

Walk Softly

Newsletter of the
Yukon Conservation Society
Winter 2016



photo: Shailyn Drukis

Inside: • Election Hopes and Fears • Ted Parnell Scholarship • Electric Vehicles



It's that time of year again... stop by the YCS or CPAWS Yukon offices to pick up some fresh-roasted Watershed Wakeup coffee for all the coffee-lovers on your list! This is a "smooth, full-bodied, and determined" roast from Bean North Coffee Roasting Co. Ltd. - so it's organic, fair trade, CO2-responsible, and delicious! Don't trust us when we say it smells heavenly - come try for yourself!

Proceeds support the Protect Peel campaign!

\$18/bag

302 Hawkins St. (at 3rd) or 506 Steele St., 9-5 Monday to Friday.

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.

What the USA's new Climate Denier In Chief could mean for Canada:

Barely 24 hours after many Yukoners accepted with cautious optimism the changing of the guard in our territorial government, we let out a collective gasp of dread at the outcome of the American election.

Climate action was discussed by all of the parties in the Yukon election (more so by some than others), and every party acknowledged that climate change is real and we need to take action to stop it. 66% of voters chose parties that supported the carbon tax that the federal government said it will put in place.

But after Donald Trump's rise to power in the USA, Canada's climate action plans seem uncertain.

In addition to recovering from the deplorable racist and misogynist tone of a divisive and hate-filled campaign, we must now deal with the fact that the President-elect of the United States is a proud climate change denier. Trump's actions would not only set back progress on environmental policy, but could also completely derail hard-fought climate progress.

With majorities in both the Senate and Congress, President Trump will be empowered to pursue his stated priorities which include: kill Obama's Clean Power Plan, withdraw from the Paris climate agreement, dismantle US environmental rules around coal power, weaken fuel economy standards for vehicles, open new public lands to oil and gas drilling (see Sebastian's article on ANWR), scale back support for renewable energy, make the Supreme Court hostile to environmental regulation... I shudder to go on.

This could send a chilling message to global climate action financing and resolve to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Unfortunately, Canada could be the first to be swept up in this dirty tide.

Because our economies are closely integrated, it may prove difficult for the federal government to stay the course on their trajectory (however bendy it may be) to real climate action.



The bendiness stems from the federal government's disappointing and perplexing approval of the Pacific Northwest LNG facility that will super-frack BC, blow the province's and Canada's carbon budgets and imperil Skeena River salmon. Trudeau's government also looks poised to approve the Kinder Morgan Trans-Mountain pipeline to get tar sands diluted bitumen to tidewater.

The Trump regime will apply renewed pressure to build the Keystone XL Pipeline, further threatening to revitalize and expand the carbon spewing, water polluting and boreal forest destroying tar sands.

Expanding fossil fuel infrastructure is incompatible with climate change action, and this new Trump wrench could further weaken Canada's ability or will to act. Is a national carbon tax going to happen now? Expect tantrums of childish proportions from conservatives and the fossil fuel lobby complaining that if our spoiled southern siblings don't have to clean up after themselves, why should we?

This mismatch between Canada and the US echoes the situation 15 years ago, when George W. Bush was elected (however dubiously). Dubya promptly withdrew from the Kyoto Accord. Despite having always hitched our wagon to US climate change actions and targets, Prime Minister Chrétien ratified the protocol. Sadly, Canada had no actual plan and we failed to meet any targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

That was a pathetic failure in our recent history, but at least it showed that we can diverge from our southern neighbour's collision course with climate change.

And we must again. But this time we have to follow through with our commitments and meet ambitious targets to diversify our economy and make Canada stronger.

Climate regression aside, the malicious US presidential campaign allowed nasty undercurrents in America to surface. The danger is for misogyny, xenophobia, racism and environmental destruction to be normalized and legitimized in North American society.

Now, more than ever, we need to defend and advance our common values of inclusion, diversity, respect, and protection of our environment, as we navigate the uncertain times ahead.

*Anne Middler
YCS Energy Analyst*

This article was inspired by the Pembina Institute's webinar "What does the US election mean for climate and Canada?" Read about it at #ClimateElection

Walk Softly

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Editorial

by Christina Macdonald

YCS hitting the ground running in 2017

The past month has been a wild ride. Two high-stakes elections have many of us looking ahead and wondering what the future will hold. The Yukon territorial election ushered in a new Liberal majority government on a commitment to working with First Nations and taking needed action on climate change. A day later, this result was overshadowed by the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA on promises to build a wall between the States and Mexico and withdraw from the 2016 Paris climate change agreement.

In these times of political and social turmoil, the Yukon Conservation Society stands strong and true to our mandate, as we have done for almost 50 years now. Over the decades, YCS has collaborated with communities, First Nation governments and other environmental organizations to secure significant conservation successes in the territory. Our Board, staff and volunteers have become experts in the Yukon assessment, regulatory and planning processes and are committed to staying on the cutting edge of research and training so that YCS continues to be a respected voice for the Yukon's wildlife, land and water.

We were a powerful voice for the environment in the lead up to the territorial election. YCS skilfully highlighted pivotal environmental matters for the public during this critical time: the Faro money pit, the carbon tax, oil and gas exploration and development in Eagle Plain, fracking, land use planning and the Peel Watershed. After 14 years, we have a new government in power and it is critical that we seize this opportunity to make conservation gains in the territory, especially as Trump carries out his promises to undo climate action and erase environmental protection measures in the United States.

We are excited to put our heads and hearts together to capitalize on the conservation opportunities of this new era. In 2017, YCS will keep working to speed the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, secure protection for vulnerable wildlife populations and sensitive habitat, and be a watchdog for industrial development activities across the territory. On March 22, 2017 the Peel Watershed case will be heard at the Supreme Court of Canada. Yukoners, Canadians, and supporters around the world will be watching as we proudly stand with CPAWS Yukon and the affected First Nation governments to uphold the integrity of land use planning in the Yukon and the Final Recommended Plan for the Peel Watershed.

While there is still work ahead for us, we are so much closer to fulfilling the vision of true protection for the wild and sacred Peel Watershed – congratulations and thank you for your passion and commitment to this united endeavour.

Wishing you a joyful and restorative holiday and all the best for the New Year.

The New ANWR Nightmare: Porcupine Caribou Threatened

No sooner had the news broken that the Trump forces had prevailed in America than his deputies in Alaska started yelling from his bandwagon that this is a great opportunity to reopen one of the most divisive issues in the history of Alaska and Yukon. Senator Murkowski and Congressman Don Young (who has been in power since 1973, having slithered out from under bribery charges two or three times) are calling on Trump to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil drilling.

In the fevered dreams of the Alaskan oilies, as much as 10 billion barrels of oil could be thus made available. However, when the national petroleum reserve to the west of the oil fields of Prudhoe Bay was opened up, with similar expectations, drilling found less than one billion potential barrels.

The big problem of course is not the uncertain quantities of oil – rather it is that these lands contain the calving grounds of the iconic Porcupine Caribou herd.

In 1987, Canada and the U.S. signed a treaty to protect the Porcupine Caribou herd. The treaty’s prime objective is “To conserve the Porcupine Caribou Herd and its habitat through international co-operation and co-ordination so that the risk of irreversible damage or long-term adverse effects as a result of use of caribou or their habitat is minimized.” For the purposes of this treaty, habitat includes the calving grounds.

The oilies have been struggling since 1977 (back when Congressman Young was still young) to get their drills into the calving grounds. The battle has been intense at times, and it is in no small part thanks to the incredible international lobbying efforts of the Vuntut Gwitchin that the lands are still protected.

President Obama could have used his executive powers to declare ANWR a National Monument, which would have afforded a high level of permanent protection, but instead he chose to propose it for permanent National Wilderness status, which would have been even stronger.

However, wilderness areas can only be created by an act of Congress. The oil lobby notoriously controls Congress, so it did not happen. And now, the oilies have control of the Presidency, the Senate and the Congress, so they aim to seize the moment.

The Gwich’in have once again set off to Washington D.C. in a last ditch effort to ask President Obama to make ANWR a National Monument before Trump, Young and Murkowski get their hands on it, in all likelihood devastating the most critical habitat of one of the only remaining intact migrating caribou herds left on the planet.

We wish them the very best on their journey and objective. We hope that when Obama considers his legacy, he follows the example of his predecessor President Carter, sets this land aside and remembers that we all depend on a healthy environment.

Sebastian Jones



Yukon Election Report: Environment Forum, Canvassing, and your Favourite Yukon Animal!

On Monday, November 7, the Yukon elected a new government. This news has since been somewhat overshadowed by the election south of the border, but we want to take the time to celebrate the efforts of YCS and CPAWS staff and volunteers during the Yukon election.

We worked hard during this election to make environmental issues a priority, and we succeeded! The Peel Watershed was the second highest issue on people's minds – right after economic development. The Yukon election had 80% turnout, something we can all be proud of. As we look to the future and prepare for a new Yukon Government, we will continue to speak up for our Yukon home here at YCS.

We collaborated with CPAWS Yukon for our election efforts. First, we held an All-Party Election Forum on the Environment in mid-October at the Beringia Centre. More than 170 people attended, making this one of the most popular fora held during the election. Representatives from all four parties answered questions from environmental organizations including YCS, CPAWS, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, Yukoners Concerned, Raven Recycling, and more. Then the floor opened to public questions. This was a great event – thanks to all who attended!

We asked all four parties a series of questions on broad environmental issues from parks to energy to mining. All parties responded and we published the answers in the Yukon News and online.

After the forum, our volunteers and staff devoted their time to sharing resources about the environment with the public going door-to-door in Whitehorse. Shailyn Drukis, our election coordinator, crunched these numbers:

- 14 amazing people (5 staff and 9 volunteers) put in 85 hours of canvassing, providing environmental voter outreach to 793 houses and engaging in 433 conversations.
- Through door-knocking, flyer drops and the three election fora we attended, we provided voters in 5 electoral districts with 416 questionnaire booklets and 572 questionnaire flyers on Yukon environmental issues.

On a lighter note, we also created a 'Vote Environment' booth and took it to events and street corners, asking people to vote for their favourite Yukon animal – accompanied by Bou, the larger-than-life caribou mascot from CPAWS Yukon. This was a fun way to get people in the spirit of voting, remind them of what they love about the Yukon, and keep the environment in their mind as they voted on Nov. 7. Unlike the real election, it was an open ballot. We collected more than 200 votes, and Moose was the winner, followed by Bear, Wolf and Fox! Congratulations also to the smaller critters such as Chickadee, Boreal Toad, and Pika who are also dear to Yukoners' hearts. It's clear that Yukoners love wildlife big and small, and the booth was a great way to share resources while sharing a smile with animal lovers from all walks of life.

For a recap of our election and environment information (including our questionnaire on environmental issues, with all the parties' answers), feel free to visit our Vote Environment page at www.yukonconservation.org/resources. Thank you to all our fantastic volunteers, and to everyone who took the time to consider environmental issues before heading to the ballot box!

*Julia Duchesne,
YCS Communications*

Julia from YCS (as Bou) and Jason from CPAWS handing out election information and getting Yukon Favourite Animal votes in downtown Whitehorse on Hallowe'en.



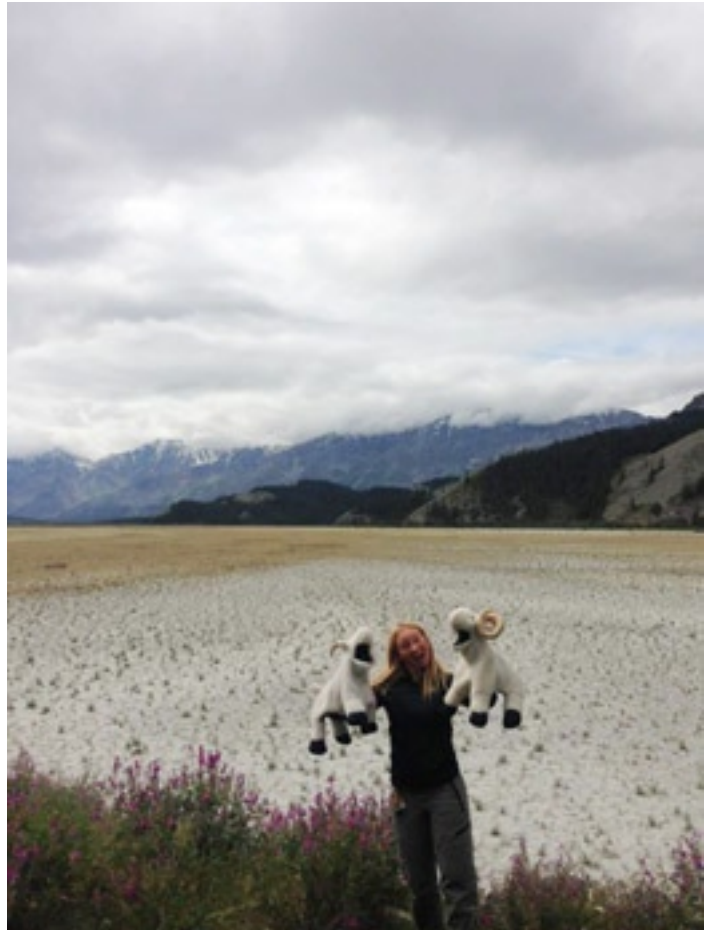
A Summer in Kluane

I first came to the Yukon during the spring of 2012. I had accepted an exciting offer to squeeze in a few weeks as a research assistant before my summer job as a natural heritage educator with Ontario Parks would begin. Shortly after arriving in Whitehorse, and with a coffee from Baked in hand, we drove the famous Alaska Highway into the St. Elias Mountains towards the Kluane Lake Research Station.

Growing up in Southern Ontario, I had never been around mountains and vast wilderness before, and now I was among Canada's tallest peaks, adjacent to a park that makes up the world's largest connected protected area. I was instantly filled with feelings of insignificance, overwhelming love, and amazement that an area like this could still exist! As soon as I arrived in the Kluane region, I knew this area would consume my life for a very long time to come.

Kluane's magic drew me in year after year. Not only did I decide to focus my honours thesis and many course projects on the Kluane region, but I also began to shift a lot of my volunteer activities towards mountain and connectivity initiatives. When I saw a job opening this year for a summer position at Kluane National Park and Reserve, I was over the moon, and was even more ecstatic when I was offered the position as a Visitor Services Attendant. It took me weeks to believe it was true, and I could not shake the feeling that someone would call me up and tell me there had been a mistake.

Working in Kluane National Park and Reserve was a truly incredible experience. Being based out of the visitor centres in both Haines Junction, and Tachal Dhal (Sheep Mountain), I spent every day getting to share my love of the area with everyone that I met. Often, while watching and counting sheep at Tachal Dhal, visitors would come up to me and tell me I had the best job in the world, and I could not agree more. I had dreamed of working in that little visitor centre for years, and now here I was, spending hours chatting with visitors about bears, sheep, glaciers, hiking and history.



Everything about working in Kluane was incredible, not only was I provided with the opportunity to turn my love of geocaching into an interpretive program, but I also got to explore many more of the trails and routes in the park – such as my longest trek to date -- the Cottonwood Trail. I have truly never felt happier or healthier. I was always hiking, surrounded by inspiring mountains and nature, and was helping visitors build a personal connection to the land. On my days off, I was hiking, drinking coffee and eating garlic cheese sticks at the Village Bakery, and helping one of the many researchers with their Kluane-based monitoring projects – such as the Kluane Ecological Monitoring Program. My summer in Kluane was truly a dream, and continues to motivate me to protect the beautiful wild landscapes we have here in the Yukon. I feel that I have only discovered a small part of what Kluane, and the Yukon, have to offer, and look forward to exploring for years to come.

Shailyn Drukis

Working with the new Yukon Government

We asked our analysts for their thoughts on the election platform of the newly-elected Yukon Government.



LEWIS:

From their election platform (http://www.ylp.ca/existing_industries_1), a Yukon Liberal government will ensure responsible resource development by:

- actively support mining and will work with Yukon's mining industry to establish strong environmental stewardship and community development programs, and
- examining the current mining assessment process to find ways to harmonize the Yukon Water Board processes within the Yukon Environment and Socio-economic Assessment Act framework;

My thoughts:

Great that the new government will establish strong environmental stewardship, but we do encourage them to work with more than just the mining industry on this. And let us all hope that 'harmonizing' does not mean reducing the effectiveness of either the Yukon Water Board or the Yukon Environment and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

From their election platform (http://www.ylp.ca/economic_and_infrastructure_development_1), a Yukon Liberal government will:

- support necessary investments in basic community infrastructure that is needed to support communities and industry,

My thoughts:

Supporting communities is very much needed, but surely industry (especially the mining industry) should pay its own way when it comes to infrastructure that only they will be using.



ANNE:

This YCS Energy Analyst is looking forward to the opportunity to work with the new Yukon government, and in particular on the following promising platform items:

- promoting and developing energy policies, initiatives and programs that source future needs from renewable technologies, such as small-hydro, wind, solar and geothermal sources;
- launching pilot projects in renewable energy storage which enable excess summer energy to be used in the winter;
- updating Yukon's Climate Change Action Plan and Energy Strategy to establish greenhouse gas reduction targets,
- allocating up to \$30M per year to implement an energy retrofit program for residential, government, and commercial buildings, working with federal agencies to access funding sources;
- establishing an Independent Task Force on Economic Enhancement and Environmental Sustainability,
- reduce community reliance on diesel energy

While we believe that connecting our electricity grid with Skagway is worthy of further investigation, we do not support connecting with the British Columbia electricity grid. We will urge the new government to accept the findings of two studies looking into connecting to the BC (and by extension, the North American) grid. These recent studies conclude that the economic, technical and capacity barriers and limitations make it an uneconomic prospect.

We will require that reducing community reliance on diesel energy doesn't include replacing it with Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), but displacing imported fossil fuels with renewable energy. We will encourage the new government to investigate a pumped storage hydro project (not liquid hydrogen as stated in its platform), to store surplus summer hydro and solar electricity for winter use.



SEBASTIAN:

Congrats to the new government! You made a lot of promises in your election platform and here are some I'm really interested in seeing you fulfill:

- Of course I'm happy you will be accepting the final report of the original Peel Watershed Planning Commission and then restarting the land use planning process in consultation with First Nations, communities and stakeholders and immediately take steps to restart the Dawson Land Use Plan. We are very pleased you will do this while working actively to uphold and promote the spirit and intent of the Agreements. What exactly do you mean by that?
- We are so pleased that you are placing an immediate, long-term moratorium on, and issuing no permits for, fracking in Yukon! And continuing the moratorium on oil and gas development in the Whitehorse trough! But...we are less pleased that you are supporting oil and gas development on Eagle Plains. This will put the Porcupine Caribou herd at risk - and they are particularly vulnerable now that the Alaskans are renewing their push for developing ANWR (see my article for further information).
- I am intrigued with your plan to establish an Independent Task Force on Economic Enhancement and Environmental Sustainability. What does this mean? Is it like the Round Table on the Economy and the Environment?
- It is such a relief to hear you will assist communities in developing "mining within municipality" policies that respect the needs of all residents, while providing certainty for land users and compensation, where appropriate, for miners. Does this mean that if a community says "NO", its wishes will be carried out?
- What I did not hear was anything on a wetlands protection policy, or a framework on how to designate protected areas. I realize that land planning can address these topics, but it will take years to develop land use plans, and all Yukoners, no matter their positions, need certainty before then.

Ted Parnell Scholarship Awarded

YCS is pleased to announce that the Ted Parnell Scholarship for 2016 has been awarded to Michelle Peter. Congratulations Michelle!

Michelle is a born and raised Yukoner and a member of the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation. She is studying in the Northern Environmental and Conservation Science diploma program at Yukon College. She has previously worked as a Fish & Wildlife Officer for NND and currently sits on the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. An avid fisher and hunter, she is on the land as much as possible and supports the mentality of taking only what you need and using as much as you can from each animal harvested. The Scholarship will support her goals to study further in the conservation field and eventually complete her Bachelor's degree while also raising a family.



The Ted Parnell Scholarship Fund was established to honour the life and work of Ted Parnell (1947-1981).

Ted was a sensitive and committed individual who contributed greatly to conservation in the Yukon. Ted's life and work reflected his keen environmental values and love of the north and its people. In his memory, the Yukon Conservation Society offers an annual scholarship of \$500 to a Yukoner engaged in environmental studies.

Application deadline: June 30

Remembering Ian Church (1947-2016)

We at YCS are mourning the loss of Ian Church, a champion of northern science and a longtime YCS member whose erudite contributions often graced the pages of *Walk Softly*. When you met Ian you remembered him, his booming voice, hearty laugh and larger than life personality immediately made an impression. But you also soon learned about his breadth of knowledge and his passion for northern ecosystems, cultures and experiences.

His interests and activities included: conservation biology and protected areas; advancing the capacity of the north to be an equal partner in science and research as we become more embedded in the global knowledge economy; issues related to environmental change and proactive adaptation to those changes – including everything under the banner climate change; appropriate and sustainable technology including energy and the biophysical side of sustainable communities; developing governance and management systems to advance these issues; and developing the next generation so they can work towards the future for themselves and future generations.

Ian immersed himself in the full realm of northern science and the alphabet soup of international bodies and expert subject organizations such as: SCAR, WMO, IASC, IPCC, AMAP, SAON, CPC. Then there were the countless hours reviewing Northern Science Training Program (NSTP) applications.

The International Polar Year really captured his imagination. With David Hik from the University of Alberta and a small group of believers, Ian worked tirelessly to ensure that Canada was one of the lead players in International Polar Year, 2007-12. He helped make connections to bring together the Old Crow Flats IPY project, a project that flipped the old research paradigm on its head.

When the *Students On Ice* program began and the federal government provided scholarships for northern youth to participate, Ian was on the selection committee.



The Canadian Climate Forum, successor to the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences, wrote the following in a memory of Ian:

“A charter member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Climate Forum, Ian brought his encyclopedic knowledge of Canada’s North firmly to the CCF table. Passionate about his work, he possessed a remarkable understanding not just of northern environmental issues but also of history, culture, sociology and anthropology. He adeptly drew those threads together in helping to shape the mandate and activities of the CCF. We are greatly honoured to have had the opportunity to work with him and we salute his many contributions”.

He was passionate, caring, articulate, knowledgeable and a great ambassador for the Yukon. He went out of his way to explain complicated scientific issues in understandable language, and/or track down journal articles and other supportive and explanatory information and pass it on to others. Or better still, he would seek to have experts come to Whitehorse as speakers during Yukon Science Institute public function.

We thank Ian for his dedication to the environmental scientific community and linking it to the general public through numerous educational initiatives, particularly with respect to climate change science. Ian will be sorely missed; the Arctic science community and the Yukon has been diminished by his passing.

Bob Van Dijken, Sandy Johnston, and the YCS staff

What will the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) ruling on the Peel mean?

Well, we know roughly what it will mean to the Peel watershed, but its implications will reverberate not just into the other Chapter 11 land use plans, but also into how the rest of the Final Agreements are implemented.

I've been hanging around the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA), so to speak, since the UFA was originally developed. I sat on a Renewable Resources Council, and worked for the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. I participated as an interested member of the public in the development of the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan and the Tombstone Park Management Plan. YCS hired me to participate in the Peel and Dawson plans. I have heard a lot of people say a lot of things about the treaties that frame so much of our lives here in Yukon.

I was keenly interested in reading the reasoning behind the appeal to the SCC. As expected, the factum, -- the case presented by the counsel for YCS, CPAWS, Na-Cho Nyak Dun, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and Vuntut Gwitchin -- lays out lucidly why the Court of Appeal erred in allowing Yukon an effective do-over, allowing Yukon to re-start the planning process in a way that could completely undo the work of the Peel Commission.

There is a section that could have implications on how governments interpret the treaties:

From the appellants' argument to the SCC, section 105, arguing that Yukon has no right to reject the Final Recommended Plan, Berger et al. state: "But if it retains in its hip pocket an ultimate right to reject the Final Recommended Plan, it can avoid giving any reasons at all. This cannot be what was intended by the parties to the UFA and the Final Agreements."

I have personally witnessed this attitude expressed when dealing with recommendations made under Chapters 16 and 17 by Renewable Resource Councils. The way the legislation was interpreted was "The Minister has the hammer". In other words, "Make all the recommendations you like, if we don't like them, we'll toss them out". Leaving aside both the appropriateness of this cavalier attitude towards the Final Agreements and the accuracy of the statement (one can think of recommendations that Yukon cannot reject), it is this very attitude that so corroded the view of Yukon that it dismissed the entire Chapter 11 process. It led directly to the oft-repeated statement by Yukon that "Public government must have the final say on public lands".

Yukon must, if it is to accept the ruling of Veale and (presumably) the SCC, acknowledge that there are indeed constraints on this right for a final say, and that it agreed to these constraints when it signed the Final Agreements. These constraints rebound through the Final Agreements, and it is to be hoped that the treatment of the deliberations and recommendations of UFA-mandated Boards, Councils and Committees will reflect this more honourable interpretation of the treaties.

Another way of expressing this change in attitude is to accept several court rulings that the treaties are not the end of a process (despite the word Final in their titles), but that they are a road map for how reconciliation can proceed.

Yukon has often demonstrated a narrow and restrictive view of how it can work with and within the UFA. The Peel case should put an end to this and the process of reconciliation can now proceed in the manner that was intended by the framers of the treaties.

This is the reason why it was so important that the SCC heard the Peel case; it answers the question, brought out into the open by the Appeal Court ruling, "How narrowly can the treaties be interpreted? What has the most weight -- a narrow reading of the wording or the spirit and intent of the treaties?"

We think that previous court rulings make this clear -- the spirit and intent of the treaties must be followed; the treaties are to be interpreted generously by Canada -- and Yukon.

Sebastian Jones

**PROTECT
The PEEL**

A greener travel choice: electric vehicles

“Shorter journeys (hence by road instead of by air), thereby reducing tourism total travel, has become more important”, so says the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report.

With that in mind, how to minimize climate pollution by road?

The short answer: drive an electric vehicle (EV) with the maximum number of people in it, where electricity is clean.

Lucky for us, the Yukon’s electricity is pretty clean: according to Yukon Energy, 99% of our electricity is produced renewably, using hydro power. This compares with other clean provinces like BC (92%), Manitoba (97%) and Quebec (99%). Least clean option? Alberta – charging up there is no better than the average gasoline car, and can be as bad as flying. In fact, right now, because most electricity from Alberta is generated using coal, it can cause as much as 100 times more climate pollution per kWh than electricity in the Yukon! For Canada on average, an EV is a cleaner drive than the best gasoline hybrid. With just one person in the car, it is better than taking the train; with 3 people, better than taking the bus.¹



According to the American Environmental Protection Agency, 60% of the electrical energy of an EV makes it to the wheels. This makes EVs three times more efficient than gasoline vehicles because only 19% of gasoline fuel energy gets to the wheels. In other words, over 80% of the CO₂ from gasoline cars comes from burning fuel that is wasted and does no work!

Building an electric vehicle does create about twice the climate pollution as building a gasoline vehicle. Most of the additional pollution comes from creating the EV’s large traction battery. However, since more climate pollution by far is created by driving a vehicle than by building it,² it is better for the planet to trade your gasoline vehicle in for an electric one, no matter how old your gasoline vehicle is.

Here in the north, there is the question of whether EVs perform alright in cold temperatures. According to David Reichmuth, senior engineer, Clean Vehicles, they do, and in the future they will likely do even better³. Like gasoline vehicles, the energy efficiency of EVs drops in the winter. For EVs, this is both because the chemical reactions of the batteries are less efficient in the cold, and also because some of the battery charge goes to heating the cab and the battery, rather than running the vehicle. However, current EVs can be pre-heated just before being unplugged to drive away, so that the initial cab heat does not come from the battery, but from the grid.

Studies on the EV Nissan Leaf have shown that the range from a charge drops by 20-25% in below-freezing conditions. It makes sense then, to buy an EV with above-average range capabilities like the Tesla S or the upcoming Chevy Bolt, so that on longer trips, the drop in range will be less likely to leave you stranded in the winter.

Already, upcoming EV designs are addressing the issue: for instance, they use high efficiency heat pumps or the waste heat from the electric motor and power control electronics to heat the battery and cab.

However, studies done in “northern” US states like Minnesota or Vermont may not really capture the impact of the cold as we can experience it here. Kia has done testing in northern Sweden where the temperatures are more akin to ours here in the Yukon.

Like any decision about embracing evolving technology, the purchase of an EV at this point is a bit of a risk: will the improvements coming in the near future leave one regretful? At the same time, the window of opportunity to mitigate climate change is shrinking rapidly. Hesitation may cost us the positive impact we seek.

1. <http://www.nationalobserver.com/2016/02/25/analysis/essential-infographics-climate-conscious-traveller>
2. <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/blogs/climatesnapshot/do-electric-cars-cause-more-or-less-climate-pollution-gasoline-cars-take-look>
3. <http://blog.ucsusa.org/dave-reichmuth/electric-cars-cold-weather-temperatures>

I was daunted at the idea of doing my own research into electric vehicles, so was delighted to come across Barry Saxifrage's reports on them in the National Observer (Essential Infographics for the Climate-Conscious Traveller, February 25, 2016) and Vancouver Observer (Do electric cars cause more or less climate pollution than gasoline cars? Take a look, April 18, 2013). I also used an article by David Reichmuth, senior engineer, Clean Vehicles as a source for info about EVs in cold climates (Union of Concerned Scientists, February, 2016)

- Visit our YES (Yukon's Energy Solutions) website to learn about made-in-the-Yukon solutions to lowering our energy footprint: <http://yes.yukonconservation.org/>.
- Thank you to Lee Johnson of Quantum Machineworks and Damen Anderson for bringing their electric vehicles to the Shift Whitehorse: Transportation Showcase in the spring. Lee brought one of the first factory electric cars to the Yukon, an electric Ford Focus, and it's thrived over a few (albeit relatively warm) Yukon winters. Damen has a Nissan Leaf and a very cool "Zero" electric motorcycle that attracted a lot of attention at the April event.
- Yukon Energy Corporation released its study on EVs at that event as well. We suspect that it's too conservative in its future projections for EV uptake in the Yukon, although Yukon Energy acknowledges that "technology can change rapidly, so we will be closely watching the EV market for new developments." Google 'Yukon Energy electric vehicle study' to find and read the report, or visit www.yukonenergy.ca.

Alison Reid

Mining and Energy Updates

China's CNOOC sells majority share in Northern Cross

China's state-owned petroleum company, CNOOC, has sold its 60% share in Northern Cross, the Calgary-based company seeking to drill for oil and gas in the Yukon. Northern Cross is currently taking the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board to court in order to drill for oil and gas in Eagle Plain. China's move may signal the end for this 'extreme petroleum' project. Now that Northern Cross has lost its financing, who will pay to clean up the suspended wells at Eagle Plain?

Faro Mine Water Results

After YCS repeatedly asked for data to be made public, Faro Mine water test results are finally online (at least for most of 2016). This is a success for transparency, but unfortunately the data reveal elevated concentrations of harmful elements on site. Faro was once the biggest lead-zinc mine in Canada, but now it is a toxic pit in the heart of the Yukon that is leaking potentially poisonous metals and contaminants into the surrounding creeks and valleys. So far, a quarter billion dollars of public money have gone towards remediating Faro, with no actual remediation to show for it.



Klondike East Bench Placer Project: YESAB says no

YESAB has recommended that a controversial mining project in Dawson not proceed as presented. A placer miner hoped to develop 34 mining claims under Dawson's popular XC ski trails. The claims date back to the 1980s, but the trails have been around since the 1970s. In its current form, the project would not have been able to satisfactorily mitigate the damage to the trails. We do not know how the government will take this recommendation, ordinarily a decision would have been rendered before the 25th of November, but this time it may take longer, especially if the government consults with the First Nation and the Municipality. Will it be followed up by legislation empowering communities to say no to a mine?

Reduce, Recycle... No Longer Can We Reuse

The City of Whitehorse is closing the Reuse Store up at the landfill. This is a sad blow for those of us who scavenge and salvage.

From that specific location I have furnished many an apartment, added to my wardrobe, even found the most appropriate wedding and birthday gifts. Yeah, regarding that last one, apologies in advance if you didn't realize you were getting a previously used item.

Now before the accusations fly about how cheap I am, let us examine why the store is closing.

The City is concerned about a few things. First off, there's the public liability. A while back a hypodermic needle was found within the items placed in the Store. Given that many people rummage through the items, there is certainly a risk to public safety.

Second, the vast majority of items dropped off at the Free Store are, sorry to inform you, trash. That is, while you might think someone will take your broken and ripped items home and give them a second life, it just doesn't happen.

The vast majority of items that were being designated as reusable just were not so. At the end of the day the City had to bring a front end loader, scoop or hand pack most of the items strewn about the Store into the loader bucket, and then deposit them in the general garbage.

This cost the City time which in turn means money in tidying up all the non-reusable items. And money is something the City is short of.

The landfill is funded through what is known as tipping fees. Tipping fees are what the City charges individuals and businesses to drop items off at the landfill. It covers the cost of operating the facility. There are some in the Whitehorse community who don't like paying the tipping fees and illegally dispose of their waste in the green belt.

This means the City then has to send a crew out to clean it up. It still costs the City, which in turn then has to recover the clean-up costs through us, the taxpayers.

One way to stop illegal dumping is to get rid of tipping fees, which then means there would be no money to run the landfill. A way to get around this conundrum is to implement disposal fees at the time of purchase.

This system is already in place for vehicle tires. The consumer pays a few extra dollars at the time of purchase, and this fee covers the disposal cost when the tire is thrown away. No tipping fee is charged on tires.

We could expand the system to basically cover everything. In some circles this is known as extended producer responsibility. It can be implemented by various levels of government, trade organizations or even individual companies.

Now this might take care of the illegal dumping issue, but it doesn't resolve the free store closure. Since it takes time and money to run a free store, and since reusing items is a good thing, perhaps it is time for the City to pay for a staff person to keep the landfill Free Store open, tidy and safe.

It might mean raising taxes, it might mean assigning a percentage of disposal fees to pay for this position. This, of course, assumes disposal fees or extended producer responsibility programs are in place.

If, as a society, we are serious about reusing items, it might be time to put our money where values are. And if you should perchance invite me to your wedding or birthday, why yes I might just have a new-to-you gift I can offer by way of celebration.

Lewis Rifkind





Yukon Conservation Society

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 _____

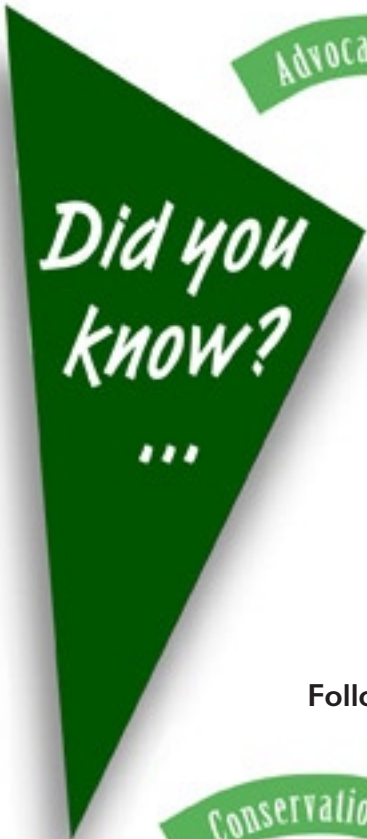
Mail completed slip to: 302 Hawkins St. Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1X6 – Phone: 668-5678 – info@yukonconservation.org

Volunteer thanks to everyone who keeps our ship sailing, especially:

- Anat Tal for her help with our membership database
- Ernie Berken for kindly cleaning our eavestroughs
- Maeve O'Neill Sanger for tackling tasks around the office
- Mary Amerongen for her work on membership
- Meghan Larivée for the beautiful animal illustrations that adorned our 'Vote for the Environment' voting booth
- Our hardworking Energy and Mining committees
- Anne, Cayley, Grayson, Lee, Mary, Maeve, and everyone who was part of our election canvassing team!



Staff and volunteers heading out on a final round of canvassing in Riverdale.



You are invited!

The YCS Year End Party is Friday Dec. 9, from 5pm onwards. Come celebrate the work you made possible in 2016 with YCS staff, Board members, volunteers, supporters, and friends! The recipient of the Gerry Couture Stewardship Award will be announced.

All are welcome. Refreshments will be provided.



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