

Vuntut Gwitchin Climate Change and Health Research in Northern Yukon:
What do our Changing Homelands Mean for our Health?
PHASE 3: Community Action on Climate Change & Food Security Adaptation in Old
Crow
Results & Recommendations

Background:

“**Community Action on Climate Change & Food Security Adaptation in Old Crow**” is the third phase of a food security and climate change initiative that began in Old Crow, Yukon in 2008. In 2010/2011, three focus groups were held in the community to discuss the key recommendations that developed from the *Phase 2: Knowledge in Action* project, “**Vuntut Gwitchin Climate Change and Health Research in Northern Yukon**” (see *Community Report* for more details). Four main issues were discussed in detail: ***Long-term Storage Facility; Animal Farming; Land-based Skills Training***; and ***Fish and Wildlife Surveying***. The following is a brief summary of the key recommendations.

Long-Term Storage Facility

Recommendation for Vuntut Gwitchin Government to develop a long-term storage facility for dry goods and emergency supplies and tools.

There was detailed discussion in the three focus groups related to the building and structure of the storage facility. Safety (personal and food safety), ensuring it is animal and pest proof, and ensuring it is weather proof were key factors to consider when planning the facility.

Key Recommendations:

- A committee be formed to develop and be responsible for the storage facility.
- Start small and initially run the facility as a short-term pilot project (e.g. two years) to work out the most sustainable approach.
- Do more research and look to other examples in the circumpolar North (including within the Yukon) for ideas.
- Encourage families to have personal caches and emergency stashes in addition to a community storage facility.
- Consider the location of the facility very carefully, looking at factors such as security, accessibility, safety, and reliability, particularly in relation to changes on the land from global warming.

Animal Farming

Recommendation to look into more animal farming possibilities.

It was noted that animal farming could be a tough solution for a sustainable food security option and traditional food species should remain as a primary food source. For example, the high costs of transportation and shipping were considered major barriers to raising animals. For any of the options, it was stressed that research and training would be needed in order to ensure that the farming practices were successful and sustainable.

Key Recommendations:

- Look into educational opportunities in order to learn from others who have experience in the animal farming field-consider doing an exchange with another community in the North.
- Consider reintroducing/relocating new species into areas where they were once found as an alternative food source (e.g. ground squirrels, reindeer farming, local fish species).
- Start small and pilot farming projects, focusing on local sustainability and the use of local resources to raise the animals.

Land-Based Skills Training & Other Education

Recommendation for a greater effort in training on land-based skills.

With the potential for hard times and risk of natural disasters, more people will be relying on the land for hunting, trapping, and survival. Education and land-based skills training was considered especially important for youth and the younger generations. Participants emphasized that training be experiential-based and that it take place in the school setting, but also include efforts from families and the community as a whole.

Key Recommendations:

- Form policies to ensure land-based skills training is a substantial part of the youth's education and that there are ample opportunities for the community/individuals to gain experience on the land.
- Consider implementing "flex-time" for employees in order for them to participate in traditional pursuits.
- Encourage community and family excursions on the land and hold community events where traditional land-based skills can be practiced.

Fish and Wildlife Surveys

Recommendation to identify where the small animals and fish are living around the community so they can be hunted/trapped and fished during hard times.

Focus group participants were in favour of documenting which lakes have fish. Elders and people who spend a lot of time out on the land will have good knowledge as to where to find fish and wildlife in the area.

Key Recommendations:

- A collaborative approach between VG Natural Resources, VG Heritage, Renewable Resource Council, Vuntut Hunters & Trappers, and the community as a whole will help to ensure that surveying is done thoroughly and accurately.
- Steps are taken to encourage community members to volunteer, report and share their knowledge for this initiative.
- Research is done to determine what knowledge and historical data already exists at the VG Heritage office.
- The use of multiple approaches to determine fish and small animal populations and locations, including interviews, historical research, and physical sampling will help to create a more complete picture for the community of its resources.

Acknowledgements

AHRN-YT would like to give a warm and sincere thank you to the community of Old Crow for inviting us to work together on this project. Thank you to Glenna Tetlich and David Frost, our local coordinators. The youth who have been involved need special recognition for their enthusiasm and dedication to learning more about climate change and health issues that they are facing in the community and for taking an active role. They will be among the future leaders of Old Crow.

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If you would like a more detailed report please contact Megan Williams VGG-Heritage Department (966-3800 x270) or AHRN-YT (katelyn@arctichealth yukon.ca; (867) 668 3393).



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