



HELPING STUDENTS SUCCEED

Vision, goals and
priorities for Yukon
First Nations
education

Yukon First Nation Education
Advisory Committee

2008

Thank you
Màh̄si' choo (GWICH'IN)
Màh̄si' cho (HĀN)
Sógá s̄enlá' (KASKA)
Shàw níth̄an (SOUTHERN TUTCHONE)
Máhsin cho (NORTHERN TUTCHONE)
Gùnè̀ch̄ish (TAGISH)
Gunałch̄ish (TLINGIT)
Tsin'jj choh (UPPER TANANA)

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for facilitating the YFNEAC vision, goal and priority development process and for writing the
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*Front cover: (top) Students from Takhini School with atlatsl at Kwaday Dan Kenji, 2007;
(bottom) Ken Baker, Carcross-Tagish First Nation, performing a dance*

YUKON FIRST NATION EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) includes members from all Yukon First Nations. The committee evolved in December, 2004 at the Yukon First Nation Curriculum Advisory Committee meeting. The creation of the committee was formally supported in March 2006 by resolution of CYFN leadership, the Yukon Chiefs' Committee on Education, and the Department of Education.

The committee has seats available to all Yukon First Nation governments. Seats are currently occupied by a cross-section of Yukon First Nations teachers, Elders, education and human resource directors, Chief and Council members, land claims experts and others directly involved in education in relation to First Nation people. Yukon First Nation governments appoint representatives to sit on YFNEAC.

YFNEAC reports to the Department of Education, the Yukon Chiefs' Committee on Education, and to the Yukon First Nation communities, through meetings and presentations at local and/or general assemblies as requested. The committee is coordinated by the Department of Education's First Nation Programs and Partnerships Unit.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Co-chairs | Peter Johnston, Yukon Chief's Committee on Education Christie Whitley, ADM, Yukon Department of Education |
| First Nation | Member |
| Selkirk First Nation | Elder Liz Hall |
| Carcross/Tagish First Nation | Norma Shorty |
| Champagne and Aishihik First Nations | Bill Bennett |
| First Nation of Na Cho N'yak Dun | Roberta Hager |
| Kluane First Nation | Shannon Walker |
| Liard First Nation | Sam Donnessey |
| Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation | Elizabeth Hawkins |
| Ross River Dena Council | May Bolton |
| Selkirk First Nation | Mary McGinty |
| Ta'an Kwäch'än Council | Nicole Smith |
| Teslin Tlingit Council | Marie Davies |
| Tr'ondek Hwech'in | Melanie Bennett |
| Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation | Tracy Rispin |
| White River First Nation | Sid C. VanderMeer Jr. |

YFNEAC: Mandate

1. The Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) will provide technical advice, guidance, support and recommendations to the Department of Education's Public Schools Branch and its programming staff in relation to Yukon First Nations education in the K–12 system.
2. The committee will aim to ensure that Yukon First Nations Elders' perspectives and knowledge are incorporated into the work of YFNEAC and the Department of Education Public Schools Branch programming in relation to First Nation education.
3. The committee will provide a non-partisan, unified and collective voice representative of Yukon First Nations perspectives and views in relation to education to the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education and the Department of Education Public Schools Branch.
4. The committee will provide a forum and establish, guide and oversee a process that will more effectively align and fuse Yukon First Nations needs and aspirations relating to K–12 education with the Department of Education Public Schools Branch's programs, projects and initiatives.
5. The committee will develop a strategic plan to guide its business over the long and short term. The strategic plan will be reviewed, and revised as necessary, on an annual basis.
6. On an annual basis the committee will recommend priorities for action for Yukon First Nations education within Public Schools Branch programming to the Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education.
7. The committee will advise on the development and implementation of an action plan in the interest of the Yukon First Nations education community.
8. The committee will provide guidance and oversee the implementation of the action plan and adjust priorities, as circumstances change.
9. The Department of Education is responsible to report progress on the implementation of the action plan to the committee on a regular basis.
10. The committee will work with the Department of Education to ensure that Yukon First Nations perspectives, contents and practices are appropriately and accurately reflected in Public Schools Branch programming, including any projects or initiatives in relation to Yukon First Nations education.

YFNEAC: Guiding principles

1. Education is life-long learning.
2. First Nation education values respect, love, sharing, caring and teaching.
3. The community at large is involved in education.
4. Education reflects traditional knowledge, cultural practices, histories and languages.
5. Elders and their knowledge are respected as being foremost and integral to the transmission of language and culture.
6. The business of the committee will not derogate or negatively affect other bilateral or trilateral processes being carried out by either Yukon First Nations or the Yukon Chiefs Committee on Education.
7. Change is achieved through developing mutual collective understandings of the issues and problems; through informed consensus decision-making; and using proven methods of program planning, delivery and evaluation.
8. The work of the committee shall enhance and complement the work of Yukon First Nations and the Department of Education in relation to Yukon First Nations education.
9. The committee will work alongside others involved towards an education system that builds thorough understandings of each other and strong relationships between all students, parents and education workers, both First Nations and non-First Nations.



Members of YFNEAC at a 2006 meeting.

INTRODUCTION

The project

In April 2007 the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) met to define its vision, goals and priorities for the education of Yukon First Nations students from kindergarten to Grade 12. The committee also proposed priorities for addressing challenges and opportunities in the education of First Nations students in the school system.

On November 1 and 2, 2007 the committee met to review the vision, goals and priorities set out in the draft version of this document. As a result of these discussions, changes were made to the draft. One of the changes was to include “preschool” in the vision and goals; consequently the phrase “preschool to Grade 12” appears throughout this document.

Context

There are 14 Yukon First Nations and eight Yukon First Nations languages. Of the 14 First Nations, 11 have negotiated final and self-government agreements and are implementing them.

In the 2006/2007 school year (as of May 31), 4,994 students were enrolled in Yukon schools. Of that number, 1,624 were First Nations students; this is approximately 32.5% of the total number of Yukon students.

In urban schools, First Nations students represent approximately 24% of students. In the rural communities, First Nations students make up an average of 64% of the enrolment, although depending on the community, the percentage of First Nations students can reach almost 85% of the total student enrolment.

YFNEAC and the First Nation Programs and Partnerships Unit (FNPP) in the Yukon Department of Education meet throughout the year. FNPP provides presentations on issues, programs and developments and provides YFNEAC with technical advice and information. YFNEAC provides FNPP with First Nations perspectives, concerns and information and provides advice on the education of Yukon First Nations students in the school system.

YFNEAC members bring a wide variety of experience, expertise and knowledge to the discussions. The committee’s vision and goals

David Dickson, Liard First Nation and Fran Etzel, Vice-principal, Ross River School, at a joint meeting of YFNEAC and AYSA, April 2007.



for Yukon First Nations students — and the priorities it has proposed — will be a critical source of direction and information as FNPP prepares the action plan that will focus its work.

FNPP, as a part of the Department of Education, receives direction from the department; unit staff also seek information and advice from a number of sources actively involved in education (e.g. Association of Yukon School Administrators and school councils).

Education evolves and so do visions, goals and priorities. The action plan will also adapt over time. It will be reviewed annually and revised as needed, so that it can respond to the challenges and opportunities that each new school year brings. The goal is to help students define and achieve their dreams.

Next steps

Unit staff will work with this document and other direction to prepare an action plan and develop measurable objectives. These will be brought back to YFNEAC for discussion.

One of the committee's tasks is the development of a short vision statement, based on the description of the vision which appears in this document.



Taneshia and Autum Jules at a fish camp near Johnsons Crossing.

BACKGROUND

The vision, goals and priorities described in this document were proposed by the Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee. The committee is co-chaired by Christie Whitley (Department of Education) and Peter Johnston (Yukon Chiefs' Committee on Education).

Committee members represent Yukon First Nations and provide technical advice, guidance, support and recommendations to the Yukon Department of Education, working through the department's First Nation Programs and Partnerships Unit.

This document reflects the committee's view of what is required to provide an effective education from pre-school to Grade 12 and to ensure strong support for students and parents.

Partners

The committee feels that a good education requires the contribution of many partners. In this document, the term "partners" includes many groups:

- YFNEAC
- students;
- parents, guardians and caregivers, and other family members;
- teachers, paraprofessionals and school administrators;
- school councils and the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees (AYSCBC);
- Association of Yukon School Administrators (AYSA);
- Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELC);
- Education Support Workers;
- Elders and First Nations;
- Department of Education;
- Council of Yukon First Nations;
- Yukon Native Language Centre;
- Yukon Teachers' Association;
- Yukon College (Early Childhood Development and the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program/YNTEP)
- Child Development Centre;
- Aboriginal Head Start Program;
- Preschool Language Program; and
- day-care centres.

The committee's vision for the education of First Nation students in the public school system is described in this document. Their vision is an education program and environment that supports First Nation student success in academics, culture, and language, so that they graduate from high school well prepared for participation in life and life-long learning, no matter where they live and work. The students in this vision are succeeding and accomplishing their dreams.

The committee has proposed six goals to support this vision (see page 14). It also recommends priorities for reaching these goals. These vision, goals and proposed priorities will be reviewed annually by YFNEAC and will be revised as required to reflect the changing education environment.

PROCESS

To help generate discussion, YFNEAC members were asked these questions:

- When you think of the current initiatives in the public school education of Yukon First Nations students in kindergarten through to Grade 12, what initiatives are working particularly well, and what initiatives should be improved?
- What is your vision for the education of Yukon First Nations students from kindergarten to Grade 12 in the future?
- What do we need to focus on to move towards that vision?

The ideas and information developed during the discussion of these questions led to the vision, goals and priorities proposed in this document. YFNEAC members believe that working on the goals and priorities identified here would help address current education concerns and move closer to the vision of an effective and supportive education system.

Participants

The participants in this process were YFNEAC members, who represent each of the Yukon First Nations. The staff of the FNPP unit in the Department of Education provided technical information and advice during discussions and in the preparation of this document.

YFNEAC was established from discussions during the December 15 and 16, 2004 meeting of the Yukon First Nation Curriculum Advisory Committee. Draft Terms of Reference were approved by the CYFN Leadership on March 16, 2006 by resolution and by the Department of Education Deputy Minister/Superintendent of Public Schools on March 16, 2006.

VISION

The development of this document started with a conversation about the present and a vision for the future. A vision is a view of the future that guides and inspires us to keep moving forward. It becomes clear over time. Some people think of a vision as an “informed dream” that speaks to both the mind and the heart. Such a vision can be both meaningful and useful.

The discussion of this vision began when the members of YFNEAC were asked to describe the education that Yukon First Nation students would be receiving in Yukon public schools in five years. These are just a few of their initial answers: “It’s great!”; “Kids are enjoying school”; “There are no dropouts because school is so fantastic!”; “They are succeeding and accomplishing their dreams”; and “School is so great that attendance is a non-issue.”

Many other answers were offered in the discussion that followed. When those answers were combined, they suggested a vision of an education system that is effective and supportive for Yukon First Nation students.

VISION: Student achievement and success

Yukon First Nations students participate in an education program that values achievement and success in academic, cultural and language knowledge and skills and encourages them to develop a strong sense of who they are.

In this vision, more Yukon First Nations students are entering college, university and training programs. They have completed high-school academic graduation requirements. They do not need to upgrade their Grade 12 education in order to get into post-secondary education or training. These students have the knowledge, skills and abilities to make the transition to post-secondary education and training. They are prepared. The gap between the prospects for Yukon First Nations and non-First Nations students is closing.

Yukon First Nation students have a strong knowledge of their culture, its perspectives and skills, and can speak their language. This does not mean that they live in the past; it means that they know who they are. This knowledge helps them to find the balance within themselves to live peacefully and respectfully with themselves, one another, and the land.



Students from Takhini School with atlatls at Kwaday Dan Kenji, 2007.

VISION: Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning takes place in schools where Yukon First Nations culture, history and language are an integral part of programs delivered at the school, in the community and on the land.

Culture and curriculum are woven together. The school calendar and cultural events work together. There is a process to accommodate the types of learning that occur when students are out working on the land with parents. There is a cultural protocol to clarify how this happens.

There is greater fluency in Yukon First Nations languages. Elders help teach, mentor and support those who have graduated from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program and are now teaching Yukon First Nations languages.

The many approaches to teaching and learning also include the opportunity to explore creative, imaginative learning.

Each child is seen as an individual with abilities, aspirations and potential. Differences and challenges are embraced, and each child is valued and respected. Different ways of learning are acknowledged and understood. The partners in education are focused on helping all children discover and develop their possibilities.

Experiential programs are provided in the communities as well as in Whitehorse. These programs support teaching and learning inside and outside of the classroom.

In this vision, rural students are academically, socially and emotionally prepared when they come to Whitehorse to attend school.

In this vision, rural and urban schools receive the same benefits. Funding and support for cultural inclusion resources is equitable.

The vision also includes a Yukon First Nations school with pre-school, elementary and secondary school programs.



Students participating in a winter camp, Old Crow.

VISION: Partnerships for education

The education partnership in this vision is focused on helping students succeed and achieve their dreams. Students are ready on many levels when they enter school. They are supported for life-long learning.

In this vision, the partners in education value the participation of parents and reach out to them. Parents are involved in developing the vision of education for their child's school. They can participate in learning opportunities at and through the school. There are opportunities for parents and children to learn together.

In this vision, parents are totally involved in classrooms, meetings, and other education activities and events. They feel a part of the education team. There is a support system in each community for the parents of school children.

The community of support for students and parents includes family, the Yukon First Nation, teachers, school, and community resources.

Elders are more involved in schools in cultural activities and language programs. These Elders work alongside teachers and are mentors and role models. There are two Elders (a man and a woman) in each school. There are Elders at the Gadzoosdaa Student Residence in Whitehorse.

In this vision, there is a strong community of support for and amongst rural students who move to Whitehorse to attend school. These students get to know each other through dinners, cultural activities and events and can provide each other with friendship, support and assistance in making the transition to living away from home and attending a new school. Elders and other adults help by facilitating some of the activities and events and providing advice and support as appropriate. Connections with the community are maintained through such things as visits from Chief and Council members and others when in Whitehorse.

Many partners help deliver this education. These are just a few of the ways that parents and community members are involved in education in this vision:

- First Nations parents are members of school councils;
- school committees/councils and teachers meet with the community to provide and exchange information and discuss issues; and
- each school council has an Elder representative and a youth representative.

The partners have good working relationships; this contributes to a strong, healthy, and meaningful education partnership.

In this vision, there is a mandatory progressive and evolving professional development program for teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators, designed to help them develop a comprehensive understanding of Yukon First Nations history, communities and issues. There is also a mandatory orientation program in each school for both new and experienced teachers. This program is intended to introduce or reintroduce teachers to the First Nation community. The orientation program is developed and delivered by the local Yukon First Nation.

In this vision, more Yukon First Nations people work throughout the education system. There are Yukon First Nation teachers, administrators, school secretaries, community education liaison coordinators, education support workers, paraprofessionals and superintendents.

This vision suggests what is possible. It also indicates where focused work is required to start to close the gap between where we are and where we would like to be. Closing that gap is the work of the vision.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles identified below reflect what is important in working towards the vision, goals and priorities:

- an education program and environment that values and develops all students' potential, supports their achievement and success, and prepares them for life and life-long learning.
- the incorporation of Yukon First Nations cultures, languages, history, perspectives, values and ways of knowing and doing in student and school programs and activities and in training and professional development by everyone who is a part of the teaching and learning environment.
- the involvement of Elders and resource people throughout the teaching and learning environment.
- a partnership for education that is based on the contributions of many partners actively working together so that students succeed and achieve their dreams.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Goal 1: Student achievement and success

The Yukon has an education program and environment in which Yukon First Nations students graduate from Grade 12 fully ready for post-secondary training, education and employment, with the Yukon First Nation perspectives, values, knowledge, skills and language to help find the balance to live peacefully and respectfully with themselves, one another and the land.

Goal 2: Culture and language programs

Yukon First Nations culture and language programs lead to competency in culture and fluency in language and provide students, school staff and community members with the opportunity to grow and learn together in understanding culture, language and history.

Goal 3: Curriculum and resources development, implementation and evaluation

Yukon First Nations cultures and languages are integrated in the public school system by being incorporated throughout the education program from pre-school to Grade 12.

Goal 4: Parent participation

Parents participate in education and receive encouragement and support from the education partners.

Goal 5: Partnership

A strong and healthy partnership for education is focused on student achievement, strengthened by the contributions of the partners, and supported by a network of good working relationships and communication rooted in mutual trust and respect.

Goal 6: Resources

Human, financial and infrastructure resources are available to support student achievement and success.



Students from Takhini Elementary School picking cranberries.

GOAL 1: Student achievement and success

Goal 1 is an education program and environment in which Yukon First Nations students graduate from Grade 12 fully ready for post-secondary training, education and employment and have the Yukon First Nation perspectives, values, knowledge, skills and language to help find the balance to live peacefully and respectfully with themselves, one another and the land.

This goal reflects the committee's belief that a public school education needs to focus more on preparing Yukon First Nation students to participate in all aspects of life and life-long learning.

The academic program provides the opportunity for the successful completion of a strong academic Grade 12 program, and readies students for education or training without having to upgrade courses just completed. This is one way to help close the gap between the prospects of Yukon First Nation students and non-First Nation students in all aspects of life.

The education program that results in this achievement begins in early childhood and leads to active and consistent student participation in elementary school, high school and throughout life. Student progress is tracked from entry to completion to monitor development and achievement and to help identify needs and the support required to meet them.

Meeting student needs and encouraging greater student interest, active involvement and successful completion of an academic education has several components:

- student readiness for school;
- student attendance and participation throughout the school year, with the support of parents, guardians or caregivers and the other partners in education;
- strong programs in reading, writing, math and science;
- assessment and assistance in the classroom and through tutoring programs;
- enhanced programs for students who have strong skills and abilities and are ready for more complex work;
- Yukon First Nations content, perspectives, and ways of teaching and learning woven into the curriculum, programs and resources;
- Yukon First Nations language programs and cultural programs;
- use of experiential programs as methods of encouraging and teaching students in math, science, and the arts; and
- preparation for the transition from elementary school to high school, the transition from rural to Whitehorse schools, and the transition from high school to post-secondary education or training.

Priorities, Goal 1

YFNEAC proposes the following priorities for supporting student success and achievement in academics, culture and language:

- Survey students to find out what they want in an education and what they need to help them achieve this.
- Provide youth with a voice on YFNEAC. This could include arranging for a youth representative from each Yukon First Nation to attend the next meeting of YFNEAC.
- Provide meaningful data in a useful format that will help the community in planning education initiatives and setting priorities.
- Provide transition support for students moving from a rural school to a Whitehorse school and for students preparing for university.
- Provide a full-time guidance counsellor at the school to assist students and staff.
- Provide experiential programs in rural schools, such as those provided at Wood Street Centre in Whitehorse.
- Provide a Reading Recovery™ program for Grade 1 and introduce structured reading programs for kindergarten and for Grades 2 to 6.
- Provide oral language programs for English as a Second Dialect (ESD) students.
- Increase the number of students completing high-school math, science and technology programs.



Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Elder Irene Smith in a storytelling session at Hidden Valley School.

GOAL 2: Culture and language programs

Yukon First Nations culture and language programs lead to competency in culture and fluency in language. They provide students, school staff and community members with the opportunity to grow and learn together in understanding culture, language and history.

This goal reflects the committee's belief that language is a fundamentally important part of culture and that it needs to be spoken, heard and understood in the classrooms, school and the community. In order to achieve this goal there needs to be a focus on recruiting, training and support of teachers of Yukon First Nations languages. Recruitment of new language teachers is essential, since many of the current teachers will retire in the next few years. Recruitment could be supported by continuing the First Nation Language Trainee program and by working in collaboration with others to plan and develop a Yukon Bachelor of Education program. The program would graduate teachers who have specialization in language teaching, fluency in a First Nation language, and competency in experiential methods of teaching.

Current aboriginal language teachers need to be supported through training and professional development in order to further develop their fluency and skills in methods for teaching second languages. A better orientation to the schools and opportunities for mentoring with other second-language teachers and Elders would also assist these teachers.

One way of introducing and reintroducing teachers to Yukon First Nation cultures is to hold a "Gathering of Nations" event as part of the annual orientation for teachers that is held prior to each school year. This event should be open to returning teachers and could introduce all teachers to Yukon First Nations cultures. An inventory of locally available Yukon First Nations resource people would help teachers and administrators develop programs that support collaborative cultural inclusion.

There are many other ways to encourage and support Yukon First Nations culture and language through the education system:

- inclusion of a "culture" goal in the development of the school plan;
- development of a strategy for involving parents and Elders in school activities to promote community awareness and support and to bring authentic cultural content to programs;
- creation of a territory-wide Yukon First Nations language stakeholder committee to develop a strategic plan for providing effective language programs;
- review of current language and cultural inclusion programming to determine its effectiveness and make recommendations for improving it. For example, experiential programs in storytelling and arts and drama with a Yukon First Nations perspective could be developed; and
- collaboration with others to develop Yukon-specific certification courses for teachers that focus on Yukon First Nations culture, language, history and ways of teaching and learning and have a local community component.

Training and professional development opportunities in Yukon First Nations cultures should also be available for mainstream teachers and administrators. Workshops and programs should be designed and delivered by the local First Nation. This could help teachers develop a comprehensive understanding of the local First Nation and the community in which they are teaching and living. Issues that might be addressed include traditional parenting; the realities and challenges facing Yukon First Nations families; and the sharing of local language, culture, and heritage resources.

Priorities, Goal 2

The committee has several priorities in the area of culture and language:

- Help teachers and administrators develop a comprehensive understanding of the realities facing students and parents and why a student may not be fulfilling expectations. One way of doing this is to include “student and parent” diagrams in the orientation.
- Expand the First Nation Administration Training Program.
- Encourage Yukon First Nations students to be involved in the arts.
- Support more fluency in those teaching the Yukon First Nation languages.
- Incorporate Elders working alongside YNTEP teachers and providing help to Yukon First Nations language teachers to ensure accurate pronunciation of words, and include Elders in the training developed for Yukon First Nation language teachers (in a manner determined by First Nations communities).
- The Department of Education, the First Nation, school council, and school staff should work together to plan ongoing professional development for school staff, including the development of a First Nations Professional Development Program, which would be designed and delivered by the local First Nation for school staff and Community Education Liaison Coordinators (CELCs).



Carcross/Tagish First Nation Elder Winnie Atlin at Ghùch Tlâ Community School, Carcross.

GOAL 3: Curriculum development, implementation and evaluation

Yukon First Nations culture and language are incorporated in the public school system, by being integrated throughout the education program from pre-school to Grade 12.

This goal reflects the committee's belief that it is critical to incorporate First Nations content, perspectives, values, knowledge and ways of teaching and learning into a public school education. This education must also recognize and include the many contributors to a Yukon First Nation child's education, such as family, community, teachers, administrators, First Nation government and culture. They all contribute to the child's intellectual, physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual development.

One way of supporting this goal is by including local resources to help develop and deliver the curriculum and integrating that curriculum into core programs and experiential and alternative programs.

Any new curriculum that is developed will need to be able to be implemented in ways that meet the learning objectives of the Department of Education and respect community and cultural requirements. The committee believes that there should be male and female Elders in the schools to work with students, teachers and others in meaningful ways to deliver this curriculum.

Priorities, Goal 3

YFNEAC proposes the following priorities for curriculum and resource development, implementation and evaluation:

- Work with the First Nation to develop resources and a support system for telling students about the residential school experience, so that students develop an understanding of what happened and the effect that it has had on several generations.
- Develop curriculum and resources for culture and language at the local level from pre-school to Grade 12. The curriculum needs to be designed so that a student who does not speak the language can progress to become a speaker.
- Work with school councils in areas where they are involved in matters that relate to Yukon First Nations education and Yukon First Nations students.



*Hazel Bunbury, Elder from the Lake Laberge area,
with students at Hidden Valley School.*

GOAL 4: Parent participation

In Goal 4 parents participate in education and receive encouragement and support for their involvement from education partners. This goal is based on the committee's belief that parent involvement is critical and central to a child's education wherever education occurs: at home, in the school, in the community, and on the land.

A child's parent, guardian or caregiver has major roles and responsibilities in his or her life; for example, getting the child ready for school and supporting him or her in attending and participating in school. These are just some of the many ways that parents, guardians or caregivers can participate in a child's education.

The strengths and ability of a parent or guardian or caregiver to positively influence a child needs to be a part of the school system.

A parent, guardian or caregiver who has not had a good education experience may find it very difficult to become involved in education. They may not know how to support the child through school. They may find it very difficult to go into the school building, to talk to a teacher or to walk into a classroom.

The other partners in education have a responsibility to reach out to parents, guardians or caregivers in a non-judgmental way. They can do this by inviting parents into the school, creating a welcoming environment, providing information in a way that is useful, and showing that their views and involvement are valued.

Priorities, Goal 4

The committee proposes the following priorities for encouraging and supporting parent participation:

- Develop support systems for parents, caregivers, or guardians with children in school. They need to know who they can go to in the community for information, assistance and support. The support system should include indigenous ways of knowing and doing things.
- Provide opportunities for information-sharing, networking and communication for parents, teachers, principals and the community. These would help provide information on issues, share ideas, offer support, and find ways to prevent or respond to problems. Workshops could focus on such things as child development, behaviour, emotions, ways of dealing with problems, ways of teaching and learning and cultural issues.
- Hold activities and events inside and outside of the school that include students, parents/guardians/caregivers, teachers and community members. These events and activities could include such things as parent/teacher meetings; school council meetings; information sessions or discussions on specific issues, school activities, the school plan or school/community social events.
- Provide parenting programs through the school that include traditional parenting and that address a range of issues.



Graduating class of 2006, Whitehorse.

GOAL 5: Partnership

A strong and healthy partnership for education is needed that is focused on student achievement and strengthened by the partners' contributions. It must be supported by a network of good working relationships and communication that is rooted in mutual trust and respect, and by meaningful participation in decision-making at the community level.

This goal reflects the committee's belief that the kind of education that is described in this plan will not happen without the active involvement, support and contributions of parents/guardians/caregivers, schools, communities and governments. Together they form the basis of the partnership for the education of Yukon First Nations students. The partners must be focused on the students and their achievement and success. This involves ensuring that schools are safe environments where students are respected and differences and differing abilities are understood and embraced.

The partnership requires good will and good working relationships among its members. The quality of the partners' relationships contributes to the quality of the education partnership. Relationships are grown and strengthened over time through commitment, practice and good communication.

The quality of the school/teacher-community relationship is critical in educating children and supporting parents. A comprehensive orientation to the community and the school is important in establishing this relationship. The orientation should include cultural protocols. Although this orientation should occur in the community as part of a teacher's introduction and welcome, the committee believes that orientations should also take place in Whitehorse, with the involvement of all Yukon First Nations. For example, there could be a "Gathering of the Nations" with activities, events, displays and a focus on culture as well as education. School and teacher involvement in the community is also helpful in building good relationships with the community.

There are other opportunities for building and reinforcing this relationship:

- bringing community people and teachers together for professional development;
- holding more school/community meetings to plan and report on activities;
- regular reporting to the First Nation throughout the school year in accordance with its process to discuss school plans and progress; and
- community hosting of school meetings and activities.

These initiatives could encourage openness and accountability and build them into school and community plans. YFNEAC, as one of the partners in the education partnership, could hold some of their meetings in the communities. This would provide an economic benefit to the community in which the meeting was held and would provide committee members with an opportunity to visit community schools and meet with local Community Education Liaison Coordinators, teachers and administrators.

Priorities, Goal 5

The committee proposed the following priorities for strengthening partnerships:

- Hold community meetings at every school before the school year begins to discuss the vision of the school.
- Work towards building relationships and partnerships that include the involvement of the local First Nation in hiring and evaluating teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals.
- Develop a process for the school principal to report to the local First Nation on education matters throughout the year.
- Include full-time positions for two Elders in each school, with the positions automatically built into school funding and not proposal-driven.
- Develop opportunities for schools and communities to share information on best practices, innovative ideas, new projects, funding sources, etc.



*Charlene Baker, Carman Baker and
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GOAL 6: Resources

In this goal, human, financial and infrastructure resources are in place to support student achievement and success. This goal reflects the committee's belief that good planning — based on best practices and protocols — is critical to successful program development and delivery.

This goal also reflects the committee's belief that rural students should receive the same quality of education as Whitehorse students; and that rural schools should receive the same benefits as Whitehorse schools.

Committee members feel that several issues need to be addressed:

- the amount of the funding allocated for a program should be determined by what is needed to adequately deliver that program;
- more opportunities are needed for high school education to be delivered in communities to support students who want to be educated in their own community;
- the need to develop a document for use by schools, First Nations and communities that provides information on programs and services, how to access funding, who to contact, etc.; and
- the need to develop a streamlined and effective process for access to cultural inclusion resources, providing financial and activity reports, and sharing best practices on all aspects of cultural inclusion in the schools.

The expertise required for the education described in this plan may come from the various partners in education. One way of bringing local expertise into the school is to work with the First Nation and other community resources to plan for their involvement in the school.

One of the sources of expertise is the current group of Yukon First Nations teachers, as well as students in the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program. Professional development and training opportunities for Yukon First Nations teachers and Community Education Liaison Coordinators are also important to encourage their development as school administrators and at senior levels within the Department of Education.

Emphasis also needs to be placed on preparing new teachers for teaching and living in rural communities. The First Nation, Department of Education, the school and other community resources can all help to comprehensively orient and involve new teachers in the community (see also Goal 2 and 5).

Priorities, Goal 6

No priorities have been specifically proposed for this goal.

The Yukon First Nation Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) has seats available to all Yukon First Nations. The committee provides technical advice, guidance, support and recommendations to the Department of Education's Public Schools Branch and its programming staff in relation to Yukon First Nations education in the K-12 system.