

Drin Gwiinzii Shilak Naii,

I am reaching out to all citizens of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation in a historical address as we find each other in hard times. Now is not the time to panic or feed into any uncertainty as there are unprecedented efforts between all levels of government in our country to provide for the safety and well-being of our people. This time now, more than ever calls on our people to consider how we can help our communities and each other, most importantly by respecting the protocols from the Chief Medical Officer of the Yukon and the Government of the Vuntut Gwitchin.

VGG has been in daily meetings with the Chief Medical Officer, Yukon and Fed gov's as well as respective YFN leadership to stay ahead of any threat to our people. Within the community we have had meetings with our local RCMP, Coop Store, Head Nurse and essential staff all of whom have been working together under significant workloads to ensure the best possible outcomes in respect of the very real threat that the COVID-19, or Corona Virus presents us. I would like to thank all of our staff and partners who are working so hard to support you the people.

I would like to begin by addressing our efforts and what may come as current considerations and efforts are being undertaken. We know with the Prime Minister's announcement this morning that Canada will be enforcing the Quarantine Measures Act which allows for fines or even jail time for those who do not follow orders to quarantine. Self-isolation however is another measure of lesser threshold and one that the Vuntut Gwitchin Government will be enforcing. As of today we are strictly enforcing our protocols on our Traditional Territory that:

1. **STRICT SOCIAL DISTANCING IN EFFECT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY & TT OF OLD CROW AT ALL TIMES**
2. People **must** self-isolate for two weeks in Old Crow directly from the airport as well as anyone who may share the household with them
3. **All** public areas, roads, spaces, buildings and trails are for those who have had no known exposure or those who are in isolation with no known exposure
4. **Anyone** who has arrived to the community from outside of the Country, an infected region, or have had a known exposure are subject to higher thresholds such as: keeping a log of any interactions with the time and day up to two weeks while in self-isolation without leaving the house at any time **without exception**
5. People are to call 811 if they suspect any symptoms and follow health professional's advice

6. We **still** recommend keeping in non-physical contact/communication with one-another and recreation activities while keeping a 2 meter distance from others
7. **No interaction** with babies, pregnant woman, elders or anyone with underlying respiratory issues or medical conditions
8. Washing hands when entering or exiting **ANY** public places, homes or handling anything from outside of the house like groceries
9. **No one** in the community should be touching each other what-so-ever
10. **Don't** be in public places unless you have to be
11. **Don't** go to the government buildings instead people should call
12. **Limit** your interaction with community members and all visitations

Furthermore all future events for the remainder of the year on our TT are currently canceled until further notice. We will have documents available at our local airport including these protocols but also a form to be filled out and immediately posted on the front door of your household reflecting the number of and whom is in self-isolation within the household and if there are any underlying health issues or vulnerable people with the day of both the beginning and end of your isolation period. The local RCMP can deliver orders made to our Coop and deliver them to your front door after 2pm including medications from Canada Post. The Coop will now be open 11-5pm Mon-Fri/12-4pm

Sat, and we have confirmed that not only do they have a surplus of food and supplies but that they're supply lines are strong and are confident that there will not be any issues with their future orders. We have also confirmed that there will be 3 RCMP officers in our community as well as the Head Nurse staying to provide core services to our community.

We ask that if you suspect any symptoms that you immediately call 811 and follow health professional's advice that you do not go directly to the local health center but call ahead to make an appointment to ensure that you can be received without exposing others. A ride can be provided if you don't have one yourself as our staff have resources to get you to the health center safely, but strictly on a needs only basis. It is also very important that our essential staff such as RCMP, Nurses, Water & Sewer staff as well as VGG staff are not approached and at least a 2-meter distance is respected at all times. It is not acceptable to endanger a single person and that we protect our critical staff, elders and the vulnerable. If you are not abiding by these protocols you are directly endangering your people. At this time we do not recommend non-residents to come to the community of Old Crow but to stay where you are as our community has limited capacity and no available housing. You could be bringing the COVID-19 virus with you.

We want to stress that although there are multiple funds being made available with different timelines and purposes, to date our First Nation has not received any funding and we are applying significant resources to support our people and staff. Our office closure will remain until further notice which will incur significant costs to the Government. To date we have provided an “On the Land” fund available to any beneficiary who wants to access our TT which will likely be made available in the following month as well. It is vital that you provide your receipts and proof of accessing our TT, this is open for applications through NR and our Finance Dept. We have also provided funding for our elders in the community who don’t have access to services and face high food costs within our remote community. Further measures we are currently developing are to first target all citizens across Canada without an income to assist with medications, groceries and/or essential utilities, but will not be issuing money or cheques to individuals. We ask that all people within our community contact our Executive Assistant Clerks at the VGG office at 867.966.3261/eac@vgfn.net and provide house numbers, contacts, # of beneficiaries occupying household, and verification of income status; as well as any beneficiaries outside of the community of Old Crow to contact Dorothy Thomas at 867.633.2911/whreception@vgfn.net to

provide all your relevant information including verification of income in order to receive emergency assistance as we work to establish the process and delivery of these supports. At this point we want to target all non-income beneficiaries first. We need to establish these lists as we continue to develop our supports to assist our people. We must also consider that our protocols and supports need to take into consideration the long term impacts of the virus. We are establishing our fiscal strategy on all available monies through our existing budgets, entities and we will be responding before we are informed of what we will be able to recoup in costs through different funding supports as they are being finalized over the coming weeks. We can expect significant losses but be assured that our fiscal management will be key and we will not put our government into a financial position that we cannot afford, we will meet the needs of our people with a strategic approach as we are only now entering the beginning of the implications of this virus.

We have made 12 on the land locations available with wall tents that can be signed-out through our Education Dept. in conjunction with our "On the Land" funding. We have hired Paul Josie as our EMO who is not a point of contact for any of these programs but is our point of coordination and implementation and he will be supported by two

more employees by next week. We have also identified separate housing should we require quarantining within Old Crow. Air North will be limiting flights to Old Crow, segregating passengers to Old Crow from others with stops in Inuvik first so that there isn't any unnecessary traffic in our airport, but freight and fuel hauls will continue. If there is a complete shut-down we will lose access to critical staff such as nurses and RCMP. This being said I must address our most critical weakness at this point which is the behavior and dangerous practices by some of our people. It is important that all measures we have communicated are strictly followed, not only have we requested that our local RCMP strictly enforce prohibition and any gatherings, our government will begin community patrols to assist. Our concern is so great that we are currently developing legislation to enact section 13.4.0 of our SGA, "Emergency Powers" that will allow our government greater powers and control of our TT and making our measures enforceable by significant fines and/or possible jail time. If enacted we will restrict all travel to the point of requiring written permission to leave, or enter our lands.

Our preparations are so far reaching that we are also preparing an "Executive Council" should we lose quorum due to the virus as a body that can be delegated council powers in exceptional circumstances to

ensure the proper and responsible operations of your government. We are also making food and supply orders if this situation should become critical as well as stock-piling traditional foods of which we have already begun.

The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister confirmed reports that U.S. is considering putting soldiers near the Canadian border:

- U.S. proposal to place troops along the border and use remote sensors to look out for irregular border-crossers
- **Government of Canada has stated this proposal is an unnecessary step and has made opposition to it very clear**
- **“A border that is as open as possible to Canada is vital for many reasons. Much of our food and vital medical supplies come across the frontier, just to point out the most obvious”**
- Canada and U.S. have a mutual ban in place on non-essential travel across the border, which includes trips for recreational purposes; exceptions made for trade, commerce and cross-border essential workers

Federal Government has announced COVID-19 emergency benefits program

- Application process scheduled to open early April with payments expected to start flowing ~ 2 weeks later
- Offers income support for up to 16 weeks for those who lose pay because of the pandemic:
 - o Available to wage earners, contract workers and self-employed people who don't qualify for employment insurance (EI).
 - o **Warning of current text scam sending url and asking for personal information**
 - o Government website is the best place to find reliable information on this program

VGG has made a public computer available in the front of our Admin building by appointment with our reception to access Service Canada should you need it for these programs

A current snapshot of severity in Canada:

- o 3,897 confirmed cases in Canada; over 500,000 globally (Thursday March 26)
- o 39 deaths in Canada; over 20,000 globally (Thursday March 26)
- o 6% of cases require hospitalization

- 2.6% of cases are critical
- 1% of cases are fatal
- Number of new cases every day based on measures taken up to two weeks prior; therefore number of cases in Canada still expected to rise despite current precautionary measures
- There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians:
 - aged 65 and over
 - with compromised immune systems
 - with underlying medical conditions
 - At this time, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that pregnant women are at a greater risk for more serious outcomes related to COVID-19.

Please seek information on Federal and Territorial websites and continue to inform yourselves with confirmed information sources and stay away from any unknown sources leaning into conjecture especially when it involves the VGG. We make this official communication today to empower our people with facts and measures that go above and beyond any recommendations that should ensure everyone that we will not accept the endangerment of a single VGFN member or our community of OC. It is more important to abide by these measures now

than anywhere else as there are no cases in the Old Crow. We must practice the highest of measures not only as government, but as the people as should there be a positive COVID-19 case we will together be prepared to not promote it's spread among any community member.

The RCMP, local health authorities, Y/Fed gov's and VGG are doing our part; you must now ask yourself, are you doing yours? What would your elders want you to do?

May kaygwaathak and vindigadachuu be with you all shilak naii,

Mahsi' cho