



**Education**  
**Deputy Minister's office (E-1)**  
**PO Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6**

January 31, 2024

**Sent via Secure File Transfer**

Jason Pedlar, Ombudsman  
Yukon Ombudsman Office

Dear Mr. Pedlar:

**Re: Hidden Valley Investigation Report 2 – Ombudsman Act Our File: OMB-INV-2021-10-077**

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Thank you for your investigation into this matter. Our top priority is to support healthy, safe, and caring learning environments in all Yukon schools. As you are aware, our government and the RCMP acknowledged that we mishandled reports of sexualized abuse at Hidden Valley Elementary School and have committed to implementing comprehensive corrective actions across the system. We have received reviews from the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, the RCMP, an independent reviewer for the Department of Education, Amanda Rogers, and we have accepted all the various report recommendations in principle and launched the Safer Schools Action Plan.

We formally accept in principle your recommendations in this review. All 23 actions in the Action Plan are now implemented and are continuously being reviewed to ensure an adaptive improvement to their application over time. Your report and recommendations provide clarifying insights.

The Student Protection Policy, Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance and all associated processes are continuously being reviewed, modified and improved as situations arise. We intend to seek feedback from several committees and advisory groups and authorities as we address your recommendations. We have already engaged with schools and education partners and asked for feedback regarding the Student Protection Policy and related procedures and the implementation of the policy, procedures, and training. In February 2023, we also engaged with the First Nation Education Commission, which comprises representatives of Council of Yukon First Nations member governments. We surveyed school administrators in April 2023. In June, we met with the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education to review and request feedback. That committee comprises the Yukon Child Care Board; educators; the Association of Yukon School Administrators; the First Nation Education Commission; Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon; school councils; the Catholic Education Association of Yukon; the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and

Committees; the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and Yukon University. We also met with Family and Children's Services in July 2023 to discuss the policy and clarify specific topics. As we address recommendations, we will reach out to the applicable groups for their expertise and authority.

Attached to this letter is a summary of your recommendations, our responses, and, where relevant, a description of work underway. I am pleased to see that your recommendations align with our ongoing work.

Again, we are grateful for your recommendations. As we address those actions, your work will contribute to safer schools.

Sincerely,



Mary Cameron  
Deputy Minister, Education

c.c.  
Justin Ferbey, Deputy Minister, Executive Council Office  
Sherri Young, Public Service Commissioner  
Ed van Randen, Deputy Minister, Social Services  
Mark Radke, Deputy Minister, Justice

**Recommendation 1: Recast part of the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance as a policy document; and Recommendation 2: Recast part of it as a companion policy procedures document.**

Your concerns throughout the document about the authority behind the policy, procedures and guidance are well noted. Currently, the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance is listed in the Student Protection Policy as a related procedure; there is a discrepancy in title. When the department conducts training, the Student Protection Policy is presented as the policy, and the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance is presented as the steps to take to meet the requirements of the policy. However, the Student Protection Policy addresses protecting students from harm by adults, and the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance is used in a variety of circumstances. The Yukon School Post-Incident communications Guidance is now used for notifications in a wide variety of events; for example, an accident or injury, escalated behaviours, fights between students, fire department calls, evacuations, hold and secures, and in the recent example of the arrest of a teacher-on-call.

We agree that the Student Protection Policy and associated procedures and other supporting documents should be looked at to ensure they all carry the appropriate level of authority, that priorities and persons responsible are clear and consistent, and that information is presented in a way that is logical and easily understood.

We will consider provisions for apologies and review the legal implications. If we proceed with this part of the recommendation, this topic could have wider ranging applicability, and so we may consider presenting it as a separate policy rather than limiting it to protecting children from harm by adults. This is an area that needs to be considered from a whole-of-government perspective. In any event, we have made strides in ensuring responses to incidents are trauma-informed and victim centred.

We remain committed to the Safer Schools Action Plan and ensuring our schools are safe, caring, and supportive environments. We continually review and look at ways to strengthen our policies, processes, and procedures.

**Recommendation 3: Identify all documents in any Action that are required to respond to and address serious incidents in a school setting and ensure that they tie together for the purposes of operational priority and cross-referencing.**

This recommendation is well received. While we have done a review as part of the Action Plan, there is still work to be done. We will conduct another document inventory and review, informed by the questions posed in the report, and clarify as required.

**Recommendation 4: Identify a Department steward with appropriate compliance authority to ensure that the Action Plan is put into effect, followed, and reviewed, as well as ensuring that Department officials and school administration follow the Yukon School Post-Incident Communication Guidance and Procedures as a policy/procedures companion document.**

The Student Protection Policy Monitoring and Accountability provisions apply to the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance: “The Assistant Deputy Minister of Policy and Partnerships will be responsible for oversight of this ‘Policy’ including recommended amendments. The Assistant Deputy Minister of Schools and Student Services will be responsible for the oversight of ‘School Procedures’ including recommended amendments.” We commit to clarifying, preserving, and/or amending as appropriate, these accountability provisions, in any updates to policies and procedures. When the Student Protection Policy and Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance and Procedures are severed, we will revisit the appropriate Monitoring and Accountability provisions to reflect the changes.

**Recommendation 5: Develop and implement a comprehensive training regimen for purposes of addressing serious incidents and communicating with families that includes (a) the Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance and Procedures, recast as a companion policy and procedures document; (b) associated legislation, policies, procedures, and guidance documents; and (c) practice scenarios to test and validate them.**

Ongoing training is part of our commitment to continuous improvement. Within this commitment to training, we accept the recommendation by formalizing and documenting our training regime within appropriate policy, procedural and guidance documents.

The Student Protection Policy sets out orientation and training requirements, which includes post-incident communications, as follows: “annual training will be provided to all new and existing school-based and school branch staff, which will include content addressing but not limited to: recognizing abuse e.g., sexualized, physical, and emotional harm; recognizing other forms of inappropriate behaviours e.g., potential grooming behaviours and those that may require further assessment and follow-up; processes, protocols in the response to abuse and other inappropriate behaviours, protective intervention, mandatory duty to report”. The Yukon School Post-Incident Communications Guidance is one of the procedures named in the processes, and current training on post-incident communications as well as associated legislation, policies, procedures, and guidance documents is included in Student Protection Policy training.

Our training sessions include practice scenarios and case studies where feasible. These exercises have proven highly valuable, and we will continue to encourage and support efforts to ensure practice scenario training opportunities continue to be offered.

What we have done so far:

At the beginning of each school year, school administration, teachers and other school staff are trained on the policy and its supporting materials. This includes post-incident communications.

In the first year of implementation, the Student Protection Policy training was provided to schools on a professional development day. In this first year, over eight hundred educators, including school administrators, teachers, learning assistance teachers, school counselors, and educational assistants were provided orientation. In addition, over 940 adults, who by virtue of their role, interact with students through school related activities, also completed the Commit to Kids Training, which focuses on the prevention of and response to child sexual abuse.

For the 2023-2024 school year, school administrators have been provided training support to ensure that annual training occurs for all new and existing school-based staff.

During the first week of October 2023, Superintendents and Executive Directors shared with their school administrators an orientation package to support school administrators to communicate the Student Protection Policy and related procedures to their school community during a regularly scheduled staff meeting or other suitable time.

Further training is planned for all school community members working in school settings, including school councils and school boards during the 2023-2024 school year.

To supplement this training, the Department of Education partnered with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to develop a training video that outlines prevention methods, including signs of grooming or abuse.