

NEWS RELEASE

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Chief and Council pass an Emergency Declaration in response to the substance use crisis

Old Crow, April 20, 2023 - Today VGFN Chief and Council passed a resolution to issue a Community Emergency Declaration on the substance use crisis. The declaration is intended to recognize the substance use crisis in Old Crow and the broader Vuntut Gwich'in community outside Old Crow, to make a call for action, and to mobilize resources to respond to the crisis.

DECLARATION

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Community Emergency Declaration on the Substance Use Crisis

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation has suffered immense losses due to substance use and overdoses, especially opioids and alcohol.

The ongoing substance use crisis has impacted and devastated individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Chief and Council stand with the families and friends who are suffering because of the deaths and loss caused by the substance use crisis. We have heard the cry for help, and we are determined to do our part to help people without judgment.

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

Work by the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will implement harm reduction and treatment policies and programs and focus on these key areas:

- Help people access supports;
- A safe exchange program;
- Building a network and range of treatment and recovery services, including connection with the land;
- Explore new treatment or therapy approaches, such as Suboxone, in a culturally safe program;
- Creating a supportive environment, including offering cultural activities to people who are using substances;
- Reduce the supply of harmful substances in Old Crow.

As leaders in the community, Chief and Council call on the Yukon government, other Yukon First Nations, partners, and organizations to come together to collaborate on work to alleviate the crisis and improve the health of the Vuntut Gwitchin community.

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