

NOMINATIONS accepted until **November 9**

VOTING in Old Crow and Whitehorse on
November 27 from 8 am to 8 pm

ADVANCED VOTING in Old Crow and Whitehorse on
November 19 - 20 from 2 to 8 pm



Heading Upriver, September 2023

Council Update

September/October 2023

Message from Council

These past few months have been a difficult time for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. In August, we experienced an evacuation as wildfires threatened our home community of Old Crow. Then in October, we came together to search for Freddy Frost. After an eight-day search, we were saddened when we learned that Freddy had passed away in his sleep after camping overnight past Crow Mountain.

These were both very difficult experiences. Yet during and after the evacuation, and throughout the search for Freddy and the service and celebration of his life that followed, we came together as a community to support each other and to support Freddy's family, in solidarity.

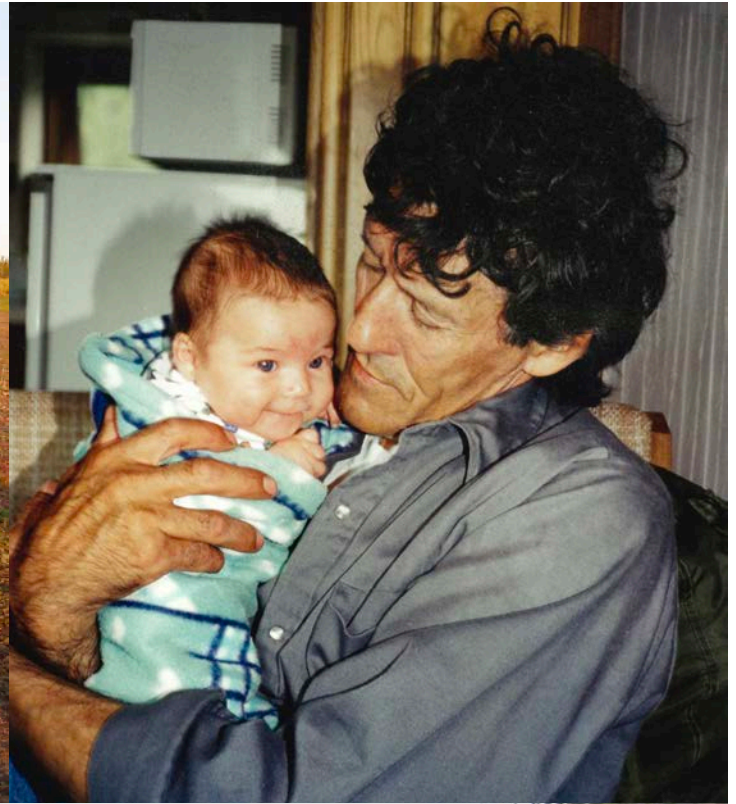
We are thankful for this, especially in a time when the world around us seems to be facing crisis after crisis. We need each other—just as we need the land—to give us strength and help us get through difficult times.

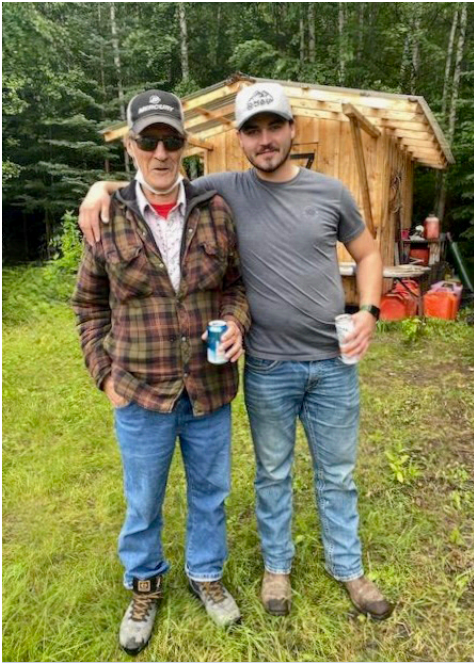
Council would like to express our gratitude to all those who came together to help search for Freddy Frost:

All the members of the search teams, including the Tetlit Gwich'in searchers who flew in from Fort McPherson ~ Yukon Search and Rescue staff ~ the Old Crow and Whitehorse detachments of the RCMP ~ the cooks and cleaners who kept the Community Hall running so that the Operations Team and the searchers could focus on their tasks ~ all the community members who contributed in many different ways throughout the search ~ the hunters who provided meat for meals at the Community Hall ~ Whitehorse residents who donated food and supplies for the search and rescue effort ~ the Yukon Government counsellors for their ongoing work in support of community members ~ the Reverend Jeffrey Mackie-Deernsted of the Anglican Diocese of Yukon, for prayers and spiritual guidance as Old Crow's travelling parish priest and as a member of one of the search teams ~ the helicopter pilots who carried the airborne search team on many flyovers of the search area and ultimately found Freddy's last camp past Crow Mountain ~ and of course, Freddy's family.

Freddy Francis Frost

November 17, 1944 ~ October 10, 2023





Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project Announcement

On September 26, 2023, Council issued a statement in response to the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project announcement concerning the former Choooutla Indian Residential School in Carcross. The school was built and funded by the Government of Canada and run by the Anglican Church for several decades until it was closed in 1969. Many Vuntut Gwitchin children were taken from their families to attend the school as a part of the broader history of colonization that so many other indigenous peoples and communities across Canada endured and continue to endure.

With the announcement, we learned that researchers used historical documents to identify 33 children who died at the Choooutla school, and that ground radar work completed this past June on the school's former grounds identified 15 potential gravesites. The Council statement emphasized the fact that the 15 potential graves "cannot be confirmed or identified without further work."

Council's statement went on to say:

"Today is another difficult and necessary step towards truth. We are gaining, through the gathering of evidence from stories, research, and science, a greater understanding of what happened to our loved ones that were taken and never returned. We acknowledge that this will reignite the pain and grief that so many of us feel and we encour-

age everyone to take advantage of the supports that are available this week. Taking care of our mental health as we are triggered is essential. We do not have to face this alone.

The trauma of residential school is a reality we continue to face. We grieve as mothers, fathers, aunties, uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers for the ones who never came home, for the ones who came home and never were the same and for those still carrying the intergenerational and transgenerational trauma.

We remember and honour each of these children, and their families. The families who, after learning the horrors of the Choooutla Indian Residential School including the realization that children were not returning without explanation, refused to allow our children to be taken to Carcross for a period of over 20 years, even at risk of breaking the discriminatory laws of Canada that were now being enforced upon our ancestors."

To read the full text of the Council statement, visit the vgfn.ca homepage.

Also on September 26th, we held a Sacred Fire beside the Porcupine River to honour the children lost (**see photo below**). Then at a community dinner held on September 29th, Chief provided the community with an overview of the work Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project, and a detailed presentation on the radar search carried out over the summer.



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation


September 30, 2023

On Saturday September 30, the community of Old Crow gathered for this year's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also referred to as Orange Shirt Day.

The day began solemnly with an Honour Walk through town to commemorate the survivors of residential

schools; the children who never returned home; and their families, friends and communities.

A BBQ and fun activities held in the afternoon was a chance for community members to celebrate our strengths and resilience as Gwich'in People.




Honouring
the children
who attended the
Choooutla
Residential School
in Carcross,
Yukon

Community Dinner
5:30 pm | Friday, September 29th
Darius Elias Community Hall

Council and the Health and Social Services department will serve dinner and provide an update concerning this week's announcement from the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project.

Supports will be available for anyone who who might need someone to talk to.
(Chantel Blysak and Rebecca Hansen, counselors; Shirlee Frost and Norma Kassi, Elder supports; Joe Migwans, Diane Smith, Kelly Allen, grief and trauma support.)



Posted September 28, 2023



Let's gather on Saturday, Sept 30th for
Orange Shirt Day
National Day for Truth
and Reconciliation

12 pm ~ Honour Walk

We will begin with opening remarks and prayers at the Community Hall, followed by an Honour Walk through Old Crow to commemorate the survivors of residential schools; the children who never returned home; and their families, friends and communities.

2 pm ~ BBQ and Activities

Join the fun activities as we celebrate our strengths and resilience as Gwich'in People.

This day acknowledges that residential schools are a part of our history.

Orange Shirt Day is a national movement to recognize the experience of children who attended residential schools, to honour them, and to reaffirm our collective commitment to the fundamental truth that

 **every child matters.** 

Supports will be available for anyone who who might need someone to talk to (Chantel Blysak and Rebecca Hansen, counselors; Shirley Frost and Norma Kassi, Elder supports; and Joe Migwans, Diane Smith, and Kelly Allen, for grief and trauma support).




Posted September 28, 2023

Arctic and Northern Policy Framework Leadership Meeting

October 13, 2023

In October, Chief Frost participated in the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework Leadership Committee Meeting alongside federal Minister Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs, territorial Premiers, and Yukon First Nations Chiefs as well as other representatives of federal, territorial and First Nations governments.

The leaders discussed shared Arctic priorities including security and defence, infrastructure and international policy and the need for investment under the Canadian government's Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

Chief Frost addressed the leaders assembled at the meeting. She emphasized the need for investments into airport infrastructure in the North to support security and defence, and affirmed that the protection of land, water, animal and cultural resources is the fundamental principle of our self-government agreement.

Chief Frost also highlighted the infrastructure challenges in Old Crow including the high cost of building and maintaining housing and community infrastructure, as well as the need to boost carbon-free electrical generation and distribution given the significant number of new houses and larger buildings being added to the Old Crow grid.



This photo includes most of the leaders in attendance at the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework meeting in Whitehorse.

From left to right: Proxy Regional Chief Mary Jane Jim, Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region; Marie-France Lalonde, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence; Chief Doreen Arrowmaker, Tłı̄cho Government (NWT); Chief Adeline Football, Tłı̄cho Government (NWT); Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs; Ranj Pillai, Premier of Yukon; Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Council of Yukon First Nations; Naa Shaade Hani Eric Morris, Teslin Tlingit Council; Chief Pauline Frost, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation; Chief Sean Smith, Kwanlin Dūn First Nation; Chief Barb Joe, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations; Deputy Haa Shaa du heni Darla-Jean Lindstrom, Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Yukon Forum

September 26-27, 2023

On September 26 and 27, Chief Frost and Councillor Linklater participated in the Yukon Forum the Äłät Nēhē-jël Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Hall in Dawson City. The Yukon Forum is a regular meeting between leaders of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon, and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

The leaders discussed a number of important issues including the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project (YRSMCP) and the impact of the opioid and substance use crisis on individuals, families and communities across the territory.

While addressing the leaders, Chief Frost strongly affirmed the need for leadership to continue to prioritize the work of the YRSMCP to help in bringing closure to our families and our communities. She Chief emphasized that the findings of the ground radar work undertaken at Chooulta Residential School are a reminder to governments that the complex forces that drive people to use and abuse opioids, alcohol and other substances are both historical and acutely present in our daily lives.

Chief Frost also reflected on the wildfire and smoke emergency this summer and spoke about the importance of emergency preparedness and coordination between all levels of government.

Prioritizing Community Safety

Increasing community safety is a key priority for Council. VGG's Implementation and Negotiations team has been working on a number of initiatives to improve community safety, including developing a Community Safety Plan, bringing Community Safety Officer training to Old Crow, and strengthening the existing Letter of Expectation between Vuntut Gwitchin Government and the RCMP. The Letter of Expectation identifies policing priorities for the community and serves to promote positive and cooperative relations between VGFN and the RCMP.

On October 10, Council placed Old Crow under lock down after gunfire was reported in the upriver subdivision. Council and VGG Administration took immediate action to notify citizens, staff and partners in community and worked with the RCMP on the response. Council has directed the Administration to record and consider incidents while developing Emergency Management plans for the community.

The Disbursement Committee

The Disbursement Committee held regular meetings in September and October, due to the fact that there were several housing allocations to consider. The Committee has made recommendations to Council regarding the allocation of the four vacant three-bedroom homes on the North Road, and two of the nine one-bedroom apartments in the Victoria Blake Memorial Elders Home.

The Disbursement Committee is also preparing to make recommendations regarding the allocation of the twelve modular homes once they are completed, which is expected before Christmas. The Committee has also considered a number of requests for post-secondary education funding and Indigenous Skills and Employment Training funding.

Recommendations regarding the allocation of housing units and education funding is time consuming process that requires thoughtful review and discussion by the Disbursement Committee. These recommendations are then submitted to come Council for final decision through Council Resolution. Council has passed a number of Resolutions related to Disbursement Committee recommendations.

Mahsi' cho to the Disbursement Committee for their dedication and hard work!

The Executive Committee of Elders

The Executive Committee of Elders met on September 20th to discuss the Yukon Residential School and Missing Children Project and future Elders Council Meetings.

Regarding the Yukon Residential School and Missing Children Project, the Committee provided recommendations to Council and the Health and Social Department on how to support citizens in the coming months. The recommendations made were considered in responding to the announcement of the findings of the Chooltla Residential School ground radar work.

Regarding future Elder Council Meetings, the Executive Committee of Elders started discussions around hosting an Elders Summit in Old Crow that would provide an opportunity for a community discussion concerning the structure and role of the Elders Council and the Executive Committee of Elders as well as community priorities.

The Committee also recommended that Council reach out to the Danzhit Hanlaih Gwich'in who are hosting the next Biennial Gwich'in Gathering in their home community of Circle, Alaska in summer 2024.



Council Resolutions

September and October 2023

To read and download the full Council Resolutions, visit:
<https://www.vgfn.ca/council.php> (2023 Resolutions).

Resolution 49 | September 14, 2023

Continuation of Community Emergency Declaration and Order Regarding Dangerous Offender

This resolutions extends the Community Emergency Declaration and Order regarding the dangerous offender Christopher Schaffer for 90 days until December 12, 2023.

Resolution 50 | September 14, 2023

Rescinding August 3, 2023 Community Emergency Declaration

This resolution rescinds the Community Emergency Declaration of August 3, 2023 in response to the wildfires burning close to Old Crow.

Resolution 51 | September 14, 2023

VGFN Chief and Council Approval of VGFN Evacuation Plan for Old Crow

This resolution approves the VGG Evacuation Plan for Old Crow that was and implemented when VGG issued an Evacuation Order for Old Crow on August 9, 2023.

Resolution 52 | September 14, 2023

Status Registry Transfer of Acceptance to the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

Resolution 53 | 2023 September 21, 2023

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Porcupine River Chum Salmon Fishery

This resolution follows Council Resolution 47 of July 24, 2023. It specifies that as of 12 am, September 24, VGFN citizens may only fish for non-salmon species using selective gear types such as angling or using gill nets with 4-inch mesh or smaller, and 60 feet or shorter in length.

Resolutions 54 and 55 | September 21, 2023

Disbursement Committee Recommendation to Council

This resolutions recommends housing allocations of new housing.

Resolution 56 | September 25, 2023

Council Leadership on Traditional Territory

This resolution appoints Councillor Harold Frost as interim Deputy Chief when Chief and Deputy Chief are both absent from the traditional territory.

Resolution 57 | October 13, 2023

Council Vacancy and By-Election

Resolution 58 | October 13, 2023

Appointments to the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council

This resolution nominates Brenda Frost and Vernon Kyikavichik to serve on the North Yukon Renewable Resource Council.

Resolution 59 | October 26, 2023

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Council By-election Postponement

This resolution requests that the Returning Officer postpone the upcoming by-election by two weeks. This was approved and the new dates were communicated to the community online and around Old Crow.

Resolution 60 | October 31, 2023

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Application for Standing at Coroner's Inquest

This resolution resolves that VGFN will apply for standing at the Yukon Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of Citizens Myranda Tizya-Charlie and Cassandra Warville planned for April 2024. If granted, the Resolution also affirms that VGFN will "take all steps necessary to participate fully in the inquest.

Resolution 61 | October 31, 2023

Disbursement Committee Recommendation to Council

This resolution recommends housing allocations of new housing units.

Resolution 62 | October 31, 2023

Disbursement Committee Recommendation to Council

This resolution recommends education funding allocations.