

**Kluane Lake School
Review Report
April 2016**

DRAFT

Kluane Lake School Review April 2016

School Principal: Rose-Marie Blair

Date of Review: April 2016

School Review Team:

Simon Blakesley, Director, Student Achievement/System Accountability, Yukon Education
Bob Walker, School Council Liaison, Yukon Education
Sharon Shadow, First Nations Education Consultant, Yukon Education

Meetings with the School included:

- Students
- Teachers and support staff
- School Council and First Nations representatives
- School administration

School Context

Kluane Lake School offers K-4 to Grade 7 with 7 students as of February 2016. The school is located in Destruction Bay, located between Kluane Lake and the Alaska Highway. It is a three-room school with additional facilities for gym, library, and a stage for performing arts. The students are bussed 18km from and to Burwash Landing. Enrollment can fluctuate significantly from year to year.

The majority of students are Kluane First Nation (KFN) citizens. Southern Tutchone is the traditional language spoken by the Elders and members of the KFN. Southern Tutchone language and culture is taught at the school each afternoon by one part-time Southern Tutchone language teacher. Expectations are that students will develop an understanding of their community and cultures while gaining the skills needed to be successful in the larger world. The school has a teacher/principal who is in her tenth year at Kluane Lake School along with another staff member who is Intermediate Teacher and Learning Assistant. The Southern Tutchone language teacher is part-time. An Education Assistant has been hired full-time to support the needs of the students. This year the school has also taken on a student teacher from the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program (YNTEP).

The priority of the School Council has been that all students have an understanding of their language, culture and heritage, become good citizens, and have the capacity to integrate into the larger educational system at any point in their education. While the review took place, preliminary plans for a new school in Burwash were under discussion.

Norms and Culture:

Characteristics:

Continuously improving schools are socially and culturally inclusive with high expectations for each learner. A focus on continuous improvement is evident.

Observations of the Team:

- The team observed a warm, calm, and caring atmosphere at KLS. For example, all students regardless of grade start the morning together for open exercises before moving to their respective classrooms
- Reflective of the caring and safe environment, all students indicated to the team that they have a “go-to” adult with whom they can talk should they have an problems or need advice or support
- While small, there is a team or “family” feel to the school that sees all students and staff working together. For example, students start their day off together, singing O’ Canada in English, Southern Tutchone, and French
- School Council shared their view with the team that there is no bullying at the school and all students are very grounded and connected with each other
- Prior to the review, KLS had just completed the annual Muskrat Camp (rated as the best to date). This large-scale camp is attended by families, Kluane First Nations members, students from other schools, services providers (e.g. RCMP, Conservation officers, Parks Canada, the Arctic Institute)
- The team heard that students grades 4 and up completed the trapping course in order to qualify as assistants on a trapline in the future. The team was impressed with the connections made between camp activities and academic learning (GPS use, photography and printing using Ipads, linkages to literacy and numeracy)
- Southern Tutchone language classes are offered in ways that are hands-on, active, and fun for younger primary students
- Staff shared with the team that they would like to incorporate more physical education activities for their students that were also culturally reflective. Students also shared they would like to have a gym for PE classes and activities like basketball

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Continue the efforts that make KLS a safe, open, and inclusive school that strives to meet the needs of all learners and their families
- Continue to work closely with KFN in the effort to strengthen language and culture throughout the learning activities offered at KLS
- Work with the staff at KFN and the First Nations Programs and Partnerships (FNPP) unit at Yukon Education to identify PE activities that are fun and doable in a context where the school has no specific gym space

School and Community

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools build a shared commitment to success for each learner. The school collaborates with parents, students, school council, First Nations and community to support student learning. Ongoing parent/community involvement is embedded in school culture and the school communicates about progress and challenges in multiple ways.

Observations of the Team:

- The team heard from School Council that they perceive the school to be inviting and welcoming to parents. Questions and concerns are addressed thoughtfully and quickly by the principal and staff members, and conversely, the school feels very supported by the community
- The principal and staff are accessible and supportive, and conduct home visits with parents and students. School Council appreciates the hard work of the staff to support families and students to attend and achieve to their potential
- The school staff are members of the community with fluency in the Kluane Southern Tutchone dialect, have family connections throughout the Kluane region, and are well-known in Destruction Bay and Burwash
- Being a small school, KLS reaches out to include other schools in order to support and maintain an extended “educational community” along the Alaska Highway
- The team learned from School Council of their efforts and those of Kluane First Nation to support students, the school, and educational success for KLS learners. In particular, the

staff appreciate the dedicated support provided by the KFN Education Support Worker to support students, families, and to bring Elders to the school

- Related to the above, staff at KLS were clear in their broad appreciation for Kluane First Nation and the strong efforts of KFN to partner with and support the school

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Continue the efforts to work with the community and foster the positive relationship with the Kluane First Nation to promote and expand the land-based learning opportunities currently offered to KLS students
- Continue to foster a school environment that is supportive of students, open to parents, responsive to School Council, and reflective of Kluane First Nation language, values, and culture
- Maintain and strengthen relationships with current partners in the region to promote meaningful learning opportunities for KLS students and those from other schools

School Organization

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools organize structures, actions, and interventions to ensure success for each learner. Work in the school is coherent and aligned to focus on improvement. Actions and interventions include effectively differentiating resources, time and professional development to get results. The Department supports the school and makes connections across the Territory to build capacity.

Observations of the Team:

- The staff at KLS make a strong effort together to share in the work of the school in order to benefit the needs of all learners
- The strengths of each staff members' skill sets and knowledge complement each other are deployed in order to maximize learning
- The team wondered whether the school would benefit from a review of resources and materials at the school, the intention being to clear out and remove materials no longer in use

- In the previous review, a concern was staff engagement in staff meetings: this concern has been addressed and is no longer an issue. Staff meetings are conducted as team meetings where individualized student progress is discussed
- The team heard that the school is making a field trip to Ottawa in June to extend student learning. The principal, staff, and the Kluane Lake School Council have worked together to engage local organizations and businesses to support this endeavour
- In order to provide French language and cultural instruction, a French monitor visits for blocks of time (3x1 week periods). Staff shared with the team that they would like more opportunities to access French resources- perhaps in coordination with St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction
- The team noted that the organization of the school's office area and functions is a challenge due to the lack of consistent and regular administrative support

Recommendations for moving forward:

- As a staff, review instructional materials and other resources in the school, and either return to the Department or dispose of resources no longer utilized in order to better utilize space
- Continue the efforts to work creatively and collaboratively as a small staff to maximize the learning experiences that are available to KLS students
- Discuss with the Superintendent and the Principal of St. Elias Community School whether potential exists for collaboration in order to support French language learning for KLS students

School Processes and Progress

Characteristics: Continuously improving schools take responsibility for improving outcomes for students. They use evidence to guide decisions and actions and have processes in place to collectively monitor progress and make adjustments in key areas of their work. They demonstrate improvement over time – for individual students, groups of students, and the school.

Observations of the Team:

- It was clear to the team that all school staff know the current achievement levels of their students, and can devote focused attention where required to promote continued academic achievement
- Staff shared that literacy and numeracy are the central focus of their activities with students, and that this emphasis needs to be continued for the future
- In reviewing the School Growth Plan and goals identified by the principal and staff, the team heard that some (but not all) targets would be achieved by students by the end of the school year. The principal advised the review team that the timeframe of goal #1 target (80% of students reading/writing at grade level) should have been worded to extend beyond one year or grade, and will refine this in the 16-17 School Growth Plan
- Related to the above, the team heard that goal #2 (inclusion of Kluane First Nation traditional values) was on track for achievement this year
- The team heard from staff that a number of assessments are used to gauge student achievement. Staff shared with the team that writing, editing, and re-drafting is at times met with resistance from students who may find the writing process tedious
- Individualized student learning is done through projects such as robotics. The team was very impressed with the high levels of student engagement and the knowledge students shared with the team. Resource people from Whitehorse have been utilized to visit the school in order to support students and staff in this work
- When reviewing data and evidence with the staff, it was clear to the team that staff are aware of specific challenges to good attendance and the causal factors behind this

- School Council members shared that they would like to know more about where their students are “at” academically (in ways that respect and preserve confidentiality)
- Staff members shared with the team that they would like to work towards stronger ties with St. Elias Community School in a number of areas, and in particular around ways that a staff can work more effectively as a team

Recommendations for moving forward:

- Use individualized data and evidence, combined with the individual knowledge of each student, to set individual learning goals that are specific to students and are realistic for KLS staff and students to achieve
- Related to the above, as a staff, review student data and evidence considering current resources to set realistic, meaningful, and achievable academic, language, and cultural goals in the School Growth Plan, with support of School Council and Kluane First Nation
- Engage in exploratory discussions with the area superintendent and principal of St. Elias Community School regarding potential areas of mutual support
- Review/discuss the above with School Council to promote their understanding of student achievement at KLS

In conclusion

The team enjoyed its visit to Kluane Lake School and appreciated the unique nature of the learning context that exists at this remote three-classroom school. The team was impressed at the efforts made at this small school to deliver individualized education to each student. Further, the support for the school by the Kluane Lake School Council, Kluane First Nation and the broader community through close relationships that nurture all KLS learners is highly commendable.

When asking the question “Where does the school need to grow to”, the team heard from many participants of the anticipated construction of a community school in Burwash Landing. This shaped the conversation in ways that, perhaps, moderated educational thought with respect to the future role of the present school in Destruction Bay. The review team did not perceive this as a negative aspect, but rather as evidence of a positive, optimistic, and forward-looking view of education where a diversity of opportunities would meet the goals and aspirations of students, their families, the Kluane First Nation, and the community.

Practices to share:

- The ongoing, supportive, and open relationship between staff, School Council, parents, and the Kluane First Nation
- The warm, friendly, and responsive learning environment that is created at KLS
- The muskrat camp as a central activity which unites schools, community, family, and allied agencies in the promotion of Kluane First Nation culture and Southern Tutchone language
- The very strong focus on chess across grade levels which sees many students enjoying becoming highly proficient at this game

Considerations for Yukon Education

- Given the small size of the school and teacher/student interest, review the consultant time allocated to support and integrate technology into instructional practice
- Review with the school the current status of administrative assistant time/support and the ways that the Learning Resource Centre at Yukon Education can support the school library
- Consider ways that French language instruction could be further supported at KLS
- Develop and support ways that school staffs from rural schools can network with neighbouring schools to foster educational leadership, share promising practices, and build capacity