

FOR RELEASE #09-113
May 11, 2009

Additional Yukon First Nations Curriculum Materials Released

WHITEHORSE – Two new books for early readers featuring Yukon First Nations’ culture are now being distributed to elementary schools throughout the territory.

“We know there is a positive correlation between cultural relevance and academic achievement. The release of these books is one example of our ongoing work with First Nation partners to improve academic achievements for First Nation students,” Education Minister Patrick Rouble said. “All Yukon students will appreciate the Yukon themes and benefit from the local First Nation cultural content.”

Authors of the books *A Time for Bear Roots*, written by Rosemary Popadynech and *Rabbit Stew for Grandma*, written by Maggie Leary, are teachers at J.V. Clark School in Mayo. The two readers feature the school’s staff, students and First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Elders. Last Friday, the school celebrated with a book launch party in the school library. Elders, chief and council, mayor and council, the school council and students were all invited to attend for readings and book signing.

The two readers were developed collaboratively by the NorthWind Books working group, a sub-committee of the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee. This group consists of classroom teachers and an Elder. Department of Education staff, from the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit and the Curriculum unit, supported the project.

“It is very exciting to see more local books being developed. It is important for students to experience the traditional knowledge and skills of their Elders firsthand,” Fran Etzel, a member of NorthWind Books working group, said. “Students now have an opportunity to learn, appreciate, respect and experience First Nation culture from their own classroom. This is a great start. I look forward to assisting with the development of more readers for our schools.”

The Department of Education now has a total of 16 readers, including these two new readers, under the NorthWind and Eaglecrest book labels.

-30-

Attachment: Images of the two book covers and background information about the Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee

Contact:

Roxanne Vallevand
Cabinet Communications
867-633-7949
roxanne.vallevand@gov.yk.ca

Michele Royle
Communications, Education
867-393-7102
michele.royle@gov.yk.ca

Attachment: : Images of the two book covers and Background Information



Rabbit Stew for Grandma



A Time for Bear Roots

The Yukon First Nations Education Advisory Committee (YFNEAC) had identified development and implementation of curriculum and resources that feature Yukon First Nations' cultures and languages as one of its goals in its 2008 report, *Helping Students Succeed: Visions, goals and priorities for Yukon First Nations education* available for download at www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/yfneac.pdf.

The YFNEAC provides technical guidance, support and recommendations related to Yukon First Nations Education to the Department of Education's Public School branch. Seats on the YFNEAC are available to the 14 Yukon First Nations. It also has an Elder representative, and a First Nation co-chair. Department of Education representatives participate as technicians and observers. The department's Assistant Deputy Minister of Public Schools is the other co-chair.

The YFNEAC ensures that Elders' perspectives and knowledge are incorporated in the programs in public schools. It provides a regular forum for Yukon First Nations to have input on the education system, and it allows the Department of Education to better align its work with Yukon First Nations' goals and priorities in education.

The NorthWind Books working group is a sub-committee of the YFNEAC. The working group consists of classroom teachers, reading recovery specialists, an Elder and a representative from the Council of Yukon First Nations. The Public Schools branch primary coordinator and the First Nations Programs and Partnership cultural consultant are both from the Department of Education and provide technical support.

The first set of readers featuring Yukon First Nations content were published in 2003, when seven books were produced by the publisher Eaglecrest Books. Since then, nine books have been published by the Department of Education under the NorthWind Books label. Currently, the First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit is working on adapting the primary readers for use in Yukon First Nation language programs. Adaptations will also include lesson plans for the language teachers to use in their classrooms.

The First Nations Programs and Partnerships unit is also looking at wider distribution for the NorthWind books; individuals, First Nations and other Canadian jurisdictions are requesting use and purchase of these books. Currently the books are also available in French for use in Yukon schools.

A recent newsletter from the First Nation Programs and Partnerships unit is available for download at www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/news/fnpp_news_vol_1_issue_1.pdf. PDF files of the two new readers are available for download at www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/index.html.