

*Jʉts'ū 'ndasats'edaye*  
*"This is how we work."*

## *Yukon First Nations Education Policy Framework*

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*First Nations Education Commission*  
*and*  
*Council of Yukon First Nations*  
2015



**“This is how we work”.**

Nits’òo gwitr’it t’atr’agwah’in ~ *Gwich’in*

Nts’ǎ’tr’ädätr’oh’ay ~ *Hän*

Duhts’ū’ huts’its’ehoh’in ~ *Northern Tutchone (Mayo and Selkirk)*

Jұts’ū’ edesats’andeyi ~ *Northern Tutchone (Carmacks, Big Salmon, etc)*

Jұts’ū’ ndasats’edaye ~ *Southern Tutchone*

In progress – more translation to come



**Note: Draft -In progress**

*"This is how we work."*

## Yukon First Nations Education Policy Framework

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Kluane First Nation  
Liard First Nation  
Little Salmon Carmacks First Nations  
Selkirk First Nation

Ross River Dena Council  
Ta'an Kwäch än  
Teslin Tlingit Council  
Tr'ondëk Hwëchin  
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FNEC Policy Subcommittee: Janie Lee Silas (FNEC), Lynn Sparks (FNEC), Elder Mark Wedge;  
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And, aided through a partnership with: Council of Yukon First Nations; Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Yukon Education

*Together, we all succeed.*

*Message from Grand Chief Ruth Massie*

## *Preamble*

This policy document, *This is how we work: Yukon First Nations Education Policy Framework*, sets out the current educational priorities of the *First Nations Education Commission* and the *Council of Yukon First Nations* for the development of programs and services for Yukon First Nations learners at all stages of lifelong learning. To fully implement these policies requires committed educational partnerships at all government levels; within all Yukon educational institutions; and among all First Nations communities. The key policies of significance at this time include:

- Yukon First Nations Culture and Language;
- Authority, Control and Responsibility;
- Sustainability, Supports and Success;
- Closing the Academic Achievement Gap;
- Data and Student Information

These policies are fully supported by universally recognized principles of equality; the inherent rights of Aboriginal people enshrined in the Canadian Constitution; in legislative rights established in First Nations Final and Self-government Agreements; and the Yukon Education Act. These laws and principles set out obligations to Yukon First Nations learners to quality and relevant learning opportunities as foundational to a culturally responsive education system. It is essential that these obligations are fully recognized and supported by Yukon public schools and postsecondary institutions and that these institutions are accountable to First Nations governments, education authorities, parents, and caregivers for the learning outcomes of Yukon First Nations learners attending their institutions.

Necessary to the successful implementation of these policies is the support and involvement of Yukon First Nations communities, families, parents/guardians and students.

Each policy area in this document includes examples of *Policy in Action* which illustrate ways to implement and support the policy at various levels: individual students; school, community and Department of Education responsibilities. Appendix A, *Yukon First Nations Language Revitalization Program*, is an example of a holistic, multi-level and integrated approach to policy implementation, illustrating a shared responsibility approach to Yukon First Nations language revitalization.

*This is a living document and subject to review by the Council of Yukon First Nations*

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## *Vision*

*Our students are excelling in both worlds. They are rooted with fluency in their traditional language and knowledge of their culture and history and confidently living life side by side with others, in a multi-lingual and multicultural Yukon society.*

*Our students are lifelong learners and First Nation citizens that will empower present and future generations.*

*Our students know the traditional cultural way of life through seeing, knowing and doing and this is how they enrich and sustain their identities and beliefs.*

*Our students know and practice their traditional laws, values and morals and these have an important place in their education.*

*Our students have the opportunity to achieve language fluency; to acquire cultural competencies that are grounded in our stories, traditional ways and land-based learning opportunities that teach respect for self, others and the land.*

*Our students are all Yukon students regardless of ancestry; who appreciate the rich heritage of this land; know how knowledge is shaped; respect differences and connect through shared educational experiences.*

## *Guiding Principles*

*A Yukon public school system places Yukon First Nations as meaningful and equitable partners in its design, knowledge base and delivery and:*

*Allows for each individual Yukon First Nations to determine local educational goals and initiatives*

*Measures student success in ways that honour the whole person*

*Engages and empowers students and their families*

*Honours the significance of place, community and social development at the centre of its programming*

*Is fully committed to protecting the natural world in all of its practices*

*Strives toward decolonization within its institutions and practices*

## *What is "Policy"*

"Policy" refers to a plan of action with guidelines and expectations for the delivery of programs and services to the public. Policies (government related) are developed from legislation or they are created by elected officials on behalf of the public. Policies are not the same as laws that compel or prohibit an action, such as laws that define how fast we can drive on public highways, but are statements that guide the actions of those in a position to implement legislation or to make a desired outcome possible.

*This is how we work: Yukon First Nations Education Policy Framework* was developed by the First Nations Education Commission of the Council of Yukon First Nations. The policies in this document are supported by important pieces of legislation at the Federal, Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations levels, as well as universal declarations. They complement the priorities of the Joint Education Action Plan, which was endorsed by Council of Yukon First Nations, Chief's Committee on Education.

*These policies* are guidelines for all: families, communities, educators, school councils/boards, Yukon First Nations and Yukon and Federal government officials who can help to advance the goals toward a more open model of public education, one that foundationally places Yukon First Nations knowledge and practices in all aspects of educational programming to create a culturally responsive Yukon education system for all students.

## *Supporting Legislation and Agreements*

**The Constitution Act of 1982** affirmed existing aboriginal treaty rights and allowed for the initiation of land claims where none had been negotiated in the past. This important affirmation came as Yukon First Nations were engaged in a long dispute over aboriginal rights to Yukon lands that had never been relinquished. In 1972, a delegation of Yukon Chiefs presented *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the Federal Government, as the foundational document for a modern Yukon land claims settlement. Negotiations began in 1983 leading to the ratification of the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) in 1993 by all fourteen Yukon First Nations.

**The Umbrella Final Agreement** provided the template for negotiations by individual First Nations addressing lands, compensation monies, joint management in cases of shared jurisdiction and self-government agreements. Each First Nation Final Agreement (FNFA) contains these provisions plus the ability to define unique areas of special interests (UFA, 1993, 2.1.3). At the same time, self-government agreements were negotiated which recognize First Nations as governments with rights to establish laws specific to local issues or privately held lands. Currently 11 of 14 Yukon First Nations have First Nations Final Agreements and Self-government Agreements.

**Specific to education**, the UFA and self-government agreements set out obligations for the provision of educational programming related to: *native studies, culture and language programs; composition of teaching staff, early childhood, special, and adult education curriculum, kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum, the evaluation of teachers, administrators and other employees*, and the right to establish schools.

**The Yukon Education Act** also recognizes the above provisions consistent with the land claim agreements, such as the following: *The Minister shall include in courses of study prescribed for use in schools studies respecting the cultural, linguistic and historical heritage of the Yukon and its aboriginal people, and the Yukon environment. (Yukon Education Act, c.25, s.51)*

**First Nations Final Agreements; Self-government Agreements and the rights enshrined in the Canadian Constitution** all work together to help define and protect the rights and interests of Yukon First Nations. These interests are also recognized in important international declarations such as the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

## *Our Students*

### *Yukon Public School Demographics, 2013*

Demographics	N
1. Total student enrollment <sup>a</sup>	5042
2. Number of First Nations students (all levels) as self-identified <sup>a</sup>	1608 (31.9%)
3. Percentage of First Nations students compared to non-first nations students <sup>c</sup>	32 %*
4. Yukon six year average high school graduation rates (3rd lowest in Canada) <sup>b</sup>	72 %
5. Yukon Non-First Nations graduation rate <sup>a</sup> (entering/completing grade 12)	77%
6. Yukon First Nations graduation rate <sup>a</sup>	47%
7. Canadian high school graduation rate <sup>b</sup>	85%

<sup>a</sup> Yukon Dept of Education- Annual Report 2013.

<sup>b</sup> CMEC -Education at a Glance, 2013

<sup>c</sup> Yukon Bureau of Statistics, School Enrolment 2013

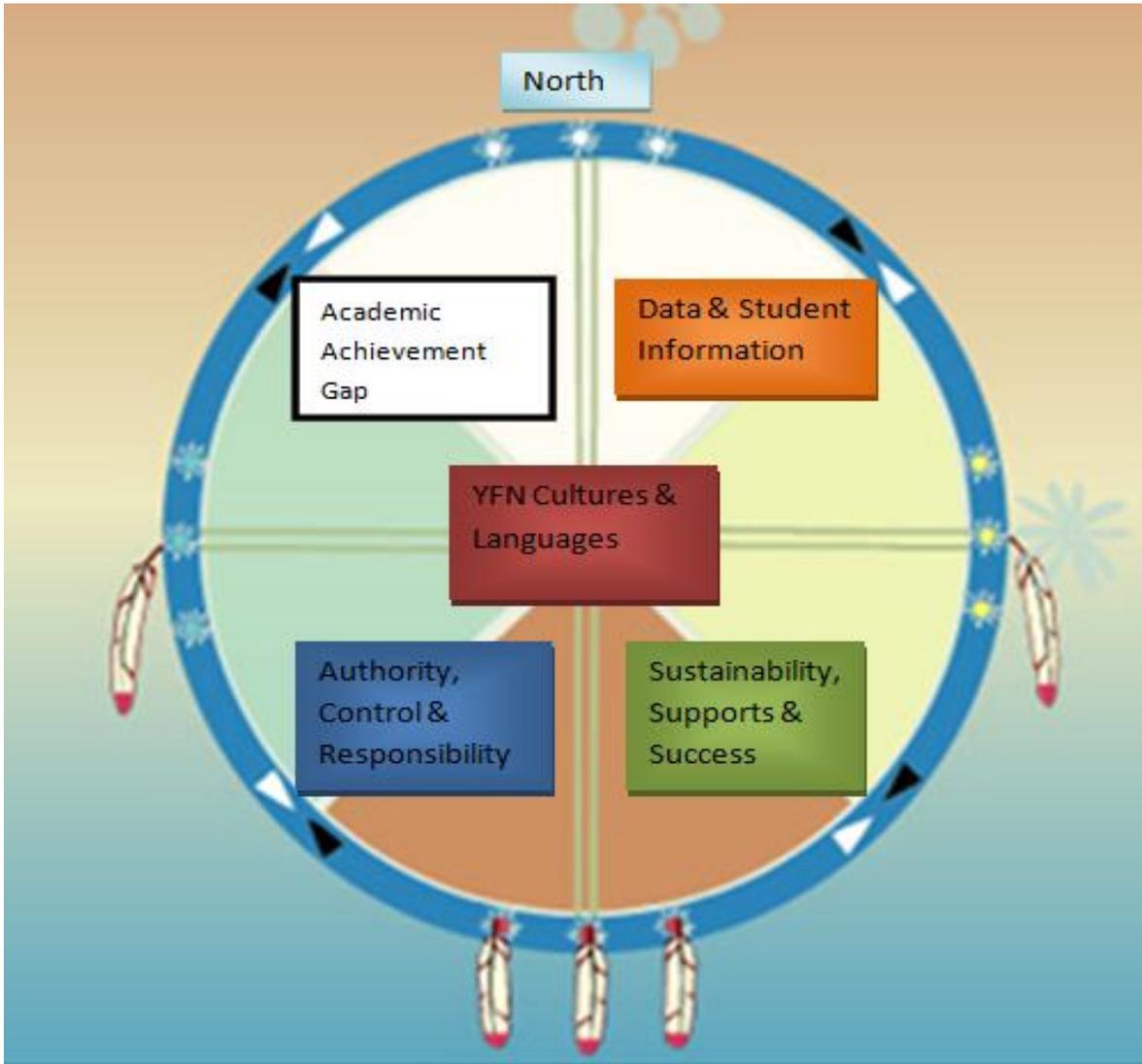
\*-this percentage will be higher in K-7 schools

## *Other Significant Data*

- 54% (self-reported) of Yukon First Nations people live in Whitehorse (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Population Report, 2014)
- 20% of Yukon population self-reports as Yukon First Nations ancestry\*
- 25% of the overall student population in Whitehorse area schools is First Nations. This percentage will increase in relation to a lower birth rate in the white community (Yukon Department of Education Strategic Plan, 2010-2015)
- 14.3 % (self-reported) First Nations individuals are employed in management positions in Yukon Education\*
- 16.9 % of remedial tutors and education assistants are First Nations individuals\*
- 24.4 % of public school teachers (includes Native Language teachers) are First Nations individuals\*
- 20% of people working in Yukon Education are First Nations individuals\*

\* Bureau of Statistics - Workforce Census

*Policies at a Glance*



## ***Yukon First Nations Cultures and Languages***

*Yukon First Nations cultures and languages are expressions of collective identities that have evolved from accumulations of learning, experiences and traditional knowledge systems shared over centuries resulting in a dynamic, enduring and distinct way of perceiving and understanding the world. These identities shape who we are, how we think, raise our children, meet our needs and collectively celebrate our achievements and overcome hardships.*

*Culture and language education is central to implementing the educational goals of our land claims and self-government agreements and restoring losses suffered from residential schools. Our cultures and language are an important national and territorial heritage that must be protected, supported, preserved and shared. They must be considered a foundational part of a Yukon public school education, fully resourced, taught by knowledgeable teachers and include language programming that is mandatory for all students.*

## ***Authority, Control and Responsibility***

*In recognition of First Nations Final and Self-government Agreements that define government to government relations including sharing of Yukon First Nation and Government responsibility for programs relating to Education; rights to assume various levels of control over education and rights defined by the Yukon Education Act to receive quality, culturally-relevant learning opportunities for First Nations learners, we need to establish shared management of Yukon public schools by promoting and sustaining meaningful, equitable and accountable partnerships with Yukon First Nations peoples at the Territorial and local level.*

*These rights are intended to ensure the improved collective and individual well-being of First Nations citizens; recognition of Aboriginal identity, self-determination, promote an anti-racist/inclusive learning environment and opportunities for innovative thinking to support quality educational experiences. And ultimately, create a better educational experience for all Yukon students, regardless of ancestry.*

### ***Sustainability, Supports and Success***

*Yukon First Nations will work in cooperation with Yukon Government and the government of Canada to jointly develop and implement an effective funding approach for comprehensive lifelong learning systems. This funding approach shall include, but not be limited to, costs associated with student assessment, review, and remediation of learner achievement levels and to support effective cultural enrichment educational programming. Sustainable and long-term funding to ensure quality educational programming is critical to supporting Yukon First Nations cultural and linguistic excellence; closing academic achievement and graduation gaps and to provide a more comprehensive educational experience for all Yukon students.*

### ***Closing the Academic Achievement Gap***

*The academic achievement gap should be approached as a systemic gap, generated by deficits in educational programming, the devaluation of First Nations identity, cultures and languages, marginalization, residential schools impacts, lack of First Nations educators and lack of meaningful parent engagement to champion this issue, rather than simply the academic deficits of individual students. Viewing the problem as a student deficit places the burden unfairly on Yukon First Nations students. Closing a systemic gap requires a multi-faceted and multi-level approach from a variety of agencies. Solutions however, must focus on closing the gap for individual students for no student should be asked to forfeit his/her future to wait for system-wide change. The academic achievement gap is a gap in knowledge of diverse ways of knowing and this negatively impacts all Yukon students, regardless of ancestry.*

### ***Data and Student Information***

*Access to data and student information is critical to planning and improving learning outcomes. Yukon First Nations will work with the Yukon Department of Education in the design and review of data pertaining to improved student learning outcomes, culturally responsive curriculum, or the expected outcomes of the local Yukon First Nations community. Data collected and shared will be guided by OCAP principles and the requirements of the ATIPP Act.*

*Where learning outcomes of First Nations students fall significantly below those of non-First Nations students, national averages or program standards, strategic plans to improve student outcomes will be prepared at the school level and in consultation with the Yukon Department of Education and Yukon First Nations.*

## *Yukon First Nations Cultures and Languages*

### ***Policy Statement***

*Yukon First Nations cultures and languages are expressions of collective identities that have evolved from accumulations of learning, experiences and traditional knowledge systems shared over centuries resulting in a dynamic, enduring and distinct way of perceiving and understanding the world. These identities shape who we are, how we think, raise our children, meet our needs and collectively celebrate our achievements and overcome hardships.*

*Culture and language education is central to implementing the educational goals of our land claims and self-government agreements and restoring losses suffered from residential schools. Our cultures and language are an important national and territorial heritage that must be protected, supported, preserved and shared. They must be considered a foundational part of a Yukon public school education, fully resourced, taught by knowledgeable teachers and include language programming that is mandatory for all students.*

### **From “Policy to Action” Examples**

#### Community Level:

- Provide early learning initiatives to promote high quality culturally relevant programs and services; the holistic development of the individual and school readiness such as: First Nations language nests, Aboriginal Head Start programs, daycare, pre-kindergarten and preschool.

#### School Level:

- Foster among First Nations and Non-First Nations students positive attitudes toward and positive values about Yukon First Nations cultures and languages as valued and foundational to Canadian society.
- Along with high quality culturally relevant programming, ensure that on-going anti-racism programs and cross-cultural awareness education; along with the history of colonialism and white privilege are included in the school curriculum so that students have an accurate understanding of the threats to First Nations culture, identity and language losses.

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Department Level :

- Increase the number of First Nations teaching and administration staff.
- Increase the number of Yukon First Nations language teachers.
- Support the role of a recognized Yukon-wide First Nations education advisory body, such as the First Nations Education Commission of the Council of Yukon First Nations, to provide input on educational matters of concern to all Yukon First Nations. Support individual First Nations local education authorities on matters that pertain specifically to an individual First Nations community.

*See Appendix A for suggestions on how to implement a community-wide language revitalization program*

### Supporting Legislation and Agreements

- **Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nations Final and Self-Government Agreements**
- **Yukon Education Act**
- **The UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples**
- **The entrenchment of aboriginal languages through Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution (1982):** *“the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.”*
- **The Supreme Court of Canada:** *“... the historic powers and responsibilities assumed by the Crown constituted the source of a fiduciary obligation.... [There is] a general guiding principle for s.35 (1). That is, the government has responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity [a relationship of trust -to act for the sole benefit and interest on behalf of the other] with respect to Aboriginal peoples.”* R v. Sparrow.
- **The Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights :** Articles 7 & 8
- **The United Nations Human Rights Council’s report:** *Role of Languages and Culture in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples: Study of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*
- **Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow (1972)**  
*“The language of instruction at the pre-school level and up to the first or second year of primary school must be in the language of the local Indian community with secondary language English being introduced gradually during that period, if this is the majority opinion of the Indian parents of the community.” (From Together Today – A Summary “Solutions to Indian problems must be found within the framework of our culture”. p. 55 )*

## ***Authority, Control and Responsibility***

### ***Policy Statement***

*In recognition of First Nations Final and Self-government Agreements that define government-to-government relations including sharing of Yukon First Nation and Government responsibility for programs relating to Education; rights to assume various levels of control over education and rights defined by the Yukon Education Act to receive quality, culturally-relevant learning opportunities for First Nations learners, we need to establish shared management of Yukon public schools by promoting and sustaining meaningful, equitable and accountable partnerships with Yukon First Nations peoples at the Territorial and local level.*

*These rights are intended to ensure the improved collective and individual well-being of First Nations citizens; recognition of Aboriginal identity, self-determination, promote an anti-racist/inclusive learning environment and opportunities for innovative thinking to support quality educational experiences. And ultimately, create a better educational experience for all Yukon students, regardless of ancestry.*

### **From “Policy to Action” Examples**

#### Student Level:

- Students are provided with leadership development opportunities that reflect Yukon First Nations governance models. Students are exposed to outstanding examples of government-to-government partnerships.

#### School Level:

- Schools provide comprehensive land claims and self-government education that reflect the agreements of the local First Nations.
- School Growth Plan include commitments to anti-racist education including ongoing examination of school practices for any potential to create barriers to First Nations students
- All First Nations staff, including CELCs and Language teachers are fully involved and provided with adequate teaching/office space as a valuable member of their school.

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School/Community Partnerships Level:

- Schools ensure that effective consultation processes are in place with local First Nation.
- Strategies are development at the school level to encourage First Nations parental engagement throughout a child's school career.
- Schools honour the traditional practices/values of the community it serves such as the importance of community, social justice initiatives, care for elders/seniors, and the practices of generosity, courage, independence and mastery.

Department Level:

- Mandatory land claims and self-government education that honours the unique aspects of Yukon First Nations agreements while also acknowledging the federal government's legal, constitutional and moral obligations to First Nations peoples of Canada.
- A comprehensive hiring/recruitment and training plan is in place to increase the number of First Nations teachers and administrators in all Yukon schools. Long-term funding of parental engagement efforts is made available to all Yukon schools.
- Territory-wide and/or community-specific consultation processes/partnership with Yukon First Nations are in place to ensure high level of consultation and partnerships arrangements that lead to shared responsibility, shared decision-making and shared leadership in Yukon education.
- Teachers and administrators are evaluated on their practices and contribution to closing the gap for First Nations students and in furthering the practices of a culturally responsive education.

## Supporting Legislation and Declarations

- **Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nations Final and Self-Government Agreements**
- **Yukon Education Act**
- **The UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples**
- **Section 35.1 of the Canadian Constitution:** *"the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed."*
- **The Supreme Court of Canada:** *"... the historic powers and responsibilities assumed by the Crown constituted the source of a fiduciary obligation.... [There is] a general guiding principle for s.35 (1). That is, the government has responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to Aboriginal peoples." R v. Sparrow.*
- **The United Nations Human Rights Council's report:** *Role of Languages and Culture in the Promotion and Protection of the Rights and Identity of Indigenous Peoples: Study of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

## *Sustainability, Supports and Success*

### ***Policy Statement***

*Yukon First Nations will work in cooperation with Yukon Government and the government of Canada to jointly develop and implement an effective funding approach for comprehensive lifelong learning systems. This funding approach shall include, but not be limited to, costs associated with student assessment, review and remediation of learner achievement levels and the development of effective cultural enrichment educational programming. Sustainable and long-term funding to ensure quality educational programming is critical to supporting Yukon First Nations cultural and linguistic excellence; closing academic achievement and graduation gaps and to provide a more comprehensive educational experience for all Yukon students.*

### **From “Policy to Action” Examples**

#### Territorial/Federal Level:

- A ten year funding agreement is developed specifically to support continuous improvement planning, assessment implementation and follow-up in all matters that pertain to system-wide student improvement programming from early intervention programs and supports to increasing graduation rates of First Nations students.

#### Department Level:

- The Department, in consultation with Yukon First Nations, will ensure adequate funding for continuous improvement planning, assessment, implementation, follow-up and reporting on all matters pertaining to student improvement, including the publication of How Are We Doing Reports.
- Environmental scans on a school-by-school and system-wide basis are undertaken to identify and prioritize financial resources and obligations toward improving student performance outcomes.

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#### School Level:

- Front line supports to students and families, such as CELCs/ESW/EOC and family counselors have the necessary training and resources to support stay-in-school programs, tutoring programs, support student attendance and keep parents informed and communication open between the school and the family.

#### Community Level:

- Community level funding is secured to support bi-annual workshops/information sessions in all Yukon communities to provide parents/guardians with the skills and background to support school success.
- Ongoing parent support groups are offered throughout the school year.
- Funding to support family centered “Whole Child” programming is offered in all schools providing opportunities such as family sports and games evenings, First Nations language and cultural activities and basic construction and repair skills training.

### Supporting Legislation and Declarations

- **Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nations Final and Self-Government Agreements**
- **Yukon Education Act**
- **The UN Rights of Indigenous Peoples**
- **The Supreme Court of Canada:** “... the historic powers and responsibilities assumed by the Crown constituted the source of a fiduciary obligation.... [There is] a general guiding principle for s.35 (1). That is, the government has responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to Aboriginal peoples.” R v. Sparrow.
- **First Nations Control of First Nations Education** (Assembly of First Nations, 2010) “All governments in Canada must fulfill their Constitutional, Treaty and international obligations to First Nations peoples by supporting the design and implementation of First Nations comprehensive learning systems with adequate and sustainable resourcing. It is imperative that the Government of Canada move ahead with the commitment made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, on behalf of the federal government, in the Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools to ‘forg[e] a new relationship... based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a stronger Canada for all of us.’ (p. 16)

## *Closing the Academic Achievement Gap*

### ***Policy Statement***

*The academic achievement gap should be approached as a systemic gap, generated by deficits in educational programming, the devaluation of First Nations identity, cultures and languages, marginalization, residential schools impacts, lack of First Nations educators and lack of meaningful parent engagement to champion this issue, rather than simply the academic deficits of individual students. Viewing the problem as a student deficit places the burden unfairly on Yukon First Nations students. Closing a systemic gap requires a multi-faceted and multi-level approach from a variety of agencies. Solutions however, must focus on closing the gap for individual students for no student should be asked to forfeit his/her future to wait for system-wide change. The academic achievement gap is a gap in knowledge of diverse ways of knowing and this negatively impacts all Yukon students, regardless of ancestry.*

### **From “Policy to Action” Examples**

#### School Level:

- Ensure and provide supports so that parents/guardians can fully and effectively participate as members of school councils/boards and parent advisory bodies
- By the end of the first month of school, individual schools have established term or semester performance targets for below standard groups (age/gender/ancestry); monitoring and review these groups and adjust actions to achieve performance target. Results are reported each term.
- Schools Growth Plans include comprehensive action plans to address performance gaps, resources identified to support improvement and reporting mechanism. These plans are reviewed and updated each school planning cycle.

#### Student Level:

- Individual students who are below academic standards are fully assessed, performance improvement targets/contracts are set; plans established for improvement; mid-term reviews and adjustments made and where needed, additional resources provided to achieve targets.

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Department Level:

- Implement a back-to-school intensive program for school leavers
- Yukon First Nations educators are employed in all aspects of the education system including: as administrators, teachers, counselors, learning assistants, school psychologists and educational assistants
- Recognize and support the role of a territory-wide Yukon First Nations education advisory body to CYFN Leadership.
- Funds for student performance improvement initiatives are made available to schools
- Provide academic credits for a student-as-tutors program

Department/School/Community Partnership Level:

- Summer programs are offered that combine academic preparation skill development and cultural/land based activities.
- Establish an academic/leadership credit system for student volunteers.
- Implement a transition from elementary to secondary program that focuses on strengthening basic skills, study skills; establish a student/adult mentorship program
- Provide training for parents/guardians, volunteers and students to serve as tutors.

### Supporting Legislation, Declarations and Reports

- **Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nations Final and Self-Government Agreements**
- **Yukon Education Act**
- **The Supreme Court of Canada:** “... *the historic powers and responsibilities assumed by the Crown constituted the source of a fiduciary obligation.... [There is] a general guiding principle for s.35 (1). That is, the government has responsibility to act in a fiduciary capacity with respect to Aboriginal peoples.*” R v. Sparrow.
- **Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow** (1972)
- **Yukon Education Reform Project: Final Report (2007):** See *Rural-to-Urban Transition, Recommendations 1-4*, (p. 2.20) and *Rural Secondary Schools, Recommendations 1-3* (p. 6.12).
- **First Nations Control of First Nations Education** (Assembly of First Nations, 2010)
- **The Operations of the Yukon Department of Education from the Office of the Auditor General** (Canada, Office of the Auditor General, 2009).

## ***Data and Student Information***

### ***Policy Statement***

*Access to data and student information is critical to planning and improving learning outcomes. Yukon First Nations will work with the Yukon Department of Education in the design and review of data pertaining to improving student learning outcomes; culturally responsive curriculum; or the expected outcomes of the local Yukon First Nations community. Data collected and shared will be guided by OCAP principles and the requirements of the ATIPP Act.*

*Where learning outcomes of First Nations students fall significantly below those of non-First Nations students, national averages or program standards, strategic plans to improve student outcomes will be prepared at the school level and in consultation with the Yukon Department of Education and Yukon First Nations.*

### **From “Policy to Action” Examples**

#### **Department Level:**

- In addition to current data on student achievement and attendance, collect and report on the number of professional development opportunities offered to staff on Yukon First Nations history and culture; the number and types of Yukon First Nations languages and cultural programs offered; research underway by the Department and attendance of staff to workshops on promising practices for improved outcomes for First Nations learners; the percentages of First Nations children attending early learning programs such as Learning Together and Aboriginal Head Start programs.
- In consultation with the CYFN Education, elaborate on the How Are We Doing Reports and make available to Yukon First Nations on an annual basis.
- Provide timely access to important Yukon First Nations student information and data by authorized researchers of CYFN and individual Yukon First Nations.
- In consultation with CYFN Leadership, develop a policy on access to Yukon First Nations student information and data.

- Ensure that parents/guardians are informed on the potential uses of self-identifying their children as “Aboriginal” on student information forms issued by the Department of Education or local school.

### Supporting Legislation, Declarations and Studies

#### **CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada) Key Policy Issues in Aboriginal Education: An Evidence-Based Approach (2012)**

- **Holistic Data Collection:** *“Holistic measures that capture the social, physical, and spiritual well-being of individuals and communities throughout the life cycle are aimed at providing a more complete view of where Aboriginal students are succeeding and where they are falling behind”.*
- **Early Development Instrument (EDI):** *“A number of important limitations of EDI as an indicator of school readiness for Aboriginal children have been noted (Li, D’Angiulli, & Kendall, 2007)... [and] may be influenced by the stereotyping, misperception, and variations in cultural competence among the teachers who are conducting the assessments. Variation in measured early childhood development may reflect variation in teacher perception, as much as or more than true variation. Finally, the emphasis of EDI on concepts such as vulnerability and readiness to learn may impose a “deficit model” on Aboriginal children (Sam, 2011).”*

**First Nations Control of First Nations Education (Assembly of First Nations, 2010):** *“Data analysis is a critical component for planning and improving learning outcomes. The government of Canada must support First Nations in developing and implementing system infrastructures and processes for data management analysis and research based on OCAP principles.” (2.1.3.)*

**Yukon Education Reform Project: Final Report (2007):** *“Equitable access to information is essential to partnerships.” (p.12)*

*“ Recommendation 2: The Yukon government should examine existing legislation and identify articles or clauses that are potential barriers to developing effective partnerships with First Nations.” (p. 1.6)*

## *Concluding Comments*

Over forty years ago a delegation of Yukon First Nations Chiefs presented *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* to the government of Canada outlining many grievances including educational reforms to close the educational gap that exist for First Nations students, increase graduation rates, include culture and language programming and train First Nations teachers and counselors. Since then, many Yukon reports, reviews, and studies have been generated with similar recommendations yet have failed to produce significant improvements in the most critical areas of student success.

The most important message to be taken from *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow (1972)*, *the Kwiya Report (1987)*, *the educational provisions of the Umbrella Final Agreement (1993)* and *the Yukon Education Reform Project (2007)* is that Yukon First Nations are dedicated and passionate about education. We fully understand that when it comes to protecting our cultures and languages; our First Nations identities; and our ways of knowing “no aspect of a culture is more vital to its integrity than its means of education” (Hampton, 1995, p. 7). We will continue to call for a public education system that is inclusive of our interests, not just for ourselves but because we desire a better education for all Yukon students, one that reflects the diversity of our vast country and our multiple heritages.

*This is how we work: Yukon First Nations Education Policy Framework* addresses five key policies of urgent concern to Yukon First Nations with some suggested implementation examples of policy in action. These examples are intended to inspire positive and forward-looking approach to changing practices. They should not be considered standardized practices but starting points to build upon according to the rich and varied cultural and educational interests evident in First Nations communities throughout the Yukon.

Together, we all succeed.

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## *Appendices: An Example of a Whole-Community Approach to Language Revitalization*

- Language Revitalization Program Sample Implementation Template

## An Example of a Whole-Community Approach to Language Revitalization

### Policy Statement : *Yukon First Nations Cultures and Languages*

*Yukon First Nations cultures and languages are expressions of collective identities that have evolved from accumulations of learning, experiences and traditional knowledge systems shared over centuries resulting in a dynamic, enduring and distinct way of perceiving and understanding the world. These identities shape who we are, how we think, raise our children, meet our needs and collectively celebrate our achievements and overcome hardships.*

*Culture and language education is central to implementing the educational goals of Yukon First Nations land claims and self-government agreements and restoring losses suffered from residential schools. Our cultures and language are an important national and territorial heritage that must be protected, supported, preserved and shared. They must be considered a foundational part of a Yukon public school education, fully resourced, taught by knowledgeable teachers and include language programming that is mandatory for all students.*

### Specific Goal: To increase use of Yukon First Nations languages in our communities: in schools, homes, work and social settings across the Yukon

Settings	Levels of Engagement <b>Emerging:</b> beginning	<b>Developing:</b> understanding with some active/promoting engagement	<b>Proficient:</b> functional and operational	<b>Exemplary:</b> fully engaged in implementing, mentoring, collaborating
<b>Community Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Public signs in the traditional language of the community e.g. post office; stop signs, playgrounds</li> <li>~traditional place names are visible throughout the community</li> <li>~Community libraries have a section devoted to the language</li> <li>~Community events/meetings include traditional greetings/closures.</li> <li>~Community newsletters devote sections to language promotion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Communities sponsor language learning opportunities for its members.</li> <li>~Communities encourage and support all workplace sites to use signage promoting the language of the community.</li> <li>~Communities seek funding to support a language learning mentorship program for families and individuals</li> <li>~Community libraries sponsor language promotion events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Communities commit to making the revitalization of First Nations languages a priority and promote its importance to all Yukoners to support and invest in.</li> <li>~At a minimum a community member can expect to be greeted by any member of the community in the traditional language of the community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Yukon First Nations languages are visible and heard through the community and across the demographic makeup of the community.</li> <li>~Community/government documents are in both languages</li> <li>~Community events/meetings are in both languages of the community</li> </ul>

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	<b>Levels of Engagement</b> <b>Emerging:</b> beginning	<b>Developing:</b> understanding with some active/promoting engagement	<b>Proficient:</b> functional and operational	<b>Exemplary:</b> fully engaged in implementing, mentoring, collaborating
<b>Family Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Families support children in using basic vocabulary, place names and any First Nation names.</li> <li>~First Nations language books, music, traditional stories are in the home</li> <li>~Elders are greeted in the traditional language</li> <li>~Families understand tone variations and have some mastery of sounds unique to the language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Families attend First Nations language classes and events where the languages are part of an event (e.g. sewing sessions, traditional dancing events, celebrations).</li> <li>~Families seek the mentorship of a capable speaker in exchange for some form of in-kind assistance.</li> <li>~Families are comfortable using basic vocabulary and simple phrases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Families spend a portion of everyday conversing with children in their traditional language.</li> <li>~Families spend time with Elders listening to stories and retelling stories using as much language as they have mastered.</li> <li>~Families are comfortable with simple conversation and easily recall commonly used words and phrases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Families engage in conversation throughout the day and in any setting.</li> <li>~Families engage in traditional storytelling and encourage older children to become storytelling mentors to younger children.</li> <li>~Families easily recall commonly used phrases and can converse confidently in everyday exchanges.</li> </ul>
<b>School Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Schools are filled with signs in the traditional language of the community –washrooms, offices, welcome signs, classrooms and school contents.</li> <li>~School libraries have a section devoted to the language</li> <li>~Elders are part of school events and are present in the school</li> <li>~School events include traditional greetings/ closures.</li> <li>~School newsletters and website include the language</li> <li>~School Growth Plans include some level of language recognition in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~School libraries sponsor language promotion events</li> <li>~School Growth Plans include a plans for language promotion throughout all aspect of the school</li> <li>~Language learning opportunities are available to all school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~School Growth Plans include a major emphasis on language development in the school that all school staff participates in promoting.</li> <li>~Elders play an active role in language development planning</li> <li>~ Language proficiency indicators are developed for each grade level and these are used extensively in student assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~School Growth Plans are also written in the First Nations language of the community.</li> <li>~Schools/ Councils hold an annual AGM and include reports to parents on School Growth Plan goals/results on language revitalization.</li> <li>~Resources and supports are available to students who are below language proficiency indicators for their grade level</li> <li>~The traditional language of the community is welcomed as a mandatory school subject for all students.</li> </ul>

	<b>Emerging:</b> beginning	<b>Developing:</b> understanding with some active/promoting engagement	<b>Proficient:</b> functional and operational	<b>Exemplary:</b> fully engaged in implementing, mentoring, collaborating
<b>Yukon Department of Education Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Department of Education offices are filled with signs in the traditional languages of the Yukon –washrooms, welcome signs.</li> <li>~Department of Education website and print material include language promotion. All First Nations languages are recognized.</li> <li>~Strategic Planning documents and School Growth Plan guidelines require language promotion in all Yukon schools</li> <li>~The Resource Centre and the Teachers’ Professional Library have sections devoted to Yukon First Nations languages and materials on language instruction</li> <li>~Meetings and gatherings begin and end with traditional greetings/ closures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~The Resource Centre and the Teachers’ Professional Library sponsor ongoing language promotion events</li> <li>~Language learning opportunities are available to Department staff</li> <li>~Funding is available for schools to undertake language promotion activities</li> <li>~Plans are underway for a fully operational Yukon First Nations Language program in all Yukon Schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~Principal and teacher evaluations include the support and promotion of First Nations languages in the school and classroom</li> <li>~A fund to support language development across the curriculum is available to all schools.</li> <li>~All Yukon schools have at least one fully operational First Nations language program</li> <li>~Professional development and research opportunities in language revitalization are available to schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~First Nations language development opportunities are well funded</li> <li>~Annual department reports include results of language development performance measures.</li> <li>~Goals in First Nations language acquisition are continually being refined and expanded</li> <li>~Plans are underway for a K-12 Yukon First Nations language immersion school.</li> <li>~The Department of Education documents its progress and lessons learned in language revitalization for publication.</li> </ul>