

Walk Softly

Newsletter of the Yukon
Conservation Society
September 1999



INSIDE: THAs Fast-tracked ♦ Faro Fiasco ♦ Energy ♦ Tipping Fees

What's Happening at YCS?

Watching the Globe

Karen, our Forestry Coordinator, went to a Global Forest Watch Canada meeting in Calgary in late August. GFW Canada is working on an alternative 'State of the Forests' report to counter the federal government's reassuring official document. Along with similar documents from a number of other countries, Canada's alternative 'State of the Forests' report will be launched early in the new year.

Home Energy Project

Craig Olsen is working on a pilot project to reduce energy consumption in Yukon homes. In partnership with the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation, YCS has been approaching homeowners in Whitehorse and Dawson to let us into their homes! In addition to learning more about climate change and how to reduce their energy costs, participants get a free compact fluorescent lightbulb and their hot water tank wrapped. We're also gathering information about domestic hot water use from the homeowners to help design future energy reduction programs.

DAP Discussions Continue...

Last April, the Yukon government struck a multistakeholder working group to discuss some key issues about the proposed Development Assessment Process (DAP) to help it define its positions at the negotiating table. Jennifer has been involved in

working group meetings since last May, with more to come this fall. Stay tuned for more on this topic in the next newsletter!

Ted Parnell Scholarship Awarded

Elizabeth Henry is this year's recipient of YCS's Ted Parnell Scholarship. Elizabeth, who has been very involved with the Students Aware of the World (SAW) group and other community activities, is heading off to Guelph to do her Bachelor of Science. Good luck Elizabeth!

Blue Book Blues

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) has a senior level committee that is looking at how to better integrate environmental assessments of hard rock mine projects with the regulatory review process (e.g. water licenses and production licenses)... and we're not on it! The expected recommendations will be presented in a 'Blue Book' form. While this work is much needed, this Blue Book Steering Committee consists of DIAND, the Yukon government, the Water Board and the Yukon Chamber of Mines. Our request for membership was denied early in the summer despite the fact we have years of experience in this area and a long list of concerns. We are currently working on getting a level

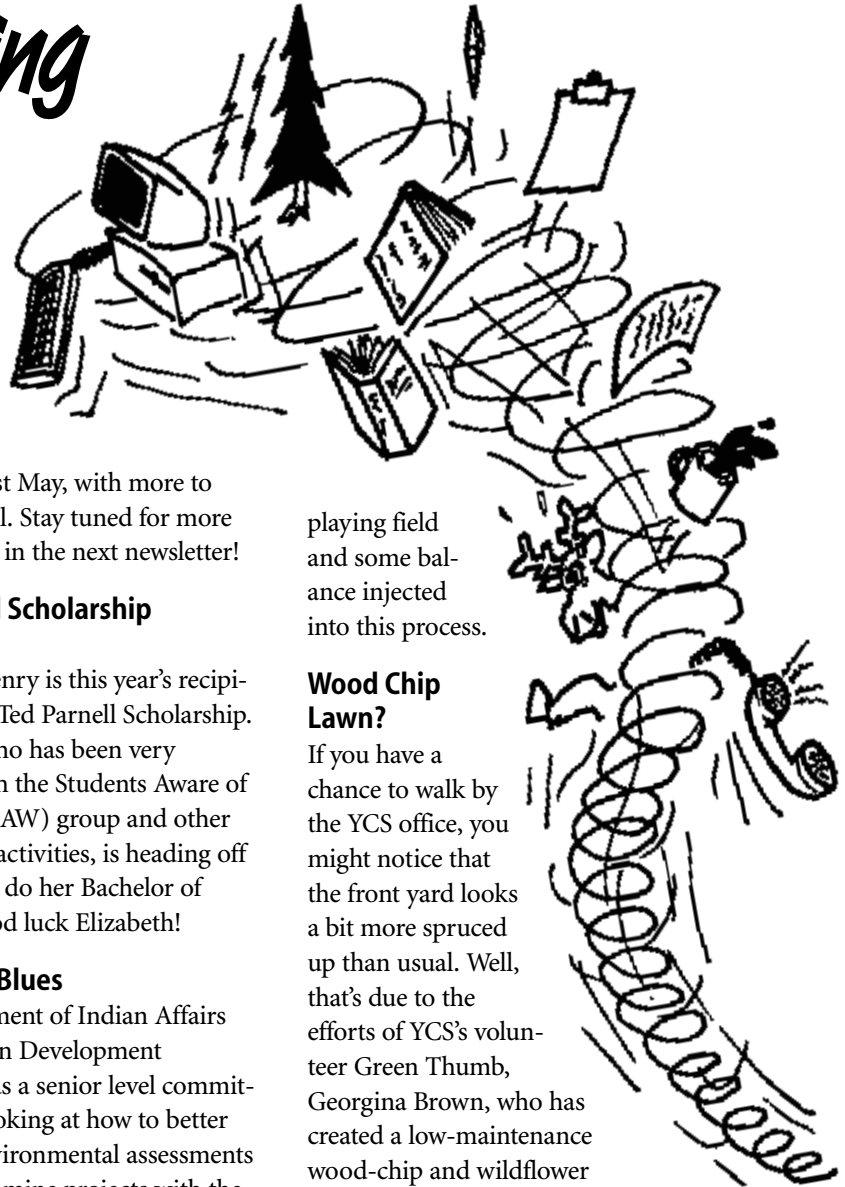
playing field and some balance injected into this process.

Wood Chip Lawn?

If you have a chance to walk by the YCS office, you might notice that the front yard looks a bit more spruced up than usual. Well, that's due to the efforts of YCS's volunteer Green Thumb, Georgina Brown, who has created a low-maintenance wood-chip and wildflower garden which beautifies the office without taking a lot of water, chemicals, or time to keep up. Merci Georgina!

Submissions to Walk Softly

Though we note it on page 5, in our box of info next to the editorial, we suspect more people likely read this section so we'll say it hear too! YCS welcomes newsletter submissions and letters to the editor. Deadlines are the first of February, May, August and November. So send in your articles and thoughts!





Creating A Sense of Place

“You’ve made me look at plants in a completely different way.”

“I didn’t know there were so many creatures in the water!”

As the trail unwinds before our feet it becomes evident that those who have joined our hike for the day aren’t the only ones being guided. Rounding the same bend in the trail is hardly monotonous. That same section of trail may greet us with a yellow-rumped warbler, newly blossomed Arnica, or evidence that some other animal had been there before our arrival. The land guides and presents us with opportunities to share and initiate the development of a sense of place with the public.

A component of YCS’ mandate is to “promote a greater environmental awareness and understanding.” To take people on hikes and shower them with facts void of meaning and relevance to their lives, will not fulfill this mandate. It’s not necessarily what you know but your relationship to it. Steering well away from the ‘Drag and Brag’ syndrome, the Trail Guides focused upon sharing the stories of the land and our involvement within these stories. These hikes are a great way to educate, connect and relate the environment to people’s lives and leave them with the sense of a place.

In order to “promote a greater environmental awareness and understanding,” a person must first develop some sort of connection to the environment. This is often the challenge; how do people form a connection to the environment? The environment is a large, convoluted concept that is hard to get cozy with. In reflecting upon where we’ve formed connections with the land, we realize that these areas have become special places to us. Our personal connections with the earth are formed in ‘places’ we have experienced. Alan Gussow best explains this in his article *A Sense of Place*. “The catalyst that converts any physical location — any environment if you will — into a place, is the process of experiencing deeply. A place is a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings.”

Through connections we develop relationships. The more connections we make with places, the greater potential of developing an environmental awareness and understanding. It may be that in the creation of a sense of place, we

may respond to the beauty of the environment, the significance of its history and the cultural surroundings. This ‘response’ may be a form of environmental responsibility.

The Trail Guides this summer delivered quality Interpretive Programs and the feedback we received from both tourists and locals was nothing but positive. We even succeeded at involving more locals through our *Theme Hikes*. We may never know how much information the public is retaining, yet, there are those magical moments that make you realize that a sense of place is developing. On one of our *Theme Hikes*, some people felt that they could no longer look at plants along the sidewalk as ‘just’ a plant. Not only did they learn its name but they got to know it personally: In nibbling Lambs Quarters, it is no longer ‘just’ a plant.

Our *Hikes for Tykes* program was just as rewarding. There was a young girl who came up to our staff and exclaimed, “I didn’t know there were so many creatures in the water!”, and a little boy who insisted on coming into our office to look at plant books so he could find the plant that we couldn’t identify. Even the moms who came on our *Pond Study* were enthralled by the dragonfly larva and were as absorbed by the pond life as their children were. We need these experiences and places we can connect to. The Trail Guiding Program is doing just that.

The Trail Guiding Program is creating opportunities for people to know the Yukon and develop a sense of ‘this’ place. Through our historical and natural interpretation we hope to share the stories of the land and how these stories are meaningful to our lives. Through creating a sense of place we are not only appreciating the land around us but developing a sense of belonging. This connection may develop a relationship based upon respect and protection.

A special thanks to the Trail Guides this summer. It was best put by one of our guests in the guest book, “We are proud of young people like you!”

tanis davey



Holding their Feet to the Fire!

Like most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) I've been active in, YCS is a 'non-partisan' organization: meaning YCS doesn't endorse any one political party as the solution to all environmental problems.

I often find that people think that this means that NGOs can't be active in politics at all. Which is not true, as YCS lobbies for conservation issues and policies with each and every government, using whatever access they'll give it.

I, as an individual, have my own private preferences about who I'd like to see in power. But when I'm acting for the YCS, I keep these 'partisan' views to myself.

And so it is that most YCS members have passionate views about the importance of having a strong Protected Areas Strategy (PAS), a rational way to identify and set aside public lands for future parks, or habitat and wildlife conservation areas. And we expect the governments that we, as individuals, elect to deliver what they promise they'll do.

Individually, one or two votes at election time doesn't sound so important. But taken as a whole, people who consider themselves to be environmentalists are a sizable part of the Yukon's voting population. And, unlike the four-leggeds and the fish, you, and I do have the vote.

And for me, there comes a time in the life of any government, when I have to remind that government of whatever political party, that I am watching and will vote accordingly in the next election. And I hope that the rest of the YCS members do the same.

The Yukon is famous for having cliff-hanger elections, where a handful of votes in each riding make or break the chances of a party forming a majority government. And in the Yukon, environmentalists are a key block of votes. Even the risk that I, as an individual, or maybe even more of 'us' environmentalists, were to simply not to vote in the next election, is a powerful act.

What I'm saying here is that the 'enviro-vote,' cannot, and should not be taken for granted by any government.

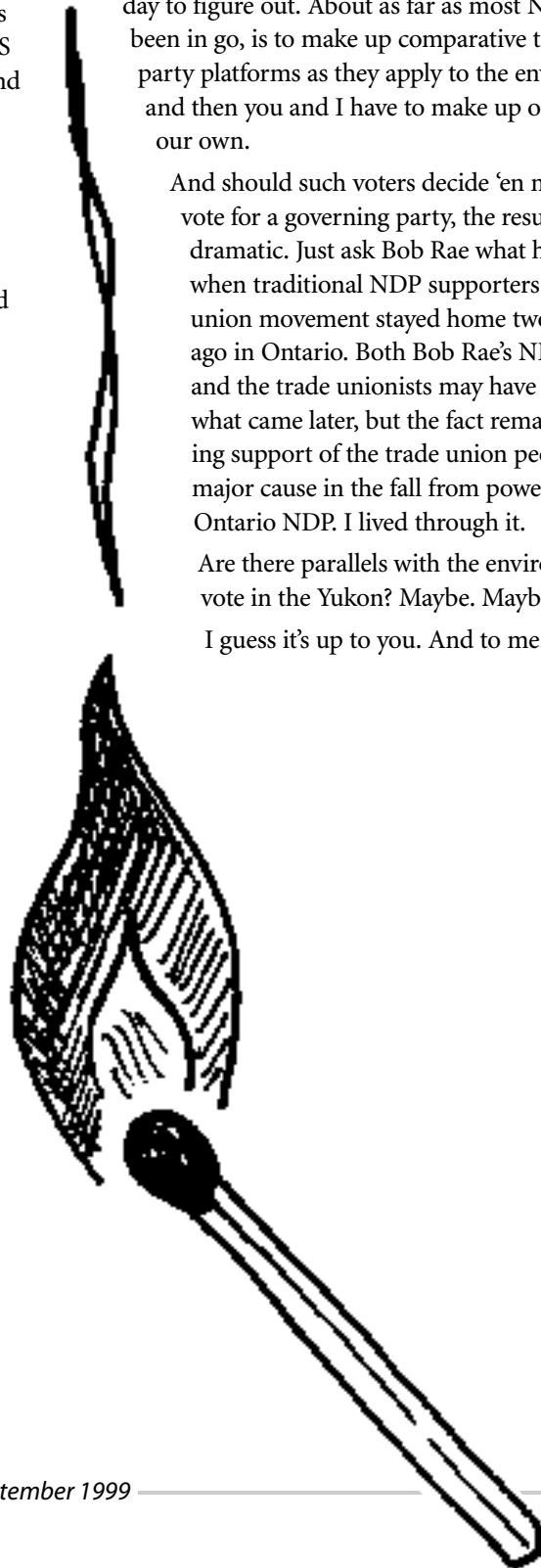
In my experience, as 'non-partisan' organizations, most NGOs don't come out and tell governments what their members expectations are. They leave that for the political party which forms the government of the day to figure out. About as far as most NGOs I've been in go, is to make up comparative tables of party platforms as they apply to the environment, and then you and I have to make up our minds on our own.

And should such voters decide 'en masse' not to vote for a governing party, the results can be dramatic. Just ask Bob Rae what happened when traditional NDP supporters in the trade union movement stayed home two elections ago in Ontario. Both Bob Rae's NDP party, and the trade unionists may have regretted what came later, but the fact remains that losing support of the trade union people was a major cause in the fall from power of the Ontario NDP. I lived through it.

Are there parallels with the environmental vote in the Yukon? Maybe. Maybe not.

I guess it's up to you. And to me. And to 'us.'

paul davis





Editorial

Walk Softly

is published by the
Yukon Conservation Society
for members and subscribers. Memberships
and information about the Society can be
obtained by phoning the YCS at
(867) 668-5678, (fax 668-6637),
by writing to Box 4163,
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3T3,
or by visiting the YCS office at
302 Hawkins Street, Whitehorse.

email: ycs@polarcom.com

We welcome newsletter submissions and letters
to the editor. Deadlines for submissions are
Feb 1, May 1, Aug 1, and Nov 1.

Views expressed in *Walk Softly* are not
necessarily those of the Society.

ycs board of directors

teresa earle

alice hartling

craig olsen

colin mcdowell

jocelyn mcdowell

marty strachan

angela walkley

sally wright

jennifer ellis, executive director

lorill crees, office coordinator

karen baltgailis, forestry coordinator

workers on this issue

lisa chevalier

tanya handley

lorill crees

paul mantle

paul davis

debbie trudeau

jennifer ellis

printed on recycled paper



I recently subscribed to the *Utne Reader* for a change of pace, yet the theme of the first issue that landed in my mailbox strongly echoed my mindset at the time: "Changing the World is Hard. WHY BOTHER?"

Good question! One of the most difficult aspects of working at the Yukon Conservation Society is that there are few tangible things to point to that show how we have changed something for the better, how part of the environment was clearly saved today because of our actions yesterday.

So I identified with the 'Cherry Pie Three' described in the *Utne Reader* who sometimes throw pies — organic of course — at key targets to demonstrate their political beliefs. Though the finer points of their message may get lost in the lobbing of these desserts, I envied how they could actually see the outcome of their actions. Dealing with multistakeholder advisory committees, bureaucracies and political positioning can tend to make one crave direct and concrete action.

However, one of the biggest 'wins' that I experience in my job is not about what I do, but what others do. When other people who are concerned about our environment step up to the plate to write a letter to the editor, voice their concerns in a public meeting, organize a meeting of their friends or even help set up chairs for an environmental talk, I celebrate!

The people doing this may feel like it isn't much, but it tells me that I am not working in a vacuum. The decision-makers also see that it is not the 'same damned bunch' they so easily learn to tune out.

In another *Utne Reader* article, Paul Rogat Loeb, author of *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time*, describes the barriers to involvement people construct for themselves. Many feel like they must know everything about an issue before they speak out. Yet in the days of information overload, they know they could never meet that standard. He adds, however, that "[s]ocial change always proceeds in the absence of absolute knowledge, so long as people are willing to follow their convictions, to act despite their doubts, and to speak even at the risk of making mistakes."

There is no perfect time or perfect amount of knowledge that people need before they are capable of acting in some way on something they believe in. Whether its throwing pies or organizing letter writing campaigns, all they need is the belief in what they are doing. Change only comes with some sort of action. It may be slow and incremental, and is usually not as tangible as I'd sometimes like to see, but I also know that it all adds up. So that's why I keep bothering to even try 'changing the world.'

jennifer ellis



DIAND Burns Yukon's Bridges Before Leaving

Less than a year before responsibility for forestry is to be devolved from the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) to the territorial government, DIAND is making plans to lock the territory into the same kind of badly planned forest tenure system that plagues the rest of Canada.

To date the Yukon has had only one long term forestry tenure — Kaska Forest Resources' Timber Harvesting Agreement. In the Yukon Forest Strategy and in various public forums, the federal and territorial governments have made commitments to avoid any more long term tenures until the Protected Areas Strategy, First Nations land claims and forest management plans have all been settled.

Suddenly, however, DIAND has produced a document outlining the process by which 15 to 25 year area-based Timber Harvesting Agreements (THAs) will be allocated in the Yukon. The intention is to assign 50,000 to 160,000 cubic meter per year THAs in previously unaccessed areas, *by this coming December*. The entire harvest ceiling for the Southern Yukon is currently 312,000 cubic meters. Just one new allocation of 160,000 cubic meters would increase the level of cut by more than half. The THA development document flies in the face of all previous government commitments — forest management plans do not yet exist anywhere in the Yukon, and land claims have not been settled in the southeast.

DIAND intends to get around the Forest Strategy and other commitments to long term planning by issuing 'short term

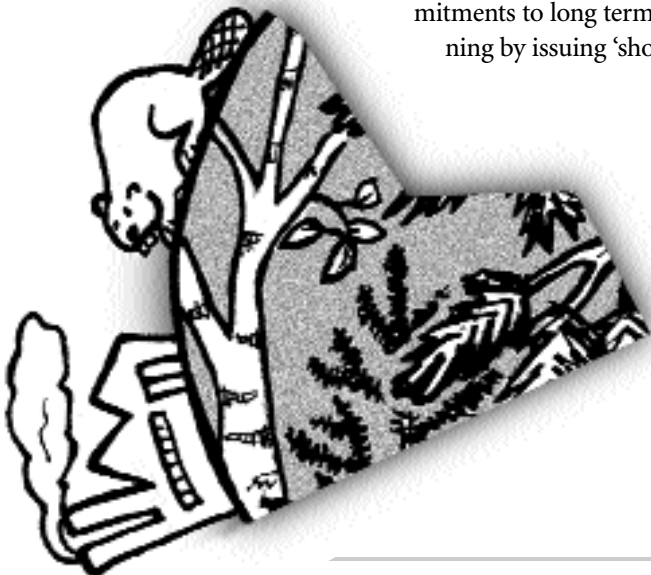
THAs.' These will later be extended to renewable 15 to 25 year tenures. DIAND is also considering having the companies do the forest management planning (or should we say *timber* management planning?) instead of communities.

The first THAs will likely be handed out in two contentious areas of the southeast — the Coal and Beaver watersheds. The Beaver has not been logged to date, and contains the last remaining contiguous stands of alluvial white spruce in the Yukon. The north Coal has also been free of logging so far. Both watersheds are potential protected areas under the Yukon Protected Areas Strategy.

The plans for new THAs are based on the 1998 Preliminary Timber Supply Analysis (TSA) for the Southern Yukon. A year of public review revealed weaknesses in the preliminary TSA, and it was slated for revision this spring. It was anticipated that the revised TSA would have withdrawn caribou habitat, green islands in burns, and a substantial proportion of the poorest timber sites. But due to Forest Resources staffing problems the preliminary version continues to be used.

The THA Development Process document is labeled a "Discussion Paper For Consultation," but DIAND clearly has little interest in what the public has to say. The document states that "(c)onsultation with the forest industry should occur prior to the desired public or stakeholder level." The THA Development Process document was released to First Nations only three days before it was given to forestry companies, and First Nations were given less than a month to respond. At least two First Nations have called for a halt to the process until forest management planning has been completed.

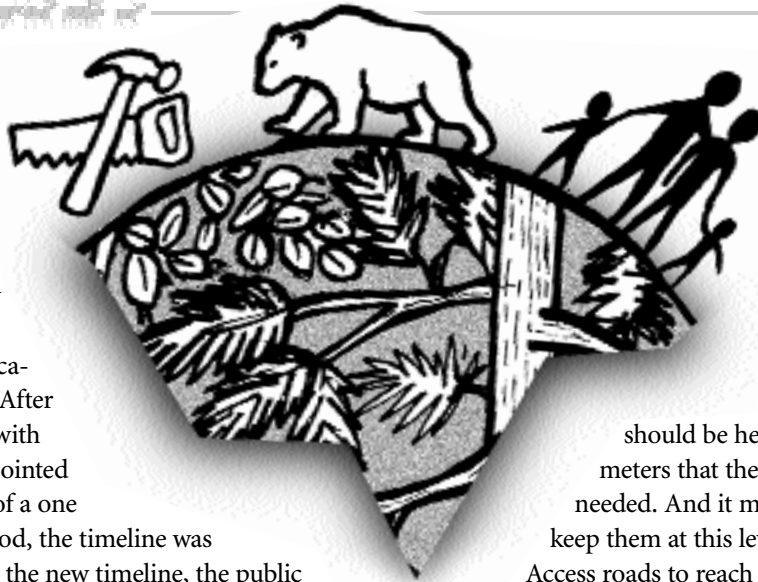
Another telling sign that DIAND is not interested in the Yukon public's opinion, is that the Yukon Forest Advisory Committee (YFAC) was not even informed that the document was being developed, let alone asked for input. YFAC is a committee made up of representatives from industry, First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, conservation groups, and Yukon College. It was formed a few years ago to advise DIAND on forest policy issues in the Yukon. YFAC has played a key role in discussions on major policy documents like the Yukon Forest Strategy, and the amendments to the Timber Regulations.



According to the original THA document timeline, DIAND did not intend to consult the public until the end of August, yet industry was to learn about the process for THA applications on September 7. After YCS and CPAWS met with DIAND officials and pointed out the ludicrousness of a one week public input period, the timeline was changed. According to the new timeline, the public was informed about the THA development document as of July 23, and input is supposed to be in by August 31. It is not clear, however, how the public is supposed to hear about the document, since DIAND has not made any efforts to publicize it. And DIAND couldn't have chosen a better time than the middle of summer if they wanted to make sure that nobody would be around to respond. September 7 is still the date that industry is to be informed as to what the application process will be. Companies will develop proposals in September and October, and successful proponents will be chosen by mid-December. Sometime after August "the appropriate level and timing of environmental review" will be determined. In other words, proponents will begin developing proposals before the environmental assessment process has been determined. Since environmental impact assessments will be carried out after the companies have spent money on inventory and planning, at best impacts will be mitigated. Excluding an entire area from forestry will be out of the question.

It is easy to see where the sudden rush to allocate THAs is coming from. South Yukon Forest Corp., the new Watson Lake lumber mill, has been complaining that it doesn't have a confirmed wood supply. South Yukon built its mill without any environmental assessment of the mill or its required timber volume, and no guaranteed wood supply. The mill owners say they need at least 100,000 cubic meters per year, and 200,000 if they are to install kiln and planing facilities. At 100,000 cubic meters 50 jobs would be produced, and double that at 200,000. If South Yukon doesn't get its wood, the owners threaten to leave town.

Clearly, the Watson Lake community can use the employment, but we need to look at creative solutions to the



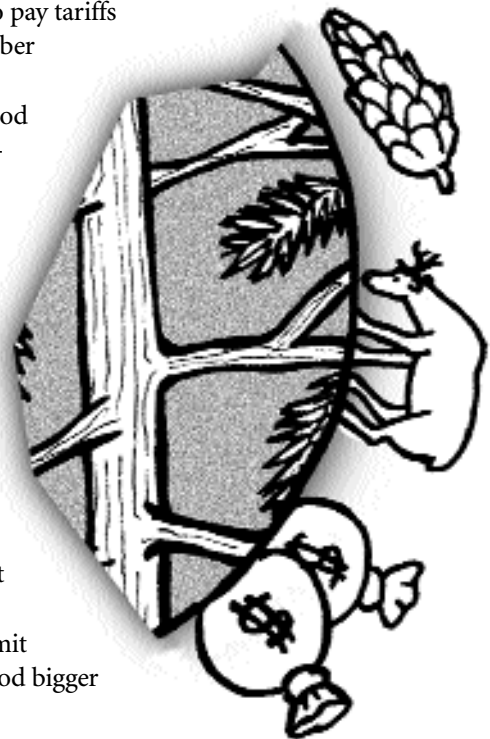
South Yukon wood supply problem. The two Forest Management Units closest to the mill can only supply at most 129,000 cubic meters per year without new access being built. In the short term, South Yukon

should be held to the 100,000 cubic meters that they originally said they needed. And it may even be possible to keep them at this level in the long term.

Access roads to reach new area-based tenures are typically subsidized in other jurisdictions — either directly, or through stumpage concessions, and the Yukon is likely to be no exception. Rather than subsidizing new access to contentious areas, the mill's value added facilities could be subsidized, so that South Yukon doesn't need higher volumes to create the cash flow to afford them.

But before we leap into anything, there are a number of questions that need to be answered about South Yukon. Some of its shareholders are Yukoners, but the identity of the real financial backers is a mystery. Where is the lumber they produce being sold? To a tongue and groove facility in Vanderhoof, as mill representatives have said, or is it going to the USA because so far the Yukon doesn't have to pay tariffs under the Softwood Lumber Agreement? If the mill is depending on the Softwood Lumber Agreement loophole to make a profit, its economic viability is far from stable, since the USA won't let that loophole stay open much longer!

What are the mill's requirements in terms of wood profile? Supposedly it is designed to process small diameter wood, but South Yukon's recent Commercial Timber Permit application requested wood bigger



than the utilization rate assumed in the Timber Supply Analysis. How economically viable is South Yukon? At least one logger didn't sell to the mill this year because it wasn't paying enough. Do Yukoners want to pay to open up new watersheds, through subsidized stumpage fees?

With large scale logging so new in the Yukon, the territory has an opportunity to create a flagship forest industry, complete with all of the components to which other jurisdictions pay lip service. BC is having difficulty implementing widespread ecological harvesting, community control and value-added manufacturing because over 85% of the wood supply is in the hands of large corporations producing commodity products like pulp and lumber. Pulp and lumber are notorious for producing the lowest ratio of jobs per wood volume. Commodity products are also the least stable source of forestry jobs, since they follow boom and bust price cycles.

Because long term tenures were given out in British Columbia before land use planning, protected areas, and land claims were settled, the British Columbia public has to pay forestry companies millions of dollars to regain control of its own land. The \$85 million dollars MacMillan Bloedel is demanding in compensation for timber licenses withdrawn for parks is an excellent example of the kind of pay-out that the Yukon could still avoid. Why is DIAND rushing the Yukon into exactly this kind of predicament? And why is the Yukon government allowing it to happen, just before responsibility for forestry is devolved to the territory?

karen baltgailis



Write letters to the following, demanding that forest management plans be finished, protected areas identified, and land claims settled, before new access is opened up for Timber Harvesting Agreements. Send copies of your letter to YCS.

Bob Nault
DIAND Minister
Terrasses de la Chaudiere, 21st floor
10 Wellington St.
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0H4

Terry Sewell
Regional Director General
DIAND
345 - 300 Main St.
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2B5

Eric Fairclough
YTG Minister of Renewable Resources
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2C6

Howard Madill
Regional Manager, Forest Resources
DIAND
345 - 300 Main St.
Whitehorse, YT
Y1A 2B5

Update:

Due to a flurry of letters demanding a slowdown to the THA process, DIAND has decided that the timeline in the discussion paper is unrealistic. At the time of printing, however, no decision had been made as to whether there will be a proper public input process, or what the new timeline will be.





Croucher Creek Juvenile Salmon Study

The Croucher Creek juvenile salmon study was conducted successfully this year and yielded new information about juvenile chinook migration patterns. This was a joint project with Kwanlin Dun and YCS, supported by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and funded by the Habitat and Restoration Salmon Enhancement Proponent Funding from DFO. The study involved trapping of salmon moving up or downstream from May to August. This project was a follow-up to the '93 survey of Croucher Creek, also by Sue Moodie, which indicated that newly hatched juvenile chinook salmon (jcs) were moving into the creek, overwintering, and leaving the following summer before a new generation of fry moved in.

Trapping in '93 was done with minnow traps at four stations along the length of Croucher, so movement of the fish was inferred by analyzing the data collected. Last fall, juvenile chinook salmon were tagged using a fluorescent polymer injection just under their skin. This year a fence trap was built at the mouth of the creek which caught any fish running downstream (smolts), and they were checked for tags, weighed, measured for length and replaced downstream of the fence. Other traps caught any fish moving upstream (fry), which were also weighed and measured, marked with a non-toxic dye, and replaced upstream of the fence.

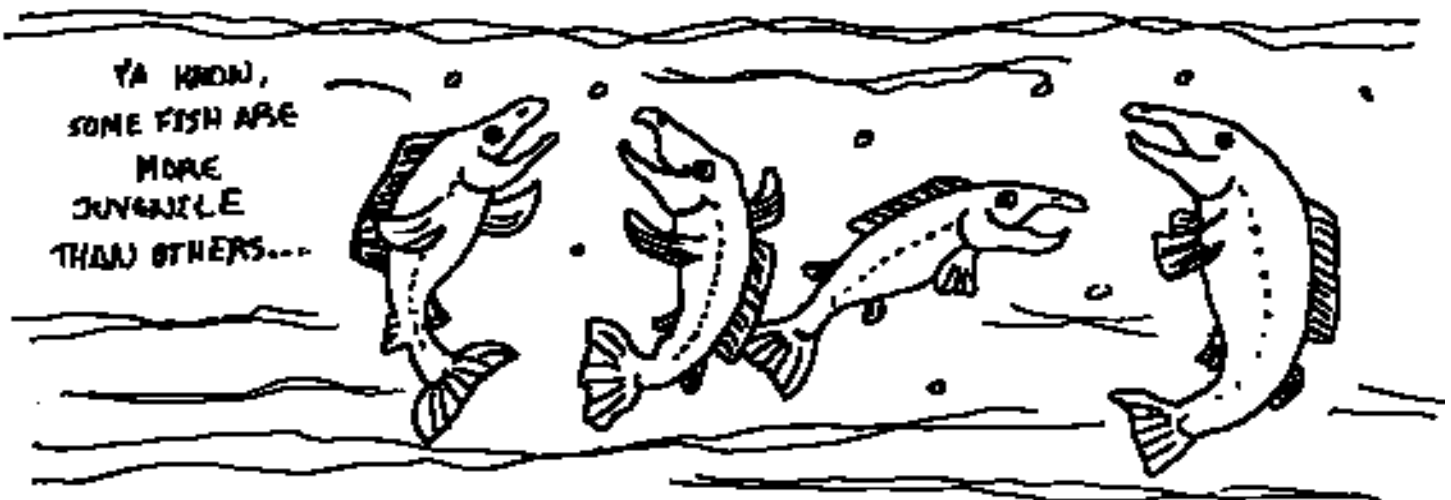
This year's late, cold spring created some interesting variations in the data collected, not to mention some interesting challenges in installing and sustaining a fence-type fish trap. Field staff Josh, Andrew and Sue arrived in May to set up, but found a half meter of ice on the creek

bottom, much of which had to be chipped through in order to set up the trap properly. Other challenges came with the melting of the bottom and soft banks of the creek, and the accompanying flush of extra water, silt and debris. Everyone involved with the project became very familiar with the joy and art of making of sandbags, and that particular facial expression which can only mean, 'I didn't know that keeping your arms in icewater could be so painful!'

Croucher Creek is significant because although it is a non-natal stream for salmon, newly hatched fry move up into the creek from the Yukon River in the summer and overwinter there. This phenomenon has not been documented in British Columbia streams, and is possibly only present in northern waters.

Mining regulations base the preservation value of streams largely on how important they are to salmon. Streams used for spawning by salmon are considered most worthy of preservation, followed by streams that are used by salmon for rearing habitat only, and streams containing fish but no salmon are considered more expendable. These regulations make no allowance for the possibility of streams which are used for overwintering habitat by salmon, such as Croucher Creek. This is a serious omission; in their first winter, juvenile chinook salmon are vulnerable to predation, disease, and stress brought on by lack of oxygen or food. Overwintering habitat is arguably just as crucial to the salmon life cycle as spawning habitat.

The '99 study of Croucher Creek was designed to provide more detailed information on jcs migration, and to add to what baseline data had been obtained in '93. The cold



spring we had this year was an extra variable, but actually helped test the hypothesis that there was a link between the onset of juvenile chinook migration and an increase in water temperature. In '93, water temperatures got up to 15 degrees by late May, and pretty much stayed there through August. The juvenile chinook movements in '93 were steady, with yearling salmon running down to the Yukon River until early June and followed neatly by fry starting to move upstream in mid-June. This year, however, water temperatures weren't in the 15 degree range until mid-June. This was maintained for a week, dropped again, and came back up for a week at the end of June. This year the movement of juvenile chinook again coincided with these periods of warmer temperatures. The downstream migration of smolts occurred in the two weeks in mid and late June when the water temperatures

were high. But because of this late start, their downstream movement overlapped with the upstream migration of the fry. The fry started coming upstream in late June and continued sporadically through July.

The study conducted in '93 established that juvenile chinook salmon overwinter in Croucher Creek. This was reaffirmed by the '99 study, and it also became clear that temperature is the environmental factor which triggers the migration which makes this possible. Also, by being able to perform a 'headcount' of jcs entering and leaving Croucher, we have a quantitative idea of how many fish are able to make use of such a habitat over winter. This information is a valuable addition to our knowledge of Yukon salmon life history, and will assist YCS in working to protect key areas which are vital to the health of our fish populations.

andrew smith

Out of the Forest and Into the... Frying Pan? Laboratory?

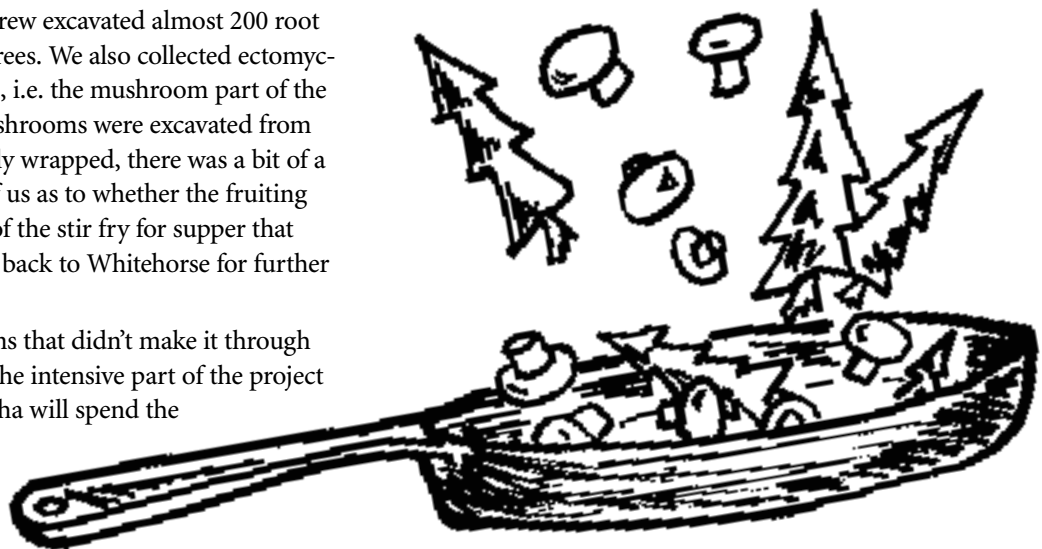
During the months of June and July, Usha Srinivasan led a group of six people (including four volunteers) into the forests around Watson Lake, Wolf Creek and Fox Lake in search of ectomycorrhizal fungi: mushrooms, that is. But not just any kind of mushrooms, we were in search of a specific type of mushroom that sprouts from tree roots at certain times of the year. In exchange for nutrients, these mushrooms help tree roots to absorb both water and nutrients from the soil. In the boreal forest, where water and nutrients often limit tree growth, mycorrhizal fungi play a vital role in helping the forest regenerate after it has been disturbed. Over a six day period, Usha's crew excavated almost 200 root samples from over 60 trees. We also collected ectomycorrhizal fruiting bodies, i.e. the mushroom part of the fungus. After these mushrooms were excavated from the ground and carefully wrapped, there was a bit of a dispute among some of us as to whether the fruiting bodies should be part of the stir fry for supper that evening or transported back to Whitehorse for further analysis.

For all those mushrooms that didn't make it through Mary's digestive tract, the intensive part of the project has now just begun. Usha will spend the next 2-3 months

in the laboratory preparing the samples for identification and documentation. The results from this study will be used to: 1) document the ectomycorrhizal fungi species that are present in the Yukon, and 2) provide a knowledge base upon which we can begin to build improved forest management practices.

sue olsen

Note: this project is supported by Northern Research Institute, DIAND-Forest Management, Environment Canada and Yukon College. For more information call Sue Olsen @ 667-3350 (ext. 208).





Energy Efficiency Conference

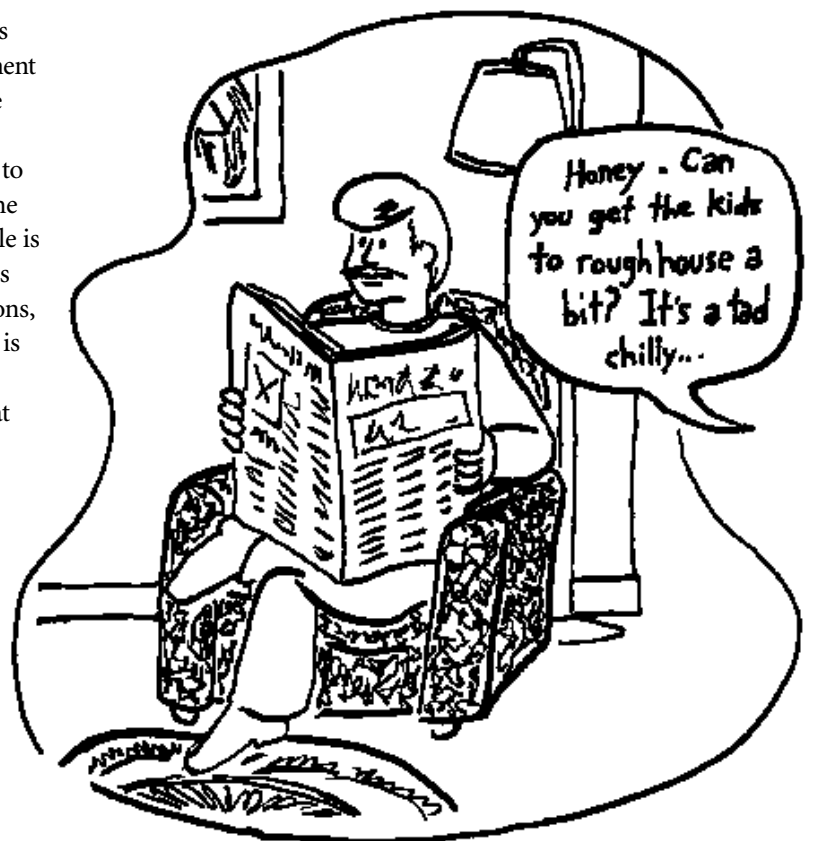
In May, I went to a national conference on energy efficiency. It was the first of its kind and was hosted by the newly formed Office of Energy Efficiency (part of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan)). This conference was interesting in a couple of ways: 1) I had never been in a room with that many suits before, and 2) there were a few really inspiring speakers.

Jack Layton, a councillor from the City of Toronto, spoke about Toronto's commitment to the 20% club. Toronto signed on to the 20% club (as did Whitehorse) several years ago. The 20% club was a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 20% below 1990 levels by 2010. Toronto set out to do that and hired staff to deal specifically with energy efficiency, coincidentally they also sold some land at the same time. The money from the sale of the land was set aside as a fund where the interest could be used for investments. The first thing they did was invest in themselves; streetlights were changed across the city and the energy savings quickly paid back the original investment. There have also been many retrofit projects for commercial buildings — saving much energy, the exact amount of energy savings varies depending on the quality of the original building, but most were more than 20%. The payback for the owners was 3-11 years simple returns, but in the case of apartment buildings there was an added bonus: their vacancy rate dropped to near zero as the apartments became more desirable places to live. This councillor's vision is now to retrofit the entire city, and it might just be possible. The moral of this councillor's story is that if a good example is set proving that energy efficiency makes good business sense then people will follow along for economic reasons, not just for the good of all of us. The interesting thing is that many are using their own money to do retrofits instead of using government money to do it, proof that people do believe in the savings.

Another really inspiring speaker was Amoury Lovins, director of the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI). Amoury is good at opening people's minds, I guess my view is/was pretty narrow too (a humbling thing to find out). He challenged many things that are common practice, for example the concept of diminishing returns for insulation. The RMI built their center high in the Rocky Mountains where it does get quite cold (he mentioned snow for much of the year and temps down in the -30s), but they built it

without a heating system! The assumption they made was that with enough insulation their returns increased again because of the savings incurred by not needing to purchase a heating system. The building is designed such that it is heated by passive solar gain and human occupant heat. Perhaps a bit radical to try here, but a good lesson in looking at all aspects of a building. The same concept goes for energy efficient apartment buildings where the systems (heating and cooling) can be made smaller in a more efficient building. Smaller systems weigh less so the building needn't be built to withstand the extra weight and is cheaper to build. Moral of this one? Keep an open mind and use a holistic approach taking nothing for granted, then there are no limits to energy efficiency and the associated minimized impacts upon global climate change and our immediate surroundings. The other moral? It does not cripple our economy to strive for energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gases by making costs out of reach, although if you are selling oil it does mean a loss of business that makes me feel downright sad.

craig olsen



Oil: Good to the Last Drop?

There we were, the bicyclist from Paris, and one from Whitehorse, stopped beside the highway, eating our bread and cheese...both marveling at the huge Winnebago-type things that roared by us.

And roared they did, the largest running on full diesel-bus-sized power packs, with dual rear axles and a chassis larger than my house. We munched on, but I couldn't help but think how I'd cooked a month's meals on less than a litre of kerosene fuel; a quantity of fuel that one of these road monsters would slurp just in warming up in the morning...

Not all of the motor vehicles were behemoths, some were smaller, rented, largely by Europeans, who called them

'recreational vehicles.' And they didn't seem to tow 9-seater, 4x4 trucks behind them to do the groceries with...

While the 'motor home' people were polite and often amused that I could haul 120kg of my gear and myself 900km powered by granola and noodles, I wondered how a society had farmed out some of its more prosperous retirees into, well, motorized exile. Were 'motor homes' not taxed as highly as houses?

As I scanned an abandoned gravel pit for bear sign, blew my whistle, and then set up my tent for the night, I couldn't help but wonder. How had we got to the point that people's retirement homes were motorized?





... I found myself thinking about the pressures on the Porcupine Caribou herd, and its chances of surviving the next decade with its core habitat untouched.

I couldn't help but think that cheap oil helped. Certainly the largest of the motor homes would be stalled by the oil prices of 1973 and 1976. Then I got to thinking about all the effort Western governments had put into keeping oil 'cheap.'

Efforts such as supporting shadowy 'coups': Like the one that put the Shah of Iran into power; and the choosing of sides in the Iran-Iraq war that killed as many as the First World War had, as it ground on in the 1980's, culminating in Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the Gulf War.

As I dried out the ex-futon bag that served as my plastic groundsheet under my tent, I couldn't help but think that oil was anything but 'cheap' — in all but financial terms. Most in the West didn't even know that a third of a million Iraqi soldiers had been carpet-bombed during the Gulf War, and that civilian casualties from that brutal regime would probably never be known.

As I clipped my tent fly on, I thought back to an Alaskan friend who'd told me that the yearly Permanent Fund cheque that she, and all Alaskans receive from the State as their share of oil revenues, was "to make up for all the wild lands we lost." This, I thought, was another cost of cheap oil.

As I unpacked my down bag, I found myself thinking about the pressures on the Porcupine Caribou herd, and its chances of surviving the next decade with its core habitat untouched.

To me it seemed, the Alaskan-style resource cheques wouldn't be enough to make up for the loss of wild lands. And I had heard that the State of Alaska was even reconsidering these, as the end of the Alaskan supply of conventional oil was discussed. Would the shrinking oil money the State had counted on be replaced by an income tax? A sales tax? A fuel tax? All these taxes, of course, were unthinkable for Alaskans.

As I blew life into my Thermarest, and hung up my socks to air, I wondered. Could we all get through the next decade of energy uncertainty, without breaking into the 'piggy bank' of wild lands that stretch across the north slope of Alaska, and into Canada?

Certainly the oil companies, like BP-ARCO have just started, this past winter, to plan to diversify out of their dependence on fossil fuels — to the shock of many in the 'soft energy' field of wind, solar and energy efficiency. But would it be fast enough?

As I shrugged into my ten-year old down bag, I wasn't sure. Could we get through another decade without another Middle East war over oil? I thought it unlikely. And next time, would the combatants use 'smart mines' to close the straight of Hormuz to tanker traffic, instead of the lackadaisical use of primitive, floating 'contact mines,' which despite their 1899 technology, had halted an astonishing number of tankers during the Iran-Iraq war?

Certainly my travels in Alaska had convinced me of the strategic dependency of the US on cheap oil, with Alaskan crude serving only as a small alternative to their massive dependency on oil from the Middle East. Pipeline crossings of rivers in Alaska had the security systems associated with nuclear weapons sites: microwave people-detecting radar, razor wire, closed-circuit TV cameras, the works.

As I looked at the map to plan out my next day's stops, luxuriating in the warmth of a dry tent and a warm sleeping bag, I had to wonder. Could the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and the Porcupine Caribou herd survive the next decade? As the 'motor homes' roared by in the distance, I wasn't so sure...

Our thirst for the stuff seemed so unquenchable...

paul davis



Faro Agreement: The Smell of Rotten Egg?

On August 11th, the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) announced that an agreement had been reached by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), YTG and Cominco regarding the assets of the Faro mine. The press release, looking at the situation through rose colored glasses, talked of the potential for over one billion dollars in jobs and economic benefits for the community. My instinct, after dealing with the Faro issue for fifteen years for YCS, is the view through dark colored glasses showing a further 10 year delay in dealing with the long term environment and reclamation issues. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been shown to creditors and will be reviewed by the Bankruptcy Court on September 20th.

The MOU is 28 pages long, so a full review is impossible, instead I'll present some of the 'highlights.'

- The long-term assets of the Faro properties, including claims and leases, the mill and water treatment plant as well as licenses and permits, will be sold to a new company "Trustco" for one dollar. This is a shell company set up by DIAND. The shares of Trustco will be held by a Trust and DIAND will name a Trustee to run the company.
- Trustco has no assets, its operations will be funded by DIAND (65%) and YTG (35% to a maximum of \$200,000.00 per year). It inherits all the environmental liability for the site and is responsible for meeting all the terms and conditions of all licenses, permits and environmental agreements.
- The federal and territorial governments give up their status as creditors, getting paid only if the mine reopens, Cominco pays off its startup and operating costs and the operation makes a profit.
- Cominco will look after care and maintenance of the site as well as having the option to mine if prices go up. If they mine, Trustco remains responsible for the environmental risk, Cominco gets the benefits, the taxpayer takes all the risk.

This deal is contrary to the principles of sustainable development and sets a number of dangerous precedents.

Documents such as the Whitehorse Mining Initiative, the federal government's sustainable development policies and the Government of Canada Minerals and Metals policy stress the importance of the polluter pays principle and that environmental reclamation must be considered a cost of doing business. The Whitehorse Mining Initiative talked about developing methods of having the mining industry contribute to the cost of reclaiming abandoned or orphan sites. The Faro agreement gives the full cost of reclamation to the taxpayer with no industry contribution. The government is setting up a shell company with no assets to hold all the environmental liability for the site, and accepting liability for *future* operations as well as past.

Another issue is the potential for conflict of interest. DIAND is both the assessor, regulator and enforcer of environmental standards and the funder of day to day operations and reclamation at the site. There could be a temptation to reduce costs by lowering standards.

This deal was negotiated behind closed doors. If we look at DIAND's track record in making deals for the Faro site, we have reason to be worried. The deals that allowed Curragh and Anvil Range to reopen the mine generated a total of 14 million dollars to take care of a 124 million dollar problem. Each time the property reopened the gap between funds available for reclamation and funds required got wider. This deal is supposed to provide more money for reclamation but the evidence to date is that it is likely to do the opposite. The MOU says only that the reclamation security trust which sets the amount of contributions toward reclamation *may* be renegotiated. This amount is woefully inadequate, in the past it has been based on what the company thought it could pay, not what was necessary to fund reclamation.

The jury is out, is this deal the goose that laid the golden egg or a turkey that laid a rotten egg?

bob vandijken

The Faro agreement

gives the full cost of

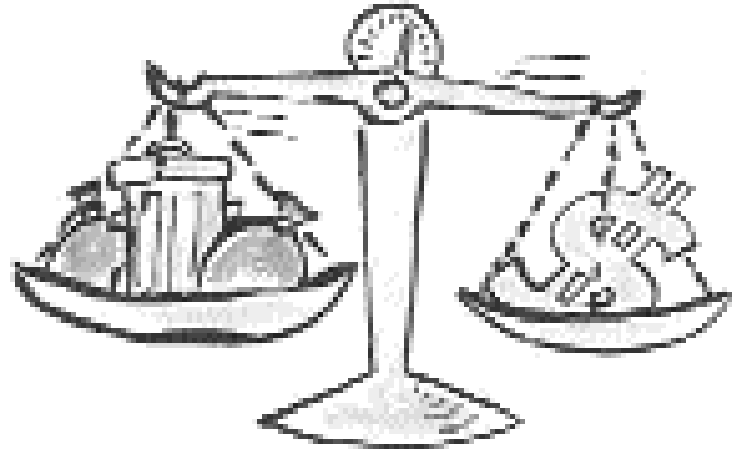
reclamation to the

taxpayer with no

industry contribution.



Tipping Fees at the Whitehorse Municipal Landfill



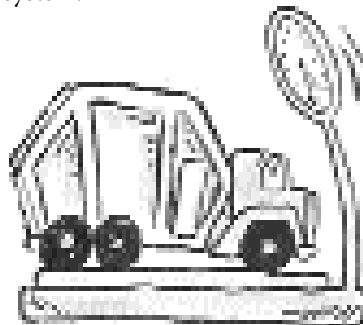
What should we do with our garbage? Should we burn it, bury it, send it out into space, dump it in the ocean, or just try to ignore it? These are questions that many Canadian and international municipalities have been struggling to answer for decades. One thing we've learned is that whatever method of disposal we choose has both financial and environmental costs associated with it.

In Whitehorse, we have chosen to bury solid waste in our municipal landfill. The environmental costs of land-filling waste are well known, and can be minimized by careful management and diversion programs. However, the financial costs of the landfill are a different story altogether.

In the past, waste disposal in the Whitehorse landfill has been funded through a percentage of property taxes. Since the disposal costs were hidden away as part of a tax, many Whitehorse residents found it easy to ignore them completely. If you can't see it, it's not there, right?

Well, disposing of waste in a landfill does cost money, and closing the landfill when it reaches capacity costs even more. To help make Whitehorse residents aware of the costs of waste disposal, and to extend the life of the landfill, the City of Whitehorse decided to move to a User-Pay waste disposal system.

A User-Pay system is exactly what it sounds like: a system paid for only by those who make use of it. The system of User-Pay that the City has adopted is a



partial one, where 50% of waste disposal is funded through property taxes, and 50% through tipping fees at the landfill. The tipping fees are weight-based, so landfill users are charged according to the amount of waste they generate.

There are many benefits to a User-Pay system. First of all, it gives the responsibility for waste disposal costs to the people generating the waste, rather than charging everyone the same rate. It also provides a financial incentive to reduce waste. In other municipalities, User-Pay systems have succeeded in reducing waste by up to 40%! The City hopes that the new tipping fees will help us reach the territorial and federal goal of 50% waste reduction, and extend the life of the landfill.

One of the main concerns about the User-Pay system is the possibility that illegal dumping will increase. In other municipalities that have implemented similar tipping fees, the incidences of illegal dumping did increase slightly, but only in the short term. Over a period of a few months, illegal dumping subsided to normal levels, and in some cases was actually reduced after User-Pay was initiated. In Whitehorse, the Community Clean-Up program has been expanded to help clean up illegal dump sites. Fines and enforcement have been also been increased to discourage illegal dumping.

By implementing a User-Pay system, the City of Whitehorse hopes to recover the costs of waste disposal, and reduce the amount of waste entering the landfill by encouraging recycling, reuse and composting programs. If you would like more information on how to reduce the waste that you generate, or if you have any questions about the new User-Pay system, please contact the City's Environmental Coordinator at 668-8312.

kirsten shewfelt

Raven Recycling Review

The Raven Recycling Society began back in 1989 as The Recycling Centre of the Yukon Conservation Society. In 1992 the recycling centre became a non-profit organization with the title of the Raven Recycling Society.

Located on the corner of Industrial and Galena Roads in the downtown industrial area, the Society has 12 full time staff members with another 5 casual and part-time workers. These numbers fluctuate depending on the season (summers being much busier than the winter).

The Society accepts a wide variety of items for recycling or safe disposal. The chart below is a four year summary of major items that the Society has shipped Outside or processed locally.

Breakdown of Commodities Processed (figures in tonnes)

	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Aluminium	99	155	117	93
Plastic	26	38	25	58
Office Paper	79	73	91	94
Cardboard	199	216	286	225
Glass	385	478	582	545
Newsprint	33	42	72	136
Magazines	0	7	0	57
Tin	24	28	26	17
Batteries	91	108	82	79
Pallets	0	15	20	4
Tetrapaks	–	–	–	2
Compost – Pickup	–	20	50	100
Compost – Dropoff	–	–	325	325
Refillable Beer Bottles	–	–	600	646
Total	936	1180	2276	2381

Below is a synopsis of recent and ongoing issues affecting the Society.

Selling Recycled Paper

The Raven Recycling Society PaperSave program, whereby on-site paper pickup is provided for a small fee, manages to divert over 80 tons of paper from being land-filled every year. This diversion, however, is only the beginning of the recycling process. The Society provides waste paper for recycling, but it also needs to support the recycling industry by creating a demand for recycled products.

To this end, the Society has created a paper cooperative. The cooperative supplies a high quality, 100% post-consumer recycled paper designed for use in high-speed copiers, laser and inkjet printers, offset printers and plain paper faxes. The cooperative enables a premium paper to be offered in Whitehorse at a price comparable to retail papers with a 20-30% recycled content.

As a non-profit organization, the Raven Recycling Society is not undertaking this as a business venture, but rather facilitating the process for local businesses. If anyone is interested in becoming a part of the paper cooperative or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the PaperSave coordinator at 667-7269.

Compost for Sale

It has been another successful year for the Society's compost operations. These are a continuation and an expansion of the Recycle Organics Together Society (R.O.T.S.) operation. Located at the City of Whitehorse landfill, the revenue from compost sales offsets the cost of the various programs associated in collecting and producing it.

Private Competition

A sure sign that a non-profit organization has become a success is when a private company starts up business in exactly the same area of operations. This has happened in Whitehorse with the Raven Recycling Society now competing with P & M Recycling for the public's refundables and recyclables.

The Raven Recycling Society likes to think it is committed to making a difference, not a buck, but it recognizes that waste reduction has become a business. As in any business field, a little competition is a healthy thing. That being said, there are fundamental differences between private and non-profit operations.

The Raven Recycling Society does make some money on certain recyclable commodities — for example, aluminum. This 'profit' is spent on improving existing operations or, as what is known in the accounting arena, on 'sure-fire money losers.' This includes magazines, newsprint, tin, HDPE and coloured plastics, tetrapaks and glass.

The Society recognizes that as long as waste reduction and recycling occurs it doesn't really matter who does it. However, Raven feels that a non-profit can better address the underlying causes of recycling — that is over-consumption and irresponsible waste practices.

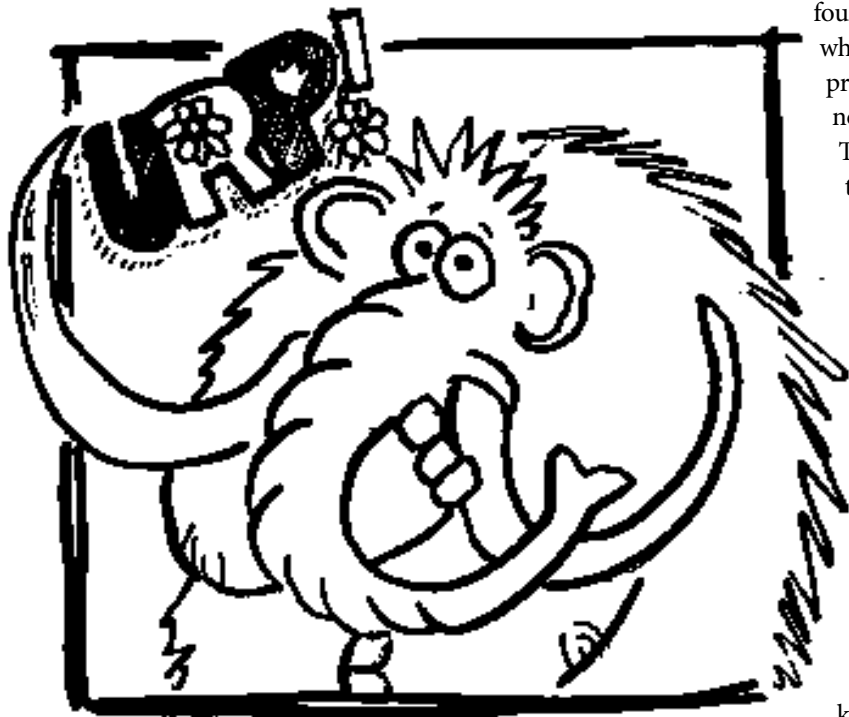
lewis rifkind



Who Knew?

Wow, it's almost the end of summer and the trail guiding program feels like it just began. What a great program to be a part of: hiking with people around the trails of the area, sharing and learning facts and knowledge. Right from the very beginning of the summer our group of five (five not seven) has been on an enthusiastic quest to 'learn more stuff.'

Training for a summer of interpretation was amazing, from discussions on the top of the clay cliffs and tours of Berengia, to meeting with local experts on such topics as fisheries, archaeology, geomorphology and local environmental issues. It was a week jam packed with information absorbing. Tanis must have bent over backwards to get all the activities organized!



Even the days of preparation for the hikes were fun. We planned themes for the hikes and talked about the possibility of costumes, Hannah even came dressed in her hand-crafted beaver costume one morning (chewing on a poplar branch of course).

How about getting to the point of the matter; besides having fun, how do the trail guides spend their summers? For the majority of the summer our days were filled with a balance of the predictable and unexpected. There is so

much to talk about on our hikes from plate tectonics to alternative energy, ancient native stories to the gold rush. The challenge comes in figuring out a way to include a little (or a lot) of everything when hiking through beautiful wildflowers, along river trails, or even over the Robert Service bridge. A question that I often think about from training is how do we create a connection with the world around us? Is there an easy method of bringing in the values of YCS without coming across as preaching? All of a sudden our job seems a bit more difficult and maybe even a little intimidating.

First it is most important to create a primary purpose, a basic goal for all the hikes in order to get people interested in learning about the outside world. Each of us has found a niche or a topic that we tend to gravitate toward, which seems to be the most effective method of interpretation — sharing your passions with people. There's no shortage of passion around here and it's contagious! That is the big part of our job, but hardly the most time consuming or physically exhausting. There is huge potential for sharing and learning when you are spending a couple of hours in nature. This is also where our job becomes dynamic, who knows what 'interpretive moments' will pop up; only this morning we found a HUGE black and orange beetle checking out a dead bird (recyclers and decomposers here we come!).

The amount we have learned this summer is amazing. There is a phrase flying around amongst the Trail Guides: "Who knew?" Who knew that seeds found in the stomach of a 15,000 year old mammoth were germinated and grew into yarrow and lupine? Who knew that Miles Canyon used to be a waterfall before the river cut into the rock? Who knew that squirrels are the only mammal to be able to climb straight down a tree without getting a head rush? Who knew? That question brings in possibility, the best part of our job — the daily learning. If you share with people, they will share with you. We could create an interpretive program on the amount that we've learned from visitors alone!

As an interpreter we get to share our passions and interests and be in constant learning mode, what a rewarding job!

shereen taylor

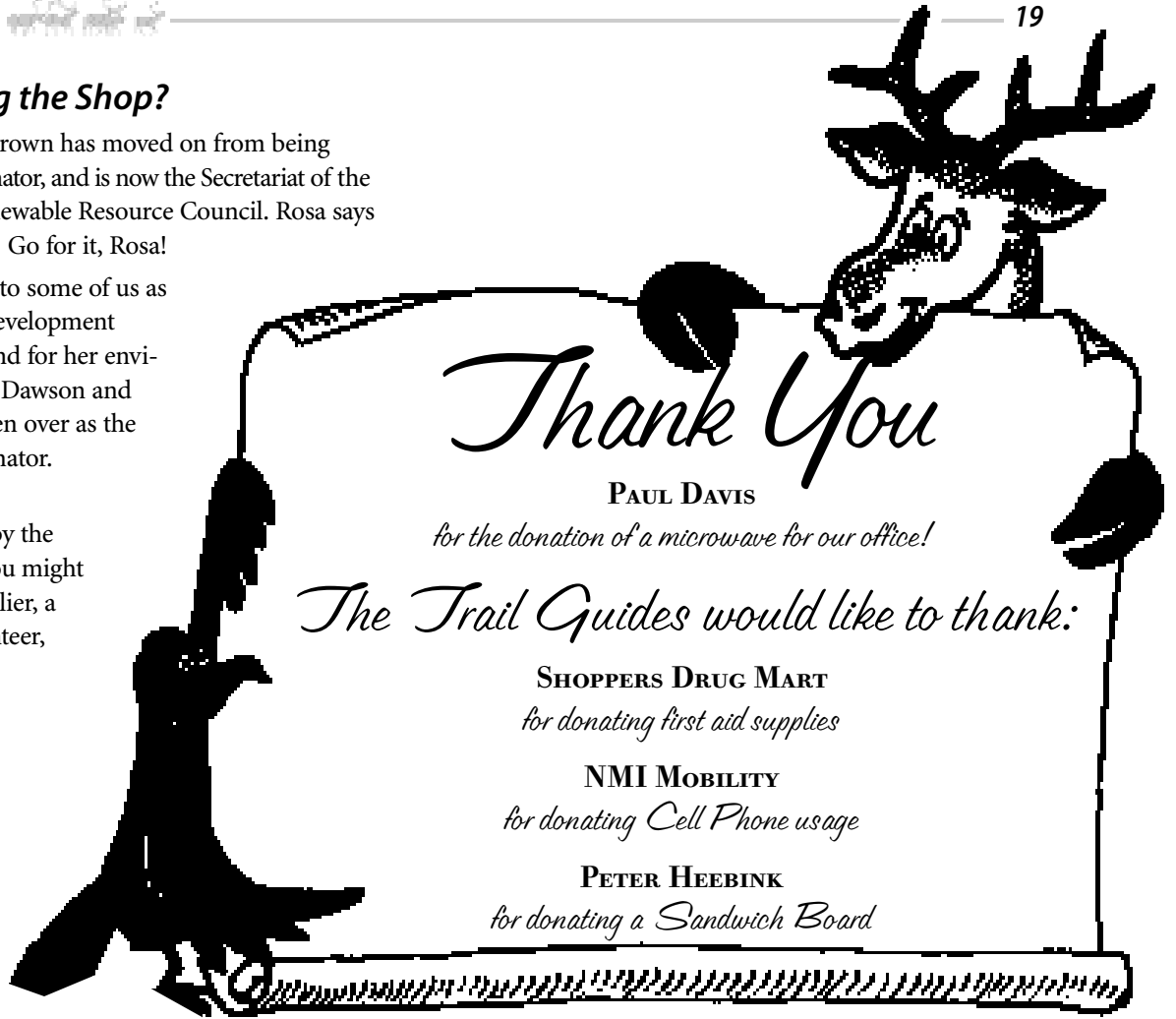


Who's Running the Shop?

The amazing Rosa Brown has moved on from being YCS's Office Coordinator, and is now the Secretariat of the Vuntut Gwichin Renewable Resource Council. Rosa says Old Crow is 'restful'! Go for it, Rosa!

Lorill Crees, known to some of us as part of the Yukon Development Education Centre, and for her environmental efforts in Dawson and Whitehorse, has taken over as the YCS's Office Coordinator. Welcome Lorill!

And if you popped by the YCS office in July, you might have met Lisa Chevalier, a dedicated YCS volunteer, who also filled in as Office Coordinator. Thanks Lisa!



YES! I want to help protect the Yukon's environment and support YCS!

I'd like to make a tax deductible gift!

- \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 \$ Other _____

Sign me up as a 1999 member (or renew my current membership).

Membership includes getting *Walk Softly* newsletter four times a year. Memberships run January to December.

- \$10 student \$15 individual \$25 family
 \$25 subscriber (receive *Walk Softly* without membership rights)

new!

- I am donating \$100 or more so I get a free YCS membership for the year!
 I am donating \$1000 or more so I get a YCS lifetime membership!

PAYMENT METHOD: Total \$ _____

- Cheque enclosed (payable to Yukon Conservation Society)
 I'd rather charge my VISA:

VISA # _____ Expiry date ____/____

Signature for VISA: _____

NAME(S) _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTAL CODE _____ PHONE _____

- Yes, add me to the YCS members email list (and get no more than two informative emails a month on Yukon issues or YCS activities).

EMAIL _____

Mail your form to Yukon Conservation Society,
Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3T3

Advocacy → Research → Environmental Education → Planning → Consultation

Did you know?

...



A computer running all the time draws as much power as a full-sized fridge. Three-quarters of that is the monitor. Set your computer monitor to shut down automatically or turn it off when not in use.



Your car likely puts out more than double its own weight in carbon dioxide (a powerful greenhouse gas) every year.



Using legal size paper is very wasteful: when the mill cuts large sheets of paper there is less waste with 8 1/2 x 11 (letter) than 8 1/2 x 14 (legal) size. Some printing companies are phasing out 8 1/2 x 14 size paper.

Conservation → Sustainable Communities → Grassroots → Non-profit → Volunteers

Yukon Conservation Society

Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3T3

