

Newsletter

VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION

MARCH 2026

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Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

HOW WE LIVE & LEAD

Nih̄tah Gwiinzii lindoo lididaa (We will go forward in a good way).

We act with integrity, humility and respect, honouring the teachings of our ancestors and the responsibilities we carry for those yet to come.

The Land is Our Foundation

The land, waters and wildlife sustain us. We hold a sacred responsibility to protect them and to pass them on in good condition.

Culture is strength

Our language, stories, traditions and laws guide our decisions and define who we are as a people.

Responsibility to one another

We support one another like family, caring for Elders, Youth and all members of our community.

Self-Determination and Accountability

We govern ourselves openly and responsibly, making decisions in the best interests of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Learning across Generations

Knowledge flows between Elders and Youth. We value listening, teaching and shared learning.

Collective Leadership

Leadership is a shared responsibility. We empower one another and work together for the good of the Nation

Balance between Tradition and Progress

We honour our past while adapting wisely to meet the challenges of the future.



VISION

WHERE WE'RE GOING

We, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, envision a strong, self-determining Nation grounded in the wisdom of our ancestors, guided by the Creator, and rooted in our land. We see future generations living well, culturally strong, self-sufficient and secure in their identity, language and responsibilities to one another, the land and all living things.

MISSION

WHAT WE EXIST TO DO

We, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, exist to uphold our laws, values and cultural teachings while caring for our people and our homeland. Through responsible self-government, stewardship of our lands, waters, and wildlife, and the strengthening of our language, culture and economy, we work to ensure the wellness, self-sufficiency and prosperity of present and future generations.

Quarterly Update for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

ISSUE #2 • MARCH 2026

MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL

Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Naii,

The first months of 2026 have been busy for Council and our Administration. But as we move into spring, I want to update you on the important work happening across our Nation.

Council Changes

In January, we appointed Gladys Netro as Deputy Chief for VGFN effective January 21, 2026. Deputy Chief Netro replaces Councillor Hal Frost who served in the position since early 2024. We would like to thank Councillor Frost for his two years of admirable service as Deputy Chief for VGFN.

In accordance with this change we have also amended our mandate letters to cover the responsibilities vacated by Debra-Leigh Reti upon her election as MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin.

Moving forward, the following mandates are held by members of Council:

- **Chief Pauline Frost** – Executive, Finance, Communications, Negotiations, Intergovernmental Affairs, Arctic Security & Sovereignty and Health & Social Services.
- **Deputy Chief Gladys Netro** – Enrollment, Gwich'in Relations, Heritage, Youth and Elders.
- **Councillor Hal Frost** – Natural Resources, Vadzaih, Łuk Choo, Emergency Management, Housing & Infrastructure (Projects) and Community Services.
- **Councillor Cindy Dickson** – Justice, Human Resources, Education & Recreation, Community Safety, Economic Development and Policy.

Porcupine Caribou Herd Update

In early January, we received news from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game who announced that the Porcupine Caribou Herd has declined from an

estimated 218,000 Vadzaih in 2017 to 143,000, according to aerial surveys conducted in July.

While this decline is concerning, it is not unexpected and does not, in itself, constitute a crisis. Community observations and western science demonstrate that the Porcupine Caribou has experienced declining adult cow and bull survival in recent years.

The Porcupine Caribou Management Board recently held its Annual Harvest Meeting in Inuvik on February 11 & 12 where the Vuntut Gwitchin along with all other user groups discussed this situation and next steps.

We will continue to provide updates on the herd as we learn more.

Updated Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

In early February, Council reviewed the Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles for VGFN that were developed 5 years ago for our 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. This was shared in our December newsletter.

You will see an updated version of this on page 1 that reflects our current realities. This was an excellent opportunity for Council to review our priorities for the remainder of our term but also update these important documents for our organization. In particular, you will see a translation for one of our principles of "We Go Forward in a Good Way" which is Nihlah Gwiinzii lindoo lididaa.

Arctic Winter Games & Yukon Native Hockey Tournament

It's a special time of year with the Arctic Winter Games and the Yukon Native Hockey Tournament later this month. We would like to wish all of our Vuntut Gwitchin athletes the best of luck and a good opportunity for healthy competition and sportsmanship.

Mahsi' choo,
Chief Pauline Frost



Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation



Christmas in Old Crow!

2025 Christmas Celebrations



Once again we held a number of events and activities during the Christmas season. Our major events were the Christmas Eve Party, Christmas Day Feast, New Year's Eve Celebration and Fireworks and Chief & Council New Year's Dinner in Old Crow. Other activities that were coordinated in December by VGFN included:

- Sewing circles
- Cross-country skiing
- Gift and Popcorn ball making
- Yard Decorating Contest
- Christmas Party Mix Making
- Merchandise Bingo
- Gingerbread and Cookie Decorating
- Cake Walk
- Best Costume Dress and Elf Contest
- Poker Run
- Indian Bingo and Games at the Community Hall
- Chili Contest
- Crib and Poker Tournament
- Pie Contest

These events and activities are put together to ensure the young residents of Old Crow have a good Christmas and have memories that will last a lifetime. They also ensure continuity and respect for our traditional protocols of how Christmas would be celebrated in the community in the past.

A Citizens Christmas Party was held in Whitehorse on December 13th and an Elders Dinner was held at the Community Hall on December 16th that was organized by our Health & Social Services Department. Over 120 Christmas hampers were provided to homes in Old Crow through Polaris Pantry from Clairmont, Alberta who made this possible with their donations.

VGFN held its staff party on December 17th and recognized a few individuals with long-service awards who included:

- Joanne Charlie – Human Resources Coordinator – 5 years
- Faye Elias – Cook and Culture Program Coordinator – 5 years
- Vernon Kyikavichik – Community Services Manager – 15 years
- Roger Kyikavichik – Custodian Coordinator – 5 years
- Deanna Kyikavichik – Custodian – 5 years
- Briana Lord – Heritage Coordinator – 5 years

These events take a considerable amount of planning and effort by a dedicated team. We would like to thank the following individuals:

- Members of our Recreation team including Teresa Frost, Sherrie Frost, Darrell Charlie, Faye Elias, Lucas Francis and Shaylynn Charlie.
- Whitehorse staff who coordinated the Citizens Party – Ashlynn Frost and Linda Netro.
- Tara Kyikavichik in our Executive office who coordinated the purchase of gifts for children in Old Crow.
- Health & Social Services staff who assisted with the Elders Dinner and distribution of Christmas hampers including Kristeen McTavish, Teresa Levesque, Louise Creyke, Allison Schafer, Anna Taureau, Maria Francis and Alyssa Sgro.
- Government Services staff for assisting with unloading of hampers and freight throughout December.

Lands and Resources Act Engagements

Your input helps shape the legislation that reflects how we want to manage our Settlement Lands

The Lands and Resources Act (LRA) will provide VGFN with legislation to manage, control, administer, and steward Settlement Lands and resources. Natural Resources and Heritage staff, along with support from policy consultant Patricia Randell, held engagement sessions in both Old Crow and Whitehorse, including:

December 4th

Meeting with Elders to provide an update on the status of the LRA, to provide an overview of upcoming engagement activities, and to discuss allocations.

January 23rd

Community dinner to present the LRA engagement process outlining the schedule for the workshop held the following day.

January 24th

Lunch and review of LRA process to date, including engagement sessions. Review and discuss LRA tools, including permits, leases, and allocations, with a short video, explanation, and discussion sessions.

February 5th

Engagement meeting in Whitehorse to review and discuss the proposed approach to permits, allocations, and leases.



Photo Credit: Paul Josie

December 12th

Meeting with a former VGFN employee and Natural Resource Committee member, to verify and seek background information on the previous work undertaken to develop the draft legislation and to discuss allocations and permits.

January 19th

Focus group session with Fish and Wildlife Manager and the Têechik Guardians to seek background information and input on enforcement provisions within the draft Act and to discuss access notice certificates, permits, leases, and allocations.

Overall, 50 Citizens and community members attended and participated in the engagement sessions.

These sessions are opportunities for the community to review and provide insightful comments to ensure that the legislation will meet VGFN's policy objectives and will be operational once complete.

We are preparing for another virtual engagement in March and an online survey to provide more opportunities for Citizens to identify areas that require further delineation or change.

In May 2026, legal counsel will begin drafting the legislation for the final reading of the proposed Act.



Tèechik Guardians Update

Protecting our land, water, and wildlife through monitoring and stewardship

Winter projects continue across the Traditional Territory for Tèechik Guardians as they work to ensure we get the knowledge we need to protect the land and wildlife for generations to come.

Linear corridors wildlife tracking project

The Tèechik Guardians have conducted two patrols on the Winter Road corridor.

The first patrol left on February 3 and set camp at the Johnson Creek first crossing. The Guardians visited and serviced nine game camera sites to retrieve last year's images and replace the batteries in the cameras. They were back in town on February 5.

The second patrol left on February 11 and spent three days on the trail and serviced 36 cameras. On February 13, they picked up their camp and came back to town.



This project represents the longest-running study of wildlife behaviour

and interactions on linear corridors in the northern boreal forest and will provide VGFN with valuable information to continue to participate in assessments and stewardship of the Traditional Territory, including additional understanding on how oil and gas activities may impact caribou.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES FOR THE GUARDIANS

The Guardians will be visiting and servicing the remaining 27 game camera sites.

The Guardians and VGFN's Environmental Monitoring Coordinator started monthly snow sampling in late February.

We are planning to support the Department of Education and Recreation Culture Camp at the end of March.

In March, the team is planning a trip to Summit Lake to drop off six canoes in preparation for an upcoming paddling trip in the summer.

The Guardians and other Citizens will participate in an upcoming moose population survey being organized by the YG from March 20-29.

The survey will focus on the area northeast of Old Crow to the Richardson Mountains and south along the Porcupine River corridor to Johnson Creek Village (Kaachik).

Trail breaking activities

Following discussions with the community, the Tèechik Guardians have been breaking trails to support Citizens accessing camps and trapping areas throughout the Traditional Territory, including Crow Flats and some areas upriver and downriver. We have been posting updated maps on the whiteboard outside the Natural Resources office in the Sarah Abel-Chitze Administration Building, along with any wildlife observations during trips.

Fish order and distribution

Natural Resources and Heritage purchased 100 whitefish from Steven Tetliichi (Tetlit Gwich'in), harvested from the Peel River, to be distributed amongst community members. Tèechik Guardian Paul Josie has begun distributing fish to Citizens, focusing initially on Elders and single mothers. The remaining fish will continue to be distributed over the coming weeks.

New Tèechik Guardians logo coming soon

A new logo design has been shared with a graphic designer, and she has provided draft options. We are currently working with the graphic designer to refine and finalize the logo. We've also checked the preferred spelling of "Teechik" vs "Tèechik" with the Heritage language team. The preferred spelling that will be used on the logo is "Tèechik Guardians".

We are very excited to have a logo for the Tèechik Guardians that reflects community values and the Traditional Territory.

Stay tuned for the presentation of the logo at our next Natural Resources and Heritage community update!

Community News & Notes



STAFF ADDITIONS

The following appointments have been made recently with the VGFN Administration.

Shae Garrett-Charlie
Environmental Monitoring
Coordinator

Kristeen McTavish
Interim Director of Health and
Social Services

Alyssa Sgro
Health & Social Services
Coordinator

Riley Smith
Strategic Communications
Advisor

Amy O'Rourke
Emergency Management
Coordinator (Part-time)

OTTAWA ENGAGEMENTS



On the week of Dec. 1-5, Chief Pauline Frost travelled to Ottawa along with Executive Director Ken Kyikavichik, Intergovernmental Coordinator Liz Staples, and external consultant Stephen Mills.

There, they attended the AFN Special Assembly along with various federal meetings including with Minister Rebecca Chartrand (Northern Affairs) and Minister Rebecca Alty (Crown-Indigenous Relations).

They were joined by Hahke Darren Taylor from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

and his staff along with staff from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun and Yukon Member of Parliament Brendan Hanley.

ELDERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



Our Annual Elders Christmas Party was held at the Darius Elias Community Hall on the evening of December 16, 2025.

About 30 Elders and their guests attended the celebration and enjoyed a Christmas dinner of turkey, ham and all the fixings. Santa Claus also made an appearance, bringing with him gifts for each Elder.

Once again it was our honour to celebrate our precious Elders.

Community News & Notes

JOIN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT



ELDERS MEET WITH HEALTH AND SOCIAL STAFF - JANUARY

Members of the Health & Social Services team met with Elders on January 16 in Old Crow.

An overview of the Home and Community Care program was provided and discussed program intentions, concerns and ideas for the future. The history of a previous job shadowing program in Old Crow was discussed as a positive idea that they would like to see return.

The meeting also focused on ideas for more effective communication of events and announcements with Elders, and the team shared a summary of the work to date on the Mountain Camp.

The Health & Social Services Department meets monthly with Elders to discuss issues and topics that are important to them. Topics often discussed at meetings include Home and Community Care, Knowledge Keepers Programming, and the Meals on Wheels programs. There is also often a focus on upcoming community activities, youth engagement and community wellbeing.

OLD CROW HOSTS YUKON RIVER PANEL'S 2025 POST-SEASON MEETING - JANUARY 27-29



On January 27-29, VGFN hosted the 2025 Post-Season Meeting for the Yukon River Panel.

This is the body formed by the governments of Canada and the United States to implement the Yukon River Salmon Agreement. It includes members from the United States and Canada, representing the interests of Yukon River fishers, First Nations, Tribal Councils, fisheries managers and others who depend upon salmon for subsistence, cultural, commercial or recreational purposes.

The Panel meets twice a year to make recommendations to the responsible management agencies on both sides of the Alaska-Yukon border that enable the conservation and coordinated management of Yukon River salmon of Canadian-origin.



In this article you will find a few special moments from the meeting captured by Jocelyn Tsetso.

Community News & Notes

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR - DECEMBER



The Health and Social Services Department hosted a three-day Health and Wellness Fair at the Darius Elias Community Centre in Old Crow this past December.

Main events occurred from December 9th to 11th, with two stand alone events from Yukon Circle of Change on December 12th and 13th.

There were 10 partner organizations in attendance, both in person and virtual, that provided engaging presentations, workshops and table displays.

The event was well attended, with around 50 community members attending each day.

Overall, the department received positive feedback from the community, as well as valuable suggestions for future events. Over the three days of the main event, there were around 20 presentations and workshops, and display tables from nine organizations.

Community members could engage with health and wellness service providers focused on families, health and wellness, and treatment.

Natural Resources and Heritage joined us to provide a department update, and we hosted continued discussions around the Land-Based Community Camp Project. We were also lucky enough to have Robin Carpenter lead two brickstitch beading workshops in the evenings and William Greenland lead two sharing circles.

Finally, we brought the main events to a close with a community dinner and dance, with music from Daniel Rodgers and Tyren Kisoun from Inuvik.

A big thank you to Faye Elias for cooking lunch each day and the delicious community dinner!

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FORUM

VGFN will be hosting a one-day forum to discuss flooding, wildfire and the fire department.

Join us for presentations, information booths and knowledge sharing on Emergency Management and Resilience topics.

We will also be holding a community debrief on the 2025 flooding event to hear about the impacts you felt as Citizens and your concerns for the future.

Please join us so we can work towards building a more resilient community. Date is scheduled for March 26 in Old Crow

ENGAGEMENTS AND MEETINGS

- * **November 30 - December 5** – AFN Special Assembly and Federal meetings (Ottawa)
- * **December 16** – Elders Christmas Party
- * **December 18** – Whitehorse Wellness Day
- * **December 18 & January 8** – first and second readings of 2nd Appropriations Act for FY2025-26
- * **January 7** – Entrepreneurship Workshop
- * **January 22** – Whitehorse Wellness Day
- * **January 23 - 24** – Lands and Resources Act engagements (Old Crow)
- * **February 5** – Lands and Resources Act engagement (Whitehorse)
- * **February 9 - 12** – LCAC Leadership Meeting (Ottawa)
- * **February 11 - 12** – PCMB Annual Harvest Meeting (Inuvik)
- * **February 23 -24** – Our Arctic Summit (Whitehorse)



CURRENT JOB POSTINGS

PERMANENT FULL-TIME POSITIONS

FINANCE DIRECTOR

DAY CARE SUPPORT WORKER

To apply for any of these positions, you can send your resume and cover letter to jobs@vgfn.ca. Applications may also be dropped off at the [Sarah-Abel Chitze Administration Building in Old Crow](#) or [Waterfront Station Office in Whitehorse](#).

Please include the name of the job you are applying for in the subject line of the email or cover letter.

While we appreciate all applications, only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Since December, Council Meetings have been held on:

December 16

January 9 & 22

February 2 - 3

February 17

Summaries of these meetings are posted at the Sarah-Abel Chitze Administration Building in Old Crow on the Bulletin Boards.

UPCOMING WORK/LEGISLATION

The following policies or legislation are currently under development by the First Nation

- * **Revised Housing Policy and Tenancy Agreement** – in part to reflect changes to the Yukon Residential Tenancies Act (2025)
- * **Elections Law** – in preparation for General Election in late 2026
- * **Dog Management Policy** – guidance on how to deal with nuisance and dangerous dogs in Old Crow
- * **Review Council Law** – to establish Review Council for VGFN as outlined in Constitution
- * **Lands and Resources Act** – to govern the management of lands and resources in VGFN Traditional Territory

UPCOMING EVENTS

ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

MARCH 8-15

Hosted in Whitehorse (Kwanlin) on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

Good luck to all Vuntut Gwitchin athletes!

LANDS AND RESOURCES ACT VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

MARCH 12 OR 13 AND 30 OR 31

This virtual session is an opportunity for Citizens to provide input on the LRA. Stay tuned to community bulletin boards and VGFN Facebook for confirmed times and links.

COMMUNITY ENERGY SYSTEMS COURSE

MARCH 23-26

Bringing together energy researchers, experts, and practitioners to deliver a course focused specifically on Old Crow's energy needs, challenges, opportunities, and systems.

YUKON NATIVE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

MARCH 26-29

Annual First Nations Hockey Tournament hosted in Whitehorse.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FORUM

MARCH 26

This two-day forum on flooding, wildfire, and emergency responses will also include a community debrief on last year's flooding.

EASTER CELEBRATIONS

WEEKEND OF APRIL 3-6

Stay tuned to community bulletin boards and the VGFN Facebook page for news and updates.

ELDER AND YOUTH GATHERING

APRIL 8-9

VGFN is organizing a gathering in early April for Elders and Youth. Deputy Chief Netro is leading the organization of this event.

RESEARCH ROUND-UP

APRIL 14-16

Natural Resources hosting a number of partner agencies and researchers to report back to community on research projects.

CONTACTS

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COMMENTS?

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT!

Please let us know if you would like to let us know how we are doing in relation to a particular policy, program, service or activity undertaken by VGFN Chief and Council, Committees or Administration. You can provide feedback by:

- ✳ Approach our staff directly and if required escalate to our Managers or Directors; or
- ✳ Email us at comments@vgfn.ca;
- ✳ Submit online at our website at www.vgfn.ca.

We aim to respond to comments promptly. If we require more time to respond, we will let you know.

If no resolution occurs by items 1 or 2 above, feel free to approach the Executive Director/Associate ED or a member of Chief and Council.



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