Mbps unlimited Internet service to the community. We take pride in bringing the best technology available to Canada to connect communities across the North.”

Paul Gillard, Vice President of Business Markets, Northwestel



HIGHLIGHTS

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

"Every Community Project" Highlights

Bringing Fibre Internet to Ross River and Faro — Our fibre lines travelled across many traditional territories and communities throughout the “Every Community Project”. We proudly connected the Yukon communities of Ross River and Faro by extending our fibre network down the Robert–Campbell Highway. This was only made possible through creative collaboration with our northern Indigenous partners.

During community consultations, we worked closely Carmacks Development Corporation (CDC) and the Dena Nezziddi Development Corporation (DNDC). Together, we developed a three-party agreement to build a temporary camp to accommodate the crews working on the fibre line.

We jointly selected a strategic location that overlapped with both traditional territories that was nearly halfway along the fibre build. Then, we engaged environmental oversight to assess the proposed route. We supported the construction by providing thorough oversight of environmental compliance of the project and communicating updates to both Nations. This camp provided employment opportunities for both Nations, including catering, fuel, waste services, and management.



CAPTURED BY A NORTHWESTEL TEAM MEMBER ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES OF THE LITTLE SALMON CARMACKS FIRST NATION AND ROSS RIVER DENA COUNCIL



This camp allowed us to stay on track with our project schedule and brought improved services to both Ross River and Faro sooner. We are grateful for the partnership we had with CDC and DNDC.”

Eric Bartlett, Senior Project Manager,
Every Community Project

Adding our 97th Community: Atlin, BC — Telephone calls made to friends, family, and loved ones in Atlin, BC will now travel over Northwestel’s northern network and systems. Northwestel took over as the provider of telephone services for the community from the previous incumbent, TELUS, to provide local support for residents and businesses.

Northwestel is grateful for all the support from Taku River Tlingit First Nation during this transition, and for the community’s warm welcome. Voice service is just the beginning. Taku River Tlingit First Nation, Northwestel, and Bell Mobility are collaborating on funding proposals to bring cellular service and fibre to the home Internet in Atlin’s near future.



CAPTURED BY CATHIE ARCHBOULD ON THE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY OF THE TAKU RIVER TLINGIT FIRST NATION

HIGHLIGHTS

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

In honour of National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, each year we are grateful for the opportunity to work with a northern Indigenous artist to design orange shirts that we provide to our employees to wear proudly in their northern community.

Orange Shirt Day



“I want my design to make people feel loved on a day where they might need it a little more.”

Kaytlyn Amitnak Niego, 2023 Orange Shirt Artist



The design features a mother figure wearing an amauti and uplifting a child, representing the collective, to the safety of the Northern Lights. Kaytlyn shared that in Inuit culture, green coloured lights in the sky have spirits and are the protectors of children.

With National Day for Truth and Reconciliation empowering the statement, 'Every Child Matters', Kaytlyn wanted to emphasize the importance of protecting children and giving a voice to those who didn't always have one.



It's a simple shape, but one that carries deep historical and cultural meaning among many of the First Nations along the Northwest Coast.

When Northwestel approached Yukon First Nation artist Kailen Gingell to design its Orange Shirts this year, Kailen created two "Ovoids" to deliver a powerful message of the successes to date and the work still to be done on the North's path to reconciliation.



“The two ovoids lie in nearly perfect balance with each other and show the viewer what could be visual harmony. This can be extrapolated to represent my views on reconciliation. Reconciliation is a restructuring of colonial ideology with Indigenous practices.”

Kailen Gingell, 2022 Orange Shirt Artist

HIGHLIGHTS

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



Northwestel Indigenous Employment Program

During the summer of 2023, Northwestel launched a first of its kind training program in the telecommunications industry to support Indigenous recruitment.



“It was exciting to see the cohort come together to work towards their goals in support of one another. Each participant learned invaluable skills that will continue to serve them in the future. By creating new and innovate pathways to the workforce, programs like this break down barriers and give opportunities to Indigenous people in the North.”

Katelyn Holway,
Former Indigenous Relations Representative
Northwestel

We are committed to creating new opportunities for northern Indigenous youth in tech, and offering new approaches to recruitment and training. The hiring process is strategically low-barrier, and we have established an interactive career discovery tool (www.nwtel.ca/pathfinder) to support Indigenous youth as they navigate opportunities.

This innovative initiative was made in collaboration with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, the Yukon Government Department of Education, and numerous northern Indigenous partners. We also introduced a unique partnership with Yukon University aimed at providing Indigenous youth with the necessary tools and skills for gaining employment at Northwestel. Students entered a six-week training program to develop skills that would prepare them for working in telecommunications. These candidates proudly graduated with two university-level courses and were offered permanent positions at Northwestel.

This first year was a learning experience for everyone, including us. The program highlighted the importance of having student supports and tutors available. It also revealed the importance of local partnerships. We thank the Yukon First Nation Wildfire Warriors Program for their unwavering support. We are excited to offer this program again in 2024, and hopeful for even greater success.



**Thank you
for coming
on this journey
with us.**

KATAISEE ATTAGUTSIAK (2022 NUNAVUT DIRECTORY ART WINNER) AND HER GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER NALA IN IKPIARJUK (ARCTIC BAY), NUNAVUT.

If you have any questions or feedback about our Reconciliation Plan or Progress Report, please reach out to us at communityrelations@nwtel.ca



A journey of a thousand miles, begins with the first step. This journey can be strife with obstacles and unforeseen challenges. Along with mutual respect, support, and guidance, we can walk this path together and make this journey a little bit easier.

The individuals on the path represent the two (Indigenous and European) cultures as they walk the path of life. Each is not following the other in a line, but side-by-side in mutual respect.

We were thrilled to team up with Mark Rutledge to craft the visual art for the 2023 Reconciliation Report.

Mark Rutledge, Illustration artist



Indigenous owner at Mark Rutledge Design, instructor at Yukon University, Anishinaabe from Little Grand Rapids First Nation & Lac Seul First Nation

With over 30 years of experience in the industry, Mark is one of Canada's leaders in design with deep roots and experience working with North America's Indigenous communities and organizations. He has a portfolio of impressive print and web designs for numerous Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations that help First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Mark is currently a part-time instructor at Yukon University and principal at Mark Rutledge Design.

Mark was the first Indigenous designer elected as National President of the Design Professionals of Canada who led the organization from the Arctic, a first in the organization's 68 - year history. He is also a Certified Design Professional (CDP™), and Registered Graphic Designer (RGD), International speaker/lecturer, futurist and a proud Ojibway from the Little Grand Rapids First Nation. Mark lives and works in Whitehorse, Yukon on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dūn First Nation and the Ta'an Kwāch'an Council.

