

## Letter from the Interim Executive Director

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

Shozrè Melissa Flynn, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in eycha Kwanlin Dun dichè. I am thrilled to be joining your teams in this supportive role as the Interim Executive Director for Yukon's newly formed First Nation School Board. I have been the Han language teacher at Robert Service School since 2008 and a member of the Administration team there since 2017.

You're receiving this newsletter as your child attends one of the 8 public schools that will be operated by the new First Nation School Board (FNSB) commencing with the 2022-23 school year. As this is the first newsletter of many more to come, I'm thrilled to introduce the **Interim Governance Committee (IGC)—a group carrying out the work of the FNSB until trustees are elected in November**— as well as myself, share some news, and tell you how excited we are to get to know you and start building relationships.

The FNSB was established in February 2022, through a series of school-attendance area referenda, enabling Yukon First Nations to assume shared authority with Government of Yukon in the delivery of public-school education in the territory. Board-run schools will continue to follow the BC Curriculum, but will tailor the programming, lesson delivery and assessment methodology to reflect Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

These schools are for all Yukon students and aim to promote reconciliation by enhancing a Yukon First Nations model that puts the student first, through a strength-based, community-centered approach. Equally, all teachers are welcome at these schools and will be supported by the Board to adapt their strengths and thrive within the new pedagogy. We aim to authentically work with the community to make student-

centered decisions for the up-coming year, utilizing Community Committees and Parent Advisory Committees, that will be established shortly after the board trustees are elected in November.

We're excited to gradually introduce changes at our 8 schools, supporting school teams in the transition to local ways of knowing and doing in the delivery of the BC curriculum while enhancing academic excellence. This spring, we are meeting with the school teams at our 8 schools and look forward to supporting them to provide your children the best possible learning environment.



I look forward to working with you,

Melissa Flynn  
[ed@fnsb.ca](mailto:ed@fnsb.ca)

New Email!

## Meet your Interim Governance Committee

The following people were appointed to the Interim Governance Committee by the Minister of Education to assume the work and responsibilities of launching the First Nation School Board until trustee elections are completed this November. This ensures a successful start to the school year for schools moving to the new school board. The IGC will dissolve after the five trustees are elected in November.



Dr. Alyce Johnson, PhD, is a Kluane First Nation Elder and former principal of Kluane Lake School. She holds a PhD in Indigenous Studies from Trent University and in 1973, was a youth signatory to *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*.



Erin Pauls, is a former school teacher who won the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence for her work as director of Dusk'a Headstart Preschool. A member of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and currently their Director of Education.



Jocelyn Joe-Strack, an Indigenous scientist, philosopher, entrepreneur, and member of Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. Currently the Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge with Yukon University.



Mark Wedge, a Carcross/Tagish First Nation Elder and former chief. Mark has held, and currently holds, many leadership roles focused on education, and economic & social development.



Melanie Bennett, life-long educator and former school principal, member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, and current Executive Director of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.



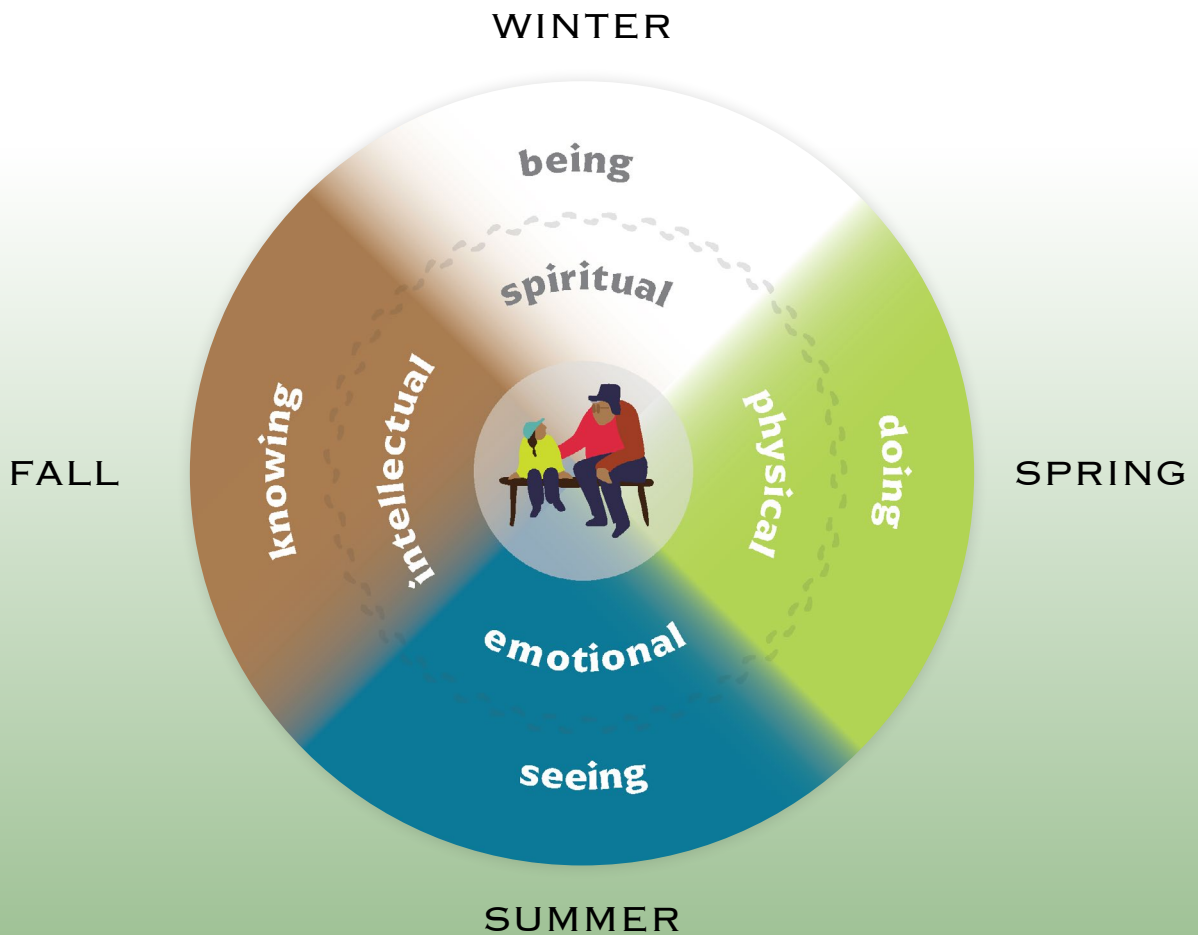
Kirk Cameron, Chair of the IGC, is a governance consultant, Whitehorse City Councilor, and former Deputy Minister and senior bureaucrat.

## First Nation School Board Trustees Election

Yukon School Board Trustee election (for both FNSB and the French School Board CSFY) will take place this fall, with nominations held in October and voting finalized in November. There will be **five** trustee positions filled. Eligible nominees must be 18+ and a Canadian citizen who is **either** a Yukon First Nations citizen with connection to an ancestral language (one of 8 YFN languages) **AND/OR** be a parent/caregiver of a student attending a FNSB-run school.



Photos: Alistair Maitland



The Interim Governance Committee (IGC) developed this workplan graphic to communicate the overarching themes that underlie the work of the First Nation School Board. The circle shape reminds us to “Remember wholeness in education” at all times including the necessary balance of intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional elements. Central to the FNSB pedagogy, the child and family are always at the

center of all decisions. The footsteps represent our aspirations for our children to walk through the journey of education in balance, as whole individuals, supported by the FNSB. Knowing, Being, Doing and Seeing, speak to our adherence to a Yukon First Nations worldview. The seasonal round holds the graphic together to reiterate that “We come from place” and our lives are connected to the land.



# FAQ First Nation School Board

## Q. Why is the First Nation School Board important?

Every child matters. The Yukon's First Nation School Board is critical to producing better outcomes for Yukon First Nations students while also benefitting every Yukon student it serves. There are significant problems with the current delivery of education in the territory. This is an opportunity to change the system and do better for our students.

It is clearly laid out in our Final Agreements that Yukon First Nations require involvement in public schools. Many First Nations are excited and have the capacity to partner and participate. Others are less involved, for now. The new School Board provides a bridge between Yukon First Nations and our public schools, which will only strengthen and fortify over time.

## Q. What does education through the lens of a First Nations worldview look like at FNSB schools?

In general, First Nations methods and practices of teaching (pedagogy) incorporate Indigenous worldviews into engagement with subjects like Math, Science, or Social Studies, often through land-based cultural activities, Ceremony and Elder engagement, and immersion in First Nations languages. First Nations values of respect, collaboration and kindness are central. The advantages of learning from two worldviews equip students to be rooted in the culture of their homeland and prepared for the modern world.

The specifics of how this will look at our 8 FNSB Schools will be determined once the trustees of the Board are elected in November 2022 – and will be shaped by the needs and input from the local First Nation and wider school community. The first school year will be a transition year.

It is important to clarify that this is an inclusive model. In no way are Indigenous students going to be treated differently or with more services than non-Indigenous students. The First Nation School Board is about delivering a different model of education, framed through a Yukon First Nations worldview, to benefit and strengthen every student at the school.

## Q. How does the new First Nation School Board reflect Reconciliation?

It honours the rights of Yukon First Nations to have authority of education while also enabling true collaboration with Yukon government and the wider Yukon community. It also offers an opportunity for our students to equally honour and benefit from two worldviews – Yukon First Nations balanced with western/European.

## Q. What curriculum will the Board follow?

Board-run schools will continue to use the BC Curriculum, but will tailor the programming, lesson delivery and assessment methods to include Yukon First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

## Q. What kinds of things will be different at a FNSB School?

Each school will operate differently from the next, reflecting the needs of the particular community and student body – and will be clarified after Board Trustee elections in November 2022 – however, one can expect to see increased on-the-land and experiential learning, increased First Nation Language instruction, Elders in the classroom, and specialized teaching and assessment practices tailored to Indigenous pedagogy and ways of learning and doing. First Nations-run schools across Canada report significant improvements in academic outcomes and graduation rates for their students.

## Q. Why change the current system?

The Yukon education system is failing too many students, especially rural, special needs, and First Nations students. There are many recent studies, reports and incidents that illustrate this:

- The 2009 and 2019 Auditor General's Reports on Education offered an alarming assessment of Government of Yukon's inability to meet the needs of First Nations, rural, and special needs learners in the territory.
- 2019/2020 Review of Inclusive and Special Education findings showed that, in many cases, students' learning needs were not being met, with devastating consequences.
- 2020/21 Attendance Audit by the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office identified six (6) areas of concern as systemic barriers to school attendance.

## Q. What kind of graduation certificates will students be able to achieve?

As the Board-run schools must be accountable to the *Education Act*, and follow the BC Curriculum, the same graduation requirements and certificates will be upheld (e.g., Certificate of Graduation, a.k.a. Dogwood Diploma, School Completion Certificate, a.k.a. Evergreen Certificate, and Adult Graduation Diploma, a.k.a. Adult Dogwood).

## YFNED and wrap-around services

### Q. What is the relationship between Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) and the First Nation School Board?

YFNED is a completely separate organization from the First Nation School Board. Under the direction of the Chiefs Committee on Education, YFNED has been tasked with supporting the process for the establishment of the FNSB. The Interim Governance Committee of the FNSB is developing finance, HR, and other procedures, and from time to time, consults YFNED senior management personnel for professional advice. When the board trustees are elected in November 2022, they will negotiate and finalize agreements whereby YFNED may continue to support the Board, but the extent to which will be determined by the elected trustees and appointed CEO.

### Q. Will YFNED wrap-around services (Nutrition, Education Advocates, Mobile Therapeutic Unit, Early Years) prioritize working with FNSB schools and their students?

No. YFNED's wrap-around service programs are funded by Jordan's Principle and are thus mandated to serve all Indigenous students of the Yukon no matter what school they attend. This includes the Nutrition Program's School Meal Program (2 meals per day to Indigenous students), the rural communities' Mobile Therapeutic Program (Allied Health and Wellness Program), the urban-centered First Nation Education Advocates, as well as YFNED's Early Years program supporting families with pre-school-aged children.

## Board governance

### **Q. How will the FNSB achieve its goals (e.g., better academic achievements, family inclusion, attendance, graduation rates etc.)?**

The First Nation School Board will adopt a Strategic Vision including policies and programs that promote proven methods to achieve its targets – and conduct the data collection and analysis needed to track progress towards these goals (Yukon government is greatly lacking in this area). With the flexibility and localized control, the FNSB will be able to better meet the needs of each individual school community it serves.

### **Q. What systems will be in place to hold the FNSB accountable? What will ensure they act in the best interest of all students?**

The new First Nation School Board is accountable to the *Education Act* including Section 7 which requires schools to care and look after all students to the highest standards. The Board will be accountable to both the Minister of Education as well as to the Community Committee established for any school community. If a parent or teacher has an issue, they raise it with the Community Committee, which can then bring the issue to the Minister if the Board is not responding adequately.

### **Q. How will the mandate of the Board be set and will it be able to change direction during its term?**

The mandate of the Board is set through the *Education Act*. A draft workplan, policies and procedures, and other planning requirements are currently being prepared by the Interim Governance Committee of the FNSB, to prepare for the 2022/23 school year and ultimately, will be carried forward by the new board when it is elected in November 2022. A strategic plan will be created and periodically renewed or revisited on a regular basis. In general, School Boards are known to follow through with strategic plans and programming goals more closely than Ministry or government-led education departments.

### **Q. What is the budget of the FNSB?**

IGC is working with the Department of Education to determine the budget, which will come out of the existing Education budget (~\$272 million). We're working to determine the budget for just this first year of operation. We won't have a finalized formula until the trustees are elected in November, but we will have a draft ready before August which will allow us to earmark our spending for our first year.

## Local management of schools

### **Q. Who is authorized for the local management of individual schools?**

The First Nation School Board provides for the local management of schools through "Community Committee Agreements."

The First Nation School Board may enter into agreements with a Yukon First Nation to set up these committees and specify their power and duties. These committees can be established to make most decisions around the operation and management of the school.

These committees would exercise agreed-to aspects of the First Nation School Board's authority under the Agreement for their respective schools. This could include ensuring that the school supports Indigenous students and meets their education needs and aspirations; implements culturally-relevant curriculum and the use of Yukon First Nation languages; and provides for local participation and decision-making.

All Community Committee Agreements will be negotiated upon election of the board trustees in November 2022.

### **Q. Will the Community Committees be formed in the first year of Board operation?**

The Board will determine the policies for the establishment and operations of Community Committees, including when they are created and whether its members are elected or appointed. There is also the option to create Parent Advisory Committees. It will take time to create individual agreements for each community and we should expect this to take time, if it is to be completed properly.

## Future referenda and elections

### **Q. What process would allow another Yukon school to join the First Nation School Board?**

Schools who did not participate in the January 2022 referendum will have to wait until the 2023/24 school year. At that point, the school council has to seek permission from both the Board and the Minister before entering into the referendum process for the school attendance area.

### **Q. Can non-Yukon First Nations people run for election as trustees for the First Nation School Board?**

YES. Yukon School Board Trustee election will take place this fall, with nominations held in October and voting finalized in November. There will be five trustee positions filled. Eligible nominees must be 18+ and a Canadian citizen who is either a Yukon First Nations citizen with connection to an ancestral language (1 of the 8 YFN languages) **AND/OR be a parent/caregiver of a student attending a FNSB-run school.**

More info will be posted on [www.fnsb.ca](http://www.fnsb.ca) and [www.electionsyukon.ca](http://www.electionsyukon.ca) soon!

# Enrollment and student services

## **Q. Will First Nation School Board-run schools only allow Yukon First Nations?**

No. All students in the Yukon are welcome at FNSB-run schools. They will provide a vigorous education meeting a high-level of academic standards – taught through the cultural worldview and pedagogy of Yukon First Nations.

In the communities, First Nations students will not have priority enrollment over any other student living in the attendance area of the school.

In Whitehorse, where we have only two FNSB schools in operation, all currently-enrolled students will maintain their enrollment – never will a non-First Nations student lose their spot to free spaces for First Nations students. However, for kindergarten enrollment, there will be priority given to First Nations students. For the first year or more of operation, it is anticipated that there will be spaces for all students interested in enrolling in Kindergarten at FNSB-run schools.

## **Q. Will non-Indigenous kids receive the same access to services and EA allocations?**

This is an inclusive, student-centred model whereby all children are served equally, based on need. FNSB-run schools put the child at the centre of all decisions so that anyone coming into our system will be honoured and served. All students will continue to be served by Student Support Services within Department of Education.

Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, an organization that is independent of the FNSB and Department of Education, will continue to provide Jordan's Principle wrap-around services to Indigenous students across the territory, no matter what school they attend.

# School staffing

## **Q. Will First Nation School Board-run schools only allow First Nations teachers?**

No. This is an inclusive model whereby all qualified teachers are welcome to teach in these schools.

## **Q. Will the FNSB implement the same learning and assessment tools across all FNSB-run schools?**

Yes, unified literacy and numeracy programs will be implemented because it is widely known that this will better serve students. Identification of those programs that will be used is currently in process.

Assessment methodology will also change, using a variety of Indigenous methods that are in use at schools and program across the country. Similarly, the IGC is in process of selecting which tools will best serve Yukon FNSB schools.