



Inspiring Northern Potential

YukonU Foundation Impact Report
July 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021



Photo: Alistair Maitland

Photo: archibould.com

Yukon University
Canada's first university north of 60°



Greetings,

In 2021, we celebrated our first full year as Yukon University. I was honoured to join Team YukonU in August 2021 and begin my path to becoming a northerner: meeting the people, visiting the places and discovering the purpose that brings our organization to life. Since I arrived, I've learned many things, but a common message has been clear—YukonU is powered by a passionate, generous community who like to give in any way they can to create the best learning and research environment in Canada's north. For that and everything you do, thank you.

As we move into our second year as a university, we do so with a new map. Our 2022–2027 Strategic Plan is entitled "Becoming," and it will guide our decisions and actions on this journey of fully embracing and becoming Yukon University.

I invite your continued engagement with YukonU, and with our students and graduates, as we write the next chapter of our story.

I look forward to meeting you—or seeing you again—soon.

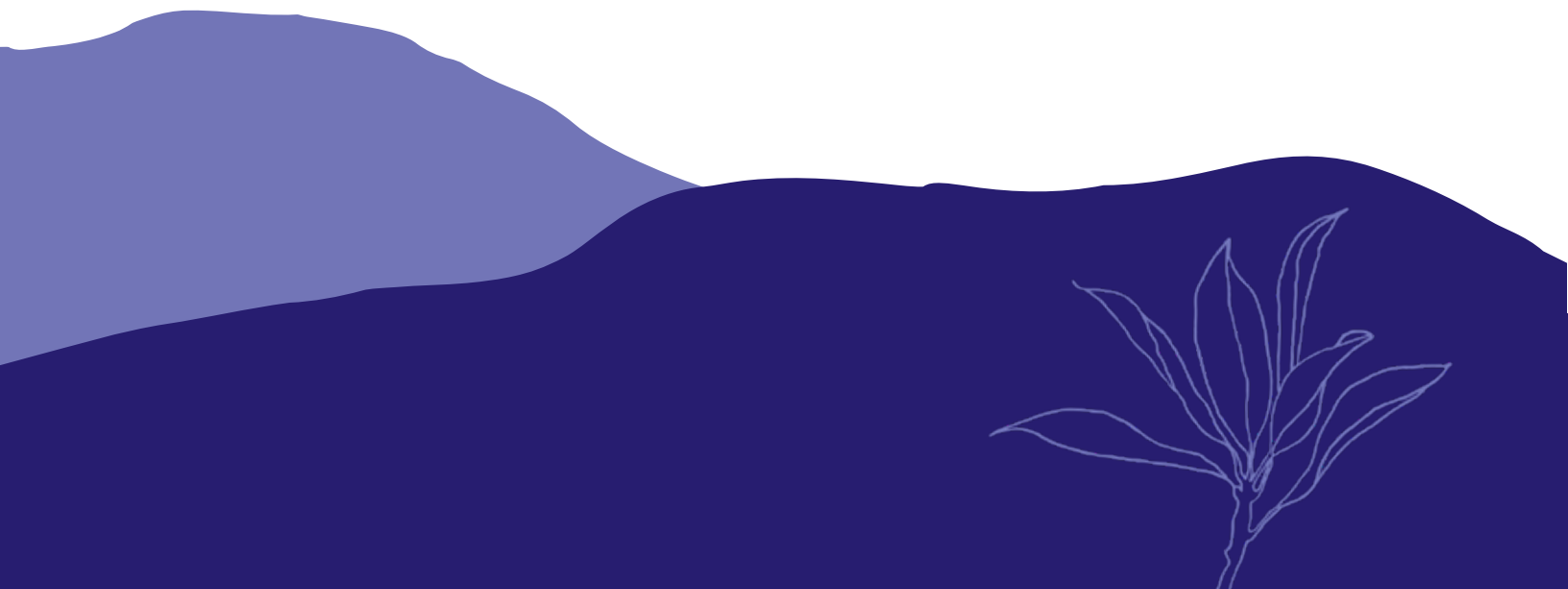
Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lesley Brown".

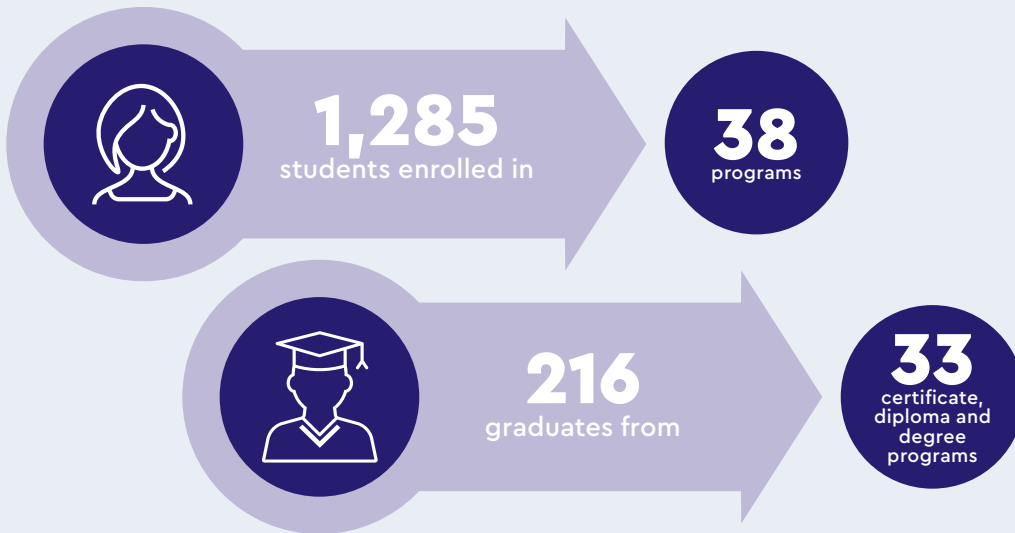
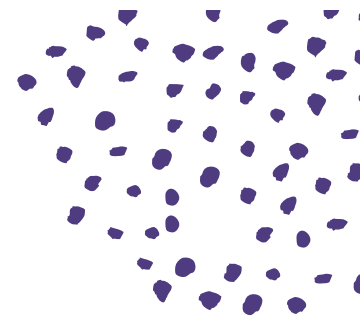
Dr. Lesley Brown
President and Vice Chancellor
Yukon University



Dr. Lesley Brown and wife, Paddy Maclean, in August 2021, with their car packed to the brim, starting their journey to the Yukon.



Support from partners, like you, helped Yukon University reach a number of significant milestones, including:



The pandemic meant that many classes took place online or in a blend of face-to-face and remote learning.

This way of teaching and learning was new for many instructors and students. The capacities developed for online learning continue to create potential for YukonU—even with in-class learning resuming in Fall 2021—by giving students needing to self-isolate or care for a sick family member the ability to join their class remotely in some cases.

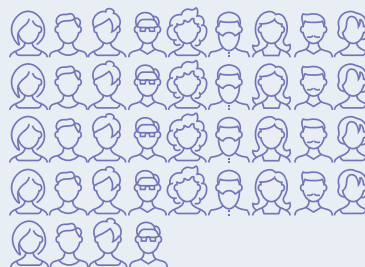
Our “made-in-Yukon” degrees:

Enrolment
Bachelor of
Business Administration



63 students

Enrolment
Bachelor of Arts in
Indigenous Governance



40 students

Course delivery (Sept 2020 to July 2021):

- › 293 online
- › 35 blended
- › 89 face-to-face

Generous gifts from supporters like you provided **\$44,750** in scholarships, bursaries and awards to **38** students

Thank you!



Alice Thrasher



Joe Thrasher



Empowering students to be change leaders in their communities and beyond

Meet Alice Thrasher and Joe Thrasher—third-year YukonU students in the Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Governance (IGD). The daughter-father duo connect to the program remotely from their home in Inuvik, NWT.

"The program has grounded us more in the land and our culture," says Alice. "I've seen a change in my dad—it's brought him back to the land. He hadn't gone hunting or camping in over 20 years." Through the program's focus on the strength of Indigenous people, Joe has rekindled his connection to the land: "I grew up on the land. For a time of two years, I lived with my grandparents with no stores and just eating native foods on our land. It's the best life you can live. My mitts, my parka, I feel so proud to wear them again."

For Alice, she is reconnecting with her Inuvialuktun language and sharing her learnings through her Tea & Maktak Facebook page. "Our language is slowly falling asleep," said Alice. "The language preservation and activism courses at YukonU made me want to do something to keep our language alive."

Alice and Joe hope to graduate in 2023 and you might wonder ... do they study and do assignments together? When asked this, Joe answered: "Alice has a better vocabulary in English than me. I just use simple words so she proofreads my stuff. But when it comes to oral history and on the land, I can teach her a lesson!" That is what Joe plans to do after he graduates: he wants to share his own oral history as a residential school survivor who has found strength in his culture and from his learnings at YukonU about the history and resilience of Indigenous people. "This is a really great program to be in. If you want to make a difference in your community and you want to go back to school, take this program. We need more people in this area."

“ The language preservation and activism courses at YukonU made me want to do something to keep our language alive.

Alice Thrasher, student
Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Governance
Yukon University

Together, we thrive: supporting students to continue their studies

With much of the teaching and learning in the 2020–21 year taking place online, it was essential to bolster supports to ensure students could continue with their planned studies. Enter Connect2YukonU, supported by funds from CIBC! The initiative gave students a point of contact while the campus was shut down—a friendly voice or face to reach out to for support. Whether it was related to mental health, academic or financial needs, the staff supporting Connect2YukonU helped students navigate a difficult time and access YukonU services. Between July 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, YukonU students booked 466 appointments for counselling and 884 for academic support.

One of the Connect2YukonU success stories was the Virtual Elders program: when a student who was ready to drop out of their program reached out for help, Elder Nina Bolton provided inspirational and concrete guidance that helped this student through a difficult time and to complete the semester.

Elder Nina said: "Especially during the beginning of COVID, we lost contact with others. People were afraid to go outside or to reach out. For students, it added to their isolation. With the Virtual Elders program, Elders could talk to students, give them a different perspective, let them know they weren't alone, and encourage them to keep their vision and focus alive."

Life works in really mysterious ways... been feeling really sad and depressed lately and had a super s****y day today but when I got to my dad's house my university sent me a care package that made me burst into tears... Hopefully tomorrow is a good day.



Many students experienced anxiety, loneliness and stress as they persevered through their program during the pandemic. YukonU mailed over 500 wellness packages to students as they headed into exams in Spring 2021. Donations to the SOS North campaign from staff, faculty and the community were matched by the Rotary Club of Whitehorse to make this project possible.



Elder Nina Bolton

Your support = positive impact.



Photo: archbould.com

The future of our world

BMO Financial Group's five-year, \$400,000 commitment is supporting the establishment of a permafrost institute at the YukonU Research Centre (YRC). Led by Dr. Fabrice Calmels, the YRC permafrost research team is actively carrying out critical research and contributing to innovative solutions that address climate change challenges in Canada's North. BMO's investment will enable a new permafrost research "mobile lab" for the YRC team to take on the road across the territory.



Technology tools for success

Forty YukonU students received a brand-new laptop to support their educational success during the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to a gift from Lenovo. Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel and other donors provided a one-year internet package for 17 of these students.



#YukonBusinessesForGood, photo: Gord Curran

Sustaining social enterprise

YukonU Innovation & Entrepreneurship worked to promote the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for social enterprise through the SDG Hub Yukon project, with funding from the Government of Canada. One outcome of the project included a parka making program, led by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation. The program employed local artists to teach pattern making, sewing and traditional artisanal skills, and entrepreneurship. The aim was to reduce inequalities by empowering workshop participants with the skills to create a profitable and sustainable business on their traditional territory.



"Becoming" — beading on tanned hide, 2021.

Celebrating our path forward

To celebrate the establishment of Yukon University, First Nation beaders from across the territory collaborated on a communal art piece that was gifted to the institution. The piece features beaded crocuses, YukonU's new symbol, surrounded by flowers sewn using both historic and modern patterns. "[Becoming]' is a response to *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*, where our Elders called for an institution that would allow our students to stay here, in their territory, where they're from—with the support of their family and community—to learn to navigate both the worlds they have to walk in," says Tosh Southwick, former associate vice president of Indigenous Engagement and Reconciliation for YukonU.

Cultural connections

Investments from Bell's Let's Talk Diversity Fund and RBC are enhancing YukonU mental health and wellness programs and facilities, including the re-development of Roddy's Camp—an outdoor space where students gather for campfires, chats, sharing and healing with Elders and peers. The redevelopment will reflect the vision and path put forth by Roddy's family to facilitate new ways of knowing, doing and seeing at the academic level, as well as land-based learning opportunities that connect to Yukon First Nations ways of doing.



Roddy's Camp is named after Elder Roddy Blackjack, a former leader of the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and an advocate for a balance of education and traditional ways, photo: Yukon Archives



Celebrating the May 2021 Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Governance graduates Victoria Holmes, Coleson Ford and Cynthia James with handcrafted drums made by Joey Migwams and painted by faculty member, Lianne Charlie.

Creating capacity for self-determination

Power Corporation of Canada's donation of \$100,000 is supporting the development of an Institute of Indigenous Self-Determination at YukonU, including the design and development of a mentorship program.

"The Institute of Indigenous Self-Determination will support First Nations governments in their implementation of their self-government agreements through research and capacity development and will share important stories of the struggle for—and achievement of—self-determination. This significant investment will be used to design programs supporting the professional development of individuals serving their communities in Canada's North," said Chùsi Robin Bradasch, associate vice president Indigenous Engagement and Partnerships.

Incubating prosperity

Innovation & Entrepreneurship at YukonU launched a Yukon business incubator in January 2021, thanks to a \$400K contribution from TD Bank Group and support from Canada's Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). Over four years, IncubateNorth will help growth-stage entrepreneurs by providing supports to grow their businesses locally, nationally and internationally. Seven Yukon businesses (Yukon Built, Neighbourly North, Yukon Furs, Yukon Grow, North Star Agriculture, Free Pour Jenny's and Firebean Coffee) are working through milestones on their business development journey as part of IncubateNorth—Canada's first regional incubator.



With support from IncubateNorth, Neighbourly North recently reached a sales milestone of \$1M.

“Managing a high-growth business is hard. It is exciting, and fulfilling, but it comes with sacrifice and hard decisions. Being able to lean on the IncubateNorth team and the support they provide as we have gone through these growing pains, has made us a stronger team.

Ben Pereira, CEO, Neighbourly North



Dear YukonU partners and supporters,

"Together, we thrive." You may have seen these words on YukonU's website or perhaps on a tote bag that you picked up at Wykes' Your Independent Grocer. I want to share a story with you about how true these words are for the Yukon University Foundation, YukonU students and alumni, and supporters like you.

Yukon's construction industry is booming with significant need for skilled tradespeople. As a locally owned and operated company, Ketz Construction Corporation knows the value of hiring locally for building projects. But this isn't always possible and in some cases, companies bring in crews from down south. That's where Peter Densmore, Ketz's president and founder, saw an exciting possibility. With a significant investment through the YukonU Foundation (YUF) into student success and carpentry programming, Ketz Construction's support has enabled a whole other cohort of students in the pre-apprenticeship program at YukonU this fall. The gift means doors opening for students to well-paying jobs in the trades, and increasing the workpool for Yukon's construction industry with quality apprentices and entry-level trades people. This kind of win-win story is an example of community engagement to support local needs, and working together, for a thriving Yukon.

YUF is a group of alumni and friends of YukonU who volunteer their time to help make YukonU a success. We thank our generous donors earnestly for their support over the last year and we invite those of you who want to join our work to create a vibrant and thriving north, together, to reach out to YUF by contacting any of the board members or Blake Buckle, director of development, at 867 336 0109.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodney Snow".

Rodney Snow, QC
Chair, Yukon University Foundation

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*We look forward to connecting
with you.*

For further information, please contact:

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