

Pathways

Stories of collaboration,
partnership and reconciliation

INSIDE:

Renewing government-to-government
relations through shared priorities

Bringing Truth and Reconciliation
to the Yukon

Changing the story for Indigenous women,
girls and Two-spirit+ people in the Yukon

Challenging perspectives to build
a better child-welfare system in the Yukon

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Message from Sandy Silver Premier of the Yukon

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the many outstanding initiatives featured in *Pathways*. The success of these initiatives was made possible thanks to the strong working relationships we continue to build with Yukon First Nations.

I am very proud of our public service and their dedication to working towards reconciliation and advancing priorities important to Yukon First Nations.

We have more work ahead of us as we continue to incorporate ways of knowing and doing into our government services. I am confident our public service is leading us to a brighter future that honours the spirit and intent of the Final and Self-Government Agreements, and will leave a positive legacy for future generations.

Thank you again to everyone directly involved with our progress, and congratulations on the many accomplishments highlighted in *Pathways*.



Message from Stephen Mills

Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office

I have worked in many positions in the Yukon government and in First Nations governments, in negotiation, program delivery and leadership roles. What strikes me is that staff within **both the First Nation and the Yukon governments are an incredibly dedicated group of people who take pride in their work and are working hard to make a difference** within the roles that they hold.

We all have an important personal role to play in reconciliation. We have the power to be champions at all levels of government.

Reconciliation is a long-term process. The public service plays a role in maintaining the commitment to reconciliation beyond the political mandates we help to implement.

Part of our role individually is to listen and try to understand the stories, history and realities of Indigenous Peoples with more depth; to be empathetic, rather than sympathetic and drive change where we can. The government has a real and lasting

impact on our community. Our decisions directly affect individual lives both negatively and positively. The policies we create and programs and services we deliver touch everyone living in the Yukon. It's our job as public servants to build momentum, push change and advance reconciliation across all levels of government.

There have been many different milestones in the journey towards reconciliation. *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement and the Final and Self-Government Agreements are incredible Yukon achievements. Nationally, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have helped us to better understand the systemic issues faced by Indigenous Peoples across Canada and here at home.

We continue to build on this momentum and are starting to better define the actions that are needed to take the next steps in reconciliation. Implementation

can be very challenging. It is often much easier to find the problems than to agree on the solutions. But I have seen a renewed commitment to work with First Nations in collaboration to find these solutions, to take risks and be innovative. We are working together to tackle some very challenging, long standing systemic issues.

What is clear is that, to truly effect change, we must work together. When we work alone we are all stretched thin, but there is great power when we align our efforts.

To me, an important part of reconciliation is empowering individuals, First Nations and ourselves to look at how we deliver programs and services, how we interact with each other and seeking more cooperative ways of doing this work in a spirit of friendship.

Reconciliation is a process, a series of small steps, decisions and actions and we all have a role to play in this process. This magazine celebrates some of those steps and hopes to encourage further progress, learning and growth.



Message from Brian MacDonald Assistant Deputy Minister of Aboriginal Relations

As public servants, we're often busy juggling priorities — consulting on legislation, developing policies, delivering programs or responding to issues. Once a project is complete, we move on to the next, rarely taking a moment to reflect on our milestones.

Pathways is a way to showcase, share and learn from the reconciliation efforts of the employees and teams working across the Yukon government public service. It is an opportunity for us to acknowledge all the work we are doing, share successes, think about where we are going in the future and how we can change the way we work to get there.

The Yukon is a small jurisdiction, but on many files we are leading the way, helping to chart a path to reconciliation and decolonization in Canada.

Reconciliation can be challenging, but rewarding work, and often, we do not realize how far we have come.

More often than not, big, shiny projects are held up as the examples of reconciliation, receiving political and media attention, while smaller acts go unnoticed. It's important to hold up our accomplishments, big and small, and appreciate what we achieved.

While some projects may seem small, when you dig deeper to understand the effort it took to change a mindset, try a new approach, build trust, work across multiple governments, it was a huge undertaking.

These successes are happening across the Yukon government often with little or no fanfare, but this is reconciliation in action.

To truly achieve equality and move forward together we need to be working at all levels, across all areas of government. This magazine is an opportunity to celebrate the reconciliation work being done across the public service — the big wins, small successes, and lessons learned over the last few years.

I hope employees with the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations hear their voices and stories in these pages and feel proud of the hard work underway. I hope that they find inspiration and examples of new and innovative approaches that can be applied to their work.

I hope that Indigenous Peoples see themselves in some of these stories and consider a meaningful career in the public service.

I hope that First Nations governments see a genuine effort, willingness to learn and commitment to work in partnership to advance reconciliation.

The stories in these pages reflect projects, people and relationships we are proud of. The Yukon public service is committed to walking a path towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. We have a long way to go, but are committed to the journey.



Renewing government-to-government relations through **shared priorities**

IN JANUARY 2017, YUKON FORUM LEADERS —

representatives from the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations — signed a declaration, committing to work together and meet four times a year.

The Forum was originally established in 2005 under the *Cooperation in Governance Act* with the goal to foster reconciliation, develop strong government-to-government relations and collaborate on shared priorities.

Forums were held between 2005 and 2016, but the meetings weren't held regularly. The Yukon government

renewed its commitment to intergovernmental collaboration at the beginning of 2017.

In May 2017, the governments agreed on four joint priority areas: fiscal relations; bilateral and trilateral engagement on justice, health and social services, education and heritage; land claim and self-government implementation; and ensuring the territory's legislative agenda considers First Nation priorities.

The governments approved a five-year *Yukon Forum Action Plan* in September 2017, which identified 16 working groups to help advance work under those joint priorities and develop policy to address long-standing and complex issues. Each working

group has a Yukon government lead and a Yukon First Nation lead.

The First Nation Relations branch at Aboriginal Relations works with the Council of Yukon First Nations, First Nations and Yukon government departments to develop a joint agenda, coordinate briefing materials and provide support and guidance to the officials and leaders who work on the Forum.

Because intergovernmental collaboration on this scale had never been done before, the team had to work with working group leads to establish effective processes. The work began with an "all leads meeting" to determine, as a group, the overall roles and responsibilities while also

recognizing that each group would have their autonomy.

“Each working group established a process that worked for them. While some have been more intentional, others have evolved more organically. Some groups are made up of just two leads, while others have multiple members and even sub-working groups,” says Jenny Imbeau, the Director of First Nation Relations. “Regardless of the structure, each working group has set its own pace understanding the importance of taking the time to build a solid foundation.”

It took time, careful consideration and flexibility to ensure the Forum and its working groups were set up to succeed.

Since 2017, the Forum has achieved some important accomplishments, laying the groundwork to modernize legislation and address critical issues, including:

- signing MOUs on mining and to reset the relationship under the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*;
- developing an agreement to clarify how resource royalties are shared under Chapter 23 of the Final Agreements; and
- identifying recommendations and priorities related to land use planning, justice and land-based healing.

Ed van Randen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Energy, Mines and Resources is the former Yukon government lead for the land use planning working group, and now for the mining MOU priority. van Randen says the Yukon Forum is foundational as a part of the ongoing reconciliation in Yukon.

He says the Forum symbolizes governments on equal footing discussing matters of mutual interest — agreeing to priorities and seeking solutions to long outstanding issues in a respectful way, between Yukon’s First People and all Yukoners.

“Over the last few years, the Yukon Forum has been a valuable addition to the cooperation and discussions we must have if we wish to govern together and address the complex issues and challenges we face in the North,” says van Randen. “I don’t think anything like the Yukon Forum exists elsewhere in Canada, but I

believe if it did, we would be the better for it.”

Shadelle Chambers, Executive Director, Council of Yukon First Nations, and a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations is the co-lead of the health and social services working group.

She says the Yukon Forum has been an opportunity for politicians — both Yukon First Nation Chiefs and Yukon government — to really identify priorities.

The meetings bring together the cabinet and Yukon Chiefs four times a year. Chambers says the consistency of the meetings is important.

“The Yukon Forum allows political leadership to really strategize and prioritize what are our political joint initiatives and allows it to remain as a priority with regular quarterly check-ins and it gives everyone a mandate to work collaboratively,” she says.



The Yukon Forum: Working Groups and Descriptions

2005

The Yukon Forum is established under the *Cooperation in Governance Act* to foster reconciliation, develop strong government-to-government relations and collaborate on shared priorities.

2017

The Government of Yukon renews its commitment to the Yukon Forum — holding the meeting four times a year.

Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon agree on joint priority areas: fiscal relations; bilateral and trilateral engagement; land claim and self-government implementation; and ensuring the territory's legislative agenda considers First Nation priorities.

The governments approve a five-year *Yukon Forum Action Plan*, identifying 16 working groups to help advance work under the joint priorities, and develop policy to address long-standing and complex issues. Each working group has a Yukon government lead and a Yukon First Nation lead.



Fiscal Relations

Resource Revenue: Explore a resource revenue sharing agreement and potential changes to the Yukon's resource royalty regime.

Infrastructure and Housing Funding: Set community infrastructure priorities and funding arrangements; and establish suitable and sustainable funding with the Government of Canada to support housing needs.

Trilateral Fiscal Matters: Work with Canada to address bilateral and trilateral financial agreements.



Land Claims & Self-Government Agreement Implementation

Economic Development (Chapter 22): Analyze, monitor and update economic development programs and opportunities like the Representative Public Service Plan, Yukon Asset Construction Agreements (YACA) and the Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy.

Government of Yukon Budgeting in Consideration of Yukon First Nation Priorities: Discuss Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation budget priorities, cycles and timing; and create the process for Yukon First Nations to articulate their budget priorities.

Land Use Planning (Chapter 11): Implement recommendations to achieve four priority objectives approved by the Yukon Forum: Set commissions up for success; support for multiple planning processes; legislative review; and implementation funding review.

Mining Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Review Mining MOU process, and implement and set priorities from the Mining MOU work plan.

Collaboration Approach: Streamline shared priorities and processes, reduce silos and resolve common issues; and consider internal Government of Yukon directive or policy on the implementation of the Final and Self-Government Agreements and recommend a path forward.

Fish and Wildlife: Work collectively on joint fish and wildlife issues, including: Trapline compensation; ethics of fish and wildlife harvesting; requirements for hunting licences; invasive species; and land leases for illegal occupation and mining activities.

YESAA Reset Memorandum of Understanding and Oversight Group: Follow the YESAA Reset MOU process, and establish priorities and work plan for YESAA Oversight Group.



Develop Bilateral and Trilateral Processes for Engagement

Health & Social Services: Work collectively to improve outcomes for children, youth and families, focused on initiatives that will reduce the number of Indigenous children in care.

Justice: Develop a joint bilateral process for strategic, effective engagement on justice related matters, excluding the Administration of Justice Agreement discussions.

Engagement Approach: Develop a strategic approach to improve coordination and enhance meaningful engagement.

Education: Develop a joint bilateral process for strategic, effective engagement on education related matters.

Heritage: Develop a joint bilateral process for strategic, effective engagement on heritage matters.

Yukon Voice: Develop a strategic process to bring a joint voice to Canada on trilateral initiatives.

Q&A

Creating a **cultural shift** through a **collaborative approach**

Four years into the *Yukon Forum Action Plan*, senior leadership in the Government of Yukon reflect on the importance and evolution of the Forum, and the lasting effect it's had on the territory's public service.

Jenny Imbeau (JI), Director of First Nation Relations at Aboriginal Relations, manages the team that supports the Government of Yukon's work with the Yukon Forum. Jenny's input below included support and inspiration from the past Director, Suzan Davy.

Al Lucier (AL), former Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Justice & Public Safety and former Yukon government lead for the justice working group.

Catherine Harwood (CH), Assistant Deputy Minister, Highways and Public Works and Yukon government lead for the procurement aspect of the economic development working group.

Why is the Yukon Forum important or unique?

Ji: The Yukon Forum has created a cultural shift within the Yukon government. While the Forum is led at the political level, identifying priorities and developing policies is really driven by the working groups made up of Yukon First Nation and Yukon government officials.

The joint priorities and working groups of the Forum is a new and collaborative approach that gives space for officials to have ongoing conversation.

AL: The Yukon Forum has provided a much-needed opportunity to align interests and efforts on issues that are joint areas of priority for First Nations and the Government of Yukon. This has given way to open dialogue and positive partnerships.

The type of collaboration enjoyed here in the Yukon is —

regrettably — ground-breaking in Canada. So often specific issues of interest between governments (First Nation, territorial/provincial, federal) are points of conflict versus opportunities to realize joint benefit and reconciliation.

CH: I find the Yukon Forum creates opportunities for safe, focused conversations about topics that have been important to Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon for decades. The topics are so big and important that departments need to work with each other in ways they haven't before. The Forum has highlighted the need for a whole of government approach. The Yukon Forum is a safe place because there is purpose, structure and people who are helping others to see different perspectives. It is about working together and is solution-oriented.

How has the Yukon Forum changed the way the Yukon government and First Nations work together?

CH: The Yukon Forum and the reporting on its Action Plan adds a layer of accountability for all that helps motivate people and drive progress. It has opened doors between government staff in many roles and at different levels. All the conversations and associated meetings have shown me that we can and must talk to each other more and reminds me how important relationships are.

How has the Forum grown or evolved over the years?

JL: It evolved naturally and is a continuous learning process — we're still figuring it out as we go.

At the first Yukon Forum in 2017, you could see the excitement for the renewed relationship between the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations, but it was a fairly scripted conversation. I think everyone was “proceeding with caution” — everyone was supportive, but building trust was important and necessary.

Now, four years later, we're building momentum. The working groups have tackled some practical, easy wins and are making progress with some more challenging issues.

What are you proud of in relation to your work with the Yukon Forum? What milestones have you achieved, or challenges have you overcome?

AL: In my opinion the greatest benefit of the Forum, at the senior official level, has been the ability to have open dialogue and discourse about areas of importance. The specific areas in the Justice trilateral table: Corrections Reform, Restorative Justice and Community Safety, have given way to systemic change, as well as bilateral engagement. These changes require significant effort, broad understanding, a challenge of the status quo, and a willingness to see things with a different “world view” than has been in place since colonization.

Specifically, the achievements and continued work in corrections reform, greater First Nation self-determination in the development of community safety planning and the recent work to revitalize and improve results related to restorative justice have been the evidence of successful change that the Yukon Forum has given way to.

CH: I am proud that Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government have created a Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy together which is linked to the economic development goals in the *Yukon Forum Action Plan*.

What could other governments learn from the Yukon Forum?

JL: The Yukon Forum is unique. Many of the policies addressed at the Forum are steeped in complex and long-standing issues that won't be resolved overnight.

It's important to understand that context, go in with eyes open, take the time to build a foundation of trust and respect and stay committed to working together collaboratively.

More importantly, we are working to understand what reconciliation means to all involved and build the road toward reconciliation together.

How would you like to see the Yukon Forum evolve over the next 5-10 years?

AL: Like all processes, the Yukon Forum will continue to mature. It will become the arena where all Yukon leaders share in the benefits of reconciliation. The issues prioritized at the Forum will be those shared by all Yukoners. The benefits of the Forum will continue to drive positive change in social and economic elements of the territory, but most importantly it will continue to evolve the focus of reconciliation.

CH: I am interested in an evolving role for the Joint Senior Executive Committee (JSEC) made up of Deputy Ministers of the Yukon government and Executive Directors of First Nations governments. I would also like to know more about the achievements of the other working groups and do more to celebrate progress on the Action Plan.



A group shot of Yukon First Nations and Government of Yukon leaders, with staff from the Gordon Foundation and youth who participated in the Treaty Simulation, held in Whitehorse in October 2020.

Treaty simulations **connect youth** with negotiators and leaders

Yukon youth are learning what it's like to negotiate a modern treaty first hand.

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, ABORIGINAL RELATIONS, THE GORDON FOUNDATION, YUKON FIRST NATION EDUCATION DIRECTORATE AND THE IMPLEMENTATION WORKING GROUP (made up of all signatories to the Yukon Agreements) have been working together to connect youth with negotiators to experience treaty negotiation for themselves through an interactive treaty negotiation simulation.

“Treaty Simulations ensure the next generation of leaders and all Canadians are engaged and interested in treaties,” explained Sherry Campbell, President and CEO of The Gordon Foundation. “Participants split into teams representing different parties — for example, an Indigenous government, the federal government, and a territorial government — before negotiating until an agreement is reached on a specific topic. Participants are guided by advisors with years of treaty negotiation and implementation experience, where knowledge-transfer is another key objective.”

Throughout the treaty negotiation simulation youth are supported and coached by treaty negotiation experts from Yukon First Nations, the Yukon and federal governments. The students take on the roles of

"I learned how much we have and how much so many people have worked to get where we are today. I'm interested in pushing the limits so we can be even more successful in the future."

"I learned that it's not easy. It's a marriage, not a divorce. You'll have to work with the First Nation, province or territory and Canada for the duration of the agreement."

YOUTH QUOTES

"I learned what questions to consider and the importance of understanding where all sides are coming from. One day down the road I dream of being Chief."

negotiators, researchers, lawyers and wildlife experts to negotiate a treaty of their own.

The first Yukon treaty simulation was held in November 2019 with youth nominated by Yukon First Nations.

One youth said that after experiencing the simulation they want to "go to more general assemblies to listen and say what I believe because as a youth I really have a role and what I think is important."

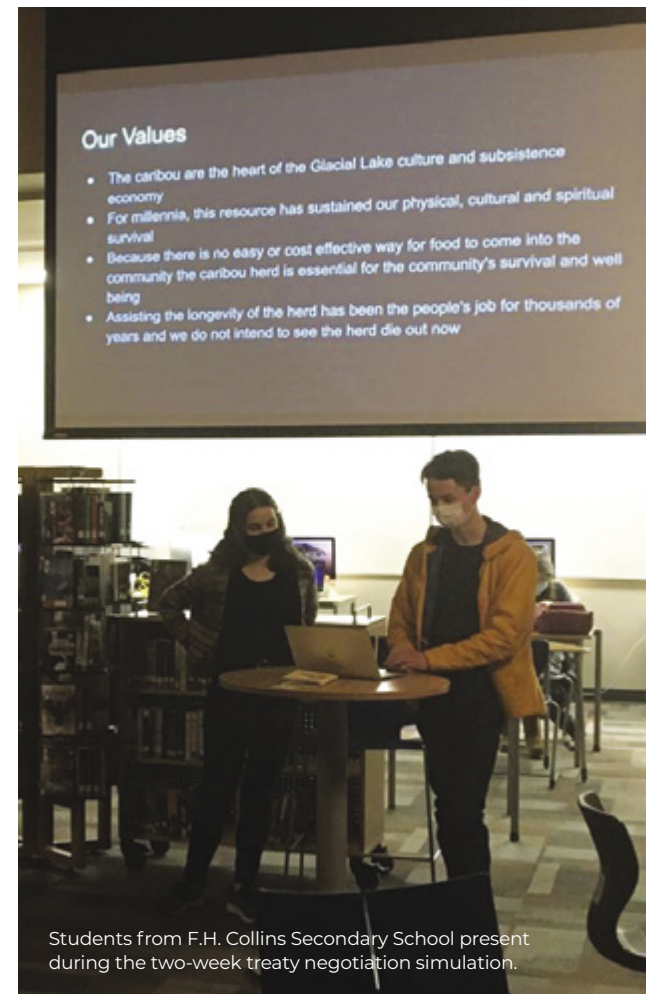
In October 2020, The Gordon Foundation trained educators from the Yukon Department of Education and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate in the treaty simulation model and the

Department of Education worked to adapt it to a school format.

"The Treaty Simulation Review was a great experience. I didn't know much about treaties and how they affect our lives every day. After this experience I have had a desire to learn more and become involved and provide more support," said Lauren Wallingham, a Yukon First Nation Education Directorate Advocate.

The Grade 12 students in Yukon First Nations Studies at F.H. Collins Secondary School took part in a two-week treaty negotiation simulation aimed at giving students an interactive and engaging way to learn about the history and practice of modern

"I learned I can be involved in my First Nation's self-government."





Staff from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate work with students during the Treaty Simulation.

treaty negotiation. Further simulations are planned for other high schools this year.

“Watching my students interacting with the experts and with each other, I could tell that they were building a powerful understanding of modern treaties and how they are negotiated,” said teacher Sean Wilkinson. “Feedback from students afterwards was highly positive. One student even reported that the treaty simulation had been the highlight of their entire school year. I really appreciated the huge amount of support provided by the Yukon experts and the Gordon Foundation, and highly

recommend this program to other Social Studies teachers.”

“The heart of the Yukon’s social contract is based in modern treaties. With this in mind, the Yukon Department of Education recognizes the importance of treaty education. We see it of vital importance that all students and educators gain knowledge of the historical treaties and gain the knowledge and skills required to implement the Yukon’s modern treaties,” says Mark Connell, a curriculum consultant with the Department of Education. “It has been a privilege to work with these expert partners to make this simulation a part of the Yukon

classrooms. We are committed to providing meaningful and engaging treaty education within the K-12 education system.”

“It was a really good experience. I learned a lot going through. It was really cool to see the whole class working as one instead of against each other,” said grade 12 student Scottie James-Shephard. “Having the experts there meant they were able to help us say things in a less hostile and more friendly way. I learned how an actual negotiation meeting goes down, how long it can take, and how long it takes to come to an agreement.”

The Gordon Foundation developed the [treaty negotiation simulation model](#) and an [interactive treaty learning website](#) with support from the Government of Yukon and a number other governments and organizations across Canada.

“I find learning about how powerful and resilient First Nations are exciting.”



“I learned that the First Nation gets to govern themselves and make the best choices for their community.”

YOUTH QUOTES

“I learned listening, communication and leadership skills.”

“I learned how to plan for the future and how to compromise when needed.”



TOP: Treaty Simulation participants split into teams representing different parties — an Indigenous government, the federal government, and a territorial government — before negotiating an agreement on a specific topic.

MIDDLE: During the treaty negotiation simulation, participants take on the roles of negotiators, researchers, lawyers and wildlife experts to negotiate a treaty of their own.

BOTTOM: Advisors with years of treaty negotiation and implementation experience guide participants through the process.

Mapping the Way through intergovernmental collaboration

The Mapping the Way public education campaign has been working to help Yukoners better understand and appreciate the Yukon Final and Self-Government Agreements for over 10 years.

THE AGREEMENTS ARE SO COMPLEX, IT'S HARD FOR NEW YUKONERS AND YOUTH TO UNDERSTAND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT ON YUKON SOCIETY. The Agreements are foundational in that they lay out a path for relationships and areas of responsibilities. In 2007, a review of the implementation of the Agreements called for improved public communications. In 2009, an intergovernmental communications working group, made up of the Council of Yukon First Nation, the 11 Self-Governing Yukon First Nations, the Yukon and federal governments was formed to help improve people's understanding of the Agreements. The group has been going strong ever since.

MAPPING THE WAY: Yukon First Nation Self-Government

Yukon is one of Canada's three smallest provinces and territories with a population of about 37,000 residents. There are 14 First Nations in Yukon. Approximately 25% of Yukon's population is Indigenous, with each Indigenous group representing one of the 14 Yukon First Nations.

1876 The Indian Act becomes law and sets out rules for the Government of Canada regarding Yukon's First Nations and their lands.

1898 The Klondike Gold Rush brings thousands of gold seekers to Yukon.

1902 The Klondike Gold Rush brings thousands of gold seekers to Yukon.

1973 **Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow**

Yukon land claim negotiations begin when Hugh Dunlop and Yukon First Nations present a groundbreaking document, "Yukon, Territory and Citizens' Response to the Canadian Royal Commission on the Yukon." The Council for Yukon Indians is created to represent land claims on behalf of all Yukon First Nations people.

1993 **Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA)**

The Council for Yukon Indians, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Yukon sign the Umbrella Final Agreement. The UFA is the first modern land claim settlement process, and towards First Nations self-government.

1993 to 2005 **Final Agreements (land claim)**

Yukon First Nations negotiate their own Final Agreements with the Government of Canada and the Government of Yukon.

Today

Yukon First Nations are at the forefront of self-governance in Canada, and are working to improve the lives of their citizens and communities.

Self-Governing Yukon First Nations

For more information about Yukon First Nation land claims and self-government, visit mappingtheway.ca

VOICES OF VISION: Yukon Aboriginal Self-Government

A 10-part series of podcast interviews

YUKON FIRST NATION SELF - GOVERNMENT
mappingtheway.ca [f /MappingtheWayYT](https://www.facebook.com/MappingtheWayYT) [@ /mappingtheway.ca](https://www.instagram.com/mappingtheway) [/mappingtheway](https://www.youtube.com/mappingtheway)

Mapping the Way exhibit called "Our Journey".



Mapping the Way has a number of resources available for order or loan that can be used at events or in classrooms.

“Over the years we’ve tried to make the Agreements more accessible to the public through storytelling and celebrating the successes of our communities and citizens,” said Stephanie Brown, the federal co-chair with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. “We have videos, podcasts, a Facebook and Instagram page, posters and a website.”

“Over the years we’ve tried to make the Agreements more accessible to the public through storytelling and celebrating the successes of our communities and citizens,” said Stephanie Brown, the federal co-chair with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. “We have videos, podcasts, a Facebook and Instagram page, posters and a website.”

“Mapping the Way has followed me through my whole career. I started working on it 10 years ago

as a co-op student with the federal government and now, working with the Yukon government, I’ve been the co-chair for the last five years,” said Shari-Lynn MacLellan, the Communications Advisor at the Yukon government’s Aboriginal Relations division. “Mapping the Way in itself is a really rewarding project to be involved in and I’m also grateful for the strong relationships I’ve built with my colleagues in other governments. The way we work together on Mapping the Way has become

a model for intergovernmental collaboration that we’ve followed in other areas like the Yukon Forum, COVID and vaccine communications.”

“This project has succeeded in educating Yukoners about their connection to the Agreements,” said Wayne Potoroka, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Communications and Policy Director. “In creating closer working relationships between all levels of government it has surpassed initial expectations for what the project could achieve.”



A collaborative fight against COVID

In the face of this year's unprecedented challenges of COVID and vaccinating the majority of our population in a matter of months, the governments of Yukon have been coming together in a Yukon-wide approach.



The Government of Yukon worked with First Nation and Municipality governments to support the community coordination of the vaccine clinics.

THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON, FIRST NATIONS AND MUNICIPALITIES

have had to dramatically change their operations, make fast-paced decisions and share information in new and innovative ways.

“It became evident early on in the pandemic that First Nation governments were being inundated and overwhelmed with outreach efforts from the Yukon

government. Aboriginal Relations took note of the Community Advisor roles and structure and saw how beneficial this approach could be to First Nations partners,” explains Jenny Imbeau, Director of First Nation Relations at Aboriginal Relations.

Aboriginal Relations and Community Services teamed up to create a Community Outreach Team with staff

assigned to each First Nation and municipality. These liaisons serve as the first point of contact for communities — finding answers to their questions, organizing meetings, sharing information about new policies, seeking input on the Government of Yukon’s pandemic response and supporting the community coordination and communication of the vaccine clinics.

Dakwākāda Dancers welcome team Togo to the Da Kų Culture Centre in Haines Junction.



“We continue to tweak and shift the function of the Aboriginal Relations COVID Outreach Team as the pandemic response evolves, however, the relationships built through the roles of Aboriginal Relations liaisons has been so successful that we plan to continue this function long after the pandemic is over,” says Imbeau.

The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations have also been working closely on communications throughout



“This has been an opportunity to recognize the authority and jurisdiction Yukon First Nations governments have regardless of whether they are identified in the CEMA legislation. This global emergency has allowed us as Yukoners to recognize how symbiotic our relationships are – we truly are One Yukon.”

- Math'ieya Alatini | Yukon First Nation COVID Response Coordinator



Community members in Haines Junction greet the COVID-19 vaccine bus with ice candles.

the pandemic. A joint communications committee made up of communications people from Yukon First Nations, Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government have been meeting weekly to share information, plan joint campaigns and provide input into each others communications initiatives.

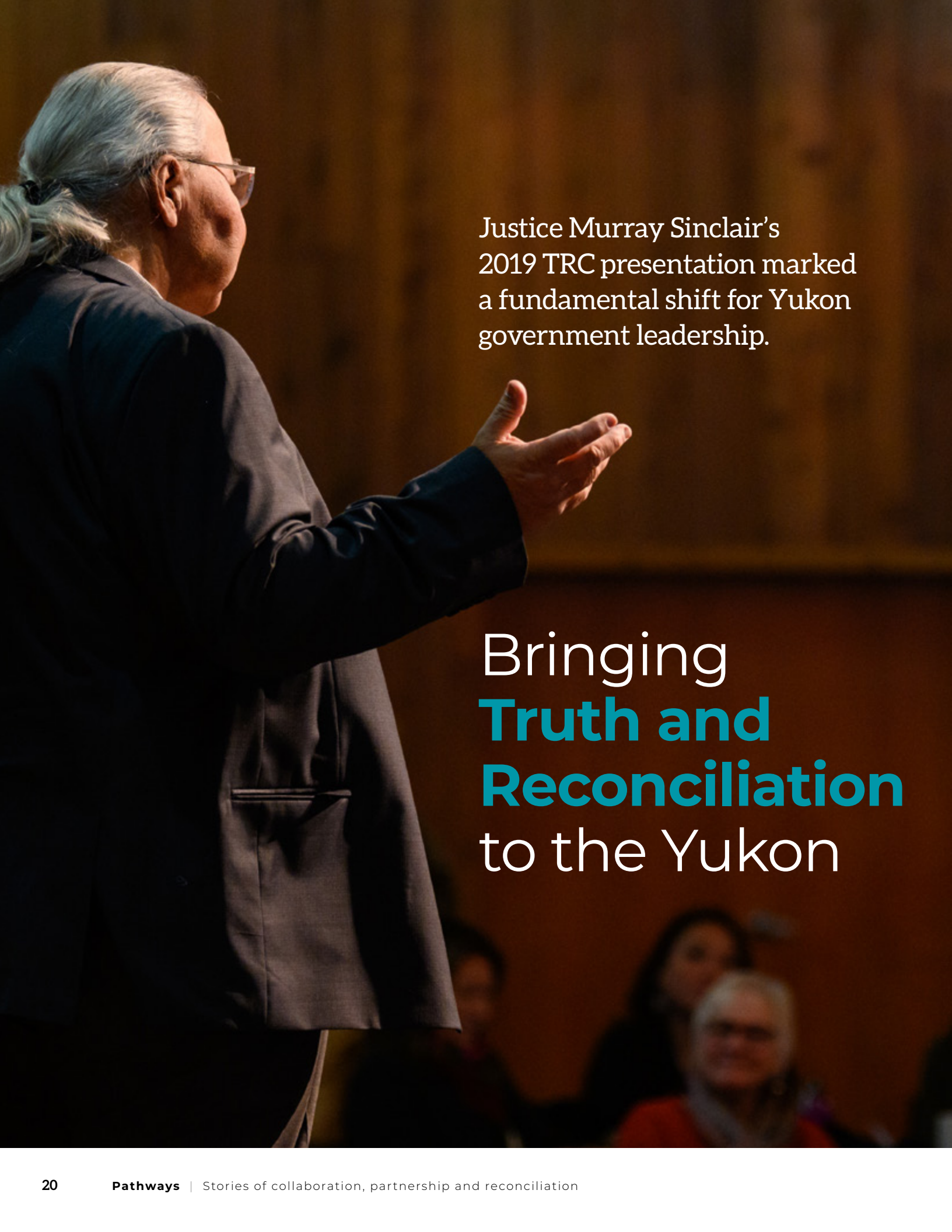
“We hold space each week to share and collaborate as government and agency representatives at an operational

level,” says Kari Johnston the Yukon First Nation COVID Response Communications Lead. “It leads to new ideas and an opportunity to understand and hear perspectives on complex communications issues in real time.”

Shari-Lynn MacLellan, the Aboriginal Relations Communications Advisor who has been serving as a liaison between First Nations and Yukon government communications,

says: “It took some time to figure out how best to work together, but it’s felt like a real team effort. Because of this coordination, we’ve been able to complement each other’s communications efforts really well.”

Council of Yukon First Nations and Health and Social Services jointly funded a series of Indigenous language videos about COVID safety and the vaccine that have been promoted through the One Yukon social media pages.



Justice Murray Sinclair's 2019 TRC presentation marked a fundamental shift for Yukon government leadership.

Bringing **Truth and Reconciliation** to the Yukon



“There is no reconciliation without truth.”

NEARLY TWO YEARS LATER, JUSTICE MURRAY SINCLAIR’S

words are as clear today as when he delivered them to a room of senior Yukon government leaders in December 2019.

Justice Sinclair served the justice system in Manitoba for over 25 years and was the first Aboriginal Judge appointed in Manitoba and second in Canada. He co-chaired the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba and served as Chief Commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

In 2016, Justice Sinclair was appointed to the Canadian Senate and spent five years working to move many of the TRC’s Calls to Action forward from the Red Chamber. Since 2015, he’s continued to travel across the country talking about ways

to tackle systemic racism in Canadian institutions.

He brought the conversation to Whitehorse in 2019.

In the Longhouse of the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Justice Sinclair began the session by asking participants to find a photo on their phone of a child in their life, and hold it up for the room to see.

As participants held up their phones, he asked them to share the photo with a neighbour.

At the end of his presentation, Justice Sinclair asked participants to consider what they would do if the child in that photo had been taken away and sent to a residential school.

“Ask yourself, if this had happened to you, if this had happened to your people, to your relatives, if this was being done



“As a First Nation man, I’m proud to have such a strong, compassionate and accomplished First Nation man, like Justice Sinclair, to look up to.”

- Stephen Mills | Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office

Stephen Mills, Deputy Minister, Executive Council introduces Justice Sinclair at a Truth and Reconciliation talk, held for senior Government of Yukon staff in December 2019.

to your babies, in those photos, what would you do about it,” he asked. “What would you want done about it? What would you want governments to do about it?”

Looking back on the talk, Jeff Ford, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Strategic Corporate Services at Executive Council Office, says the room was captivated.

He says he has never seen a speaker connect so directly with each individual participant before.

“When he looked at you, you felt like he was talking to you, sitting next to you in the chair and there’s no one else in the room,” says Ford. “He drew direct parallels between the experience of Indigenous parents in the 50s and 60s, and parents sitting in the room.”

Ford says the talk resonated with everyone in the room and

marked a fundamental shift for government leadership.

Stephen Mills, the Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office, says the talk was very personal.

For him, meeting the man who witnessed his mother’s story as a Residential School Survivor during the TRC hearings was an honour.

“It was almost like meeting a dear, dear, close friend of my mother for the first time,” says Mills. “It meant a lot to me.”

“Being able to share the stage with somebody who changed thinking in Canada and continues to be a voice and keep the work of the Commission alive, changed me,” says Mills. “As a First Nation man, I’m proud to have such a strong, compassionate and

accomplished First Nation man, like Justice Sinclair, to look up to.”

Mills says having a shared experience like this with colleagues was powerful.

“For some people, residential schools and the TRC are local or national headlines,” says Mills. “But Justice Sinclair was able to bring it home and make the experience personal for everyone in the room.”

He says the talk ripped a band-aid off of a wound everybody was feeling.

Justice Sinclair was direct. He called out Canadian public institutions, including the media, for deliberately hiding the history of Residential Schools from Canadians.

He warned that governments can’t resist the truth of Residential

Schools out of fear that Canadians don't know how to address the past.

Sinclair said TRC's final report was written to be accessible to everyone.

"The most important work that has to be done is changing the minds of Canadians," he said. "The purpose of the TRC Report was to help people make decisions and influence decision makers on how to move forward."

Justice Sinclair's speech has had a lasting effect on the Yukon government's leadership and has inspired action for many.

Aisha Montgomery, the Director of Communications at Community Services, says she walked over to the library after leaving the talk at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, and took out the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

She had thumbed through the recommendations in the past, but felt the responsibility to read the whole report after listening to Justice Sinclair's talk.

"It was my responsibility to better understand where and what I could do in my everyday work to advance reconciliation. The biggest shift for me is beginning to really understand how our life experiences shape the lens that we see life through."

Montgomery says the talk deepened her sense of responsibility.

"As public servants, we make decisions that impact citizens," she says. "It is our responsibility to understand how people will be impacted by the work we do and importantly, the approach we take to the work we do."

She says as a public service leader, it's important to do the work.

Justice Sinclair discusses how Canadian institutions can tackle systemic racism and support the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



Ford says Justice Sinclair's talk taught him that reconciliation is a journey.

"It's not an end state. It's not a project deliverable, or a training course," he says. "We need to be committed to that journey, with open hearts and with the kind of passion that Justice Sinclair reflected in his speech."

Damien Burns, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Protective Services says, "the talk helped me

recognize that we have the ability and responsibility to consider reconciliation in all aspects of life and work and to make it a key driver in Government of Yukon programs and services."

At the end of the talk, Justice Sinclair said the most important work within government now is to educate the public and bring the truth into the light.

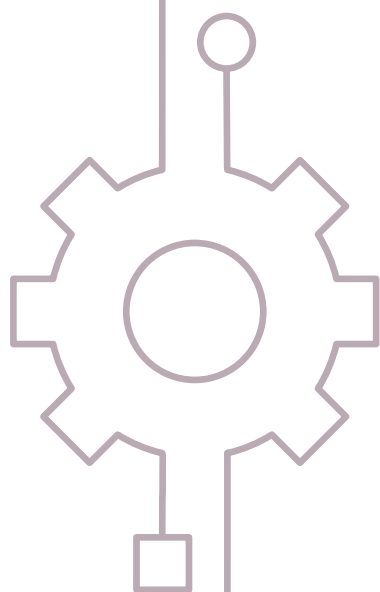
Because there is no reconciliation without truth.

"As public servants, we make decisions that impact citizens. It is our responsibility to understand how people will be impacted by the work we do and importantly, the approach we take to the work we do."

- **Aisha Montgomery** | Director of Communications, Community Services

Modernizing the Yukon government's consultation processes

The Government of Yukon is starting a project that has the potential to dramatically improve the way it consults with Indigenous groups and governments.



THE GOAL OF THE PROJECT IS TO CREATE AN ELECTRONIC CONSULTATION SYSTEM to store and share consultation records, contact lists for Indigenous groups and governments and the Government of Yukon, maps and information about Indigenous rights, the Final and Self-Government Agreements and other information relevant to consultation. This will aid the Yukon government in meeting its responsibilities in consultation by improving our processes and practices.

The consultation advisors at Aboriginal Relations provide support and advice to Government of Yukon departments on how to consult meaningfully with Indigenous groups and governments. “Consultation is a foundational aspect of reconciliation, but it is also often a very administrative process where we exchange a series of letters and often maps and reports,” says Alisha Bell, one of Aboriginal Relations’ Senior Consultation Advisors.

“We hear about consultation fatigue from Indigenous groups and governments all the time,” says Emily Mann, also a Senior Consultation Advisor with Aboriginal Relations. “We’ve heard both internally and externally that there is an interest in streamlining the Yukon government’s processes. Consultation still needs to be flexible and meaningful to the Indigenous group or government, but this system should help provide some consistency and help Indigenous groups and governments prioritize the consultations that are most important to them.”



Emily Mann and Alisha Bell are Senior Consultation Advisors at Aboriginal Relations.

Aboriginal Relations also anticipates that the new system will help the Yukon government staff enhance their knowledge of consultation and follow a common process that works for both the Government of Yukon and Indigenous groups and governments.

“Our knowledge of assertions of Indigenous rights and

consultation case law and obligations is always evolving. Our current processes to notify departments of these changes can be slow and clunky with information being emailed to departments and saved in different ways,” says Alisha Bell. “We want a system that is responsive and that will grow with us.”

“With this system, any new information that might be beneficial for future consultations, such as specific areas of importance to an Indigenous group or government or who represents them, can be securely added, shared with all departments and remain accessible in the future. It will save Indigenous groups and governments from having to repeat information multiple times to multiple departments,” says Emily Mann.

To help inform the development of the system, Aboriginal Relations has been gathering information from consultation practitioners within Indigenous groups and governments and the Yukon government. Development is expected to take place over the next two years.

“Consultation is a foundational aspect of reconciliation.”

- Alisha Bell | Senior Consultant Advisor, Aboriginal Relations



Shoulder-to-shoulder:

Wildland Fire Management and 14 Yukon First Nations fight wildfires together

White River First Nation signs initial-attack crew agreement with the Government of Yukon.

THROUGH WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT BRANCH, the Government of Yukon has fully integrated Yukon's First Nations into how it manages wildfires. Fourteen of the Yukon government's 25 initial-attack wildfire crews are hired through contracts with First Nations or their development corporations. First Nations are involved in the Yukon government's progressive fire response policy that mandates protecting people and property while preserving fire's place in the wilderness.

Some of the government's initial-attack contracts predate the 1990 Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) and the devolution of

fighting fires from the federal government in 2003. Earlier this year, the government finalized its initial-attack crew agreement with the White River First Nation, ensuring that all 14 First Nations are represented among the government's initial-attack program.

Dave Trudeau is Wildland Fire Management's Regional Protection Manager in the Northern Tutchone fire management region and hails from the Wiikwemikoong Unceded Territory. Dave was first recruited to fight fire in 1998 as a short-term Emergency Fire Fighter. His brother Gerry, who was a member of the Selkirk First Nation's elite Pelly Fire-Head Hunters fire crew, facilitated his brother's recruitment to fight the Haines Junction 'Beetle Burnout', a major fire that was made more intense by a spruce beetle infestation that killed entire forest stands.

"I established a bit of a reputation at the Beetle Burnout because I found my passion," Dave

says with pride. “I had a lot of bush skills. I was a professional chainsaw operator and people noticed me.” In 2000, “the Selkirk First Nation tracked [him] down” and recruited him to the Fire-Head Hunters – where he eventually served two years as a crewmember, then three more as its crew leader.

Since rising through the ranks, Dave has seen government firefighters and First Nations contract crews work shoulder-to-shoulder in common purpose. He says it’s very simple: “if you’re going to fight fire, then you’re going to go fight fire. When everybody’s in Nomex, nothing else matters.”

Wildland Fire Management’s collaboration with First Nations governments has evolved beyond implementing the UFA into full-on reconciliation. In the lead-up to devolution, wildfire officials

consulted with First Nations governments to develop a territorial fire management policy that uses zones to determine how aggressively fires are fought.

“When we did the consultation, we visited all 14 First Nations and discussed the process with them. We did a tour to every First Nation and asked people which areas needed protection. We drafted a series of maps, then presented them back to the community,” says Mike Sparks who was a federal Resource Management Officer who helped develop the policy.

First Nations engagement in the policy’s development led to some unique results. In Old Crow, residents flagged the Porcupine River for more forceful fire suppression because residents use the river and its tributaries extensively.



Crews respond to the 2019 Bear Creek fire in Haines Junction.



As a result of meaningfully including the community, wildfire officers can make more relevant decisions about how to protect the community.

Finalized in 2003, the Yukon's fire management policy remains a progressive document in a professional community that continues to evolve past a suppression-focused mentality.

Thanks to the policy, the Yukon maintains a better balance between public safety and preserving fire's role in the forest.

As Wildland Fire Management grows, it continues to hone its relationships with the Yukon's First Nations. It maintains a strong relationship with the Yukon First Nations Wildfire Limited Partnership, a private company that

provides sustained-action wildfire crews and manages some First Nations development corporations' initial-attack contracts. The FireSmart program also creates countless opportunities for First Nations governments to make their Traditional Territories more resilient to wildfires while having the chance to employ local forestry technicians.



Crews respond to Fox Lake fire in 1998.



Eff Crew briefing Granger while fighting the Fox Lake fire in 1998.



Alice Frost, with Charlie crew, pile burns during the 2019 wildfire season.



Golf Crew, working with Carcross/Tagish First Nation, prepares to load an initial-attack helicopter.



Dave Trudeau, Regional Protection Manager, Northern Tutchone Fire Management Region, Wildland Fire Management.

Tän tàgá shro t'sän yū

“trail (to the) big river”

New Wolf Creek trail features interpretive signs in Southern Tutchone, English and French.



A trail post on the Tän tàgá shro t'sän yū, “trail (to the) big river”.

NEW WOLF CREEK TRAIL

features interpretive signs in Southern Tutchone, English and French.

In June 2019, the Department of Environment opened Tän tàgá shro t'sän yū “trail (to the) big river,” a wheelchair accessible interpretive trail at the Wolf Creek Territorial Park.

The trail features interpretive maps, signposts and place names in Southern Tutchone, English and French, and gives more people access to connect with nature and culture.

Collaborating with Kwänlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the department developed the interpretive panels with financial support from CanNor and the City of Whitehorse.

The Government of Yukon partnered with Singletrack to Success to re-design and build the Wolf Creek trail and used the opportunity to train and employ First Nation youth.

Then Minister of Environment Pauline Frost, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Chief Kristina Kane, Kwanlin Dün First Nation Councillor Jessie Dawson as well as Elders and project partners were on hand for the official opening of the trail, in honour of International Trails Day.



In a press release announcing the new trail, then Minister Frost said the accessible trail will allow more Yukoners to get out, enjoy nature, and have memorable recreation experiences.

“Spending time in nature is good for the mind, body and soul, and is something all Yukoners should have the opportunity to enjoy,” said Frost. “The multi-lingual interpretive signage also provides an important opportunity for locals and visitors to see and learn different languages.”

The Wolf Creek trail is the second of three new wheelchair-accessible trails in Yukon's territorial park system. The first trail, Beaver Pond Trail in Tombstone Territorial Park, opened in 2011, and the third trail at Pine Lake campground is expected to open in 2022.

Changing the story for Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people in the Yukon

The Yukon Advisory Committee developed a MMIWG2S+ Strategy using a decolonized, community-led approach.

IN DECEMBER 2020, THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON

released *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy*, the territory's response to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Final Report.

The National Inquiry spent two years holding public hearings, gathering evidence and listening to the testimonies of more than 2,380 family members, survivors of violence, experts and Knowledge Keepers.

In June 2019, the National Inquiry released its Final

Report, finding that Canada's disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people are rooted in human and Indigenous rights violations and abuses.

The report included 231 individual calls for justice directed at governments, institutions, social service providers, industries and all Canadians to make legal and social changes to end the genocide against Indigenous women and girls across Canada.

The Yukon was the first jurisdiction in the country to release its response to the National Inquiry's Final Report.



Doris Bill, Chief of Kwanlin Dūn First Nation acknowledged the grieving families of MMIWG2S+ people during the release of the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy.

Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy was developed through a grassroots, community-led approach by the Yukon Advisory Committee (YAC), a committee co-chaired by a representative of the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and Indigenous women's organizations.

YAC was created in the spring of 2015 to guide and support the first Yukon Regional Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ people (MMIWG2S+) and to connect the work of the National Inquiry in Yukon to families of MMIWG2S+, and Indigenous survivors, experts, and communities.



Ann Maje Raider, Executive Director of Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, co-chaired the Yukon Advisory Committee with Chief Bill and Jeanie McLean, Minister responsible for the Women's Directorate.



The Yukon government released its *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy* at the Kwanlin Dūn Cultural Centre on December 10, 2020.

The committee is grounded in culture and community, and uses a decolonized approach in its work to end violence, uphold dignity, and bring justice for MMIWG2S+.

Honouring the committee's approach, the Women's Directorate stepped back from the development of the strategy and took a more supportive role, letting YAC drive the process.

Hillary Aitken, Director, Women's Directorate, says the work of developing the MMIWG2S+ Strategy needed to be done in a different way.

"Government of Yukon needed to listen, learn, and make the process just as important as the final strategy," says Aitken. This approach is sometimes hard and

will always take more time, but it is the right thing to do."

The strategy was finalized in December, after a year of meetings and discussions led by the committee.

Lisa Dewhurst, Senior Advisor on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Women's Directorate, joined the directorate in September 2020.

She says it was an honour to support the committee's work, even for a short time, and witness the empowerment of Yukon First Nations to develop a solution that supports First Nations women and girls across the territory.

"The people have their answers. They know what is best for them, but they need partners and

resources," says Dewhurst. "They're their own best identifiers of the problem and the solution, but they need to be heard."

She says the Family Gatherings that were held provided an important voice to the strategy; keeping the families at the heart of this work has been a cornerstone in this work.

"Lives need to be saved and Indigenous women and girls need to be valued," says Dewhurst.

Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy addresses all four pathways to violence identified in the National Inquiry's Final Report, and maps four corresponding paths to dignity and justice: Strengthening Connections and Supports; Community Safety and Justice;

A sacred fire was held before the Yukon government released the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy.



Minister Jeanie McLean, and First Nations, territorial and federal government leaders signed on to support the MMIWG2S+ Strategy during the event on December 10, 2020.



Economic Independence and Education; Community Action and Accountability.

The strategy groups 31 priority actions under the four paths. It takes a Yukon approach, encouraging all Yukoners to see themselves as part of the solution.

In a press release announcing the strategy, Ann Maje Raider, Executive Director, Liard Aboriginal Women's Association and co-chair, YAC, attributes the committee's success to the life-long work of advocates.

"All of the advocates, family members, and survivors that

have fought so hard for so long," says Maje Raider. "Nothing about this work has been easy, but their tireless work, guidance, strength and commitment over the years is the reason we are here today."

YAC released Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy with a signing ceremony in Whitehorse at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre in December. Delegates from all 14 Yukon First Nations, federal, territorial and municipal governments signed a declaration to end violence against Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit+ people.

Dewhurst says the strategy offers lessons to other government departments in approaching policy change in a decolonized way.

She encourages others interested in taking a more decolonized approach to work to focus on creating relationships and building a diverse network.

"Get out there and develop relationships, meet people, don't be stuck in your own silo," says Dewhurst. "Reach out to learn about the First Nations - all of them. Know who they are, where they are, and build those relationships and don't stop talking with them."

The Yukon's MMIWG2S+ Strategy is a living document that will grow and change as implementation proceeds and priorities for action change and community needs evolve. It will guide the development of an implementation plan outlining detailed action required, including who will lead and contribute to each action item, over the next 10 to 15 years and beyond.

"The people have their answers. They know what is best for them, but they need partners and resources. They're their own best identifiers of the problem and the solution, but they need to be heard."

- Lisa Dewhurst | Senior Advisor on MMIWG, Women's Directorate

Breaking Trail Together:

Building a public service that reflects the Yukon's population

The Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations governments work together to create a representative territorial government.

IN SEPTEMBER 2019, THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON released its plan to create an inclusive Yukon public service, representative of Yukon First Nation people.

The 10-year strategic plan, *Breaking Trail Together, an Inclusive Yukon Public Service*, was developed in collaboration with representatives from six Yukon First Nations — Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.

Matt Lackowicz, Director of Human Resources for the Department of Environment was a member of the working group. For him, the work was personal.

"I wanted to be involved because I believe representation is really important in government," says Lackowicz. "It's important as a member of the public to feel represented by the public service that's serving you."

He says the government has been working on improving representation for close to 30 years as part of its Final Agreement obligations.

Under Chapter 22 of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements, the Yukon government has a legal obligation to develop and implement a plan to establish a proportionately representative public service, based on the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal and gender make-up of the territory's population.

According to the Government of Yukon's Workforce Census Data, the government's Aboriginal employee representation rate is approximately 15 per cent as of March 31, 2020, while the current working-age population of Aboriginal people in Yukon is 21.7 per cent, based on 2016 Census data.

Lackowicz says *Breaking Trail Together* aims to help close the representation gap.

"It's a real opportunity to bring more views to the public service,



As of March 2020, approximately 15 per cent of the Government of Yukon's workforce self-identify as Aboriginal.



The Government of Yukon's *Breaking Trail Together* plan has three pillars: responsive and barrier-free recruitment; culturally safe and supportive working environments; and training and development opportunities.

that maybe weren't there before," he says. "It was important to really just build on existing structures to make them a little bit more functional and reflect the views of First Nations people who are ultimately the users of this part of the strategy."

The strategic plan is built around three foundational objectives.

Responsive and barrier-free recruitment: Identify and remove any recruitment obstacles for Yukon First Nation applicants and create a flexible recruitment process to ensure a 'two-way fit' for

both the employer and employee.

Culturally safe and supportive working environments: Create a culturally safe work environment where all employees, including senior executives, managers and supervisors are aware and respectful of Yukon First Nations cultural norms and practices, and feel safe from discrimination.

Training and development opportunities: Invest in training and development opportunities to retain skilled and effective employees within the Yukon public service and advance

qualified Yukon First Nations employees into management and other leadership positions.

Lackowicz says it's important to have the right people in the right positions.

"We need First Nations voices within government as part of the whole reconciliation process," he says. "It's important to have First Nations voices internally as we approach consultations and work on high-level strategies."

The strategic plan aims to provide employment, and skill-development opportunities for Yukon First Nations

people, but, Lackowicz says it's about striking a balance.

"It's also important that we don't take all the people from the community," he says. "We need to find balance and share capacity with each other."

Lackowicz says reconciliation work, like *Breaking Trail Together*, is a process that takes time to develop well.

"We worked together on this strategy for almost a year," he says. "There were a lot of questions, but it gave us an opportunity to talk about issues and see where both sides were coming from."

As the government rolls out *Breaking Trail Together*, its committed to the plan's vision — to work collaboratively with Yukon First Nations governments to be a national trailblazer in achieving a representative Yukon public service, inclusive of Yukon First Nations people.



According to 2016 Census data, 21.7 per cent of Yukon's population self-identifies as Aboriginal.

The Yukon government's hiring preference pilot project

On October 1, 2020, the Government of Yukon announced an 18-month hiring preference pilot project for all job competitions across the territorial government.

The competitions remain open to everyone, however, hiring preference will be given to qualified candidates who self-identify as Aboriginal. The system is two-tiered:

- first priority will be given to applicants with Yukon First Nation ancestry; and
- second priority will be given to applicants with Canadian Aboriginal ancestry.

Once the competition assessments are complete, the hiring preference is applied. Regardless of ancestry, successful candidates must meet all essential qualifications, knowledge, skills and suitability required to perform the job.

In a press release announcing the pilot project, then Minister of the Public Service Commission Richard Mostyn said the project ensures government programs and services are inclusive and meet the needs of all Yukoners.

"Our public service should reflect the population that we serve," he said. "The preferential hiring pilot project allows us to test this approach to increasing representation of Aboriginal people within the Government of Yukon and advance reconciliation efforts with Yukon First Nations."

The goal of the hiring preference pilot is to increase the representation of Aboriginal people within the public service across a broad spectrum of occupations and pay levels.

Once the pilot is complete, the government will evaluate and assess the program before deciding next steps.

Creating a **culturally safe and supportive workspace** through reconciliation

The Department of Justice champions truth and reconciliation through a new strategy.

ANGELA ENS JOINED THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE as the Reconciliation and Engagement Consultant in the fall of 2020.

In her role, Ens is responsible for creating and implementing the department's Reconciliation and Engagement Strategy, which will address the representation of Indigenous peoples within the Department of Justice and create culturally safe and supportive workspaces.

Ens says the strategy is meant to complement work already being done throughout government.

"We're working to supplement the government's *Breaking Trail Together Plan* and look at how we can apply similar concepts of truth and reconciliation to the specific function and service delivery within the Department of Justice," says Ens.

She says the strategy aims to meet the needs of staff and integrate truth and reconciliation into the department's day-to-day business.

Amanda Ho, Director, Human Resources, Department of Justice says the department

has highlighted meaningful reconciliation with Yukon First Nations and is a guiding principle for all of Justice staff.

"Our hope is that this work will have a lasting impact on the department and the way we do business and serve our clients," says Ho. "Our department expects our staff to embody meaningful reconciliation in the work that they do and the services they provide."

Ho says senior leadership has a vision for reconciliation within the department and created the Reconciliation and Engagement Consultant role to help move the work forward.

"We really wanted somebody that could come in and focus on the work", says Ho. "We need a dedicated person to focus on it and really champion it within the department and with our stakeholders and partner agencies."

Although the strategy is in its early planning stages, engagement with employees and external stakeholders has begun.

Ens says "someone once told me that reconciliation is like a dartboard. You throw your dart and



anywhere it lands on that board will be a good place to start."

She says new training opportunities are already being planned based on some initial feedback from staff.

"To complement our strategy we are planning on doing training around trauma-informed practices and setting up the department so that the environment, and workspaces are culturally inclusive," says Ens.

The department hopes to have the engagement completed and the Reconciliation and Engagement Strategy drafted within the next six months, with implementation ongoing.

Family Information Liaison Units:

Supporting families of MMIWG2S+ to heal



The Department of Justice helps families navigate the justice system and access case information through FILU.

**STEPHANIE SULLIVAN,
COORDINATOR, FAMILY
INFORMATION LIAISON UNIT**

(FILU), is passionate about her work.

She is Inuvialuit, originally from Inuvik, who has lived in the Yukon for 15 years. And like some of her clients, she has lost a family member to violence.

Now, she's a family advocate, helping families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and Two-spirit plus peoples (MMWIG2S+) access information about their loved one's case.

Families of MMIWG2S+ people, Indigenous women's groups and communities across Canada advocated for a National Inquiry into Missing or Murdered

Indigenous Women, Girls or Two-Spirit Plus Persons. From conversations with families and advocates, the federal government identified a need for individual family support to access information on their loved one's case and better access to systems, services and support.

In August 2016, the federal government launched the National Inquiry, and at the same time provided a parallel investment to ensure families had access to information on an individual basis. Funding was provided to the provinces and territories to establish FILUs in each jurisdiction across the country.

The unit helps families navigate the justice system and access information on current and historical cases.

Lareina Twardochleb, Director, Victim Services, says FILUs are a critical entry point for families.

She says some families haven't had access to information for 40 years.

"To have an ally, an advocate and support is really important," says Twardochleb. "We walk families through really complicated systems — information requests are complicated, and historical information requests are even more complicated."

Depending on the case, the type of support families need may vary. The FILU coordinator, attends meetings with the coroner and/or RCMP, and liaises with government departments – such as justice and archives – to gather information and documents related to the case. The FILU Coordinator can also support individuals or families in court.

Sullivan says FILUs are a centralized and coordinated service.

"We offer a holistic approach," she says. "Once the information is collected, I meet with the families in a culturally safe way to walk them through the information.

"Whether it's a ceremony, a memorial, or going out on the land – we want to work with families, individually – to understand their needs; what do they need or want to be able to move forward and not be in such a place of pain and hurt."

- Stephanie Sullivan | Coordinator, Family Information Liaison Unit

I make sure they have the right support and are taken care of after the meeting, so they're not just left on their own."

Over the past three years, FILU has visited all 14 Yukon First Nation communities with the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council (YAWC) to bring families and service providers together to raise awareness about support available to families, and have supported YAWC as they host on the Land Healing Camps for families and youth.

Sullivan plans to continue family outreach through an upcoming awareness campaign.

As this year comes to a close, FILU is beginning to plan for the

future, thinking through its vision and creating new supports through new cultural programming.

Sullivan says it's about helping families come to a place of healing.

"Whether it's a ceremony, a memorial or going out on the land — we want to work with families, individually — to understand their needs; what do they need or want to be able to move forward and not be in such a place of pain and hurt," she says, "And to feel like they have given their loved one's the justice they deserved from the start."

Sullivan encourages anyone interested in learning more about the services or need of support for a loved one's case to contact FILU.

If you are a family member of a missing or murdered Indigenous woman, girl or Two-spirit plus person, or know someone who is, and need support for your loved one's case, please contact the **Family Information Liaison Unit: 867-393-7178 or filu@yukon.ca**.

Lhech'i Dün K'e (One People):

Honouring reconciliation through heritage and sport

The Yukon's First Nation Heritage Advisor worked with the 2020 Arctic Winter Games to adopt the 91st Call to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Final Report.

THREE TRADITIONAL BUTTON BLANKETS were made for the 2020 Arctic Winter Games (AWG).

Hazel Bunbury named them, Lhech'i Dün K'e (One People). The blankets hold personal and spiritual meaning to many Yukon First Nations people and are worn in traditional ceremonies.

They were created as part of the AWG's Reconciliation Action Plan, a first for the international games.

AWG planned to gift two blankets to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, the Yukon First Nation partners in the 2020 games, and the third to the 2022 Arctic Winter Games Host Society, Wood Buffalo, Alberta.

Nyla Klugie-Migwans, the First Nation Heritage Advisor

at Tourism and Culture, and member of the Selkirk First Nation, says AWG's action plan honoured the 91st Call to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee's Final Report. The plan was historic.

"It was the first time the Arctic Winter Games and Arctic Winter Games International Committee adopted the 91st Call to Action of the TRC," says Klugie-Migwans.

The action asks host country officials of major sporting events, like the AWG, to ensure that Indigenous Peoples' territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of the planning and participation of such events.

In her role as First Nation Heritage Advisor, Klugie-Migwans served as the vice president of community engagement for the games and worked to ensure the games had First Nations representation from across the territory.

Klugie-Migwans says five Yukon First Nations signed MOUs with AWG's host society to participate in the games, and the committee partnered with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council to create Reconciliation House. This was to be hosted at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre as a place to do workshops on reconciliation and education for the week of the games.

Nyla Klugie-Migwans presents the Lhech'i Dun K'e button blanket to Doris Bill, Chief, Kwanlin Dün First Nation.



Nyla Klugie-Migwans presents a flag honouring the 2020 Arctic Winter Games commitment to adopt the 91st Call to Action from the TRC's Final Report to Rosemary Waugh-Wilson, Councillor, Kwanlin Dün First Nation.



She says her work on the committee was one of the biggest achievements of her career.

As First Nation Heritage Advisor, Klugie-Migwans supports Yukon First Nation heritage projects and advocates for First Nations heritage and culture within the Yukon government.

She says her life experience guides her work.

“When I do my work, I base it on my own experience,” says Klugie-Migwans. “It’s important to be able to connect my own culture, family history and traditions to make positive change as an educator.”

Brian Groves, Senior Manager, Heritage, with Tourism and Culture, says the First Nation Heritage Advisor is an important resource in the department to build and understand First Nations culture and Traditional Knowledge.

He says the AWC’s Reconciliation Action Plan was an important achievement.

“Nyla played a key role in planning for the 2020 Arctic Winter Games,” says Groves. “One of the big highlights was Reconciliation Day, March 17, which really brought attention to the TRC’s Call to Action 91.”

The 2020 Arctic Winter Games were cancelled due to COVID-19, a week before the opening ceremonies. The AWG’s action plan was never fully realized.

In January 2021, Klugie-Migwans presented Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta’an Kwäch’än Council with two Lhech’i Dün K’e button blankets on behalf of the 2020 Arctic Winter Games Host Society.

Two months later, the 2022 Arctic Winter Games Host Society postponed the games in Wood Buffalo, Alberta because of the ongoing pandemic.

Klugie-Migwans plans to give the third blanket to the Wood Buffalo Host Society once a new date has been set. She hopes it will inspire them to continue the reconciliation work that began in Whitehorse.

“I hope the blanket, flag and pins will be an example to them of what it means to have reconciliation at an international sporting event,” says Klugie-Migwans. “We have to start thinking about reconciliation as an educational tool and promote working with local First Nations communities to celebrate culture and language. All those components are very important.”




Klugie-Migwans continues to work with Yukon First Nations on cross-cultural knowledge and leadership. She is grateful for the opportunities given to her on a daily basis to promote the importance of culture and heritage. Nyla hopes by being a positive influence that she is making steps towards education and reconciliation.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued 94 Calls to Action to address the legacy of Residential Schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. The Calls to Action were part of the Commission’s larger Final Report.

The 91st Call to Action focuses on reconciliation in sport:

We call upon the officials and host countries of international sporting events such as the Olympics, Pan Am, and Commonwealth games to ensure that Indigenous peoples’ territorial protocols are respected, and local Indigenous communities are engaged in all aspects of planning and participating in such events.

To learn more about the TRC’s Final Report and Calls to Action, visit: www.trc.ca.



Part of capacity building involved touring various established renewable energy systems such as a biomass facility.

Building capacity

within Yukon First Nations

THE ENERGY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

supports increasing capacity to develop local energy projects.

In 2012, the Government of Yukon's Energy Branch began partnering with Yukon First Nations to develop community energy plans.

Working with individual First Nations, the Branch provided government-to-government support through funding, administrative, and project management resources to help First Nation governments and development corporations identify and implement their energy projects.

Ryan Hennessey, Senior Energy Planner at the Energy Branch, says many First Nations intuitively had a plan, but didn't have the capacity to develop or implement it.

He says the Yukon government's support filled in those gaps and allowed First Nations to explore initial stages of development, without investing too much up front.

"The First Nation could investigate their energy options without actually having to commit resources," says Hennessey. "The idea being that as we got closer to building, we [the government] would back away and the First Nation would take on a greater role with their own resources."

He said it worked well.

Over eight years, the Branch completed 150 projects — everything from improving energy efficiency in buildings to installing solar photovoltaic (PV) arrays and completing biomass studies.

Hennessey says the Branch received criticism on its approach which was seen as colonial.

In response to the concerns, the Branch conducted a survey to better understand the capacity constraints First Nations governments faced. Over 175 participants from First Nation governments across Canada were asked to identify the major barriers in creating renewable energy projects — from access to human resources or financing.

Hennessey says 82 per cent of participants identified human resources as the bigger barrier, while 18 per cent said financial capacity.

"The results affirmed our approach and suggested we were moving in the right direction," he says.

Following the survey, the Branch created the Energy Capacity Development Project, focused on building partnerships with Yukon First Nations to increase capacity to develop local energy projects.

The project created a tool to evaluate five streams of capital needed to develop energy projects: natural, social, institutional, human, and financial.

Hennessey says the capital tool assesses both short-term and long-term capacity issues, which helps First Nations identify gaps.

Once gaps were assessed, the government worked with First Nations to create a Capacity Development Strategy, and granted them \$100,000 to implement their plan.

The project has completed its implementation phase and is moving into evaluation and measurement. Hennessey and his team are currently evaluating the project's effectiveness by talking to Yukon First Nations about what

Over the implementation phase, the Yukon government worked with seven Yukon First Nation governments and development corporations to address internal capacity issues, including:

- Assembly of First Nations, Yukon Region
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and Village of Haines Junction
- Council of Yukon First Nations
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- Teslin Tlingit Council, Village of Teslin, and Deisleen Development Corporation
- White River First Nation

worked with the project and what can be improved.

The final phase of the Energy Capacity Development Project will determine best practices and refine tools to improve the government's capacity to work with Yukon First Nations. It's slated to begin later this year.

Drawing a new blueprint:

Collaborating with Yukon First Nations on policy development

The Government of Yukon is working with Yukon First Nations to improve representation and participation in the territory's economy.

IN DECEMBER 2020, THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON

released its Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy — a first in the territory. The policy aims to increase the number of government contracts awarded to Yukon First Nation-owned businesses.

“Across the hundreds of millions of dollars of procurement that we do, Yukon First Nation Citizens and businesses are underrepresented,” says Catherine Harwood, Assistant Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works.

Jay Chou, Acting Manager of First Nations Strategic Relations of Highways and Public Works, says the policy will increase Yukon First Nations representation in the economy.

“Increasing opportunities and securing contracts will help build capacity among Yukon First Nations businesses,” says Chou. “Improving representation will ensure more Yukon First Nation-owned businesses and people

will benefit from government procurement opportunities.”

The Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy was developed in collaboration with Yukon First Nations Governments over two years. In December, 2018 and into 2019, each of the 14 Yukon First Nations Governments appointed a representative to participate in the technical working group, which guided the development of the policy. A sub-working group was formed from the technical group to review the policy options and measures before they were presented to the larger group.

In August 2020, the policy work was complete. It was approved in December 2020 and formally endorsed by Yukon First Nations at the Yukon Forum later that month.

Melissa Carlick, Policy Analyst, Highways and Public Works, says the technical working group took a unique approach in developing the policy.

“The process put relationships first,” says Carlick. “It started from a place of curiosity and gave us time to understand Yukon First Nations views and perspectives and to hear about their experiences.”

Traditionally, the government's approach for developing policies is to plan, research, write and implement, Harwood says.

“The implementation aspect, however, is kind of left once the policy is finished,” says Harwood. The expectation is that all the planning and research leads to a really great choice and the implementation will be fine, but that's not always the case.”

She says the technical working group realized early on that they would need to take a different approach to the implementation of the Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy.

With the support of senior leadership, the group scrapped the traditional approach and tried something new.

“Early on we acknowledged that the policy was going to need review, tracking, and measurement to make sure it was working and could be adapted, so that we built it right into the policy,” says Harwood.

Turning the policy development process on its head helped change the team’s perspective.

“We were really focusing on relationships in the early days and the process kind of flowed out of the relationship work,” says Harwood.

The new approach made the process more collaborative.

“It was kind of liberating, but also scary when you don’t have a blueprint,” she says. “So, we had to keep talking with our partners about the fact that we didn’t have a blueprint, and this was new.”

The government has developed its procurement rules over decades.

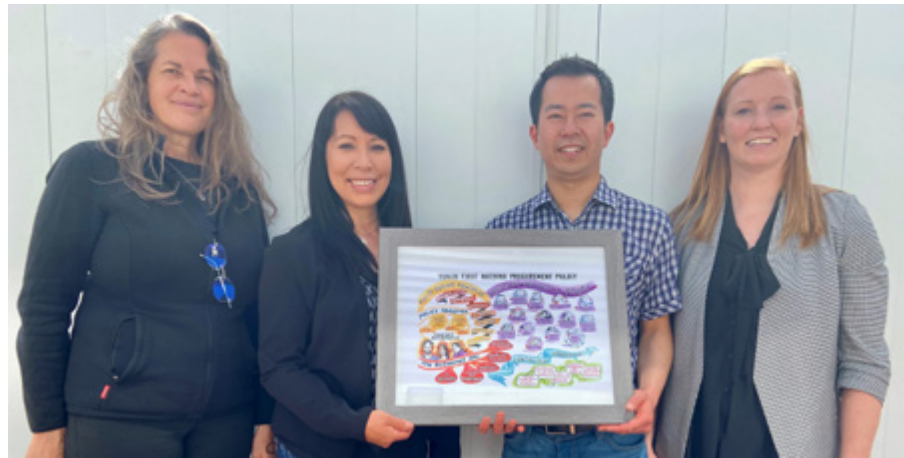
Harwood says the past policies rules didn’t fully consider the different background or starting point of Yukon First Nation Governments, businesses and Citizens.

She hopes the policy will build stronger relationships between the private sector and Yukon First Nation-owned businesses.

“It’s about incentivizing partnerships, putting the responsibility and flexibility into the hands of the businesses and saying you’ve got to figure out how you want to work together — we want to see you work together,” says Harwood.

The policy will help level the playing field. Harwood says once representation has improved, the policy may not be needed.

“Once we have our targets and we’ve shown consistently that



The Highways and Public Works team that worked with Yukon First Nations to develop the procurement policy included (from left): Catherine Harwood, Assistant Deputy Minister; Melissa Carlick, Policy Analyst; Jay Chou, former Manager of of Strategic First Nations Relations (Acting); and Erin Light, Manager of Strategic First Nations Relations.

they’re being met, and there’s sustainability and participation by Yukon First Nations then some or all of this policy can be repealed,” says Harwood. “Yukon First Nations governments have said we don’t need to have special treatment forever, but we do need it now.”

The Yukon First Nations Procurement Policy was developed on the foundation of reconciliation.

Chou says it’s about acknowledging the injustices of the past and then doing things differently.

Harwood agrees. She says reconciliation isn’t about assigning blame, pointing fingers or completing tasks on a checklist.

“It’s about being willing to take a good, hard look at ourselves as human beings and as organizations and ask why we are set up the way we are, do we have to keep doing things the way we do,” she says. “It always comes back to working together because to me reconciliation is about reconciling and coming back together.”

Reflecting on the policy development experience, Carlick says one of the big takeaways was not to rush into anything.

“We were fortunate to have the flexibility to take the time needed to get this work done,” she says. “Senior management allowed us the time to get to know each other, to understand each other’s perspectives and then find common ground.”

The first phase of the policy was implemented in February 2021. The policy is scheduled to be fully in place on October 4, 2021.

“Across the hundreds of millions of dollars of procurement that we do, Yukon First Nation Citizens and businesses are underrepresented,”

- Catherine Harwood | Assistant Deputy Minister, Highways and Public Works

Challenging perspectives to build a better child-welfare system in the Yukon

In the Yukon, Indigenous children are significantly over-represented in the child-welfare system.

SHADELLE CHAMBERS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COUNCIL OF YUKON FIRST NATIONS, and

a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, says the latest data reports about 90 per cent of the children in care are Indigenous.

Chambers co-chairs the territory's health and social services working group with Geraldine MacDonald, director of Family and Children's Services with the Government of Yukon.

The working group is one of 16 joint priority groups under the Yukon Forum, a set of quarterly meetings that bring together political leadership from the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations, including members of cabinet and Yukon Chiefs, to identify and address priority issues of Yukon First Nations.

Chambers says the over-representation of Indigenous children in care is a systemic

issue and a direct result of a colonial-based system.

"The legacy and impact of the child-welfare system on our people has resulted in the over-representation of children in the system and requires us to be involved in a meaningful way," says Chambers.

She says Yukon First Nations need to have a voice in improving the system.

"There needs to be Yukon First Nation collaboration in all aspects of the delivery of child-welfare services," says Chambers.

Over the past three years, the health and social services working group has focused on improving the territory's child-welfare system.

Under Chambers and MacDonald's leadership, the working group has made great strides.

The Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to end Birth

Alerts — a practice that allows child-welfare workers to be notified of an expectant birth, if there's a perceived protection issue, without informing the parents.

The working group brought in parity for family care providers, ensuring grandparents receive the same financial support as foster parents.

And in 2019, the group introduced Honouring Connections, an initiative that supports the First Nation of a child in care to develop a cultural connection plan for the child.

The group's work has addressed everything from legislative policy framework and practice, to training and on the ground collaborative case planning.

MacDonald says the work hasn't been easy.

"We're not perfect. There's been a lot of bumps in the road and there's been a lot of lessons



Shadelle Chambers,
Executive Director,
Council of Yukon First Nations

“There needs to be Yukon First Nation collaboration in all aspects of the delivery of child-welfare services.”

- Shadelle Chambers | Executive Director, Council of Yukon First Nations

learned,” says MacDonald. “We’ve had a lot of opportunities to come together and to work on this file collectively. We couldn’t have done it without the partnership of Yukon First Nations.”

MacDonald says the group has had to dismantle many things within the system before it could begin to rebuild. She says the work has challenged her team’s perspective.

“A big piece of what we’ve been doing is listening, but also asking questions, asking why we do things the way we do?” MacDonald says. “We’re exposing and challenging our perspectives and roles.”

She credits the work to Yukon First Nations leadership, support of Yukon government and the commitment of staff at all levels.

“We could never, ever have done it without First Nations having a strong lead,” says MacDonald. “We have to be able to move away, to let go, and to give First Nations the lead

in developing and delivering these services to families.”

She says the work is essential to affect change and move things forward in a more culturally appropriate way.

Chambers says the group has done a great job of collaboratively working within the current system to address some underlying issues.

But her eyes are on the future. She says the next step is shifting to a prevention-based system.

“We need to really fundamentally change the paradigm of child welfare to a prevention-based investment, rather than waiting for a protection

concern or involvement from family and children services,” says Chambers.

A prevention-based model offers upfront supports for families.

Chambers says the upfront supports could alleviate, or significantly reduce, the number of families that have to come to the child-welfare door.

The change would require a new approach to child-welfare services, and it will require buy-in from everyone.

“We need everybody,” says Chambers. “It’s going to require a shift in how governments have traditionally looked at how they provide supports.”

Community gardens support food sovereignty and reconnection with land



The Government of Yukon has worked with Yukon First Nation governments across the territory to create community greenhouses and farms.



IN RECENT YEARS, THE YUKON'S AGRICULTURE BRANCH

has been working with several First Nations and community groups to help develop community gardens and greenhouses in various communities around Yukon. Sometimes this is in the form of technical help and growing advice, and for some projects it also involves funding assistance.

“Our work is supporting First Nations to take the lead to increase local food production, create local sources of fresh foods and help with our efforts to address climate change adaptation,” said Agrologist with Energy, Mines and Resources, Randy Lamb.

Greenhouses and farm operations have been started in cooperation with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, Nacho Nyäk Dun and Carcross Tagish First Nations.

These community garden projects support food sovereignty, provide training and employment opportunities and help people reconnect with the land in new ways.

“The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in farm is more than the production of food. It is a place where youth establish good work ethic and independence and where elders enjoy planting seeds and watching their grandkids play. It is a place that strives to be innovative, but is grounded in simple hands-on activities. Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in had the foresight to invest in developing this parcel of land and it is a space that is providing an abundance of wellness programming,” says Derrick Hastings the manager of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in farm. “With the support of the government our large infrastructure projects move closer to reality and our site

becomes a safer space in relation to the wilderness that surrounds it.”

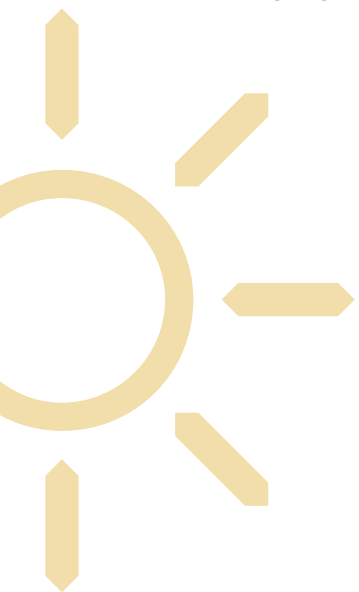
Both the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and Nacho Nyäk Dun farms won Arctic Inspiration Prizes in recent years.



One-window approach helps First Nations access funding



The Yukon Development Corporation's new model helps coordinate funders to advance First Nation-led renewable energy projects.



IN SEPTEMBER 2020, THE GOVERNMENT OF YUKON released *Our Clean Future: A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy*. The strategy outlines the government's plan to fight climate change and build a green economy based on reliable, affordable and renewable energy.

One of the targets identified in the strategy is to have one independent power production project in each of the off-grid communities and reduce diesel for electricity in those communities by 30 per cent by 2030.

Victoria Zeppa, Senior Policy Advisor, Yukon Development Corporation (YDC) says with the help of Yukon First Nations and First Nation Development Corporations, the territory is on track to meet the target.

First Nations are developing renewable electricity and heat generation projects across the territory in each of the off-grid communities, including:

SOLAR ENERGY:

- Copper Niisuu Limited Partnership, White River First Nation;
- First Kaska GP LTD, Liard First Nation; and
- Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Government.

WIND ENERGY:

- Kluane First Nation Government.

YDC is an arms-length agency responsible for providing economic development support to First Nation and municipal governments, as well as the private sector.

The YDC works with clients to access money through the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative and Arctic Energy Fund. Together, these funds are dedicated to supporting renewable energy projects from feasibility through to design and construction.

Zeppa says a common client concern is navigating bureaucratic processes and coordinating funders.

“We’ve heard that it can be challenging working with and coordinating the different players around the funding table,” she says.

This year, YDC created and implemented a new model, a one-window approach to help mitigate the issue.

“We work closely with proponents, setting up biweekly meetings to understand their needs, coordinating calls with relevant federal funders or the utility, or hosting information workshops to help remove barriers to project development.”

In Watson Lake, Liard First Nation and its development corporation, First Kaska, is working on a renewable energy initiative to offset the community’s diesel microgrid.

Jasper Lamouelle, CEO, First Kaska, says Watson Lake’s diesel microgrid is the largest in the territory and one of the largest in the country.

“This project will be immensely important for First Kaska, Liard First Nation, and certainly the town of Watson Lake,” he says.



Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation’s solar farm in Old Crow.

“There are obvious impacts for environmental stewardship: reducing the greenhouse gas emissions by displacing over a million litres of diesel a year; and less fuel transport.”

First Kaska plans to break ground on the project this summer and begin generating electricity by summer 2022.

Lamouelle and his team have worked with Zeppa every step of the way. He says YDC has been immensely helpful.

“With their support, we were able to take advantage of other territorial and federal funds to drive the feasibility study,” he says.

Zeppa says beyond aligning with the government’s climate change objectives, the renewable energy projects help First Nations realize their vision for self-determination.

“Our focus is to really help set these projects up for success, so they can create business and economic development opportunities for their First Nation and the development corporation,” says Zeppa. “These projects offset the use of fossil fuels in the community, while generating income to support other economic development initiatives.”

Lamouelle says the renewable energy project will create jobs and a long-term stable revenue source for First Kaska.

“We’ve been able to sit down with ATCO Energy and iron out a 25-year power purchase agreement,” he says. “ATCO is going to buy power produced in Watson Lake as opposed to tankers from down south.”

He says the agreement is the perfect example of stopping economic leakage.

As First Kaska prepares to break ground later this summer, the diesel generators have been turned off in Old Crow as the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation’s solar farm began producing electricity in May 2021.



About Aboriginal Relations

This magazine is championed by the Aboriginal Relations division of the Executive Council Office at the Government of Yukon. We provide support and advice to all Yukon government departments on First Nations relations, consultation, negotiations and implementation.



Our Vision (what we want)

Our partners are empowered and view us as trustworthy and collaborative.

Our Mission (what we do)

We provide leadership and advice to support a strategic, government-wide approach to reconciliation and collaboration with Indigenous governments, communities and organizations. We lead and support negotiations and collaborate with Indigenous governments to improve the lives of all Yukoners. We advise the Government of Yukon departments on how to strengthen relationships, fulfill consultation obligations, and implement agreements with Indigenous governments to the benefit of all Yukoners.

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Who we are

Assistant Deputy Minister's Office

- Comprised of the Assistant Deputy Minister, Senior Advisor, Executive Assistant, Administrative/Financial Assistant and Strategic Communications Advisor.
- Provides overall direction, coordination and support to the Aboriginal Relations division and staff.

First Nation Relations and Capacity Development Unit

- Negotiates government-to-government accords.
- Coordinates Yukon and Intergovernmental Forums.
- Leads other intergovernmental meetings and capacity development initiatives with First Nations.

Policy and Consultation Unit

- Provides advice to departments on consultation with Indigenous groups.
- Develops corporate consultation policies and procedures.
- Provides advice to departments on how their policies, legislation or agreements could impact Indigenous groups.

Implementation and Reconciliation Unit

- Supports implementation of the Final and Self-Government Agreements.
- Provides advice to departments on their obligations under the Final and Self-Government Agreements and transboundary treaties.
- Leads and supports negotiations with First Nations, tax sharing, transboundary interests, self-government, land interests, consultation obligations, etc.

