JIJIKTUKWEJ L'NUE'KATIK
Formerly Annapolis Valley First Nation
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Community Engagement and Electoral Governance Review
Potential Transition from the Indian Act Election System to the First Nations Elections Act

RFP Number: 20261020-01
Issue Date: October 20, 2026
Submission Deadline: November 3, 2026
Anticipated Project Start: November 15, 2026
Anticipated Project Completion: March 31, 2027

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1. Introduction

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik (formerly Annapolis Valley First Nation) invites proposals from qualified consultants or consulting firms to plan, coordinate, and deliver a comprehensive community engagement process concerning the potential transition from the election provisions of the *Indian Act* to the *First Nations Elections Act* (FNEA).

The purpose of this engagement is to ensure that community members have access to clear, accurate, and accessible information about both electoral systems and are provided with meaningful opportunities to share their perspectives, concerns, priorities, and recommendations.

The successful consultant will be responsible for developing and implementing a culturally appropriate, inclusive, and transparent engagement process that supports informed community discussion and assists Chief and Council in understanding the views of membership before determining whether to pursue a transition.

<u>This project is an exploratory engagement process and does not presume or predetermine community support for transitioning to the FNEA.</u>

2. Background

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik is a Mi'kmaw First Nation located in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia, with approximately 350 registered members residing both on and off reserve.

The First Nation currently conducts Chief and Council elections pursuant to the election provisions of the *Indian Act*.

Chief and Council are exploring whether transitioning to the *First Nations Elections Act* would better support the community's long-term governance priorities, including electoral stability, accountability, transparency, and meaningful participation in community governance.

The FNEA provides an alternative statutory electoral framework for participating First Nations, including four-year terms of office and different provisions governing electoral administration, nominations, voting, and electoral offences.

The First Nation recognizes that electoral governance is a matter of significant importance to its members and that any potential transition must be informed by meaningful community engagement.

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik anticipates its next Chief and Council election in December 2027. The First Nation wishes to explore whether a transition to the FNEA could reasonably be completed before that election, subject to community engagement, Council consideration, and applicable federal legislative and administrative requirements.

The First Nation is seeking an independent consultant to facilitate this process and provide an objective assessment of community feedback.

3. Project Objectives

The objectives of this project are to:

1. Provide community members with accurate, understandable, and balanced information about the current *Indian Act* electoral system and the FNEA.
2. Explain the potential benefits, limitations, risks, and implications of transitioning between the two electoral systems.
3. Engage members residing both on and off reserve through accessible and culturally appropriate methods.

4. Identify community perspectives, priorities, concerns, and recommendations regarding electoral governance.
5. Assess the level and nature of community support for, or opposition to, a potential transition.
6. Identify any outstanding questions or matters requiring further consideration before Chief and Council make a decision.
7. Identify the legislative and administrative requirements and anticipated timelines associated with a potential transition before the December 2027 election.
8. Produce a comprehensive final engagement report with findings and recommendations to inform Chief and Council's consideration of the proposed transition.

4. Scope of Work

The successful consultant will be expected to undertake the following activities.

4.1 Project Planning and Coordination

The consultant will:

- Conduct an initial meeting with the Executive Director and designated representatives of Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik.
- Review relevant governance documents, electoral information, and applicable legislative requirements.
- Develop a detailed engagement work plan, including methodology, activities, timelines, communications, and deliverables.
- Identify potential barriers to participation and propose strategies to address them.
- Establish a process for maintaining confidentiality, protecting participant information, and documenting engagement findings.
- Coordinate regularly with the designated First Nation project representative.

- Identify any risks or dependencies that may affect project delivery or the anticipated December 2027 election timeline.

4.2 Electoral Systems Research and Educational Materials

The successful consultant will prepare clear, impartial, and accessible educational materials comparing the current *Indian Act* electoral system with the FNEA.

At a minimum, materials must address:

- Length of terms for Chief and Council.
- Nomination and candidacy requirements.
- Eligibility to vote and opportunities for member participation.
- Election administration and responsibilities.
- Voting methods and accessibility for off-reserve members.
- Election appeals, challenges, and dispute-resolution processes.
- Electoral offences and enforcement provisions.
- Removal from office and related accountability provisions.
- Legislative and administrative implications of transitioning.
- The process and requirements for requesting inclusion under the FNEA.
- Potential implications for future community governance development and self-determination.

Materials must explain both the potential advantages and disadvantages of the two systems without advocating for a predetermined outcome.

<u>Legislative Accuracy and Review</u>

All educational materials and explanations of the transition process must be based on current federal legislation, regulations, and applicable guidance.

The consultant must identify any legislative requirements, administrative procedures, or timelines that may affect the First Nation's ability to transition before its anticipated December 2027 election.

The consultant must arrange for appropriate legal review of the legislative comparison and proposed transition process by a qualified legal professional, in coordination with the First Nation, before educational materials are distributed.

The proposal must identify how this review will be completed and include any associated costs or clearly identified assumptions.

All educational materials must be reviewed and approved by Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik before public distribution.

4.3 Community Engagement Strategy and Minimum Requirements

The successful consultant will develop and implement a comprehensive community engagement strategy that provides meaningful opportunities for members residing both on and off reserve to participate in discussions regarding the proposed transition.

At a minimum, the engagement process must include the following activities.

A. In-Person Community Engagement Sessions

The consultant must organize and facilitate a minimum of three (3) in-person community engagement sessions within Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik.

These sessions must:

- Provide an accessible, plain-language overview of the current *Indian Act* electoral system and the FNEA.
- Explain the potential advantages, disadvantages, and implications of transitioning.
- Allow members to ask questions and receive accurate, impartial responses.
- Facilitate respectful discussion regarding electoral governance, representation, accountability, and community priorities.

- Provide opportunities for members to express support, opposition, uncertainty, or alternative perspectives.
- Collect and document feedback for inclusion in the final engagement report.

Sessions should be scheduled at varying dates and times to maximize participation, including consideration of evening or weekend availability.

B. Virtual Off-Reserve Engagement Sessions

The consultant must organize and facilitate a minimum of two (2) virtual engagement sessions specifically intended for off-reserve members.

These sessions must provide the same educational information and opportunities for discussion as the in-person sessions.

The consultant must ensure that:

- Sessions are accessible using commonly available virtual meeting technology.
- Members receive sufficient advance notice and clear instructions for participation.
- Appropriate measures are established to verify membership while protecting privacy.
- Participants can ask questions and provide feedback.
- Sessions are scheduled at different times to accommodate varying schedules and time zones.

Off-reserve members must also be able to participate in the broader engagement process through surveys and other feedback mechanisms.

C. Membership Survey

The consultant must develop and administer a membership survey to gather perspectives on the proposed transition.

The survey must be available in both online and paper formats.

The consultant will be responsible for:

- Developing clear, neutral, and accessible survey questions.
- Ensuring that members receive sufficient information about both electoral systems before expressing their preferences.
- Establishing reasonable measures to verify eligibility and prevent duplicate survey submissions.
- Making paper surveys available at designated community locations.
- Providing an accessible means for off-reserve members to request and return paper surveys.
- Ensuring confidentiality of individual responses.
- Collecting and analyzing survey results.
- Reporting the number of responses, participation rates where measurable, and relevant differences in perspectives between on-reserve and off-reserve respondents.

Survey questions must be reviewed and approved by the First Nation before distribution.

D. Additional Engagement Opportunities

Proponents are encouraged to recommend additional engagement activities that strengthen accessibility and participation, including:

- Individual interviews.
- Small-group discussions.
- Elder-focused engagement.
- Youth engagement, including young adults eligible to participate in elections.
- Other culturally appropriate and accessible engagement methods.

The minimum engagement requirements identified above are mandatory and must be included in the proposed work plan and budget.

4.4 Engagement Facilitation

The successful consultant will:

- Organize and facilitate engagement activities in coordination with the First Nation.
- Present information in a clear, neutral, and respectful manner.
- Ensure that members have meaningful opportunities to ask questions and express differing perspectives.
- Maintain an inclusive environment that respects Mi'kmaw culture, values, and governance traditions.
- Document participation levels and key themes.
- Address misinformation or misunderstandings through accurate, evidence-based explanations.
- Provide reasonable accommodations to support accessibility and participation.

The consultant must maintain independence and neutrality throughout the engagement process.

4.5 Community Participation and Assessment of Support

The consultant must establish a clear methodology for assessing community perspectives regarding the potential transition.

The methodology must:

- Distinguish between support, opposition, uncertainty, and requests for additional information.
- Identify participation by on-reserve and off-reserve members where appropriate.
- Report the total number of participants and survey respondents.
- Explain how duplicate participation across engagement activities will be addressed when reporting overall participation.
- Identify potential barriers to participation and any limitations affecting the representativeness of findings.

- Distinguish between the perspectives of engagement participants and the broader membership.

The engagement process is not intended to constitute a formal referendum or binding community vote.

The consultant must not characterize survey findings as demonstrating the position of the entire membership unless the methodology and evidence reasonably support such a conclusion.

4.6 Analysis and Reporting

Following the completion of engagement activities, the consultant will analyze all information collected and prepare a comprehensive report.

The report must include:

1. Executive summary.
2. Overview of the engagement process and methodology.
3. Description of engagement activities conducted.
4. Participation statistics, including on-reserve and off-reserve participation where information is available and appropriate.
5. Summary of educational information provided.
6. Key themes identified through engagement.
7. Community perspectives regarding the current electoral system.
8. Perceived benefits and concerns regarding the FNEA.
9. Assessment of community support, opposition, and uncertainty, with appropriate methodological limitations.
10. Outstanding questions or issues requiring further consideration.
11. Legislative and administrative requirements associated with a potential transition.
12. Assessment of the feasibility of transitioning before the December 2027 election.
13. Recommendations regarding potential next steps.

14. Appendices containing engagement tools, survey instruments, and anonymized findings.

The report must distinguish between the perspectives expressed by participants and conclusions that can reasonably be drawn about the broader membership.

The consultant must not characterize engagement findings as a formal referendum or binding community decision.

4.7 Transition Timeline and December 2027 Election Considerations

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik anticipates its next Chief and Council election in December 2027.

The First Nation wishes to explore whether a transition to the FNEA could reasonably be completed in advance of that election, subject to community engagement, Council consideration, and applicable federal requirements.

Proponents must provide a detailed project schedule that:

- Allows sufficient time for all required engagement activities.
- Includes time for the development, review, and approval of educational materials.
- Provides adequate advance notice to on-reserve and off-reserve members.
- Establishes a reasonable period for survey completion.
- Includes time for analysis, draft reporting, and presentation of final findings.
- Identifies the federal administrative steps and anticipated timelines associated with a potential transition.
- Identifies any risks, dependencies, or deadlines that could affect implementation before March 31, 2027.

The consultant must provide a realistic assessment of the feasibility of completing the transition process before the anticipated election.

The engagement process must not be shortened or compromised solely to meet the anticipated election date.

4.8 Final Presentation

The successful consultant will present the final engagement findings to Chief and Council and respond to questions regarding the methodology, results, and recommendations.

The consultant may also be requested to participate in a community presentation of the findings.

5. Required Deliverables

Deliverable	Minimum Requirement
Project Work Plan	Detailed methodology, schedule, communications strategy, and participation plan
Legislative Comparison	Plain-language comparison of the two electoral systems, subject to appropriate legal review
Educational Materials	Community presentations, information sheets, and supporting materials
In-Person Engagement	Minimum 3 facilitated community sessions
Virtual Off-Reserve Engagement	Minimum 2 facilitated virtual sessions
Membership Survey	Online and paper formats, including administration and analysis
Engagement Summary	Participation statistics and emerging themes
Draft Final Report	Findings, analysis, limitations, and recommendations
Final Engagement Report	Finalized findings, community perspectives, and recommended next steps

Transition Timeline Assessment	Assessment of the legislative and administrative steps required for a potential transition before December 2027
Final Presentation	Presentation of findings to Chief and Council

All final materials, including editable documents and anonymized engagement data, will become the property of Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik, subject to applicable privacy requirements and agreed contractual terms.

6. Project Timeline

The anticipated project timeline is as follows:

Activity	**Target Date**
RFP Issued	October 20, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	November 3, 2026
Consultant Selection	November 10, 2026
Project Initiation	November 16, 2026
Engagement Plan and Educational Materials Approved	December 15, 2026
Community Engagement Activities	January 4-March 4, 2027
Draft Report Submitted	March 9, 2027
Final Report and Presentation	March 30, 2027

Proponents are encouraged to propose a realistic schedule that allows sufficient time for meaningful engagement, particularly with off-reserve members.

Any anticipated legislative or administrative timelines should be identified in the work plan.

7. Consultant Qualifications

Proponents should demonstrate the following qualifications and experience:

- Demonstrated experience conducting community engagement with First Nations or Indigenous communities.
- Strong understanding of First Nations governance, electoral systems, and the relevant federal legislative framework.
- Familiarity with the *Indian Act* election provisions and the *First Nations Elections Act*.
- Knowledge of Mi'kmaw communities, governance traditions, and cultural protocols.
- Experience facilitating sensitive or potentially contentious community discussions.
- Demonstrated ability to engage geographically dispersed membership populations.
- Experience developing accessible educational materials, surveys, and engagement reports.
- Strong analytical, facilitation, communication, and report-writing skills.
- Ability to conduct engagement independently, objectively, and confidentially.

Preference may be given to qualified Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous consultants or consulting firms with relevant experience.

8. Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested proponents must submit a proposal containing the following information.

A. Consultant Profile

- Name of consultant or firm.
- Contact information.
- Overview of qualifications and relevant experience.
- Identification of proposed project team members and their roles.

B. Understanding of the Project

- Demonstrated understanding of the First Nation's objectives.

- Understanding of the relevant electoral systems.
- Identification of key considerations, opportunities, and potential challenges.

C. Proposed Methodology

- Detailed approach to community education and engagement.
- Proposed engagement activities and methods, including all mandatory sessions and surveys.
- Strategies for ensuring meaningful participation by on-reserve and off-reserve members.
- Approach to maintaining neutrality, confidentiality, and cultural appropriateness.
- Proposed methods for analyzing feedback and assessing community perspectives.
- Approach to legislative research and legal review.

D. Project Work Plan

- Proposed schedule and milestones.
- Estimated time required for each phase.
- Proposed project management and reporting arrangements.
- Assessment of potential timeline considerations related to the December 2027 election.

E. Relevant Experience and References

- Examples of comparable projects.
- At least two professional references from previous clients.

F. Financial Proposal

A detailed, itemized budget identifying:

- Professional fees and hourly or daily rates.
- Estimated consultant hours or days.
- Planning, research, and project management.
- Legislative research and coordination of legal review.
- Development of educational materials.
- Preparation and facilitation of three in-person engagement sessions.
- Preparation and facilitation of two virtual off-reserve engagement sessions.
- Development, distribution, and analysis of online and paper surveys.
- Travel, accommodation, and other engagement-related expenses.
- Analysis, reporting, and final presentations.
- Other anticipated expenses.
- Applicable taxes.

The proposal must clearly identify the total proposed project cost and any assumptions or exclusions.

Proposals must include all mandatory engagement activities within the quoted total project cost.

Any proposed additional engagement activities must be identified and priced separately.

9. Proposal Evaluation

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	**Weight**
Experience with First Nations governance and electoral legislation	25%
Quality and suitability of proposed engagement methodology	25%

Experience working with Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous communities	20%
Project work plan, timelines, and deliverables	10%
Cost and overall value	15%
References and demonstrated past performance	5%
Total	**100%**

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik reserves the right to request additional information, conduct interviews, or seek clarification from proponents during the evaluation process.

Proposals that do not include all mandatory engagement activities may be deemed non-compliant.

The lowest-priced proposal will not necessarily be selected.

10. Project Oversight and Reporting

The successful consultant will report to the Executive Director of Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik or their designate.

The consultant will be required to provide regular progress updates, identify emerging issues, and obtain approval for major changes to the agreed-upon scope of work.

Chief and Council will maintain responsibility for any decisions regarding the potential transition to the FNEA.

The consultant's role is limited to research, education, engagement, analysis, and recommendations unless otherwise agreed upon in writing.

11. Confidentiality and Information Management

The successful consultant will be required to maintain strict confidentiality regarding all non-public information obtained during the project.

The consultant must:

- Protect the privacy of engagement participants.

- Obtain appropriate informed consent for participation and information collection.
- Ensure that individual responses are not attributed to identifiable participants without explicit permission.
- Store information securely and restrict access to authorized project personnel.
- Comply with applicable privacy requirements and the First Nation's information-management expectations.
- Ensure engagement findings are reported in a manner that protects participant confidentiality.
- Not disclose, publish, or use project information for purposes outside the contract without prior written authorization.

The consultant must respect First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) in the management of community information.

12. Conflict of Interest and Independence

Proponents must disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest, including relationships or interests that could reasonably affect the independence of the engagement process.

The successful consultant must not advocate for a particular electoral outcome or attempt to influence members toward a predetermined position.

All educational materials, facilitation activities, analysis, and reporting must be conducted objectively and impartially.

13. General Terms and Conditions

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any or all proposals.
- Request clarification or additional information from proponents.
- Negotiate the scope, schedule, and fees with a preferred proponent.

- Cancel or amend this RFP process at any time.
- Decline to award a contract.
- Verify references and qualifications.
- Award the contract based on the proposal that provides the best overall value and alignment with community needs.

All costs associated with preparing and submitting a proposal are the responsibility of the proponent.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute a commitment to award a contract.

The successful proponent will be required to enter into a written services agreement before commencing work.

14. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically in PDF format.

Submission Deadline: November 3rd, 2026, 11:59pm AST

Submit Proposals To:

Sarah Toole
Executive Director
Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik

Email: stoole@avfn.ca

Subject Line: RFP Submission – FNEA Community Engagement

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to the contact identified above by November 3rd, 2026.

Late or incomplete proposals may not be considered.

15. Closing Statement

Jijiktukwej L'nue'katik is committed to ensuring that its members are informed, heard, and meaningfully involved in discussions concerning the future of community governance.

Through this project, the First Nation seeks to support transparent, respectful, and informed consideration of its electoral governance options, while recognizing the importance of Mi'kmaw identity, community values, and the right to self-determination.

The First Nation welcomes proposals from qualified consultants who share this commitment and can demonstrate the expertise, independence, and cultural understanding necessary to support this important engagement process.