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THE FORT REPORT



UNSTOPPABLE: LADY EAGLES CLAIM THIRD STRAIGHT CONSECUTIVE CHAMPIONSHIP







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By NELLIE WARD AND JANE WARD

The Fort Yukon Lady Eagles cemented their place in Alaska basketball history on Saturday night, defeating Newhalen to capture their third consecutive state title at the Alaska Airlines Center. With the victory, Fort Yukon becomes only the second 1a program in state history to achieve a three-peat.

Fort Yukon wasted no time taking control, jumping out to an early lead in the first three minutes of the game. The scoring started with a three-point shot from Jewel Mahler, followed by a steal from Nellie Ward that led to a layup by Kylee Carroll. Moments later, Jane Ward knocked down another three-pointer to give the Lady Eagles a quick 8-0 advantage and set the tone early.

Newhalen, however, made things interesting in the fourth quarter, battling back and cutting into the lead to put pressure on Fort Yukon down the stretch. The game grew tense as the comeback threatened the Lady Eagles' control.

In the final minute of the back and fourth battle, Ida Lester knocked down a three-pointer to bring Newhalen within one point, raising the tension to its peak after it was Newhalen's possession with under 30 seconds on the clock. Newhalen looked for a backdoor cut to the rim as senior Nellie Ward came up with a clutch interception, quickly turning defense into offense.

Jane Ward pushed the ball down the court to deliver a key pass to Kylee Carroll, who finished the play to extend Fort Yukon's lead to three. With only 15 seconds left Newhalen rushed the ball down the floor and attempted to get their last shot to tie the game, after the shot was contested junior Karli Thomas hustled to the floor to have possession, with the last remaining 5 seconds Jewel Mahler secured the win for the Eagles winning 52-49.

Fort Yukon Voice

An interview with Ms. Jamie Bridges

By Kylee Carroll and Jewel Mahler



"Growing up in Fort Yukon, both of my parents were teachers at this school. My siblings and I were often here early and stayed late almost every day. Because of that, I used to say I would become anything but a teacher. Ha!

I still remember the amused looks on their faces when I told them I was going to pursue my master's degree in teaching. Once I earned my degree, however, the only thing I wanted to do was return home and teach.

Moving back was more challenging than I expected, especially finding housing. But it was important to my husband and me that our children grow up here, grounded in their Gwich'in values. We wanted them to experience the same kind of childhood we had, away from the hustle and bustle of city life."

How does it feel to be the only teacher here who actually grew up in the village?

I have mixed feelings about being the only classroom teacher from Fort Yukon. On one hand, I feel proud that I followed the guidance of my Elders, leaving to get an education and then returning home to give back to my community. There is a sweet sense of pride in serving my people.

On the other hand, it makes me sad that I am the only one. When I was growing up, we had many Gwich'in teachers. Seeing people, especially Gwich'in women, who had gone to college and earned degrees made that path feel possible for me. Today, many of our students don't have those same examples, and that is something I hope will change.

Do you think it's easier for students to talk to you because you understand exactly where they come from?

Yes, I do. I was raised with the same Gwich'in values as my students, and most of us are family or I have known their families my whole life. Because of this, students don't have to explain their family dynamics or why those relationships are so important—they know I understand.

Family is at the heart of our community, and I carry that understanding into my classroom. Those shared experiences help me build strong relationships with my students and advocate effectively for them at school.

What was the hardest part about leaving Fort Yukon to go to college and get your teaching degree?

Leaving wasn't as difficult for me as it might be for others. I had already attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School in Sitka, so I was used to being away from home. I saw college as my next big adventure. My community was incredibly supportive. People often reminded me, "Fort Yukon will always be here, you can always come home." They were right—I did eventually come back home!

While leaving family is never easy, and stepping into the unknown can feel intimidating, our young people are stronger than they realize. Our community takes great pride in seeing them pursue their dreams and explore the world. College was such a wonderful experience, I hope more of our students attend.

How do you bring Gwich'in values or local traditions into your lessons?

This is my favorite part of teaching at home! I intentionally integrate Gwich'in values and traditions into my lessons whenever possible.

Some examples include teaching about Elizabeth Peratrovich, having students interview Elders and write research reports, and designing STEM projects connected to our local environment. These experiences help students see that their culture and knowledge are valuable and belong in the classroom.

What do you say to the seniors who are nervous about leaving home for the first time after graduation?

The world is not as scary as it may seem. In fact, growing up in a village has given you strengths that many others don't have. You already know how to survive in challenging conditions and how to live and work as part of a community.

Your ancestors are with you—they are opening doors because they know what you are capable of. Walk through those doors with confidence. You deserve to be there. Go out into the world and make your grandparents proud. I promise you'll make memories you'll look back on with fondness.

Do you hope some of your current students will become teachers and join you at this school one day?

Teaching is a calling. I love learning, and I love working with children. If you feel the same, I hope you will consider becoming a teacher.

However, it's important to enter this profession for the right reasons. Students deserve teachers who are passionate about helping them succeed. Children can tell when that passion is there—and when it isn't.

What is the most important thing you want your students to learn about their own potential?

I want my students to know that they are just as capable as anyone else in this world. No one has the right to tell you that you are less intelligent, less brave, or less talented.

Hard work is a core Gwich'in value. Our ancestors have shown us that with dedication and perseverance, incredible things are possible. I want my students to believe that—and to live it.

If you could go back to your own high school graduation day, what advice would you give yourself?

I didn't graduate from here—I graduated from Mt. Edgecumbe High School.

This is the best advice I have ever heard:

"The only two people you need to make proud in this world are the eight-year-old version of you and the eighty-year-old version of you.

The eight-year-old you didn't care about status or money. They cared about feeling alive, safe, and joyful.

The eighty-year-old you won't care about your mistakes or the people who doubted you. They will care about whether you lived bravely, loved openly, and took chances.

Remember the child who dreamed and the Elder who remembers. Live a life that makes both of them proud—because in the end, they are the only ones who ever really mattered."

Ms. Jamie Bridges' story is more than a personal journey. It is a reflection of the strength, resilience, and deep cultural pride of Fort Yukon. Her voice reminds us that education is not just about leaving home, but also about returning, reconnecting, and uplifting the next generation.

Fort Yukon Voices celebrates stories like hers—stories that inspire, empower, and keep culture alive for generations to come.

Caps, Gowns and Question Marks: Senior Year Anxiety

by Mason Peter



For the last few years, my life has been measured in one-hour and thirty-minute periods. The steady, silent rhythm of the clock on the wall. You learn to track time by the shifting light in the hallways or the collective rustle of notebooks and chromebooks closing. But as graduation approaches, those measurements have shifted. They no longer feel like a routine; they feel like a countdown clock ticking toward zero.

Everywhere I go, the air is thick with "lasts." It's in the way we linger in the doorway after the last class, the heavy silence of the last time waking up for a school day, and the bittersweet weight of the last time I'll walk these halls as a student. While the world tells me I'm supposed to be radiating joy, the reality is a heavy dose of sadness and anxiety. It's hard to celebrate the end of a chapter when you aren't sure you're ready to turn the page.

The most terrifying question I face daily and the one that follows me down the hallway is: "What are you going to do after school?" It feels like I'm expected to have a detailed roadmap for the next decade, GPS coordinates and all, when in reality, I'm still just trying to figure out what I'm going to do today. I find myself nodding and smiling, pretending to be ready for the "great beyond," but underneath the stiff fabric of the cap and gown, I am gripped by the fear of the unknown.

However, I'm starting to realize that maybe the point of "the real world" isn't to have it all figured out on day one. Maybe this knot in my stomach isn't a warning sign of failure, but a signal of growth but a sign that my life is about to expand in ways I can't yet imagine.

As we prepare to walk across that stage, I'm choosing to believe that while the future is a blank map, that doesn't mean we're lost. It means we're the ones holding the pen. We might be leaving the Fort Yukon School, and the wind out there might be a little colder and stronger than we're used to, but we're finally getting the chance to see exactly how high we can fly.

Journalism Class

Topic :

KYLEE BREE CARROLL

JEWEL MAHLER

MASON PETER

JANE WARD

NELLIE WARD

MR. JAYSON GUERRERO

Class Information

Task/Homework