

# COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY TO APRIL



2023  
VUNTUT GWITCHIN  
GOVERNMENT





*March ~ Old Crow kids making the most of a photo opportunity.*



*April ~ Old Crow kids enjoying a tour of their little Arctic community.*

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*From long time ago...*



This 3-inch wide bracelet made out of heavy coloured beads is on display at the Sarah Abel Chitzee Government Building in Old Crow. It was found burried outside of Cadzo's Store at Rampart House by Freddie Frost of Old Crow in the summer of 2007.

## CHIEF AND COUNCIL

### **Making Council More Accessible to Citizens**

In March, Council passed Resolution 03-07-2023-#11, which amended VGG's *Governance Act*, building on work undertaken by the previous administration to update job descriptions and VGG's wage structure. The amendments align Chief, Deputy Chief and Councilor salaries with VGG's staff salary structure and allows for Councilors to work part-time.

Both these new measures are intended to make Council more accessible to citizens who would like to participate in leadership but have other responsibilities that prevent them from working full time on Council.

### **Extension of the Community Emergency Declaration and Order Regarding Dangerous Offenders until August 28, 2023**

In February, Council passed Resolution 02-17-2023- #05, extending the Community Emergency Declaration and Order barring Chris Schafer from entering, accessing, or being present on VGFN Settlement Lands.

In May 2023, Council passed Resolution 05-30-2023 - #29 which extends the declaration and order again for another period of 90 days until Monday, August 28, 2023. The newly extended order also prohibits anyone from helping Chris Schafer in any way to enter, access, use, or otherwise be present on, VGFN Settlement Land, and states that anyone who doesn't comply with these measures commits an offence under VGG's *Community Emergency Act*.

VGG will continue to work with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon to ensure the safety of the residents of Old Crow, in particular the women and girls.

### **The Substance Use Crisis**

Soon after being sworn-in, Chief Frost made clear her intention to focus action and more resources to support citizens in Old Crow and elsewhere struggling with substance use. In March, VGG posted a public notice on Facebook encouraging VGFN citizens wishing to go to treatment to contact the government. This was not limited to citizens living in Old Crow or Whitehorse. VGG made it a priority to ensure everyone who requested it was able to go to treatment.

Many citizens contacted the government, and several citizens are currently participating in treatment programs as a result of this effort. The Health and Social Department is also working to ensure that citizens have access to appropriate aftercare once they have completed treatment.

### **Yukon First Nations Opioid Awareness Walk ~**

On March 24, Yukon First Nations held Opioid Awareness Walks in communities throughout the territory. The goal of the Yukon wide walk was to show solidarity for all those who are experiencing the devastating impact of the current opioid crisis, and to put pressure on Yukon and Canadian governments to do more to support First Nations governments and their communities at the front line of the epidemic.

Chief Frost made a strong statement in leading Opioid Awareness Walk in Old Crow with a sign that affirmed a fundamental principle of harm reduction approaches to opioid addiction and substance use more generally.

Council followed up with a public statement that read as follows:

*“This week Vuntut Gwitchin Chief and Councilors, citizens and other residents of Old Crow, walked in solidarity with our brothers and sisters across the Yukon whose lives have been devastated, and often tragically cut short, by the opioid crisis.*

*We have heard the cry for help, and we are determined to do our part to help people without judgment. This means implementing policies and programs, including a safe exchange program, that are often referred to as harm reduction.*

*Time and again, harm reduction policies and programs have proven effective where others have failed. They have been successful in helping people and families struggling with all types of drugs, including alcohol.*

*Harm reduction sees the value and dignity of each person. It reminds us of the teachings of our Elders—We must care for each other!”*



Chief Frost speaking before the walk. Her words were reinforced by the sign she carried.



Pausing for a group shot in front of the Youth Centre after completing their Opioid Awareness Walk through town.

**Community Emergency Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis** ~ In April, Council passed a Community Emergency Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis (Resolution 04-18-2023-#22), It said (excerpt):

*“The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has suffered immense losses due to substance use and overdoses, especially opioids and alcohol. The ongoing substance use crisis has impacted and devastated individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Chief and Council stand with the families and friends who are suffering because of the deaths and loss caused by the substance use crisis.*

*This is a time for our community to come together to support each other and work towards a healthier community and nation. Our community can support people who are on a healing journey with Gwich'in teachings, traditional practices, cultural activities, and time on our ancestral homeland.”*

**Working with government & other partners to provide substance use education & services** ~ VGG has been working closely with the governments of Yukon and Canada, and the Blood Ties Four Directions Centre, a well-respected Yukon organization which provides harm reduction education and services in Whitehorse and all the Yukon communities.

The Centre’s Rural Partnership Coordinator, Celia Pratt, coordinates and delivers education and capacity building and engagement programs to Yukon communities. Celia spent several days in Old Crow over the past few months working with VGG staff and other community members.

**You can reach Celia Pratt at (867) 332-8266;**



*Blood Ties Four Directions Centre’s Rural Partnership Coordinator Celia Pratt demonstrates how to administer Naloxone in the event that they are present when a person is experiencing an opioid overdose.*

**partnership@bloodties.ca.**

**Securing \$2 million in additional funding to assist citizens living with addictions** ~ Chief Frost traveled to Ottawa in April for an emergency meeting with PM Trudeau and several federal Ministers. Chief secured commitments for approximately \$2,000,000 of additional funds to assist citizens.

## Appropriations Act 2023

In March, Council passed the *1<sup>st</sup> Appropriations Act 2023-2024*, which took effect on April 1, 2023, after undertaking three readings. The first reading was held February 22nd in Old Crow, the second reading was held on March 10<sup>th</sup> in Whitehorse & the third reading was held on March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Chief Frost emphasized the importance of putting the Vuntut Gwitchin Government back on track to repay loans taken on by the previous Council to pay for significant investments in housing.

**The Appropriations Act 2023 is available to read and download on the [vgfn.ca](http://vgfn.ca) website.**

## Disbursement Committee

VGFN Citizens deserve to have confidence in their government's decisions. One way to do this is by bringing citizens into a transparent, fair, and equitable government decision-making process. To do this in a way that is both concrete and accountable, Chief and Council passed Resolution 02-17-2023-#04, which set out the terms of reference for a new Disbursement Committee.

The *Terms of Reference* for the Committee state that the committee will consist of five (5) citizens who will be the committee's voting members, and the Chair who will not have a vote. At least one of the five Citizen members must be an Elder, and the Chair will be VGG's Finance Director or Finance Manager.

The Committee will ensure that Chief and Council, the Elders Committee, the General Assembly and the Executive Director are updated regularly on their work and decisions.

The Disbursement Committee will disburse funds in these areas:

- housing
- harvest allocation
- post-secondary education
- youth enhancement funding
- scholarships, bursaries, and grants
- employee incentives/long service awards
- general funding requests

In February, Vuntut Gwitchin Government put out a public call out for citizens who were interested in serving on the Disbursement Committee. Membership is determined by Chief and Council after consulting with the Chair, taking account of the balance of skills and expertise necessary for the Committee to perform its role and subject to specific requirements or directions of the General Assembly.

To be considered for membership, citizens who put their name forward had an established record of community involvement (other requirements are listed in the Terms of Reference). Members are appointed for a period of two years with a possibility of one renewal.

**Committee Members, appointed through Council Resolution, are:** Cindy Dickson, Jennifer Kay, William Linklater, Glenna Tetlich, Ashlynn Frost, and Katherine Peter (Alternate).

The Disbursement Committee has already met several times regarding the allocation of new housing units and the disbursement of education funding. These meetings have been Chaired by VGG's Director of Finance, Ronda Jordan.

**The Terms of Reference of the Disbursement Committee is available on the [vgfn.ca](http://vgfn.ca) website.**

## Executive Committee of Elders

In February, Council passed Resolution 02-16-23-#03 establishing an Executive Committee of Elders. As Vuntut Gwich'in, we have long valued the knowledge and guidance of our Elders. This value is clearly reflected in our Constitution, which states that an Elders Council be established to advise Council broadly.

Despite direction from the GA and repeated calls from citizens, we have not had a formal Elders Council for some time. Part of the reason for this is that we are a busy community and nation facing many day-to-day challenges.

The role of the Committee is to gather input from Vuntut Gwich'in Elders (defined by the constitution as any citizen 60 and up) and communicate

this to Council on a regular basis. Members will be actively involved in VGG, and will work to ensure that efforts to strengthen VGFN culture and traditions remains at the forefront of our government. In February, VGG put out a public call out for VGFN elders who were interested in being on the Committee. All those who put their name forward were appointed to the Committee by Council through Resolution 03-13-2023-#13.

**Committee Members are:** Roger Kyikavichik, Shirlee Frost, Norma Kassi, Stanley Njootli Sr., Randall Tetlich, and Marie Statnyk.

The Executive Committee of Elders have had a number of meetings already to discuss the role of the Committee, the ongoing mental health and addictions crisis and filling Council vacancies.



*March ~ Snowy view on the way to Crow Point.*

## Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit

Working closely with partners and allies, including the Gwich'in Steering Committee, VGG continues to seek protection of Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit on behalf of present and future generations of the Gwich'in people. This work is guided by *Gwich'in Niintsyaa 2022 Resolution to Protect the Birthplace and Nursery Grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd* and a number of VGFN General Assembly resolutions.

In March, US President Biden's visit to Ottawa provided an excellent opportunity to amplify the Biden Administration's commitments made to safeguard the calving grounds in the 2021 *Roadmap to a Renewed U.S. Canada Relationship*. This included an Op-Ed by Chief Frost in the *Hill Times*—one of the most influential publications read by Canadian Members of Parliament—and a Joint letter from Northern Chiefs to the Prime Minister and the U.S. Department of State regarding these commitments and the actions needed to implement them fully.



# THE HILL TIMES

Friday, March 31, 2023

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## Biden and Trudeau must act on commitment to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The remaining suspended oil and gas leases, which cover more than 350,000 acres of the Arctic Refuge, must be cancelled.



U.S. President Joe Biden's visit to Ottawa last week was a reminder of the vital, collaborative role Canada and the United States must continue to play in protecting the Porcupine caribou herd and the Gwich'in way of life, writes Chief Pauline Frost. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

OPINION | BY PAULINE FROST | March 29, 2023



The remaining suspended oil and gas leases, which cover more than 350,000 acres of the Arctic Refuge, must be cancelled.



In February 2021, my small fly-in-only community of Old Crow, Yukon, more than 100 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, breathed a sigh of relief.

At that time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and United States President Joe Biden announced the Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership following their first bilateral meeting. Within the Roadmap, the Ameri-

can president and the Canadian prime minister finally acknowledged the importance of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and committed to working together to help safeguard these lands.

But further action is urgently needed to cancel the remaining drilling permits, and to pass legislation to permanently protect the Arctic Refuge.

The Gwich'in are a caribou people. Vudzaih (caribou) provide nourishment for the culture and body of our people. Our communities—home to more than 9,000 people—span the extent of the migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd in what is now known as Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska.

Each spring, the Porcupine caribou migrate through the homeland of my people, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, past our small community and across the river after which the herd was named, to their calving grounds in Alaska, the place we call *Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit* (The Sacred Place Where Life Begins). Each fall, the herd returns to our

homeland, fattened and healthy. As I write this, pregnant caribou are preparing for this journey so that they can nurture the future of the last large, healthy, migratory caribou herd on the planet, and in doing so, nurture the future of my people.

The Gwich'in Nation has been leading efforts to protect the Arctic Refuge from oil drilling for decades. While we have been stewards of the land for millennia, it was in 1988 that our Elders called for the Gwich'in of Alaska and Canada to gather for the first time in more than a century. Pressure from certain members of U.S. Congress and lobbying efforts for oil and gas development in the Coastal Plain of the Arctic Refuge represented a profound threat to our people and our way of life.

In 2017, drilling in the Arctic Refuge became legal through passage of then-president Donald Trump's tax bill. This, and everything that followed up to the final days of the Trump administration, left us the closest we have come to the destruction of these sacred lands and the decimation of the caribou.

After decades of advocacy by the Gwich'in Nation to share our way of life and to share the consequences of oil drilling in this sensitive arctic ecosystem—including the inevitable impacts to the food security, health, culture, and way of life of our Nation—our voices were heard. The commitment Biden and Trudeau made in the Roadmap to safeguard the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd acknowledged our concerns and, in doing so, honoured our way of life, our Elders, and our future generations.

Today, we are fortunate that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge remains free from oil rigs. The prime minister and president's commitment has helped in maintaining the health of these sacred lands.

But everything that has happened since February 2021 has only offered short-term protection. Further action is needed to follow through on the commitment made to truly safeguard these lands. The remaining suspended oil and gas leases, which cover more than 350,000 acres of the Arctic Refuge, must be cancelled. And legislation must

be passed by U.S. Congress to restore protections to the Arctic Refuge so that a second lease sale does not occur.

Biden's visit to Ottawa last week was a reminder of the vital, collaborative role Canada and the United States must continue to play in protecting the Porcupine caribou herd and the Gwich'in way of life. While our Nation is small, we are vocal and we are proud. We will continue to hold the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States accountable for the commitments they have made and the actions they must take. The protection of vudzaih is critical to the physical, cultural, and spiritual survival of our people—we have no other choice but to protect it at all costs.

Pauline Frost is Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (People of the Lakes) in Old Crow, Yukon, part of the Gwich'in Nation whose traditional territory spans the extent the migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd in what is now known as the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Alaska.

The Hill Times

## Northern Chiefs Meetings

Over the last few months, Chief Frost has participated in a number of meetings with Chiefs of Northern First Nations, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na Cho Nyäk Dun and Gwich'in Tribal Council. This is an important opportunity to continue and strengthen our collaboration on a number of joint political and technical priorities including but not limited to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd, ensuring arctic sovereignty and addressing the mental health and addictions crisis.

VGG looks forward to continuing our strong relationships with our Northern relations.

## Intergovernmental Accord with Government of Yukon

Earlier this year VGG and the Government of Yukon renewed discussions on an Intergovernmental Accord (latest Accord lapsed in 2018) which has an intended purpose to facilitate bilateral cooperation at political and administrative levels on shared priorities.

While some progress was made on negotiating a draft Intergovernmental Accord up until early 2022 at the technical level, discussions had since been put on hold. Negotiations on priority issues, including local service provision, took precedent, and utilized existing capacity.

VGG has identified a number of initiatives around community wellness, education and training, community development and economic development and will continue progress discussions with the Government of Yukon in order to finish the Accord and start its implementation.

## Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) National Conference and Leadership Meeting

*February/March*

In late February, Chief Frost attended the Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) National Conference and Leadership Meeting in Ottawa.

The week focused on discussing current challenges and possible paths forward to ensure final and self-government agreements are respected, honoured and fully implemented.

During the LCAC conference, Chief Frost spoke to two breakout sessions, one on protecting caribou and salmon, and another on food security. She was supported throughout the week by Implementation and Negotiations Advisor Stephen Mills, Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator Liz Staples, and Katriel Villacorta as youth representative.

While in Ottawa Chief Frost had a productive meeting with Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Marc Miller. She spoke to Minister Miller about ongoing challenges that our Nation is facing in relation to the mental health and addictions crisis, and advocated for more support to build capacity so that VGG can develop effective addictions and mental health programs and services for VGFN citizens.

## Yukon Forum

In March, Chief Frost and Deputy Chief Reti participated in the Yukon Forum with Premier Ranj Pillai and his Cabinet, Council of Yukon First Nations Grand Chief Peter Johnston and other Yukon First Nation leadership. Together, Chief and Deputy Chief brought forward the perspec-

tives and concerns of Vuntut Gwitchin regarding a number of issues stressing the need for ongoing collaboration to address the substance use crisis.

At the Forum, the Government of Yukon released a draft Yukon Substance Use Strategy which VGG is currently reviewing.





*April ~ Helping to document the Easter festivities at the Darius Elias Community Hall.*

## **Tribute to Robert Bruce Jr.**

*Old Crow*

*The following tribute by Chief Frost was shared with VGFN citizens at Robert Bruce Jr.'s Celebration of Life in Old Crow, and was posted on Facebook for the benefit of those who could not attend the celebration in person.*

It is with great sadness that the Chief and Council of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation announces the passing of elder Robert Bruce Jr. on Saturday, April 16.

A residential school survivor, Chief Robert was a resilient person who overcame many obstacles throughout his life. He dedicated his adult life and service to the people of Old Crow.

A generous and respected elder, Chief Robert is well-known for his wisdom and his traditional teachings, which he shared enthusiastically with Vuntut Gwitchin leadership, employees, citizens, and other community members.

Chief Robert was for many years the spokesperson for the Elder's Council. In this role, he brought the voices and knowledge of our elders to Chief and Council, providing guidance on many important matters.

Chief Robert was especially concerned with the preservation and celebration of Vuntut Gwitchin language, culture, and traditions. Of all the jobs he had over the course of his tenure representing our Nation, this was one he held in the highest regard.

A dedicated instructor and interpreter of *Dinji Zhuh k'yuu*—the Gwitchin language, he was extensively involved in translating and interpreting for the Vuntut Gwitchin Oral History Project.

A strong leader dedicated to the well-being of his beloved Vuntut Gwitchin Nation, Chief Robert took on many leadership roles throughout his life. He served as a Councilor and Elder Advisor, as Chief from 1992 to 1996, and as MLA for the electoral district of Vuntut Gwitchin from 1996 to 2000, serving as Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly during this time.

Robert Bruce Jr. also served as Chief during a key moment in our history—the signing of the Vuntut Gwitchin Final and Self Government Agreements in 1993. He expressed great joy on that day almost thirty years ago when he signed the Agreements on behalf of present and future generations of our people, alongside Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and Yukon Government Leader John Ostashek.

It is extremely difficult to find words that capture the contribution Robert Bruce Jr. made to our Nation. He was a man of his word, and stood by his people and the leadership through many challenging and exciting times. We will remember Robert fondly as we celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of our Final Agreements in May.

Chief Robert, we will hold you in our prayers as we continue our journey together, blessed as we are with a homeland you so loved. Family, friends, colleagues, community members and those who crossed paths with you over the years will grieve your loss. *Haii cho* for everything you have done, especially your dedication to the Gwitchin Nation. We will remember you fondly in our hearts, our stories, and our history.

*Chief Pauline Frost*

*April 17, 2023*



**Top:** This photo of Chief Robert Bruce Jr. was part of a slideshow created by Frances Ross-Furlong honouring the former Chief on the occasion of his Celebration of Life at the Darius Elias Community Hall in April. **Bottom:** Chief Robert Bruce Jr. (right) and Charlie Peter Charlie Sr. signing the VGFN Final Agreement in May 29, 1993.

## SPRING CULTURE CAMP

**To view photos from this year's Spring Culture Camp, see pages 32-34.**

*"Our Elders guided us by teachings on the land. Our hearts and minds thrive with this knowledge being passed down. Our youth are our future and these teachings help prepare them for their journey in life."*

Paul Josie, Josie's Old Crow Adventures

This year's Spring Culture Camp ran from April 3 to 21. Funded by VGG's Education Department, the camps were organized by Paul and Bree Josie (Josie's Old Crow Adventures). Students from Chief Zheh Gittlet School, community members, student resource workers and Vuntut students living outside Old Crow were invited to attend.

Many people contributed to making the camps a success. Teachers from the Chief Zheh Gittlet School, representatives from the First Nation School Board, a counsellor, local RCMP officers, staff from the YFNED Mobile therapeutic Unit and the Old Crow Early Years program, as well as Gwich'in Elders. The camps were staffed by the coordinator, two camp attendants and a cook. VGG Recreation staff also visited the camp and helped out with activities.

### **Week 1 ~ Kindergarten to Grade 3**

The first week of culture camp was for children kindergarten to grade 3 and gave parents the choice between day camp or overnight camping. The camp included four kindergarten students and six grades 1 through 3 students. One Vuntut Gwich'in child also traveled to Old Crow and attended with their family.

**Week 1 included the these traditional activities:**

- snowshoeing
- Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (Gwich'in Language)
- storytelling
- identifying animal tracks and skat
- dog sledding
- ice fishing
- on the land survival

During the first week, the children went for a snowshoe hike and practiced walking and running in snowshoes. They also used their snowshoes during games and activities where they were identifying skat and tracks.

### **Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (the Gwich'in Language) ~**

A daily language circle included games and songs in Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu, including a drum song which the children sang at the beginning and the end of each day.

**Storytelling** ~ The children learned traditional stories and built their storytelling skills using a colouring book that Bree and Paul developed that tells a story passed down from Paul's grandmother. We went through the story together and had the children practice telling the story themselves.

**Dog team** ~ The children learned about different types of dogs on the team & what makes a good sled dog, and everyone enjoyed riding in the sled behind the dogs during the week.

**On the land survival skills** ~ Throughout the week, children completed many activities to learn about wilderness survival. This included a caribou blanket activity and a necklace making activity where each bead represented something they need to survive.

## Week 2 ~ Grades 4 to 6

The second week of culture camp, for children in grades 4 to 6, took place at Tl'oo K'at. We had 12 children participate in the camp, including one from Whitehorse.

### The learning goals for this camp were:

- on the land survival
- Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (Gwich'in Language)
- storytelling skills
- tracks and skat identification
- dog care and mushing skills
- ice fishing
- snowshoeing skills

**On the land survival skills** ~ Participants learned to harvest poles and put up a wall tent on their own. They harvested firewood, cleared it, and learned to make fire in the wood stove. They also learned fire safety, how to make a fire for warmth in the snow, and how to cook and prepare food over the fire.

We had a fun tea-boiling competition in which the children raced to make a fire and boil snow in a tea pot!

**Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (the Gwich'in Language)** ~ Participants built their language skills throughout the week through learning circles and songs, including a Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu drum song. At the beginning of each day, the students talked about feelings and the weather in our language. They practiced during daily activities, whether a prayer at mealtimes, a song for the fish while ice fishing, or by using names in our language for animals and birds during skat and track identification activities.

**Storytelling** ~ The group practiced storytelling skills by getting comfortable with speaking to

the group. Each day we worked a little on speaking and reading in front of the group. Children worked on the traditional creation story and learned traditional stories about the northern lights. They practiced telling the story in their own words and illustrating a traditional story. The students also enjoyed a fun and funny joke telling competition!

Students received a custom-made observation journal that included pictures of the animals, their tracks, their skat, for students to check off. It also had sections for birds and fish and had the Gwich'in name for each animal. We snowshoed together pointing out tracks and signs of animals. We played a game where the group hunted for skat to win a prize of chocolate.

**Dog team** ~ Each day, participants spent time with the dog team. They learned about what foods dogs can and cannot eat and how to cook for a dog team. They also learned about the different types of dogs on a team and how to stand on the dog sled and hitch up the team. Students started solo mushing around the camp with one dog. By the end of the week, they were mushing four dogs on the river and the lake behind camp!

**Ice fishing** ~ The students learned to make ice fishing hooks from sticks and line and how to bait them. They helped to drill the holes with an auger and how to sing for the fish. They saw an eagle and a falcon fly over and were happy for the sunny day and to be out on the land together.

**Snowshoeing** ~ The 4-6 group went snowshoeing three times through the week and enjoyed it. They learned to make trail in snowshoes and how people used to make trails for their dog teams by running in front in snowshoes. They also practiced snowshoeing in deep snow and running in snowshoes, and at the end of the week we had some fun snowshoe races!

## Week 3 ~ Youth (Grades 7 to 12)

The third week of culture camp was for youth. Six youth in this age group attended camp, including two who traveled from Whitehorse. The approach for this week was to build on existing skills, since most of the youth participants have been hunting and camping on the land their whole lives.

### The focus for Week 3 was:

- dog care and mushing
- on the land survival
- ice fishing
- processing fish and meat
- Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (the Gwich'in Language)
- storytelling, tourism and hospitality

**Dog team** ~ Dog care and mushing started with introducing the dogs, building trust and preparing food. The youth practiced standing on the sled, calling commands and hitching up for a two dog pull around the camp. Later they mushed four dogs on the river and on the lake behind camp. Dog sledding was a favourite activity among this group and they kept asking for more opportunities to enjoy building their skills!

**On the land survival skills** ~ Survival skills included learning to harvest poles and firewood and put up a wall tent. The youth participants also practiced making fires, maintaining a wood stove, signaling for help, and cooking on an open fire. After learning and practicing the skills, we had fun with fire making and tea boiling competitions!

**Ice fishing** ~ This group went ice fishing together and learned how to make a fishing pole, bait it, and use and sharpen the ice auger. They caught, identified, and cut up fish and discussed the body parts, what is edible and how to cook it.

We thawed a caribou and taught the kids how to skin, butcher and process it for cooking. Just before the Week 3 culture camp, the community lost a beloved Elder. It was decided that the youth would prepare the caribou and that it would be donated for the funeral feast.

The youth really enjoyed working with meat and were proud to be honouring a beloved elder. It is an important part of Vuntut culture to come together and help when someone passes away. This was a very important opportunity for the youth to contribute to this traditional practice.

### Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu (the Gwich'in Language) ~

To build their language skills, the youth learned and sang songs in Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu. We also practiced introducing ourselves and our families and using names for all animals and caribou body parts in our language. Students prayed in Gwich'in before meals and spoke Gwich'in during the tea boiling competition. We spent parts of the day immersed in our language, and students could refer to their Observation journals to help them remember the names for animals, birds and fish in Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu.

**Tourism and hospitality** ~ To develop tourism and hospitality skills, the youth practiced public speaking, storytelling and communicating effectively to visitors. At the end of each activity we would ask "Why do we do this?" or "How do you explain this to someone who is not Gwich'in?"

The youth participants learned to think about what a tourist wants to do and how to make sure they are having a good time. They also learned traditional stories and practiced telling them so that they could share this story with a visitor while they were eating or sitting under the northern lights.

**To view photos from this year's Spring Culture Camp, see pages 32-34.**

# GWICH'IN LANGUAGE NEST

February to April

VGG Language Coordinator Sophie Flather has been piloting a *Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu* (Gwich'in) language nest on Friday mornings. Bree Josie, who manages YFNED's *Niin k'iit Tsal* Little Tracks Play Space, made the space available on Friday morning for the language nest.

A language nest is where we immerse children aged 4 and under in the Gwich'in language. There are wonderful speakers who join and help us keep the children immersed in *Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu* all morning. Between February and April there were twelve language nests with children and their parents joining in.

Sophie has developed some staff tools, songs and books with speakers to use during and in between the language nests. She has also been developing her own knowledge through her participation in a language nest mentorship with Chief Atahm Language Nest in Chase, BC, offered through the Yukon Native Language Centre.

Along the way, Sophie is evaluating the progress of language nest participants and developing future plans for the language nest in Old Crow.

There are times when challenges like isolation, or bouts of cold or flue symptoms that seems to be unavoidable when caring for young children, make progress difficult.

The language nest is an opportunity for parents and other community members who are passionate about *Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu* to work with the Language Coordinator and support each other as they take on the challenges of bringing *Dinjii Zhuh k'yuu* to their young children while learning the language themselves.



# NATURAL RESOURCES AND HERITAGE

The Natural Resources department (NR) is a strong, hardworking team with several projects and priorities. NR's work is mainly based on:

- 1) direction of the VGFN General Assembly to Chief and Council which flows through the Executive Director for NR to implement, and
- 2) VGG's implementation responsibilities under the Final Agreements. NR's work is also guided by these strategic goals:

- Lead and promote stewardship of Vuntut Gwitchin Natural and Cultural Resources;
- Grow capacity through training, mentorship, coordination and partnerships;
- Involve and inspire the community through education and outreach;
- Implement Final and Self-Government Agreement commitments related to legislation and planning; and
- Participate in action against climate change.

NR team members each bring skills and knowledge that ensure the progress of VGG priorities. The NR Director oversees the department's staff, committees, plans, policies, workflow, and budgets. NR's Director and Managers work closely with other government and partners at various tables to ensure VGG's Natural Resource priorities are addressed and adequately resourced.

There is simply too much work to give full updates on everything, but I hope you find the highlights useful. I want to thank everyone for their support, kind words, and contributions to NR, especially our great staff. Thank you all for your good guidance and feedback!

Erika Tizya-Tramm  
 Director, Natural Resources and Heritage

## Fish and Wildlife

*Nanagwaalii Drin shoh ohtii Teechik!* It has been a busy start to 2023 for the Fish and Wildlife Branch. Clifton Nukon, our Fish and Wildlife Technician, is on parental leave and we miss him! With one less staff member, we are always interested in hiring community members for different jobs. Come talk to any NR staff if you are interested in casual work.

**2023 NR Calendar** ~ Early this year, we were proud to release the 2023 NR calendar. What is special about this year's calendar is that the whole calendar project, from taking the photos, to working with the graphic designer, to organizing the printing and shipping, was done by NR Intern Caleb Charlie. Mahsi' Caleb, great job!



Every month of the year is represented by a beautiful photograph of VGFN Traditional Territory taken by Caleb Charlie.

**Research Roundup** ~ In January Fish and Wildlife got 2023 rolling with the second edition of the Old Crow Research Roundup. This is an event in which all the different research groups active in the VGFN Traditional Territory can come together and present to citizens what they have been up to, what they found, and what their plans are for the coming years.

We had two days of presentations and discussions about draining lakes, reconciliation, land treatment facilities, COVID-19, archaeology at *Ni'iinlii Njik*, contaminants in traditional foods, Porcupine caribou, moose and wolves, and VGG's Land Guardian program. A big mahsi' to Darrell and Kristen for cooking and to Polar Knowledge Canada for funding the event. Also a big mahsi' to Nicole Corbiere who donated a beautiful pair of mitts for a door prize!



*Mitts donated for a door prize for VGFN community members attending the Research Roundup.*

**Trapper Assistance Program** ~ The Trapper Assistance program closed on January 30, 2023. We provided support to 12 licensed VGFN trappers to help them get out on the land. We hope trappers had a good season, and that muskrats were on the menu this spring!

**Dempster Patrol** ~ In February, Fish and Wildlife staff patrolled the Dempster Highway. The patrol observed high snow pack in the mountains and very little activity in the backcountry. Skidoo tracks stayed near the highway and there was no sign of hunting activity or caribou.



*Camp wood pile showing snow accumulation and lack of disturbance in the Dempster highway corridor.*

**Annual Harvest Meeting of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board** ~ In February, Old Crow sent a strong delegation to the Porcupine Caribou Management Board's Annual Harvest Meeting in Dawson. Delegation members were VGG Game Guardian Robert Kyikavichik; VGG Fish and Wildlife Manager Jeremy Brammer; PCMB Board Member Marvin Frost Sr.; and PCH Knowledge Hub Advisors Mary Jane Moses, Shawn Bruce and Robert Bruce Jr.



*VGG Game Guardian Robert Kyikavichik sharing his knowledge of Porcupine Caribou at the Annual Harvest Meeting of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board.*

Everyone spoke to the status and importance of Porcupine caribou and their habitat, and the meeting worked on the best ways to understand the threats facing Porcupine caribou moving forward.

The Fish and Wildlife Branch is happy to report that most caribou indicators look very healthy, and there was general support for keeping the Porcupine caribou in the green zone where VGFN harvest can continue normally.

**Wilderness First Responder Training** ~ In early March, Jeremy Brammer attended two weeks of Wilderness First Responder Training in Inuvik, NWT. Fish and Wildlife does a lot of work out on the land, and we are looking to upgrade our first aid and rescue certifications. The 80 hour course is exactly the kind of training people should have if they spend a lot of time on the land. We would like to bring it to Old Crow, so let NR know if you are interested in getting high level first aid training.



*The late Mervin Joe of Parks Canada, Talia MacDonald, and David Haogak making an improvised pelvic binder, a life saver for somebody who breaks their pelvis in the bush!*

**Breaking Trail at Curtain Mountain** ~ In March, Game Guardian Robert Kyikavichik, Land Guardian Robert Linklater, VGFN youth Jayce Charlie went back and forth to Curtain Mountain to break trail in preparation for the Johnny Charlie Memorial skidoo trip from McPherson.

After four days of breaking trail on their first trip, a big wind and snow storm blew and filled in their trail! So the two Roberts had to go out a second time to make sure the trail was clear!! Great work trail breakers!



*Robert Kyikavichik and Jayce Charlie at LaPierre House. breaking trail to Curtain Mountain.*

**Winter Road Wildlife Monitoring Project** ~ In January, the Teechik Land Guardians Robert Linklater, Naomi Wilson, and Riley Jonathan began setting up and servicing game cameras along the Winter Road corridor. From their camp at Johnson Creek, the Guardians deployed over 60 cameras before thaw.

The cameras monitor wildlife on and around the Winter Road, the biggest seasonal use linear corridor on VGFN lands. Linear corridors, like winter roads, all season roads, and seismic lines, affect how wildlife move around a landscape. Depending on traffic, they can act as a barrier to keep animals on one side, or depending on snow depth, they can funnel animals who are looking for an easier travel route.

All of this has consequences for important animals like *vadzaih*, *dinjik*, and *zhòh*. Any new projects on VGFN lands will usually involve the cutting of new linear corridors, but we have very little information about how cutting new corridors will affect the caribou, moose, and wolves in the VGFN Traditional Territory.

The Winter Road Wildlife Monitoring Project cameras will mean VGFN will be able to access accurate, relevant and up-to-date information on the impacts on wildlife of any cutting on linear corridors. The project is a collaboration between VGG and the University of Guelph.

As the project researcher, Karl Hogue is exploring the impact of the winter road on large animals by combining camera trap monitoring and Vuntut Gwitchin traditional knowledge. Karl has also contributed as part-time NR employee. He will return in September for the third time to live, study and work in Old Crow.



*Land Guardians deploying a game camera to monitor wildlife.*



*Land Guardians at their camp at Johnson Creek.*



*Setting up game cameras: Land Guardians Robert Linklater, Naomi Wilson, and Riley Jonathan; researcher Karl Hogue; Fish and Wildlife staff Jeremy Brammer and Clifton Nukon; Game Guardian Robert Kyikavichik; and Yukon Environment staff.*



*Land Guardians traveling the Winter Road to camp.*

**Traditional Pursuits Program** ~ The Traditional Pursuits Season started on April 3. Stay tuned for an update on the program in the fall newsletter.

**The Yukon River Panel Meeting** ~ In early April, the Yukon River Panel met in Whitehorse to discuss this year's forecasts for Yukon River chum, Chinook, and coho.

## Heritage

**Odyssey Research Program Tour** ~ Brandon Kyikavitchik was invited to present at the Odyssey Research Program labs at Kansas University in early April. Brandon delivered a presentation about Vuntut Gwitchin oral history as it relates to archaeological research carried out in Vuntut Gwitchin Traditional Territory. Yukon Government archaeologist Ty Heffner presented alongside Brandon on the impacts of climate change on north Yukon archaeological sites.

A video recording of Brandon's presentation posted on the VGG Facebook page has more than 1,500 views and everyone commented positively, including VGFN citizens. As Joe Thomas wrote:

*"I am a member of of the Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation and I am proud that we are broadcasting our life and history in 2023. We have a lot to offer the world. The main thing is to keep our way of life alive and teach the young people and the people of the world. My great grandmother is Clara Frost. Our language and culture is very important to maintain and revitalize!!"*

**Genealogy** ~ VGG Heritage Researcher Briana Tetlich has been working on updating Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation family trees. Family members can request copies of their own family trees. **Contact Heritage for more information.**

Thursday, April 6 | 3:00 p.m.  
502 Summerfield  
1300 Sunnyside Ave.

**Brandon Kyikavichik**  
Cultural Interpreter  
John Tizya Center  
Old Crow,  
Yukon Territory  
of Canada

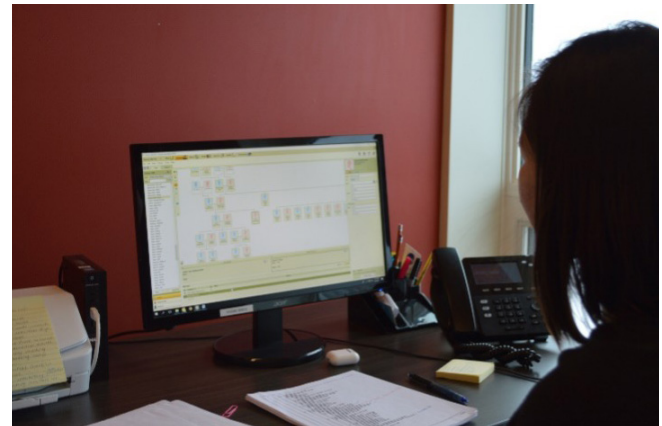
Presentation will be done in both English and Dinjizuh k'yuu [the Gwich'in language].

**A Very Brief History of the Vuntut Gwitchin**

Brandon is a member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in northern Canada. He is working on translating the recordings of his elders that have now passed on as well as retracing his people's pre-Christian culture with a focus on linguistics. Brandon was raised in the small village of Old Crow, Yukon Territory of Canada, north of the Arctic Circle. His great-great grandfather ran a caribou fence that was miles in length in the late 1800's and his great grandfather's great grandmother was known as a gwiye'h'at [a woman of high status]. Brandon has written a book about his experiences learning the mysteries of his people's pre-Christian past. (in peer review process)

Brandon will give a very brief history of his hometown and will combine archaeology, geology, and paleontology with an oral history of his people to paint a picture of their pre-Christian past and culture. His talk will feature caribou fences, war, espionage and peacemaking, astronomy, ice age history, giants and maneaters; a strange world never seen before, not even in movies.

SPONSORED BY:  
The Department of Anthropology  
The Odyssey Archaeological Research Program at the Kansas Geological Survey



**Cultural Experiential Education** ~ Funding is confirmed for this fiscal year to continue developing cultural experiential education units in: Crow Flats, Gwich'in Stories, & Medicinal Plants.

Funding for helicopter travel has been confirmed for July 22 to August 1 for oral history research on the land related to experiential education.

**Rampart House & LaPierre House Management Plan Update** ~ The update of the Management Plan is complete after two community consultation sessions and collaborative visits to Rampart House and LaPierre House with the Yukon Government and the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee in the summer of 2022.

The signing ceremony for the plan and site designation will be at Rampart House in July 2023.



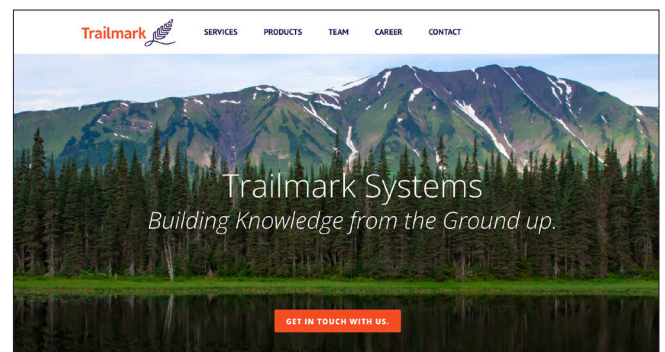
Rampart and LaPierre house artwork by Maureen Charlie.

**Approved Research for the 2023 Field Season** ~

A diverse set of research projects were approved for research on VGFN Traditional Territory this field season. Below is a list of research subjects researchers will be investigating:

- soundscape ecology
- food sovereignty
- cannabis legalization
- pseudoscorpions diet and population
- Porcupine Caribou herd ecological change
- North Slope wolves
- hydroclimatology
- treeline trajectories
- human contaminant biomonitoring
- caribou contaminant monitoring
- Bluefish Caves archaeological testing and lithic analysis
- land treatment site monitoring
- wolf-caribou interactions
- Heliobacter pylori genomics
- Covid 19 experience
- the Tukudh Bible
- social economy
- Arctic border rights and responsibilities
- caribou traditional knowledge mobilization
- grey-headed chickadee hybridization
- river ice breakup monitoring

**Trailmark Systems** ~ The Trailmark on line oral history archive is being tested by Heritage staff and will be available to VGFN citizens and the general public later in 2023.





Kathie Charlie teaching herself different porcupine quills sewing techniques.

## Lands

**Regional Land Use Planning** ~ VGG and the Yukon Government are currently finalizing the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan (NYRLUP) Annual Implementation Report of the last year's implementation priorities. Some highlights are:

- *Tracking and reporting on human linear and surface disturbance:* VGG and the Yukon Government (the parties to the NYRLUP) approved a 2021 pilot study completed by Yukon Land Use Planning Council for further recommendations for VGG & YG to consider.
- *Access Management Plan for the Eagle Plains Oil and Gas Basin:* VGG and YG agreed to an expert panel of reviewers for feedback on draft plan, and need to develop the summary engagement package for this process.

- *Porcupine Caribou Herd industry guidelines:* VGG is awaiting finalization from Yukon Government Environment for review.
- *Dàadzàii Van Management Plan:* We are close to final draft, further discussion is needed.
- *Porcupine Headwaters planning:* VGG has expressed its desire to address planning for this “annexed” region since the resolution of VGFN and THFN overlap. VGG has developed a preliminary framework for further discussion, particularly with VGFN citizens.
- *North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan Review:* VGG and YG are considering a Plan review.
- VGG submitted final comments on the *Final Recommended Dawson Regional Land Use Plan*, particularly with respect to protection of the headwaters region of the Miner River and other common issues submitted by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Government. We were happy to see the integration of earlier VGG comment submissions and we commend the Commission for its good work on the plan.
- VGG continues to participate as a Party to the Peel Plan Implementation Committee (PPIC). Current work is on Special Management Area planning with VGG and YG. VGFN is connected to one of the 6 Special Management Areas in the region where we are mainly focusing our discussions. We are working on a Terms of References to guide this work.

## Parks

*The Vuntut National Park 10-year Management Plan* needs to be approved by Parks Canada, VGG, and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council (the parties to the plan) before a final round of consultation before it's signed off.

*The Dàadzàii Van Management Plan* requires Gwich'in Tribal Council consultation to continue working with YG Parks on final drafting.

*Ni'iinlii Njik Wildlife Preserve, Ecological Preserve, and Habitat Protection Area Plans* all require a review by the Parties. Updates on status, water, salmon, bear viewing, and mining rights are all a primary focus.

Several pieces of Yukon Legislation require updating to bring them in line with the Final Agreements, these include:

- YG Lands
- YG Minerals
- Yukon Parks and Certainty
- Yukon Oil and Gas Act

VGG is involved in all these processes, some to a higher degree than others depending on the proportion of impact to VGFN rights and interests.

**New Lands Legislation** ~ The new Lands Legislation table is quite new and is progressing well in its early stages. More updates will come once this process is into the substantive issues.

**Modernizing Yukon's Mining Legislation** ~ The modernization of Yukon's 125-year old mining laws has been steadily progressing through the collaborative, co-development of the new Mineral Legislation, which has been progressing steadily.

A "What We Heard Document" has been released and available on the Yukon Government's website. VGG participated substantially in this process.

In April, Yukon Government staff held an Open House in Old Crow and a number of citizens were able to learn more about the new legislation and the consultations that have informed its development.

**Yukon Parks and Certainty Act** ~ This act only applies to Territorial Parks, one of which includes the Rock River campground in VGFN Traditional Territory.

**North Yukon Intergovernmental Oil and Gas Forum** ~ This forum continues to meet regularly to discuss common issues related to the Yukon Oil and Gas Act and active oil and gas exploration permits in VGFN Traditional Territory.

## Energy

### Community Energy Systems Course ~

The second year of the Community Energy Systems Course was a great success with five community participants this year! A partnership between VGG, Yukon University, ATCO, and YG, the course is accredited with Yukon University. The partners are currently developing an advanced curriculum for graduates of the course.

This year's lecturers included Dr. Alex Vigneault, owner of Beyond Consulting, Dr. Judy Booth, Manager of the Low Carbon Transition unit at YG Energy Mines and Resources, Erika Tizya-Tramm, NR Director, David Frost, Energy Manager, Dr. Michael Ross, Yukon University's Industrial Research Chair of Northern Energy Innovations, Amber Polson, Project Coordinator with Yukon University's Northern Energy Innovation research program, and Norm Curzon, Generation Specialist from ATCO.

Special thanks our participants and graduates Jason Van Fleet, our local energy operator, Marvin Frost Jr., Maureen Charlie, and Grace Nakimayak, our special guest from Paulatuk who is an energy champion in her community!

We are currently working on several community outreach initiatives such as surveys, home visits, and youth-oriented communications materials for the Youth Council and the school. Please don't hesitate to reach out for any information or to give us your feedback. Thank you to our community for the strong support in our international leading energy work—we could not do any of it without you! Mahsi Choo!



*Community Energy Systems Course students and instructors on a tour of Old Crow.*

# COMMUNITY EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

## Council Swearing-In Ceremony

January

VGFN citizens kicked off 2023 at the Darius Elias Community Hall with the swearing-in of the newly elected Chief and Council.

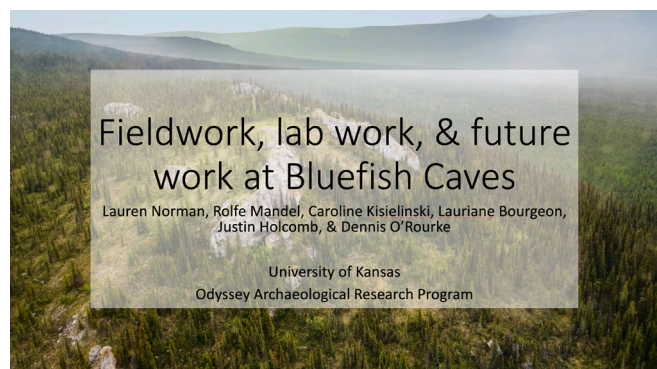
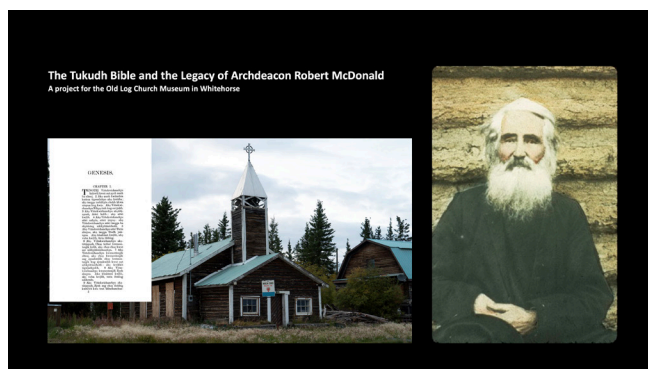
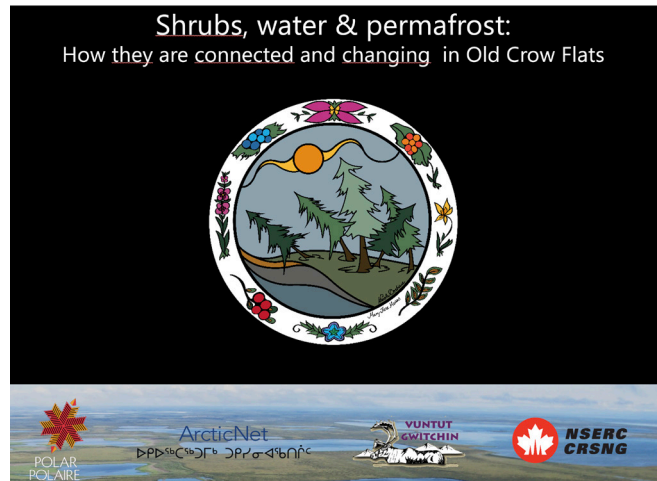
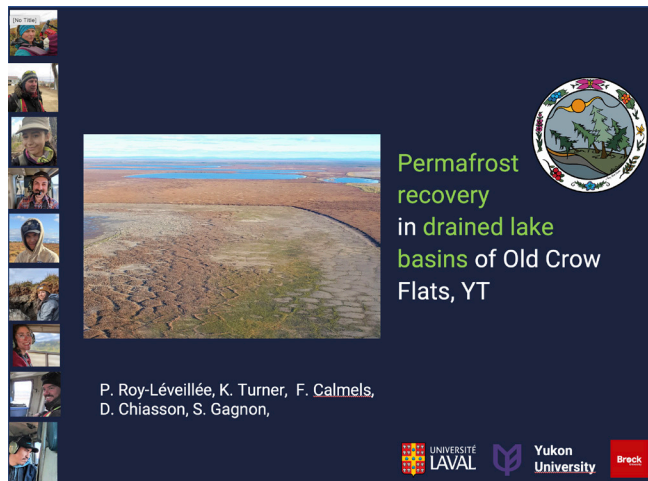
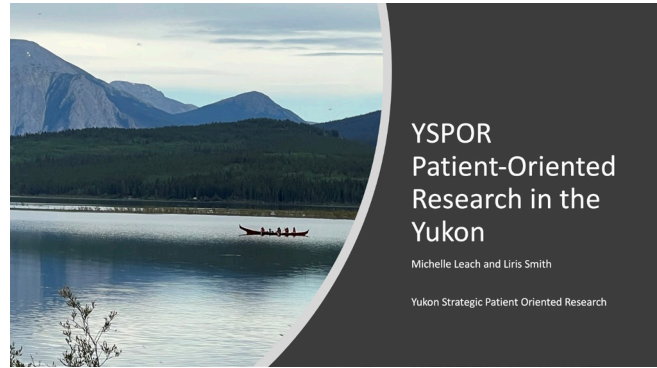
Chief Pauline Frost, Deputy Chief Debra-Leigh Reti, and Councilor Jeneen Njootli were sworn in. Then everyone enjoyed a delicious dinner, Gwich'in music and dances, and a beautiful display of fireworks on the Porcupine River.

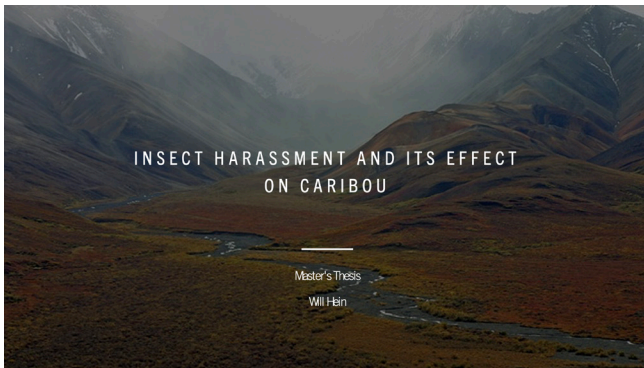
Musicians Boyd Benjamin, Keitha Clark and Richard Nerysoo played well into the evening and people enjoyed participating and watching as people danced to familiar tunes like the Old Crow Duck Dance and Eagle Island Blues.



## Research Roundup Presentations

These presentations given at the Research Roundup illustrate the wide range of research being carried out within the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation homeland. From Bluefish archaeology, to a study of insect harrassement of caribou, every research project is evaluated by Natural Resources staff to ensure it will benefit VGFN.



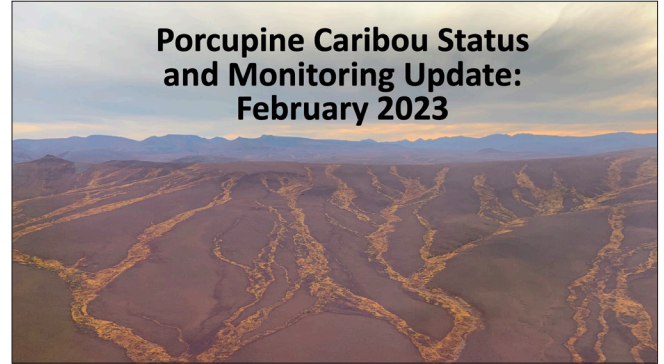


### Old Crow Biomonitoring Project

- Biomonitoring clinic (Feb 2019):** Participants gave samples of blood, hair and urine, took food and lifestyle surveys
- Return of Results (Jan 2020):** Results returned in person to the Old Crow Biomonitoring Project, including:
  - Long and short reports
  - Community presentation
  - Individual results letters
  - One on one meetings
- Return of Results (Feb 2023):**
  - Traditional food sampling for HCB
  - Biobanked Blood Samples: Dioxins

### Mercury Studies in Old Crow Flats

Brian Branfireun, Western University  
 Nicole Corbiere, Laurentian University  
 Pascale Roy-Léveillé, Laval University



- 1) Ni'iinlii Njik dewatering
  - 2) Teechik Land Guardians predator monitoring
  - 3) Arctic Caribou Contaminant Monitoring
- Jeremy Brammer VGG ECCC  
 Karl Hogue VGG Guelph  
 Mary Gamberg Gamberg Consulting

### 1. Ni'iinlii Njik

Background

### 2. Teechik Land Guardians predator monitoring

Originates from the community-based fish and wildlife work plan

### 3. Arctic Caribou Contaminant Monitoring

25 YEARS ANS Northern Contaminants Program

CARIBOU SAMPLES NEEDED

\$50 per caribou, 20 samples needed  
 Please see Jeremy at NR department for sampling kits  
 966-3261

## Johnny D. Charlie Skidoo Trip

February and March



### Prayer for the travellers

**By Mary-Jane Moses** ~ *K'agwaadhat, Mahsi' chco for this new day. I ask your blessing for all who are gathered here this morning. Mahsi' choo, the community of Old Crow honoured our visitors from Tetli'it Zheh (also known as Fort McPherson) and other Delta communities with such warm hospitality.*

*Our relatives and visitors alike came over to visit and renew kinship ties following the old trail that connects our Gwich'in communities, connects us a people—united. The same trails that our ancestors travelled with dogteams so long ago. Today the tradition continues on by the Tetlit Gwich'in with support from Vuntut Gwitchin in memory of Johnny D. Charlie and countless others.*

*K'agwaaadhat we are grateful and so honoured by all of this, this hard work done by so many people so this memorial trip can continue on many times over well into the future. A legacy never to be forgotten. Our young people need to know and experience their true connection to the land, to the placenames, and to the old stories passed down by elders and knowledge holders. Mahsi' choo they are able to experience this first hand.*

*K'agwaadhat, I ask for your blessing upon the people who will depart our community this morning. I pray for safe journey on their return trip to their homelands over the mountains. Watch over each one of them as they pass through the beautiful Vuntut Territory and let them enjoy the awesome scenic landscapes. Let them remember the ancestors who travelled the same land for their sustenance. It was their way of life. Today this is still practiced, harvesting from the land, respecting what the land provides. This land that still takes care of us.*

*Mahsi' choo to the funders, supporters, helpers, and organizers who made this event possible.*

*Hai Choo. Amen.*



## Preparing T'oo K'at for Culture Camp

March

Daniel Blake was hired by Recreation to engage VGFN youth in on the land activities. Together they replaced damaged tents on tent frames, cleared snow, cut a new wood trail, brought in a new wood stove provided by Government Services, and harvested wood for Culture Camp. The youth were a big help, and were happy to use their bush skills in the service of the community!



*Can you spot the little camp visitor?*



# Spring Culture Camp

April 3 to 21

Go to page 13 to read the full story about Spring Culture Camp 2023!



The top two photos by Gyde Shepherd, all other Spring Culture Camp photos are by Paul and Bree Josie.





# Easter 2023

April









# Sliding in the Slough

April





## Dog Sled Rides on the back lake

March

In March, Josie's Old Crow Adventures was hired by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate's Early Years program to offer dogsled rides for kids. Kids and families were given an opportunity to go around the back lake by dogsled. There was bannock and hot chocolate for those waiting in line. Over twenty families participated in the two day activity!



*Top: Paul Josie of Josie's Old Crow Adventures, led by Adam Adam Kyikavichik on the snowmobile.*

## Printmaking Workshop with Whitehorse Artists Hannah and Reed

April

Councillor Frei Njootli invited Whitehorse-based artists Hannah and Reed to spend a Sunday afternoon learning printmaking at the Youth Centre for anyone who was interested. It was a fun (and colourful) activity that everyone enjoyed, regardless of their age!



## GWICH'IN CULTURE AND HISTORY

### Dog Packs

Dog packs were made of untanned caribou leg skins. These packs were placed on the back of a dog and used to transport meat that the hunters killed before the arrival of skidoos in the community. They were also used for hauling belongings around in the summertime.

*“I remember the days when I was growing up. Dogs were very important to people....the people taught their dogs very well, how to carry packs in the summer and how to pull their leg-skin toboggans, or sleds, in the winter.”*

Mary Kendi, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Elder, July 2000.

*“One day, finally, somebody shot a small caribou...and I was told to go for it. They got me a dog with a dog pack, and I had to climb a small hill. There was only a few willows here and there. Shortly after climbing the hill, I came to the spot where the young caribou lay. I cut it all up like I saw others do, packed it all up and took it home.”*

Bella Alexie, Teet'it Gwich'in Elder, From a 1970s interview (“Early 1900s as I Remember It”).



Above and at top of opposite page: Small Dog Pack, made by Reverend Dr. Ellen Bruce, Old Crow.



*“The women were busy drying meat and also making dog packs for each dog. Dog packs were made from caribou-leg skins. The leg skins were soaked in water before sewing. When it was finished, it was stuffed with moss and dried, so it would be in shape, and trimmed with moose skin. The trace for the dog packs was cut from the edge of moose skin.”*

Andrew Kunnizzi, Teet’it Gwich’in Elder, 1970s.



*“We lived at Rampart House, towards Crow Flat, through Flat Mountain, down that way...We use dog pack all summer. When we kill caribou, dog pack it in. We pack meat, too, dry it and cache it, ground cache, eh?”*

Charlie Thomas, Vuntut Gwich’in Elder, 1990s.





*Photos by Gyde Shepherd, unless otherwise indicated.*

**COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER ~ JANUARY TO APRIL 2023**

