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"Holding up our dreams"



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YUKON
FIRST NATION
EDUCATION
DIRECTORATE



First Nation
School Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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JUST RELEASED: YUKON FIRST NATIONS K-12 LANGUAGE FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN

Whitehorse – Today, the First Nation Education Commission (FNEC) is pleased to release *We Are Our Language*, which makes up two essential documents that guide the revitalization of Yukon First Nations languages within the Kindergarten-to-Grade Twelve school system in the territory. The commission, which represents all 14 Yukon First Nations, directed the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) to complete *We Are Our Language, Yukon First Nations K-12 Language Framework* and its corresponding *Action Plan*. The First Nation School Board (FNSB) will be leading this work in its 11 Yukon public schools.

The *Yukon First Nations K-12 Language Framework* is focused on past and present findings, experiences and advice from Yukon First Nations, partners and stakeholders. It sets a path for increased capacity within Yukon First Nations language communities, and among motivated language learners who have growing levels of fluency among the Yukon's K-12 student population.

The *Yukon First Nations K-12 Language Action Plan* builds on the *Framework* by outlining specific priorities, strategies, deliverables, and timelines, tailored to best fit local First Nations, communities and school authorities.

The two key goals of both the *Framework* and the *Action Plan* are to inspire K-12 Language Learners and improve teacher capacity.

The First Nation School Board fully endorses *We Are Our Language: Yukon First Nation K-12 Language Framework and Action Plan* and plans to implement it across its eleven schools. The school board is staffing Land and Language Connectors for each FNSB school community as well as Language Coaches who will support First Nation Language teachers throughout all FNSB schools. Through these positions, plus the active involvement of Community Committees and the First Nation's Education Directors (who are also FNEC Commissioners), the *Framework and Action Plan* has systemic support across Yukon.

DOROTHY SMITH, ROSS RIVER DENE COUNCIL ELDER, KASKA LANGUAGE TEACHER, FNEC COMMISSIONER:

"We have been asking for changes on how First Nations languages are taught in school for a long, long time. Language learning has to be completely the First Nations way. It has to be done on the land. It can't just be done in a closed classroom. Our way of teaching is by using it while doing things: by looking, seeing and doing. Even the stories, the legends, that were told to us when we were growing up, we knew them all by 5 years old, and by 6, we could tell them to other people. It is all spoken. Not written. Kids learn it faster when we speak it together outside on the land."

STATEMENT FROM FNEC COMMISSIONERS:

“This language framework and action plan is the result of the resolve, passion and combined efforts of the FNEC commissioners, who together, recognized the dire need for unified, direct action to address the systemic problems in K-12 First Nations language instruction. As the commission represents all 14 Yukon First Nations, this action plan imbues the strength that unity provides, so that the flame of language learning ignites and burns brightly in the hearts and minds of our learners, supported by the generations who came before.”

MELANIE BENNETT, YFNED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

“The *Yukon First Nation K-12 Language Framework and Action Plan* offers concrete evidence and discernable strategies necessary to inspire the love of learning language in our public-school students – the key youth heartfully taking up the revitalization of our languages. And language is at the heart of our culture, our wellbeing and our self-determination. We are our language; When we reclaim our language, the seeds of knowledge, culture and identity that were diminished during the residential schools’ era are replenished in our most precious resource, our children.

This action plan is targeted specifically at what we need to do for our K-12 students in the public school system – although, it doesn’t impact the hard, important work that Yukon Native Language Centre is doing in developing fluent speakers, it does compliment the mandate of YNLC and creates a platform of opportunity for our First Nations language learners in Yukon.”

MELISSA FLYNN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIRST NATION SCHOOL BOARD

“As a First Nation Language teacher in Yukon, this is a responsibility that I hold dear to my heart. The Framework and Action Plan illustrate how Yukon First Nations are not just crucial partners but the best suited to govern education on their Traditional Territories. The First Nation School Board is honoured to take on the privilege of bringing this guidance into the classrooms of Yukon. It is a commitment and partnership with the First Nations, communities, families and learners who contributed to the teachings and wisdom highlighted within these two documents, as well as with those future generations to come.”

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BACKGROUND:

First Nations Education Commission (FNEC)

FNEC provides technical support, advice and recommendations to Yukon First Nations and Yukon Government with respect to education matters relating to Yukon First Nation citizens and communities. These education matters include early childhood education, primary and secondary education and employment training. FNEC is comprised of members from all 14 Yukon First Nations and attends quarterly, 2-day meetings (including Yukon Department of Education officials on Day 2).

Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED)

Steered by the Chiefs Committee on Education (CCOE), the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate was launched in the summer of 2020 in response to the long-overdue need for unified control over First Nations education in the territory.

YFNED is dedicated to capacity-building, systems and resources development, second-level educational programs and services enhancement, and learner supports. YFNED advances First Nation decision-making and aspirations for control over education, providing technical support, research and advice for Framework Agreement processes, and advocates for First Nation student success across the system.

YFNED provides administrative support to FNEC.

www.yfned.ca

First Nation School Board (FNSB)

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 continue to follow the BC Curriculum, but tailor the programming, lesson delivery and assessment methodology to reflect Yukon First Nations worldviews.

These schools are for all Yukon students and promote reconciliation by enhancing a Yukon First Nations model that puts the student first, through a strengths-based, community-centered approach.

The following 11 Yukon public schools are with the FNSB:

- Chief Zzeh Gittlit School, Old Crow, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation
- Johnson Elementary School & Watson Lake Secondary School, Watson Lake, Liard First Nation
- Ross River School, Ross River, Ross River Dena Council
- St. Elias Community School, Haines Junction, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- Nelnah Bessie John School, Beaver Creek, White River First Nation

- Grey Mountain Primary School, Whitehorse, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Takhini Elementary School, Whitehorse, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Eliza Van Bibber School, Pelly Crossing, Selkirk First Nation
- Ghùch Tlá Community School, Carcross, Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing, Kluane First Nation

www.fnsb.ca