



YUKON FIRST NATION EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEW FIRST NATIONS-LED MOBILE THERAPEUTIC UNIT (MTU) A FIRST IN THE YUKON

Whitehorse – This week, at their widely attended First Nations Education Conference, the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) will make an historic announcement as they launch their Mobile Therapeutic Unit, a new, holistic allied health service for Indigenous children and youth in the territory. Never before has an Indigenous-led organization provided these Allied health services in the Yukon, which will also be delivered through the lens of Yukon First Nations culture and world view.

The team will include:

- A culturally based mental wellness team
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Language Pathology
- Education Psychology
- Audiology
- Optometry

Funded by Jordan's Principal, the MTU was created in response to an overwhelming need for support for young First Nations learners, and aims to complement existing services provided by the Government of Yukon. The development of the MTU is two-years in the making, born out of meetings with Yukon First Nations about what their children and youth need most – then developed from additional partnerships with the federal and territorial governments.

“YFNED believes First Nations families and communities are the true experts on the well-being of their children,” says Melanie Bennett, Executive Director of YFNED. “The Mobile Therapeutic Unit will work to ensure every child’s emotional, physical, spiritual and cultural needs are met.”

The launch is coinciding with YFNED’s major education conference, where a mix of over 275 virtual and in-person participants from across the territory – and Canada – are coming together to share ideas and inspiration around First Nations control of First Nations education.

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BACKGROUND:

- The MTU operates an open-referral policy to ensure all families and communities can access our services. Parents, teachers, caregivers or students themselves can call **1-833-YFN-KIDS** to speak with someone from our team or email MTU@yfned.ca
- The MTU operates under 5 guiding principles:
 - **To ensure cultural continuity for Indigenous children**
 - **To prevent the mislabeling of cultural difference as individual or group pathology**
 - **To promote collaborative approaches to professional practice in Indigenous communities**
 - **To strengthen family and community capacity for supporting Indigenous children**
 - **To be built on partnerships with First Nations**
- The MTU team will be working closely with each Yukon First Nation to ensure the services reflect the distinct culture of each Nation. They will be visiting each community and will work with YFN's staff, elders and families to understand children's needs.
- The MTU will be working in partnership with Dr. Katharine Smart and her social pediatric team and will mirror their travel schedule in the communities.
- YFNED promotes an Indigenous-based, family-led, and holistic model for education. We believe a wrap-around model of services is the best for our First Nation students. Along with the MTU, we currently have 12 First Nation Education Advocates working in schools and with families; as well as the Urban and Rural Jordan's Principle Nutrition Service.
- YFNED is a new organization created in 2020 with the aim to improve the outcomes of First Nation students in the territory. The 2009 and 2019 Auditor General's Report *Kindergarten through Grade 12 Education in Yukon – Department of Education* offered an alarming assessment of Yukon Government's inability to meet the needs of First Nation learners in the territory. Created by the Chief's Committee on Education (CCOE), YFNED provides multi-tiered solutions to these long-unaddressed gaps and failures.

Related Links:

- Yukon First Nation Education Directorate www.yfned.ca
- 2019 Auditor General's Report: https://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/yuk_201906_e_43400.html