

# CHON-FM / Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon

## ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



Elders Tesloa Smith and Hammond Dick made history by providing live play-by-play commentaries in the Kaska language on CHON-FM during the annual Yukon Native Hockey Tournament in Whitehorse, March 2024. Kaska Learners' instructors Paul Caesar-Jules and Emerald Poppe helped the Elders develop a Kaska Hockey Dictionary in preparation. CHON-FM is planning to support this again in 2025.



Indigenous Radio  
**CHON<sup>F</sup>M**  
The beat of a different drummer

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## Chair's MESSAGE



On behalf of Northern Native Broadcasting's Board of Directors, I want to thank all 14 Yukon First Nations for supporting their radio station, CHON-FM. It could not have survived forty years without the continued dedication of its membership.

As you know, 2024 was a year of celebrating our accomplishments with radio contests, prizes and interviews. It culminated with the fortieth anniversary concert on September 21, where we celebrated the diversity of First Nations musical talent from across the territory. We honoured the commitment of CHON-FM's outgoing Chair, Judy Gingell, who was also an original board member; we recognized the multi-talented Ben Charlie for bringing the Gwich'in language and homegrown music into our homes for decades; we

reminisced about the tireless work of CHON's founders, including the late George Henry and Bob Charlie, not to mention all of CHON's past and present staff, and, of course, our dedicated listeners. There were so many people involved over the years that it was difficult to reach all our contributors, for that we are sorry. We missed some very important people and will try to over the next while to find a way to honor all.

Now, our job is to contemplate the next forty years.

As a not-for-profit organization, CHON-FM naturally struggles to stay alive. To maintain a complex infrastructure that supports 28 communities, while maintaining a skilled and happy workforce and a full spectrum of Yukon First Nation programming, is a major annual undertaking. Inflation and decreased federal funding in recent years have added to CHON's financial stress. And radio advertising, normally a solid source of revenue, now has a fierce competitor – the internet.

But the full picture is even more complicated.

We find ourselves again in a very tough financial situation. We are operating on a very minimal budget, we have failing equipment in a lot of the communities, and very dated equipment at the station, and a very small number of employees.

CHON-FM is the only broadcast center that is prepared in the event of an emergency with a back-up generator, we are able to still operate if the power, and cellular service were to ever fail again.

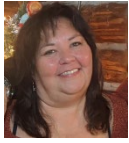
It is going to take creative solutions and tough decisions to move us forward I look forward to your ongoing support and to hearing your voices as we embark on this new journey.

Shàw níthàn

Denise Beattie



## Board of Directors



**Denise Beattie**  
Chair  
CAFN



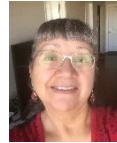
**Duane Aucoin**  
Vice-Chair  
TTC



**Lyndsay Amato**  
Secretary  
C-TFN



**Dan Profeit**  
Director  
FNNND



**Linda Harvey**  
Director  
KDFN



**Vacant**  
Treasurer



**Vacant**  
Director

## Administration



**Juliann Fraser**  
General Manager



**Anushka Sakargayen**  
Sales & Marketing  
Manager



**Martins Udoh**  
Finance Manager



**Clint Carpentier**  
Program Manager

## On-air Talent



**Ben Charlie**  
Host of  
Vuntat  
Njiik Nakaii



**Charles Eshleman**  
Host of  
Indigenous  
Connections



**Carl Carpentier**  
Host of  
Cool Country  
Morning



**Stuart Bonell**  
Reporter  
News and Current  
Affairs



**Panebi Wilson**  
Reporter  
News and Current  
Affairs



**William Carlick**  
Host of  
The Drive Home

# General Manager's REPORT

It has been my absolute pleasure to work as General Manager for CHON-FM/Northern Native Broadcasting Yukon since April 2023. I entered this role knowing NNBY's impressive past and legacy to generations of Yukon First Nations. As a longtime Yukoner who has raised three children here, worked as journalist during the exciting land-claims ratification era, and employed with several First Nations organizations, I felt I had some skills and knowledge that would be helpful in this role. I also knew that I was taking on a major project of rejuvenating CHON-FM following years of part-time management and other setbacks.

Running a not-for-profit community radio station mandated to serve 14 First Nations, eight language groups, and 28 communities in Yukon, NWT and BC, CHON-FM is by nature a massive undertaking.

Financial stability among non-profits is always a going concern, but the lack of regular engagement among Yukon First Nations in their radio station is CHON-FM's greatest challenge today.

Without exaggeration, the role of GM in 2025 requires constant consideration of whether CHON-FM is a viable entity. I am regularly confronted with these two questions:

- *Can CHON-FM continue to survive (and thrive) with inadequate funding and limited community involvement in the age of the internet?*
- *Can CHON-FM reverse recent trends and find a financial solution and a means to encourage First Nations involvement a investors, listeners, employees, and board members?*

*Juliann Fraser*

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

CHON-FM tackled strategic elements prioritized in NNBY's 2020-2023 [Strategic Plan](#), including:

1. ***Celebration of and Connection to Yukon First Nations Cultures and Languages.*** This was done in several ways:
  - a. **(June 2023)** CHON covered events at KDCC 'live' on Indigenous Peoples Day;
  - b. **(January – March 2024)** CHON introduced *Ah' Nezen*, a 'live' show from Ross River featuring the Kaska language, live music and interviews with Ross River residents by Dennis Shorty and his wife Jennifer Fröhling, from their living room;
  - c. **(March 2024)** CHON broadcast 'live' from Takhini Arena during the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament while two Elders – Tesloa Smith and Hammond Dick – delivered play-by-play commentaries in the Kaska language on hockey games featuring Kaska players;
  - d. **(June 2024)** CHON hired a citizen of Kwanlin Dun First Nation, William Carlick, to host *The Drive Home Show*, which had been vacant for more than six months.
  - e. **Advertisements** by some Yukon First Nations in traditional languages are ongoing.



- f. **(September 2024)** CHON produced and hosted the *CHON-FM 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert* which featured Yukon First Nation musical acts and performers from across the territory, celebrating various languages and cultures, and CHON itself.



2. **Quality Radio/News and Online Programming.** This was meant to include a restoration of newscasts, and a reconsideration of music, online presence, and responses to technical issues.



- a. **(August and November 2023)** After two years without **news reporters**, two non-First Nation individuals with broadcast experience were hired. Despite a competitive starting wage, CHON was unable to attract skilled journalists or Yukon First Nations citizens;
- b. **(August 2023)** CHON's interactive **website**, which provides written news articles and the ability to play CHON live was restored after being shut down;
- c. **(August 2023)** CHON began contributing to its **Facebook** page after several years of inactivity.
- d. **(September 2023)** CHON began broadcasting episodes of the Thom King's *Dead Dog Café Comedy Hour* on Wednesday afternoons;
- e. **(December 2023)** CHON began broadcasting Lance Delisle's *The Collective* on Friday evenings; Lance is Mohawk from Quebec and produces a weekly themed podcast geared around popular and Indigenous music;
- f. **(January 2024)** CHON began broadcasting *Ah'Nezen* once per month, live from Ross River, featuring Dennis Shorty, with conversations and songs in the Kaska language. It was sponsored by Fireweed Metals and lasted three months.
- g. **(October 2024)** CHON introduced *Boreal Boogie* on Saturday nights as an alternative to our regular country/classic rock programming. It features a variety of dance music including Indigenous;
- h. **(December 2024)** CHON introduced *Recovery Stories Yukon* on Wednesday afternoons and Sunday mornings; it is produced by Capri Zowalny, a THFN citizen in Dawson City.

3. **Organizational Effectiveness & Financial Sustainability** This included recruitment of Indigenous youth, creating a Human Resources policy, diversifying revenue streams, and developing a board recruitment strategy.



- a. CHON has approached Yukon University and First Nations organizations such as Shakaat Journal about the potential to recruit and train Indigenous youth, but with little success so far;
- b. CHON has not updated its 2001 human resources policy due to lack of resources;
- c. CHON continues to look at ways to diversify its revenue streams to support regular operations and maintenance. It has ramped up its grant application efforts to include Canada Council for the Arts, Community Development Fund, Community Radio Fund, and City of Whitehorse Festivals and Events. However, none of these can be used to support regular operations, rather they support the purchase of equipment or one-time events.

d. CHON has made significant efforts to recruit board members by advertising in our regular newsletter, through Facebook, on our website, and via on-air announcements, however there has been little response and the board continues to be under-represented.

### 6-year Operational Costs + Deficits

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
costs	\$1,052,766	\$1,198,101	\$1,042,393	\$1,085,757	\$1,009,169	\$1,024,531
deficit	-\$342,275	-\$290,650	-\$23,603	-\$76,450	-\$7,545	-\$192,880

CHON-FM operational costs have remained steady over the past 6 years - at just over **\$1 million**, with deficits.

CHON-FM's deficits, however, have varied. This is partly due to a variance in subsidization from its own sister company, Keyah Productions, which over time contributed approximately \$1 million in funds to NNBY/CHON-FM to cover operational costs.

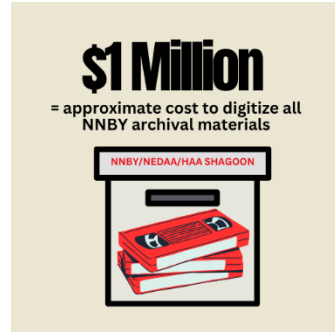
The Keyah fund was depleted in 2023, and 2024 found itself reliant, for the first time in many years, on advertising revenue and Heritage Canada funding alone.

## STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS 2024-2025

CHON-FM's Board of Directors in collaboration with the General Manager have identified additional priorities for the upcoming years, some of which were identified in the previous strategic plan.

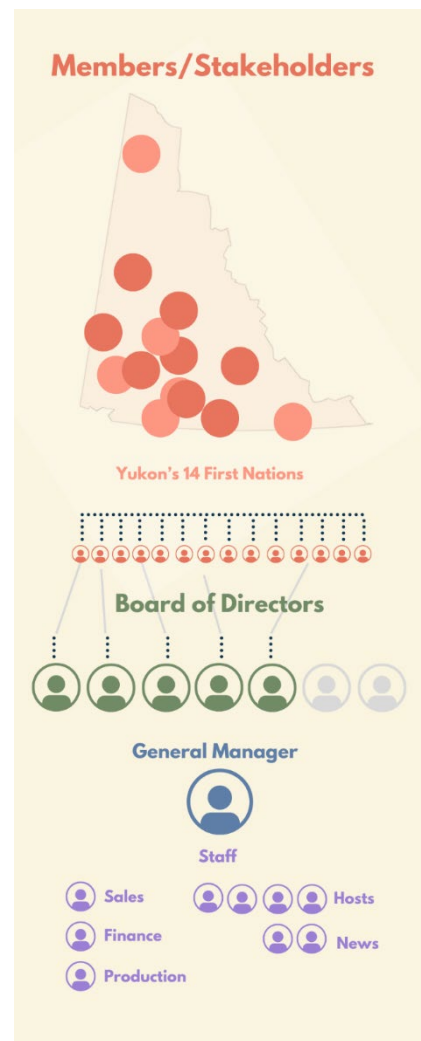
- 1. Financial sustainability and future planning** – CHON-FM has been operating at a deficit for many years and officially exhausted approximately \$1 million in contingency funds between 2013 and 2023 in order to subsidize operations, leaving no emergency funds and ultimately forcing CHON to operate according to a balanced budget. How do we increase revenues in an age where radio is less relevant;
- 2. Governance**, including a revision of the non-profit society's bylaws, which provide guidance and training to the Board of Directors;
- 3. Human Resources** Policy is required as the current policy dates back to 2001 when NNBY still had television and a more complex management system;
- 4. Recruitment** of board members, Yukon First Nations talent, advertisers, and listeners;
- 5. Strategic planning** that includes modern solutions to radio effectiveness and alternatives in the age of internet and social media;
- 6. Transparency** to stakeholders, in other words providing regular updates to Yukon First Nations regarding the governance of NNBY via the website and newsletter;
- 7. Partnerships**, as a means of diversifying CHON-FM to meet the interests of younger generations, to increase capacity in the realms of writing and journalism, archives preservation, and to take advantage of new technologies and media;

- 8. **Archives** preservation and presentation of materials (NNBY television archives) as a means of cultural celebration and a source of radio content. The estimate for total digitization of NNBY’s collection is \$1 million;
- 9. **Upgrading** of internal broadcast hardware and software;
- 10. **Maintenance** of outdoor broadcast systems in communities across Yukon. This remains an ongoing concern as CHON has not had the resources to employ a full-time engineer. It has relied on a consultant for the past decade however this resource is no longer dependable:



- 11. **Capacity-building** should be a regular concern of CHON-FM as it exists in a territory without broadcast, journalism, or engineering training. It is both a tactical and cultural concern as Yukon First Nations should not be expected or encouraged to go ‘outside’ for training. Partnerships that support ongoing training in Yukon would enable us to recruit from our membership.

- 12. **Lobbying** governments for support has been ongoing since the late 1970s. Back then, all levels of government were eager to support a grassroots radio station built by Yukon First Nation, but 40 years later, that is not the case. CHON receives only federal funding that it applies for, and no ‘core’ funding for operations. It does not receive funding from Yukon government, other than the occasional Community Development Fund grant which CHON must also apply for. A flyer distributed to Yukoners in 2023 by Yukon’s Member of Parliament and the federal Liberal party in favour of preserving CBC contained much disinformation about community radio stations, and not-for profit societies, not to mention Indigenous broadcasting. For example, community and campus stations have benefitted from Canadian Content Development support (CCD) which comes from the licensing fees paid by commercial broadcasters. However, when the CRTC developed the rules for the Fund, Indigenous licensed stations were excluded from that funding. In Canada, there is no lobby group for Indigenous radio stations, just as in the Yukon there is no lobby group for non-profits. Working with partners to amplify First Nation voices in these two sectors will strengthen our cause. A National Indigenous Media Association is now being formed with other Indigenous media organizations, such as IndigiNews, and CHON is at the table. Working with NGOHub and Volunteer Yukon may eventually lead to more support for Yukon-based societies.





13. **Ownership** and membership of NNBY/CHON-FM according to the Constitution includes all 14 Yukon First Nations. However, only seven representatives are required to sit on the board (it is normally as low as three). There has been no consistent mechanism to guarantee participation amongst owners, and this disconnect continues to leave much of the Yukon First Nation population in the dark about its own station, including the fact that it is theirs to care for. The sense of pride and stewardship that can come with ownership has not been present. CHON's bylaws allow for membership to pay fees, which is something that needs to be considered for both financial reasons, and to develop a sense of stakeholdership.

## Did you know... ?

NNBY's original logo was designed by the late **Mark Preston**. The original 4-foot painting was recently framed and can be seen hanging at the radio station.



Preston's painting was modified into the logo that was used for decades, until 2021 when CHON rebranded.



Preston's design was brought back in 2024 as the 40th Anniversary logo, as a way to celebrate the past and all of its contributors.



PHOTO by Vince Federoff, September 21, 2024



# CHON-FM 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert



PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: by Vince Federoff, September 21, 2024



CHON -FM A Year In Photos 2023-24



NORTHERN NATIVE BROADCASTING YUKON  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**AGENDA & Minutes**

July 19, 2023

August 20, 2023

Location: Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce boardroom or Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83655492706?pwd=Qm9Hdnk2MU0wNHRxUzVySWZoUTdVdz09>

Meeting ID: 836 5549 2706 Passcode: 154028

**AGM Agenda**

1. Opening Prayer
2. Introductions
3. Call Meeting to Order
4. Adoption of Agenda
5. Adoption of 2022 AGM Minutes – October 6 & October 11, 2022
6. Presentation of March 31, 2022 Audited Financial Statements – PSL Professional Chartered Accountants
7. Chair's Report
8. General Manager's statement
9. Appointment of Directors
10. Appointment of Auditor – PSL Professional Chartered Accountants
11. Appointment of Legal – Lamarche, Lang & Barrett
12. Closing Prayer
13. Adjournment

**AGM Meeting Minutes**

**Attending in person:** Judy Gingell (chair), Juliann Fraser (GM); **Attending via Zoom:** Duane Aucoin (deputy chair) Lyndsay Amato, Auditor Paul Senga, KDFN Chief Smith, TTC Chief Eric Morris, C/TFN Chief Maria Benoit. **Regrets:** Albert Drapeau (secretary/treasurer)

- Agenda adopted;
- Motion to adopt 2022 AGM minutes, passed;
- Motion passed to accept Lyndsay Amato (C/TFN) as new member of the Board of Directors and to the office of Secretary/Treasurer;
- Motion passed to adopt 2021-22 audited financial statements.