

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation **NEWSLETTER**

March to May 2025



Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation

Table of Contents

Section 1. Chief and Council	1
A. Message from Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.	1
B. News Release Highlights	3
C. Intergovernmental Events and Meetings	4
D. Update on Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit—The Sacred Place Where Life Begins	7
Section 2. Executive Office	8
A. Message from Executive Director Ken Kyikavichik	8
B. Community Safety	9
and Preparedness	9
C. Human Resources	11
D. Policy	12
E. Committees	12
Section 3. Special Events	13
A. Wellness Week 2025	13
B. Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days)	16
Section 4. Departments	18
A. Education	18
B. Finance	20
C. Government Services	20
D. Health and Social	21
E. Recreation	22
F. Natural Resources	23
G. Heritage	26
Section 5. Council Resolutions Passed from March to May, 2025	27
Section 6. Contact Us	29

Section 1. Chief and Council

SECTION 1

A. Message from Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.

Drin Gwiinzii Shalak Naii!

As we participated in this year's Wellness Week and Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days), I want to take a moment to reflect on the deeper meaning of this time for us as Vuntut Gwitchin.

Wellness Week provided us a chance to reconnect and take care of ourselves and each other. Wellness is about more than just being healthy. It's about balance and caring for our minds, bodies, hearts and our spirits, and nurturing the connections that keep us strong—our families and friends, our culture, our language, and the land. True wellness comes

from standing together as a community, supporting one another, and honouring the teachings of our ancestors.

Vadzaih Choo Drin reminds us of our sacred relationship with caribou. We also carry the responsibility to protect them and teach our young people of the importance of the Vadzaih in our lives and our stories. For countless generations, Vadzaih have provided for us—not just food and clothing, but also knowledge, direction, and spiritual meaning. They are part of who we are.



Photo by Rony Chakraborty

I would also like to take a moment to speak about our seasonal flood preparedness that occurred in April and May.

During this time, the Porcupine River was at moderate flood risk due to potential for ice jamming. While there was no immediate cause for alarm, we took precautions to ensure the safety and well-being of our community.

These proactive steps included checking equipment, updating emergency plans, and ensuring supports are in place.

Thankfully, these measures assisted in ensuring that we minimized the damage that occurred from the rising water levels on May 24. Our goal with these efforts was not to cause worry, but to build awareness, readiness, and confidence should a flood event occur.

Preparedness is a core part of keeping our Nation strong and resilient, and we were successful by planning and working closely with all partners to stay informed and responsive.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all those who have worked to organize Wellness Week and Vadzaih Choo Drin, as well as the those who worked to keep our community safe during break-up. I would like to specifically acknowledge the Events Coordinator, staff from our Health, Social and Recreation Department, our Emergency Management Team and the Executive team that pulled all of this together. Your dedication and care are bringing people together and we appreciate everything that you have made possible for the community.

Mahsi' choo for being part of this beautiful community.

Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.



SECTION 1

B. News Release Highlights



APRIL 11, 2025

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation condemns Trump's continued push for drilling in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

In March, the Trump Administration announced plans to restart the leasing program that would open the entire Coastal Plain to oil and gas leasing and the court ruled that previously cancelled oil and gas leases be reinstated.

VGFN strongly condemned the renewed attempt to bring oil and gas development the sacred lands of *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit*.

"For thousands of years, Gwich'in have lived alongside the Porcupine caribou herd. Its survival has guaranteed our own. Now that the United States government has cleared a path for oil and gas development in the Coastal Plain—the heart of the Porcupine caribou nursery grounds—the herd's future is uncertain. This is why we will not rest until we have secured permanent protection of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit for all future generations."

Chief Pauline Frost

SECTION 1

C. Intergovernmental Events and Meetings



Dene Nation Delegation Visit

March 22-23 ~ Old Crow

In March, a Dene Nation Delegation travelled overland from Teetl'it Zheh (Fort MacPherson) and arrived in Old Crow after spending a night at Curtain Mountain.

The delegation included Dene National Chief George Mackenzie, Phillip Mackenzie, Sahtu Grand Chief Wilbert Kochon, and Teetl'it Sub-Chief Phillip Kay, staff, guides, youth and Elders from Teetl'it Zheh, Colville Lake, Tsiigehtchic, Fort Good Hope and Yellowknife. Teetl'it Chief Liz Wright flew into Old Crow on the same day.



To mark the occasion, a group of community members met the delegation partway and accompanied them to Old Crow, where the community had gathered at the Darius Elias Community Hall to warmly welcome them.

Chief Pauline Frost and Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr. were honoured to host a leadership meeting with members of the delegation. The visit celebrated the strong connections between Gwich'in communities and was an opportunity for Old Crow to share news and stories with visiting family members and friends.



Left to right: Phillip Mackenzie, Dene Nation, VGFN Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr., Sahtu Grand Chief Wilbert Kochon, VGFN Chief Pauline Frost, Dene National Chief George Mackenzie, Teetl'it Chief Liz Wright, Tsiigehtchic Chief Phillip Blake.

Yukon First Nations Defence and Security Industry Conference

April 22-23 ~ Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Whitehorse

This conference was hosted by the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region in partnership with the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce.

Chief Frost was a conference speaker and spoke about the need to go beyond military and geopolitical views of Arctic security, emphasizing that achieving true security in the north will require critical investments in housing, education and training, healthcare, transportation, energy, and more—investments that are critical to community well-being and resilience.

National Children's Chiefs Commission

April 28-29 ~ Ottawa

Chief Frost and Liz Staples participated in meeting with the National Children's Chiefs Commission and Assembly of First Nations to discuss the long-term reform of child and family services.

Leadership Summit concerning the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter

April 11 ~ Whitehorse

Hosted by the Yukon Government to discuss operations at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter following the April 2024 Coroner's Inquest into the deaths at the shelter of Cassandra Warville, Myranda Tizya-Charlie, Josephine Hager, and Darla Skookum between 2022 and 2023.

Chief Frost emphasized the need to learn from shelter users and to improve information sharing on operations, oversight and accountability. Additional leadership meetings to discuss these issues will be hosted by the Yukon Government.

Federal Election 2025 and Federal Engagement Strategy

VGFN sent a congratulatory letter on May 6 to the newly elected Prime Minister Mark Carney that included an invitation to visit Old Crow.

VGFN is developing a Federal Engagement Strategy to follow up on the key priority areas that we have identified for re-elected Yukon MP Brendan Hanley and the Prime Minister.

Pre-election Letters to Candidates: Outlining Priorities

Before the Federal Election in April, VGFN Council sent letters to the four Yukon candidates in 2025 Federal Election. Below is a summary of the priorities raised with the four candidates.

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 language, infrastructure, and land stewardship.

This is key to building a strong future for our Nation and community.





SECTION 1

D. Update on Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit—The Sacred Place Where Life Begins

Supporters for protection of *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* in the U.S. Congress are once again introducing a bill to make the Coastal Plain official wilderness under U.S. law.

While this legislation has been introduced many times before and is unlikely to pass in the current Congress, it's still an important step to show continued support for protecting the Refuge. At the same time, there is growing concern about efforts in Congress to allow more oil and gas leasing in the Refuge.

These efforts may use a special process called budget reconciliation, which allows certain decisions to pass with just 51 votes instead of the usual 60. This same process was used in 2017 to open the Refuge for drilling, and it may be used again to mandate new lease sales as part of a broader budget plan.

VGFN is closely monitoring the situation and preparing to support amendments that would stop this from happening. In addition, more than 350,000 acres of leases in the Coastal Plain were recently reinstated by U.S. courts.

The next likely step is seismic exploration in winter 2025–2026. This would require several permits and approvals—some of which include opportunities for public input.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has said it will fast-track permitting for oil and gas development as part of a national energy strategy. This push is tied to a broader U.S. policy response to a declared National Energy Emergency, which may speed up energy development across the country, including in the Arctic Refuge.

There is growing pressure to drill in the Refuge, even though previous lease sales brought in far less revenue than expected and faced strong opposition.

VGFN is working with the Gwich'in Steering Committee and other partners, and advocacy groups are preparing messages and social media materials to raise awareness and push back against false claims that drilling will benefit the U.S. economy.

While this remains a challenging time politically, these actions—both in Congress and on the ground—are important steps to continue protecting the Arctic Refuge. The Gwich'in remain united in defending Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit as part of our identity, culture, and responsibility to future generations.

Elizabeth Staples, Caribou Coordinator

Section 2. Executive Office

SECTION 2

A. Message from Executive Director Ken Kyikavichik

Drin Gwiinzii,

My name is Ken Kyikavichik. In March of this year, I was hired as the Executive Director of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

It is an honour to join the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Since March, I have been working to get to know our Directors and Managers, and the programs and services VGFN provides for Citizens and the community. I have also been reviewing the departmental structure to identify potential changes so that we can better serve Citizens.

You may have seen a recent posting for an Associate Executive Director. The new Associate Executive Director will oversee the programs and services we offer in the areas of Community Safety and Preparedness, Education, Health and Social Services, Recreation, Government Services, Natural Resources, and Heritage.

I will continue to support Chief and Council and oversee the Executive Office team—Enrolment, Communications, Human Resources, and Policy—and the Finance department.

We look forward to informing Citizens and the community of the great work that our team is doing through this newsletter, which will be published regularly this year. Communication of our activities in different formats will be a key objective for our team this year.

We recently coordinated three important events in Old Crow: Wellness Week and Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days) from May 12 to 18; and a visit by the United States Consul General Jim DeHart on May 29. The Consul General's visit was an opportunity for leadership to communicate our government's priorities and our concerns about issues such as Vadzaih, Arctic Sovereignty and Cross-border Mobility with the United States.

I have an open-door policy. Many of you have already stopped by my office to share food, stories, advice and any issues or questions you may have for the government of the VGFN.

Being a relative newcomer to Old Crow, I have found that sitting down for a direct discussion is the best way for me to learn what is happening in the community and to understand how people are doing. I work at the pleasure of Chief and Council and Citizens, and I look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead!

Haii',

Ken Kyikavichik, Executive Director

SECTION 2

B. Community Safety and Preparedness

Community Safety Plan

House of Wolf presented a Community Safety Assessment and five-year strategic plan on community safety to Council in March.

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 to name a few.



Spring Break-Up Planning, Preparation and Response

In March and April, work began on preparations for spring break-up. This included reviewing and finalizing the Flood Preparation and Response Plan with the Government of Yukon to ensure that the community was prepared for a potential flooding.

In early May, Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr. shared a message to the community that emphasized the importance of working together as a community and in partnership with the Yukon Government's emergency management team. The message also pointed to the long history of Vuntut Gwitchin resilience and knowledge in response to flooding.

“By working together and supporting each other,” he said, “we will get through whatever break-up brings—just like we always have—and we will celebrate Vahzaih Choo Drin together once again.”

In the following weeks, VGFN staff from various departments worked with Yukon emergency staff on a range of activities, including installing tiger dams around key buildings at risk and setting up the Emergency Operations Centre at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School. Throughout the month, regular updates were posted on Facebook and around town to keep the community informed and ready for the river break-up.

Community Flooding

On May 23, around 4:00 a.m., an ice jam caused water levels to rise quickly in the southern part of Old Crow. In response, residents in the affected area were evacuated to the Reception Centre at Chief Zzeh Gittlit School.

VGFN shared updates throughout the event on Facebook, including water level readings, photos, and River Watch observations.

The response was coordinated under a Unified Command with Yukon Government, operating out of the Reception Centre.

Despite the high water, no major damage occurred, and the situation was well managed.

After the river broke fully later that day and water levels dropped, VGFN used its Facebook page to share updates on cleanup and safety, thank responders and residents, and remind people to document any damage.

Posts highlighted the community's resilience and expressed appreciation for the work of VGFN staff, the participation of residents, and the support provided by Yukon Government emergency staff.



SECTION 2

C. Human Resources

A warm welcome to New Staff who joined VGFN from March to May!

Ken Kyikavichik, Executive Director

Ken Kyikavichik joined VGFN in March as Executive Director. Raised in Inuvik and Teet'it Zheh (Fort McPherson), Ken's mother is Ellen Smith, and his grandparents were the late Peter and Mary Kyikavichik (Kay) of Teet'it Zheh.

Ken was Grand Chief of the Gwich'in Tribal Council between 2020-2024. He is a member of the Teet'it Gwich'in Band Council (Fort McPherson) and has served on the Gwich'in Settlement Corporation for 4 years between 2016 and 2020 in the roles of Chair and Vice Chair. Ken holds a Bachelor of Management from the University of Lethbridge.

Ellen Kyikavichik, Community Mental Wellness and Addictions Outreach Support Worker

Ellen Kyikavichik joined the Health, Social Services and Recreation Department in March as the Community Mental Wellness and Addictions Outreach Support Worker. Ellen was born and raised in Whitehorse, and her grandparents are the late Sarah Tizya and John Joe Kyikavichik.

Ellen brings a deep personal understanding, empathy and insight to the role of the Community Mental Wellness and Addictions Outreach Support Worker. Her primary goal is to support Citizens who are themselves supporting family and friends overcome addictions, and to help people find their true purpose.

"We each have our own story, and I openly share my story to those who seek it." —*Ellen Kyikavichik*

Katriel Villacorta, Justice Coordinator and Indigenous Court Worker

After graduating from the Indigenous Governance program at Yukon University, Katriel began working as a Justice Support Worker with VGFN. She quickly realized her passion for Restorative Justice.

Since January of this year, Katriel Villacorta has been the Acting Justice Coordinator and Indigenous Court Worker. In May, Katriel assumed this position permanently.

Congratulations Katriel!

Katriel is currently studying Restorative Justice through Simon Fraser University. She is passionate about implementing a Restorative Justice program at VGFN in the near future. The court worker position has shown her how she can use her voice to advocate for Citizens, help the Court better understand the community of Old Crow, and what services Justices can provide to better serve the community.

"Justice is at the core of all our Agreements. I look forward to the day when we fully decolonize the frameworks of Justice in our community; draw down our Administration of Justice; and exercise our own courts, inherent laws, and traditional ways of conflict resolution. I'm honored to serve our community through this important work." —*Katriel Villacorta*

Kathie Nukon, Language Mentor

Kathie Nukon joined the Natural Resources and Heritage Department as the Language Mentor in March. Kathie has a passion for her Gwich'in language and is already mentoring every day. Kathie looks forward to contributing to upcoming language programs as well.

Aidan Kyikavichik, Lands Technician

Aidan Kyikavichik joined the Natural Resources and Heritage Department in March as the Lands Technician. Aidan is from Old Crow and a VGFN Citizen. He was born in Whitehorse and lived in Old Crow as a child. He attended ILC school in Whitehorse, graduated grade 12 and is now living in Old Crow.

Abdou Diop, IT Support Specialist

Abdou Diop joined the Government Services Department in April as Information Technology (IT) Support Specialist.

Born in Senegal, West Africa, Abdou moved to Canada at a young age and graduated at CDI College in Montreal with Honours in 2017. After graduation, Abdou began working at VC3 in Edmonton, where he occupied several positions, including IT Analyst and Senior Deployment Specialist.

SECTION 2

D. Policy

Policy continues to support VGFN through policy development, research, and policy and legislative interpretation. Policy and Communications staff are also working on a plan to create short user-friendly summaries of all VGFN policies that can be read and downloaded from the VGFN website.

Water and Fuel Delivery and Sewage Transportation Policy

To read the full Water and Fuel Delivery and Sewage Transportation Policy, visit the Policy section of the Library on the VGFN website at [vgfn.ca/policies](https://www.vgfn.ca/policies). Earlier this year, Chief and Council approved the *Water and Fuel Delivery and*

Sewage Transportation Policy. Its purpose is to ensure residents receive consistent and fair water and fuel delivery and sewage transportation services and are informed of the requirements to receive service delivery.

As part of the policy, the Government Services Department has created a schedule so that residents can know when to expect water and sewage service Fuel Delivery and Sewage service delivery. To help make sure services happen on time, residents are asked to keep access to their tanks and sewage pump-out areas clear. This means removing things like snow, ice, mud, vehicles, and other items from the area.

To read and download the *Water and Fuel Delivery and Sewage Transportation Policy* in full, visit <https://www.vgfn.ca/policies>.

SECTION 2

E. Committees

Advisory Committee of Elders Meetings

The Advisory Committee of Elders meets once per month or at their discretion as outlined in its revised Terms of Reference. Chief and Council may request additional meetings of the Advisory Committee of Elders when seeking specific advice or recommendations.

March 25, 2025

At this meeting of the Advisory Committee of Elders, key topics of discussion included an overview of the amendments to the Committee's Terms of Reference, a Council Update, and a discussion about the political climate in Old Crow and at the Territorial, Federal and International levels.

Action items for follow-up included inviting the newly elected Prime Minister to visit Old Crow, which was sent in May.

April 25, 2025

Key topics of discussion included a Council Update, Wellness Week and Caribou Days, ongoing flood preparation and the location of the Old Crow airport. The Committee advised on the importance of including Elders in Wellness Week to teach culture and language and suggested identifying youth role models to participate.

Enrollment Committee Meetings

April 23, 2025

The Enrollment Committee met and reviewed 16 enrolment applications. One application was put on hold while waiting for more information. Some approved applications are still waiting on signatures, birth certificates, or proof of withdrawal from enrolment with other First Nations.

Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee Meeting

April 10, 2025

The Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee met in Old Crow. Discussion included planning for an in-person meeting to do a walk through of the Constitution to identify and engagement planning.

Section 3. Special Events



SECTION 3

A. Wellness Week 2025

Held from May 12 to 15, this year's Wellness Week brought together Elders, youth, and community members in a powerful celebration of healing, culture, and connection.

Organized around the themes of spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical wellness, the week focused on sharing traditional knowledge, relationships, and uplifting the community through Gwich'in teachings and practices.

The week opened with prayer and ceremony, including a smudge, fire feeding, and reflections from Council, Elders, and youth. Activities like

drum song circles with Randall Tetlich and energy healing talks helped set a spiritual tone. Throughout the week, Elders led sessions on traditional law, spirituality, medicine, weather, and relationships—offering youth and adults a chance to learn and reflect.

Hands-on cultural workshops included hide tanning, bone grease making, and chitsuu (dry fish) preparation, with outdoor cooking and muskrat skinning demonstrations drawing strong interest from participants.

Evenings were filled with laughter and music, with games, dancing, and gratitude circles fostering community joy and unity. Highlights included the pie contest, a BBQ hosted by the Conservation Officer, and the final sharing circle where Elders and youth came together to express a shared vision for the future.

Wellness Week 2025 was a beautiful reminder of the strength and resilience of Vuntut Gwitchin people—rooted in land, culture, and community.





SECTION 3

B. Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days)

From May 16 to 18, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation came together to celebrate Vadzaih Choo Drin (Caribou Days), a cherished annual gathering honouring the cultural and spiritual importance of the Porcupine caribou. The weekend was filled with games, knowledge sharing, traditional practices, and joyful community connection—all focused on celebrating Vadzaih and protecting their future.

Friday opened with lively morning games like dart throw, gunny sack races, and berry picking. The afternoon featured culturally important events such as caribou skinning demonstrations, muskrat skinning, and a team caribou-cutting challenge. The evening lit up with the Teetl'it Dancers, a traditional fashion show, and a crowd-pleasing jigging contest, celebrating both heritage and humour.

Saturday focused on caribou conservation and advocacy, with updates from the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and partners like the Gwich'in Steering Committee and CPAWS Yukon.



The morning discussions built understanding of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins) and inspired collective action to protect it.

Sunday brought more family games, a climate and land panel, and a community chili contest followed by a talent show featuring singing, fiddling, and skits. The weekend closed with a gratitude circle, music, and dancing, leaving hearts full and spirits strong.

Caribou Days 2025 reminded all in attendance—near and far—of the deep connection between VGFN and the land, the power of unity, and the importance of protecting what is sacred for generations to come.





Section 4. Departments

SECTION 4

A. Education

Early Learning Program

We are working on licencing for the day home and after will be posting for an Early Learning Manager in the near future.

Post-secondary Education Financial Assistance

The Education Department and the Policy team have produced a new post-secondary education financial assistance policy to improve how support is provided to VGFN students. The policy has been approved by Council and will be posted on the website in June 2025.

VGFN High School Students Edmonton Trip

Education Support Worker Glenna Tetlich and Heritage Manager Megan Williams travelled with a group of VGFN high school students to Edmonton to tour universities for a week in March. Students also participated in a youth conference during the trip.

Spring Culture Camp Year 3: Traditions, Arts and Trades

VGFN and Chief Zzeh Gittlit School collaborated to deliver the Spring Culture Camp out at Whitefish Lake in late March and early April. The theme of this year's camp was Traditions, Arts, and Trades.

Activities included small engine repair, trapping, camp cook competition, Gwich'in butchering and dry meat making, painting, sewing/beading, storytelling, and making traditional medicine. Older students participated from March 24 to 28, while younger students were at camp from March 31 to April 2.

A big Haii' Choo to Florence Netro who worked as lead coordinator for both camps, Renee Charlie who worked as the camp cook, and to the Natural Resources and Heritage department staff for much needed support for transportation and equipment.

Many Elders and community members also generously contributed their time and wisdom in a variety of ways, helping to ensure Culture Camp was a safe and meaningful learning experience that was rich in Gwich'in culture.

Micah Quinn, Education Director





SECTION 4

B. Finance

In March, the Finance Director worked with VGFN Directors and Managers to compile and submitted the final budget for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2026, and worked with Council to prepare the First Appropriation Act 2025–2026.

Following the First Reading on March 3 and the Second Reading on March 20, 2025, Council approved the First Appropriation Act 2025-2026, which came into force on April 1, 2025.

In March, the Finance Department staff processed transactions for the last month of Fiscal Year 2024-2025; compiled and presented the new fiscal budget developed by each Department; coordinated and provided virtual training for financial software; and set up new automated Accounts Payable software that was implemented in April and May.

In April, the staff processed year-end fiscal transactions; rolled over to the new fiscal year with files and new budget; implemented the new automated Accounts Payable software; completed in-person software training and began preparing for the 2025 fiscal year audit.

Ronda Jordan, Finance Director

SECTION 4

C. Government Services

Information Technology (IT)

Making IT Work Better for Everyone

Over the past few months, IT has been working behind the scenes to make our computer systems more reliable, secure, and user-friendly.

Sarah Abel-Chitze Administration Building Network Mapping

We finished a full “map” of the network in the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building, so we know exactly how all the computers, phones, printers, and other devices are connected. This will ensure IT can fix problems more easily.

Preparing for a Full Network Upgrade

We are preparing for a full network refresh in the fall by checking what’s working, what needs fixing, and what’s missing. When the network has been fully updated, our staff will notice several big improvements, including faster internet with fewer slowdowns; stronger connections for phone calls and video meetings; support for new tools and technology; and better security.

These and other improvements planned for this year are about more than technology—they are intended to help staff serve Citizens better. Thanks for your patience as we make these improvements. If you have any questions or suggestions relating to our IT services or infrastructure, please reach out!

Abdou Diop, IT Support Specialist

SECTION 4

D. Health and Social**Wills and Benefits**

Nine Citizens took advantage of free wills and benefits sessions offered by Whitehorse-based lawyer Caroline Grady on April 24 and 25 at the Victoria Blake Elders Home.

More sessions are planned for early July in Old Crow along with other opportunities for Citizens to get this service completed in Whitehorse in early fall.

Justice

You may have noticed a few extra forms with your notice of court date papers in your mailbox. These forms are part of intake which sets you up with legal help and support while you're dealing with the justice system or if you're in custody.

Filling out these forms makes it easier for the Court Worker to contact you, talk to supports, your lawyer, and the courts on your behalf, as well as making sure your personal information stays safe and confidential. Nothing is shared without your signed consent. It's important to fill these forms out and return them to the Justice Coordinator.

If you're not sure how to fill them out, please stop by my office at the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building in Old Crow or contact me. I'd be happy to go through them with you. If you have any questions about the forms or your legal situation, my door is always open.

Katriel Villacorta, Justice Coordinator

Knowledge Keepers: Recovery and Aftercare Training Weekend

In April, the staff of the Knowledge Keeper Project offered a Recovery and Aftercare Training Weekend at the Darius Elias Community Hall. The event was 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.

Participation was open to all community members, including those in recovery or who have been in the past; as well as those living with a partner, family member or friend who has been in recovery, or are interested to learn more about recovery and aftercare. Through listening to recovery stories and traditional teachings shared by Elders, talking about community and individual needs, this weekend was a step toward better recovery and aftercare programs and services in Old Crow.

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. Actually, everyone is welcome to attend!

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.

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 | gnetro@outlook.ca

Todd Pryor, VGFN Manager of Mental Wellness
(867) 457-8051 | todd.pryor@vgfn.ca

Posted April 2, 2023

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

SECTION 4

E. Recreation



Easter Weekend

Events held during Easter Weekend were a success and appreciated by families. It was nice to see the kids having fun. It was a great continuation from the Ski Loppet into the music and then fiddle. A big thanks to the Natural Resources and Heritage Department for providing the meat, and to the musicians Johnny Landry, Henry Nukon, Boyd Benjamin and Kevin Barr, who performed at the Darius Elias Community Hall over the weekend.

We are at a very basic level of planning for the summer programs and that will be mostly focused on the land.

Activities will include youth and Elders hunting trips, Canoe trips, Camping and other fun activities. We are also in the process of

registering Old Crow as a club Biathlon Yukon, which we hope will increase participation in various provincial and national level biathlon events.

Father Mouchet Ski Loppet

The Father Mouchet Ski Loppet took place in April over the Easter weekend. There was the visit of long-time ski coach and trail builder Gary Bailie with his granddaughter Essence, as well as Olympic and international skiers Knute Johnsgaard and Sasha Masson.

Together with VGFN Citizen and staff member Glenna Tetlich, the group devoted significant time to ensure the event was successful and fun for all participants.

Rony Chakraborty, Events and Recreation Manager

SECTION 4

F. Natural Resources

Oil and Gas Update

The Natural Resources Department continues to monitor the status of Chance Oil and Gas Limited's proposed exploration project in the Traditional Territory.

Our priority is to ensure Chance Oil and Gas respects VGFN's rights, and we will continue to protect VGFN Traditional Territory, including the winter range of the Porcupine Caribou.

Chance has indicated they plan to resubmit their proposal with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB), but no new activity or interactions with VGFN have occurred since the fall.

Energy

Sree Vyaa

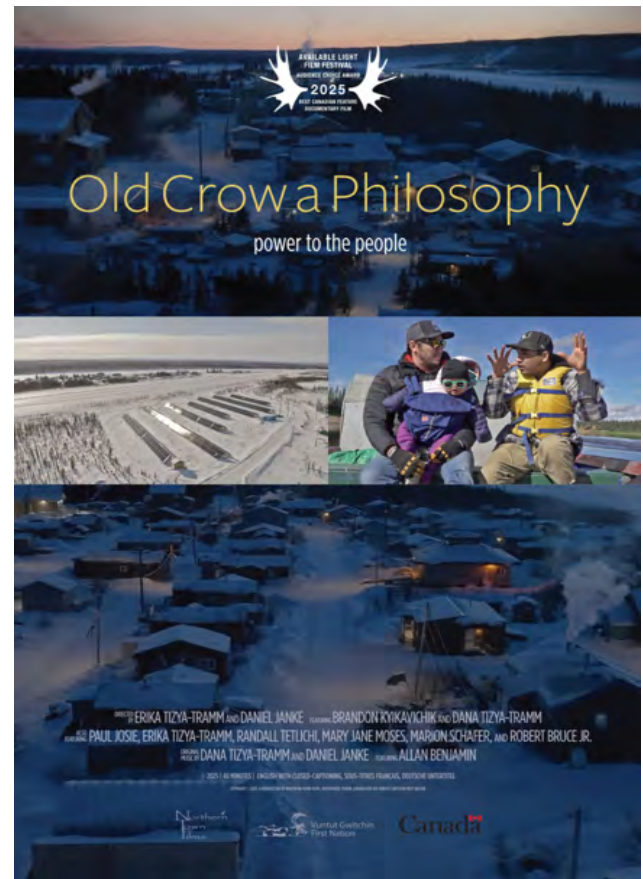
Sree Vyaa officially started gathering renewable energy in early February. In February and March, approximately 32,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity were produced and purchased by ATCO—about the amount of electricity needed to power all the homes in Old Crow for a month.

Community Energy Audits

During audits in February by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers, we discovered a few inconsistencies with the data collected and are working towards resolving them.

We are still waiting for the final ASHRAE audit reports, which will help guide energy efficiency goals and consumption for VGFN buildings. During the audits, we also performed energy audits on homes and assessed vacant houses due for renovations.

Old Crow: A Philosophy Film



We are gearing up the film Old Crow a Philosophy for a film festival tour circuit. More to come on this exciting project. The “Old Crow A Philosophy” film is touring Yukon film festivals.

William Linklater, Senior Energy Analyst

Fish and Wildlife

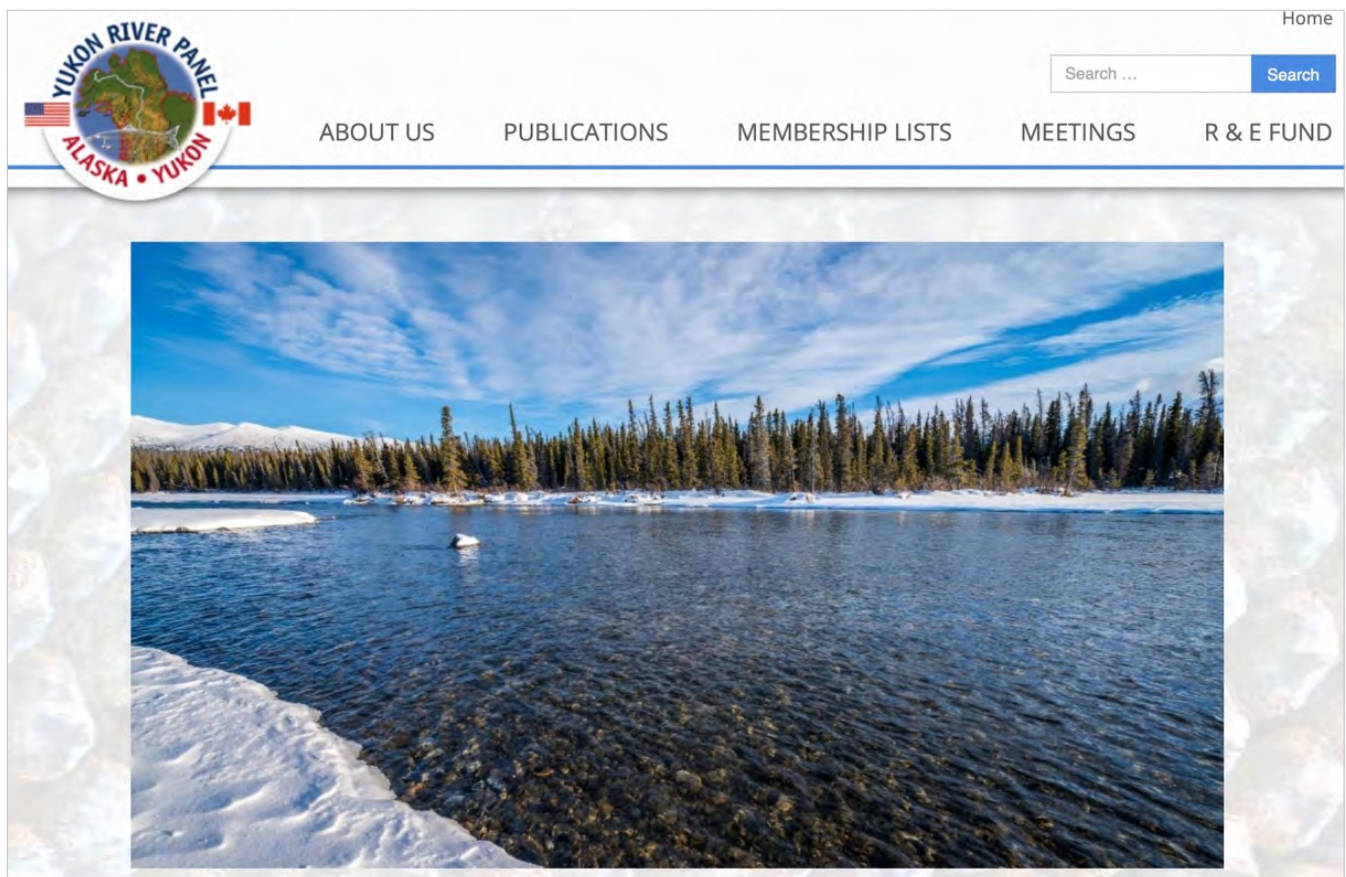
Yukon River Panel Pre-season Meeting

Dawson City and Online, April 7-10

The 2025 Yukon River Panel Pre-Season meeting was held between April 7 and April 10, and the Public Sessions were held on April 9-10. The Porcupine River representatives on the Yukon River Panel are Stanley Njootli Sr. and Elizabeth MacDonald. VGFN's First Nation Advisor to the Panel is Jeffrey Peter, and Chief Frost is also a Panel member nominated by Canada.

This year the forecasts are critically low for both Chinook and chum on the Porcupine and Yukon Rivers. No fishing opportunities are forecasted to be available for either subsistence fishers in Alaska or First Nation fishers in the Yukon.

VGFN confirmed that it will receive funding for the project "Fishing Branch chum salmon restoration trial," while our second project "Fishing Branch River Chum Spawning and Seasonal Dewatering" will have to wait until July or August before we hear whether it is funded.



Traditional Pursuits Program

The department accepted applications for Traditional Pursuits at the Old Crow office between April 14 and 25, and at the Whitehorse Waterfront office between May 1 and 7. In total, we received 37 Household Traditional Pursuits applications, and one Youth Traditional Pursuits application. Of these, 33 household applications and the youth application were accepted.

The dates for the Fall Traditional Pursuits application period in the Crow and Whitehorse will be announced later in the summer.

Premium Fur Program

The first round of VGFN's Premium Fur Program was completed on April 25. We received 144 furs from VGFN trappers.

We are now looking for tanners in Old Crow who would be interested in being paid to tan marten, fox, wolf, wolverine, and lynx fur. Once these furs are tanned, we plan to share them with VGFN crafters. If you are interested in tanning, please contact Katherine Peter at the Natural Resources and Heritage office in Old Crow.

Trapper and Firearms Courses

In April, the Natural Resources and Heritage department hired Ryan Sealy to teach the Trapper Training Course in Old Crow.

Seven community members successfully completed the course held at the Darius Elias Community Hall. We look forward to seeing more people out trapping in the coming year.

We also hosted Mark Yourkevich, who ran three Canadian Firearms Safety Courses at the Yukon University Alice Frost Community Campus.

Several community members completed their Possession and Acquisition License applications, and twenty people successfully completed the courses!



Mark Yourkevich teaching the firearms course at the , who ran three Canadian Firearms Safety Courses in one of the classrooms (see below) at the Alice Frost Community Campus.



SECTION 4

G. Heritage

Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (the Gwich'in Language)

I completed VGFN's Language Specialist, completed my Mentor Apprentice Program with the Yukon Native Language Centre in Whitehorse in March. I worked with Stanley Njootli Sr., Jane Montgomery and Kathie Nukon to learn language through immersion. The program ended but I still plan to continue the mentorship and speaking relationship.

Kathie came on as a Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu Language Mentor and it has been a pleasure working with her. Kathie and I participated in a Mentor Apprentice Train-the-Trainer workshop in Whitehorse. I believe this would be a good program for intermediate speakers in the community.

We are pleased that Joelle Charlie joined the team as the Beginner Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (Gwich'in) Teacher. Joelle will be offering courses to beginner learners. I will provide support to this role as well.

Sophia Flather, Language Specialist

Lands

In March, a crew working for Natural Resources and Heritage completed FireSmart work of a 1.1-hectare plot on the west side of the ski lodge road in March to help safeguard Old Crow from potential risks of wildfire. We expect to conduct additional work in the summer/fall this year to continue to protect the community.

Aidan Kyikavichik was recently hired as the Lands Technician. Over the coming months, we will work together to strengthen community connections to different Protected Areas within our Traditional Territory. Aidan is currently organizing on-the-land programming, specifically in Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park in the Summit Lake/Bell River area.

VGFN Protected Areas

Vuntut National Park, designated under Canada's National Parks Act; Fishing Branch Ecological Reserve, designated under Yukon's Parks Act; and the Old Crow Flats Special Management Area, which is managed in accordance with an agreed-to Management Plan.

VGFN is organizing a trip that will bring Citizens together, provide an opportunity to share knowledge, and to discuss the responsibility we have to care for and respect the land and water for future generations. We will continue to work with Citizens, as well as other agencies to achieve our long-term conservation and cultural objectives.

If you're interested in sharing your knowledge of this area, or ideas on how we could better create connections to these special places, please come visit us at our office in the John Tiyza Center.

Christine Creyke, Lands Manager

Section 5. Council Resolutions Passed from March to May, 2025

PASSED MARCH 5, 2025:

13. Self-Government Financial Transfer Agreement Amendments (CO2025-13)

This resolution approves updates to its agreement with Canada to receive more funding for climate protection, school food programs, youth mental health, housing, health care, violence prevention, post-secondary support, and language revitalization.

14. Amendment to the Advisory Committee of Elders Terms of Reference (CO2025-14)

This resolution approves changes to clarify the role of the Elders' committee and renamed it the Advisory Committee of Elders.

15. Appointment of Executive Director (CO2025-15)

This resolution appoints Kenneth Kyikavichik as the new Executive Director, replacing Rodney D'Abramo who was acting in the role since December 2024.

16. Bank Signing Authority (CO2025-16)

This resolution updates who has authority to sign cheques and manage VGFN funds, replacing a previous resolution.

17. VGFN Council Vacancy and By-election (CO2025-17)

This resolution calls a By-election to fill vacant Councillor positions.

18. Council Leadership on the Traditional Territory (CO2025-18)

This resolution appoints Councillor Reti as interim Deputy Chief, ensuring leadership is present on the Traditional Territory.

19. Purchase of Cabin from Citizen (Resolution CO2025-19)

This resolution approves the purchase of a cabin to support Land Guardian activities.

PASSED MARCH 27, 2025:

20. Removal from Office (CO2025-20)

This resolution removes Councillor Crystal Linklater from office.

21. First Appropriation Act 2025-2026 (CO2025-21).

This resolution approves the budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

PASSED APRIL 4, 2025:

22. Authorization to Sign Sun Life Indemnity (CO2025-22)

This resolution provides authorization for the Chief and Executive Director to sign a Sun Life Indemnity form.

23. Victoria Blake Elders Home Loan Lump-Sum Payment and Loan Renewal (CO2025-23)

This resolution approves a \$3 million payment, and a one-year fixed interest loan included in the VGFN First Appropriation Act 2025-2026 approved by Council in March.

24. Council Salary Table for Fiscal Year 2025–26 (CO2025-24)

This resolution sets salaries for the Chief, Deputy Chief, and Councillors for the current fiscal year.

PASSED MAY 14, 2025:

25. Appointment of Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officer (CO2025-25)

This resolution appointed Tanya Silverfox as Returning Officer and Linda Netro as Assistant Returning Officer for 2025 by-election.

26. Appointments to the Constitution Review and Legislation Development Committee (CO2025-26)

This resolution appointed Kris Statnyk to the Constitution Review and Legislative Development Committee.

PASSED MAY 25, 2025:

27. Response to Flooding in Old Crow (CO2025-27)

This resolution authorizes the Administration to spend on required flood response activities and directs VGFN to seek recovery funding from government agencies.

28. Bank Signing Authority (CO2025-28)

This resolution updates who has authority to sign cheques and manage VGFN funds, replacing Resolution CO2025-16.

Section 6. Contact Us

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. Mahsi' cho for your continued involvement and support!

Visit our website comments page: 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.

Contact us by email, phone or regular mail, or drop by our offices during regular office hours, which are Monday to Friday, 9 am to 4:30 pm.

Our Offices

Old Crow

Sarah Abel Chitze Building

Main Reception

reception@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 0

Mailing Address:

PO Box 94, Old Crow,
Yukon, Canada, Y0B 1N0

Whitehorse

Hanson Street Office

Office Contact:

Dorothy Thomas
Citizens Advocate and
Administrative Assistant
dorothy.thomas@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 294

Mailing Address:

508 3A Hanson Street,
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1Z 1Z1 Canada

Whitehorse

Waterfront Office

Office Contact:

Family Support Worker
Linda Netro (she, her)
linda.netro@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 290

Mailing Address:

2237 Second Avenue, Suite 220
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 0K7 Canada

Chief and Council

Chief Pauline Frost

pauline.frost@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 240

Deputy Chief Harold Frost Jr.

haroldjr.frost@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 230

Councillor Debra-Leigh Reti

debra-leigh.reti@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 231

Executive Director

Ken Kyikavichik

Executive Director
ken.kyikavichik@vgfn.ca
(867) 966-3261, ext. 234

March to May 2025 Newsletter
Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation



Vuntut Gwitchin
First Nation