

Letter from the Interim Executive Director



On a trip last month to Old Crow, is Melanie Bennett (left), Executive Director of Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and Melissa Flynn (right), Interim Executive Director of the First Nation School Board

Dear School Staff,

Drin Hozo and happy Hallowe'en! I hope you are enjoying all the fresh snow and crisp temperatures as winter settles in around us.

Today, we are so thrilled to be sharing the First Nation School Board's initial Literacy Plan. This is the first of its kind ever in the territory: a comprehensive, evidence-based, locally created and proven strategy that provides our teachers with support from a team of Literacy Coaches to deliver the very best literacy education for our students. You'll find all the info and details in this newsletter.

It is an exciting time at the First Nation School Board as we are mid-way through the first ever election period for determining our five school board trustees. We have an excellent roster of candidates who have put their name forward. Please encourage any eligible voters to make their mark on a ballot.

I am so looking forward to working with the elected trustees to deliver our vision of education to Yukon students. Mahsi Cho to the incredible work of the outgoing Interim Governance Committee members who have laid a solid foundation of policies and guidelines on which the new trustees can build their success.

We have much to look forward to in the coming months as the trustees can begin delving into the important work of shaping the future of education in the territory. I eagerly await introducing them to you and fostering the relationships on which so much of the First Nation School Board is based.

Melissa Flynn
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Language and Culture Strategist

We have created a new FNSB position called the Language and Culture Strategist, a role to support our schools in coordinating local First Nations involvement in the school including fostering the development of cultural and local language programming. We have posted an Expression of Interest to see who might be interested in filling this special position at

www.fnsb.ca/jobs

Education Analysts launching Grad Planner workshops

The Education Analysts are working with former school counsellor Benita Parkarri and former superintendent Greg Storey to deliver a Grad Planner workshop to deliver to all our FNSB high schools. The workshop will show teachers and counsellors on how to use the First Nations Graduation Planner booklet and web app. The Graduation Planner lays out all the options, choices and various requirements for high school students to navigate their way through their learning journey.

The team at YFNED is also developing a choose-your-own-adventure style interactive web app, to invite students to access information from the planner and begin thinking about their journey through education. It is called "Choose Your Path" and will be launched in late November. Stay tuned!!



This is Sam, the animated hero in the Choose Your Path Web App.

Numeracy Program Grows

Over the month of October, the Numeracy Team was busy traveling all over the territory. Marie Daniels, our lead Math Advocate travelled with Chris Stacey, a YFNED Education Analyst, to Ross River School, Ste. Elias School in Haines Junction, as well as Watson Lake Secondary and Johnson Elementary in Watson Lake.

Their main goal was to connect with students, teachers and administration and work on identifying where there may be gaps in students' learning in numeracy. Everyone was interested in working on student's numeracy skills. Their focus for the beginning of this year has been in reinforcing Basic Facts learning. Teachers are practicing in class but parents or guardians can also help students master these by practicing at home.

YFNED has currently hired more Math Advocates bringing the team up to a total of 4 This team will be reaching out and supporting all FNSB schools.



Word of the Month

Every month we will introduce you to a common word or phrase in all 8 Yukon First Nation languages. Choose the phrase(s) for the Traditional Territory where you live and try to use this as often as you can in your speaking and writing. Check www.ynlc.ca for sound clips and more resources.

English	<i>Take Care of Each Other / Help Each Other</i>
Gwich'in	<i>Nihts'at tr'inonjìh</i>
Hän	<i>Hqzq łëk'ätr'ënòcha</i>
Kaska	<i>Déhtsj' néhdī!</i>
Northern Tutchone	<i>Tl'int's'in nats'in.</i>
Southern Tutchone	<i>ntäts'än näts'uji</i>
Tlingit	<i>Woosh eet yidashí</i>
Upper Tanana	<i>Łii k'analta'</i>

November Language Challenge

TEACHERS: We encourage you to try using your local First Nations language in your classroom at least once every day. Start with our "Word of the Month"!

The First Nation School Board trustee election is happening NOW!

VOTING PERIOD: October 28 – November 7

For more details: www.electionsyukon.ca



Hello! I'm Megan Norris. Your new FNSB Literacy Coach

The Literacy Coach role combines my lifelong passion for literacy and love for helping people that help people. I'm so grateful to be working for a school board that is committed to literacy excellence and follows a Yukon First Nations worldview. We'll be launching the FNSB Literacy Strategy soon, and I'm so excited!



ABOUT ME:

- Of Dutch & British descent.
- Grew up in Fort Saskatchewan, AB and moved to Whitehorse June 2021
- 2011, Bachelor of Education
- 2019, Master of Speech-Language Pathology
- Was an EA and substitute teacher with Edmonton Public Schools
- Worked as a teacher with the Centre for Literacy supporting students 1:1
- Worked as an SLP for a non-profit that serves the Deaf or Hard of Hearing community, supporting their Early Childhood Services program
- Built relationships and served Indigenous children in Yukon communities as an SLP with the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate
- It has been my lifelong passion and dream to work in literacy. I am so honoured to be here!

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First Nation School Board LITERACY PLAN

OCTOBER 2022

OVERVIEW

The First Nation School Board's comprehensive literacy plan aims to **improve literacy outcomes for students in a culturally-inclusive model.**

We do this by using the most up-to-date research and techniques in literacy teaching, utilizing a team of Literacy Coaches to provide ongoing support to teachers, and by developing localized reading resources in collaboration with community.

BACKGROUND

The Interim Governance Committee of the First Nation School Board recognized an immediate need for a concrete plan in supporting teachers and students in the area of literacy. It has been identified through a variety of reports, including the 2019 Auditor General's report on education, that Yukon's public school system faces a chronic problem in not successfully teaching reading and writing skills, most dramatically among its Indigenous students (2019 June Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly).

Research shows that if students fall behind with their basic reading and writing skills by the end of their primary school years, they are extremely unlikely to catch up in later years and their chances of graduating Grade 12 are significantly reduced (OHRC, 2022). The Department of Education has not developed any comprehensive plans to address this failure. Available data shows the academic gaps are widening, year after year (Auditor General, 2019).

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Right to Read* report (2022) expresses the critical importance of learning to read, stating: "Literacy goes beyond the ability to read and write proficiently. It includes the ability to access, take in, analyze and communicate information in a variety of formats... to function in school and life... and can affect their confidence in their academic abilities and overall self-esteem, and lead to significant mental health concerns...a negative impact on employment, and lead to lower incomes, poverty and homelessness and higher rates of involvement in crime and incarceration."

Currently, there is no comprehensive literacy strategy in the Yukon.

OUR VISION

The First Nation School Board is launching a targeted and comprehensive Literacy Plan that aims to improve literacy outcomes for all primary students across our schools. We aim to raise the quality of teaching, programming, assessing and tracking K-3 students by implementing programs that are based on the Science of Reading, which is a vast body of interdisciplinary research on how children best learn how to read. We have started to hire Literacy Coaches who will provide support with content knowledge and resources, through mentorship and working collaboratively with teachers. Literacy coaches will be continuously visiting schools throughout the school year. Using an instructional coaching model, educators will receive explicit instructions on how to improve the literacy outcomes in their classroom, based on the latest science and research.

Our plan is modeled around widely successful literacy programs operating in both the South Slave and Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Councils of the NWT and based on the latest evidence-based best practices, with support from the Centre for Literacy based out of Edmonton.

We thank all primary teachers across the territory within the 8 schools of the First Nation School Board for completing literacy screening assessments for all primary grade students. These literacy screening results will give us a baseline for our 8 schools, and show us where support is needed. The Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) is supporting the process by completing student literacy profiles for many of these students. YFNED is also working with us to collaboratively develop local reading books for 4 of our schools written in English and the local First Nations language(s).

LOOKING FORWARD

We are building a team of literacy coaches, and have recently hired Megan Norris, a certified teacher, Speech and Language Pathologist and literacy expert. Megan is the first Literacy Coach to operate in the Yukon. She has already delivered Professional Development (PD) sessions to our Primary school staff and helped organize the *Science of Reading* Professional Development day offered by Centre for Literacy teachers on September 28. Megan's first priority will be the review of student profiles, and supporting our primary teachers in implementing evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies that will support improving literacy outcomes in our young learners.

She will continue working 1:1 with teachers ongoing until the end of June. More literacy coaches will be joining the team likely after March 2022. During the week of November 20, a team from the Centre for Literacy in Edmonton is traveling to the Yukon to deliver our second PD for all our primary teaching staff (teachers, EAs, LATs), all First Nations education staff, as well as tutors, advocates, and Early Years staff from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. We will be offering a day of training in Whitehorse as well as visiting Ross River and Watson Lake during this tour.

In order for the Board to make the best decisions on our Literacy Plan moving forward, we are also working with Firelight Research Inc., who are interviewing educators across Canada to examine programs and pedagogies that best reflect an Indigenous worldview.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Please contact:

Melissa Flynn

Interim Executive Director

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www.fnsb.ca

SOURCES

- Our plan is modeled around successful literacy programs operating in:
 - South Slave: www.ssdec.net
 - Beaufort Delta Divisional Education Councils of the NWT: beaufortdeltadec.ca
- Centre for Literacy, www.centre4literacy.com
- 2019 June Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/yuk_201906_e_43400.html
- Right to Read, Ontario Human Rights Commission, October 2022, www.ohrc.on.ca/sites/default/files/Right%20to%20Read%20Executive%20Summary_OHRC%20English_0.pdf

If you have photos or stories to share in future FNSB newsletters or on our new Facebook and Instagram pages, please email communications@fnsb.ca

Lets celebrate the new
**First Nation
School Board**
on Wednesday Nov 2, 2022

10:30 am - 1pm
Celebration + Lunch
Chief Zheh Gittlit School

5 pm
Community Dinner
and Music
Community Hall

**“To succeed in this world, kids need
to have one hand on the keyboard,
and one foot on the land.”**

— James Allen, Champagne & Aishihik Elder

Posted Oct 27, 2022

FNSB

