

# Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly 2022



## Annual Report



# Nihłah iidilii jì' t'aih nakhwats'an hèelyaa

**Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation**

*P.O. Box 94, Old Crow, Yukon Y0B 1N0*



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# Agenda

## Tl'oo K'at

DAY 1: MONDAY August 1		DAY 2: TUESDAY August 2		DAY 3: WEDNESDAY August 3		DAY 4: THURSDAY August 4		DAY 5: FRIDAY August 5		
8:30 a.m.	BREAKFAST									
9:00 a.m.	OPENING PRAYER									
9:05 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Opening Comments</li><li>• Approval of GA Chairs</li><li>• GA Rules and Procedures<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Conflict of Interest</li></ul></li></ul>		Portfolio Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Executive Office</li><li>• Corporate Services</li></ul>		TBD by the GA		TBD by the GA		2022 Resolutions (all day)	
10:30 a.m.	BREAK									
11:00 a.m.	GA Rules and Procedures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tie Breaking</li><li>• Speaker Time Limits</li></ul>		Portfolio Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nation Building</li><li>• Operations</li></ul>		TBD by the GA		Submissions for 2022 Resolutions Close!			
12:00 p.m.	LUNCH	MUSIC	LUNCH	MUSIC	LUNCH	MUSIC	LUNCH	MUSIC	LUNCH	MUSIC
1:00 p.m.	Chief’s Welcome		Portfolio Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gwich’in Services</li><li>• Stewardship and Sustainability</li></ul>		TBD by the GA		TBD by the GA			
1:30 p.m.	Resolution Committee Selection									
1:45 p.m.	Agenda Review and Approval									
2:15 p.m.	BREAK									
2:45 p.m.	Chief and Council Report on the Reorganization		Chief and Council Report on 2021 Resolutions		TBD by the GA		Audit Prentation <i>Presentors: Auditors Janna and Corrine from Mackay</i>			
3:30 p.m.										
4:00 p.m.										
4:30 p.m.	SUPPER									





## Message from the Chief

### **Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Kut,**

As Vuntut Gwitchin, we are guided by the wisdom of our ancestors, our culture, and our traditions. We gather strength from one-another and from the shared joys and challenges of living a remote, northern life, intimately connected to the land, waters, and wildlife of our traditional territory. We walk together in an ever-changing world for the benefit of our youth, and with the guidance of our Elders. We recognize that both the leader and follower in us will bring our vision of self-governance to life.

Nearly thirty years after signing our Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements, it has become apparent that our administrative structure no longer fits the demands of our agreements, not to mention our dreams for our people throughout the Yukon and the world, and especially in our community of Old Crow, where the seat of government lives. To this end, we launched

an ambitious government-wide re-organization in April, and have been developing over the past year, with input from all staff and the community, a five-year Strategic Plan that is expected to be finalized this fall : Yeendoo Geenjit Gwitr'it T'agwàa'in

Both the restructuring and the strategy were built on the wisdom and advice of previous governments, and General Assemblies. A clear vision for the future would never have emerged from the chaos surrounding us. Therefore, we sharpened our focus internally and dedicated our efforts to the single, yet monumental, goal of establishing clarity.

Today, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation holds the blueprints to build a clear structure and strategy that can better serve our values and traditions, while enabling us to manage the resources, both natural and financial, that are essential to

our future as a modern treaty nation. I can feel the difference in just a few months. Our community is more motivated; we are working together; we are embracing the power of the Gwich'in Way and allowing it to inform how we move forward – with kindness, compassion, trust, and without fear. Work has already begun in earnest to fine-tune our processes and empower our staff for the sake of our unique vision for the future. We can better take advantage of opportunities and implement our Agreements more fully.

Mahsi' Choo for walking alongside me on this journey.

**Dana Tizya-Tramm**

# Message from the Executive Director



## **Drin Gwiinzii Everyone,**

It is an honour and a pleasure to be reporting to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly.

I have been in the Executive Director role for just six months. So far, I have found it to be a very complex and challenging role, but also beautiful and fun. I have much gratitude in my heart for the Vuntut Gwitchin people as you have welcomed me and entrusted me to lead and manage your government. I want to ensure you that am committed to my role. I will continue to listen, learn, and strive to make fair decisions on behalf of Vuntut Gwitchin Government, and in the best interest of the community.

It is incredible how much change has occurred within VGG this past year. Until recently, we were facing an array of daily challenges related to COVID-19. The pandemic disrupted our work, put projects and programs on hold, forced us to isolate from one-another, and made it nearly impossible for governments across the Yukon to engage with their communities. For over two years, VGG endured more than its share

of challenges for a small, isolated community in the far north. That stress pushed to the surface too many underlying problems for the administration to handle. VGG was in crisis. But we chose to recognize it as an opportunity.

VGG's approach to fixing the government has focused primarily on re-organization and recruitment. Various evaluations of VGG's inner workings over the past few years, including the governance audit of 2021 by KPMG, helped put a spotlight on the government's structure, hierarchy, and its capacity in relation to VGG's responsibilities to Citizens and their future goals. Reactivity in government is already decreasing thanks to massive efforts in Human Resources to grow our workforce. Slowly and deliberately, I can see VGG settling in to a more planned, strategic approach to its work.

Other key priorities – in the interest of accountability and transparency – have included developing a more succinct, line-by-line budget; to finalize VGG's Five Year Strategic Plan, along with goals and objectives

for each department; developing itemized workplans, and continuing to implement VGG's comprehensive Communications Strategy, which includes a new website, regularly scheduled public engagements, and increased Crow FM programming.

With challenge comes opportunity, and when VGG found itself at a crossroads, it chose the more complicated path of opportunity. It is indeed the longer, rockier, more thoughtful journey. But the Vuntut Gwitchin, I have learned, are determined to make their government succeed for the sake of their elders, whose wisdom paved the way to self-government, as well as for future generations. I look forward to learning more with you on this journey, and to growing as a human being as I immerse myself in your community. Thank you for having me.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Light'.

**Erin Light**

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Notes:

**The Executive Office, led by the Executive Director, is responsible for Governance, Communications, Enrolment, and the Whitehorse Citizen Liaison Office. The Executive Director oversees the Strategic Leads, and provides the direction to all five VGG portfolios.**

### Re-Organization of VGG

When Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation signed its Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements nearly 30 years ago, among their many pages was a prescribed colonial-style government. It was a way to begin self-governing, but it was not traditional, nor was it designed by the people.

Over the decades, the Vuntut Gwitchin have engaged with their government and sought to improve it. In demonstration of this awareness, several General Assembly Resolutions have called for an organizational audit – a complete and thorough assessment of the government's design, internal structure, and hierarchies.

An organizational audit was completed by KPMG and presented to the GA in 2021. Meanwhile, a consultant was hired to learn more intimately the functions of every single VGG staff member.

This intensive process enabled staff to contemplate their jobs and what they thought needed improving. At the same time, we learned what was on the minds of VGFN Citizens, including these main priorities:

- VGG is stuck in reactive mode with little strategic planning;
- VGG has too many senior-level

staff with not enough workers;

- VGG is short on programs and services for Vuntut Gwitchin people;
- VGG's most important and strategic position, the Executive Director, has historically been difficult to fill due to its immense workload and the chaotic nature of the government;
- VGG needs to be more communicative and transparent, this includes ensuring Chief and Council meetings are held regularly, with minutes;
- VGG Standing Committees need to be fully functioning, as does the Elders Council, and
- VGG needs to work on engaging youth and forming a Youth Council.

### Phase 1 of Re-Organization

On April 4, 2022, a new organizational structure was implemented in response to an organizational crisis. Phase 1 of the re-organization was introduced, and involved the following actions:

**The creation of Portfolios:** Former departments were reorganized under more intuitive umbrella portfolios; they are: Corporate Services, Gwich'in Services, Nation Building,



CBC's The National interviews Lorraine Netto in Old Crow, October 2021.



Stewardship and Sustainability, Operations, and the Executive Office.

### The establishment of Strategic Leads:

For each portfolio, there is a Strategic Lead at the helm, which adds organizational capacity to departments, enabling them to be more strategic and less reactive. Strategic Leads oversee departmental Managers. Over time, as a 'Director' position becomes vacant, their replacement will be called a 'Manager'. This is meant to reduce the top-heaviness of the organization.

**A Gwich'in focus:** All program-based services have been organized to enable more focus on how to better serve the needs of the community. For example, Housing has been moved to the Gwich'in Services portfolio, where there will be greater focus on policy and tenant management.

### The expansion of Nation development:

Intergovernmental Relations is now called Nation Building, with an expanded focus on governance functions such as law-making, implementation of the VGFN Self-Government Agreement, and strategic initiatives.

### Increased support for services:

Operations, formerly known as Government Services, will now include a Manager of Capital Planning, and a Senior Advisor on Public Works. These positions will ensure that Citizens are engaged in the process of Capital Planning, including the creation of a 10-Year Capital Plan, and improve public works, such as road maintenance, dust control, and supporting YG with sewage and water delivery.

**Intensive recruitment:** There has been concerted efforts to build capacity throughout VGG and that intensive recruitment will continue until the functions of all portfolios have been staffed appropriately.

## Phase 2 of Re-Organization

In order to plan for Phase 2 of the VGG Re-organization, a review is scheduled to take place six months following the launch of Phase 1. At that time, we will attempt to answer the following critical questions:

- Did we successfully identify and address all the critical issues affecting VGG?
- Do VGFN Citizens see or feel an improvement in the way their government is operating?







*Boat on the frozen Porcupine River, Old Crow, November 2021.*



*The first all-staff meeting took place following VGG's Re-organization at Crow Mountain Camp in May.*

## **Yeendoo Geenjit Gwitr'it T'agwàa'in/We are Working for Our Future**

VGG's success lies in its ability to plan for the future. A Five Year Strategic Plan (2022-2026) – Yeendoo Geenjit Gwitr'it T'agwàa'in – is being developed to this end. VGG staff worked on developing Vuntut Gwitchin's Vision, Mission, and Principles during a government-wide gathering in May; these provide the spirit and intention with which we will implement the goals and objectives devised by each department. Feedback from Citizens on the Vision, Mission, and Principles, and the Strategic Plan itself, is planned for this fall.

## **Governance**

VGG's Governance department was introduced as part of VGG's re-organization; it fills a gap in service by providing support to the pillars of government as identified in the VGFN Constitution: Council, the GA, and the Elders Council. It ensures the coordination of information between these entities and promotes adherence to processes and laws that were designed to ensure democracy, transparency, informed decision-making, and communication. Governance provides support to Chief and Council, the General Assembly, and VGG, by overseeing Standing Committees, GA Resolutions, the Elders Council, the General Assembly, as well as Enrolment and the Whitehorse Community Liaison Office.

## **General Assembly**

VGG is expanding its efforts to support the General Assembly as a constitutional "pillar of government", recognizing that the GA has powers and responsibilities that exist year-round, not only during annual GA Meetings. Preliminary efforts to enhance the role of the GA include the following:

- Establishment of a GA Working Group;
- Expansion of GA Meetings to five days;
- Ensuring the GA Agenda enables a review of past and present GA Resolutions;
- Ensuring the GA Report is a fact-based document of accountability;
- Ensuring the Constitutional and other legal provisions related to the GA are followed;
- Ensuring the GA event is a collaborative effort and aligns with Gwich'in values.

Holding regular public meetings in Old Crow and Whitehorse, and providing more frequent GA Resolution updates, is part of the larger strategy to keep the GA informed, engaged, and active throughout the year. Providing opportunities for the Citizens to connect with its GA meeting Chair(s) at the beginning, and during, the event is also intended to enhance the productivity of GA meetings.

## Elders Council

The Elders' Council is another pillar of government, according to the VGFN Constitution. Formalizing the authority of Elders by re-establishing the Elders Council will serve to enhance transparency in government as the Elders Council has been identified in legislation as an authority in selecting membership in Standing Committees, which oversee VGG legislation. Efforts are being made to connect with all beneficiaries over 60 years of age to formalize and legitimize VGG's Elders Council, for the sake of inclusivity, and to enable it to fulfill its leadership duties.

## Youth Council

VGG does not have a formally-recognized Youth Council, however all departments continue to make efforts to engage youth whenever possible. There is no constitutional or legal requirement for VGFN to have a Youth Council, however, it is identified in the Governance Act as a body that should be represented on Standing Committees. Creative efforts to engage youth further in the community and in governance remains a priority.

## Standing Committees

VGG's Governance Act states there should be a Standing Committee for every VGG portfolio. However, only one Standing Committees currently exists. This is mainly due to gaps in government structure, including the absence of a formal Elders Council. Each Standing Committee should be chaired by a member of Council; it must include the portfolio's Strategic Lead (director), as well as one Elder, one Youth, and one Citizen-at-large. It is responsible for reviewing any proposed legislation for that department, providing advice to Council regarding the legislation, and leading public engagements on the proposed legislation.

## Working Groups

There is a need for inter-departmental collaboration on issues not requiring legislation, such as mental wellness and capital projects. For these Working Groups, a Terms of Reference has been developed, which puts a departmental Manager (not Director or Strategic Lead) at the helm of a Working Group to

advance a project, program, strategy, or initiative for which they are responsible.

## GA Resolutions

The Governance department has begun tracking GA Resolutions as VGG has identified the need for a central tracking system, rather than relying on individual departments to identify which resolutions to tackle. The change is meant to support the departments, and to enable mid-year reporting to Council and Citizens. A long-term goal is to establish a database that tracks all GA Resolutions over time.

## Citizen Data

VGG has maintained basic enrolment data for the sake of beneficiary status, however this is not transmittable to other areas of government. A long-term goal is to expand the government's enrolment statistics through voluntary, census-type surveys. As with other governments, this information can be used to improve services.

## Whitehorse-based Citizens

Although the "seat of government" is in Old Crow, VGFN Citizens residing in other parts of Canada and the Yukon, especially Whitehorse, want to stay informed. As VGG expands its governance and communications capacity, so has it expanded its efforts to reach all Citizens, especially the significant VGFN population in Whitehorse. Concerted, inter-departmental efforts will be made to expand VGG's connection and service to those in Whitehorse.

## Whitehorse Citizen Liaison Office

The Whitehorse Citizen Liaison Office on Hanson Street has offered a drop-in location for Citizens for more than 10 years. Anyone requiring access to telephone or internet, assistance with forms and applications, a cup of tea and a snack, is welcome to pop in. The office strives to provide access to traditional knowledge, culture, heritage, and provide a much-needed connection to the goings-on in Old Crow.

The Citizen Liaison daily provides support to Citizens with forms, applications, funding, approval processes for hunting; information and interpretation about VGG laws and policies, especially documents

related to VGG's Stewardship and Sustainability portfolio, as well as information about programs, funding requirements, and the VGFN Land Claims Agreement. The Citizen Liaison acts as a conduit to the seat of government in Old Crow; Citizen concerns or complaints are relayed to the appropriate departments for follow-up.

The Citizen Liaison is a 'front line worker', often called upon to provide advice and a listening ear regarding anything the Citizen may be struggling with, especially addictions; she provides support for incarcerated Citizens, including help with applications for social, financial, and training programs; she supports Citizens experiencing illness, undergoing life transitions, or dealing with emotional problems, with compassion, and connects them to the appropriate organization or professional. Additional services provided include e-mailing job applications, setting up interviews, assisting clients with issues related to NIHB, college applications, and other education-related forms and deadlines.

Special events are regularly coordinated, such as gatherings and parties – with donated caribou, duck, and rabbit cooked for small groups in the office; the cooks are our very own Citizens, either visiting or living in Whitehorse. When requested, the Citizen Liaison visits patients and their family members in hospital through the First Nations Health Program and seeks financial or other supports on their behalf.

## **Communications**

With the re-organization in April, Communications moved to the Executive Office, with the Communications Manager now seated in Old Crow rather than Whitehorse.

## **Media Relations**

VGG continues to enjoy a positive relationship with the media, which has shown in Yukon, Canada, and beyond, to have a heightened interest in remote, Indigenous communities, such as Old Crow, especially where they intersect with climate change. We continue to entertain requests to visit and report in the community about Sree Vyâa and the ongoing efforts to protect the Porcupine caribou herd from potential oil exploration. The campaign to establish a Yukon First Nation School Board, and the winter road are a few other popular items of interest.

## **Website**

VGG hired Mammoth Agency, an award-winning web and graphic design company Whitehorse, to build the new VGG website, following the formal evaluation of eight proposals from companies in Whitehorse, British Columbia, and Alberta. Mammoth completed the "frame" of the website in May and is now installing the content in a manner that makes information easy to find, and visually engaging. To ensure useability, 'review and testing' sessions will take place with Citizens before the new website goes live. We aim to make the site a one-stop-shop for Citizens wishing to access services and engage in government

policies, programs, and laws. Phase two of this project includes developing a digital library that is accessible from the website; it will include historic VGFN documents, Gwich'in language resources, and photos.

## **Branding**

With a new website coming, it is a good time to update our branding by identifying VGG colours, letter styles (fonts), and templates to professionalize our corporate identity with consistency and intention. Community engagement on these branding details will take place.

## **Community Calendar and Newsletter**

The Community Calendar and the VGG Newsletter are essential communication tools. VGG intends to provide a quarterly newsletter in printed form, for pick-up at VGG Reception and in the Co-op, on our website, and in your email Inbox.

## **Crow FM**

The Communications department is now located in the Crow FM radio station in the Youth Centre, where we are making plans to develop regular programming for the community. We hope to gather program ideas from the community. Efforts are being made to ensure messages from Chief and Council are included in our regular program.

## **Photographers**

VGG is purchasing user-friendly (and waterproof) cameras to involve the community in documenting life in Old Crow.

## CORPORATE SERVICES

### Corporate Services is responsible for the Human Resources and Finance Departments.

#### Human Resources

VGG has been working to transform its Human Resources (HR) department by re-organizing, modernizing, and professionalizing its processes and systems for nearly a year. This work has been led by consultant Candace Morgan, who will continue to advise VGG until the transformation is complete. The new HR Director will be equipped to continue this work thanks to a significant capacity increase in the department. HR now includes a Staffing Coordinator, Records Coordinator, and Information Coordinator, and will hire a Training Coordinator. VGG employees can expect greater support with regards to benefits, training, and other HR related services thanks to the comprehensive improvements that have been done and that are planned for the near future.

#### Payworks

Employee information is managed through electronic data systems, however, the goal is to transition to a single system called Payworks. All employees will be trained on how to use Payworks, which will enable staff to view their entire personal HR record, and which will replace timesheets.

#### Benefits

During the re-organization of HR, it was discovered that approximately 40 per cent of eligible VGG staff were not enrolled in group benefits such

as Sun Life Group Health Plan, RBC Critical Illness Recovery Plan, and Manulife Group Registered Pension Plan. HR continues to work at ensuring all eligible employees are enrolled, and a Benefits Information package has been developed. The Information Coordinator continues to work with group benefit providers and employees to ensure optimum support and coverage. Compensation and benefits was moved into HR from Finance.

#### Policies

VGG now has a Human Resources Policy, Health and Safety Policies, a Procedures Manual, and a Harassment and Violence Prevention Plan. It has also introduced a Health and Safety Committee; members are Duane Debastien, Jeremy Brammer, Lisa Van Fleet, and Paige Tizya-Tramm.

Also, a new standardized and legal Employment Contract template has been created for all hires, and a regularly-updated 'casual list' which the departments can draw from.

#### Future Improvements

Below is a list of additional improvements planned for HR:

- Digitization of all HR records;
- Training for all staff on the new HR Policy, and Health and Safety Policy and Procedures;
- Development of a VGG staff training program on lateral violence (which can be extended to the community);

- A compensation review that includes a review of all job descriptions;
- A benefits review (this has not been done since 2011);
- Development of a performance management system that aligns with departmental workplans and VGG's Strategic Plan.

#### Finance

VGG's Finance department is responsible for ensuring the government is financially informed, and for providing oversight of all financial processes. It aims to provide timely and accurate recording, processing, and reporting of financial transactions. It supports VGG in managing both short- and long-term goals through budgeting, forecasting, financial analysis, and recommendations. It is guided by regulatory reporting requirements and laws. It aims to provide financial stewardship and transparency through robust internal controls, communication, and by supporting the annual financial audit process.

#### Budget 2022-23

The First Reading of the Appropriation Act was held on May 24, 2022, for \$57,613,187. The Second Reading was held on May 31, 2022, and was approved for a budget totaling \$58,310,678. The increase of \$697,491 followed Citizen engagement and feedback, which led to additional funding being added to fund the following:



- 2022 Biennial Gwich'in Gathering;
- Baseball diamond improvements;
- Housing renovations;
- Community Hall and Elder's Facility operations;
- Student summer employment.

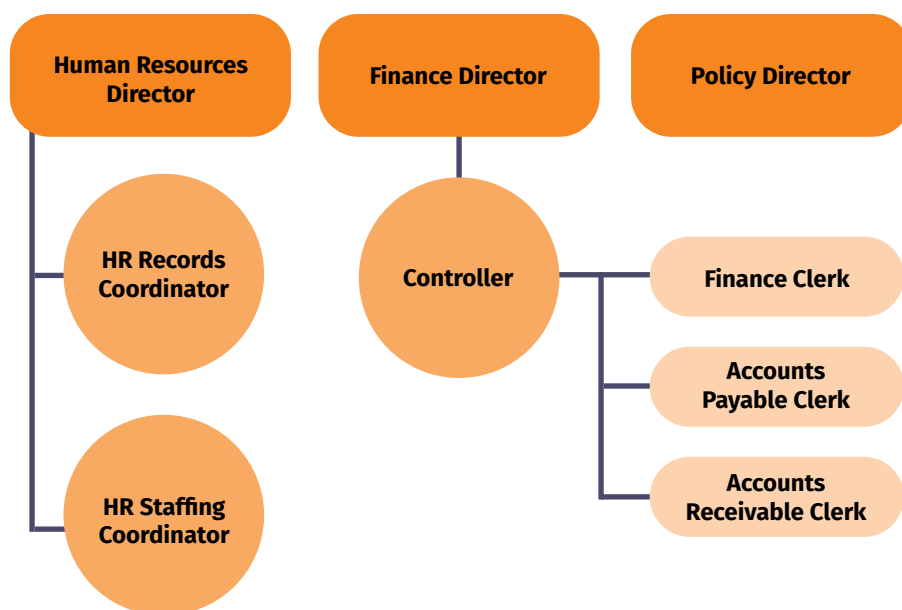
Total funding for three capital projects in 2022-23 is \$35,104,621, with the following breakdown:

- \$15,374,392 for the Elders facility;
- \$8,875,229 for 4 houses;
- \$10,855,000 for 12 modular homes.

## Annual Audit

The annual audit is being conducted by McKay & Associates. Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2022, will be formally presented at the 2022 General Assembly.

## CORPORATE SERVICES



## GWICH'IN SERVICES

**Gwich'in Services is responsible for the Education, Recreation, Housing, and Health and Social Services Departments.**



### Education

#### Culture Camp

Over the winter, VGG set up a new camp at Crow Flats with six tent frames. The first Culture Camp took place with school children in April under the theme 'Traditions, Arts & Trades'. Videos of the Culture Camp experience was facilitated by the Western Arctic Youth Coalition; the Arts & Trades Career Fair was facilitated by Frances Ross-Furlong, and the Ski Loppett was hosted by competitive cross-country skier Knute Johnsgaard, and Pavlina Sudrich.

#### Activities & Support

Two parka-making workshops with students in Whitehorse and Old Crow took place, in which VGFN youth each sewed a beautiful parka and celebrated their work at a spring feast at the Darius Elias Community Centre.

A Career Fair took place in April that featured VGG Departments,

Wildstone, TSL, Ketza, OCDC, Porcupine Enterprises, and Yukon government.

Working with the YFNED Nutritional Program, food hampers were given several times during the pandemic. YFNED's Early Years Program: In order to support the Nin K'ih Tsal Little Tracks Play Space, we ordered furniture for children ages 0-5 years.

### Recreation

Recreation was made into its own department as part of the April re-organization. It is a busy department that is essential to community connection throughout the seasons. During COVID-19, it provided Crow FM programming and organized other pandemic-appropriate activities, including gingerbread house decorating at home, and a radio Talent Show. With the lifting of restrictions, Recreation was able to host Valentine's Day activities for kids. And regular after-school programming for children resumed at the Youth Centre, including Indian cooking with Lalita. Healthy activities

for youth are always a priority; we organized road hockey, skating on the icy roads, skiing, and sliding at the slough, as well as regular programming in the school gym for kids, youth, and adults. Summer Day Camps were coordinated and began June 20.

This summer, VGG hired an Events Coordinator, who will focus on community events such as New Years, Easter, Caribou Days, Canada Day, Halloween, and Christmas, as well as Mother's Day, Father's Day and Valentine's Day. Recreation now has five staff.

### Health and Social

#### COVID-19

VGG's COVID-19 response team participated in-home rapid testing, running testing sites, providing transportation to the testing sites; we distributed and collected declarations at the airport, and provided hampers full of food and supplies to the community.

## Social Assistance

VGG's Social Assistance (SA) Policy is under review. Presently, we hold the same requirements and guidelines as the Government of Yukon.

We are aware of challenges in communicating with SA clients, therefore we appreciate your patience. There is a 48-hour grace period from the moment you apply to receiving funds from the program. We encourage those who are applying to the social assistance program, to do so at the end of each month.

## Family Support Worker

VGG provides support for families by attending conferences related to our children in care, managing Jordon's Principle requests, collaborating with the community's social worker to ensure Citizens receive the counselling or treatment they need. Foster and respite-care families in Old Crow are always in demand.

Some family support workshops that are being planned for the future include:

- Parenting
- Independent living
- Anger management
- Pregnancy and prenatal care
- Youth & Elder gatherings
- Language learning with Elders

## Issue Awareness

The department hosted various outdoor events to bring attention to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, domestic violence, and suicide prevention.

## Housing

Under VGG's re-organization, Housing was identified as a top priority and made into its own department under Gwich'in Services. VGG has hired a Housing Manager and, with funding from CMHC, will hire a local youth as a Housing Intern. These adjustments are intended to improve tenant relations and add a strategic focus to the issue of housing in Old Crow.

## Housing Strategy

To address housing issues in Old Crow, VGG will develop a Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan through Citizen-engagement, regular consultations with the (Citizen-based) Gwich'in Services Standing Committee, and with the advice of housing experts. In a culturally-relevant way, the strategy should address housing needs, rental arrears, home ownership, funding, and maintenance. It should also take into account VGG's goal of net zero emissions by 2030.

## New Homes

VGG's Operations department is tackling the housing demand with an array of new builds. By the end of 2023, VGG expects to have 26 housing units ready for families and individuals in Old Crow. These include four homes on the North Road, nine units in the Elders Complex, 12 modular homes, and one unit in Yukon Government's 10-Plex. VGG currently has 20 applications for homes.

## Modular Homes Project

In February 2022, Council approved modular homes as potential

solution to the housing crisis in Old Crow. VGG engaged prospective contractors to submit proposals for the project; TA Modular Ltd from Sicamous, BC, was the winning submission. It will construct 12 modular homes for delivery to Old Crow over the winter road in 2023. There will be 5 one-bedroom, 5 two-bedroom and 2 four-bedroom units located downtown, and in the subdivision behind the school. Some will be placed on lots where homes were previously demolished. Porcupine Enterprises will do the lot preparation in the coming months.

## Maintenance and Arrears

Housing maintenance continues to be a challenge due to staff shortages and other issues, especially in winter with sewer tanks and water tanks freezing and breaking. Rental arrears have reached approximately \$1 million. This has created an ethical dilemma for VGG in that we are repairing homes for tenants who are not paying their rent. The housing strategy is meant to address this challenge.

## Warehouse Funding

A funding application has been submitted under CMHC's Northern Access Housing Challenge Round 3. This challenge encourages proposals that reduce supply-chain bottlenecks and improve the flow of construction materials into communities. VGG's application is to fund construction of a warehouse where new home-building materials could be stored. This would enable construction of new homes during years when there is no winter road. VGG collaborated with the communities of Paulatuk and Tulita, Northwest Territories, and have proposed a partnership with Arctic Response Canada Ltd., an expert

in materials handling, storage, and care in northern environments. If this application is deemed successful in September, we will have 12 months to finalize and submit a design for consideration.

## Housing Committee

The recently-established Gwich'in Services Standing Committee will address housing policies, and participate in the decision-making process related to the new homes.

## Family and Children's Services

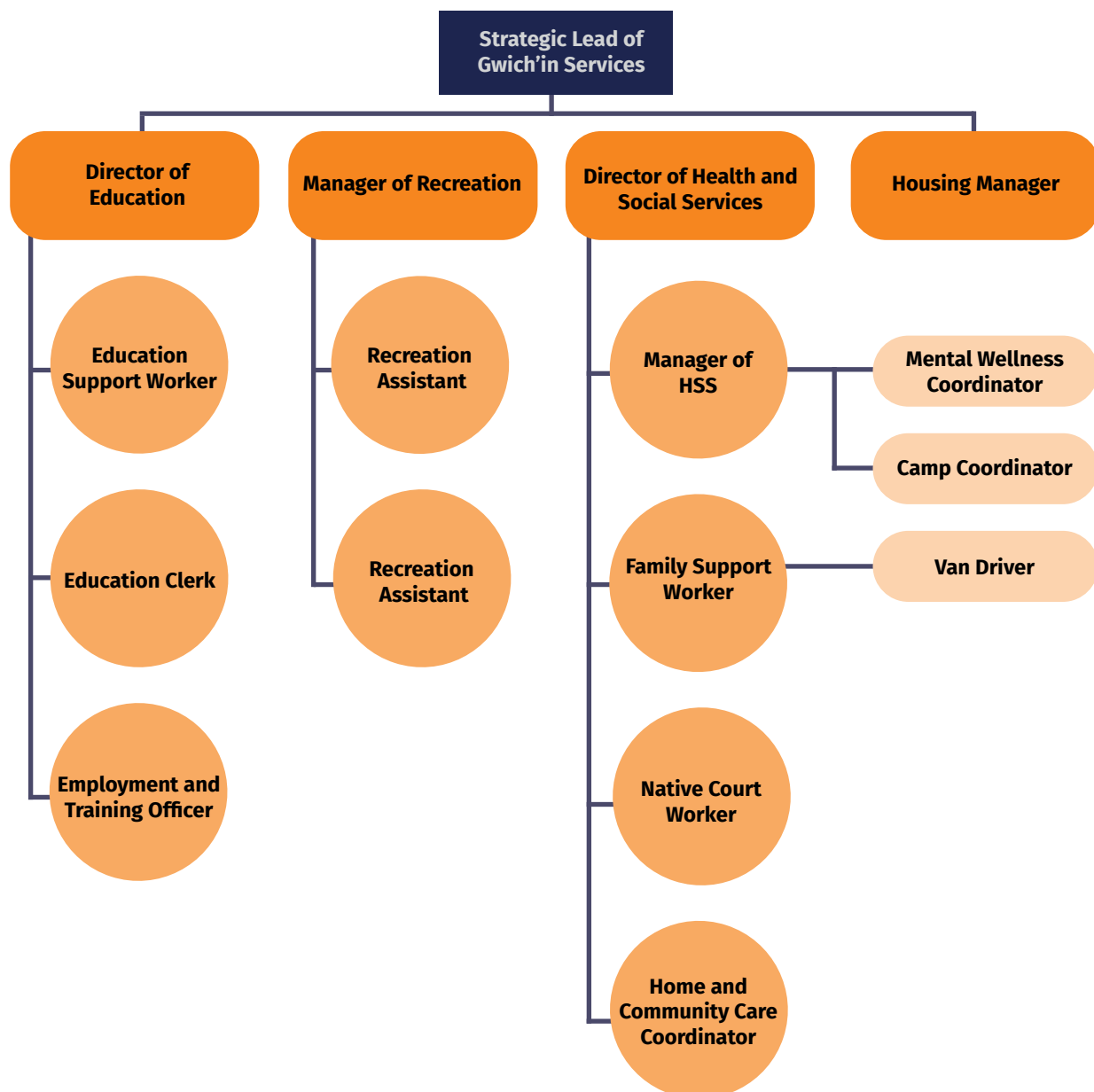
CHILDREN IN CARE	All children	Yukon FNs	VGFN
Total Children in care	79	59	7
Continuing care order (CCO)	61	48	7
Other types of children in care (VCA/TCO/ITO)	18	11	-
PLACEMENTS FOR CHILDREN IN CARE	All children	Yukon FN	VGFN
Children in care - foster care	45	38	4
Children in care - YG group home care	13	7	-
Children in care - Nts'äw Chua	2	1	-
Children in care - out of territory	3	2	-
Out-of-territory group home	1	-	-
Out-of-territory foster home	2	2	-
Out-of-territory EFCA home	-	-	-
Children in care - extended family	8	8	3
Children in care - Independent living	4	1	-
FOSTER HOMES	All homes	Yukon FN	VGFN
Foster homes (general, respite, emergency, kinship)	60	12	1
EXTENDED FAMILY CARE	Total	Yukon FN	VGFN
Children in Extended Family Care	143	108	10
Extended Family Placement homes	89	57	5
AGREEMENTS WITH YOUTH & FAMILIES	All youth	Yukon FN	VGFN
Youth Support Services (16-19)	23	7	-
Transitional Support Services (19-24)	37	30	2
NTS'ÄW CHUA	All youth	Yukon FN	VGFN
Residents	5	2	-





*The Elders Complex under construction, May 2022.*

## GWICH'IN SERVICES



## STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

**VGG's Stewardship and Sustainability portfolio strives to manage the land, water, fish, and wildlife within VGFN Traditional Territory while simultaneously promoting Vuntut Gwitchin culture, oral history, and language. It strives to educate and empower Citizens to protect and maintain the integrity of the natural environment as part of our tradition of caring and planning for future generations. It oversees the following departments: Lands, Fish and Wildlife, Heritage, and Energy.**

### Lands

The Lands department is responsible for the management, planning, and administration of VGFN Settlement Lands. Where VGFN rights and interests are defined for non-Settlement Lands, we engage in co-management for the sake of protecting harvest and access rights.

We develop and implement legislation and policy in relation to activities and dispositions on Settlement Land, land planning, and oil and gas companies.

VGG has focused this past year on options for updating its various land plans according to key considerations, such as current needs and issues, VGFN relationship to the land, and planning context. Plans need to be flexible and adapt to change and our relationship with the land over time. As such, Lands will consider updates to the following:

- **North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) (2009)**  
Upon approval of the NYRLUP in 2009, the Parties agreed to assess the need for a plan review after 7 years. In 2016 the Parties agreed there was no need for a plan review at that time, but this need would be revisited annually. In 2019 a plan evaluation found that while the plan was generally meeting its goals, some actions had not been implemented and changes to the region since plan approval could be affecting planning. Currently, VGG and YG need to decide if the NYRLUP needs updating given this analysis.
- **Ni'iinlii Njik Wilderness Preservation and Habitat Protection Area Management Plan (2004; updated 2010)**  
Currently a review is recommended after five years of commercial bear viewing. The Parks Act requires a plan review every 10 years.
- **Ni'iinlii Njik Ecological Reserve and Settlement Land Management Plan (2004; updated 2010)**
- **Human-Bear Risk Management Plan (2006.Updated 2010)**
- **Van Tat K'atr'anahtii (Old Crow Flats) Special Management Area Management Plan(2006; updated 2013)**  
The Parks Act requires a plan review every 10 years.
- **Porcupine River Salmon Plan (2019)**  
This Plan recommends a review every five years.
- **Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Wetlands) Habitat Protection Area Management Plan (2019)**  
This Plan recommends a review no later than five years after initial plan approval.
- **Peel Watershed Regional Land Use Plan (2019)**
- **Vuntut National Park Management Plan (2010)**  
This Plan recommends a review every 10 years. A Draft plan is currently under review.

In addition to plan revisions, we've also been focussing on plan development:

- **(DRAFT) Access Management Plan for Eagle Plains LMU 9 (as per NYRLUP recommendation #6.3)**

This was prepared by YG, VGG, and YLUPC. The Eagle Plains LMU 9 region is in Vuntut Gwitchin Nation's TT. The Porcupine Caribou Herd (PCH) is of the utmost importance to VGFN, but PCH winter habitat use includes the Eagle Plains region where oil and gas development potential is high. A key recommendation of the NYRLUP was the development of an AMP.

The AMP is meant to be one of multiple management tools that make up a management framework to address potential conflicts arising from oil and gas exploration and development interests in the range of the PCH. The AMP is intended to provide guidance and recommendations for the development and use of access roads in Eagle Plains. Broader consultation is needed on the draft AMP; however, considering oil and gas instability, remoteness of the region, and climate change issues, VGG needs to revisit the process.

- **Dàadzàii Vàn (Bell River Summit Lake Territorial Park Management Plan)**
- **(DRAFT) Dawson Regional Land Use Plan (2021)**

VGG submitted input focussing on transboundary issues, such

as protecting the water and Porcupine Caribou.

- **Crow Mountain Local Area Plan**

VGG will develop a planning framework for citizen review and feedback before the development of a draft plan

- **Planning for the southern TT in the headwaters of the Porcupine River watershed**

This area was not originally part of the NYRLUP and had been part of the previous Dawson regional planning work. With the overlap agreement with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, this area was removed from the Dawson Planning Region. VGFN is now responsible for planning the area.

VGG is starting to consider how to best plan this area, since this watershed area is connected with Nì'iinlìi Njik, the Porcupine River, and the rest of the VGFN TT. Therefore, we will consider how planning for this area relates to the NYRLUP and the Nì'iinlìi Njik Management Plans.

## VGG Lands and Resources Act

This legislation will establish regulations for land use and lease agreements on VGFN lands. Following the COVID-19 pandemic shut-down, the Stewardship and Sustainability Standing Committee has resumed Citizen consultation. The Committee received valuable feedback this spring during the Stewardship and Sustainability Summit in Old Crow.

- **Old Crow Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw (OCPZB)**





Old Crow Winter Road, March 2022 - Photo by Caleb Charlie

This bylaw is up for review. A draft scope of work has been submitted to VGG, but a full review is still required.

## Winter Road

As per VGG's Permit, plans for retrieval of stranded equipment and land remediation is required by Old Crow Development Corporation's winter road operations. Assessment of Porcupine Enterprises Limited's operations is being evaluated. VGG is aware of some public concerns related to the winter road, therefore Citizen engagement and discussion will take place to help inform how it proceeds in considering Old Crow's freight needs.

## North Yukon Intergovernmental Oil and Gas Forum (NYIOGF)

This Forum is formally established through an MOU between the three Northern Yukon First Nations (THFN, NND, VGG), and the Government of Yukon. Mutual priorities related to the Yukon Oil and Gas Act are identified by the Parties through an approved Workplan. It 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.

## Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment

In December 2020, Chance Oil and Gas Limited (COGL) submitted a project proposal to Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Board (YESAB) to conduct well-maintenance on eight suspended wells in Eagle Plains. Associated activities include:

- Possible extended flow testing (ETF) on up to 3 wells
- Conversion of 2 wells to deep injection wells to dispose of borehole waste fluids
- Abandonment of 3 wells (or potentially up to 6 wells depending on ETF results)
- Reversion of 3 wells to suspended status
- Re-establishment of 2 winter roads, water use, vegetation clearing, and a 46-person work camp.

VGG, with Citizen's input, identified the following key concerns: 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, and incomplete alignment with the NYRLUP. We emphasized that VGG does not support keeping aging oil and gas wells in a "suspended state" (not producing or abandoned) as they can become environmental liabilities and result in potential avoidance and loss of use of well areas for VGFN traditional pursuits. VGG supports full abandonment followed by remediation of the land is the most responsible action.

In May 2022, YESAB determined in a report that the project will result in, or is likely to result in significant adverse effects to the Porcupine caribou herd, VGFN wellbeing, soils, vegetation, and heritage resources. VGG reviewed YESAB's report, provided feedback, and awaits a final decision by Yukon Government and Fisheries and Oceans Canada.



## **Yukon Oil and Gas Act: Section 68 Benefits Agreement**

Due to the financial scale of COGL's Well Maintenance and Extended Flow Testing project (described above), a Benefits Agreement is required under Yukon's Oil and Gas Act. Affected First Nations, COGL and YG must negotiate an agreement that considers potential financial benefits, employment, and training opportunities. This negotiating is ongoing.

## **Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Act (YESAA): New Rules**

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Board's new Pre-submission Engagement (PSE) rules took effect June 1, 2022. Among its intended benefits, the process brings the Parties together well in advance of a project submission to identify information gaps and issues of concern, define values and baseline information requirements, and ensure an efficient screening process. VGG's review of the PSE process found it reflected common values, such as early engagement, however VGG has identified the following as potential issues:

- Alignment with United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the requirement of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent;
- No rules to support First Nations' engagement;
- No requirement for a detailed project description;
- Lack of transparency when taking into account issues raised by First Nations;
- Limited specific requirements in project proposal guidelines; and,
- No requirement that all statutory 'matters to be considered' are included the project proposal.

## **New Mining Legislation**

As a party to the Mining Memorandum of Understanding (MMOU) with the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, VGG collaborates with the parties to improve Yukon's outdated mining laws. This is an active and ambitious discussion table.



## Fish and Wildlife

VGG's Fish and Wildlife department is focused on the monitoring, conservation, and sustainable harvest of fish and wildlife in Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory. This department plays a major role in conservation advocacy through the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and the Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance.

Events related to Fish and Wildlife over the past year include the Research Gathering in October, the School Hunt in November, and Land Guardian activities over the winter and spring.

The overall goal is to support the traditional local economy of the VGFN by advocating on behalf of salmon and caribou habitats and other wildlife in 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 to produce the best information about 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 Traditional Territory.

VGG aims to ensure that all of its long-term programs, short-term

projects, and engagements with outside organizations work towards these objectives.

## Land Guardians

In addition to our regular, small staff, which includes a manager, a technician and an intern, Fish and Wildlife regularly hires temporary Land Guardians throughout the year and are always looking for more VGFN citizens interested in this work, either as a summer-student during a break from school, or in the winter months.

## Workplan

In 2021, VGG completed the Old Crow Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan for 2021-2026. It addresses major fish, wildlife, and habitat work priorities and work that will be undertaken by Yukon Government, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Parks Canada, North Yukon Renewable Resource Council, and VGG. Community engagements will be ongoing as we work through the plan over the remaining four years.

## 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 (ADF&G) 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. The Porcupine River sonar in 2021 counted the lowest salmon numbers ever recorded:

- 411 Chinook
- 3,486 chum

The Fishing Branch Enumeration Weir, which has been counting fish since 1974, also counted its lowest numbers ever: 2,413 chum.

In 2021, VGFN fishers who called in their catch, reported catching 19 Chinook and 69 chum (some may have been bycatch from fishing for whitefish).

In 2022, Yukon Chinook has been





worse than last year and summer chum only slightly better than last year. 43,594 Chinook and 437,032 summer chum were counted at Pilot Station as of July 19 .

The forecast for the Porcupine chum run is between 3,000 and 6,000 – this falls within the “red zone” (see chart).

For context, this season’s subsistence salmon fisheries have been closed for the whole Chinook and chum runs so far in Alaska. The Yukon Salmon Subcommittee has recommended ‘limited-to-no’ Chinook fishing, and DFO has indicated there is no available allocation for First Nation Fisheries. In 2021, VGG recommended a voluntary closure of Chinook fishing to ensure enough salmon spawn for future generations of fishers. This year VGG has asked for a similar closure, where the only fishing should be for freshwater fish.

## Caribou

This past season, most Porcupine caribou wintered west of Arctic Village although several thousand wintered in the Whitefish Lake area, upriver of Old Crow. Caribou in Alaska did reasonably well over the winter based on field crew observations, however, those near Whitefish Lake had a tough winter and some were reported to be in poor condition. Snow conditions were deep with some crust layers. The Whitefish Lake area also had more wolves, based on local observations, and counts of killed collared caribou.

In 2022, the Fortymile caribou herd near Dawson calved a nine days later than ever recorded. Porcupine



*Blackfox Caribou Fence*

caribou, however, calved, a bit earlier than normal, taking place mainly at Marsh Creek and the Aichilik River. Early data suggests calving was below average. Summer movements of the herd so far have been uncharacteristically slow, possibly driven by high temperatures and mosquitos. Smoke from Alaska fires has hampered efforts to track the herd’s coastal movement.

Data from 2017, identifies approximately 218,000 Porcupine caribou. However, the annual PCMB report suggests the herd is stable or growing. The Porcupine Caribou Management Board has reported that the herd is in the Green Zone, which VGG supports. It is a good time to harvest Porcupine caribou.

Barren ground caribou, which includes the Porcupine herd, were designated ‘threatened’ by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) in 2016. Although the Porcupine caribou are doing well, many other caribou in this category are doing poorly in

Canada. The Porcupine Caribou Management Board is developing a Conservation Plan with other affected communities that focuses on the protection and longevity of the Porcupine herd specifically.

## Moose

Yukon Government, together with the PCMB and VGG, have begun a project entitled ‘Ecological change and livelihoods in the Porcupine Caribou summer range – Moose and Wolf research components’. It began this spring surveying moose and wolves in the northern portion of the VGFN traditional territory.

## Species at Risk

This past year, VGG has been notified about the following changes to the list of Species at Risk:

- Common Nighthawk: from Threatened to Special Concern
- Olive-sided flycatcher: from Threatened to Special Concern
- Peregrine falcon: from Special Concern to Not at risk

- Short eared owl: from Special Concern to Threatened
- Lesser yellowlegs: from Not at risk to Threatened
- Barn swallow: from Threatened to Special Concern
- Common warbler: from Threatened to Special Concern

## Harvest Monitoring

VGG collects your harvest information to assist with wildlife management. These numbers are critical information when meeting with other governments and co-management boards. An effective harvest monitoring system enables VGG to argue strongly for harvesting rights.

## Research

Citizens can hear about all the different research happening in their Traditional Territory, during our regular Research Gatherings. The last one took place in October 2021, with various research groups presenting their findings to the community. The next one is planned for February 2023.

## Ni'iinlii Njik Chum In-stream Incubation Trial Year 3

A survey chum spawning locations at Ni'iinlii Njik included cameras to monitor it over the winter months. In spring, we discovered that large portions of the Ni'iinlii Njik had dried out. We plan to do further work to better understand this situation, and how it is affecting spawning salmon.

## Nanh gwiinzii vik'ite'tri'giikhii (Teechik Land Guardians)

In fall 2021, the Old Crow Land Guardians project began hiring community members to break trails, set up camps, monitor the winter road, collect caribou tissue samples, harvest meat for community meals, collect freshwater fish tissue and stomach samples, and set up game cameras. The project has employed 27 people in various kinds of fieldwork.

Setting up game cameras along the Winter Road corridor to enables VGG to monitor wildlife using the Road, compared to areas around the Road to determine if it acts like a funnel drawing in wolves and caribou from the area. This will continue during the next winter road season.

## Young Fishers

The Young Fishers project began with a May expedition to Chuu Tl'it with 20 participants and eight boats. We are trying to identify freshwater fish species that may be predatory to juvenile salmon, like jackfish, loche, and coney. The school will participate in this project by allowing students to dissect the fish, take measurements, and study their gut contents.

## Porcupine Caribou Knowledge Hub

In 2021, the Porcupine Caribou Knowledge Hub was created to better understand how climate change is affecting the Porcupine herd, its habitat, and the people that depend on it. VGG is a key partner in this, working with Yukon Government, universities, and the Porcupine Caribou Management

Board. Researchers are studying the impacts of climate change on vegetation, moose, muskox, wolves and the Porcupine caribou herd. The first stage of this study involved better understanding the plants that caribou are eating through the summer. That work was completed in 2021, mostly on the north slope of Alaska and Yukon. The second stage, now underway, is assessing how nutrients and minerals are present in key plants and how those qualities change through time and across the summer range of the Porcupine herd. This project is looking for more participants.

## Arctic Caribou Contaminant Monitoring Project

This project monitors contaminants in caribou across Canada's North to look at trends in known contaminants (like mercury) while also learning about potential new contaminants making their way into the Arctic. Only two herds in Canada get monitored every year, the Porcupine and the Qamanirjuaq in Nunavut. Every year we are looking for hunters to collect 20 samples from Porcupine caribou, samples that include one kidney, butter block sizes of muscle and liver, one leg bone, and the front teeth. Hunters receive \$50 per sample (with proper labels).

## Traditional Pursuit

VGG's Traditional Pursuit Program provides assistance to all adult VGFN citizens who want to spend 10 days or more out on the land between April 1 and October 31. The Traditional Pursuit Program is ongoing. It is open to all VGFN citizens who want to 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, filling out a harvest survey form, or by speaking with a harvest surveyor.

Applicants receive 120 L of gas on their gas card and \$400 to use at the Co-op for bush supplies and equipment (junk food and tobacco products not eligible).

Applications can take several weeks to process, depending on the volume of applications received.

As of July 5, 2022, 46 families have accessed Traditional Pursuit for support getting on the land. In 2021, 48 families accessed Traditional Pursuit. We are currently studying options to add more support for younger citizens active on the land in the Traditional Territory. These options include a separate Youth Traditional Pursuit Application for ages 15-17 as well as a family Traditional Pursuit package.

### **Trapper Assistance**

To support local trappers, VGG provides funding of up to \$700. In 2021, seven Citizens received assistance to support this pursuit.

### **Community hunts**

This year, community hunts supplied caribou meat for Vadzaih Choo Drin and dinjik for the Gwich'in Gathering. Colton Schafer harvested his first dinjik for the Gwich'in Gathering!



*Mary Jane Moses at Ch'ihilii Chik*

## **Heritage**

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

This project relies on a wealth of active and recorded knowledge from the land. Elders will be educate Youth in preparation for their future as land stewards in an uncertain future. Tested, successful, and relevant cultural experiential learning will be used. Current units include the Crow Flats Experiential Unit, which focuses on family use areas and traveling by canoe; the Gwich'in Stories Unit, which focuses on stories and the role they play in transferring inter-generational knowledge; a Medicinal unit will focus on local plants, and community knowledge around proper collection, preparation and uses.

### **Rampart House Reconstruction**

Rampart House and LaPierre House are co-managed by Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Yukon Government. LaPierre House is preserved as a "ruin" so the main activities at this site are a boardwalk and interpretive signage installation. Reconstruction of Rampart House by our VGG crew is currently focused on St. Luke's Church, work camp upgrades, solar array installation, and site maintenance. This summer, the Rampart House and LaPierre House Management Plan team visited both sites with the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee. The management plan will be ready for community presentation in November 2022.

### **Vuntut Gwitchin 101**

A VG 101 course is in development and will include Vuntut Gwitchin culture and history from the perspective of Vuntut Gwitchin. The course will replace YFN 101 that is currently required for teachers, government workers, RCMP,



*Boat Operators at Gindèh Chik.*

and nurses in Old Crow, and will be delivered to new VGG staff. The course will follow the Yukon University core competencies in history, heritage and culture, self-government, residential schools, world view and contemporary issues.

## Language

Our language is critically endangered. We need to have a targeted approach to language revitalization with our limited resources. The Language Coordinator's job is creating a fluency-transfer system to empower us to use our language in our daily lives, and especially to pass language on to the next generation. A fluency-transfer system means that students could one day go through all of our courses and consistently come out proficient speakers. The curriculum is easy to use and can be picked up and taught by anyone.

We are currently working on

developing higher level curriculum and looking for new teachers to be teaching the Gwich'in 1 and Gwich'in Googwandak 1.

## Gwich'in 2 Textbook

This is the third textbook in our program (after Gwich'in 1 and Gwich'in Googwandak 2). It is substantial, and it is half completed. The textbook is more advanced conversational language where students are learning verbs and grammar.

## Gwich'in Googwandak 2 Textbook

This is the second story textbook. It is exciting to be working on this, pulling stories together directly from Gwich'in speakers (in person or recordings/transcripts) as much as possible. Here we are learning from our own stories. At this point, the textbook has very little English written in it. We speak about the stories in our language.

## Sharing Language Curriculum

Our curriculum is available to everyone. We are working on uploading it to the new website. Currently, it is shared personally with whoever asks us for it. There are textbooks, recordings, lesson plans and booklets.

## Oral History Archives

VGG is working with Trailmark to develop online access to interviews, video footage, indexes, and historical and contemporary photographs. It will also create an atlas and geographic database that includes place names, photos, heritage sites, routes, villages, and camps.

Vuntut Gwitchin knowledge and history is preserved through:

- Translating, transcribing and indexing interviews;
- Updating genealogical records;
- Archiving photos.



## Sarah Abel Chitze Book

*Gijiint'aii: Try Your Best, Featuring the Stories of Sarah Abel Chitze* is a book combining the efforts of the late Joel Peter, Marion Schafer, and Irwin Linklater along with writer and VGG staff, Brandon Kyikavichik. The production is being edited by Shirleen Smith with the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee and would not be possible without the translations of Elders Mary Jane Moses and Jane Montgomery. The Sarah Abel Chitze book features nine translated tapes totaling approximately seven combined hours of interview time.

The stories have been written in Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (Gwich'in) using the modern orthography developed in Alaska by Richard Mueller and Katherine Peter (Neets'aii Gwich'in) and are accompanied by English translations as well as elaborations by the author. The book also includes extensive discussion based on research leading up to, during, and after each tape and sometimes between the stories.

The book is meant to capture the essence of Sarah's words. When Sarah told the stories featured in this book, she told them to a speaker who could understand her perfectly, even her highly complicated "old language", as such, she told the stories in a masterful way and she was attempting to make that listener feel something specific. This book is attempting to make the reader feel what Sarah wanted the listener to feel when she told these stories all those years ago. There will be books to follow this one as well. Our history is rich and our culture is storied, there will be much information coming out in these books, more than many of you could ever have imagined.

## Future Publications

At this point, fifty interviews have been translated in total and thirty hours of interview time. Three more books have been planned, making four in total. Various Elders will be featured in these books, although not all families will be represented, for now. The present focus is stories that are the most difficult to translate. The information held within these stories will be pivotal to our understanding of what life was like pre-contact. Although not all stories will be published in books, everything will be used in some way to preserve as much of our language, history, and culture as possible.

Another long-term goal is to address more contemporary stories. This will be pursued when we've exhausted our resources concerning the nature of our precontact existence. By then we will be working with stories by a wide variety of people from a wide variety of backgrounds who will cover all subjects be it a "long ago story", or just stories of how they lived in their own time. Because so much has been recorded, we have an endless supply of resources. Getting all of these stories out in Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu with English translations may be one of our most important resources in saving our language.



Sarah (Joseph) Abel Chitze.  
Photo: VGG Archives, Dicquemare Collection,  
VG1999-01-15.

## Approved Research in Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory for 2022

Name	Affiliation	Project	Time period
Alison Perrin	Carleton University	Examining Research Policy and Practice in Canada's North to support evidence-based decision-making	December 31, 2022
Natalie Boelman	Columbia University	Navigating the New Arctic (NNA): Soundscape ecology to assess environmental and anthropogenic controls on wildlife behavior	2019- October 2023
Kathleen Orndahl	Northern Arizona University	Caribou and Vegetation Structure in a Warming Arctic	July 1 – Aug 15/19 May 15, 2022 completion
Virginia Coyne	St. Francis Xavier University	Yukon First Nation Post-Secondary Graduate Stories: A Case Study	February 2021- March 31, 2022
Ryan West	Vancouver Island University	Dancing Between Traditions: A Critical Autoethnographic Examination of Learning Systems Using the Metaphor of Athabaskan Fiddle Music	February 2021- March 31, 2022
Denis Lacelle	University of Ottawa	Effect of acid drainage on permafrost and ground ice, Eagle Plains, YT	July 2021 and Sept2022
Erin Hobin	University of Waterloo, Public Health Ontario	Evaluating the impact of cannabis legalization in the Canadian territories	Sept 2021 online surveys March 2024 completion
Christie Sampson	University of Calgary	The search for bull trout ( <i>Salvelinus confluentus</i> ) in the Yukon	July 26-Aug 26, 2021, completion August 1, 2022
Christie Sampson	University of Calgary	Microplastics in the foodweb	June 3-28, 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 – March 2022
Ty Heffner	Government of Yukon	Northern Yukon Archaeological Site Monitoring Project 2022	
Aven Knutson	University of Northern British Columbia	Self-determination and procedural justice in a Yukon climate planning partnership	July 2021- August 2022
Grant Zazula	Government of Yukon	Old Crow and Porcupine River Palaeontology Survey, Collection and Research 2022	July 2022
Sally Robinson	Old Log Church Society	Old Log Church Photo Identifications and Stories	October 2021 to March 2022
Carine Cote-Germain, SAR biologist	Environment and Climate Change Canada	Grizzly Bear Indigenous Knowledge Workshop	December 2021-March 2023



<b>Tobias Ullman</b>	University of Wuerzburg, German Research Foundation	Remote Sensing and Geophysics of Tundra Landscapes 2022	Aug 7 – Sept 24, 2022
<b>Mike Suitor</b>	Yukon Government	Porcupine Caribou Late Winter Captures	March 8-31, 2022
<b>Ian McDonald</b>	Parks Canada	Aquatic, permafrost and Peregrine Falcon monitoring in Old Crow Flats, 2022	Summer 2022
<b>Carle Belanger</b>		Lepidoptera (Macrolepidoptera and Microlepidoptera) Survey 2022	July 1- August 2022, report January 2023
<b>Catherine Scott</b>	McGill University, NSERC	Ecology and population genetics of arctic arthropods	June 10 – 30, 2022, completion late 2024
<b>Mike Suitor</b>	Yukon Government, Department of Environment	Ecological change and livelihoods in the Porcupine Caribou summer range – Moose and Wolf research components	2022-2027
<b>Sean Carey</b>	McMaster University	Hydroclimatology and water quality research for small streams in Tombstone Territorial Park	April – December 2022 (January 2025)
<b>Stephen Paterson</b>	Saint Mary's University	Environmental factors driving distributions of non-native earthworms in the Yukon	June 10 – August 31, 2022 (Aug 31, 2024)
<b>Kevin Turner</b>	Brock University	Evaluating the influence of climate and land cover changes on water biogeochemistry in Old Crow Flats, Yukon, Canada	June 5-15, 2022 (boat + heli) Aug 26-31, 2022 (heli)
<b>Pascale Roy Leveillee</b>	Laval University	How shrubbification influences hydrology, permafrost, and mercury mobilization: a cross-disciplinary approach to landscape change to support community resilience in Old Crow Flats, YT	June 2-17 Aug 20-31
<b>Stefan Kruse</b>	Alfred Wegner Institute	Vegetation transect: Revealing boreal forest and treeline trajectories along a bioclimatic gradient in Northwestern Canada	July 14-August 17, 2022 August 2022 – August 2024
<b>Tim Bennett</b>	Ecofer Consulting Ltd	Dempster Fiber Optic Project km111 to NWT Border and km72 site visits	Summer 2022
<b>Charles Miller, Libby Larson</b>	NASA ABoVE	Arctic-Boreal Vulnerability Experiment (ABoVE) 2022 Airborne Campaign	July 6 – August 31, 2022
<b>Brian Laird</b>	University of Waterloo	Yukon Contaminant Biomonitoring: Old Crow	Until March 31, 2023
<b>Mary Gamberg</b>	Northern Contaminants	Arctic Caribou Contaminant Monitoring Program	May 2022 to March 31, 2023
<b>Xanthe Walker</b>	Northern Arizona University	Climate warming and increasing wildfire in the boreal forests of Northwestern North America	Aug 1-15, 2022
<b>Ed West</b>	West Ecosystems Analysis, Inc, California	Acoustic Bat Monitoring in the Yukon	June 3 to December 31, 2022
<b>Rolf Mandel, Lauianne Bourgeon</b>	University of Kansas, Odyssey Research Program	Archaeological Testing at Bluefish Cave 4	July 7-17, 2022 field work Analysis Spring 2024

## Energy

The Energy department works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by advancing the transition to sustainable energy generation and consumption, supporting the development of community-owned renewable energy infrastructure, and the implementation of energy conservation initiatives.



*Group of people outside the Northern Commercial Store in Old Crow, 1946.*

### Energy Task Force

The Energy Task Force was formed in the spring 2020 as an advisory body to Chief & Council. It is mandated to recommend a plan for achieving the 2019 General Assembly Resolution to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. The Energy Task Force includes representation from various departments, from Citizens, and from the Old Crow Development Corporation. Its main responsibility is to inform the Community Energy and Implementation Plan, and to oversee its implementation.

### Community Energy and Implementation Plan

This plan will provide a series of recommendations about how energy should be generated in Old Crow. It aims to reduce fossil fuel consumption in the community, while maintaining or improving the quality of life for residents. Citizens had the opportunity to provide feedback on a draft vision and principles for the Plan at the Stewardship and Sustainability Summit in May, and by participating in the Community Energy Survey. Over 50 surveys were completed. Strategies to reduce greenhouse

gases have focused on expanding Old Crow's community-owned, clean energy infrastructure. Beyond solar energy generation and wind energy, this could include energy-conscious buildings, and increased use of electric vehicles. In Old Crow, electricity generated from diesel fuel is the largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions (53%); heating residential and commercial buildings with diesel is the second largest emitter (29%); followed by transportation, using diesel and gas fuel (18%).

### Sree Vyàa

In August 2021, Old Crow's diesel generators were turned off because Sree Vyàa, VGG's solar energy project, was producing enough electricity to power all of Old Crow. Despite a few technical glitches at the beginning, Sree Vyàa has proven a success in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In September 2021, under the terms of the Electricity Purchase Agreement, an Operating Committee was formed with representatives from VGG and ATCO Electric; its main goal is to optimize the amount of energy ATCO can purchase from VGG.

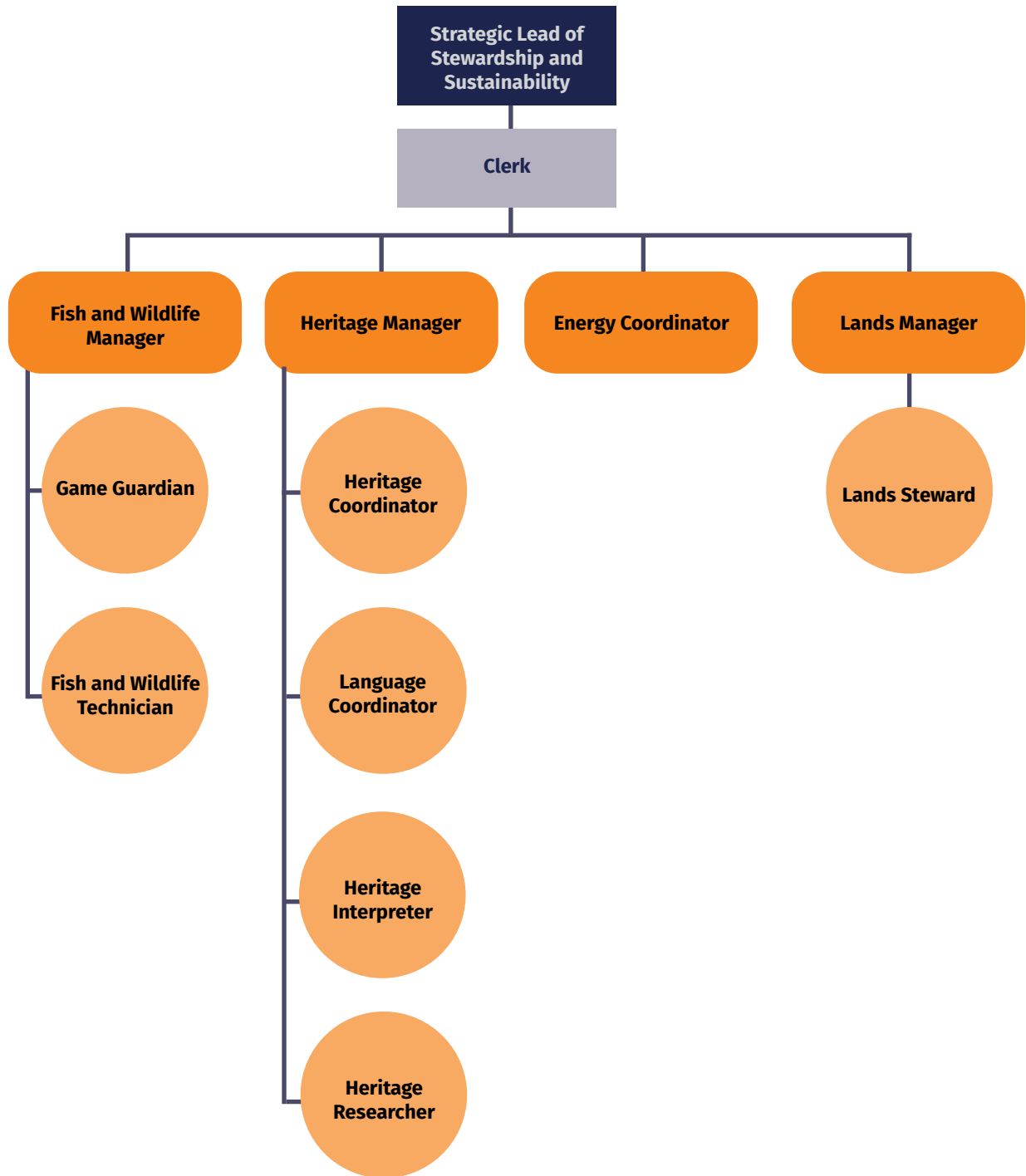
### Old Crow Wind Project

Generating wind energy on Crow Mountain is being considered as a viable option for generating clean electricity during the winter months. Accurate data about the wind speed and direction is required for developing the business case for wind generation. Measuring wind speed in contemplation of a wind energy resource has continued for a second year at the wind meteorological evaluation tower (MET) located on Mountain Road. Operating sensor equipment in extreme cold weather has been challenging, with the system failing this past winter, resulting in an incomplete data set for the season.

### Community Energy Systems

Community Energy Systems is a Yukon University course developed for the residents of Old Crow in partnership with Yukon University (Alice Frost Campus and Northern Energy Innovation). The first course was delivered in Old Crow in March and completed by six VGFN participants.

## STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY



## NATION BUILDING

**In March 2021, VGG introduced Intergovernmental Relations and Governance, which became the Nation Building portfolio as part of the April 2022 re-organization. The goal remains to support the government by focusing on implementing the VGFN Agreements, to negotiate on behalf of VGFN in collaboration with other Yukon First Nations and Indigenous treaty governments in Canada, and to develop strong, strategic, and fruitful intergovernmental relationships. Nation Building also leads the development of VGG laws.**

### Intergovernmental Relations

VGG is dedicated to building and maintaining positive relations with Yukon First Nations, Modern Treaty Holders, the governments of Yukon and Canada, as well as international partners and academic institutions. This department supports cross-department initiatives ranging from climate change to harm reduction by securing program funding and taking advantage of opportunities. It strives to be strategic in its political advocacy by reviewing and analyzing external laws, policies and strategies that may have significant implications for the Vuntut Gwitchin people and their government.

VGG participates regularly with various organizations, forums, and working groups, including:

- Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN);
- Assembly of First Nations (AFN);
- Gwich'in Council International (GCI);
- Government of Yukon;
- Government of Canada;
- Yukon University;

- Yukon First Nations Education Directorate (YFNED);
- University of British Columbia (UBC);
- First Nations Major Project Coalition;
- Yukon Northern Chiefs;
- Yukon Forum;
- Land Claims Agreements Coalition (LCAC);
- Indigenous Clean Energy;
- Indigenous Working Group on Trade;
- UK-CAN Free Trade Agreement Working Group;
- Arctic and Northern Policy Framework All Partners Working Group;
- Yukon Oil and Gas Forum;
- Renewables in Remote Communities Conference;
- Arctic Frontiers Conference;
- Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference; and
- United Nations' Conference of the Parties (COP).

### North Yukon Climate Solutions Table

Intergovernmental Relations is developing a North Yukon Climate Change Solutions Leadership Table and in discussion with other northern Yukon First Nations. The vision is to address climate change in the Yukon's north by bringing together Indigenous climate leaders, and by sharing research and ideas.

### Political Advocacy and Lobbying

VGG is developing a government relations strategy informed by community priorities and values. It will help VGG in advocating for mental health and wellness support, as well as environmental protection and infrastructure. The strategy is meant to improve our connection with treaty partners, and the governments of Yukon and Canada.

### Harm Reduction

VGG is conducting research to inform a Harm Reduction Strategy, a Harm Reduction Policy, and a Wellness Plan; this work fulfills the mandate of two 2021 General Assembly resolutions. In response



to a third 2021 GA Resolution, which mandates a review of prohibition for the sake of enabling harm reduction initiatives, VGG is exploring legislative pathways to repeal the existing Government of Yukon Old Crow Prohibition Regulation under the Yukon Liquor Act. The Nation Building Standing Committee will eventually engage Citizens to discuss and provide feedback on any proposed changes to the law.

## Traditional Land Camps

Intergovernmental Relations has secured funding that will enable VGG to host traditional land camps from Infrastructure Canada, Child and Family Services, and Crown and Indigenous Relations Canada (CIRNAC).

## Porcupine Caribou Protection

In 2021, during the final days of the Trump presidency, more than 400,000 acres of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit (the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge), were leased for oil and gas development to three separate entities. Under US President Biden, however, steps are being taken to protect the Coastal Plain, including suspending the existing leases until a comprehensive analysis of environmental impacts can be completed.

VGG continues to work with our partners and allies to move forward our legislative, technical, legal, and corporate strategies aimed at restoring protection of the Coastal Plain, including lobbying, and maintaining a strong presence in the international media. The Gwich'in efforts, as seen in the media over

decades, have no doubt contributed to the waning interest in drilling in the Arctic Refuge. Some recent positive developments, include:

- One of the three lease holders - and the only oil and gas company to bid in Trump's lease sale - cancelled their lease in the Coastal Plain. This followed news that Chevron and Hillcorp paid the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation to walk away from their legacy leases, which they held since the 1980s, on private land within the Arctic Refuge.
- Every major bank in the US and Canada, and 18 international banks, have declared that they would not finance drilling in the Arctic Refuge. In addition, 14 international insurers have confirmed they will not underwrite Arctic Refuge drilling.

Central to restoring protections to the Coastal Plain is US legislation that repeals a 2017 mandate for an oil and gas program. In May, Vuntut Gwitchin representatives Chief Tizya-Tramm, Lorraine Netro, and Liz Staples joined Gwich'in leaders in Washington to lobby members of the Biden Administration and Congress. Over the coming year, VGG's focus will be to influence Congress, participate in the supplemental environmental assessment process, and continue our efforts to secure corporate, organizational, and public support.



*VGFN Chief and Gwich'in delegates lobby the US government to protect Porcupine caribou. Washington, DC; May 2022.*

## Self-Determination

As a department, Self-Determination is dedicated to furthering the implementation of VGFN's Land Claim and Self-Government Agreements with respect to Gwich'in values and priorities.

### UNDRIP

VGG supports the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as it reinforces issues of importance contained in VGFN's Agreements. We received \$100,000 from Justice Canada for a legal review and community engagement of UNDRIP. This department seeks to determine how UNDRIP relates to the VGFN Agreements with regards to health, energy, salmon, heritage, and economic development, before

providing feedback to Justice Canada.

### Self-Determination Strategy

VGG will take stock of its progress in implementing the VGFN Agreements, including its success in working with the governments of Yukon and Canada, and develop a Self-Determination Strategy to determine its path forward. Eventually, a tracking tool and checklist will be developed to hold all parties accountable. Strategy development has begun with a legal review and Citizen feedback obtained during the Nation Building Summit in June. In collaboration with Heritage, we will seek to document the wisdom of Elders, and the voices of Youth to give the strategy a solid foundation.

## Salmon Rights

Chinook salmon are in a period of long term decline and feature year after year historical lows. The once plentiful and consistent Fall Chum salmon are also becoming variable and no longer returning as they once did. The current management approaches directed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are struggling to address these declines. This department has begun exploring actions to reconcile Vuntut Gwitchin rights and jurisdiction over salmon. Other First Nations in Yukon and BC, Gwich'in Nations, and Indigenous peoples from around the world, will be invited to share their knowledge. An International Indigenous Salmon Peoples Gathering in Vancouver proposed for October 2022 will facilitate such discussions.

## LCAC and IWG

Regular participation with the national Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC ) and Yukon's Implementation Working Group (IWG) helps further VGG's interests through discussions and action on common implementation goals. LCAC was formed in 2003 as a coalition of modern treaty signatories with the objective of working together in the shared interest of having a new and better policy for the implementation of modern treaties.

Recent priorities of the LCAC include:

- Amending Canada's Interpretation Act to allow greater protection through treaty rights;
- Lobbying Canada to adopt a Modern Treaty Implementation Policy to ensure modern treaties are fully implemented and consistent with their spirit and intent;
- Developing training and awareness workshops in collaboration with Canada, and organizing a national conference in 2023 aimed at bringing to light gaps in federal understanding of modern treaties.

Engagement with IWG, which is facilitated by the Council of Yukon First Nations, continues, with recent priorities including a joint review of the 9-year review and Chapter 22, and developing a web-based tool for implementation review.

## Fiscal Negotiations

VGG hires negotiators to represent Vuntut Gwitchin in the collaborative fiscal process with Yukon and Canada. VGG and other modern

treaty holders work to co-develop a formula for Fiscal Transfer Agreements (FTA) with the two governments. Representatives from the Government of Canada and Self-Governing Indigenous Governments (SGIGs) meet regularly to develop methodologies to estimate SGIG expenditure needs in the areas outlined in the Federal Fiscal Policy, collaboratively developed in 2019, including infrastructure and housing; lands and resources; culture, language, and heritage; socioeconomic gaps; adjustors, and tax policy. Work on a methodology for infrastructure expenditure need has been broken out into two phases.

Phase 1 work is carried out within Canada's existing mandates for funding infrastructure. The work over the last fiscal year consisted of establishing guidelines for Canada and the SGIGs to follow when determining the types of assets to be included in Phase 1 discussions, and the amount of funding for operations, maintenance, and capital replacement (including adjustments for remoteness).

VGG worked with Canada bilaterally to apply the Phase 1 policy approach and the guidelines to arrive at an estimate of expenditure need. The estimated expenditure needs for Phase 1 is \$3,280,00 with VGFN currently receiving \$1,490,000. This would result in an estimated increase of \$1,790,000 to the fiscal transfer agreement (FTA) ongoing if the approach is approved by Treasury Board and the offer from Canada follows the methodology and guidelines developed under Phase 1.

Phase 2 covers outstanding matters not yet addressed under Phase 1. The Phase 2 approach is intended to support a complete expenditure need model for all of the assets that fall within a bundle of comparable assets existing in non-Indigenous communities. The discussions through Phase 2 includes topics such as:

- Cultural and heritage assets;
- Closing infrastructure gaps
- Closing gaps in the size and quality of existing infrastructure assets relative to comparable non-Indigenous communities.

Phase 2 expenditure need work is expected to be completed by March of 2024.

## Housing

SGIGs in the Collaborative Process advanced a proposal for housing stimulus funding. The housing stimulus proposal asked Canada to provide \$426 million in funding for affordable housing and supporting infrastructure. In the summer of 2021, Canada announced that a portion of the Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund (ICIF) established in federal Budget 2021 would go to SGIGs to support shovel-ready housing and infrastructure projects. The ICIF funding amount was incorporated into an FTA with the total amount of \$10,182,037 to be paid annually as follows:

- **2021/22:** \$1,944,769
- **2022/23:** \$2,423,324
- **2023/24:** \$3,716,444
- **2024/25:** \$2,097,500

Further funding under the Indigenous Community



Infrastructure Fund was announced in federal Budget 2022 to address housing gaps. Federal Budget 2022 proposes to provide an additional \$565 million over 5 years to support housing in the communities of Self-Governing and Modern Treaty Nations. This means that the VGFN can expect additional funding to be used for housing projects.

SGIGs and federal representatives have been discussing how to approach apportionment of this funding amongst SGIGs and Modern Treaty Nations. Updated housing data from VGG may be required to ensure the allocation methodology reflects current circumstances. The allocation to VGFN is unknown at this time.

## **Socio-Economic Gaps**

Targeted measures and corresponding funding are required to work on closing socioeconomic wellbeing gaps in the long-term. The collaborative fiscal process is working to identify areas of need and plans for locally delivered programs to address those needs. The long-term goal is to secure ongoing gap-closing funding as part of the FTA. This will allow SGIGs to plan into the future and implement gap-closing programs targeted to community needs. The SGIGs in collaboration with Canada have developed about 35 indicators related to outcomes in education, holistic health (physical, spiritual, mental, emotional), and culture/language as a foundation for well-being. The challenge is to develop methodologies to estimate the expenditure need required to close the gaps. The outcomes of the closing of gaps are to be measured using these indicators.

## **Culture, Language and Heritage**

The Working Group on Culture, Language and Heritage (CLH) is in the process of mapping out activities and functions associated with cultural revitalization, language support, and heritage stewardship.

CLH working group is working on an expenditure need model for adult immersion programs and for language revitalization. These models outline the projected expenses for an SGIG to run an immersive language program for adults and to support basic language competency. The details of the expenditure need for each of these programs continue to be assessed and costed. The group is working with Canada to prepare a memo to Cabinet regarding the expenditure need of SGIGs in respect to language revitalization programs, with the goal of submitting the memo this fall.

## **Lands and Resources**

Canada and SGIGs continue to engage in discussions on the expenditure need model for lands and resources management. SGIGs held an in-person workshop to advance this work. The results of the work included updated spreadsheets outlining functions and activities required to carry out activities and identifying them as core, variable, or modular functions. These spreadsheets will continue to be developed in the coming months in order to develop costing related to the expenditure need for Lands and Resources functions and activities.

## **Federal Tax Discussions**

Canada's Finance representatives have indicated that Canada is considering deferring the expiry of the Section 87 exemption for certain Modern Treaty Nations. Federal representatives have indicated that there are three options that have been proposed for deferring the exemption:

- An option in which the section 87 exemption would continue to apply on former reserve land until such time as an SGIG chooses to exercise its tax powers.
- An option in which the current transition period of up to 12 years would be extended to the earlier of 50 years and such time as an SGIG chooses to exercise its tax powers;
- An option that mirrors the arrangement negotiated in the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement whereby the section 87 exemption remains on former reserve lands for as long as the section 87 exemption continues to apply on reserve lands across Canada.
- As VGFN has exercised its taxation power with respect to Income Tax and GST there may not be much impact on VGFN from any changes mentioned above.

## **Federal Transfer Agreement (FTA) Negotiations**

During the last fiscal year, VGG negotiated numerous program enhancements and increases to our FTAs with Canada.



In addition to the program enhancements in the FTA the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal issued an order to which VGG was entitled to benefit in the amount of \$2,204,616 in retroactive funding and \$433,726 in 2021-22 current fiscal year funding. The interim funding of \$433,726 will continue in the future until the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society program's overall funding methodology is revised in keeping with the Tribunal's orders.

### **Social Well-Being Working Group**

As a part of FTA fiscal collaborative process, VGG sits at a table that aims to address socio-economic outcome gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada. The table is comprised of self-governing First Nations and Canada. They are working to develop a list of indicators with matching data sets (that already exist) to develop a framework to measure socio-economic indicators according to what is important to First Nations. In the past 5 years, this table has secured millions of dollars in funding for VGG, with the funding coming to an end in the next fiscal year. After this period, the Social Well-Being Working Group will put in another proposal for more funding for policy development, services, and programs for VGG and the other First Nations to improve socio-economic outcomes.

### **Data Steering Committee**

Given the complex nature of the SWG2A Working Group, a sub-working group called the Data Steering Committee (DSC) was

struck to discuss data among the First Nations representatives. The DSC gathers to share best practices for internal data collection and management and the challenges to using externally collected data including bias and accessibility. Outcomes of the DSC, including principles and practices for Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty often inform the key messages of the SWG2A and are flagged with the federal team to further develop the relationship and foster understanding of First Nations data priorities.

### **Strategic Initiatives**

Strategic Initiatives is a department being created within the Nation Building portfolio; it will oversee research and development, opportunities management, and economic development programs. Recruitment for a manager of this department is ongoing.

### **Funding Opportunity Management**

Strategic Initiatives supports VGG departments who require funding application assistance. We play a key role in identifying and accessing funding opportunities for Vuntut Gwitchin Government. Recently, we have secured funding from the Government of Canada to provide traditional, on-the-land camps for families.

### **Happiness and Wellness Index**

VGG is working to establish a policy framework to measure socio-economic outcomes. Understanding what barriers – whether social or economic, or both – exist among VGFN Citizens is necessary for VGG in its development of effective programming and services. In the coming months, two surveys will be distributed as a means of developing a Vuntut Gwitchin



Happiness and Wellness Index. The survey data will be used to develop indicators for the Index.

### University of British Columbia

VGG has established a partnership with the University of British Columbia’s Sustainability Hub. VGG and UBC will be working together to develop sustainable solutions that benefit remote Indigenous communities dealing with the effects of climate change. VGG and the Sustainability Hub have jointly applied to UBC’s Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Fund to secure resources for climate-related and educational initiatives. There will be opportunities for VGFN Citizens to participate in an academic conference on climate related topics hosted by UBC.

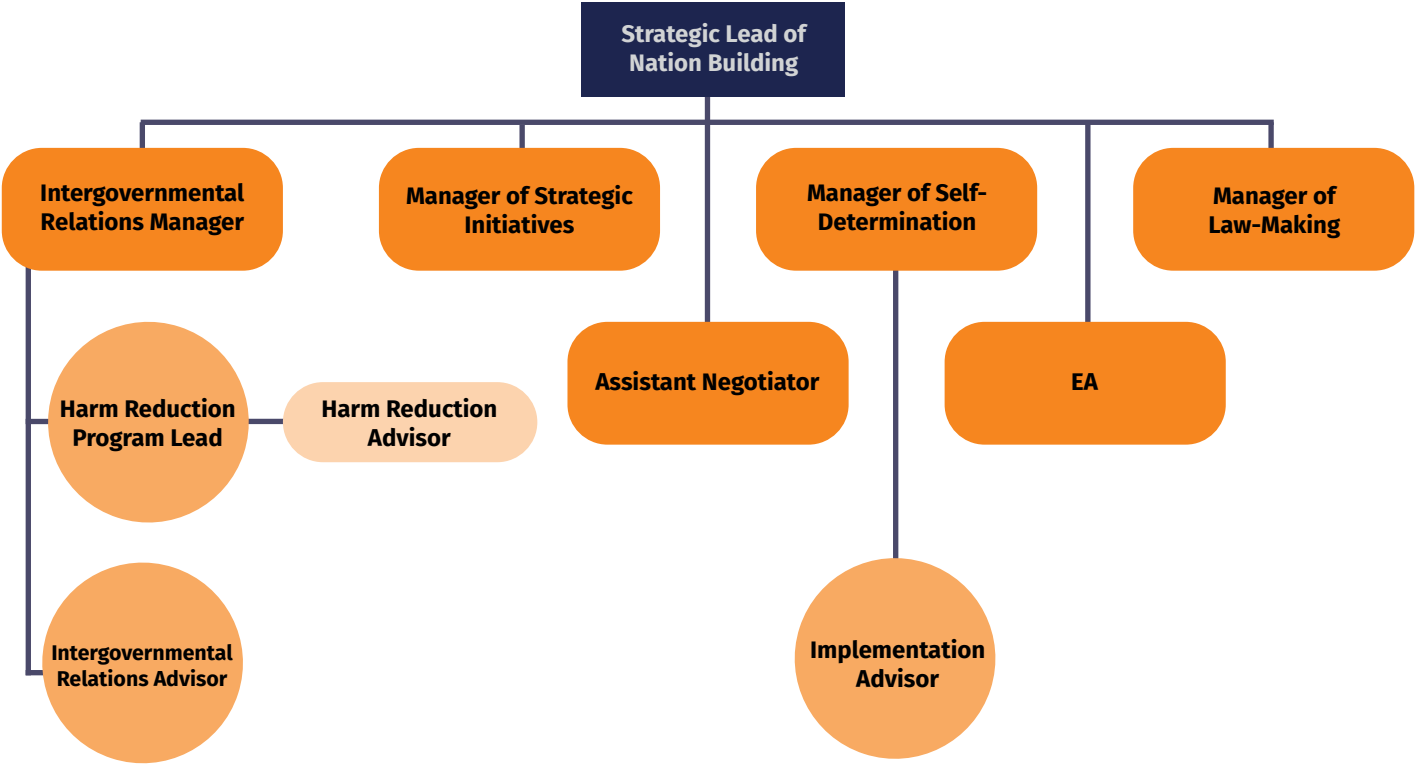
### Institute of Self-Determination

VGG is a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish the Indigenous Institute of Self-Determination (IISD), in collaboration with Yukon University and the Council of Yukon First Nations. VGG is party to the co-development of the IISD, still in its early stages.

### Elections Act

VGG’s Elections Act review continues, with the aim of becoming law before the scheduled November 2022 election. The Elections Act Review Committee was re-engaged this spring, following a Citizen survey, which was distributed this winter. Community consultations on the draft Elections Act will take place in the coming months, with feedback integrated into an updated draft that will be reviewed by Council for first reading. If the amendments affect VGFN’s Constitution, a special General Assembly will take place prior to second reading, which makes the Elections Act law.

### NATION BUILDING



## OPERATIONS

### Shop and Materials

Since January, there have been upgrades to the shop and organizing inventory. We are looking into a better system for better inventory control. We are replacing equipment and tools. Efforts are being made to keep the shop orderly and clean for easy access to materials. Staff training and licensing, such as Class 3 for the fuel truck, is also a priority.

### Staff

Since the re-organization in April, a main priority for Managers has been to have monthly staff meetings. This way all employees are on the same page and can communicate more effectively, and voice questions and concerns. Weekly management meetings are now taking place for the same reasons.

### Services

Throughout the winter, there were significant sewer freeze ups and replacements. Controlling the dust levels in the community in the summer has been a priority. We are working with Porcupine for next winter's snow removal services.

### Capital Projects

The following are in progress or are scheduled to take place in Old Crow:

- Elders Complex
- Winter Road
- Industrial Subdivision
- 4 New Houses
- Quarry (and a new Crusher)
- Pile Installation
- Land Treatment Facility (YG)
- Cemetery Expansion



### Infrastructure

- Road Maintenance
- Water Drainage
- Snow Removal
- Dust Control
- Solid Waste Facility

### Utilities

- Water & Sewer
- Fuel Resupply

### Operation & Maintenance

- Community Buildings & Housing
- Government Assets
- Heating & Domestic Water Systems
- Winter Plumbing Issues
- Security
- Water Tank & Chimney Cleaning

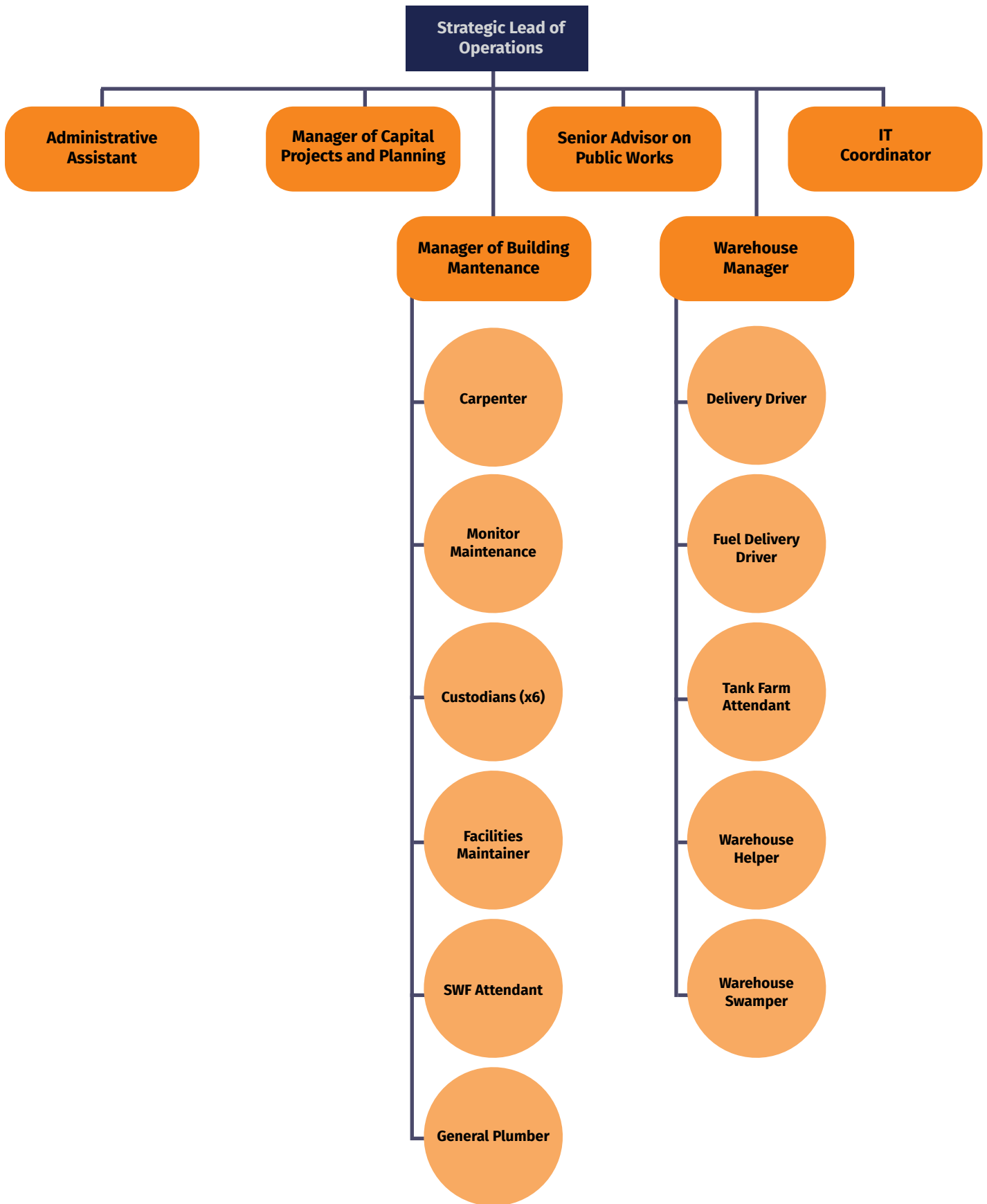
### Ongoing Issues

- Loose Dogs
- Carbon Neutrality by 2030
- Old Community Hall

### Future Improvements

- Appliance Repairs
- Safety Committee
- Record Management
- Recycling Program
- Control Dust
- Set up a Fire Department
- Inventory Control
- Gas Station & Tank Farm Management

## OPERATIONS





# Resolution Template



Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## TEMPLATE

VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 2022-XX

RE:	<i>General topic; EXAMPLE: Governance Improvements</i>
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### WHEREAS:

A.	<i>Background statement 1; EXAMPLE: VGG has not modernized its internal frameworks, policies, procedures, processes;</i>
B.	<i>Background statement 2; EXAMPLE: Vuntut Gwitchin values and principles should be reflected throughout the government, and</i>
C.	<i>Background statement 3; EXAMPLE: Staff and Citizens would benefit from a culturally-informed and modernized administration.</i>

### THEREFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION RESOLVES THAT:

1.	<i>Action statement 1; EXAMPLE: VGG develop a framework of policies, processes and procedures to modernize the government's approach to internal management;</i>
2.	<i>Action statement 2; EXAMPLE: VGG engage all staff in the development of the framework, and</i>
3.	<i>Action statement 3; EXAMPLE: VGG publish a guide and provide staff training on the new framework.</i>

### MOVED:

SECONDED: \_\_\_\_\_

# 2021 Resolutions

VGFN General Assembly 2021	Resolutions
<b>01. Youth Council Age</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-01 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The older youth seem to get all the opportunities;</li> <li>The younger youth would like to participate;</li> <li>The younger youth would like to have their voices heard, acknowledged and recorded;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Council age be amended to 12 to 25 years of age.</li> </ol>	<b>02. Ban on Single Use Plastic</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-02 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <i>Yeendoo Diinehdoo Ji'heezit Nits'oo Ts'o' Nan He'aa Declaration</i> [VGFN Climate Emergency Declaration] recognizes climate change is a threat to the people, community, lands, waters, animals and way of life and is a call to action;</li> <li>The VGFN General Assembly recognized the importance of reducing the use of single use plastics when in 2004-4 it agreed by consensus to ban the use of disposable products at VGG events;</li> <li>Single use plastics used in the retail and hospitality sectors are resource intensive, their production, transportation and disposal contribute to pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;</li> <li>Old Crow lacks plastic recycling or the ability to transport plastics to recycling facilities in other jurisdictions;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of all single use plastics for retail and hospitality in Old Crow will be banned by January 1, 2022.</li> </ol>
Vuntut Gwitchin Government	4

VGFN General Assembly 2021	Resolutions
<b>03. Training Opportunities</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-03 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VGFN Citizens are unemployed;</li> <li>VGFN Citizens need to feel empowered to apply for and work for Vuntut Gwitchin Government;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positions of internships be created to work alongside Vuntut Gwitchin Government employees.</li> </ol>	<b>04. Vuntut Gwitchin Government employees in Whitehorse and Elsewhere</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-41 - Tabled</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vuntut Gwitchin Government is housed in Old Crow, on traditional Vuntut Gwitchin land;</li> <li>Many employees are now housed in Whitehorse, Yukon;</li> <li>We also have employees that are housed in other parts of Canada;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VGG employees in Whitehorse and other parts of Canada perform work duties in Old Crow on traditional land;</li> <li>Some positions have already been determined to be located in Whitehorse and these should remain: Citizens Advocate/Administrative Assistant, Whitehorse Family Support Worker, Whitehorse Education Support Worker;</li> <li>Council will review VGG employees working in Whitehorse and develop a strategy.</li> </ol>
Vuntut Gwitchin Government	5

VGFN General Assembly 2021	Resolutions
<b>05. Harm Reduction Policy</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-05 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many citizens deal with grief, common intergenerational trauma, unresolved underlying trauma and compound trauma and they cope by using substances. Some people have substance dependency issues. The opioid crisis is impacting our people. Although we often hear that the land heals, our citizens face severe barriers to accessing their own land due to lack of access to harm reduction services such as a safer supply of substances (i.e. alcohol and methadone). This could be considered a violation of their rights as Vuntut Gwitchin citizens;</li> <li>Current government policies encourage high risk behaviors, criminalization and stigmatization of health and mental health issues;</li> <li>Harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that saves lives (safer supply, education) and money (less medivacs, doctor billing hours) and is compassionate care. Harm reduction is necessary health care. Harm reduction promotes safety and connection in the community;</li> <li>Abstinence based programming does not work for everyone. Harm reduction is about meeting people where they are at and providing support, there is no expectation of sobriety;</li> </ol>	<b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VGG develop a harm reduction policy;</li> <li>Align our programs and services with harm reduction policy;</li> <li>VGG work towards low barrier supports for people with addictions in Old Crow including a safer supply of drugs and alcohol and sterile equipment and supplies, and harm reduction education;</li> <li>VGG will look into partnerships with other governments to provide the appropriate health care services;</li> <li>VGG will review the personnel policy through a harm reduction lens.</li> </ol>
Vuntut Gwitchin Government	6

VGFN General Assembly 2021	Resolutions
<b>06. First Wave COVID-19 Essential Worker Pay</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-06 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VGG paid 4-5 employees essential worker pay, all other essential workers that were deemed essential by VGG did not receive this pay;</li> <li>Some VGG employees feel it is not fair to those who were essential workers but did not get the Covid pay, which was equivalent to one week's pay;</li> <li>The process was not fair and transparent and equitable to all essential workers at that time;</li> <li>This created discontent amongst employees as they did not feel valued or treated equally;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That Council review the essential worker pay;</li> <li>That all essential workers from the first wave of Covid be paid the same amount.</li> </ol>	<b>07. Comprehensive Government Services and Housing Development Planning</b>  <i>Resolution No. 2021-71 - Passed by Consensus</i>  <b>WHEREAS:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no comprehensive plan for housing for the next five years;</li> <li>Old Crow is in a housing crisis;</li> </ol> <b>THEREFORE</b> , the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation resolves that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a priority, VGG create within six months a comprehensive 5-year plan for building houses to meet the needs of the community and consult the community in this process.</li> </ol>
Vuntut Gwitchin Government	7

**08. Prohibition Bylaw Amendment***Resolution No. 2021-08 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. Prohibition came into place in Old Crow in 1991;
- B. Since 1991, the prohibition bylaw has been an ongoing topic of debate in the community;
- C. A resolution was passed at the VGFN GA in 2005 to review the alcohol prohibition bylaw (no. 2005-15). In response a consulting firm was hired to assess the community's opinions on the prohibition bylaw. Questionnaires were distributed with a 75% return rate. The surveys showed that people want change to prohibition, want more prevention programs, want prohibition to be enforced differently;
- D. The VGFN GA in 2008 passed resolution no. 2008-04 directing leadership to follow through on the implementation of the Prohibition Review Report recommendations;
- E. The VGFN GA in 2013 passed resolution no. 2013-05 directing leadership to research and develop recommendations for changes to the existing prohibition bylaw;
- F. The VGFN GA in 2015 passed resolution no. 2015-05 directing leadership to hold community meetings and consultations and that meaningful and binding decisions be made based on the results of these meetings;

- G. There have been no changes to the prohibition bylaw to date;
- H. Prohibition is not working for the citizens of Old Crow;
- I. The prohibition bylaw in its current state prevents the provision of harm reduction services by service providers in Old Crow;
- J. Prohibition is creating harm in the community;

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

1. VGG take the necessary steps to amend or repeal the current prohibition bylaw, with the following conditions:
  - a. VGG explore and implement harm reduction models and healing pathways forward with the necessary programs and services to support wellness in Old Crow as presented in option 2 of the Prohibition Pathway Forward Briefing Note presented to the General Assembly by Chief and Council on October 13, 2021;
  - b. The VGG leadership must present and finalize the VGG Wellness and Happiness Index (the "Index") along with a Wellness Plan;
  - c. VGG will present the Index, the Wellness Plan, and a draft amendment to the bylaw to the General Assembly for final approval.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government

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**09. Old Crow Flats Camp***Resolution No. 2021-09 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. Since time immemorial the *dinji zhuh* have used Old Crow Flats to sustain/maintain their way of life, it provided food and economic sustainability. In 1993 the citizens of VGFN agreed to protect this pristine eco-rich region as a Special Management Area, never to be developed or disturbed;
- B. The Elders deemed this eco-rich area, a place of healing, advising that it will one day be filled again with Vuntut families, that the sound of Gwich'in laughter will radiate in the traditional area of our Flats;
- C. Our citizens have not used this area in approximately 30 years, people are not springing out anymore;
- D. Times have changed drastically where we have lost our connection to the historic rich area, no longer are families passing on the traditional teachings, language and gifts of spending longer stretches of time on the land together;

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

1. That Council direct VGG Natural Resources, Health and Social, Education departments collaborate and fund a three-week pilot camp in Old Crow Flats for Vuntut Gwitchin citizens and their families to work remotely from the Flats;

Vuntut Gwitchin Government

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**10. Recognition of Dagoo Nation***Resolution No. 2021-09 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. Dagoo descendants currently form part of the citizenship and have beneficiary status within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
- B. Historically Eagle Plains, Whitestone, Fishing Branch are the traditional territory of the Dagoo Nation;
- C. We want our children to recognize and know their heritage;

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

1. That Vuntut Gwitchin Government recognize the Dagoo Nation.

**11. Chance Oil and Gas Participation***Resolution No. 2021-11 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. Chance Oil and Gas is meeting with VG citizens in Old Crow and Whitehorse without VGG involvement;
- B. This engagement is important to all citizens for many reasons;

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

1. Council directs the chair of the NR Committee to move forward with a discussion with the Vice President of Government Relations of Chance Oil and Gas with VGFN Elder mediation.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government

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**12. Review of Council indemnities under the Governance Act***Resolution No. 2021-12 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGFN has had a difficult time in recent years attracting and maintaining a full Council;
- B. s.35 of the Governance Act outlines indemnities of council members;
- C. Cost of living in the Yukon and Old Crow has dramatically increased;
- D. Council member salaries are too low for the work and sacrifices they are asked to make in their elected roles;
- E. Current council member salaries are lower than the majority of positions within the government and have not been adjusted to the rate of inflation since 2012;
- F. There are many reasons for high turnover, including low rates of pay;

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

1. VGG seek out an independent review on the organizational structure, design, and remuneration of Chief and Council to reflect the work Council members put in and that Council positions remain attractive and competitive for skilled Vuntut Gwitchin members;
2. VGG bring Review Report back to the General Assembly for review & approval.

Vuntut Gwitchin Government

**13. Bring Northern Hub of Mental Wellness and Substance Use back to Old Crow***Resolution No. 2021-13 - Passed by Consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGFN has repeatedly vocalized the need for more mental health supports including mental wellness, substance use, and harm reduction;
- B. In June 2021 the Northern Hub of Mental Wellness and Substance Use was pulled from Old Crow after having built relationships with community members since October 2020;
- C. Pulling the Northern Hub of Mental Wellness and Substance Use from Old Crow has negatively affected our community and was made without community or client consultation;
- D. VGFN citizens deserve to have consistent access to therapists and counsellors to support their mental health and facilitate accessing other treatments;

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

1. That VGG request from the Yukon Government that the Northern Hub of Mental Wellness and Substance Use be brought back to Old Crow for one week per month as per their previous schedule.

**14. Safe playgrounds***Resolution No. 2021-14 - Tabled***WHEREAS:**

- A. Children in Old Crow need safe places to play outside;
- B. There has been lots of vandalism and garbage left in playgrounds in the past year;
- C. Many playgrounds are becoming overgrown with willows and grasses to the point where children can no longer play;
- D. Many playgrounds lack garbage cans and benches;
- E. No playgrounds in Old Crow have swings that accommodate toddlers;
- F. There is playground equipment that has been purchased for Old Crow that has not been set up;

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

1. Playground maintenance will become a responsibility of the GS Department;
2. This responsibility will include regular cleanings, clearing brush and grass, and ensuring there is enough equipment including garbage cans, benches, swings, and structures.

**15. VGG to review and increase contract amounts for cooks and cooks' helpers***Resolution No. 2021-15 - Tabled***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGG hires local residents as cooks and cooks' assistants for community events;
- B. Cooks pay is the same whether you cook for 50 or 200 people;
- C. Cooks pay rates appear intended to cover one day of pay, but cooking requires time spent meal planning, shopping, and preparing food that needs time (e.g. dry meat);
- D. Due to COVID19, increased safety measures (e.g. individually packaged meals) requires that cooks and cooks assistants work longer hours;
- E. Amounts for cooks and cooks' helpers have not been increased in many years despite increases in the cost of living;

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

1. VGG will review the wages for cooks and cooks' assistants contracts and increase the rates accordingly.

**16. VGG to review and increase equipment rental rates***Resolution No. 2021-16 - Passed by consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGG's rental rates for equipment (e.g. ATV, snowmobile, boat) have not been increased for many years;
- B. Equipment purchase, operating, and maintenance costs have increased considerably since VGG rental rates were established;
- C. Current VGG rental rates do not reflect the cost of operating equipment;

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

1. VGG will review equipment rates paid for snowmobiles, toboggans, boats, and ATVs to reflect the increased costs of purchasing, operating, and maintaining this equipment.

**17. Update VGG Finance Policy***Resolution No. 2021-17 - Passed by consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. The VGG Finance Policy has not been updated since 1995;

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

1. VGG will update the Finance Policy by the next General Assembly.

**18. Consult with the community to build an on the land treatment centre***Resolution No. 2021-18 - Passed by consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGFN elders have said that being on the land is a source of healing;
- B. VGFN citizens have a very close connection to the land of their Traditional Territory;
- C. Currently VGFN citizens seeking treatment have to go treatment centres outside the VGFN Traditional Territory;

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

1. VGG will consult the community regarding the construction of treatment centre out on the land on the VGFN Traditional Territory;
2. Depending on community support, VGG will seek out external funding and resources to construction an on the land treatment centre for VGFN citizens on the VGFN Traditional Territory.

**19. VGG Government Modernization***Resolution No. 2021-19 - Passed by consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. VGG hasn't modernized its internal frameworks, policies, procedures, processes;
- B. VGFN values and principles should be reflected throughout the government;

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

1. VGG develop a robust and comprehensive framework of policies to modernize the governments approach to support staff and citizens.

**20. Arctic National Wildlife Refuge***Resolution No. 2021-19 - Passed by consensus***WHEREAS:**

- A. The Gwich'in have led efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for decades;
- B. Our efforts are most successful when we keep this issue in the forefront for political leaders and the general public by using diverse voices from the community and implement community-led tactics;
- C. We are at tipping point in our efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge with oil and gas leases issued and a law that requires development but an Administration that has committed to restoring protections;
- D. We have had to adapt our tactics in seeking protection of the Refuge to account for the changing legal landscape and the ongoing global pandemic;

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

1. Vuntut Gwitchin Government hold an Advocacy Gathering for the community which includes:
  - a. opportunities for training which encourages community members, and particularly youth, to become more involved in work to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge;

- b. A review of what has been done in efforts to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge since the legal landscape has changed and brainstorming of strategic tactics we could implement that accounts for this and the ongoing pandemic.



## 21. To extend the GA from three days to five

*Resolution No. 2021-18 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- The GA currently does not have enough feasible time to speak to issues and all of our entities in three days;
- The GA should be held during the work week as we are a growing government, we need to extend the days so that there is enough time to speak to all of our issues without being restricted;

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

- The GA be extended for five days, Monday to Friday;
- All entities will present at the GA.

## 22. Board Appointments

*Resolution No. 2021-18 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- VGFN has a goal of creating wealth across generations and to establish a framework of economic development that establishes opportunities for all Vuntut;
- The VGG entities need to provide all Vuntut with the opportunity to be mentored and sit on VGG boards and there is no clear appointment process;
- Current board VGG board members have served many years, sometimes since inception;
- All Vuntut citizens need to be involved in the management of VGG entities and there is a need for specific measures and efforts to provide opportunities for young Gwitchin to be involved in these entities;

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

- VGG ensure that its entities include the involvement and perspectives of young Gwitchin;
- VGG establish an appointment process, that focuses on mentorship and support for youth involvement, for the appointment of new members to VGG boards, including VGLP, VGBT, and VGT.

## 23. OCDC Special General Assembly

*Resolution No. 2021-18 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- OCDC has been bailed out by VGG;
- OCDC has not followed the original intent of the creation of OCDC;

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

- VGG hold a meeting to resolve the issues surrounding OCDC after OCDC gets their financials in order.

## 24. Climate change strategy for the North Yukon

*Resolution No. 2021-18 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- The Yeendoo Diinehdoo Ji'heezrit Nits'oo Ts'o Nan He'aa Declaration (2019) recognizes the adverse impacts of climate change on the lands, water, animals, and people of the VGFN;
- The 2019 VGFN GA directed the government to pursue carbon neutrality;
- We recognize the importance of Traditional Knowledge, land based information, and western scientific data to inform how we will adapt to a changing world; and
- We recognize our Northern First Nations neighbours are facing similar concerns that presents an opportunity for collaboration;

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

- VGG seek the involvement of NND and TH to prepare a climate change strategy for the North Yukon that addresses monitoring, mitigation, and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

## 25. Ti'oo K'at

*Resolution No. 2021-25 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- GA has not been at Ti'oo K'at for 2 years;
- This is our traditional meeting place;
- There is a loss of connection to our past and the future on the land;
- The old Ti'oo K'at site had family tent frames;

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

- VGG legislate that all GAs be at our traditional meeting place Ti'oo K'at;
- VGG increase housing capacity at Ti'oo K'at with more tent frames and Internet;
- VGG help citizens build family tent frames at Ti'oo K'at.

## 26. Gwich'in Arts Summit 2024

*Resolution No. 2021-26 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- There are many talented Gwich'in artists both in and outside of our homelands;
- Our people are DJs, painters, carvers, designers, poets, tanners, musicians, linguists, quill workers, sewers, beeders, snowshoe makers, and more;
- Arts are empowering and healing for our people;
- Our community has continually expressed interest in tourism and in bringing together elders, youth, education, and culture;

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

- VGG set aside funding to plan a Gwich'in Arts Summit in 2024;
- VGG hire 3 citizens to plan this Summit;
- VGG ensure the Summit occurs in Old Crow with at least a portion at Ti'oo K'at;
- VGG ensure some Summit activities happen on the land.

## 27. VGG Events Coordinator Position

*Resolution No. 2021-26 - Passed by consensus*

### WHEREAS:

- The Vuntut Gwitchin are known for hosting traditional events, this is how we gather and celebrate. It is important to continue this tradition;
- Currently it is hard to get coordinators and the traditional part gets lost in the event when we try to organize an event at the last minute;

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

- VGG post and hire a full-time permanent position of Events Coordinator;

## 28. Description: National Conference on Migratory Fish Species

*Resolution No. 2021-26 - Tabled*

### WHEREAS:

- Salmon returns to their spawning grounds have been the poorest on record this year and have been on a downward trend for decades;
- The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation relies on salmon for their subsistence and traditional needs;

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

- VGFN calls for a national Indigenous conference on migratory fish species to address the increasingly low population.

# VGFN Constitution



## VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION CONSTITUTION

Ratified by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly: 1992

Last amended by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly: August 10, 2019

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### PREAMBLE

We, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation of the North Yukon, having boundless pride in our ancient cultural heritage and ancestral homeland and desiring to exercise our inherent right of self-government to exercise responsibility for the general welfare of our Citizens and to provide for the good government of our communities, lands and resources, hereby adopt this Constitution.

### DEFINITIONS

1. In this Constitution:
  - "Canada" means, unless the context otherwise requires, Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada;
  - "Chief" means the leader of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - "Child" means a child born in or out of wedlock, a legally adopted child and a child adopted in accordance with the accepted custom of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - "Citizen" means a person whose name is on the First Nation Citizenship List;
  - "Council" means the Council of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation as chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - "Councillor" means either the Deputy Chief or Councillor as chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - "Elder" means a Citizen who is sixty years of age;
  - "Elders Council Member" means a Citizen who is sixty years of age or older and who chooses to be a member of the Elders Council;
  - "Elector" means a person who is on the First Nation Citizenship List, who is 18 years of age or older and who is not disqualified from voting;
  - "First Nation" means the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - "First Nation Citizenship List" means the list of Citizens that is maintained by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - "Generally Accepted Accounting Principles" means the accounting principles generally accepted in Canada as amended from time to time, as applicable pursuant to the public sector accounting standards established by the Public Sector Accounting Standards Board of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants or its successor;

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"General Assembly" a governing body composed of eligible Citizens that provides direction to Chief and Council;

"General Election" means a regularly scheduled election held in accordance with Vuntut Gwitchin Laws, in which all Citizens who are at least 18 years old are entitled to vote;

"Governing Body" means a body established under the Constitution, which includes the General Assembly, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Court, Elders Council, and Council;

"Non-Settlement Land" means all land and water in the Yukon other than Settlement Land and includes Mines and Minerals in Category B Settlement Land and Fee Simple Settlement Land, other than Specified Substances as defined in the Umbrella Final Agreement;

"Public Institution" means a Vuntut Gwitchin Government body, board, commission, corporation, organization or tribunal established under Vuntut Gwitchin Law;

"Resident" means a person who the majority of the time, regularly lives on Vuntut Gwitchin Settlement Land but who may or may not be a Citizen of Vuntut Gwitchin;

"Review Council" means the body responsible for:

- (a) recounts in an election;
- (b) serving as the Citizenship/Enrollment Committee;
- (c) receiving complaints about Chief and Council;
- (d) where necessary, removal from office; and
- (e) when necessary, appointments of interim Councillor.

"Settlement Land" means Category A Settlement Land, Category B Settlement Land or Fee Simple Settlement Land, as defined in the Umbrella Final Agreement;

"Traditional Territory" means, subject to a Yukon First Nation Final Agreement, with respect to each Yukon First Nation and each Yukon Indigenous Person enrolled in that Yukon First Nation's Final Agreement, the geographic area within the Yukon identified as that Yukon First Nation's Traditional Territory on the map referred to in 2.9.0 in the Umbrella Final Agreement;

"Umbrella Final Agreement" means the 1993 agreement signed between Canada, Yukon and Council of Yukon First Nations;

"Vuntut Gwitchin Court" means a court established under Vuntut Gwitchin legislation;

"Vuntut Gwitchin Laws" includes this Constitution and any law passed in accordance with the procedure set out in the Governance Act or relevant legislation;

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"Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation" means the collectivity of Citizens who share the language, culture, and laws of the Vuntut Gwitchin, and their descendants;

"Vuntut Gwitchin Nation Fiscal Financing Agreement" means a fiscal financing agreement within the meaning of that term in the Umbrella Final Agreement;

"Vuntut Gwitchin Government" means both the elected and administrative bodies forming the government of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;

"Vuntut Gwitchin Settlement Trust" means a Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation settlement trust within the meaning of that term in the Umbrella Final Agreement;

"Youth Council" means the collective of eligible youth of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;

"Youth Representatives" means the eligible youth chosen to represent the Youth Council;

"Yukon" means, unless the context otherwise requires, Her Majesty the Queen in right of Yukon; and

"Yukon First Nation Final Agreement" means a land claims agreement for a Yukon First Nation that includes provisions specific to that Yukon First Nation and incorporates the provisions of the Umbrella Final Agreement.

### ARTICLE I – OBJECTS

1. The objects of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation are to:
  - (a) have authority in respect of communities and lands of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the occupants thereof as prescribed in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement;
  - (b) promote and enhance the general welfare of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - (c) promote, enhance and protect the history, culture, values, traditions and rights of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - (d) promote respect for the ancestral homeland of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation including the natural resources thereof;
  - (e) use, manage, administer and regulate the lands of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation including the natural resources thereof;
  - (f) control the disposition of rights and interests in and to the traditional lands and resources for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;

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- (g) use, manage and administer the money and other assets of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, including any and all benefits to be realized by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation from the settlement of the land claims of the Vuntut Gwitchin;
- (h) promote and carry out community development and charitable works for the benefit of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
- (i) ensure that the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation meets its obligations and discharges its responsibilities under this Constitution, its laws, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement and agreements ancillary thereto;
- (j) maintain a registry of Citizens; and
- (k) do such other things related to the foregoing as may be conducive to the general welfare and good government of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

#### **ARTICLE II – VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION AUTHORITY/LOCATION**

1. Subject to the terms of the Vuntut Gwitchin Final Agreement and the Vuntut Gwitchin Self-Government Agreement, the operations and authority of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation shall extend to and over all land and resources, all Citizens, all occupants of Settlement Land and all matters within the jurisdiction of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, and to the collective rights and interests of Citizens.
2. The seat of government for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation shall be located within Settlement Land as advised by the General Assembly.
3. This Constitution is the supreme law of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, subject only to the:
  - (a) Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement; and
  - (b) rights and freedoms set out in this Constitution.
4. In the event of an inconsistency or conflict between this Constitution and the provisions of any Vuntut Gwitchin Law, the Vuntut Gwitchin Law is, to the extent of the inconsistency or conflict, of no force or effect.
5. The validity of a Vuntut Gwitchin Law may be challenged in the Supreme Court of Yukon Territory until the Vuntut Gwitchin Court is established.

#### **ARTICLE III – CITIZENSHIP**

1. Citizenship shall be determined by the Citizenship Code of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation through the authority of the Review Council.

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2. Every eligible person residing on or off Settlement Land can apply to be a Citizen in accordance with Vuntut Gwitchin Law.

#### **ARTICLE IV – RIGHTS OF CITIZENS**

1. The Constitution hereby guarantees the rights and freedoms hereinafter set out subject only to such reasonable limits as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic Vuntut Gwitchin society.
2. Every Citizen has the right to enter, remain in and leave Vuntut Gwitchin Lands in accordance with Vuntut Gwitchin Law.
3. Every Citizen has the right to make political choices, to participate in political activities, and to express a view on any public issue.
4. Subject to residency and other requirements set out in Vuntut Gwitchin Law, every Citizen who is at least 18 years of age is eligible to vote in Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elections and to hold office in Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
5. Chief and Council must make laws in respect of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elections and referenda, including the establishment of:
  - (a) qualifications of voters;
  - (b) qualifications of candidates for election to office;
  - (c) an independent officer to administer elections and referenda;
  - (d) procedures for the conduct of elections and referenda; and
  - (e) areas or locations within which elections or referenda will be held.
6. Every Citizen has the following fundamental freedoms:
  - (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
  - (b) freedom of thought, belief or opinion and expression;
  - (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
  - (d) freedom of association.
7. Every individual is equal before and under the laws of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation law without discrimination.
8. Every Citizen has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof, except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

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9. Every Citizen has the right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure.
10. Every Citizen has the right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.
11. Any person charged with an offence contrary to a validly existing Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation law has the right:
  - (a) to be informed without unreasonable delay of the specific offence;
  - (b) to be tried within a reasonable time;
  - (c) not to be called as a witness in proceedings against the person in respect of the offence;
  - (d) to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation law and to a fair and public hearing before an independent and impartial justice tribunal;
  - (e) not to be denied reasonable bail without just cause; and
  - (f) if finally acquitted of the offence, not to be tried for it again and if finally found guilty and punished for the offence and if the punishment of the offence has been varied from time of the commission and the time of sentencing, to have the benefit of the lesser punishment.
12. Every Citizen has the right not to be subjected to any cruel or unusual treatment or punishment.
13. A witness who testifies in any proceedings has the right not to have any incriminating evidence so, given to be subsequently given against that witness in any other proceedings, except in a prosecution for perjury or for the giving of contradictory evidence.
14. Any part or witness to any proceedings who does not understand or speak the language in which the proceedings are conducted or who is deaf, has the right to the assistance of an interpreter.
15. Gwich'in is the official language of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.
16. Everyone has the right to use the Gwich'in or English in any debates or other proceedings of the General Assembly or Council.
17. The laws, records and journals of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation shall be printed and published in English and may be translated into Gwich'in language.
18. Either the Gwich'in language or English may be used by any person in any pleading issuing to any Court or published by the Vuntut Gwitchin Council within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Traditional Territory.

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19. Anyone whose rights or freedoms as guaranteed by this Constitution have been infringed upon or denied may apply to the Vuntut Gwitchin Court to obtain such remedy as the Court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances. Until a Court is established, any such person may also apply to any other court of competent jurisdiction.
20.
  - (a) Every Citizen shall have reasonable access to information about him or her (and his or her minor children) personally which has been provided to or obtained by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and which is within the possession or control of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.
  - (b) The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation may keep and use such personal information as any person may provide to it or as it may otherwise obtain in connection with the enrollment of that person as a beneficiary of the Vuntut Gwitchin Final Agreement or as a Citizen of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, or in connection with the access to or the provision of any program, service or benefit, or the application of any law, of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation by or to that person, provided that such information shall be kept protected by such security safeguards as are appropriate to its sensitivity.

#### **ARTICLE V – ORGANIZATION OF THE VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION GOVERNMENT**

1. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government shall have four branches: the General Assembly, the Elders Council, the Council and the Vuntut Gwitchin Court. A branch of the government shall not exercise the powers of another branch, except as this Constitution may permit.
2. The Elders Council, General Assembly, Chief and Council shall be guided by the Code of Conduct established for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
3. Elected officials of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government shall abide by the Oath of Office that is appended as Schedule II to this Constitution.

#### **ARTICLE VI – VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

1. There shall be a General Assembly composed of the Citizens of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. The powers, duties and responsibilities of the General Assembly shall include:
  - (a) consideration and approval of proposals and reports received from the Council;
  - (b) consideration and review of proposals, legislation and financial reports received from Council;
  - (c) consideration and approval of Elders Council proposals;
  - (d) amending this Constitution; and

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- (e) providing direction to Chief and Council through General Assembly resolutions.
2. A meeting of the General Assembly shall be held each year during a date in the month of August and special meetings of the General Assembly may be held at the call of the Council at any other time:
- (a) a notice of a meeting of the General Assembly with the proposed agenda shall be posted throughout the community of Old Crow and to Citizens not residing on Settlement Land with no less than two weeks' notice. Notice shall be given through electronic media;
- (b) 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 no less than 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;
- (c) the quorum for a General Assembly shall be 25 members present and eligible to vote in the General Assembly;
- (d) the Chair of the General Assembly shall be chosen by the General Assembly Coordinator in consultation with the Executive Office. The General Assembly Coordinator shall be a Citizen;
- (e) consensus will be encouraged for all decision-making of the General Assembly. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, decisions shall be passed by simple majority vote;
- (f) Chief and Councilors are considered observers and non-voting members of the General Assembly and serve as members for the purposes of achieving quorum; and
- (g) Only members who are sixteen years of age or older may vote in meeting of the General Assembly.

#### **ARTICLE VII – ELDERS COUNCIL**

##### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

1. To become a Elders Council Member, one must be:
- (a) 60 years of age or older; and
- (b) a Citizen.

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2. An individual who meets the eligibility criteria for becoming an Elders Council Member, but who chooses not to participate in the Elders Council is still considered an Elder.
3. The Elders Council shall advise the Council on all matters and may:
- (a) provide advice and guidance to Vuntut Gwitchin governing bodies excluding the Vuntut Gwitchin Court;
- (b) appoint the Elder's representative to the Review Council;
- (c) preserve and protect Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation traditions, customs, laws, culture and language; and
- (d) upon recommendation from Chief and the Councilors, appoint members to Council committees.

##### **GOVERNANCE**

4. The Elders Council shall determine their own rules and procedures for the conduct of their business.
5. If an Elder sits on the Review Council, they shall not be a n Elders Council Member for the duration of their term on Review Council.

#### **ARTICLE VIII – COUNCIL**

1. There shall be a Council elected by the eligible voters of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation pursuant to the Election Act and relevant legislation.
2. The Council shall consist of one Chief and four Councilors.
3. In the event that the required number of nominees have not been nominated to fill all the positions on the Council, the Elders shall recommend suitable candidates to the community at large in a duly called public meeting. All recommended candidates shall be consulted prior to nomination and the membership at large in Old Crow must, by consensus, approve the recommendations prior to the affirmation of the recommended candidate under this process.
4. The quorum of the Council shall be three members, including the Chief (or in the absence of the Chief, the Deputy Chief) acting in consultation with the other members, to the extent that is practical.
5. The terms of office for the Chief and four Councilors shall be four years, commencing on the 2nd Wednesday of January immediately following their election. For greater certainty, the Chief and Councilors holding office on the day of the election remain in office until the 2nd Wednesday of January.

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6. The Council shall determine their own rules and procedures. The Council shall strive to make all decisions by consensus. In the event a consensus cannot be reached, the Council shall make the decision by simple majority vote.
7. The Council shall hold regular public meetings and shall hold special meetings at the call of the Chief or upon written request signed by three or more of its Councilors.

#### **ARTICLE IX – COUNCIL DUTIES AND POWERS**

1. It shall be lawful for the Chief and Councilors, by and with the advice of the General Assembly and the Elders Council, to make Vuntut Gwitchin Laws for the peace, order and good government of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in accordance with section 13.0 of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement.
2. All Vuntut Gwitchin Laws enacted by the Council shall be consistent with the objects of this Constitution. The Council shall establish, by law, a general procedure for the enactment of Vuntut Gwitchin Laws.
3. Without limiting the foregoing, the duties and powers of the Council also shall include:
- (a) considering direction provided by the General Assembly through resolution;
- (b) setting clear policies and guidelines and ensuring good management and reporting in all aspects of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government within the jurisdiction of the Council;
- (c) proposing new legislation under the jurisdiction of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
- (d) establishing a system of laws according to the traditions, needs and ideals of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and in accord with the objectives of this Constitution;
- (e) implementing Vuntut Gwitchin Laws considered by the General Assembly;
- (f) exercising all jurisdiction, power and authority of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and fulfilling any duties of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation pursuant to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement;
- (g) as they deem advisable, establishing any trust for the benefit of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, constituting any persons as trustees thereof and vesting therein any property of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; and
- (h) exercising such powers and doing such things as may be necessary to fulfill the objects of this Constitution.

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#### **ARTICLE X – CHIEF AND DEPUTY CHIEF**

1. The Chief shall be the general spokesperson for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and the chief executive of Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
2. The Chief shall hold no other office except as provided in this Constitution.
3. The Chief shall be the presiding officer of the Council.
4. The Chief shall have the power, in accordance with Constitution and any law and subject to the approval of the Council to:
- (a) establish committees of the Council and to appoint the members to subcommittees;
- (b) ensure that resolutions approved, and Vuntut Gwitchin Laws enacted by the Council are implemented;
- (c) make recommendations to the General Assembly or to the Council and to make periodic reports of the state of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; and
- (d) exercise such additional powers as may be authorized by Vuntut Gwitchin Law.
5. The Deputy Chief, who is appointed from the four Councilors shall perform such duties of the Chief or exercise such powers as may be delegated to them.
6. In the absence or incapacity of the Chief, the Deputy Chief shall, under the direction of the Council, perform all the duties and exercise all the powers of the Chief.
7. Either the Chief or Deputy Chief should be present on the Traditional Territory at all times. In the event that both Chief and Deputy Chief must be absent, an interim Deputy Chief shall be appointed.

#### **ARTICLE XI – TERMS OF OFFICE AND QUALIFICATIONS**

##### **QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Any person desiring to run for Chief or Councilor must meet the following qualifications:
- (a) Be 18 years or older;
- (b) Be ordinarily resident in Canada;
- (c) No indictable offence convictions for 5 years preceding the election; and
- (d) Be a Citizen.

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2. If an eligible candidate for Chief or Councillor does not reside on Settlement Land during the election and wins their desired seat they must relocate to Settlement Land within 14 days after election day.

#### **ARTICLE XII – REVIEW COUNCIL**

##### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. The Review Council means the body responsible for:
  - (a) recounts in an election;
  - (b) serving as the Citizenship/Enrolment Committee;
  - (c) receiving complaints about Chief and Councillors;
  - (d) when proven, according to Vuntut Gwitchin Law, removal from office; and
  - (e) when necessary, appointments of interim Council members.
2. The Review Council comprises the following five members, appointed for a three-year term:
  - (a) one person appointed by the Council who is not the Chief or a Councillor;
  - (b) two persons appointed on the recommendation of the General Assembly; and
  - (c) two persons appointed on the recommendation of the Elders Council.
3. The scope and authority of the Review Council shall be set out in the Governance Act and related legislation.

##### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

4. All members of the Review Council must abide by the Code of Conduct established for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

#### **ARTICLE XIII – YOUTH COUNCIL**

##### **ELIGIBILITY**

1. To be eligible for Youth Council, youth must be:
  - (a) between the ages of 16-30; and
  - (b) a Citizen.
2. Youth between the ages of 16-30 who are not Citizens residing on Settlement Land may participate in Youth Council as determined through its terms of reference.

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3. A Youth Representative and alternate shall be chosen by eligible youth.
4. The Youth Representatives shall report regularly to the Youth Council.

##### **PURPOSE**

5. The Youth Representatives shall provide leadership to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation youth regarding participation in the community and Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

##### **GOVERNANCE**

6. The Youth Council shall determine their own rules and procedures for the conduct of their business.
7. All members of the Youth Council shall abide by the Code of Conduct established for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

#### **ARTICLE XIV – VACANCIES AND REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

##### **REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

1. Any member of the Council who, during the term during which he or she is elected, is convicted of an indictable offence as defined in the Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c C-46, shall automatically be suspended from his or her office.
2. During the 45 days following the conviction, the Review Council will determine whether that office will be forfeited or whether the member will continue their office subject to terms and conditions.
3. If a Councillor is convicted of an offence that is not an indictable offence but that, in the sole discretion of the Review Council is a breach of the Oath of Office or Code of Conduct, they may be removed from office or be subject to terms and conditions imposed by Review Council.
4. If, on complaint through proper outlined in Vuntut Gwitchin legislation by a Citizen, Review Council determines there has been a breach of the Councillor's Oath or Office or Code of Conduct, a councillor may be removed from office or be subject to terms and conditions imposed by Review Council.
5. The decision of the Review Council shall be final and such Council member shall not be eligible to be returned to office for at least six years following the action.
6. The Review Council shall undertake its responsibilities with respect to removal from office in accordance with the procedure outlined in Vuntut Gwitchin Law.

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##### **VACANCIES**

7. Subject to Article XI, vacancies in the membership of the Council or in the offices of the Council shall be filled in the following manner:
  - (a) If the vacancy occurs within six months of a General Election, the Review Council will appoint an interim Council member to serve until the election period begins; and
  - (b) If the vacancy occurs when more than six months remaining before a General Election, a by-election will be held in accordance with the procedure set out in the Elections Act.

#### **ARTICLE XV – VUNTUT GWITCHIN COURT**

1. There shall be a Vuntut Gwitchin Court whose membership and organization shall be established by the Administration of Justice Act and any other applicable Vuntut Gwitchin Laws.
2. Vuntut Gwitchin Court shall have power to hear and decide all cases of alleged violation of Vuntut Gwitchin Laws and to impose such penalties as are provided by Vuntut Gwitchin Laws.
3. Vuntut Gwitchin Court shall establish its own rules and procedures in legislation.
4. Vuntut Gwitchin Court may establish and administer a system of legal aid and general legal counselling for persons coming before the Vuntut Gwitchin Court.

#### **ARTICLE XVI – FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

1. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation financial administration will:
  - (a) be prudent, open, and accountable;
  - (b) provide for effective, efficient and responsible use of the financial resources of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and its Citizens;
  - (c) prepare, maintain and publish its accounts in a manner consistent with the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles; and
  - (d) manage finances in accordance with Vuntut Gwitchin Law.
2. Council shall establish a financial administration system that will include mechanisms to prepare and present an annual budget in accordance with the Appropriations Act.
3. At any time during regular office hours, or at any other time upon giving reasonable notice and arranging a time satisfactory to the Council, the records of the proceedings of a governing institution, the approved budget and the audited financial statements of the

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Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation may be inspected at the administrative office of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government by any Citizen subject to and in accordance with any applicable privacy and freedom of information laws.

4. Unless in accordance with applicable privacy and freedom of information laws, no person shall be entitled to make copies of records or to remove records from the office of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government.
5. Vuntut Gwitchin Government shall make policies providing for allocations to Governing Bodies and Public Institutions.

##### **AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS**

6. The books, accounts and records of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation shall be audited at least once a year by a chartered accountant and the report thereof shall be submitted to Chief and Council for approval and presented to the General Assembly.
7. The fiscal year of the Council shall end on March 31 of each year.

#### **ARTICLE XVII – THE SEAL**

1. The Council shall have a seal, which shall remain with the Chief or his or her agents and shall be affixed to all documents required to be in writing under the seal.

#### **ARTICLE XVIII – AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION**

1. This Constitution may be amended only in accordance with the following steps:
  - (a) Step 1: Council shall adopt a resolution, by simple majority vote, proposing an amendment to this Constitution;
  - (b) Step 2: written notice of the proposed amendment is given by the Council to all Citizens eligible to vote at a General Assembly at least fourteen (14) days before the meeting of the General Assembly at which the amendment is to be considered;
  - (c) Step 3: General Assembly shall then determine whether to proceed with or change the proposed amendment. The quorum for the General Assembly must be present at the time the amendment is considered for debate and decision; and
  - (d) Step 4: the amendment is approved by eligible voting members of the General Assembly. Consensus will be encouraged for all constitutional amendments of the General Assembly. In cases where consensus cannot be reached, amendments shall be passed by 60% majority vote.

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2. For the purposes of approving amendments to this Constitution, Chief and Council shall be considered voting members of the General Assembly.
3. Any amendment to this Constitution must be consistent with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement and the rights and freedoms stated within this Constitution.

#### **ARTICLE XIX – TRANSITION**

1. This Constitution shall be the sole Constitution of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.
2. Any and all laws, ordinances, resolution and agreements enacted or entered into by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation shall remain valid to the extent that they are consistent with this Constitution.
3. The Council shall be constituted, and its members shall take office in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution within one year of the ratification of this Constitution.
4. Until the members of the Council shall take office in accordance with this Constitution, the Old Crow Band Council shall have all the powers and duties of the Council.

#### **ARTICLE XX – RATIFICATION OF THIS CONSTITUTION**

1. This Constitution shall come into force as provided in the Settlement Agreements or Self-Government Agreements and when approved by a majority of the members of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; present and voting when assembled for the purpose by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.
2. The official copy of this Constitution as approved at such assembly may be signed at the assembly by members of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and shall thereafter be safeguarded as provided by the Council.

#### **ARTICLE XXI – CHALLENGING AND QUASHING OF LAWS**

##### **VALIDITY OF VUNTUT GWITCHIN LAWS**

1. The validity of a Vuntut Gwitchin Law may be challenged by a Citizen in the:
  - (a) Yukon Supreme Court; and
  - (b) Court of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, once established.
2. Any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect.

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#### **ARTICLE XXII – OTHER INTERPRETATION**

1. In this Constitution:
  - (a) unless it is otherwise clear from the context, the use of the word “including” means “including, but not limited to”, and the use of the word “includes” means “includes, but is not limited to”;
  - (b) unless it is otherwise clear from the context, a reference to a “section”, “subsection” or “paragraph” means a section, subsection or paragraph, respectively, of this Constitution;
  - (c) headings and subheadings are for convenience only, do not form a part of this Constitution, and in no way define, limit, alter, or enlarge the scope or meaning of any provision of this Constitution; and
  - (d) unless it is otherwise clear from the context, the use of the singular includes the plural, and the use of the plural includes the singular.
2. If there is a conflict between different versions of this Constitution, the English language version will prevail.

##### **CONFLICT OF LAWS**

3. In this Constitution there is a conflict between laws if compliance with one law would be a breach of the other law.

##### **STATUS OF SCHEDULES**

4. All Schedules to this Constitution form part of this Constitution.

##### **COMMENCEMENT**

5. This Constitution is in effect as of the effective date of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement.

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#### **SCHEDULE I: VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION CITIZENSHIP CODE**

##### **PREAMBLE**

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation have occupied the lands known as the northern portions of the Yukon Territory since time immemorial. Therefore, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation considers the control of its Citizenship to be its fundamental right and responsibility.

##### **DEFINITIONS**

1. In this Citizenship Code:
  - “**Adopted Child**” means a person who, while a minor, is adopted in accordance with the relevant laws on adoption, which includes Vuntut Gwitchin Law or customary laws;
  - “**Canada**” means, unless the context otherwise requires, Her Majesty the Queen in right of Canada;
  - “**Chief**” means the leader of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - “**Child**” means a child born in or out of wedlock, a legally adopted child, and a child adopted in accordance with the accepted custom of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - “**Citizen**” means a person whose name is on the First Nation Citizenship List;
  - “**Councillor**” means either the Deputy Chief or Councillor chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - “**Council**” means the Council of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation chosen as a result of a duly held election;
  - “**Elder**” means a Citizen who is sixty years of age or more and resides in the Yukon;
  - “**Enrollment/Statistician Officer**” means the officer of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation who is responsible for maintaining the First Nation Citizenship List;
  - “**First Nation**” means the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - “**First Nation Citizenship List**” means the list of Citizens, which is maintained by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation;
  - “**Ordinarily Resident**” means a person who lived or has lived the majority of his or her life in the Yukon. In making such determination, temporary absences from the Yukon for reasons such as travel, education, medical treatment, military service or incarceration, shall be considered periods of residence provided the Person was Ordinarily Resident prior to such temporary absences;

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“**Resident**” means a person ordinarily residing the majority of the time on Settlement Land who may or may not be a Citizen;

“**Review Council**” means the body responsible for:

- (a) recounts in an election;
- (b) serving as the Citizenship/Enrollment Committee;
- (c) receiving complaints about Chief and Council;
- (d) when proven, according to Vuntut Gwitchin Law, removal from office; and
- (e) when necessary, appointments of interim Councillor.

“**Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation**” means the collectivity of Citizens who share the language, culture, and laws of the Vuntut Gwitchin, and their descendants;

“**Vuntut Gwitchin Government**” means the government of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; and

“**Vuntut Gwitchin Laws**” includes this Constitution; and any law passed in accordance with the procedure set out in the Governance Act.

##### **FIRST NATION CITIZENSHIP ENROLLMENT**

##### **EXCLUSIONS**

2. The following persons shall not be eligible to be registered as a Citizen:
  - (a) a person who is enrolled in another self-governing First Nation in Canada; and
  - (b) a person who is a Citizen of another self-governing First Nation or member of a First Nation Band as defined in the Indian Act in Canada.

##### **APPLICATIONS**

3. Any adult person may apply to the Enrollment Committee to be enrolled as a Citizen.
4. Any adult person may apply to the Enrollment Committee to enroll their Minor child as a Citizen.
5. Any person who, by order of a court in Canada or pursuant to Legislation, has been vested with the authority to manage the affairs of an adult incapable of managing his or her own affairs may apply to the Enrollment Committee on behalf of the adult.

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**MINOR CHILDREN**

6. If the parents of a minor child are citizens of a different self-governing Indigenous Nation or an Indian Band, the minor child is considered a citizen of the Nation or Indian Band of the parent's choice.
7. If parents of a minor child are legally separated or divorced, the minor child will retain Citizenship of the parent with whom they are primarily resident or the Citizenship of the parents' joint decision, if they agree.

**FIRST NATION ENROLLMENT COMMITTEE**

8. The Enrollment Committee is the same body as the Review Council and is responsible for:
  - (a) receiving completed applications for Citizenship or Enrollment;
  - (b) approving and certifying eligible applicants and forwarding the same to the Enrollment/Statistician Officer;
  - (c) forwarding the names of applicants who have been refused Citizenship and/or Enrollment together with all relevant information and documentation to the Enrollment/Statistician Officer;
  - (d) determining whether or not a child has been adopted pursuant to Vuntut Gwitchin custom; and
  - (e) providing information about adoption to the Enrollment/Statistician Officer.

**ENROLLMENT**

9. Any enrolled person as per section 3.2.0 of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement is a Citizen.

**PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR ENROLLMENT**

10. Any adult person who seeks to become a Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Citizen will file an application with the Enrollment/Statistician Officer with the following documentation:
  - (a) birth certificate; and
  - (b) confirmation that the applicant is not enrolled under another land claim agreement as per section 3.4.0 of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement.
11. If the applicant cannot confirm enrollment under the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement they can confirm eligibility by showing that they are:

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- (a) a descendant of a deceased or living enrolled person; or
  - (b) an adopted person of an enrolled person.
12. The Enrollment Committee may, in its discretion, and upon consideration of all relevant circumstances, consider an applicant to have sufficient ancestry with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation so as to justify enrollment.

**ENROLLMENT APPEAL BOARD**

13. On an ad hoc basis, an appeal board ("Enrollment Appeal Board") may be appointed by the Chief and Council and shall consist of three persons, all Citizens, none of whom shall concurrently sit on the Enrollment Committee.
14. The Enrollment Appeal Board shall hear any appeals from the decisions of the Enrollment Committee.
15. An appeal must be written and contain a brief statement of the grounds of the appeal.
16. An appeal may be made by the Council, any member, or the person in respect of whose name the protest is made or his or her representative.
17. The Enrollment Appeal Board shall have the authority to affirm, vary, deny or refer the subject matter back to the Enrollment Committee for reconsideration or further investigation.
18. A decision of the Enrollment Appeal Board shall be final.

**WITHDRAWAL AND TERMINATION**

19. Any member may withdraw his or her Citizenship upon written application to the Enrollment Committee.

**FIRST NATION ENROLLMENT/STATISTICIAN OFFICER**

20. An Enrollment/Statistician Officer will be hired by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government and shall have the following responsibilities:
  - (a) notifying each applicant of the results of the findings and determination of the Committee;
  - (b) maintaining an up to date First Nation Citizenship List; and
  - (c) providing any individual seeking to become a Citizen, the application form that identifies the enrollment requirements and outlines the application process.

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**AMENDMENT**

21. The Citizenship Code may only be amended using the amendment procedure provided for under Article XVIII of this Constitution.

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

22. This Citizenship Code will become effective on the effective date of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Self-Government Agreement.

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**SCHEDULE II: OATH OF OFFICE**

Each person who is elected to the position of Chief or Councillor is required by this Constitution to swear or affirm loyalty to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and obedience to this Constitution, and must answer the following questions asked by an Elder accordingly:

**Question:** "Will you accept from the people the sacred responsibility of government? Will you be faithful to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, uphold its values, and protect and obey its Constitution?"

**Answer:** "I will."

**Question:** "Will you seek the guidance of the Elders and respect their wisdom? Will you be faithful to your role and to those who seek your advice, and will you keep secret all matters entrusted to your confidence?"

**Answer:** "I will."

**Question:** "Will you work to preserve the peace and unity of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, to secure the well-being of the people, and to provide good, effective, and accountable government for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation?"

**Answer:** "I will, and may I have the wisdom to continue to protect our land and our people."

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# The Year in Pictures





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Vuntut Gwitchin Government