

# Gugoontrii gweedhaa ji' yeenoo nits'oo tr'igwiindai' ganatr'agwaahandaii

When times are hard, we remember our cultural teachings

**2021 General Assembly**

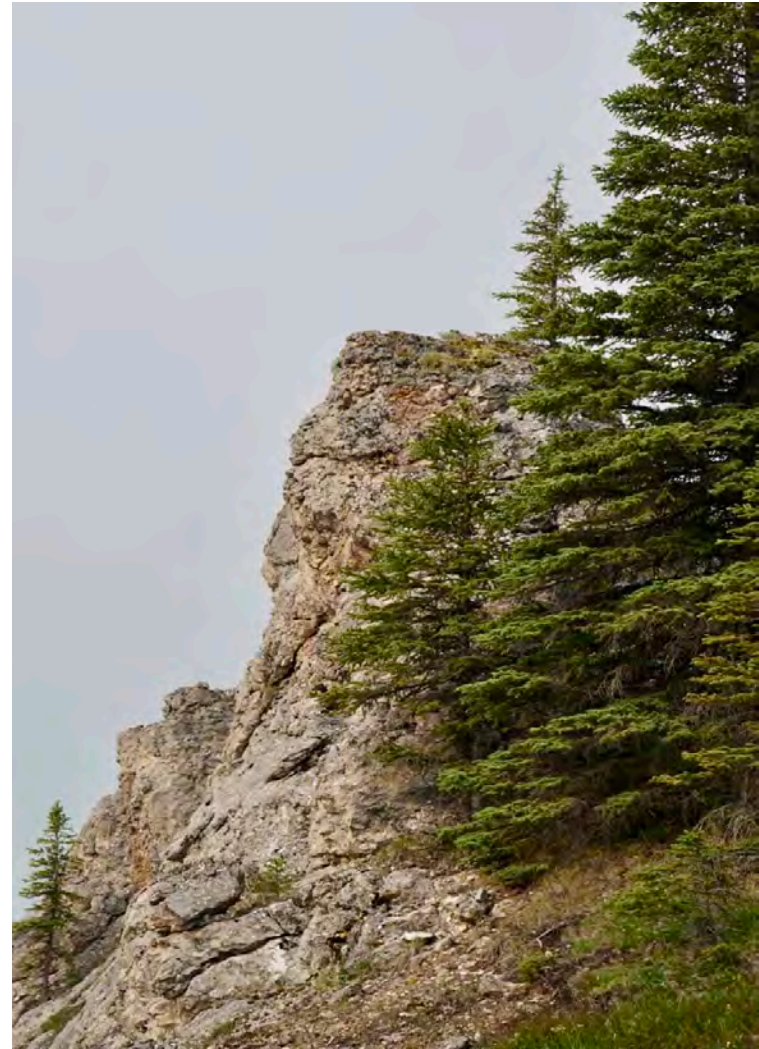
September 22 to 24, 2021





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Bluefish Caves. *Photo by S Smith*

# General Assembly Rules of Order

*Refer to: Articles VI Vuntut Gwitchin General Assembly*

1. There shall be a general assembly composed of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Citizens.
  2. A meeting of the General Assembly shall be held annually during the month of August, and additional meetings of the general assembly may be held at the call of the Council at any other time.
  3. Any Citizen of the General Assembly may speak in the traditional language of the Vuntut Gwitchin and, where possible, translation may be made available.
  4. A notice of a meeting of the General Assembly with the proposed agenda shall be posted throughout the community of Old Crow and such notice shall be given two weeks before the meeting. Notice of any meeting of the General Assembly shall be given through print and the electronic media and such notice shall allow sufficient time to make arrangements to permit the members to be present.
  5. The quorum of the General Assembly shall be 25 members present and eligible to vote in the General Assembly.
  6. Agreement by consensus at all meetings of the General Assembly will be encouraged and in cases where general agreement cannot be reached the majority vote of those eligible members present shall be required for the approval of motions.
  7. Only members who are sixteen years of age or older may vote in meeting of the General Assembly.
- Power, duties and responsibilities of the General Assembly shall include:
- a) Consideration and approval of reports including financial reports received from the Council;
  - b) Consideration and approval of reports from the Court and Elders Council;
  - c) Determining general policy guidelines and direction for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Council for the forthcoming year; and
  - d) Mending this constitution.
8. The General Assembly has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine disputes and to make findings and decisions respecting the interpretation and application of the constitution.



## Message from Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm

Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Kut,

We are proud to come to our people in another gathering of one of the most important functions in our journey of Self-Government, the meeting of the General Assembly. I always look to this gathering as the North Star to all our work as a people—to gauge our progress, measure our successes and report to the Vuntut Gwitchin on our homeland and in our way.

As I write this I wonder and now ask aloud, how can we capture the power and inclusion of such gatherings throughout our years as a government? How can leadership add value to our workplace and community? How can each one of us contribute to our community and governance as our elders set out to do for each of us not so long ago? I ask this as a leader and as a community member.

This year has certainly met us with the challenges of the ongoing pandemic; it has presented us with new challenges while making others we face together even more pressing and difficult. Yet the storms that crash upon our lives shall not sink us, nor shall they deter our progress. No matter what we may face as a people, we shall find that we indeed have much to be grateful for, and successes in light of these challenges.

We continue to hold the strength of our ancestors and again gather to share it with one another.

I am especially proud to greet the General Assembly with our new Council members, Bonnee Bingham and Ryan Newman-Kaye. Together with Deputy Paul Josie, Councillor Tracy Rispin, we will work together to make this year a meaningful and productive one. We have forged a new path in growing our governing practices that will stand to serve our people in the future—guiding future leadership, serving the government and therefore the people.

This past year has been informed by past Councillors and a pandemic which shook governments around the world to their core. We have reflected on what we can learn from this and have set out to build these lessons into the very function of our government. This is reflected in an entirely new department rising from this vision: Intergovernmental Relations and Governance is a symbol of what we can accomplish even in the midst of hard times.

This year has not made us weaker, but stronger; it has not made us give up, but work harder; it has not made us lose hope, but rather showed us the importance of hope.

We will not give up on our national work regarding education, housing, relations, and of course our lands and animals. We continue in strength on Territorial matters with fellow Yukon

First Nations and the Yukon Government across the many tables we attend in order to ensure our peoples' voices inform the decisions being made. Although we may go to Whitehorse and Ottawa to bring solutions to our nation, it is the meetings with our people that are most important. Now, coming out of a once in a century pandemic, we may gather again, hold discussions, continue vital conversations and our work together.

This year was a truly transformative one. This General Assembly will show that we are growing as a government, that we are taking the next step to serve our people, and that we have accomplished a great deal despite the hardships brought by the pandemic.

This could not have happened without the hard work within the Executive and Administrative branches of our government. I give my thanks to our staff, each one of you makes a valuable difference. To our new staff, we welcome you to the heart of our people; to our people, you have the power and expertise; to our elders, you give us guidance and strength; to our youth, you give us hope and reason; and once again to my fellow councillors, Paul Josie, Tracy Rispin, Bonnee Bingham and Ryan Newman-Kaye, it is an honour to work beside you, Haii cho.

This is just the beginning. We look forward to the birth of a new way of governing over the course of this year. But first, to the General Assembly, let us begin our discussions.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm*



## Executive Office

Drin Gwiinzii,

As we all know, this past year has been a challenge and strain on us all. We have had numerous people acting as the Executive Director and so we've taken a collaborative approach to report from the Executive Director's office.

COVID-19 has continued to challenge the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (VGG), our employees, VGFN Citizens and our community. The government has had to take extraordinary steps to ensure the safety and protection of everyone in the community—especially our elders and young people—by declaring a community emergency.

The community was locked down in November 2020, which led to the development of our Covid Risk Matrix, and then again during the outbreak in the Yukon in June and July 2021. The risk matrix was established to ensure we all have clarity on how the government would respond with specific thresholds, leading VGG to restrict access to Settlement Land for the protection of the community. We'd like to thank you all for your continued support and understanding as we've made these difficult decisions. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government is committed to creating a strong network of health and mental health supports.

VGG has also been doing a great deal of internal work to improve the office culture, strengthen our policy frameworks and support governing structures.

With the finalization of the third-party Organizational Review done by KPMG, the creation of the Governance Handbook and the development of an HR plan, we are on sure footing to continue our path to VGG being an employer of choice. We are planning and coordinating the development of frameworks, policies, procedures, and processes to strengthen supports for our Citizens and provide deeper transparency at every level.

With the creation of the Intergovernmental Relations and Governance Department, we are in a position to significantly improve coordination within VGG to address external affairs, consultation, and implementation of the Vuntut Agreements. We have positioned ourselves with strong relationships and we stand strong on the shoulders of all of you who have made the Agreements a reality.

One of the most challenging positions to fill in any Indigenous government in Canada is the Executive Director. We have posted the position widely and will need to do so again to find the right fit. Although we are challenged with vacancies and capacity, Council has made this a top priority for the office of the Executive Director.

We look forward to meeting you all at the General Assembly to discuss our challenges and success—but most importantly, engaging with you all on the needs, issues and priorities of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Executive Director*

# Human Resources

## Human Resources Strategic Plan

A Human Resources Assessment was conducted by consultant Candace Morgan in August 2021. After meetings with the Chief and Directors, an HR Plan was developed that describes the areas within VGG where improvements could make the government stronger for the future. The following outlines an overview of the approved HR Plan.

Although we want to talk about the future, it is important to assess and speak about the current situation. There is work to be done to build an organization striving for excellence! The initial assessment found that Leadership and Directors are very committed across the organization. All speak of the need for positive change and are ready to roll up their sleeves and get to work transforming VGG!

## Organizational Structure

Working with the Directors, we will undergo a complete review of the purpose and functions of each department. Once we determine where the gaps and overlaps are, we will develop plans to clarify departmental roles and responsibilities and develop an overall organizational structure for Council's approval. Once the organizational structure is approved, the Human Resources consultant will work with Directors to develop

plans to assist their staff in developing competencies where needed to fulfil their responsibilities. This will be done with the aid of a forward-thinking performance management system, and training and development plans.

## Other HR Tools

In order for any organization to function effectively and efficiently, there is a need for good policies and procedures and other 'tools' to help staff. Throughout this project, we will strengthen many areas so that staff can focus on their responsibilities. These areas include:

Health and Safety Policies and Procedures; Administration Policies and Procedures; Position Reviews and Job Descriptions; Organizational Structure; Performance Management; Learning and Development; Mentorship; Compensation Review; Employee Benefits and Rewards; HR Information Systems and Processes; Staff Planning and Succession; Timekeeping and Payroll Systems; Community Skills Database; HR Process Improvements; Recruitment and On-Boarding.

Moving forward with a VGG Human Resources Plan is essential in coordinating and focusing effective and efficient human resources programs and services across the organization.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Human Resources*



## Intergovernmental Relations and Governance

Staff: Jordan Peterson (Director), Rebecca Shrubbs (Associate Director, on maternity leave), Juliann Fraser (Associate Director), Gyde Shepherd (Communications Manager).

### Establishing a New Department

As Director of the Intergovernmental Relations and Governance Department, I am thrilled to introduce our newly established department to the community. The department was established via Council Resolution No. 03162021-05 on March 16, 2021.

The purpose of this new department is to build capacity and retention within VGG and to create a team that focuses on supporting and coordinating across departments to implement the VGFN agreements, build governance capacity and facilitate strong intergovernmental relationships.

### The Role of the Intergovernmental Relations and Governance Department

The function of Intergovernmental Relations and Governance (IRG) is to oversee VGG's responsibilities in implementing the Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements and to manage intergovernmental relationships between the Vuntut Gwitchin Government, other First Nations, governments and organizations across the country.

IRG is also a steward for the Constitution, oversees the development of VGFN laws, provides advice on policies and legislation, and supports the Elders Council and Youth Council. Finally, IRG is responsible for internal VGG communications and external communications to Citizens, media and stakeholders.

## IRG's Four Functions

### Intergovernmental Relations

Intergovernmental Relations manages intergovernmental relationships (Nation-to-Nation and Nation-to-organization/government). For example, this includes working closely with Yukon First Nations, Modern Treaty Holders, The Northern Chiefs, the Government of Yukon, the Government of Canada, Gwich'in Council International and other key stakeholders.

### Governance

Governance ensures that Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation values and knowledge align with VGG legislation and policy, and with the Constitution.

### Implementation

Implementation centers around honouring the spirit and intent of the Agreements and includes Nation-building and strategic planning, Land Claim implementation management and Self-Government management.

## Marketing and Communications

Marketing and Communications oversees all internal and external communications for VGG, ensuring its messages are consistent and engaging. This function is responsible for the implementation of VGG's Communications Plan and oversees the development and distribution of all marketing materials to ensure consistency across the government.

## Hiring of new staff to better serve the community's needs

We are continuing to build our team so that it can carry out all of IRG's functions with internal capacity, thereby reducing VGG's dependence on consultants. A Senior Policy Analyst and a Nation-Building Manager will be hired soon. IRG is also initiating capacity-building to support the education and development of Citizens through an internship program.

## IRG Standing Committee Terms of Reference

IRG has drafted the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the IRG Standing Committee to ensure it captures all the functions and pre-existing sub-committees on matters such as legislative drafting, policy recommendations and constitutional review.

## Council Development

Multiple committees were doing similar, overlapping work in the past. The goal of the IRG Standing Committee is to streamline committee work, clearly define the meeting process and ensure committee members' time is used effectively.

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

A call for members to sit on the committee was posted on September 15, 2021 and will close on September 29 with its first official meeting scheduled for October 18, 2021. This is an exciting and momentous step for VGG.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Jordan Peterson, Intergovernmental Relations and Governance  
Director*



Aerial Shot of Old Crow. Photo by S Smith

## IRG Files and Projects

### **Gwich'in Excellence Project**

The Gwich'in Excellence Project (GEP) will significantly improve the operational capacity of VGG as a whole. Clarity, cohesion and unity is lacking within the organization, resulting in wasted resources, staffing issues and lost opportunities. Robust and standardized frameworks, policies, processes and procedures will bring much needed clarity across all departments and with all VGG's stakeholders. A standardized, cohesive framework will guide VGG toward excellence in all activities.

### **Communications Plan**

Mahsi' Choo to all staff and Citizens who participated in the workshops and surveys to inform the VGG Communications Plan 2021-2023. The response and feedback were outstanding, ensuring the plan truly reflects the vision of the community.

We are excited to share the Communications Plan, entitled Łyaa Gijnih Nizii Nihts'an Tr'ahahtsyaa Ts'at... Gwiintl'oh Gwiinzii Tr'igiheekhyaa... Nihjih Kheh Ts'ó' ("We will exchange good words and have a strong back and forth conversation together"). The plan was accepted on September 7, 2021, via council resolution and copies are available for every household in Old Crow or for download on the VGG website.

### **Organizational Audit**

As per General Assembly Resolution No. 2020-04 External Audit on VGG Administrative Structure, VGG engaged the consulting KPMG, a third-party consultant, to conduct an audit on the administrative structure of the executive and senior management for the VGG. KPMG held numerous workshops and interviews with Council and senior staff and has compiled a final report which will be presented by KPMG to the General Assembly.

### **COVID Support: Communications and Coordination**

Whether you work the front lines or behind the scenes, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all. It was clear from the beginning that VGG needed to do everything within its power to keep the virus from entering the community. As an organization already struggling with capacity, COVID-19 placed an additional burden on staff and departments.

Although not previously versed in pandemic or virus terminology, VGG staff quickly became experts and went to work advocating for VGFN Citizens and the community of Old Crow. It was a steep learning curve, and we continue to learn and adapt as the pandemic continues, as research advances and as the virus evolves. IRG took on the task of providing COVID-19 communications to the community with regular, succinct, targeted reports to VGFN Citizens and the community.

IGR also worked directly with the YG to coordinate and support the Old Crow vaccine clinics. Again, when the first vaccine clinic was coming to Old Crow, it was new to everyone and a large amount of planning, coordination and teamwork was required by various agencies and departments. We advocated for a clinic in Old Crow that was tailored to the needs of the community and was barrier-free to ensure anyone who wanted the vaccine could get it. Communications focussed on dispelling vaccine myths and providing the community with facts from trusted resources.

### **COVID-19 Legislation and Policy**

Passing the Community Emergency Act (CEA) allowed VGG to put the needs of community members at the forefront and enforce measures that went beyond what the territory was recommending. As Yukon's only remote, fly-in community, the CEA was able to put the community's safety first. Subsequent policy accompanied the Act and provided the administration with a matrix to navigate particular COVID-19 thresholds.

### **Governance Training**

We have partnered with organizations like the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate (YFNED) to put together training for all VGG managers, directors and Council. In March 2021, VGG held a three-day governance training course for managers and Council on governance best practices which allowed for team-building and a understanding of the roles and responsibilities of VGG administration and Council. We will continue with ongoing governance training in the coming months and years.

### **Council Orientation Binder**

A proper orientation is key to any new employee's success and joining Council is no different. In fact, as leaders, it is even more important that Council fully understand the roles and responsibilities of a Councillor, as well as the policies, procedures and supports available to support them and the work of VGG.

When a by-election was called on January 11 for February 8, 2021, IGR first, developed a "Running for Council" pamphlet, which was a wonderful suggestion from a Citizen. The pamphlet outlined day-to-day roles and responsibilities of Council and answered some commonly asked questions. Second, IRG worked to refresh the existing Council Orientation Binder, which includes the following sections:

- **Government Overview** ~ VGFN Land Claims and Self-Government Agreements; Governance Structure Maps; Organizational Charts; VGG Legislation; VGG Policy.
- **Budget Information** ~ Governance Act; Appropriations Act; Audited Financial Statements.
- **Election Commitments** ~ Facilitated sessions to go through Political Commitments from past Council Members within the current term.
- **Role of Chief and Council** ~ Overall Role and Responsibility; Oath of Office; Oath of Confidentiality and Secrecy; Code of Conduct (draft); Decision Making; Monthly Meeting Protocol; Standing Committees.

IRG now provides Council with an in-depth Orientation process that spans their first month in office. The last Governance Training for Council, directors and managers was funded through YFNED and was a beneficial opportunity for all involved.

### **Governance Handbook**

Stemming from the work on the Council Orientation Binder, IGR facilitated sessions with Council, led by Castlemain Group, to support strong core governance practices by:

Developing a draft Chief and Council Governance Handbook that includes the following *core governance* policies:

- VGG Council Rules and Procedures Policy
- VGG Standing Committees Rules and Procedures Policy
- VGG Council Conflict of Interest Policy
- VGG Council Communications Policy
- Ensuring discussions at the Council retreat and orientation are incorporated into the handbook

Ensuring VGG principles, values and laws, are reflected in the handbook.

Core Governance is:

- Guided by traditional teachings and cultural identity
- Exercising our inherent rights

- Engaging in Nation building
- Fulfilling the promise of our Land Claim and Self-Government Agreement
- Improving the quality of life of our people and safeguarding the land
- Defining our own standards and benchmarks of success (Ni'inlii Declaration)
- Improving internal and external communications
- Updating workplans, policies, procedures and templates
- Developing strategic paths and change management approaches to address Citizens' needs and expectations

The Governance Handbook will provide Council with an easily accessible guide and set of tools to navigate governance, while upholding VGFN laws and core governance policies during their term. Chief and Council finalized the Handbook on September 7, 2021, via council resolution.

### **Strategic Plan**

VGG has been undergoing a comprehensive review since January 2020. With the COVID-19 pandemic it has slowed much of this work to allow for the government to focus on supporting Citizens and the community during this difficult time. With much of the harder times behind us, Council is endeavoring to have the VGG Strategic Plan completed by October 2021.



### **North Yukon First Nations Intergovernmental Accord ('Northern Chiefs')**

In 2015, VGG, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Na-Cho Nyak Dun established the North Yukon First Nations Intergovernmental Accord. The Accord affirms that the Northern Nations "share a way of life based upon a cultural, spiritual and economic relationship with the land" and that, among other things, "intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration is both desirable and practical in order to ensure sustainable development in North Yukon and protect the resources and traditional values of North Yukon First Nations people."

The Accord establishes a framework for collaboration, asking Chiefs to meet at least three times a year and for intergovernmental and technical staff to oversee implementing the initiatives identified at the Northern Chiefs' table. An Appendix to the Accord allows the Chiefs to update shared priorities as political landscapes evolve. Priorities include:

- Ongoing collaboration and collective strategies for oil, gas and minerals;
- Integrated renewable resources management;
- Collaborative approaches on regional land-use planning;
- Collaboration on drugs, alcohol and mental wellness, including unity on community resources and an agreement with YG to increase efforts;
- Collaboration and information-sharing on projects and joint-action to address climate change at all levels;

- Sustainable development; and
- A collective approach to working with external entities at both the political and technical levels.

### **Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN)**

As an associate member, VGG continues to attend Leadership meetings and gatherings hosted by CYFN. While VGG does not have voting privileges, we continue to leverage VGG priorities at these important tables.

### **Assembly of First Nations (AFN)**

VGG continues to participate with AFN at the regional and national levels. AFN Regional Chief Kluane Adamek holds regular Leadership Summits and VGG is a current member of the AFN Yukon Executive Committee. AFN works to ensure Yukon First Nations issues are a focus at the national level through advocacy and intergovernmental relations.

Chief Tizya-Tramm is also the Yukon's representative on AFN's Advisory Committee on Climate Action and the Environment (ACE), where he provides leadership and direction to the AFN Environment portfolio and works to advance First Nations' jurisdiction and self-determination within the context of the natural environment. The work of the ACE addresses climate change, species at risk, Indigenous protected and conserved areas, and environmental and regulatory reviews.

### **Land Claims Agreements Coalition (LCAC)**

Modern treaty holders face significant challenges in achieving full implementation of their agreements, in large part due to Canada's refusal to develop mechanisms for full implementation, undermining the fundamental premise of these agreements. This has forced some LCAC members to turn to the courts.

VGG Chief and/or IGR staff join monthly teleconference meetings and attended the LCAC Conference and Annual Leadership Meeting in Ottawa in February 2021. Formed in 2003, the LCAC is made up of Modern Treaty holders across Canada, some of which have Self-Government Agreements. The goal of the coalition is to ensure modern treaties & agreements are fully respected, honoured and implemented. The LCAC coordinates the following with regards to Modern Treaty implementation:

#### **Amending the Interpretation Act**

A Ministers' Working Group on the Review of Laws and Policies was formed in February 2017 to "examine relevant federal laws, policies, and operational practices to help ensure the Crown is meeting its constitutional obligations with respect to Aboriginal and treaty rights". However, since the sheer number of statutes and regulations was a major obstacle to the group, it dissolved.

The solution proposed by Indigenous governments and scholars is to address all the laws simultaneously by making an amendment to the Interpretation Act, which would read:

*"Every enactment shall be construed so as to uphold existing Aboriginal and treaty rights recognized and affirmed under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, and not to abrogate or derogate from them."*

LCAC is working tirelessly to bring this issue to the forefront. In January 2021, it wrote to David Lametti, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, to provide a statement of support for the amendment.

#### **Deputy Minister's Oversight Committee (DMOC)**

The DMOC, chaired by the Deputy Minister of Crown Indigenous Relations, was established to oversee Canada's efforts in fulfilling its implementation obligations with regards to Modern Treaties.

#### **Modern Treaty Implementation Office (MTIO)**

LCAC has flagged some challenges with the MTIO, including an overwhelming lack of engagement between federal departments and the MTIO, and is therefore recommending that the office report directly to the Deputy Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, or the Privy Council. The MTIO is supposed to provide oversight of Canada's modern treaty obligations between and within federal departments and to assist LCAC.

#### **Modern Treaty Implementation Review Commission (MTIRC)**

LCAC's foundational document, the Four-Ten Declaration states: "there must be an independent implementation and review body, separate from the Department of Indian Affairs

and Northern Development.” LCAC is advocating for a Modern Treaty Implementation Review Commission to act as this review body; it would monitor and report to Parliament on the progress of Modern Treaty implementation and exist within the Office of the Auditor General or a similar arm’s length office. Furthermore, the MTIRC would have legislative authority, including powers to initiate and conduct reviews and reports of Parliament’s progress in fulfilling treaty obligations.

### **Model Implementation Policy**

The LCAC continues to push for a Model Implementation Policy to ensure that modern treaties are fully implemented and consistent with their spirit and intent. The policy would highlight the distinction between obligations and objectives, and other integral components of modern treaties. Since it formed in 2003, the LCAC has lobbied for a “broad, effective, publicly-released modern treaty implementation policy.” In the absence of such a policy, LCAC in 2008 developed and delivered to Canada its own Model Policy, to which a response was never received.

### **Modern Treaty Management Environment (MTME)**

The Modern Treaty Management Environment is a database designed to track and report on federal progress on treaty objectives, resolved issues and to showcase rights that aren’t necessarily ‘obligations’. The MTME includes performance data that could eventually be used for annual reporting on treaty implementation.

LCAC continues to assist Canada in building the new database. The MTME replaces the original TOMS (Treaty Obligation Management System), which LCAC felt was inadequate.

### **Assessment of Modern Treaty Implications (AMTI)**

LCAC continues to press for the full application of the AMTI process, which requires that all federal legislation and policy initiatives be assessed for potential implications to modern treaties before they proceed to cabinet. This is because modern treaty holders often discover too late that a new law contradicts their treaty rights.

Despite the adoption of the AMTI in 2016 by the Deputy Minister’s Oversight Committee, significant revisions to the Fisheries Act, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and others, have not been subject to this process, nor has any contact been made with modern treaty holders to collaborate on legislative assessments. Some modern treaty partners have begun legal proceedings against the federal government for the lack of AMTI consultation.

### **Performance Measurement Framework (PMF)**

LCAC, in collaboration with DMOC and MTIO, is working to develop qualitative and quantitative indicators for common treaty objectives it identified in 2018, including:

- Culture, Language and Heritage
- Economic Development

- Environment
- Governance / Relationships
- Social Development

The Performance Measurement Framework for modern treaty implementation has the potential to be a key tracking tool for the implementation progress, however, limited technical resources and competing priorities has hindered its success. The Land Claims Agreements Coalition continues to keep a close eye on the PMF process; under the Cabinet Directive, the Modern Treaty Implementation Office (MTIO) has an obligation to complete it.



Van Tat Gwatsal (Little Flat). Photo by S Smith

### **Gwich'in Council International (GCI)**

GCI continues to be an important body to leverage the Gwich'in Nation voices on the international stage. VGG's appointed director is Erin Linklater; a call for nominations in the near future will be made for a second appointment.

### **Yukon Forum**

The Yukon Forum, established in 2005 and revitalized in 2016, is a quarterly meeting of Yukon First Nations Chiefs and Yukon Government Ministers in order to build "strong government-to-government relations and collaborate on shared priorities".

VGG brings a strong voice to the table and continues to push for a Yukon Forum that asks difficult questions, addresses common issues for all Yukon First Nations and keeps all levels of government accountable and working together. IGR provides Council with the technical support needed to come to the table fully informed on joint priority items including:

- Fiscal Relations
- Bilateral and trilateral processes for engagement
- Land Claim and Self-Government implementation
- The Yukon legislative agenda

Old Crow was set to host the Yukon Forum in 2020 as the Yukon Forum site rotates between the communities, however COVID-19 disrupted those plans.

## **Yukon Days**

Yukon Days is a collaborative effort between Yukon First Nations and YG to build stronger partnerships with the Government of Canada. Ministers, Chiefs and senior officials decide on joint priorities to discuss during face-to-face meetings every February with federal Ministers in Ottawa.

## **Youth Council**

One of the functions of IGR is to develop opportunities for Youth to participate in government, as well as in projects and programs that foster the values of the VGFN, including internships that will grow capacity among VGFN Citizens.

## **Elders Council**

IGR will work with the Elders Council to look at more effective ways to strengthen partnerships between Elders and Youth. VGFN Citizens of all ages agree that our elders serve a critical role in language fluency, storytelling and wisdom in governance.

# **Fiscal Relations with Canada and Yukon**

## **Financial Transfer Agreement**

VGFN's five-year Self-Government Financial Transfer Agreement (FTA) took effect April 1, 2019, and expires March 31, 2024. The annual ongoing value of the FTA is \$14.5 million (or \$14,531,949) plus an additional \$1.5 million in amendments (shown below). VGG along with other Yukon First Nations negotiated amendments to the FTA, effective April 1, 2021, as follows:

- VGG is currently negotiating with Canada to increase funding for community infrastructure and related operations and maintenance as there has been inadequate funding under the current FTA for the replacement and maintenance of existing assets. The basis for these negotiations is a 2019 report by Stantec Engineering listing VGFN's assets and the cost to replace and maintain them.
- While the 2019 FTA is a significant increase relative to the 2010 FTA, it falls short of Canada's commitment to "comparability in funding arrangements" under Section 16.1 of the Self-Government Agreement. VGG will continue to seek fulfillment of Section 16.1, including through the co-development of new federal funding mandates through Canada's Collaborative Fiscal Policy Development Process.
- The 2019 FTA allows VGG to incorporate additional funding that may become available as a result of changes in federal policy or the announcement of new federal programs.



### **Comprehensive Funding Agreement (CFA) in relation to COVID-19**

VGG, along with other Self-Governing Indigenous Governments (SGIGs) and Modern Treaty Nations MTNs), engaged with Canada to negotiate on fiscal issues related to COVID-19.

As a result of those efforts, all were successful in accessing direct funding for COVID-19, rather than relying on application-based funding, in the amount of \$544,423 for 2020-21 and \$365,556 for 2021-22.

### **Collaborative Fiscal Policy Development Process**

Under the Collaborative Fiscal Policy Development Process, self-governing Indigenous governments and Canada have been co-developing a new federal policy on Self-Government funding that incrementally enhances the fiscal relationship.

Many of the gains in the 2019 FTA were secured through our participation in that process. SGIGs at the collaborative fiscal table developed two submissions to Canada's budget planning with respect to infrastructure and housing based on housing surveys and infrastructure studies carried out in 2019 and 2020, resulting in \$517 million for First Nation Housing and Infrastructure in the 2021-22 Budget. Of this, \$290 million was allocated to the 25 SGIGs at the collaborative fiscal table, plus three modern treaty nations; VGFN is expected to receive \$10 million over four years.

### **Negotiation Loan Reimbursement**

Minister Carolyn Bennett, Crown-Indigenous Relations, confirmed in a 2019 letter to VGFN that the full \$7,143,137 in negotiation loans, which had been repaid by VGFN, would be reimbursed in five equal annual installments beginning that fiscal year. The first two payments have been invested until a decision can be made on how to spend it.

### **Community Wellbeing and Jurisdiction Initiatives Funding**

Retroactive funding for First Nations children and families living on reserve and in Yukon who are not served by a First Nations Child and Family Services agency includes more than \$2.2 million for VGFN, in addition to \$433,726 for the 2021-22 fiscal year and for years following, until the First Nations Child and Family Service program is revised to meet the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's (CHRT) orders.

VGFN is reviewing the requirements of the program to determine the most appropriate way to access this funding, which was announced in the summer of 2021 as a result of the CHRT's successful case against Canada, brought forward by the Caring Society of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations.

### **Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care**

The 2021 federal budget includes \$2.5 billion over five years for Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) as part of a new, Canada-wide ELCC system. Discussions with Canada have begun to determine VGG's portion of the funding and to assist Yukon First Nations in developing ELCC legislation, however these discussions have been put on hold due to the federal election. VGG received approximately \$48,500 per year in ELCC funding for 2019/20 and 2021/22.

### **Intergovernmental Accord with Yukon**

Before the pandemic caused a delay in discussions, VGG had been working to renew its expired Intergovernmental Accord with Yukon, aiming for an agreement that would include stronger bilateral cooperation at the political and administrative levels.

### **Taxation**

Along with other Self-Governing Indigenous Governments and Canada, VGG is discussing new approaches to taxation to make sure any new policies do not conflict the current VGFN situation, or that they provide enhancements.

### **Section 15.8 of the Self-Government Agreement**

VGG and the governments of Canada and Yukon have agreed to amend Section 15.8 of the Self-Government Agreement to allow VGG to hold land and properties not Settlement Land or tangible

personal property located on Settlement Land. It also enables VGFN Citizens to collect income from a registered pension plan tax-free. These provisions are not retroactive and approvals have been delayed by the federal election.

### **Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)— Loan securitization re: Section 95 Housing Program**

VGG, in cooperation with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Carcross/Tagish First Nation, is in discussions with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to broaden its ability to build CMHC-eligible homes on Settlement Land that was not land "formerly set aside" for such purposes.

The current situation requires that a Ministerial Letter of Guarantee be provided to access CMHC Section 95 program subsidies/loans only on lands "formerly set aside." Canada is considering expanding the selection of eligible lands.

### **Resource Royalty Sharing with Yukon**

VGG is collaborating with other Yukon Self-Governing First Nations to secure from the Government of Yukon an increase in royalties from minerals, oil and gas from 10 per cent. Additionally, the First Nations are looking to expand resource royalty sharing to all resources, including forests and water.

## Government Services

Vanh Gwiinzii Shalak Naii,

I would like to recognize and acknowledge Lorraine Netro and her friends' long walk to Kamloops, BC, in bringing forward the stories of Residential School students who did not make it home.

I want to thank Paul Josie and Marilyn Charlie for putting their name forward for leadership last winter. It was a pleasure to meet and work with Marilyn and I was sad to see her go. I would like to welcome Bonnee Bingham and Ryan Newman-Kaye who were acclaimed and sworn-in to leadership this past August 2021. I also want to congratulate our new young MLA Annie Blake. It is good to see our young people stepping up to represent us.

In February 2021, we held a strategic planning exercise with Dennis Shewfelt as our facilitator. From March 23 to 26 Chief and Council and Directors participated in governance training with Kirk Cameron. The same training will be offered again soon. Chief and Council and Directors are also involved in an "Organizational Audit" and the "Gwitchin Excellence Project".

Government Services will be reviewing our Policies and Procedures—the guide on how we do things. There will be amendments and new policies to develop for these changing times. Records Management and putting Government Services online is also very important to us. I participated in the "Yukon First Nation Procurement Policy" initiative this year. The goal is to have a minimum of 15% of procurements come from Yukon

First Nation businesses. The initiative stems from the Umbrella Final Agreement's Chapter 22 to increase Yukon First Nation participation in Yukon's economy.

Road construction for the Winter Road and Back Haul Project will begin in early January 2022. Porcupine Enterprises will construct, maintain, operate, monitor and oversee freight hauling for the duration of the project, which should be completed by April 2022 at the latest.

I am working with the other members of the Energy Task Force (ETF) to look at how we use energy in Old Crow and to look at ways we can reduce our use of fossil fuels. For example, we work with Josh Clark at Air North to improve freight hauling by Air North into Old Crow.

Our community came through another challenging time with COVID-19 and its variants, so Mahsi' Choo to everyone who received both their COVID vaccine shots. There were a few positive COVID cases in Old Crow in early July, so be vigilant in protecting your family in these difficult times. Also, if you go out on the river, please wear your personal flotation device and remember we live in wildlife habitat.

Mahsi' Choo for all your support this past year, and what follows are reports from the Government Services Staff.

*William Josie, Government Services Director*

## Housing Division

Our mission in Housing is to provide safe, comfortable homes in good repair. To that end, we are undertaking inspections of all homes in Old Crow to ascertain current conditions, identify deficiencies and develop a plan with our workers to correct them. We have started our inspections in cooperation with our Construction Division, work orders have been issued for the most urgent situations and work has commenced.

We have many challenges with respect to the overall condition of our rental housing, but we want to assure our Citizens that we are working diligently to improve the quality of living for all. We have several applications for housing, and we are working hard to get all vacant units ready for tenants.

We are also in the process of investigating both Federal and Territorial initiatives that will assist us and homeowners to improve the energy efficiency in our homes. Finally, this fall we are anticipating going to tender for construction of four new homes on the North Road to be completed in 2022.

We encourage anyone who has made an application in the past for housing and has not been accommodated to contact the Housing Manager Steve Cook (966-3261, ext. 262) to make an appointment to update their application. All in all, it's an exciting and challenging time in the Housing Division.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*William Josie, Government Services Director*

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

## Capital Projects

**Old Crow Community Centre:** The Old Crow Community Centre is near completion. The septic system designed by KZA has not been approved by Environmental Health and therefore needs to be revised. The main issue is the installation of a tank that is not certified in Canada. The new certified tank to be installed is in Whitehorse and will need to come into Old Crow via Hercules due to its dimensions. Once in Old Crow the installation should only take 14 days. Until the approved tank and system is installed, Yukon Government Building Inspection cannot grant building occupancy as no water can be used in the building.

VGG is working diligently and moving this issue forward to bring the Community Centre to final completion.

### **VGFN Elders Complex**

The VGFN Elders Complex was tendered this summer and Wildstone Construction Ltd. was the successful bidder. VGG entered in August 2021 into a construction contract with Wildstone for just over \$20 million to build the Complex to a turn-key stage, meaning with all furniture, fixtures and equipment necessary to operate and move into the building. Extensive exterior site work is included as well.

The Federal Government is contributing \$9 million towards the project via the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP).

Additionally, VGG has two additional funding applications with separate federal funding programs, one with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) and the other with Infrastructure Canada's Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Fund. VGG is hoping to supplement the \$9 million with funds from both programs. The additional funding should be decided on by October 2021. The construction is to start immediately with the steel works this fall, then take a brief winter break. Construction will restart in March 2022 and the Complex is scheduled to be complete by December 2022.

### **Winter Road**

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government will be entering shortly into a Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) with the Yukon Government in the amount of \$2.5 million for the construction and operation of the winter road for this coming winter 2021-22. The work will be contracted out in its entirety to Porcupine Enterprises who in turn will hire the expertise required as well as provide lots of local business opportunities for services and equipment.

### **Industrial Subdivision**

Plans to start working on the road for a new industrial subdivision as per the Official Community Plan have stalled because the south main access into the subdivision was deemed too complicated, with only a road culvert crossing over the creek. The consultant TetraTech determined that the creek is substantial in width and has a strong enough flow seasonally that could wash out the culverts.

The high risk of cutting off the new subdivision makes a culvert crossing is not feasible according to the engineer. TetraTech suggested installing a bridge on piles. For this, an engineering team would be hired to design the bridge and its foundation, which would require a YESAB review and consultation with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Currently the plan is on hold until a direction forward has been determined.

### **Yukon Government Health and Wellness Centre and Tenplex**

The design and construction are proceeding as planned for the Yukon Government Health and Wellness Centre and Tenplex. The pile installation for the Tenplex will take place this winter with construction starting in March 2022. Construction for the Health and Wellness Centre is planned to begin in 2023, with the aim to have it completed by 2024. Between 2022 and 2024 TSL/Ketza has committed to provide work and apprenticeship opportunities as well as economic service opportunities for the residents of Old Crow.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Claudia Reh, Consultant*



## Natural Resources and Heritage

On behalf of the Natural Resources Department (NR), I am pleased to present NR's annual report to the General Assembly. Any matters related to land, fish and wildlife, culture and language, and renewable energy and climate change within VGFN is handled by the NR department.

### The NR Team

NR has a growing team of skilled and committed staff. The following is a list of NR staff members and their positions (in alphabetical order):

Jeremy Brammer, Fish and Wildlife Manager; Rosa Brown, Energy Coordinator; Caleb Charlie, NR Intern; Sophia Flather, Language Coordinator; Mary Jane Moses, Heritage Coordinator; Brandon Kyikavichik, Heritage Interpreter; Robert Kyikavichik, Game Guardian; Clifton Nukon, Fish and Wildlife Technician; Katherine Peter, Lands Steward; Brianna Tetlich, Language Assistant; Erika Tizya, NR Director and A/Lands Manager; Jenna Thomas, NR Clerk; Megan Williams, Heritage Manager.

Throughout the year NR's work is further supported by the roles fulfilled by committee members, short-term hired expertise, NR's standing committee member, and VGG's internal team. Engagement with Citizens also contributes greatly to our work through participation in NR meetings, phone calls or emails, and those who come by to visit with us regularly. NR always welcomes your questions and feedback.

As Director, I have oversight over a number of projects, programs, planning processes, and management responsibilities implemented by NR staff. Despite the challenges of a pandemic and limited capacity over the last year, our team has managed a substantial workload towards fulfilling NR's departmental goals and responsibilities. Below are some highlights.

## Operations

Much of how Natural Resources approaches its priorities are based on its 5-year (2017-2022) goals. The goals are to:

- Build and maintain the knowledge, skills and capacity to effectively manage natural and cultural resources in the VGFN Traditional Territory;
- Support and develop the participation of VGFN Citizens in the stewardship of natural and cultural resources in the VGFN Traditional Territory;
- Establish and maintain strong collaboration and leadership in the management of natural and cultural resources as envisioned in the VGFN Final and Self-Governing Agreements;
- Participate in global action against climate change;
- Participate in transboundary natural resources approach to natural resource management by effective communication with other Gwich'in governments and organizations (AK /NWT), and Yukon First Nations on common goals and objectives.

These goals help provide clear direction, inform NR's annual budget and work planning, and inform decision-making. The strategies that accompany these goals provide clear actions to help NR achieve our goals. Over the last year VGG has been working on finalizing its organizational strategic plan. Once complete, NR will review our departmental strategic plan to ensure alignment with VGG's visions and goals.

NR Managers meet regularly to provide updates, raise issues and solutions, and discuss work planning priorities. The NR Clerk and NR Director work closely to support NR staff in their day-to-day work. One departmental goal we did not achieve this last year was an NR retreat on the land, which I hope to make up for in the 2021-2022 year. As Director I chair the NR Committee and Energy Task Force, which have been meeting regularly over the last year.

NR has held some important community engagement sessions this last year concerning oil and gas, lands act consultations, forest harvesters engagement, the Old Crow community fish and wildlife plan, and radio shows on Chinook Salmon. Finally, together with HR and Yukon University's Alice Frost campus, I have also been involved in setting up getting an administrative assistant training program.

I look forward to more NR presence in the community this coming year with the success rate of vaccinations and relaxed COVID restrictions. I know it has been a tough year for everyone, but as Gwich'in we are adaptable and we get through anything when we work together. I feel honoured to be a part of VGG's team and our collective growth.

Finally, I have been acting Lands Manager for the last year since Rosa Brown transitioned into the Energy Coordinator role. I worked as the Lands Manager in the past, so I am familiar with the files. I am grateful for Rosa Brown's support when needed.

The Lands Steward role also supports Lands by managing VGFN Settlement Lands, lands within the community boundary, and lands legislation and policy related to Settlement Land dispositions and activities. NR continues its search for a qualified Lands Manager to take on this role.

Mahsi' Choo!

*Erika Tizya, Director of Natural Resources / Acting Lands Manager*



Blackfox Creek. Photo by S Smith

## Land Use Planning

### North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan

VGG and Yukon Government representatives meet annually to set implementation priorities based primarily on the recommendations in North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP). The Parties then meet quarterly to implement those annual priorities.

Annual reports highlight the past year's activities while setting next year's priorities. These reports are signed off by the respective leadership representatives and are made available publicly.

This year the Parties resumed meetings after a year pause due to COVID-19 and capacity issues. Annual Report discussions took place June 9 and 10, 2021. The main issues of focus included: 1) Access Management Plan; 2) Caribou Guidelines; 3) Surface Disturbance Reporting; 4) Planning of the Porcupine Headwaters; and 5) Plan Review.

The Access Management Plan for the Eagle Plains Land Management Unit #9 is close to a final draft for consultation; however, the Parties have a few items needing clarification, such as understanding any updates to YG regulations. This plan will provide guidance concerning access issues, recommendations and best practices relevant to the Eagle Plains region.

The YG department of Environment is finalizing a draft of the Porcupine Caribou Guidelines, which will be made available to the NYRLUP implementation committee for review and comments.

A draft of the Surface Disturbance Report completed by the Yukon Land Use Planning Council for the Eagle Plains Land Management Unit #9 is under review by the Parties and issues for further discussion have been flagged before this is marked complete.

Planning for the Porcupine Headwaters has been a significant point of discussion among the Parties, particularly related to process. This "new" planning area was created from the resolution of the Tr'ondëk Hwëchin First Nation and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory overlap.

The Parties need to determine how to proceed with a planning process. Some options have been discussed. Once the parties agree on a process, this of course will be presented to VGFN for discussion and feedback.

Finally, the issue of a Plan Review has been discussed at length with the main questions being determining the Plan's "effectiveness" and/or the "significance" of changes or gaps in the NYRLUP and its context that may trigger a full Plan Review. A Plan Evaluation report was done by an external consultant, providing the Parties with good points to consider concerning whether a Plan Review is needed at this point.

These five priorities will roll over to this year's annual priorities for completion with the addition of adaptive management, research, and improving the effectiveness of our NYRLUP implementation process.

### **Crow Mountain Local Area Plan**

As per GA resolution 2020-015, NR has sought advice on the best approach to this task. Local Area Planning is not common in the Yukon, but there are frameworks for consideration.

This plan is entirely on Settlement Land, which means no other jurisdictions or authorities' processes apply. Essentially, this is entirely a VGFN exercise. NR is approaching this in two phases: 1) a planning framework for consideration, and 2) drafting the plan. Once a framework is complete and reviewed internally, NR will take this to the public for feedback

### **Dàdzàii Vàn Territorial Park**

This planning process is on hold due to capacity issues and COVID-19. A draft management plan contains a few minor issues flagged for clarification before it goes for public consultation.

### **Dawson Regional Land Use Plan**

A draft plan has been released for public consultation. NR is conducting a review and will provide its comments to the Commission. The Planning Commission is planning a community tour in October to consult with the public.

### **Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan**

After the approval of the PWRLUP, an implementation committee made of reps from each of the Parties (NND, TH, VGFN, GTC, YG) was struck with the approval of a Terms of Reference signed off by leaders. The Peel Plan Implementation Committee (PPIC) has begun work on implementing some of the foundational pieces of the Plan's recommendations such as dealing with mining claims, Special Management Areas, standard terms and conditions, and administrative boundaries, to name a few. These meetings occur monthly.

### **Land Use Permits**

The Natural Resources Department issued a land use permit to the Old Crow Development Corporation (OCDC) for the transport of freight from Eagle Plains to Old Crow along the winter road route. This was the fifth year snowcats were used to haul freight into Old Crow, and the first year for OCDC as the sole operator.

While this is a beneficial service for residents and businesses of Old Crow, it is not without its challenges. The department completed two post-season patrols of the winter road route and noted a number of violations of permit terms and conditions. OCDC is responsible for these issues but is not currently operational. VGG is working to address the most immediate concerns, primarily to stabilize heavy equipment for removal on the 2021/22 winter road and to collect any remaining debris.

## Water

### **Yukon-NWT Bilateral Water Management Agreement**

This agreement was signed in 2002 and is an agreement between jurisdictions about how the Parties will cooperate to make decisions around the water that flows between them. It has been identified by the Parties that the agreement needs to be modernized to align with more recent trans-boundary agreements NWT has with Alberta and BC and the agreement Yukon has with BC.

Inaugural meetings of the Parties to this agreement were planned to be held in Old Crow in April 2020. Unfortunately, COVID-19 deferred these meetings until March 2021 via videoconferencing sessions. A consultation period started in January 2021. VGG provided our comments to the process and are currently being reviewed by YG.

### **Water/Snow Samples**

VGG continues to collect monthly water samples in the summer months and snow samples in the winter months. These samples get shipped to Yukon Water Resources Branch for lab analysis and contributes to ongoing monitoring of water quality and quantity around Old Crow.

## Oil and Gas

### **North Yukon Intergovernmental Oil and Gas Forum**

In December 2019, an MOU was signed between the three northern Yukon First Nation Chiefs (NND, VGFN, THFN) and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources for Yukon Government. The MOU formally established the North Yukon Intergovernmental Oil and Gas Forum (NYIOGF), which consists of representatives from each party and technical staff.

The Forum aims to increase cooperative and collaborative government-to-government relationships in relation to the administration and management of oil and gas resources in the respective Traditional Territories, facilitate development and implementation of complementary oil and gas regimes among the northern YFNs and the Yukon Government, and that these things are done in a way that align with the Parties' rights, interests, values, and concerns.

The most recent meeting of the Forum Principals discussed the draft work plan priorities recommended by the Forum working group. Work plan approval by the Parties' Principals is currently underway.



## Oil and Gas Engagement

Chance Oil and Gas Limited (formally Northern Cross Yukon) has been active in VGFN Traditional Territory since 2004, with their oil and gas interest dating back to the 1990's.

A 2014 NRCan Geological Survey report states that the Eagle Plains Basin holds up to 329 million barrels of crude oil and is the most feasible oil and gas basin in the Yukon in terms of development. COGL's active permit area covers over 1 million acres and the company holds 3 Significant Discovery Licenses, meaning these are proven petroleum discoveries. With the substantial oil and gas potential and interests that overlap with VGFN, VGFN will play a significant role.

In 2016, VGG identified the need for an oil and gas engagement policy based on a number of experiences including those with project proponents and participation in the YESAB process. VGG needed a framework for achieving deep and meaningful engagement in a way that effectively upholds VGFN rights and interests and leads to project support prior to entering the YESAB process.

In May 2018, the VGG Oil and Gas Engagement Policy ("the Policy") was approved by VGFN Council. The policy outlines a 3-stage process for engagement and achieving project consent: 1) Notice period; 2) Cooperation; and 3) Benefits and Stewardship (see Figure 1).

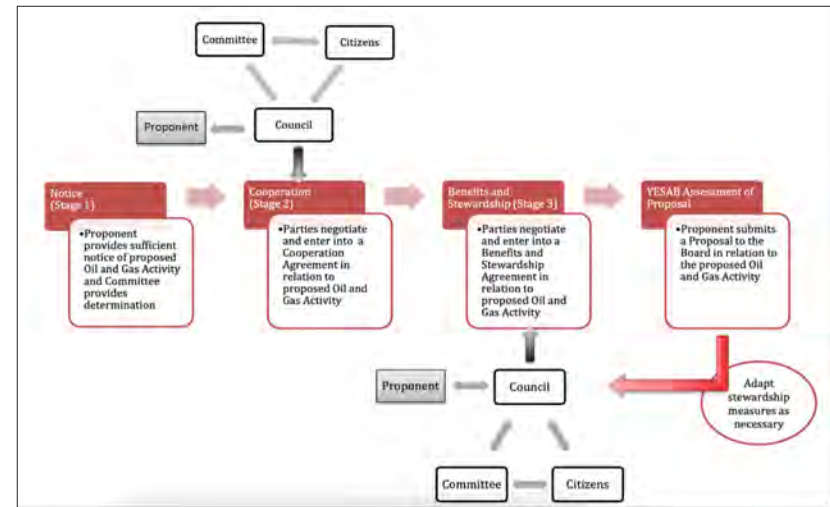


Figure 1. VGG Oil and Gas Engagement Policy 3-Stage Process

In June 2019, COGL submitted notice of their proposed Multi-Well Exploration Program to the Policy oversight committee ("Natural Resources Committee").

In July 2019, the parties advanced to stage two related to Cooperation. Here, the parties negotiate Cooperation Agreement terms regarding the community-based process for considering and consenting to the proposed project. To date, the parties have been unable to advance past the Cooperation stage. Throughout the last year, the parties made several attempts to re-engage without success. It is NR's understanding based on correspondence from COGL that they intend to submit a Multi Well Exploration Program September 30, 2021.

## **Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Board (YESAB)**

Currently there is one active project proposal in YESAB related to oil and gas activities in VGFN Traditional Territory. Chance Oil and Gas Limited is proposing a Well Maintenance and Exploration Program to take place this winter. COGL is proposing assessment and maintenance activities on 8 suspended wells with the possibility of Extended Flow Testing on up to 3 wells, and conversion of up to 2 wells to active deep injection wells for disposal of borehole waste fluids. They further propose to possibly abandon up to 6 wells and suspend up to 3 wells. Associated activities include road access, water use, vegetation clearing and a maximum 46-person work camp.

VGG has provided its comments on this project throughout the YESAB process. The main concerns noted by VGG in reviewing COGL's project proposal include: insufficient engagement, lack of inclusion of VGFN knowledge, insufficient assessment of project effects on caribou and moose, no assessment of project effects on VGFN traditional land use, incomplete alignment with the NYRLUP.

VGG looks forward to having our concerns addressed so we can better understand the project's impacts and COGL's mitigation measures.

## **Benefits Agreement**

Due to the financial scale of COGL's Well Maintenance and Exploration project proposal, the parties are required to negotiate a Benefits Agreement in relation to the project's potential benefits, employment, and training opportunities. The Parties have met on a few occasions to begin these discussions. At this point, VGG is looking forward to a draft Benefits Agreement for review and feedback.

## **Policy and Legislation**

### **VGFN Lands Act**

A lands act will establish regulations for land use and lease agreements on VGFN lands. After many drafts and reviews, in January 2020 the NRC deemed the draft Lands Act ready for public engagement and a proposed Citizen engagement plan was made. Engagement sessions were completed in Whitehorse on March 12, 2020, one day after COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. As a result, further engagement with VGFN Citizens was put on hold.

With COVID-19 restrictions relaxed and improved capacity within the NR department, plans are being prepared to commence public engagement, with the possibility of passing a VGFN Lands Act before Christmas.

## Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Act

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Board (YESAB) developed a new Pre-submission Engagement (PSE) process for Executive Committee screenings. Similar to the purposes of VGG's Oil and Gas Engagement Policy, this PSE process is meant to be a proactive, front-end process that occurs well before a project is submitted to YESAB Executive Committee screening. This will bring parties together early on in the process to review the project, identify gaps, define values and address other requirements before a project is submitted. NR was involved in these sessions from 2019-2020 and we are currently preparing comments to the final draft before it comes into legislative force.

## Mining

As a party to the 2017 Mining Memorandum of Understanding (MMOU), VGG participates as a member to this collaborative table set up to improve Yukon's outdated Mining Legislation. Due to capacity issues, NR has scaled back our participation to only those opportunities where our contributions may lead to significant impacts. One such opportunity arose through the Yukon Mineral Development Strategy 9-month public engagement process. VGG provided comments on the strategy based on our experience with Oil and Gas interest in the VGFN Traditional Territory and VGG's development of an Oil and Gas Engagement Policy. NR was pleased to see many of our recommendations to the YMDS Panel were incorporated into their Final Recommendations.

## Fish and Wildlife Manager

*Jeremy Brammer, Fish and Wildlife Manager*

Drin gwiinzii Teechik. Shoozri' Dinjii Dzan vaazhii.

I would like to begin by thanking everyone who has contributed to fish, wildlife, and habitat work over the past year. A big Mahsi' Choo to all those that participated in the Old Crow Fish and Wildlife Work Plan meetings in March, in caribou meetings in February, in salmon meetings throughout the year, or who were working on the land collecting samples, reporting harvest, dealing with wolves and bears around town, or letting us know what you see and think.

I started in this position one year ago and I would not have been able to get much done without all of your help and support.

The overall goal of the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the Natural Resources Department is to support the traditional local economy of the VGFN, an economy that depends on the fish, wildlife, and habitat of the VGFN Traditional Territory. This work can be divided into three major objectives:

- managing fish, wildlife, and habitat to ensure there are enough animals and plants for all generations of VGFN;
- coordinating research so we have the best information available for how fish, wildlife, and habitat in the Traditional Territory are changing; and

- supporting life on the land to ensure traditional lifestyles, skills, and knowledge continue to be practiced and shared in the VGFN Traditional Territory.

All of our long-term programs, shorter-term projects, and engagements with outside organizations work towards these objectives. This GA report will look at our work planning process overall, and then our individual programs, projects, and engagements under these three objectives.

## Fish and Wildlife Work Planning Overall

### Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan

We have been working on an Old Crow Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan for 2021 to 2026. This Work Plan will take over for the last work plan which expired in 2018, and will cover major fish, wildlife, and habitat priorities for the next five years.

The priorities will be worked on by Yukon Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada, the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council, and VGG. We held two community gatherings in March 2021 to discuss this Work Plan and choose priorities, and we are looking forward to sharing the Work Plan with Citizens this fall. This new work plan will be dedicated to the late and dearly missed Darius Elias. We hope to carry on his legacy by working and advocating for the fish, wildlife, and lands of the Vuntut Gwitchin.



Darius Elias looking out on a ridge. *Photo by Wayne Lynch*

### The Gwitchin Excellence Project

The Vuntut Gwitchin Government has undertaken what is called the Gwitchin Excellence Project to help align the operations of all departments to be more effective in our work. Over fiscal year 2021-22 in Fish and Wildlife we are reviewing our operations to make sure they align with VGG goals overall and the work of other departments.

### **Working with the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council**

Over the past year I have participated in every Renewable Resource Council (RRC) meeting that I could attend given restrictions on physical gatherings. I think it is very important that the RRC and Fish and Wildlife at VGG work together as closely as possible for the North Yukon.

The RRC provides considerable traditional knowledge to help guide fish, wildlife, and habitat work in the North Yukon.

### **Fish, Wildlife, and Habitat Management**

We manage fish, wildlife, and habitat to ensure there are always enough animals and plants for all generations of the VGFN. Much of the work in fish, wildlife, and habitat management involves working with other levels of government like Yukon Environment and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and co-management bodies like the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and the Yukon Salmon Subcommittee.

Any work we do to count, survey, or help an animal or plant is usually by working together with one of those agencies. A lot of fish and wildlife management is done by species, so that is how I will present it here.

### **Salmon**

To predict the runs of Chinook and chum salmon, we rely on sonar projects run by DFO and Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game runs the Pilot Station sonar about 200 km from the mouth of the Yukon River and DFO runs the sonar at Eagle.

The Porcupine Sonar Project is a joint effort between Fish and Wildlife at VGG and DFO. We were happy to see the Porcupine sonar go forward this year as it was on hold in 2020 because of COVID.

This year the Porcupine sonar has been operational and counting since July 1, 2021. Hal Frost is the Porcupine Sonar Technician for VGG, and we are looking for another technician to help with test fishing. As of August 4, 2021, 359 Chinook have passed the sonar. This is the worst August 4 count since the Porcupine sonar began counting Chinook in 2016.

In addition to the Porcupine sonar, VGG works with DFO to run the Fishing Branch Enumeration Weir. VGG NR Intern Caleb Charlie worked at the weir in fall 2020 counting chum. In 2020, 4795 chum swam passed the Fishing Branch weir. This is the worst count ever at Fishing Branch, which started back in 1972.

Based on these government sonar projects and as of August 4, 2021, the outlook for both the 2021 Chinook and chum runs are not good. Pilot station counts of Chinook are the 4th worst year on record since 1995, while Pilot station counts of summer

chum (which are good for predicting fall chum) are the worst on record. Alaskan communities have had their subsistence salmon fisheries closed for the whole Chinook and chum runs so far, and everything suggests that will continue.

In Canada, DFO and the Yukon Salmon Subcommittee have recommended no Chinook fishing so far. VGG recommended a voluntary closure of Chinook fishing between July 5 and August 9 to ensure enough salmon spawn for our children and grandchildren while still having time to do some fishing. We discussed this closure and the salmon situation on July 9 and July 23 on Crow FM.

We will continue to monitor this situation closely and report to the community when we have more guidance. We continue to hope and pray for improvements in these runs to allow for more fishing opportunities for VGFN Citizens. In the meantime, we are organizing a freshwater fishing expedition alongside the Education Department.

We get a lot of our salmon information through post-season and pre-season meetings of the Yukon River Panel and the Yukon Salmon Subcommittee. These meetings need VGFN Citizens at the table to make sure VGFN voices are heard when it comes to salmon management in Alaska and the Yukon. Participants get their travel expenses and honoraria covered for contributing their time and knowledge.

If you are interested in salmon and want to get involved, please contact me at [fwman@vgfn.net](mailto:fwman@vgfn.net) or 966-3261 ext. 222.

## Caribou

This past March, Yukon Environment together with VGG Game Guardian Robert Kyikavichik were out collaring caribou in the Richardson Mountains and around Old Crow.

Caribou came out of winter in excellent condition this year. They arrived on the calving grounds early, by mid-May they were at the 1002. Most calving happened between the Sadlerochit and Jago rivers, especially on the southern edge of the 1002.

Calving this year was average with around 82% of cows 4 years or older giving birth. Survival of calves to the end of June appears to have been good. The majority of bulls for the first time in over a decade went to the Brooks Range north of Arctic Village. With that said, several thousand bulls are still in the Richardson's as of July 15.

For the third year in a row the main cow/calf herd did not leave the calving grounds in Alaska by traveling south through the Brooks but rather traveled east along the foothills and crossed the Firth River in early July. In late July they were spread out across the Yukon North Slope with most near the headwaters of the Bell River on the North Slope.

This June the Porcupine caribou did not aggregate enough on the North Slope for a photo census. So we are still working with the census result of 2017, which was about 218,000 caribou. However all indicators since like adult female survival and calving rates suggest the herd is stable or growing.



We are thankful that Citizens have had opportunities over the past year to harvest caribou and that many Citizens have reported their harvest to us.

With all the information we have now, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board recommended that we are in the Green Zone, which VGG supports. It is a good time to harvest Porcupine caribou.

Barren ground caribou, including the Porcupine herd, were listed as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2016, a listing which VGG supported. This was because, even though the Porcupine caribou are doing well, many other barren ground caribou herds are doing poorly in Canada. Because of this listing, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board will be writing a Conservation Plan with input from all the user communities. We held the first meeting to discuss this plan in March 2021.

Old Crow is the first community to have its say on how we make sure Porcupine caribou are never threatened.

## **Moose**

Working together with many partners especially Yukon Environment and the PCMB we secured funding to study moose in the Richardson Mountains. See the "Plants, Caribou, Moose, and Wolves Project" under research. Planning for this project will start this year. We have requested Yukon Environment conduct a Porcupine River moose survey as well and they will be considering that idea in October 2021 for work in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

## **Species at Risk**

Over the past year, we have been contacted about a number of new species at risk including the horned grebe, bank swallow, transverse lady beetle, collared pika, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, gypsy cuckoo bumble bee, Yukon draba, Hudsonian godwit. If you have any questions or comments about these species being listed for protection, please contact me [fwman@vgfn.net](mailto:fwman@vgfn.net) 966-3261 ext. 222.

## **Harvest Monitoring**

We are trying to collect harvest information from all VGFN Citizens every 6 months. Citizens have a few different options for reporting harvest: (1) NR calendar; (2) telephone or in person surveys; and (3) come into the NR office to report. We want to collect harvest information twice a year, in July/August for the first six months of the year and in January/February for the last six months.

These harvest numbers are very important for our meetings with other governments and co-management boards. If we can say VGG has an effective harvest monitoring system in place and we know what is happening on the land, we can argue strongly for clear and precise harvesting rights for VGFN Citizens. As we have said before, these harvest numbers are our 'ammunition' for if we ever have to fight for your harvest rights.

## Research

### **Porcupine River Salmon Predation by Freshwater Fish**

We applied for funding from the Yukon River Panel for a salmon predator project that would have happened in May 2021, but we were not successful. This project would have studied how much freshwater fish are eating salmon in the springtime at the headwaters. We will reassess whether we want to try for a similar project in 2022-23.

### **Fishing Branch River/Ni'iinlii Njik Chum In-stream Incubation Trial Year 2**

In the fall of 2019 Environmental Dynamics Incorporated (EDI) and VGG technician Caleb Charlie placed a number of fertilized chum eggs in incubation bags in the Fishing Branch River/Ni'iinlii Njik. These eggs and milt were taken from areas that were known to dry out over the winter, and they were placed in spots that are known to stay wet.

In spring 2020, the EDI crew returned to evaluate the success of those incubation bags. Emergence success from those bags was between 0 % and 52 %, and several lessons were learned about the set-up of incubation bags. We did not run the incubation project from fall 2020 to spring 2021 because of COVID. In the fall of 2021 we will return to Fishing Branch/Ni'iinlii Njik to try incubating chum eggs again using the lessons learned the previous year.



Blackfox Caribou Fence. *Photo by S Smith*

### **Recently announced funding for Plants, Caribou, Moose and Wolves Project**

On July 9, 2021 it was announced that a research project studying plants, caribou, moose, and wolves in the range of the Porcupine caribou will be funded by the Canadian Mountain Network. VGG is a partner on this project, together with governments, universities, co-management agencies, and the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee.

There will be a Gathering to plan the project likely in the fall. This will be a time for VGFN Citizens to provide their input on what they would like to see. Field work will be starting this winter, with many opportunities for VGFN Citizens to participate. This project will be working together closely with the next research project.

### **Nanh gwiinzii vik'ite'tri'giikhii / We read the land well**

This is a project that VGG leads that will involve hiring VGFN Land Guardians to patrol in winter 2021-22 to set wolf and camera traps. We want to study how many wolves there are on the traditional territory, how wolves are using our trails, and how much wolves are eating important traditional food animals like caribou and moose.

We will hold a fall Gathering to discuss the project. If you are interested in working as a Land Guardian please contact me fwman@vgfn.net 966-3261 ext. 222.

### **Contaminant in Traditional Food Project**

This project is a follow up from the Human Health Project that looked at contaminants in people's blood, hair, and urine between 2018 and 2020. It is specifically looking at hexachlorobenzene (a pesticide that has been banned) in common traditional foods like caribou, moose, salmon, fish, berries, etc. This is why we have been putting out posters for samples.

We have more kits for any Citizens who want to contribute samples. \$50/kit. There should be results from this project shared with the community this fall.

### **Beavers in the Arctic: Identifying Key and Emerging Questions**

We have a beaver research project starting up that is looking to identify emerging questions from community members about beavers in the Arctic. They have been talking to community members from across northern Canada and Alaska, and they have spoken to a few trappers in Old Crow.

If you have questions about beavers that you would like to see studied, please contact me fwman@vgfn.net 966-3261 ext. 222.

### Research Gathering October 2021

To make it easier for VGFN Citizens to hear about all the different research happening in the Traditional Territory, we will be coordinating a Research Gathering in October 2021. Researchers will be invited to come all at the same time to present their results to the community in one big gathering. There will be a feast and prizes for community members.

## Supporting Life on the Land

### Firearms and Trapping Course

We support the delivery of training courses so VGFN Citizens and Old Crow residents can have all the certifications they need to be out on the land. In April 2021, NR Clerk Jenna Thomas organized a firearms course where Old Crow residents could be certified for possession and acquisition licences. This would allow more Citizens to buy their own firearms and ammunition.

### Traditional Pursuit Program

The Traditional Pursuit Program provides assistance to all VGFN Citizens who want to spend considerable time out on the land. The program will be active from April 6 to October 31 2021. It is open to all VGFN Citizens who will spend 10 days or more out on the land in the VGFN Traditional Territory between those dates.

To be eligible for the program you must be 18 years old or older, conduct traditional pursuits while out on the land (e.g. berry

picking, fishing, hunting, cutting wood, building), and you must report your harvesting activities using an NR calendar or by speaking with a harvest surveyor. Applicants receive 120 litres of gas on their gas card and a P.O. for \$400 to use at the Co-op for bush supplies and equipment (junk food and tobacco products not eligible). That P.O. must be used all at once. So far 44 Citizens have accessed Traditional Pursuit in 2021.



Tracey Rispin at Vadzaih Choo Drin, 2021. Photo by Bree Josie

### **Vadzaih Choo Drin**

Every year we coordinate Vadzaih Choo Drin to honour and celebrate the spring migration of the caribou near Old Crow and share traditional cultural practices about life on the land. We were delighted to see so many Citizens participating in this year's Vadzaih Choo Drin! One major challenge this year was having to discourage out-of-community travelers to attend Vadzaih Choo Drin. We were disappointed to make that announcement, but it was done so all community members in Old Crow could feel comfortable attending carnival events. On top of that, this year's organizers Bree Josie and Sherrie Frost did an amazing job to ensure we could all gather, share, and have fun while staying COVID safe. A big Mahsi' Choo to Bree and Sherrie for your fantastic work! We are very much looking forward to Vadzaih Choo Drin 2022 when we can all gather together!

### **Whitestone Village/Chuu TI'it Trip**

We support expeditions on the land that support VGFN Citizens while they use and share traditional practices and knowledge. In May 2021 we assisted Jason Van Fleet at the RRC to coordinate a trip Whitestone Village to access and monitor this important Heritage site for the Daagoo Gwich'in.

It was important to see so many generations out on the land harvesting and sharing their knowledge of a distant part of the Traditional Territory. Big mahsi' to all those who made that trip possible!



The Crew at Whitestone Village/Chuu TI'it. Photo by Atsushi Sugimoto

### **Freshwater Fishing Expedition**

Because of the poor Chinook salmon run in the Yukon watershed, we have been working with the Education Department to organize a freshwater fishing expedition.

COVID and low water levels have made planning difficult. Still we are hoping to support a number of families to spend time on the land fishing for freshwater fish so that Citizens have plenty of fish to eat even if there are few salmon in the river.

## Trapper Assistance

Like the Traditional Pursuit Program, Trapper Assistance helps trappers pay some of the costs of being active on the land. To be eligible you need to be a VGFN Citizen with a trapping licence who is actively trapping on the VGFN Traditional Territory. Applicants must report trapping harvest to the NR Department using calendars or by responding to surveyor. Applicants in 2020 received \$700 that could be divided between gas and groceries. In 2020, 20 VGFN Citizens received Trapper Assistance to support them on the land.

## Fur and Hide Purchasing Program

The Traditional Pursuit and Trapper Assistance Programs provide a baseline level of support for all VGFN Citizens who are active on the land. The Fish and Wildlife Branch wants to provide additional support the dedicated harvesters who are hunting and trapping lots. At the same time, we want to support crafters who create beautiful art using skins and hides from the VGFN Traditional Territory.

In the fall of 2021, we will be exploring a Fur and Hide purchasing program where we will purchase high quality hides and fur from VGFN harvesters, send those hides and fur to be tanned, and then sell them back to VGFN crafters at a reduced price. We hope to support both the harvesters and crafters who through their hard work show us all how we can live off the land. If you have any questions about this upcoming program, please contact me [fwman@vgfn.net](mailto:fwman@vgfn.net) or 966-3261 ext. 222.

## Energy Coordinator

Just after the 2020 General Assembly, I moved from the role of Lands Manager, which I had held since 2015, to the newly created position of Energy Coordinator. The work of VGG in developing clean energy alternatives to diesel generation has steadily increased over the past several years, to the point where the creation of a new position within the government was needed. Serving as the Energy Coordinator is an exciting job, and I am thrilled to report our progress over the past year.

*Rosa Brown, Energy Coordinator*

## Energy Task Force

The Energy Task Force was formed in the spring 2020 as an advisory body to Chief and Council. It is mandated to recommend an action plan for advancing the 2019 General Assembly Resolution to reach carbon neutrality by 2030. These recommendations will form a Community Energy and Implementation Plan.

The membership of the Energy Task Force (described in the Terms of Reference) currently includes the following people: Erika Tizya-Tramm (Chair), Director, Natural Resources Department; William Josie, Director, Government Services; Juliann Fraser, Intergovernmental Relations; William Linklater, Citizen Representative; myself as Energy Coordinator; and representatives of the Old Crow Development Corporation.



The task force meets on a monthly basis to share updates and resources, and to provide oversight and guidance on the development of the Community Energy and Implementation Plan and an Energy Investment Strategic Plan. Both these planning documents are scheduled to be completed by early summer, after which the Energy Task Force will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on its implementation.

### **Community Energy and Implementation Plan**

The Community Energy and Implementation Plan will build on earlier energy planning initiatives for Old Crow. The planning process will begin by establishing a community vision for the future of energy in Old Crow, with clear objectives for how this vision can be achieved. A 10-year implementation strategy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030 will set out measurable goals for years 3, 5 and 10. Community engagement on the plan is scheduled to begin this fall.

### **Energy Investment Strategic Plan**

The Energy Investment Strategic Plan, developed in consultation with VGFN Citizens, will make recommendations for how allocation of a portion of the revenue generated from Sree Vyah, the Old Crow solar project, can be used to achieve the objectives of the Community Energy and Implementation Plan and the overall climate target of carbon neutrality. VGG is receiving funding support from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Environmental Damages Fund to complete the two plans over the next year.

### **Sree Vyah (The Old Crow Solar Project)**

In April 2021, the solar array began exporting a limited amount of clean energy to the Old Crow electrical grid. Power output was initially limited by the utility (ATCO Electric Yukon) to 12 per cent until the battery energy storage system and microgrid controller, which ensure grid stability, were installed.

Fully commissioned this past August 2021, the solar array can generate enough electricity when the sun is shining to meet the entire electrical load of the community and to allow the diesel generators to turn off.



A sunny day in Old Crow with some of Sree Vyah's solar panels in the foreground. *Photo by Caleb Charlie*



An aerial view of Sree Vyah showing the mono-crystalline panels positioned east and west to maximize solar generation during the Arctic summer. *Photo by Caleb Charlie*

In one year, solar generation will provide 24 per cent of the electricity used in Old Crow, with the diesel generators expected to turn off for 2,200 hours (approximately 92 days) and run at a lower capacity for many more days. The solar project will reduce the amount of diesel consumed in Old Crow by 189,000 litres per year and 4.7 million litres over the life of the project.

VGG is receiving funding from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor) and Natural Resources Canada's Clean Energy for Rural and Remote Communities program for the construction of Sree Vyah. Early stages of project development were funded by Yukon University's Cold Climate Innovation, Polar Knowledge Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's Northern REACHE Program and the Yukon Development Corporation's Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative.

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Other exciting projects related to Sree Vyah include the development of a local operator/energy technician training program in partnership with Northern Energy Innovation and Yukon University and the production of a second short film about energy projects in Old Crow and VGG's work in tackling climate change.

### **Old Crow Wind Project**

In early 2021 VGG erected a wind meteorological evaluation tower (MET) on Mountain Road with the support of the Old Crow Development Corporation. The tower will measure the wind resource over the next two years to determine if there is enough wind to develop a commercial wind project at this location.

VGG is interested in developing a large-scale wind project to reduce the amount of diesel used to generate electricity over the winter months and has identified this location for its promising modeling results and proximity to existing infrastructure, which will help keep development costs down.

While there have been MET towers in Old Crow in the past, this tower was constructed to gather the site-specific data needed to build a business case for a prospective project before it is considered for development. Previous MET tower locations in and around Old Crow were not found to be suitable for development because either the location was too costly (the top of Crow Mountain) or the wind resource was not adequate (the bluffs area).

Early data collected at the site of the present MET tower shows promising results, but there were a lot of technical challenges with equipment over the past winter months and this data set is incomplete. The MET tower was constructed with funding support from the Yukon Government's Energy Branch and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's Northern REACHE Program.



Erecting the Meteorological Evaluation Tower (MET) on Mountain Road.

### **Old Crow Biomass Project/Forest Resource Harvest Management Plan**

Following up on the recommendations of a pre-feasibility study that looked at the viability of a biomass/district system for Old Crow, our work plan over the next year is focused on addressing data gaps in our knowledge of locally available feedstock.

The development of a Forest Resource Harvest Management Plan for the area around Old Crow will build our understanding of the forest resources available for harvest (willow and spruce) and how a sustainable harvest can be achieved.

VGG is receiving funding support from Natural Resources Canada's Indigenous Forestry Initiative to complete a forest harvest resource management plan over the next two years and from Yukon Government's Energy Branch for work completed in 2019/2020.

## **Heritage**

For a department that focuses mainly on interactive, group projects the past year has been challenging for Heritage. We had a great season with our summer students in the summer 2019 and really focused on their work place skill development. They did well considering our summer students usually get to travel to amazing places out on the land with their Elders.

We are making use of the pandemic to focus on office tasks such as finally writing an Atlas, transcribing and indexing interviews that were missed in the past, developing an online database, writing and researching oral history books, editing navigation systems and developing experiential education materials. Overall, we will look back on this time as challenging but productive.

*Megan Williams, Heritage Manager*



### **Van Tat Gwich'in Cultural Experiential Project**

This project utilizes the wealth of active and recorded knowledge from the land, Elders are educators of Vuntut Gwitchin youth to prepare them for their responsibilities as land stewards in an uncertain and constantly changing future. Tested, successful formats of locally relevant cultural experiential learning will be used to teach youth.

Three areas are moving forward: Gwich'in story telling, Atlas, and Crow Flats Family Use areas paddle trips. It will take time to move these materials forward but the results will be worth it when there are culturally relevant, experiential products for educating Vuntut Gwitchin youth.

### **Van Tat Gwich'in Atlas**

Work continues on the Atlas and University of Alberta Press remains interested in publishing this book. The Atlas will include maps of Gwich'in place names and navigation systems, oral history, descriptions and photos; it will combine information collected during our multi-year projects in oral history, cultural geography, cultural technology and navigation systems. In tandem with the Atlas we are preparing to finish editing and printing the Van Tat Gwich'in Place Names wall map.

### **Archives and Accessibility**

We have embarked on an accessibility journey with the Vuntut Gwitchin oral history collection.

Over the past two years the non-digital DAT tapes, miniDV's and audio cassettes have been shipped in batches to a digitizer in Nelson BC. We are working with a company called TrailMark to develop an online system that will make this wealth of eight terabytes of cultural information accessible to registered users. It has been interesting to review the collection, looking for anything that was missed and cataloging film collections.



Rampart House St. Luke's Church, gable end under construction, 2021.  
*Photo by Joseph Bruce*

### **Rampart House and LaPierre House**

Rampart House and LaPierre House are jointly managed with Yukon Government Department of Tourism and Culture.

This year we are working with the Yukon Government and a consulting team to renew the Management Plan first signed in 1999. There have been delays due to Covid-19 but the desk work continues and there will be a site visit for the plan in 2022.

Reconstruction work on Rampart House is progressing. The main priority is reconstruction of the Church and also maintenance of the Rectory, warehouse and store. This year the crew members included: Donovan Frost, Joseph Bruce, Marvin Frost Jr and Peter Charlie.

### **Researchers and Media**

Research and Media applications for projects involving people or projects deemed sensitive to the community (e.g. human or caribou research) are reviewed by the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee. Research projects concerning the land and animals are reviewed by the Natural Resources Department staff.

An agreement is signed by both the researcher and VGG with the objective of ensuring that the project will benefit the community and information will be available for community purposes.



Rampart House crew Donovan Frost and Joseph Bruce.  
*Photo by MJ Moses*

## Current Projects

Biodiversity, fire succession, soundscape ecology, caribou vegetation during climate change, permafrost vulnerability, *H. pylori*, shrubification, First Nations graduation, fiddle music and education, Porcupine Caribou, hydrology, peregrine falcons, acid drainage, cannabis, bull trout, archaeology, palaeontology, beavers, National Parks and reconciliation, and climate change planning partnerships.

## List of Projects

Robert Busby, Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology (IRIS). *EarthScope Transportable Array - Removal*, 2021.

Kirsten Reid, Memorial University. *Biodiversity gradients and tropic interactions in western Canadian subarctic*, June 1 - Aug 31, 2020, completion Aug 2021.

Carissa Wasyliw, Memorial University. *Drivers of novel post-fire successional trajectories in the Canadian western subarctic*, June - Aug 2021.

Natalie Boelman, Columbia University. *“Navigating the New Arctic (NNA): Soundscape ecology to assess environmental and anthropogenic controls on wildlife behavior*, 2019 - Oct 2023.

Kathleen Orndahl, Northern Arizona University. *Caribou and Vegetation Structure in a Warming Arctic*, July - Aug 2019, completion May 2022.

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Fabrice Calmels, Yukon Research Centre. *Permafrost Vulnerability in Old Crow Flats, Yukon, a chapter of ArcticNet Project “Supporting Humans in A Thawing Landscape”*, June 2021 - Sept 2021.

Karen Goodman, University of Alberta. *CANHelp Addressing Community Concerns about Risks from *H. pylori* in the Circumpolar North*, Jan - Dec 2021.

Peter Jaffe Western University. *Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations (CDHPVP) Survivor and Proxy Interviews (Phase 3)*, Jan - Dec 2021.

Pascale Roy Leveillee, Laval University, Centre for Northern Studies. *How shrubification influences hydrology, permafrost and mercury mobilization: a cross-disciplinary approach to landscape change to support community resilience in Old Crow Flats*, April - June 2021 (24 river, 14 lake sites); August 2021.

Virginia Coyne, St. Francis Xavier University. *Yukon First Nation Post-Secondary Graduate Stories: A Case Study*, Feb 2021 - March 2022.

Ryan West, Vancouver Island University. *Dancing Between Traditions: A Critical Autoethnographic Examination of Learning Systems Using the Metaphor of Athabaskan Fiddle Music*, Feb 2021 - March 2022.



Mike Suitor and Martin Kienzler, Yukon Government Regional Biologists. *Porcupine Caribou Late Winter Captures*, March 2021.

Ian Macdonald, Vuntut National Park. *Aquatic, permafrost and Peregrine Falcon monitoring in the Old Crow Flats*, April - Aug 2021.

Denis Lacelle, University of Ottawa. *Effect of acid drainage on permafrost and ground ice*, Eagle Plains, July 2021, Sept 2022.

Erin Hobin, University of Waterloo, Public Health Ontario. Evaluating the impact of cannabis legalization in the Canadian territories, Sept 2021 (online surveys); completion March 2024.

Christie Sampson University of Calgary. *The search for bull trout in the Yukon*, July - Aug 2021; completion Aug 2022.

Kai Bruce, Concordia University. *Reconciliation and Renewed Relationships in National Parks*. May 2021 - April 2022.

Erin Hobin University of Waterloo. *Evaluating the impact of cannabis legalization in the Canadian territories*, May 2021-March 2024.

Helen Wheeler, Anglia Ruskin University. *Beavers in the Arctic: identifying key and emerging questions*. May 2021 - Mar 2022.

Ty Heffner, Government of Yukon. *Northern Yukon Archaeological Site Monitoring Project*, 2021, postponed.

Philip Bonnaventure, University of Lethbridge. *Investigation of permafrost and surface temperature lapse rates in high latitude mountains*, Aug - Sept 2021.

Aven Knutson, University of Northern BC. *Self-determination and procedural justice in a Yukon climate planning partnership*, July 2021 - Aug 2022.

Grant Zazula, Government of Yukon. *Old Crow and Porcupine River Palaeontology Survey, Collection and Research*. 2021, postponed.

### **Yukon Forum, Heritage Priority**

VGG participates in a working group developed from the Yukon Forum, Heritage Priority called the Heritage Working Group. The group includes representatives from six or more Yukon First Nations and Yukon Tourism and Culture.

The workplan includes activities in priority areas: respectful partnership and shared vision, review of relevant laws, policies, procedures, guidelines, strategies, review of operational structure and procedures, communication protocols on First Nations Heritage.

The Yukon First Nations Heritage Group continues to caucus separately from the larger Heritage Working Group.

## Heritage Coordinator

Drin gwiinzii tthak ts'ó'.

First and foremost, Ha'aai to community of Old Crow for your continued support in moving Heritage projects forward. The past two years have been difficult for everybody; however, we keep pushing on following the COVID-19 protocols. The last two summers we have not had on the land projects where we took elders and knowledge holders back to the land to continue the gathering and collection of stories and knowledge of places on the land. Everything had to be canceled due to COVID-19.

In the meantime, we have been looking back in the collections and editing past transcripts. When you're working with thousands of transcripts there are bound to be mistakes here and there. So those are being tidied up and are near completion.

At this time, I can't miss thanking our VGG Heritage Committee members, elders Jane Montgomery, Marion Schafer and Robert Bruce. I say, Mahsi' Choo for your many years of direction, planning, support and dedication in moving forward our Heritage department, we are a small branch of the VGG government however the huge amount of work gets done with the strong team members on board, enabling us every year to take people to the land with the choppers, sometimes by boat.

To Shirleen Smith, anthropologist, who has been working with us on the team since 2000, to provide her expertise on all fronts from teaching us to work with the equipment, the audio

and video recorders to her photo taking to writing reports and getting booklets made and so on. Good work Shirleen, much appreciated for you being there, showing us the way.

Megan Williams is another strong mentor on the tea I certainly appreciate all your work behind the scenes, the logistics of getting people on the land, your patience, hard work and dedication and much more is always acknowledged, Mahsi'. Lastly, thank you community members, youth, those who have joined us in recent years since 2000 for our on the land projects, thank you for helping us along. I appreciate all of it.



Dog Whip Workshop ~ Rosie Kaye, Mary Jane Moses, Marvin Frost Sr and Shawn Bruce with dog whip. *Photo by MJ Moses*

A reminder here to the community: to have strong people, strong community, we need to come together and support each other, stand side by side.

Your involvement and support to the community and leadership is what makes it all happen. Your good words and actions is what makes it happen, to move our community forward. We have to work with our heritage, our culture and traditions. We have to learn and teach our children and grandchildren so they walk tall with Gwich'in pride.



Dog Whip Workshop ~ Shawn Bruce cutting decorative pom poms.  
Photo by MJ Moses

Our ancestors from long ago worked extremely hard to survive and sustain themselves in the harshest of conditions; it was hard times but happy times because they supported one another and worked together. There was no time for anything else except helping each other to move ahead.

This is a reminder that we are a strong people, we have to carry the traditional knowledge and teachings and all that it encompasses proudly to the future generations so they can take their place and carry those forward in a good way and with a positive mindset.

When we share knowledge, we are more powerful and connected in unity towards a shared vision for our community. We need that link to our traditional knowledge, culture and traditions. It is so important to carry them forward and to instill Gwich'in pride in our youth for a strong nation. Only you can help make it happen!

Tthak ts'o' gwiinzii edik'anootii, nakhwaa divee gozu'. K'agwaadhat shik nakhwaa vili'.

*Mary Jane Moses, Heritage Coordinator*

## Heritage Interpreter

My work has taken a couple U-turns in this last year. Since my last GA report, I've been working fervently, and almost exclusively, on a book of translations. First, I think it's important to explain the roundabout progression of mostly happenstance that got me to this point.

When I first got this job, about four and a half years ago, I started out getting acquainted with the data base, then came the long arduous process of collecting data, cross referencing, and compiling. I soon realized that what I truly wanted to do, was to find as much information as I could on the paradigm of the ancient Gwich'in lifestyle, before contact with European settlers. This, became what I specialize in. Throughout my process I was feeling more and more like I was missing something, I wasn't getting the fullest understanding of the transcripts as I believed I could, something was being lost in translation.

I decided to bring in Joel Peter, my long-trusted colleague and mentor in Gwich'in language and culture. I started out simply listening to the tapes of the elders speaking Gwich'in, while following along with the transcript. Joel, who was also following along, soon realized there was a bit of a disconnect between the transcript and what the speaker at the time (Myra Choo Kay) was saying. That was the foundation for what I am doing today, years later. What ended up happening is Joel and I began writing out the stories in Gwich'in complete with full translations. At the time, my job had a much broader description and I was doing many different things and wearing many different hats.

So, Joel and I would only work every once in a while. We did this for the next three years, until, tragically, Joel passed on.

It was after Joel passed that I decided to take the translations we did together and compile it all into a book entitled *Nihts'ó' Tr'itr'iniinjik – We Helped Each Other – Sarah Abel Ch'idzee Gwaandak – Sarah Abel Chitze Stories*. I figured, since I already have the translations done, it wouldn't take too long. Little did I know that the editing process is ten times more work than any other process.

In the beginning I struggled with how I was going to take this random collection of stories and compile them into something coherent enough and intriguing enough to be published. I went and looked through the stories and immediately realized that we had more stories by Sarah Abel Chitze than by anyone else, and all of her stories were amazing.

So, I decided to put together what could be, the first in a line of "Sarah Abel Books", as I have come to refer to them. I quickly realized that the work on these books is going to take up the bulk of my time at work and so we have now changed what I do to specifically focus on translations.

The writing out and compiling of these pre-contact stories, in full Gwich'in, with my mentors Irwin Linklater and Marion Schafer present, is of the utmost importance now. I liken it to mining for gold, whereas, getting as many of these so called, "high language" words and phrases into the ears of these first language speakers as is feasibly possible, is the pay dirt.

As such, it is what I will focus the bulk of my time on from now, and until I can no longer, or, if so be it, until I have to take the rest of the stories we have to Alaska and finish them there. When the elders like Sarah Abel, Myra Kay and Myra Moses speak, they speak in an old language. Irwin likens it to a speaking Victorian English.

*"If you met someone from England in the 1700's, and they were to speak English to you – you wouldn't know what the heck they're saying." He would say.*

There is one more element that is important to shed light on. What I have been figuring out is that these stories deal with a people not only from an alien time, but who's very existence was quite alien to us today, even to the elders who grew up here. What we found is that, whenever the transcript got confusing, or when they had to insert Gwich'in words into the transcript because they didn't know it in English, Irwin (and before him Joel) could draw on the stories he heard growing up in Old Crow.

There are two fundamental differences between the two mentors I've had (Joel Peter and Irwin Linklater) and other fluent speakers in the community. The first and most important difference, is that Irwin and Joel never went to residential school. All that time that their contemporaries were in residential school having the "Indian forced out of them", and of course, forced not to speak their language, Joel and Irwin were living here in Old Crow, sitting in dimly lit wall tents or cabins and listening to these stories being told in that ancient "high language".

The second element, is that they were raised by people who lived in those times, the caribou fence days, when very few Gwich'in people had European goods and services. Irwin never forgets to remark.

*"My [great] grandmother Eliza Steamboat, [Big Joe Kyikavichik's much older sister] was born in the stone-age, she used to talk like this, it's a real stone-age way of speaking."*

Through my process, I have identified a new project once again, and once again, quite by happenstance. There are a number of these stories in our data base, that have parts missing, confusing areas that are most likely lost in translation type situations, and Gwich'in words inserted where the English translation is not known. We have to find every one of these stories and every one of these stories has to be done by my team (Marion Schafer, myself, and Irwin Linklater).

Marion has the most incredible and accurate ear for language I have ever seen. She speaks the words back to me in a well pronounced voice and without her, this project would be quite impossible. Irwin of course, is possibly one of the last people alive that has the knowledge to do these translations justice.

Mary Jane Moses has accomplished one of the most amazing things I can think of in this community. She fills my heart every day when I think of all she's done for our community. Following the process of writing transcripts perfectly, she wrote out hundreds, maybe thousands of transcripts.





Irwin Linklater, Brandon Kyikavichik, Marion Schafer working together on translation of Sarah Abel's Gwich'in interviews. *Photo by M Williams*

It is from the foundation she created that I am able to do my work and I can't thank her enough.

Now the work continues, and make no mistake about it, when I'm finished, the work will not be done yet either and someone will have to take over and continue on the foundation that I will leave behind, once we get to that point. I will now be focusing one-hundred-percent of my time on locating these pre-contact, high-language stories and translating them, written in Gwich'in with English translations, and eventually, we will have one of the greatest data bases' precontact indigenous knowledge that you will find anywhere in the world.

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Mahsi' Choo to Megan Williams also, the best boss I've ever had by far and to think, most likely, if I had had a different boss, I have no doubt I wouldn't still have my job, and wouldn't be on this incredible journey with my mentors.

### **Some of the Things We Uncovered So Far**

How People Travelled - How Wars Were Fought - How Wars Were Paid For - Ancient Systems Of Indigenous Currency - The Age Of Giants - The Courage, Ingenuity, and Tenacity Of "Old Ladies" - A Traditional Gwich'in Game Similar to Football - Protocols Around, and Types of Medicine Powers/Dream Powers - Caribou Fences - Genealogical Information Going Back Many Generations - The Strength, Prowess and Influential Nature Of Female Leaders.

As well as much, much more that no one would ever think of, and who knows what else we will find.

Mahsi' Choo for taking the time out of your day to read my General Assembly report.

*Brandon Kyikavichik, Heritage Interpreter*



## Information Systems

I have been the Director of Information Services since the fall of 2020 when Paul Doehle retired. I'd like to thank him for all the hard work and countless hours he's put into making the Information Systems of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government into where we're at today.

We are currently in the process of hiring a new Computer Support Technician. We continue to build infrastructure which allows for the sharing of information among VGG staff, including documents, departmental goals, policies and procedures, to name a few. Stored electronically, employees have access to this information through their web browser on our Intranet website (vgg.net). The building of this infrastructure is ongoing and is updated continuously as we receive input from staff and research changes in Information Technology.

### Network Security

There is a growing global concern over attacks on business computer systems. Due to this the VGG Information Systems department is taking steps to safeguard our network from such attacks, such as training staff to recognize suspicious emails.

We have also invested in security hardware and software to prevent attacks. We have developed a backup system that includes offsite backups that can be used to restore computer data.

## Education and Recreation

The Education Department has been working hard during the pandemic in all areas where we provide support. There are many new ways that we have to learn to adapt to in order to keep students and the community safe. I am pleased to be a part of this department and team and Education as a whole.

We have a wonderful team that helps make the programs work and we work together to make it happen for our students and community. I am also grateful to every one of our partners—you have been supportive and generous to our students and community with the many projects that we partner on together throughout the year.

At the end of the 2020-21 school year we are happy to announce that we have six high school graduates and four graduates from post-secondary and trades programs throughout Canada.

Due to COVID-19, all the summer graduation celebrations were scaled-back. We worked with the Yukon First Nation Grad Committee and the staff at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School to make sure our graduates were celebrated.

We are extremely proud of each student's accomplishments and only hope that the education you receive carries you onto reaching the goals you set for yourself. The Education Department is here to help you succeed and will do what we can to support your education goals.

This year we were fortunate to have Jordan's Principle funds to help support our Hot Lunch Program from September to June 2021. We were pleased to have Sherri Frost as our cook and she did an amazing job for the students. She provided healthy meals to help students to stay focused and make the best of their days while at school. Part of this initiative allowed us to buy each student a hamper of groceries for Thanksgiving and Christmas; we hope you enjoyed and shared a blessed meal with your family during the holiday season.

We worked with Jordan's Principle and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate to offer salmon, chicken and bison to go to the whole community. We appreciate the hard work that the Directorate and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government did along with the helpers to get this food to homes.

The Spring Culture Camp was held in April 2021; we planned with the school for the students to attend the Crow Mountain Camp. This year with the COVID pandemic and trying to lessen the gatherings, we included the Father Mouchet Ski Program in the Culture Camp and invited Knute Johnsgaard and Pavlina Livingstone-Sudrich to take part in the camp and offer a skiing program for the students and teachers.

As with every year that we are fortunate to have Knute and Pavlina come to Old Crow, we had a wonderful time with them at camp and skiing. We were also blessed to have community members come out and help with cultural teachings such as ch'angwàl skinning and tanning and muskrat skinning. There is so much a student learns and adults learn as well from

each other in all aspects of life on the land. We are grateful for the time you take to pass on the knowledge and share your connection with the students and teachers.



Charyl Charlie, Jack Van Fleet, Sow, Jason Van Fleet and Stan Njootli Sr going out for a ski at Culture Camp. *Photo by Charyl Charlie*

We met with CanNor and received funding to stabilize the arena foundation so that the facility can accommodate recreational activities throughout the year, such as hockey and skating. Porcupine Enterprises put gravel in and graded and packed the foundation. We then brought in our pumps and hoses and hooked them up so they can pump water from the river and give the arena foundation a slow flood, this allowed for a really nice, even ice surface this year.

The youth and community were able to use the arena much longer to skate on good ice. The cover has yet to be repaired due to COVID-19. The company that needs to come to Old Crow from Alberta is unable to make it. We are looking at other options of having just the ends repaired for now and finding workers to do this job rather than wait any longer.

This year our work at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School (CZGS) continues with the students being the main focus and providing support to the teachers and staff as they teach our children throughout the year. Education normally provides a homework tutor, but this position has been vacant, and an Education Support Worker.

This year we were also pleased to have Daniel Blake on board as our Education Support Worker until February 2021. Daniel did a great job supporting and working with the students and teacher during his time at CZGS. Daniel has a great working relationship with the students and was able to bring the students out on the land hunting and to camp when needed.

Our annual fall hunt was coordinated along with Ryan West and they took out eight boys along with our helper Mary Jane Moses and the boys along with their camp crew had a wonderful trip. They harvested a caribou for the Hot Lunch Program and also spent Orange Shirt Day honouring the day at camp.

Daniel has been busy supporting the classrooms daily and assisting with students in the school and preparing the outdoor classroom tent-frame across from the school where students go for cultural teachings and activities, and other outdoor activities such as skiing.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Charyl Charlie, Director of Education*

### **Post-secondary Education and ISETPs**

We had a total of twenty students attending post-secondary school this year and four post-secondary graduates. We would like to wish congratulations to Susie Firth who received her Community Education and Support Worker Certificate. Joshua Tetlich is now a Red Seal Plumber, Briana Tetlich earned her Bachelor's degree of Nursing, and Allison Hay earned a Bachelor in Veterinary Medicine! We've also had Citizens earn various certificates such as wilderness first aid/standard first aid, air brakes, welding, Class 3 driver's licenses and safety tickets.

We have twenty applicants for the 2020-21 academic year: twelve are returning students and eight are new. We also want to share that we offered a position for one person to take on

a new program at Yukon University—the Housing Maintainer Program. It is geared toward maintenance of houses built in the north. One spot was offered to each First Nation and Lawrence Charlie took on the task. Lawrence finished the final module on July 2020 and has now completed the program. We congratulate Lawrence for his dedication and desire to upgrade his skills for his position and the community.

We've been working to revise our Education Policy to make it more student-friendly. I'm very pleased to announce the amounts for living allowances for our students has been increased. I know this will help our students immensely. We also had to come to decisions quickly to assist our students outside of the territory due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to offer them travel to return to the Yukon for them and their families.

Our students still successfully completed their studies through online learning—well done! We will still be closely available to our students this year as they will have blended classes of online and face-to-face, as things can change quickly in the current circumstances.

My quarterly PACFNI meetings at Yukon University have changed to monthly ZOOM meetings. I really value this time getting updates from Yukon University of exactly what's going on and how they're moving forward during these times. It has been very helpful to be able to share with the other First Nations on how they've responded in their communities and how they're supporting their students.

It was also my first year implementing the new federal Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program (ISET) which replaced the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). This new program allows us to have more control and discretion on what training we believe is suitable for our Citizens.

Our local campus won't open until the fall as they are in the process of hiring a new coordinator. Bree moved on from her position this past year but she still has been a great help to me whenever I need it. Bree and I worked together recently on securing further funds for the daycare to assist with some renovations and new equipment, which was approved by the Government of Canada's Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care sector. Please stop by to see me if you have any training ideas for the upcoming year or if you need assistance with any of our education or training applications.

### **Education Clerk**

The Education Clerk is the backbone of the Education department. We are thankful to Jocelyn Tsetso and Jocelyn Benjamin for helping process the paperwork and support they provide for us daily. When we have a staff of ten, we have many programs going on at once and the clerk sometimes has to juggle many tasks to ensure the programs are successful. It helps that we have teamwork to make programs happen as one person cannot simply do it alone.

### **FNEC-First Nation Education Commission**

Part of the job of the director is to sit on the First Nation Education Commission (FNEC) with Glenna Tetlich as the alternate. Under the school agreement negotiated pursuant to the framework agreements, we intend to establish a primary and secondary school system in the Yukon that provides high-quality education to our students consistent with our cultural values, principles and perspectives.

We have a great team working on our behalf in Whitehorse and the team participates in regular community visits to keep everyone on track to our goal. It would nurture our students' development, empower them, and support them to become contributing members of our community as we implement our Land Claim and Self-Government agreements and build a future for our children. This system would provide educational programs and opportunities to all students in the Yukon.

The First Nations Education Commission continues to gather with other Yukon First Nations, the territorial government and the federal government to address educational issues for our students across the territory.

There are many aspects of this file moving forward and we hope that the accomplishments along the way can be shared soon. A new office is being setup across from CYFN and the team is setting up to work on our behalf with education and supporting our education departments across the territory.

You can also follow the commission on Facebook at Yukon First Nation Education Directorate where they share information.

### **Childcare Initiatives**

We continue to work closely with Elizabeth Last Name as we provided funding, workers and nutritious snacks for the children at the Dri Nin Tsul Day Home. Through funding received we were able to re-furnish the day home with new equipment and toys for the children along with cleaning supplies. We were able to buy new furniture for the little ones that attend the youth centre. We hope that they enjoy the new setup!

### **Post-Secondary Education Policy Review**

The Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Review is complete and updated and we are now moving to get the policy approved by Chief and Council.

### **Fishing Camp, Gopher Bluff and Porcupine Lake**

Due to the low water and the shutdown of the salmon fishing season this year, we were unable to hold the fishing camp. We have been working with the Natural Resources department to see if we can look at other options to help the community. We looked at doing a fishing camp at Gopher Bluff and Porcupine Lake with family bubbles, but the low water again required us to put that on hold. We are still keeping this on the table and looking at a Fall Hunting Camp, so stay tuned as we work out the details and what fall has in store for us.



## Indigenous Academy

Approximately fifteen students have registered for the Grade 10 Indigenous Academy at FH Collins for the upcoming semester and a classroom space has been confirmed. The students will attend the Academy in the morning and take separate classes in the afternoons for both semesters in the upcoming school year.

FH Collins has assigned a teacher to the Academy for each semester as well as additional support from Elder Annie Bernard and Counselor Jodi Tuton. The Directorate will work as a partner on the Advisory Committee and a Cook from the Directorate's Nutrition Team and a First Nations Education Advocate will work directly supporting students in the Academy as well.

Mahsi' Choo,

*Paige Tizya-Tramm, Family Support Worker*



Students, teachers and VGG Education staff meet with FH Collins' Jodi Tuton to introduce Indigenous Academy. *Photo by Charyl Charlie*



## Education Support Worker ~ Whitehorse

Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Naii,

I am pleased to report to the community on the successes of our students and programs in the Whitehorse high schools. The past school year came and went before we knew it, there were many interesting and challenging events that we had to go through. This year we had the honour of celebrating six VGFN students that graduated from high school. Congratulations to all the graduates for your hard work and dedication on your achievements, also congratulations the graduates that received Yukon First Nation graduation awards: Cole Robulack and Tugugin Swan.

The priority of the Education Support Worker (ESW) position here in Whitehorse is to provide a vast variety of supports to VGFN students attending high school and residing in Whitehorse. In addition, I support parents, teachers, and resource people. Our goal is to help students work towards a successful education path and pursue higher education. I believe education is the central basis for people to achieve their goals and be successful in life and is lifelong. For my part, I continue to take course Yukon College in order to develop new skills sets to better assist the students in a more formal way.

Students have access to programs that assist them during the school year such as: counseling, language program, tutoring, after school curricular and sports programs. VGFN students are also provided with a monthly student allowance, daily snack

program or food voucher in some schools, winter clothing program and periodic hot lunch program.

It is extremely important for the students to have access to culture programs while attending high school. We have a successful Gwich'in language program at FH Collins, which is open to all First Nations and non-First Nations students. Students attending other high schools in the Whitehorse area are eligible to cross-enroll if they are interested in taking the language class. In addition, there are cultural programs throughout the year as well as First Nations inclusion academic programs covering First Nations History 12, First Nation Arts and Socials program and First Nations English 8 and 10 classes.

I am pleased to announce that we will embark on a new Grade 10 program at FH Collins this fall called "First Nation Youth Leadership Academy Program". This was developed in partnership with the Department of Education and Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. All students from Old Crow transitioning to Whitehorse this fall have been enrolled. As one of the ESWs at FH Collins, I will work closely with VGFN students going through this unique First Nations program.

As the Vuntut Gwitchin Government Education Support Worker, I'm happy to participate on the First Nation Graduation Society, the Alternative for First Nation Education Committee, and the Gadzoosdaa Residence Advisory committee.

I look forward to another school year and to be a part of the many positive changes as we continue to work together towards the success of our youths' education.

In closing, if I would like to have a meaningful dialogue on how we can support our students to help them achieve their education goals, please don't hesitate to contact me. Keep safe.

Mahsi' Choo.

*Glenna Tetlich, Education Support Worker*



CYFN Hockey Camp August 16-20 - Reg McGinty, Adam Kyikavichik, Gavin Charlie, John Chabot, Jayce Charlie, unknown person, and Dredyn Kassi participated in the 13+ category. *Photo by Charyl Charlie*

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## Recreation

This was a long, cold winter. Recreation stayed busy in the evenings at the school gym with soccer, volleyball and floor hockey. Youth cleared hockey areas on the slough and river to play ice hockey as well (just as I did as a which I was growing up here in Old Crow!).

The community borrowed kicksleds and flew around town on the slick roads; young children enjoyed sliding down the hill at the slough, even on some pretty cold days! Fun weekly activities for everyone such as the family movie theatre nights, gaming nights, and Texas Hold'em for the older folks, kept the youth and the rest of the community busy at the Youth Centre.

Due to COVID-19, we were not able to participate in the annual First Nation Hockey tournament in Whitehorse, the Arctic Winter Games and NAIG. We are looking forward to training and prepping early this year to make some great teams again. Fingers crossed and lots of prayers that this pandemic ends soon.

Education and Recreation teamed up with Yukon University to run a self-governance workshop for youth at Tlo Kut. We brought in Teslin Tlingit youth leader Melaina Sheldon to lead the workshop. Several of our Elders and leaders shared their life experience in governance with our youth.

What a successful weekend for our youth learning about self-governance and where we are headed with them leading one day!

With COVID-19 restrictions slowly being lifted Recreation has eased into running more programming for our community. We enjoyed a boat ride for the afternoon up river with Danny Kassi driving and giving us lots of history and as usual, great stories! No rhubarb was picked but lots of wild onions, great fowl pictures and many more mosquito bites to deal with! Rain has been weather we contended with but avid youth have been coming out for fun and games outside the youth centre, participating in National Aboriginal Day and Canada Day celebrations.

Currently we have Rec staff and summer students running softball clubs for 7-12 year-olds and T-ball for 3-6 year-olds on weeknights, weeding and tending to our community garden, keeping the Fitness centre clean for our community to use.

Our Rec youth have started helping out our community on Fridays-“Give Back to Our Community” days. Rec youth have also been working on our 2-kilometre ski trail to create a summer archery trail that the community can enjoy! We are looking forward to possible paddle and hunting trips structured within our COVID-19 guidelines and allowances.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Paige Tizya-Tramm, Family Support Worker*



Mary Jane Moses tanning caribou ch'angwàl. Photo by Charyl Charlie

## Health and Social

Drin Gwiinzii to all,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Director of the Health and Social Department. I started my position in late April 2021. Although it has been a short time since I started this new position, I have worked in the Health and Social department in many different capacities over the years. This year is quite different, I am coming back to work in a new challenging position, during a pandemic, and as a new mother to my son who was seven months old when I started back to work.

The last two years has proven to be the most difficult and trying times for everyone. We are still trying to navigate through the uncertainty of pandemic of COVID-19. The Health and Social Department has faced a lot of challenges since the pandemic started back in March of 2020 but continued to manage basic operations. When I started in late April 2021, the Health and Social Department had many vacant positions and the operations of the department was at an all-time low for capacity.

Health and Social posted for all vacant positions and we had no luck with zero applications forward for the vacant positions. A re-posting for the positions was initiated and this took some time and lucky, we finally had a few people interested in applying to the vacant positions. Since then, I am happy to announce that many of the positions have since been hired.

I would first like to acknowledge and thank the ongoing staff of the Health and Social department who have been managing to keep the department operational during the most difficult of times, as well as the past staff members who have moved on to new endeavors. We can't thank you enough for your dedication and service to the community.

We have been working with Cedar's Treatment Center in Cobble Hill, Vancouver Island, to get Citizens into treatment which is ongoing at this point. We have put in six applications and one person has successfully completed this treatment program. We are supporting ongoing treatment processes.

Although we are facing challenging times with COVID-19 in Old Crow and current community lockdown and government closure, we are excited to announce that we are currently planning out the logistics of virtual programing and services for the community. We are still managing ongoing services such as social assistance, virtual counselling services with Kyla Arnett and Chantel Blysak, treatment application processes, etc.

Please reach out to the Health and Social Department with any suggestions, concerns. We would like to get feedback from the community on how to improve services and programs.

Mahsi' Chool

*Natasha Frost, Health and Social Director*



## Family Support Worker

Hello everyone,

I am very excited to introduce myself as the new Family Support Worker in the Health and Social Department. It's been great to unite in our newly staffed department, even though we've had a slow start due to the COVID-19 outbreak in the territory. Thus far I've assisted in the distribution of the hampers to every household in the community. Also, I've been the on-call van driver so Earl could enjoy a much-needed break. You may know the acceptable calls were cut down to emergency only to reduce the point of contacts in the community, which could result in spreading of the virus.

During this time, I only made two people clutch the door handles with my driving so far, but by the end of our trip they would conclude I can, in fact, drive! I also helped the COVID-19 response team get established and driving elders to and from the rapid testing site. I was so proud to see the long line up there every day. As we know the testing was voluntary and this definitely showed that we wanted to get the virus contained.

I want the Citizens to know that everyone's wellbeing is paramount to me and I will work really, really hard to support our people. I look forward to thoughtful conversations in my position to help me understand people's situations so I can assist them better. I will treat everyone uniquely on a Citizen-to-Citizen basis. I know we all have different personalities and circumstances, so I will treat everyone as an individual to gain accurate information

to help resolve their challenges, starting where they're at in life and with the aspects they're ready to work on. And we'll do it together! We all have strengths to offer and our people know what's best for them, this is the path for them to reach self-determination in their challenges when seeking assistance from our department.

It should be made known also that if some of the problematic aspects of our Citizen's lives will be helped with an outside service, I am here to help advocate for them and assist in making strategic referrals.

I am motivated to start planning programming with the department and developing shared goals and visions. I am sure we are all looking forward to COVID-19 and the restrictions being behind us so we can gather and socialize again. So please come visit my office as soon as you can.

Mahsi' Choo for taking the time to read my introduction report, I am so full of hope for our people and I know we all have a deep love for our community, let's keep seeking connections with each other which is a necessity for healing.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Paige Tizya-Tramm, Family Support Worker*

## Administrative Assistant and Social Assistance Administrator

Good day to all,

During the month of May 2021, I worked for the Department of Health and Social Services on a short-term hire to help with administrative operations, as the department position was vacant. As of June 2021, I was hired on as the new Administrative Assistance/Social Assistance Administrator for the Department of Health and Social Services. I have worked as the Home and Community Care Coordinator in the past; I do enjoy working in this department and for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

Please do not hesitate to contact me in regards to any Health and Social Services needs and I will direct/assist you to the best of my knowledge.

Mahsi' Choo,  
*Candace Blake, Social Administrator*

## Home and Community Care Van Driver

Hello Everyone,

My name is Earl Benjamin and for the past decade I have been driving the Community Van for the Health and Social Department here in Old Crow. At times it can get very busy, but I do it for the people which I enjoy.

I must say the highlight for me is when I pick up the newborn babies to bring them home. I pick up elders that need to go to the health center and for shopping at the Co-op store.

I meet a lot of new people coming into the community for work, I also pick up food for meetings that go on in the community. I am also on call nightly in case of an emergency.

All have a good day.

Mashi' Choo.  
*Earl Benjamin, Home and Community Care Van Driver*



## Finance

The Finance department's activities are cyclical by calendar and fiscal year. We continually strive to improve internal systems, to improve the services provided to VGFN Citizens, and to work effectively and efficiently with all the departments. Our goal is to ensure the Vuntut Gwitchin Government remains accountable to Citizens and we strive to achieve this with the highest possible standards of transparency and accountability.

The Finance department's responsibilities include: General Ledger; Accounts Payable; Accounts Receivable; Funding Arrangements; Audit Preparation; Budgeting and Monitoring; Payroll and Benefits; and Fuel Services Management.

To support the department's responsibilities, we apply various financial and administrative procedures and policies. Examples are finance policy, management committee directives, internal controls, funder requirements, personnel policy and Canada Labor Standards. We rely on these mechanisms to guide us in the work we do. At all times we work diligently to maintain the highest standard of service to community members.

### 2021-2022 Appropriation Act

The First Appropriation Act for 2021-22 fiscal year was approved for a total amount of \$35,903,578. The Second Appropriation Act was approved for a total amount of \$38,003,578. There was an increase of \$2,100,000 to support Old Crow Development Corporation financial deficit.

Please come to the Finance office if you would like copies of the Appropriation Act including the discussion notes.

An important planning tool for management to guide in the running of operations, the Budget begins with a best estimate of the expenditures for the year to deliver programs identified by the departments.

As the fiscal year progresses, amendments to the Budget take place to reflect changes in priorities, revisions to program delivery, or to include new funding sources. During the year we had 84 account programs with approximately 65 funding agreements with the federal and territorial governments and various other funders.

Finance training is provided to departments regarding account programs and structure, charts of accounts, coding, purchase orders, financial statements and transactions, cheque requisitions, timesheets and leave forms. All directors and managers have access to their respective program accounts, income statements and transaction listings.

The annual audit began in late March 2021. The audit team from McKay and Associates completed two onsite fieldworks during April and August of this year. We anticipate having the draft audited financial statements for presentation during the General Assembly.

## Staffing

Liannah Charlie-Tizya will be returning from maternity leave. We are looking forward to having her back in the office. During Liannah's absence we had Madison Lord and Serena Schafer Scheper fill in. It was a pleasure having both these girls in the office.

Marla Charlie returned to begin working once again on the records management for our department. After a few months having Cheryl J. Charlie with us as Finance Manager, she has started on a new journey. We were happy to have Cheryl join the team. We wish only the best for her and her boys.

Thank you to my Finance staff for their dedication and commitment to serving the Citizens of Old Crow, it's an honor to work with these ladies as their team leader. Thank you to the Citizens of Old Crow, it is a privilege to work for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

Thank you to Chief and Council for their support and encouragement. Thank you also to the Executive Director, Directors, Managers and staff for your teamwork, understanding and cooperation in working with the Finance department. We welcome Citizens to stop by the Finance office if you have questions or concerns or just to say hello. Our doors are always open.

Mahsi' Choo,  
Bev Cameron, *Finance Director*

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Roger Kyikavichik, Tracy Rispin, Robert Bruce Jr, Dana Tizya-Tramm, Pauline Frost-Handberg holding up Vuntut Gwitchin agreements.  
*Photo by Charyl Charlie*

## 2020 General Assembly Resolutions

### 01. Youth Enhancement Fund to include bikes

*Resolution No. 2020-01—Withdrawn*

### 02. Long Term Palliative Care Options

*Resolution No. 2020-02—Passed by Consensus*

#### WHEREAS:

VGFN members require palliative care outside the community of Old Crow as there are no equitable services in Old Crow;

Governments do not provide long term palliative essential care;

Community members must seek full time care out of the community at a cost to them;

The cost often is not affordable due to limited incomes;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

There be alternative funding provided by VGG to establish a committee to address “end of life and essential care” within 60 days of the 2020 General Assembly to be presented to Council to provide further direction.

### 03. Terms of Reference for Councils

*Resolution No. 2020-03—Passed by Consensus*

#### WHEREAS:

Youth Council and Elders Council do not have terms of reference or guidelines but are recognized within the Constitution;

Discussions are highly confidential or sensitive;

There is concern with the possibility of information breaches;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

Elders Council and Youth Council code of conduct include terms of reference and guidelines.

**04. External Audit on VGG Administrative Structure***Resolution No. 2020-04—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

VGG lacks best practices within the government systems, processes and structure;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG conduct an external audit on the administrative structure of the executive and senior management;

This external audit take place within six months of the General Assembly.

**05. Board and Committee Member Conduct***Resolution No. 2020-05—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

Board and committee members' role is to represent VG Citizens in a respectful manner;

Board and committee members address VG issues and business;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG create processes to ensure strengthened relationships between board and committee members and community members;

VGG investigate these issues and develop processes to mitigate them orientation packages will be developed.

## **06. VGFN Agreement Modernization**

*Resolution No. 2020-06—Passed by Consensus*

### **WHEREAS:**

The VGFN has practiced its own traditional dispute resolution practices and has traditional decision making processes;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG directed to look at this internally with legal advice as a first step and then meet with the parties to pursue a joint mandate with Government to pursue modernization of VGFN Final and Self-Government Agreements including but not limited to part 24 Dispute Resolution;

VGG GA directs leadership to proceed to Yukon Forum discussion on Agreements specific to Yukon.

## **07. Appointments to VGFN Entities**

*Resolution No. 2020-07—Passed by Consensus*

### **WHEREAS:**

VGFN has trusts, corporations and development corporations it appoints Citizens to;

VGFN does not have an established appointment process;

Citizens have sat on these Vuntut entities for longer than regularly established timelines;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGFN create an easy to understand guideline on VGFN entities;

VGFN create and establish an application and appointment process that considers Vuntut culture and values including youth mentorship;

VGFN create and establish an application and appointment lengths ranging from 1-4 years and a tracking system to ensure appropriate and ongoing notifications of appointments.

**08. Elders Council Structure***Resolution No. 2020-08—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

The Elders Council performs an important function in our Governance as an advisory body as set out in the VGFN Constitution;

Currently the Elders Council does not have established processes and support in carrying out its duties;

The Elders Council would benefit from restructuring to improve its functioning;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

The VGFN GA recommends Council support Elders Council with technical and financial support

The Elders Council structure be reviewed;

Discussions will take place within 60 days of the General Assembly.

**09. Dog Officer***Resolution No. 2020-09—Withdrawn***10. Vuntut Gwitchin Governance***Resolution No. 2020-10—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

The Gwitchin have a strong way of governance;

Our traditional and cultural way of being is for all future generations;

THEREFORE, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG issue a public statement to both Canada and Yukon governments about the importance of respecting our nation-to-nation relationship recognizing the strength of our cultural values, traditional way of being and self governance.



### **11. Spiritual Gathering for Community**

*Resolution No. 2020-11—Passed by Consensus*

#### **WHEREAS:**

Vuntut Gwitchin spirituality was strong in the past and needs to be strengthened again;

People are praying in different ways and we need to be open to this;

There are different denominations of spirituality;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

The community hold a spiritual gathering for the community;

The community form a representative advisory group to oversee the gathering;

The spiritual gathering would involve all types of spirituality and approach VGG for support.

### **12. VGFN Standing Committee Representation**

*Resolution No. 2020-12—Passed by Consensus*

#### **WHEREAS:**

There is a large population of VGFN beneficiaries that reside in Whitehorse, Yukon;

Cultural and traditional connection and social support is important for Citizens to feel connected to Old Crow;

VG Whitehorse Citizens deserve leadership representation in Whitehorse;

A budget is needed to provide cultural activities and social gatherings in Whitehorse;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGFN leadership assign a Chief and Council representative to represent the Whitehorse Citizens' interests;

VGFN Council representative will participate in providing resources.

### **13. VGG Program Directors to Reside in Old Crow**

*Resolution No. 2020-13—Withdrawn*

#### 14. Crow Mountain Road Regulation

*Resolution No. 2020-14—Passed by Consensus*

##### **WHEREAS:**

Crow Mountain is used for hiking, berry picking, dog sledding, camping, tours and gravel hauling;

The safety of our Citizens, children and dogsleds is in danger when large trucks are hauling and throwing rocks;

The schedule of trucks on the mountain road has been sporadic including evenings and weekends;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

The trucks hauling on the mountain road be restricted to weekdays during work hours (7am - 5 PM) so community members can enjoy the mountain after work and on weekends;

Companies operating trucks on the mountain road post hours and dates they will be hauling so other businesses can plan uses (tours, gatherings, berry picking) around the trucking schedule.

#### 15. Crow Mountain Camps and Cabins

*Resolution No. 2020-15—Passed by Consensus*

##### **WHEREAS:**

Crow Mountain is a place for all community members to enjoy;

Crow Mountain is a place of pristine wilderness;

Crow Mountain is a tourism draw for our community;

The number of permanent camps on the mountain is growing;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

Community members can continue to enjoy the mountain with temporary camps and giving the land time to heal after use;

Community members can develop a community area plan considering the community issues.

## 16. Bylaw Enforcement

*Resolution No. 2020-16—Passed by Consensus*

### **WHEREAS:**

We have many bylaws regarding ATVs and dogs in our community;

The RCMP is unable to enforce these bylaws;

Loose dogs and unsafe ATV usage is putting community members, especially children, in danger;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG will hire a Bylaw Enforcement Officer who will be responsible for catching loose dogs, sending unwanted/ abandoned dogs to the humane society, and fining individuals that commit bylaw infractions;

The fines collected from individuals will help cover the costs for this position and the cost for catching & sending dogs out.

## 17. Indoor Playground

*Resolution No. 2020-17—Passed by Consensus*

### **WHEREAS:**

We have a large number of children in Old Crow;

We have long cold winters & deep snow where young children are unable to play and run outside for long periods of time;

We have very little play equipment in the community suitable for infants, toddlers and preschoolers;

**THEREFORE**, the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

VGG seek funding from a third party to develop an indoor heated playground that is suitable for children 5 and under;

When the playground is developed it will be staffed by a recreation employee to ensure the place is clean, respected and used properly;

The indoor play space will also have a seating area and washrooms so that it could be booked for small events like kids parties and playgroups.

**18. Community Clean Up***Resolution No. 2020-18—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

The community is attempting to build a tourism industry to build our economy;

There is equipment, vehicles and materials stored all over town including the river road and people's front yards;

Materials such as washers, driers and fridges are sitting out with the door still attached are dangerous for young children;

Areas of interest for tourists such as the old bell and downtown have become eye sores;

**THEREFORE,** the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

A set of locations be identified as places to store materials;

All appliances that are removed from houses have the doors removed and be taken to the dump immediately;

Large machinery should not be parked in the downtown area when it is not in use and the grass area in front of the church is off-limits for storing materials.

**19. Youth Council***Resolution No. 2020-19—Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

2020 has been declared year of the youth;

VGG has an established Youth Council;

**THEREFORE,** the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Resolves that:

The Youth Council lead a project with all youth to put on a community event;

VGFN develop a youth strategy in conjunction with all Vuntut Gwitchin youth.



Irwin Linklater, Jocelyn Benjamin and Mary Jane Moses at Dàadzàii Vàn Park. *Photos by S Smith*

## Notes

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## Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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## Notes

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Front Cover:  
**Dàdzàii Vàn** (Summit Lake)  
Photo by S Smith

Back Cover:  
**Ch'it'oo Choo Ddhàa** (Big Nest Mountain)  
Photo by S Smith