

The Canadian Scene



Hon. Simeon Mikkungwak

New Nunavut Speaker

On May 28, 2019, Baker Lake MLA **Simeon Mikkungwak** was elected Speaker of the Nunavut Assembly. Mr. Mikkungwak, who was elected in a secret ballot over MLAs **Paul Quassa**, **Tony Akoak** and **Pat Angnakak**, replaces former Speaker **Joe Enook** who passed away in March.

“Having served as Deputy Speaker for our late Speaker, I am deeply touched,” Mr. Mikkungwak said. “My colleagues, it’s evident that we will work well together on behalf of Nunavummiut. I also humble myself for being elected as Speaker.”

First elected in 2013 and re-elected in 2017, in addition to his role as Deputy Speaker, Mr. Mikkungwak also served as Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole.



Hon. Nathan Cooper

Prior to entering politics Mr. Mikkungwak worked as an inspector for the Kivalliq Inuit Association, an alcohol and drug specialist for Nunavut’s Department of Health and Social Services, a court interpreter, and deputy mayor of Baker Lake.

New Alberta Speaker

Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills MLA **Nathan Cooper** was selected Speaker of the 30th Alberta legislature on May 21, 2019 in a secret ballot over Edmonton-Manning MLA **Heather Sweet**, who served as deputy chair of committees in the previous assembly. Mr. Cooper, who at 39 is the youngest Alberta Speaker in more than 80 years, has a reputation in the Assembly for his sense of humour and his love of parliamentary procedure.

"I think the thing that I hope to do is strike the right balance of being a Speaker who has a keen sense of when to interject and when to allow the members of the assembly to continue in the cut and thrust of debate," he told reporters, noting he would "try his very best Dad voice" when dealing with unruly MLAs.

Mr. Cooper said he planned to apply the rules consistently while hoping debates would be "vigorous, thoughtful and amicable."

While working to remain order in Assembly, Mr. Cooper explained that he did not view the legislature as a workplace like any other. "This is the peaceful way we do battle," he said of Assembly debates. "We are doing battle for ideas in democracy."

New PEI Speaker

Souris-Elmira MLA **Colin LaVie** was elected Speaker of the PEI Assembly on June 13, 2019 in a secret ballot over MLA **Hal Perry**. Mr. Perry became deputy speaker. Speaker LaVie, who replaces retiring Speaker **Francis "Buck" Watts**, said his admiration for Speaker Watts and other previous Speakers inspired him to seek the chair.

First elected as a Progressive Conservative MLA in 2011, Speaker LaVie has won re-election twice. While sitting in Opposition, he served as critic for fisheries and agriculture, and as the Opposition whip.

"I want to thank you all for showing me your support," Speaker LaVie said following his election. "It's a real honour to sit in the Speaker's chair.... Everyone is equal inside these rails."

A local lobster fisher, Speaker LaVie is very active in his community. He serves as Chief of the Souris Fire Department and is a long-time volunteer with the Eastern Kings Sportsplex.

New Clerk of the Alberta Assembly

On May 24, 2019, Speaker Cooper appointed **Shannon Dean** as the new Clerk of the Alberta Assembly. Dean, who is the first woman to be named to the position, replaces **Merwan Saher**.



Hon. Colin LaVie

After earning a Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Alberta in 1987, Ms. Dean attended Osgoode Hall Law School at York University and graduated in 1991.

During her more than 20 years at the Alberta Assembly, Ms. Dean has held numerous positions including Senior Parliamentary Counsel, Law Clerk, and Director of House Services. She also served as Acting Clerk following former Clerk **Rob Reynolds** retirement.

Noting her extensive experience working in non-partisan roles for the Assembly, Speaker Cooper said he believes the Legislative Assembly Office should be "very pleased to work under the leadership of Ms. Dean."

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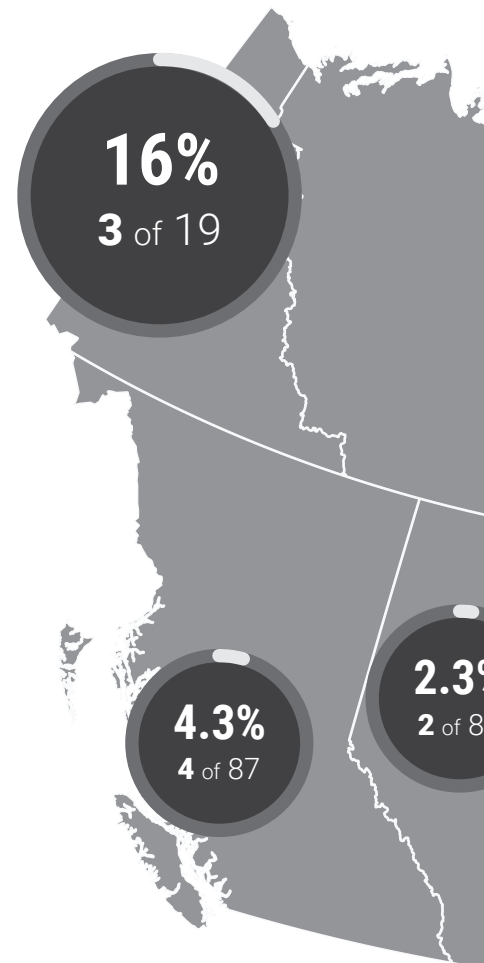


*As of June 30, 2019

Indigenous Parliamentarians Across Canada: By the Numbers

Following Confederation, Indigenous Peoples in Canada faced various restrictions which prevented many of them from participating actively within the country's parliamentary system. Enfranchisement was delayed for Status Indians and uneven across provinces when federal legislation extending voting rights was repealed.¹ Systemic barriers brought about by the affects of centuries of colonialism, including poverty, racial prejudice and lack of adequate health care and education further limited capacity for participation. Moreover, the nation to nation understanding of treaty rights led some Indigenous Canadians to decline to exercise their right to vote or stand for office when enfranchisement was granted. Despite facing these kinds of barriers, Indigenous Parliamentarians have grown in number over the past few decades.

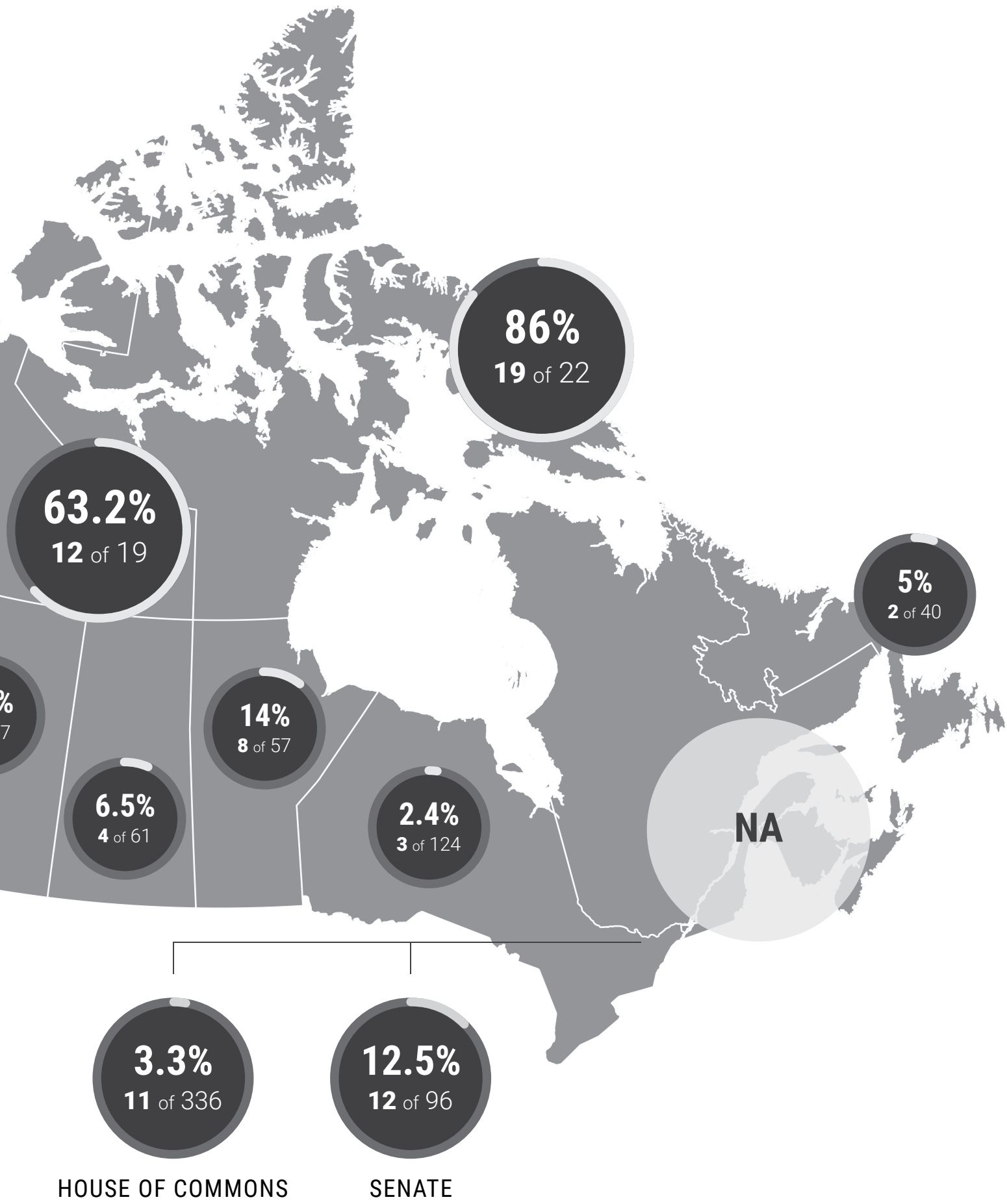
The Association of Parliamentary Libraries in Canada has confirmed the following number of Members self-identify as Indigenous as of April 10, 2019. In the case of Yukon, which does not have a legislative librarian, its numbers were confirmed through the Yukon Legislative Assembly Office.



¹ Indigenous Suffrage, The Canadian Encyclopedia.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/timeline/indigenous-suffrage>

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