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Dene Nation Begins Process of Reclaiming Education System for Future Generations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Yellowknife, Northwest Territories – June 15, 2021] – At the Dene Nation’s Leadership Meeting in Inuvik on April 15, 2021, the resolution passed to adopt the Mission, Vision, and Priorities, developed on the outcomes of the Dene Nation Virtual Education Summit, held in July 2020.

“We see the Mission and Vision as the overarching narrative of how the Dene Nation will work with partners to reframe the education system in the Northwest Territories, to respect, acknowledge, and embrace the history, culture, and unique ways of knowing and being of the Dene,” said Director of Education Jane Arychuk. “The Priorities are intended to help carve out the framework to move this ambitious agenda forward, while also providing concrete next steps for action.”

During the Dene Nation Virtual Education Summit, elected leaders, educators, students, and traditional knowledge keepers echoed their overwhelming support to reclaim education in the Territory to be more culturally responsive and reflect Dene values and history.

“Reclaiming education for the Dene is one of our most significant priorities for the Dene Nation. It is one way for us to preserve our culture from one generation to the next and to ensure that our children are brought into our histories, our traditions, and our knowledge,” said National Chief Norman Yakeleya. “Over the past two years, the Dene Nation has done extensive work to determine a path forward to reclaim education and to rethink and rebuild the education system in a way that reflects who we are as a people.”

Strong partnerships for this process will be essential to moving things forward. Under the direction of Dene leadership, the Dene Nation will move forward on accessing federal funding to ensure that long-term sustainable and predictable agreements can support the process. In addition, the work will include developing an action plan with staffing requirements and planned projects to move the Mission forward and implementing both an Advisory Committee and Chiefs Committee on Education for oversight.

“Both Dene leadership and our people want to see education meet the needs of our children at all levels and prepare them to walk into the future,” continued National Chief Yakeleya. “It is time for change and implementation of a collaborative plan to improve our education system. We need to work together to fix the flaws in the system and meet the recommendations of the Northwest Territories Auditor General’s Reports. The Dene Nation is prepared to put in the work, and we’re asking the same of our partners.” concluded Yakeleya.

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Reclaiming Dene Education

Mission

To rethink, rebuild, and refine the Northwest Territory's education system through collaboration and unity that embraces the Indigenous ways of knowing of our learners, while empowering their future preparedness through academic rigour.

Vision

- To pick up on and continue the steps of our ancestors to build upon traditional and western education systems, while reconceiving the system to empower present and future learners.
- To take ownership of education in the Northwest Territories with Dene at the centre of the system, while collaborating with the wider network of stakeholders in the territory.
- To embed education as a part of the shift from claiming Indigenous rights to exercising these rights, such that Dene see themselves capable of embodying Indigenous law, history and traditional knowledge.
- For our learners' identities, languages, traditions and ways of knowing and being to be prioritized through a rigorous curriculum that privileges their unique position between two worlds.
- For our learners to see themselves and their worldview reflected through experiential and on-the-land learning, led by Dene committed to the land, language, and ways of being.
- To cultivate wellness and health among Indigenous families and communities through a culturally safe and enlightened curriculum that regenerates Indigenous priorities while minimizing the effects of intergenerational trauma.

Priorities

- An education system developed, governed and staffed by Dene
- Increased Dene educators and administrators supported by informed non-Indigenous school staff
- Establish a legal framework and legislated processes to create an alternative school system for NWT Indigenous communities
- Fully resourced and funded community operated and regional schools
- Provide mental wellness teachings and support at all levels
- Incorporate strong career planning components at all levels
- Ensure a holistic education system that reflects Indigenous histories, cultures, languages of the people.



Upholding and Protecting the Rights and Interests of the Dene Nation