

Walk Softly

Newsletter of the
Yukon Conservation Society
Fall 2017



photo: Sarjana Amin

Inside: • Summer at the Canyon • Yukon State of Industry • I Spy A Problem

We recycle white goods and e-waste:

Raven Recycling Society can now accept all sorts of e-waste (most anything with a cord or a battery) as well as white goods. These items must be sent out for recycling. This costs and Raven must charge tipping fees just as the landfill does.

Bring these items to the back of Raven Recycling
9:30am - 3:30pm, Mon. to Sat.
More info: ravenrecycling.org

General guideline for pricing:

Prices are charged at the discretion of the attendant because electronics are not created equal.

White Goods:

- stoves, washers, dryers \$12 each
- fridges, freezers and air conditioning units \$35 each

Microwave ovens: \$15

Handheld items: curling irons, computer mice, keyboards, cell phones, cameras, etc. \$2 each

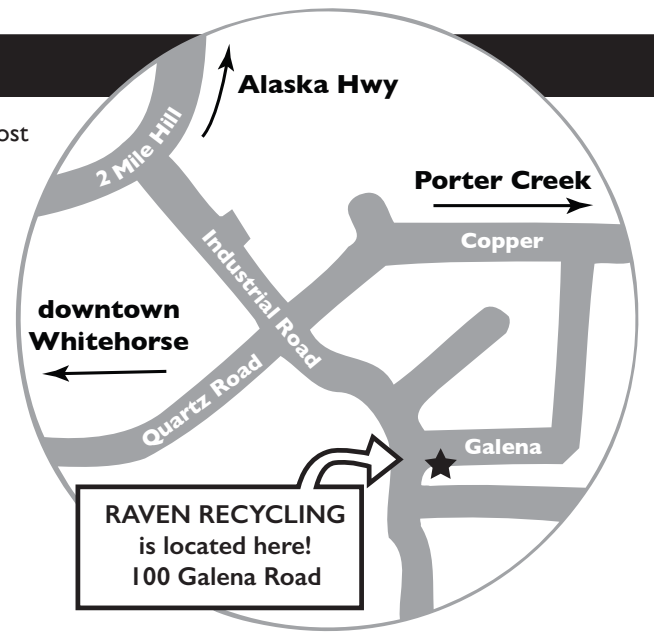
Blenders, toasters, printers, vacuum cleaners and audio devices \$7.00

Flatscreens TVs and computer monitors:
29" or less \$15; 30" and above \$30

CRT TVs and computer monitors:
29" or less \$20; 30" or more \$40

Computer towers and laptops: \$15

WHY? Electronic waste in landfills is a toxic time bomb: the heavy metals leak into the soil and groundwater eventually leading to human health issues. White goods take up lots of room in landfills and are very recyclable.



Reuse is always better than recycling when possible.



Computers for Schools Yukon

Raven Recycling accepts some e-waste for use in the Computers for Schools Program. Items collected are given to them for certified data destruction. They are then refurbished and given out to schools and non-profit organizations. Check their website for current needs. www.cfsy.ca

Refunds are given to ALL READY TO SERVE LIQUID BEVERAGE CONTAINERS sold in the Yukon.

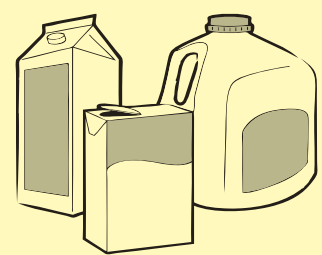


750ml and larger
25¢ refund

These include: juices, soda pop, alcoholic drinks, coffee drinks blended with milk or milk substitutes, liquid coffee flavoring, fruit smoothie drinks blended with milk or milk substitutes, drinkable yogurt



less than 750ml
25¢ refund



milk & milk substitutes
(all sizes: 5¢ refund)

These include: soy, almond, hemp, rice, or coconut milk, milkshake products, liquid dairy or non-dairy creamer, liquid whipping cream

FLYING TO SAVE THE EARTH

The Yukon Conservation Society is often described as an environmental watchdog. In the broadest sense that means the group keeps an eye on developments within the Yukon that could have an impact on the land.

A typical workday at YCS usually means ploughing through mineral and energy development proposals on the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board website, or reviewing on-line applications to the Yukon Water Board, and then developing written comments that will address environmental concerns associated with the applications and proposals.

The idea that environmentalists spend their days chaining themselves to trees or helping baby deer find their mothers isn't really that accurate at YCS. Like most people, our work routine usually consists of staring at a computer screen for about eight hours a day, usually for low wages and no benefits.

It is a rather unfortunate truth that the some modern-era environmentalists get to spend little time on the land. Being a watchdog in this day and age means a lot of electronic paperwork and not much else.

However, there is another form of watchdogging that occurs and that's reviewing what impact existing projects are having on the land.

This can take numerous forms, from examining water test results coming off mine sites (the Faro Mine water test results are particularly awful) to looking at air (and even satellite) photographs of the impacts project are having on the Yukon.

Environmentalists might always get to be on the land, but there is the opportunity to visually see what is happening on the land through photography. Aerial photography, to be specific.

The Yukon Conservation Society has turned to eyes in the sky to better understand what is happening on the ground. As in the words of the song, "I am the eye in the sky, looking at you."

This means YCS has been using aircraft fitted with cameras to take what are essentially surveillance photographs. After all, no mining company or government entity responsible for an abandoned mine, will let environmentalists wander all over the place whenever they please taking pictures of all the nastiness happening on site.

To be fair, they do offer guided tours of their facilities, but one gets the sense they are somewhat controlling what one can see and photograph. An independent overflight by a camera-equipped plane can see all and it can be done at the time of YCS's choosing.



For instance, YCS obtained aerial photographic evidence of a stream downstream of the Faro Mine turning a rather unusual colour this spring. The pictures and analysis are available on the YCS website at www.yukonconservation.org.

How do we get these vital images? It's all thanks to volunteers, who take these airborne pictures, on their own or under the auspices of the LightHawk Organization.

LightHawk links pilots and conservation groups. Their mandate is "We fly to save the Earth."

According to their website at www.lighthawk.org they "...accelerate conservation success through the powerful perspective of flight." They believe that "seeing our world from above causes people to care about what they witness from the air and stirs them into action when they return to the ground."

In addition to this, YCS has also been the recipient of other aerial footage obtained by individuals operating on their own. These individuals have very kindly turned over the photographs to YCS.

Visual identification of development projects and associated areas within the Yukon do not necessarily have to show environmental disasters. Aerial pictures taken prior to a project commencing can identify important environmental values and guide development.

Air photos taken during and after a project can show important remediation and closure initiatives. They are but one tool groups such as YCS use to ensure development happens in an environmentally sustainable manner.

So the next time you're on a mining site somewhere in the Yukon and there's a buzz in the sky, it could well be the Yukon Conservation Society's eyes in the sky.

Check out the Yukon Conservation Society website at www.yukonconservation.org and look at the mining pages. There are numerous aerial pictures and videos of the impacts of mining upon the land.

Lewis Rifkind, Yukon Conservation Society Mining Analyst

Walk Softly

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Coal Mining Isn't Cool

The Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) is not opposed to mining, as long as it is done in appropriate areas, in an environmentally friendly-as-possible manner, with closure plans are comprehensive and adequately funded.

Which is all well and good, but what does one do when a proponent wants to mine a mineral that is, in the view of YCS, positively dangerous? There are some obvious candidates for these dangerous minerals. Asbestos and coal immediately spring to mind.

In the Yukon asbestos was previously mined at Clinton Creek and just across the border at Cassiar, in northern British Columbia. Clinton Creek is now one of the four infamous Type II minesites the Federal Government is paying to clean up and close with taxpayers' dollars. The other three are Mt Nansen, the Keno complex, and of course the Faro Mine.

Asbestos, including the asbestos from Clinton Creek, is a very dangerous material. It causes cancer in humans. The Canadian government says it will completely ban it by 2018.

Coal is a bit of a different type of dangerous material. It helped power the industrial revolution and laid the foundations of our energy driven civilization. Even today many jurisdictions in Canada rely upon coal for their energy needs. Alberta relies upon coal for about 41 percent of its electricity generation capacity.

Coal also has a hazardous history. From the 'miner's lung' of the old coal-mining days to the soot, acid rain, and other air pollution caused by today's power plants, coal is one of the world's dirtiest fuels. If that wasn't bad enough, it could also destroy the planet's current comfortable temperature levels through climate change.

We are already seeing the effects of climate change and if we don't soon get a handle on climate change caused by the burning of coal (and other fossil fuels), we are all cooked.

To their credit, the current Canadian Federal Government has committed to phasing out coal-fired electricity by 2030. No word yet on whether there will be any commitment to phasing out coal exports.

The Yukon has used coal in the past. Deposits near Carmacks and Ross River were both used in mineral production at the Faro Mine. The Yukon has coal deposits near Whitehorse, Carmacks, Ross River, and within the Peel Watershed.

Just because a jurisdiction has deposits of coal, or any other form of fossil fuel, doesn't mean it should develop it. In fact, it should do the exact opposite; either develop a new technology, or use an existing one, to transition away from fossil fuels (including coal) for energy generation. The result must be to leave all currently known coal deposits in the ground and certainly to avoid developing new ones.

Using coal for energy contributes a lot to the gasses that are causing climate change. Coal produces almost twice the carbon dioxide as natural gas for a unit of energy. There are also very serious concerns in regards to air pollution.

The reason this has all come up is because a company has submitted an application to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) to explore for coal deposits near Braeburn. It's on the YESAB website as project 2017-0142 and is titled Division And Corduroy Mountain Coal Exploration.

This activity, the physical exploration, is not dissimilar to hard rock exploration, and while there are environmental impacts associated with exploration they are minimal if done correctly and in accordance with best practices.

The problem is the next stage. If commercially viable quantities of coal are found, the decision will have to be made as to whether to permit further exploration or development. The answer, of course, is a resounding no!

YCS recognizes that there are many jurisdictions in the world dependent upon coal for an energy or heat source, but that does not mean we must permit Yukon coal to feed their coal addiction. They have a responsibility to get off fossil fuels, just as the Yukon has a responsibility to develop mineral resources that do not result in the cooking of the planet.

The Yukon does have coal deposits, and it also has coal regulations to manage these deposits. They are O.I.C. 2003/54 if anyone is interested in looking at them.

Despite the 2003 tag in the title it looks like they are essentially unchanged from the 1954 Territorial Coal Regulations. How else to explain the current fees applied to Yukon coal?. These include such fiscally rewarding provisions as an annual rental per acre under lease of \$1.00.

But don't worry about that low fee, the royalties are even lower. In addition to the annual rental, "a lessee shall pay annually a royalty at the rate of \$0.10 per ton on merchantable coal." Please don't show the placer miners this figure; they'll probably start complaining that the \$0.375 cents royalty they pay on gold per ounce is too high.

The money being spent on coal exploration would be better spent on exploring for minerals that are actually useful. Renewable energy technologies all use copper and zinc. The Yukon is blessed with deposits of these minerals and surely mining's energies would be better spent exploring for and perhaps developing those deposits.

Even better, perhaps the exploration dollars could be used to recycle and recover existing minerals from scrap materials.

The mere concept of exploring for coal is outdated, much like the regulations that govern it. The world is hotter now, and we know better. The coal age should be over.

*Lewis Rifkind, Yukon
Conservation Society Mining
Analyst*

YCS Awards the Ted Parnell Memorial Scholarship to Sonny Parker

Sonny Parker grew up in Dawson City and is entering his third year studying in the Northern Environmental and Conservation Sciences degree program (Yukon College/University of Alberta). His love for the outdoors has led him to question how we as humans can manage sustainable development of the earth's natural resources to benefit ourselves, while at the same time providing for the conservation of the environment. He has worked in wildland firefighting, mineral exploration, placer mining, and as a salmon technician field assistant. More recently, his work on bird species population monitoring projects has opened his eyes to the importance of long term monitoring for conservation. He also has a passion for photography and believes that imagery can help people connect with nature and push them to take action in a meaningful way. He plans to pursue a career in natural resource management and environmental stewardship and says, "I hope to use education, photography, and a passion for the outdoors to help create a sustainable future for many generations of Yukoners to enjoy."



photo: Sonny Parker

The Post-Legal Era in the Peel Watershed

As you probably know, the Yukon Conservation Society was in Ottawa this March as the Supreme Court of Canada heard the Peel Watershed case.

After decades of First Nation governments and the public calling for protection of the wild Peel Watershed, and over 3 years of legal battles, we expect to hear the final judgement from the Supreme Court of Canada this fall. The judgement will have implications for the Peel, for land use planning across the Yukon Territory and the interpretation of modern treaties across Canada. We don't know when the judgement will be released, but you will be hearing about it throughout the Yukon and beyond!

The Yukon Government has committed to upholding the Final Recommended Plan for the Peel Watershed pending the ruling from the Supreme Court of Canada, which is an important step in the right direction. This plan recommends 55% permanent protection and 25% interim protection for the watershed. But there is still a lot of work ahead to secure this protection and ensure the waters and caribou of the watershed run free and healthy forever. Thank you for your steadfast support over the years – please continue to stand with us as we move into the post-legal era for the Peel.

Have you paddled in the Peel?

Help us share the beauty of the Peel Watershed by sending us one or two of your favourite photos from your paddling trip into the Peel Watershed. Be sure to include a caption and your name for the photo credit. CPAWS Yukon and the Yukon Conservation Society will use these photos on social media, at our public events and in our newsletters. Occasionally the media will request images for stories they are running – please also let us know if you are okay with the images being used by the media. If you would like to share your experience in another way – through a short story or poem, for example – we will happily share those, too!

Peel Photo Exhibit in Fort McPherson!

Monday August 21, 1pm onwards, Fort McPherson Rec Complex

PROTECTING THE PEEL WATERSHED: VOICES FROM CANADA'S NORTH is a unique photo exhibition presenting the faces and words of some of the many whose lives are entwined with the Peel watershed, an incredible Yukon wilderness area recently discussed at the highest level of court in Canada.

After its March debut at the SAW Gallery in Ottawa, the show has hit home soil and is making its tour of the communities involved in its creation.

The exhibit will be up for a special one-day display at the Rec Complex, alongside special events hosted by the Tetlit Gwich'in DGO to mark the Gwich'in Tribal Council General Assembly. Visitors can enjoy the beautiful photos and powerful words of those who participated in the project, alongside the special arts and crafts displays, feast and dance!

*Christina Macdonald
(YCS Executive Director)*

Mother & Daughter(s) FUND RAISER for the Peel

This past summer, I was part of a ten-person canoe trip lead by Jamie Pope and Emily Cameron. The twenty-day trip took us down the Wind River in the Yukon to the Peel River in the Northwest Territories. It was a wonderful trip filled with beautiful scenery, amazing wildlife and good company.

Peel Trip Painting
by Lynda McLeod



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Invasive Plant Removal at Range Point

The Yukon Invasive Species Council (YISC) and the City of Whitehorse are battling invasive plants growing at the entrance to Range Point, part of the McIntyre Creek Regional Park.

Invasive plant species flourish in disturbed environments like exposed slopes and the margins of roads and paths. They can permanently alter landscapes and ecosystem functions by competing with native plants for nutrients and water. In the Range Point area, bird vetch (*Vicia cracca*) is covering the road side and has started to overgrow shrubs such as willow and aspens. Bird vetch spreads rapidly; it reproduces by seed and vegetatively through spreading rhizomes (underground stems). Once established, bird vetch is able to flourish in a range of conditions and it is tolerant of fire and drought. Unlike many invasives, bird vetch is also capable of invading undisturbed areas. White sweetclover (*Melilotus alba*) is also found growing along the road in Range Point. Both plant species can form large monospecific stands, overgrow and shade native species.

Bird vetch is a frustration to home gardeners and is a threat to natural areas, small grain fields, and vegetable market gardens. If not removed, bird vetch could expand its range into the adjacent forest, compete with native vegetation and grow towards the creek. White sweetclover can pose a safety hazard by obstructing the view of roadside ditches.

Removing invasive plants is not easy and requires a multi-year effort. During the summer of 2017, heavily infested areas will be stripped down, plant material will be removed and safely disposed of. Smaller patches will be dug up by hand, flagged and monitored for regrowth. Regrowth of native species will be encouraged and reseeded with native plants will be implemented after the first year of monitoring the site. This is the first removal project on a large scale in Yukon! Project progress will be documented and the project will be evaluated.



This multi-year project is funded by the Environmental Damages Fund of Environment and Climate Change Canada and in-kind contributions from the City of Whitehorse. Friends of McIntyre Creek and the Yukon Conservation Society as well as the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council also support the project. Interested in joining the battle against invasive plants? Interested persons can take part in the project by helping with the hand-removal of plants or collecting seeds. For more information please contact info@yukoninvasives.com

Andrea Altherr

The most touching experience for me was meeting the First Nations people of Fort McPherson. Due to flooding, we forced to stay in the Fort McPherson Campground for a number of days waiting for the road to be restored. We were visited daily by the people of Fort McPherson, bearing gifts of fish, bannock and even a birthday cake for my daughter. One day they prepared a delicious spread of caribou, bannock and salad from their own garden for everyone in town who was delayed.

I was moved by their genuine hospitality and extraordinary kindness. It is so inspiring to meet people who live off the land in a true community. They share all the gifts the land provides, the porcupine caribou when they come, fish from the Peel river and the fresh water from the mountains. We were strangers, but they treated us like family sharing their water and food. So when I returned to Victoria I wanted to do something to acknowledge their kindness. I decided along with my two daughters to host a mother daughter(s) art show to raise funds to support them in their quest to save their water which eventually becomes everyone's water. The people of Fort McPherson feel it is their responsibility for future generations to protect the land. I believe following their lead will show people how to build a sustainable community that will thrive in the future knowing we are all connected. The Yukon Conservation Society does great work in supporting this paradigm shift.

Lynda McLeod is a Nurse, Artist, Educator and Coach from Victoria, B.C.

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Summer at the Canyon

YCS does a lot of great work throughout the year, but summer is special because we get out onto the trails. Our free summer programming is one of the ways YCS gives back to the community. While working to raise awareness and protect the Yukon's environment, we have the privilege of helping people get out into nature and experiencing the gorgeous land we live on through our summer programming.

We have been running guided hikes in Miles Canyon for more than 20 years. Our knowledgeable and friendly trail guides have accompanied thousands of locals and visitors on free guided hikes over the decades. Our trail guides take hikers to Canyon City and back, with stops along the way to learn about the area's geological history, First Nations and Gold Rush heritage, animals, edible plants, and much more.

Guided hikes aren't the only activity we offer. Our Kid's Ed-Ventures are nature- and conservation-themed educational adventures tailored specifically for children. Throughout the summer, groups of kids from the Yukon Wildlife Preserve, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, and other camps and daycares play games and do activities that revolve around plants, wildlife, geology, and history. We offer a drop-in Kid's Ed-Venture at the Fireweed Market as well. Over 250 kids joined us at the market this summer to do hands-on learning activities.

Our trail guiding team (L-R): Tannicka, Tessie and Sarjana at the canyon.

We also hosted special themed hikes on topics from Beringia to Wild Edibles in the canyon and on the Millennium Trail, including hikes for the Cadets, Girl Guides, and ElderActive Recreation Association. A new addition this year was a Field Notebook Workshop where visitors had the chance to learn about field note-taking strategies and drawing plants from local artist Misha Donohoe.

Thank you to our funders!

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



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By the Numbers

Over 1600 people took part in our free programming this summer, an increase of more than 30% from 2016.

- 757 people joined us for hikes in Miles Canyon – from a total of 16 countries including the USA, New Zealand, France, Russia, Mexico, Sweden, and Japan!
- We ran 2 hikes a day, 5 days a week – that's nearly 100 hikes! We also hosted 5 themed hikes and events, with guest leaders sharing their expertise on special topics.
- 488 art and nature lovers saw the Canyon from a new creative perspective during the Created at the Canyon event and exhibit launch party.
- 162 cadets and Girl Guides enjoyed a hiking adventure from Miles Canyon to Canyon City.
- 387 children took part in Kids' Ed-Ventures, our summer programming for kids aged 5-14.



Our Trail Guiding Team

Each summer, we hire three students to coordinate and deliver our outdoors programming. This year, our trail guiding team of Sarjana Amin (coordinator), Tessie Aujla and Tannicka Reeves (trail guides) had a great season on the trails. They jumped into their roles with enthusiasm, enriching the program with a fresh perspective and friendly interpretive skills.

Work at YCS is a great start for careers in science, education, and interpretation. Sarjana, Tessie, and Tannicka have now fallen even more in love with outdoors education – and have become great ambassadors for YCS, Yukon history, nature, and conservation! We're sad to see them go but we're glad they had a great and memorable summer.

Our summer programming would not be possible without the volunteers who dedicate their time to help train our trail guides, develop promotional materials, help with outreach and events, and lead special themed hikes and events. Thank you to everyone who was part of this season on the trails!

We're already excited about next year, our 50th anniversary year. If you have ideas for a guided hike or special event for the summer or another time during the year, please let us know. Thank you for supporting our outdoors programming – and stay tuned for 2018!

Created at the Canyon

This summer was our sixth year hosting our annual art-on-the-trails event, Created at the Canyon. Created at the Canyon is a unique opportunity to experience nature through art – and art through nature. During this two-day event, six local artists stationed themselves on the trails around Miles Canyon, creating art and sharing their creative process and stories with more than 400 visitors. Visitors and the artists love this event as well as the amazing artwork resulting from the inspiration gained at the Canyon. The artists' work was displayed for the month of August at the Northern Front Studio. This year we had all new artists, and new artistic media as well! Our talented artists this year were: ink drawing and mixed media artist Gorellaume; tapestry and rug hooking artist Françoise La Roche; painter and story teller Shirley Adamson; encaustic, paint, and mixed media artist Anne Hoerber; paper making and sculpture artist Helen O'Connor; and painter and sketch artist Sheelah Tolton. This event is gaining in popularity with artists and visitors every year, and we're already looking forward to next year's art.

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The artwork is on display at Northern Front Studio until Aug. 31, at which point photos of the art will be online at YCS Guided Hikes and Kid Ed-Ventures on Facebook, and at www.yukonconservation.org.

Sarjana Amin
(Trail Guide Program Coordinator)

French artist Gorellaume recently arrived in Whitehorse. We think that his striking, richly-detailed otter drawing is the largest piece ever produced at Created at the Canyon!



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Reflections from the Created at the Canyon artists:

Shirley Adamson

“By means of stories told during the darkness of winter my ancestors passed down through the generations our history beginning with creation.

Stories filled with magic and imagery described our relationships with the physical and the metaphysical.

Events were documented in stories that remained unchanged in the telling in order to share with those who followed how our lives were lived and the importance of the respect that allowed us to co-exist in harmony with all the other energies.

Throughout my childhood I heard these stories spoken by my grandmother in the language of the Tagish peoples who are the original occupants of the area in which Miles Canyon is located.

As I sat before the canvas on the eastern bank of the canyon, remembering the Southern Tutchone names of the region and hearing the voices of those who walked before me echoing through my mind, the old stories flooded back to me.

The story of The Daughters of the Sun was and continues to be a favourite with me; in the ways of the people it describes one element of the two volcanic eruptions of Mount Churchill in the Wrangell Range of Alaska that laid what is known today as the White River Ash over our homelands.

My canvas captures a single image of that event and the accompanying story is as close as possible to the original telling given my limitations with the English language.”

Tagish Kwaan elder
Shirley Adamson
told and illustrated
the story of the
Daughters of the
Sun.



Françoise La Roche

“Animals were my main source of inspiration until working at Miles Canyon a few weeks ago. That is where water struck me as a new element. I discovered a perpetual motion which is really hard to replicate on burlap. It was a challenge for me. The forest smells and the beauty of the water helped me focus and become part of the work. Comments and questions from visitors were like a pep talk and encouraged me to continue creating. Getting out of my cabin and receiving feedback from complete strangers nourished my passion for rug hooking.”

Helen O'Connor

“Miles Canyon is such a visually stunning place! The unique turquoise blue of the river, the orange lichen-speckled rocks and the many delicately fragrant wild flowers and plants make it a feast for the senses. I was impressed by the constant motion and flow of the river as I observed the sway of plant life in the wind and rain. I was delighted to use Yukon River water and plants from the canyon location to make handmade paper on site for painting, sculpture and wild flower collage.”

Gorellaume

“I work very much on instinct, and being on site at Miles Canyon allowed me to be in closer contact with the energy and power of this land that I felt on my 2 first visits, and that I hope translated into my work: the mix of beauty and harshness, the sometimes uneasy experience of the wind, rain and wildlife (insects everywhere!) while drawing, and the wonderful hypnotic sound of water, the curves and graceful lines of this environment.

I was also lucky to hear quite a few anecdotes from locals and people who were very familiar with this site. I was happy, as a new resident of the Yukon, that my work instigated conversation with a lot of different people, and made thematic sense to those that knew the Canyon well - the churning of the water and land, the repetition of curves, and a love for its animal and plant inhabitants.

All of this, with special emphasis on an admiration and respect for the land and its people that again increased for me during this experience. And my gratitude for getting to learn so much about this site from different sources, such as First Nations stories about the elusive resident otters. This provided the energy and motivation I needed to finish the canvas, and underscored the warm Yukon welcome I have experienced since arriving here.”

Artist Anne Hoerber used paint and encaustic (wax) to represent the luminous colours of the canyon and the Yukon River. (Photo Sarjana Amin)

Anne Hoerber

“Taking part in Created in the Canyon was inspiring. Meeting the other artists and getting to talk with the people who come to watch us work gave me so much positive energy, and was such an empowering experience.

Spending the time in Miles Canyon, taking in those dramatic views, and connecting with my surroundings was deeply satisfying. The granite cliffs seem frozen in time, the river is always changing, the beauty and power of it all imprinted on my soul.

And oh the colours of the water!! I love how the river is alive with colour... There are a million shades of blue and green, constantly changing and endlessly fascinating!”

Sheelah Tolton

“Painting at Miles Canyon was a welcome reminder that an intriguing scene can be found everywhere and at vastly different scales- from views of dramatic landscapes and skies to tiny glimpses of plants daringly dangling out into space. With each scale came a different way of understanding the site. The landscape is a product of decades encompassing ice ages, volcanoes, and the dramatic results of tireless movement of water. Imagining the power and time required to carve the canyon gave me a new perspective of how truly brief the highlighted goldrush era really was, and by extension the brevity of human history in the area. At the same time, visualizing the daily and hourly struggles of a fireweed plant valiantly clinging in a crack mere feet over the rushing water brings to mind the minute to minute vitality of the flora and fauna in and around the canyon.

Above and beyond the inspiration gained from the location itself, I really appreciated getting the chance to interact with the public and not only share my own vision but to catch glimpses through others' eyes and lives.”



State of Industry in the Yukon

If you're like us in the YCS Office, your head is spinning when it comes to the mining, and oil and gas industries in the Yukon – big news is breaking regularly and project developments are coming fast and furious. To help you keep track, we've summarized the status of projects currently in the news. Give us a call at the YCS office – 668-5678 – if you want to learn more! We also encourage you to get to know our new government – connect with Ministers and their departments if you have questions or concerns about these projects.

Oil and Gas

Kotaneelee – EFLO, Apache and Yukon Government

- Located in the extreme south east of the territory, the Kotaneelee site is where the only commercially viable petroleum (gas) was ever produced in Yukon – the site opened in 1977 and ceased production in 2012.
- Kotaneelee sits on top part of the Liard Basin, one of the largest shale gas resources in the world.
- In 2015, the company in charge of the site, Houston-based EFLO Energy Inc. became insolvent and licenses for three of the four wells were turned over to another company, Apache. The fourth well become the property and financial responsibility of Yukon Government's Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) oil and gas branch. Both Apache and EMR then filed applications with the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) to have the wells abandoned.
- Well abandonment involves filling the well with cement and capping the pipe below ground, and removing associated infrastructure; experience has shown that it is not uncommon for well abandonment to fail and the well will need to be re-abandoned.
- News emerged last month that the estimated cost of abandonment for the one well under YG ownership is \$2.4 million. The original owner, EFLO Energy Inc., left a security deposit for \$625,000 with the government of Yukon, which leaves Yukon taxpayers on the hook for \$1.8 million.
- Apache has recently sold all its Canadian assets. The new owners, Paramount, will be responsible for care and maintenance – at least until ownership transfers again.
- **YCS's main concerns:** security deposits are not adequate to cover the cost of abandonment; if public money is used to heavily subsidize closure, there is an incentive for companies to walk away from wells.

Eagle Plain - Northern Cross Yukon

- Eagle Plain in north central Yukon lies within the North Yukon land use planning region.
- Thirty three wells were drilled in the Eagle Plain basin between 1958 and 1985, one was drilled in 2005 and four wells were drilled in 2012-2013. Currently there are eight inactive (suspended) wells at Eagle Plain; the others have been abandoned. One had to be re-abandoned in 2015.
- In 2014, Northern Cross Yukon (NCY) submitted a proposal to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) to drill and conduct flow tests on up to 20 exploratory oil and gas wells in the Eagle Plains region. NCY is a small Calgary-based outfit; its only backer, the Chinese Overseas Oil Company (CNOOC) recently sold all of its shares in the company.
- YESAB referred the project to an Executive Committee review due to unresolved questions about the impacts of the project on the Porcupine Caribou Herd. NCY then sought a judicial review of the referral and the case was heard by the Federal court in Whitehorse in April 2017. The ruling was released in late June: the Federal Court dismissed Northern Cross's application for a judicial review and the project will be reviewed by the YESAB Executive Committee.
- News broke in April that NCY is suing Yukon Government for up to \$2.2 billion dollars, claiming the government put a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing in 2015. The company is seeking reimbursement for rentals, capital expenditures, and the oil and gas revenues they won't be able to cash in on because of the moratorium. Yukon Government has not yet filed their statement in response.
- In July, Northern Cross dissolved and was re-named Chance Oil after NCY's then CEO withdrew from the company.
- **YCS's main concerns:** a large public payout for a private company that never had a viable business plan to develop oil and gas resources; the security deposit at Eagle Plain to cover abandonment is only \$1.1M, grossly inadequate to cover abandonment of eight wells; precedent that a local government cannot make decisions to care for the land without industry demanding steep compensation for potential "lost profits" (similar to the concerns about foreign trade deals preventing local governments from regulating activities on their land).

Mining

Coffee Gold Project – Goldcorp

- The Coffee Gold project is located approximately 130 kilometres south of the City of Dawson. The project is proposed as an open pit, heap leach; no development has taken place to date, the project is scheduled to begin production sometime in 2021.
- In 2016, Goldcorp, one of the world's largest gold producers, agreed to purchase the project from Kaminak Gold Corporation, a junior mining company.
- Goldcorp filed its proposal to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) at the end of March 2017. Since then, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in has filed documents presenting its concerns with Goldcorp, citing aggressive timelines and inadequate responses to questions and First Nation concerns with the project. Selkirk First Nation has filed documents with YESAB outlining lack of appropriate consultation. The White River First Nation has also filed documents with YESAB expressing concerns about how YESAB addresses issues regarding a First Nation with an unsettled land claim as compared with those that do.
- YESAB has discontinued its assessment process on this project until such time as adequate consultation has occurred between Goldcorp and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Selkirk First Nation, and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation.
- **YCS's main concerns:** an extensive, government subsidized all season road running south from the Dawson region to the project area would open up a region of the Yukon that does not have a land use plan; increased hunting and wildlife impacts; powered with fossil fuels; water treatment and final reclamation plan; financial security deposit.



Kudz Ze Kayah project – BMC Minerals

- In March 2017, BMC Minerals, a private company in London, England submitted a project proposal to YESAB for a new mine located approximately 115 km southwest of Ross River. The proposed Kudz Ze Kayah mine would be an open pit and underground copper, lead, zinc, silver and gold mine and would begin commercial production in 2022.
- The project is currently being assessed by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB); YESAB recently filed a 94 page information request to the company. The company has responded, and a number of review bodies have asked for further information from the company regarding the response.
- **YCS's main concerns:** on-site water treatment issues and the amount of financial security that will be asked of the company.

Eagle (Victoria) Gold project - StrataGold

- A proposed open pit gold mine located between Mayo and Keno; cyanide heap leaching techniques would be used to extract gold.
- The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) completed an environmental and socio-economic assessment in 2010. The Government of Yukon, Natural Resources Canada, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and Transport Canada, as the four Decision Bodies, issued their decision documents to 'accept' the recommendation of the YESAB Executive Committee to allow the project to proceed subject to mitigative terms and conditions. A water licence was issued by the Yukon Water Board. The Eagle Gold Project has signed a Comprehensive Cooperation and Benefits Agreement with the local First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun.
- In May 2017, the Yukon Water Board contacted StrataGold regarding its Project Reclamation and Closure Plan (RCP), identifying "significant deficiencies in the RCP that need to be addressed." These include the presence of irrelevant and incorrect information, unaddressed questions regarding water treatment, security estimate deficiencies and significant calculation errors in the costing of certain aspects of mine closure.
- **YCS's main concerns:** (at least) \$64.5 million public investment to upgrade the electricity transmission line between Stewart Crossing and Keno in order to provide grid power to Eagle Gold Mine; connecting this mine to the grid will likely result in more fossil fuels being burned to generate electricity, which will result in higher greenhouse gas emissions and also higher electricity rates.

Faro Mine – Federal and Territorial Governments

- Located 15 km from the town for Faro, the Faro mine was once the world's largest open-pit zinc mine. The mine was abandoned in 1998 and its owner went bankrupt, leaving the mine for the Federal government to take ownership of and responsibility for.
- At least \$250-million has already been spent maintaining the mine site and yet not even a handful of dirt has been cleaned up. The government is spending \$40-million annually to run pumps to prevent the toxic tailings from breaching the dams. The cleanup itself could cost a further \$1-billion, and will most likely end in a scenario where water treatment will have to occur on site in perpetuity.
- The Federal government has just announced a series of community meetings over the month of June to get public input on the closure and reclamation plan for the Faro mine.
- **YCS's main concerns:** water treatment. Water testing results are slowly being released by the Faro Mine Remediation Project team.

Casino Mine – Western Copper and Gold

- This huge project is currently 'on hold' while the proponent provides more information to the YESAB Panel Review. The company has until Dec 31st, 2017 to provide a lot of information that YESAB has requested.
- **YCS's main concerns:** access road north-west of Carmacks goes through the grounds of the Klaza Caribou Herd; the amount of fossil fuels consumed on site would double the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions; proposed wet tailings dam (at 286 metres high) would be an environmental catastrophe in the making.

Placer mining – Dawson region goldfields

- Several placer mining operations (and reality TV stars) have recently been fined for infractions of *Yukon's Environment, Lands, and Waters Act*. Infractions have included allowing sediments to flow directly into a stream and depositing waste into a waste management system without reporting.
- In 2016 a proposal to placer mine in the Indian River wetlands south of Dawson City resulted in a recommendation from the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) that the wetlands be avoided. The decision body, Yukon Government, rejected the YESAB recommendation and approved the project. The Yukon Water Board (YWB) then issued a licence with conditions that supported YESAB's recommendation to avoid the wetlands, but the Board was ultimately forced to withdraw this licence for legal reasons (under Final Agreements, the YWB cannot issue conditions contrary to a decision document).
- The YWB is holding a public hearing in Fall 2017 on another water license, for reality TV show associated company Tamarack which has applied for a water license to mine more of the Indian River wetlands.
- Discussions about wetland reclamation are currently being undertaken between Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon Government.
- **YCS's main concerns:** Yukon does not have a *Wetland Protection Act*.

Tiger Gold Road – ATAC Resources

- An all-season, 65 km road proposed to run north-east of Keno City to a region known as the Tiger gold deposit.
- In March 2017, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) recommended the project proceed with conditions, including the development of a comprehensive access regime for all land users and harvester groups and avoidance of nesting peregrine falcons. Government of Yukon is currently reviewing the recommendation and consulting with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. It is of note that the Yukon Government still has not released a Decision Document on the YESAB recommendation after two months. Usually Decision Documents are released within thirty days.
- **YCS's main concerns:** 46 permanent creek and river crossings; habitat fragmentation; increased access leading to wildlife impacts; no regional land use plan in place to help fully understand all the values and impacts.

Roads to Resources/Yukon Resource Gateway Project – Yukon and Federal Governments

- In 2016, news broke that the Yukon Government had made a pitch to the Federal Government asking them to pay \$250 million toward road upgrades that would benefit three possible major mines in the territory - Coffee, Selwyn and Casino. The mining road application, called the Yukon Resource Gateway Project, would see the Yukon government contribute \$112 million and industry contribute another \$109 million toward roadwork in the Dawson and Nahanni ranges.
- **YCS's main concerns:** landscape transforming decisions in the absence of a regional land use plan; no public consultation.

Christina Macdonald
(YCS Executive Director)



Yukon Conservation Society

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Thank You Volunteers!



The Yukon Conservation Society wouldn't be the vibrant, active organization it is without your help!

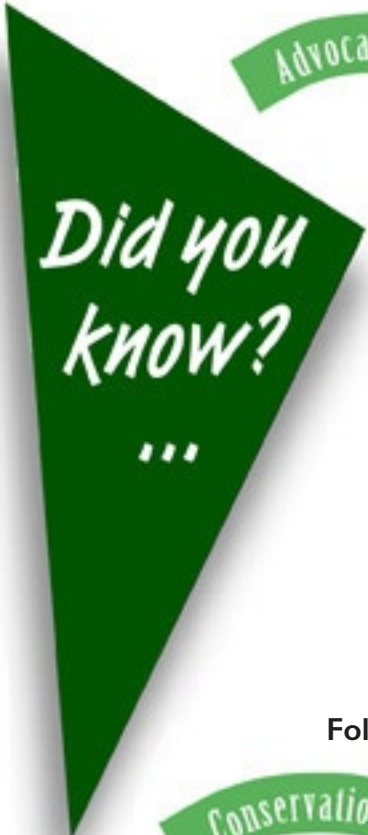
Thanks to:

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Misha, Nina, Mary W., and everyone who helped with the trail guiding program and led special events this summer

Tanya for her help with designing trail guiding material



An Army of Problem Solvers is coming to the Yukon!

We're excited about an upcoming event with Shaun Loney, author of *An Army of Problem Solvers: Reconciliation and the Solutions Economy*. We'll be learning about how communities can turn environmental and socio-economic problems into opportunities through creative, grassroots solutions such as social enterprises. We hope to host workshops and a public evening event with Loney and local Yukon 'solutionaries' in the first week of November. We're busy writing funding applications to make this event possible – stay tuned!

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