



NEWS RELEASE

April 21, 2026 - Old Crow, Yukon

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation advances stewardship and protected areas work through on-the-land initiative

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) continues to exercise its responsibility to care for and steward its traditional territory through work supporting protected areas and future youth programming.

As part of Canada Nature funding received through the Yukon Government, VGFN's Natural Resources Department has been working with community members to strengthen connections to protected areas and identify opportunities for Citizens to spend time on the land learning from experienced knowledge holders.

In March 2026, members of the Natural Resources Department and Teechik Guardians program undertook a multi-day snowmobile trip to transport canoes and equipment toward Summit Lake, laying the groundwork for a youth canoe trip planned for late summer 2026 in Dàadzàii Vàn Territorial Park. Due to high demand on aircraft resources during wildfire season, transporting canoes and equipment by air was not feasible. The team developed an alternative approach, hauling canoes and supplies more than 250 kilometres along the Porcupine and Bell River systems by snowmobile in temperatures reaching -40°C.

Despite challenging trail conditions, overflow water, and extreme cold, the group successfully positioned the canoes near the headwaters of the Little Bell River. Along the way, a moose was harvested for the Elder and Youth Gathering on April 8 & 9, 2026 in Old Crow, reinforcing the connection between land-based work and community wellbeing.

The Nation acknowledges the leadership, skill, and dedication of those who participated in the trip, including Lance Nagwan, Aidan Kyikavichik, Karl Hogue, Stan Njootli Jr., Robert Linklater, and Dean Kapuschak, along with additional Guardians who supported logistics along the route.

Initiatives like this strengthen capacity to implement protected areas in ways that reflect Gwich'in values and priorities, while creating meaningful opportunities for youth to build relationships with the land.

The VGFN remains committed to advancing conservation approaches that reflect Indigenous governance, respect traditional knowledge systems, and support future generations in maintaining strong connections to the land.

Planning is underway for a youth canoe trip to Summit Lake in August or September 2026, which will provide opportunities for young people to learn directly from knowledge holders while experiencing protected areas within VGFN traditional territory.



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The Teechik Guardians program plays an important role in monitoring and stewarding VGFN traditional territory while supporting knowledge sharing between generations. Time spent on the land strengthens shared understanding and helps ensure decisions related to conservation are grounded in lived experience, cultural values and direct observation. Through initiatives like this, VGFN continues to advance stewardship and land-based learning grounded in culture, responsibility, and self-determination.

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