



INDIGENIZING UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR YUKON UNIVERSITY

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Contents

- Executive Summary..... 3
- Introduction..... 5
- Background..... 7
- The Workshop..... 9
- What we Heard: Why, How, and What 10
 - Why does this matter? 10
 - Duality and balance 10
 - Reconciliation 14
 - Accountability to Yukon communities..... 15
 - Challenges and opportunities..... 15
 - How will it be achieved? 15
 - Autonomy and accountability 15
 - Changing behaviours, values, and power dynamics to reflect duality, balance and reconciliation 16
 - Challenges and opportunities..... 19
 - What will it look like?..... 20
- Implications for YukonU and Next Steps 25
- References..... 29
- Appendix 1 - List of Participating Institutions 31



Executive Summary

In March 2018, Yukon College brought together a group of 30 people, including representatives from fifteen post-secondary institutions and multiple Yukon First Nations, for a one-day workshop in Whitehorse, Yukon to share perspectives, experiences and ideas on bridging university governance and Indigenization. This report provides an overview of what was heard at the workshop and discusses broad implications and next steps for Yukon College in its transition to Yukon University (YukonU).

Yukon College is in the process of becoming the first university in Canada North of 60. As part of this transition, it is currently refining what YukonU will look like in the future. A critical aspect of this process is university governance. The purpose of this workshop was to spark a conversation around what Indigenization and reconciliation look like within university governance and policy. The main themes that emerged from the workshop fall into three interrelated categories.

First, why does Indigenization of university governance matter? Participants discussed the necessity for duality and balance between breaking out of a traditional university governance model, while at the same time respecting what works well within that world. It is an opportunity to advance the conversation on reconciliation and maintain accountability to Yukon communities. Second, how will Indigenization of university governance be achieved? Participants pointed to the need for autonomy and accountability, as well as changing the processes, principles, and structures of university governance. Third, what will it look like? Participants identified concrete actions that Yukon College/University could consider through the process of Indigenizing university governance (see table on pages 21-23) and broader outcomes that YukonU may achieve in implementing these actions (see table on page 24). Within each of these themes, specific challenges and opportunities were identified and discussed.

The workshop was an important starting point for the conversation around Indigenizing university governance and will set up a road map for this journey. However, participants emphasized that this journey may look different at different institutions. The workshop concluded with a discussion about implications and next steps for Yukon College as it continues through the transition to becoming a university. One of the most important implications that was highlighted was the need for YukonU to identify and define the core principles of an Indigenized, bicameral governance system. The actions that have been identified in the workshop offer a useful starting point for thinking about these principles. Some of the next steps identified for Yukon College include:

- Continue the conversation both internally and with external institutional allies.
- Explore Indigenous governance principles and identify actions that align with these principles.
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required to ensure Indigenization is an outcome in governance and identify ways to foster that collective knowledge, skill, and attitude.
- Expand the process that the Yukon College Board of Governors is currently going through (to develop Indigenization principles that it will apply to their governance practices and decision-making) to include the academic council.

Yukon College has been speaking about reconciliation and the need for Indigenization of education for over a decade and is continuing to do so in the transition to YukonU. The institution now has the opportunity to lead an important conversation around Indigenizing university governance.

Introduction

Yukon College (YC) is an institution that focuses on education and research relevant to the north, and that has flexible and comprehensive programming including degrees, diplomas, certificates, trades and adult basic education. YC is in the process of transitioning to becoming a university. This is a significant milestone, as Yukon University (YukonU) will be the first university in Canada North of 60. YukonU will be at the forefront of critical issues of climate change, sustainable resource development, and reconciliation with Indigenous communities. A hybrid institution, it will offer a mix of college and university programming. The transition to YukonU is a natural extension of the institution's evolution and growth (see sidebar). In light of this goal, Yukon College is currently in the process of refining what YukonU will look like in the future. A critical aspect of this process is university governance. By governance, we mean

the processes and practices through which an entity organizes itself to achieve its mandate. It is concerned with the structures and procedures for decision-making, accountability, control and codes of conduct. It is expressed through legislation, policies and by-laws, and informal norms. The goal of effective governance is a robust organization that'll achieve peak performance and is accountable to the people it serves.¹

In the context of this report, we focus primarily on bicameral collegial governance processes, which refers to a board and senate structure of governance. YC has identified that a bicameral system will be the governance structure for YukonU. In the transition from a college to a university, key changes in areas such as by-laws, policies, and legislation will have to take place and, in several places, are already taking place.

Why Yukon University?

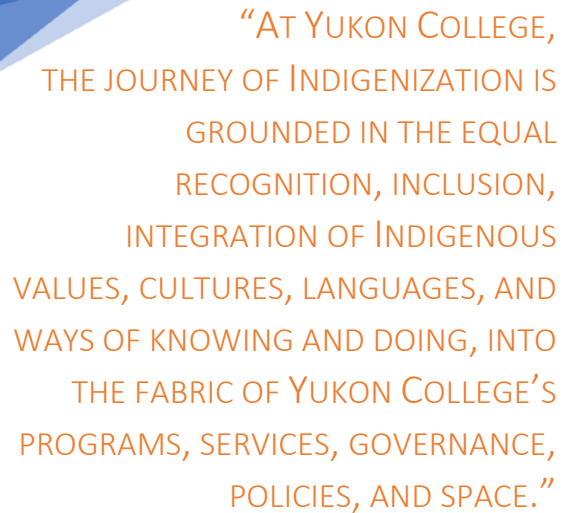
Over 50% of the students at Yukon College are in university or university transfer programs. In other words, many Yukon College students are aspiring to complete degrees.

As a university, it could provide further opportunities for students to access credentials that are focused on the North, while staying in the North. The Yukon has already led the way in contributing to national and international conversations in areas such as modern treaty negotiations, climate change impacts, and mine reclamations. Transitioning to a university would allow YukonU to build on those research impacts, and do more research in the North, for the North.

¹ University of Alberta, "Governance System."

For example, most universities in Canada have individual acts (University Acts) that establish the powers of the governing bodies (e.g., board, senate). Consequently, Yukon Government will draft legislation that will replace the existing Yukon College Act with the requirements of a University Act. The new Act will include a new shared governance model that is more typical of Canadian universities.

The conversation about governance at YukonU is taking place alongside another, much larger, conversation about reconciliation in education. As the chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, The Honourable Mr. Justice Murray Sinclair stated, “reconciliation is about establishing a mutually respectful relationship and we think, in the long term, that while education is what got us into this situation, we think education is the key to reconciliation.”²



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THE JOURNEY OF INDIGENIZATION IS
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WAYS OF KNOWING AND DOING, INTO
THE FABRIC OF YUKON COLLEGE’S
PROGRAMS, SERVICES, GOVERNANCE,
POLICIES, AND SPACE.”

[Working draft definition of
“Indigenization”]

The relationship between reconciliation and education is further reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action, specifically #11 (“We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education”) and #62 (“Provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms”)³. The TRC’s report has been a catalyst for post-secondary institutions to reflect on their values and activities and to question how they align with the calls to actions in the report.

Yukon College has been speaking about reconciliation and the need for Indigenization of education for over a decade and is continuing to do so in considering the transition to YukonU. One step in this process has been to draft a preliminary definition of Indigenization, which is ongoing: “At Yukon College, the journey of Indigenization is grounded in the equal recognition, inclusion, integration of Indigenous values, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing and doing, into the fabric of Yukon College’s programs, services, governance, policies, and space.”

² Benjoe, “TRC: Reconciliation through Education.”

³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to Action,” 2–7.

A critical aspect of this definition is ensuring that the governance of Yukon College/University reflects a process of Indigenization. However, discussions of Indigenization within post-secondary institutions are largely focused on curriculum, space, and student services, with little being formally explored about what Indigenization and reconciliation looks like in university governance and policy.

This report describes a workshop hosted by Yukon College that aimed to begin such a conversation. The report is divided into four sections. First, we describe the context of the Yukon and some of the history and existing debates related to university governance in Canada. Second, we describe the workshop that took place and third, the main themes that were discussed at the workshop. Finally, we discuss implications and next steps for Yukon College/University in the context of Indigenization and university governance.

Background

The context for this report is first and foremost the Yukon and the fourteen First Nations whose traditional territories span the region. Each First Nation possesses both shared and individual heritage and culture, language, and systems of governance. Of the total population in the Yukon (35,874) approximately one third identify as First Nation.⁴ There are eleven First Nations with signed self-government and land claims agreements. The document that paved the way for these agreements, *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*, has similarly paved the way for the creation of YukonU. While it was written in 1973, the words ring true today: “At the present time the Yukon Education system is designed to get students ready to go outside to university. Very few of our students feel this is necessary. We feel that there should be a university in the Yukon.”⁵

Ongoing debates about university governance in Canada provide a secondary backdrop to this report. The existing university system, including its tensions and strengths, has a long history in Canada. The Royal Commission on the University of Toronto, 1906 (Flavelle Commission) recommended distancing the university from direct political interference of the provincial government and introduced the idea of a shared governance model.⁶ Sixty years later, the Duff-Berdahl report (1966) strongly endorsed the bicameral shared governance model. “Duff and Berdahl argued that the reform of university governance could be accomplished within the framework of bicameralism: faculty should have a voice on university governing boards, students should have a voice on university senates, there should be more interaction between senates and boards, and the entire governance process should become more open and transparent.”⁷

⁴ Statistics Canada, “Census Profile, 2016 Census.”

⁵ Council for Yukon Indians, *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, 21.

⁶ Higher Thinking Strategies, “Shared Collegial Governance: Making It Work at Yukon University.”

⁷ Jones, Shanahan, and Goyan, “The Academic Senate and University Governance in Canada,” 39.

This model of bicameral shared governance has been adopted by most Canadian universities. Within this model, the academic council, senate, has authority over academic matters, and the board of governors has fiduciary authority over finances and resources, including appointment of the president.⁸

In the past two decades there have been calls for reforms to the existing university governance model, including suggestions by former University of Saskatchewan and Athabasca University President, Peter MacKinnon. In his book, *University Commons Divided: Exploring Debate and Dissent on Campus*, MacKinnon calls for a fundamental questioning of bicameralism, possibly in favour of a unicameral system.⁹ Others have argued that the senate should be abolished in favour of collective bargaining.¹⁰ For those who have focused on retaining bicameral governance models, emphasis has always remained on the importance of the relationship between the senate and the board. As stated by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, “in a period of challenge, stress and change for higher education, it is more important than ever that shared governance works well.”¹¹

One of the major challenges for “effective shared governance is failure to understand and agree on the definition and how it should be put into action”.¹² For example, a study involving university senates in Canada found significant role confusion, perceptions of power imbalances, and a lack of communication between the board and the senate.¹³ Many of those involved on senates saw the important role for the senate in a university but were unsure whether it was actually living up to that role. There are therefore important challenges that have been identified within existing university governance structures that require focused attention, such as encouraging dialogue between boards and senates and clarifying the authority of each.¹⁴ These are challenges of university governance that need to be addressed before and during the transition to YukonU. However, the fact that this conversation has focused primarily on refining the bicameral model has meant that it has largely overlooked the relationship between governance reform and broader calls for Indigenization within post-secondary institutions.

⁸ Pennock, Jones, and Leclerc, “Challenges and Opportunities for Collegial Governance at Canadian Universities: Reflections on a Survey of Academic Senates,” 73.

⁹ MacKinnon, *University Commons Divided: Exploring Debate & Dissent on Campus*.

¹⁰ See for example, Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), “Report of the CAUT Ad Hoc Advisory Committee on Governance”; Kool, *Acad. Gov. 3.0 What Could It Be? How Can We Get There?*

¹¹ Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, “Shared Governance: Changing the Times,” 3.

¹² Bahls, *Shared Governance in Times of Change: A Practical Guide for Universities and Colleges*, 19.

¹³ Pennock, Jones, and Leclerc, “Challenges and Opportunities for Collegial Governance at Canadian Universities: Reflections on a Survey of Academic Senates,” 77–78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

The Workshop

The ongoing transition to YukonU is an opportunity to start a new conversation around university governance in the context of reconciliation and Indigenization. It requires embodying the principles and practices of reconciliation and Indigenization at the heart of the institution.

To begin this conversation, Yukon College brought together a group of individuals involved in post-secondary education for a one-day workshop in Whitehorse, Yukon to share perspectives, experiences, and ideas on bridging university governance and Indigenization. The workshop was intended as a starting point. There were no preconceived notions of what the outcome would be, in part because there are few examples elsewhere of similar conversations taking place in Canada.

Twenty-five post-secondary institutions were invited to send two representatives, primarily Presidents/Vice-Presidents and university Secretaries, to the workshop in Whitehorse. A total of 30 participants took part, representing fifteen institutions and Yukon First Nations representatives, including Elders and community members (see Appendix 1). The workshop was structured to include a combination of small group and plenary discussions. Glen Jones, Professor at the University of Toronto, and Vianne Timmons, President and Vice-Chancellor at the University of Regina, co-facilitated the workshop. They opened the day with brief presentations on principles and tensions within university governance and examples/approaches to Indigenous governance within a university context.

Participants were broken into five small groups, with 5-7 people per table, to discuss three main questions. There was a large group debrief at the end of each question in which everyone participated.

The three questions posed to the breakout groups were:

1. What are the key principles or ideas that should underscore the Indigenization of university governance at the new Yukon University?
2. What are some of the major challenges that Yukon University may face in terms of adopting a new, Indigenous governance structure?
3. What are some of the ways that Yukon University can address or overcome these challenges?

The day ended with a discussion about next steps for Yukon College and how this conversation around Indigenization and university governance can be maintained.

The next section of this report describes the overarching themes that emerged from the workshop. The report highlights key points that cut across the three discussion questions, though

it does not do justice to the depth of conversations that took place. The process of identifying these themes and writing this report was iterative; it involved numerous conversations with various people involved in the workshop to share, discuss, and clarify ideas and key concepts. This report should not be considered a blueprint or guide for “how to Indigenize university governance”. Rather, it aims to shed light on an aspect of university governance that thus far has not received the attention it requires across the post-secondary sector, and to suggest avenues for how YukonU can continue to think about these issues as their university governance model develops.

What we Heard: Why, How, and What

The main themes from the workshop in Whitehorse are presented here in three interrelated categories. First, why does Indigenization of university governance matter? Second, how will it be achieved? Third, what will it look like? Structuring these questions as flowing from one to the other is intentional; they cannot be considered separate. In moving from one question to another, there are also key challenges that arise. However, participants in the workshop emphasized that rather than seeing challenges solely as barriers to achieving goals, they should be seen as opportunities to come up with creative solutions. This conversation is innovative, hard, and complex, and there are many different ideas on how to proceed.

Why does this matter?

Leading up to the workshop, representatives from Yukon College talked about the opportunity to create a governance system that embodies the principles and practices of Indigenization and reconciliation at the heart of the institution. Such a system would emulate Yukon College/University values and reflect the relationship that the college/university has with Yukon First Nations. As a starting point, the workshop participants discussed why Indigenization within university governance matters. Facilitator Vianne Timmons spoke to the importance of this discussion: “Yukon College has to embrace governance in a forward-thinking way. It will be a role model for all Canadian institutions that are on this path”. What followed was an expansive conversation, but three main themes emerged, including duality and balance, responsiveness to reconciliation, and accountability to rural Yukon communities. Several challenges and opportunities were also discussed.

Duality and balance

The notion of duality and balance characterized the way in which many of the workshop participants discussed the relationship between breaking out of the traditional university governance structure while respecting what works well within that world. On one hand, some

participants acknowledged that the bicameral model of governance that dominates universities across Canada came from a colonial time and place. As one person described,

I think we have to really think about how we are framing this discussion. We're talking about whether Yukon College can fit into the current box that exists in public post-secondary across this country. I think the reality is that Yukon College has the opportunity to breathe life into a very old traditional, colonial system of education that would actually benefit all Canadians...I don't understand why it's a struggle, when our people have been excluded from post-secondary [institutions] since the beginning of time...The reality is that Indigenous knowledge and principles - of accountability, of transparency, of inclusiveness, of consensus-building - are principles that can exist regardless of legislation, regardless of whatever kind of box you're trying to put us into.

Some viewed the traditional model of university decision-making as hierarchical and segregated and focusing on Indigenization provides an opportunity to break out of that model (see text box below). Concurrently, there were those who pointed to the benefit of current university governance models whereby roles and expectation are clearly defined and delineated between governing bodies and operations. There are also expectations associated with those roles, such

Mark Wedge on colonization, decolonization, and Indigenization

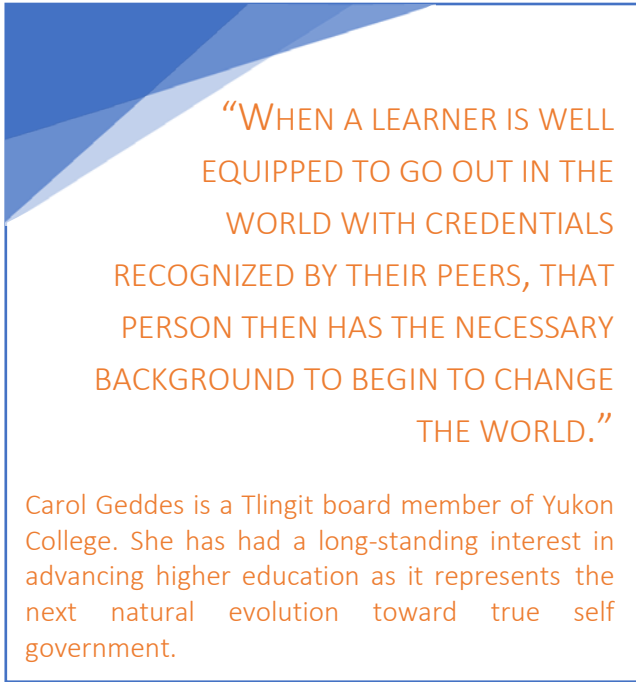
The following is an excerpt from a conversation with Mark Wedge and is being used here with his permission. Mark Wedge or Aan Goosh oo is of Tagish/Tlinget/Caucasian ancestry. Following his mother's lineage (as is customary with the Tagish/Tlinget), he belongs to the Deicitaan Clan of the Crow moiety. Mr. Wedge is a Trustee on Carcross TagishDánna Jili Trust and Director on the CYFN First Nations Education Commission. He has been actively involved in the economic and social development of his local communities and has served as Chief of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

A lot of times the tools that are used for colonization [include] centralized power...Usually that is done through a legislative framework...Decolonization is when you begin to start understanding that those things don't work for us...In the Yukon, the contemporary treaties, the modern treaties or the land claims, is a decolonizing statement where the First Nations are saying, "We're going to govern ourselves, we're going to make our own laws, we're going to take care of ourselves. We're not going to be under the Indian Act". Those are decolonizing processes. When you look at Indigenizing processes...you take traditional values, [such as] Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow, these kinds of things, and you start incorporating them into structures...if the College is trying to move towards a university, how do we structure it? We're aware of the colonial tools. We're aware that there's a decolonizing process and we want to incorporate Indigeneity or Indigenization into these processes. It's going to be through this legislative process...[that] we start to say, "Ok, what would that look like?" If we know that centralizing power oftentimes is done through legislation, how do you decentralize power? There [are] many examples...you centralize education, so you control who a doctorate is, who issues a doctorate, who issues a bachelor, who issues a masters, what kind of processes you have to go through...you're controlling what learning is, those types of things.

as legal requirements and fiduciary obligations. As one participant explained, the principles and practices of good governance that many universities strive for also include respect for diversity of others' views, accountability, transparency, and aiming for consensus in decision-making.

YukonU has an opportunity to challenge the historically colonial roots and power dynamics of the standard university governance model, while also building on what works within that model. This will require consideration and negotiation of the relationship between YukonU and other institutions, academic and non-

academic. For example, students need to be able to engage with Indigenous teachings and storytelling while also ensuring that their full academic credentials are recognized in their subsequent career paths. For Carol Geddes, a citizen of Teslin Tlingit Council and board member of Yukon College,



“WHEN A LEARNER IS WELL EQUIPPED TO GO OUT IN THE WORLD WITH CREDENTIALS RECOGNIZED BY THEIR PEERS, THAT PERSON THEN HAS THE NECESSARY BACKGROUND TO BEGIN TO CHANGE THE WORLD.”

Carol Geddes is a Tlingit board member of Yukon College. She has had a long-standing interest in advancing higher education as it represents the next natural evolution toward true self government.

The greatest service we can provide for students is to create a space where intellectual challenge is tempered with human-centred support. Indigenous students are taught to learn by example, which is true of all students. A rich cultural tradition can provide a referential framework for knowledge while enhancing standards set by mainstream society. When a learner is well equipped to go out in the world with credentials recognized by their peers, that person then has the necessary background to begin to change the world. Therefore, higher education represents a natural extension of a dynamic, ongoing process of developing self-government.

Participants emphasized that this would be a challenging task, as it ultimately requires striking a balance between Western and non-Western modes of governance, while operating within a Canadian and worldwide approach to defining what is a university. In determining the right balance, a discussion on the ultimate goals of the university will be important, as well as a thoughtful and possibly incremental approach to this balance. One approach discussed by participants was using consensus-based decision-making as a process that could potentially fit within both academic governance and governance in Indigenous communities. Consensus decision-making does not mean that everyone will agree, but that everyone can live with the decision. While consensus may not always be possible, it should be the first option. Consensus

should not block or stall decision-making and priority setting, but rather will ensure that everyone looks in a similar direction and sees the same priorities – and while some may prefer a different direction, they agree that they can live with the majority decision. Ultimately, this will align governing bodies to work toward common goals, based on shared understandings and priorities. Allowing the institution to move as a whole stands in contrast to a board and senate that move in different directions or find themselves in points of conflict. To do this well, high level priorities and strategic directions need to be aligned and understood.

The discussion of duality and balance also extended to the context of respecting and appreciating

Mark Wedge on duality and balance

The following is an excerpt from a conversation with Mark Wedge and is being used here with his permission.

The concept of duality, from a Western concept, is a concept it seems to me of right or wrong, good or bad, night or day. That opposite. Now we do have opposites in traditional structures, but the opposites look different in the sense that you also have a balance. You have Wolf and Crow, male and female; it's not about right or wrong, it's about "this is how I understand it". How do you incorporate some of those things? If the College is going to be a university, how do you incorporate the freedom to think? Now we say it in other institutions, "you have the freedom to think", but we also say, "you can only think inside this box". That has to be part of the legislation, is saying "who controls who gets a degree? Who controls what that degree is?" Shared power structures and duality starts meaning... [that you] base your research around traditional models. The way institutions do it is that they'll give you an academic committee [senate] made up of usually masters or professors. I could never be on the academic committee [senate] because I don't have a degree. Then you start saying no, what we need is people in the community that have knowledge of the community - the community decides if these people have knowledge - that would sit on these academic [senate]... The legislation then begins to start saying "how do we incorporate those things, that kind of thinking? How do the communities take control of their knowledge and the research that they require?" That has to find its way into that legislation.

both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing. This was summarized by the phrase "learning to live together going forward". Ensuring such an approach is embedded in the Yukon University Act was identified as an important starting point, as this will anchor decision-making at the university going forward.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation was an important principle that participants identified as driving Indigenization of university governance. One participant emphasized the importance of education within broader discussions of reconciliation in Canada: “The country has been struggling with the concept of reconciliation for many years, but it’s only recently in the last while that our minds are starting to be open. We have a wonderful opportunity in this country to really stride forward rather than taking small steps, and that’s where post-secondary institutions can be breaking the structures and taking these giant strides forward”. In other words, YukonU has an opportunity to truly advance the conversation on reconciliation in a significant way, and one way to do that is to truly value Indigenization throughout governance structures and processes. An important part of this conversation was honouring the history of the land. As one participant described, “once you honour the history of the land, you’re going to honour the people”. However, it also requires learning to live with a bit of discomfort.

Participants from Yukon also noted the existing final and self-governing agreements that are in place for 11 Yukon First Nations. All people, Indigenous and non- indigenous, have a role to play in reconciliation and one place for YukonU to start is to explore ways to implement the spirit and intent of those agreements into university activities.

CHALLENGE:

Avoiding a pan-Indigenous approach

“When I worked in the child welfare system, we were having children exposed to finally going to a sweat lodge and feeling and seeing what that experience is like because the experience is different for each individual. I had children coming back saying ‘that Coast Salish sweat was awesome, I can’t wait to go again’. I realized at that point, ok the sweat lodge is not Coast Salish. The ceremonial place for ceremonies – the big house, the smoke house, the long house, the potlatch – it’s not the lodge. So, we need to give them the foundation to build their perspectives on. And if they want to create that pan-approach, that’s their choice not ours. We need to lay down the foundation and exercise proper protocols and respect the land that we’re standing on and where those teachings come from.”

Accountability to Yukon communities

The need to ensure YukonU is accountable to rural Yukon communities was an important point that was raised throughout the workshop. This idea is discussed in further depth in the next section of this report, but it is nonetheless important to note that accountability was a key principle for Indigenization of YukonU governance.

Challenges and opportunities

One challenge participants identified was the need to avoid a pan-Indigenous approach (see sidebar on previous page) when talking about Indigenizing university governance. Participants warned against taking lessons from Yukon College and applying them to an Inuit or Métis or Southern setting, for example. Instead, lessons should be shared and modified as needed, respecting diversity among Indigenous groups. There is an opportunity for YukonU to engage with First Nations in the Yukon and ensure that the process of Indigenization is relevant to the context here.

Another important challenge that was discussed was that there may be those who see reconciliation and Indigenization as a loss of decision-making power for certain groups (the notion that power is finite, and that giving it to one group, means the loss of power for another). Reconciliation requires shifting away from a colonial space where Indigenous people are seen as “less than”, yet in trying to shift that space, there may be those who see themselves as losing out. The workshop participants argued there is an opportunity within the transition to YukonU to focus on what is gained through Indigenization and reconciliation, not what is lost.

How will it be achieved?

In discussing how Indigenization of YukonU governance will be achieved, two main streams of thought became clear. The first related to autonomy and accountability. The second related to ensuring that behaviours, values and power dynamics within the university reflect the goals of Indigenization through processes, principles, and structures of university governance. Underscoring all of this is the need for ongoing partnership. YukonU cannot do this work alone; dialogue is crucial to this journey. To accomplish this, YukonU will need to continue to work with the President’s Advisory Committee on First Nations Initiatives (PACFNI), the fourteen Yukon First Nations communities, Yukon First Nations leadership, First Nations representatives, and many others. These relationships are not set in stone but need to continue to be dynamic, evolving as the institution evolves.

Autonomy and accountability

Autonomy and accountability are central to conversations of university governance. The two are inherently linked; to be autonomous from government intervention while still receiving public

funds, universities must also be accountable to the broader public.¹⁵ Universities Canada, a membership organization for Canadian Universities, reflects these values in their membership criteria, which require an independent board of governors that “is committed to public accountability and functions in an open and transparent manner”.¹⁶ Accountability is especially important in building public trust of universities, which in Canada has historically been quite high.¹⁷ However, the balance between autonomy and accountability is not always easy.

Workshop participants raised concerns about governments becoming too directive in their relationship with post-secondary institutions in Canada. Participants noted that in the context of the Yukon, autonomy refers to both territorial and First Nation governments. They emphasized that the YukonU Board of Governors should maintain independence and autonomy, and that this principle should be considered within the legislation that creates YukonU.

At the same time, accountability to communities should also be central to this legislation as the mission of a Yukon university should be to serve its population and to advance knowledge within the region. Participants pointed out that while university legislation in Canada does tend to ensure accountability to provincial and federal governments, it does not typically include accountability to communities. YukonU should specifically ensure accountability to the communities that it serves, communities that are not represented solely by Chief and Councils or territorial or municipal governments.

Changing behaviours, values, and power dynamics to reflect duality, balance and reconciliation

The question of “why does it matter?” helped participants to articulate the significance of duality and balance, as well as reconciliation, in the context of Indigenizing university governance. In discussing how these goals will be realized, participants talked about the importance of changing the processes (how decision-making unfolds), principles (principles embodied in decision-making), and structures (how it is organized and who is at the table) of university governance. The need for change stems from an acknowledgement that current processes, principles, and structures are inadequate to meet the goals of Indigenization. For example, the rules of order that govern university board discussions (typically Robert’s Rules of Order or Bourinot’s Rules of Order) will need to be re-evaluated according to an Indigenization lens. This will be an important element in terms of deciding how decision making unfolds.

A central inadequacy of university governance that was highlighted by the workshop participants is its treatment of power. They discussed how power is embedded in a university’s system of

¹⁵ Higher Thinking Strategies, “Autonomy and Accountability.”

¹⁶ Universities Canada, “Membership Criteria.”

¹⁷ Higher Thinking Strategies, “Autonomy and Accountability.”

governance, and the challenge of “re-educating” this long-standing euro-centric system. However, they also talked about opportunities for changing these systems of power, for example through infusing policy and procedure with an Indigenous approach, incorporating different conceptions of power within the organization, giving Indigenous people power by having them at the decision-making table, and empowering community and youth to raise their voices. This understanding of power – both as something that needs to be addressed and as an opportunity for change – set the context for how processes, principles, and structures could also change.

Participants discussed a number of ways in which the processes and principles of university governance can shift to reflect duality, balance, and reconciliation. First, they emphasized dialogue over debate, or, as one participant said, “making sure they are being heard”. This discussion pointed to the fact that post-secondary institutions often train academics to debate, but in moving towards dialogue, they also need to learn to listen and think beyond their own worldviews and knowledge. Dialogue within YukonU governance processes

must emphasize curiosity not judgement, aim to build common ground, consensus (as presented above) and be meaningful and respectful. This can be time consuming, but one participant explained, “marriage takes a lot of time”.

Second, it is important that YukonU ensure a safe and respectful space for different views to be heard and considered. This means elevating, rather than dismissing, different ways of seeing the world. It is critical that YukonU establish mutual respect as a key principle from the very beginning to establish a solid foundation upon which respectful space can be built. Several examples of

EXAMPLE:

An “ethical space of mutual respect”

Elders Reg Crowshoe and Willie Ermine have discussed the idea of an “ethical space” of engagement between two societies and their knowledge systems. With the creation of distinct and autonomous worldviews, a space between these understandings is opened. When the two views encounter one another, there are hidden interests and assumptions that influence their relationship and must be uncovered.¹⁸

The ethical space framework allows this to happen. It “opens up the possibility for configuring new models of research and knowledge production that is mutually developed through negotiation and respect in cross-cultural interaction”.¹⁸

systems or ideas that create safe and respectful spaces within institutions were provided, such as the idea of an ethical space (see sidebar) or halloocracy.¹⁸ Such examples may provide learning opportunities for YukonU going forward.

It is also important for YukonU to take a strengths-based approach (focusing on supporting what is going well) rather than a deficit approach (focusing on what is going wrong). YukonU should ensure cultural safety, which includes intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions. Finally, the future university should prioritize creating long-term relationships, rather than engaging through isolated events, and reflect locally-relevant values.

The structure of university governance is inseparable from the process and principles that contribute to goals of Indigenization. For YukonU, this will mean bringing together academic and Indigenous traditions and protocols. One participant explained that you need to ask “if this is a Western Academic tradition, what would it look like in a First Nations context?”. For example, YukonU could consider using talking circles as a dispute resolution mechanism. It could also look to examples elsewhere, such as the University of Calgary’s strategic planning process (see sidebar) for what this might look like.¹⁹ It could also use a co-chair model on its board and sub-committees to ensure multiple approaches are guiding the decision-making process.

Changing the structure of university governance to reflect Indigenization also

EXAMPLE:

Strategic planning at the University of Calgary

In 2016, the University of Calgary initiated a task force (including a steering committee and working group) to create an Indigenous Strategy Framework. This process was guided by two validation systems: a standard institutional terms of reference framework, and an Indigenous-oriented framework that was developed in consultation with Traditional Knowledge Keepers.¹⁹ Both frameworks identified different steps in a four-stage journey. The terms of reference, for example, included steps such as setting goals, information gathering and data collection, data analysis, and strategy writing. The Indigenous framework identified steps such as defining a common purpose, gathering stories, bringing stories home, and empowering the spirit of Indigenization.

These stages were also validated through both the Steering Committee and a ceremony conducted by Traditional Knowledge Keepers.¹⁹

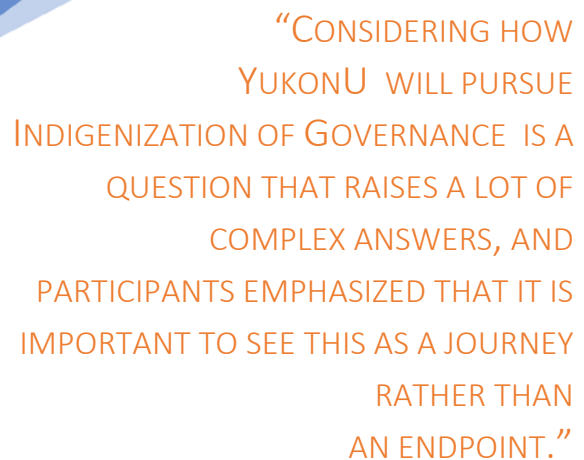
¹⁸ Ermine, “A Critical Examination of the Ethics in Research Involving Indigenous Peoples,” v.

¹⁹ University of Calgary, “Indigenous Strategy.”

means paying attention to representation and ensuring there are a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds involved. In other words, “see who is missing and then make sure they are at the table”. This includes making sure those without a formal education are involved. Representation should be based not on a person’s title, but on what they can bring to the table. In addition, Indigenous representatives need to be involved not just on advisory bodies, but also on decision-making bodies. Such initiatives are already in place in some universities in Canada. For example, Vancouver Island University has created a special faculty designation for Elders, which means Elders can have faculty seats at the senate table. In the Yukon, First Nations fought for guaranteed representation to be included in the Yukon Final Agreements. For example, the UFA states that “the parties to the Umbrella Final Agreement may negotiate guaranteed representation for Yukon First Nations on government commissions, councils, boards and committees in the Yukon established to deal with the following matters: education; health and social services; justice and law enforcement; and other matters as may be agreed.”²⁰ In other words, guaranteed representation for Yukon First Nations within university governance is necessary not only out of principle, but because it is enshrined in the governance framework of the territory.

Challenges and opportunities

There are several challenges and opportunities that arise when answering the question “how will it be achieved?”. Changing governance structures to ensure representation – for example, by guaranteeing seats to a certain number of Indigenous representatives – also raises issues of tokenism. Such issues underscore the importance of ensuring that the goals of Indigenization are not met through structure alone; they require changing values and behaviours as well – for example, by engaging in meaningful dialogue. Another issue that was raised during the workshop was simply that the population in the Yukon is small, which limits the number of people available to participate on boards and sub-committees and over-burdens the people who are available.



“CONSIDERING HOW YUKONU WILL PURSUE INDIGENIZATION OF GOVERNANCE IS A QUESTION THAT RAISES A LOT OF COMPLEX ANSWERS, AND PARTICIPANTS EMPHASIZED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEE THIS AS A JOURNEY RATHER THAN AN ENDPOINT.”

²⁰ Council for Yukon Indians, *Umbrella Final Agreement between the Government of Canada, the Council for Yukon Indians, and the Government of the Yukon*, 262.

Another challenge within this process is managing expectations. Considering how YukonU will pursue Indigenization of governance is a question that raises a lot of complex answers, and participants emphasized that it is important to see this as a journey rather than an endpoint. Time and thoughtfulness are key, as well as flexibility and the ability to adapt as the journey unfolds. Along the way, it will be critical to showcase the strengths that already exist at Yukon College and celebrate successes to build support internally and externally. Setting high expectations is important (“it’s still good to dream”), but if these expectations are not met, the result is not necessarily a failure. While the creation of YukonU will be an important milestone, conversations about Indigenization and governance will have to continue. The workshop participants were hopeful that the creation of YukonU would in turn spark these conversations across the country.

The question of how YukonU will continue to be relevant to Yukon communities was also raised. For example, there may be tensions between the role of YukonU as a critical voice and its role as an advocate for community values and needs. Workshop participants saw this as an opportunity to establish YukonU as both.

What will it look like?

The third and final category that was discussed at the workshop was, “what will it look like to Indigenize university governance?” Within this category, participants identified concrete actions that Yukon College/University could consider through the process of Indigenizing university governance. In several cases, these steps are already being taken at Yukon College. The following table is by no means a complete list but is a starting point for thinking about what this looks like in action.

ACTIONS	EXAMPLES	STEPS BEING TAKEN AT YUKON COLLEGE
Explore different models for decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus-based decision making. For example, the Government of Northwest Territories governs under a consensus-based model • Decentralize committees to inform decision-making: not all decisions need to be made directly by the board or senate. For example, the board or senate could create side tables or subcommittees for key issues, though the board will retain fiduciary responsibility for decisions. 	
Develop and provide training and education to ensure success and skill development for board and members, faculty, staff and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include and explain academic and Indigenous terminology • Provide workshops and orientations about the structure of committees, senate, board, academic council etc. and outline their roles and responsibilities and how each relates to each other • Explain who has authority in what contexts: often within new institutions, faculty don't have an understanding of the decision-making power that they have • Training on Yukon First Nation history and worldviews: for example, conducting Blanket exercises • Unconscious bias training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon First Nations 101 – a 1-day course intended for anyone interested in learning about Yukon First Nations and Self-Government that develops a broader understanding and appreciation for key moments in Yukon First Nations distant and recent past. • Full-day workshop with Board of Governors on the spirit and intent of the Yukon Final Agreements with the goal of developing Indigenization principals that reflect the spirit and intent of the Final Agreements that the Board can apply to their governance practices/processes and decision-making.
Review existing hiring, tenure, and promotion processes, and human resources more broadly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does Yukon College/University look for in a candidate? • Include recommendations from the communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elder equity pay

<p>Using values and practices relevant to the traditional territory you are in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include Indigenous and non-Indigenous spaces and ceremonial practices, for example ensuring board and senate meeting rooms are Indigenous, including opening and closing prayers at board meetings, hosting meetings on the land, etc. • Use local metaphors • Avoid the pan-Indigenous approach • Respect Traditional Knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon College currently has several established positions for Elders on campus • Prayer policy establishes that any opening address that an Elder provides will be accepted in order to be respectful of the fact that we are in their traditional territory and need to incorporate their values and worldviews • Ongoing rotation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous chancellors • Yukon College currently has three dedicated seats for First Nation representatives on its Board of Governors • Establishment and on-going commitment to the President’s Advisory Committee on First Nations Initiatives (PACFNI) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PACFNI will provide strategic direction to Yukon College, specifically the Board of Governors’ and the Senior Management Team. This high-profile committee will play an important role by assisting Yukon College in its goal to increase the effectiveness of programs and services offered, with the ultimate goal being the success of all Yukon College students.
<p>Draw on existing land claims agreements and boards for examples of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Yukon has modern treaties and self-government agreements, which include the right to govern—one of the things that Yukon First Nation leadership is promoting is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Governors spirit and intent workshop (see above)

relationships, structures and language	<p>that this is an opportunity to look at how YukonU legislation can fit within both worlds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the teachings from the agreements, and apply spirit and intent of those agreement to governance principals and operations 	
Prioritize engagement with rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain relationships with community campuses • Engage rural Yukon communities in the foundation of board governance • Report annually to Yukon First Nation leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and on-going commitment to PACFNI • On-going presentations/meetings with First Nation Leadership from Senior College Officials
Diversify representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid tokenism by ensuring that there is more than one Indigenous seat on the board and senate • Ensure there is a role for Elders • Ensure communities are represented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yukon College currently has three dedicated seats for First Nation representatives and three dedicated seats for community representatives on its Board of Governors • Two First Nation positions on Senior Executive Council • Academic Council is exploring questions of representation and how Indigenization will be included in the new university legislation

Participants also indicated some of the broader outcomes that YukonU may achieve in implementing these actions. Indeed, several of the actions Yukon College is already taking are intended to move towards these outcomes.

OUTCOMES
Home grown solutions
True partnerships, not just consultation
Multiple knowledges woven together
Capacity for institutional success
Yukon rural communities see themselves in the institutions
Transparency
Accountability and autonomy

Implications for YukonU and Next Steps

The workshop in Whitehorse was an important starting point for the conversation around Indigenizing university governance and will set up a road map for this journey. However, participants emphasized that this journey may look different at different institutions.

In the workshop, participants pointed to *why* Indigenizing university governance is important; it necessitates duality and balance between breaking out of a traditional university governance model while at the same time respecting what works well within that world. It is an opportunity to advance the conversation on reconciliation and maintain accountability to Yukon communities. Participants also discussed *how* Indigenization of university governance can take place, pointing to the need for autonomy and accountability, as well as changing the processes, principles, and structures of university governance. There were several concrete examples of *what* this might look like in practice, such as drawing upon values and practices that are relevant to the traditional territory you are in.

In summary, the workshop identified why Indigenizing university governance is important, areas within university governance where change might take place, and some of the actions needed to realize that vision. However, it also became clear that tangible actions must be linked to broader principles, and the core principles that are at the heart of Indigenizing university governance still have yet to be identified. While the participants discussed principles of *why* Indigenizing university governance was important, it is ultimately up to YukonU to define the core principles of an Indigenized bicameral system. This emphasizes a point made at the outset of this report; working through the “why, how, and what” of Indigenizing university governance is a process, not an end point. Arriving at tangible actions brings us back to the beginning: what are the core principles that underscore these actions? This is perhaps the most significant next step – or rather, leap - for Yukon College to take in the transition to a university governance system.

The actions that have been identified offer a useful starting point for thinking about what the principles of an Indigenized bicameral system might look like. For example, the idea of utilizing a co-chair model to ensure appropriate representation (of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous committee members) is tied to the principle of equality and ensuring everyone’s voice counts. The inclusion of opening and closing prayers at meetings is indicative of the broader understanding that ceremony is important. The importance of partnerships in which decisions are made together is a tangible action that stems from the principle of meeting the spirit and intent of the final agreements. Consensus-based decision-making emphasizes the collective rather than the individual. These principles are intentionally broad. While not everyone will agree on specific principles (e.g., which ceremony from which First Nation should be used in a graduation ceremony), the broader understanding that ceremony is important is an opportunity

to build common ground. Identifying areas of common ground will therefore be an important process in building YukonU's governance system. There have already been ways in which this has been exemplified at Yukon College. The brand new, made in the North Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Governance program was developed in full partnership with all fourteen Yukon First Nation governments. This partnership was integral to the whole process, including identifying program and learning outcomes, delivery model and course content, and much more.

Several of the challenges (and their related opportunities) associated with the *why* and *how* of Indigenizing university governance have already been identified, such as tokenism and avoiding a pan-Indigenous approach. The challenges of identifying principles of an Indigenized university governance model are similarly significant, but also present an opportunity to lead the way in having difficult conversations that require creative solutions. The best example of this tension between challenge and opportunity is the issue of academic freedom. "Academic Freedom is the freedom to teach and conduct research in an academic environment. Academic freedom is fundamental to the mandate of universities to pursue truth, educate students and disseminate knowledge and understanding."²¹ For universities to fulfill their role of pursuing and communicating truth, faculty must be provided with the freedom to tackle controversial subjects. In doing so, universities also have the

EXAMPLE:

Academic freedom and the story of Crow

For many years, a course at Yukon College taught the history of one region in the Yukon by beginning with the Ice Age. However, it excluded Yukon First Nation perspectives on how that region came to be. When this was pointed out, the course content was changed to present both the Ice Age, as well as a Yukon First Nations' version of history, including the story of Crow. For some instructors, this was not an issue. However, several instructors have since refused to teach the story of Crow, arguing that they have the academic freedom to teach the truth, as supported by the available facts and evidence. They do not see the story of Crow as supported by evidence. The argument here is that if they taught history as the story of Crow, what is to stop others from teaching a creationist version of history? These tensions demonstrate the challenging question of academic freedom that YukonU will have to address: How does an institution both protect academic freedom and create boundaries around how truth and evidence are understood when the knowledge systems that are involved have different interpretations of these concepts?

²¹ Universities Canada, "Statement on Academic Freedom."

responsibility to ensure that its faculty members are expressing views based on solid research, data, and evidence.²² Within a bicameral system, it is the role of the board to protect academic freedom and it is the role of the senate to ensure the conditions are right for individuals to pursue truth and for students to learn.

In considering an Indigenized bicameral system, the issue of academic freedom raises challenging questions of how “evidence” and “proof” are understood. This is demonstrated by the sidebar on the previous page. Within a traditional university setting, the concepts of evidence and proof are interpreted through Western academic standards such as rigorous scientific methods. Such standards are not easily applied to Indigenous knowledge or traditional stories, nor should they be. As Carol Geddes describes, "traditional stories are much more than entertaining tales but are clear guides for living through the use of metaphor". Julie Cruikshank wrote extensively on the role of stories and metaphors in her work as an anthropologist in the Yukon. She describes,

Senior Yukon First Nation women - Mrs. Angela Sidney, Mrs. Kitty Smith, and Mrs. Annie Ned - chose to record stories in the 1970s and early 1980s that they considered essential to charting a good life. With a clear and steady purpose, each explained that when a young person came to consult her in times of difficulty, she would think back and recall a traditional story that had helped her through a similar life situation. Such stories, they insisted, are 'good to think with'. Their work had a clear and steady purpose, and it would please each of them to know that their guidance continues.²³

The implications of these tensions between academic freedom and Indigenization are twofold for YukonU. First, the institution will have to address its understanding of academic freedom in the context of Indigenization at an early stage. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it will have to create a safe space for having these difficult conversations and accept that it will not arrive at the perfect answer immediately.

There are a number of steps that Yukon College should take to continue working through the relationship between Indigenization and university governance within the transition to YukonU. In several cases, these steps are already underway.

- Continue the conversation both internally and with external institutional allies.
- Explore Indigenous governance principles and identify actions that align with these principles.
- Explore Indigenization as it relates/applies beyond board and senate to operational processes.

²² Higher Thinking Strategies, “Academic Freedom.”

²³ Julie Cruikshank, personal communication.

- Identify the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required to ensure Indigenization is an outcome in governance and identify ways to foster that collective knowledge, skill, and attitude.
- Indigenizing policy research project currently underway in partnership with the 2018-2019 Jane Glassco Northern Fellowship to explore how universities can be inclusive of Indigenous peoples through policies, existing and new, that span from university governance and operations.
- Expand the process that the Yukon College Board of Governors is currently going through (to develop Indigenization principles that it will apply to their governance practices and decision-making) to include the academic council.

In the path to becoming YukonU, the institution will not and cannot be everything to everyone. However, this should not be presented as a challenge or barrier. Rather, Yukon College needs to continue to work with Yukon First Nations - including leadership, Elders, community members, and others - in defining what the university will become and to work through the challenges that may arise. It is not only a challenge, but an opportunity; Yukon College/YukonU and the First Nations representatives that are part of this process have the opportunity to lead the conversation on Indigenizing university governance.

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Appendix 1 - List of Participating Institutions

British Columbia Association of Institutes and Universities (BCAIU)
British Columbia Institute of Technology
Capilano University
Emily Carr University of Art and Design
Higher Thinking Strategies Limited, Ottawa
Justice Institute of British Columbia
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
University of the Fraser Valley
University of Northern BC
University of Regina
University of Saskatchewan
University of Toronto
Vancouver Island University
Yukon College