



Annual Report 2025 + 2026



ATLANTIC REGION
ABORIGINAL LANDS
ASSOCIATION



+ VISION

Stewardship of our traditional territories that honours our traditional values, Nation-to-Nation relationships and the vision of Indigenous peoples.

+ MISSION

Professional and sustainable land management using a balance of cultural and technical knowledge on behalf of First Nations in the Atlantic region and future generations.

ARALA is comprised of Land Managers from Indigenous Communities across Atlantic Canada.



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+ MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Members,

As we reflect on another successful year, we celebrate the accomplishments made possible through the dedication of our members, Board of Directors, ARALA staff, partners and supporters. Together, we have strengthened our organization, expanded professional development opportunities, and continued to advance First Nations land management throughout the Atlantic Region.

This past year has been marked by collaboration, learning, and growth. Through specialized training, strategic governance initiatives, and meaningful partnerships, ARALA continues to build a strong foundation that supports our members and their communities.

On behalf of the board of directors, thank you for your continued commitment and participation. We look forward to another successful year of working together.

Wela'lin-Woliwon-Thank you,

Audrey Ward BOARD CHAIR





LEARNING GROWTH COLLABORATION

+ ABOUT ARALA

The Atlantic Region Aboriginal Lands Association (ARALA) is committed to supporting First Nations land managers through education, professional development, networking, advocacy, and partnerships.

Our mission is to connect and support land managers across the Atlantic region through education, professional development, and networking that fosters collaboration and shared success.



ARALA is pleased to welcome **Becky Wolfe, Executive Assistant**, to our team. We look forward to the skills, experience and fresh perspective she brings to the organization. We encourage our members and partners to join us in extending a warm welcome.



+ BOARD OF DIRECTORS – KEY ACTIVITIES

Throughout 2025-2026, the ARALA Board of Directors continued to provide strategic leadership and oversight, with strong focus on governance, organizational sustainability, accountability, and long-term capacity building.

Key areas of activity included:

- **Governance and policy development** – continued strengthening of organizational policies, procedures, ethical standards, and accountability practices. ARALA’s policies reinforce the Board’s responsibility for organizational integrity, including oversight of the Executive Director.
- **Leadership and succession planning** – significant attention was given to organizational continuity and succession planning. The succession planning established a framework for leadership readiness, development, and the long-term transition of the Executive Directors role including ARALA staff positions
- **Business continuity and risk management** – identified key operational risk, records, reporting, and organizational operations during disruptions.
- **Financial and organizational accountability** – maintained oversight of fiscal accountability and organization resources, while supporting stronger financial management and reporting capacity within ARALA.

The Board’s continued commitment to strengthening ARALA’s governance and long-term sustainability; through policy development, financial and organizational oversight, succession and business continuity planning, and leadership development. The Board worked to ensure ARALA has the systems and capacity necessary to effectively serve its membership. These efforts provide a stronger foundation for organizational stability, accountability, and continued growth.



+ GOVERNANCE & ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

During 2025-2026, the Board of Directors focused on strengthening the Association through sound governance and strategic planning.

Highlights included:

- Continued review and enhancement of governance policies
- Strengthening financial oversight and accountability
- Approval of the 2025-2026 financial statements
- Ongoing organizational planning and policy development
- Expansion of member engagement initiatives
- Continued collaboration with First Nations partners and federal organizations

+ MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

- Stakeholder engagement survey preparation for strategic priorities by members
- Approval of establishment of the Membership & Engagement Committee
- Increased opportunities for members to participate in association activities and event planning
- Continued efforts to recruit and retain members
- Strengthen communications and networking opportunities across the Atlantic region through updated website and creation of social media presence (Facebook)



+ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEYOR GENERAL BRANCH'S PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

June 10th, 2025

NALMA

Fourteen participants attended this specialized training session designed to increase knowledge of survey products, mapping resources, and technical services available to First Nations.

Participants valued the opportunity to meet Surveyor General Branch staff from the Atlantic Region and praised the practical presentations and interactive exercises.

The National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA) provided an overview of its Survey Program. This initiative helps advance priority projects such as land designations, allotments, permits, additions to reserve, and boundary re-surveys. It also supports land use mapping and other survey-related activities that contribute to informed land management practices.



The presentation also outlined the contract administration process, requesting and evaluating quotes, awarding and monitoring contracts, and issuing payment upon completion. Also highlighting survey and mapping training opportunities and resources available to strengthen First Nation land management capacity.

Key topics included:

- Interpreting survey plans and the history of Canada Lands Surveys
- Boundary monitoring and monumentation
- Digital mapping products and spatial data
- Surveyor General Branch services for First Nations
- Community-specific mapping resources
- Overview of the NALMA Survey Program
- Survey project processes and contract administration
- Survey and mapping training opportunities





INDIAN LAND REGISTRY SYSTEMS TRAINING

July 15th -17th, 2025

ILRS



ARALA was pleased to partner with the Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association (OALA) to deliver a comprehensive three-day ILRS training. This collaborative initiative reflects the shared commitment of both organizations to strengthen the knowledge, skills and capacity of First Nations land management across Canada.

The training welcomed 18 participants which included both members and non-members, and ISC staff. The training provided practical instruction on the administration and use of the ILRS.

Participants received hands-on training in:

- **Completing ILRS application forms under the Indian Act**
- **Preparing Citrix access applications**
- **Accessing Surveyor General Branch and Canada Lands Surveys tools and resources**
- **Using Canada Lands information through Google Earth and other digital mapping platforms**
- **Navigating survey mapping resources to support effective land administration**

The partnership with OALA enabled participants to benefit from experienced instructors and practical examples that enhanced the learning experience. The interactive format encouraged participants to ask questions, share experiences, and build confidence in applying the Indian Land Registry System within their communities.

Participants feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many noting that the training was highly beneficial for completing the ILRS forms, the practical exercises reinforced learning, and the instructor's expertise made complex processes easier to understand.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

September 23-24, 2025

AGM

ARALA members gathered for the Associations Annual General Meeting to conduct business, receive organizational updates, and participate in professional learning.

Governance Highlights

- Approval of the 2024-2025 audited financial statements
- Election of Courtney Sark to the board of directors by acclamation and re-election of Rachel Stevenson and Mary Sieben
- Introduction to new member representatives for Eskasoni, Miawpukek and Paqtnkek.
- Lands & Economic Development, Rachel Steveson, Director of Lands & Economic Development, Wasoqopa'q
- Charity Law 101 for First Nations: Foundations & Qualifies Donee Status, Richard Bridge, Strategic & Legal Counsel, Ulnooweg & Cheryl Knockwood
- Framework Agreement on First Nations Land Management, Danielle Alain, Land Code Governance Advisor

Featured presentations:

- Members benefited from presentations on:
- Updates from ISC-Atlantic, Krista MacDonald, Director of Lands & Economic Development
- Matrimonial Real Property (MRP), Carrie Zeppa, Manager, and Shayne MacDonald, MRP Regional Consultant, First Nations Housing Professional Association.

The AGM provided valuable networking opportunities and encouraged collaboration among land managers, government representatives, and partner organizations.



AI MASTERCLASS

PASCAL DEGRACE, MISTRAL CREATIVE AGENCY

November 13th, 2025

AI

The goal for the training was to develop a basic understanding of how AI works allowing individuals to identify where it can be useful while also recognizing its limitations. By becoming familiar with practical AI tools, users can streamline routine tasks, improve productivity, and strengthen communication.



CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

March 25th-26th, 2026

Under the theme “Land in Balance: Preparedness and Stewardship for a Changing Climate” ARALA hosted its inaugural Cumulative Effects of Climate Change Conference, bringing together 40 participants from First Nations communities, government departments, Indigenous organizations, and partner agencies to explore the impacts of climate change on First Nations lands and communities.

Planning for the conference began well in advance with the establishment of a dedicated Planning Committee, which met both virtually and in person to develop a comprehensive agenda and coordinate event logistics.

Over two days, participants engaged in presentations and discussions on a range of timely and relevant topics, including:

- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) presented by Cheryl Knockwood
- Traditional Knowledge presentation by Opolahsomuwehs (Dr. Imelda Perley), highlighting Indigenous perspective and land stewardship.
- Climate Change at Indigenous Services Canada, building climate resilience presented by Emily Després and Noah Gauthier
- Indigenous Centre for Cumulative Effects (ICCE) – Cumulative Effects 101- introducing approaches to understanding and managing cumulative environmental impacts and encourages Indigenous led methods of monitoring
- Membertou Traditional Knowledge Study, presented by Jason Googoo
- Renewable Energy and opportunities for sustainable community development by Sal Poirier
- Environmental Stewardship and protecting First Nations lands for future generations youth perspective, presented by Summer Raven Saulis
- Emergency Management and community preparedness, presented by Kirk Hannah
- Wabanaki Wildland Wildfire Crew, showcasing Indigenous leadership in wildfire response and land stewardship, presented by Chelsea Cullins and Lana Levi
- Salt Marshes and Climate Adaptation, exploring natural solutions to climate resilience, presented by Lyle Vicaire
- Canada Space Agency, demonstrating how satellite technology and earth observation can support environmental monitoring and land management, presented by Dalia Laoubi

The Cumulative Effects of Climate Change Conference reinforced that responding to a changing climate requires an integrated approach, one that respects Indigenous knowledge and rights which strengthening environmental stewardship, emergency preparedness, climate adaption, and access to technical information. Through knowledge sharing and collaboration, the conference provided First Nations land professionals with diverse perspectives and practical information to support their work in protecting lands and preparing communities for changing climate conditions.

CLIMATE



PARTNERSHIPS

ARALA values the relationships that contribute to building stronger First Nations land management capacity.

Throughout the year, we continued to collaborate with organizations including:

- National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA)
- Surveyor General Branch
- Indigenous Services Canada
- Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association
- Subject matter experts and partner organizations

These partnerships strengthen resources, knowledge, and opportunities available to our members.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026-2027

Together, we will continue to build strong, resilient communities thorough education, collaboration, and leadership

ARALA remains committed to supporting members by:

- Expanding professional development opportunities
- Growing member engagement and participation
- Strengthening governance and organizational sustainability
- Increasing collaboration with First Nations and partner organizations and regional lands associations across Canada
- Supporting the continued advancement of First Nations land management professionals

+ SAVE THE DATE!

Upcoming Toolkit Training



Environmental Management Toolkit Training

The Environmental Management Toolkit Training offered by ARALA provides participants with a practical overview of environmental management on reserve lands and traditional territories.

*October 20-22, 2026
Four Points by Sheraton
Moncton, NB*



Indian Lands Registry System Toolkit Training

The focus of this training is to provide participants with an understanding of the Indian Lands Registry System (ILRS). The 2.5-day training will provide land technicians with hands-on experience completing various instruments, associated application page, navigating the Electronic Registry Index Plan (eRIP), while sharing knowledge and experiences.

*November 24-26, 2026
Sandman Dartmouth
Dartmouth, NS*





Stay Connected

Watch for upcoming training opportunities, networking events, committee activities, and announcements, visit us at **www.arala.ca** Your participation is essential to the continued success of ARALA



Acknowledgments

ARALA extends heartfelt thanks to our members, Board of Directors, Elders, volunteers, facilitators, and partners whose commitment makes our work possible.

Your knowledge, leadership, and dedication continue to strengthen First Nations land management throughout Atlantic Canada. We look forward to another successful year together.

THE ATLANTIC REGION ABORIGINAL LANDS ASSOCIATION

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+ arala.ca





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