

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Enhancement Trust

ILC 2025 Fall Harvest Hunt – Activities Summary

In September 2025, seven students from the Individual Learning Centre travelled to Pickhandle Lake to participate in our annual Fall Harvest Hunt and land-based culture camp. Once again, we were honoured to be welcomed to the family camp of White River First Nation citizens David and Ruth Johnny. Their guidance and hospitality make it possible for students to learn directly on the land, in a place where cultural knowledge and relationships to wildlife continue to thrive.

Throughout the four-day camp, students were immersed in the skills and responsibilities that come with living from the land. They took part in the daily set-up and maintenance of camp, cooked and shared meals together, and learned to support one another through the rhythms of outdoor life. With elders and traditional land stewards teaching alongside us, the group helped check a fish net in the lake and learned how to clean and process the whitefish harvested from it. Students also assisted with the processing of small game, including grouse, rabbit, and ducks gaining experience in traditional preparation methods and honoring the respectful handling of harvested animals.

The group spent time on the land walking, learning navigation and safety skills, and understanding how to move responsibly through wildlife habitat. Moose hunting was a major focus of the trip; although the group did not successfully harvest a moose this year, the experience remained meaningful and educational. Students learned firsthand the patience, environmental awareness, and deep connection to land that responsible big-game hunting requires. For many, being part of the hunt represented a powerful connection to traditional food systems and seasonal practice.



Berry picking, survival lessons, and evening teachings around the fire added to a holistic experience rooted in Indigenous knowledge. The Johnnys and other elders generously shared stories and cultural teachings tied to the land, offering insight into stewardship values that sustain both wildlife and community well-being. For First Nation students in particular, this was an important opportunity to connect identity, family history, and cultural learning to place.

These activities strongly support the Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust's objectives by developing the next generation of stewards who understand where their food comes from, how wildlife populations must be respected and protected, and why sustainable harvest matters. Students directly participated in practices that foster appreciation for fish and wildlife, and they witnessed how careful teaching from experienced land users supports long-term conservation.

The Individual Learning Centre serves many students who thrive best when learning is relevant, hands-on, and grounded in real experience. Each year, the Fall Harvest Hunt/Culture Camp demonstrates that land-based education can build confidence, personal growth, and stronger school engagement. Students consistently return from Pickhandle Lake feeling proud, thankful, and more connected to both land and community mentors.

By supporting this camp, the Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust contributes to a learning experience that empowers youth, strengthens ties to traditional territory, and reinforces the responsibility all Yukoners share in caring for the land, the fish, and the wildlife that sustain us.

Financial Report/Communication

We cracked the code! This year we managed to find the right guy at Yukon Fleet vehicles to give us the real cost of renting the trucks each year. It turns out that the Department of Education pulls that amount from our school budget at the end of each year and our school admin assistant can never find it. It feels better to report the real amount rather than an estimate. The overall funding amount is correct for our needs. Thank you! I have been trying to find



consistent internal funding for our hunt, but have been told that money will be tight this coming year. In terms of communication, we do not have a large social media presence, but our Facebook page has over four hundred followers. We post a “Thank You” to our page and we include the YFWET in our list of sponsors after our graduation in June. We have no problems finding both students or staff to go our hunt. This year there were seven students and two staff. We have tried to increase our capacity by having different staff members go each year. This has enabled more of us to strengthen our relationship with the Johnnys and provide better support for our students wishing to go on the hunt.

Thank you again for supporting our school with this hunt each year! Our school continues to build strong relationships with our students and set them up for success through their academic year.

