



**Council of Yukon
First Nations**



FOR RELEASE

August 13, 2020

Yukon First Nations launch new, independent Education Directorate

Joint news release between the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations Education Directorate

The Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate (YFNED) jointly announced today the separation of Education as a department under the banner of CYFN as Yukon First Nations resolve to take more dramatic measures in order to gain control of the education of their children.

CYFN's Education department officially dissolved on March 31, 2020. CYFN's former Senior Policy Analyst for Education, Melanie Bennett, now heads the YFNED as Executive Director. The YFNED has physically moved into a new office space and has hired all new staff, including 12 Yukon First Nation Education Advocates, job titles that did not previously exist.

At the root of the change was the Chief's Committee on Education (CCOE), which was an advisor to CYFN and will continue to advise YFNED. Vuntut Gwitchin Chief Dana Tizya Tramm recently took the helm of the CCOE as Chair; Ta'an Kwach'an Chief Kristina Kane is Co-chair.

CYFN and the CCOE held 'visioning sessions' throughout the Yukon from 2016 to 2018. Yukon First Nations community members, Chiefs and Councils and Yukon First Nation Education Directors attending the sessions urged the CCOE to dramatically reform its approach in order to achieve substantial changes to Yukon's public-school system. The YFNED is mandated to advocate for more Yukon First Nations content and consideration of culture in the schools and to put pressure on the Government of Yukon to collaborate with Yukon First Nations governments on all education matters.

The YFNED will facilitate the creation of a Yukon First Nations School Board. Yukon has only one school board: la commission scolaire francophone du Yukon (CSFY), which represents Yukon's French first-language students. The Yukon First Nations School Board Agreement will provide Yukon First Nations with more authority and control of Yukon First Nations' education and will aid in the development of a Yukon First Nations school in Whitehorse.

Quotes

Generations of Yukon First Nations know from experience that if they do not feel accepted, involved, engaged, and happy to be at school, they will not thrive – they will not learn. CYFN

will work closely with the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate to build an education system deserving of our children.

– **Grand Chief Peter Johnston, Council of Yukon First Nations**

Today signals a break in the colonial cycles of education of Yukon First Nations, which has never honoured our people. Our youth are not failing the current education system, rather the system has failed our youth. It is only right that the education of Indigenous people be carried out by Indigenous peoples.

- **Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Chief Dana Tizya-Tramm, Chair of the Chiefs Committee on Education**

Every Yukon First Nation boy and girl deserves an education that reflects their cultural realities and respects the inherent wisdom of their ancestors' traditions, methods and ways. The YFNED was founded on the hopes and dreams of Yukon First Nations parents and grandparents, which is simply to regain some control over the education of their children. Our mission is to make those dreams a reality. YFNED's founders are optimistic that Yukon's education system can be fixed so that Yukon First Nations children feel like they belong.

– **Melanie Bennett, Executive Director, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate**

Additional information

- Yukon First Nation Education Directorate website is www.yfned.ca
- <https://cyfn.ca/yukon-first-nations-launch-nutritional-meals-program-in-rural-communities/>
- <https://cyfn.ca/education-departments-poor-performance-is-nothing-new-says-chiefs-committee/>

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