

Living and Working in Old Crow

The Vuntut Gwitchin government departments are located in the Sarah Abel Chitze Administration Building. The departments are: Chief & Council, Human Resources, Finance, Government Services, Information Systems, Natural Resources, and Education. The administrative centre is located in a modern building with a bright atmosphere. Software includes Windows XP 2003 with Office 2003. Email is MS Outlook. Websites are an intranet site, a government site at www.vgfn.ca, and a community site www.oldercrow.ca.

Vuntut Gwitchin signed a self-government agreement in 1995. The Vuntut Gwitchin Government provides the majority of government and municipal services in Old Crow. 40 to 50 residents are employed by Vuntut Gwitchin Government.

Wages at VGFN are for 6.5 hours per day, 65 bi-weekly, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with an hour lunch break. Some comp time can be accrued.

For housing, staff are supplied with an appropriate sized house and charged \$200 rent per month, and \$35 per month for water and sewer. The house has a fridge, stove, washer, dryer, and minimum suitable furniture, and heat source. Some homes have oil monitor heaters, most have a wood burning stove, a few have both sources of this type of heating. Oil per litre costs approx. \$1.50; a cord of wood costs around \$300. People go through 5 to 6 cords of wood in a year.

Houses are fairly modern. Some are small log homes finished inside with bright wood paneling similar to that found in mobile homes. Floors are covered mainly with lino and hardwood. These homes are approx. 500 square feet, have small bedrooms, and a combination room of kitchen, dining and living room. Other homes are more modern duplexes or larger individual houses.

Telephone and high-speed internet services are provided through a satellite telephone system. Television, without a satellite dish, provides two channels. The only television satellite system that works in Old Crow is Bell Expressvu.

A few vehicles are owned in town, with the most common form of transportation (in addition to walking/hiking) being snowmobile in winter, and ATVs in spring, summer and fall, and a lot of river boats. Dog mushing is mainly a recreational activity. The walking time to work from the farthest houses is approx. 20 minutes.

Access to Old Crow is mainly through air service Sunday to Friday. Air North has a route from Whitehorse to serve Dawson City, Old Crow, Inuvik, NWT and Fairbanks, AK. The only other access is through the river system. The cost of air travel from Old Crow to Whitehorse return is approx: \$550. Air North also has direct return flights from Whitehorse to Vancouver, and Whitehorse to Calgary and Edmonton. Air Canada has direct flights from Whitehorse to Vancouver return.

Many people order groceries and items from stores in Whitehorse and have them air freighted to Old Crow. Food mail is approx 35 cents per lb. This rate is for staple food items (including some personal care items) and doesn't include snacks, some processed foods and pop. Freight for non food mail items is \$1.28 per pound for the first 100 lbs. Groceries purchased at the store in Old

Crow are more expensive than Whitehorse – two litre size milk at the local store is approx: \$9. A jar of jam can cost \$7.

Services in the community include: RCMP with three officers, two nurses, Yukon Electrical, a community college campus with one instructor/coordinator, the modern public school with grades K – 9, post office, TD bank and gas services (available a few hours each day Monday to Friday), one grocery/hardware store, and an Anglican church (where the hymns are sung in Gwitchin). Many government officials, researchers and consultants visit Old Crow. There are two bed and breakfast type businesses that offer a total of 10 bed spaces.

Old Crow is a ‘dry’ community with alcohol prohibited in the community.

The majority of the population is Vuntut Gwitchin, with a few residents from the Gwi’chin people of Ft. McPherson, NWT (who are usually related to someone in Old Crow). Approx. 300 people live in the community. The majority of Vuntut Gwitchin citizens (500 +) live outside of Old Crow. Approx. 25 residents are non-First Nation.

In winter temperatures can dip to minus 50 for consecutive weeks. There are also strong winds in this location on the Porcupine River. The ice leaves the river in May. Snow and cold weather can arrive in Sept. The growing season is short, but intense because of the long daylight. Activities in other seasons include boating, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and berry picking.

Activities in winter include snowmobiling, woodcutting, dog mushing, sport activities in the school gym, and cross country skiing. There is a ski lodge with many skis and boots available, and tracked ski trails in addition to the many snowmobile trails to ski on. People travel the frozen river to spend weekends at cabins along the river. At Christmas, New Years and Easter there are large celebrations with games for all ages and large community suppers. Whenever there is a meeting at the community hall – community consultations, information workshops etc. - meals are usually served before the meeting starts.

The Old Crow website www.oldercrow.ca has more info about the community, and the length of daylight hours through the year. More information can also be found at www.vgfn.ca, and www.yukoncommunities.yk.ca. The website for Council of Yukon First Nations www.cyfn.ca has information on the Umbrella Final Agreement, First Nations’ Final Agreement and Self-government Agreement.

The following page contains the vision, mission and values of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Strategic Plan 2005 – 2008

For more information about living in Old Crow, please contact the Human Resources Department at hrd@vgfn.net, or call 867-966-3261 local 258.

VISION

Respecting our diversity through the teachings of K'agwaadhut, our ancestors, and our people, we live a healthy life.

MISSION

The Vuntut Gwitchin, having boundless pride in our ancient cultural heritage and ancestral homeland, exercise our inherent right to govern ourselves, assume responsibility for the general welfare of our citizens, and provide responsible governance of our communities, lands and resources.

VALUES

- 1. We value the empowerment of our people to contribute to a strong and healthy Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.**
- 2. We value all that is living, and strive to create a balance in our interactions with them.**
- 3. We value children and youth, and are committed to a safe and healthy environment within our traditional ways.**
- 4. We value education and life experiences that enhance the Vuntut Gwitchin identity.**
- 5. We value our traditional language, culture, spirituality, and the oral teachings of our elders.**
- 6. We value accountable and transparent governance.**