



Vuntut Gwitchin Government

Council Update

Old Crow | Friday, June 16, 2023 ~ Chief and Council have been working hard on several priorities for the benefit of VGFN citizens. An update on these initiatives was provided during a public meeting held in Old Crow on June 12, 2023. The same updates will be provided during public meeting held in Whitehorse on June 20, 2023.

Amendments to the Governance Act

On June 12, Council held the first reading of the Act to Amend the Governance Act (2023-2) at a public meeting in Old Crow. The proposed amendment removes Standing Committees from the Legislative Process and adds in its place "Ad-hoc committee of the Council" which means a committee established by the Chief and with the approval of Council with a specific mandate and terms of reference.

The proposed amendments also require any future draft legislation to be published after first reading and before it is final. This approach introduces flexibility into the legislative process while still maintaining public transparency.

Click to download the [Act to Amend the Governance Act](#).

A second reading of the Act to Amend the Governance Act will proceed more than 15 days after the first reading, as required by VGFN law.

The Substance Use Crisis

Council issued a community emergency declaration on April 20, 2023, to recognize that the ongoing substance use crisis has impacted and devastated individuals, families, and the community as a whole, and to mobilize the resources necessary to respond to the crisis, including substance use and overdoses. Council and the Health and Social Services Department, with the support of the Executive Committee of Elders, is working hard to respond to the crisis.

While in Ottawa for the Intergovernmental Leaders Forum, Chief Frost spoke to Prime Minister Trudeau regarding the crisis and the needs of our community for direct support and resources to face this crisis in our community head on; sentiments that were shared by self-governing First Nations across the country. Chief Frost also met with Carolyn Bennett, the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, who provided verbal commitments for funding for a VGFN-led strategy.

On May 19, 2023, Council met with the Chiefs of Northern Nations, First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation and Gwich'in Tribal Council, to discuss collaborative approaches to community wellness and committed exploring opportunities for a joint addictions' treatment facility within our traditional territories and providing wrap around services within our communities. The Chiefs continued the discussion with Premier Pillai and our Member of Parliament Dr. Hanley and the need for a whole of government approach.

Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) ~ Council is also taking active measures with our partners to reduce the supply of harmful substances in Old Crow and to ensure community safety and order is maintained. These active measures include inviting the Safer Communities and Neighborhoods (SCAN) unit to deal with complaints of illegal drug trafficking and bootlegging activities occurring on VGFN Settlement Land.

Click to read the [Open Letter regarding SCAN](#).

Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project

On Monday June 5, the Ground-penetrating radar started on the Chooutla Residential School in Carcross, continuing work that started in 2021 to identify missing children and unmarked burial sites.

This work is being led by the Yukon Residential Schools and Missing Children Project Working Group which Norma Kassi and Shirlee Frost sit on as representatives of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Information gathered at the Chooutla Residential School will be processed over the summer and an analysis report is expected in September. Some of the school sites in Whitehorse may be ground searched next year.

Council met with the Executive Committee of Elders on June 6 to discuss the work that is ongoing, what protocols will need to be developed and what supports will be needed for families and the community. These conversations will continue with the Executive Committee of Elders, the Elders Council, families of missing children, the community and our Executive Office and Health and Social Services Department.

Community Dogs

There have been a number of complaints about loose dogs in Old Crow that cause problems for some citizens, especially elders and children. There have been incidents of dog bites and a few residents have told Council that they do not feel safe in town due to some of the loose dogs being aggressive.

Despite repeated notices asking for dogs to be tied up, several dogs remain loose in town so VGG has taken the next step by putting-up public notice that loose dogs will be sent to the animal shelter in Whitehorse, humanely and on an ongoing basis, and that dog owners will be required to pay \$500.00 to retrieve their dog the first time.

At the same time, VGG continues to engage with Yukon government and the Humane Society Yukon regarding animal welfare and animal control to support good practices and care of dogs.

New Policies of the Vuntut Gwitchin Government

Home of the Wise Ones Interim Policy

Resolution 06-12-2023-#33

The Home officially opened on May 19, 2023. The Home is significant infrastructure in Old Crow that will provide secure, safe, and comfortable housing for Elders in the community. Council recently passed a resolution to adopt the interim policy to provide initial rules and direction on managing the new Home of the Wise Ones.

VGG is currently accepting applications for the Home of the Wise Ones with allocation of units to be considered by the VGG disbursement Committee.

If you would like to apply, or if you have questions, please contact James Smith, Executive Director at (867) 332-1543, james.smith@vgfn.net.

Funeral and Bereavement Policy

Resolution 06-12-2023-#34

VGFN has traditional and cultural protocols for when a member of the community has passed.

As the community and the government have evolved, Elders have advised that the government continue these protocols, which are rooted-in respect for the deceased and the deceased's family.

VGG has had a protocol document since 2009 that has provided guidance for the government to follow regarding finances, protocols, and office closures when a citizen passes. As a part of good governance, and recognizing that VGG would benefit from formalizing this protocol document into a formal policy, Council recently passed a resolution to adopt the VGFN Bereavement and Funeral Policy.