

# Ginjih nizii hah nihts'o' gidiikhyaa

We will talk to each other with good words



## Vuntut Gwitchin Government Report to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

2023 General Assembly

Tl'oo K'at



## Table of Contents

3	Agenda
4	General Assembly Rules of Order
6	Message from the Chief
8	Message from the Executive Director
11	Council and Executive Office
25	Finance
27	Human Resources and Development
33	Government Services
37	Natural Resources and Heritage
53	Health and Social Services
60	2023 General Assembly Resolution Template
61	Notes



View from Tl'oo K'at, June 2023.

# 2023 General Assembly Agenda

	Monday August 7	Tuesday August 8	Wednesday August 9	Thursday August 10
8:00AM	Boats leaves Old Crow	Boats leaves Old Crow	Boats leaves Old Crow	Boats leaves Old Crow
8:30AM	Breakfast			
9:00AM	Opening Prayer			
9:05AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of GA Chairs</li> <li>Adoption of General Assembly Rules and Procedures</li> </ul>	Department Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Human Resources &amp; Education</li> <li>Health &amp; Social Services</li> </ul>	Reports from Trust and Business Entities	Audit Presentation (FY 21/22 and 22/23)
10:15AM	Health Break			
10:30AM	Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chiefs' Welcome</li> <li>Elders' Welcome</li> <li>Executive Directors' Welcome</li> </ul>	Department Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural Resources &amp; Heritage</li> <li>Government Services</li> </ul>	Resolutions	Update and community discussion regarding Old Crow Development Corporation (OCDC)
12:00PM	Lunch and Citizen Acknowledgments			
1:00PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolution Committee Selection</li> <li>Review and Approval of Agenda</li> </ul>	Guest Reports or Remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RCMP</li> <li>Additional TBC</li> </ul> Council Remarks	Resolutions	Continued discussion if required Boats leave Tl'oo K'at
3:00PM	Break			N/A
3:30PM	Department Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive Office               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive Committee of Elders</li> </ul> </li> <li>Finance               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disbursement Committee</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Open Discussion on Community Concerns and Solutions **4:00PM Resolution Deadline	Resolutions	N/A
4:30PM	Activities			N/A
5:30PM	Dinner			N/A
6:30PM	Boats leave Tl'oo K'at	Boats leave Tl'oo K'at	Boats leave Tl'oo K'at	N/A

## General Assembly Rules of Order

The following Rules of Order were adopted during the 2022 General Assembly with additions in *italics*:

1. The meeting shall convene each day at 9am.
2. Only Citizens *participating virtually or in person* 16 or older are eligible to vote at the GA (Constitution, at Article VI 2).
3. The quorum for the start of the meeting and for consensus or a vote on any matter requiring a decision by the GA shall be 25 Citizens (Constitution, at Article VI c, and e)).
4. Any Citizen eligible to vote may propose a resolution and may move or second a Resolution. A person may not both move and second the same Resolution.
5. A proposed Resolution may, at any time during the discussion stage of the GA, be withdrawn, amended, or tabled for a future GA, with the agreement of the GA in consultation with the Mover. If a Mover wishes to withdraw , amend or table for a future GA their resolution, they may do so at any time before the resolution is put to the floor of the GA.
6. The Chair, with the agreement of the GA, may introduce time allocation on discussions of any item on the GA Agenda.
7. The discussion on a matter before the GA (including proposed Resolutions) may be terminated at the discretion of the Chair when the Chair are satisfied that everyone who wishes to has had an opportunity to talk on the matter.
8. After a Resolution has been duly moved and seconded:
  - a. The Chair shall allow discussion of the Resolution, and;
  - b. Where the Chair is satisfied that everyone has had an opportunity to speak, or when the time limit has been reached where the GA has assigned time allocation, the Chair may seek consensus. Where unanimity is not achieved, a Resolution may be passed with a simple majority vote (quorum is required at time of vote).
9. During discussion, each speaker *participating virtually or in person* shall use a microphone if on is available and give his/her name for the record. (*\*Housekeeping note: For virtual participants (on Zoom platform) the participant will click the "raise hand" icon and wait for the Chair to acknowledge the participant. Once acknowledged to speak the virtual participant will "unmute" and address the assembly.*)
10. No Citizen *participating virtually or in person* shall speak unless the Chair have recognized the person. The Chair shall [may] allow all who wish to speak on the issue before the Assembly for the first time to have the opportunity to do so before allowing previous speaker to speak again on the same issue.
11. Personnel issues, which relate to the confidential and private information of individuals, shall not be discussed by the GA.

12. Non-citizen guests may observe the GA. Guests may watch the GA proceedings, unless proceedings are in-camera, but they may not participate directly, unless asked to by the GA. All non-citizen guests shall make themselves known to the GA.
13. No alcohol or drugs will be allowed in or around the GA. No one under the influence will be allowed to participate in the GA.
14. All Citizens are expected to treat one another with respect and to refrain from name calling and abusive language.
15. Where matters of form or procedure are not provided for in these Rules of Order or in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Constitution, Roberts Rules of Order shall be relied on.



## Message from the Chief

Drin Gwiinzii Shalak Naii,

It is an honour to address the General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation this year as Chief of our Nation and I look forward to thoughtful and respectful discussion regarding the work of our government and our collective vision of the future.

With that in mind I want to acknowledge the theme of this year's General Assembly "Ginjih nizii hah nihts'o' gidiikhyaa" (We will talk to each other with good words). These words provide us a strong foundation for doing good work over the course of the General Assembly and the years ahead.

I would like to start off by acknowledging Council. To Deputy Chief Debra-Leigh Reti and former Councilor Jeneen Frei Njoolti who worked extremely hard for months as we prioritized the safety and wellness of our community and balancing the budget of our government. Despite limited capacity on Council, with two position unfilled, we were able to progress a number of important initiatives during our first six months in Office.

I would also like to acknowledge Councilor Harold Frost Jr. and Councilor Crystal Linklater who have begun their work as new Councilors. I am so grateful for each of you and proud of you for stepping forward to serve our people.

I would like to thank the Directors, Managers and staff for the work that has been accomplished over the last year.



Despite challenges in capacity with a number of positions unfilled and challenges faced over election year, particularly during the caretaker period and transition, a lot of really good work has been accomplished and I am grateful for this opportunity for the community to hear from you on this work.

Our government has an ambitious vision for the future of Old Crow and for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizens. A future that supports local housing needs, ensures access to mental health and addictions services and drives a vibrant regional economy, one that is not solely reliant on the government. It is our goal to see young people thrive and succeed.

Upon taking office it was a commitment of our Council to work closely with our youth and our elders, and collectively with all citizens residing in and outside of Old Crow.

Everyone deserves to be heard and be given the opportunity to participate in our self-government.

We actioned this commitment in a number of different ways. We have hosted a number of public meetings in Old Crow and Whitehorse to provide updates on the work of Council and have endeavored to make every public meeting available for virtual participation. We have released a number of short Council Updates, along with our first newsletter which provides a snapshot on some of the priority initiatives we have progressed. Whenever I am required to travel, I ensure that the community is provided the purpose and dates of my travel.

We worked quickly to establish the Executive Committee of Elders, to provide greater voice to our Elders Council required by Article VII of our Constitution, and the Disbursement Committee and are working towards establishing our Executive Committee of Youth, all of which our Executive Office and Finance Department will report out on in greater detail.

Over the coming year we will be launching a new website which will house all of this information and increase its accessibility for everyone.

Over the last six months, there have been a number of important Intergovernmental meetings that I participated in to provide voice to the knowledge, perspectives, or concerns of our Nation. These have been critical opportunities to meet with federal ministers, including the Prime Minister and a number of his cabinet, territorial leadership, include the Premier, and Northern First Nation

Chiefs. I truly believe that collaborative approaches between all levels of government is necessary to address northern indigenous challenges and is the best way for the region to advance reconciliation.

I would like to conclude by acknowledging our late and Honourable Elder Robert Bruce Jr who served as Chief during a key moment in our history – the signing of our Final and Self Government Agreement 30 years ago. He expressed great joy on that day when he signed those Agreements on behalf of present and future generations of our people.

I am humbled to continue along the path that Robert Bruce Jr. and so many others have laid before me to progress our government and our Nation.

Mahsi' choo shalak naii,

Chief Pauline Frost



## Message from the Executive Director

Drin Gwiinzii,

I have been motivated by the resilience and determination of the Vuntut Gwitchin people to overcome the challenges of living in Yukon's northern most community and to be here to help create a brighter future for future generations. It is my goal as the Executive Director to support and empower the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (VGG) in achieving these objectives.

Through collaboration with various departments and community members, we have made significant progress in addressing the financial issues that have plagued the administration. We have implemented new budgeting strategies and financial management systems, resulting in a more transparent and accountable approach to handling the Nation's resources.

Additionally, we have worked diligently to modernize policies and procedures, ensuring a fair and equitable framework for decision-making within the government. This has led to increased trust and engagement from the community, as they feel heard and represented in the governing process.

Despite our best efforts and partnerships with external organizations, it is clear that the battle against addiction is far from over. We have provided support and resources to individuals in need, but the crisis continues to loom large. Our prevention and education initiatives strive to equip community members with the necessary knowledge to

make informed decisions, yet the road ahead remains long and daunting.

The reality is that addiction still holds a strong grip on the community, and it will take ongoing dedication and collective efforts to make any progress. However, there is hope that one day Vuntut Gwitchin citizens will achieve a thriving and resilient nation, where the vision of a prosperous and harmonious community can become a reality.

In terms of finance, VGG's current system is unique but outdated, deviating from the standard accounting structure. This becomes evident when examining the budget for the 2022/23 fiscal year, which skyrocketed to \$58 million, significantly surpassing the approved amount of \$23 million from the previous two years. To achieve this increase, VGG resorted to utilizing its accumulated surplus, exceeding the constitutional borrowing limit, and relying on future federal commitments.

As an example, \$7 million was borrowed at a 6.85% interest rate for the elder's complex. Although the previous Council planned to repay the loan within two years, this would still result in a substantial amount paid in interest. To address this, the new aim is to repay the loan in just one year, demonstrating a commitment to practicing stringent fiscal restraint.

In the realm of housing and infrastructure, VGG encountered a situation wherein they constructed twenty-five new housing units within the community. Unfortunately, this increased focus on new housing came at the expense of neglecting the aging and deteriorating housing stock and other essential infrastructure such as the shop,

skating rink, and old hall. In the upcoming fiscal cycle for 2023-2024, the objective will be to shift attention towards repairing and retrofitting the existing buildings.

Moreover, the aim is to tackle the challenge of reducing the carbon footprint and the associated costs linked to excessive cargo flights.

Alongside these efforts, VGG plans to resume the construction of four new houses annually, utilizing an economically sustainable construction method that heavily relies on local labor and materials, thus simultaneously reducing transport costs.

Moreover, the government administration is also focusing on reorganizing and revitalizing the community. This process will require more than four years to complete, as it involves creating a framework and supporting policies that can sustain the organization in the long run. This is essential for the betterment of all Vuntut Gwitchin Citizens.

Currently, many policies within VGG are either missing or outdated, which hinders effective consultation and decision-making. To address this, an Executive Committee of Elders and a Disbursement Committee have been established to support the decision-making process. Additionally, new housing, finance, health, and educational policies are being developed to ensure clarity and fairness in the community's resource allocation. Overall, the development of clear processes is crucial for promoting community fairness and effective allocation of resources.

The land and energy situation in Old Crow poses unique challenges that must be addressed in any future plans. One of the

major concerns is the small and overloaded electrical grid, which cannot handle an increase in load. To avoid system failures and ensure a stable energy supply, ongoing discussions with ATCO Electric are being conducted to find effective solutions.

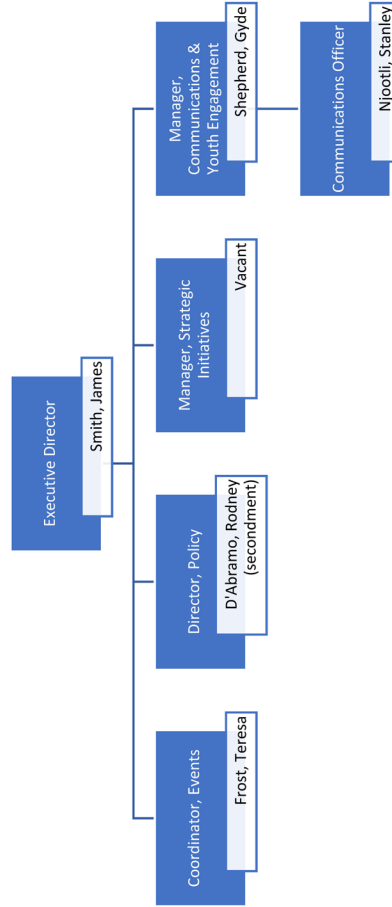
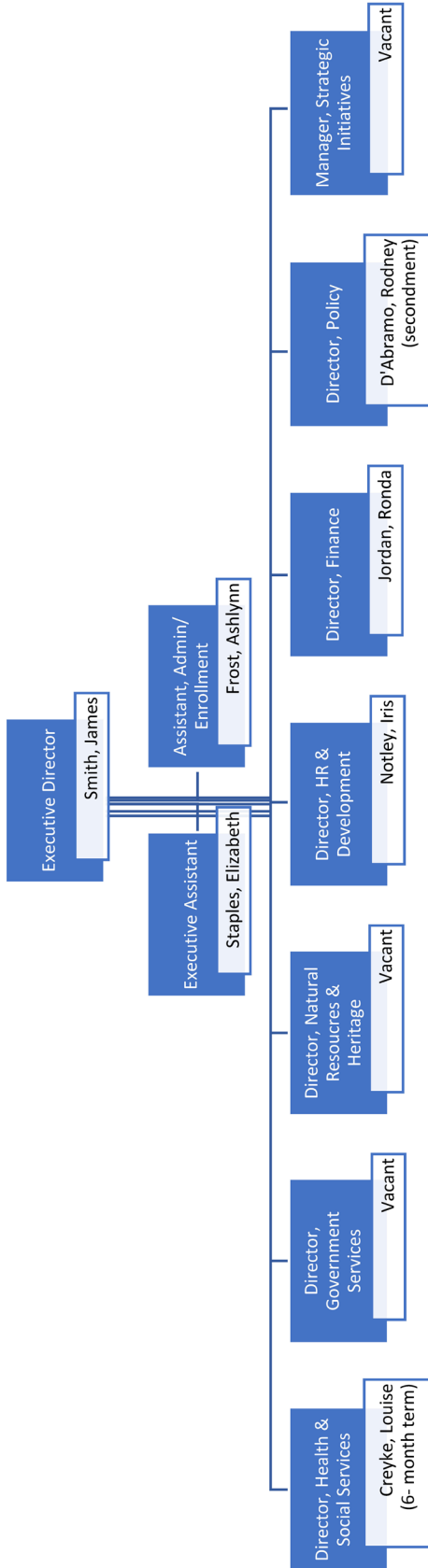
Similarly, the conservation of fish and wildlife is also a top priority. The protection of at-risk species, such as the struggling Chinook salmon, required the closure of the Porcupine River and its tributaries to all gillnet fishing.

With unwavering dedication, a highly committed negotiations team, which includes Stephen Mills, Erin Linklater, Kris Statnyk and John Bailey, is working tirelessly to secure additional federal and territorial resources for Old Crow, aiming to provide enhanced support to the community. Through this exceptional collaborative effort, we are optimistic about improving the overall well-being and ensuring long-term sustainability for the community.

Together, we can make a lasting positive impact on Old Crow and its residents. With this incredible team effort, the community will see an increase to overall well-being and sustainability.

Mahsi' choo,

James Smith, Executive Director  
Vuntut Gwitchin Government



# Council and Executive Office

## Council

### **Making Council More Accessible to Citizens**

In March, Council passed Resolution 03-07-2023-#11, which amended VGG's Governance Act, building on work undertaken by the previous administration to update job descriptions and VGG's wage structure. The amendments align Chief, Deputy Chief and Councilor salaries with VGG's staff salary structure and allows for Councilors to work part-time.

Both these new measures are intended to make Council more accessible to citizens who would like to participate in leadership but have other responsibilities that prevent them from working full time on Council.

### **Extension of the Community Emergency Declaration and Order Regarding Dangerous Offender until August 28, 2023**

In February, Council passed Resolution 02-17-2023- #05, extending the Community Emergency Declaration and Order barring Chris Schafer from entering, accessing, or being present on VGFN Settlement Lands. In May 2023, Council passed Resolution 05-30-2023 - #29 which extends the declaration and order again for another period of 90 days until Monday, August 28, 2023.

VGG will continue to work with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon to ensure the safety of the residents of Old Crow, in particular for women and girls.

### **Community Emergency Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis**

In April, Council passed a Community Emergency Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis (Resolution 04-18-2023-#22). It said (excerpt):

"The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has suffered immense losses due to substance use and overdoses, especially opioids and alcohol. The ongoing substance use crisis has impacted and devastated individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Chief and Council stand with the families and friends who are suffering because of the deaths and loss caused by the substance use crisis.

This is a time for our community to come together to support each other and work towards a healthier community and nation. Our community can support people who are on a healing journey with Gwich'in teachings, traditional practices, cultural activities, and time on our ancestral homeland."

VGG is continuing work to implement harm reduction and treatment policies and programs and is collaborating with all levels of government to alleviate the crisis.

### **Open Letter regarding the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods Act**

In June, Council issued an open letter to the community regarding the measures being taken to reduce the supply of harmful substances in Old Crow and to ensure community safety and order is maintained. This included inviting the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) unit to the community to deal with complaints of illegal drug trafficking and bootlegging activities.

## Executive Committee of Elders

In February, Council passed resolution 02-16-23#03 establishing an Executive Committee of Elders. As Vuntut Gwich'in, we have long valued the knowledge and guidance of our Elders. This value is clearly reflected in our Constitution, which states that an Elders Council be established to advise Council broadly.

Despite best efforts to hold regular Elders Council meetings, as directed by the General Assembly and VGFN Citizens, a formal Elders Council meeting had not occurred for some time. Feedback received from Elders in the past, centered around the frequency and intensity of Elders Council meetings. Elders wanted to provide oversight and advice to Council, but some Elders were not participating because meetings were happening too frequently and were too onerous. Part of the reason for this is that we are a busy community and Nation facing many day-to-day challenges.

With this in mind, a plan was developed, which was intended to be both inclusive and practical. The Executive Committee of Elders will serve as a conduit between Elders Council and Chief and Council. They will gather the input of Vuntut Gwich'in Elders (defined by the constitution as any citizen who is 60+) and communicate this to Chief and Council on a regular basis. Similarly, they will bring information from Chief and Council to Elders Council, when required.

Members of the Executive Committee of Elders will be actively involved in our government. In particular, the Committee will work to ensure that efforts to strengthen VGFN culture and traditions remains at the forefront of our government.

In February, VGG put out a public call out for VGFN elders who were interested in being on the Committee. All those who put their name forward were appointed to the Committee by Council through Resolution 03-13-2023-#13.

Committee Members are: Roger Kyikavichik, Shirlee Frost, Norma Kassi, Stanley Njootli Sr, Randall Tetlich, and Marie Statnyk.

The Executive Committee of Elders have had a number of meetings already. At the beginning of May, the Executive Committee of Elders met in Old Crow and hosted meetings with the Elders Council, VGG staff, and the community to discuss the role of the Committee, the ongoing mental health and addictions crisis and filling Council vacancies.

### NOTICE

## Executive Committee of Elders

VGG is seeking VGFN Elders (60 year and older) who are interested being considered for membership on the newly established Executive Committee of Elders. Members of the Committee will be actively involved in our government.

An important task for the Committee will be to gather the input of Vuntut Gwich'in Elders and communicate this to Council on a regular basis.

**If you would like to be considered for membership on the Executive Committee of Elders, please contact:**

James Smith, Executive Director, Vuntut Gwitchin Government  
(867) 332-1543 | james.smith@vgfn.net

**The deadline is Monday, March 13, 2023.**

For more details, see **Resolution 02-16-2023 #03**  
Establishing an Executive Committee of Elders  
in the Feb. 24, 2023 Council Update.

Posted Feb 27, 2023



## Youth Council

VGFN does not have a formally-recognized Youth Council at this time, however all departments continue to make efforts to engage youth whenever possible. Chief and Council are progressing with establishing an Executive Committee of Youth, similar in structure to the Executive Committee of Elders

## Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project

On Monday June 5, the Ground-penetrating radar started on the Chootla Residential School in Carcross, continuing work that started in 2021 to identify missing children and unmarked burial sites. This work is being led by the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project Working Group which Norma Kassi and Shirlee Frost sit on as representatives of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Information gathered at the Chootla Residential School will be processed over the summer and an analysis report is expected in September. Some of the school sites in Whitehorse may be ground searched next year.

Council met with the Executive Committee of Elders on June 6 to discuss the work that is ongoing, what protocols will need to be developed and what supports will be needed for families and the community. These conversations will continue with the Executive Committee of Elders, the Elders Council, families of missing children, the community, our Executive Office and Health and Social Services Department.

## Implementation and Negotiations

### Fiscal Negotiations

There are more than 630 First Nation communities in Canada, of which 43 of these communities fall under 25 Self-Government Agreements. VGG is part of an exclusive club as less than 7% of First Nations in Canada are self-governing and 11 of the 25 agreements in Canada are Yukon agreements. Stephen Mills began working as a consultant for VGG in February and is leading fiscal negotiations on behalf of VGG.

### Financial Transfer Agreement

VGFN receives most of its money to run the Government and implement our agreements through a Financial Transfer Agreement with Canada. The current agreement expires on March 31, 2024 so the negotiations to renew this should have commenced a year ago. We are currently approaching Canada with an interim approach so that funding is secure going forward and that there is sufficient time to have a real negotiation. There are protections in place to ensure that funding flows while negotiations are proceeding.

### Collaborative Fiscal Policy

VGG is also involved in fiscal negotiations with Canada as part of the collaborative fiscal process which includes all self-governing First Nations in Canada. This process has provided additional funding to VGG over the last year in several areas including for governance, infrastructure, and housing. We are currently negotiating additional funding for a new phase of infrastructure, languages, social well-being, and land and resources management with a goal of concluding this by the end of March of 2024. Meetings occur for one-week every month.

## **Administration of Justice Agreement (AJA)**

Erin Linklater began working as a consultant for VGG in April 2023. As part of her scope of work, Erin is leading negotiations with Governments of Yukon and Canada in relation to administration of justice and community safety which had not been progressed by VGG for some time.

To date, Erin has reviewed all prior documents in relation to administration of justice and is working on reviving the VGFN Justice Committee, the negotiation framework agreement, and the establishment of a Review Council. As part of this work, Erin is exploring the development of a Steering Committee that will be tasked with developing legislation and a Terms of Reference for the Review Council. She is also working on a proposal for a community safety officer (“CSO”) program for VGFN.

## **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The UN Declaration is an international human rights instrument that affirms the minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of Indigenous peoples throughout the world. On June 21, 2021, Canada passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act with the requirement of completing an Action Plan for meeting the objectives of the UN Declaration in June 2023.

VGG has completed a submission to Canada in response to Canada’s United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, particularly as it relates to VGFN’s Final Agreement and self-government agreement. Over the last number of months this work was largely led by Erin who also participated in ensuring that Canada’s UNDRIP Action Plan included

Modern Treaty holders as a distinct group with its own chapter in the Action Plan. The consultation with VGFN on this UNDRIP Action Plan continues and will evolve.

## **Intergovernmental Accord**

Earlier this year VGG and the Government of Yukon renewed discussions on an Intergovernmental Accord (the latest Accord lapsed in 2018) which has an intended purpose to facilitate bilateral cooperation at political and administrative levels on shared priorities.

VGG has been working in collaboration with the First Nation Relations & Capacity Development Branch of Aboriginal Relations at Government of Yukon towards the signing of a 10-year Intergovernmental Accord and Action Plan. The Premier of Government of Yukon has agreed to the 10-year Accord, and VGG and YG are working towards signing the Accord by end of summer 2023. VGG has identified a number of initiatives for inclusion in the Accord around community wellness, education and training, community services, community development and economic development.

## **Northern Chiefs**

VGG continues to work closely with other Northern First Nations; Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Gwich’in Tribal Council, at the political and technical level.

The meetings that have occurred over the past year between the Chiefs and technicians have been important opportunities to strengthen our collaboration on a number of joint priorities including but not limited to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd, ensuring arctic sovereignty and addressing the mental health and addictions crisis.

VGG looks forward to continuing our strong relationships with our Northern relations.



Chiefs of Northern Nations meet along the Porcupine River in Old Crow, Yukon during the 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement and Self-Government Agreement and to discuss collaborative approaches to community wellness and the ongoing mental health and addictions crisis each of their communities are facing. From left to right: Grand Chief Ken Kyikavichik of the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Chief Pauline Frost of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Chief Dawna Hope of First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Chief Roberta Joseph Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

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

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

As part of this, Chief Frost is serving as Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Health; a committee that will provide leadership and oversight regarding how Health and Wellness Yukon (the proposed Health Authority) will be operated and governed.

## **Yukon Forum**

VGG brings a strong voice to the table and continues to push for a Yukon Forum that asks difficult questions, addresses common issues for all Yukon First Nations and keeps all levels of government accountable and working together.

In March, Chief Frost and Deputy Chief Reti participated in Yukon Forum in Haines Junction bringing forward the perspectives and concerns of Vuntut Gwitchin regarding a number of issues stressing the need for ongoing collaboration to address the substance use crisis.

In June, Chief Frost participated in Yukon Forum at Helens Fish Camp. Leaders had collective discussions related to supporting the work of the Residential Schools and Missing Children Project and responding to the Yukon's Substance Use Health Emergency. Leaders also had a strategic conversation on how to best advance the collaborative work between governments through venues such as Yukon Days, the Intergovernmental Forum and the Yukon Forum itself.

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

Modern treaty holders face significant challenges in achieving full implementation of their agreements, in large part due to Canada's refusal to develop mechanisms for full implementation, undermining the fundamental premise of these agreements.

Formed in 2003, the LCAC is made up of Modern Treaty holders across Canada, some of which have Self-Government Agreements. The goal of the coalition is to ensure modern treaties & agreements are fully respected, honoured and implemented.

In late February, Chief Frost attended the LCAC National Conference and Leadership Meeting in Ottawa. During the LCAC conference, Chief Frost spoke to two breakout sessions, one on protecting caribou and salmon, and another on food security. She was supported throughout the week by Implementation and Negotiations Advisor Stephen Mills, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator Liz Staples, and by Katriel Villacorta as a youth representative who attended the Conference as a student with Yukon University in Indigenous Governance.

While in Ottawa for the Conference and Leadership Meeting, Chief Frost had a productive meeting with Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller regarding ongoing challenges that our Nation is facing in relation to the mental health and addictions crisis, and advocated for more support to build capacity so that VGG can develop effective addictions and mental health programs and services for VGFN citizens.

In May, Chief Frost participated in the Intergovernmental Leaders Forum, a meeting between Chiefs of self-governing First Nations and Prime Minister Trudeau. A number of federal cabinet Ministers were also in attendance. Chief Frost provided closing remarks on behalf of the Indigenous leaders, reflecting on a discussion that covered critical issues including the mental health and addictions crisis each of the leaders is facing in their communities, the poor repair of community infrastructure, and the loss of our languages.

While in Ottawa for the Intergovernmental Leaders Forum Chief Frost, supported by Stephen Mills, Liz Staples and Elder Representative Stanley Njootli, met with a number of federal Ministers and their staff to continue these discussions.



Chief Frost in Ottawa to meet with federal leadership regarding priorities to Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Top: Chief Frost providing closing comments at the Intergovernmental Leaders Forum. Bottom Left: Chief Frost and Elder Representative Stanley Njootli Sr. meeting with Minister Carolyn Bennett, Mental Health and Addictions and Yukon Member of Parliament Brendan Hanley. Bottom Right: Chief Frost meeting with Minister Omar Alghabra, Minister of Transport.

## Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit

Working closely with partners and allies, including the Gwich'in Steering Committee, VGG continues to seek protection of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit on behalf of present and future generations of the Gwich'in Nation. This work is guided by Gwich'in Niintsyaa 2022 Resolution to Protect the Birthplace and Nursery Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd and a number of past VGFN General Assembly resolutions.

In March, US President Biden's visit to Ottawa provided an excellent opportunity to amplify the Biden Administration's commitments made to safeguard the calving grounds in the 2021 Roadmap to a Renewed U.S. Canada Relationship. This included an Op-Ed by Chief Frost in the Hill Times—one of the most influential publications read by Canadian Members of Parliament—and a Joint letter from Northern Chiefs to the Prime Minister and the U.S. Department of State regarding these commitments and the actions needed to implement them fully.

VGG will continue to progress technical, legal, corporate and education strategies, and will continue to engage with all Parties of the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement, to protect Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit. We are currently planning for this initiative to pick up again this Fall as we prepare to respond to the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Process and look to co-ordinate advocacy opportunities around legislative and corporate milestones.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29, 2023 | THE HILL TIMES | 11

### Opinion

# Biden and Trudeau must act on commitment to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The remaining suspended oil and gas leases, which cover more than 350,000 acres of the Arctic Refuge, must be cancelled.

Pauline Frost

Opinion



In February 2021, my small fly-in-only community of Old Crow, Yukon, more than 100 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, breathed a sigh of relief.

At that time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and United States President Joe Biden announced the Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership following their first bilateral meeting. Within the Roadmap, the Ameri-

can president and the Canadian prime minister finally acknowledged the importance of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and committed to working together to help safeguard these lands.

But further action is urgently needed to cancel the remaining drilling permits, and to pass legislation to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge.

The Gwich'in are a caribou people. *Vadzaih* (caribou) provide nourishment for the culture and body of our people. Our communities—home to more than 9,000 people—span the extent of the migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd in what is now known as Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska.

Each spring, the Porcupine caribou migrate through the homeland of my people, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, past our small community and across the river after which the herd was named, to their calving grounds in Alaska, the place we call *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins). Each fall, the herd returns to our

homeland, fattened and healthy. As I write this, pregnant caribou are preparing for this journey so that they can nurture the future of the last large, healthy, migratory caribou herd on the planet, and in doing so, nurture the future of my people.

The Gwich'in Nation has been leading efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil drilling for decades. While we have been stewards of the land for millennia, it was in 1988 that our Elders called for the Gwich'in of Alaska and Canada to gather for the first time in more than a century. Pressure from certain members of U.S. Congress and lobbying efforts for oil and gas development in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge represented a profound threat to our people and our way of life.

In 2017, drilling in the Arctic Refuge became legal through passage of then-president Donald Trump's tax bill. This, and everything that followed up to the final days of the Trump administration, left us the closest we have come to the destruction of these sacred lands and the decimation of the caribou.

After decades of advocacy by the Gwich'in Nation to share our way of life and to share the consequences of oil drilling in this sensitive arctic ecosystem—including the inevitable impacts to the food security, health, culture, and way of life of our Nation—our voices were heard. The commitment Biden and Trudeau made in the Roadmap to safeguard the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd acknowledged our concerns and, in doing so, honoured our way of life, our Elders, and our future generations.

Today, we are fortunate that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remains free from oil rigs. The prime minister and president's commitment has helped in maintaining the health of these sacred lands.

But everything that has happened since February 2021 has only offered short-term protection. Further action is needed to follow through on the commitment made to truly safeguard these lands. The remaining suspended oil and gas leases, which cover more than 350,000 acres of the Arctic Refuge, must be cancelled. And legislation must

be passed by U.S. Congress to restore protections to the Arctic Refuge so that a second lease sale does not occur.

Biden's visit to Ottawa last week was a reminder of the vital, collaborative role Canada and the United States must continue to play in protecting the Porcupine caribou herd and the Gwich'in way of life. While our Nation is small, we are vocal and we are proud. We will continue to hold the Government of Canada and the United States accountable for the commitments they have made and the actions they must take. The protection of *vadzaih* is critical to the physical, cultural, and spiritual survival of our people—we have no other choice but to protect it at all costs.

*Pauline Frost is Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (People of the Lakes) in Old Crow, Yukon, part of the Gwich'in Nation whose traditional territory spans the extent the migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd in what is now known as the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska.*

The Hill Times

## Policy

Drin Gwiinzii,

I am honoured and pleased to be able to provide a report out on policy work in your government. This is the first report to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly from the VGG Policy Department.

Policy is a definite course of action usually selected from options that guides and determines decisions in the organization. Policy can be seen as a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures. We can also see that policy reflects decisions; it is not just a bunch of documents on a shelf somewhere. This is where we can see policy as playing an integral function in the organization, as the work of developing policy draws on people, past decisions and future goals for different program areas and the community.

Policy decisions are sometimes formally recorded in strategies, legislation, regulations, directives, policies, and guidance, but are also informally implemented through decisions made about the structure of programs and services. Here are some high-level overviews of policy projects that your government has undergone over the last year. Please see the specific policies for more details.

### Support to Chief and Council

In this work the Policy Department has provided support to Chief and Council through developing policy documents based on leadership direction. Policy has also helped with meeting management, including setting up agendas, organizing briefing materials and taking notes.

## Governance Handbook

The Governance Handbook lays out governance practices that reflect a commitment to open communications and transparent decision-making for the benefit of VGFN Citizens. It includes key policies that guide how the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Council makes decisions, how these decisions are communicated to Citizens and how Council works collaboratively with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government administration.

### Honoraria Policy

Citizens regularly contribute their time and energy in service to the community and to the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. Citizens bring important wisdom to government deliberations. The honoraria policy aims to compensate Citizens for their contributions. It lays out consistent and fair criteria for when honoraria should be used, such as for an individual's contribution of knowledge or expertise to meetings or events. It also says when it shouldn't be used, like for attending public meetings or training for personal reasons. It updates the rates to \$400 for events of 3 hours or more, \$250 for events longer than 1 hour and up to 3 hours, and \$100 for events of 1 hour or less.

## Housing

Housing plays a vital role in the healthy well-being of your community. Housing units are made available in many forms – for example, individual houses, duplexes, and the Home of the Wise Ones – designed for the northern environment, built to appropriate standards and building codes, and located to suit the lifestyle of Citizens and the growth pattern of the community.

In VGG Housing, there was a shift to using a new tenancy agreement template. The new template is modern and complies with current landlord and tenant laws. A tenancy agreement is a legal document that sets out the terms and conditions associated with renting a VGG rental housing unit for both the tenant and VGG as the landlord. The tenancy agreement is administered according to the terms outlined in the agreement, the Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, the Housing Policy, and any applicable VGFN laws. The tenancy agreement confirms the obligations, rights and responsibilities of the tenant and the Housing Department.

As the community changes and evolves over time in Old Crow, the housing policy will also change to respond to shifts in community and individual needs. A lot of work has been done to update the housing policy to reflect current state of the community, and it is near completion. The purpose of the revised housing policy is to establish guiding principles, define roles and responsibilities, describe the various housing programs and services offered by VGG, set out the eligibility for the housing programs and describe the tenancy agreement process and related procedures. It will make for a good foundation for housing decisions and actions and it can be built on as new needs arise.

### **Disbursement Committee**

Chief and Council gave direction to form a committee to be known as the VGG Disbursement Committee who will be responsible for recommending disbursing designated program funds on behalf of VGG in a transparent and responsible manner. The purpose of the Committee is to disburse programs funds and assets on behalf of VGG following best practices and in a manner that is aligned with the values, goals and objectives of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, such

as housing and education funding. Policy supported drafting terms of reference for Chief and Council's consideration as a key first step to setting up the Disbursement Committee.

### **Death and Bereavement Policy**

VGFN has traditional and cultural protocols for when a member of the community has passed. As the community and the government have evolved, Elders have advised that the government continue these protocols, which are rooted-in respect for the deceased and the deceased's family.

VGG has had a protocol document since 2009 that has provided guidance for the government to follow regarding finances, protocols, and office closures when a citizen passes. As a part of good governance, and recognizing that VGG would benefit from formalizing this protocol document into a formal policy, Council adopted the VGFN Bereavement and Funeral Policy.

### **Governance Act changes**

The Governance Act has seen two amendments this year. The first was based on a General Assembly Resolution that called for Vuntut Gwitchin Government to have an independent review of the structure, design, and remuneration of Council in order to ensure that the salary and benefits Council members is commensurate with their responsibilities and to promote qualified candidates for Council to seek nomination and election. The internal review was done and recommended that regular updates to Council salaries and benefits, including adjustments for inflation, be addressed through the human resources policies and practices of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government. The Governance Act was changed to implement these provisions for

members of Council, including prescribing that the Chief and Deputy Chief shall be remunerated on the basis that their positions are equivalent to full-time employment while the other positions on Council shall be remunerated on the basis that their positions are equivalent to part-time employment, with an option for more hours if needed.

The second amendment to the Governance Act has to do with standing committees. The changes remove standing committees from the Act as a requirement and the changes allow for ad-hoc committees of the Council to be established by Chief and Council under the Vuntut Gwitchin Governance Act, including establishment of appropriate terms of reference to guide the work of the committees.

These changes clarify and make explicit that a proposed Act means a new Act, an amendment to an Act, or the repeal of part or all of an Act. This clarifies that Amendments to existing legislation need to follow the same legislative process as for new legislation. This is an important check and balance otherwise a Council could seek to fundamentally change or alter existing legislation and government policy by effectively introducing new legislation by amendment without adhering to the law-making process.

The changes call for VGG to publish the first reading version of any proposed act immediately following the approval of the first reading of the proposed Act by Council. While no longer the responsibility of standing committees, this change will ensure as a matter of good governance that the principles of transparency and accountability, and opportunities for VGFN citizen review and public comment, remain a fundamental part of the VGFN legislative or law-making process.

## Emergency Declarations

The VGFN Community Emergency Act provides the power for Chief and Council to declare a state of emergency if they believe that a preventable, foreseeable, imminent, or actual danger exists to life, health or safety on Settlement Land. Under a declaration Council can put in place certain special temporary measures to address the existing community emergency through a Community Emergency Order to establish the special temporary measures. Two declarations have been made over the past year, one on the substance use crisis, and one relating to a person considered dangerous to the community. A third was prepared and ready to go for flooding, but was not needed.

## Victoria Blake Memorial Elders Home – Operations Policy

The Home officially opened on May 19, 2023. The Home is significant infrastructure in Old Crow that will provide secure, safe, and comfortable housing for Elders in the community. Council recently passed a resolution to adopt the interim policy to provide initial rules and direction on managing the new Home of the Wise Ones.



Opening of the Home of the Wise Ones. Photo by Atsu-shi Sugimoto

This is some of the work the Policy Department has been busy on the last year. Future work includes working on improving communication of new or amended policies of VGG so people can access and use the policies.

To sum up, policy is really about taking the opportunity to reflect the past and current culture of the organization, and to shape the future culture. Good policy does this through listening to leadership, the community, the administration, and working with a range of people with the aim to make a policy that we all can live with.

Mahsi' choo,

Rodney D'Abramo  
Director of Policy

## Communications

### Council Updates

VGG Communications began producing monthly and sometimes by-weekly updates outlining current Council initiatives, resolutions and intergovernmental activities, including intergovernmental work with the Yukon and Canadian governments on behalf of VGFN citizens. Beginning in September, these updates will be published in the first week of each month, and will include a full list and description of all Council Resolutions passed in the previous month.

### Calendars

VGG Communications will continue to publish monthly calendars listing Council travel, as well as community meetings in Old Crow and Whitehorse, and VGG programs, services, activities and events. With the launch of the new website in October, the calendar will be available for easy viewing online, and will include a detailed Chief and Council calendar noting all Council travel.

### Paper Posters

VGG puts up paper posters to let citizens and other residents of Old Crow know about events, activities and to receive updates from Council. This is an effective way to reach citizens regardless of whether they have access to the vgfn.ca website or VGG's Facebook page. Communications is currently working to upgrade this system to electronic screens located at the Co-Op, Darius Elias Community Hall and the main administration building.

### Facebook

Facebook continues to be the primary communication medium for VGG to communicate to citizens who prefer online communication, as well as citizens and others who do not live in Old Crow. VGG posts, especially those that include photographs and videos of community events, continue to generate a great deal of interest with many are viewed over 1,000 times. Facebook posts with images allow citizens living outside of Old Crow to feel a connection to the community and to friends and family members.

### Newsletter

The most recent VGG Community Newsletter covered the first quarter of 2023. The next one will cover May to August 2023 and will be published at the end of September. The final 2023 newsletter will cover September to December, and will be published in late January 2024.

### Community Photos and Videos

VGG Communications attends and takes photos and videos to document VGG events, as well as events such as the school graduation and Yukon University campus programs and workshops. This is done mostly

outside of VGG work hours and is unpaid, but VGG Communications is happy to volunteer this time and effort because of the benefit to citizens and other Old Crow residents.

Taking photos and videos of life in Old Crow provides up-to-date and memorable visual material that can be used for VGG reports, the Facebook page, and in slideshows and presentations at community events and meetings. In addition, these photos will be used to populate the new website so that it shows the lands, waters and the lived reality of Vuntut Gwitchin people and homeland.

## Coming this Fall

### The new VGG website

This October, the new VGG website will go live. Designed by Whitehorse-based Mammoth Agency in consultation with VGG Communications and Heritage staff, it's address on line will be vgg.ca. Given that most people these days tend to access websites using a smartphone, the new website is being designed to adapt automatically to the device you access it on, including smartphones, tablets/iPads, laptops and desktop computers.

The website will be a useful tool for citizens to keep up-to-date on their government's work on their behalf. Among other things, the new website will include a digital version of the monthly Council Updates, quarterly VGG newsletters and General Assembly Resolutions. The website will include calendars for Council and VGG Departments as well as an Old Crow page that will be a one-stop-shop for visitors to the community, including citizens visiting family and friends. It will also have an up-to-date list of staff and their contact information.

### New Community TVs

Posting paper posters is time consuming, especially if posters need to be updated. To remedy this, VGG Communications has purchased three 50-inch monitors (TVs) that will be mounted at three locations in town: the Co-op (where the current poster board is), the Admin Building, and the Community Hall.

Using an application intended to display menus at a store, such as the ones you see behind the counter at Tim Hortons. All three monitors, which will be connected to the Internet via WiFi, will display Council announcements and updates, upcoming events, the VGG monthly calendar, as well as photos and videos taken at past community events. VGG Communications is also planning to mount a TV at the airport in 2024.

### VGFN Flag and Traditional Territory Sign

We are working on replacing the weathered Vuntut Gwitchin flag sign located near the Health Centre with a new and larger flag sign. It will be relocated so that it can be seen easily from the front entrance of the airport, and will include the "VGFN Traditional Territory" in Gwich'in and English. Construction is planned for September 2023.

### CROW FM

As of July 2023, VGG Communications staff are located in the Administration building. This has freed up the radio room in the Youth Centre. We will work with Council and VGG Departments to produce regular programming by the end of 2023. We are planning to renovate the radio station room and to buy new digital broadcasting equipment that will allow programming to be broadcast throughout Old Crow and streamed on line for those who wish to tune in from other locations. We welcome input from anyone who has ideas and suggestions for programming.



Youth Panel Address during the 30th Anniversary Celebrations (Photo by Atsushi Sugimoto).



Executive Committee of Elders Address the community at a Community Meeting.



Council Swearing-in Ceremony.

## Finance

The Finance department is responsible for ensuring financially-informed administration and for providing oversight of all financial resources and processes. Finance carries out many functions such as:

- providing timely and accurate recording, processing, and reporting of financial transactions;
- supporting all Vuntut Gwitchin Government operations in meeting both short-term and long-term goals through leading the budgeting, forecasting, cashflow, and financial analysis and recommendation functions;
- meeting regulatory reporting requirements; and
- providing financial stewardship and transparency through robust internal controls, communication, and supporting the annual financial audit process.

## 2023-24 Appropriation Act

The 2023-24 Fiscal Year Appropriation Act was approved for a total expenditure budget of \$23,453,977.

### VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION FIRST APPROPRIATION ACT 2023-2024 SCHEDULE A

DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	2023-24 First Appropriation Act	** Changes	2023-24 Final Reading
CHIEF AND COUNCIL	\$ 1,979,202	\$ 24,000	\$ 2,003,202
EXECUTIVE OFFICE	\$ 1,613,599	\$ -	\$ 1,613,599
NATION BUILDING	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
HUMAN RESOURCES	\$ 1,060,296	\$ -	\$ 1,060,296
NATURAL RESOURCES AND HERITAGE	\$ 3,611,190	\$ -	\$ 3,611,190
GOVERNMENT SERVICES	\$ 7,031,075	\$ 200,000	\$ 7,231,075
EDUCATION and RECREATION	\$ 2,077,730	\$ -	\$ 2,077,730
HEALTH, SOCIAL, and JUSTICE	\$ 1,831,628	\$ -	\$ 1,831,628
INFORMATION SYSTEMS	\$ 535,400	\$ -	\$ 535,400
FINANCE and DEBT MANAGEMENT	\$ 2,489,857	\$ -	\$ 2,489,857
OTHER CAPITAL PROJECTS	\$ 1,000,000	\$ -	\$ 1,000,000
		\$	\$ -
	\$ 23,229,977	\$ 224,000	\$ 23,453,977

## Audits

The F2023 annual audit is being conducted by M. McKay & Associates. The auditors have concluded their on-site fieldwork. It is anticipated that the Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023 will be available to be formally presented at the August, 2023 General Assembly. The F2022 annual audit was completed by M. McKay & Associates and will be presented at the August, 2023 General Assembly as well.

## Disbursement Committee

VGFN Citizens deserve to have confidence in their government's decisions. One way to do this is by bringing citizens into a transparent, fair, and equitable government decision-making process. To do this in a way that is both concrete and accountable, Chief and Council passed Resolution 02-17-2023-#04, which set out the terms of reference for a new Disbursement Committee.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee state that the committee will consist of five (5) citizens who will be the committee's voting members, and the Chair who will not have a vote. At least one of the five Citizen members must be an Elder, and the Chair will be VGG's Finance Director or Finance Manager. The Committee will ensure that Chief and Council, the Elders Committee, the General Assembly and the Executive Director are updated regularly on their work and decisions.

The Disbursement Committee will allocate disbursements in these areas:

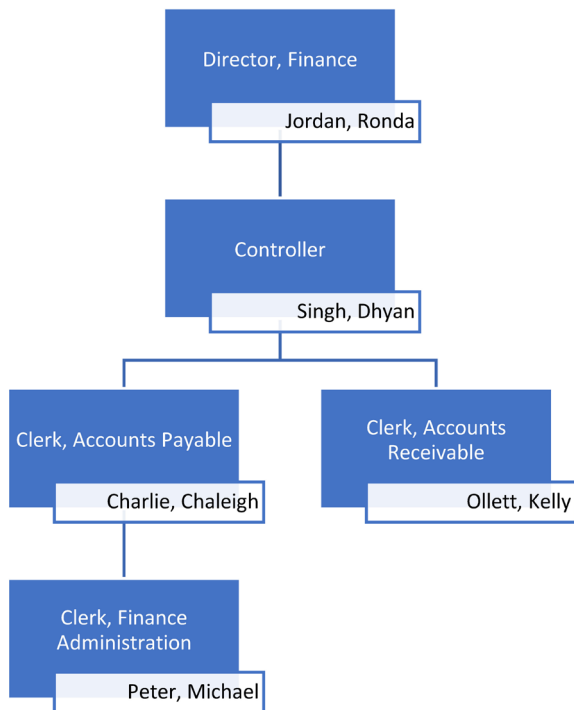
- housing
- harvest allocation
- post-secondary education
- youth enhancement funding
- scholarships, bursaries, and grants
- employee incentives/long service awards
- general funding requests

In February, Vuntut Gwitchin Government posted a public call out for citizens who were interested in serving on the Disbursement Committee. Membership is determined by Chief and Council after consulting with the Chair, taking account of the balance of skills and expertise necessary for the Committee to perform its role and subject to specific requirements or directions of the General Assembly.

To be considered for membership, citizens who put their name forward had an established record of community involvement (other requirements are listed in the Terms of Reference). Members are appointed for a period of two years with a possibility of one renewal.

Committee Members, appointed through Council Resolution, are: Cindy Dickson, Jennifer Kay, William Linklater, Glenna Tetlich, Ashlynn Frost, and Katherine Peter (Alternate).

The Disbursement Committee has already met several times regarding the allocation of new housing units and the disbursement of education funding. These meetings have been Chaired by VGG’s Director of Finance, Ronda Jordan. Information is provided to the Disbursement Committee by relevant Directors within VGG (e.g. Director of Education). Once the Disbursement Committee has made a decision, it proceeds as a recommendation for consideration by Council at the next scheduled meeting of Council. Council makes the ultimate decision on allocation, in consideration of the recommendation received from the Disbursement Committee, through Council Resolution.



## Human Resources and Development

VGG has been working to transform its Human Resources (HR) department by re-organizing, modernizing, and professionalizing its processes and systems for the past two (2) years.

A consultant, Candace Morgan, led this project until her resignation in February 2023. Two separate departments, Human Resources and Education, are now combined under the direction and leadership of the Director of Human Resources and Development (Iris Notley), who commenced employment on February 20, 2023.

### Human Resources

On May 11, 2023, a Manager of Human Resources and Citizen Advancement (Hope Paseska-Meyer) was hired, increasing the HR compliment to three (including Joanne Charlie – HR Administrative Assistant). VGG employees can expect greater support relating to benefits, training, and other HR-related services thanks to the comprehensive improvements that are in progress.

### Recruitment and Retention

Currently, fifteen (15) positions are advertised on the VGFN website and YuWin. The Summer Jobs Placement program was a huge success, resulting in six (6) Vuntut citizens (youth, ages 13-24) who have commenced summer employment. The HR department strives to employ Vuntut citizens and is devoted to finding creative ways to increase citizen employment. To this end, Career fairs are planned for September/October in Old Crow, Whitehorse, Inuvik, and Dawson City.

## 2023 General Assembly Report

A standardized recruitment process is now implemented with a streamlined process for casual hires.

Leadership positions currently posted are:

- Director, Government Services
- Director, Natural Resources and Heritage
- Manager-In-Training, Procurement Services
- Manager-In-Training, Lands and Development
- Manager-in-Training, Human Resources
- Manager-In-Training, Education and Culture
- Manager-In-Training, Fish and Wildlife

### PayWorks

This year we transitioned HR/Finance systems by introducing Payworks for timesheets, absence requests, and pay notifications. This system upgrade improved the timelines for pay processing and reduced errors and omissions (misplaced information).

### Benefits

At the last GA, it was reported that 40% of staff were not enrolled in Sunlife Group Health Plan or Manulife Group Registered Pension Plan. Over the past year, there has been a push to ensure all eligible staff are enrolled in benefits and are aware of their options. The transition of benefits from Finance to HR has been a seamless process.

### Policy

The Records Coordinator Position is currently vacant. Policies are developed for Human Resources, Health, and Safety, and a new Healthy Workplace Healthy Community

Plan is now implemented. Those policies and procedures are under review as they need more clarity and specificity.

### Staff Leadership Retreat

On June 23, 2023, a Leadership Staff Retreat was held at Tloo K'at. There were 12 in attendance. We participated in activities focused on staff team building and improved communication. The Leadership Retreat was a huge success, and we will schedule a retreat twice a year.



### Manager-In-Training Program

Creation of the Manager-IN-Training (MIT) Program, designed for succession planning to provide citizens with advancement and training opportunities. Every Manager role will have a citizen MIT who will be provided with the tools and resources to assume the Manager role.

### Hybrid Work Arrangements

The HR department is exploring hybrid work arrangements, including job sharing and accommodation for specific needs (including reduced hours) to ensure staff are provided the opportunity for on-the-land and cultural practices. We are also reviewing the rotational worker policy to foster living and working in Old Crow.

### Staff Supports

An extension of the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) will be the introduction of counseling resources (including an on-site counselor) for staff to encourage attendance and productivity in the workplace. Plans are currently in place to hire a contracted counselor.

A compensation review of salaries concluded in 2023 (the first one since 2011), resulting in significant wage increases for most positions. This project also necessitated reviewing and revising all job descriptions. This project was also completed in early 2023.

### Citizen Advancement

Along with our regular duties, our team is committed to promoting a holistic approach to service delivery. To this end, we are working with citizens to complete forms and draft resumes.

### Performance Management

Development of a performance management system that aligns with departmental work plans and VGG's strategic planning:

- Development of a Corrective Action process to hold staff accountable for behaviors and to improve performance;
- Attendance management; and
- Probationary reviews

### Reception

Hello everyone,

I would like to take this opportunity do a report for the 2023 G.A.

My name is Randel Kendi and I am the receptionist for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in Old Crow.

I have worked for the first Nation for the past 5 years. I answer the phone, take messages, do my daily coffee for staff and the public. I also make sure that the front area is always cleaned and do a daily mail run to the post office.

Each morning, I come to work at 8am and leave at 4:30pm I don't start working until 9am but I come in an hour early to get the building ready for Chief and Council and staff.

Each morning I write on the positive board to give a good positive energy for the day.

I am pleased to be working for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. With this I thank you one and all for your daily support and encouragement. I look forward each day in coming to work.

Mahsi' Cho,  
Randel Kendi  
Receptionist

## Education and Citizen Advancement

The Education department is now combined with Human Resources under Human Resources and Development. The Recreation Department transferred to the Department of Health and Social Services. Combining the Human Resources and Education departments eliminates one Director position, which results in significant cost-savings for VGG.

### Culture Camp

VGG partnered with Josie's Old Crow Adventures to facilitate a Youth Culture Camp over three weeks from April 3-21, 2023.

Learning objectives of the three camps included:

- Snowshoeing;
- Gwich'in Language;
- Animal tracks and skat identification;
- Dogsledding, including dog care and mushing skills;
- Ice Fishing;
- Wilderness Survival;
- Storytelling, Tourism and Hospitality; and
- Processing fish and meat.



Photo Courtesy of Josie Old Crow Adventures.

A full report on the Culture Camp can be obtained from the Education Department.

### Staffing

Currently, only two positions are filled in the Education Department, Education Support Worker (Glenna Tetlich) and Team Lead, Cook and Programs (Faye Elias). The following positions are vacant and posted:

- Manager, Education and Culture;
- Manager-In-Training, Education;
- Education Support Worker (ESW); and
- Driver, School Bus.



Photo Courtesy of Josie Old Crow Adventures.



Photos Courtesy of Josie Old Crow Adventures.

### **Post-Secondary and Training Sponsorship**

VGG continues to fund students enrolled in post-secondary and other training.

The Education Department makes recommendations to the Disbursement Committee for funding requests. However, due to fiscal restraints, the education budget is reduced, and not all requests will be funded. We are focusing on training that leads to advancement and employment.

### **Education Policies**

With the development of the Disbursement Committee (replaced Education Committee) and the refocus of this government on citizen wellness and advancement supports it became apparent that the current policies, guidelines, and forms need to be updated. As such, we have initiated a comprehensive review of Education policies to align with the new direction of this government.

### **Citizen Advancement**

We are in the process of identifying citizen skills and education/training. With that information, we can complete a gap analysis

of skills required for future employment needs. We will also develop a skills database. Our goal is to match citizen training, and advancement needs with future employment opportunities.

### Day Care

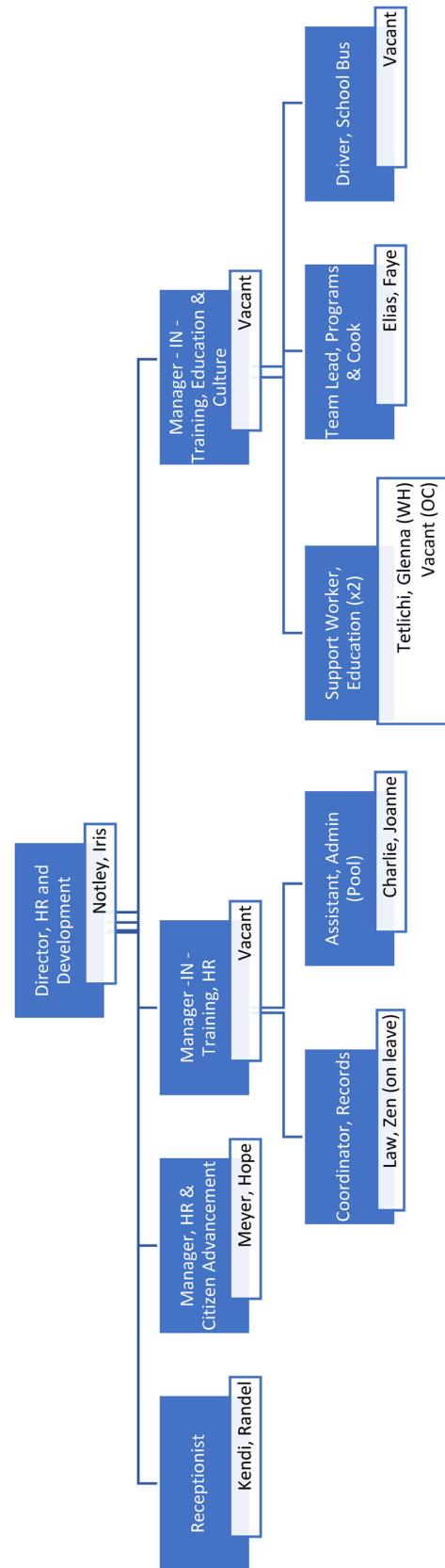
We are working with the school and plan to open a Day Care for the 2023-24 school year. The lack of daycare in Old Crow is a significant employment barrier.

### School Attendance

We are working with the First Nation Education School Board (FNESD) to explore options to increase attendance for High School Students, including a combined education and work experience program.

### Café and Arts and Crafts Store

The team is currently identifying a location to house a café (coffee shop). The objective is to provide work experience for youth. We also hope to provide space for local artisans to display and sell their products.



## Government Services

Capital infrastructure projects play a crucial role in the development and progress of Old Crow. These projects involve the construction or improvement of vital physical structures such as housing and roads. They contribute significantly to the economic growth of Old Crow. Capital infrastructure projects also provide jobs and employment opportunities, thus stimulating economic activity and improving the overall quality of life. Investing in infrastructure projects is essential for the sustainable and inclusive development of Old Crow.

### Housing

Four new homes have recently been completed, but unfortunately, they did not meet the EnerGuide 80 rating which is considered a benchmark for energy efficiency. These homes were constructed at a considerable cost of 10.65 million dollars. On a positive note, the elder's 9-plex was finished ahead of schedule, resulting in a cost-saving of approximately 100,000 dollars. This was primarily achieved by canceling unnecessary work and implementing stricter project management towards the end. Unfortunately, the final cost for the building came in just over 21 million. Thankfully the modular home project is on budget. The modular homes arrived in Old Crow on the winter road in 19 separate pieces and have been placed on their lots. Currently, the finishing touches are being done, building stairs, sewage tanks, electrical hookups and installing oil tanks.

Government Services has some exciting plans in the works for the next few months. Our focus will be on renovating residential properties, with a special emphasis on

improving energy efficiency. We are working closely with an architect to design a cutting-edge community warehouse that will serve as a hub for our efforts. In addition, we have set a goal to construct four new homes each year, starting in Spring 2024. By implementing these ambitious plans, we hope to provide more households with energy upgrades and expand VGG's housing portfolio. This is a vision of optimism and positive change for the future.

In the upcoming months, Government Services will be fully occupied with the task of refurbishing residences. For example, adding more insulation to the exterior of a house can be highly effective in improving the energy efficiency and overall comfort of the home. By increasing the thickness of the insulation layer, heat transfer through the walls can be significantly reduced, thereby minimizing heat loss during the winter and heat gain during the summer. This improved thermal barrier acts as a buffer against extreme temperatures and helps maintain a stable indoor environment. In turn, this can lead to reduced heating costs, as the heating system doesn't need to work as hard to maintain a comfortable temperature. Additionally, the extra insulation can also mitigate noise transmission, creating a quieter indoor environment. Overall, the addition of more insulation to the exterior of a house has the potential to provide substantial long-term savings, increased comfort, and a more sustainable living space.

### Administration Building

Our organization has identified the need for expansion and improvement of our main administration building to accommodate the growing demands of our operations. By expanding our building, we aim to create

a more efficient working environment for our staff and provide better services to our clients. Through this crucial investment, we will be able to enhance our ability to fulfill our mission and make a greater impact in our community. We are excited about the potential opportunities that an expanded administration building will bring and are determined to secure the necessary resources to make this vision a reality. As such, VGG is currently exploring funding opportunities to undertake this work.

## Fuel Tank Farm

After the implementation of new software and hardware, the tank farm has undergone a significant upgrade. The refurbishment has yielded remarkable results, as the system is now functioning optimally. Compared to its previous state, the tank farm experiences far fewer disruptions and interruptions. The newly installed technology has enhanced the efficiency and reliability of operations, leading to smoother processes throughout the farm. The upgrade has undoubtedly proven to be a valuable investment, ensuring seamless functioning.

## Services

Ensuring regular and consistent water and sewer services has been a priority for VGG. Ketzka Camp, North Road, Ski Lodge and Subdivision receive services Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Downtown, Government Buildings receive services Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Controlling the dust levels in the community this summer has been a priority. As of early July, the main loop road has been regularly watered. A dust control solution, calcium

chloride, that binds particles together to prevent them from being dispersed into the air, is being considered pending confirmation of funds. While these measures help to reduce dust issues, it is only for the short term and Government Services is exploring longer term solutions, such as linseed oil, for dust control.

## Winter Road

This year, VGG entered into an agreement with the Yukon Government to construct, maintain, and decommission a winter road and contracted Porcupine Enterprises Limited Partnership for this work.

In advance of construction of the winter road, VGG hosted a number of public meetings to hear from the citizens, and Elders, and ensure concerns were considered in moving forward.

Construction of the winter road commenced November 27, 2022. The existing alignment from previous years winter road was maintained to ensure minimal land disruption. The road passed the necessary inspections and was open to traffic on February 18, 2023. In total, 47 loads came into Old Crow and 33 loads exited Old Crow. Equipment and other materials left on the winter road by the Old Crow Development Corporation from previous years was removed.

Decommissioning of the road was completed on March 22, 2023. Wildlife was abundant this year with caribou, martin, fox, lynx, moose, owl's, ptarmigan and other species of birds observed.

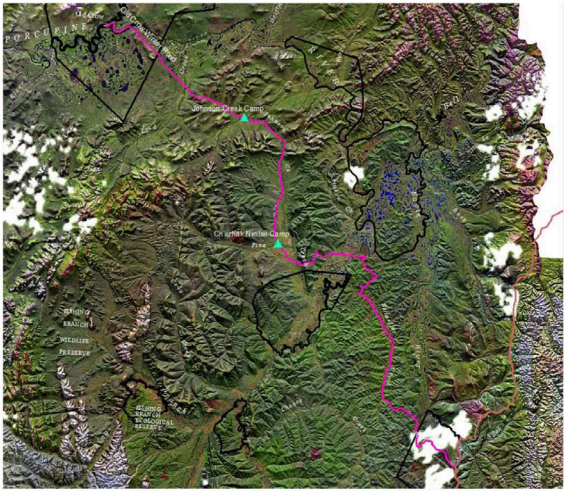
On July 27 and 28, fly overs of the winter road will be completed to evaluate the remediation concerns from the previous years winter road and to evaluate if there were any damages from this year.



One of the four new homes along the north road.



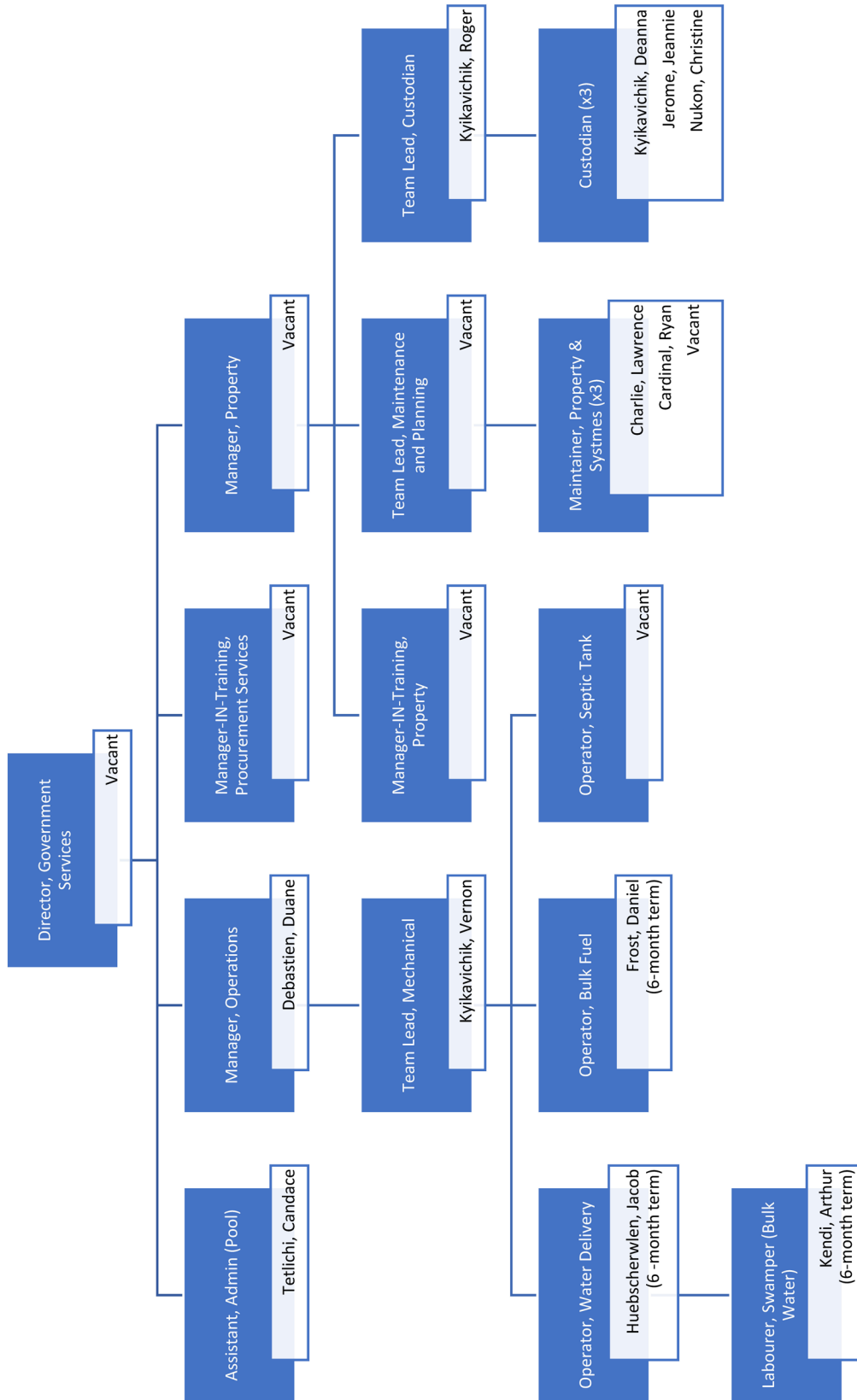
Construction continues for new Wellness Center and 10-plex.



**Winter Road Weekly Update**

January 23, 2023 -Update #1  
Porcupine Enterprises Limited Partnership  
Authored by: Sharon Miller

Regular updates on the Winter Road,



# Natural Resources and Heritage

## Fish and Wildlife

The Fish and Wildlife Branch has four full time staff: Jeremy Brammer (Fish and Wildlife Manager), Katherine Peter (Fisheries and Harvest Support Coordinator), Clifton Nukon (Fish and Wildlife Technician), and Robert Kyikavichik (Game Guardian). Our goal is to support the traditional economy of the VGFN by:

1. Managing fish and wildlife populations and their habitats to ensure there are enough animals and plants for all generations of VGFN;
2. Coordinating research to have the best information available to VGFN citizens when making decisions about their fish, wildlife, and habitat; and
3. Supporting life on the land to ensure traditional lifestyles, skills, and knowledge continue to be practiced and shared.

Our work is based off the Darius Elias Memorial Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan for 2021-2026 that came out of community meetings in March 2021.

### Salmon

The Chinook run of 2022 was the worst on record for the Yukon River mainstem and the Porcupine. The chum run for 2022 was the worst on record on the Yukon mainstem and the second worst ever on the Porcupine. 349 Chinook and 3,804 chum passed the Old Crow sonar.

Because of these poor runs, VGG announced a voluntary closure asking citizens not to fish Chinook or chum in 2022. Most citizens responded to this closure and did not fish salmon, leaving more to pass to the spawning grounds.

The 2023 Chinook run is forecasted to be worse than 2022. The 2023 chum run is forecasted to be better than 2022, but still below escapement goals. As of July 4, the Chinook run is 32,504 at Pilot Station, 23% of the historical average for this date. This year, VGG has announced a mandatory closure for all gillnets in the Porcupine River and its tributaries during the Chinook run. This closure may be adjusted as the run size becomes clearer, and a similar closure will be considered for the chum run. Emergency support in the form of salmon and dog food will be distributed to the community to offset the loss of these fisheries.

### Fall School Hunt

In September 2022 Fish and Wildlife staff working with the school and Yukon University coordinated a fall hunt with students up the Crow River. The hunters had a good trip to Johnson Creek and got some porcupines to share with the community.

### Traditional Pursuits and Trappers Assistance

VGG's Traditional Pursuit Program provides assistance to all adult VGFN citizens who want to spend time out on the land between April and October. The Traditional Pursuit Program is ongoing as of July 2023. To be eligible for Traditional Pursuit, you must be a VGFN citizen 19 years or older (youth 16-18 apply to Youth Traditional Pursuit), one application per household, fill out a Traditional Pursuit Application Form and

## 2023 General Assembly Report

Harvest Report Form, and spend 10 days or more out on the land in VG Traditional Territory between April 1 and Oct. 31, 2023.

In 2022 Traditional Pursuits had the most applicants ever. It was able to support 54 VGFN households going out on the land. For 2023 the Traditional Pursuits budget has been increased, and a new youth category created to support young hunters who hunt for their families. As of July 4, 2023, we have received 27 applications to Traditional Pursuits.

In 2022-23 Trappers Assistance helped 13 households get out on the land to trap.

### NR Calendar

NR Intern Caleb Charlie led the creation of 2023's NR calendar, all with his original photos. Great job Caleb!



### Research Roundup

In January 2023, we held the 2nd Old Crow Research Roundup. The Research Roundup is a place where all the different research groups active in the VGFN Traditional Territory can come together and present to citizens what they have been up to, what they found, and what their plans are for coming years.

We had two days of presentations and tables talking about draining lakes, reconciliation, land treatment facilities, COVID-19, archaeology at Ni'iinlii Njik, contaminants in traditional foods, Porcupine caribou, moose and wolves, and VGG's Land Guardian program.

### Species at Risk

The following species at risk designation changes or plans were shared with VGG for comments:

- Western Bumble Bee mckayi subspecies listed as Special Concern;
- Common Nighthawk was changed to Special Concern from Threatened;
- Olive-sided Flycatcher was changed to Special Concern from Threatened;
- Peregrine Falcon anatum/tundrius was removed from the list;
- Collared Pika, a species of Special Concern, has a draft management plan;
- Barn Swallow, downlisting from Threatened to Special Concern;
- Canada Warbler, downlisting from Threatened to Special Concern;
- Lesser Yellowlegs, listing to Threatened;
- Short-eared owl, listing from Special Concern to Threatened.

If you have any concerns about these species, please report them to Fish and Wildlife Manager Jeremy.

### **Johnny Charlie Memorial Skidoo Trip**

The Fish and Wildlife Technician and Game Guardian both supported the Johnny Charlie Memorial Skidoo Trip to McPherson by breaking trail twice to Curtain Mountain.

### **Nanh Gwiinzii Vik'ite'tri'giikhii (Teechik Land Guardians)**

The Teechik Land Guardians have been busy between January and April 2023 deploying and servicing game cameras along the Winter Road corridor. From their camp at Johnson Creek, the Guardians deployed 72 cameras. These cameras monitor wildlife on and around the Winter Road, the biggest linear corridor in VGFN lands that is used only seasonally. Linear corridors, like winter roads, all season roads, and seismic lines, affect how wildlife move around a landscape. Depending on traffic, they can act as a barrier keep animals on one side. Or depending on snow depth they can funnel animals who are looking for an easier travel route. All of this has consequences for important animals like vadzaih, dinjik, and zhòh.

Any new projects in VGFN lands will usually involve the cutting new linear corridors, but we have very little information about how cutting new corridors will affect the caribou, moose, and wolves in the VGFN Traditional Territory. The Teechik Land Guardians are deploying cameras so VGFN citizens have the best information available when talking about cutting linear corridors. This project is funded by Polar Knowledge Canada, and we are looking to hire casual Guardians for March-April 2024.

### **Fishing Branch Dewatering Study**

A crew from EDI and a VGFN citizen visited Fishing Branch in May 2023 to assess dewatering in the river. Unfortunately, they were too late and the spring flood had already arrived by the time they got there.

### **Whitestone Expedition**

In May 2023 18 people set off from Old Crow to visit Whitestone Village. Even though we started off in a snowstorm, the weather got better and we had a great trip. We harvested ducks, geese, and fish to share with the community and cleaned up traditional sites along the way. We also collected water and fish samples to monitor contaminants in the headwaters draining Eagle Plains and the diets of predator fish who could be eating salmon.

### **Harvest Monitoring**

VGG collects harvest numbers from VGFN citizens through surveys twice a year. These numbers provide critical information to VGG when meeting with other governments and co-management boards. Good harvest data means VGG can argue strongly for the harvesting rights of VGFN citizens.

## **Lands**

The Lands department is responsible for the management, planning, and administration of VGFN Settlement Lands as well as providing input to land use issues throughout and adjacent to the rest of VGFN's Traditional Territory.

Where VGFN rights and interests are defined for non-Settlement Lands, we engage in co-management to protect VGFN harvesting and access rights. The department also implements legislation and policy in relation

to activities and dispositions on Settlement Land, conducts land planning, and liaises with mining, oil and gas and other companies. and dispositions on Settlement Land, conducts land planning, and liaises with mining, oil and gas and other companies.



### Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement (2022)

In late 2022, Canada and Yukon signed off on the Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement that provides for finalizing establishment or reviews of protected areas throughout the territory. Specifically named in the agreement in VGFN's Traditional Territory are: Ní'iinlii Njik Wilderness Preservation and Habitat Protection Area; Van Tat K'atr'anahtii (Old Crow Flats) Special Management Area; and Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park.

The Ch'ihilii Chik (Whitefish Wetlands) Habitat Protection Area Management Plan (2019) will also be reviewed as part of this work. VGG is currently negotiating capacity and engagement funding with Yukon to participate in the implementation of the Agreement.

### North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP)

Currently, VGG and YG are assessing the need to update the NYRLUP given recent analyses suggesting some improvements could be made.

Plans in development are as follows:

- **(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 NYRLYP was the development of an AMP. Lands department will be working with the community to continue development of this plan with an aim to finalizing it during this fiscal year.

- **(DRAFT) Dawson Regional Land Use Plan (2021)**. VGG submitted input focussing on transboundary issues, such as protecting the water and Porcupine Caribou. VGG will continue to work with the planning commission, YG and TH as the Plan nears completion.
- **Crow Mountain Local Area Plan**. VGG will develop a planning framework for citizen review and feedback before the development of a draft plan. This work will be advanced when VGG's land planning capacity needs have been addressed through funding contributions from YG.

- **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. We plan to use resources provided to implement the Nature Agreement to scope out and initiate this planning project.

### VGG Lands and Resources Act

The department is in the final stages of developing this legislation that will establish regulations for land use and lease agreements on VGFN lands. When final consultations with citizens in and outside Old Crow are complete and the draft Act revised accordingly, it will be taken to VGFN Chief and Council for their consideration.

### Old Crow Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw (OCPZB)

This bylaw is up for review and the department plans to complete a full review with citizen input and provide recommended revisions to Chief and Council.

### Class 1 permit for a Vanadium drilling project along the Dempster

A Class 1 mining permit was issued by YG following input from VGG. Conditions are included to protect caribou should they appear in the vicinity and to ensure proper treatment of any heritage resources that may be encountered. The department held discussions with the project proponent who made it clear that there may not be any

activity on this project this year, but if so, it will likely occur in March 2024 over about ten days with advance notice to VGFN. If this project becomes more active and expanded in the future, Class 3 mining permits will be required that will trigger a full YESAA assessment. This means there will be very detailed consultations with VGFN citizens.

### Winter Road

Stranded equipment on the road was removed in 2023 and inspections of the road carried out in winter (March 2023) and summer (July 2023). The report from the summer inspection is in preparation and will be used for considering revisions to the road design and remediation needs. 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 (TH, 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 collaborative government-to-government relationships in relation to the administration and management of oil and gas resources in the respective Traditional Territories. Forum officials meet monthly and the current focus is on COGL activities.

### **COGL Exploration Project**

Chance Oil and Gas Limited (COGL) will be submitting a proposal to YESAB for an Executive Committee Screening. COGL plans to carry out a public meeting in Old Crow on August 23, and later in Whitehorse, to run through their draft project description as part of preparing their full proposal for submission to the Executive Committee in mid-December 2023.

VGG is currently discussing the process and timeframes for the Executive Committee Screening in order to better understand our capacity and engagement needs prior to seeking resources from the federal and territorial governments. VGG aims to have additional capacity in place to ensure VGFN can effectively participate in the Screening process prior to the proposal submission by COGL.

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

Due to the financial scale of COGL's Well Maintenance and Extended Flow Testing project, a Benefits Agreement is required under Yukon's Oil and Gas Act (YOGA). Affected First Nations, COGL and YG must negotiate an agreement that considers potential financial benefits, employment, and training opportunities. This agreement is in final draft form and is expected to be signed off by the Parties this summer.

### **New Mining, Lands and Forestry Legislation**

As a party to agreements among Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, VGG collaborates with the parties to improve Yukon's outdated mining laws, consolidate and modernize Yukon Lands Act and develop and implement revisions of the Forest

Resources Act that stem from a YG-First Nations' review. These are active files and VGG has been contributing to discussions on all three of these initiative Nations' review.

### **Old Crow Flood Mapping**

Lands department is in early discussions with Environment Yukon to collaboratively undertake an Old Crow flood mapping project. The objective will be to more accurately map community flooding areas under different water level scenarios and will use a combination of remote sensing (LIDAR) ground-truthed by local elders and other VGFN citizens. There will be particular interest in learning from citizens who experienced the 1991 flooding.

## **Energy**

### **Energy Task Force**

The Energy Task Force was formed in the spring 2020 as an advisory body to Chief & Council. It was mandated to recommend a plan for achieving the 2019 General Assembly Resolution to be Carbon Neutral by 2030. The Task Force has not been active recently and its structure, membership and responsibilities will be revised and re-established in summer/fall of 2023.

### **Sree Vyàa Update**

Sree Vyàa commenced operations in April 2021. From April 2021 to December 2022, it generated 685 MWh of solar electricity, equivalent to saving 201,000 liters of diesel fuel. In 2022, 20% of the community's electricity demand was served by Sree Vyàa. During the summer months, it helped turn off the diesel generator for 1,700 hours (averaging 280 hours per month or 10 hours per day).

After accounting for operation and maintenance costs, Sree Vyàa is projected to generate an annual profit of about \$250,000. The NR department will conduct an online survey in August 2023 to gather citizen feedback on allocating this fund. We have identified four areas where the money could be invested:

1. Direct support for green businesses (example: local farming)
2. Direct support to citizens for green living and local businesses for green operation (example: rebate on electric ATV)
3. Support VGG future renewable energy initiatives (example: wind farm in crow mountain)
4. Create paid position(s) to manage the investments.

### Community Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP)

The Community Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP) aims at providing detailed recommendations to manage energy generation and energy efficiency in Old Crow. The primary goal is to reduce fossil fuel consumption while maintaining or enhancing the residents' quality of life.

The forecast for the greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in Old Crow in 2030 indicated that electricity generation from diesel will continue to be the largest source, contributing more than 40% of the emissions followed by heating with diesel (See figure right).

In 2010, Old Crow's total emissions were about 2,800 Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e. However, by 2030, the business-as-usual GHG emissions are expected to reach 4,700 Tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e

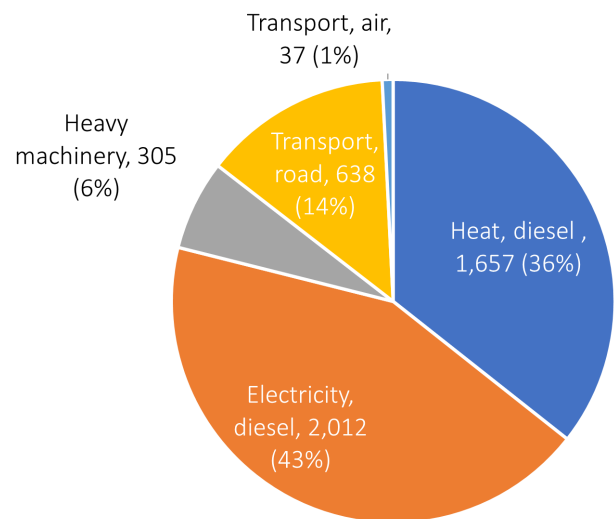
(the equivalent of about 1000 cars on the road). Without Sree Vyàa, the GHG emissions in 2030 would have been 500 Tonnes higher.

In June 2023, we began the engagement process with community members and presented various scenarios for achieving GHG emissions reductions ranging from 10% to 80% by 2030, all with existing and proven technologies.

NR will conduct an online survey in August 2023 to gather feedback from the community about how ambitious our GHG reduction target should be by 2030. The community will be providing feedback on the potential projects as well, such as the wind farm on Crow mountain.

Based on the community's input, we aim to release the CEIP in the fall of 2023.

To showcase the impact of change on VGFN traditional territory and the climate action taken by our community, such as Sree Vyàa, we are producing a short film. The short film is expected to be completed by August 2024. Thanks for everyone involved in this initiative.

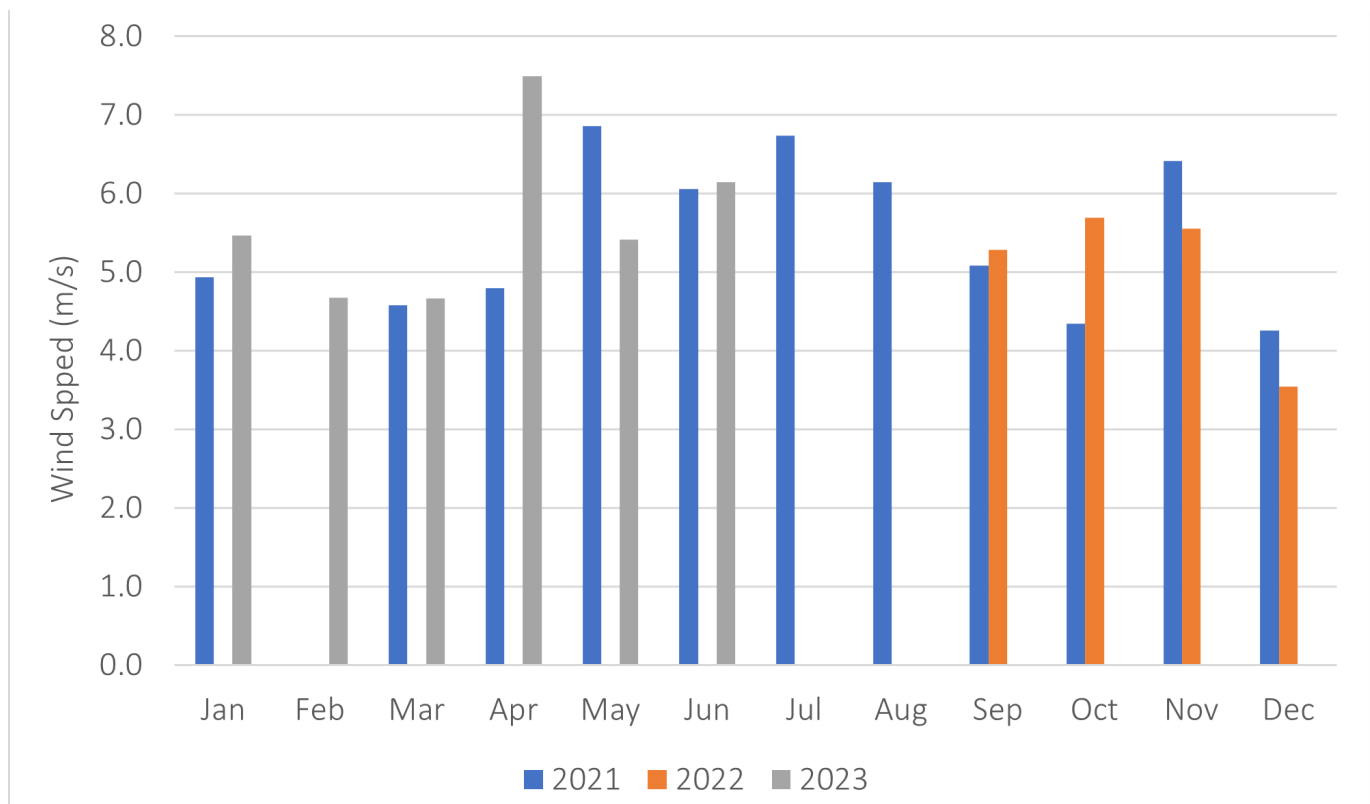


### Old Crow Wind Project

Considering the feasibility of generating clean electricity during winter months, we are exploring the potential of wind energy on Crow Mountain. We have identified two potential locations for wind farms: the lower site, near the MET tower, and the upper site, situated above and west of the quarry.

One significant advantage of wind power lies in its consistency throughout both summer and winter seasons, allowing us to generate electricity year-round and overnight. This contrasts with Sree Vyàa, which primarily produces electricity during the spring and summer seasons.

The figure below displays the wind speed measurements taken at the MET tower site. Thanks for our local operator, Jason Van Fleet, braving all weather conditions to retrieve the data and maintain the system. Considering the promising wind speeds observed during the winter season, a wind farm could serve as a potential source to enhance the share of green energy in Old Crow. We will continue monitoring the wind speed until the summer 2024.



### Carbon Credits

In 2022, the federal government enacted legislation that provides the basis for establishing credits for carbon storage projects or where large tracts of land that store carbon are protected long-term. These credits can have value and may be an additional source of income for VGFN or used to offset carbon releases, given the large long-term protected areas in VGFN traditional territory. Work is underway with YG to explore a pilot program with an aim of establishing a VGFN carbon offset system.

## Heritage

Heritage mandate: to preserve, protect and promote the culture and language of the Vuntut Gwitchin.

## Language

Dinjii Zhuh K'yuu is at a critical stage for achieving fluency among young speakers. Heritage staff have made huge developments in language speaking including: developing the Direct Acquisition teaching materials and classes, developing a Language Nest program, Elder mentorship, student mentorship and language documentation. The focus right now is only on activities that create speakers.

Currently language work is focused on: continuing with language mentorship, nest, classes, documentation and supporting speakers, language teacher training, language planning around facility development and finding additional funding, language documentation and linguistics, staff mentorship in language speaking.

## Language Coordinator, Sophia Flather

Drin gwiinzii shalak kat.

We all know that our language is critically endangered. We need to have a targeted approach to language revitalization with our limited resources. The main mission is always to create new speakers. My job is creating a fluency-transfer system to empower us to use our language in our daily lives, and 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. And all the curriculum is easy to use and can be picked up and taught by anybody.

Last August, we held a Teacher Training here in Old Crow. We had many participants from Old Crow, Whitehorse and farther. The participants did very well and we met regularly for a while after the Teacher Training to continue practicing their teaching skills. In the end, everyone was pulled in different directions and it was difficult to maintain. I have found it challenging to find teachers to take on teaching the beginner courses but I am trying again this year to get new teachers to teach Gwich'in 1 and Gwich'in Googwandak 1. This is necessary to free up space so that I can develop the next textbooks.

While I found it challenging to focus on curriculum development this year, I ended up taking a mentorship with the YNLC on building a language nest. The mentor was Landon Peters from the Chief Atahm Language Nest in Chase, BC. This helped so much in developing scripts, roles, budgets, and materials for a language nest.

This winter, we piloted Diiginjik Ch'at'oo – Our Language Nest at the Early Years Playspace on Friday mornings. We did 12 sessions and did some evaluations of how it went. This is definitely something we would like to see in our community to support children to hear and learn language from a young age and to support parents in speaking with their children.

Right now, we do not have a lot of capacity to run a full-time language nest. The priority is creating new adult speakers. From there, we could run more programs fully such as Language Nest.

Future plans are as follows:

- **Teacher Training and Language Classes**  
Language teachers are gold! We could provide as many classes as we have the teachers for! Anybody could be a teacher. I am planning a 1-week teacher training from August 14th-18th. Please sign up, language teachers are essential to language revitalization!
- **Curriculum Development** I am working on the Gwich'in 2 and Gwich'in Gooqwandak 2 textbooks. Along with those textbooks we need recordings, lesson plans and worksheets.

Get involved in our language program, you might be surprised at how enriching it is! The future of our language is in our hands.

Mahsi' choo,

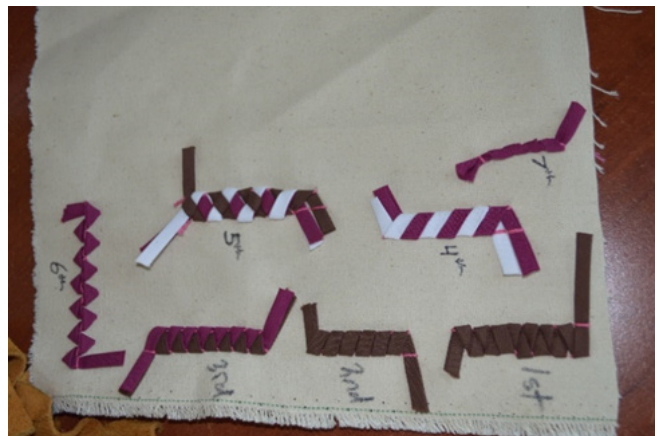
Sophia Flather  
Language Coordinator

### Oral History

Van Tat Gwich'in oral history has been actively recorded through a series of multi-year projects: focusing on oral history, cultural geography, cultural technology, navigation systems and historical lifeways. Interviews are recorded, translated and indexed. We are currently working with TrailMark Systems to develop an online, access-controlled archives. All access to the oral history collection is permitted through the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee.

The current focus is on Cultural Experiential Education. The VG Heritage Committee provided direction to reach youth with oral history through cultural experiential

education by developing units that will be engaging and achieve academic credit in units: Crow Flats Cultural Experiential, Gwich'in Stories unit, Medicinal plants unit.



Kathie Charlie teaching herself different techniques for sewing with porcupine quills.

### Rampart House and LaPierre House

Rampart House and LaPierre House are co-managed with Yukon Government Historic Sites Unit. There is an annual reconstruction work camp at Rampart House for 30 days. LaPierre House is preserved as a ruin and there are semi-annual site visits to cut grass and check the boardwalk and interpretive signage.

Achievements this season: Complete Rampart House and LaPierre House Management Plan update, Reconstruction work camp at Rampart House and solar array installation at Rampart House in June, and Signing ceremony planned at Rampart House July 27.

### VG 101 Course Development

This course is being developed to educate incoming teachers, government workers, RCMP, nurses and 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 from the perspective of Vuntut Gwitchin citizens. There is great material for this course and it is much needed to assist new comers to the community.



Rampart House and LaPierre House logo by Maureen Charlie.



Rampart House artwork by the late Harvey Kassi.

### Collaboration

VGG is represented at the Heritage Working Group (HWG), a collaborative table for YG and all YFNs. There are quarterly meetings to move forward on collective issues based on the work plan and terms of reference. The HWG came out of the Yukon Forum, Heritage priority. The YFN caucus meets prior to full group meetings. Priorities are: Successor legislation for the Historic Resources Act (YG), Heritage Awareness Campaign and Data Sharing.

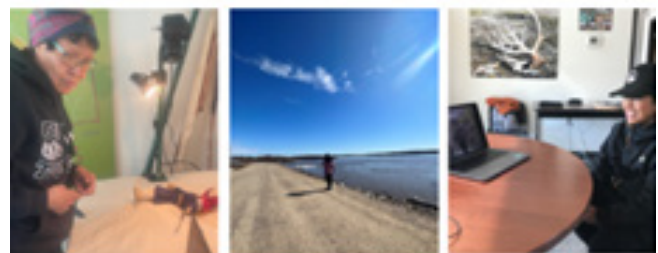
### Researchers

Heritage is collaborating with archaeologists from Yukon Government and from Kansas State University on the Bluefish Caves excavation project and cave investigations on Ch'itoo Choo Ddhaa (Big Nest Mountain), and with Yukon Government Palaeontologist Elizabeth Hall in her work at locality 11A on the Crow River.



### Film Making

Many great local films have been produced and directed in Old Crow. In May 2023 mentors from Our World worked with 5 local film makers to produce films that were screened for the community during Vadzaih Choo Drin. The films were by Izaiah Frost and Vernon Jr Kyikavichik, Kayleen Kyikavichik, Sophia Flather and Mary Jane Moses. The films can still be viewed at [www.ourworldlanguage.com](http://www.ourworldlanguage.com).



### Heritage Coordinator, Briana Tetlich

Shoozri' Briana Lord vaazhii. I started the position as Heritage Co-ordinator March 30, 2022. Prior to this, I was mentored by Mary Jane Moses, who held this position for 20 years! I want to say mahsi' choo to Mary Jane for all her years of hard work and dedication to this position and our community. As well as, for the smooth transition her and Megan have made for me to be in this position. I have worked in the heritage department seasonally for many years in different roles, such as the language assistant, film maker, and summer student.

What I've been working on:

- transcribing and indexing interviews;
- archiving photos, documents, interviews;
- editing and adding to the Master Index;
- updating genealogical records;
- participating in language opportunities ex. language nest, textbook revision, Gwich'in classes;
- assisting in VG 101 course development;
- cleaning and organizing Heritage buildings within community; and
- preparing for upcoming summer trips.

Some of my goals/tasks for the upcoming year:

- participate in material development for Cultural Experiential Learning;
- assist in VG 101 course development and implementation;
- attend and support language opportunities; and
- continue updates of genealogical records.



### Heritage Researcher, Brandon Kyikavichik

#### Gijiint'aii: Try Your Best - The Sarah Abel

**Chitze Book:** This book, which I usually refer to as the Sarah Abel book, is a compilation of stories from one of the most respected matriarchs of her time, Sarah Abel Chitze. Sarah was adopted to, and raised by Myra and Peter Moses, and everybody who knew Peter Moses, always praises his story-telling ability. Both of my more elderly translators, the late Joel Peter as well as Irwin Linklater, made many comments to this effect, they always expressed regret that he was never recorded, for he was the best story-teller in these parts. Since Sarah was raised by Peter, she got to hear many of those stories being told on many dozens of occasions, as such, she had the widest breadth of knowledge concerning our history of anybody alive during her time, this is why I decided to feature her, and only her, in this first book. The next book will feature more elders from different Gwich'in settlement areas. I finished the Sarah Abel book last year. The book was sent for a peer review which included a cultural element. The peer review took longer than I expected and editing began this past spring. I am currently working on the proposed edits which we received from the editor. As things have taken a bit of a turn lately, this next part of the process may also take longer than expected. I am hoping we can get this book edited and ready for publishing as quickly as possible.

**Dinjii Zhuh Gwitr'it: Gwich'in Culture - The Second Book In The Joel Peter Project Series:**

I immediately began work on the second book after sending the first book to peer review. The first book, as fascinating and full of knowledge as it is, is only the very tip of the ice berg. The second book will cover a much wider scope and will include stories from past elders such as; Myra Choo Kay [Kyikavichik], Big Joe Kyikavichik, Dick Nukon, Lydia Thomas, Ellen Bruce, Edith Josie, Hannah Netro, Charlie Peter Charlie, Alfred Charlie, Tabitha Kyikavichik, Bella Greenland, Edward Snowshoe, Johnny Kay, William Nersyoo, Johnny Semple, Mary Husky, as well as others. In the first book, you will have learned of our systems of currency, our military practices and how economy played a role in it, medicine [or psychic ability], incredibly gifted female leaders, hunting techniques, belief systems, and all kinds of history that covers a wide array of subjects including epidemics and overly stringent hunting regulations being imposed on our ancestors. In this second book, you will see more of what you learned in the first book which will further solidify in your mind what these practices actually meant for our people back then, but there will also be more added to it. In this second book you also learn about our land management and co-management practices, espionage during war times [including the two greatest spies in Gwich'in history – both of whom were women], and a whole lot more about the psychic abilities commonly referred to as medicine, and our religious belief systems and practices and how they relate to our modern religion – Christianity. The second book will cover so many different areas of historical discussion as well as philosophy, and practices, it will surely prove to be, the most fascinating book of Gwich'in history you have ever read.

**My Language Learning Journey:** This was actually never about me learning the language. At first, all I wanted was to know what our pre-Christian culture was. I soon realized that if I wanted to do that, I had to get the stories of the old days told by our oldest most knowledgeable elders fully translated. That's how this started, I had to bring in an expert and attempt to get these stories not only fully translated, but written out in our modern orthography as well. So, that's what I did. We changed my position so I could focus solely on working with the recordings of our most knowledgeable ancestors who were recorded. I had to not only get better and better at writing in the language, which involved reading and speaking the language better and better, but it also involved studying papers on linguistics in order to figure some of this stuff out. Even with this layered, multi-faceted approach I still wouldn't have been able to do what I set out to do after Joel died, which is to get these stories into proper form to be published, and there was also my new goal to think about, the plan to become fluent in my language arose not long after I began working on recordings with Joel, so I had to get help. Luckily, I have a fellow Gwich'in colleague from Fort Yukon, Alaska, but who now lives in Fairbanks, who helps me out a lot. He does a lot of work with a linguist who also lives in Fairbanks and its actually the linguist who is the biggest help to me now. With what I've been learning from them, my language learning journey has taken an exciting turn and I think there's a chance I may be able to become fluent, something I didn't think was possible when I first started working with our language and realized how hopelessly different it is than English, which makes it ever the more difficult for English speaking people to learn. We are working on some

exciting stuff and we operate at such a highly technical level that it is becoming difficult to find more people to work with who are also doing things at such a high level. It is going to be important for us to find more people who can do such highly complicated work and get them trained to do similar work that we as language workers are doing at the moment. In a perfect world, we would have teams of people each devoted to a different aspect of language revitalization, although I don't know how feasible that is. I will continue doing the work that I'm doing, using the process I have developed along with my contemporaries in Alaska, and we will do our very best to figure all of this out.

**The following is the Table Of Contents for Gijiint'aii: Try Your Best: The Sarah Abel Chitze Book:**

Forward

- Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm

Preface

- A Journey
- Stumbling Pathless Through The Dark

Diik'ih Ahaa: Following Our Tracks

- Who We Are
- Navigating The Stories
- Compiling The Stories
- Some Additional Information

Tape One: Rampart House Part One

- A Harrowing Journey To Rampart House
- The Bishop Who Ate His Boots Arrives At Rampart House
- John Tizya Starts The Town Of Old Crow Working For The Church
- The Rampart House Epidemic Part One
- People Moved To Teechik [Old Crow] & The Advice Elders Gave
- Amos Njootli's Devotion To The Church

Tape Two: Rampart House Part Two

- The Rampart House Epidemic Part Two: The Full

Testimony

- Amos Njootli Goes On A Hunt & Sarah Moves To Teechik [Old Crow]
- Dances On Hospital Island & The Last Sermon Of Amos Njootli

Tape Three: Untitled

- Days Of Extreme Hardship
- Grass-Pants Meets The Settlers
- Vasaagihdzak: The Man-Eating Monster & The King Across The Ocean
- Vah Srigwehdi': The Lone Survivor

Tape Four: Strange Creatures

- Two Old Women & The Bushman
- The Old Lady & The Ice Bear
- The Fast Runner & The Woman Who Can't Keep A Husband
- The Elderly Couple & The Lake Monster

Tape Five: The Incredible Experience Of Solomon Nideechii [Nadichii]

- A Terrible Crime
- A War Party & A Clash Of Medicine Men
- A Strange Encounter With A Bushman

Tape Six: Ko' Ehdanh - [Man] Without Fire

- Ambushed & Slaughtered
- A Winter Without Fire
- Raising An Army
- Taking Revenge & Rescuing A Beloved Wife
- The Five Families

Tape Seven: Untitled

- Katlaih: A Football Game Gone Awry
- A Young Man & A Sow Grizzly: A Trip Into The Animal Realm

Tape Eight: Tthaa Nan Dahk'wan/Gwiyeh'at [A Woman Of High Status]

- Continue To Breath When No One Else Can
- The People's Path
- Royal Treatment For A Woman Of Renown

Tape Nine: Tr'iinjoo Vigwijaht'oo: The Woman Who Wouldn't Be Broken

- Left For Dead
- "Bring Her Back For Me"
- The Sorry Husband

# 2023 General Assembly Report

## Epilogue

- The Significance of Tr’iinjoo Vigwijahtl’oo [“Strong Woman”]
- The Many Meanings Of Gwitr’it

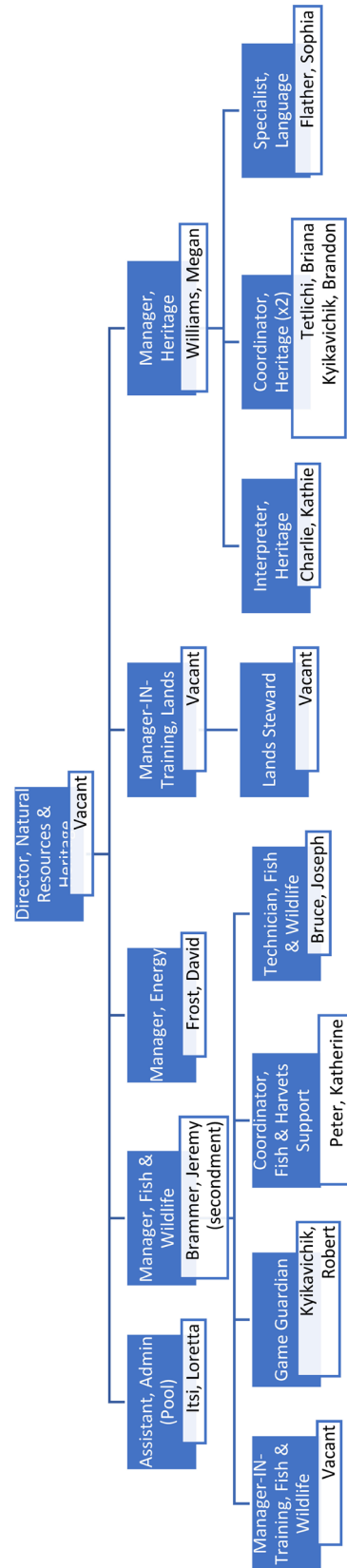
## Stories That Were Moved

- VG2003-3-8 [Tape One]: The Families Living At Rampart House
- VG2000-3-1 [Tape Six]: The Ch’eeghwat Ti’ Bloodline
- VG2000-3-1 [Tape Six]: The Deaths of Ch’eeghwat Ti’ & Shahnuu Ti’
- VG2000-3-1 [Tape Six]: Since The Word Of God Came About
- VG2003-3-4 Part Two [Tape Seven]: The Five Families Part Two
- VG2003-3-3 [Tape Eight]: Protective Birds & The Medicinal Properties of Juniper

## The Following Is The Chosen Structure [Subject To Change] For The Second Book: Dinjii Zhuh Gwitr’it: Gwich’in Culture

- Dinjii Zhuh Gwitr’it: Gwich’in Culture
- Section 1: Preface & Introduction
- Section 2: Never Give Up: Stories of Survival & Overcoming Incredible Hardship
- Section 3: Strange Days: Our Most Ancient Stories
- Section 4: The Geopolitical Landscape: Stories Of War, Espionage, Peace Making & Trading
- Section 5: Innovative Spirit: Caribou Fences & Other Technologies of Our Ancestors
- Section 6: Knowledge is Power: Historical & Cultural Information, Medicinal Practices, Astronomy, Landscapes, Animals, Reading Signs, Recollections

## Section 7: Epilogue



# Health and Social Services

Drin gwinzii,

I am happy to provide this report as Director of Health and Social Services, focusing on what has occurred since I started in the position on April 3, 2023.

Work has been busy since the day I started and I felt as though I started at ground 0. There were lots of new learnings, including understanding the government, working towards meeting the needs of our people and focusing on providing programs and services to citizens all while being fiscally responsible.

## Mandate

The focus of the Health and Social Services Department is to provide access to services and programs for the well-being of all citizens. It is imperative we provide fair, equitable services while we promote opportunities for well-being and healing.

It is critical that the work that we do reflects the people's voice. VGFN citizens were invited to offer feedback regarding the health and wellness of our community during public meetings hosted by the Health and Social Services Department in Old Crow (May 23) and Whitehorse (June 6). Citizens shared their ideas, needs and concerns and discussed strategic planning for the department, all of which will inform the mandate for the Health and Social Services Department and the development of a Wellness Plan with Strategic Goals that will focus on enhancing the well-being of our people.

## Substance Use Crisis

Soon after being sworn-in, Council made clear their intention to focus action and more resources to support citizens in Old Crow and elsewhere, who were struggling with substance use. Council passed a Community Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis (Resolution 04-18-2023-#22).

In March, VGG posted a public notice on Facebook encouraging VGFN citizens wishing to go to treatment to contact the government. This was not limited to citizens living in Old Crow or Whitehorse. VGG made it a priority to ensure everyone who requested it was able to go to treatment.

Many citizens contacted the government, and several citizens are currently participating in treatment programs as a result of this effort. The Health and Social Services Department is also working to ensure that citizens have access to appropriate aftercare once they have completed treatment and have been following them through the process. A weekly online aftercare group is set up with cedars and we are creating a weekly recovery-based check in group.

## To all VGFN Citizens:

**If you need to go to treatment, please contact VGG so we can make arrangements.**

### Contact:

James Smith  
VGG Executive Director  
james.smith@vgfn.net  
(867) 332-1543



Posted March 20, 2023

Calls in total	39
Calls from citizens who live in Old Crow	18
Calls from citizens who live outside of Old Crow	21
Citizens who received a treatment date	22
Citizens who declined treatment after follow up	5
Citizens who completed treatment	12
Citizens who continued in Second Stage/Aftercare	5
Citizens who have upcoming dates for treatment	5
Citizens working who are working towards dates	9
Citizens who did not follow through or complete	3

VGG has been working closely with the governments of Yukon and Canada, and the Blood Ties Four Directions Centre, a well-respected Yukon organization which provides harm reduction education and services in Whitehorse and all the Yukon communities.

A great result of this collaboration is that we have created access to safe supplies/harm reduction supplies in the Health Center, our office and 24 hours anonymous access to a locked box located in the Nursing Station foyer. The combination to the lock is provided by the Nursing Station and Health and Social Services Department during working hours.

### Counselling

There are four counsellors who come to Old Crow and we are working very hard to schedule them so that every week there is a counsellor in community. Our Health Manager, Rebecca Hansen, is an experienced Clinical Counsellor and Certified Addictions Counsellor. She has been providing counselling, pre-treatment, post-treatment, coordination of treatment and application support, family conferencing/mediation and mental health outreach plus follow up. As a team, the Manager and Director have done several wellness checks, interventions, outreach to those who are struggling and family support.

### Wellness Camps

Over the month of July, Health and Social Services coordinated three on the land Wellness Camps at Rampart House and Tl'oo K'at.

July 9 – 14	July 16 – 21	July 23 – 28
Youth Co-Ed (ages 12 – 17)	Women's	Men's

### Consultation with Government of Yukon

The Health and Social Services Department has had a number of meetings with Government of Yukon that have centered around Putting People First and the new Health Center. On July 13, the Health and Social Services Department and Government of Yukon hosted their first community meeting to discuss ways to improve how health services are delivered in Old Crow.

### **Introduction to restorative practices June 26-27th (Yukon Circle of Change) training**

On June 26th and 27th staff involved in healing participated in training regarding introduction to restorative practices hosted by the Yukon Circle of Change.

Our hope is to build a healthy community that is focused on restorative practices and community healing opposed to punishment. Later, there will be a collaboration with restorative practices, health and social and justice.

### **Citizen Outreach in Whitehorse**

Our new Family Support Worker in Whitehorse, Linda Netro, has coordinated a number of events and activities for Whitehorse based citizens.

- On March 28th, VGG hosted a young women's pizza supper at Boston Pizza with 8 participants. Words of encouragement from the Chief were shared and an Easter Basket was given to each youth who participated.
- On March 29th, VGG held a Women's Get Together/ Matriarch's Knowledge Keepers' Circle with 14 participants. The women had discussion while beading, sharing the importance for all-inclusive joint men and women get together for VGFN citizens living in the Whitehorse area.
- VGG delivered Mother's Day flowers to 19 mothers in Whitehorse.
- April 11th and June 20th Council hosted public meetings in Whitehorse to provide Whitehorse based citizens updates on the work of Chief and Council and upcoming priorities. These meetings were also made available over Zoom.

Our Administrative Assistant/Community Outreach worker, Dorothy Thomas has been providing a safe space for Whitehorse based citizens to come and chat, use the facilities and have a snack. There are 10 citizens that come throughout the week on a regular basis and several others who pop by. She provides support with applications for training, programming, and helps guide citizens to find the right door to services. With the Manager, she has provided outreach at the Whitehorse Shelter, Hospital and Blood ties. Safe/Harm Reduction supplies are provided at the Hanson Street office as well.

Our Health Manger travels to Whitehorse one week per month. She provides the same services she does in Old Crow to Whitehorse based citizens. This includes counselling, pre-treatment, post-treatment, coordination of treatment and application support, family conferencing/mediation, mental health outreach plus follow up. She helps to coordinate work plans with Linda and Dorothy and tends to three ongoing projects. 1. Yukon Strategy for Patient-Orientated Research, 2. Yukon First Nation Cancer Care Project, 3. The working group on the Yukon Child and Family Services Act.

For any service or activities offering in Whitehorse, VGG conducts outreach via phone – calling and texting – and via social media to notify citizens of the events and to encourage participation.

VGG will continue to provide these services to our citizens in Whitehorse and in response to discussion during past meetings of the General Assembly.

## Recreation

Our Recreation staff and summer students have been running lots of events and activities in Old Crow for youth and adults including sports such as baseball, hockey, and volleyball, movie nights, crafts and even a pizza night. Recreation will continue to offer great programming for all ages.



Pink shirt day.

## Looking Forward

We have a lot of work to do to review and develop policies, co-ordinate home and elder care, strengthen family supports, and plan On the Land Wellness Programs.

Many of our policies require updating and as a department, we will be reviewing and making the updates required to meet the needs of our people. In addition, we have a number of positions currently vacant including Family Support Worker, Home and Community Coordinator and Home Care workers.

It is important that the Health and Social Services Department provides inclusive and fun activities for all age. Some great projects that have been started are Food Sustainability, gardening, Women's Health Workshops, Youth Camps, Women's Camps, Men's Camps and healing opportunities.

Some of the things I am thinking about as we move forward:

- One of my concerns; There are many young people not in school. The YG Department of Education is mandated to deliver accessible and quality education to all Yukon learners. I remember in 2019 I had put forward a resolution so that all teaching staff have cultural orientation to understand VG land and culture. Even though this resolution may not have been passed, there has to be reasons in and beyond our school, as to why we are facing these concerns.
- Another concern that I have is that there was a resolution passed regarding Residential School Curriculum in our school, so that our children are aware. I raise this because we are currently awaiting the results of the ground penetration at Chooutla Residential School. Our community is fragile and we need to address the situation we are in and the traumas that will be retriggered. We will be working to ensure that we have counselors available as this work proceeds.
- It's been a lot of work getting people to Treatment Centers, some make it and some don't. We make no judgement and continue to offer Aftercare Programming. This alone is not good enough, we need support from the community and we need to do this together. I firmly believe in what Robert Bruce Jr. said, "Gwitchin Law is to help one another". The words of former Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm help to guide my work "We gather strength from one another and from the shared Joys & challenges of living a remote, northern life Intimately connected to the land waters and wildlife of traditional territory"

There are a number of activities we are already planning for the months ahead:

- Berry picking
- Hosting Culture Camp
- Women's Beading
- Fun Family Night Activities
- A Fitness Trainer to provide support with gym equipment and training
- Organized access to the gym
- Consistent aftercare groups
- Health fair
- Workshops
- Grief and Healing
- Follow up Wellness Camps
- Events, including events for
  - World Suicide Prevention Day
  - National Day of Truth and Reconciliation
  - World Mental Health Day
  - National Addictions Awareness Week
  - Family Day

Mahsi' choo,

Louise Creyke and the Health and Social Services team

## Community Justice

In the area of Community Justice, activities were impacted by the pandemic. Now that our community has been COVID-free for a number of months extra support is required to deliver in this area.

## Indigenous Court Worker

Court circuits are scheduled approximately every three months for Old Crow. A week prior to a circuit a pre-circuit court is held by teleconference with a Judge, Crown and Defence lawyers, Probation Officer, RCMP, Victim Services worker, and a Clerk of the Courts. After each matter on the docket is discussed, the presiding Judge will decide, if court will be held by telephone, or in-person. The court worker will immediately notify clients of the date, time and location of a telephone, or in-person court.

Most times, telephone court will take place at the Sarah Abel-Chitze Building. A venue is booked, If the circuit is coming to the community. The morning of court the room is prepared. Postings are put up around the community, so that everyone knows where court is going to be held.

The next court circuit is on Tuesday, September 26, 2023.

The court worker is present in the court room to support clients. The court worker will answer any questions of the Judge or the lawyer. These are called in-court services.

After court hearings, the court worker will help clients, who need assistance. These are out-of-court services. The court worker will supervise community service hours and help with probation orders. Any questions, a client may have about their conditions, the court worker will answer.

If a client is required to report to the probation officer, or the lawyer the court worker will assist them in placing the calls. All visits, calls, requests from clients are noted.

This data is entered on to a spreadsheet. The information assists the funders when making applications for funding for VGG. VGG is also a funder. Statistical information is completed by deadlines in four quarters before the end of a fiscal year.

A client may decide they want to attend alcohol/drug treatment. They are then referred to a counsellor.

The Court worker duties are many things: helping clients to connect with a clerk of the courts when they have probation order (s) to sign. A Justice of the Peace will read the order (s) to the client on the telephone. The final document will have both signatures. The client is given a copy. Finally, a copy is put in the client's file.

### **Justice Committee**

Three to five members are required to form this committee. This committee will assist and direct the Community Justice Coordinator in the delivery of the types of programs that it would like to see for the community. There is a TOR, or Terms of Reference available if you are interested in being a committee member.

The committee will make its decision on how often it will meet, who will chair the meeting, and decide on the amount of honorarium it should pay each member for each meeting they attend.

### **Restorative Justice**

Currently, two referrals for restorative justice are being worked on. The Yukon Government Community Justice Coordinator assists and co-facilitates. She will come to the community when a date has been set to do

the actual conference. We are both trained to facilitate restorative justice conferences, or circles.

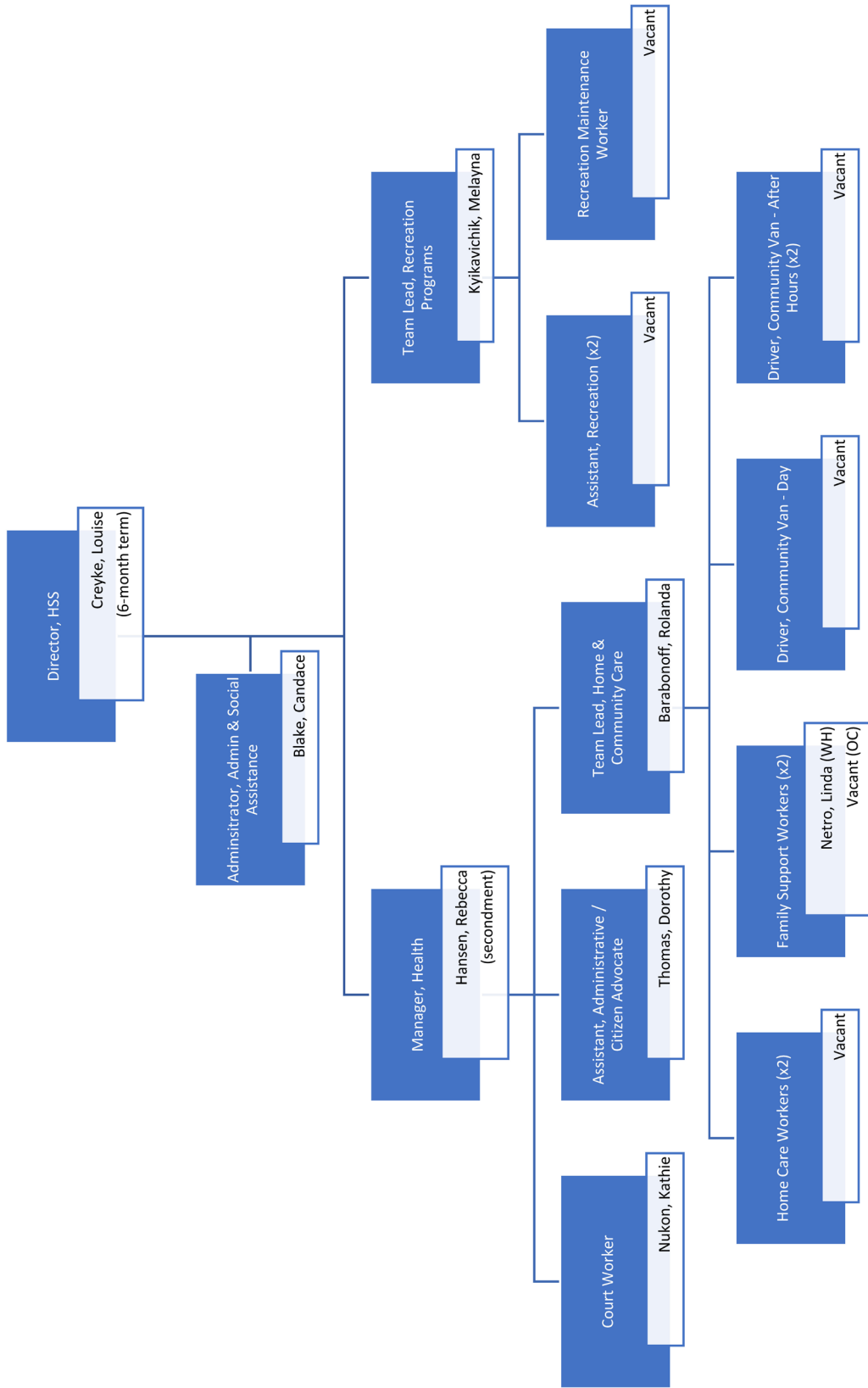
Timelines are put on all processes, so that the work is completed in due time. A final report is sent to the people who made the referrals. This report will include what the final agreement is between the person who caused the harm and the person who was harmed. This will include what the person who caused the harm will do to repair the harm. It could be that this person apologizes in person, or in written form to the person he/she harmed. Both sides are respectfully supported through the whole process.

All restorative justice conferences completed have been successful. The desire is to do more restorative justice processes for citizens. Restorative justice prevents clients from having a criminal record, by dealing with matters outside of the justice system. Citizens can also make referrals for community members who are on the docket. A referral will be made on your behalf if it is determined the person is a suitable candidate for this diversion.

If you have any questions on any of the topics in this report, please do not hesitate to ask. Your suggestions are also welcomed.

Mahsi choo,

Kathie Nukon  
Community Justice Coordinator  
and Indigenous Court Worker



# 2023 General Assembly Resolution Template



VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION  
2023 GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS  
Resolution No. 2023- [#]

SUBMITTED BY:

ENTERED BY:

RE: [TEXT]

WHEREAS:

A. [TEXT]

B. [TEXT]

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

1. [TEXT]

2. [TEXT]

MOVED BY:

SECONDED BY:

[#]	IN FAVOUR
[#]	OPPOSED
[#]	ABSTAINED
[Y] OR [N]	CARRIED

# Notes

## Notes

# Notes



Indigenous Peoples Day parade.



**Vuntut Gwitchin Government Report  
to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation**

2023 General Assembly  
Tl'oo K'at

