

YFN Joint Education Action Plan 2014-2024:

A Blueprint to Strengthen Our Roots and to Close the Education Gap



Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation



Teslin Tlingit Council



Carcross/Tagish First Nation



Champagne & Aishihik First Nation



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Introduction

The Yukon First Nation (YFN) *Joint Education Action Plan 2014-2024: A Blueprint to Strengthen Our Roots and to Close the Education Gap*, has been a long time coming.

After over 40 years of reports and studies with hundreds of recommendations for improvements to our education system being put forward by YFNs, Yukon and Canada, it is time for partners to move forward together and most importantly a time to act. As many YFN leaders, Elders, parents and educators have stressed, another report or study is not what is needed, as the issues are widely documented and solutions and recommendations have been put forward at the local, national and international levels. It is time for all partners and stakeholders to make the historical document “Together Today... For Our Children Tomorrow” a reality.

This document sets out an action plan – a blueprint that aims to address four priority areas in YFN *kindergarten – grade 12 (K-12) education*.

“This Joint Action Plan represents, perhaps our last, opportunity of survival for our languages and culture in its purest form. If we can get back to our traditional ways... the indigenous people can teach the world to be respectful about the ways of the earth. The link between our past and our future is getting thinner and thinner. Our links are disappearing. It will be our fault if we miss out on realizing that. This process is a fight to fight – TODAY... ‘Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow’ was our last fight. TODAY, this process is our next. If we don’t do the work, it won’t get done to the satisfaction of our people.”

Ed Schultz, Executive Director, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation

Rationale

The *YFN Joint Education Action Plan* was initiated from the 2012 *Tripartite MOU on Education Partnerships* between YFNs, Yukon and Canada.¹ The plan incorporates the feedback and the participants' recommendations from events that were hosted by CYFN with participation from partners in Yukon Education, Aboriginal Affairs and YFN governments. The Yukon wide education events and meetings brought together representatives with a cross-section of participation from YFN Leadership, Elders, Youth, education directors and other YFN education staff, Yukon Education officials and staff, teachers, principals and representatives from Canada.

The following education events were coordinated by CYFN over the past year and helped to inform the priorities, goals and actions embedded with the education action plan:

- March 4-5, 2014 – Education Summit on YFN Education
- January 22-24, 2014 – YFN Literacy Framework Workshop
- February 18-20, 2014 – YFN Student Success Workshop
- 4 FNEC meetings and 2 CELC/ESW/EOC meetings
- March 20-22, 2013 – Education Summit on YFN Education

Over the past year, workshop and summit participants engaged in activities and presentations from YFN Elders, educators and youth, as well as experts in education around the following topics:

- An overview of the history and current situation for YFN education;
- Re-affirmation of YFN priorities in education;
- Best practises in Aboriginal education for achievement and advancement;
- YFN student achievement data; and
- YFN perspectives and priorities in education, literacy and achievement.

The action plan also reflects numerous reports, research, studies and recommendations put forward by YFNs, Yukon and Canada as related to YFNs or Aboriginal education. The following reports and documents helped to inform this plan:

1. 1973 *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*
2. 1987 *KWIYA Report*
3. 2001 *CYFN Education Report*
4. 2002 *Education Act Review*
5. 2005 *AFN First Nations Education Plan*
6. 2008 *Education Reform Final Report*
7. 2008 *YFN Students Succeed: YFN EAC Terms of Reference*
8. 2008 *One Vision, Multiple Pathways: Secondary School Program Review*
9. 2009 *Auditor General's Report on Yukon Education*
10. 2010 *Du Chuu Synthesis of Meetings re: Partnership in Education*
11. 2013 *Tripartite MOU on Education Partnerships, including Mtg. Minutes*
12. *CYFN Resolutions RE: Education & Language*
13. *CYFN - FNEC Documents: Terms of Reference, Draft Action Plan & Program Reports*
14. *Yukon Education Annual Reports*

¹By March of 2013, Canada, nine Yukon First Nations, CYFN and Yukon signed off on a, *Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding for Education Partnerships*+(see Appendix A). Essentially, the MOU was a commitment from all three parties to work together to improve First Nation education in the Yukon (CYFN, 2013, p. 2), and to develop a plan for action and implementation to help advance educational outcomes and achievements for YFN students in the educational system (CYFN, 2012, p. 1).

Vision

The following vision has evolved from the many years of discussions and reports on YFN education:

Our students are excelling in both worlds, rooted with fluency in their traditional language and knowledge of their culture and history, and confidently living life side by side with others, in a multi-lingual and multi-cultural Yukon society. Our students are lifelong learners and First Nation citizens that will empower the present and future generations.

Participants from the Literacy Workshop in January 2014, expressed that, ‘knowing the traditional cultural way of life through seeing, knowing and doing and sustaining our identities, beliefs, laws, values, and morals’ should be the foundation upon which all learning is based. Furthermore, they emphasized that, ‘language fluency and cultural competency are grounded in our stories, traditional ways and land-based learning opportunities that teach respect for self, others and the land.’

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles and assumptions were taken from the many reports and the voices from the many meetings, workshops and gatherings over the years.

1. YFN education is based upon traditional knowledge, cultural practices, histories and languages.
2. YFN education is life-long, holistic and values respect, caring and teaching in a way that meets the needs of YFN students.
3. YFN education fosters the process for YFN students to develop proud cultural identity while preparing to succeed in continuing education.
4. YFN communities, families and students need to be involved and engaged in education initiatives.
5. All parties will work together to ensure the effective and efficient use of available resources and existing funding and to secure additional strategic funding from governments if available.
6. Each individual YFN determines local goals and initiatives with respect to education and the parties to the Joint Education Action Plan support and assist.
7. The Yukon Education Act recognizes that for a high quality education system to evolve in the Yukon, meaningful partnerships and greater parent and public participation is needed.

Priorities

Four common priorities emerged from the numerous meetings, gatherings, research studies, reports and documents produced by YFNs, Yukon and Canada over the past forty years:

K-12 Culture and Language

Recognition of the diversity of YFN peoples, communities, languages, cultures, traditions and spiritual practices and the need for culturally appropriate education are embedded within the MOU. The MOU also states that all parties agree that the Yukon education curriculum must include the cultural and linguistic heritage of YFN people.

Authority, Control and Responsibility

YFN land claims and self-government agreements, and the Yukon Education Act provide opportunities for YFNs to assume various levels of control over education. Jurisdiction and implementation of agreements is a priority brought forth by YFNs over the years.

Sustainability, Supports and Success

Within the MOU, Yukon Education Act and Land Claims agreements there are provisions to support parties in working together to ensure that adequate funding and other resources are in place to ensure successful education initiatives. The MOU states that all parties will, "work together to ensure the effective and efficient use of available resources and existing funding and to secure additional strategic funding from governments if available". Sustainable and long-term funding, resources and supports are critical to closing the academic achievement gap, as well as to support YFN cultural and linguistic excellence. This process will require cooperation, collaboration and a commitment to transforming the education system to improve the learning outcomes of YFN students, from all parties to the MOU.

Closing the Academic Achievement Education Gap

Closing the academic achievement gap between FN students and non-FN students in Yukon and in Canada is a long-standing priority for FN people throughout the country. It is a priority for YFNs that YFN students attain and exceed academic requirements. It is widely understood that eliminating the education gap will contribute positively to the social, economic, cultural and political landscape of the Yukon and Canada.

Goals and Common Threads

JOINT EDUCATION ACTION PLAN 2014-2024

← COMMON THREADS →

*Community, Family, Parent and Student Involvement & Engagement
Pre-Natal, Early Childhood, Lifelong Learner*

PRIORITIES

**CULTURE AND
LANGUAGE**

**AUTHORITY,
CONTROL AND
RESPONSIBILITY**

**SUSTAINABILITY,
SUPPORTS AND
SUCCESS**

**CLOSING THE
ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENT
GAP**

GOALS for each PRIORITY AREA

**1.1 Culturally Inclusive
Councils, Staff &
Students**

- É Teacher Certification
- É Local Teacher Orientation
- É Mandatory - Cultural Awareness Training

**1.2 Culturally Inclusive
Schools**

**1.3 Culture & Language
Curriculum**

**1.4 K-12 School
Language Programs**

**1.5 Culturally Relevant
Programs**

- É Land based, experiential, in language

**2.1 Community Priorities,
Implementation &
Capacity Building**

- É Policy, planning, capacity building, etc.
- É FN school, Ed Act, etc.

2.2 Challenges & Barriers

- É Committees
- É Upgrading
- É Yukon Grant
- É Rural Equity
- É FN involvement: Hiring, Evaluation & Certification

**2.3 YFNs Jurisdiction &
Implementation**

- É Yukon Ed Act, Inherent Rights, Land Claims, Self-Government, Constitution, etc.

**3.1 Funding, Supports
and Resources**

- É Environmental Scan to identify and prioritize financial resources & obligations

3.2 Capacity Supports

- É CELC-ESW-EOC
- É Front Line Student Support

**3.3 Policy & Protocol
Framework
(examples)**

- É Engagement, involvement & consultations
- É OCAP compliancy

**3.4 Accountability,
Assessment &
Evaluation**

- É YFN Education: How are We Doing Reports

**3.5 Relationships &
Partnerships**

- É Meetings, Workshops, Summits
- É Interagency Cooperation

**4.1 Family &
Community
Engagement &
Supports**

**4.2 Foundations for
Success**

- É Pre-natal
- É Early Childhood
- É Lifelong Learner

4.3 Student Supports

- É Basic Needs & Employment
- É Attendance
- É Tutoring
- É Engagement & Involvement

**4.4 Literacy & Numeracy
in English**

4.5 Transitions