



VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT
Government of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

CHIEF AND COUNCIL

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VUNTUT GWITCHIN FIRST NATION

COUNCIL RESOLUTION 06-12-2023 – #34

RE: VGFN Bereavement and Funeral Policy

WHEREAS:

- A. A death in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) community is difficult emotionally, spiritually and financially.
- B. VGFN has traditional and cultural protocols for when a member of the community has passed. As the community and the government have evolved, VGFN Elders have advised that the government continue these protocols, which are rooted-in respect to the deceased and the deceased's family.
- C. As a part of good governance, VGG would benefit from formalizing the 2009 Protocols document titled "When a Vuntut Gwitchin beneficiary is deceased" into a formal policy.

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

1. The new policy titled: "VGFN Bereavement and Funeral Policy" has been reviewed and approved.

THIS RESOLUTION being duly approved by a quorum of the Council at a meeting duly convened on June 12, 2023 at Old Crow, Yukon.

Chief Pauline Frost

Deputy Chief Debra-Leigh Reti

Councillor Jeneen Frei Njootli

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VGFN Beneficiary Bereavement and Funeral Policy

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Policy title: VGFN Bereavement and Funeral Policy

Department: Executive Office

Approval Date: June 12, 2023

Effective Date: June 12, 2023

Narrative context

A death in the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) community is difficult emotionally, spiritually and financially. As a small First Nation, each death is felt personally by all. VGFN has traditional and cultural protocols for when a member of the community has passed. As the community and the government have evolved, VGFN Elders have advised that the government continue these protocols, which are rooted-in respect to the deceased and the deceased's family.

Scope

This policy applies to any Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation citizen and is meant to guide the VGG administration and provide financial support to the deceased's family to cover funeral costs when a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen has passed.

Authority – who approved this policy

This Policy was approved by the Chief and Council on June 12, 2023.

This policy is in effect as of June 12, 2023.

Application – who and what this policy applies to

This policy is to support the family of a deceased VGFN citizen.

Principles and intent – what are we trying to do with this policy

Due to the remoteness and isolation of Old Crow, families of the deceased bear a significant financial burden that other communities do not face.

While VGFN citizens live all across Canada, most reside in Whitehorse and Old Crow. At the end of life, many people are hospitalized or moved to Whitehorse or Vancouver to access a broader range of services. Many families incur a cost to move the body of the deceased either back to Whitehorse or back to Old Crow.

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This policy is mindful of the remoteness factor and seeks to mitigate the associated additional costs at a difficult time.

Policy core objectives

The core objective of the policy is to ensure that the VGG has consistent protocols in place for when a VGFN citizen has passed and that the family is adequately supported for the costs associated with the funeral. All families of a VGFN citizen will be treated the same and receive the same amount of financial compensation.

Definitions

“**Citizen**” means persons entitled to citizenship as provided within the Citizenship code of the Vuntut Gwitchin.

“**Chief and Council**” means the Vuntut Gwitchin Chief and Council pursuant to Article VIII of the Constitution.

“**Key family contact**” means person selected by the family to be responsible for the funeral arrangements.

“**Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation**” hereafter referred to as ‘**VGFN**’ means the collectivity of Citizens who share the language, culture, and laws of the Vuntut Gwitchin and their descendants.

“**Vuntut Gwitchin Government**” hereafter referred to as ‘**VGG**’ means, for the purposes of this policy, the Council and administration forming the government of VGFN but does not include the Elders Council or General Assembly, which exist as separate branches of the government of VGFN.

Policy provisions

1. Eligibility
 - a. This policy is applicable when the deceased is a VGFN citizen.
2. VGG Office Closures
 - a. Following a prayer circle, and at the direction of Chief and Council, the Sarah Abel-Chitze Administration Building in Old Crow and any satellite offices located in Whitehorse (VGG offices) will close as soon as leadership is made aware of the passing of a VGFN citizen.
 - b. The VGG offices will close from 12:00 PM to 4:30 PM on the day of the funeral.
 - c. Essential services will remain available, at the discretion of the Executive Director.

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- d. Any employee not deemed an essential service must seek approval from the Executive Director to continue to work on these days (e.g. to meet pending deadlines).
 - i. If an employee not considered an essential service is granted permission to work during the office closure, they must do so in a manner respectful to the deceased and the deceased's family e.g., working "offline" and refraining from sending emails to other staff and Citizens.
3. Finances
- a. A cheque for \$3,500 will be given to the key family contact and is to be used at the discretion of the family.
 - b. The \$3,500 will come from the Chief and Council budget.
 - c. The Deputy Chief will determine if the family requests a paper cheque or a direct deposit of the \$3,500.
 - i. This information will be emailed from the Deputy Chief to the Director of Finance.
 - ii. This email will be attached to the cheque requisition as backup information.
 - iii. Direct deposit will be done by the Director of Finance.
 - iv. Delivery of a paper cheque will be done by the Deputy Chief, unless otherwise delegated by Chief and Council.
 - d. The family is responsible for any expenses over and above the \$3,500 provided.
4. Traditional Practices
- a. At the family's request, or at the discretion of Chief and Council, a hunter(s) will be appointed to hunt for the funeral feast.
 - b. Oil/gas will be provided only to the assigned hunters.
 - c. One Council member will be in charge of overseeing this task.
5. Other Matters
- a. If requested by the family, a coffin and cross will be made in Old Crow by the Government Services Department.
 - i. Chief and Council will direct the Government Services Director to order the lumber and hardware required.
 - ii. In conjunction with the Government Services Director, the family will assign an individual(s) to make the coffin and the cross.
 - b. If the family wishes to purchase their own coffin, an additional \$500 will be provided to the family.
 - c. The Health and Social Services Department will purchase flowers on the government's behalf, for community wreath making.
 - d. An Elder from the immediate family will choose the plot for burial.
 - e. Diggers from the community will prepare the plot for burial.

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Roles and responsibilities

Council

Council members that are present in the community will meet after a death has been confirmed by an immediate family member.

Council will direct the Executive Director to communicate to all employees when the VGG offices will be closed.

The Deputy Chief, unless otherwise delegated, will seek information as to who the payee is for the \$3,500 and whether the cheque is to be deposited into a bank account or delivered.

Council will provide direction for a hunter(s) to hunt for the feast.

Executive Director

At the direction of Chief and Council, the Executive Director will send an email to all staff indicating the closure of the office.

Director of Finance

At the direction of Chief and Council, the Director of Finance will arrange to deposit the cheque to the family (or as otherwise directed).

Director of Government Services

At the direction of Chief and Council, the Director of Government Services will be directed to order the lumber and hardware required for a coffin and cross to be made in Old Crow.

Director of Health and Social Services

At the direction of Chief and Council, the Director of Health and Social Services will order flowers for community wreath making.

Employees

Staff considered Essential Services will be identified and required to continue to work to ensure continuity of services during office closures.

If staff would like to help the family with funeral preparations when offices re-open, their supervisor must approve this and ensure that a Leave Form is completed using appropriate accrued leave (Special, Comp, Vacation).

Any staff member assisting in grave digging will continue to be paid their regular wages.

Review

Chief and Council may review this policy as needed.