

# ***Calling Our Spirits Back***



## **Liard Aboriginal Women's Society**

5-Year Strategic Plan (2018-2023)

**DRAFT: October 12, 2018**

# Acknowledgements

The completion of this Strategic Plan would not have been possible without the dedication and contribution of many Kaska Citizens and individuals.

We want to acknowledge the outstanding efforts and dedication of the LAWS Board Members: Leda Jules, Dorothy Smith, Mary Maje, Fannie Vance, and Mary Charlie, and LAWS Executive Director Ann Maje Raider. Your wisdom, guidance, teachings and stories help to move us closer to our vision and action for a strong organization and safe, healthy, and proud communities, including our Kaska women and girls.

A sincere thank you to the 77 Kaska and Watson Lake Citizens who shared their feedback on the 2006-2011 LAWS Strategic Plan. Reflections on important issues and strengths in our community were particularly useful. A special thanks to Art Stephenson for your support during the 2006-2011 planning process and recent participation in the 2018 planning process for LAWS' next five-year plan. We also thank Chief Morgan of the Liard First Nation for your understanding and political support.

Finally, thank you to Jeff Cook and Paula Hay from Beringia Community Planning for your facilitation and support with engagement and plan development.





*“Planning. It’s something we do every day in our life. It’s about calling our spirits back”*



*“We need more women working together, we really need to go into our culture”*



*“Thank our ancestors. They left their wisdom and we are carrying forward”*



*“We are an ally in helping community understand violence. The public has been blown away”*



*“Our elders are still drumming for us. It’s a case of getting well enough to hear them”*



*“We try to live a good life and teach others”*

# Executive Summary

## *About LAWS*

The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) is a non-profit, charitable, community-based Indigenous organization. Since its formation in 1998, LAWS has led and supported numerous efforts aimed at improving health and wellness among Kaska members, particularly women. The organization offers a variety of 'trail breaking' social development programs and services, restorative healing and gender-based empowerment programs that address the intergenerational impacts of Residential School including addictions and violence.

LAWS serves the five communities that make up the Kaska Nation in the Yukon and Northern British Columbia. The Kaska Dena are a Dene-speaking people who live primarily in the communities of Lower Post, Upper Liard, Watson Lake, Ross River, YT, and the Kaska communities in Dease Lake and Fort Good Hope, BC., and number approximately 3,000 members.

Our society is served by an Executive Director, Board of Directors and administrative support. Together, this group of women lead LAWS with their passion for social and political justice and are guided by ***Principles of Kaska Sisterhood***. The success of LAWS is due to a number of strengths including organizational stability, sound financial management, effective program design and management, a focus on land, culture and traditional practices, strong principles of empowerment, and resilient and inspired leadership.

## *Our Planning Process*

The LAWS 5-Year Strategic Plan (2006-2011) was completed in 2006 to guide LAWS in developing programs and services. Through a variety of planning activities, we undertook a review of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, including: a review of literature and data relevant to the health and wellness of Kaska members; a review of past planning efforts; interviews with local agencies, government departments and key informants; a Community Survey and Board of Directors Survey, and a workshop with LAWS leadership and Board. The goal of this process was to understand successes and challenges in implementing the plan to date and establish priority areas for the next five years. The planning process was an opportunity to come together and understand the needs of Kaska members, particularly our women and children, and plan for our organization and community health and wellness in a strategic and visionary way.



## Our Strategic Plan (2018-2023)

Our strategic Plan is organized according to our Vision Framework (see **Figure 1**), which consists of a summary of our Current Situation, Vision Statement, a set of Core Values and Principles, Goals and Strategies, priority Actions, and next steps for Implementation.



Figure 1: Vision Framework

### Current Situation

Based on our Data Inventory research, our historical planning review, the results of our two surveys, and engagement with the LAWS Board, we developed an assessment of our current situation. Our Current Situation assessment conveys an understanding of where we are now as Kaska people and as an organization. Our Current Situation considers our organization and community's strengths, challenges and opportunities. It highlights what is working well and not working well and has led to an assessment of what our needs and priorities are for the next five years. The three core themes of families and children, youth, and healing summarize our Community Situation; and three core themes of culture, governance, and funding summarize our Organizational Situation. Combined, these themes inform our Goals and Strategies.



*“When we work together we get somewhere”*

## Vision Statement

Based on our current situation, we determined what we need to do to create a better future for our organization and Kaska people. Our Vision statement is a high-level description of what we want for our Kaska communities and LAWS as an organization in the future.

*Our way of life is built upon our culture, traditions, language, connection to the land and the knowledge of our Elders. Our members work together to sustain supportive kinship, family and community bonds in a safe and secure environment and we have all the resources needed for the healing and development of our people. We are a strong, proud, free and equitable Nation where members take responsibility and youth are our activists and leaders. We are an established organization with strong and diverse leadership and staff. Sustainable funding and strong partnerships support our purpose and mandate as we lead the way for other organizations and levels of government.*

## Core Values

Through planning and our work as an organization, we aim to strengthen our health, relationships and way of life that have been damaged by intergenerational trauma, addiction, oppression and violence. We do this work according to the principle of Dene ā'nezen, the system of laws that is central to our health and wellbeing as Kaska people. Dene ā'nezen calls on us to foster empowerment, dignity and respect in our work, particularly as we work to maintain supportive community connections and family bonds. Aligned with Dene ā'nezen, we have 9 Principles of Kaska Sisterhood and 6 Core Values that guide us as we move towards our Vision and achieve our Mission.

## Goals and Strategies

Based on our Vision, we chose our goals and strategies to point the way to towards the change we want to see. Our 5 Goals and 12 Strategies reflect our shared Vision of where we are headed as an organization. They reflect our values as an organization and give an indication of the action needed to achieve our Vision. Table 1 on the following page summarizes our Goals, Strategies, and Actions.

## Priority Actions

During our planning process, we identified many Actions to address our Goals and Strategies and bring them to life. We prioritized Actions that we considered to be the most important for us to focus our resources on according to impact and how well one Action would help us achieve one or more of our Goals. Our 19 Actions are organized by type, with several actions in each of the following categories: Human Resources (3), Plan or Strategy (3), Infrastructure (4), Program or Curriculum (4), Document (3), and Event or Ceremony (2).

## Implementation

Implementation is about putting our ideas into action with specific activities. It involves building readiness to move our organization and Strategic Plan forward. Our Actions are divided into five phases, which align with the five years of our Strategic Plan. The phases include: Maintaining Ongoing Work & Getting Ready (year 1), Building Momentum (year 2), Deepening our Work (year 3), Expanding our Capacity (year 4), Increasing our Impact (year 5). Our Actions are phased based on our capacity and readiness to implement them, cost and timing, and the relationship between different Actions. This helps us consider how projects will be sequenced and which Actions need to happen before others.

In order implement our Actions we need to address challenges such as limited human resources and the burden of securing core funding and constantly engaging in a proposal driven funding system. Successful implementation requires mobilizing people, time, money, relationships, tools and resources.

**Table 1** summarizes our 12 Strategies and 19 Actions by each of our 5 Goals. The table shows the category that each Action falls into and how we will roll out our Actions over the next five years.

Table 1: Success Highlights since 2006

Goal 1: Increase Self-Determination and Independence				Action Type	Year
Strategy	1. Expand Human Resources	Actions	Hire Administrative assistant	Human Resources	Year 1
			Hire Executive Director	Human Resources	Year 1
	2. Secure Sustainable Funding		Hire Project Coordinator	Human Resources	Year 1
	3. Document Evidence and Results		Develop Political/ Funding Strategy	Plan or Strategy	Year 1
	4. Strengthen Advocacy, Prevention and Promotion		Create Protocol Declaration	Document	Year 2
			Develop Promotional Strategy	Plan or Strategy	Year 2
Goal 2: Strengthen Unity, Pride and Dignity				Action Type	Year
Strategy	5. Enhance our Physical/ Public Space	Actions	Secure Office / Centre	Infrastructure	Year 1
			Revitalize Tu Cho	Infrastructure	Year 3
	6. Bring Back our Language and Culture		Develop Kaska Teachings Booklet and Storybook	Document	Year 2
			Develop Kaska Culture Program and Curriculum	Program/Curriculum	Year 4
Goal 3: Support our Women and Families				Action Type	Year
Strategy	7. Celebrate and Honour our Women	Actions	Create Kaska Women’s Award Ceremony	Event/ Ceremony	Year 2
	8. Strengthen Local Program and Service Delivery		Create Centre for Response-based Practice and Learning	Infrastructure	Year 5
	9. Promote Land Based Healing		Develop Kaska Healing Program and Curriculum	Program/ Curriculum	Year 3
			Establish Kaska Wellness Centre	Infrastructure	Year 5
Goal 4: Protect and Educate Our Children				Action Type	Year
Strategy	10. Secure Authority over Child Protection and Welfare	Actions	Develop Kaska Model for Child Protection	Plan/ Strategy	Year 3
	11. Increase Child and Youth Safety		Create Youth mentorship Program	Program/ Curriculum	Year 4
			Deliver Youth for Safety and Youth for Culture Programs	Program/ Curriculum	Year 1
Goal 5: Empower and Celebrate Our Youth				Action Type	Year
Strategy	12. Increase Youth Involvement and Leadership	Actions	Create Youth Mentorship Program	Program/ Curriculum	Year 4
			Fund Youth Circle	Event/ Ceremony	Year 4

## Conclusion

Learning about our community's health needs and coming together as an organization to create a Vision was an invigorating and inspiring process. Our Strategic Plan is important for providing our organization with clear direction to strengthen the health of Kaska people. It represents an important step in gaining control over our own health and wellness. Our Strategic Plan is a powerful tool to ensure that our community voices continue to inform and support the development of new and existing programs. It is also an important governance tool for building our capacity and helping to tell a positive story about our organization, our Kaska Nation and where we are going.

Successful implementation will involve securing funding, capacity building, mobilizing resources, and advocating at the territorial and National level for Indigenous health to be considered a top priority. It will also involve examining our human resources, budgets and policies and identifying what needs to be strengthened in order to effectively move our Strategic Plan forward.

Equipped with the strengths of the Kaska people, we will see the results of our planning efforts in the years ahead. We will continue to build relationships, commit to change, and restore individual, family and community relations through our ongoing work. Drawing on Dene ā'nezen, we will build on our roots as Kaska people, respect and honour our Kaska culture and Elders, and focus on healing and our connection to culture and land.



*“Calling our Spirits Back is about bringing our Dene ā'nezen back – the highest law of our land.”*

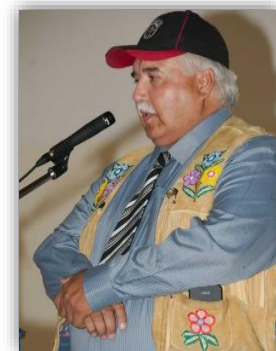


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# Introduction: Context and Planning Approach

In this section we introduce our organization and planning context and provide an overview of our strategic planning process.



# Introduction: Context and Planning Approach

## LAWS Organizational Profile

The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society (LAWS) is a non-profit, charitable, community-based Aboriginal organization providing vital social development services to the five communities that make up the Kaska Nation in the Yukon and Northern British Columbia. The Kaska Dena are a Dene-speaking people who live primarily in the communities of Lower Post, Upper Liard, Watson Lake, Ross River, YT, and the Kaska communities in Dease Lake and Fort Good Hope, BC., and number approximately 3,000 members.

LAWS was established and registered in the Yukon in 1998, when a small circle of women from our Kaska Nation concerned with their community began fundraising for social and recreational purposes. Since then our work has grown and evolved. Today, we offer a variety of 'trail breaking' social development programs and services, restorative healing and gender-based empowerment programs that address the intergenerational impacts of Residential School as well as addictions and violence primarily.

Example milestones as an organization are summarized in **Figure 2**. A detailed historical timeline for the organization as well as key policy developments in the recent history of the Kaska Nation can be found in **Appendix A**.

Since its formation in 1998, LAWS has led and supported numerous efforts aimed at improving health and wellness among Kaska members, particularly women. Our work reflects our emphasis on inter-generational relationships, cross-cultural partnerships and relations, collaboration and cooperative working relationships, cultural safety and increased equity in the contribution of women's and men's and roles within our Kaska communities.

Our society is served by an Executive Director, Board of Directors and administrative support. Together, this group of women lead LAWS with their passion for social and political justice and are guided by ***Principles of Kaska Sisterhood***. They are active role models in their communities – practicing, teaching and celebrating their culture, traditions and language to their children, grand-children and even great grandchildren.

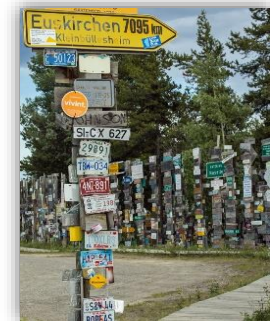
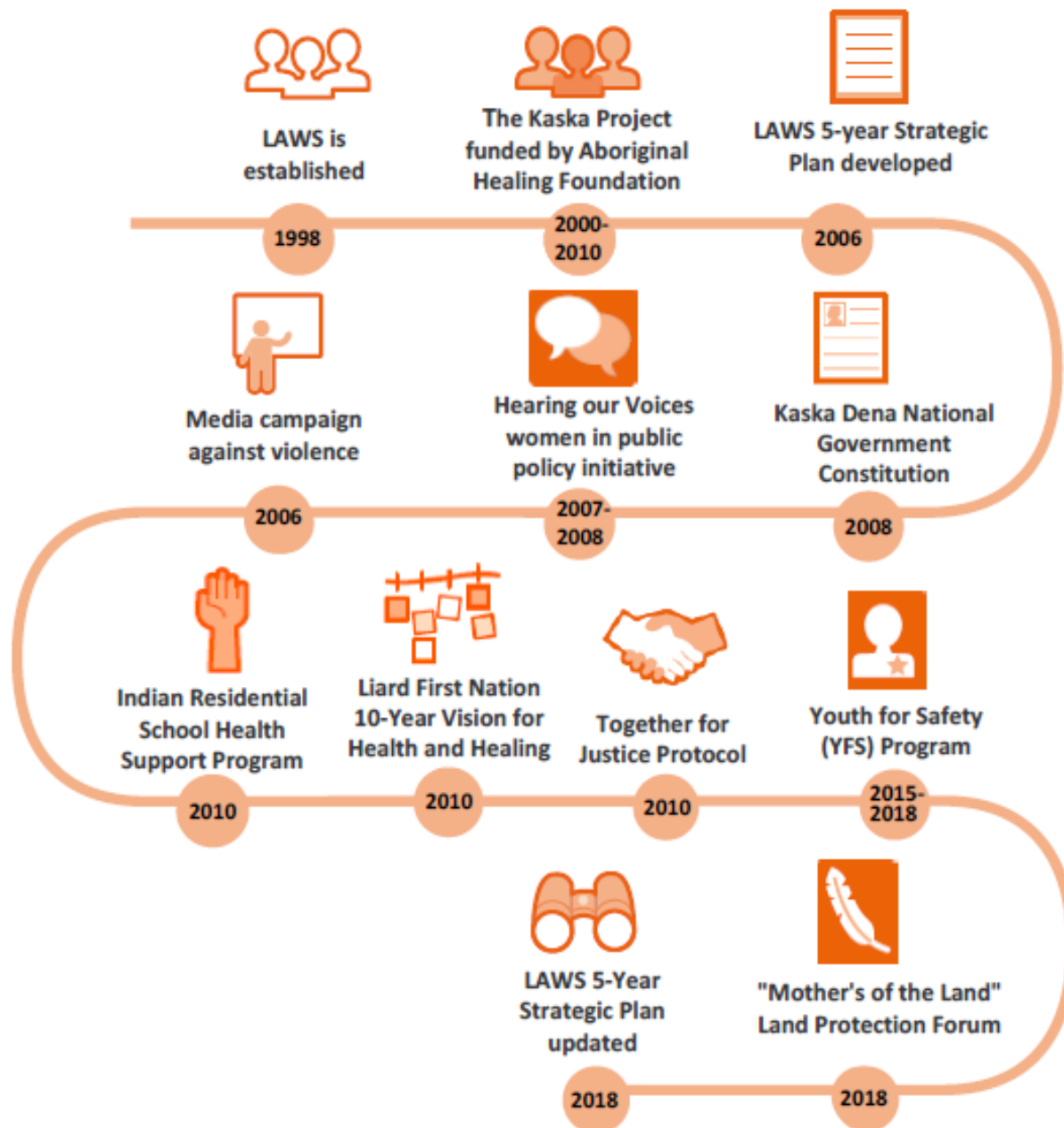


Figure 2: LAWS Milestones

## Planning History

The success of LAWS is due to a number of strengths including organizational stability, sound financial management, effective program design and management, a focus on land, culture and traditional practices, strong principles of empowerment, and resilient and inspired leadership. Understanding the importance of collaboration, LAWS will continue to seek support for our work from various partners. Funders appreciate our strong accountability and we are effective at relationship building and we rely on partnerships. LAWS has been successful in securing funding from:

- Status of Women Canada
- Health Canada
- Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement
- Aboriginal Healing foundation

The LAWS Strategic Plan was completed in 2006 to guide LAWS in developing programs and services. Key priority areas included:

- Addressing the intergenerational impacts of **Indian Residential School**
- Revitalizing **Kaska healing traditions** and supporting members in healing
- **Reducing violence** in Kaska communities
- Promoting Kaska **language and culture**
- Supporting **family reconciliation**
- Strengthening Kaska **governance and economic development**
- Integrating Kaska culture and history into the **education system**

Our previous 5-year plan (2006-2011) is up for review and renewal. Between 2011 and 2016, LAWS did not update its strategic plan but focused its efforts on supporting a number of planning initiatives with Kaska communities. In 2011, for example, LAWS held two workshops to promote dialogue between women and the RCMP and to develop an action plan to address the abuse of women in the Yukon. Following this initiative, LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP participated in a series of workshops between 2011 and 2013 to build collaboration on community safety. The resulting “Together for Justice” protocol established a new relationship between LAWS and the local RCMP. In 2017, LAWS began the planning review process by undertaking an inventory of current health related data, specific to Liard First Nation and Kaska communities. The process involved extensive research and interviews with relevant agencies and government departments on issues related to mental wellness, addictions, violence against women and child welfare facing Kaska communities.

Along with a review of relevant data, LAWS undertook two surveys and a workshop with LAWS leadership and board members to review of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan, particularly the successes and challenges in implementing the plan to date. This review helped the LAWS Board prepare for further planning and the development of the LAWS 5-Year Strategic Plan 2018-2023.



## Our Purpose For Planning

We value planning to better mobilize our limited resources and to maximize results for our Kaska Citizens and women. We have established an extensive network of supporting organizations and partners, including the Liard First Nation Chief and Council. Our challenges include limited human resources and the burden of securing core funding and constantly engaging in a proposal driven funding system. It is essential that LAWS secures long-term, adequate and flexible funding to sustain its efforts, particularly given its proven results at the community level.

Now more than ever, LAWS is drawing on our strong history of achievements, including planning, program development and service delivery, to position ourselves for social, culturally appropriate community development opportunities in ways that support the health and wellness resiliency of our Kaska members.

This planning process was an opportunity to come together and understand the needs of Kaska members, particularly our women and children, and plan for our organization and community health and wellness in a strategic and visionary way. The objectives of our planning process were to:

- Identify and understand Kaska health and wellness needs
- Give voice to a vision for Kaska health and wellness
- Build on our principles to guide us as an organization and what we do
- Celebrate our culture and integrate our traditional knowledge
- Build our capacity to carry out our plan and evaluate our results



### National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

*“The mandate of the National Inquiry is to report on the systemic causes of all forms of violence against Indigenous women and girls, including sexual violence. This includes issues like sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, bullying and harassment, suicide, and self-harm”*

*“The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has concluded that violence against Indigenous people—including Indigenous women and girls—is rooted in colonization. For the violence against Indigenous women and girls to end, the ongoing colonial relationship that facilitates it must end”*

*“Based on our guiding principle—that all Indigenous women and girls are sacred—our vision is to see Indigenous women and girls restored to their rightful power and place. We hope that all Canadians will share this vision and engage with each other to protect the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S people.”*

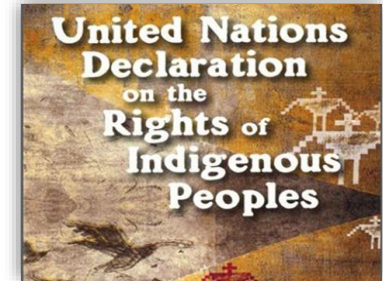
## Planning Context

Our people are strongly connected to our culture; we are deeply rooted in the land around us and this is a source of identity and pride. A sense of connection and support plays an integral role in the emotional and mental health of our members. While our connection to culture and community is one of our greatest strengths, members identify the need for traditional practices to be strengthened and the need to heal the trauma and wounds that impair community support and involvement.

Our community's health and wellness has been influenced by colonization, the Indian Act and the residential school system, among other factors. A wide range of national and international organizations and human rights bodies have raised urgent concerns over the disproportionate impact of health challenges faced by Indigenous people, particularly women and girls in Canada. These bodies have called for a concerted national response that is comprehensive, coordinated, and developed in collaboration with Indigenous communities. Although LAWS has made significant strides towards undoing some of these negative impacts, there is still a lot of work to be done at Federal, Provincial, and Territorial levels.

The adoption of the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Canada (2016), the establishment of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016), and ongoing implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action (2015) all represent potential improvements to Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples. While these recent legal and political decisions on Indigenous rights are fundamental to reconciliation, territorial, provincial and federal governments still retain considerable control over our Kaska Nation.

At the Kaska Nation level, we are guided by our Kaska National Constitution which outlines our fundamental values and governance principles. It is ultimately the significant momentum among Indigenous communities and organizations such as LAWS to help make decisions with our community, including empowering our Kaska women, to plan and lead our future for increased strength, health and wellbeing. These efforts are strengthening our self- governance and planning capacity, and more importantly securing better results and outcomes for our Kaska people.



**Article 21:** *States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate, special measures to ensure continuing improvement of their economic and social conditions. **Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities.***

**Article 22:** *States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that **indigenous women and children** enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.*

**Article 7:** *Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly **removing children** of the group to another group.*

## Planning Approach

Our approach to planning is based on our experience, knowledge and Kaska values, particularly system of values captured by the value system of Dene ā'nezen (Respect & Dignity). Our planning process is based on the following five pillars (see **Figure 3** below):

### Respect Kaska Culture

Our planning process is driven and shaped by a respect for our local culture, protocols and customs.

### Involve our Community

We emphasize taking the time to listen to community members and include their voices and address their needs as much as possible.

### Listen and Respond to Needs

We seek to understand community health and wellness needs through community engagement and in depth research in order to better plan our future.

### Informed Decision Making

We draw on traditional knowledge, relevant data and community input to make informed decisions.

### Celebrate our Results

We include opportunities for ceremony, recognition and celebration in our planning process.



## Our Approach to Planning

*Figure 3: Approach to Planning*

## Planning Activities

Our planning process was led by our Executive Director, Ann Maje Raider and the Board of Directors. Beringia Community Planning provided facilitation, process, analysis and writing support. Our research and planning processes involved several activities, summarized in **Figure 4** below:



Figure 4: Planning Activities

## Organizing our Plan

Our strategic Plan is organized into 5 sections that encompass the Vision Framework illustrated in **Figure 5**:



Figure 5: Vision Framework

### *Vision Framework*

**Current Situation:** Our analysis of our current community and organizational situation includes acknowledging our strengths as an organization, challenges facing our Kaska Nation, as well as the opportunities and constraints related to service provision, program delivery and advocacy - so we can be strategic looking ahead.

**Vision Statement:** Our long-term desired change as an organization is defined, as well as our stated mission and principles that guide our decision-making.

**Core Values:** the core values and principles that guide our decision making are defined as well as our Principles of Kaska Sisterhood.

**Goals:** Our goals describe our key focus areas for strengthening health and wellness among Kaska members.

**Strategies:** Our strategies broadly describe how we are going to achieve our goals and inform our key actions and next steps.

**Actions:** Our actions are the specific initiatives (e.g. events, projects and programs) that we plan to undertake in order to realize our vision. This section describes key action areas, next steps, and associated timeframes, including sequencing.

**Implementation:** Our results, impacts and outcomes represent our desired change we hope to achieve and how we need to organize and mobilize our resources to confront resistance and challenges of successful implementation.





*“Those that share our land must follow our ways”*



*“We’re going to have to walk softly but from our hearts”*



*“Sharing stories. Teaching about values. The stories are a teaching tool”*

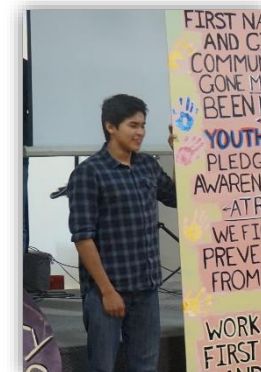


*“Planning has to begin with our language...how far can we go to be a good Dena? When you say Dena, there are principles to follow; certain things have been learned to be a good Kaska Dena – there are roles and responsibilities to be carried out”*



# Current Situation

Based on our Data Inventory research, our historical planning review, the results of our two surveys, and engagement with the LAWS Board, we developed an assessment of our current situation. Our current situation is organized by six core themes and divided into two parts: Community Situation and Organizational Situation.



# Current Situation

Our Current Situation provides an overview of our Community and Organizational Situation to convey an understanding of where we are now as Kaska people and as an organization. This section summarizes the results from our review of our previous 2006-2011 plan, engagement with the LAWS Board, Community and Board Surveys, key successes since 2006, as well as relevant data from our Health Profile. Our full Health Profile is a compendium to this plan and provides an overview of relevant health and wellness data for Liard First Nation and Kaska Nation members. Our Current Situation considers our organization and community's strengths, challenges and opportunities, particularly related to our families and children, youth, and healing the impacts of residential school and colonization. It highlights what is working well and not working well and has led to an assessment of what our needs and priorities are for the next five years.

## Our Community History

Kaska Nation consists of five Kaska Dena Nations located in northern British Columbia and southern Yukon. Our language is Kaska, a northern Athabaskan language. Kaska Nation consists of a population of approximately 3,000 members who live primarily in the communities of Lower Post, Upper Liard, Watson Lake, Ross River, YT, and the Kaska communities in Dease Lake and Fort Good Hope, BC (Historical Canada, 2018).

Kaska Dena have existed from time immemorial and have occupied and used the lands, waters, and resources of our traditional territory throughout history. We share a common culture based on our clan system, a common language with distinct dialects, a common history tied to our stories, myths, the oral traditions of our Elders, and our traditional laws. Before Europeans arrived, we occupied and hunted in an area of approximately 240,000 km<sup>2</sup> in parts of what today is known as Northwest Territories, Yukon, and British Columbia - see **Figure 6** (Kaska Dena Council, 2018).

In 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company began trading with the Kaska and in 1873 the presence of outsiders increased in our territory due to the gold rush. With the increase in settlers on the land, our communities were confined to certain areas and reserves. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Euro-Canadian influences on Kaska people increased and we gradually shifted from a local, subsistence-based economy to a cash-based economy (Canadian Encyclopedia, 2017). From 1951, Kaska children were taken from their homes

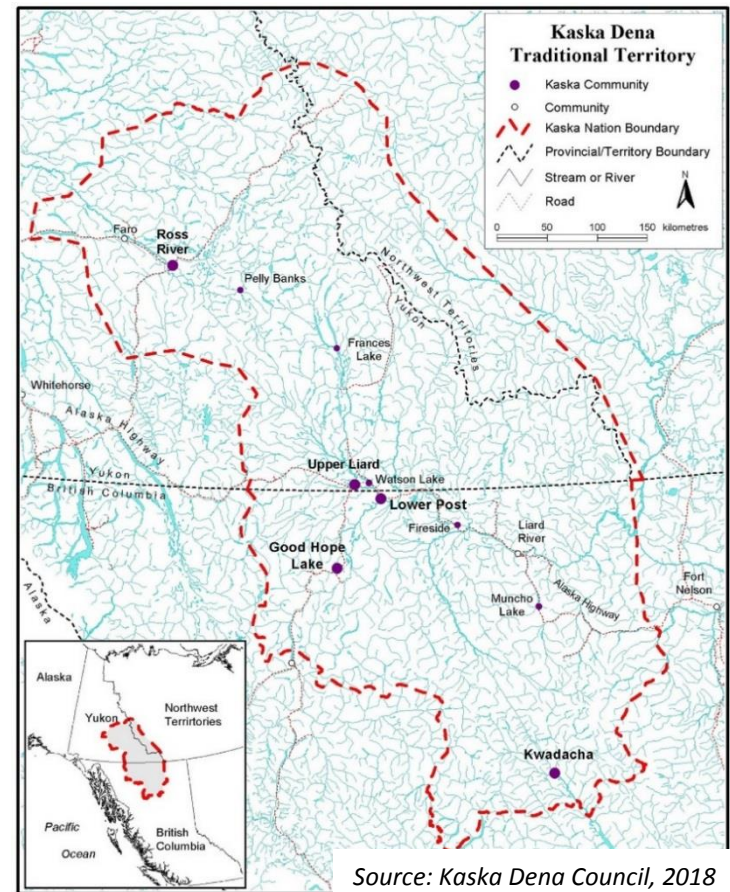


Figure 6: Vision Framework

and forced to attend the Lower Post Residential School which remained open until 1974 and was considered one of the worst schools in the system. Children were forbidden from speaking their mother tongues and practising their traditions along with suffering physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse (Yukon news, 2012).

While our communities still struggle with the impacts of colonization and residential school, we continue to find strength in our culture, traditions, language, and connection to the land. Kaska art is inspired by nature as well as by our history and heritage. Drumming remains an important part of our culture and unites our people in prayer and song. Kaska is one of the most widely spoken Indigenous languages in the Yukon and we have many fluent Elders in our communities who are passing their knowledge on to our Youth.

## Our Organizational History

LAWS was established and registered in the Yukon in 1998, when a small circle of women from our Kaska Nation concerned with their community began fundraising for social and recreational purposes. Since our inception, LAWS has provided consistent direction and presence in the Kaska community through its provision of several ongoing social development services and wellness initiatives. Regular programs include a restorative healing program that has responded to the needs of Residential School survivors and those suffering intergenerational effects; and, a gender-based empowerment program intended to restore the traditional role of women in the stewardship of family, community and the Kaska Nation, among other accomplishments.

In 2010, LAWS led the development of the Liard First Nation's (LFN) 10-Year Vision for Health and Healing. Throughout the engagement process, we consistently heard from participants that incidents of violence and death are increasing due to drug and alcohol use along with corresponding issues related to women's safety and child welfare. Today, local knowledge suggests that interconnected issues of substance use and mental health challenges negatively impact a majority of Kaska Nation members, particularly women and children. LAWS has heard from members that they need more support to address multiple issues.

LAWS has been active in responding to existing research and local knowledge related to substance use and violence. In 2015, LAWS initiated three-year Youth for Safety empowerment project to foster community safety and justice for women and girls in Watson Lake. The project was a response to the grim statistics around violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada and the lack of programs and services that address the issue. This work was also supported by the **Together for Justice Safety Protocol** developed in 2013 between LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP Detachment.

As an organization we have maintained organizational stability, sound financial management, and effective program design and management for over 20 years. We continue to focus on our land, culture and traditional practices, strong principles of empowerment, and resilient and inspired leadership. Funders appreciate our strong accountability and we are effective at relationship building and maintaining strong relations. Our challenges include limited human resources and the burden of trying to secure core funding. Funding to community-based organizations such as LAWS is typically



competitive, proposal-driven and fragmented. A lack of data to highlight the grave state of mental wellness and addictions and to showcase LAWS successes and challenges is a significant barrier in ensuring the sustainability of existing initiatives and accessing long-term funding opportunities.

In order to shift how communities approach wellness and the effectiveness of treatment and child welfare efforts, and to ensure that our strategic planning efforts meet the needs of communities, a better understanding of the current situation is required.

### Summary of Previous Plan 2006-2011

The LAWS Strategic Plan (2006-2011) was completed in 2006 following an evaluation of programs and services offered in previous years. The plan was developed to guide LAWS in developing future programs and services. Through two surveys and a workshop with LAWS leadership and board members, a review of the 2006-2011 Strategic Plan was undertaken to understand successes and challenges in implementing the plan to date. This review helped the LAWS Board prepare for further planning and the development of the LAWS 5-Year Strategic Plan 2018-2023.

**Figure 7** highlights key themes captured in the 2006-2011 Plan. These themes remain relevant and have guided the development of the 2018-2023 Plan.



Figure 7: 2006-2011 Themes



## 2006-2011 Themes

**Residential School:** Under this theme, our key focus areas included increasing public and First Nation recognition of the strengths of the people to survive, teaching Youth Kaska strengths and history, and promoting healing of the intergenerational impacts of physical and sexual abuse suffered by Kaska children due to mission school.

**Healing Ways:** Our main aim related to this theme was to increase support for individuals to heal through psychotherapy and traditional ways, promote healing of physical and sexual abuse suffered by survivors of residential school and participating members, and provide opportunities to survivors to be involved in the healing process and to network with each other and community resources.

**Violence:** This theme reflects our desire to decrease of all forms of violence – mental, physical, emotional, spiritual – involving families and individuals and to restore balance with Kaska traditional healing, culture and spiritual lifestyle.

**Culture & Language:** Important aims under this theme include increasing youth skills and pride in their culture, promoting empowerment of youth in their culture traditions and social identity, strengthening partnerships between LAWS and other community organizations related to culture, and promoting the use of Kaska in all areas of community life.

**Family Love & Reconnection:** This theme included supporting families to be active with one another, having respect and communicating well with each other and to promote interaction between Elders and the younger generation.

**Governance & Economic Development:** This theme reflected the importance of completing the Kaska constitution and developing a plan to build the Kaska economy.

**Education:** This theme encompassed giving voice to First Nations education goals and concerns through the First Nations school council and ensuring that the school curriculum includes First Nations content and input in all areas such as Kaska history.

*“It takes a whole community to raise a child. I see the struggles they [my children] have but I don’t know how to relate to them. It’s hard to break Residential School roots. Our people still don’t know how to say I love you. Where do we go? How do we help our people?”*



LAWS Accomplishments Since 2006

**Figure 8** highlights key accomplishments since the development of our Strategic Plan in 2006. These accomplishments are organized by the thematic areas identified in the 2006 plan and further detailed in **Table 2**.



Figure 8: Success Highlights since 2006

**Table 2** below provides details on some of LAWS key accomplishments since the development of the Strategic Plan in 2006, including those highlighted in **Figure 5**.

*Table 2: Success Highlights since 2006*

Theme	2006-2018 Accomplishments
Culture and Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2006: Kaska Language Immersion Program.</b> The United Church Healing Fund supported the Kaska Language Immersion program, which offered culture and language gatherings at our camp at Frances Lake and language and sewing classes with whole families taking part.</li> </ul>
Family Love & Reconciliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2008-2009: Kaska Legends Project.</b> The Ross River school welcomed the opportunity to have Kaska elders visit and share Kaska legends to teach students about trapping and traditional behaviours. This project allowed women to build relationships amongst themselves and with Elders, breaking the barriers of isolation that accompanies violence.</li> <li>• <b>2018: Mothers of the Land.</b> In partnership with Liard First Nation, LAWS hosted an Indigenous Land Protection Forum “Mothers of the Land” in Watson Lake. Participants discussed traditional principles related to land stewardship, management of traditional lands, and social action strategies.</li> <li>• <b>2016: Elders Sharing.</b> Following on from the Together for Justice Protocol between Kaska women and the RCMP, a group of very traditional Elders shared our Kaska culture with our local RCMP members.</li> </ul>
Governance & Economic Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2007-2008: Hearing Our Voices.</b> This eighteen-month initiative sought to engage First Nations Women in the development of public policy during the development of Kaska Nation self-governance. Through the initiative, a forum was created for Kaska women to participate, shape research, gain skills, share concerns, and assume roles of leadership in the constitutional developmental process.</li> <li>• <b>2008: Kaska National Constitution Engagement.</b> Engagement with Dease River First Nation and Daylu Dena Council, on the development of a Kaska National Constitution.</li> <li>• <b>2008: Kaska Dena Good Governance Act.</b> This Act provided for the exercise of the National Government’s legal capacity and self-governing powers and the management and administration of the National Government.</li> <li>• <b>2008: Kaska Dena National Election Code.</b> The election code was developed in 2008 and outlines election and voting protocols.</li> <li>• <b>2008: Kaska Dena National Government Constitution.</b> The constitution was developed. It reads: <i>We have a deep spiritual attachment to Kaska Dena Kayeh which, together with our culture, language and ancient traditions make us Kaska Dena. We govern ourselves accordingly.</i></li> <li>• <b>2017: Data Inventory.</b> With funding from National Indian Brothers (NIB) Trust Fund, LAWS undertook an inventory of current data being collected by relevant agencies on mental wellness, addictions, violence against women, and child welfare specific to Liard First Nation and Kaska-specific where possible.</li> <li>• <b>2007-2012: Workshops.</b> Over 100 community members including women, Elders and Youth came together to learn how to make ribbon shirts, vests, gun-cases, snowshoes, and drums in various workshops over five years.</li> </ul>

Theme	2006-2018 Accomplishments
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2006: Media Campaign Against Violence.</b> In 2006 LAWS was funded by the Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund to run a Media Campaign against Violence in both Kaska and English. This was an exciting venture that united Kaska Elders, men, women and children, all speaking out against violence throughout the Kaska homeland including local radio.</li> <li>• <b>2011: Bridging the Gap.</b> With Justice Canada and RCMP funding, LAWS held two workshops to promote a dialogue between women and the RCMP. The dialogue focused on how to stop the serious abuse of women in Yukon communities, create safety for them to retain their dignity and report violent crimes, and help develop an effective plan of action to address this abuse with the full participation of RCMP and community members.</li> <li>• <b>2013: Together for Justice.</b> LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP broke new ground with a unique community safety initiative, following a series of workshops that took place from 2011 to 2013 in both Watson Lake and Whitehorse. The resulting “Together for Justice” protocol established a new relationship between LAWS and the local RCMP in order to build community safety through collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>2015-2018: Youth for Safety (YFS) Program.</b> The YFS Program was initiated by LAWS in collaboration with Watson Lake Secondary School to foster community safety and justice for young girls and empowered youth to address gender-based violence in their communities.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2007-2008: Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA).</b> LAWS established a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) process that identified behaviours that are interfering with the student’s educational progress. This process led to the development of individual plans for students to help build positive behaviours and strong relationships between teacher, student and family.</li> </ul>
Residential School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2010: Indian Residential School (IRS) Health Support Program.</b> LAWS was successful in securing funding from Health Canada under their IRS Resolution Health Support Program. The program provides funding for a Residential Health Support Worker (RHSW) who provides all eligible former Indian Residential School (IRS) students and their family members with access to emotional and referral support.</li> </ul>
Healing Ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>2007: Therapeutic Behaviour Mentoring Program.</b> This one-to-one mentoring program provided mentors the opportunity to create safe and therapeutic environments for younger students. The approach included Engagement, Skills Coaching/Safety Coaching, and Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• <b>2010: Liard First Nation’s 10-Year Vision for Health and Healing.</b> Liard First Nation (LFN), under the project leadership of LAWS, launched a community-based process with the Kaska community and Town of Watson Lake to identify a path leading to a healthy community. Over the course of two years, LAWS led a participatory, five-phase planning process that engaged 256 individuals and resulted in a 10-Year Vision for health and healing.</li> </ul>

We reviewed the themes identified in the 2006-2011 plan and identified priority areas. This led to a synthesis of the 2006-2011 themes. **Table 3** below shows the connection between the 2006-2011 themes and those identified in our 2018-2023 Current Situation and Goals.

*Table 3: Success Highlights since 2006*

2006-2011 Themes	2018-2023 Themes	Goals
<b>Residential School</b> →	Healing → Culture → Families → Children →	<b>Strengthen Unity, Cultural Pride and Dignity</b>
<b>Healing Ways</b> →		<b>Support our Women and Families</b>
<b>Violence</b> →		
<b>Culture &amp; Language</b> →		
<b>Family Love &amp; Reconnection</b> →		
<b>Governance &amp; Economic Development</b> →	Governance → Funding →	<b>Increase Self-determination and Independence</b>
<b>Education</b> →	Children →	<b>Protect and Educate our Children</b>
	Youth →	<b>Empower and Celebrate our Youth</b>



## Our Community and Organizational Situation

The following pages summarize our Community and Organizational Situation. The three core themes of families and children, youth, and healing summarize our Community Situation; and three core themes of culture, governance, and funding summarize our Organizational Situation. These six themes were considered priority areas by community members and the LAWS Board and combined, inform our goals and strategies. Key strengths, challenges and opportunities are summarized in **Figure 9** and **Figure 10** according to each of these themes.

<i>Community Situation</i>					
Families and Children		Youth		Healing	
<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
A. We have strong social and family connections	C. Many households are run by single parents	A. Our Youth are connecting to their culture and Elders	B. We are concerned for our Youth	A. Our connection to culture has a positive impact on our health and wellness	C. Alcohol, substance use and addictions negatively impact our communities
B. Our families support each other	D. Many of our children are in the child welfare system			B. Our members report good mental health and wellness	D. Some members struggle with mental health challenges
<b>Opportunities</b>		<b>Opportunities</b>		<b>Opportunities</b>	E. Violent crime is high
E. Develop our own model of child welfare		C. Empower Youth through culture		G. Develop our own healing model	F. Rates of interaction with the justice system and incarceration are high
				H. Become a centre for wellness	

Figure 9: Community Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

Organizational Situation					
Culture and Community		Governance		Funding and Advocacy	
<b>Strengths</b> A. Our work is deeply connected to our culture B. We are connected to our community		<b>Strengths</b> A. Our leadership is very committed B. Our scope of work is responsive and adaptive		<b>Strengths</b> A. We demonstrate sound financial management B. We are consistently successful in our work	
<b>Challenges</b> C. Our members would like to connect more to their culture		<b>Challenges</b> C. Our staff and leadership are stretched D. Our staffing capacity has room to grow E. We are limited by physical space		<b>Challenges</b> C. Our work is limited by a lack of core funding and revenue capacity D. We are constrained by shifting funding conditions and requirements	
<b>Opportunities</b> D. We continue to develop culturally relevant programming		<b>Opportunities</b> F. Strengthen data governance G. Mentor the next generation of leaders		<b>Opportunities</b> E. Leverage new political priorities	

Figure 10: Organization Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities

## Our Community Situation

### 1. *Families and Children*

- A. We have strong social and family connections:** Many of our community members speak about the importance of family, friends and social networks. A sense of connection and support plays an integral role in the emotional and mental health of our members and in raising our children. It is important that we continue to foster this connection and heal the wounds that impair community support and involvement.
- B. Our families support each other:** Our grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings play a vital role in raising the next generation of Kaska members. According to the regional health survey (2016), of those individuals with more than one child, 40% were also single, but 69% lived in a home with more than one adult. This indicates parents considered “single” are not necessarily raising their children alone. As we explore a Kaska model of child welfare, we have an opportunity to support both parents and extended families who care for children.
- C. Many households are run by single parents:** While extended families play an important role in children’s lives, there is a high percentage of single-family homes. The Regional Health Survey (2016) highlights that 39% of LFN respondents live in a single adult home and of those, 77% had a household income below \$30,000. Additionally, 40% of people with one or more children are single and of these single parents, 60% are women. We can see that there is a need for services that support families both economically and socially. In line with this, survey respondents emphasized healthy families, community, and relationships as a focus area for LAWS work. Additionally, community members saw education, life skills, and employment as important factors for supporting the health of Kaska members and their families.
- D. Many of our children are in the child welfare system:** The 2016 census reveals that 91% of children in care in the Yukon are Indigenous. Our community members are aware that substance use and addiction is a major factor in child apprehension. Developing treatment options for families with children in the welfare system was identified as a top objective by community members. The Board and community would like to see more advocacy for children who are apprehended from their homes and potentially disconnected from their culture.

- E. **We have an opportunity to develop a Kaska model of child protection:** Yukon's Child and Family Services Act came into effect in April 2010. It recognizes that First Nations should be involved in the planning and delivery of programs and services to their members. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action calls upon different levels of Canadian government and Indigenous governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families. We have an opportunity to leverage these political priorities to develop a Kaska model of child protection, parenting and treatment to support our own communities. This model would be based on holistic approach to child welfare and keeping children with their families and in their communities. Ultimately, we hope it would inform the development of various territorial and federal programs and services.



## 2. Youth

- A. **Our Youth are connecting to their culture and Elders:** Our Elders are the knowledge holders in our community and our Youth have many opportunities to learn from them. Our Youth find strength in their connection to culture, our territory, and the continuation of traditional practices. This is fostered through school programs, community events, and various programs and ceremonies supported by LAWS.
- C. **We continue to empower our Youth through culture:** Empowering Kaska Youth through their culture was considered an important area of work by Board and community members. Through our work we maintain a strong connection to culture and through our programs, we have been able to share our knowledge with community members, particularly youth. Our work with Youth has been highly successful and we have opportunities to maintain this work through various funding sources and through support from the school system.
- B. **We are concerned for our Youth:** Many of the challenges facing our community such as substance use, mental wellness, and violence negatively impact and influence our Youth. Our population is young and growing which makes youth an important target group for programming.

### 3. Healing

- A. Our connection to culture has a positive impact on our health and wellness:** According to the Regional Health Survey (2016), 72.4% of Liard First Nation adults engage in traditional activities and 40% of adults engage in hunting. Among those that participate in traditional activities, 91% indicated that they have excellent to good mental health. Similarly, among those respondents that indicated that they have excellent to good mental health, 73% participate in traditional activities. This emphasizes the importance of our culture and presents an opportunity to strengthen our connection to culture and traditional practices.
- B. Our members report good mental wellness:** In the 2016 Regional Health Survey, 66% of adults and 89% of Youth stated that they had good to excellent mental health. As we learn more about the factors that keep us well, we can draw on these strengths to support those that need it.
- C. Alcohol, substance use, and addictions negatively impact our communities:** The Regional Health Survey revealed that a significant percentage of LFN adults and youth binge drink at least once a week (20% of adults and 19% of youth). Among respondents, 16% of adults and 15% of youth have sought treatment for drug and alcohol addiction in the past year. Community and board survey results highlighted substance use and addictions as the only issue considered extremely prevalent. Treatment, traditional healing, and support for families and individuals struggling with substance addiction were identified as top priorities by community members in the Community Survey. Given the connection between poverty, trauma, substance use, and crime, there is a need to focus on these areas holistically.
- D. Some members struggle with mental wellness challenges:** Our members struggle with mental health and wellness challenges. Among adult respondents to the RHS, 28% of adults and 28% of youth find their lives *quite* to *extremely* stressful. Furthermore, many of our members have considered suicide (22% of adults and 26% of youth) or attempted (23% of adults and 19% of youth) suicide. Many have also or experienced suicide in their families or among close friends. The co-occurrence of substance use and mental health challenges stem from trauma, residential school, cultural disconnectedness, racism, stigma, poverty, and a lack of safety. This highlights the need to focus on wellness in a holistic way. In line with this, community survey respondents stated that promoting healing of intergenerational impacts of physical and sexual abuse should be a core objective.



- E. **Violent crime is high:** Although data at the community level is limited, we know that violent crime – particularly violence against women – is high in our communities. Despite efforts internationally and nationally to reduce violence against women, our community members considered domestic violence to be very prevalent and listed it as the second most important issue after substance use and addictions. Among respondents to the community survey, providing a safety net for survivors of sexual and physical abuse was a priority, as were advocacy and prevention and providing healing for men.



## Our Organizational Situation

### 4. Culture and Community

- A. **Our work is deeply connected to our culture:** Our work is grounded in the system of Dene ā'nezen (dignity and respect) and guided by *Principles of Kaska Sisterhood*. Through our work we support our communities to practice, teach and celebrate our culture, traditions and language.
- B. **We are connected to our community:** We have been able to maintain a consistent direction and presence in the community over the long term. This connection to community needs and ability to respond effectively remains one of our greatest strengths. In many ways our community struggles with lateral violence and a lack of unity. We endeavor to bring diverse groups together and promote inclusion, healing and understanding.
- F. **Rates of interaction with the justice system and incarceration are high:** According to the Justice Department, in 2016/17, of the 510 people admitted to the Whitehorse Correctional Facility, 64% (326) were First Nations. The majority of offenders in the Yukon are male and of First Nations descent and half are from communities outside of Whitehorse. In the 2015 Report to the Auditor General it is estimated that 90% of offenders have a problem with substance use. Addressing the underlying causes of offending such as mental health challenge and substance abuse, racial bias, and providing culturally sensitive support to First Nations is required to reduce offending behavior and heal our communities.
- G. **We are well positioned to become a centre for wellness:** We need more information on barriers to accessing treatment for our members in order to meet the high demand among community members for support services. As we achieve success establishing a LAWS Centre, we can draw on our deep connection to Kaska communities and expand the use of our space and delivery of programs and services.

**C. Our members would like to connect more to their culture:** While our culture is one of our greatest strengths, we are losing some of our traditional practices and many members lack cultural awareness. In line with this, culture and language were identified as core priorities for LAWS' work by Board and community survey respondents. Drawing on our strengths, we can continue to support connection to our tradition and language particularly by bringing Elders and Youth together.

**D. We continue to develop culturally relevant programming:** Often available programs and services are based on program models developed outside of the community and are not necessarily relevant to Kaska people. Drawing on our deep connection to Kaska communities and culture and our use of both western and Kaska methodologies places us in a unique position to support community members through culturally relevant programming.

## 5. Governance

**A. Our leadership is very committed:** Our group of healthy and vibrant board members continue to be important role models and advocates in our Kaska communities.

**C. Our staff and leadership are stretched:** Limited core funding stretches our leadership in many directions, having to undertake both program and organizational management. As public and political advocacy becomes increasingly important, it will be even more challenging for only a few individuals to sustain our programs to a high standard.

**E. We are limited by physical space:** Our work is constrained by limited physical space. Many of our core priorities, including developing safe gathering spaces for women and youth and increasing our capacity as an organization cannot be achieved without our own space.

**B. Our scope of work is responsive and adaptable:** Since our inception, LAWS has remained a highly flexible organization. Over time we have repeatedly adjusted our focus in order to respond to the changing needs of community members

**D. Our staffing capacity has room to grow:** The lack of stable core funding has made succession planning at LAWS more difficult, due to uncertainty around our ability to pay long term salaries and invest in staff.

**F. We have an opportunity to strengthen data governance:** While we have a strong understanding of our community challenges, strengths and needs, we often lack the relevant data to 'prove' our knowledge and needs. It is challenging to acquire relevant Kaska level data, both online and through government and agency contact persons. Our challenges related to acquiring timely and relevant data also present an opportunity to advocate for collaborative data governance and research initiatives with local organizations and relevant government bodies.

- G. We have an opportunity to mentor the next generation of leaders:** In the face of funding and staffing challenges, we have an important opportunity to identify and mentor new leaders who can carry on our work. We hope that over time we will be able to offer more committed young people exciting opportunities to work for LAWS and ultimately for their communities.

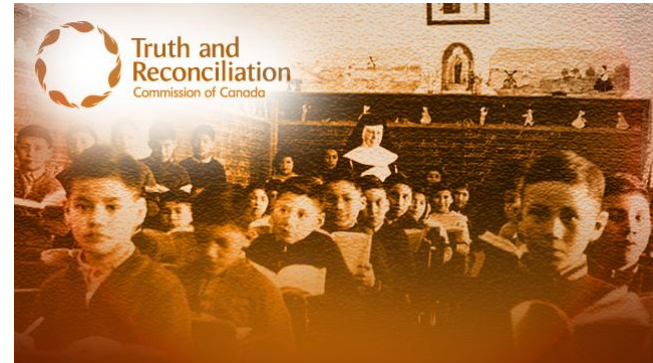


## 6. Funding and Advocacy

- A. We demonstrate sound financial management:** We have been able to attract long-term and short-term funds and demonstrated consistent and responsible management over these funds.
- B. We are consistently successful in our work:** We have been able to achieve significant success with few resources. Even as programs adapt and evolve, our program evaluations demonstrate a consistent pattern of success, meeting both the requirements of funders as well as community needs.
- C. Our work is limited by a lack of core funding and revenue capacity:** A significant portion of our staff time and core resources are used to apply for funding, which is typically short term, proposal/ project-based, and does not cover ongoing organizational costs such as salaries, space and supplies. Given this project-based cycle, we are continually challenged to find new sources of long-term funding but also have an opportunity to explore innovative options for generating funds.
- D. We are constrained by shifting funding conditions and requirements:** Periodic changes in focus at the territorial and federal level often restrict our ability to deliver long-term strategies. These shifts can result in funding opportunities that do not support our program models, culture, and organizational mandate. An important challenge remains for us to diversify our own resources so we can avoid dependence on a single source of funding and maintain our commitment to our own mandate and purpose.

**E. We have opportunities to leverage new political priorities:**

While we find it challenging to be dependent on external funding priorities, this also presents opportunities to be adaptable and take advantage of changes in political priorities. From this perspective, government directions and priorities such as those captured in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and the mandate of the National Inquiring into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) can be leveraged to support LAWS program and planning efforts. We also have an opportunity in this funding climate to advocate for change in the way small organizations are supported.



**TRC Calls to Action:**

**Youth Programs # 66:** *We call upon the federal government to establish multiyear funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.*

**Child Welfare # 5:** *We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.*

**Justice #41:** *We call upon the federal government, in consultation with Aboriginal organizations, to appoint a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls.*

**Justice #36:** *We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused.*





*“A lot of our stories are teachings. Ceremonies, wildlife laws. Our children are not aware”*



*“If they weren’t hurting they wouldn’t be drinking”*



*“Our work is challenging. We are always planning from external circumstances. We don’t have an internal pot. So many are after the same pot of funding”*



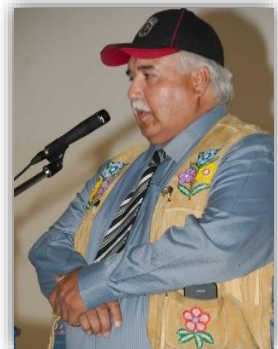
*“We have a great Board. It’s what has kept us going. Board stability”*





# Our Vision, Mission, Principles and Values (2018-2023)

Based on our current situation, we determined what we need to do to create a better future for our organization and Kaska people. Our roadmap is guided by our core values and ***Principles of Kaska Sisterhood*** and expressed in our Vision Framework. We developed our vision statement, mission, mandate and core values in past strategic planning work but have adapted them based on input from Board and community members. Our ***Principles of Kaska Sisterhood***, Vision, Mission, Mandate, and Core Values are summarized in this section.



## Our Vision Framework

Our Vision Framework (**Figure 11**) shows the role of our Current Situation in defining our Vision, Core Values, Goals, Strategies and Actions. Our Vision Framework consists of a Vision Statement, set of Core Values and Principles, Goals and Strategies, and a set of priority Actions. The following section presents our Vision Statement and Core Values. Together we have **9** Principles of Kaska Sisterhood, **6** Core Values that guide us as we move towards our Vision and achieve our Mission.



Figure 11: Vision Framework



# Our Vision, Mission, Principles and Values

## Our Vision

Our Vision statement is a high-level description of what we want for our Kaska communities and LAWS as an organization in the future.

*We are a strong, proud, free and equitable Nation where members thrive, and participate actively in community life and governance. We are connected to our culture, traditions language, land and the knowledge of our Elders. Our Youth are our activists and leaders. Our members work together to sustain supportive kinship, family and community bonds in a safe and secure environment and we have all the resources needed for the healing and development of our people.*

*We are an established organization with strong and diverse leadership and staff. Sustainable funding and strong partnerships support our purpose and mandate as we lead the way for other organizations and levels of government.*



## Our Mission

*Liard Aboriginal Women's Society is an inclusive organization that cares, listens, teaches and supports people of the community to use our culture and language to look after each other and live in the Dena Kayeh way.*

## Principles of Kaska Sisterhood

Our Principles of Kaska Sisterhood flow from our Vision Statement and further guide our process, decisions and actions as an organization and as Kaska women.



As Kaska sisters we will respect and honour ourselves, our men, our children and our Nation.



We will be proud for being created Kaska.



With honour we will follow the path of our ancestors.



We will remember that our Creator created us in his image.



We will speak our language at every given opportunity.



We will work together for the betterment of the Kaska Nation and all of humankind.



We will respect the land and remember to walk tenderly on the trails made by our ancestors.



We will work toward ending oppression and prejudices with an open mind and kind heart.



We will preserve our land and wildlife for our children yet to come.

## Core Values

Through planning and our work as an organization, we aim to strengthen our health, relationships and way of life that have been damaged by intergenerational trauma, addiction, oppression and violence. We do this work according to the principle of Dene ā'nezen, the system of laws that is central to our health and wellbeing as Kaska people. This principle encompasses several core values that are considered to be extremely important by Board and community members. These are summarized in **Figure 12** and accompanying text below. Drawing on Dene ā'nezen, we build on our roots as Kaska people, respect and honour our Kaska culture and Elders, and focus on healing through our connection to culture and land. Dene ā'nezen calls on us to foster empowerment, dignity and respect in our work, particularly as we work to maintain supportive community connections and family bonds.



Figure 12: Core Values

### *Core Values*

**Respect & Honour:** We respect the teachings of our Elders and build on their knowledge. We honour Kaska culture, language and traditions in our everyday living

**Our Roots:** We build on our strong roots and our past and communicate who we are and where we are from. We build on and increase recognition of the strengths of Kaska people

**Healing:** We build on our connection to the land for healing and use a variety of healing methods and approaches

**Safety, Support & Connection:** We work together to sustain supportive bonds of family and community in a safe and secure environment

**Empowerment:** We place a strong emphasis on empowerment and the principle that power is never completely extinguished

**Dignity:** The restoration of dignity is central to our work as we empower women and address underlying causes of violence



# Our Goals and Strategies

During this phase of the planning process, we considered the potential and desired change for our community and organization and how to make our vision come to life. Based on our Vision, we chose our Goals and Strategies to point the way to towards the change we want to see.



# Our Goals

Our five Goals, summarized in **Figure 13** and described in detail in **Figure 14**, represent our shared Vision of where we are headed as an organization. They reflect our values as an organization and give an indication of the action needed to achieve our vision for our Kaska communities. These five goals build on the themes identified in our first 5-Year Plan (2006-2011) as well as priority areas identified by respondents in the Board and Community Surveys.



*“Lots of doors closed but we didn’t give up”*

Figure 13: Our Strategic Goals

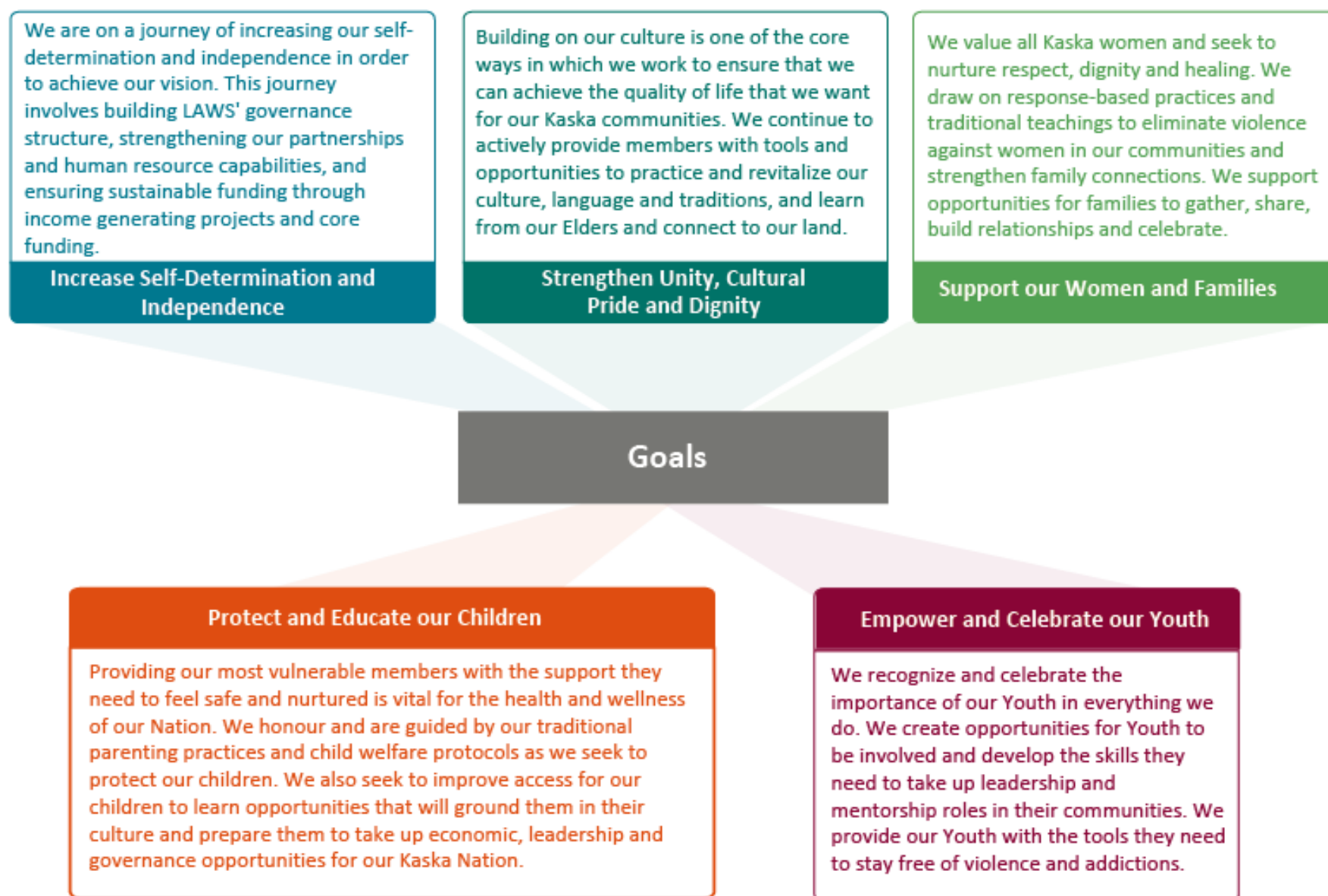


Figure 14: Description of our Strategic Goals

# Strategies for Our Goals

Our strategies describe how we are going to achieve our goals. They give clearer direction on the specific actions we will undertake to meet our goals. Our strategies are summarized by goal in **Figure 15** below and described in detail in **Table 4** on the following page. **Figure 16** highlights the relationship between our Strategies and Vision Framework.



Figure 15: Goals and Strategies

Table 4: Strategies to achieve our Goals

Goal 1: Increase Self-Determination and Independence		
Strategy	1. <b>Expand Human Resources</b>	Our leadership is currently stretched in many directions, having to undertake both program and organizational management. Expanding our Human Resource capabilities will be a critical step in strengthening our organization and enabling existing leadership to focus their efforts more strategically.
	2. <b>Secure Sustainable Funding</b>	Periodic changes in funding priorities at the territorial and federal level often restrict our ability to deliver long-term strategies and finding funding to support our mandate. In order to avoid dependence on a single source of funding, we need to plan strategically for financial improvements and to secure sustainable funding.
	3. <b>Document Evidence and Results</b>	The dysfunctions in data collection and management systems at the government level reveal the need for a local, Kaska-led strategy and system of data governance and management for LAWS. This system will enable us to document evidence that supports the continuation of our programs and services and to show evidence of results.
	4. <b>Strengthen Advocacy, Prevention and Promotion</b>	While we find it challenging to be dependent on external funding priorities, this also presents opportunities to be adaptable and take advantage of changes in political priorities. From this perspective, by promoting our work effectively and leveraging government directions and priorities, we can gather the support and funding that we need to meet our strategic directions.
Goal 2: Strengthen Unity, Pride and Dignity		
Strategy	5. <b>Enhance our Physical/ Public Space</b>	Our ability to deliver programs and manage the organization is limited by our lack of physical space. To support our program delivery, such as cultural and land-based programs, and to establish the organization as a centre for wellness and training, we need to enhance our physical space including an office space and publicly accessible area.
	6. <b>Bring Back our Language and Culture</b>	LAWS work is rooted in and shaped by respect for culture, traditions, language and our connection to the land. We are fortunate that our leadership is deeply connected to Kaska culture. Although our culture is one of our strengths, many of our traditions are not practiced regularly and our language is not spoken by all members. Given the important role that language and culture play in healing, bringing Kaska traditions, language and culture into all areas of our work will strengthen our ability to support the health and wellness of our communities.

Goal 3: Support our Women and Families		
Strategy	7. Celebrate and Honour our Women	Across our communities, Kaska women have accomplished amazing feats in the face of unique and difficult challenges. As a positive example to the girls on our communities, we acknowledge the tireless political, social, and economic contributions of Kaska women, whose strength guides us everyday. We honour and remember the missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada, while celebrating and drawing attention to the women who continue to shape our future with their powerful voices.
	8. Strengthen Local Program and Service Delivery	We are sometimes required to deliver programs based on program models that are developed externally. This can result in a disconnect between the purpose of the programs we deliver and our communities' needs and priorities. As we strengthen our ability to generate funding, we will be in a position to expand our work and to deliver programs and services that support Kaska and local needs.
	9. Promote Land Based Healing	The health and wellness of our families involves many interrelated parts: our social support system, social networks, living conditions, income level, and mental and physical wellness. Underlying all aspects of our health and wellness is our connection to land and culture. Many Kaska people do not have access to land-based healing opportunities. As we enhance our health and wellness programs, infrastructure and access to appropriate physical spaces, we strive to support more opportunities for healing on the land.
Goal 4: Protect and Educate Our Children		
Strategy	10. Secure Authority over Child Protection and Welfare	Many of our children are in the child care system. There have been several policy initiatives calling for a reform of the child welfare system as it relates to Indigenous Peoples. As it stands, the current apprehension model in the Yukon results in high rates of Indigenous, including Kaska, children being removed from their homes. We need to take back our leadership role in child welfare and protection and address child welfare issues holistically and from an Indigenous perspective.
	11. Increase Child and Youth Safety	We have a young population which has significant impacts on the types of services and programs we need. Many of our children and youth are in the child care system and struggle with substance use and exposure to violence. Childhood is an intervention point for building safe and healthy lifestyles. If we can increase the safety of our young people, we will ensure the health of our communities in the future.
Goal 5: Empower and Celebrate Our Youth		
Strategy	12. Increase Youth Involvement and Leadership	We recognize the importance of our young people in becoming the next generation of advocates and leaders of LAWS. This requires that we continue to support opportunities to strengthen our youth and help them stay free of violence and addictions.



Figure 16 shows the relationship between our Vision, Values, Goals, and Strategies.



Figure 16: Vision Framework with Strategies



*"Calling our Spirits Back is about bringing our Dene ā'nezen back – the highest law of our land"*



*"The youth are showing us the way"*



*"Culture is not separate from language. No separation between land use, language, water, air, fire – we are all one"*



*"It's our responsibility. We have been doing it for generations. The Elders always took the children"*



# Strategic Actions

Our action ideas show how we can bring our Goals and Strategies to life. During our planning process, we identified many Actions to address our Goals and Strategies. During our planning process we prioritized certain Actions based on capacity, funding, resources and how much of an impact a particular Action would have on our community. This section provides a summary of how each of our prioritized Actions relates to our Goals and Strategies.



# Actions to Achieve our Goals

We identified several Actions to help us best meet our **5** Goals and **12** related Strategies. We prioritized Actions that we considered to be the most important for us to focus our resources on according to: community impact (how well an Action would help us address our health and wellness challenges and build on our strengths), feasibility (time, funding and human resources required), and political impact (how well a particular Action aligns with current political priorities at the territorial and national levels). **Table 5** below lists our **19** Actions, organized by each of our **5** Goals. Each Action item is also described in detail in **Table 9** in **Appendix B**.

*Table 5: Goals and Actions*

Goal 1: Increase Self-Determination and Independence	Goal 2: Strengthen Unity, Pride and Dignity	Goal 3: Support our Women and Families	Goal 4: Protect and Educate Our Children	Goal 5: Empower and Celebrate Our Youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire Administrative assistant</li> <li>• Hire Executive Director</li> <li>• Hire Project Coordinator</li> <li>• Develop Political/ Funding Strategy</li> <li>• Create Protocol Declaration</li> <li>• Develop Promotional Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure Office 7 Centre</li> <li>• Revitalize Tu Cho</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Teachings Booklet and Storybook</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Culture Program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Kaska Women's Award Ceremony</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Healing Program and Curriculum</li> <li>• Establish Kaska Wellness Centre</li> <li>• Create Centre for RBP and Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Youth Mentorship Program</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Model for Child Protection</li> <li>• Deliver Youth for Safety and Youth for Culture Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Youth Mentorship Program</li> <li>• Fund Youth Circle</li> </ul>

## Goals-Strategies-Actions

Figure 17 below shows each of our 5 Goals, 12 related Strategies, and 19 Actions.

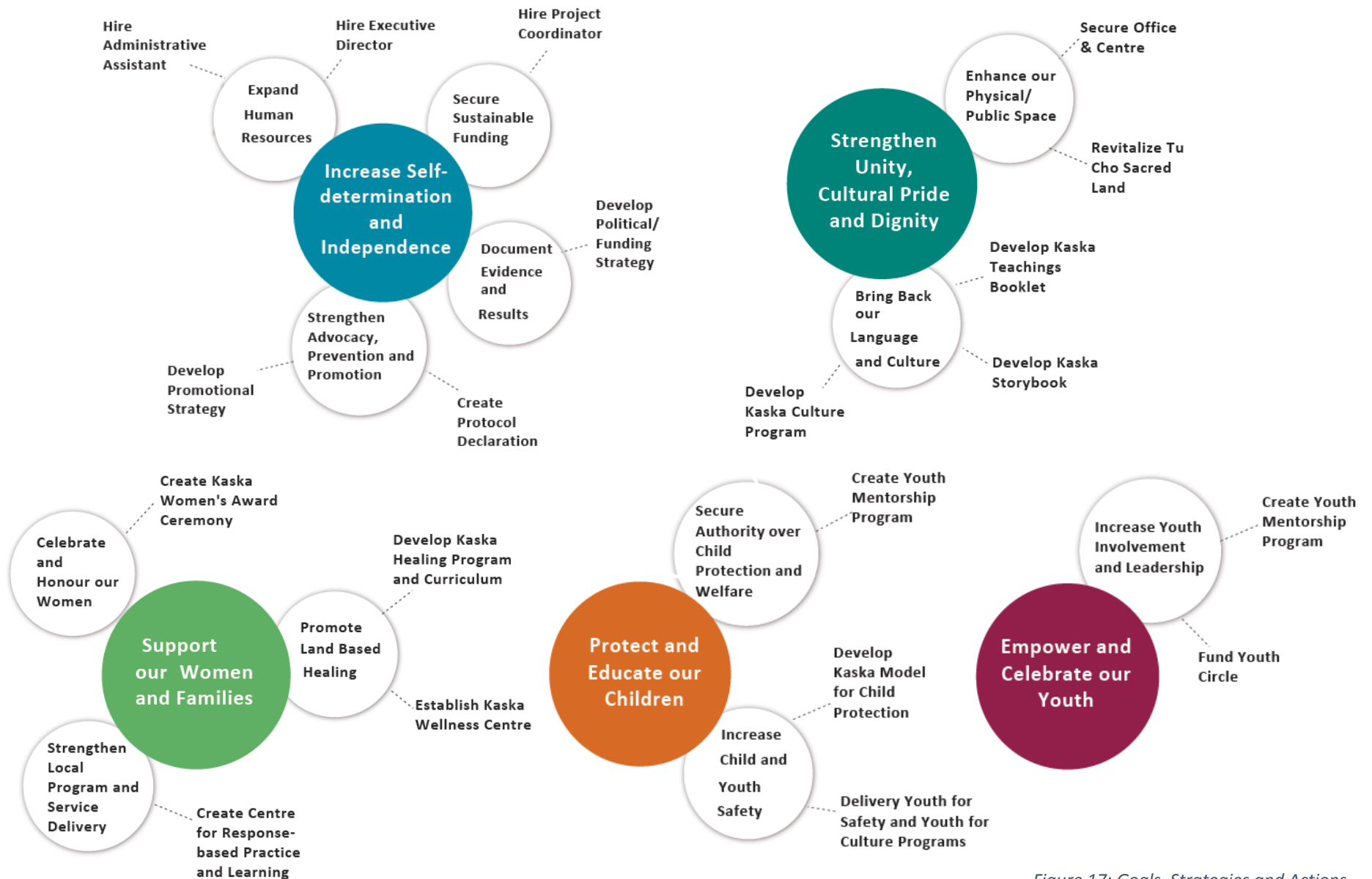


Figure 17: Goals, Strategies and Actions



**Figure 18** shows the relationship between our Vision, Values, Goals, Strategies and Actions.



Figure 18: Vision Framework with Actions





*"Because the younger ones are coming up. They've got to carry that work"*



*"I'd like to see Frances when people were camping all over the place. It was so alive. We pray for enough money to have our camp open all year"*



*"Why do we think people owe us? When I went to boarding school they did everything for us. We have to think where did we learn these things? Now I teach my kids how to take responsibility for themselves"*

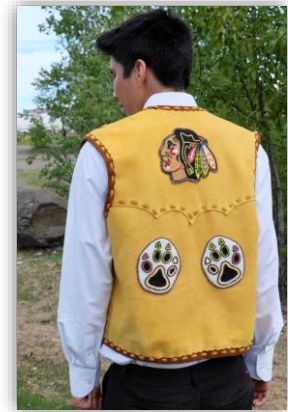


*"The youth are getting more confident. We had 450 at a regalia. I hear a lot from parents 'my son has changed so much' and they're educating the public. They are more aware of the power they have. Their minds are opening up. That's a change for our youth"*



# Implementation and Next Steps

Implementation involves building readiness to move our organization and Strategic Plan forward. It is about putting our ideas into action with a specified set of activities. In order to do this we need to mobilize and organize action, people, time, money, relationships, tools and resources. Implementation also involves examining our human resources, budgets and policies and identifying what needs to be strengthened in order to effectively move our Strategic Plan forward. In this section we explore implementation challenges and strategies, and present a summary of our work plan for implementation.



# Implementation

## Implementation Challenge and Strategies

LAWS leadership identified several challenges that could impact the implementation of our Strategic Plan. It is important to explore these challenges in order to prepare and strategize how we can move our Strategic Plan forward. Internally, a lack of capacity, funding and infrastructure could all make it challenging to implement our 19 Actions. Externally, a lack of political support, buy-in from community, and turn over in community leadership could limit our success. **Figure 19** below highlights potential implementation challenges and a suggested strategy to move our Strategic Plan forward. **Table 10** in **Appendix C** provides a more detailed description of the action needed to accomplish each strategy.

<b>Challenge:</b> There is limited or a lack of funding	<b>Strategy:</b> Create a Funding Strategy and hire a proposal writer	<b>Challenge:</b> Lack of community buy-in and understanding	<b>Strategy:</b> Maintain communication to community members
<b>Challenge:</b> Available space does not meet our needs	<b>Strategy:</b> Start small and scale up	<b>Challenge:</b> Leadership disruptions in our communities	<b>Strategy:</b> Provide ongoing communication and coordination
<b>Challenge:</b> Limited staff capacity	<b>Strategy:</b> Ensure adequate human resources	<b>Challenge:</b> Lack of political support	<b>Strategy:</b> Network and establish partnerships
<b>Challenge:</b> We do not know if what we are doing is helpful	<b>Strategy:</b> Commit resources to data collection and monitoring and evaluation		

*Figure 19: Implementation Challenges and Strategies*

## Actions by Phase

Our **19** Actions can be divided into five phases, which also align with the five years of our Strategic Plan. Our Actions are phased, based on our capacity and readiness to implement them, cost and timing, and the relationship between different Actions. This helps us see which Actions need to come first in order for others to follow successfully. For example, in order for us to implement the Action *Develop a Kaska Wellness Centre* in Phase 3, we first need to secure a space for LAWS to operate. This is captured with the Phase 1 Action *Secure Office & Centre*. **Table 6** describes each of our implementation years and **Table 7** summarizes the Actions in each of these time periods.

*Table 6: Implementation by Phase organized by Year*

Phase 1 →	Phase 2 →	Phase 3 →	Phase 4 →	Phase 5
Maintaining Ongoing Work & Getting Ready	Building Momentum	Deepening our work	Expanding our Capacity	Increasing our Impact
During this phase, we continue our ongoing work and spend time building our readiness for implementation. This period involves establishing our human and physical resources, including hiring important staff members and securing an office. These Actions will ultimately help us mobilize resources in order to implement other Actions in our Plan. We also continue to deliver our ongoing programs, particularly Youth for Safety and Youth for Culture.	Now that we have built our capacity through human resources and physical infrastructure, we can start to undertake some important strategic, political and promotional work. During this year we focus on Actions that will help us build confidence and momentum and form the basis of other strategic initiatives.	This phase focuses on building on our strengths and implementing strategic political and program areas that will help us establish a basis from which to expand our capacity in Phase 4. This period includes strengthening our program delivery, enhancing our infrastructure and space to deliver programs, and increasing our interagency collaboration and coordination.	During this phase we set out to achieve some of the bigger Actions we identified. These Actions reflect our growing capacity as an organization and highlight our ability to invest in longer term strategies such as a Youth Mentorship Program and our own curriculum. This period also reflects our ability to support external initiatives such as funding a Youth Circle.	During this final year the results of our hard work pay off and we are able to implement ideas that require more funding and resources. In this stage we develop new organizational structures and program delivery and funding models such as a LAWS Wellness Centre and Centre for Response-based Practice where we are able to deliver our own curriculum.

Table 7: Actions by Phase

Phase 1 →	Phase 2 →	Phase 3 →	Phase 4 →	Phase 5
Maintaining Ongoing Work & Getting Ready	Building Momentum	Deepening our work	Expanding our Capacity	Increasing our Impact
Year 1 Actions	Year 2 Actions	Year 3 Actions	Year 4 Actions	Year 5 Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire Executive Director</li> <li>• Develop Political / Funding Strategy</li> <li>• Hire Administrative Assistant</li> <li>• Hire Project Coordinator</li> <li>• Secure Office &amp; Centre</li> <li>• Deliver Youth For Safety and Youth For Culture Programs</li> <li>• Secure Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Promotional Strategy</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Teachings Booklet</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Storybook</li> <li>• Create Kaska Women's Award Ceremony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop Kaska Model for Child Protection</li> <li>• Revitalize Tu Cho Sacred Land</li> <li>• Develop Kaska Healing Program</li> <li>• Create Protocol Declaration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Youth Mentorship Program</li> <li>• Deliver Kaska Culture Program and Curriculum</li> <li>• Fund Youth Circle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Centre for Response-based Practice and Learning</li> <li>• Establish Kaska Wellness Centre</li> </ul>

**Figure 20** below organizes our **19** actions by type: Human Resources, Plan or Strategy, Infrastructure, Program or Curriculum, Document, and Event or Ceremony and shows the number of actions in each of these categories. This showcases the diversity of our Actions and in **Table 7** on the following page we can see how our different Action areas are interconnected and will build on each other over the next five years.



Figure 20: Number of Actions by Type

## Implementation Timeline

**Table 8** presents an action plan for our 19 Actions by type (Human Resources, Plan/ Strategy, Infrastructure, Program/ Curriculum, Documentation, Event/ Award) and highlights how our different Action areas are spread out over five years. We can see how our Actions will roll out over the next five years, each year aligning with the five phases identified in the previous section. This tool helps us to see how projects will be sequenced and allows us to consider which Actions need to happen before others.

*Table 8: Implementation Timeline by Action and Year*

Type	#	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Human Resources	1	Hire Executive Director	•				
	2	Hire Administrative Assistant	•				
	3	Hire Project Coordinator	•				
Plan or Strategy	4	Develop Political / Funding Strategy	•				
	5	Develop Promotional Strategy		•			
	6	Develop Kaska Model for Child Protection			•		
Infrastructure	7	Secure Office & Centre	•				
	8	Revitalize Tu Cho Sacred Land			•		
	9	Create Centre for Response-based Practice and Learning					•
	10	Establish Kaska Wellness Centre					•



Type	#	Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Program or Curriculum	11	Deliver Kaska Culture Program and Curriculum				•	
	12	Develop Kaska Healing Program			•		
	13	Deliver Youth For Safety and Youth For Culture Programs	•				
	14	Create Youth Mentorship Program				•	
Document	15	Develop Kaska Teachings Booklet		•			
	16	Develop Kaska Storybook		•			
	17	Create Protocol Declaration			•		
Event or Ceremony	18	Create Kaska Women's Award Ceremony		•			
	19	Fund Youth Circle				•	

# Conclusion

Learning about the health needs from our community and coming together as an organization to create a Vision was an invigorating and inspiring process. Our Strategic Plan is important for providing our organization with clear direction to strengthen the health of Kaska people and represents an important step in gaining control over our own health and wellness.

Our Strategic Plan is a powerful tool to ensure that our community voices continue to inform and support the development of new and existing programs. It is also an important governance tool for building our capacity and helping to tell a positive story about our organization, our Kaska Nation and where we are going.

Now begins the hard work of putting our Vision and goals into action. Successful implementation will involve securing funding, capacity building, and mobilizing resources. It will also involve advocating for a change in mindset at the territorial and National level in relation to Indigenous health and continuing to build relationships, committing to change, and restoring individual, family and community relations through our ongoing work.

Equipped with the strengths of the Kaska people, we will see the results of our planning efforts in the years ahead.



*“Helpful to know who is doing what.  
We can have a focus. Lots of people  
have come to help us. Our prayers are  
manifesting to allow the goodness  
that we are to come out.”*





*"This will help us to get to where we want to get to"*



*"Women are going forward and showing everyone how"*



*"Our elders are still drumming for us. It's a case of getting well enough to hear them"*



*"Be always focused on the vision"*



# Appendices

Appendix A: Historical Timeline

Appendix B: Description of Actions by Goal and Strategy

Appendix C: Implementation Challenges and Strategy





# Appendix A: Historical Timeline

- **1998: Formation.** LAWS was established and registered in the Yukon as a non-profit society.
- **2000-2010: The Kaska Project, or ‘Guni’s Tsi Nedzedundeli’** (‘Let’s go back to the land’) aims to culturally and spiritually restore the Kaska people. Funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), the project is in its tenth year of operation. It addresses the legacy of sexual and physical abuse in residential schools through a series of sub-programs, relevant to residential school survivor and intergenerational impacts.
- **2001: Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF) funding.** LAWS applied to AHF for funding to help heal the legacy of physical and sexual abuse throughout our Kaska homeland. With these funds, LAWS offers healing to the Kaska communities of Watson Lake, Ross River, Good Hope Lake, Fort Ware and Lower Post, drawing on a blend of western and traditional healing opportunities.
- **2004: Breaking the Silence on Family Violence: Watson Lake Conference.** At a court hearing in October 2003, a B.C. Provincial Court judge requested input on how to deal with family violence issues by February 2004. As a result of this, the ‘Breaking the Silence on Family Violence Conference was held in Watson lake. It was organized for people to bring forward their recommendations on how to prevent family violence in the region, as well as workshopping what types of services were needed. The day consisted of awareness raising and open discussion with three-quarters of the participants were Kaska citizens, out for a total of 94.
- **2005-2006: Spiritual Energy Healing.** LAWS was funded by the Yukon Community Development Fund to offer spiritual energy healing and training. We welcomed Heather Robb from Port Moody, B.C. to our community to offer a 21-day series of workshops on energy healing, consisting of self-healing, meditation and increasing our awareness of self as spiritual beings. We learned how to work with energy to heal ourselves and to assist others on their healing journeys.
- **2006: Firesmart Project.** The Yukon Government Firesmart program funded LAWS under three separate contribution agreements to facilitate a Firesmart project around our camp at Frances Lake. A 150-metre fire safety zone was established, debris was removed or burned and all windfall and deadfall was cut and burned. All other potential hazards were removed, and a general clean-up of the area was undertaken.
- **2006-2011: LAWS 5-year Strategic Plan.** The LAWS Strategic Plan was completed in 2006 following an evaluation of programs and services offered in previous years. The plan was created to guide LAWS in developing future programs and services with the following key themes identified: Residential School, Healing, Violence, Culture, Family Love & Reconnection, Governance, Education and Economic Development.
- **2006: Media Campaign Against Violence.** In 2006 LAWS was funded by the Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Fund to run a Media Campaign against Violence in both Kaska and English. This was an exciting venture that united Kaska Elders, men, women and children, all speaking out against violence throughout the Kaska homeland.
- **2006: Kaska Language Immersion Program.** The United Church Healing Fund supported the Kaska Language Immersion program which offered culture and language gatherings at our camp at Frances Lake and language and sewing classes with whole families taking part.
  - **Denek’eh Gudzededeh (Let’s Speak our Language).** A total of 81 one-hour lessons were developed to teach and preserve the Kaska language. The lessons are written in Kaska and recorded digitally.
  - **Kaska lessons.** Kaska lessons were taught in Adult Immersion Language Classes. Lessons highlight the cultural importance of our language and enable the students to use the conversational language in daily activities with friends, family and even at work.
- **2007: Therapeutic Behaviour Mentoring Program.** This one-to-one mentoring program provided mentors the opportunity to create safe and therapeutic environments for younger students. The approach included engagement, skills coaching/safety coaching, and positive reinforcement.

- **2007-2008: Hearing Our Voices.** This eighteen-month initiative sought to engage First Nations Women in the development of public policy at a critical juncture in the evolution of self-governance with the Kaska Nation in northern BC and the Yukon. Through the initiative a forum was created for Kaska women to participate, shape research, gain skills, share key concerns regarding governance, and assume roles of leadership in the constitutional developmental process of the Kaska Nation.
- **2007-2008: Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA).** LAWS established a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA) process that identifies behaviours interfering with the student's educational progress. This process led to the development of intervention plans to teach students appropriate alternative behaviour and helped build positive relationships between teacher, student and family.
- **2007-2008: Mentorship Program.** This one-to-one mentoring program provides mentors the opportunity to create safe and therapeutic environments for younger students consisting of engagement, skills coaching/safety coaching, and positive reinforcement. We believe that positive change in our students occurs through their experiencing connections with caring peers and adults.
- **2007-2012: Traditional Craft Workshops.** Over 100 community members including women, Elders, and Youth came together to learn how to make ribbon shirts, vests, gun-cases, show shoes and drums in various workshops over five years.
- **2008: Kaska National Constitution Engagement.** Engagement with the Dease River First Nation and Daylu Dena Council on the development of a Kaska National Constitution.
- **2008: Kaska Dena Good Governance Act.** This Act provided for the exercise of the National Government's legal capacity and self-governing power, as well as the management and administration of the National Government.
- **2008: Kaska Dena National Election Code.** The election code was developed in 2008 and outlines election and voting protocols.
- **2008: Kaska Dena National Government Constitution.** The constitution was developed and states: *We have a deep spiritual attachment to Kaska Dena Kayeh which, together with our culture, language and ancient traditions, make us Kaska Dena. We govern ourselves accordingly.*
- **2008-2009: Kaska Legends Project.** The Ross River school welcomed the opportunity to have Kaska elders visit and share Kaska legends to teach students about trapping and traditional behaviours. This project allowed women to build relationships amongst themselves and with Elders, breaking the barriers of isolation that accompanies violence.
- **2010: Liard First Nation 10-Year Vision for Health and Healing.** Liard First Nation (LFN), under the project leadership of LAWS, launched a community-based process with the Kaska community and Watson Lake to identify a path leading to a healthy community. Over the course of two years, LAWS led a participatory, five-phase planning process that engaged 256 individuals and resulted in the 10-Year Vision for Health and Healing.
- **2010: Indian Residential School (IRS) Health Support Program.** LAWS was successful in securing funding from Health Canada under their IRS Resolution Health Support Program. The program provides funding for a Residential Health Support Worker (RHSW) who provides all eligible former Indian Residential School (IRS) students and their family members with access to emotional and referral support.
- **2011: Bridging the Gap.** With Justice Canada and RCMP funding, LAWS held two workshops to promote a dialogue between women and the RCMP. The dialogue focused on how to stop the serious abuse of women in Yukon communities; creating safety for women to both retain their dignity and report violent crimes; and developing an effective plan of action to address this abuse with the full participation of RCMP and community members
- **2013: Together for Justice.** LAWS and the Watson Lake RCMP broke new ground with a unique community safety initiative following a series of workshops that took place from 2011 to 2013 in both Watson Lake and Whitehorse. The resulting 'Together for Justice' protocol established a new relationship between LAWS and the local RCMP in order to build community safety through collaboration.



- **2015-2018: Youth for Safety (YFS) Program.** The YFS Program was initiated by LAWS in collaboration with Watson Lake Secondary School to foster community safety and justice for young girls, and to empower youth in addressing gender-based violence.
- **2016: Elders Sharing.** A continuation from the 'Together for Justice Protocol' between Kaska women and the RCMP, a group of very traditional Elders shared our Kaska culture with the local RCMP members. The experience was memorable and touched everyone involved.
- **2017: Data Inventory.** With funding from the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) Trust Fund, LAWS undertook an inventory of current data being collected by relevant agencies on mental wellness, addictions, violence against women, and child welfare specific to the Liard First Nation—Kaska-specific where possible.
- **2018: Mother's of the Land.** In partnership with Liard First Nation, LAWS hosted an Indigenous Land Protection Forum called 'Mother's of the Land' in Watson Lake. Participants discussed traditional principles related to land stewardship, management on traditional lands, and social action strategies.

## Appendix B: Description of Actions by Goal and Strategy

**Table 9** below provides a description of each of our Actions by Strategy and Goal.

*Table 9: Descriptions of each Action*

Goal 1: Increase Self-Determination and Independence		
Strategy	Action	Description
Expand Human Resources	Hire Executive Director	In order to continue our work in the community, we need to have committed leaders and staff. A vital step towards strengthening our organization will be to hire an Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. These individuals will lead ongoing planning and operations and ultimately the implementation of this strategic plan.
	Hire Administrative Assistant	
Secure Sustainable Funding	Hire Project Coordinator	In order to manage ongoing work effectively, we need dedicated staff that can focus on seeking funding for new and ongoing projects. This involves writing proposals, advocating for funding, and keeping up to date with emerging political trends and relevant data.
	Develop Political / Funding Strategy	At the same time as we need to diversify our financial resources, it is important that we leverage new political priorities and advocate for ourselves. This involves planning strategically based on new political and funding directions.
Document Evidence and Results	Develop Promotional Strategy	Part of generating funding for our work involves using our promotional materials, social media opportunities and website to show case our work. In order to use our resources effectively, we need to develop a Promotional Strategy. This strategy will outline our approach and protocols for communication and identify our existing and needed tools.
Strengthen Advocacy, Prevention and Promotion	Create Protocol Declaration	A declaration of our principles and a protocol for how we work with agencies, governments and other partners will help us maintain our commitment to our own mandate and purpose and help us advocate for the support we need. This will further contribute to a paradigm shift towards more response-based culturally appropriate practices by other programs.

Goal2: Strengthen Unity, Pride and Dignity		
Strategy	Action	Description
Enhance our Physical/ Public Space	Secure Office & Centre	An important step for our organization is to develop a LAWS Centre which will function as our office and act as a safe gathering space for women, youth and other groups and a space from which to deliver other programs and services (e.g. treatment centre, youth centre, safe house, training centre).
	Revitalize Tu Cho Sacred Land	Frances Lake, traditionally known as <i>Tu Cho</i> has been an important fishing and hunting area for us since time immemorial. We have continued to use Frances Lake but there are several barriers to accessing the lake. In particular, as the infrastructure around the lake is deteriorating, we need to explore options to repair the trails and cabins and protect the area for future generations. In the future we would like to see Frances lake become a place for bonding, different types of retreats, land-based wellness programs, and teaching our youth traditional practices.
Bring Back our Language and Culture	Develop Kaska Teachings Booklet	Through our work we maintain a strong connection to culture and through our programs, we have been able to share our knowledge with community members, particularly youth. In order to enhance our existing work, we need to continue to document our traditional knowledge and develop tools to communicate this knowledge to community members including a Kaska Teachings Booklet and Kaska Storybook for children. Along with documentation it is vital that we practice and teach our culture and highest laws.
	Develop Kaska Storybook	
	Deliver Kaska Culture Program and Curriculum	Our use of western methodologies while keeping culture at the centre of our work places us in a unique position to support community members to work through personal and collective wounds, discover their own resiliency, and revive a personal sense of power. One possibility for sustaining ourselves without government funding is to develop our own curriculum and workshops to teach our strengths, history and unique approach to social justice and empowerment. We hope that partners such as agencies and groups who work with Kaska communities will also take this training to learn about our healing models.

### Goal 3: Support our Women and Families

Strategy	Action	Description
<b>Celebrate and Honour our Women</b>	<b>Create Kaska Women's Award Ceremony</b>	We honour and celebrate the achievements of extraordinary Kaska women. The creation of an award ceremony will not only reward the efforts and strengths of role models in our communities but also encourage other women to take on leadership roles for the advancement of Kaska women.
<b>Strengthen Local Program and Service Delivery</b>	<b>Create Centre for Response-based Practice and Learning</b>	As we achieve success in our other priority action areas, such as the creation of a LAWS Centre and the development of curriculum and training material, we will be in a position to expand our work further to establish our own Centre for Response-based Training and Learning.
<b>Promote Land Based Healing</b>	<b>Develop Kaska Healing Program</b>	Our priority in this area is addressing the mental wellness concerns that cause addictions and violence. Our community members have emphasized that substance use and addiction is a major factor in child apprehension and the need for culturally appropriate services. A program for Kaska parents and guardians that draws on traditional parenting principles will support our efforts to lead our own child welfare system and keep our children at home.
	<b>Establish Kaska Wellness Centre</b>	As we achieve success establishing a LAWS Centre, we will be in a position to expand the use of our space and delivery of programs and services such as through the creation of a Kaska Wellness Centre.

### Goal 4: Protect and Educate Our Children

Strategy	Action	Description
<b>Secure Authority over Child Protection and Welfare</b>	<b>Develop Kaska Model for Child Protection</b>	A Kaska model of child protection and treatment would support our communities in implementing a holistic approach to child welfare, keep children with their families and in their communities, and inform the development of various territorial and federal programs and services.
<b>Increase Child and Youth Safety</b>	<b>Deliver Youth For Safety and Youth For Culture Programs</b>	Youth for Safety (YFS) and Youth for Culture (YFC) are Youth empowerment projects designed to foster community safety and justice in the town of Watson Lake, Yukon and nearby Kaska First Nations populations in Two Mile area, Upper Liard and Lower Post, BC. Through the project, Youth learn Kaska principles of dignity and ways of restoring and preserving the dignity of those who experience violence, while also learning new skills to increase safety. Building on the success of the project, LAWS will continue to seek funding for YFS and YFC.

### Goal 5: Empower and Celebrate Our Youth

Strategy	Action	Description
<b>Increase Youth Involvement and Leadership</b>	<b>Create Youth Mentorship Program</b>	Through a mentorship program, we will create more opportunities to help young professionals develop the skills they need to contribute to our organization and Kaska Nation.
	<b>Fund Youth Circle</b>	While we are not in a position to provide for all of the social and recreational needs of our youth, we will continue to engage with youth through YFS and by supporting small-scale projects such as a Youth Circle, media campaigns against violence involving youth, and sharing teachings. In particular, we are eager to support Youth Circles as funds become available. Youth Circles are discussion groups that inspire youth-centric, peer-to-peer dialogue. This model helps youth identify factors that contribute to adverse behaviours and help them move forward in a good way.

## Appendix C: Implementation Challenges and Strategies

**Table 10** below highlights potential implementation challenges. For each challenge, a strategy is suggested to move the plan forward and a description of the action needed.

*Table 10: Implementation Challenges and Strategies*

Challenge	Strategy	Action
<b>There is limited or a lack of funding</b>	Create a funding strategy and hire a proposal writer	We will need to invest time to ensure that we maintain up-to-date research on potential funding opportunities. A Strategy is required to secure additional funding from governments and other agencies, as well as hiring a researcher/ proposal writer to secure funding.
<b>Available space does not meet our needs</b>	Start small and scale up	Starting with basic office space will help us maintain ongoing work. As we demonstrate our success and expand our program areas, we can work towards meeting our infrastructure and space needs through partnerships and funding opportunities.
<b>Limited staff capacity</b>	Ensure adequate human resources	In order to address our limited staff capacity, we need to define what skills are needed and invest in positions that bring specific skills to our team.
<b>We do not know if what we are doing is helping</b>	Commit resources to data collection and monitoring and evaluation	Ongoing qualitative and quantitative data collection will ensure that we can track our progress and outcomes as well as showcase the results of our work. This requires collecting, documenting and managing information. This will help us adapt our strategy as needed, communicate results, and validate our work.
<b>Lack of community buy-in</b>	Maintain communication to community members	Consistent communications tools and sustained community engagement will help build our connection to community members. Communicating our results and successes will help demonstrate the value of our work and keep community members informed and engage.
<b>Leadership disruptions in our communities</b>	Ongoing communication and coordination	Consistent communication with community leadership and continuing to show our appreciation for their support will help us build strong relationships with leadership and community staff, even with turn over. With consistent communication, LAWS and communities can coordinate activities to compliment and support each other's efforts. Scheduling regular meetings with leadership to inform them of progress and successes will help build support.
<b>Lack of political support</b>	Network and establish partnerships	An interagency protocol will ensure that staff from different agencies are working together to advocate for changes in political and funding priorities. Our partnerships will help us share the load and responsibility for the plan's success and building a commitment to action.