

Walk Softly

Newsletter of the
Yukon Conservation Society
Fall 2016



Inside: • Get ready for the election! • Climate conservatism • Moments of Optimism

Planet at the Crossroads

From September 1st-10th, more than ten thousand delegates from over 190 countries met in Honolulu, Hawaii for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress. While this congress occurs every four years, the theme of this year's meeting – 'Planet at the Crossroads', really resonated with the experiences that I have had researching, living and working in the Yukon. While influential delegates, such as Dr. Jane Goodall, Dr. E.O. Wilson and Dr. Sylvia Earle, tried to hammer home how our environment is experiencing rapid change and how right now is the time that we need to decide which path to take to address this, I believe that this reality has unique implications for the Yukon.

Having grown up in Southern Ontario, as it seems many of the current residents here have, I have seen how dire environmental damage can be. In the Yukon, we are

incredibly lucky to still have vast wild areas, and relatively few demands on our resources. We therefore have an inimitable opportunity to correctly balance these current and future demands, and an immense need to work together on this.

At this congress, a large community of conservation leaders came together at the international stage. Governments, scientific and academic institutions, industries, large and small non-governmental organizations, Indigenous Peoples (as they are referred to within the IUCN), young professionals, and many other concerned citizens of our planet. Collaboration led to the passing of new motions to globally improve conservation, the setting of the IUCN conservation agenda for the next four years, creating a new voting right for Indigenous organizations, and a strong recognition of the need to

include young people and young professionals within conservation decision making processes.

In the Yukon, we have a fairly small population, but a large ability to have a strong conservation community made up of all of these sectors. Our neighbours, friends, and those we pass by every day represent the same range of stakeholders who came together in Hawaii. With growing pressure and demands being put on our landscapes, we need to come together now, and to believe in the power of each individual to make a positive difference. How we vote, how we question decisions, and how we decide to integrate our voices will matter. Let us not mess up this opportunity to protect the future of the Yukon's environment.

Shailyn Drukis is a parks and conservation advocate and a former YCS Trail Guide Coordinator.

In the Yukon I have found

In the Yukon I have found
immensity of land
endless sun
bear spray
an impressive amount of lost things,
hanging on trees
real pedestrian priority
a colorful 5% (or 15%)
dene hand games
a Canadian culture I relate to
une francophonie fière et vivante
la Saint-Jean la moins séparatiste ever
an extremely familial gay pride
friends I love, friends in my heart
routes instead of trails
a wild new way of hiking
mountain biking adrenaline

powerful women
the most badass MLA of Canada
actually dried wood fire
the coolness of lakes and rivers
the rush of water on the skin
the 10 pm fierce sunlight,
enflaming trees and mountains
a cultural relationship with nature
the thrill of meeting with a fox
or a hare or a coyote
or 24 mountain sheep or a herd of elk
animals can be quite bold
(as my dear colleague Lewis would say)
or pigs and cats in leashes
general adoration for pets
the best fresh popcorn
delicious clean air

people who build their own houses
childhoods as all childhoods should be
brilliant kids

In the Yukon I have found
strength
freedom
inspiration
beauty

and a golden home up north

by Pénélope Langlais-Oligny

Trade Agreements and Protecting the Environment

Each of us involved with YCS acts in one way or another to protect the land and reduce our contribution to climate change, and some of our efforts are fruitful. But there is a brick wall we may hit: Canada agreeing to more trade agreements.

NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, is already causing problems for environmental protection efforts and many other public interest matters. But the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) of twelve Pacific Rim countries, if ratified, will cover nearly 40% of world trade, and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) will cover Canada's trade with Europe.

A major piece of the brick wall is that the Trans Pacific Partnership and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement contain Investor State Dispute Settlement clauses. Investor State Dispute Settlement rules allow corporations to sue governments for lost or potential future profits when governments make new rules or laws which may affect their profits. Using ISDS, corporations may sue governments for public interest actions such as protecting the environment, protecting human rights including Indigenous rights, protecting jobs, health, and local food production. Invoking ISDS rules in the trade agreements, corporations can force governments who interfere with corporate profits to a tribunal operating under rules written by the corporations, suing for millions or billions of dollars. Countries cannot appeal, and there are almost no checks and balances, so corporations can try to put forward absurd claims.

The ISDS in NAFTA was designed to protect the investments of multinational corporations from the risks of public policy decisions by governments. Under NAFTA's ISDS, corporations have so far involved Canada in 35 claims, 63% of which were claims against government protecting the environment or managing resources. Examples:

- Lone Pine Resources, a Canadian Energy company, which planned to frack near and under the St Lawrence River, is suing the Canadian Government through its American affiliate because Quebec placed a five year moratorium on fracking. Lone Pine claims that Quebec's action is "arbitrary" and "capricious" and deprives Lone Pine of its rights to profits from fracking there.
- The American company Bilcon planned to build a quarry and marine terminal in Nova Scotia. Environmental assessment determined that the area was environmentally sensitive, the local people worked hard to express their opposition as it would threaten endangered species, and Canada rejected the quarry. Bilcon challenged this under NAFTA, won, and is demanding US\$300 million from Canada in compensation. The local people have to struggle again, trying to keep Canada from settling out of court.
- A US chemical corporation, Ethyl, used the ISDS to oppose Canada's ban on importing gasoline with the additive MMT, a suspected neurotoxin. Canada settled with Ethyl by repealing the ban and paying them US\$13 million.

The mere threat of being sued can deter governments from legislation in the public interest. Even if governments are not deterred, they lose millions of dollars in settlement to corporations – simply for passing good public policy. This money could be used for investment in public goods like transit, healthcare, and education – instead it is thrown to the corporations behind closed doors.

Proponents of the TPP point to the TPP's words of protection for the environment, but there is also a clause stating that the other rules in the agreement always take precedence.

The First Nations on Lelu Island, BC, are struggling to prevent a company called Petronas from exploiting liquefied natural gas there. The land and water and the fishing economy are at stake. If the TPP was ratified, Petronas, a Malaysian company, could sue the Canadian government if it tried to limit the company's activities on the island.

Canada and other developed countries have promised to address climate change, but at the same time they are actively pursuing these trade agreements, which would make the promises toothless.

The advantages of the trade agreements are doubtful. Loss of jobs is expected, for example. Lower wage earners' share of the income pie is expected to decrease, as it has under NAFTA. Even the World Bank, a proponent of trade agreements, forecasts under 1% growth for Canada from the TPP.

See the Council of Canadians' website for more information: www.canadians.org/trade. The website makes it easy to send a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau and the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade. You can act by insisting that Parliament not ratify the TPP or CETA, particularly the ISDS clauses. At the very least, action to limit climate change should be exempted from the agreements. Our local MP, Larry Bagnell, can be contacted at Larry.Bagnell@parl.gc.ca.

by Mary Amerongen

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Editorial

by Christina Macdonald

Made-in-the-Yukon Solutions

Recently, several academics have come to the Yukon Conservation Society office to talk ‘wilderness’. They start with general questions – “What does wilderness mean to you?” – and as the interview warms up, move to the more specific “Do northern Canadians understand wilderness differently than those who live in the south?” Having spent most of my life in southern Canada but the last chunk in the Yukon I experienced a conflicted reaction to this question. The old me would likely have described wilderness as large, road-less, un-peopled areas of land that are intact and full of wildlife. Now that I have steeped in Yukon culture for six years I would edit that definition and remove ‘un-peopled’.

People are very much present on the Yukon landscape. The First Nations people – the first to come to the Yukon over the Beringian landbridge – have lived here for thousands of years. In much more recent history, the population of the Yukon has grown with immigrants from the south who also have a presence on the land – hunting, fishing, trapping, harvesting wood, mining, farming, hiking, canoeing. And the Yukon remains a place more wild than not.

Of course, that can change. You just have to look south to see how dramatic that change can be. How wilderness can become a few isolated spots on the map surrounded by roads, cities and other development. And how conservation efforts are focused on bringing plant, insect and animal species back from the brink of extinction. And there are certainly examples of this within our own borders.

You may have heard the ad playing on the radio these days where the Yukon Premier calls for made-in-the-Yukon solutions. Yes, we do need made-in-the-Yukon solutions that recognize and nurture the incredible opportunities we have here to do things differently, to not squander our natural resources – renewable and non-renewable – and to put conservation first so that wilderness and people can continue to thrive in the territory.

And we have those solutions!

These are the processes, Boards and Councils created in the Yukon, many of them flowing from the Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nation Final Agreements: regional land use planning, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB), the Yukon Water Board (YWB), the Renewable Resources Councils and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board to name a few. These processes, Board and Councils provide a way for all Yukon people to have a say in how land and wildlife in the Yukon is protected, developed and managed. That’s a very special thing.

But these made-in-the-Yukon solutions are under attack. Bill S-6 – an act to amend the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act – was passed in 2015 despite opposition from the public and a lawsuit by the

Council of Yukon First Nations. This act undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of the YESAA process and permits political interference. Fortunately, the federal government has committed to rescinding the contentious clauses this fall. Northern Cross Yukon (owned in large part by China's largest independent producer of offshore oil and natural gas, CNOOC Limited), is taking YESAB to court (via the Federal government because the assessment board is a product of and is governed by federal legislation) because the Board called for a more extensive Executive Committee assessment – it was unable to conclude what, if any, impact the exploration project would have on the Porcupine caribou herd and the communities depending on the herd for food. Yukon government is taking the Yukon Water Board to court, seeking a legal remedy to overturn the recent YWB ruling that prohibits disturbance or alteration of undisturbed wetlands on the Indian River and Ruby Creek near Dawson City. And there is the Peel Watershed court case which will be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada on March 22, 2017. Two Yukon courts have already ruled that the Yukon government failed to honour the letter and spirit of its treaty obligations when it comes to the land use planning process for the Peel Watershed. The future of the watershed and land use planning in the territory is at stake.



We have made-in-the-Yukon solutions that must be respected and supported because they allow all people to contribute, resulting in decisions that are informed by this collective intelligence and wisdom. And I think many people here appreciate that. I attended the launch of the Executive Leadership Centre at the Yukon College recently and chatted with people from Highways and Public Works, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and a local business owner. It was so refreshing to feel the positive energy in the room – people care deeply about this place and are excited to cultivate, and be, leaders who are inspired, innovative and rooted.

We have the opportunity for genuine consultation and thorough assessment processes that inform decisions in the territory – let's not throw that away. Let's use our made-in-the-Yukon solutions to make good decisions about protection, development and management in the territory so that wilderness and people can continue to thrive here.

Towards optimism

I am sure that many of us who work towards building a fair and sustainable future can't escape from occasionally feeling helpless in front of the immensity of what is yet to be done. Unfortunately, being confronted by discouraging times seems to be part of the collective fight for a smart and solidary society. In this context, it is important to celebrate victories and to acknowledge positive impacts. Therefore, for the good sake of our morale, I am happy to share with you the optimism that working with YCS generated for me.

Indeed, writing this piece on the cusp of ending my public policy summer internship, I realize that having spent the summer surrounded by people who fight relentlessly for the conservation of the land made me optimistic.

More precisely, assisting with the Protect the Peel campaign and witnessing the excitement surrounding the victory of the Supreme Court of Canada accepting to hear the Peel case made me optimistic that our country is on the way to committing to honour First Nations rights and to conserve our precious remaining wild land.

Standardizing and developing YCS' youth educational program and delivering Ed-ventures to several groups of kids made me optimistic that Yukon's and Canada's future will be led by curious, kind and environmentally aware citizens, and that strong programs of environmental education can positively impact communities.

Being part of YCS' booth at the Fireweed market made me optimistic that empowering the community and visitors with better understanding of the environmental situation in the Yukon is an efficient way of building a strong, environmentally aware and critical thinking society.

Researching the environmental policies in the Arctic, and more precisely in the Yukon North Slope and the Beaufort Sea, makes me hope that wise and sustainable decisions will be taken for that precious land and water. Knowing that the Arctic region of the Territory is now on YCS' and CPAWS' radars makes me optimistic that people will fight relentlessly to protect it.

And even if understanding unsustainable resource development's threat makes me angry and scared, working with YCS' dedicated team and understanding their impact on Yukon's land and people makes me feel optimistic about the power of small, grass roots environmental organizations.

*by Pénélope Langlais-Oligny
YCS's outgoing Policy Intern*

Summer on the Trails

Our free summer programming is one of the elements that sets YCS apart as an organization. Not only do we work to raise awareness and create change for the Yukon's environment, we also have the privilege of helping people get up close and personal with nature.

We have been running guided hikes in Miles Canyon for more than 20 years. Over the decades, thousands of locals and visitors have passed through the Canyon with our knowledgeable and friendly trail guides. Along the way to Canyon City and back, people learn about the area's geological history, First Nations and Gold Rush heritage, edible plants, and much more.

Hikes are the backbone of our summer programming, but we offer much more. Our Kids' Ed-Ventures are nature adventures tailored specifically for children. Throughout the summer, groups of kids from the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, MacBride Museum, and other camps and daycares learn about nature and conservation at Miles Canyon or other local parks.

This year for the first time, we offered a Kids' Ed-Ventures space at the Fireweed Community Market, reaching dozens of kids with hands-on learning activities. Another successful venture this summer was a series of Edible Plants Hikes for seniors through the ElderActive Recreation Association. We're excited to repeat and expand these offerings next year!

Sam Skinner leads a mushroom themed hike.

We also hosted our art-on-the-trails event, Created at the Canyon, for the fifth year in a row. Created at the Canyon is a unique opportunity to appreciate nature through art – and art through nature. During this unusual event, five local artists camp out on the trails around Miles Canyon for two days, creating art en plein air and sharing their creative process with visitors. The public and the artists – and YCS staff! – love this event and the beautiful artwork resulting from the artists' time creating in nature. The artists' work was displayed for the month of August at the Northern Front Studio. This year we had some returning favourites – musician Steve Slade and artist Leslie Leong – plus new faces including haiku poet kjmunro, photographer/beader Pat Bragg, and pencil artist Dustin J.L. Sheldon.

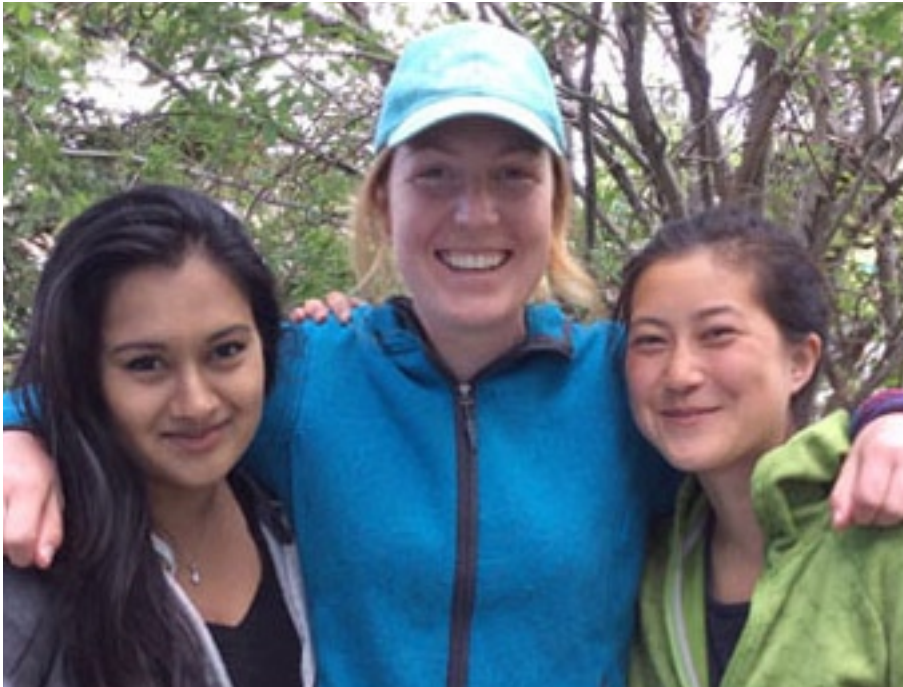
Thanks to the generosity of our funders, all of our summer events and programming are free. Our Miles Canyon programming is supported by funding from the Yukon Government's Department of Tourism and Culture, and from the federal Canada Summer Jobs program. Created at the Canyon is made possible by the Yukon Arts Fund.



By the Numbers

Nearly 1200 people took part in our free programming this summer.

- 554 people joined us for hikes in Miles Canyon – from a total of 13 countries including the USA, Australia, Chile, and Japan!
- We ran 2 hikes a day, 5 days a week – that's nearly 100 hikes! We also hosted 13 themed hikes and events, with guest leaders sharing their expertise on everything from Mushrooms to Yoga.
- More than 360 art and nature lovers saw the Canyon in a new creative light during the Created at the Canyon event and exhibit
- 31 seniors enjoyed our 3 popular walks on edible plants with the ElderActive Recreation Association
- 248 children went on Kids' Ed-Ventures, our summer programming for kids aged 5-12



This summer's team of Sarjana, Nina and Bella brought expertise and enthusiasm to their roles, energizing the program with friendly interpretive skills and fresh ideas.

Our Trail Guiding Team

Each summer, we hire three students to coordinate and deliver our outdoors programming. This year, our trail guiding team of Nina Vogt (coordinator), Bella Zimbalatti and Sarjana Amin (trail guides) had a great season on the trails. Work at YCS is a great start for careers in science, education, and interpretation. If they weren't already, Nina, Sarjana, and Bella have now been bitten by the outdoors education bug – and have become great ambassadors for YCS, Yukon history, nature, and conservation! We're sad to see them go but we're thankful to them for leaving us a richer, more developed program – and for creating great memories for hundreds of people on the trails.

Of course, the summer wouldn't be possible without the volunteers who dedicate their time to help train our trail guides, develop promotional materials, help with outreach and events, and lead special themed hikes and events. Thank you to everyone who has helped make this season a huge success with hard work, enthusiasm, and dedication!

We're excited about continuing to develop new and engaging ways for locals, visitors, and youth to explore nature and history in Miles Canyon in the years to come. Thank you for supporting our outdoors programming – and stay tuned for 2017.



City Trail Maintenance Policy: Proposed Changes

On June 21, 2016 the Trail Maintenance Policy came up for discussion at City Council. Administration proposed changes to the Trail Maintenance Policy that, in Active Trail Whitehorse Association's view, could well result in the construction of additional rogue trails (two rogue trails have been publicly reported in the last two years). City Council decided to send the proposals back to administration for further review, and then to the Whitehorse Trail & Greenways Committee for its input.

Functional and safe trails must be built to certain standards. Trails also have impacts on vegetation, wildlife, bird life, other trails in the area, and other users. This is why the city has a process in place for reviewing trail applications – the Trail Maintenance Policy helps guide this process. ATWA is concerned that city administration's proposed changes to the Trail Maintenance Policy will establish a means to circumvent the Trail Application process.

The 2007 Trail Plan's inclusion principle states, "the City of Whitehorse Trail Plan recognizes the importance of the trail system to residents and visitors alike and is committed to including the public in determining guidelines for trail system development, use, preservation and maintenance."

It is anticipated that the issue will come before City Council on Tuesday, October 17. You might want to be included in the discussion by sending your comments to mayorandcouncil@whitehorse.ca.

To see administration's proposals refer to <http://www.activetwa.org/city-trail-maintenance-policy.html>

Keith Lay
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Speaking up for the Environment at Election Time

The territorial election is coming up soon. In 2016, environmental issues are at the top of the agenda. YCS and CPAWS Yukon have collaborated on a set of environment questions that we are posing to all territorial parties in advance of the 2016 election. The answers will be published online and in print, with the intent of informing voters about the platforms of each of the parties. Feel free to use these questions to quiz candidates at the door about their plans for the Yukon's environment!

1. A process for regional land use planning in the Yukon was laid out in the Umbrella Final Agreement, but to date, only the North Yukon Land Use Plan has been completed. How would your party get regional land use planning back on track?
2. While mining brings revenue into the Yukon, it also has negative impacts on the land and wildlife, and can result in major clean up and maintenance costs when mines are abandoned. How would your party improve mining in the Yukon to minimize environmental harm?
3. What is your party's position on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and conventional oil and gas development in the Yukon?
4. Yukon political leaders were in Paris last year for the UN conference, where Canada and the world agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming to 1.5-2°C and avoid catastrophic climate change impacts. How would your party make the Yukon a leader in achieving this goal?
5. In the consultations on Next Generation Hydro, there was opposition to large hydro and strong support for smaller hydroelectric sites and other forms of renewable energy. What is your party's vision for meeting the territory's future energy needs?
6. The Yukon lacks an active territory wide conservation strategy for protecting wildlife and important natural areas. How would your party address this gap?
7. Wetlands have enormous economic and environmental value but they are also one of the ecosystems most threatened by human activities. Will your party commit to developing a Yukon wetland policy?
8. With wise stewardship, the Yukon's wilderness can provide economic opportunities for generations to come. How would your party strengthen the conservation economy and opportunities for wilderness experiences?
9. Territorial parks depend on stable funding to ensure that wildlife and plant species are being adequately managed and preserved. How would your party support the health of Yukon's parks?

Stay tuned for information about the upcoming Environment Forum hosted by YCS and CPAWS Yukon before the election.



Vote for the Peel

YCS and CPAWS Yukon are also sending a Protect the Peel doorhanger to every Yukon household. On the back are two questions to pose to candidates at the door:

1. The Peel Watershed Planning Commission recommended that 80% of the Peel Watershed be protected. Does your party support this recommendation?
2. Two courts have found that the Yukon Government failed to honour its constitutional obligations during land use planning for the Peel Watershed. What will your party do to rebuild trust in the planning process?

*Julia Duchesne,
YCS Communications & Outreach Manager*

Peel Watershed Update

For years, YCS members have been fighting to protect the Peel Watershed. This summer, YCS and CPAWS Yukon spent time at a number of public gatherings throughout the territory to speak with people about the campaign. From the Fireweed Community Market in Whitehorse, to the Moosehide Gathering on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory, YCS staff and volunteers had the privilege of introducing people to the Peel Watershed, hearing people's Peel stories, and sharing the latest news.

In just a few months, we gathered nearly 2000 signatures for the Peel Pledge. These signatures come from Yukoners, other Canadians, and visitors from far-flung reaches of the planet. All these people believe that the Yukon has something special here – something that is worth protecting. That's not just huge swathes of wilderness, clean rivers, and intact ecosystems, but also the planning processes that guide decision-making for the land.

The Peel Watershed legal case is complex and long-running - supporters often stopped by to check what stage the case is in now. It was great to be able to share the news that the Supreme Court of Canada (the highest court in the land) will be hearing the Peel legal case on March 22, 2017 – the case is of 'national and public importance'! Besides supporters, we also spoke to people who do not support the legal case to protect the Peel Watershed. They are concerned that implementation of the Final Recommended Plan will result in a lost opportunity for jobs in the resource extraction industries. What some didn't understand is that we're not advocating for 100% protection of the Peel Watershed.



YCS volunteer Laurie holds an art and music banner created at Atlin Arts & Music Festival and Dawson City Music Festival.

During initial consultation, the First Nations asked for the entire Peel Watershed to be protected from industrial development. However, the Final Recommended Plan from the Peel Watershed Planning Commission is a compromise between protection and development. The Final Recommended Plan calls for 20% of the watershed to be open to industrial development, and 80% to be protected – 55% permanent protection, 25% interim protection to be revisited at a later date. This is the plan that Yukon Government rejected in favour of a new plan opening 71% of the region to industrial development. We're fighting for the Final Recommended Plan – the 80/20 plan – to be upheld, because it is the legitimate product of the land use planning process that so many contributed to in good faith.

But most people we met over the summer are passionate about protecting the land, especially when they've experienced it firsthand. Hundreds of people were drawn to speak with us just by seeing Peter Mather's iconic image of the beautiful Wind River that we had on display at our outreach booth.

At Dawson City Music Festival, I met paddlers who had just come from the Wind River and were eager to keep it clean and free of development. Most movingly, at Moosehide I had the honour of speaking to people who had trapped and travelled for decades in the mountains of the Peel Watershed, and knew the hills in Peter's photo like the back of their hands.

As YCS gears up for the next year of the Peel campaign, in which we will have a territorial election, a Supreme Court hearing in March 2017, and maybe even a final ruling on the court case, we are proud of the work we have all done so far and eager to keep fighting for a fair outcome for the Peel Watershed. You can support the campaign by making the Peel Watershed an election issue (see the Vote for the Peel info), by sharing the Peel Pledge with your friends and networks, and by donating to support the campaign (www.protectpeel.ca). If you'd like to help with events or other efforts, please contact YCS!

*Julia Duchesne,
YCS Communications & Outreach Manager*

Climate Conservatism: The dangerous new denial that threatens progress on climate action

Many Canadians were cautiously optimistic when COP21 in Paris produced ambitious targets for greenhouse gas reductions and the federal government promised bold climate action. However, despite those targets and promises, there is a new game in town that threatens to prolong our addiction to fossil fuels and obstruct necessary action to help us transform to a low carbon economy and society. It's called "climate conservatism".

Climate conservatism has replaced climate change denial, which has lost all credibility due to the indisputable scientific evidence that the climate is warming, that climate change is having disastrous effects to land, water, communities and economy, and that it is caused by human consumption of fossil fuels. Climate conservatism – the new climate denial – however, accepts climate science and acknowledges that burning oil and gas is the cause. But this clever and convenient new movement and messaging supports business as usual and the continuation of a fossil fuel-based economy by rejecting measures that respond to climate change in an adequate or timely way.

Climate conservatism claims that expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure is needed to fund eventual climate action. For anyone paying attention, we know that this is false. Public investment in infrastructure that is incompatible with a transition away from fossil fuels is not acceptable.

Recently, we have seen two examples of climate conservatism at work here in the Yukon.

First, Yukon Government's Oil and Gas Branch hosted a presentation at the Beringia Centre by the President of the New Brunswick-based Atlantica Centre for Energy at the end of June. It was intended to help the public "make informed decisions" about energy development in the territory.

Climate conservatism claims that solutions don't exist – despite the fact that solutions do, in fact, exist (it's the will that is lacking).

The presenter is a skilled communicator and represents the new face of oil and gas industry spin, heavily invested in the status quo. Atlantica Centre for Energy calls itself a bridge between the energy industry, government and the community, designed to help "realize opportunities." The unfortunate example offered by the presenter was that Atlantica helped a company get an unpopular pipeline built through a park. Apparently, opponents to this industrial infrastructure project through a public wilderness space were satisfied because they got a new café and playground out of the deal.

The presenter claimed that Atlantica's goal is to increase energy literacy. This was troubling as, from the perspective of this YCS employee, her public education was biased and uninspiring, and consisted of a crusade to persuade the public to accept the inevitability of a fossil-fuelled future.

The post-climate-denying oil and gas messaging now agrees that, yes, we need to transition from a carbon-based society to a renewable energy society. The president of Atlantica said as much.

But clearly the oil and gas sector intends to drag out the necessary transition as long as possible by spreading dismal (mis)information such as "the solutions don't currently exist; let's be realistic; we just can't meet our GHG reduction targets; people will protest all kinds of energy including renewable, etc."

This is not at all helpful or motivating to get us where we need to go. Most people at the talk could see through this strategy attempting to convince people that we need to accept fossil fuel development in the Yukon.

The second example is the Yukon Chamber of Commerce's "Fueling Yukon's Economy" campaign to promote a Yukon oil and gas industry. It's an initiative of the Chamber's Energy Committee, made up of people heavily involved with the oil and gas industry.

This campaign would be better named: Fossil-Fueling Yukon's Economy, because nowhere does the Yukon Chamber promote the business and economic development opportunities in empowering Yukon's economy with renewable energy.

The Chamber's response to a YCS opinion editorial acknowledged that it is unsustainable to continue to burn fossil fuels. The gist of their argument was this: Since we don't have a plan to shift to renewables and therefore will continue to burn fossil fuels, let's invest in starting an oil and gas industry here.

YCS believes that the problem with energy conversations in the Yukon is that stakeholders have not agreed or acknowledged that we must break our addiction to fossil fuels. Until we achieve consensus that we need to stop burning fossil fuels, we will not achieve anything.

To ensure that our greenhouse gas reduction targets are not merely symbolic gestures but actual goals that we develop plans to achieve, we must change how we do business. Government must make bold policy

to reduce our energy demand and stimulate the development of renewable energy projects to displace imported fossil fuels.

The Yukon Chamber of Commerce says its priority is to plug the leak in our economy (\$200 million each year) resulting from the purchase and import of fossil fuels. Plugging this leak is a priority for the Yukon Conservation Society too, but let's realize decarbonization goals while we're at it. Decarbonizing our energy sources is the foundation of our

sustainable energy vision to empower Yukon's economy and usher in renewable energy democracy to the Yukon.

We hope the Chamber's energy committee can break away from its singular focus on fossil fuel development and explore economic development opportunities to develop renewable energy to increase our energy security, create jobs and revenue, plug the leak, and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Wins all around.

The term Climate Conservatism was coined by Mike Soron, a National Climate Organizer working with Leadnow.ca on the #PeoplesClimatePlan. Google his name and climate conservatism to read his article about the new denial messaging and how it is compounded by false consensus and pluralistic ignorance.

Anne Middler
YCS Energy Analyst

Shop for Yukon Art at YCS!

Do you know that the Yukon Conservation Society is carrying beautiful limited edition prints by Don Weir? Don has kindly offered YCS partial proceeds from the sales of the prints.

Alpine Colour in the Tatshenshini, 16" x 24"

\$185.00 (tax included)

Don Weir is donating \$75.00 from the sale of every *Alpine Colour in the Tatshenshini Fine Art Print* to the Yukon Conservation Society.



Autumn Colour – Donjek Valley, 16" x 23"

\$185.00 (tax included)

Don Weir is donating \$35.00 from the sale of each *Autumn Colour – Donjek Valley Fine Art Print* to the Yukon Conservation Society, and \$50.00 to Karen's Fund up at the Whitehorse General Hospital which supports breast cancer patients.

We are also carrying four different hand silkscreened prints featuring Yukon wildlife, by Tanya Handley. At \$30, these fun, colourful wolf and raven prints make a great gift – or a perfect Yukon adornment for your own wall! YCS gets all the proceeds from these sales.

Greener travel

Climate change is finally getting some of the attention it deserves from many countries in the world. It is a climate justice issue, and as such is relevant to everyone. The efforts of each of us who cares about social and environmental justice are needed if we have any chance of turning things around.

My sense is that travel will be hard for many of us to give up. I know many genuine environmentalists and social justice activists who yearn to travel to beautiful and interesting places, and who do so.

How might we integrate our desire for climate justice with our enthusiasm to connect personally with other parts of the world? Here are a few ideas that occur to me:



- **Avoid meat:** perhaps this surprises you! The global meat industry causes approximately 18% of greenhouse gas emissions, compared to 14% for all modes of transportation. Many cultures have traditionally eaten little meat (because it takes more resources to produce meat than plants), so you may have many interesting choices of local fare, without meat. If we let our travel companions know that we are avoiding meat, they may be encouraged to eat meatless on the trip, increasing the impact of our choice.
- **Minimize air travel:** the emissions in the high atmosphere have more impact on the greenhouse effect than fossil fuels used by ground transportation. Planning a trip this way has, in my experience, focused as much on the travel experience itself as on the destination. I have seen more of the countryside when I travel through it by bus, train or ferry. I am also more likely to meet people who can't afford to travel by air.
- **Stay in one place:** there is much to be said for exploring one place thoroughly. Staying in a variety of places within one region can give a fuller appreciation of the community. This also gives us time to use local transportation, which is an excellent way to see more of the doings of local people, and to interact with them.

I hope you see this as a discussion worth continuing. If you have some more suggestions, please send them to us to include in our next newsletter.

by Alison Reid

Response to previous Green Travel

Thank you for raising the subject of 'green travel'. Responding to climate change is already a difficult topic as the actions called for seem so drastic that we can't see how to get started. But air travel is particularly troubling. A few years ago I went to great lengths to improve the energy efficiency of my 100 year old house in Winnipeg. It was pretty successful, reducing the annual CO₂ emissions from mostly natural gas heating from 8 tonnes/yr to under 4 tonnes/yr.

Then we went and visited my sister in France – CO₂ cost for my wife and I FIVE TONNES. Ouch! The problem with air travel is that the actual emissions have to be increased by something called the 'radiative factor'. This accounts for the greater impact at high altitude plus the emissions of nitrous oxide from jet engines.

Air travel is the magic carpet that transports us to interesting places. And air travel has become part of the staple diet of most Canadians – perhaps even moreso here in the Yukon. What to do?

I have few answers for others – our situations are often different. My wife and I volunteered in international development for many years which gave us the chance to do a lot of international travel before we were burdened with the knowledge of climate change. In retirement we chose to live where we could do the things we love to do without traveling. Whitehorse was our chosen venue. But even now the question of 'love miles' remains. How to sustain the closest family relationships when we are separated by thousands of kilometers?

Our solution is to travel less often than we can afford ... but still fly every couple of years. It's not perfect but it seems appropriate for us in our situation. And there are still times I feel envy hearing about the exotic adventures of others – but this is not supposed to be easy!

by Stu Clark

Little Victories

It has been said that big things have small beginnings. Let us look at some of the recent little victories in mining exploration environmental assessment in the Yukon. Then let us consider where this could possibly be headed.

The Yukon Government recently agreed with recommendations from the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) on two mining projects. The first is known as the Kluane Property, a hard rock mining exploration project located on sensitive sheep and caribou habitat between Kluane and Aishihik Lakes. The government agreed with YESAB that the project should NOT proceed. For details, see project number 2016-0078, Kluane Property – Quartz Exploration, Strategic Metals Ltd. on the YESAB website, www.yesabregistry.ca.

The second little victory is the Judas Creek placer mine, near the subdivision of the same name out at Marsh Lake. In this particular case the Yukon Government also agreed with the YESAB recommendation that the project should NOT proceed due to impacts on caribou habitat. (For details, see project number 2015-0204 – Placer Mine on Judas Creek Tributaries).

Both of these projects were in areas that do not have land use plans in place. The lack of land use plans means that each and every resource extraction project has to be examined on a stand-alone basis, creating a lot of uncertainty for all parties involved.

The mining company is often unaware of local issues, and can be blindsided by public opposition to one of its projects because land-use planning has not been done. Companies do not like this uncertainty, and it can affect their ability to raise funds from investors to develop projects.

Environmentalists get upset about certain projects happening in ecologically sensitive areas and fight tooth and nail to protect the land. This is because land-use planning has not been done. Land-use planning would presumably have identified the sensitive areas and excluded them from industrial development.

Local residents might have their own reasons for opposing a project in their neighbourhood and environs, which also could have been addressed through land-use planning.

You see where this is headed. To avoid a lot of upset companies and locals, to provide certainty to one and all, land-use planning is the way to go.

However, as the reader might be aware, land-use planning is a bit tied up at the moment. The North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan has been completed, but it's the only one so far. The Peel Watershed land-use planning case is before the Supreme Court of Canada and won't be heard until March 22nd 2017. After that, the paused Dawson Regional Land Use Plan will likely resume, and other regions may follow.

Until then, we may see more little victories. Without land-use planning, a lot of resource extraction projects are going to be opposed on a case-by-case basis and, on some of them at least, the environment is going to take precedence over the desire for development.

The little victories might not be as major or precedent-setting as Supreme Court cases, and they cover much smaller geographic areas, but they are victories for the environment all the same. They also create a compelling reason to ensure land-use planning is undertaken soon so all parties, ranging from private industry to environmentalists to locals, have certainty over what the land can and cannot be used for.

*Lewis Rifkind,
YCS Mining Analyst*



YCS has a basement office space for rent!

We prefer to rent to a small environmentally-friendly NGO, or small business. The office can be furnished or unfurnished and is good for single, trustworthy individuals - \$300/month. This price includes 1 parking space, electricity, heat, high-speed cable internet, shared kitchen, boardroom and bathroom. Phone, fax, copier, and printer are available for additional fees. Available immediately!

For more information call Judith at 668-5678 or email inquiries to ycsoffice@yck.ca

Why the Raven is Black: A Natural History Observation

In spring of 1993 I was fortunate enough to find myself in Thompson, Manitoba. Snow was still on the ground but the sun was gaining power and the thaw had begun. Majestic Pisew Falls was flowing freely with wonderful ice works still in evidence. I had come to visit a friend and had a week at my disposal.

I soon encountered the ubiquitous and renowned “Thompson Turkey”. They were everywhere. Perched on dumpsters. On trees. Walking happily down the sidewalk. Soaring overhead. Calling out pleasures and displeasures. I refer, of course, to an icon of the great Northern Boreal Forest: the common raven.

They are anything but common, except maybe for their occurrence at these latitudes. They seemed to me like citizens of this northern Manitoba city. Yet they drifted off to the wilds of the forest with ease and grace after extracting what was needed from town. Where did they go? Why come so boldly into town? I asked a local Aboriginal woman where do the ravens go at night and she smiled as she replied, “They go into the woods to perform ceremonies.”

I became spellbound watching these large birds seamlessly enmeshing themselves into the day to day business of Thompson. I began to listen for their calls, one not like a crow’s exactly, huskier yet melodic with a wide variety of tones. One raven perched above me, called, and I tried mimicking a “caw” sound. It responded with an indescribable bell-ring sound.

I then began to wonder why a big, jet-black bird would live and flourish in a landscape covered in snow for nine months of the year. They stood out on the snow white fields like beacons. I had thought animals were supposed to be equipped with camouflage of some sort to blend in with their environment. Or did ravens not care to do this? They are very bold birds, indeed Lakehead University naturalist Scott Kyle says “Ravens are the bikers of the bird world.”

As I continued watching them, captivated and determined now, I noticed something. A raven picked at a scrap on an open white field, visible to all. Then, apparently satisfied the bird took to flight. It flew, not far, up to a row of evergreens bordering the clearing and..... disappeared. I could not make out where it flew to perch. It was then I noticed not the green of the evergreen trees

but rather the dark black shadows contained therein. I could hear other raven calls close by but I could not see them. It would seem that the ravens wrapped in their black feathered coats had found a perfect spot to conceal themselves.



Day or night, summer or winter. A perfect camouflage.

So black would seem to be a perfect colour for this year round denizen of northern Manitoba, a land wrapped in white snow for much of the year. But I still believe that the raven wants to be seen. By me, by you and by all other creatures it shares its environment with.

By Michael J. Waddell, B.A.



YES! I want to protect the Yukon's environment and support the Yukon Conservation Society!

I'd like to make a tax deductible gift!

- \$60 \$200 \$500 \$1000 Surprise us! _____
- I'd like to make a monthly pledge by credit card of \$_____ (charged on the 15th of each month)
- I have made a bequest to YCS in my will

Please, sign me up as a member:

- Student \$10 Individual \$25 Family \$40 (2 or more people)
- I am a **new** member!
- I am **renewing** my membership for 2017!

Memberships are activated on day of receipt and good for 1 year, and include a subscription to the Walk Softly newsletter. Both donations and memberships are tax-deductible.

Do not send me newsletters. Instead, **notify me by email** when they are online.

Payment Method: Total \$ _____

- Cheque # _____ enclosed (payable to Yukon Conservation Society)
- Visa/Mastercard # _____ Expiry _____ Signature _____

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email – for Tax Receipt and YCS Email List _____

Mail completed slip to: 302 Hawkins St. Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1X6 – Phone: 668-5678 – ycs@ycs.yk.ca

Thank You Volunteers!

Look at our awesome wall tent! Sally Wright decorated it with about 25 YCS logos, and Peter Heebink ensured that the wall tent frame fits our new tent. Keep an eye out for wall tent Kid's Adventures next summer!



If you attended the YCS BBQ, you might have noticed that our yard looks better after it received some LTC. Thank you Nate Wood! We have some more ideas for our yard in the next few years, and would like to hear from what you'd like to see happening to our green space in downtown Whitehorse!

Thank you to all our volunteers for the vital work you do at YCS. If you'd like to help out with any of our events, campaigns, or projects, contact Julia at ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca or 668-5678.

We'd love to have you!

YCS is grateful for these tasks accomplished by our fantastic volunteers:

Mary Amerongen for her outreach and membership work

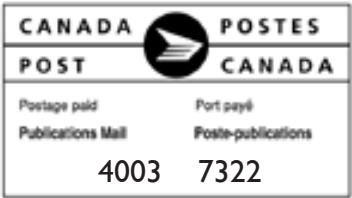
Joshua Hunt for help with computers

Laurie DuFleuve for help with outreach at DCMF and Moosehide

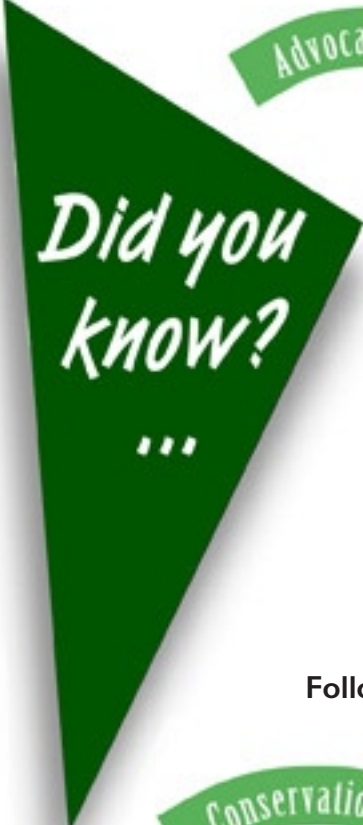
Tanya Handley for her tireless work on design for the Trail Guiding Program and Newsletter

All the volunteers who helped at the Summer BBQ Party

Everyone else who lends a hand keeping the YCS ship sailing!



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Environment & Election

It's critical that we speak up for the environment in the upcoming territorial election. Yukoners care about the Peel Watershed and land use planning, the future of mining, energy and fracking, wetlands, conservation strategy, and many more issues that affect the land we love.

Look inside for information about how we're putting the environment on the agenda – and stay tuned for details on our environment forum!

Follow us! YukonConservationSociety @YukonConservati YukonConservation

