



VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT
Government of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

CHIEF AND COUNCIL

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VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION

COUNCIL RESOLUTION 04-18-2023 – #22

**RE: VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION COMMUNITY EMERGENCY DECLARATION ON THE
SUBSTANCE USE CRISIS**

WHEREAS:

- A. The Citizens of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation are linked to our ancestors through cultural heritage and our ancestral homeland;
- B. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Community and Citizens, through colonialization including residential schools, have suffered significant trauma;
- C. Many people have turned to substance use as a way to deal with unresolved trauma;
- D. Certain drugs, like alcohol and opioids, are associated with serious harms such as addiction, overdose and death. These drugs have a devastating impact on people's lives and their families, as well as place a significant burden on our health, social services, and community;
- E. Widespread use of substances including alcohol and opioids has led to a crisis in the VGFN community;
- F. Harm reduction and treatment is part of healing from colonialization;
- G. Culture is medicine. Including people who may be using substances in cultural activities expands the options that we have to build connections with people who use substances, and in turn, offers opportunities for people who use substances to connect with their cultures. Land based healing initiatives are one way to increase access to cultural activities;
- H. Action is needed to address the complex substance use crisis;
- I. Council may make a Community Emergency Declaration if the Council reasonably believes that a Community Emergency exists, pursuant to section 5 of the Community Emergency Act declaring that a Community Emergency exists within the meaning of the Act.

THEREFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION RESOLVES THAT:

- 1. A substance use state of emergency is declared by the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation for its Citizens and community. This Community Emergency Declaration is hereby made by Council pursuant to section 5 of the Community Emergency Act.

2. This Community Emergency Declaration attached as Schedule 1 shall come into effect immediately upon this Council resolution being published in accordance with the section 5 of the Community Emergency Act and will remain in effect for a period of 90 days unless terminated earlier or extended pursuant to section 6 of the Act.

THIS RESOLUTION being duly approved by a quorum of the Council at a meeting duly convened on April 18, 2023 at Old Crow, Yukon.



Chief Pauline Frost



Deputy Chief Debra-Leigh Reti



Councillor Jeneen Frei Njootli

Schedule 1

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

April 18, 2023

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

The ongoing crisis of substance use 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.