

# visions north

TALKING ABOUT YUKON LAND CLAIMS

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Dan Ford, shown here at Mobile Maintenance, benefited from training with Skills Canada Yukon's Skills Centre in Whitehorse. The Centre builds partnerships with industry employers, educators, First Nations and other organizations that serve youth. For more information about how you can benefit from their programs, visit their website at [www.skillsyukon.com](http://www.skillsyukon.com) or call 867-668-2736.

## Southern Tutchone Language Lessons

Kindergarten students at St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction are now enjoying a curriculum enhanced with lessons in the Southern Tutchone language and culture.

The community recently celebrated the launch of the pilot program at the school gymnasium. The event was led by Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief, Diane Strand, Education Minister, Patrick Rouble, the school council, and the many people who worked on the program's development.

"The launch of the bi-cultural program is an important milestone for the Department of Education, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the St. Elias School Council," Minister Rouble said. "I commend the contributors for their innovation and creativity to bring local wisdom and culture to the curriculum."

"This project is the result of a collective dream and desire to revitalize our language and our culture, and it is good to see those dreams finally being brought to fruition," Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief Diane Strand said. "Much hard work has taken place to get this project ready to be delivered, and I greatly appreciate the efforts of the many people who played an integral role in getting this project off the ground but also acknowledge that there is still a lot of work left to be done."

Language lessons began on September 21, 2009, for kindergarten students and will continue through Grade 2. The pilot will run for three years and then be evaluated. The vision is to promote awareness and sensitivity of Yukon First Nations culture while promoting pride and belonging amongst First Nation students. A long-term hope is for greater fluency in the Southern Tutchone language in the community.



Students talk about the Gopher Story and examine a gopher skin blanket and other artifacts with Richard Smith of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation Heritage Department.

Students have already begun to talk in sentences about the weather, various things in the environment and themselves.

The program aims to enhance the academic performance and parental satisfaction for the participating students. Plus, the framework for the program can be adapted to suit other First Nations and other schools.

"I am optimistic that this program will be a success, for it is through the vision of our people, the wisdom of our Elders and the promise of our youth that our culture, language, and values will thrive," Chief Strand added.

Integrating Southern Tutchone language and culture into the classroom supports preservation of the language and culture by promoting students' intellectual development and improving their motivation. In this way, it will improve achievement for all students, and help to eliminate the achievement gap between First Nation and non-First Nation students.

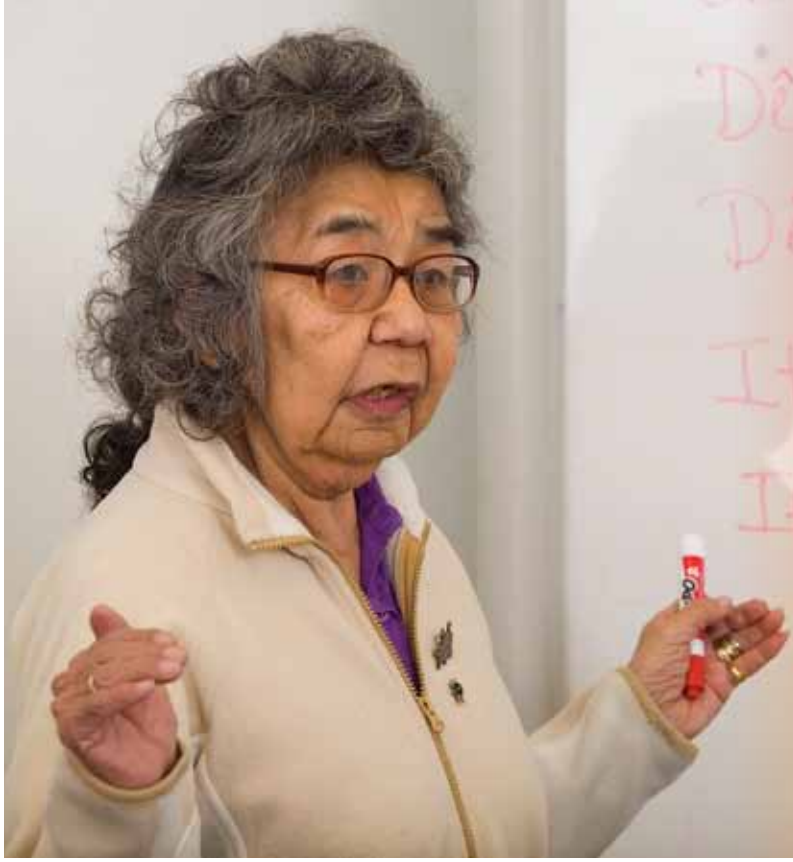
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WHAT IS VISIONS NORTH?

*Visions North: talking about Yukon land claims* is a bi-annual newsletter that raises awareness about land claims and self-government and related issues in Yukon communities.

*Visions North* is produced and distributed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) with the participation of the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN).



# Keeping Language Alive: Emma Sam

*...in the Teslin dialect of Tlingit you wouldn't say hello or goodbye, just "How are you? Mâ sá iyatì" or "I'll see you again, Tsu yé ikhwasatìn."*

Tlingit Elder, Emma Sam grew up speaking the Tlingit language, "I always feel like I've had my language all my life, I didn't have to learn my language. I was born with it." For many First Nations people today that is not the case, but there is a strong movement for people of all ages to learn now. Emma Sam made a conscious decision not to forget her language and she's been helping others to learn it since the early 1970s. "People are aware that they have to be proud of who they are and where they come from."

When Emma realised that her language was beginning to die out with the Elders, she decided that as a fluent speaker she could help to keep it alive. She has taught in Whitehorse schools, during women's sewing classes and as a translator and interpreter for 13 years with the territorial Aboriginal Language Services Branch.

This work, and her contribution to three books about learning and translating Tlingit, helped her win this year's Council of the Federation Literacy Award. When Yukon Minister of Education, Patrick Rouble, asked her how he should say congratulations in Tlingit, she told him, "in Tlingit you don't say congratulations, you just say I'm happy for you."

There are many differences between English and Tlingit. For example in the Teslin dialect of Tlingit you wouldn't say hello or goodbye, just "How are you? Mâ sá iyatì" or "I'll see you again, Tsu yé ikhwasatìn."

Emma doesn't think of herself as a role model but her students disagree, saying that all Elders

are role models in some way. Every Tuesday and Thursday from 1-2pm Emma teaches Tlingit at the Council of Yukon First Nations. The class is open to anyone who is interested in learning Tlingit and challenging themselves to learn what is thought to be the second hardest language in the world. Emma jokingly says since she can already speak Tlingit her next goal is to learn the hardest language, Xhosa, the South African language known for its clicking sounds.

Members of Emma's class are learning that introducing yourself is one of the most important things in Tlingit. Your introduction tells much more than your name, it tells your

history, whether you are wolf or crow clan, who your parents are and where you come from. "Language is who we are. Within language, we learn all our sacred Tlingit values and teachings, we learn our Tlingit laws we learn everything about being a Tlingit people."

The Council of Yukon First Nations offers free lessons in Tlingit, Gwitchin, Southern Tutchone and Northern Tutchone as a part of its overall language programming.

For more information contact: **Gayle Corry** at 867-393-9201 or [gayle.corry@cyfn.net](mailto:gayle.corry@cyfn.net)



Emma Sam (centre) with two of her students.

## More Yukon First Nations Books Released!

Two new books featuring Yukon First Nations' culture were introduced to elementary schools throughout the territory in the spring of 2009.

"The release of these books is one example of Yukon's ongoing work with First Nations to improve academic achievements for First Nation students," said Education Minister Patrick Rouble. "However, all Yukon students will appreciate the Yukon themes and benefit from the local First Nation cultural content."

The authors of the books *A Time for Bear Roots*, written by Rosemary Popadyne and *Rabbit Stew for Grandma*, written by Maggie Leary, are teachers at J.V. Clark School in Mayo. The two books feature the school's staff, students and First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Elders.

The two books were developed collaboratively by the NorthWind Books working group, a sub-committee of the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. This group consists of classroom teachers and an Elder. Department of Education staff, from the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit and the Curriculum Unit, supported the project.

"It is very exciting to see more local books being developed. It is important for students to experience the traditional knowledge and skills of their Elders firsthand," said Fran Etzel, a member of NorthWind Books working group. "Students now have an opportunity to learn, appreciate, respect and experience First Nation culture from their own classroom. This is a great start! I look forward to assisting with the development of more books for our schools."

The first set of books featuring Yukon First Nations content was published in 2003, when seven books were produced by the publisher Eaglecrest Books. Since then, nine books have been published by the Department of Education under the NorthWind Books label. Currently, the First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit is working on adapting the books for use in Yukon First Nation language programs. Adaptations will also include lesson plans for the language teachers to use in their classrooms.

The Department of Education now has a total of 16 books under the NorthWind Books and Eaglecrest Books labels.



Rabbit Stew for Grandma



A Time for Bear Roots

A teacher's guide for the books is currently in development. The guide will include cultural information and classroom activities for teachers to use before, during and after the stories are read. PDF files of the two new books are available at:

[www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/index.html](http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/index.html)

# Mayo Residents Celebrate Culture Through Yukon College Program

A Heritage and Culture Essential Skills program that was delivered at the Mayo campus of Yukon College earlier this year has given residents a new appreciation of their culture, taught them new skills and created employment opportunities.

The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and Yukon College collaborated on the six-month program for heritage work that included a variety of topics such as filmmaking, genealogy and interviewing.

Irene Johnny, one of a dozen participants, is a mature student who has since been hired as the Acting Heritage Officer with the First Nation. "I'm glad I took the program and I think it brought the Heritage Department together and made us stronger," Johnny said.

Since taking the program, Johnny has coordinated Aboriginal Day celebrations in Mayo and has had the opportunity to search for artifacts in the remote Bonnet Plume River area of northern Yukon.

Joella Hogan, the Heritage Manager with the First Nation, helped develop the course outline. As a result of the program the First Nation is better equipped to implement Chapter 13 on

heritage as defined in their Final Agreement. "We now have a better team that is able to work with our partners in terms of heritage planning," Hogan said.

"Before the program there was a lot of turnover in the department, but now if we are going to work on a genealogy project, we can pull in Irene and someone else who took the course with her, to work on it."

As a result of the program, the First Nation was also able to hire Nicole Hutton, a young Na-Cho Nyäk Dun citizen, for a two year Heritage Technician position.

"We're so much better now at promoting our culture and I think people feel more proud when they know how to display it properly," said Hogan.

John Reid, Coordinator of the Mayo Community Campus says courses such as filmmaking opened people's eyes to modern story telling and showed the limitless possibilities of recording Elders' stories and collecting traditional knowledge.

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Irene Johnny from Mayo took the Heritage and Culture Essential Skills Program earlier this year and has since been hired by Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's Heritage Department.



Irene designed and crafted a set of miniature wall tents that were used in the cultural exhibit at the end of the program.

## Learning Southern Tutchone:

Dänji	Groundhog
Tsäl	Gopher
Kwänzhia	Chipmunk
Shär	Bear

Chìch'a Dàkwach'e?	How is it outside?
Chìch'a - K'uk K'ij	Cloudy
Chìch'a - Shä Njshä	Raining
Chìch'a - Kwä K'ü	Cold
Chìch'a - Yäw' nìKhyäw	Snowing

Dännch'e	How are you?
äghajänä ich'e	I am a girl
Däk'an ich'e	I am a boy
nädhat	Stand up
ndá	Sit down

Counting how many years old you are	
läch'i	1
täki	2
tayke	3
dük'wän	4
Këjan	5



## Partnership Will Improve Workforce Engagement

A new education initiative called the Education and Employment Training (EET) program, delivered in partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) and Yukon College, is geared toward improving workforce engagement.

"This is a meaningful initiative that will have long-term impacts for the citizens of Kwanlin Dün First Nation," said KDFN Education and Social Assistance Director Art Stephenson. The program will help address the academic, employment and life skill needs of adult learners.

"The EET program supports Yukon's commitment to work with partners to enhance transitions between different levels of education, training and the world of work," Education Minister Patrick Rouble said.

The program also provides Kwanlin Dün citizens with access to supportive expertise in the development of a comprehensive, long-term, community-based education plan. "We are very excited to be a part of the program and we look forward to engaging in this work with our partners," Yukon College's Dean of Applied Science and Management Shelagh Rowles said.

The EET program is the first project to be funded under Yukon's new Labour Market Agreement (LMA) with the Government of Canada.

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The Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee helps ensure Yukon First Nations' goals and priorities are represented in Yukon schools. For more information about the Committee and its work, please visit: [www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/advisorycouncil](http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/advisorycouncil)



"It was the best week I ever had."

## Experiencing Science in Action

Brittney learns how to put out a fire as part of the annual First Nations and Inuit National Science Camp in Yellowknife.

Natane Primozic, Anthony Primozic, and Brittney Brown from Champagne & Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) were chosen to participate in this year's First Nations and Inuit National Science Camp in Yellowknife from July 12-19, 2009. Students gained hands-on experience with science and science-related careers and the education needed to pursue these careers. Monica Primozic, one of the camp chaperones, asked the students to describe their experiences.

**Q Monica:** What did you learn at the camp?

**A Natane:** I learned about northern plants, permafrost, composting chemical wastes, ATV mechanics, airport technology and also about different cultures from across Canada.

**A Anthony:** I learned that getting up early is a real pain! I learned that there are many science careers out there, like being on the radio, working in the bush with permafrost, or being a renewable resource officer.

**Q Monica:** What was your favourite presentation?

**A Brittney:** I liked the fire safety where we were taught how to put out fires using the equipment like fire extinguishers and hoses.

**A Natane:** I really liked the traditional medicines presentation because I am very interested in different cultures.

**Q Monica:** Are you planning to further your education and in what area?

**A Anthony:** I am interested in renewable resources because it's a fun job being in the bush and looking after wildlife.

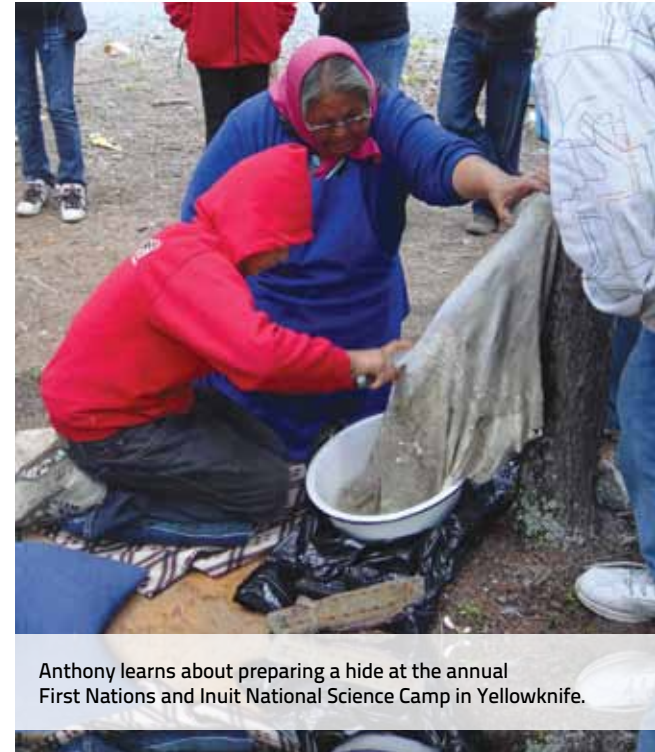
**A Brittney:** I want to learn more about health and maybe be a nurse.

**Q Monica:** What else can you tell us about your science camp experience?

**A Natane:** It was fun and knowledgeable. I enjoyed meeting new people and learning new things.

**A Anthony:** I got to meet new friends and also go on the radio on CKLB. It was the best week I ever had.

**A Brittney:** It was very fun meeting new people and learning other First Nation cultures. I liked learning about another area, and things that it can offer, and how that is different from where I live.



Anthony learns about preparing a hide at the annual First Nations and Inuit National Science Camp in Yellowknife.

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 even better!**

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[ytinfo@inac-ainc.gc.ca](mailto:ytinfo@inac-ainc.gc.ca)  
 or call 1-800-661-0451  
 and ask for Communications.



Scribing is the process of marking a log to fit the log below it. Students shown here are learning the skill as part of the 2008-2009 Log Building Training Program hosted by the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. For more information contact the Training Policy Committee at 867-668-7812.

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