

Report to the 2025 General Assembly Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

August 2025



Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation

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In Loving Memory

Phillip Robert Bruce

1981-2025

Beloved Father, Son, Brother, Uncle, Cousin and Friend

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Section 1. Council

A. Message from Chief Pauline Frost

Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Naii,

It is an honour and a privilege to address the 2025 General Assembly of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation as your Chief. I welcome the opportunity for thoughtful and respectful dialogue about the work of our government and our shared vision for the generations to come.

This year's theme—Shik gwiinzii nihah tr'igihèekhyàa, nihteenjit hidhoh'e (Always we will talk good with each other, respecting each other)—speaks to the heart of who we are. These guiding words lay a strong foundation for the work we are here to do together during this Assembly.



My key objectives of this year's General Assembly are to:

- present the audit of VGFN, our Trusts, and business entities to Citizens;
- provide updates on the accomplishments and challenges faced by our Nation, our Council, and our Administration over the past year; and
- seek feedback on the strategic direction of VGFN by identifying priorities and long-term goals.

I would like to emphasize the importance of these discussions in guiding the future of our Nation. This Assembly is an opportunity to engage in dialogue about collective direction. I also encourage each of you to visit the office, meet with our team, and share your perspectives throughout the year.

As we move forward, I am proud to announce that we once again have a full Council in place: Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr., Councillor Debra-Leigh Reti, and our newly elected Councillors Cindy Dickson and Gladys Netro.

Together, we are entrusted with preserving the peace, unity, and culture of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, while delivering accountable and effective governance. To Deputy Chief Frost and Councillor Reti, I offer deep appreciation for your hard work and dedication this past year. To Councillors Dickson and Netro, I look forward to working closely with you in service to our people. It is an honour to walk alongside such strong, committed leadership. I ask our Citizens to continue supporting them in their roles.

I would also like to acknowledge our Directors, Managers, and staff, who have delivered tremendous outcomes under often difficult circumstances, including staff turnover and shortages. Their commitment and perseverance have ensured continued progress and meaningful results.



Curtain Mountain Trail (March 2025)

Section 1. Council ~ Message from Chief Pauline Frost

This past year has not been without hardship. The ongoing drug crisis continues to plague and devastate our community. We are grieving for those we've lost. We are also experiencing rapid and unprecedented changes to our lands and waters due to climate change and threats to our sovereignty.

From the beginning, this Council has made clear that we will strive for the safety and wellness of our people; it is our top priority. This year, we completed our Community Safety Strategy which is a whole-of-government approach grounded in community engagement and Elder knowledge. Implementation will begin this year, marking a significant step forward in supporting the health, safety, and resilience of our people.

We have also continued to invest in healing. We continue to support Citizens seeking treatment outside of the community, while also creating in-community healing opportunities, including our Youth Wellness Week in May which offered space to reconnect with each other, our culture, and ourselves. The Elder-youth gatherings and traditional skills workshops held throughout the week helped reinforce healthy living and community cohesion.

Financial stewardship remains a central priority. Our Management Committee and Council has worked diligently to balance our budget. In accordance with the 2025/2026 Appropriations Act we have made a lump-sum payment on the loan for the Home of the Wise Ones to support reducing long-term interest obligations. This is a step toward greater financial sustainability and responsible governance.

We continue to progress negotiations for a fair and adequate financial transfer agreement. At the same time, we are preparing for possible reductions in funding due to recent and expected changes in policy at the federal and territorial levels. By planning ahead, we ensure that we can continue to provide essential services and programs to our Citizens. VGFN continues to lead at intergovernmental tables including with Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon, and the Government of Canada.

We regularly meet with federal Ministers, the Yukon Premier, and Northern Chiefs to share the knowledge and perspectives of our Nation and advance our priorities. As I have shared before, it is my belief that collaboration across governments remains our strongest tool for confronting the challenges we face in the North and for advancing true reconciliation.

Recent international developments further stress the importance of this work. Actions and statements by U.S. President Donald Trump, including efforts to open the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas development, rhetoric challenging our sovereignty and the imposition of tariffs and executive orders that restrict our Citizens' ability to cross the border, as well as mounting economic pressures and the threat to Łuk Choo (Chinook Salmon), expose the vulnerability of our region.

These issues underscore the urgent need for vigilance, decisive leadership, and unwavering advocacy to protect our lands, waters, rights, and future. We remain steadfast in protecting our homelands and upholding our inherent right of self government for ourselves and for future generations.

The work of our Nation does not rest on Council and staff alone. We are strongest when we all contribute to the success of VGFN. There are many opportunities to get involved – through our committees, public meetings, and direct feedback. We appreciate those who participate respectfully and constructively. Your voices are heard, and your contributions help shape our administration and the future of our Nation.

As Vuntut Gwitchin, we are guided by the wisdom of our Elders, uplifted by the strength of our traditions and motivated by the passion of our young people. We walk in the footsteps of those who came before us, honouring their legacy by working for a better future.

Finally, let us take a moment to remember and honour the loved ones we lost over the past year. Their absence is deeply felt. We carry them with us in our hearts, our memories, and in our continued work as a community. Please continue to look out and care for each other as we need it more than ever.

Mahsi' choo, shilak naii.

Chief Pauline Frost



B. Message from Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.

Dear Citizens of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation,

As your Deputy Chief, it is an honour to share this message for the 2025 General Assembly reflecting on our history and path forward as a Nation. This past year brought both challenges and progress. Through it all, our Nation has remained strong, united, and committed to one another.

As you will see in the following report, we have focused on what truly matters—improving health and wellness, strengthening community safety, building emergency preparedness, and defending our Arctic sovereignty.

We've also prioritized housing, infrastructure, and education, because strong communities and empowered minds shape our future. The global landscape is shifting, and the Arctic is increasingly at the centre of international interest. In these uncertain times, we must stay informed, stand together, and protect what is ours.

Climate change is reshaping our land, melting permafrost, rising waters and the continued threat of oil development in the Arctic Refuge adds to the risks facing the Porcupine Caribou, the land, and our way of life.



As Vuntut Gwitchin, we carry a sacred duty to protect the land, the animals, and the balance our ancestors lived by, for the sake of those yet to come.

Our decisions today shape the future for our children and grandchildren. I call on all Elders, youth, families, and members, to walk this path together. Your unity brings strength, and with that strength, we can meet any challenge.

Let's work together, support one another, and cherish what we have. Lift each other up with kindness, listen with open hearts, and care for one another as our ancestors taught us to do. We are guided by these teachings passed down through many generations.

We walk in the footsteps of those who came before us and prepare the way for those who will follow. I promise to serve with integrity, to listen, and to act with purpose. Our future is guided by our values, our vision, and our unity.

May the Creator bless us and give us continued strength.

May our people walk in unity, guided by the land, the animals, and the spirit of our ancestors.

With respect,

Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.



C. Report from Council

1. Council Mandate Letters

In September 2024, each member of Council received a mandate letter outlining the key priorities and pressing challenges the Council is committed to addressing during their term in office. These letters also identify individual areas of focus for each member, based on their stated areas of interest and expertise, as well as input from discussions and Resolutions of the General Assembly.

Council Mandate letters are designed to guide and prioritize the work of Council and the Administration. They also support public accountability and transparency by outlining the vision and key priorities of leadership.

All the mandate letters include the following statement of shared purpose:

“Our Council has an ambitious vision for the future of our Citizens. A future that celebrates our traditions, language and culture; supports local housing needs; ensures access to mental health and addictions services; and drives a vibrant regional economy. It is our goal to see all our Citizens, and our community thrive and succeed.”

“From the start, our Council has prioritized the safety and wellness of our community and balancing the budget of our government. While addressing the ongoing substance use crisis must remain our focus, we must also continue to support the other branches of our government, progress the development and implementation of new legislation and set clear policies for the administration.”

Following the 2025 General Assembly, the Executive Office will work with Council to review and update the mandate letters, taking into consideration developments over the past year, the discussions and Resolutions passed by the 2025 General Assembly, and the areas of interest and expertise of the newly elected Councillors.

To read and download the Council Mandate Letters, **visit vgfn.ca/council**.

2. Council Administration Policy

In the fall of 2024, Council adopted the Council Administration Policy, which outlines expectations for Councillors' roles, responsibilities, and time commitments. The policy also establishes fair and transparent guidelines for the administration of Chief and Council business and salaries.

Together with the Constitution, Governance Act, and Governance Handbook, the Council Administration Policy helps guide Council in advancing VGFN's priorities.

Specifically, the policy:

- outlines the values and expected conduct that guide Chief and Council in fulfilling their duties;
- clarifies Council's authority, duties and responsibilities as VGFN's leadership
- sets expectations for Councillor availability in the office and regular working hours; and
- provides direction for Councillors to take on or be assigned special projects and administrative duties.

3. Council Resolutions

Council continues to make decisions through formal Council Resolutions. These resolutions are posted monthly on the VGFN website, and verbal updates are shared during community meetings. This process supports the implementation of General Assembly Resolution GA2024-27, which outlines the Legislative Approval Process and expectations for communicating Council decisions.

4. Fiscal Negotiations

Financial Transfer Agreement

VGFN receives the majority of its funding to operate and implement its Agreements through a Financial Transfer Agreement (FTA) with the Government of Canada. VGFN participated in negotiations with Canada in late 2024 in advance of the expected March 31, 2025 deadline for the renewal of VGFN's Financial Transfer Agreement.

VGFN set out the following priorities:

Climate Change: This includes additional funds for emergency preparedness and response as well as additional funding for infrastructure and other program areas to fill a growing gap that is a result of increased costs to build and maintain infrastructure and related program areas.

Education: This includes additional funds for early childhood, K-12, and adult education programming.

Nutrition North: This includes direct funding to develop and implement a more effective program that ensures Old Crow residents have access to food and other essentials at reasonable prices—whether purchased locally or shipped to the community.

Alcohol and Toxic Drug Crisis: VGFN has joined other modern treaty holders in requesting additional significant resources to address this crisis.

In early 2025, VGFN agreed to extend the existing agreement until March 31, 2030. This extension was made in recognition of current political uncertainty, which limits VGFN's ability to achieve the desired changes over the longer term. Despite these challenges, since August 2024, VGFN has successfully negotiated increased funding from Canada for the period of 2024 to 2029 to support many priority needs for Citizens and the community.

These include funds for:

- housing programs and services;
- local government services;
- skills and employment training;
- health programs and services;
- reclamation; revitalization and strengthening of language;
- family violence prevention;
- structural mitigation to support climate resiliency;
- school food program;
- improving youth mental health; and
- culturally safe health care services.

Collaborative Fiscal Policy

While VGFN continues negotiations on a new FTA directly with Canada, we are also involved in the collaborative fiscal process which includes all self-governing First Nations in Canada. This recognizes that certain funding areas apply to all self-governing First Nations, so the larger funding requests need to be considered when federal negotiators go to Cabinet for approval.

Self-governing First Nations and Canada completed collaborative negotiations in the following areas:

Infrastructure: This funding is needed to enable VGFN to build and manage the infrastructure needed to support a healthy and resilient Old Crow for decades to come and redress the impacts of chronic underfunding.

Language revitalization: This funding is needed to support intensive adult immersion programs to increase the number of Gwich'in language speakers.

Lands and resources: This funding is needed to strengthen our capacity to steward and protect our lands, fulfill our treaty/self-government obligations, and facilitate responsible and sustainable development in our Traditional Territory.

In the fall of 2024, self-governing First Nations joined together to provide political momentum to secure federal Cabinet approval for these priorities.

While the federal government did not ultimately approve the additional funds before the federal election in April, VGFN and other self-governing First Nations across Canada have already begun a new round of advocacy to advance the funding priorities with Prime Minister Carney and his new Liberal government.



Jayce Charlie, Dean Kapuschak, Gavin Charlie, and Logan Kyikavichik at Curtain Mountain Cabin (March 2025)

5. Federal Government Relations

Federal Engagement Strategy

Before the April Federal Election, VGFN Council sent letters to the four Yukon federal candidates to highlight our priorities. VGFN is currently developing a federal engagement strategy to guide our efforts to uphold our sovereignty, advance self-determination, and ensure our governance and agreements are fully respected and implemented and to progress these priorities.

Substance Use and Community Safety: We need stronger airport security to stop harmful substances from entering Old Crow. We called for a clear commitment from the new government to support long-term, community-led wellness programs and services.

Infrastructure and Housing: Old Crow urgently needs better housing, energy, internet, and major upgrades to our airport runway. With no road access, we depend on air travel all year. Improved infrastructure will improve the quality of life for our residents while also working to lower our cost of living.

Arctic Sovereignty: As Canada's northernmost First Nation, we stressed that Arctic sovereignty means more than military presence. It requires healthy people, a strong environment, and reliable infrastructure.

Community Emergency Preparedness: With climate change causing more emergencies, we are working to improve planning and response. We need long-term, stable federal funding to protect our people, infrastructure, and land.

Fair and Sustainable Funding: To fulfill the promises of Self-Government, we need fair and sustained funding from Canada for infrastructure, language, and land stewardship. This is key to building a strong future. It is clear that Economic Development and Economic Reconciliation with First Nations is a high priority for Canada and it seems to be a priority shared by provinces and territories including Yukon.

6. Long Term Reform on First Nations Child and Family Services

This past fall of 2024, a draft Final Agreement between the Government of Canada, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and other organizations representing First Nations in Ontario regarding the long-term reform on First Nations Child and Family Services was released. The proposed Final Settlement Agreement did not adequately take into account or address the unique circumstances of self-governing First Nations in the Yukon, including our relationships with Canada and Yukon under our self-government agreements.

Ultimately, the Chiefs in Assembly at the AFN voted down the draft Final Settlement Agreement and called for the creation of the Children's Chief Commission, with representation from all regions at arm's length from the AFN Executive, to renegotiate.

Chief Frost was appointed as Yukon's representative to the National Children's Chiefs Commission (NCCC). The commission oversees and provides strategic direction for negotiations on the long-term reform of the federal First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Program. Chief Frost was also appointed as Chair of the Commission during its inaugural meeting in January 2025.



7. Administration of Justice

The Administration of Justice (AJA) is an area of jurisdiction outlined in section 13.3.17 and 13.6.2 of the VGFN self-government agreement and includes adjudication; civil remedies; punitive sanctions; prosecution; corrections; law enforcement; VGFN courts; and other matters related to aboriginal justice to which the parties agree.

Section 1. Council ~ Report from Council

Last year, we received confirmation from Canada and Yukon they would return to the AJA negotiation table to negotiate a new framework agreement that allows for the incremental negotiation and implementation of AJA jurisdiction for VGFN. We are currently preparing to re-engage with Canada and Yukon on AJA negotiations this fall following the Yukon territorial election which is expected to occur by early November.

8. Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC)

VGFN continues to be a member of the Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) which is made up of Modern Treaty holders across Canada who collectively advocate for ensuring modern treaties and agreements are fully respected, honoured and implemented.

There are a number of technical working groups that have been formed as part of LCAC to progress this work which includes but is not limited to the toxic drug crisis working group, economic reconciliation and policy circle. In addition, VGFN participated in the LCAC Conference and Leadership Meetings and supported a VGFN youth representative in participating in Treaty Simulation.

9. Conference and Leadership Meeting

In late February, VGFN participated in the LCAC National Conference and Leadership Meeting in Ottawa. During the LCAC conference, Chief Frost spoke during a breakout session on emergency management.

During the leadership meeting, LCAC Leadership discussed several joint challenges and priorities in implementation of our modern treaties, including:

- establishing an independent oversight mechanism for modern treaty implementation as an independent agent of parliament;
- progressing an evidence-based, comprehensive proxy funding model to address the toxic drugs crisis in our communities; and
- ensure that our Nations were not left behind and included in the conversation on enhancing and facilitating internal trade and economic development.

Following the federal election, we participated in an additional Leadership Meeting to reaffirm the priorities of the coalition in light of the change in government.

The LCAC Coalition is an important avenue to progress priorities of self-governing First Nations. In 2024, the federal Interpretation Act was amended to address all potential inconsistencies between Canada's laws and policies and our section 35 rights by making it clear that enactments should be interpreted in a way that does not abrogate or derogate from these rights.

In 2023, Canada's Collaborative Modern Treaty Implementation Policy was implemented by the Federal Government. This was a priority of LCAC advocacy for over 15 years and was a demonstration of the strength and resiliency of the Coalition and the importance of maintaining involvement.

10. Treaty Simulation

In February, Breyze Blake participated as a youth representative in the Treaty Simulation Event hosted by the Gordon Foundation in Ottawa. The Gordon Foundation's treaty Simulation model provides a unique and impactful experience that brings together emerging Indigenous leaders to learn about Land Claims Agreements and self-government.

Through the guidance of advisors, participants experience what it is like to negotiate and/or implement an agreement while building new skills and growing a network for future support. Following the Treaty Simulation, Breyze joined the VGFN delegation at the LCAC Conference and Leadership Meeting.



Elders and Youth Day at Tl'oo K'at (August 2024)

11. Vuntut Gwitchin Electoral District

Last year, the Electoral District Boundaries Commission raised significant concerns for VGFN when it released its Interim Report recommending that the Vuntut Gwitchin and Klondike electoral districts in Yukon be merged. Throughout the summer and early fall of 2024, VGFN advocated for maintenance of the Vuntut Gwitchin electoral district.

VGFN was pleased to see the Commission reverse its initial recommendation, recognizing that “Vuntut Gwitchin people are likely to be disenfranchised if their electoral district is combined with Klondike,” and that “Vuntut Gwitchin interests and values especially as they relate to the land are very different from the land development interests of many in the Klondike.”

Related VGFN News Releases:

- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation supports maintenance of the Vuntut Gwitchin Electoral District, October 18, 2024
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation opposes “Yukon North” proposal of the Electoral District Boundaries Commission, August 23, 2024.



Dagoo T'aaí Program Crew, including Vuntut Gwitchin guides, First Nation School Board staff, and Yukon University students and support staff (March 2025)

12. Yukon Forum and Intergovernmental Forum

We continue to bring a strong voice to the table at the Yukon Forum and the Intergovernmental Forum. In September 2024, March and June 2025, Chief Frost participated in the Yukon Forum. In December 2024, Chief Frost participated in the Intergovernmental Forum in Ottawa.

At these important intergovernmental meetings, Chief Frost pushed the discussion on matters such as emergency management, arctic foreign policy, housing, substance use health emergency, and intergovernmental relations. VGFN will continue bring forward our priorities to these tables and try to focus the discussion on finding and progressing solutions.

13. Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

We remain committed to reducing the risk of harm to our Citizens who may seek refuge at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter on 405 Alexander Street for their safety and survival. We also recognize that our Citizens face unique and distinct circumstances in relation to our Nation's existing substance use emergency declaration and the disproportionately high number of our Citizens experiencing homelessness in Whitehorse.

Following the April 2024 Coroner's Inquest into the deaths at the shelter of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Aleisha Dawn Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Elizabeth Hager and Darla Skookum, the Government of Yukon scheduled a series of meetings with Yukon First Nation leadership to discuss shelter operations.

Through these discussions, VGFN has emphasized the need to improve information sharing about operations, oversight and accountability, and to learn from shelter users.

The Government of Yukon has now extended the current contract with the Canadian non-profit Connective for a one-year term and has committed to Yukon First Nations to continued discussions over this time and to establish a oversight committee for the shelter.

14. Intergovernmental Accord with the Government of Yukon

On July 27, 2024, the 10-year Intergovernmental Accord between the Government of Yukon and VGFN was signed by Chief Frost and Premier Pillai. This Accord is designed to facilitate bilateral cooperation at political and administrative levels on shared priorities, including community wellness, education and training, and community services. Since this time, our Directors and Managers have worked in collaboration with Government of Yukon staff

to develop a detailed Action Plan outlining specific initiatives designed to improve the overall well-being of our Citizens and community. While development of the Action Plan was delayed due to staff turnover, we anticipate that the Action Plan will be finalized in the coming weeks and in advance of the territorial election. The Action Plan will be an evergreen document that is reviewed and updated annually by VGFN and the Government of Yukon.

15. Local Services Agreements

We continue to struggle with the arrangement around the delivery of water, fuel and collection of wastewater and waste in Old Crow with the Government of Yukon. Our current municipal services agreement is from 1993 and is in dire need of update.

Stephen Mills and our Executive Director along with contracted support will be working to modernize this agreement to clarify roles and responsibilities along with the necessary funding to support the improvement of service and the longer-term sustainability of VGFN's ability to manage these services for community residents.

16. Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN)

VGFN rejoined CYFN as a Full Member in October 2024 and continues to attend leadership meetings and gatherings hosted by CYFN and bring forward our priorities at these meetings supporting General Assembly Resolution GA2024-09 - Rejoining Council of Yukon First Nations as a Full Member.

Over the last year, Yukon First Nation Chiefs have discussed the role, mandate and resources of CYFN and AFN Yukon Regional Office, and have considered options to provide an effective and efficient means to advance the interests of all Yukon First Nations at the regional and national level. In late spring, Yukon First Nation Chiefs directed that the CYFN Grand Chief:

- assume the duties, responsibilities and obligations exercised by the AFN Yukon Regional Chief;
- carry out the responsibilities for the position of the AFN Yukon Regional Chief with funding provided by the AFN; and
- receive direction and report to all fourteen Yukon First Nation Chiefs at a common table to address Yukon First Nation national interests and priorities.

17. Northern Chiefs

We continue to collaborate with Northern Chiefs of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na-cho Nyak Dun and Gwich'in Tribal Council on issues of joint concern. This has included Arctic sovereignty, lands and airport security.

18. Canada/U.S. Relations

Statements and actions by the recently elected Trump Administration over the past year including renewed threats of oil and gas development in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, proposed tariffs on Canadian goods, increased scrutiny and detainment at the border, and comments challenging Canadian sovereignty, have raised serious concerns for VGFN.

In the face of these cross-border challenges, VGFN remains firmly committed to protecting our lands, upholding our rights, and preserving our cultural practices for current and future generations.

We are working closely with federal, territorial, and other First Nation partners to monitor development and coordinate a united approach. On May 29, we hosted U.S. Consul General Jim DeHart in Old Crow to directly express our concerns and reaffirm our position.



19. Protecting Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit

As directed by our Elders, VGFN remains steadfast in our commitment to protect Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins) and stands united with our Gwich'in relatives in Alaska and the Northwest Territories, and with our partners and allies around the world.

This work continues to be guided by the Gwich'in Niintsyaa Resolution to Protect the Birthplace and Nursery Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, as well as General Assembly Resolutions, including Resolution No. 2021-19.

Following the Biennial Gwich'in Gathering in Circle, Alaska, VGFN has continued to respond to the increasing threats to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge including the second lease sale of the Coastal Plain and the recent re-election of President Donald Trump.

Current Status

On his first day in office, President Trump issued an Executive Order aimed at clearing the path for oil and gas drilling in the Refuge. Since then, the U.S. Administration has taken several concerning actions including:

- announced the intention to reinstate a leasing program that would open the entire Coastal Plain to oil and gas development;
- passed a budget bill through Congress mandating four additional lease sales in the region; and
- declared a National Energy Emergency, enabling the fast-tracking of permits for energy and critical mineral projects, thereby undermining environmental safeguards.

During this time we also witnessed a District Court decision overturning the cancellation of AIDEA's leases, which cover over 350,000 acres of the Coastal Plain.

Strategy Development

In December, VGFN participated in a strategic meeting of the Gwich'in Steering Committee (GSC) in Whitehorse. Attendees included VGFN's GSC representatives Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr. and Christine Creyke, as well as Chief Pauline Frost, Elders Stanley Njootli Sr. and Norma Kassi, and Caribou Coordinator Liz Staples. The meeting focused on discussing a unified path forward for the new Board in response to emerging threats.

In February, Deputy Chief Frost, Stan Njootli Sr., and Liz Staples participated in a strategy meeting hosted by the Arctic Defense Campaign (ADC). The ADC

coordinates advocacy across organizations dedicated to halting oil and gas exploration in both the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the Western Arctic. VGFN's goals for this engagement included:

- strengthening relationships with aligned organizations;
- gaining insights into U.S. legislative, legal, and regulatory frameworks from expert partners;
- contributing messaging and strategies to the broader coalition; and
- bringing knowledge back to inform and refine VGFN's approach.

In response to the rapidly evolving political landscape, VGFN has developed a comprehensive advocacy strategy. This living document outlines core streams of action including corporate, legal, international advocacy, public education and legislative. Elements of the draft strategy were published in February and discussed at Vadzaih Choo Drin 2025. It remains under continuous refinement based on developments and citizen feedback.



Deputy Chief Frost addressing the Arctic Defense Campaign during the Coalition's Strategic Planning Meeting in Anchorage February 2025

Ongoing Advocacy

In April, VGFN made the difficult decision to pause in-person advocacy trips to the U.S. due to increased safety and security concerns. These include:

- unpredictable border policies and enforcement;
- heightened risk of detainment, delay, or denial of entry;
- increased digital surveillance and potential privacy violations; and
- growing political polarization and civil unrest in parts of the U.S.

This decision is not taken lightly and will be continually reassessed. While we have paused direct travel, we remain fully engaged in advocacy efforts through other channels. While U.S. travel is paused, VGFN continues to strengthen domestic and international support for the protection of the Refuge. This includes:

- reaffirming commitments from Canadian banks not to finance drilling in the Refuge;
- collaborating closely with the Parties to the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement; and
- hosting an upcoming Leadership Summit to advance regional cooperation and shared action.

VGFN also continues to support the critical work of the Gwich'in Steering Committee, ensuring that our collective voices remain strong and unified.

Looking Forward

VGFN remains unwavering in our mission. We will not rest until the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the sacred calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, is permanently protected for future generations.

Mahsi' choo to all those who walk with us in this vital work.

20. Community Safety

House of Wolf Assessment

House of Wolf presented a Community Safety Assessment and five-year strategic plan on community safety to Council in March along with community sessions in Whitehorse in June, and a planned future session in Old Crow in late summer/early fall. The Assessment identified key challenges our community is facing as well as strategic recommendations for a path forward through these challenges including rebuilding trust in Governance, Administration and RCMP, supporting mentorship opportunities for youth, and establishing a Community Safety Officer Program.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

We continued to work towards enhancing the relationship with the RCMP. In the fall, Council met with RCMP Yukon District Officer, Criminal Operations Officer and Old Crow Corporal to discuss concerns with communications following recent incidents.

We have proposed a number of amendments to the Letter of Expectation between VGFN and the RCMP, which is intended to define and promote positive and cooperative working relations and clarify the policing relationship in the community. These include but are not limited to improve communications, enhance on the land training for officers in Old Crow, and build longer-term capacity. We will progress discussions on amendments to the Letter of Expectation over the coming year.

Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods

VGFN has re-engaged with the Government of Yukon's Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) Unit regarding the Yukon's Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act and its application to illegal activities affecting community safety in Old Crow including drug trafficking and bootlegging.

We have recently updated the Cooperation Agreement with SCAN to assist with the application of the SCAN Act and the work of the SCAN Unit in responding to complaints of illegal activity in Old Crow.



21. Committees

Management Committee

The Management Committee was previously established and defined in the 2006 version of the VGFN Constitution. While it was removed from the Constitution when the General Assembly amended it in 2019, it is still referenced in the Governance Act and other legislation and policies as a key body necessary for the administration of VGFN.

Last year, VGFN re-established the Management Committee, appointing the positions of Chief, Deputy Chief, Executive Director and Director of Finance to serve on the Management Committee. The Management Committee continues to meet every two weeks to review matters in support of good financial oversight of VGFN. This has included such things as staff compensation, organizational structure, commercial issues, delivery of local services, housing, policy development and relationships with affiliates such as Porcupine Enterprises.

Advisory Committee of Elders

This year, Council updated the Terms of Reference and renamed the Executive Committee of Elders to the Advisory Committee of Elders. This worked clarify some confusion between the role of the Committee and the Elders Council as outlined in the Constitution.

Over the last year, the Advisory Committee of Elders, has continued to meet to discuss ongoing community concerns and support Council on a number of matters including but not limited to threats to the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, supporting education, supporting youth, and Council vacancies.

Members of the Advisory Committee of Elders are Roger Kyikavichik, Stan Njootli Sr, Marie Statnyk, Norma Kassi, and Shirlee Frost.

Further support is needed for the Elders Council to be created and function as envisioned in our Constitution. Over the past year, we have advertised a couple of Elders Council meetings and provided some coordination support in attempts to support the Elders Council, however we recognize that this relationship needs to be further defined. Some questions that need to be clarified include: Who calls an Elders Council Meeting? How is an Elders meeting run? How are Elders Council discussions captured and communicated to other governing bodies and the community?

The 2025-2026 *Appropriation Act* includes a \$180,000 budget to support the Elders Council and enable the Elders to host a summit in Old Crow.

This summit would be an opportunity for the Elders Council to define its rules and procedures and discuss the work of reclaiming our language, as envisioned by the 2024 General Assembly Resolution entitled “Language Summit for the Critically Endangered Language of the Vuntut Gwitchin” (GA2024-29).

Enrolment Committee

VGFN considers the control of its Citizenship to be its fundamental right and responsibility, and the Constitution states that the Citizens of VGFN shall be determined by the Citizenship Code through the authority of the Review Council. VGFN does not currently have a Review Council nor legislation that sets out the scope and authority of the Review Council.

In the absence of the Review Council, Council has established an Enrolment Committee to support our Enrolment Officer in reviewing the current enrollment list and considering future enrolment applications.



A Teechik Land Guardian installs a game camera (Winter 2025)

Section 1. Council ~ Report from Council

Over the past year the Enrolment Committee has reviewed sixteen applications for enrolment.

Members of the Enrolment Committee are Sandra Charlie, Brenda Frost, Dorothy Thomas, Katherine Peter, Teresa Frost, Randal Tetlich, Katriel Villacorta, Roger Kyikavichik and William Linklater.

22. Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee

The General Assembly in 2023 provided direction to Council to establish a committee responsible for:

- reviewing and making recommendations for amendments to the Constitution and related legislation; and
- reviewing VGFN legislative priorities and supporting Council and the General Assembly on the development of any recommended legislation.

Last summer, Council established the Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee. Since then, the Committee has developed a Terms of Reference, reviewed Section 10 of the Self-Government Agreement, reviewed



Mary-Jane Moses at work at the Doll Making Workshop (December 2024)

General Assembly Resolutions related to the Constitution and legislative development needs, reviewed changes that have been made to the Constitution over time, and developed a work plan.

Progress of the Constitution Review and Legislation Development has been challenged by member turnover and cancellation of meetings due to unforeseen circumstances.

Both Council and the Committee recognize the importance of this work and are committed to advancing the assigned mandate over the coming year.

To support progress in critical areas, the Committee has received further direction to focus their review of the Constitution and any resulting associated legislation on:

- Requirements and process for elections for VGFN, and -
- To the extent that it applies to elections for VGFN, structure and mandate of the Review Council.
- The Committee has been tasked to complete their work and provide recommendations to Council by February 28, 2026.

Members of the Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee are Stan Njootli Sr, Linda Netro, Erika Tizya-Tramm, Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr., William Linklater, Ryan Kyikavichik and Kris Statnyk.

23. Review Council Act

VGFN retained the law firm Ratcliff LLP to complete the draft legislation required to establish the Review Council. Ratcliff has completed a preliminary draft based on a review of previous work completed and other key pieces of legislation. This draft legislation has a number of outstanding questions and will proceed to the Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee as well as the community for discussion and further development.

This work supports the implementation of General Assembly Resolution GA2024-23 - Establishment of a Review Council.

24. Executive Office Organization

At the start of the year in January, the Management Committee, Directors, and Implementation and Negotiation Consultants met with the objective of identifying core functions (things we need to do) and emerging functions (things that are a high priority to do) to guide our work through the end of 2024/2025 and the upcoming year.

Section 1. Council ~ Report from Council

Over the three days, the discussion included:

- A look at the changing political climate to increase our understanding of the potential budgetary impacts that are likely with upcoming expected changes in the federal and territorial governments;
- Challenges and successes across the Administration, including how we can improve communication and engagement with the community; and
- How we will proceed through the budgeting process for the upcoming Appropriations Act for 2025/2026.

The discussions supported the presentation of the Appropriations Act for fiscal year 2025-2026. An additional outcome of the discussion was the recognition of the need for increased senior-level capacity within the Executive Office. To address this, VGFN has created a new Associate Executive Director position to complement the existing Executive Director role. The Executive Director will continue to oversee Finance, Human Resources, Policy, Intergovernmental Relations, Communications, Enrollment, and provide direct support to Council.

The newly established Associate Executive Director will be responsible for Education and Training, Health and Wellness, Natural Resources, Government Services, and Emergency Management. We anticipate that this expanded leadership structure will enhance coordination and communication between Council, Administration, and the community, while also helping to reduce staff burnout and turnover.



Robert Kyikavichik used his boat to provide the shuttle service for those attending the 2024 General Assembly at Tl'oo K'at (August 2024)

Section 2. Executive Office

A. Report from Executive Director Ken Kyikavichik

Drin Gwiinzii,

It is my pleasure to be sending my initial report to VGFN Citizens as your newly hired Executive Director. Since my start with VGFN in early March, I have been working to get to know our policies and procedures along with spending time to learn the local concerns and opportunities for our Citizens. You will see below that working with Council and our Administration, I have been specifically looking at our people, processes, structure and systems on how we work at the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

1. Organizational Structure

Throughout my career I have focused on providing structure for the teams and organizations that I work with. I have spent some time reviewing our organizational structure to suggest some revisions to Council, allowing for increased decision-making by our Directors and Managers while also working to ensure departments are properly resourced to provide the programs and services that our Citizens require. I also reviewed a number of job descriptions across the organization to ensure they are updated and meeting VGFN's objectives. This has also included a review of all salaries and casual hourly rates to ensure our staff are being paid fairly and competitively for the contributions and expertise they provide.

One of these changes was the creation of an Associate Executive Director position that works with me to separate the roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director. Previously, the Executive Director or ED as it is more commonly known, was responsible to oversee ten (10) departments and had at least twelve (12) direct reports. This was much too broad for one person to perform effectively so we implemented this change this summer and I now work with an Associate ED to share these responsibilities.

2. Policies

I have also worked with our management team to update some key policies. In June, we were able to finalize revisions to our Post Secondary Education Policy. These changes will work to increase financial support to VGFN students while also working to address their changing needs and realities. We are currently working on an update to our Health and Safety Policy to make it more applicable to our staff. This will be on-going to create an improved safety culture that will focus on taking care of our staff and Citizens into the future.

3. Council Meetings

We held initial Council meetings in early March and April. After some delays we were able to reconvene in May and have established a schedule for Council meetings to occur every second Wednesday.

A by-election was organized and held on June 30 to fill two (2) vacancies that were created throughout the year on Council. We are pleased that two Citizens have been able to step up and work with the Chief and Deputy Chief Frost and Councillor Reti to provide continued leadership for the community.

4. Emergency Management

Most of the spring was spent getting the community of Old Crow ready for potential flooding during break-up. Between March and May a significant amount of effort was led by our Director of Policy, Rodney D'Abramo, who worked with the Yukon Government and our VGFN departments to ensure we were prepared for the ice move which finally occurred on May 24.

Despite some localized flooding on the west side of the community and the North road, Old Crow sustained relatively minor damage. The proactive efforts to remove snow, equipment and install Tiger Dams around key infrastructure such as the Fuel Storage Area, Ketza Camp, Sewage Lagoon and Sree Vyàa solar power installation was effective in minimizing the damage resulting from rising water levels due to an ice jam.

5. Visits and Events

During my short time with the organization, we were pleased to host the Dene Nation and Teetl'it Gwich'in Band Council who traveled over by snowmobile in March from Teetl'it Zheh. We also coordinated Wellness Week and Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days) in May along with a visit by the US Consul General Jim DeHart on May 29.

6. Committee Work

Important Committee work over the past year was continued and in some cases restarted. In the last few months we have continued to see the Disbursement Committee operate and have convened the Constitution Review and Legislative Development along with the Enrolment Committee.

Some work has been required by each of these Committees to update their Terms of Reference to ensure they are working in unison with VGFN, and in particular Chief and Council.

7. Communications

You will see that we have changed our approach to how we utilize social media. The VGFN Facebook page is now being used to send out posters and notifications for any community activities in Old Crow and Whitehorse. Our news releases are being shared on our website at **vgfn.ca**.

Summaries of our Council Meetings are being posted on our Bulletin Board at the Sarah Abel-Chitze Administration Building and throughout the community immediately following meetings of Chief and Council.

We have restarted a regular schedule for Community Update meetings in both Old Crow and Whitehorse, and you can expect to have these organized at least three times a year. I am also pleased to share that we have refined our newsletter and will now mail a printed copy to Vuntut households. This will continue into the future with at least three newsletters issued throughout the year to keep our Citizens updated on our activities.



8. Internal Meetings

As outlined in this report, we have a number of Directors and Managers at VGFN that provide numerous programs and services to our over 1,000 Citizens. Every two weeks we have a Directors and Managers meeting - held to promote teamwork and collaboration within the organization. I also arrange weekly meetings with each Director and Manager that report to me, to understand what is happening in their respective departments and areas.

9. Looking Forward

Some key areas we are focusing on in the upcoming year includes Natural Resources with the successor mining legislation and required land use planning and where required, land withdrawals, until our rights and territory can be properly respected and protected in accordance with the Final Agreement.

We have recently updated our protocol agreement with the Yukon Government department of Community Justice and Public Safety on the implementation of the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods (SCAN) Act in Old Crow to tackle illicit drug activity, bootlegging and sexual exploitation if present in the community.

We continue to have a number of vacancies at VGFN. I encourage you to keep posted to our website or Bulletin Board at the Sarah Abel-Chitze Administration Building for these opportunities. Please also let your friends or family who may be qualified, know about these opportunities so they can fill these roles.

In closing, I have to say Old Crow really has been a 'home away from home' for me in a number of ways. In addition to seeing my extended family, it has been very humbling to meet and interact with many of you over the last number of months. I look forward to continuing this important work that we as an Administration undertake on behalf of all Citizens.

Haii',

Ken Kyikavichik, Executive Director

B. Communications

Overview

This past year, the focus of Communications has been on building strong processes that support transparent, timely, and accessible communication for all Citizens. These improvements not only strengthen the daily operations of our government, but also help Citizens engage more directly with leadership, services, and decision-making processes.

From refining online tools to expanding in-person engagement and increasing clarity in public-facing information, each initiative this year has aimed to make communication more open, responsive, and culturally grounded.



Dean Kapuschak, Jayce Charlie and Gavin Charlie on the McPherson Trail (March 2025)

Website Development and Improvements

Launched in early 2024, the VGFN website at vgfn.ca has undergone continuous updates to improve access, accountability, and ease of use. Some improvements have included:

Homepage Enhancements: The homepage now highlights essential links to transparency tools, government reports, and active opportunities.

Integrated Calendar: Previously scattered across different sections, the calendar is now unified into one master view. Colour coding helps users quickly distinguish between VGFN Recreation, Council activities, other departmental events, and submissions from local partners like the Old Crow Health Centre and Chief Zzeh Gittlit School.

News Page: This section serves as the main hub for newsletters, public statements, and news releases.

Chief and Council page: Profiles and mandate letters are on the website alongside a breakdown of leadership responsibilities in a plain, clear format.

Council Resolutions: We introduced a consistent, easy-to-read format that includes titles, reference numbers, dates, background context, and decisions. These resolutions are searchable by keyword and available back to early 2023.

Key Documents Linked to Resolutions (Coming Fall 2025): A new feature will allow key background documents—such as policies, laws, and funding details—to be directly linked to resolutions for full transparency.

Searchable General Assembly Resolutions back to 2004: A searchable GA Resolution file is now available back to 2004, with annual GA Reports posted from 2021 onward.

Jobs Page Update: Renamed from “Careers” to “Jobs” to be more inclusive, the page now features consistent templates that display key information clearly.

Contact and Comments Pages: The contact page now includes clearer office details and location maps. A dedicated Comments Page allows Citizens to submit feedback, creating a helpful record for follow-up and accountability.

Library and Search Tools: All sharable government documents are now housed in a searchable library, designed to balance transparency with legal and privacy obligations.

Phone version of the website: With the main structure now in place, mobile updates will begin in Fall 2025.

Website Photography: A new initiative encourages youth and land users to contribute seasonal and culturally relevant photos, with proper permissions, fair compensation, and clear credit.

Simplified addresses for website pages: Short, memorable addresses like vgfn.ca/jobs are being created to make important content easier to find and share.

VGFN Facebook Page

Facebook remains one of the most effective and affordable ways for VGFN to reach Citizens—especially those living in Old Crow and other regions. Between July 1, 2024, and July 1, 2025, our Facebook page received over 44,900 views. Some observations and changes include:

High Engagement: Posts consistently receive strong interaction, especially those about cultural events, community celebrations, and youth programming.

Real-Time Updates: The page is a go-to source for urgent notices, meeting reminders, and weather or travel-related updates.

Community Preparedness and Emergency Response: During spring flood season and power outages, Facebook played a critical role in sharing updates from the Emergency Operations Centre.

Cultural and Wellness Programming: Posts about Elder feasts, youth drum-making, land-based activities, and wellness supports received strong interest.

Governance Transparency: Council announcements, election notices, and self-government updates are posted clearly and accessibly.

Council Communication: Council members use Facebook to stay visible and connected with Citizens—highlighting public meetings, youth achievements, and community successes.

Facebook Comment Policy Change

In early 2025, VGFN turned off Facebook comments to promote respectful dialogue and improve information flow. A new Comments page visitors can access from the homepage of the website allows Citizens to submit feedback securely and directly to VGFN. Users are asked to include their name and email; all submissions are private.

Facebook remains an important news-sharing tool, and we invite all Citizens to use the website for thoughtful feedback.

Communication Tools for Staff and Citizens

This year saw other major improvements in tools and resources available to staff and Citizens including standardized templates for letters, newsletters, Council resolutions and reports. This saves time and reduces errors. We have also created user-friendly fillable PDFs for our forms, starting with the post-secondary funding application. These now serve as templates for other programs.

Other key improvements include:

Document Labeling: Templates are categorized (e.g., “Policy Explainer,” “Application”) to make navigation easier for both staff and Citizens.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Programs: We collaborated with Fish and Wildlife staff to create clear, plain-language FAQs for the Traditional Pursuits and Trapper Support programs. These FAQs explain the purpose of each program, how to apply, what the rules are, and how those rules apply in different situations.

Policy Explainers: One-page summaries are now available for each policy, written in plain language and often including FAQs for clarity.

Policy Access: All policies are available in the VGFN website library. Citizens are encouraged to reach out to staff directly, or email **comments@vgfn.ca**, with any questions. The policy team is always available to explain the reasoning behind each policy.

Council Communication

We are now producing meeting summaries within 2 days of each Council Meeting which are posted at the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building. Starting in Fall 2025, plain-language summaries of Council meetings will be available online, helping Citizens stay informed about key decisions and leadership updates.

Communications staff actively participate in most large community events and many smaller gatherings, providing direct opportunities for dialogue and trust-building. With foundational tools in place—like the website and improved use of community TVs—we plan to be even more present at community activities, workshops, and land-based programs.

Our work is guided by Van Tat culture and values. We strive to honour land-based knowledge, community ways of gathering, and the lived experience of Citizens. This means more than sharing updates—it means supporting identity, connection, culture and ultimately sovereignty.

Media Relations

Communications manages inquiries on behalf of Chief and Council, ensuring timely, respectful, and accurate responses. National issues like Arctic sovereignty, military presence, and addictions have drawn significant media attention. Our responses reflect both VGFN priorities and community values.

While media relations matter, most energy is directed toward local communication—meetings, Facebook, and the website—where we can speak most directly to our Citizens. We work to maintain respectful relationships with journalists and media outlets, while staying focused on our core responsibility of serving and informing VGFN Citizens.

Mahsi' choo,

Gyde Shepherd, Communications Manager



C. Human Resources

Vanh/Drin Gwiinzii,

My name is Dereck Mukuku, and I am the Human Resources Manager for VGFN, and I started in September of 2024. My role is to support leadership and every member of staff with advice on all aspects of Human Resources.

The Human Resources team carries out the following:

- recruitment;
- employee retention;
- HR planning;
- performance management;
- organizational health checks;
- restructuring; and
- departmental organization.

Before my arrival, VGFN relied upon MNP Consulting for many of these areas which has since been reduced to assistance with performance and employee management amongst other HR related projects.

Human Resources Policies Manual

Our amended Human Resources Policies Manual was approved by Chief and Council in November 2024. This policy provides detailed guidance to our staff around important items such as leave, performance expectations, hours of work and measures to ensure the health and wellbeing of our staff in the workplace.

Compensation: Cost of Living Adjustment

Effective April 1, 2025, a 2.1% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) was implemented for all VGFN employees. The Cost of Living Adjustment ensures that incomes for VGFN staff remain consistent with increases in cost of living. Employees expressed their gratitude for this adjustment and the timely execution this year.

Review of Organizational Structure and Job Descriptions

Chief and Council with VGFN Directors participated in a leadership retreat on January 13-15, 2025. The aim was to align the VGFN leadership strategy to the operations of the Administration team in order to better serve the Citizens.

This was resolved as this retreat that the organizational structure for VGFN will be reviewed. At the current time, all VGFN job are being reviewed and assessed starting with the Directors.

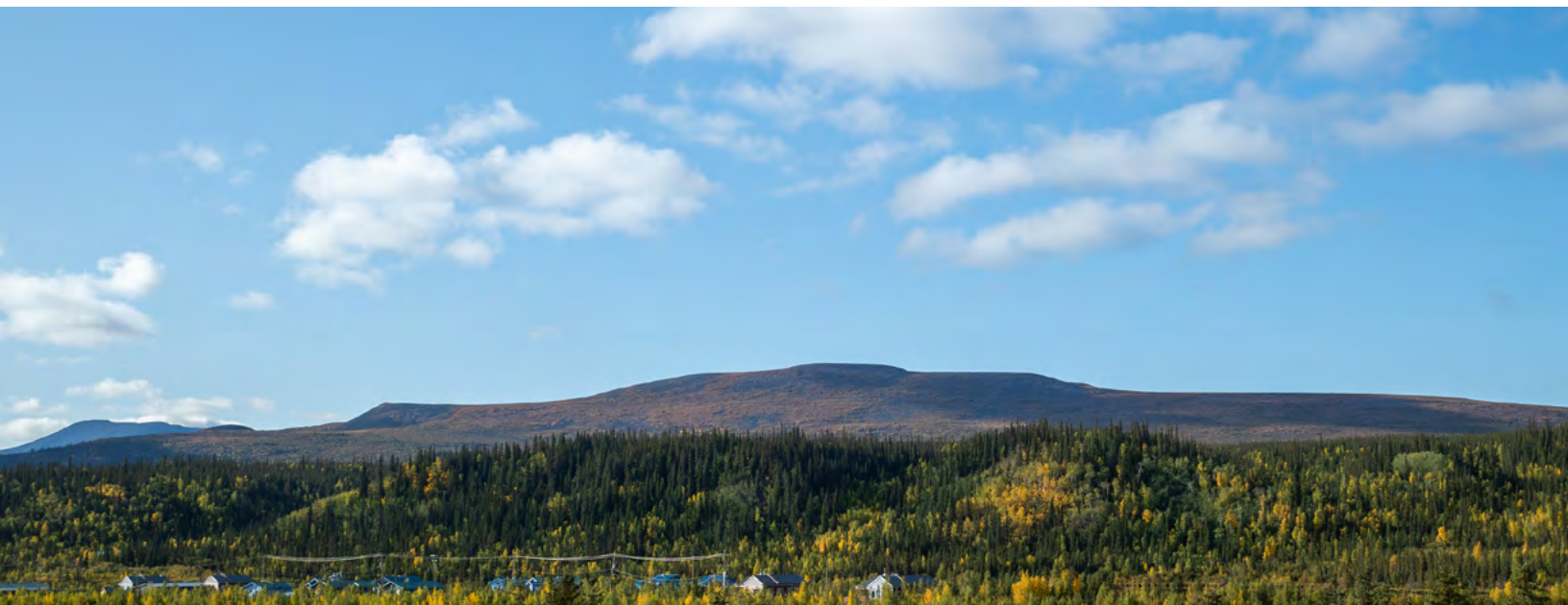
The review of all Director Job Descriptions has been completed and discussed. The strategy going forward is for Directors to take the lead in reviewing all job descriptions in their respective departments with the assistance of the Human Resources Manager, the Executive Director and Associate Executive Director.

Job Descriptions for new positions are being written by the Managers and Directors with the collaboration of the Human Resources Manager. VGFN continues to post vacant positions on the new VGFN website, Social media platforms, YuWin and Indeed.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment of staff into vacant positions is ongoing. Currently, VGFN has a total of 84 approved permanent full-time and part-time positions. We have 18 vacant positions, representing a staff vacancy rate of approximately 21%. This vacancy rate is an operational issue for us at the current time and does impact the programs and services we are able to provide.

Our preference is to hire VGFN Citizens that are residing in Old Crow while taking into consideration the required skills, education and experience. The table on the following page shows the positions that have been filled from September 2024 to date and a column with current vacancies that are at different stages of recruitment.



Filled and Vacant Positions: September 2024 to July 2025

Executive Office	
Filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Human Resources ManagerReceptionist/ Admin SupportExecutive Assistant	Vacant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Associate Executive DirectorEmergency Management Coordinator
Education	
Vacant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Education and Training DirectorEducation and Training Coordinator (term until June 2026)	
Health, Social and Recreation	
Filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Health Programs ManagerMental Wellness and Addictions Outreach Support Worker, WhitehorseJustice Coordinator	Vacant: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mental Wellness and Addictions Programs ManagerMental Wellness and Addictions Outreach Support Worker, Old CrowFamily Support Worker, Old CrowAdministration Assistant (term till July 2026)Justice Support Worker
Finance	
Filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Finance Manager	
Government Services	

Filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT Specialist 	
Natural Resources and Heritage	
Filled: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lands Manager • Senior Energy Analyst • Heritage Interpreter • Land Guardian • Language Teacher • Lands Technician (term) • Land Guardian Coordinator (term) 	Vacant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fish and Wildlife Manager

Benefits

Human Resources will be reviewing the current Sunlife benefits program to see whether the coverage adequately covers the needs of our staff members. Some employees have expressed concern over shortfalls on basic cover like prescription glasses and essential drugs.

Considerations are ongoing to have a stand-alone Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that is aligned to the unique needs and requirements of our staff in Old Crow. Proposals from different service providers are being received and will be reviewed by the Management Committee for final approval before end of 2025.

Summer Student Work Placement Program

We have initiated a Summer Student work placement program for high school and post-secondary students for 2025. The invitation to apply has been posted on our website and Facebook page. We are looking for a total of six students to work in the Government Services, Natural Resources and Heritage and Communications departments. The objective is to have VGFN youth join the program and share and develop the values of community, integrity and teamwork. The program will run during July and August.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone for the support I have received from the day I joined VGFN to date. Such support should not be extended to me alone but to everyone who comes to support the will and thrust of the Gwich'in people. Let's keep working together to improve the livelihoods in Old Crow and beyond. Thank you!

Dereck Mukuku, Human Resources Director

D. Policy

Policy connects with departments and issues across VGFN and the community to foster collaboration and integration. Ensuring policies are available and understood is an important part of our work, and we aim to continue to improve access to these documents and the meaning and use of the policies.

To access policies that are in effect, visit the Policy section of the Library on the VGFN website.

Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Policy

A review and update of the Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Policy has been completed and was passed by Chief and Council on June 11, 2025. The policy supports education as a fundamental right for VGFN Citizens and works to ensure that financial assistance is provided in a fair, equitable, and transparent manner that supports the education goals of students. Along with the policy, supporting documents, such as the application form, have been modernized to be more convenient for students.

Council Administration Policy

Last fall, Chief and Council passed the Council Administration Policy. The policy which sets out the expectations regarding Councillors' duties and time commitments and provides fair and clear guidelines for Chief and Council administration and pay.

Water/Fuel Delivery and Sewage Transportation Policy

Earlier this year, the Water and Fuel Delivery and Sewage Transportation Policy came into effect through Council resolution. Its purpose is to ensure residents: (1) receive consistent and fair water and fuel delivery and sewage transportation services; and, (2) are informed of the requirements to receive service delivery while supporting sustainable delivery operations.

Human Resources Policies Manual

In addition to what was shared in the Human Resources update, the manual has been updated to include:

- options for flexible work arrangements for staff;
- optional increase of hours for employees from 65 hours to a maximum of 80 hours bi-weekly;

- clarification that employees are paid during the annual Christmas break; and
- detailed compensation for permanent employees who are required to work during unplanned and planned closures.

Respectful Behaviour Policy

In collaboration with the departments, the Respectful Behaviour Policy came into effect by Council Resolution in January 2025. The policy provides guidelines to ensure everyone benefits from a safe, positive, and inclusive environment when receiving services and participating in VGFN programs.



Ramport House worksite (Summer 2024)

Housing Policy

Along with Government Services, Policy has been working with a legal consultant to update VGFN's tenancy agreements to ensure the agreements are compliant with the potential changes to the Yukon Residential Landlord and Tenancies Act and representative of the values included in the Housing Policy.

In Development

The following policies are under development:

Procurement Policy

Policy has been meeting regularly over the past few months with Government Services and Finance departments to develop a Procurement Policy. The draft policy was developed to provide general guidance on procurement matters and to ensure that VGFN receives good value when procuring goods or services, in a fair and transparent manner.

Medical Care Financial Assistance Policy

Policy and the Health, Social and Recreation department have developed a draft Medical Care Financial Assistance Policy to ensure Citizens are able to access the medical care they require by providing additional financial assistance for expenses not covered by other funding programs. The draft policy will apply to Citizens residing and receiving medical services in Canada.

Substance Use Treatment Transition Policy

VGFN is committed to supporting its Citizens who experience the negative impacts of substance use. As our Mental Wellness and Addictions Program further develops, the draft policy will provide details on:

- pre-treatment supports available (e.g. counselling);
- how Citizens experiencing the negative effects of substance use will be supported to receive treatment at a primary care facility; and
- how Citizens will be supported through a program of aftercare in the community, including personalized care plans.

Data Governance

We participated in the Council of Yukon First Nation's Data Summit in October 2024 and subsequently joined the CYFN Research and Data Working Group.

Language Revitalization Research

To support the Natural Resources and Heritage department's language revitalization efforts, over the past year, Policy has been completing research on other Yukon First Nations language revitalization programs as well as other Gwich'in language programs outside of Yukon.

Supporting Departments

The Policy team provides support to the Executive Office and the departments through policy development, research, policy and legislative interpretation, and by acting as a liaison between other governments and organizations.

Over the past year, such support has included participation in the draft Land and Resources Act development sessions, review of program area forms and documents, completion of jurisdictional scans upon request, development of policy templates with Communications, and assistance with legal reviews by compiling information and written summaries.



Arctic Research Facility

Emergency Management

Effective emergency management is vital for the security and wellbeing of Old Crow and is a key priority for VGFN. Over the last year, Policy team members have advanced planning for an emergency management program including developing a job description and securing funding for an Emergency Management Coordinator position. The team is recruiting for this resource, and aims to support this position to further build out the emergency management program and more broadly, community resilience.

Leading up to the 2024 break-up, the emergency management planning team developed a robust flood plan that was recognized by partners and the federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers of Emergency Management. In February 2025, the VGFN team along with interagency partners won the Emergency Management Exemplary Service Award which was presented to the team in Ottawa.

In the spring of 2025, the emergency management team used the award-winning flood plan from 2024 to prepare for the Porcupine River break-up in 2025. The planning and preparations overall went very well, with Yukon government again recognizing the risk of flooding and entering a Unified Command with VGFN to add capacity to final preparations and response to flooding.

On May 24, at four o'clock in the morning, the River Watch team identified an ice jam that caused water to rise quickly in the south part of town, and a tactical evacuation of the south part of town was executed.

The Director of Policy has coordinated with VGFN departments and Yukon Wildland Fire Management to develop a draft Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP).

Once reviewed by the community and approved, the CWPP will be a strategy for reducing the wildland fire risk around Old Crow. It is created with community with support and technical input from Wildland Fire Management officials. The plan will include prioritized areas where wildfire fuel management should take place; and recommendations to reduce the chances that wildland fires will damage structures. Projects that will likely come out of the CWPP include FireSmart projects and potentially a fire guard.

Emergency management is usually outside the work of the Policy team but it supports the broad objectives of the government. More work is required to build and bolster the emergency management and resilience capacity in VGFN, and Policy has been and continues to be very active on this file.

Intergovernmental Relations

The Policy team was able to join a few intergovernmental relations tables over the year to bring VGFN issues and input to those groups. Policy joined the CIRNAC Emergency Management Forum in February and was able to raise awareness of Old Crow's needs for emergency management support for training and resources.

The Policy team also joined the VGFN delegation at the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework meeting in Whitehorse in late March and joined the Gwich'in Council International (GCI) delegation for the Global Affairs Canada Arctic Cooperation Advisory Committee. We also participated in the CIRNAC First Nations Managers forum to learn about a variety of programs available to First Nations governments, such as funding for specific projects.

Dogs

At times there are complaints about loose nuisance or dangerous dogs in Old Crow that cause problems for some Citizens, especially the elderly and children. Dogs from Old Crow are sometimes sent to shelters in Whitehorse and Dawson, which can put a strain on those shelters. A broader dog control program is required to better serve Old Crow.

Policy is leading a project to partner with Community Veterinary Outreach on a funding program from the charitable arm of PetSmart, a large pet supply company, as we develop a dog program for Old Crow. The project provides for relationship building and program development for dog care in Old Crow, including community visits by veterinarians to understand the needs and desires of the community such as clinic fairs, pet food, dog training, dog behaviour, and humane treatment of abandoned or unwanted dogs.

This project is an opportunity to explore innovative ideas with the community, including telemedicine; establishing kennel facilities where animals can stay safely with the potential to go back home, be re-homed in the community, or wait for transportation out of the community if home is found for the dog.

In June, we held a clinic in Chief Zheh Gittlit School that offered spay and neuter surgeries as well as wellness checks. This clinic was generously supported by PetSmart Charities and the Canadian Animal Assistance Team, as well as the work of a dozen Old Crow volunteers. All the clinic services and work were provided at no charge. VGFN did provide some supplies and in-kind contributions, such as staff time, tables, tarps, etc. The Alpine Veterinary Medical Clinic in Whitehorse sent one veterinarian to the clinic to engage with the community, and covered the costs of their staff time and travel. A community dinner was held on June 12, with a brief presentation and discussion about dogs and pets in the community.

Governance Support

As part of the Executive Office, Policy provides support to Chief and Council by helping with meeting management, including setting up agendas, organizing briefing materials, taking notes, and technical support. The Policy team also provided support during the leadership retreat that took place in January, including with planning, content development, and recommendations.

In closing we would just like to say it continues to be a pleasure to work with and in the community to advance Vuntut Gwitchin self-determination and self-government, and we look forward to continuing this valuable work!

Rodney D'Abramo, Policy Director



Culture Camp under the Northern Lights (March 2025)

Section 3. Departments

A. Education

The Education Team

Our current team includes Abigail Tsetso as administrative assistant, Glenna Tetlich (Whitehorse) and Florence Netro (Old Crow) as Education Support Workers in the schools and a variety of people who have served as school cook, with Naomi Wilson and Renee Charlie in particular handling the majority of this important role. Anton Soloviov joined VGFN in June as the Post-Secondary Education and Training Coordinator. Malinda Bruce (Education Manager) is currently on maternity leave.

Soon we hope to have an Early Learning Program Manager in place as VGFN takes over the operations of the community daycare in Old Crow. A huge Haii' goes out to Elizabeth Kyikavichik for her over forty years of providing early learning care to the community! Elizabeth has chosen to retire after many years of dedicated service to Old Crow.

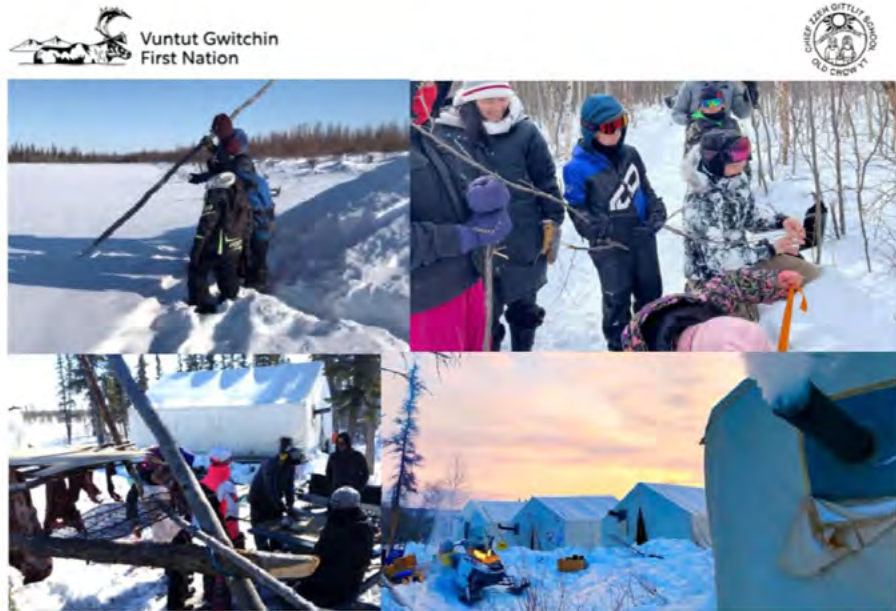
School Nutrition Program

The school nutrition program is funded through Jordan's Principal and was expanded this past year to supply daily breakfast and lunch to all students at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. The position of school cook is being elevated from casual to a full-term position starting for the 2025-2026 school year.

Culture Camp: Traditions, Arts and Trades

This year's culture camp was coordinated by Florence Netro with support from Frances-Ross Furlong. The camp was held over 2 weeks, with grades 4-7 participating from March 24 to 28, 2025, and grades 1-3 participating from March 31 to April 2, 2025. The kindergarten class visited the class as a day trip on April 2, 2025. The theme of this year's camp was "traditions, arts, and trades".

A big thank you to the Natural Resources and Heritage department for providing logistical support and other resources, Joseph Bruce and his team for dedicating many hours to camp set up and take down, Renee Charlie who worked long hours to provide hot meals and snacks throughout each day of the camp, and to the numerous community members who came out to provide guidance and instruction in many of the camp activities and serve as overnight chaperones. Well done everyone!



Whitefish Lake Culture Camp “Year 3: Traditions, Arts & Trades”

Activities this year include: small engine repair, trapping, camp cook and Iron Chef competition, Gwich'in butchering and dry meat, painting, sewing/beading, storytelling, making medicine

Grade 7-8-9: Mon March 24 to Fri Mar 28 (5 days)

Grade 3-4-5-6: Mon Mar 31 to Thurs Apr 3 (4 days)

Grade 1-2: Mon Apr 7 to Wed Apr 9 (3 days)

Kindergarten: Tues April 8 (half day)

There will be a parents/guardians information meeting the week after March Break to review the schedule and complete your child's permission waiver. For more information ahead of the information meeting at CZGS, contact **ESW Florence Netro** or Frances Ross-Furlong.

University and College Tours in Alberta

Over Spring Break from March 9-16, 2025, Glenna Tetlich and Megan Williams took a group of grade 11 and 12 students to visit university and college campuses in Edmonton.

While in the city, the group participated in the Indigenous Youth Rising conference, which took place from March 14-15, 2025. The tour was a great success. Mahsi' Glenna and Megan!

Grade 12 Graduation

Congratulations to our Vuntut Gwitchin High School Graduates for the 2024-2025 academic year! There were six high school graduates this year including: Brianna Bingham, River Frost, Brooklyn Kunnizzi-Njootli, Seth Netro, Kadynce Smith, and Logan Williams.

The Yukon First Nations graduation ceremony was held on June 13 at the Kwanlin Dun Cultural Centre in Whitehorse. Elder Shirlee Frost, ESW's Glenna Tetlich and Florence Netro, longtime dayhome operator Elizabeth Kyikavichik, and numerous friends and family members were in attendance to honour and celebrate our graduating students.



School Community Committee

Last year, we worked with the First Nation School Board (FNSB) to develop an agreement regarding a Community Committee for Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. The Committee appointed by VGFN engages with FNSB on certain decisions with respect to the operations and management of Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. Following a public request for Expression of Interest, Roger Kyikavichik, Renee Charlie, Sherrie Lynne Frost, Briana Lord and Sophia Flather were appointed to the Community Committee, with FNSB supporting its operations.

Staffing at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School

Chief Zzeh Gittlit School is currently operating with only one of its five allocated Education Assistant positions filled, leaving the system unable to fully support the needs of our local students. As a result, we are advocating for the Government of Yukon and the FNSB to amend their recruitment processes by extending housing and relocation allowances, currently available only to teachers, to also include Education Assistants willing to work in Old Crow. These changes are essential to attract and retain qualified staff and ensure our students receive the support they need and deserve.

Education Summit

In 2024, the department identified hosting an Education Summit as a key priority to help shape the future of education in Old Crow. Over the coming year, we remain committed to holding a Summit to move forward and support meaningful community engagement and long-term educational planning.

Post-Secondary and Training Programs

Huge congratulations go out to Bohdi Elias and Alice Frost who graduated from their respective programs this past Spring! Bohdi completed his carpentry apprenticeship program at Yukon University and Alice graduated with a degree in health sciences at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia. Alice has also been accepted into medical school at the University of Saskatchewan and will begin the program this Fall!

A new Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Policy has recently been approved by VGFN Chief and Council at their June 11th meeting. This new policy is now in effect and will bring important changes, including more financial support for our Citizens furthering their education.

In closing, I would like to say that we are currently recruiting a new Director for the department. This position was posted on our website at vgfn.ca and will be integral in moving the important work of the department forward.

Ken Kyikavichik, Executive Director and Acting Director of Education

B. Finance

Introduction

The Finance department is responsible for ensuring financially-informed administration and for providing oversight of financial resources and processes.

Finance carry out functions including:

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

Strengthening Financial Operations and Systems

Over the course of the past year, Finance has continued to work methodically to strengthen the foundation for delivery of its core functions. This has included:

- training Directors and Managers on our Financial Reporting system to support their budget management responsibilities;
- implementation of Automated Accounts Payable Information System with automated data capture and approvals; and
- implementation of modernized Purchase Order System with automated approval routing.

These activities will allow our management and administrative teams to focus more on their strategic duties as opposed to managing the time consuming processing and issuance of hard copy financial statements, invoices and purchase order creation.

2025–2026 VGFN Appropriation Act

The 2025-26 Fiscal Year Appropriation Act was approved reflecting total budgeted revenues of \$34,938,512 and total budgeted expenditures of \$40,920,982 resulting in use of prior year surpluses amounting to \$5,982,470.

Shik gwiinzii nihah
tr'igihéekhyaa,
nihteenjít hidhoh'e.

Section 3. Departments ~ Finance

The summary of the 2025-26 Budget by department is summarized below:

VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION FIRST APPROPRIATION ACT 2025-2026 SCHEDULE A	
DEPARTMENTAL OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	2025-2026 First Appropriation Act
CHIEF AND COUNCIL	\$ 4,224,582
EXECUTIVE OFFICE	\$ 2,347,075
HUMAN RESOURCES	\$ 770,352
NATURAL RESOURCES AND HERITAGE	\$ 3,835,032
GOVERNMENT SERVICES	\$ 17,040,826
RECREATION	\$ 737,175
EDUCATION	\$ 1,408,560
HEALTH, SOCIAL, and JUSTICE	\$ 4,609,592
INFORMATION SYSTEMS	\$ 557,432
FINANCE and DEBT MANAGEMENT	\$ 5,390,356
	<hr/>
	\$ 40,920,982
	<hr/>
CAPITAL PROJECTS INCLUDED IN ABOVE VOTE AMOUNTS	\$ 10,456,000
TOTAL <u>EXCLUDING</u> CAPITAL PROJECTS	<hr/>
	\$ 30,464,982

The 2024-25 fiscal year annual audit is being conducted by M. McKay and Associates.

In closing, I would like to thank our team of Obrian Kydd (Finance Manager), Dhyan Singh (Payroll and Contracts Manager), Kelly Ollett (Accounts Receivable Clerk), Chaleigh Charlie (Accounts Payable Clerk) and Michael Peter (Finance Clerk) for their continued dedication and commitment to VGFN.

Ronda Jordan, Finance Director

C. Government Services

Drin Gwiinzii,

I am pleased to provide a report on our activities this year for Government Services. Our department has the important job of providing Citizens with the services they require in Old Crow along with the maintenance of various buildings and infrastructure in the community. This isn't a job we take lightly and are proud of the many things we have been able to achieve this year.

The Government Services Team

Our team includes:

- Candace Tetlich, Administrative Assistant
- Vernon Kyikavichik, Community Services Manager
- Abdou Diop, IT Support Specialist
- Michael Rispin, Planning and Maintenance Coordinator
- Travis Frost, Planning and Maintenance Coordinator
- Lawrence Charlie, Property Maintainer
- Ryan Cardinal, Property Maintainer
- Operators, Garney Tizya, Daniel Frost-Reid and Peter Frost
- Drivers, Kenny Gully and Amanda Frost
- Custodians, Deanna Kyikavichik, Jeannie Jerome, Adeline Charlie, Susie Firth, Gloria Nukon, Leonard Nukon, Dougie Charlie and Tracy Kapuschak

New Fuel Truck Purchase

VGFN has purchased a new fuel truck for the community (pictured below). This truck will come with an advanced fuel delivery system, better fuel economy, and a safer more reliable environment for the driver. The manufacturing of this truck is complete and currently the shipment logistics underway. This purchase was achieved by accessing the gas tax funding program from the Yukon Government. The key benefits of this new vehicle is outlined as follows:

Increased Efficiency: More efficient refueling process, saving time and allowing for more deliveries.

Lower Operating Costs: Fuel efficiency improvements and the potential for fewer costly repairs.

Reduced Downtime: New trucks have a lower risk of breakdowns and require less maintenance compared to older models, minimizing disruptions to operations.

Section 3. Departments ~ Government Services

Advanced Features: automated dispensing systems, and enhanced safety features, improving overall operations, finance reconciliation and driver safety.

Access to New Technology: Equipped with the latest technology, improving fuel efficiency, safety, and overall operational capabilities.

Peace of Mind: Reduces the stress associated with unexpected repairs and downtime, allowing for more reliable operations.

Customization Options: Specialized equipment and features to meet specific operating needs.



Ketza Camp Purchase

This year, VGFN purchased the trailers, equipment and materials stocked at the area known as the Ketza Site. Included were 6 modular trailers totalling eighteen rooms and a professional kitchen, multiple vehicles and pieces of heavy equipment, various storage containers with tooling, equipment and materials, and a yard stock of building materials and supplies. This provides supportive and preventative housing, emergency sheltering, and temporary tenant/staff housing when needed.

The vehicles, heavy equipment, tooling and building supplies will be utilized within the department for its Housing division. With the vehicle purchase, a new multi passenger van was added that can transport Citizens safely and efficiently in emergency situations.



Arena Dismantle

In early May, everyone witnessed the old arena being dismantled to make way for the Housing Warehouse Shop. This was successfully completed by Government Services with no damages to buildings or equipment and no injuries to staff. With the new location of the rink located beside the school, this will provide greater flexibility with its size, purpose and programming options. Having many designs under consideration, the future benefits of this future multi-purpose center will be invaluable to the community.



Tank Farm Addition

WS Nichols from B.C successfully completed the installation of the addition to the community tank farm in December with commissioning completed and all tanks operational in February. Three new tanks with a capacity of 129,000 litres was added to heating fuel and one new tank of 43,000 litres added to gasoline storage.

In a community that completely relies on its heating and transport fuel to be delivered by air, this added storage will help ensure that we always have the necessary products on hand - especially in emergency situations. More capacity = greater peace of mind for Old Crow.



Housing

Each year our Housing division successfully attends to many emergency repairs, preventative maintenance programs and renovation projects. These tasks require a lot of time, equipment usage and inventory. To aid in administrating this process, an asset management system known as Maintain X has been funded by Indigenous Services Canada and is currently being implemented. This will create efficiencies in all areas.

Many building renovations have been completed or are under construction. This includes units 1102, 1103, 360, 948, 928, and 922 just to name a few. These renovations either add additional unit to the housing stock or allows a unit to be brought back to proper health and safety standards- both bringing positive impacts to Old Crow.

Alterations and necessary deficiency repairs are underway or have been completed on all the modular homes from Twin Anchors as well as the new units constructed by Wildstone on the North Road. Though there have been many lessons learned from both of these projects, ultimately the final goal was achieved by adding sixteen additional family units to Old Crow.

Information Technology (IT)

Our Information Technology has seen many upgrades this year. A new secure platform in collaboration with VC3 Technologies has been implemented across VGFN.

With over 80 users, a secure platform is necessary to protect our electronic information and all the historical data collected over time. Our new IT Specialist, Abdou Diop, has been employed on-site at the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building to oversee our IT system, correct any issues and deploy any necessary advancement in technology particularly around system security.

Roadmap for the next 8 months: To build a clear understanding of priorities for the short and midterm.

Full Network Mapping of the Main Admin Building: To be able to pinpoint and mitigate IT issues in a more efficient and strategical way.

Full Network assessment in preparation of the VGFN Network refresh: Build the technical needs for the organization for the next 7 years. Submitted to VC3 for quoting.

Recovery of All Starlink accounts: For proper troubleshooting in case of an outage. This also helped the Finance department on invoice conciliations.

Evergreening Completion: A workstations order has been submitted to match number of users. The systems' post-deployment is ongoing.

VGFN School Network Redesign: Setup a switch and new printer within the VGFN Local area network at the school for one to 3 users.

Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Workstation and Starlink pre- and post-setup: Conceive procedures and setup EOC workstations to be ready for spring break-up and other emergency management events.

Elders Complex Mesh creation: To broadcast Internet across all units. This also fixes the smart TV connection issues elders were encountering frequently.

Tank Farm second Starlink setup: Network Configuration to establish a steady connection to the pump that is servicing the helicopters.

Dark Web training sessions: Recent cybersecurity reports show a rise in data breaches. A couple of users' stolen information ended up for sale on the Dark Web. Security training modules have been sent to users to raise awareness of cybercriminal activities and how to protect VGFN from them.

Sree Vyàa E-Building Wi-Fi implementation: A Starlink and camera have been set up at the E-Building, as well as a workstation for troubleshooting, saving 10 % of the energy generated by Sree Vyàa for the community.

Full Network Mapping/Network refresh of the Ketza camp: Setup a guest and staff Wi-Fi at the camp and broadcast across all trailers.

Full Cloud Back up Completion: A cloud backup solution for remote areas has been provided to us to complete the backup of the Organization's critical data. This solution mitigated the need of any potential loss of data and improved the internet performance as Cloud backup as scheduled after-hours.

Housing Warehouse Shop

This winter we awarded the tender for the New Housing Warehouse Shop to Johnston Builders. Johnston Builders have numerous success stories across northern Canada, including our own Darius Elias Community Hall. With the site now prepared and piles in the community, construction will commence this summer with completion scheduled for Spring 2026.

Funding for this project was made possible by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CHMC) and the Yukon Government working together with VGFN to assist in reducing our housing demands. This new warehouse assembly shop will be a welcome addition to the community, allowing greater flexibility in the design and construction of new homes in Old Crow.



Council Chambers

VGFN's needs for office space have now reached their capacity at the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building. At the same time, there is a need for space to accommodate Council and Administration meetings and workshops that is not currently available. To accommodate these requirements, a building addition or retrofit of another existing building has been budgeted for \$2.5 million for this year's construction season. An assessment of our Administration Building will be the first step on determining how we move forward.

New Home Construction

To alleviate the demands for housing in Old Crow, we constructed the modular homes from Twin Anchors and the four single family homes from Wildstone. Though these two projects decreased the housing demand, they certainly have not been entirely conducive to the climate and conditions of this community.

Locally designed and constructed homes have always been the most reliable choice and this year's budget will bring this practice back to life. This process enables the employment of local skills and labour, with added involvement in materials, equipment, and product finishes.



This project will produce a more reliable, efficient, and a culturally accepted dwelling over the longer term constructed with a local capable workforce. With the advancement of everchanging designs, materials and building techniques, Old Crow has many options available for VGFN to provide the most reliable efficient home suitable for this community. We look forward to developing quality, energy efficient and spacious homes for our Citizens in the future.

I would like to thank our team members for the exceptional service they have provided during the year, at times in very challenging circumstance.

Haii'.

Rob Myers, Government Services Director

D. Health, Social and Recreation

1. Health, Social and Justice

Home and Community Care

The home and community care team consists of Rolanda Barabonoff and Anna Taureau. With the addition of Anna to the team, the Elder's program has grown to include weekly Elders Teas every Tuesday afternoon along with weekly Elders dinners every Thursday evening at the Victoria Blake Memorial Elders Home.

Elder wellness has been a priority of the team and as such, beading circles, bingo and board game events have been introduced to the regular schedule at the Victoria Blake Memorial Elders Home with a focus on social wellness. The Elder's Planting Program also began this summer with the intention of supporting Elders to grow vegetables at the Victoria Blake Memorial Elders Home with the goal of harvesting fresh, healthy food that is home grown and free of cost to the Elders in the community. The home and community care team hosted the Elder's Christmas Party on December 5, 2024 which was a huge success. The event included a meal catered by Faye Elias, photography by Rony Chakraborty and games coordinated by Jocelyn Tsetso.

In home Elder support and advocacy has continued throughout the year. The Home and Community Care Coordinator, Rolanda Barabonoff, organized the Elder's Fuel Program and the Elder's Spring Cleaning Program in addition to coordinating personal supports with our partners in many branches of Yukon Government Health.

Mental Health and Addictions

The mental health and addictions team has grown to include Ellen Kyikavichik, who is the new Community Outreach Worker in Whitehorse. Mental health and addictions support remains a priority in the department and access to counselling, detox, inpatient treatment and outreach supports are still being coordinated by the department.

Substance Use and Addictions Program

The Substance Use and Addictions Program (SUAP) is intended to increase supports and services in community for Citizens who are returning from inpatient treatment programs. The objective is to develop access to aftercare in community to reduce relapse and the need for multiple in-patient treatment programs. This includes increasing community awareness, outreach and harm reductions supports, as well as aftercare programming.

This program is housed in the Mental Health and Addictions branch of the Health, Social and Recreation department and is overseen by the Mental Health and Addictions Manager.

Knowledge Keepers

The Knowledge Keeper Project is a joint initiative between VGFN and Blood Ties Four Directions. The goal of the project is to build a network of community supports with the support of Vuntut Gwitchin Elders, Knowledge Keepers, outreach workers and people with lived and living experience.



KNOWLEDGE KEEPER PROJECT

Recovery and Aftercare Training Weekend

April 11 to 13 | 9:30 am - 4 pm

Darius Elias Community Hall

Are you in recovery, or have been in the past? Are you living with a partner, family member or friend who has? Would you like to learn more about recovery and aftercare?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, this training weekend is for you.

Some of the things we will do during the training include,

- Listening to recovery stories and traditional teachings shared by Elders;
- Brainstorming about community and individual needs.

What we hope to achieve together?

With your help, this training will be a first step toward better recovery and aftercare programs and services for VGFN Citizens in Old Crow.

You don't need to sign up before the training, **but if you decide to take part, we ask that you commit to the full 3 days.**

There will be coffee/tea, bannock breaks, and lunch on all 3 days.

 This Knowledge Keeper Project event is offered in partnership with **Thay K'i Anint'i (Fly Like an Eagle)**, an Indigenous-led Yukon organization that provides culturally relevant recovery coaching and programming.

Questions we will explore together:

- What does recovery mean for you?
- What exactly is addiction?
- What impact does addiction have on individuals, families, and the community as a whole?
- What are the barriers to recovery, and how can a person get past them?

For more information, please contact:

Gladys Netro, Knowledge Keeper Project Lead: (867)-335-1256; or

Todd Pryor, Manager of Mental Wellness: (867) 689-8051/ todd.pryor@vgfn.ca

Posted April 2, 2025

 Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Family Support

The Old Crow Family Support Worker position has remained vacant throughout the year. The Whitehorse Family Support Worker, Linda Netro, has continued to provide holistic support to families in collaboration with partner agencies such as CYFN, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and Family and Children's Services.

The Whitehorse Family Support Program has also hosted many family events such as family picnics, family swimming, and family holiday events.

Social Assistance

In 2025, the department staff participated in training to become familiar and proficient in the Yukon Government Social Assistance legislation, policy and procedures. This has increased staff capacity in administering social assistance while ensuring that legislation is being followed.

Consultants and Contractors

Sharon Moore concluded her work with the department in March 2025. Sharon presented the Community Wellness Plan prior to the completion of her work within the community. Melissa Valja continues to visit Old Crow to offer massage therapy and flower essence healing sessions alongside Jessica Wrench, who offers psychic readings and energy healing.

Justice

The Health, Social and Recreation department welcomed Katriel Villacorta as the new Justice Coordinator. The Justice program is evolving to new heights with a focus on restorative justice and restorative practices including Circle of Change training for community members to learn about restorative practice.

Louise Creyke, Health Programs Manager

2. Events and Recreation

Introduction

Events and Recreation had a highly productive year, as we diligently focused on encouraging strong participation among Citizens and residents, especially youth. Our emphasis on physical activity, mental wellness, and enjoyment allowed us to create community recreation programs that were inclusive and appealing to participants of all ages.

In anticipation of the Arctic Winter Games 2026 and the North American Indigenous Games 2027, we took proactive steps to equip our youth with the skills needed for success in these events. In partnership with Judo Yukon and Grapple Yukon, we introduced sports such as judo and wrestling.

Biathlon Yukon

We were pleased to welcome Sophia and Nick Marnik from Biathlon Yukon, who introduced Biathlon Shooting to our community, along with Fencing Yukon, which engaged both youth and Elders in the sport of fencing.



Rampart House Canoe Trip (July 2025)

First Assist

Our partnership with First Assist, led by ex-NHL player John Chabot, reflects our commitment to fostering educational achievement through sport in Indigenous communities. We were also honored to host distinguished visitors like Kirk McLean, facilitating meaningful meet-and-greet opportunities for community members.

A promotional poster for the Annual Father Mouchet Ski Loppet 2025. The background is a faded image of a ski race start. The text is centered and reads: "ANNUAL FATHER MOUCHET SKI LOPPET", "2025", "ALL AGES WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE", "PRIZES FOR EVERYONE", "SPECIAL GUESTS". Below this, four circular portraits of special guests are shown with their names and titles: Gary Bailie (Yukon Hall of Fame), Knute Johnsgard (Canadian Olympian), Sasha Masson (Canadian National Team), and Liliane Gagnon (Canadian Olympian and Gold medalist at the World U23 Championships). At the bottom, the event details are listed: "Saturday APRIL 19 at 1:00pm OLD CROW SKI LODGE" and "DINNER at 6:00 PM Darius Elias Community Hall". Logos for Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Air North Yukon's Airline are in the bottom corners.

ANNUAL FATHER MOUCHET SKI LOPPET

2025

ALL AGES WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE
PRIZES FOR EVERYONE

SPECIAL GUESTS

Gary Bailie
(Yukon Hall of Fame)

Knute Johnsgard
(Canadian Olympian)

Sasha Masson
(Canadian National Team)

Liliane Gagnon
(Canadian Olympian and Gold medalist at the World U23 Championships)

Saturday APRIL 19 at 1:00pm OLD CROW SKI LODGE
DINNER at 6:00 PM Darius Elias Community Hall

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

AIR NORTH
Yukon's Airline

Father Mouchet Ski Loppet

In April, the Father Mouchet Ski Loppet was a great success, underlining the collaboration and support from various local leaders.

Our initiatives extended beyond Old Crow, with children participating in the Teslin Camp and basketball camps organized by KDFN. Additionally, we secured prime-time ice at Whitehorse arenas to ensure families could enjoy skating and hockey together, reinforcing community connections.

Community Engagement

To further enhance community engagement, we organized a variety of family events that offered joyful experiences for all. Notable highlights included captivating performances by Magic Ben and hypnotist Corrie, and music from Johnny Landry and Henry Nukon at the Easter Carnival.



Magic Ben involved several community members in a fun Easter Carnival magic show (April 2025)

We successfully celebrated Halloween and other holidays, which strengthened community ties and brought people together.

Youth

We are pleased to have secured major funding from the Yukon Government to support ongoing traditional and youth-focused projects and programs. Vuntut Gwitchin dedication to traditional practices was evident during our Youth Wellness Week, which featured valuable teachings from Elders, which deeply resonated with youth, reinforcing essential cultural connections.

Section 3. Departments ~ Health, Social and Recreation

In early July, a group of Old Crow children, youth and adults canoed for three days down to Rampart House days. They were joined by a group of Elders on the final day. In view of the interest in the water activities, we are looking to start a kayaking and canoeing program for the community this coming year.

We would like to extend heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated recreation staff—Jocelyn Tsetso, Shaylynn Charlie, Shalana Pascal, and Tyra Benjamin—for their unwavering commitment and hard work, which has played a key role in building a strong and welcoming Recreation program for all.

Rony Chakraborty, Recreation Manager



Rampart House Canoe Trip (July 2025)

E. Natural Resources and Heritage

Introduction

Drin Gwiinzii,

It is an honour to introduce the General Assembly Report for the Natural Resources and Heritage department, providing everyone with an update on our activities and progress over the past year.

Our department is guided by the vision, “Together we speak for the land, past and future.” The four parts of the department (in alphabetical order) are Energy, Fish and Wildlife, Heritage, and Lands. Our activities and programs focus on caring for the land, water, fish, and wildlife in VGFN Traditional Territory, ensuring Citizens have opportunities to maintain connections with Vuntut culture, oral history, and language.

Our department has a dedicated and passionate team that works on a wide variety of projects to centre VGFN self-determination and stewardship. I am pleased to share that we have continued to expand the department this year, with the creation of several new positions, partnerships, and initiatives.

The Natural Resources and Heritage Team

Natural Resources and Heritage has a great team of dedicated staff, including:

- Loretta Itsi, Administrative Assistant
- Christine Greyke, Lands Manager
- Aidan Kyikavichik, Lands Technician
- William Linklater, Senior Energy Analyst
- Jeremy Brammer, Fish and Wildlife Manager
- Brandon Kyikavichik, Heritage Researcher
- Briana Lord, Heritage Coordinator Sophia Flather, Language Specialist
- Joelle Charlie, Adult Language Teacher
- Katherine Peter, Fisheries and Harvest Support Coordinator
- Paul Josie, Land Guardian
- Robert Kyikavichik, Game Guardian
- Tyler Lord, Land Guardian
- Karl Hogue, Land Guardian Coordinator
- Megan Williams, Heritage Manager
- Kathie Charlie, Language Mentor
- Language Mentors and Translators Mary Jane Moses, Irwin Linklater, Marion Schafer and Jane Montgomery

Section 3. Departments ~ Natural Resources and Heritage

The department also relies on the skills, knowledge, and contributions of a large team of casual staff, including Elders, Land Guardians, Junior Land Guardians, and Cooks. Additionally, we collaborate with a focused team of consultants, and we appreciate their continuity and dedication.

Over the past year, we have made progress on previous GA resolutions while also balancing attention to other emerging issues. We have focused on projects to steward the Traditional Territory and represented VGFN at several intergovernmental tables. We have also emphasized the importance of ensuring that community members and Citizens have opportunities to communicate with our staff and stay informed about our work through community presentations and updates.

In this report, staff from Energy, Fish and Wildlife, Heritage and Lands provide updates on projects undertaken this past year. We will also continue to provide additional updates throughout the year. With new opportunities to work with us and additional programs being planned, we expect to have an exciting year ahead!

Mahsi' choo to our amazing staff and all you have accomplished in the last year.

Paul McCarney, Natural Resources and Heritage Director

1. Energy

The May 2029 Yeendoo Diinehdoo Ji'heezrit Nits'oo Ts'o' Nan He'aa Declaration and VGFN GA Resolution No. 2019-08 - Carbon Neutral Resolution, declared a climate change state of emergency for VGFN lands, waters, animals, and peoples and called to action efforts to prevent a rise in global temperatures.

We continue on the path to reducing greenhouse gas emissions through a sustainable energy transition, utilizing proven technology, enhancing energy efficiency in our infrastructure and housing, and providing ongoing community education, such as last year's Community Energy Systems Course. Upcoming energy projects will rely on community engagement, which is the cornerstone of our mandate.

Community Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP)

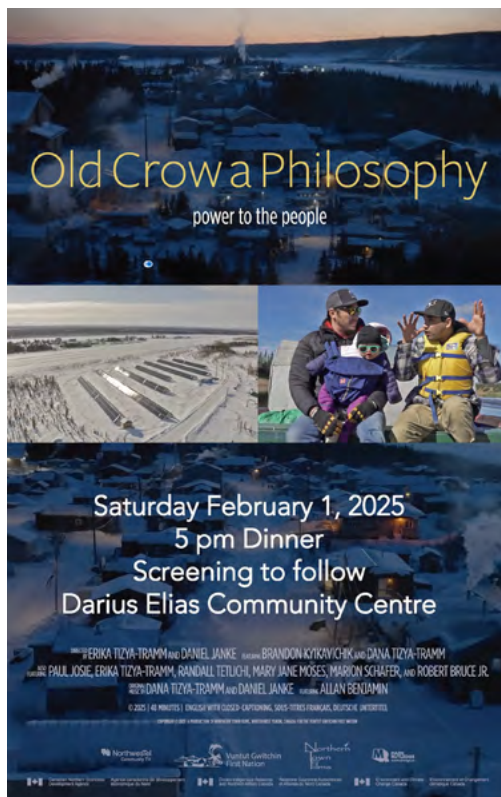
The Community Energy Implementation Plan (CEIP) aims to provide an action plan to reduce fossil fuel consumption and lower greenhouse gas emissions while enhancing the quality of life for community members. The plan is currently scheduled to be completed within the year and distributed to the community. We are collaborating with other VGFN departments to ensure we have adequate and proper input before finalizing the report.

Energy Task Force

The Energy Task Force (ETF) was reestablished in 2023 and remains active, holding monthly meetings. The ETF's Terms of Reference is currently being updated. Once this is completed, we will seek additional community representation to help guide the community towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2030. Current ETF members are William Linklater (Senior Energy Analyst, Chair), Alexandre Vigneault (3EYOND Consulting), Maureen Charlie (Citizen representative), Anya Malysheva (minute-taker), Ken Kyikavichik (Executive Director), and Rob Myers (Government Services Director).

Sree Vyàa Solar Installation

The Sree Vyàa solar installation in Old Crow is in its fourth year of operation and has been producing electricity for the community, especially during the summer months. Despite some recent minor setbacks, such as an inverter issue, the sales generated this year are expected to be one of our best years.



Old Crow: A Philosophy, directed by Erika Tizya and Daniel Janke, was screened for the first time in February 2025 at the Darius Elias Community Hall in Old Crow.

Sree Vyàa continues to garner national attention in the renewable energy sector, and we have been invited to deliver several presentations to share our lessons with other governments and communities.

We also finalized and released the film *Old Crow: A Philosophy*. The film won the People's Choice Award at the Available Light Film Festival, and continues to gain attention in the independent film market.

VGFN and ATCO finalized the Terms of Reference for a Joint Operating Committee. The committee meets once a month to discuss Sree Vyàa's operations and maintenance for the upcoming months. Issues have arisen with the ground stability of Sree Vyàa's foundation, and we are working towards a long-term solution for the twenty-five-year lifespan of the installation.

To secure funding for climate mitigation and adaptation, we require a comprehensive study of the permafrost underlying the Sree Vyàa site with actionable solutions to move forward. Fixing the foundation will require revenue from the installation's energy sales as part of its operation and maintenance budget.



Sree Vyàa solar installation

Old Crow Wind Project

We received funding to conduct a feasibility study for a wind project on Crow Mountain, located above the quarry. The upper site received support from the community in the 2023 energy survey, and current wind modelling indicates the site has the potential to harness wind during the winter months. This will help diversify renewable energy production in Old Crow and help offset more diesel during the winter months.

The feasibility study will include geotechnical and engineering studies to determine whether Crow Mountain's bedrock is suitable for wind turbines—a comprehensive environmental assessment of the affected area, which will also include noise and visual assessments will be completed. We will also conduct a grid impact study to assess the impact of the turbines on the existing electric infrastructure. Once we have gathered sufficient information, we will hold a community engagement session to discuss our findings, key considerations, including access roads and the potential impact of the turbines on the Crow Flats Special Management Area.

The wind project will be far more challenging for Old Crow due to logistics, the size of the infrastructure, and the community's remoteness, but it has the potential to make a substantial contribution to Old Crow's energy needs. It will also address some of the limitations of the existing power infrastructure in the community that is provided by ATCO.

Old Crow Biomass Project

We received funding to conduct a biomass feasibility study which was completed near Dawson City in collaboration with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. The study examined the economic viability of harvesting willows and shrubs around Old Crow with an excavator. Due to the warming climate, willows and shrubs have been growing at a faster rate than traditional logs.

At this stage, the shrubs and willows are the key fuel for the potential biomass operation and will need another year of a feasibility study. The potential is promising, and we are seeking additional funding to expand the scope of how these biomass products can be harnessed. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation is also exploring biomass development in their community, along with guidance and assistance from the Teslin Tlingit Council, which operates biomass district heating systems. VGFN continues to build partnerships with other First Nations that share similar sustainability goals sustainability for our communities.

Old Crow Housing Energy Efficiency Plan

We are working closely with Government Services to select ten homes for energy retrofits. These homes underwent building and environmental assessments, as well as an energy audit, in early spring 2025. At this point, we are focusing on retrofits that enhance the energy performance and durability of houses. We are also considering heating systems for Old Crow's houses. Each home is unique and has its challenges with heating; however, that is why we are focusing more on the building envelope. These assessments must be completed to receive further retrofit funding.

VGFN Building Energy Audits

In the early spring of this year, Renu Engineering conducted an energy audit on eight VGFN government buildings and one private commercial building. The audits followed the ASHRAE (American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers) energy audit guidelines. The audits included energy modelling, mechanical design and reviewing electricity and diesel data in conjunction with VGFN's energy monitoring system. The reports, which are due late this fall, will assist in the submittal of funding requests to help retrofit VGFN buildings to become more energy efficient.

In closing, Energy is fortunate to have the community of Old Crow and its Citizens provide community inspiration, creativity, guidance and feedback on our upcoming energy projects. I look forward to hearing from you all during our future energy engagement sessions. Don't hesitate to contact me to talk about any energy-related ideas or concerns.

William Linklater, Senior Energy Analyst

2. Fish and Wildlife

Drin gwiinzii shijyaa kat!

Fish and Wildlife supports the traditional economy of VGFN by:

- managing fish and wildlife populations and their habitats to ensure there are enough animals and plants for all generations;
- coordinating research and monitoring so Citizens have the best information available when making decisions about fish, wildlife, and habitat; and
- supporting life on the land to ensure traditional lifestyles, skills, and knowledge continue to be practiced and shared.

Our work is guided by:

- the Darius Elias Memorial Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan for 2021-2026;
- the VGFN 2024-2029 Research Priorities Report;
- discussions with VGFN Council;
- Citizens;
- the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council; and
- GA Resolutions.

Łùk Choo (Chinook Salmon)

In 2024, because of critically low returns of Chinook, Chief and Council passed resolution #48, which prohibited the harvest of Łùk Choo in the Porcupine River watershed and required the removal of gillnets while the Łùk Choo were passing Old Crow (July 3 to August 10, 2024). This is the best way to ensure that Łùk Choo survive to feed our grandchildren and their grandchildren. Unfortunately, the 2025 Chinook run looks similar to 2022-2024. Last year, 468 Łùk Choo migrated past Old Crow. Every Łùk Choo needs to spawn to help protect the Porcupine River population.

For 2025, the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee recommended “no subsistence... allocation of any Yukon River and Porcupine River Chinook and chum.” We will need to discuss closing the VGFN Łùk Choo fishery and restricting the use of gillnets in the Porcupine and its tributaries between July 3 and August 10, 2025. These dates should allow the highest number of Łùk Choo to pass within the shortest closure period.

On July 4, 2025, we held our annual salmon meeting with the Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance, and Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to update us on the state of this year's salmon runs.

In early August 2025, we will hold a community survey and workshop to develop a Salmon Harvest Management Plan, as requested in GA Resolution 2023-05. While we develop our Salmon Harvest Management Plan, Canada and Alaska are currently working on Chinook Stock Rebuilding Plans for the entire Yukon watershed. These plans are called for in the Canada-US agreement to place a moratorium on all Chinook harvest for the next seven years, one complete life cycle, to let Lùk Choo rest.

Shii (Chum Salmon)

The Yukon and Porcupine Shii runs improved in 2023-2024 compared to the big drop over 2020-2022. However, the 2024 count was still lower than the 2023 count. The Ni'iinlii Njik weir counted 11,528 Shii in 2023, but only 5,933 in 2024. This year, we are forecasting an even lower return of Shii to Ni'iinlii Njik and the Porcupine River.

In 2025, we will need to discuss closing the Shii fishery and restricting the use of gillnets in September. The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee recommended no subsistence harvest this year. Fish and Wildlife will monitor the strength of the fall run and make recommendations to Council regarding how to manage fishing during the migratory period.

Counting Salmon

In 2025 we will continue to work with DFO to run the Porcupine Sonar Camp downriver from Old Crow and the Fishing Branch weir at Ni'iinlii Njik. These projects are essential for letting us know the health of salmon in the Porcupine drainage. Mahsi' choo to Jayce Charlie and Joseph Bruce, who alongside the DFO team make these camps happen!

Vadzaih (Caribou)

The Porcupine caribou population appears healthy. Over the past year the herd has often been close to Old Crow and hunters have had a lot of success, especially last winter.

A photo census was again attempted in June 2024, but the mosquitoes and other biting flies did not get so bad, so the herd remained loose on the North Slope. They were unable to photograph the entire herd. The last herd count was in 2017, when they estimated the herd was at 218,500.

While the best count we have is from 2017, declining survival of adult males, adult females, yearling females, and 3-year-old cow pregnancy rates suggest the herd number has peaked and is starting to slowly decline. Even so, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board (PCMB) and representatives for all the user groups (including Jeremy Brammer, Tyra Benjamin, Marvin Frost,

Section 3. Departments ~ Natural Resources and Heritage

Jeffrey Peter, Esau Schafer, and Nathaniel Schafer for VGFN) met in February 2025 and agreed that the Porcupine herd is still in the green zone (> 115,000 animals).

Citizens are encouraged to continue to harvest what they need, pursue and finish wounded animals, not waste any meat, and share their harvest with the community and Elders where they can.

Dinjik (Moose)

Yukon Environment and the PCMB are working with us on a project called “Ecological change and livelihoods in the Porcupine Caribou summer range – Moose and Wolf research components” that involves aerial surveys of moose and wolves in the northern portion of VGFN Traditional Territory. This project began surveying moose and wolves in the spring of 2022.

A student from McGill University named Irène Svoronos was in community for July and September 2024 to work on this project. Irène will be back from August to November 2025. She will be working with Elders interviews in the Heritage archive, talking to knowledge holders, and participating in community hunts. She will also help organize a moose workshop in late 2025 or early 2026. If you want to discuss Dinjik, please speak with Irène!

Species at Risk

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

- grey-headed chickadee to be listed as *Endangered*;
- horned grebe as *Special Concern*;
- *Management Plan* for wolverine; and,
- *Management Plan* for grizzly bears.

If you have any comments or concerns about these species being listed as species at risk, or about the Management Plans, please report them to me. Notably, Yukon River Chinook salmon (Łùk Choo) are now a high-priority candidate species for assessment under the Species at Risk Act.

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

The Teechik Land Guardians were busy between January and April 2025. This year, the Land Guardians broke trails to Crow Flats, Curtain Mountain, and along the Winter Road. Around the Winter Road corridor, the Land Guardians serviced 72 game cameras. These cameras monitor wildlife on and around the Winter Road.

Linear corridors like winter roads, all-season roads, and seismic lines affect how wildlife moves around the landscape. Some animals like to stay near roads; other animals avoid them.

At present, we don't have a lot of information about how cutting new corridors will affect how Vadzaih, Dinjik and wolves move around VGFN Traditional Territory. That's why this work is important—it will ensure Citizens have the best information available for discussions concerning cutting new corridors such as roads, trails, and seismic lines.

We will be looking to hire several casual Guardians for January to April 2026. Please talk to Karl Hogue if you are interested in these opportunities.



The Teechik Land Guardians (Winter 2025)

Harvest Support

Our staff including Robert Kyikavichik, Karl Hogue, Tyler Lord, and Paul Josie have all been gathering meat and fish for community events and to share with community members. They do this as part of major events like the Fall Hunt, but also during regular work weeks.

In addition, they also support Citizens getting on the land by breaking trail, helping set up or repair camps, accompanying Citizens to their camps, and responding to emergency situations. They do this important work all year and deserve to be recognized for the support they provide to the community while continuing to follow Van Tat values and protocols.

Mahsi' choo Robert, Karl, Tyler, Paul, and all other casual Land Guardians who provided harvest support during the year!

Fall School Hunt

In September 2024, we worked with Chief Zzeh Gittlit School and Yukon University to coordinate a Fall Hunt with students up the Porcupine River. The hunters had a good trip to Gopher Bluff and came back with a moose they cut up and shared with Elders and the community.

Traditional Pursuit and Trappers Assistance Programs

Our Traditional Pursuit Program assists all households who want to spend time out on the land between April and October. To be eligible for Traditional Pursuit, you must:

- be a VGFN Citizen 19 years or older (youth 16-18 apply to Youth Traditional Pursuit) with one application per household;
- fill out a Traditional Pursuit Application Form and Harvest Report Form, and spend 10 days or more out on the land in the VG Traditional Territory between April 1 and October 31, 2025.

To reduce delays between the submission of applications and receiving purchase orders, we held focused application periods in the Old Crow office from April 14 to 25 and at the Whitehorse Waterfront office from May 1 to 7. In total, we received 37 applications for Traditional Pursuits and one youth application. Thirty-three households and one youth application were accepted. There will be a fall Traditional Pursuits application period, both at the Old Crow and Whitehorse Waterfront offices, in August.

This year, to help streamline Traditional Pursuits, we are providing applicants with harvesting journals. In these journals, harvesters can record where and when they camp out on the land and what they harvest.

For the 2026 Traditional Pursuit program, harvesters must return their journal with detailed descriptions of ten nights out on the land to be eligible for Traditional Pursuit.

VGFN Premium Fur Program

In 2024-25, the VGFN Premium Fur Program replaced the Trappers Assistance Program previously of past years. With the new program, VGFN trappers are paid premium prices for their high-quality furs. These furs will then be tanned and redistributed in the community.

This year, we received 144 furs from trappers! We are now looking for tanners in Old Crow who are interested in being paid to tan marten, fox, wolf, wolverine, and lynx fur. If no tanners in Old Crow are interested, we will send the furs outside the community to be tanned and sent back to Old Crow.

If you are interested in tanning, please talk to Katherine Peter in our office at the Sarah Abel Chitze Building!



Travis Frost with some of the furs he sold to VGFN through the new Premium Fur Program

Ni'iinlii Njik (Fishing Branch) Shii Spawning and Dewatering Study

We secured funding for three years (2024-2027) to study dewatering in Ni'iinlii Njik and how it may impact spawning Shii. This work involves the Land Guardians, Brock and Queens Universities, and Environmental Dynamics Incorporated (EDI). In October 2024, our department and EDI sent a crew to Ni'iinlii Njik to count and map spawning Shii. In May 2025, we sent a crew to assess dewatering in the river and collect water samples.

In June 2025, a crew from Brock University assisted us in the collection of water samples. In July-August 2025, we worked with Queens University and the Yukon Government to set up a meteorological station at Ni'iinlii Njik. We will be returning in October 2025 to map out Shii spawning beds.

Ni'iinlii Njik Shii Salmon Restoration Trial

In 2019-2020 we collaborated with EDI on an instream egg incubation trial on Ni'iinlii Njik. This involved collecting brood stock (eggs and milt) and trying different incubation techniques to protect the eggs through the winter. Our hope was to increase Shii egg survival at Ni'iinlii Njik, so more juveniles would leave the spawning grounds the following year. This project had mixed results, so we applied for funding in 2025-26 to try again. This time, we will try incubating eggs in both Ni'iinlii Njik and Whitehorse to see which method better protects the eggs until they hatch into fry.

Harvest Monitoring

During the year, we collect harvest data from Citizens through surveys during Traditional Pursuit applications or in December. Harvest numbers provide critical information to us when meeting with other governments and co-management boards. For example, these help make decisions on the colour zone of Porcupine caribou with the PCMB for the upcoming year. Good harvest data now means we can argue for more future harvesting opportunities for Citizens based on accurate and reliable information.

Another important part of harvest monitoring is collecting Vadzaih tissue samples. We need the help of hunters to collect complete tissue samples. These help us measure the health of Vadzaih each year and how that changes over time. Sample kits will be available in our office in September, and harvesters who complete the kit will receive \$50 in gas.

Mahsi' choo to this amazing team and all you have accomplished over this past year! We would also like to remember and honour our beloved Clifton Nukon, who will always be our Fish and Wildlife Technician in heaven.

Jeremy Brammer, Fish and Wildlife Manager

3. Heritage

Heritage's mandate of is to promote, preserve and protect Van Tat Gwich'in language and culture. The work we have undertaken this year are in the areas of Language, Oral History, Rampart and LaPierre House, and Research and Collaboration.

Dinjii Zhuh k'yu (the Gwich'in language)

The priority in our Gwich'in language work is to increase speakers. This is achieved by connecting with the community through language, teaching new speakers, mentoring, and conducting research.

This year, we are so happy to have welcomed two new language workers to the Heritage team: Joelle Charlie as Language Teacher and Kathie Nukon as Language Mentor.

We use the Paul Creek Curriculum from Salish School of Spokane, a proven immersion program which is an excellent starting point for creating speakers. The curriculum engages beginner speakers as teachers with recordings from fluent speakers, ensuring our Elders are not burdened with the task of teaching basic language skills. Both Joelle and Sophia are trained as teachers in this program, and several community members have also completed this training.

In addition to providing basic-level classes, language learners are also supported at the intermediate level through the Master Apprentice Program. Sophia was accepted to a formal MAP through the Yukon Native Language Centre and has been working closely with her mentors, processing recordings, conducting immersion sessions and attending progress evaluations and training.

Brandon Kyikavichik (Heritage Researcher) has set up an effective mentorship that utilizes oral history recordings, which he translates in-person with fluent mentors Marion Schafer, Irwin Linklater, and Kathie Nukon. This method of working with interviews with highly fluent Elders and mentors has resulted in the value-added benefits of allowing Brandon to become an intermediate speaker and gain in-depth studies of Van Tat Gwich'in culture and language.

The plan moving forward is to develop customized support for language learners who are on their own journey. We don't have one path forward, but a different strategy for each person and we are working together to support increasing speakers in a way that works for both individuals and the community.

Sophia Flather, Language Specialist

Oral History

Van Tat Gwich'in oral history has been actively recorded through a series of multi-year projects: focusing on oral history of the whole Traditional Territory, Cultural Geography (place names), Cultural Technology (social and environmental technologies including games, boats, fish traps), Navigation Systems (ground truthing main travel routes, helicopter work, GIS work), and Historical Life Ways (life stories).

All access to the oral history collection is permitted through the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee. The Committee provided direction on how to reach youth with oral history through cultural experiential education and language projects that connect youth with their cultural identity through the land and Elders.

Our work in the office includes maintaining the audio and video oral history archives, transcripts (English and Gwich'in), historical and contemporary photos, film footage, and GIS (place names, trails, camps, villages, sites). Database management includes many hours of data entry. We rely on summer students and interns who learn how to do this while connecting with their culture at the same time.

The Vuntut Gwitchin 101 (VG101) course development is on track for the inaugural course offering in the summer of 2025.



Bluefish Caves (August 2024)

The course covers the six main pillars of the YFN 101 mandatory course offered at Yukon University, but will be specific to Vuntut Gwitchin. The course content has been reviewed by the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee and covers history, heritage and culture, self-government, residential schools, worldviews, and contemporary issues.

Briana Lord (Heritage Coordinator) has dedicated many hours to creating this course, and it is an excellent resource for both Citizens and people who visit the community as teachers, researchers, nurses, RCMP, and other staff.

Rampart House and LaPierre House

These two sites are co-managed by VGFN and the Yukon Government. The management plan was updated in 2023. This year, the reconstruction work camp is operating for 40 days, primarily focused on the final stages of the St. Luke's Church project and preparing the site for the new cook shack, scheduled to be built in 2026.

We would like to recognize the excellent work of crew members: Foreman Donovan Frost, Log Workers Wilfred Josie, Marvin Frost Jr., Joseph Bruce, Cook Stanley Grafton Njootli, Boat Operators Dean Kapuschak, Gavin Charlie, and all boat operators who provide support to this project.



Rampart House Crew (Summer 2024)



St. Luke's Church, Rampart House

Research and Collaboration

We are represented at the Heritage Working Group, a collaborative table for the Yukon Government and all Yukon First Nations (YFNs). There are quarterly meetings to advance collective issues based on the work plan and terms of reference. The Heritage Working Group emerged from the Yukon Forum's Heritage priority. The YFN caucus meets prior to full group meetings. The working group's priorities are successor legislation for the Yukon Government's Historic Resources Act, Heritage Awareness Campaign, and data sharing.

Heritage is collaborating with archaeologists from the Yukon Government and Kansas State University on the fourth season of the Bluefish Caves excavation project, focusing on Cave IV.



Part of the Bluefish Caves excavation site (Summer 2024)

We are also working with Yukon Government Paleontologist Elizabeth Hall in her work at locality 11A on the Crow River. These research crews hire research assistants, our Gwich'in in the Kitchen, Darrel Charlie and boat operators.

It continues to be a pleasure and an inspiration to work with this crew, and we hope you will gain some insights on our work this year from this report.

As always, we have huge gratitude for the community and especially the youth and Elders we work with! Please feel free to reach out with feedback, ideas, comments and observations that you may have.

Megan Williams, Heritage Manager



Gavin Charlie (centre), boat operator for the Palaeo Crew collecting fossils on the Crow River



Adam Kyikavichik assisted the archaeological helicopter survey at Diniizhoo.

4. Lands

Drin gwiinzii shijyàa kat!

My name is Christine Creyke and my mother is Louise Creyke (Frost) and Grandparents are the late Ethel and Stephan Frost. I am the Lands Manager and our team focuses on ensuring that our Traditional Territory is stewarded and protected based on VGFN values and priorities.

The Lands team participates in several forums to develop new legislation for the Yukon, collaborates with other Yukon First Nations and transboundary Indigenous groups, and develops management plans for protected areas throughout the Traditional Territory.

In addition, the team is organizing land-based programs for Citizens to connect with the Traditional Territory and works on monitoring key aspects of environmental health in Old Crow and throughout the Traditional Territory.

Lands and Resources Act (LRA)

The Lands and Resources Act will provide VGFN with legislation to manage, control, administer, and protect Settlement Lands and resources. We have been reviewing the content of the Act to ensure that proposed legislation aligns with VGFN's policy objectives. This work has resulted in the verification of existing content and the identification of areas that require further clarification or revision. We are now preparing to carry out community engagement on these policy items to finalize the Act.

Alongside this review, we have been scoping implementation activities that will be required to enact the legislation. These activities will include developing policies, establishing application processes and procedures for the access and use of our lands, developing communication materials, identifying staffing requirements, building enforcement systems, and implementing land management tools.

Protected Area Planning

VGFN received funding from the Yukon Government to support our work in creating and expanding protected areas within our Traditional Territory. Through this funding, we hired Aidan Kyikavichik as Lands Technician in March 2025.

Aidan is increasing VGFN's capacity to complete outstanding work on protected areas (e.g., Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park), organize land-based programs, and participate in future protected area planning.

One of the key priorities is to work closely with community members to identify ideas to enhance community connections with protected areas and organize programs to bring Citizens into those areas.

Chance Oil and Gas Limited Eagle Plains Exploration Project

In recent communications to VGFN, Chance Oil and Gas Limited (COGL) informed us they plan to resubmit a Project Proposal to the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board (YESAB), which will require VGFN to coordinate ongoing engagement with COGL, consult with community members, and prepare for a potential Executive Committee screening.

The 2024 GA passed a resolution to reinstate the Oil and Gas Committee. We have been actively working to implement this resolution as well as updating the Oil and Gas Engagement Policy, which will provide us with a firm foundation and valuable guidance in our interactions with COGL

New Yukon Mining Legislation

Yukon First Nations, Transboundary First Nations, and the Yukon Government have been working together to develop what is called successor mining legislation to replace the old Placer and Quartz Mining Acts. I along with legal guidance from Kris Statnyk (Legal Counsel), have participated in the New Minerals Legislation (NML) “Framework Agreement” technical working group.

A draft Framework Agreement was presented to Yukon Chiefs in early June 2025. This agreement will establish key aspects of the new successor minerals legislation. VGFN will continue to raise our concerns about the development of the legislation to ensure that it complies with our Aboriginal rights, titles, and interests, including the VGFN Final Agreement, into the future.

Local Forest Harvest Plan

Over the last two years, VGFN has drafted a Local Forest Harvest Plan: Troo nit'ii. The plan includes objectives to address community priorities regarding wood harvesting, information about the forest ecosystem, the history of local forest harvesting, community needs, traditional and best practices for harvesting, and recommendations for local harvesting.

The plan includes maps, methods, results, volume estimates for potential harvest sites, as well as shrub monitoring plots to inform an understanding of willow harvest. The draft plan was presented to the community in April 2025 and will proceed for approval by Chief and Council.

Climate Hazard Monitoring

Lands is also developing a culturally relevant climate hazard risk monitoring program, which will provide a critical repository of data and observations to support decision-making related to climate resilience, emergency management, and safety. Through this project, we will enhance internal capacity and develop a plan to implement an ongoing program of land-based monitoring that reinforces Citizen and Elder expertise, supports data sovereignty, and serves as a foundation for holistic emergency management and disaster risk reduction.

We will hire a coordinator based in Old Crow to pilot a community-based tool for environmental hazard monitoring and will ensure environmental and climate hazard data and observations are available to community members.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your attention and ongoing involvement in Lands initiatives. Much of my inspiration and direction comes from working alongside our people, and I'm grateful for the shared commitment we all bring to this work. Protecting our natural environment is a collective responsibility—one that requires continued action, collaboration, and care.

I'd also like to acknowledge our team for their dedication and the meaningful progress made in conservation efforts. Let's keep working together to safeguard our land, water, and wildlife for generations to come.

Mahsi'.

Christine Creyke, Lands Manager



Section 4. Contact VGFN

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation welcomes and values your input. Citizens are encouraged to reach out with questions, comments, ideas, or feedback. Your thoughts help guide the work we do and ensure that we are moving forward together in a good way. Haii’ for your continued involvement and support!

Visit our website comments page at vgfn.ca/comments. This Comments page is a place where you can share your suggestions, concerns, ideas and knowledge with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Go to our website Contact page at vgfn.ca/contact to find contact information for Chief and Council, the Executive Office, or our departments; or drop by our offices during our regular office hours.

Our regular office hours are from Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4:30 pm.

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Notes

Report to the 2025 Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation General Assembly
August 2025



Cabins at Dachan Tr'iivan (Bonnet Lake), reconstructed
by carpenters Mike Rispin and Phillip Bruce.



Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation