

Walk Softly

Newsletter of the Yukon
Conservation Society
May 1996



INSIDE: Kudz Ze Kayah ♦ Climate Change ♦ Habitat Protection ♦ Horse Logging



Caribou Recovery Needs Habitat Protection Not Wolf Kills

In mid April, the government released another year of data on the wolf kill program. This past year, the fourth winter of the program, a total of 22 wolves were killed in the Aishihik area, bringing the total number of wolves killed as part of this program to 159.

Although the YCS continues to support the community developed Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan which allows for the consideration of predator control programs, we believe the Yukon government has ignored many of the important elements in the Plan in its Aishihik program and, therefore, we oppose the continuation of the wolf kill part of the caribou recovery program.

One of the most critical issues for YCS is the refusal of the government to do anything to protect the habitat of the caribou or moose in the area. Section 7.2 of the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan states that "key ungulate habitat areas should be identified and given full protection from development." To date there has been no territorial protection of the Aishihik caribou habitat or that of most other ungulates.

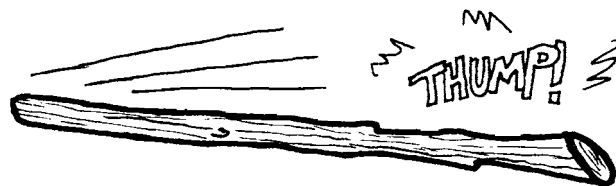
In fact, in 1994, the Yukon government condoned mining exploration activities in the heart of the wolf kill area. They also refused to lobby the federal government to withdraw the area from further mineral staking saying that they would only look at taking steps to protect the habitat if it turned out that the rest of the program wasn't working.

Although Mickey Fisher, Minister for Renewable Resources and Economic Development, is always quick to explain that the territorial government is not responsible for regulating mineral staking or mining activities, what he usually fails to point out is that they do have the responsibility and the jurisdiction to protect wildlife and their habitat. The Yukon government has consistently failed to exercise that responsibility.

This inaction is also a significant issue in the Finlayson and Wolverine Lakes area near Ross River and Watson Lake. Between 1983 and 1989, the Yukon government conducted another expensive and

controversial wolf kill program to help boost the numbers of the Finlayson caribou herd yet nothing was done to protect any of the habitat of this herd. Without protection of its critical habitat, maybe a herd can survive for a few terms of office but how will they do for a few generations?

And now, in the last year, there has been a huge mineral staking rush in the Finlayson herd's area, a tremendous amount of exploration activity has taken place and one company, Cominco, is already into the project development stage. Now, the territorial government's ability to mitigate the impacts of these activities is limited to working with the companies and to recommending that the federal government attach terms and conditions to the water licenses which would help protect wildlife. They are in a reactive, rather than a proactive position. If there was a similar mineral discovery made tomorrow in the Aishihik area, the Yukon government would be no better equipped to deal with the alienation and disruption of critical habitat or the impact of exploration and development activities on the Aishihik caribou or moose.



Write to:

Mickey Fisher
Minister of Renewable Resources
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 2C6



For years hunters have made sacrifices and willingly stopped hunting in the area, and wolves have been killed in order to boost the numbers of caribou and moose as quickly as possible. It is unacceptable that nothing has been done to prevent mining companies from operating in some of the most critical areas of both the Aishihik and Finlayson caribou herds.

Despite what the Minister of Renewable Resources (and Economic Development) says, the territorial government can do something about mining. In any area where there is a caribou recovery program, the territorial government can and must aggressively lobby the federal government to withdraw critical areas from further

mineral staking. More importantly, however, it can at minimum proclaim the 1992 amendments to the Wildlife Act, which have already been passed by the Legislative Assembly (but were not signed by the Commissioner after the last election). These amendments would immediately strengthen the Yukon government's ability to establish Special Habitat Protection Areas and provide it with the ability to draft regulations to control the impacts of resource development on wildlife and their habitat.

jennifer ellis

Cherry-picking of Wolf Management Plan

In addition to the lack of habitat protection, the government's announcement of the wolf kill results for this year raises some other concerns for YCS:

- The Yukon government noted that moose calf survival rates were higher now than at the outset of the program, going from 10 to 17 percent over the three years. However, the Plan states that if the calf survival rate of the target ungulate species in the area has not at least doubled after two years of a predator control program, it should be suspended and re-evaluated. Although the government has target numbers for how many moose they want to see in the area, they claim that moose are not a target species in this particular program so they can ignore this provision of the plan.

Additionally, moose in the Big Salmon and Mayo areas, regions with no wolf control, experienced very similar changes in survival rates raising the possibility that other factors, such as weather conditions, may have more to do with moose calf survival than the wolf control program.

- In the last two years the government has killed fewer wolves in snares than other animals (31 other animals compared to 27 wolves). Although the total number of coyotes, wolverines, moose, bison and lynx killed outnumbered wolves, the government seems to consider the use of snares a success.

They have labeled the snaring of these other animals as 'incidental snaring' which is reminiscent of the use of 'collateral damage' in the Gulf War.

The Yukon government believes that the use of snaring falls within the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan. It calls for consideration of traditional methods of wolf control involving increased "trapping and hunting efforts or killing pups at den sites." Whether or not snaring is one of these methods, it is something that has been tried and should be considered a failure. The plan was never intended to allow for other animals to be killed as part of a predator control program.

- The government announced it will be extending its sterilization of wolves in the Aishihik area. The Plan provides for the use of non-lethal methods such as sterilization providing they are shown to be effective. While the YCS supports the Plan, and most of us would prefer to see a wolf sterilized rather than killed, sterilization is still a very intrusive intervention in an ecosystem and a form of crisis management. We do not want sterilization to be considered a regular tool available for predator management. The continued use of "fertility control" in the Yukon clearly needs further discussion and monitoring.



Clip Clipping Through The Forest

I worked in Nova Scotia last year with a team of Belgians named Bob and Ted—incredibly huge, good natured workhorses. The other apprentices and I spent our days in the forest learning the principles of ecoforestry, learning how to communicate with the horses, selecting slow growing trees, falling and limbing them and skidding them to brows (a pile of logs) nearby. The farm owns a portable bandsaw mill, which is hauled from brow to brow in the forest, and the wood is milled on site. In the time that I worked there I learned to combine the notions of work and pleasure: there became no separation between the two.

Lately, horse logging has been gaining popularity as a way to earn a living by working in the forest in a sustainable way. Combined with the principles of ecoforestry, it is a very low-impact way to use the forest. The farm I worked on in Nova Scotia is a fine example of this: it has been logged every year since the Wentzell family settled there 150 years ago, and the 160 acre woodlot has some of the biggest, healthiest old growth hemlock, pine, spruce and hardwoods anywhere in the province.

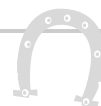
Unlike large-scale operations that require expensive equipment such as fellerbunchers and major road construction, horse logging has very low overhead. All you need is a couple of good horses, harness, chains, wagon, saw, hay and oats. With the massive debts incurred from buying a fellerbuncher, more and more trees are cut down just to pay for the thing. Logging with horses goes at a much slower pace, but it can still be profitable, especially if you measure the value of how you spend your time.

The basic principle of ecoforestry, which works very well combined with horse logging, is don't get greedy, i.e. take what you need but leave a healthy forest for future generations. The boreal forest is a very fragile ecosystem. We don't yet know all of the impacts we have on it and so we must tread very lightly. Horses can skid logs on a very narrow trail, and when working on frozen ground, there is no problem with soil disturbance or compaction. Every horse logger has unique tools and techniques for hauling wood. In Nova Scotia there is an old tradition of selection logging with horses or oxen. In B.C., I've noticed that the tradition is not as deep-rooted, and horse-loggers have been very inventive; making yarding wagons with motorcycle tires and such.

I spent some time with the Cariboo Horse Loggers in the Quesnel–Williams Lake area of B.C. Unlike Nova Scotia, these loggers make their living harvesting wood mainly on crown land, instead of private woodlots. Competition for Tree Farming Licences is heavy, with the odds stacked in favour of the large-scale, heavily-mechanized operators. The horse loggers are finding their niche, however, in sensitive areas, such as fire-killed stands. Heavy machinery would damage the new seedlings coming up under the surviving old growth. Horse loggers also find work in stands that are going through a “rotation”, for example a forest that was logged for spruce in the '60's might now have a mature stand of pine which can be harvested to make room for the young spruce underneath. These are not necessarily ideal ecoforestry principles in action, but it is a step toward making selection logging with horses more widespread and recognized as a sustainable option to mass clearcutting.

Currently in the Yukon, I know of only one horse-logger, but the practice has great potential here. For example, while the fellerbuncher operators in the area have been waiting for their permits all winter, the horse logger I know has been logging steadily, with a long-term permit. The permit is for a huge area which is in a sensitive elk habitat zone, a mix of fire-kill and green timber. The fire-kill wood he sells for firewood, and for the green timber he plans to have a portable mill on site. He is not getting rich quick, but he makes enough money to feed his family and his horses, and he spends his days doing what he loves.

I suggest that anyone interested in practicing sustainable forestry, who likes and knows horses should check out what is available for a horse logger up here. Get yourself some good, hardy northern horses, and do what you love. If you don't know much about working with horses or falling trees and you want to learn, the Cariboo Horse Loggers Association does take apprentices sometimes, as does Windhorse Farm in Nova Scotia. For more information, contact Kim at YCS.





Editorial

Walk Softly

is published by the Yukon Conservation Society and is available free of charge to members of the Society. Memberships and information about the Society can be obtained by phoning the YCS at (403) 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.

We welcome newsletter submissions and letters to the editor.

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Last spring, when the YCS was applying for funding to do an analysis of the proposed amendments to the mining legislation and regulations, the funder asked us how the project fit into our long term plan on mining. What did we want to do about mining in the long haul and what step was this in our plan? Good questions, but difficult to answer.

Planning ahead is one of the more difficult tasks any volunteer group faces. So often YCS finds itself reacting to the actions of others: a mining company's development proposal; a government's draft legislation or consultation on policy; the utilities' new rate or capital project proposals. Although all of these activities are important for an environmental group to tackle, they can deflect our attentions away from setting out and acting on our own priorities.

Increasingly, our actions are also determined by the availability of funding. More and more, government funding programs in particular look for measurable results, something they can attach their logo to. The benefits of educational projects or activities designed to address systemic barriers to environmental protection are less tangible and, therefore, a lower priority for many funding agencies.

One funder, however, supportive of YCS's agenda is the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. In addition to supporting the Building Sustainable Communities project, this foundation has also helped us send people to an educational workshop on mining and the environment, contributed to the Bonnet Plume and Killermun Lake lawsuits and financed the analysis of the mining legislation.

More recently, they have provided funding to help YCS to develop a strategic plan. The changes in our funding base, the implementation of land claims and self-government agreements, the arrival of new Yukon environmental groups and the many, many ongoing issues demanding our attention, provide us with strong incentive to take the time to look at how we've been doing, where we want to be going, and how we're going to get there. The opportunity to explore, with skilled guidance, what our board, volunteers and staff envision YCS doing in the next 3-5 years and to create a functional long term plan which reflect these priorities is an exciting one. The discussions will no doubt be lively, the ideas no doubt diverse. But the outcome, a renewed vision of just what it is we are here for, will no doubt be energizing and rewarding.

jennifer ellis



Another Perspective on Environments

There are probably as many perspectives of environments as there are human beings—a pretty ominous thought when thinking of how many people presently occupy a space on our earth. To simplify our understanding of our world we associate with a number of cultural institutions by birth and by choice. These associations reflect our social and cultural self, and how we make sense of the world we share.

I for example, make sense of the world from an urban, eurocentric, middle-age, middle-class, female perspective. My perspective of the world differs by virtue of age, gender, geography, social background and economic status. In fact, my view of the world may not be common even with those whom I share similar attributes. Therefore, I can expect my perspective of environments to differ, and quite dramatically at times.

When making decisions about environments and use of natural resources, many perspectives are discussed, but many more are not considered. I often feel the female voice, a perspective that reflects the female social relation to environments, is not considered when decisions are made regarding the use or non-use of our environments.

There are many descriptions of the female voice. One characteristic of this perspective is an expectation of keeping harmony and existing with all living and non-living organisms—a perspective not favoured by those accustomed to domination and control of environments. It is a voice that seeks the elimination of power and privilege over trees, water, animals and other elements of our earth. It is one that interconnects earth cycles and human beings, rather than separating humans from life systems. Through understanding the human consideration of environments we begin to gain an understanding of the female perspective.

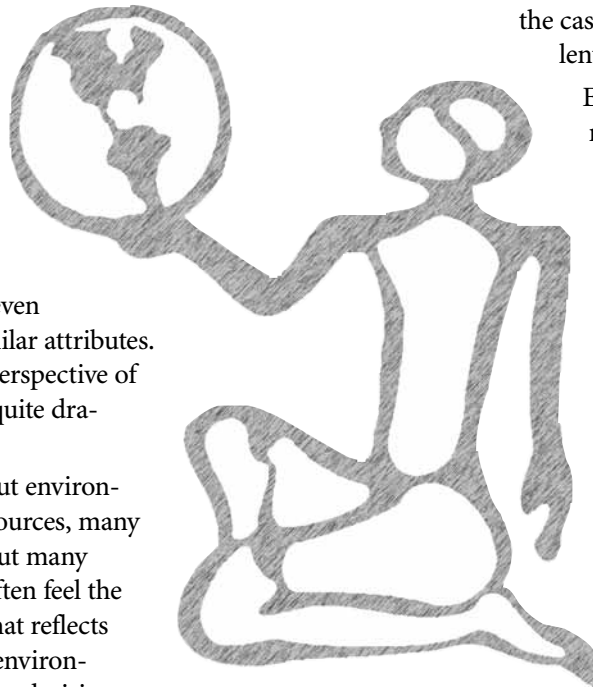
The female social relation to environments is a history of intimate interconnections with life that does appropriate resources, but cooperates with the earth's cycles. This organic partnership does not constitute a relationship of dominance or property relation, but reflects a working relationship of sustaining life. A biological aspect of this relation is the reproduction of life. In conceiving life, the female body becomes a life sustaining environment in which life flourishes. A social aspect is the sustenance of life and the production of life, as in the case of agricultural practices, prevalent especially in developing regions.

Environmental practices that have resulted in environmental degradation, resource depletion and prohibition of access to resources are acts of power that have minimized the female social relations to environments. These acts of dominations have grossly interrupted harmonious interactions, breaking organic connections that include human life as part of earth's cycles. This economic and social statement of controlling environments subordinates the female social relations to environments.

Inadvertently, it minimizes the social and biological importance of female in society. Conserving human life and satisfying basic needs, is then undervalued and becomes extremely difficult.

To include the female voice, is not only an inclusion of another perspective but an insight into the many power relations that make up society. It is a perspective that enables us to paint a more complete picture of human consideration of environments, and enhances our understanding of gender relations, our social history and our social-cultural self.

jeanne burke





Household Compost Pickup

In April the City of Whitehorse began a pilot project of collecting household compostables. The project recognizes that not everyone can or wants to compost at home and that municipalities should offer an alternative. Two hundred and fifty households, who already receive household garbage pickup, can volunteer to be involved. Prior to joining the program, representatives from each household will go to an orienteer-

ing seminar about composting and also receive information on recycling.

Instead of the regular weekly garbage pickup, household solid waste will be collected one week and compostables the next. The cycle then repeats. For the purposes of this project, compostables are defined as fruit and vegetable waste and non-recyclable paper products. The solid waste will go to the City landfill, but the compostables will be diverted to the Recycle Organics Together Society (ROTS) site adjacent to the City landfill for composting. Once composted it will be tested for quality and then sold.

The amounts of both garbage and compost collected will be weighed to look at diversion ratios. Based on a 1994 City of Whitehorse garbage survey it should be possible to achieve a 50/50 split between solid waste and compostables. The City is emphasizing this as a feasibility study but communities in southern Canada have achieved up to 70% diversion of solid waste from entering the landfill, greatly reducing landfill costs.

lewis rifkind

Yukon Conservation Society's

NATURE APPRECIATION SERIES

May & June 1996

Once again YSC is offering Nature Appreciation outings. The schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, May 22 BIRD WALK!! Lee Kubica will walk us along lower McIntyre Creek to view the birds of this rich and varied habitat. Bring your binoculars! Meet at Porter Creek Super A. *7pm - 9pm*

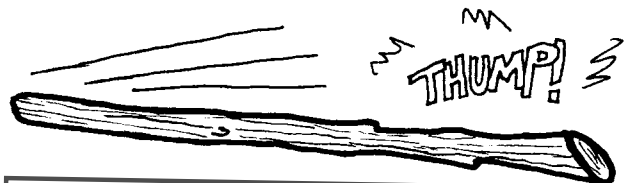


Sunday, June 2 ORIGINS OF WHITEHORSE LANDSCAPES!! Soil scientist, Scott Smith, examines how local geological landforms effect soil and plant communities. Be prepared for a moderate hike. Meet at YCS. *1pm - 4pm*



Saturday, June 8 FROG HABITS AND HABITAT!! Wade the shoreline of Paddy's Pond with biologist Randy Lamb as he looks and listens for these rare inhabitants of the Yukon. Bring rubber boots. Meet at Trailhead, the corner of Hillcrest and Summit Drive. *2pm - 4pm*

For more information call YCS at 668-5678 or come to the YCS office at 302 Hawkins Street.



Help determine the future of household compostables collection in Whitehorse. Volunteer to be part of this pilot project. For further information contact the City of Whitehorse Environmental Coordinator, Sabine Schwieger, at 668-8312.

Even if you aren't part of the pilot project you can be composting! Check out the ROTs pamphlets available at YCS: *Building a Home Composter*, *Worm Composting*, and *Backyard Composting*.



Kudz Ze Kayah

Following an intense and promising summer of mineral exploration in 1995, Cominco has submitted an Initial Environmental Evaluation for the proposed development of Kudz Ze Kayah copper, lead and zinc mine at the ABM deposit south of Ross River. This article highlights some of the major caribou concerns pertaining to this proposed development.

The Kudz Ze Kayah site is in the centre of the Finlayson Caribou Herd range. The most common map presents 12 years of caribou summer, rutting and winter range data contiguously as a single area on a single figure. Cominco has used these maps to compare the area of the entire Finlayson Caribou Herd range with that of the area physically disturbed by the proposed mine site. Such a comparison is the basis for Cominco's contention that the Kudz Ze Kayah impacts a total of 210 ha of potential caribou and moose habitat and that this is less than 0.2% of the total summer habitat of the herd. This implies that the total possible summer habitat range is used every year and with equal intensity and that therefore the project area directly impacts a minute percentage of the herd's total habitat. In fact, the caribou herd selects different, localized ranges each year, based on changing environmental and biological conditions. The project area may encompass a large percentage of the herd's range one year, and very little of it the next.

Similarly, Cominco states that since most calving activity occurs outside of the project area the project will have little impact on habitats that are critical to caribou reproductive activities. It is true that the project area is not known to comprise habitat that is highly used by caribou during reproductive activity. Whether or not the project will impact habitats that are critical to caribou reproductive activities is 1) unknown and 2) a separate issue.

Temporary access roads are often the first major intrusion into remote sites. One of the most serious results of road-building (including power rights of way) into wilderness areas is that wildlife populations become easily accessible to hunters who travel by off-road vehicles. There are numerous examples throughout the Yukon of wildlife populations that have been devastated by hunters after roads were built into areas previously inaccessible by motorized means of transport and therefore lacking in hunting regulations (eg. Granite Creek near Haines Junction, Shanienbaw north of

Champagne, Clear Creek near Dawson City, etc.). Cominco has staffed a 24 hour security gate at the entrance to the access road and plans to destroy all roads it has created. However off-road vehicles will travel almost anywhere and Cominco's roads are only the beginning of an extensive grid that has already developed in the area.

The ABM deposit and the access road between it and the Robert Campbell Highway are situated in the Geona Creek valley. This valley is used by the Finlayson Caribou Herd during their protracted and broad migrations between summer/fall ranges to the south and winter ranges to the north. The proposed airstrip at the Robert Campbell Highway is in the middle of the herd migratory range. (The access road is also in the middle of moose primary winter habitat).

Cominco is currently considering two routes for shipping ore. One is to Skagway via Carmacks and Whitehorse. The other is to Fort Nelson via Watson Lake. There are a number of reasons why the Robert Campbell Highway, from the access road to Carmacks, is a poor choice. The most important is that the Finlayson Caribou Herd winter range extends along the Robert Campbell Highway from the access road to Ross River. Close to ten thousand caribou congregate on either side of the Highway throughout the winter. Use of this route for hauling concentrate would result in attrition (due to motor vehicle accidents) as well as disturbance of the caribou.

Prior to the recently initiated staking rush in the Finlayson / Wolverine region, this ecosystem was relatively unimpacted by human disturbance. The cumulative effects of exploration activity ongoing in the region have already impacted the Finlayson / Wolverine ecosystem. For example, 1995 was the first year in over a decade that caribou were not seen on the wide plateau Southwest of Wolverine Lake. That exploration activity is essentially unregulated poses an enormous problem for effective environmental planning. Cominco's efforts to propose mine impact mitigation are almost useless given the greater context of disturbance caused by other companies exploring in the region. For this reason it is critical that potential impacts of the proposed Kudz Ze Kayah mine be considered in the context of other disturbances in the area.



Cominco has developed an unprecedented environmental plan to determine baseline conditions and to develop monitoring and mitigation programs. Given the biological richness and previously undeveloped nature of the Finlayson / Wolverine area this is highly appropriate. Unfortunately, Cominco has failed to specify in any case the exact point at which it will consider a compliance point value to have been exceeded or a significant impact to have been detected. It is imperative that Cominco indicate to what degree of significance it

will respond and that Cominco specify what decrease in mine productivity it is willing to suffer and what measures it is willing to institute in order to rectify and/or prevent any given problem. The compilation of baseline data and the implementation of monitoring programs alone will neither prevent nor mitigate serious damage to the Finlayson area ecosystem. These constitute only the initial part of what should be clearly delineated contingency plans.

yodit johnson

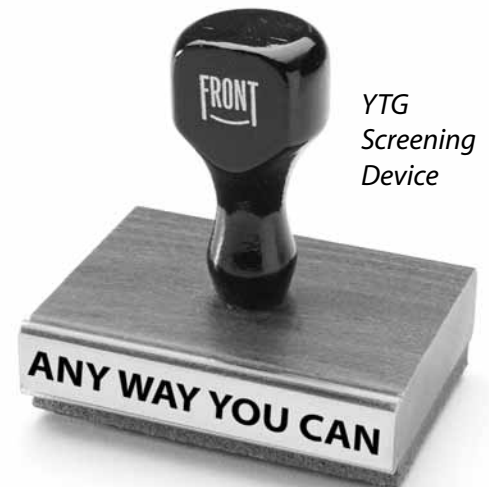
Open for Business

Ladies and gentlemen, the Yukon is open for business. That is the message the Territorial government is carrying to anybody who will listen. The mining industry heeded the call and there are an unprecedented number of developments being screened: some grandfathered under the *Environmental Assessment Review Process Guidelines Order* (EARP); others receiving a *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA) review. These projects are just the tip of the iceberg. Despite the fact that senior federal government officials stated in the spring of 1990 that there was a need to screen exploration activities on quartz and placer claims, there is still no mechanism to do so six years later. Legislation to enable these reviews to take place is currently in Parliament but has a low priority. Legislation to deal with operating mines and the reclamation of closed properties is still outstanding.

This increase in mining activity has generated calls for more power generation and improved infrastructure. The activity in the Finlayson Lake area has prompted the Yukon Government to contemplate upgrading (straightening and widening) the Robert Campbell Highway and running a power line to mines in the area. The Dublin Gulch project, a gold heap leach proposal near Mayo, requires the upgrading of the South McQuesten River Road, the Loki Gold project near Dawson required an upgrade of the "Ditch Road" while the Western Copper project near Carmacks requires an upgrade of the Freegold Road as well as a power line from Carmacks to the site. Screenings of infrastructure are conducted separately from screenings of the project. For example, the screening for the South McQuesten

River Road will be conducted separately from the review of the Dublin Gulch project so that a true review of the cumulative impacts of the project are not conducted. A cornerstone of energy policy is providing energy for mining development. There has been talk in the media lately of a 40 MW coal fired generating facility being developed near Breaburn. Exploration and development are taking place in sensitive wildlife habitat without adequate safeguards in place. *The Wildlife Act* does not protect habitat. Proposed changes to this Act to rectify this problem have never been passed, probably because it would send the wrong "signal" to industry. Staking and exploration in the Finlayson Lake area rated a full page map in *The Northern Miner* recently. This status is usually reserved for areas where a staking and exploration "rush" is taking place, such as Voisey's Bay in Labrador and the Lac de Gras diamond area in the NWT. The Finlayson Lake caribou herd has just "recovered" to a "sustainable" population after a wolf kill in the area and a map of critical habitat for the herd overlaps the exploration targets. Yes ladies and gentlemen the rush is on and the environment will once again suffer the consequences.

bob van dijen



YTG
Screening
Device



Environmental Assessment Review

It's been a boom year for Environmental Assessments over at the DIAND Environment Directorate. Not only are a lot of mines in the review and planning stage, but 1995 saw the greatest amount of quartz claim staking since 1969. The following is the December 1995 listing of projects undergoing environmental assessment by the Regional Environmental Review Committee.

Underway

Ketza River Holdings

Ketza River mine, southwest of Ross River
Milling of ore

Loki Gold Corporation

Brewery Creek, east of Dawson City
Proposed cyanide gold heap leach mine

Western Copper Holdings Ltd.

Williams Creek, northwest of Carmacks
Proposed sulphuric acid copper heap leach mine

Yukon Electric Company Ltd.

Powerline from Carmacks to Williams Creek Minesite
Power transmission line to serve Western Copper Holdings project

United Keno Hill Mines

Elsa, north of Mayo
Hard rock silver/lead mine

Minto Explorations Ltd.

Minto Property, southwest of Minto
Proposed hard rock gold, silver and copper mine

First Dynasty

Dublin Gulch, southern McQuesten watershed near Mayo
Proposed cyanide heap leach gold mine

Yukon Energy Corporation

Aishihik Lake and River, 50 km northeast of Haines Junction
Program of studies on the hydroelectric project

YGC Resources Ltd.

Grew Creek, 35 km west of Ross River
Proposed gold mine

BYG Natural Resources Inc.

Mount Nansen, 45 km west of Carmacks
Proposed gold mine

Parks Canada/YTG

Alsek Pass valley near Haines Junction
Proposed access road and day use area

Anvil Range Corp.

Faro Mine, 20 km northwest of Faro
Integrated comprehensive abandonment plan

Cominco Ltd.

Kudz Ze Kayah, Finlayson Lake (between Ross River and Watson Lake)
Proposed open pit lead/zinc mine

Community and Transportation Services (YTG)

Yukon River Bridge (Dawson City)

Anticipated

Cash Resources Ltd.

Division Mountain/Coal Property, 35 km west of Braeburn
Coal mine

Feather Gold Resources

Montana Mountain, south of Carcross
Proposed hard rock mine

Yukon Energy Corp.

Drury/Morley/Lapie/Orchay Rivers
Small hydro proposals

Westmin Resources Ltd.

Bonnet Plume River
Copper mine

Redell Mining Corp.

Mt. Freegold, 50 km northwest of Carmacks
Proposed gold mine

Wheaton River Minerals Ltd.

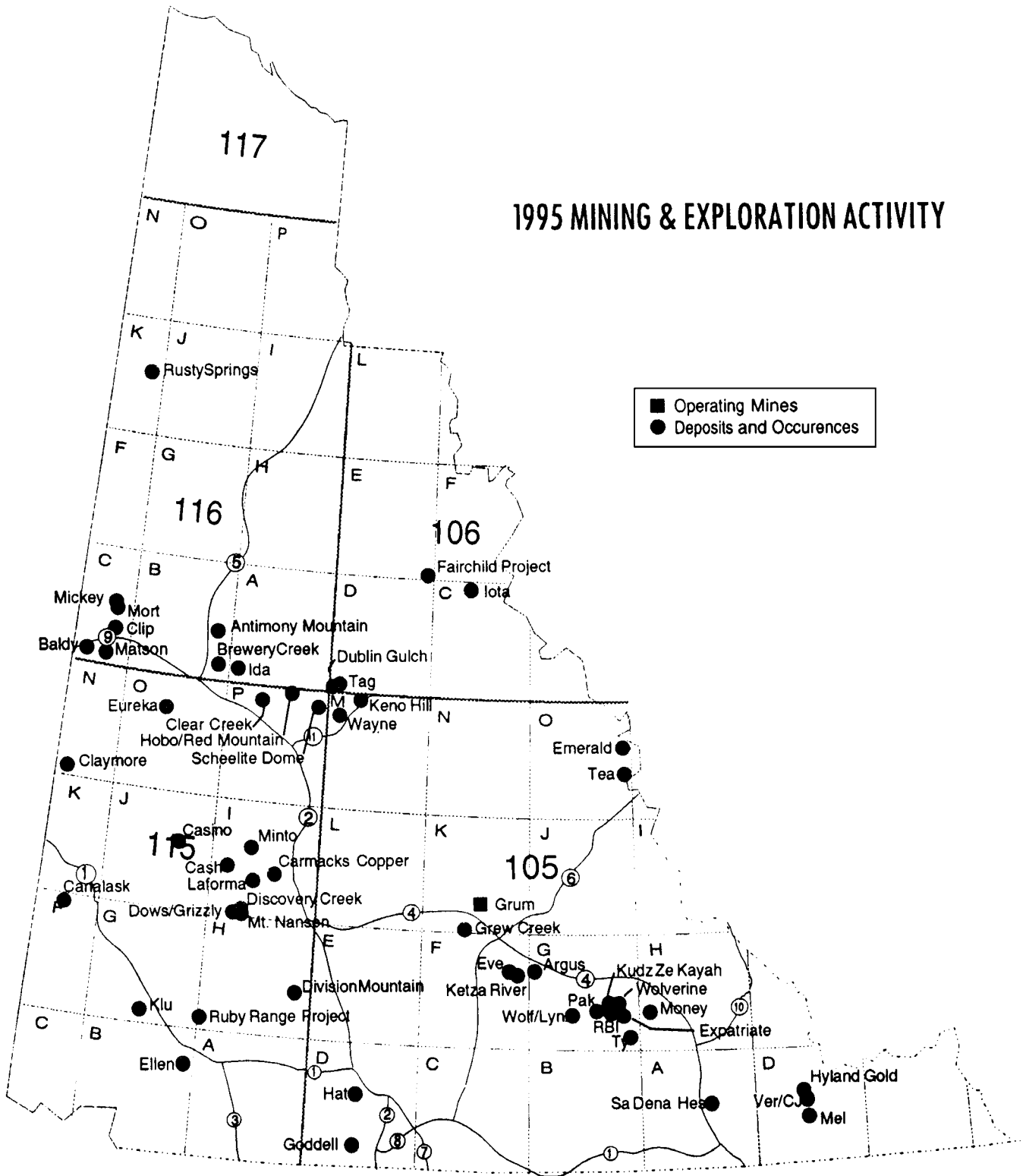
Mt. Skukum
Gold mine

The Yukon Conservation Society does have an opportunity to comment during the assessment process. If you are interested in hearing more about how you can be involved, contact the YCS office.

lewis rifkind



1995 MINING & EXPLORATION ACTIVITY





Sustainable Communities Workshops: *A Continuing Success*

Last year, YCS in partnership with the Council for Yukon First Nations and the Environment Program of Indian Affairs, organized and delivered a three week Environmental Training Program for First Nations people from across the Yukon and northern BC. Based on this very successful and rewarding experience, the partners renewed their commitment to working together to provide further environmental training and educational workshops to community people.

The following months were consumed by meetings and discussions with key community people and First Nations, and with planning and proposal writing. By December, funding was secured and the partners were ready to launch another series of environmental training workshops—this time for both native and non-native participants.

Many people from the communities and First Nations expressed a strong interest in learning more about forests, mines and contaminants, so we started with two Whitehorse-based workshops, one on Forests (in February) and the other on Mines and Contaminants (in March).

These workshops included delegates from the communities and First Nations, presenters from governments, First Nations, industry and environmental groups (from both the Yukon and “outside”), informative videos and lively group discussions. Feedback from participants and presenters was largely very positive and supportive of the efforts of the partners.

We are now focusing our efforts on five regional community workshops, bringing people together from neighbouring communities. Through this educational initiative we hope to broaden the understanding and awareness of environmental concerns and issues and to empower people to act in their own communities.

These workshops begin with the basics, covering topics like traditional views of the environment, watersheds and ecosystems, land use planning, community organizing, environmental quality, water and soil testing, hazardous waste, recycling and other waste issues.

Based on the outcome of the first of these workshops, held at the end of March in Mayo, and the earlier Whitehorse workshops, it is clear that we are meeting

many of our project goals. Participant evaluations frequently state a new or renewed interest in environmental issues and indicate a desire to start tackling concerns in their community.

In some cases, this is happening during the workshops themselves. At the Mayo workshop, one of the group exercises on community organizing was to design a plan to address an issue of local concern. The purpose of the activity was to get people to go through the exercise of planning the steps needed to organize on any issue.

By the end of the three-day workshop, one group which chose to address “increasing community understanding of cyanide” had already acquired new information on cyanide which was shared with everyone at the workshop and has likely been circulated further by now. The group intends to continue to acquire information and synthesize it for the broader community according to the plan they developed in the workshop.

After the Forest workshop, YCS was approached by one of the delegates for help in organizing a evening presentation in their community. They had connected with the workshop delegates from the local First Nation and decided they wanted to organize something where they could share what they learned at the workshop. Planning for this event is currently underway.

In addition to providing education and training to participants, one of YCS’ goals is to learn more about community and First Nation issues and perspectives so that we may work towards better reflecting community concerns in our activities and positions. The opportunity to meet people from each community and First Nation, to listen to their questions and concerns (particularly in the small group exercises) and to share information on what YCS is and does is a significant and long term benefit of these workshops.

The innovative partnership of government, First Nations and an environmental group has also provided important benefits. The desire and ability to accommodate different perspectives and experiences has given us a combination of knowledge and skills far stronger than any of us could have provided on our own.

And perhaps even more importantly, we have provided a concrete example to our respective constituents of the



ability of these groups to work effectively together to deliver a program beneficial to all of our interests. In the era of land claims and self-government, partnerships such as this one can play a central role in facilitating the smooth implementation of agreements and the changes that flow from them.

Funding for these workshops is provided by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, the Council for Yukon First Nations (AES program) and the Environment Program of Indian Affairs. For more information on upcoming workshops, please call Jennifer Ellis at 668-5678 or Janne Hicklin at 667-4731.

jennifer ellis, janne hicklin

Floating on Down the River

On June 1st, 1996 the City of Whitehorse will commence discharging raw sewage into the Yukon River. The discharge is planned to last for up to three days and will allow maintenance and repair work on the pumps and pipe that the sewage travels through under the Yukon River on its way to the main sewage lagoons. The City says it does not have much alternative, as to install temporary pumps and pipes or to use a storage lagoon would be technically difficult and financially prohibitive.

Thus, at the start of tourist season, untreated sewage will be floating down the Yukon River. However, if the work is not done on the pumps and pipe, in the future a serious problem could occur resulting in a much longer discharge. We are now in the situation of having short term pollution to avert long term pollution. Note that the word pollution is used somewhat out of context, given that the present sewage treatment is rather minimal. Screens will be placed on the discharge pipe to catch large items. This is purely a visual response to the problem, and will do nothing to stop the river from being polluted by the bacteria within the sewage.

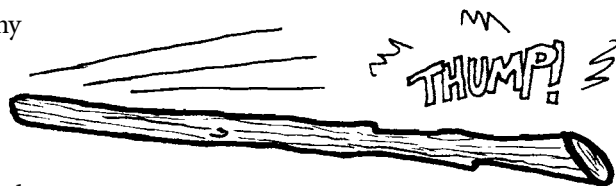
To prevent the amount of discharge the City will be encouraging people to reduce water usage. A massive media blitz will alert the public to the situation and the water conservation methods that can be applied. Any regular conservation habits that might develop from this will be important for long term efficiency of both the water and the sewage systems. Cutting down on the amount of water that enters the sewage lagoons will enhance the effectiveness and life-span of the new sewage lagoons. With good cooperation from the public, sewage amounts could drop by 50% or more. The only exception to this process are the inhabitants of Crestview and Porter Creek, whose sewage currently goes to their own lagoons.

This gives rise to an interesting point. Why are the main sewage lagoons on the opposite side of the Yukon River

from the vast majority of the City population? And more importantly, why is there only one pipe across the river, with no means of diverting sewage in the event of pipe maintenance or repairs apart from dumping it in the river. The new sewage lagoons, currently under construction and also on the opposite side, will provide better treatment but only if the sewage can reach them. It is all dependent on one thin underwater pipe. Once again, the exception to this problem is the Porter Creek lagoons. They will be closed (and a good thing too, considering the state they are in) and a double pipe system used to convey their sewage across the river to the new lagoons.

The next major sewage construction should involve a backup method of moving sewage across the river while pipeline maintenance or repairs are done. The City has applied for an exception to its water license to dump sewage into the river. The exception is for this time period only, and not (as initially requested by the City) for any time the City feels it must discharge into the river. As no long term financial commitment has been made to solve this problem and given the age of the system it looks like the City will be applying for a lot more water license exceptions in the future.

lewis rifkind



Attention Whitehorse Residents!!

Please reduce your water use as much as possible between June 1st, 8:00 am to June 4th 8:00 am. Less water down your drain is less sewage in the river. Tell your neighbours!



Climate Change

Reports of changes in the world's climate have been with us for fifteen or twenty years. Most of us have an understanding of the ill effects that are likely to come about from the burning of oil and coal. But there has always been much uncertainty as to whether global warming has begun.

Three simple facts are known:

- the distance from the surface of the earth to the far edge of the inner atmosphere is only twelve miles
- the annual amount of carbon dioxide forced into that limited space is six billion tons
- the ten hottest years recorded have all occurred since 1980. (Ross Gelbspan. *Harper's Magazine* December 1995).

What are we to do with this knowledge?

Raven Recycling Society hosted a workshop on Earth Day (April 22) to discuss climate change and explore options for global, community, and personal action. The Workshop was based on the Friends of the Earth's Climate Change Workshop (available from the Raven).

The workshop attempted to increase participants understanding of the causes and effects of climate change in a "non-technical sort-of-way." Rather than have people listen to a lecture from an "expert," the workshop encourages participants to discuss information about climate change and then synthesize it with their own knowledge and experience.

An important point to clarify before discussing climate change is that the greenhouse effect, global warming and climate change are similar—but not the same.

The greenhouse effect is a descriptive term that helps explain how greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide trap heat in the atmosphere. Global warming refers to the increased temperatures that are expected to result with more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Temperature is the primary element of climate and increased temperatures will alter precipitation

pattern, wind speed and direction, and air pressure (in other words, climate change).

A lot of time was devoted to identifying what is known and what is uncertain about climate change. Most of the uncertainty lies in determining whether the changes in precipitation, wind, and air pressure on a local scale will add to the temperature increase or reduce them.

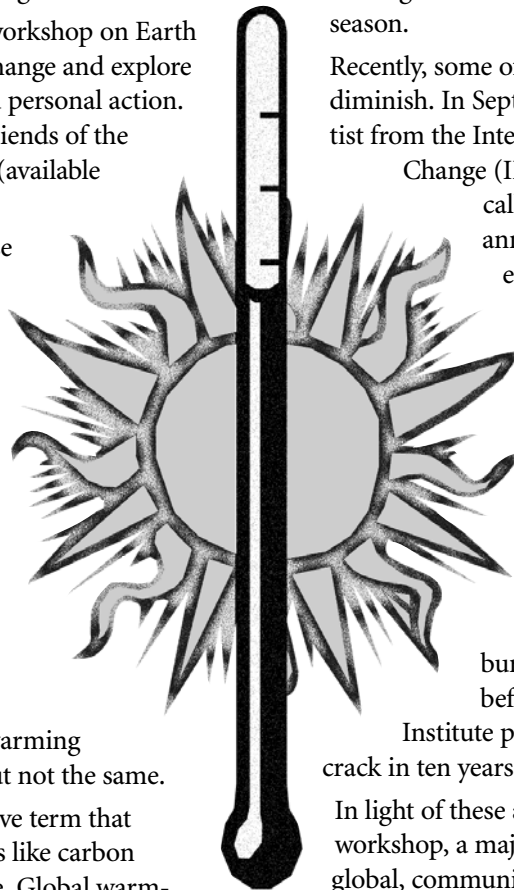
In the past, Environment Canada scientists have predicted that in Canada we could face droughts in south-western Ontario and the Prairies, flooding on our coastlines, extinction of wildlife and the loss of our Northern boreal forest. In the North, higher temperatures will greatly improve shipping conditions in the far north, by reducing the extent and the thickness of floating sea ice and lengthening the short summer season.

Recently, some of the uncertainty has begun to diminish. In September 1995, 2,500 climate scientist from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued an uncharacteristically bold statement. They flatly announced that the earth had entered a period of climactic instability likely to cause "wide spread economic, social and environmental dislocation over the next decade."

Evidence of environmental instability is becoming more evident. In the Antarctic a 48-by-22-mile chunk of the Larsen Ice Shelf broke off last March, exposing rocks that have been buried for 20,000 years. Two months before, the Argentine Antarctic Institute predicted that the ice shelf would crack in ten years.

In light of these and other facts discussed in the workshop, a major focus is exploring options for global, community and personal action on climate change. If you would like to examine this issue with a group you are involved in please contact Dawn at the recycling centre for more details.

dawn lammer





Remember the Moose

When you roll out of bed and click on the light, not a lot of us think about where the electrical current came from to make this possible, nor about the environmental impacts involved in electrical generation and consumption. The moose upstream of the dam notice when the water levels fall in their favourite swamp, as do the raven when they're trying to find their way around in winter ice-smog, some of which is caused by diesel generation in Whitehorse. So, what's a green-hearted environmentalist to do?

Well, in 1996, you're going to have a chance to change things—and save money on your hydro bill. You see, this spring, YCS made an appearance to the Yukon Utilities Board, and out of that came a consensus amongst all of the engineers, and the environmentalists, that energy efficiency and energy conservation is worth doing in the Yukon.

Energy efficiency and conservation is very important north of sixty, where diesel fuel has to be trucked enormous distances to generators, and where diesel generator exhaust is trapped by the valley Whitehorse sits in. Unlike outside, the power net here can't bring in extra juice from other utilities if there's a big load. In the Yukon, they have to burn more diesel to make up the difference.

Now, you could ask, who's the big user of hydro? Well, we have met the enemy, and it is us. Yes, having the mines running makes a big difference, but the load share that really trips off those standby diesels, is the "hi kids I'm home" peak of the winter-time dinner hour. But this doesn't have to happen.

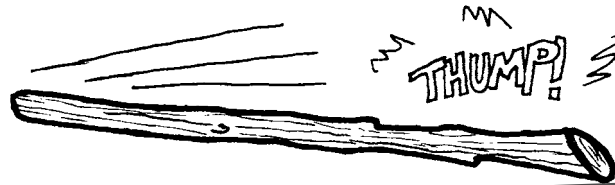
A lot of us still use 1000 watt block heaters without a timer all night which keeps the diesel-generators humming. Not all of us use 12 watt compact fluorescent bulbs to brighten up those long winter nights at a quarter the wattage of a 60 watt incandescent. It's actually kind of hard to find energy-efficient electrical gear in the Yukon.

What's to be done?

This spring, the utilities will be forming a working group with YCS and others to write a business plan to promote energy conservation and energy efficiency. Just

around the start of peak consumption season, this fall, you should see some promotion of energy-saving gear, like hot water tank insulation blankets, pipe wrap, block heater timers, compact fluorescent bulbs and lots of other stuff. Look for it!

paul davis



Do It Now!

Of course, you don't have to wait for the plan to conserve energy—after all, energy efficiency saves you money! So, maybe the next time you roll out of bed, click on the light, and hunt for your slippers, you'll have remembered the moose, and the ravens, and you'll be burning a compact fluorescent bulb, take a shower from a super-insulated hot water tank, and close the door on a well-insulated apartment when you leave!

Ted Parnell Scholarship

The Yukon Conservation Society offers an annual scholarship of \$500 to a student pursuing any aspect of environmental studies. This scholarship will be awarded to the student demonstrating outstanding interest and motivation in the environmental field. Interests pertaining to northern environments such as wildlife, ecology, renewable resources, energy and environmental education are appropriate areas for eligibility. Applicants must be Yukon residents and should be entering or currently enrolled in a post-secondary school program (excluding graduate work). Application should be made in writing by June 30, 1996. For a full list of the application requirements, contact the YCS office.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YCS?

As the first days of spring roll around, outdoor activities begin to happen at 302 Hawkins Street. The Nature Appreciation Series is well underway. Planning for another season of Hikes and Bikes guided trips and our Guided Nature Walks program has also begun.

Hikes & Bikes Summer!

This summer YCS will again be offering to the public guided hikes and bike trips taken from our popular book (available around town and at our office). If you are interested in volunteering to lead a group, leave your name and number at the YCS office.

Hikes & Bikes Two?

Last newsletter we noted we were looking at producing a road guidebook for the Yukon. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure adequate funding for the book so we have had to move on to other projects.

Tombstone Park Petition!

Over 1000 people signed the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society petition asking the Yukon Government to restore the proposed Tombstone territorial park to its originally proposed 100,000 hectares from its currently proposed 37,800 hectares. These signatures were presented to the house by Trevor Harding on March 12, 1996. Thanks to all those who helped send such a strong message to the government.

Crying Wolf!

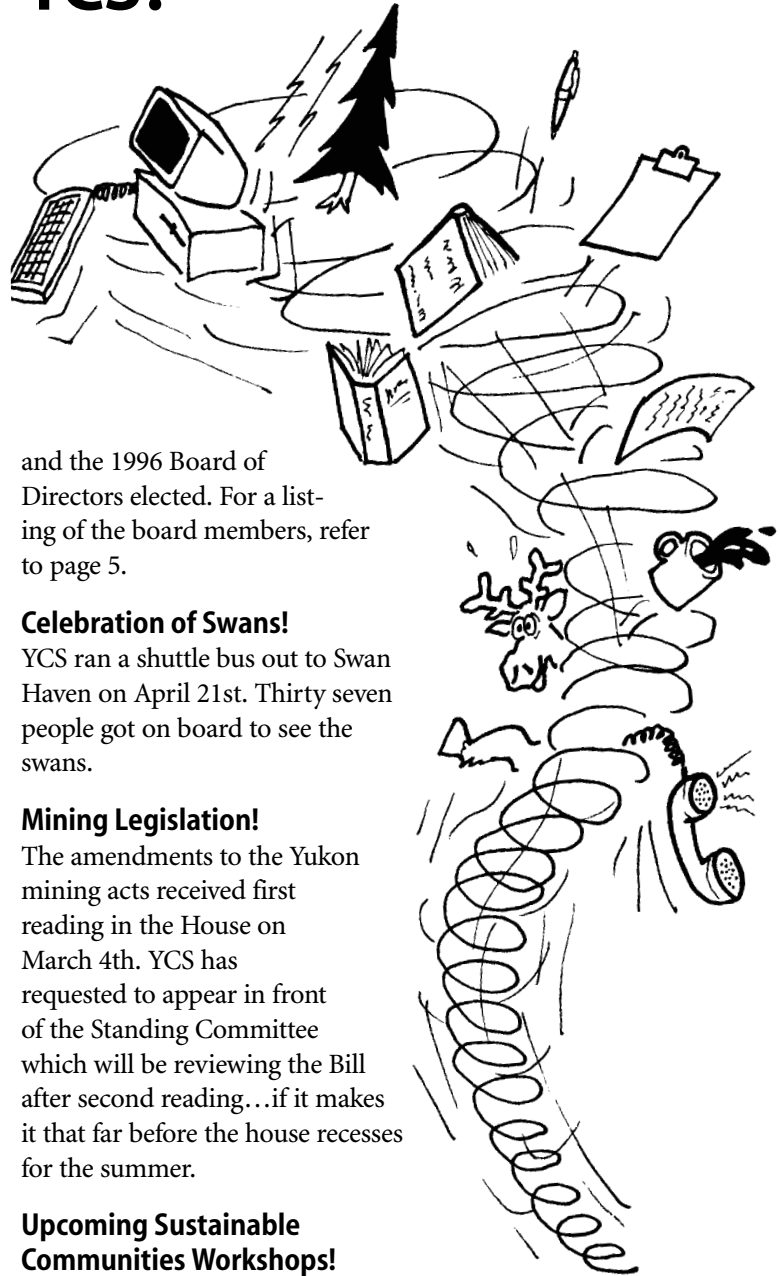
Kudos to our very own executive director Jennifer Ellis who had her 15 seconds of fame on The Nature of Things. The episode, called Crying Wolf, dealt with human attitudes towards wolves in North America. The Yukon was singled out as the only place on the continent with a wolf control program currently underway.

Birthday!

April 24 was YCS's 28th birthday. Thanks to the hundreds of volunteers and supporters who keep us going.

AGM!

The YCS annual general meeting was held on March 28. Thanks to the Alpine Bakery for donating the meeting space and the snacks. New members were signed up



and the 1996 Board of Directors elected. For a listing of the board members, refer to page 5.

Celebration of Swans!

YCS ran a shuttle bus out to Swan Haven on April 21st. Thirty seven people got on board to see the swans.

Mining Legislation!

The amendments to the Yukon mining acts received first reading in the House on March 4th. YCS has requested to appear in front of the Standing Committee which will be reviewing the Bill after second reading...if it makes it that far before the house recesses for the summer.

Upcoming Sustainable Communities Workshops!

Proposed workshop locations and dates are Haines Junction, May 10-12; Old Crow, May 15-17 and Watson Lake, May 22-24. Call the YCS office to confirm timing.

Board Meetings!

Members are invited to join the board for their regular meetings held the first Tuesday of every month.

Wildlands!

The next Wildlands meeting is scheduled for 7 pm, May 16th at the Whitehorse Public Library. See you there.