

# Walk Softly

Newsletter of the  
Yukon Conservation Society  
Summer 2016



photo: Grant Douglas Photography

**Inside:** • Golden thoughts • Summer happenings • Environmental History

Chris Rider (CPAWS Yukon), Jill Pangman (CPAWS Yukon) and Christina Macdonald (YCS) recently travelled to Dawson City to meet with the Chiefs of the Northern Yukon First Nations (the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation). Through legal action against the Yukon government, YCS, CPAWS Yukon and the Northern First Nations are working to protect the Peel River Watershed.



Left to right: Chris Rider (CPAWS Yukon), Pauline Frost (Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation), Chief Simon Mervyn (Na-Cho Nyak Dun First Nation), Tim Gerberding (Tr'ondek Hwech'in), Chief Roberta Joseph (Tr'ondek Hwech'in), Christina Macdonald (YCS), Jill Pangman (CPAWS Yukon)

## [Is there such a thing as] Green Travel

Some years ago at a social gathering, an acquaintance of mine was enthusiastically describing recent extensive travels around the world. Horrifying, I heard myself say: "Wow, that sounds like several lifetimes of fossil fuel use!" As you might imagine, the conversation ended awkwardly.

Ok, so I was tactless, possibly intolerant, and I put friendly relations with my acquaintance in serious jeopardy... and yet I feel a sneaking pride that I voiced the "travel dilemma". I wonder though how I can respond better, while still honestly, to similar situations in the future.

Is there a way for us lucky, wealthy, curious, responsible and adventurous folks to express these facets of ourselves with no harm to the planet? My comment was a conversation stopper, and therein I see a major flaw. We need frank and open discussion in order to figure this out. And for the record, I am well aware that I am in no position to righteously throw stones!

This topic does feel like an elephant in the room. We plan and describe our own trips, take and share photos, feel envy at others' travels - all without much question among ourselves. Many of us have traveled and still want to, so naturally it is awkward to raise these questions about others' activities.

Mired as I currently am in a confused guilt-bog regarding travel, I am going to stop for a while until I figure some of this out. Maybe I'll stop traveling for a long time. I have been to a lot of places in my life already, so maybe I should let others use the carbon. Perhaps I'll save up the travel dollars I am not spending towards an electric car... so tell me, would it be "green" to travel in an electric car?

Please send your thoughts about green travel to [ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca) to be included in the next column.

*Alison Reid*



## In Praise of Carbon Pricing

A wise and experienced YCS staffer tells me that I should never read the comments after news stories, presumably because so many comments are trollish rants.

However, I still read them; it is like a sort of guilty pleasure for me, and anyway, I find plenty of nuggets amidst the dross. Many comments are thoughtful and I often learn something unexpected.

Recently I read an article on a meeting between the three northern Premiers, who, led by our Premier, made their opposition to a carbon tax very clear.

As an environmentalist that cut his teeth on the climate change file, I have come to the conclusion that a price signal is an effective way to change behaviour. The idea behind carbon pricing is to discourage bad behaviour, and to use its revenues to encourage good behaviour.

Many of the comment conversations revolved around the concern that Yukon is not a climate villain, so why should we be penalized?

Some maintain that the ability of the forests and tundra to absorb carbon overwhelms the output of Yukon people. I'm not aware of any peer reviewed calculations that prove this, but the point is an interesting one, and it strikes at the heart of the disconnect between climate hawks and climate doves.

What has been scientifically established is the size of our ecological footprint – the idea that our individual impact can be measured by the hectares of land it takes to support us. Famously, it has been shown that if everyone on the planet consumed and emitted as much as Canadians do, we would need 3.5 planets.

The thing is, Canada is a relatively sparsely populated country, so if you run the ecological footprint calculations to include population density, it can be shown that if the entire world had the same population density as Canada, let alone Yukon, we could all live as Canadians do (or even as Kuwaitis, the current consumption champions) and still live sustainably.

So the climate doves have a point. Seen narrowly, Yukon is not causing the problem, neither, this thinking goes, is Canada. Our emissions per Km<sup>2</sup> are sustainable even though our emissions per person are not.

But, the doves are missing the point. For the planet to be sustainable, its overall population density would need to fall to that of Canada. This would mean a lot of people in densely populated countries would have to vanish. The doves do not supply a way to achieve this goal.

So, until the global population drops back to two billion or less (Earth currently hosts 7.2 billion), we have to reduce our carbon emissions, and much of the overconsumption that drives it. We need to remember that we are not just citizens of sparsely populated, highly forested Yukon, but also of Canada and the world.

Until someone comes up with a better method to cut carbon than through the power of the economic system that put us in this predicament to begin with, there is no easier way to change our behaviour than through an open, simple, transparent carbon tax.

As a relatively wealthy secure people, we have an obligation to be leaders: to show the rest of the world how a northern and remote place can reduce its carbon footprint. We are faced with a classic choice: Lead, follow or get out of the way. YCS says we should lead, but ultimately the choice is up to all of us.

*Sebastian Jones  
YCS Energy Analyst*

### Further reading:

- Ewing B., A. Reed, A. Galli, J. Kitzes, and M. Wackernagel. (2010). Calculation Methodology for the National Footprint Accounts, 2010 Edition. Oakland: Global Footprint Network.
- Calculate your footprint (it costs a dollar, sorry!):
- Center for Sustainable Economy. (n.d.). FAQ. Retrieved from [http://myfootprint.org/en/about\\_the\\_quiz/faq/](http://myfootprint.org/en/about_the_quiz/faq/)
- Calculate your footprint for free (American calculator)
- <http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/>



### Walk Softly

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## Editorial

by Julia Duchesne

### Our new look

If you've visited the YCS office or website recently, you might have noticed some changes. Some projects that we've been working on since I arrived have finally borne fruit! Over the past year, we've been developing a new website, display, and brochure to better communicate what we do at the Yukon Conservation Society.

First, our website. The old YCS website had its charms (especially the subtle animation of a caribou herd that trekked across the top of the homepage as soon as you landed), but its labyrinthine structure was so layered with years of information and updates that it was hard to find what you needed. It was also a chore for Lewis, our Mining Analyst, whose Webmaster duties involved wrangling with 'miles of spaghetti code' – not anyone's idea of fun. The new website has a fresh, clean look that showcases the beauty of the Yukon – thanks to images generously donated by Cathie Archbould and Peter Mather. The site is a work in progress and staff are still adding content. The new system is great because it allows staff to easily update their own pages, keeping the website relevant, appealing, and up to date.

Beyond YCS' online presence, we've also updated two other resources that let us reach out to members and the general public more effectively. We revived the YCS brochure, updated its content, and turned to Tanya Handley, our designer extraordinaire, to create a beautiful new look for 2016. Now we have an informative, appealing brochure to give out at the market, at talks, or at any other event where people might want to take some info about YCS home with them. The brochure also incorporates a membership and donation form for those who would like to join or support YCS.

Finally, we have developed a visual display that can be set up in the office and at events. We have created information and photo panels that can be easily changed and re-arranged to suit different themes or topics. This display has already been deployed at our Casino Mine tailings dam information session, the Chadburn Park Plan open house, and the Shift Whitehorse transportation showcase. Our wonderful volunteers such as Mary Amerongen, who identified the need for an updated YCS display and brochure and helped shape the look, will be making great use of these new materials at the Fireweed Market and other events and open houses to come.

We welcome feedback on these projects and we're looking forward to introducing many new members to YCS this summer. If you'd like to be part of our outreach activities, contact me at [ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678. It's now easier than ever to learn about what we're up to and how to get involved!

## Government of Canada sets a precedent for consideration of upstream GHG emissions in environmental assessments.

During the valiant yet ill-fated battle to stop Yukon Energy’s Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) facility, YCS tried to get the Executive Committee of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) to consider upstream emissions and activities associated with the LNG fuel in its assessment of the “Whitehorse Diesel-Natural Gas Conversion” project.

YCS argued that YESAB was mandated to do so by their own Act: YESAA Section 42 states that YESAB shall consider “the significance of any environmental or socio-economic effects of the project that have occurred or might occur in or outside Yukon”.

YCS wanted YESAB to consider the fact that this facility required LNG (which is methane: a potent greenhouse gas with environmentally harmful extraction methods) to function. Extracting, processing, liquefying and transporting this fossil fuel for the LNG facility have ongoing environmental and climate impacts that should be taken into consideration in an assessment of a project that requires such a feedstock to operate.

The YESAB Executive Committee chose not to consider the LNG fuel in the scope of its assessment outside of the Project Area and point of combustion. It said YESAB could not make recommendations to regulatory bodies outside of the Yukon (yet that was not what we asked of them). The Executive Committee also said it disagreed with our interpretation of Section 42 and stated that if it were to do as we suggested, YESAB would be crippled by having to consider the lifecycle of every piece of construction material or equipment. We argued that those examples were not fair comparisons, as they are one-time purchases, as opposed to a fuel that must be continuously supplied throughout the project’s lifespan.

YESAB’s choice to disagree with our assertion was very disappointing for YCS and one of a number of frustrating losses in that ultimately unsuccessful campaign.

Two years later, the newly empowered and renamed federal government department, Environment and Climate Change Canada, set an important precedent in considering upstream greenhouse gas emissions in environmental assessments.

In February, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) released its draft report for the Pacific NorthWest LNG project. PETRONAS (owned by the government of Malaysia) proposes to build the controversial LNG liquefaction and marine transport/export facility at Lelu Island near Prince Rupert on the BC coast.

The Pacific NorthWest LNG project itself would emit 5.28 million tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) per year. Most of these emissions would be a result of the combustion of natural gas to power the energy intensive liquefaction process. The project itself would be one of the highest single source greenhouse gas emitters in Canada.

But it’s not just direct project emissions that are significant. From the CEAA draft report:

“As part of the Government of Canada’s interim approach for environmental assessments announced on January 27, 2016, Environment and Climate Change Canada provided an assessment of the upstream greenhouse gas emissions associated with the Project. Upstream emissions were estimated for the stages preceding the liquefaction process and included natural gas production, processing, and pipeline transmission. ECCC estimated that upstream emissions associated with the project would range from 6.5 to 8.7 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.”

The proponent said this was an overestimation and recalculated the upstream emissions to 5 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year.

*Doing the math:*

natural gas production, processing, and pipeline transmission <i>to fuel the project</i> <i>(upstream emissions)</i>	=	6.5 to 8.7 million tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e* per year
	+	
Pacific NorthWest LNG project <i>to operate the project</i>	=	5.28 million tonnes CO <sub>2</sub> e* per year
<i>a whole lot of                  climate change!</i>		
* carbon dioxide equivalent		

*continues...*

Even with this recalculation, the upstream emissions related to natural gas extraction, processing and pipeline transport would be as energy intensive as the liquefaction and export facility. Keep in mind that (difficult and inconvenient to measure) fugitive emissions related to fracking are likely not properly included in upstream emissions calculations. Also, methane is calculated at only 25 times the global warming potential (GWP) of CO<sub>2</sub>e, rather than 86 CO<sub>2</sub>e. The latter number is methane's global warming potential over a 20 year timeframe (the former is over 100 years), which YCS and many others agree is more appropriate – because of the urgency of required action to meet our 20 year climate goals and methane is a short-lived climate pollutant.

The Yukon could suffer dire consequences if the Pacific NorthWest LNG export project were to proceed – and not only from climate change. Access to international markets would be created, potentially making remote shale gas deposits – extractable only through fracking – attractive to industry. EFLO Energy has set its sights on shale gas deposits in the Liard Basin in southeast Yukon, and declared its intention to frack during its presentation to the Select Committee Regarding the Risks and Benefits of Hydraulic Fracturing in 2014.

CEAA concludes that: “The upstream greenhouse gas emissions estimate of 6.5-8.7 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year can be characterized similarly to the direct emissions: high in magnitude, continuous, irreversible and global in extent. Accordingly, the upstream emissions could be considered likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects.”

Of course, the upstream *activities* causing those emissions, namely fracking, will also have significant adverse environmental effects. For the sake of salmon, land, water, and the climate, let's hope that the federal government does not approve the Pacific NorthWest LNG facility.

If one good thing has come of this frightening industrial spectre, it is the inclusion of upstream emissions in a major environmental assessment. While it's too late for this precedent to help prevent the construction of Yukon Energy's LNG facility, it should help arguments against its use (i.e., burning fracked gas). Yukon Energy is considering upstream emissions related to all its resource supply options; LNG will have continuous upstream emissions, unlike renewable energy alternatives.



### **Pacific NorthWest LNG and Salmon**

Despite its trailblazing on upstream GHG emissions, CEAA's draft report was criticized by BC environmental and indigenous groups for its failure to recognize the significance and value of the salmon habitat in the Skeena estuary, and for excluding peer-reviewed independent science related to Flora Bank and the area around Lelu Island. The proposed LNG export project location, Lelu Island and Flora Bank near Prince Rupert on the BC Coast, is a precious refuge for migrating and juvenile salmon in one of the least industrialized estuaries in the world.

Further to ignoring the significance of this critical salmon habitat, the report also ignored the science related to impacts the project would have on this rare habitat.

CEAA has until June to release its final report. Land defenders seeking to protect Flora Bank and Lelu Island from this extreme fossil fuel development that would compromise salmon, require an extreme ramping up of fracking efforts, and have carbon budget-blowing direct and upstream GHG emissions, hope CEAA will include vital science in its final report.

At the time of *Walk Softly* deadline, BC Premier Christy Clark is urging the federal government to approve the PETRONAS LNG facility as a response to the devastating forest fires at Fort McMurray, Alberta and BC's Peace region. Time will tell whether disaster capitalism prevails or whether we take this opportunity to renew our economy aligned with our commitments to deep greenhouse gas reduction targets.

YCS hopes that this precedent for consideration of upstream emissions in an environmental assessment will help us ensure that the YESAB Panel Review assessing the massive Casino Mine will include the upstream emissions of the on-site LNG facility proposed to power that operation. We hope that the significance and magnitude of the direct project GHG emissions as well as upstream emissions will give recommending and decision bodies even more reason to recommend against the Casino project from proceeding. As we told YESAB, YCS will always request upstream analysis of activities and emissions in energy projects. We must acknowledge the global reach of the impacts of our fossil fuel use.

*Anne Middler,  
YCS Energy Analyst*

## Meet our new staff and colleague:

Hi! I am Pénélope, and I am really happy to be a policy intern with YCS for the summer! I flew into Whitehorse the day after I finished my French Literature undergrad in Montreal, and am already amazed by the beauty of the land. I could not think of a better way to spend my summer than discovering the Yukon and dedicating time to a meaningful organization! I am as excited to canoe, hike, bike, climb and camp as I am to learn about Yukon's environmental issues and policies. Growing up in the woods of Quebec, working as a counsellor for a canoe-camping expedition camp and being part of an urban fruit picking collective made me eager to engage more in environmental action and education, so when I had to find a Public Policy related internship as part of the Loran Scholars Foundation summer program, YCS seemed to be the perfect fit. Nature has always been a source of joy, respect and calm as well as an amazing playground for me, so it makes me really happy to be working with a team dedicated to preserving it!



Hi! I'm Nina Vogt and I'm this summer's Trail Guide Coordinator. I was lucky enough to grow up in the Yukon and spend a large portion of my time enjoying the amazing wildlife and scenery this territory has to offer. When I have free time I enjoy outdoor activities like hiking, horseback riding, canoeing and trail running. I'm passionate about maintaining our biodiversity and culture here in the Yukon, and I believe an important aspect of this is public education. I'm excited to work with YCS' Guided Nature Hikes and Ed-Ventures, and to be involved in engaging all ages in the importance of the Yukon's ecosystems and history.

YCS welcomes Chris Rider to his new role as the Executive Director of CPAWS Yukon! Chris and Christina are pictured in front of the Yukon River in Dawson, just a few days before spring breakup.



## COFFEE'S HOT

If you have the good fortune to live in Dawson City you have probably received an e-mail, or seen a poster, or heard through the grapevine, about a Coffee Gold open house. This mining project used to be owned by Kaminak, but Kaminak has just been bought by GoldCorp for over half a billion dollars. Details on this arrangement are still forthcoming.

The Coffee Gold project involves developing a hard rock gold mine at Coffee Creek, about one hundred kilometres south of Dawson, on the far side of the Yukon River.

To their credit, Kaminak rewrote the manual on how to do community consultation. It seemed a month couldn't go by without a gathering in Dawson to discuss some aspect of the proposed project.

It will be interesting to see if GoldCorp goes to similar lengths to maintain the social licence Kaminak built for the proposed mine. A mining giant with mines around the world, GoldCorp has been accused of environmental and human rights harms in the past. More on this in future issues of *Walk Softly* as information emerges.

All the community consultation on Coffee Gold was done prior to any technical paperwork being made public on the Yukon Environmental and Socio Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) website. As of the time of writing of this article, no documentation has been made available to the general public through YESAB.

From an environmental conservation perspective, there are a few things known.

The existing placer roads and trails heading south from Dawson, across the Stewart River, and then south to the Yukon River, will be upgraded to be able to take large trucks. This upgrading could open up this area to increased hunting and related harvesting pressures.

It will also increase the pressure on the land adjacent to the improved road through easier access to this area by other mineral exploration and development companies.

The rivers will be crossed using a barge in summer and an ice road in winter.

The actual Coffee Gold mine will be using cyanide heap-leach technology. No matter how a company tries to dress this up, it means they will be digging bloody great pits in the ground to extract ore. This ore will then be crushed and piled into a heap.

A cyanide solution is dribbled over it and as it percolates through it will gather the gold particles with it. The cyanide-gold solution is collected at the base of the pit and the gold removed. The cyanide is continually recycled to be dribbled back over the growing heap of ore.

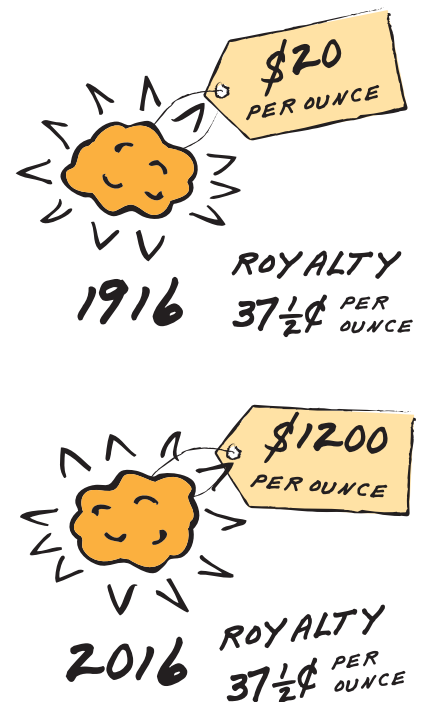
Of critical importance is the design of the pad upon which the heap-leach operation takes place. Cyanide heap leaching has been used in the North before, but each mine site is unique in the approach it takes to ensuring cyanide does not leach into the groundwater table.

Finally, there is the energy usage. From what is known so far, the project will be reducing operations in the winter, thus reducing on-site energy consumption. However, most of the energy on site, irrespective of season, will be generated from fossil fuel sources. This will contribute towards the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions.

YCS will be putting information and analysis online about this project as it progresses and as more details about GoldCorp's ownership are made public. Check the mining pages on our newly revamped website at [www.yukonconservation.org](http://www.yukonconservation.org) regularly for updates.

*Lewis Rifkind, YCS Mining Analyst*

Some things change,  
some stay the same...





## ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD...

The Bank of Canada has sold off the last of its gold reserves. There is nothing left in the vault. It is empty. The value of our currency is now basically determined by the faith we all collectively put into it.

Speaking of faith, we assign a similar belief to gold. The metal has some minor use in industrial applications, but the vast majority of it is used as jewelry or stored in vaults. It is estimated that about three thousand tonnes were produced worldwide in 2015, of which three-quarters was used as jewelry.

Storing gold in a safety deposit box is a recipe to lose money. It costs to buy or rent a safe, and then it has to be guarded. Meanwhile, the gold sits inside doing nothing. And heaven forbid a person stores it under their mattress. While gold might be malleable, it would still make a mattress very lumpy.

There are the survivalists who love to point out that when civilization collapses those with gold bars and coins will have the wealth to survive.

Far be it for me to point out the obvious but when civilization collapses, those with stockpiles of lentils and medicines will do a lot better at the local market than anyone sitting on a pile of yellow metal.

In the meantime, though, the Yukon gold extraction industry hums along. Despite the apparent uselessness of this metal, there does still seem to be some demand for it.

Yukon placer miners (who wash gold out of streambed gravel) extracted over \$69 million worth of gold in 2013. In exchange, the Yukon received under \$18,000 in royalties, plus a lot of destroyed streams and river valleys.

The royalties haven't changed in a century: they are still thirty-seven and a half cents an ounce. Meanwhile, gold is worth over twelve hundred dollars an ounce, compared to about twenty dollars back in 1916. The royalty rate stays the same despite the incredible increase in the value of this particular metal. The Yukon is giving this stuff away and not getting anything in return apart from environmental degradation and some nostalgic feelings about our reason for being. Something has to change.

While there are no active hard-rock gold mines currently operating in the Yukon, there are a few proposed. These include such future operations as the Kaminak Mine south of Dawson and the Victoria Gold Project between Mayo and Keno. These operations, and any other hard-rock operations out there, require ore to be crushed so the metals can be extracted.

The Yukon will get some royalties (the hard-rock royalty is different from the placer royalty, although its adequacy is still debatable) in return for removed mountaintops, filled-in valleys, and mounds of crushed rock tailings that will hopefully not have to be maintained forever.

Gold mining, both hard-rock and placer, does create some jobs, but the very nature of mining is that once the ore body is exhausted (or the placer stream worked over) the mine closes and the jobs disappear.

Of course, if the mine has been abandoned by the operating company (a not uncommon occurrence in the Yukon) there will always be maintenance and remediation jobs paid for by the taxpayers. Some of these abandoned mines will require taxpayer funded cleanups lasting centuries. It is also highly dependent on the price of gold, leading to a boom and bust cycle of activity over which the Yukon has no control.

Depending on the government of the day, infrastructure can be built (sometimes using taxpayers' dollars) to support the mine. This ranges from roads to electricity generation and transmission. The thought always arises that perhaps infrastructure investments should be aimed at the needs of Yukoners, and not just resource extraction companies.

And all this money spent and the environment altered, for a yellow metal that is essentially useless.

Maybe it is time to re-examine the value humans put into gold, and the effort we take in extracting it out of the ground. The tax dollars being spent on supporting infrastructure for this boom and bust economy could perhaps be spent on more sustainable initiatives. And the environmental damage done is costing us way more than the value of the gold itself.

*Lewis Rifkind  
YSC Mining Analyst*



## Free Guided Nature Hikes

It is that time again - our free guided hikes at Miles Canyon and Canyon City start soon!

**When:** 10am & 2pm, Tuesday through Saturday, June 11-August 20

**Where:** Meet at the Robert Lowe Suspension Bridge below the Miles Canyon parking lot

The 2 hour, easy walking hikes are fun for avid nature enthusiasts, hikers and families alike. Learn about the Gold Rush, First Nations history, geology, plants, animals and so much more! The hikes with our knowledgeable guides will run rain or shine. Check our website for the up-to-date schedule of special themed hikes.

### Kids' Ed-Ventures:

Our regular hikes are great for people of all ages who are capable of walking 3.5km over mostly gentle terrain, including children. Additionally, we offer nature and conservation themed drop-in activities and games for children of all ages each Saturday at Miles Canyon from 12:30pm-2pm. Visit our website for a list of themes for each Saturday.

Meet us at the Robert Lowe Suspension Bridge below the Miles Canyon parking lot!



### We Take Requests:

Do you have a larger group that would like to join us for a hike?

Do you have a specific theme you would like to hear more about?

Would you like to schedule a specialized Kids Ed-Venture Program for your camp, daycare, or other kids' group?

Contact Nina at 668-5678 or [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca)! We are happy to accommodate your requests.

### Help out our trail guiding team! We're looking for:

#### Youth Volunteers:

Are you a youth aged 13-17 interested in sharing your passion for conservation, and building your skills and knowledge while you do it? We are looking for motivated young people to volunteer with our Trail Guiding Team! Email [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca) or call Nina at 668-5678 for more information. You will gain:

- Interpretation skills
- Kids' conservation education experience
- Knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the Yukon
- Access to passionate mentors in the field of conservation
- A certificate indicating your contribution at the end of your term
- An amazing summer experience with the YCS staff!

#### Art-loving volunteers for Created at the Canyon!

We are looking for volunteers to assist with our Created at the Canyon live multi-media art event on Friday July 15th and Saturday 16th at Miles Canyon/Canyon City, and the following open exhibit in August. We require volunteers to help in the planning process and also on the day of the events. Come join our creative team in making this community event a reality!

#### Guest guides with knowledge to share!

Do you have specific knowledge and passions that you want to share? For example, are you a mushroom expert, passionate birder or Yukon history enthusiast? We are looking for guest speakers from all walks of life to join our guides at Miles Canyon and Canyon City on special themed hikes. If you have knowledge that you want to share with tourists and locals alike with the goal of connecting with nature and/or history, contact us!

*For more information on these volunteer opportunities contact our Trail Guide Coordinator, Nina Vogt, at [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678.*



## Created at the Canyon

**Original live art and performances inspired by the natural and cultural history of Miles Canyon & Canyon City.**

**When:** Friday, July 15th from 2pm-8pm & Saturday, July 16th from 10am-4pm

**Where:** Miles Canyon & Canyon City

Join us this July as we bring art outdoors! Visit six local artists as they create art inspired by the stunning beauty and fascinating history of the canyon and Yukon River. Artists will be in place at the Canyon on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday, and YCS will be there to provide maps, information, and our regular guided hikes running 10-12 and 2-4. This event will be followed by an open art exhibit in August at a local venue. All Created at the Canyon events are free.



photos: Grant Douglas Photography

### Artist Call-Out – Created at the Canyon

The Yukon Conservation Society is accepting applications until June 20th from artists and performers of all sorts. The selected six artists will create original art in Miles Canyon over the two days of the event. This is a great opportunity for artists to connect with each other and the public, to make art outdoors, and to be exhibited in a prominent local venue.

YCS invites artists in all media, including (but not limited to) performance art, installation, mixed media, writing, storytelling, photography and sculpture, to apply for this event. YCS particularly encourages youth and First Nations artists to apply.

Artists will be required to be at Miles Canyon from 2-8pm Friday July 15 and 10am-4pm Saturday July 16, and are also encouraged to attend the exhibit launch in August. YCS does not provide art supplies. Artists will receive an honorarium.

Please contact Nina at [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678 for more information and artist application packages, or visit [www.yukonconservation.org](http://www.yukonconservation.org).

*Funding for this project is made possible through the assistance of Arts Fund, Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Yukon, Elaine Taylor Minister*



## Working on the Environment: The Yukon Conservation Society

Board member David Neufeld has written a chapter on Yukon counterculture for a book on Canadian countercultures and the environment.

Part of his chapter discusses YCS' history – read on to learn about our wild ride through Yukon environmental history!

The story of the Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) highlights the nature of both the countercultural desire to limit environmental devastation and the conflict with the local non-Aboriginal population, who saw only the promise of modernity and doubted that there could be any serious threat to the territory's expansive wilderness.

“It’s a wonderful place here. It’s friendly. I have always felt the wilderness hospitable and warm. It’s more than just the physical facts of water and trees . . . it’s sort of a medium, like amniotic fluid that surrounds the child in the womb and invokes a feeling of total well-being. We feel good here. And it means something to me to have built my home here, as carefully as I could, to fit into the wilderness.”

*[from the cover of YCS founder John Lammers' autobiographical book, showing the Yukon Wilderness Unlimited camp at the mouth of the Pelly River]*



An excerpt from “Building Futures Together: Western and Aboriginal Countercultures and the Environment in the Yukon Territory” by David Neufeld, in *Canadian Countercultures and the Environment*, ed. Colin M. Coates. Available free online at <http://press.ucalgary.ca/books/9781552388143>.

John Lammers, a refugee of the World War II Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, arrived in the Yukon in the early 1950s. Originally settling in Whitehorse, Lammers undertook a variety of bush and town positions until 1963, when he acquired land at the isolated confluence of the Stewart and Pelly rivers and set up a year-round wilderness tourism business. He and his wife built their own camp and ran river trips for a small but well-to-do market of southern Canadians and Americans. Their income was modest, but Lammers was living out his dream of an alternative lifestyle. He lamented the fact that many newcomers simply settled in town and adopted a suburban lifestyle, when the alternatives were so attractive:

“The physical Yukon is different from elsewhere. And with planning, our society up here could easily offer human beings a life that is different. But to do that we would have to . . . acknowledge that the thing that is special about the Yukon is her small population, our space, our great natural environment. And our society should steer people toward a lifestyle that takes advantage of her particular endowments. . . . There are many, uniquely Yukon opportunities.”

Years before the influx of counterculture youth, Lammers identified the Yukon as a place that could address the Western cultural interest in communing with the natural world.

Lammers’s lifestyle aspirations quickly ran into the realities of the Yukon mining boom of the mid-1960s. Incensed, Lammers complained that local citizens had no “voice in the planning of what goes on. . . . The federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development . . . rules the Yukon . . . [controlling] oil exploration, road building, timber [and] mining. And they apparently view their function as one of a . . . broker, selling off our product as fast as they can, without trying to ration any of it out to last for the future.

Lammers started a citizens’ campaign for comprehensive land-use regulation. As president of the new YCS, established in 1968, he wrote, “We are in danger of losing all of the Yukon’s natural assets swiftly, if greedy, single-minded, unplanned, extraction type of ‘development’ is allowed to spread its cancer here also.” In late summer 1970, speculators staked Lammers’s own property for potential development. Lammers moved into high gear.

The society, closely modelled on the Alaska Conservation Society, was led by local outdoorsmen and -women. These included Charlie Taylor, the president of the Yukon Fish and Game Association; Monty Alfred, a federal hydrologist; Bob Charlie, a young First Nations broadcaster; and Cora Grant, an avid birdwatcher and the one stalwart supporter of Lammers’s causes. Lammers began to build the society’s membership, gaining the support of the local canoe club and the consumers’ association; the chamber of commerce and all government departments studiously ignored them.

## A Castle on the Frontier



An initial survey of the membership identified subjects of concern: wildlife preservation, scenic and aesthetic aspects of Yukon roads, cleanup of abandoned mines, public consultation by the federal government, public education on issues, and parks and land-use regulation. These relatively conservative objectives reflected Lammers's desire to support the federal government's proposed introduction of comprehensive land-use regulations that the local mining industry vociferously resisted. Lammers had difficulty getting the YCS board to support even these limited goals. Membership was never large; he complained that only ninety people signed up, and over sixty of these were from southern Canada and the United States. Among local members, only two or three stood with him on more controversial issues. One by one, directors resigned or simply stopped showing up. Rudy Burian, Lammers's downstream neighbour, observed that "[John] wants to save everything. He even believes in suing the government if they do something he doesn't like. He's a nice guy, but he's just too radical in his conservation ideas. . . . His ideas to me are more or less communistic."

The failure of the first conservation society to advance an environmental agenda among Yukon people can be attributed to the prevailing non-Aboriginal belief in the scale and resilience of Yukon wilderness. In 1971, roughly three-quarters of the Yukon population — largely young, non-Aboriginal, and transient—lived in Whitehorse or the relatively large communities of Dawson City, Faro, and Watson Lake. Caught up in the glamour of a new Klondike rush, they did not see how they were connected to contemporary environmental issues.

However, Kluane National Park, an integral element of the government's northern development strategy, garnered all kinds of interest. Southern environmental organizations, the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada being especially prominent, rallied broad public support for the establishment of the Yukon national park. Although originally supportive, Lammers found that his agenda for land-use regulation was lost between the economics of industry, the symbolic value of the national park, and the economic diversification offered by tourism. Isolated and almost alone, he concluded the federal government had traded away the regulations to industry in return for the national park. A bitter man, Lammers attempted to disband the YCS in the spring of 1972.

Despite Lammers's fiat, the conservation society carried on. The floundering group was briefly led by a non-Aboriginal believer in ecological salvation through Native spirituality. However, the outdoorsmen and more conservative long-time Yukoners quickly took over leadership and pursued a more moderate public role. They made contacts in forward-thinking elements of the mining industry, and together they sought to fashion compromises in mining practices. They were no dreamers of an alternative future. As its new president declared, "Conservation . . . must make the leap from dreamy Indian idyll to present day push. . . . Members of the society can create a working relationship between the simple life and today's life."

At this point, the counterculture reacted in their own way to environmental threats. Under the leadership of Innis-Taylor—"the grand old man of Yukon environmentalism"—they established an alternative body, the Yukon Resource Council, in 1973 to maintain a strong public voice against unrestricted resource development. The council soon

recaptured the leadership of the YCS. They mounted potent professional and technical cases against proposed mega-hydroelectric projects, the Alaska Highway pipeline, extension of the Dempster Highway, and the related release of lands for oil exploration. A teacher in Old Crow (a YCS member) supported the Vuntut Gwitchin community presentation to the Berger Commission (1974–1977), an early crossover between counterculture and Aboriginal advocacy. Further, during the anti-trapping and anti-fur campaigns of the mid-1980s, YCS was almost alone among Canadian environmental groups in offering support for Aboriginal trapping.

By the late 1970s federal government departments, now more sensitive to demands for local participation, began to support the YCS with annual grants and specific consultation contracts, much to the chagrin of the local Progressive Conservative MP, Erik Nielsen. The society's environmental education role greatly expanded in the early 1980s. Programs were developed for schools, and a much broader offering to the public included workshops on energy conservation, lectures, and a series of travel books highlighting Yukon's environmental wonders. These efforts, especially the initiation of a still-operating summer program of free nature and history hikes in Whitehorse, dovetailed with the development of the ecotourism market. The organization was well organized, employed paid staff, and enjoyed a degree of community support. Led by a board of well-educated and articulate wilderness guides, teachers, and professionals—most of them young recent arrivals in the territory—their strategic objective was the transformation of Yukon society.

In 1979, YCS President Nancy MacPherson noted that the society wished “to explore and promote alternative ways of thinking and living in this world.” Lynda Ehrlich, an active member in 1980, recalled local resentment toward the society: “YCS was perceived as kind of radical left wingers and [the YCS] wouldn't have disputed that to a great extent. . . . There were all sorts of crazy comments about us, the hippies.” The society was radical. Most of its activities promoted rethinking humans' relationship with nature and argued for a reduction in resource consumption and a greater emphasis on the stewardship of natural places.

While the work of the society was non-partisan, its membership was not. Politics in the Yukon was then, and largely remains today, polarized between the business and industry promoters of unrestrained economic development and a counterculture recognizing a plurality of interests in how the environment is understood and related to. In 1985 the two Yukon countercultures felt they had achieved a major objective with the election of a left-leaning New Democratic Party government with four First Nations and four non-Indigenous legislators under the leadership of Tony Penikett. This victory was understood as a sign of the transformation wrought by both First Nations young people and their newcomer peers over the previous fifteen years. Many more of them subsequently moved into government to enact their dreams.



## Students, this is for you!!

### Ted Parnell Scholarship

YCS is happy to offer its annual scholarship of \$500 for 2016. This scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing any aspect of environmental studies, demonstrating outstanding interest and motivation in the field. Interests pertaining to northern environments such as wildlife, ecology, renewable resources, energy, and environmental education are appropriate areas for eligibility.

### Application Requirements

Applicants must be Yukon residents and should be entering or currently enrolled in a post-secondary school program (excluding graduate work). Proof of acceptance will be required before the scholarship is awarded.

### Applications should be made in writing by July 1, 2016.

Details regarding the application can be found on our website, [yukonconservation.org/funds](http://yukonconservation.org/funds)

For more information call Julia at YCS: (867) 668-5678



**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 visa 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 2016!

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

*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.*

**Payment Method:** Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque # \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed (payable to Yukon Conservation Society)

I am putting it on my Visa # \_\_\_\_\_ 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](mailto:ycs@ycs.yk.ca)**

**Thank You Volunteers!**



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](mailto:ycsoutreach@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678.

We'd love to have you!

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

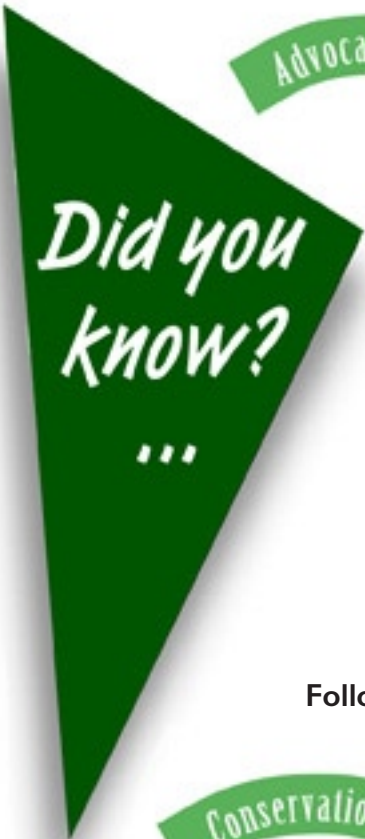
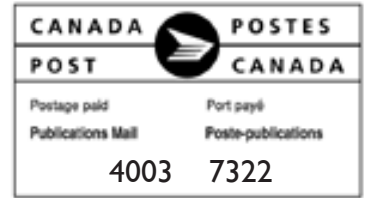
Computer maintenance, back-ups and support: Joshua Hunt

Energy Committee: JP Pinard, Sally Wright, Skeeter Wright, Lee Carruthers, Nick de Graff, Bonnie Burns & Karen Baltgailis

Office Support: Julie Frisch

Membership Database Support: Mary Amerongen

Recycling: Raven Recycling



**Tuesday, August 9th we will be Celebrating our Members with a Backyard BBQ!**

It's thanks to our volunteers, members, and supporters that YCS can keep speaking up for our Yukon home. We'd like to thank you with a summer BBQ party! Please join us on Tuesday August 9 from 11:30-1:30 for a lunchtime BBQ party to kick off summer.

Friends and supporters of YCS are welcome – and please bring along anyone who would like to learn more about YCS! There will be veggie options available.

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