

# Walk Softly

Newsletter of the  
Yukon Conservation Society  
Summer 2018



**Inside:** • The Edible Garden • Mining Victories • Meet the New Staff



## 50 Years of YCS – Some snippets of history

YCS was founded in 1968. The Whitehorse Star wrote at the time: “It is an encouraging sign that a conservation group has organized here in the Yukon recently, sifting harmful practices out of the bustling years of progress into which we have plunged” adding “it is not too late here in the North, if we heed the warning now”. Started as a group of volunteers, we got our own office in late 1974 and hired an office manager in 1979. By the 1980s, we’d grown into a fully-fledged professional organization!

Countless people have left their mark on YCS over the years. One of them was Ted Parnell. As an early director of YCS, Ted was a strong supporter of conservation and of Indigenous rights, devoting much of his time to working for Indigenous organizations. He died in 1981 at a young age, leaving a bequest to YCS. With his donation we started the Ted Parnell Scholarship, awarded every year to a Yukon student pursuing environmental studies. The bequest also helped us purchase 302 Hawkins St., aka Parnell House, which has been YCS’ home ever since. It was bought for \$53,662.50 in 1984. A chunk of that money came from Ted – and two board members took out mortgages on their house to help with the balance!

Our program of guided nature walks is nearly as old as YCS – it began in 1981. Over the decades, we’ve held hikes everywhere from the Hidden Lakes to Haeckel Hill to Grey Mountain. These days we offer regular guided hikes to Canyon City and occasional shorter walks in other locations. We also created the *Hikes and Bikes Guidebook* in 1995 as a guide to Whitehorse-area trails. A second edition followed in 2005 – both can be found on many Yukon bookshelves.



Ted Parnell (1947-1981) was an early board member of YCS. He sadly died at a young age but his passion for conservation and indigenous rights lives on through the generous bequest he left for YCS.

We’ve created learning materials including environmental education kits for educators, wildlife handbooks for students, and *The Magical Thread*, an interactive online storybook teaching kids about the magnificence of the natural world still in use in Yukon classrooms today. Each summer, hundreds of children learn about conservation concepts with our Kids’ Ed-Ventures program.



Over the years, we’ve advocated for better standards in everything from placer mining to forestry, and held events on topics from straw bale building to the impacts and possibilities of hydro in the Yukon. We’ve gotten our hands dirty with tire cleanups in the Yukon River and Range Road in the 1990s, a Wolf Creek revegetation project and a biodiesel experiment in the 2000s, and many more projects.

We’ve held Yukon regulators accountable with a tireless presence at a variety of iterations of environmental assessment boards and panels, the Yukon Water Board, Utilities Board hearings, intervening at the Aishihik Lake Hydro License, raising the alarm over problems with the Cyprus Anvil (Faro) mine water license, and organizing against the Alaska Highway pipeline in the 70s. To this day, YCS participates in project assessments and land use planning – including our ongoing work to help Protect the Peel watershed.

Our next two newsletters will dive into this history in more depth – and so will our September BBQ in the YCS garden and our November celebration at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre!

### Walk Softly

is published by the Yukon Conservation Society for members and subscribers. Memberships and information about the Society can be obtained by contacting the YCS office.

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### YCS BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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Faris Mecklai (Policy Intern)

### WORKERS ON THIS ISSUE

Tanya Handley, Julia Duchesne

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## Recent Mining Victories!!!

Astute visitors to the YCS office may have noticed a bell affixed to the wall in the kitchen. Christina Macdonald (the former Executive Director, last heard of enjoying the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State) installed it so we could ring out our successes with a resounding clang. She almost broke it during the Peel Watershed successes! Over the past few weeks the bell has had yet another workout. We spend a lot of time submitting environmental concerns to the Yukon’s assessment bodies, and it’s great when their recommendations and decisions align with our submissions – as has happened recently.

**Victory!** The Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB) has recommended against the Judas Creek Tributary Placer project (YESAB # 2018-0025) proceeding mainly due to concerns over potential harm to the Carcross Caribou Herd. This project would have taken place near the Marsh Lake subdivision of Judas Creek. The Yukon Government decision document is expected in late June.

**Yet another victory!** YESAB has handed down its recommendations on the Klondike East Bench placer mine project (otherwise known as the Slinky mine, or YESAB # 2017-0206). While YESAB has allowed the project to proceed, the conditions remove almost all the undisturbed ground, do not allow the miner to haul ore down the Dome Road to his sluice box, completely forbid him from disturbing new ground during nesting season and provide a 50m buffer from the community ski trails.

**My goodness, a third victory!** YESAB recommended that a placer mine in the Indian River wetlands can proceed... so long as it avoids all the wetlands (YESAB # 2018-0035). YCS assumes that when the Yukon Government has developed a wetlands policy, and after wetlands reclamation guidelines have been

worked out, there may be an opening for the miner to apply again.

YCS takes what it can get, so let’s celebrate a partial victory over a YESAB application to install a private

bridge over the Nordenskiöld River near Braeburn Lodge (YESAB # 2018-0003). The proponent has withdrawn the bridge aspect of the project, but there will still be some trail upgrades from the North Klondike Hwy to the project area in question. YESAB will release its recommendation on this project by late June.

Finally, in the obtuse victory department, the Yukon Water Board (YWB) agreed with YCS regarding our concerns with project changes that Victoria Gold (a proposed hardrock gold mine between Mayo and Keno) has made to the project since going through the YESAB and YWB processes. The water licence (YWB QZ14-041) as originally issued no longer reflects what is being constructed on the ground. The YWB has instructed Victoria Gold to apply to amend their licence.

- Lewis Rifkind and Sebastian Jones





## The Edible Garden Project

It's not just the inside of the office that's getting a little TLC – there are also some exciting changes happening to the garden. A year ago, Board member Alberto Suarez-Esteban had the idea of creating an edible garden project at YCS. With a little help from the City of Whitehorse Environmental Grant, we're now making this dream a reality!

Alberto has now left the Board and will soon be heading east to start a farm in the Ottawa Valley, but the YCS Edible Garden lives on with the help of Marjolène, Julia and a crew of volunteers. With a generous donation of used lumber from David Neufeld, and a lot of elbow grease, we constructed four huge planter boxes in April. The cold spring delayed planting, but we've now filled the boxes with a 70% compost, 30% sand mix from the City of Whitehorse, and planted a huge array of vegetables. We've even harvested local willow to create hoops for the plastic sheeting covering one planter.

The goal of this project is to transform the YCS yard into a productive urban edible garden, a downtown oasis that provides food to people in need, creates welcoming green space downtown, promotes sustainable landscaping practices and healthier lifestyles, and helps Whitehorse citizens get hands-on experience with growing local food to help reduce our reliance on the carbon-intensive food shipping system. We're also trying to reduce the number of invasive species harboured by our lawn!

We want the garden to be an inviting, informative place. Our picnic tables will be surrounded by greenery and there will be an information panel in the garden illustrating the benefits of growing local food. We are documenting the process of building and planting a garden in how-to guides which will soon be available at YCS and online.

### What we're growing:

- Cabbage, broccoli
- Potatoes, beets, turnip, radishes, carrots, onions
- Beans, sweet peas
- Leaf lettuce, butterhead lettuce, mesclun, arugula
- Bok choy, kale, chard
- Cress, chives, oregano, dill, mint
- Nasturtium (edible flower)
- Rhubarb, raspberry and other berries

Anyone is welcome to help tend the garden – weeding, watering, harvesting, etc. – in exchange for a share of the produce. We'll be splitting the harvest 50-50 with half going to volunteers and half to the Whitehorse Food Bank's Grow-A-Row program, which encourages gardeners to donate fresh produce. Contact Marjolène or Julia to get involved – or just stop by and ask what you can do!

Radishes and beans sprouting under cover.



Summer 2018

### How we're growing it:

We have 4 planter boxes: two 4'x10' boxes, one 5'x10' box, and a 4'x4' square box. Each box is approximately 2' deep. We're also planting in some smaller containers and the existing garden spaces around our deck.

It's a natural garden with no chemical inputs. We're mostly starting from seed but we've also had some generous donations of plants like rhubarb and raspberry bushes – and we'll be buying some young berry bushes to complement our existing berries. In the planters, we're experimenting with several different types of garden planting:

- Circle planting: a permaculture-inspired box with a mixture of plants planted in circular patterns that help the plants support each other – and look pretty too!
- Square-foot planting: a simple but orderly gardening system in which a box is divided into square feet with one type of plant growing in each square.
- Row planting: a 'typical' planting system where plants are aligned in rows or stripes across the box.



The boxes are constructed of donated lumber with a simple but sturdy design.



### It takes a village:

Thanks to volunteers Alberto Suarez-Esteban, Dave Neufeld, Erik Miller, Guillaume Riocreux, Luc Garceau, Maeve O'Neill Sanger, Mary Whitley, Mary Amerongen, Tracy and Kendra Dart and others for all their help with the garden so far!

YCS staff and volunteers in a newly-constructed garden box.



Summer 2018

Our youngest volunteer was Kendra Dart, who got to work fixing up some old planter boxes.





## Meet our new staff members:



### Cody Reaume: Energy Analyst

Cody is a mechanical engineer (EIT) with a passion for clean energy technology. He previously worked on the development of cutting edge CO<sub>2</sub> capture technology and also brings experience with solar photovoltaics. His engineering background and appreciation for both the advantages and challenges of renewable energy technologies position Cody to provide valuable input and recommendations on energy development. Cody also aims to take a proactive approach to demonstrate the viability of clean energy solutions and help educate the Yukon public and decision makers. In his free time Cody is an amateur inventor and also enjoys soccer, board games, and long talks about the future of humanity.



### Faris Mecklai: Policy Intern

Hi! My name is Faris and this summer I will be working at YCS as a policy intern. I am currently an undergraduate student studying Arts & Science at McMaster and don't really know what career path I want to follow. However, I have always been passionate about the environment. In high school, I created and led a StreamKeepers club which monitored development on local ecology near my school. This past year at university, I was part of the Youth Advisory Board for the NGO Waterlution, in which I engaged kids in learning about their own water stories. So, when looking for a public policy internship as part of the Loran Scholars Foundation summer program, I actively searched for an environmental grassroots organization in a part of the world I had yet to discover. Whitehorse is the farthest north I have ever been, and I'm excited to explore this new part of the world I have never experienced before. This summer, I hope to uncover the beauty of the Yukon all while helping an organization which shares many of the same values as me. Having lived extensively in British Columbia and Ontario, I can't wait to see what the Yukon will offer me.

### Sprucing up the office

Our new Financial Manager, Marjolène, has not only been working hard on money matters but is also doing an impressive job at office management. Under her direction, we've been doing a lot of much-needed spring cleaning – from tidying and rearranging the Trail Guide HQ in the basement to updating our shared spaces and offices. Pop in to the office to see the lovely new layout, paint scheme, and abundance of green and growing things!

Thank you very much to Ken at Falcon A Interior Painting for the beautiful interior paint work, and to YG Asset Disposal for the new-to-us furniture.



### Marking the 50th!:

Our new tote bags are recycled cotton featuring a beautiful design by local artist and YCS member Sally Wright. Each bag is silkscreened by hand. Our caribou-logo design is also available. (\$22)

50th Anniversary stickers are \$2 each and available in rectangular or square designs:



Trail Guide Coordinator Max Lommerse and YCS volunteers will be at the Fireweed Market in Whitehorse every Thursday from 3-7pm until August 16.



## Free Guided Nature Hikes

It is that time again – our free guided hikes from Miles Canyon to Canyon City start soon! Join our fantastic trail guides for a fun and informative walk in one of the most beautiful places in Whitehorse.

**When:** 10am & 2pm, Tuesday through Saturday, last day of hikes August 18

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

The two-hour, easy walking hikes are fun for nature enthusiasts, hikers and families alike. For visitors, it's a great way to learn about the area – and for locals, you just might learn something new too! Twice-daily hikes run rain or shine and cover topics such as local geology, plants, and animals – and the rich human history of the area.

We frequently host **SPECIAL THEMED HIKES** on topics such as Mushrooms, Northern Adaptations, Art and more. We also hold lunchtime events such as Wild Edibles hikes on some Fridays. Check our website, [yukonconservation.org](http://yukonconservation.org), for the evolving list of special events and themed hikes.

### We Take Requests:

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

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

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

### Did you know?

Canyon City was an important stop on the journey to the Klondike gold fields, but the area has been important for much longer than a century. Before settlers arrived in the area, there was a fishing camp at the big bend in the river – one stop on a trail network stretching from Marsh Lake to Lake Laberge. The canyon currently known as Miles Canyon is called Kwanlin in the Southern Tutchone language – which refers to 'water running through a narrow place'.

We know much of the history of the Canyon City area thanks to an archeology and oral history initiative undertaken in the 1990s by Yukon Heritage Branch, Department of Tourism and Kwanlin Dün First Nation with the support of the Yukon Conservation Society and MacBride Museum. Tagish and Kwanlin elders shared stories about fishing in the area, and excavations found tools such as skin scrapers and spear points dating back thousands of years. Read more at [www.tc.gov.yk.ca/canyon\\_city](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/canyon_city) or in the Trail to Tramway booklet available at YCS.

### Kids' Ed-Ventures:

Our regular hikes are great for people of all ages who are capable of walking 3.5km over mostly gentle terrain, including children. Additionally, we offer nature and conservation themed drop-in activities and games for children of all ages at our YCS tent at the Fireweed Market at Shipyards Park every Thursday starting June 17. We are happy to book Kids' Ed-Ventures as well. Do you know a group of kids who would like to have a special Ed-Venture tailored just for them? YCS is happy to accommodate theme, location, and special time requests for your group!



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

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

We are looking for volunteers to assist with our Created at the Canyon live multi-media art event on Friday July 14th and Saturday 15th at Miles Canyon/Canyon City, and the following open exhibit in August at the Northern Front Studio. We require volunteers to help in the planning process and also on the day of the events. Come join our creative team in making this community event a reality!



### Guest guides with knowledge to share!

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

For more information contact our Trail Guide Coordinator, Max Lommerse, at [hikes@yukonconservation.org](mailto:hikes@yukonconservation.org) or 668-5678.



## Created at the Canyon

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

► **Miles Canyon:**  
Friday, July 13th from 2pm- 8pm & Saturday, July 14th from 10am-4pm

Join us this July as we bring art outdoors! Visit six local artists as they create art inspired by the stunning beauty and fascinating history of the canyon and Yukon River. Artists will be in place at the Canyon on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday, and YCS will be there to provide maps, information, and our regular guided hikes running 10-12 and 2-4. This event will be followed by an art exhibit in August at the Northern Front Studio. All events are free. Funding for this project is made possible through the assistance of Arts Fund, Department of Tourism and Culture, Government of Yukon, Jeanie Dendys, Minister.

*"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!"*

– 2017 artist Anne Hoerber

## Meet the Trail Guiding Team:



L-R: Max, Ingrid and Jamie at the canyon on their first day of hikes.

### MAX LOMMERSE

Hi! I'm Max and I've just started as the new Trail Guide Coordinator for this summer. I was born and raised in the Yukon and have always been amazed by the natural beauty of the Territory and I try to get outside when I can to enjoy it. I'm excited to be part of YCS' trail guiding team this summer as I want to help teach visitors about the wonderful nature and deep history we have here in the Yukon.

### INGRID JANZEN

Returning to the Yukon for the season, Ingrid is happy to spend the summer as a trail guide at Miles Canyon and as a dancer with the Klondike Follies Cabaret. After completing the International Baccalaureate Diploma at Pearson College UWC, Ingrid spent a year travelling abroad and working at home. This spring, she finished her first year studying geography at Concordia University in Montreal and will be transferring to Quest University in Squamish to pursue an experiential education on the west coast. Ingrid is passionate about the boreal landscape and tries really, really hard to make people laugh.

### JAMIE JOE-HUDSON

Jamie was born in the Yukon and is a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. As a girl she spent her summers in Klukshu village learning her family's stories and enjoying hiking, fishing and berry picking. It was here she began her interest in First Nation traditional values and governance. Jamie is currently at Bishop's University studying business and played Varsity soccer last year. She is excited to be back in the Yukon, spending her summer on the trails, and sharing her love of the great outdoors and Yukon's rich history!



# SafeCast, Radiation, and the Yukon

After the terrible Tohoku 2011 earthquake in Japan that destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, limited government information was being released publicly about radiation levels. A need was recognized to have citizens monitor and publicize radiation levels. This is how a group called Safecast was established, using what is known as Citizen Science. The SafeCast team built, deployed and published public radiation information to complement the limited government information.

Citizen Science enables people to contribute to scientific knowledge by making science projects accessible online. Local examples include the Yukon Conservation Data Centre which gathers observations about fauna and flora from many sources. The Weather Underground provides local weather independent of Environment Canada. Stream Keepers are monitoring and advocating for rivers and streams everywhere. Astronomy has always had professionals and amateurs working together on a host of projects, and now amateur astronomers comb through telescope images online to help chart the universe. Now it is the turn of radiation.

According to the Safecast website (<https://blog.safecast.org/>) they maintain the largest open dataset of background radiation measurements ever collected: over 50 million readings to date and growing daily, including in the Yukon. The first SafeCast Yukon radiation survey was published on 9 May 2018 on the SafeCast website. This was thanks to long time Yukoner Gerry Whitley. The results are online at [https://api.safecast.org/en-US/bgeigie\\_imports/35680](https://api.safecast.org/en-US/bgeigie_imports/35680)

The secret of SafeCast's success is that it allows citizens to build their own radiation monitors. The resulting network is spreading around the world. Gerry has assembled a bGeigie Nano mobile radiation monitor and plans to collect baseline data along Yukon roads filling the Yukon portion of the world map.

Lewis Rifkind



Gerry's bGeigie Nano mobile radiation monitor, which can be mounted to a car to collect radiation measurements. photo: Gerry Whitley



**Yukon Conservation Society**  
1968-2018: • Advocacy • Education • Community

### SAVE THE DATE:

### 50th Anniversary Celebration

Saturday November 17, evening, Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, Whitehorse

Join us to celebrate and learn about 50 years of YCS history and look ahead to 2068! There'll be food, music, dancing, and friends new and old.

## YES! I want to help protect Yukon's environment by supporting the Yukon Conservation Society!



### DONATIONS

- \$60  \$200  \$500  Surprise us! \_\_\_\_\_
- Monthly Pledge (credit card only) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP

- Student \$10
  - Individual \$25
  - Family \$40 (2 or more people)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount
- Both donations & memberships are tax deductible. PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY. Your tax receipt will be emailed unless you prefer a paper copy.*

- I want to volunteer, please send me information.
- I would like to receive a twice-monthly email with YCS news and events.
- I would like to receive my copy of the *Walk Softly* quarterly newsletter by email, not a paper copy in the mail.

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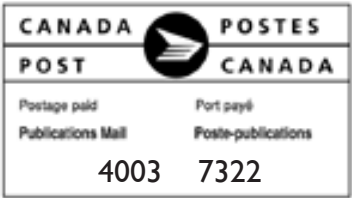
Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers who keep YCS running smoothly, including:



- Abby Wright and Tanya Handley for their design and illustration skills
- Anat Tal for her work on our membership database
- Ernie Berken for keeping our eaves and windows clean
- Gerry Whitley and his plane for being our eyes in the sky

- Joshua Hunt for keeping our tech systems working
- Mary Amerongen for keeping our membership records and correspondence going smoothly
- Paul Davis for helping prepare the office for painting
- Shyloh Van Delft for her help with Trail Guide training
- And all our Garden Team volunteers for their help building, chopping, lugging soil and planting!

## Thank You Volunteers!



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Join us at these upcoming events!

**Created at the Canyon**

Friday July 13, 2-8pm and Saturday July 14, 10am-4pm at Kwanlin (aka Miles Canyon)

6 local artists will create original works of art outdoors, inspired by the culturally and ecologically significant landscape of the canyon and the Yukon River. Stop in and visit them near the Robert Lowe Bridge on July 13 and 14 to learn more about their art and this beautiful place! Exhibit all August at the Northern Front Studio.

**BBQ and Storytelling** Friday September 7, 5-7pm in the YCS garden

Gather in the YCS garden for an end-of-summer get-together. We'll be sharing stories from our 50-year history and enjoying a free BBQ.

Follow us!

