

# Educational Change in Canada's Yukon: Self-Governance or Neo-colonialism?



CASE Seminar Series  
May 4, 2016

# Focus of the Presentation

- ◆ Provide the historical context leading to the development of Self-Government Agreements (SGAs) for Yukon First Nations
- ◆ Describe the educational developments that have occurred within one First Nation: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in
- ◆ Provide account of the research process associated with monitoring the changes – in Education – and factors influencing the process
- ◆ From this account, critically consider the SGA accord and its implications for the future.



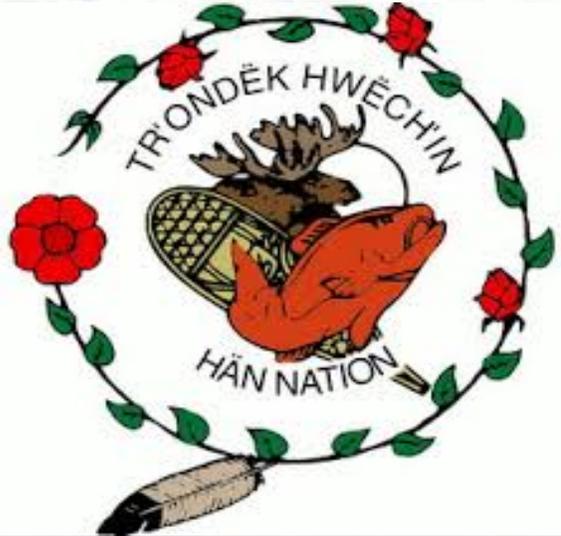




Twelve First Nations in the Yukon.

All different language base

Most have moved to Self-Governing Agreements within the last two decades





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# Significant Events in Canada's History

- ◆ Similar to many other British colonies, treaties were established both before and after Confederation (1867).
- ◆ Focus of all treaties and confusion was about the term 'sovereignty' and 'governance'.
- ◆ Aboriginal peoples did not believe they were surrendering their right for self-determination.
- ◆ In 1867, the BNA Act (Constitution Act) assigned the federal government responsibility for "Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians"
- ◆ From an early stage, treated as wards of the state and put into a legal category different from all other Canadians.
- ◆ A policy division that strengthened the power of the colonizers and disenfranchised Aboriginal peoples – power differential - hegemony.
- ◆ Later, Inuit were also considered to fall under direct government legislation.
- ◆ Metis and "non-status Indians held no formal recognition, until 1982 when Metis gained official recognition as one of the three official Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Treaties between the Crown and  
 aboriginal peoples establish a  
 constitutional and moral basis of  
 alliance between First Nations people  
 and the sovereign institutions of the  
 Canadian state.



# Indian Act of 1867

- ◇ The goal of the Act was to 'protect' Indians while at the same time 'civilize' them and prepare for them for mainstream society.
- ◇ Health and education responsibility of the federal government.
- ◇ Policy encouraged a minority group to be forced to adopt the customs and prevailing attitudes of the dominant culture
- ◇ Essentially an 'assimilation' policy rather than providing any evidence of encouraged sovereignty.
- ◇ Placed Indians, including their lands under the influence of Indian Agents (Gov officials)
- ◇ Indians were inferior by virtue of race and incapable of determining their own destiny, especially in reference to the state
- ◇ Education was seen to be a major means by which assimilation could be fostered and be fashioned to the norms of society
- ◇ Education responsibility devolved to religious orders soon after confederation.

# Residential Schools of Canada



# Residential Schools

- ◆ Aboriginal school attendance initially in public schools
- ◆ Action because of disgruntlement at the local and provincial level moved the federal government to take over responsibility
- ◆ Most activity in development in early 1900s
- ◆ Strong emphasis on assimilation into Canadian society and the knowledge, beliefs and behaviors consistent with the dominant society
- ◆ Government sought to further its own objective to assimilate Aboriginal people peoples and to eliminate what it perceived as an obstacle to building the Canadian nations
- ◆ Noteworthy that there was considerable variance in location, expectation, and influence, both short-term and long-term.
- ◆ Understanding the consequence of such policy actions is imperative to current educational and social development in Canada as a whole, and, especially, the Yukon.



Portage Indian School, Portage la Prairie, MB - 1940's.  
© Indian Residential School Museum of Canada



THOMAS MOORE, AS HE APPEARED WHEN ADMITTED TO THE  
REGINA INDIAN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.



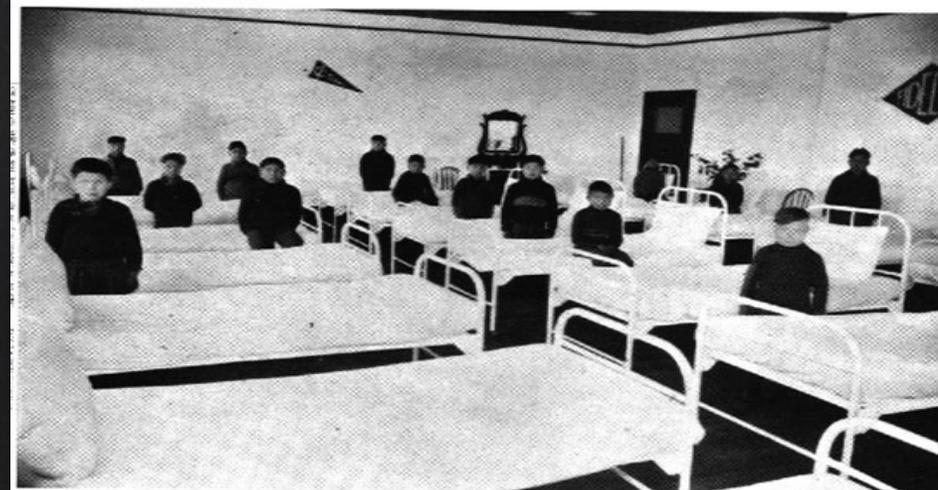
THOMAS MOORE, AFTER TUITION AT THE REGINA INDIAN  
INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.



Photo: The Shingwauk Project - The Kirkpatrick "Snap Shot Album"



Photo: The Shingwauk Project - Ruth A. (Cox) Ingle's Photo Albums

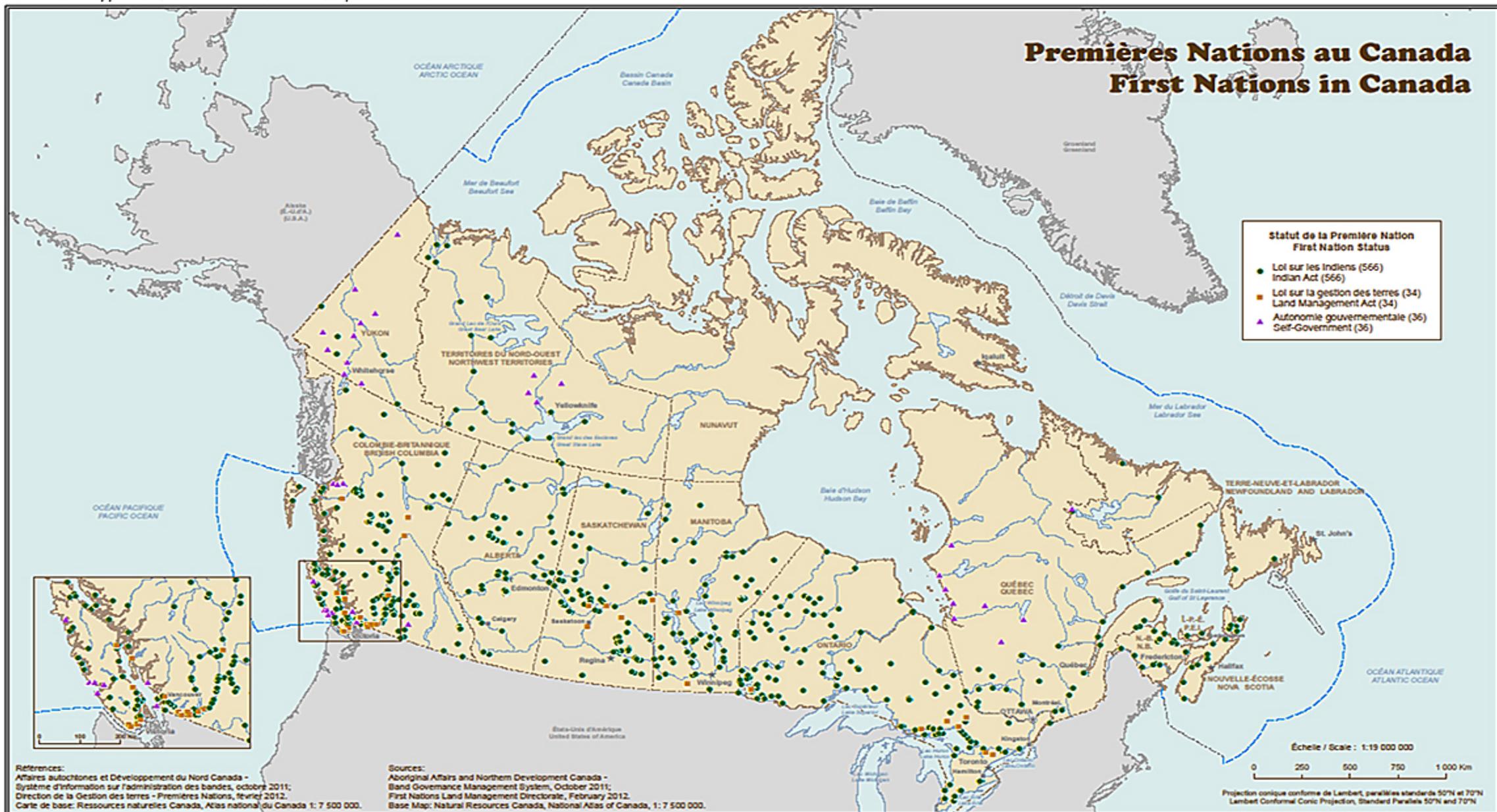


# Recent Developments

- ◆ Over the past three decades the Governments of both Canada and the Yukon have moved towards actualizing policy developments with Yukon First Nations (YFNs), called Self-Government Agreements (SGAs) .
- ◆ SGAs, which in the Canadian context are unique to the Yukon, are complex and wide-ranging, and include financial compensation, land, harvesting rights, heritage resources and operative governance structures in areas such as education and justice.
- ◆ Within each Self-Governing First Nation (SGFN) considerable attention is given to inclusion of principles that acknowledge the traditional decision-making institutions of YFNs and ensure that these are reinstated in institutional practices within contemporary forms of government (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 1998).
- ◆ Because of this imperative, with the establishment of SGFNs, each YFN with the required co-operation of Yukon Education (YE) faces the challenge of reversing assimilation and, by such, regaining a sense of identity especially within the processes that influence practice (Smith, 1997),



## Premières Nations au Canada First Nations in Canada



# Focus of the Research - My Role

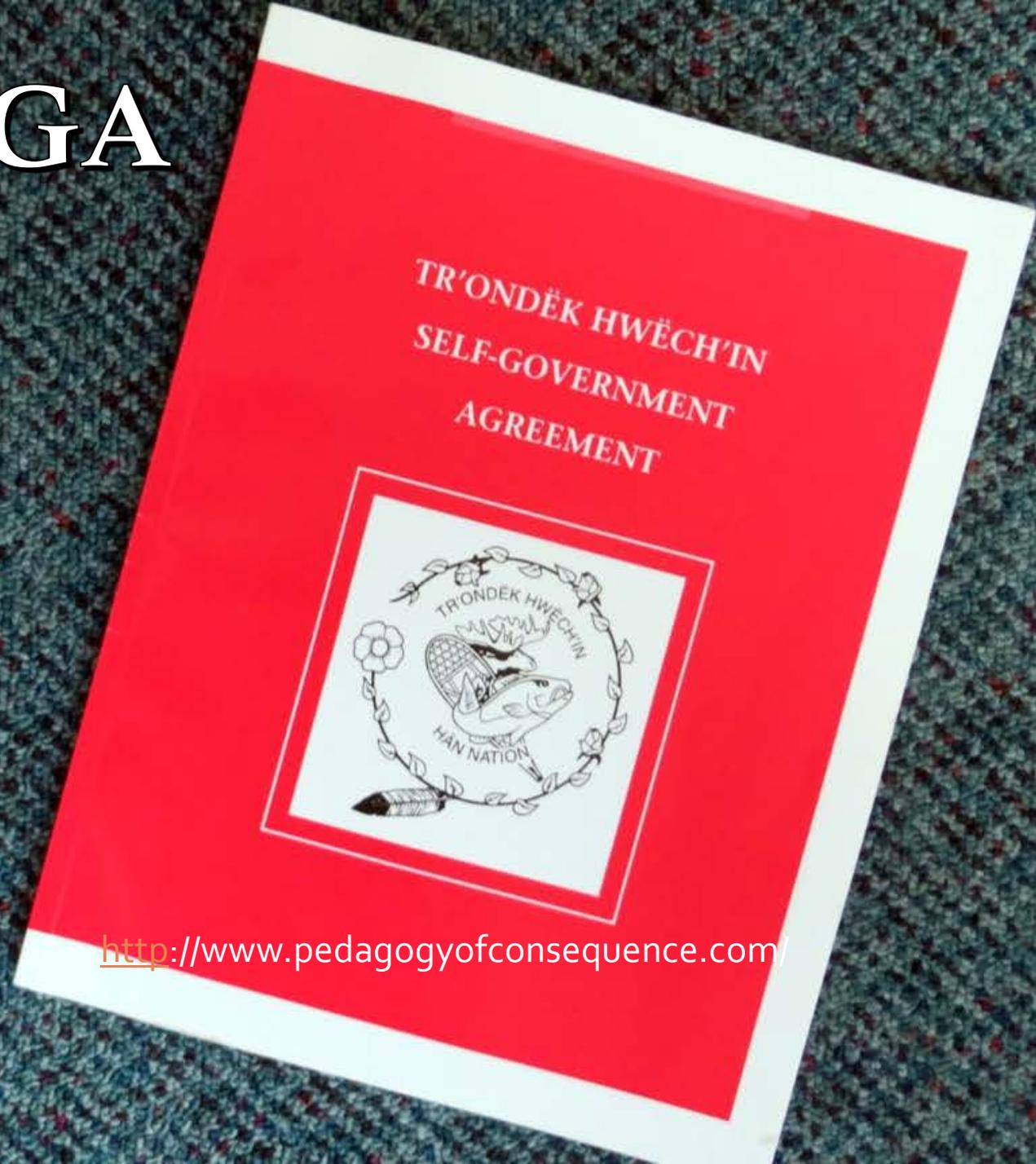
- ◇ Facilitating 'Curriculum' Change in Canada's northern communities – determining what counts in schools and classrooms and assisting in moving towards this
- ◇ Phase One: 2005-2007: What are the educational aspirations for each First Nation for P-12?
- ◇ Phase Two: 2007-2013-ongoing: How can these aspirations be realized?
- ◇ Phase Three: Evaluation 2012-2014: What is the influence of this enactment?
- ◇ Phase Four: Evaluation 2014:
  - ◇ What are the processes at work that seek to alter the curriculum experience provided for citizens within a Yukon First Nation with the advent of self-governing agreements.
  - ◇ What processes have influenced, negatively or positively curriculum development; that is the **broad learning experience provided for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in students**? What tensions exist as a result of a change in governance agreements in regards to curriculum development?

# Publications (Yukon)

- ◆ Lewthwaite, Brian, Owen, Thomas, and Doiron, Ashley (2015) *Curriculum change and self-governing agreements: a Yukon First Nation case study*. International Journal of Multicultural Education, 17 (3). pp. 37-55.
- ◆ Lewthwaite, Brian, Owen, Thomas, Doiron, Ashley, Renaud, Robert, and McMillan, Barbara (2014) *Culturally responsive teaching in Yukon First Nations settings: what does it look like and what is its influence?* Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 155. pp. 1-34.
- ◆ Lewthwaite, Brian, and McMillan, Barbara (2014) *Our Stories About Teaching and Learning: culturally responsive teaching in Yukon First Nations settings*. Other. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Dawson City, Yukon.
- ◆ Lewthwaite, Brian, Owen, Thomas, Doiron, Ashley, McMillan, Barbara, and Renaud, Robert (2013) *Our stories about teaching and learning: a pedagogy of consequences for Yukon First Nation settings*. Interchange, 44 (1-2). pp. 105-128.

# Nature of the SGA

In relation to education, upon the request of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Yukon *shall* during the term of a self-government financial transfer agreement, negotiate the division and sharing of responsibility for the design, delivery and administration of programs delivered within the Traditional Territory relating to [amongst other things] kindergarten through grade 12 curriculum (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 1998, p. 33).



There was provision for [TH's]:own self-managed education system, its own separate education system in Dawson, but this was definitely what the TH citizens *did not want*. The TH see themselves as part of an integrated community, they don't want a separate education system. They wanted a united system, a merged system, essentially a marriage between the TH, the Government of Yukon, where each would be equal partners and in essence enter into a co-management system or even call it co-governance when it comes to education (TH Implementation Director, personal communication, September 21, 2014).

As stated by Fallon and Paquette (2012, p. 12),

Within this [SGA] co-governance model, the province or territory retains ultimate authority over laws, regulations, and policies setting forth education standards and criteria for academic success. By so doing, this structure represents a form of *neo-colonialism rather than it does [a structure for facilitating] decolonization* [italics authors]. Fundamentally, the epistemological imperatives for TH are unlikely to be accommodated within such a system of operation.

*Neo-colonialism: continued application of overt and hegemonic influence on colonized peoples, despite granting independence*



**Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in  
Philosophy**

# TH Culture Camps



Tr'ëhuhch'in  
Näwtr'udäh'a



Finding Our Way  
HOME

# Residential School Curriculum

**Need Help Finding Your Path?**

**We can help.**

# **Education Outreach Program**

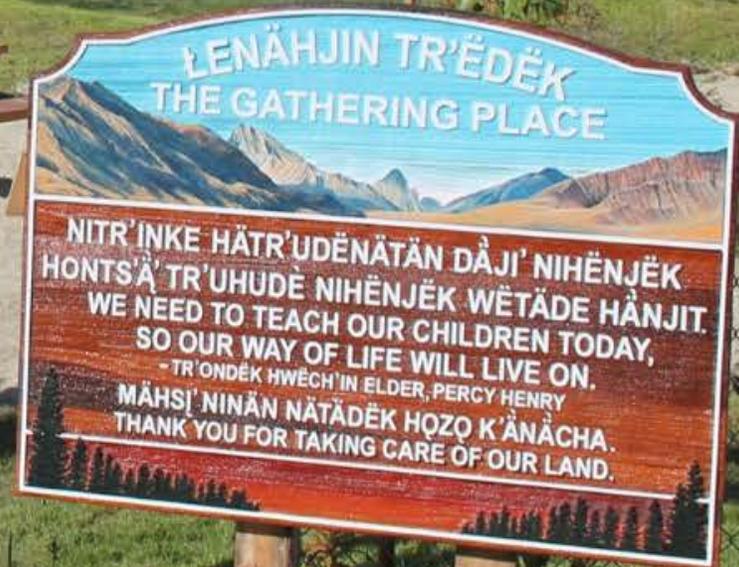
**A self-paced individualized learning  
program that empowers our young  
community members.**



# Cultural Inclusion



# Łenähjin Tr'ëdëk: The Gathering Place



A large group of people, including men, women, and children, are gathered in a gymnasium. They are holding hands in a large circle, participating in a ceremony. The gymnasium has a wooden floor with various colored lines (blue, red, green, black) and basketball hoops are visible on the walls. The atmosphere appears solemn and communal.

# Truth & Reconciliation Ceremony

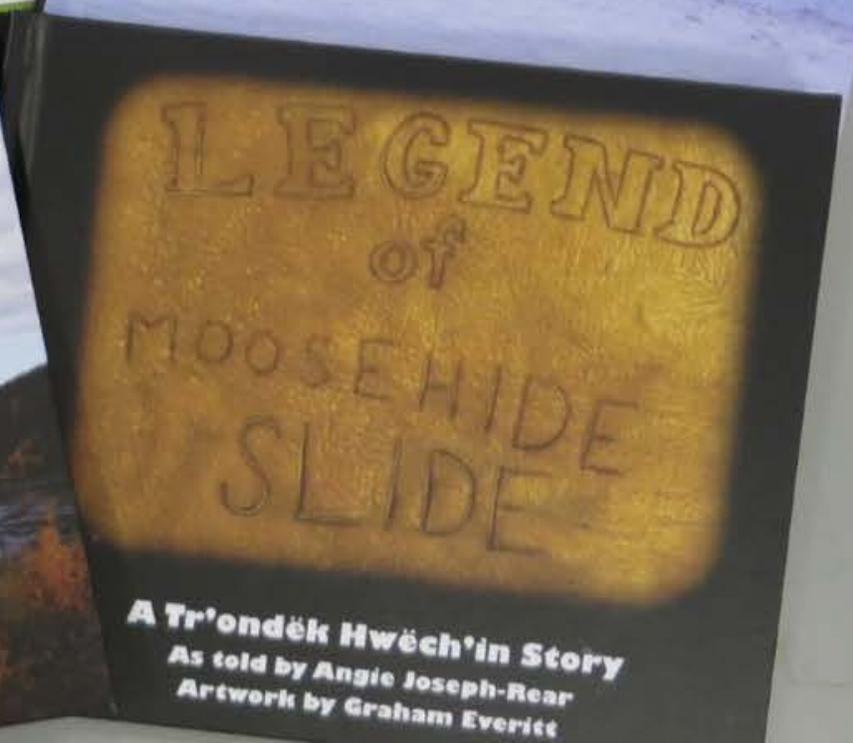
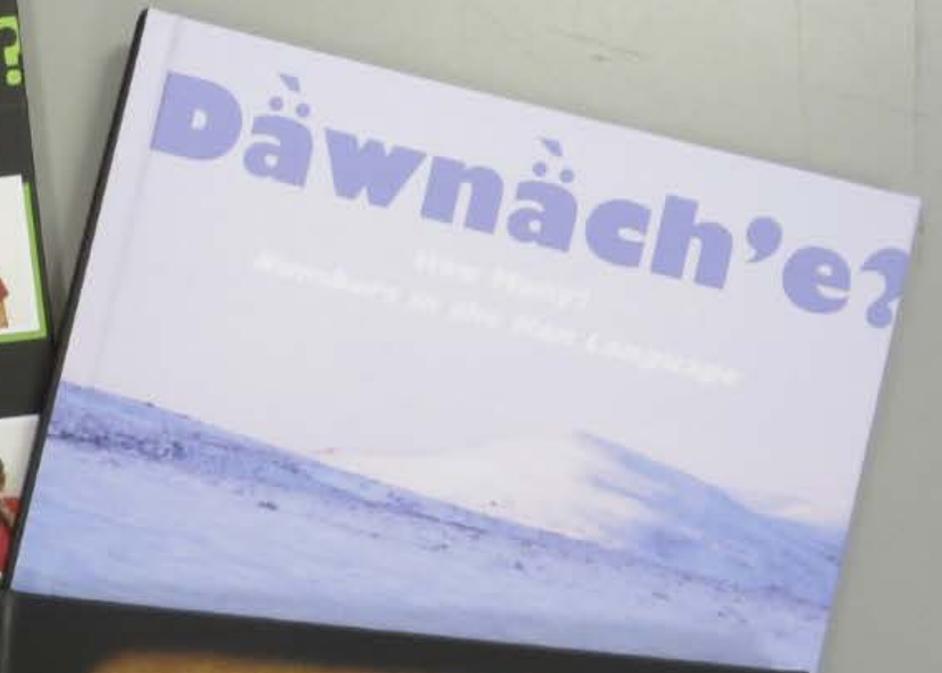
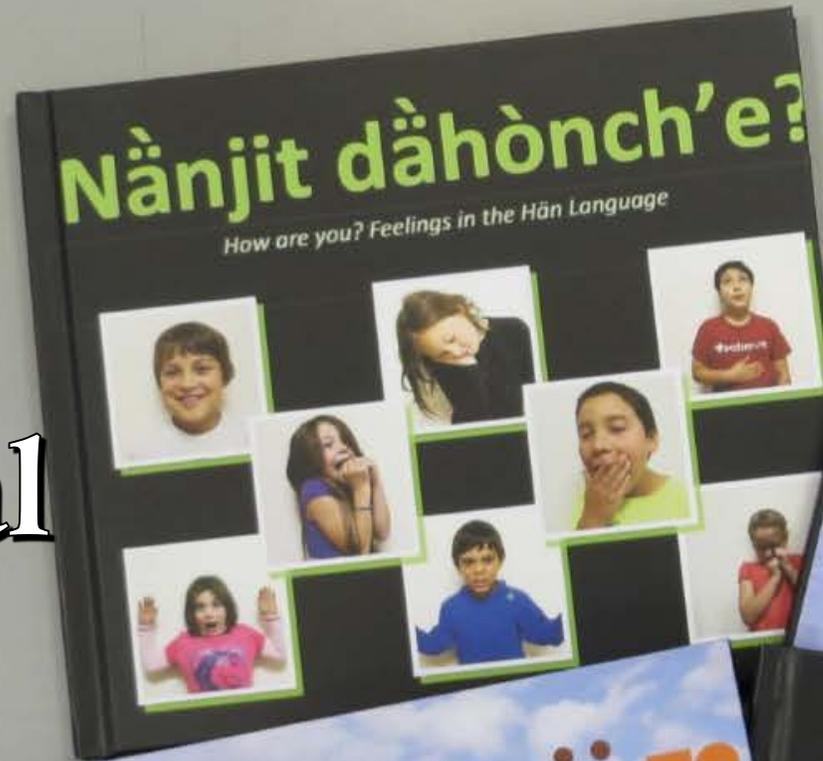
# Traditional Knowledge Field Trips



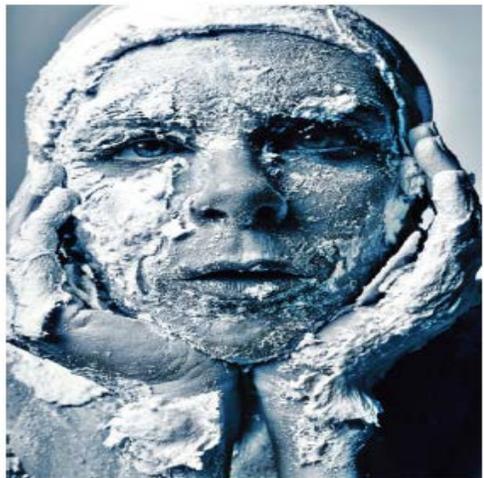
# Supporting Staff and Students



# Educational Resources



**Extreme Environments:  
An Integrated Science Learning Unit for  
Yukon Grade 6 Students**



# Youth Mentorship



**Building positive, trusting and meaningful relationships.**

# Jigging Club





# Summer Youth Camp

DÄNOJÄ' HWĒDEK GHÄ  
HÄW'ON'ĒKTÄN ATR'OHOAY



OUR STORIES ABOUT  
TEACHING AND LEARNING  
Culturally Responsive Teaching in  
Yukon First Nations Settings

“Our Stories  
About  
Teaching &  
Learning”

Draw upon teaching orientations that are identified as culturally located practices.

Affirm cultural competencies honored by the local community.

Provide two-way learning experiences by integrating traditional knowledge, beliefs and values and contemporary scientific knowledge, processes and attitudes.

Use traditional and contemporary cultural examples as contexts for student learning.

Include the local community and its people in students' learning opportunities, especially in the use of narratives including local people.

Foster Han language development where possible.

Use diagnostic and formative assessment to inform planning and teaching and monitor student learning.

Engage students by starting lessons by providing first-hand experiences for students or drawing upon common experience.

When using story to engage students, use the interrupted-story-line as a vehicle to prompt consideration and first-hand investigations.

Deliberately promote scientific and cultural habits of mind (curiosity, problem-solving, working to end) student through thoughtful independent consideration of questions and challenges posed.

Move from the experiential, first-hand experiences to the psychological; that is, after providing concrete experiences assist students in making sense of experiences by using purposeful strategies to promote understanding such as role plays, illustrations and analogies.

Assist students in their consolidation of ideas only as an extension of the initial experiential and psychological learning experiences.

Provide opportunities for student-initiated and directed investigations.

Provide opportunity for students to make connections among science and all other learning areas.

Foster student independence, creativity and curiosity by providing opportunity for students' ideas and questions and follow-up opportunities for problem-solving and investigation.

Provide students the opportunity to make connections between what they are learning and career opportunities specific to the local context.

What processes have influenced, negatively or positively curriculum development; that is the broad learning experience provided for students?

What tensions exist as a result of a change in governance agreements in regards to curriculum development?

# Contributors to Change

- The SGA has provided the conditions for change
- Curriculum de-colonizing tangibly evident
- Key has been:
  - the provision for change in curriculum by Yukon Education (culture-based education)
  - an identified critical awareness of the need for change, especially for the learning experiences that foster the development of TH identity and educational success
  - largely because of serendipity: the right people at the right time in the right place using the right processes (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, PPCT)
  - skill, values and knowledge base of those involved
  - the support and advice of elders and culturally endorsed protocols

# Tensions with Change

- Concern the changes have not addressed some fundamental 'intangible' issues – who is privileged, what is privileged
- Hidden curriculum, especially the 'operative agenda' of 'school is still controlled by Yukon Education and parochial tradition
- Teachers still hold the authority which decides what and who is privileged
- Perpetuating influence of a social order
- The likely conflict between neo-colonialism and decolonisation
- As researchers, we expose this knowing that this tensioned space is the site for discussion, debate and ultimately change.

Within this [SGA] co-governance model, the province or territory retains ultimate authority over laws, regulations, and policies setting forth education standards and criteria for academic success. By so doing, this structure represents a form of *neo-colonialism* rather than it does [a structure for *facilitating*] decolonization Fallon and Paquette (2012, p. 12),



From an elder:

In our culture there is nothing more important than the learning that makes a person wise. The main thing the southern culture wants from school is 'head knowledge'. That is what it has always emphasized. I do not know why. It intrigues me.

I think about what school would look like if we had worked together from the beginning to make the learning better for our younger ones. I look to the future in believing it will be more on our terms where both worlds can be combined. It will be not just about knowledge, but how to behave and be wise, not just knowing. This is what is happening now, but we have a long way to go.

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# Mähsi cho!



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