



First Nation School Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 8, 2023

## **FIRST NATION SCHOOL BOARD LAUNCHES BOLD NEW LITERACY PLAN**

**Whitehorse** – The First Nation School Board announced today a robust and exciting new Literacy Plan that aims to reverse the dire problem of low literacy rates that have prevailed among Yukon students for decades. The plan makes some bold moves: carrying out thorough assessments and analyses of all K-3 students, replacing unproven programs with evidence-based science of reading approaches, including converting all Reading Recovery Teachers into new Literacy Teacher positions, and increasing training, supports and resources for all school teams.

Since the FNSB was established in February 2022, they have been working on researching, developing and implementing a Literacy Plan that addresses the urgent problem of low literacy rates among Yukon students, as described in both the 2009 and 2019 Auditor General’s Report on Education.

The science of reading, an extensive and proven body of research, shows that students best learn to read following very explicit methods, specifically, a structured literacy approach. This research also points to the problems with “Balanced Literacy” approaches, such as Reading Recovery and Fountas and Pinnell, both of which have been used across Yukon public schools for over a decade.

School districts all over North America are switching away from Balanced Literacy approaches, aligning with the science of reading. Literacy skills are key to our children’s ability to learn and find “success” in life. In fact, it is a human right to learn to read and the research shows we must address low literacy rates using science-based structured reading approaches. This is why the FNSB is investing a great amount of energy and resources into their Literacy Plan.

The FNSB Literacy Plan includes the following components:

- Thorough assessments and data collection to provide analyses and strategies tailored to each classroom – and to track success over the coming years
- Moving away from Balanced Literacy by replacing all Reading Recovery programs with those that meet the most up-to-date science of reading standards beginning with the 2023-24 school year.
- Reading Recovery Teachers will now be called Literacy Teachers, who will continue to provide one-to-one supports with students. Literacy Teachers will be trained and supported in science of reading by the FNSB Literacy Coaches and will tailor their supports to the individual needs of each student.
- Building up a team of FNSB Literacy Coaches who train and support our teachers in the science of reading. These coaches will directly support classroom teachers, as well as Learning Assistance Teachers (LATs) who work in small groups, and Literacy Teachers who work one-to-

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one with students. The FNSB Literacy Coach team is also committed to building localized resources with the involvement of Elders and Knowledge holders.

Over the past five months, FNSB's Lead Literacy Coach, Megan Norris, has carried out literacy assessments in all K-3 classes in all FNSB schools and has begun working with classrooms to interpret that data into strategies. She has also visited all of our schools providing PD, support and resources, with the support of Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) and the Centre for Literacy based out of Edmonton.

"This is such an exciting time and we are confident this new direction will begin to make lasting improvements in our students' literacy levels and overall educational outcomes," says Dana Tizya-Tramm, Chair of the First Nation School Board trustees. "Under the authorities of the First Nation School Board as detailed in the *Education Act*, we are thrilled to be able to quickly and efficiently make the kind of innovations that are needed for our children."

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**BACKGROUNDER:** *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 ways of knowing, being and doing.*

*The eight FNSB schools are:*

- *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*
- *Nelna 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*

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*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 strengths-based, community-centered approach.*

*Equally, all teachers are welcome at these schools and are 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, utilizing Community Committees and Parent Advisory Committees, that will be established Spring 2023.*

*Voting in a referendum is taking place between February 16 – 27, 2023 to determine if the following schools will join the FNSB:*

- *Del Van Gorder School, Faro*
- *Eliza Van Bibber School, Pelly Crossing*
- *Ghùch Tlâ Community School, Carcross*
- *Kluane Lake School, Destruction Bay*

For more information, please visit: [www.fnsb.ca](http://www.fnsb.ca)

For information on the February Referendum, please visit: [www.electionsyukon.ca](http://www.electionsyukon.ca)