

Haa atwuskoowu tin (With our Knowledge)

Cynthia James

Jane Glassco Arctic Fellow



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(WITH OUR KNOWLEDGE)**

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The Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship Program is aimed at young Northerners, especially Aboriginal Northerners, aged 25-35, who want to build a strong North guided by Northerners. It is for those who, at this stage in their lives, are looking for additional support, networks and guidance from mentors and peers across the North and throughout Canada as they deepen their understanding of important issues facing their region and develop policy ideas to help address them. The program was named in honour of Jane L. Glassco, Gordon Foundation trustee and daughter of founders Walter and Elizabeth Gordon. It was through Jane's direct leadership that the Foundation became deeply interested in Northern and Arctic issues, and in supporting young Northerners.

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Cynthia is currently working as the Education Support Worker for the Ta'an Kwach'an Council in Whitehorse, Yukon. Ta'an Kwach'an is one of the two First Nation governments located in the Whitehorse area. Cynthia's role is to provide Ta'an Kwach'an citizens and kindergarten to grade 12 students with educational tools and resources for a successful journey through their elementary and high school careers. Cynthia enjoys the fast paced variety of her position, and loves the interaction with the community and students.

Her involvement with climate change action and adaptation is purely at a 'grassroots' level and she applies her experiences gained from spending time on the land with her family.

Community

Cynthia was raised with her eight sisters and four brothers on the land in a cabin with no running water or electricity. She is a member of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the Yukon.

Fellowship Focus

As a recipient of the 2010 Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship, Cynthia will look at Youth Engagement: Clan Law Education and Community Development policy in the communities of Carcross and Tagish. Though it is often mentioned within Carcross/Tagish First Nation culture how important youth are, there is presently a lack of engagement. Through her research Cynthia will attempt to find ways to encourage youth participation in the Carcross/Tagish First Nation community, and outline how best to implement them.

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Preamble

I began this journey with the Jane Glassco Arctic Fellowship with the intention of research on climate change and adaptation policy specific to my region of Carcross and Tagish Yukon. However, in my process of discovery there were some life transitions that changed my policy topic to Youth Engagement: Clan Law Education and Community Development policy. I was appointed to sit on a constitutional review committee for Carcross Tagish First Nation, and in this process I realized how little I knew about our system of governance, and how the youth were not mentioned at all within the constitution, and had little to no legitimate engagement within the governance process. The importance of understanding our clan system started the journey of exploring possible solutions to youth engagement within CTFN governance. I have grown passionate about this topic, and I believe that this process could be a starting point of community development for my communities of Carcross and Tagish. It is always mentioned within our culture how important the youth are, but there are no clear methods of engagement. I do not claim that my ideas are the only answer to this identified policy gap within the governance of CTFN, however, I do believe they could be a stepping stone to increased dialogue and awareness.

Purpose statement

This paper is intended to help effect the development of a policy that ensures the understanding of community clan development to be implemented for the benefit of Carcross Tagish First Nation youth. It is to empower and enable the CTFN youth to assert ownership of their culture and traditions through clan law education, for the enhancement of responsibility and understanding of clan law, and to establish a strong, legitimate participation within the Government of Carcross Tagish First Nation. In the context of community clan development for the youth of Carcross Tagish First Nation, the development of my ideas in this paper are to enhance the importance of CTFN youth engagement and identify gaps within the governance process. It includes three principles for consideration, as well as suggestions for clan development: 1) The official formation of the CTFN youth council. 2) The formation of a CTFN youth society. 3) The importance and benefits of sharing clan development specific to youth within the community.

Connection of Yukon First Nations

"We must understand where we have been in order to understand where we are going."

Together Today for our Children Tomorrow, 1973

Families are what closely connect each First Nation community within the Yukon. It seems that although each community is unique, the connections of culture and language have many similarities in language dialects, marriage between communities, and similar ceremonies such as the potlatch. My paper is specific to my First Nation: Carcross Tagish First Nation. But I have to make reference to all Yukon First Nation people in order to highlight the past as it pertains to clan law. First Nations have oral history that dates back to time immemorial when Crow created the world. Storytelling is the tool used for the passing of information and traditional knowledge to the future generations. The Yukon First Nation people speak dialects of Athabaskan and Tlingit Languages, including Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Han, Tlingit, Gwitchin, Kaska, Tagish, and Upper Tanana.

Storytelling: Crow Story

"The story of the Crow story is a long story. And no end...no end to that. I think you can't finish [in] six months or something if you really know all the story. That's how the world, that's how the world, yeah, that's how this world [is] set up. And when he fly from that place there he fly over to Fish Lake, Marsh Lake, down that way, all the way to Frances Lake. He fly all over [the] place, all this world. He put the fish in there, drop it, drop it, drop it, drop, that's why all the fresh water fish. Yeah. He got that fish from Eagle. That's why we got all kinds of fish."

Johnnie Smith Yukon Archives Sound Recording Collection, 1998

The natural law and connection with all living things has always been paramount to the First Nation people's way of life. Traditional knowledge is passed on. Taking care of and respecting the earth, air, land and water was the lifestyle of First Nation people. To take only what was needed to sustain life was a policy and practice. Traditional knowledge is passed on through generations. People long ago were taught through experience and hands-on methods of hunting and gathering that were combined with migration patterns according to the seasons. The ability to predict weather patterns and animal migration patterns were just a few of the skills First Nations people gained through spiritual connections with all living things. People long ago had

governance processes based on values learned from the natural environment surrounding them, and an agreement to live in harmony with all living things.

"That Crow, he does everything, teaches everything."

Kitty Smith

(in Cruikshank: Dän Dhá Ts'edenintth'é/Reading Voices)

The Yukon First Nation governance models were set out in clan systems of wolf and crow moiety. Moieties are two social or ritual groups into which a people are divided. This set out the way clans would interact with other clans and kept an order to the community. The Carcross/Tagish

area has six clans that are recognized. Two of the six are Wolf, and the other four are Crow moiety. Daklaweidi (Killerwhale) and Yen Yedi (Wolf) are both of Wolf Moieties. Deisheetaan (Beaver), Ganaxtedi (Raven), Kookhittaan (Crow), Ishkahittan (Frog) are all of Crow Moiety.¹ A citizen follows their mother's people and clan membership is matriarchal throughout the Yukon Territory. This means that a child belongs to the clan of his or her mother. In the past, this system had many traditional laws. A comprehensive and widely held definition of traditional knowledge was developed through the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples:

"Traditional knowledge means the accumulated body of knowledge, observations, and understanding about the environment, and about the relationship of living beings with one another and the environment, that is rooted in the traditional way of life of first nations."

These traditional laws governed the people and ensured a peaceful balanced lifestyle. The Yukon First Nation people still practice these types of traditional laws today, and the differences are associated with language and region. For the Tlingit/Tagish people of my region, traditional clan laws are the system of our self-government,² and they generally include, for example:

- Wolf and Crow people have to marry people from the opposite clan. For example: A Wolf would marry a person from the opposite clan, the Crow clan.
- Clan members hold the rights to stories, songs, crests, regalia, objects, art, and any other forms that express its clan systems.
- The oldest member of the family carries the right to grant permission for use of stories and songs, and in some cases, a whole family discussion occurs prior to making a final decision.
- Crows take Crow family names; Wolves take Wolf names.
- A Wolf or a Crow cannot tell stories or songs that rightfully belong to the opposite clan.
- If somebody wants to hunt, fish, pick berries or gather medicine on another clan's traditional territory, he or she must first seek permission. This is out of respect for the fact that another clan owns the rights to use that land. They have the responsibility for taking care of the land and all other people have to report to them before using it.
- During potlatches (ie. funerals, naming, ceremonies), the opposite clan is responsible for certain procedures during a potlatch. For instance, when a Crow clan hosts a potlatch, they are responsible for

¹ CTFN Community Portal, www.ctfn.ca

² <http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/fnationgroups.html>

gifts to the Wolf clan (blankets, sewing, money) because the Wolves have to do the groundwork for the hosting clan.

- People from the opposite clan may be asked to witness and to be mediators during important events.
- Clans must reach a consensus before proceeding with decision-making.
- Clans must train their children in the responsibilities for carrying the stories, songs, dances, crests, regalia, and family practices.³

This traditional type of governance kept political affairs in order and clans lived in harmony with structures in place to solve disputes. This system is not based on individuals, but rather groups. If a person was hurt by another clan's member, it was the offender's clan that would pay and make amends with the victim's clan for the negative actions of their clan member. The payment to the affected clan would depend on the crime, and payment could come as a land parcel or harvesting area. The principle clan system of governance is practiced in present day within First Nation self-government. The involvement of youth within governance processes is set out to have a balance of voices, which would include elder's councils, so youth councils are considered an equally important voice. The CTFN governance structure includes the youth council, and is considered one of these governing bodies, however, it is unclear how this is constituted. Understandably, youth would first show initiative to engage in the role of establishing the youth council, but need clear guidance and support from the CTFN governance.

³ Ibid.

Social Structure/Youth Inclusion

Historically, young people within the clan system took on adult responsibilities early on, and were trained by aunts and uncles to develop land skills and harvesting methods. Parents had a gentler role, so aunts and uncles were feared as disciplinarians.⁴ All Tlingit married: boys after 16 and girls after 12 or 14, upon reaching maturity. The parents often arranged for the marriage of their children in their infancy. Comparatively, youth in the past had more structure and planning around their development by the community. There were ceremonies for the girls around the time of puberty. The girls spent time just outside the camp in a little hut learning to weave baskets or sew, and listened to aunts' stories about womanhood. The boys were taken out by their uncles and taught to hunt, fish, trap and use weapons. Generally, a young boy's first successful hunt was shared with the entire community in a ceremony that would prepare the boy for manhood. Presently, coming of age ceremonies for young people are rare. The purpose of coming of age ceremonies was to teach the youth their roles and responsibilities within the close-knit communities. Of course, girls and boys attend school at this age. A curriculum educating the youth in coming of age ceremonies could be incorporated into the classroom and would be beneficial as a community development initiative.

⁴ The American Museum of Natural History, *The Tlingit Indians* (1991):264

1. Introduction

1.1 The need for clan development CTFN youth

Clan law, as it currently pertains to the youth in the community, is dismally understood. Currently, there is one youth sitting on the general council, and the youth council is inactive. On the path to self-governance, there must be four attributes of good governance taken in to consideration:

- 1) *Legitimacy*
Concerns the way structures of governance are created and leaders chosen, and the extent of constituents' confidence and support in them.
- 2) *Power*
The acknowledged legal and cultural capacity and authority to make and exercise laws, resolve disputes, and carry on public administration.
- 3) *Resources*
The economic, cultural, social and natural resources, and information technology needed for the establishment and implementation of governance arrangements.
- 4) *Accountability*
Concerns the extent to which those in power must justify, substantiate and make their actions and decisions known.⁵

The youth council and the state of support for youth within the community is symbolic, and understandably there is an increasing need for educating community youth in clan law, specifically in matters pertaining to CTFN clan governance. The clan collection and use of clan knowledge is a delicate matter because of its connection to individual clan culture, and its link to the language in which it was created. The modern day governance model is based on clan laws that have governed our people since "Crow created the world."

Incorporating clan law into legislative and written policy models that are based around colonial and English language governance processes proves to be challenging in the infancy of self-government.

⁵ Institute of Governance (IOG) 1999; Plumptre and Graham 1999; Sterritt 2001; Westbury 2002.

“Self-government can mean different things to different people. Usually, it means the right to look after your own affairs. The Self-Government Agreement negotiated by C/TFN as part of the land claim process establishes the decision and law-making powers that C/TFN will have once the agreement is approved. C/TFN will be able to govern its own affairs, including making laws on a wide variety of topics affecting its citizens and its Settlement Land. As a self-governing First Nation, C/TFN will have its own constitution. A constitution is a legal framework that defines how a government is set up, how leaders are picked and how decisions and laws are made. The constitution also establishes a citizenship code.”

*Carcross Tagish First Nation Community Portal
www.ctfn.ca*

In the early steps of implementation within the process of self-governance, the use of the clan system does not manifest well with many of our people. But in stating this, it is important that CTFN youth and its citizens understand the value of using clan law in all aspects of governance to foster self-determination in citizens and members’ rights and interests. A clear process of adapting principles of clan law within our modern context, and creating an outline of “best practices” of how to best honour our traditional laws within this modern context, would be beneficial for creating governance. The challenge would be to determine which laws we learn and respect but do not enforce, and which laws we can still use today in our form of modern governance.

Therefore, an immediate need to increase the level of understanding of clan law policies will allow for future generations to use clan law respectfully. Doing so would prevent compromising the fundamental purposes of preserving the culture. Without including the legitimate involvement of youth, implementation is for naught. A sound understanding of governance clan law by youth will result in a more functional future government for CTFN.

CTFN is in its eighth year as a self-governing First Nation. All aspects of government legislation are based on the statutes of the government of CTFN Virtues and Values Book One – *Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our place, our Responsibilities*; and Book Two – *Traditional Family Beliefs and Practices*. Yet there have been no clear processes for the CTFN youth council described in the methods of involvement within the governance. Therefore, there is no guarantee that youth of the CTFN government have a clear and legitimate voice that matters and will be managed respectfully. This gap in governance needs to be rectified for the youth and future generations in order to foster a strong community and nation. An example of youth council engagement could be to create a youth council with governing powers and reporting set out the same as any council within the governance process.

1.2 Why should CTFN consider education and community development around clan law for youth?

The principal purpose of education and community development around clan law for youth is to guide engagement within governance of CTFN decisions, and also to avoid or minimize negative impacts to future generations' understanding of clan law values. Youth education and community development would help to streamline implementation of our self-government agreements for future community leaders and overall community understanding within the governance processes. Clan law is "clan business," however, without this information passed on to youth, there is a risk that the important clan governance principles will be lost. It becomes a collective community responsibility.

"There is a role for our own aboriginal ways of governance in our modern systems, I feel our modern governance structures/laws would be more sensitive plus solid if that was more the case all over."

*Nancy Karetak-Lindell
April 2012*

1.3 Why should CTFN youth be interested in clan law?

The advantage of Carcross Tagish First Nation youth engagement in the governance process specific to clan law is that (a) It is the current governance system, and in order for a strong future leadership the youth must be educated in the matter. (b) It is a part of the heritage and identity. (c) It puts preventative measures in place for future costs and streamlines clan law knowledge as it pertains to the governance process. For example, the leadership selection process has no identifiable involvement specific to the youth council expressed in any legislation or policy. The general council is the only council which currently has youth representation. It makes good sense to prepare the youth of the community to understand their own governance process so as to make future governance decisions. This could be accomplished by a program such as "leadership on the job" for future leaders, which would include involvement in the youth council. This would provide a foundation for youth interested in a future leadership role; this is an example of streamlining the transfer of knowledge.

1.4 Purpose of a clan law education community

Development youth policy

pol·i·cy

n. pl. pol·i·cies

1. A plan or course of action, as of a government, political party, or business, intended to influence and determine decisions, actions, and other matters.

A policy is simply an accepted course of action. In CTFN governance, consensus of the people is generally sought after. The purposes of adopting clan law education and community development policies for the youth of CTFN is to establish legitimate rules for engagement in a CTFN youth citizen clan law and community development project, and in particular, empower the CTFN youth within the process to manage and share in important governance decisions. This policy or action would also establish a method(s) for clan law education and community development.

Youth clan law community education project proposal:

The youth council will need additional starting costs and community support. Through the youth forum and a partnership with Yukon College's Carcross campus, a proposal should be written and submitted to all necessary stakeholders and funding agencies in the community, the Yukon, and nationally. The Carcross campus should agree to the use of space and resources for the CTFN youth council. Support letters from the RCMP, CTFN Governance, Community Health Centre, and elders council should be submitted with the proposal.

2. Timeline

2.1 What is the timeline for community development in clan law?

Below is the timeline of community development and education in clan law as it pertains to governance. It could be streamlined into a workplan with the following actions:

2.2 Actions February 2012 to February 2014

- Gather youth in a youth members' forum specific to the issue of clan law within governance, identify issues, identify speakers and participants in clan development and methods.
- Communicate to youth not available to public forum through social media, email, and telephone.
- Legitimately form a youth council which will be taken into consideration and heard within all aspects of governance and management as a legitimate body of governance, and move through processes to amend the constitution to include the CTFN youth council.
- Form a youth society for the sole purpose of fundraising to become self-sufficient in funding youth council and youth initiatives.
- Seek stepping stone funding within community funding agencies in the Yukon and nationally.
- **Evaluate the process** and make the necessary changes to ensure youth engagement through consistent communication.
- Establish a youth council administration to fall under the main governance department and include the same administrative benefits of other such councils and boards within the Government of CTFN. The youth council would report regularly through an executive council and AGMs.
- Train youth councillors in roles and responsibilities, and council/board process.
- Evaluate process and make changes to work plan if needed within a citizen youth forum.

3. Conclusion

The importance of creating and implementing a strategy for educating the youth of CTFN in clan law will foster a functional future self-government. The future of a CTFN governance process without a clear understanding of clan law would create future problems in correctly implementing a legitimate self-government. Perhaps the importance of correct implementation can be best described from the document Together Today for our Children Tomorrow:

"We need expert help and guidance with the implementation of this Settlement. Implementation means we will have to set up the organizations to look after the land, money, and programs that will put on many kinds of training courses. The success or failure of this Settlement will depend on how it is implemented. Some people say we should wait until we are better educated. We have waited one hundred years, and our problems are getting worse, not better. The first five years of implementation will tell if this Settlement will be able to do for our children what we plan it to do."

This statement stands as true in present day First Nation self-governance as it did when the document was first written in 1977 by a collective Yukon First Nation leadership. If youth are not educated and don't understand their own clan, how would a governance process based on clan law have any chance of success?

"I think we've got to make sure that when we're teaching the younger people that we are telling them the truth. The right stories have to be brought out, and I think the sooner we get going on that, the better it's going to be for us as a people."

*Stanley James
Words of our Elders' Council Assembly, 1993*

Youth engagement through clan development and the formation of a youth council that is under the financial umbrella of a youth society would create an environment for education and clan development tailored to the youth of Carcross Tagish First Nation. The proposed policy change honours our culture and engages the modern context of self-government; it further engages youth to begin much needed dialogue and properly supported community clan development. With the challenges and benefits of adopting our traditional laws into modern day self-government, the principles of these actions carry on our culture for future generations. It may not be in true form, but the ideas and customs through Tlingit stories/language and guidance will be carried on and supported.

4.0 Resource List

Books/Articles

- The Council for Yukon Indians (1978). Together Today for our Children Tomorrow, 24(3) y7.
- The American Museum of Natural History (1991). The Tlingit Indians, 264.
- Cruikshank: Dän Dhá Ts'edenintth'é/Reading Voices
- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996
- Institute of Governance (IOG) 1999; Plumptre and Graham 1999; Sterritt 2001; Westbury 2002
- Walking Together Words from the Elders' Council Assembly, 1993, pg 101.

Internet:

- CTFN Community Portal www.ctfn.ca
- www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnation/fnationsgroups.html
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Policy

Other/quotes:

- Johnnie Smith Yukon Archives Sound Recording Collection 1998
- Quote from Nancy Karetak Lindell. April 2012



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