

# Walk Softly

Newsletter of the Yukon  
Conservation Society  
December 1999



**INSIDE:** Whitehorse Wetlands ♦ Southeast Yukon Under Siege ♦ Permission to Pollute?

# What's Happening at YCS?

## A New Katimavik-tim Arrives!

YCS welcomes Katimavik participant Mike Smorong, who will be helping out around the office for the next couple of months. His main projects will be cataloguing our resource library and assisting in the revamping of the YCS office. Mike is eager, and a hard worker. Thanks Mike, and thanks Katimavik!

## Forestry Webpage

Check out YCS's new Forestry Webpage at:

<http://www.yukonweb.com/y/cs/forests/>

Thanks to Richard Lawrence at YukonWeb for donating his time and expertise to get us on-line.

## New E.D.

YCS said goodbye to Jennifer Ellis, and hello to Christine Cleghorn, who started on November 2 as the new Executive Director. See articles further in this issue.

## New Faces New Spaces

No — we're not moving, but we're moving our stuff all around! YCS is in the midst of giving our upstairs office space a much-needed facelift. Drop by after December 6 to see our new look and to help yourself to anything in our pile of "purged" items.

## Christmas Open House and Sale

December is sale month at YCS, with 20% or more off all of our merchandise for the entire month! We're also having an open house December 16, look for further details in this issue.

## YCS Goes International

Christine Cleghorn had the pleasure of touring Peruvian indigenous communities affected by mining. Many of the mining operations were partially owned by Canadian companies. The trip was in cooperation with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. Stay tuned for a slide show on mining that will incorporate pictures from the tour.

## YCS Hosts Negotiation Skills Workshop

Over forty people attended from the communities of Whitehorse, Teslin, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Iskut and Smithers BC. Thanks to the Yukon Environmental Training Trust Fund and Training Resources for the Environmental Community from Seattle for their support.

## Special General Meeting

YCS is proposing amendments to our current constitution and by-laws. Therefore, we are calling a Special General Meeting on **Tuesday, January 11 at 5 pm** at the YCS office to have our membership vote in the changes by special resolution. The changes are mostly administrative, and are necessary for us to be in good standing with the Yukon Societies Act. Any members who are

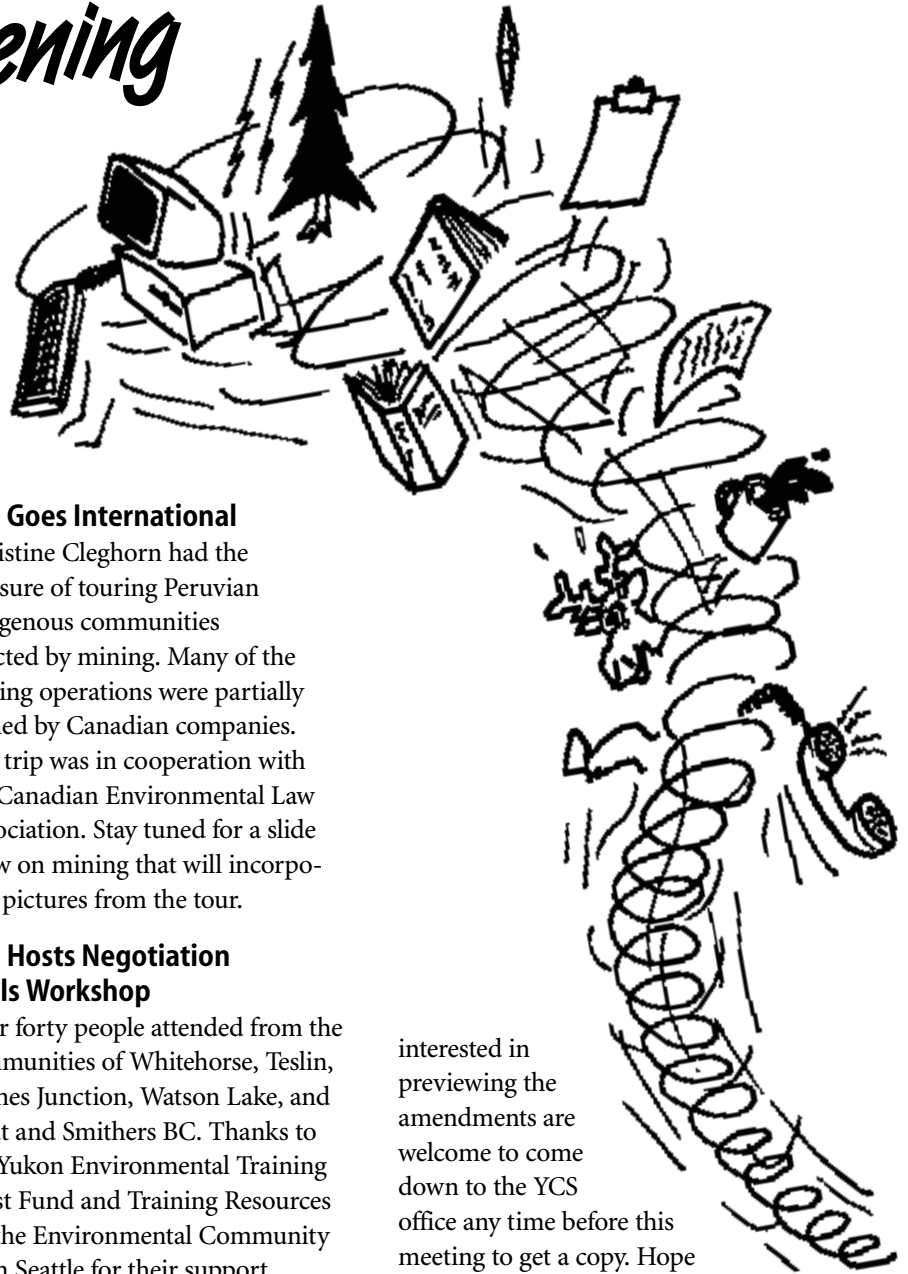
interested in previewing the amendments are welcome to come down to the YCS office any time before this meeting to get a copy. Hope to see you at the meeting!

## Newsletter Submissions

We want your input! YCS welcomes newsletter submissions and letters to the editor. Deadlines are the first of February, May, August and November. Don't be shy!

## Holiday Hours

YCS will be closed for the holidays from noon on December 24 through January 3.





## It's a Park. It's a Park... It's Almost a Park!

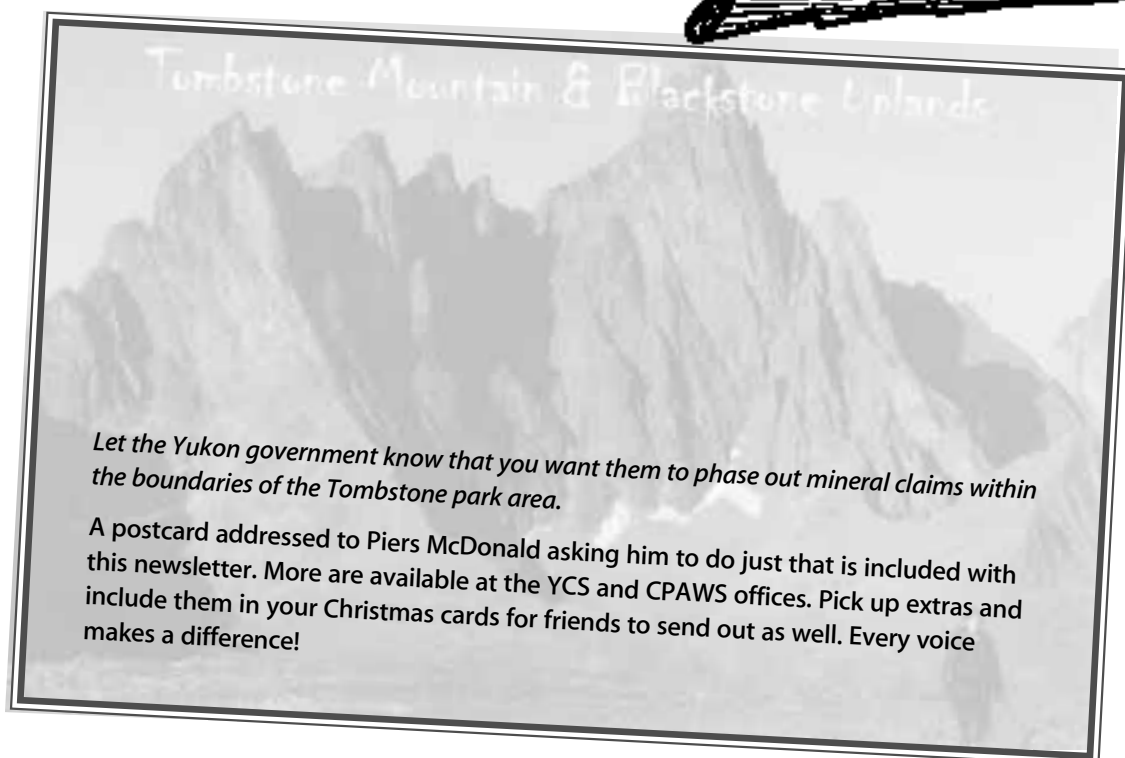
On November 4 about 200 Yukoners gathered in the lobby of the YTG Legislature to celebrate their new park — well almost park. Hopefully by the time you are reading this the government will have accepted the park boundary as defined by the Tombstone Steering Committee and they can get on with the management plan in the new year. So why did Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and YCS orchestrate a celebration complete with drumming and dancing, cake and speeches before the park was born? Partly because we wanted to remind the government that there are a lot of Yukoners in the environmental lobby and partly because we wanted to celebrate. A protest march might have brought more media coverage but Yukoners would rather celebrate than demonstrate so we decided to go for the cake.

Percy Henry, a Tr'ondek Hwech'in Elder was there. He was born along the Blackstone in the 'almost park' and he told us that it is all there — everything a person needs for a good life. During the last Ice Age people followed game into this southern tongue of the glacial refuge. As the continental ice sheet melted south people followed. But

some stayed behind; as Percy Henry pointed out they had all they needed. As the glacier retreated the climate changed but the land continued to sustain them. And it is all still there. Now that is something to celebrate.

However the integrity of the future park is still not secure. There are seventy five legal mining claims within the recommended boundary. Each and every one of them compromises the wilderness refuge capability of the area. It is important for the Yukon government to hear that Yukoners want them to phase out these mineral claims.

Consumerism, pollution, greed and garbage are rapidly taking over the planet. As we begin a new millennium in our crowded cities, surrounded by all this stuff, we need, more than ever, natural places with healthy ecosystems. Whether we walk in them, drive through them or just read about them, the fact that they are there can remind us of who we are, where we have come from, what we need and where we are heading.





## Drum Roll Please... Introducing Christine!!

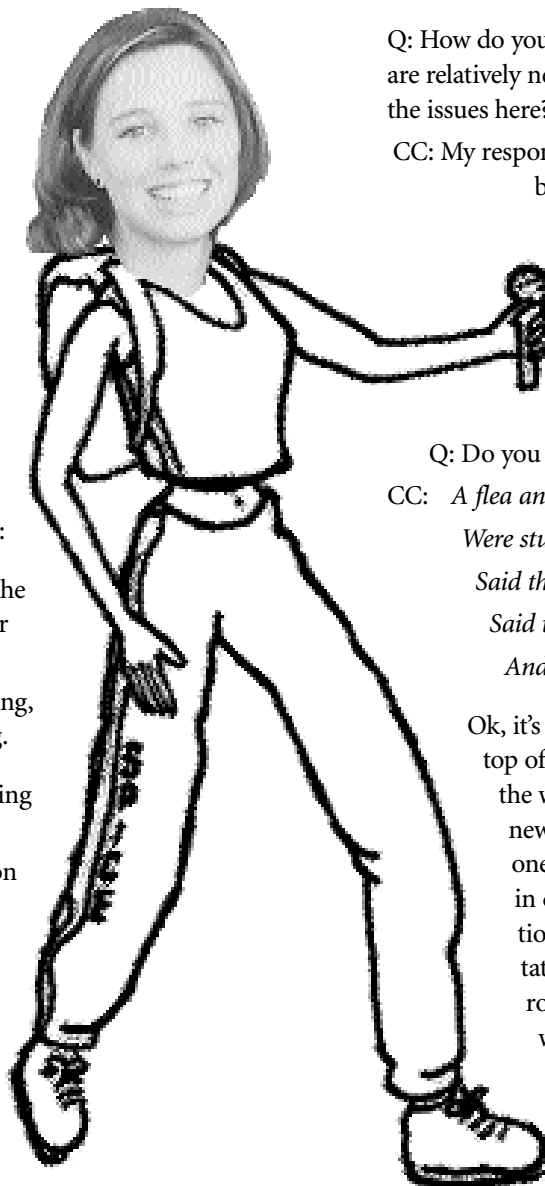
I arrived at YCS late in the evening to interview the new Executive Director after her third day on the job. Hmmmm, a U2 fan I noted, the strains of Bono reaching my ears as I locked up my bike on the porch. Cleghorn greeted me from underneath a hefty pile of folders marked "Urgent" and cleared off a section of floor for me to make myself comfortable. I perused her resume while she turned down the music and settled in for the interview: Master's Degree in Rural Planning and Development, 2 years in Labrador working on the Voisey's Bay environmental assessment, recent trip to Peru touring communities affected by mining, with other environmental work mixed in for good measure. The interview went something like this (highlights have been reserved for my upcoming book "Liquid Lunch: We Are What We Drink"):

Q: How does it feel to be the new Executive Director for YCS?

CC: Overwhelming, exciting, intimidating, empowering.

Q: What is the most pressing issue for YCS these days?

CC: We are an organization of volunteers, and I think keeping our volunteer base strong is a key to our future health. I give that equal priority to environmental issues.



Q: Which is your favourite Spice Girl?

CC: Is Ginger an option or do you mean, specifically, the remaining Spice Girls? Do you include Posh? She's just gone out on her own so you should clarify that too. You'll have to rephrase your question before I commit to an answer.

Q: Ahem. Ginger and Posh are included in the question.

CC: Sporty Spice.

Q: How do you react when people tell you that since you are relatively new to Yukon, you don't fully understand the issues here?

CC: My response is that we all like to drink water, breathe clean air, and we want those things for our neighbours, our children, and the wildlife around us. I don't buy the homegrown argument because I think my experience elsewhere gives me a perspective on Yukon issues that is valuable.

Q: Do you know any limericks?

CC: *A flea and a fly in a flue*

*Were stuck and knew not what to do*

*Said the flea, "Let us fly"*

*Said the fly, "Let us flee"*

*And they flew through a hole in the flue.*

Ok, it's not everyone who knows a limerick off the top of her head (especially one that doesn't have the word Nantucket in it) so I have to give the new E.D. some points for that. It's not everyone who would have picked Sporty Spice but in discussion Cleghorn backed up her selection well, drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from a variety of studies to narrow down the selections until there really was no other option. I encourage you all to stop by YCS and meet Christine. Or buy my book and read more about her.

*olga massier*



# 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 3S9, 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.

Publications Mail Agreement number 4154991  
Changes of address or undeliverable copies should be sent to YCS at Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3S9

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Stepping out of the taxi, I instinctively shut my eyes and closed my throat. Too late, I was already coughing, the burning sensation creeping down my throat and while coughing didn't help, breathing didn't seem like an option either. Opening my eyes, I stared at the source of this pollution. The smelter's stack stretched to the sky, the smoke steadily pouring out. For the last few days, I had been visiting communities affected by mining in the high Andean region of Peru. Now I was seeing the smelter where all the ore came to be smelted before being sold.

This was not just any smelter: Doe Run's La Oroya smelter is the single largest point source of CO<sub>2</sub> in South America. Who cares? Greenhouse effects aside, I care, because some of the mines which feed this smelter are owned, at least partially, by Canadian mining companies. Through the course of my voyage into communities affected by mining, I couldn't help but think: "This would never happen in Canada." Except it already has, of course. Sydney, Yellowknife, Sudbury... all are communities affected (for better and worse) by mining. The question is perhaps better phrased as: "Would this *still* happen in Canada?" Or even more importantly: "Why is this happening at all?"

Looking around Yukon, I see many communities affected by mining, and wonder what will happen if the oil and gas boom that so many say is looming actually comes to fruition. Will we learn to balance environment and development? Will we be mature enough to look beyond immediate economic concerns? There are no easy answers to the questions posed above, but I believe YCS plays, and will continue to play, a critical role in the debate and planning which shape our future. It is a fear of unfettered development, coupled with awe and respect for our natural environment, which compelled me to apply for my new position at YCS. After a week on the job and the opportunity to understand the many ways that YCS volunteers work toward protecting and understanding the environment, I feel even more confident about what the future can be for Yukon.

christine cleghorn

# Momentum Gathering to Protect Whitehorse Wetland

Many people in Whitehorse cringed when the oxbow wetland in the Marwell industrial area west of Quartz Road was ploughed under. That portion of the Quartz Road wetland had been a buffer to the industrial wasteland that now greets you on the drive into Whitehorse. Like the coyote, beaver, mew gulls, northern harriers, ducks, sandpipers and swans who lived in the wetland, we lost a piece of our home and heritage.

Willow wetlands and sloughs used to characterize downtown Whitehorse from about Jarvis Street to the present day Marwell area. Whitehorse was built up on top of this rich wildlife habitat. Today all that remains of this habitat is the Quartz Road wetland, or what's left of it.

## What's Left of the Quartz Road Wetland

What's left includes a series of willow and sedge islands along the riverside of Quartz Road, north of Kishwoot Island, and a riparian belt along the river. It also includes the Spook Creek drainage behind Beaver Lumber and what remains of the oxbow wetland on the proposed mall site. The area supports hundreds of bird species, coyotes and several small mammals. The riverbed around the islands is important habitat for freshwater fish as well as spawning salmon.

The area also has an interesting history. It was important for First Nations who fished in the area and had long-term settlements within downtown Whitehorse. Jack London's *Sea Wolf* tells the story of a pirate captain and his boat the Clara Monarch, parts of which can be seen on the riverbank of the Quartz Road Wetland.



The draft Yukon River Corridor Plan identifies the Quartz Road wetland as a High Sensitivity area. This means that the area is a “site with low tolerance to human disturbance where slight alternations would result in functional or structural changes to the landscape unit with potentially negative impacts on wildlife or visual esthetics.”



### Efforts to Protect the Area

Up until recently, White Pass owned most of the area. When White Pass put the large wetland west of Quartz Road up for sale, local biologist Dave Mossop solicited support from local groups and government in order to purchase the area for conservation of the Wetland. Unfortunately another buyer purchased the land. As we all know, the buyer has since filled in the land. Large portions of the wetland were lost to the potential of another shopping mall in Whitehorse.

The Yukon Conservation Society has launched the first stage of establishing protection for the natural features of the Quartz Road wetland. On October 18, YCS brought together a number of groups interested in this area's protection for conservation, recreation and interpretation. Twenty people attended the meeting representing thirteen different public interest groups and government departments.

The resulting vision included five main goals:

- 1) developing partnerships to establish protection for the area,
- 2) rehabilitating natural vegetation and hydrology,
- 3) providing people with access to the area without impacting the values of the area,

- 4) designing interpretive material and structures and,
- 5) educating the community on the importance of wetlands.

### A Volunteer Project

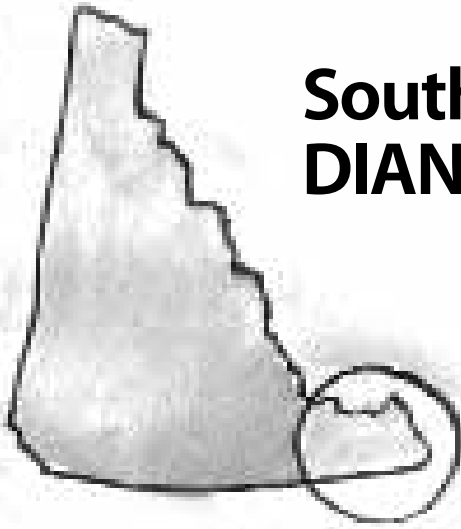
YCS has been looking for an opportunity for members and families to become involved in a project. This is it! We are in the idea development stage of the project and we encourage anyone interested in volunteering to contact us. Pending funding, there will be lots for volunteers to do.

#### Watch for:

- Walks and talks about the Quartz Road wetland
- Quartz Road wetland clean-up project
- Focus sessions on characteristics of the Quartz Road wetland
- Opportunities to input on the planning of trails and interpretation of the wetland
- Building the trail system and interpretive structures

*angela walkley*





## Southeast Yukon — DIAND Setting Own Agenda

### **Logging Plans May Threaten New Southeast Yukon Protected Area**

#### **Unique ecology in the southeast Yukon**

An unusual combination of geographic and climatic conditions have created a unique ecological mosaic in the extreme southeast Yukon, also known as 'the La Biche.' Fire is relatively rare in the area, so small disturbances like insects and disease create unevenly aged forests, with trees up to 250 years old. The forests of the lower La Biche and Beaver River valleys, and parts of the middle La Biche are among the most productive in the Yukon, with vegetation, bird, amphibian, and fish species not found anywhere else in the territory.

There are forty-one rare plant species in the southeast Yukon, and several bird species found there are declining, "threatened" or "vulnerable" elsewhere. A number of the bird species in the southeast are at the northwest limit of their range, which means that they contribute important genetic diversity to their populations as a whole. Bull trout, listed as "vulnerable" in Alberta and BC, and "threatened" or "endangered" in the USA, are found in the La Biche

River, and wood bison in the lower La Biche have increased from three animals in 1993 to more than twenty in 1999. For more details, see Randy Mulder and Bruce Bennett's article in the June issue of *Walk Softly*, *Southeast Yukon: Where Biodiversity Abounds*.

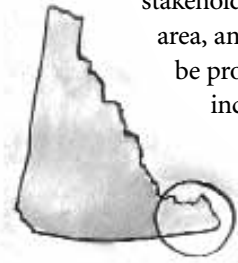
#### **Threats to the La Biche**

While the southeast Yukon is remote from the rest of the territory, road access from northern BC makes logging economically feasible. About 300,000 cubic meters (about 7,500 truckloads) have been logged in the lower La Biche River valley in the Yukon, and over 1.8 million cubic meters have been logged in the La Biche River valley south of the border in BC. Oil and gas potential in the area is also high. The Anderson Gas lease has been in operation for 15 years, there are numerous seismic lines, a gas plant, a few airstrips, and a road system, and the natural gas tendering process in the southeast Yukon has begun.

#### **The Forest Ecosystem Network interim protected area**

The unique ecological attributes of the La Biche River watershed, and the potential for cumulative impacts from industrial developments were recognized in the 1996 *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (CEAA) screening of the Liard First Nation Forestry Training Society Timber Harvest Agreement. During the CEAA screening, two important environmental concerns were expressed: that flora and fauna not common to the Yukon be protected, and that a "Forest Ecosystem Network" be excluded permanently from logging, in order to protect rare, threatened and vulnerable species as "a living laboratory."

The CEAA mitigation for these concerns was that a representative protected area within the La Biche valley be created, before any logging beyond that current season was done in the area. A group of key



stakeholders was formed to designate the area, and the percentage of the land base to be protected. The stakeholder group included YCS, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS), Trans North Timber, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) Forest Resources and Yukon government Parks and Habitat.

In December 1996, the stakeholder group delineated preliminary boundaries, but this proposed Forest Ecosystem Network (FEN) protected area had not been surveyed for ecological values. Therefore the La Biche/Beaver Technical Group was struck to evaluate the proposed area and other potential areas, to ensure that the CEEA mitigation was satisfied. While the technical group went to work, the proposed FEN received interim protection until December 1999.

In order to assess and refine the FEN boundaries, the technical group analyzed Forest Resources' forest cover information, produced a Forest Bird Habitat Potential Map for eight key bird species, produced a Forest Fragmentation Map, and did extensive field work. Wherever possible without compromising conservation goals, the effort was made to avoid areas of importance to oil and gas and forestry.

The technical group determined that the original FEN was not representative of all landscapes present, as it did not include enough spruce and mixed forest types. The boundaries were redrawn in December 1997, and after continued study, the technical group has now produced final boundaries and a final report. The total final area recommended by the technical group is 183 square kilometers. About a quarter to a third of the proposed FEN has already had significant impacts from oil and gas activity and logging.

No Yukon Protected Areas Strategy proposal has yet been developed for the La Biche, and none is likely to be, until the Liard First Nation land claim has been settled. There are also no forest management plans or land use plans for the area. Immediate landscape level protection is necessary, since gas exploration continues, and DIAND plans to increase logging in the area.

### **DIAND's forestry plans conflict with FEN**

DIAND produces overall forestry plans for Forest Management Units, called Resource Reports. Resource Reports outline the areas of interest for logging, the ecology of the general area, and possible ecological, First Nation, and other concerns. Draft Resource Reports are CEEA screened before they are implemented. There are several serious concerns regarding the draft Resource Report for the Lower La Biche Watershed.

Oddly, DIAND didn't wait until the final FEN technical group report, before producing and circulating the draft Resource Report, even though the FEN final report came out shortly after the draft Resource Report. Even more oddly, DIAND doesn't seem to have considered even the interim FEN boundaries when choosing the Forestry Areas of Interest, although a map of the interim FEN boundaries is included in the Resource Report. Most of the Forestry Areas of Interest are within both the interim and the final proposed FEN boundaries.

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***DIAND has co-operated since 1996 in the development of the Forest Ecosystem Network proposal... It is very disappointing that at the last minute they no longer seem to be dealing in good faith.***

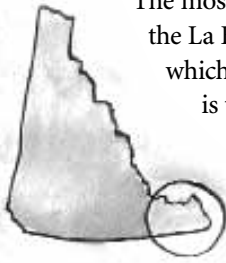
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### **Inflated harvest ceiling**

In the Resource Report DIAND proposes to use the harvest ceiling for both the Beaver and La Biche River watersheds, even though logging is only planned for the La Biche watershed. This means that 147,000 cubic meters per year could be cut in the La Biche watershed, as opposed to the 58,000 that the preliminary Timber Supply Analysis estimates is available. Furthermore, the proposed harvest ceiling for the La Biche makes no provision for withdrawing the timber volumes in the Forest Ecosystem Network, which will no longer be available for logging.

### **Ecosystem-based management?**

The draft Resource Report is also contradictory. It states that the goal is to practice ecosystem-based management by mimicking natural disturbances.



The most prevalent natural disturbances in the La Biche are ones like insects and disease, which create small gaps. Spruce budworm is thought to be the primary reason for the mixed age and species composition of these forests. Shelterwood and selection systems would be necessary to create similar openings, however the draft Resource

Report suggests straight edged patch cuts and replanting with pine. This is because partial cutting systems would likely result in poor regeneration, due to budworm dispersal from mature trees to seedlings.

While patch cutting and planting pine probably is the best system to minimize the risk of Not Sufficiently Regenerated designations on reforested lands, it would result in a completely different ecosystem from what presently exists. It would change the logged areas from predominantly uneven aged spruce stands with a high proportion of mature and old trees, to young, even-aged pine plantations. This is especially disturbing, since pine is uncommon in the La Biche, particularly in the Forestry Areas of Interest. If the level of budworm activity in some parts of the La Biche makes it impossible to practice ecosystem-based forestry with our current knowledge, these areas should not be logged at all. Logging methods that completely change the character of the forest should certainly not be used.

### **DIAND Stalls Final FEN Boundaries Decision**

On November 23, 1999, the FEN Stakeholder Group met. According to the agenda, the purpose of the meeting was for the Technical Group to present their recommendations, and the Stakeholder Group to make a decision regarding the FEN boundaries. This decision was to be forwarded as a recommendation to DIAND Forest Resources for a final decision. The DIAND representatives, however, came with a different agenda. They announced that key stakeholders, including the oil and gas industry and some First Nations with traditional territories in the southeast Yukon, had not been consulted, and that the process could not continue without them. The oil and gas industry has no place at the FEN table, since the FEN will only be protected from logging. On the other hand, all First Nations with potential land claims should certainly

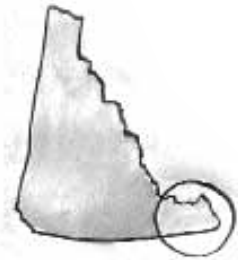
have been included right from the start. However, after three years of FEN planning, DIAND's eleventh hour announcement that new stakeholders must be invited to the table looks suspiciously like stalling.

The DIAND representatives asked the stakeholder group to agree to logging this winter even though the FEN boundaries won't be finalized until after Christmas, so long as logging is outside the proposed FEN boundaries. However, the DIAND representatives did not come prepared with information about the forestry potential of the areas of the La Biche that are outside the proposed FEN, so they were unable to give the industry representatives any assurance that there would be wood available. Therefore, the stakeholder group was backed into agreeing to logging within the proposed FEN boundaries if absolutely necessary.

DIAND has co-operated since 1996 in the development of the Forest Ecosystem Network proposal, and excellent research has been done in the process. It is very disappointing that at the last minute they no longer seem to be dealing in good faith. We can only hope that they really do their utmost to find a wood supply for this winter outside the FEN boundaries, and that early in the new year the Technical Team's recommendations will be followed. DIAND has a legal obligation to fulfill the 1996 CEAA mitigation and create a representative La Biche Forest Ecosystem Network from which forestry is permanently excluded — let's hope it happens without an all out battle.

*karen baltgailis*





## THAs on the Fast Track Again

Remember last August when the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) came out with plans to allocate large new Timber Harvest Agreements (THAs) without proper planning and public input? If the Yukon public hadn't stopped them then, THAs would be being signed as you read this. Unfortunately, DIAND didn't learn from the last round — now they intend to have companies applying for THAs by February 7, 2000.

The intention is still to open up currently inaccessible areas of the southeast (read: the Coal and Beaver River watersheds) for big tenures; and South Yukon Forest Corporation is still the driving force. You've probably heard recent talk on the radio about 'roads to resources' in the southeast. It's all part of the plan.

It is not possible to make sound decisions about protected areas, habitat and other non-timber values, or to even do sufficient inventory to determine which areas are suitable for forestry within a two-month timeframe. Two months is absolutely inadequate for the necessary public input into where new

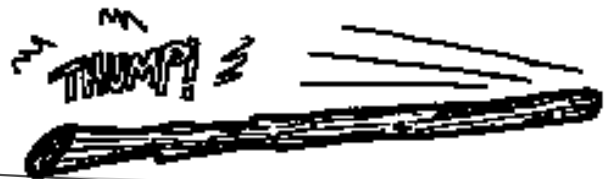
THAs should be located, and what kind of tenure system is appropriate for the Yukon's very limited wood supply. In addition, the final Timber Supply Analysis is still not complete.

If the Timber Harvest Agreement Development Process proceeds as planned, adequate protection of the southeast Yukon's ecological values will be precluded, First Nations' land claims could be severely compromised, traditional values and lifestyles will be threatened, and the opportunity for a well planned, small scale sustainable Yukon forestry industry will be lost.

The issue hasn't changed since the last time we told DIAND to slow down. Please write again; ask why they still aren't listening, and demand real public input into the future of the Yukon's forests. Call Karen at YCS for more information and how you can help. And keep checking our forestry webpage, which will hopefully be updated shortly. ([www.yukonweb.com/y/cs/forests/](http://www.yukonweb.com/y/cs/forests/))

DIAND Forest Management and the Alsek Renewable Resource Council are doing a great job getting the forest management planning process organized in the Champagne and Aishihik traditional territory. This is exactly what needs to happen everywhere before long term allocations are made, especially in the southeast where so much more logging occurs.

*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.

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Howard Madill  
Regional Manager, Forest  
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345 - 300 Main St.  
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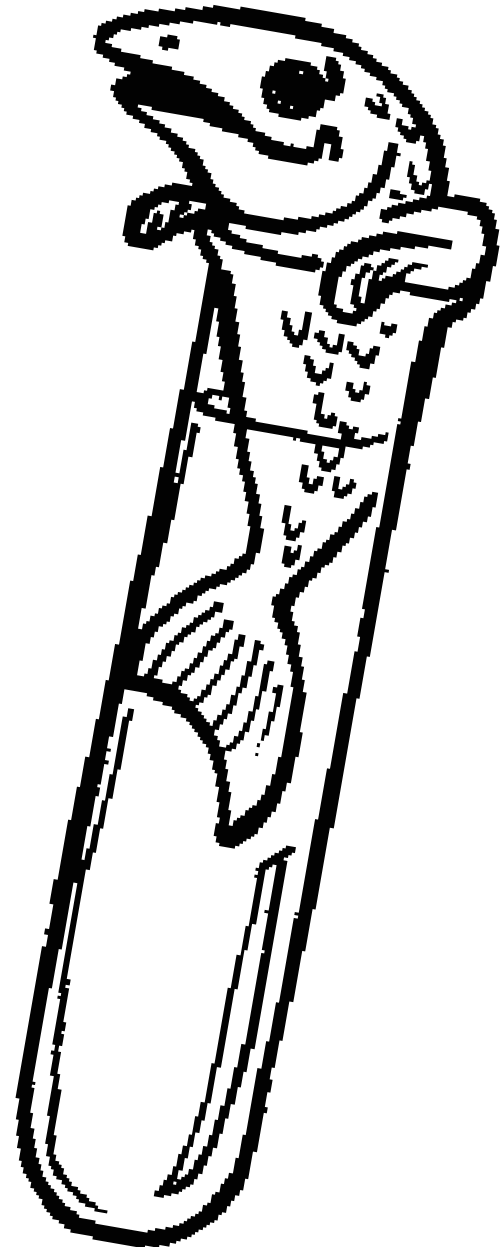
# Metal Mining Liquid Effluent Regulation: Permission to Pollute

For the last seven years, three departments of the federal government have been reviewing an important regulation under the federal *Fisheries Act*, with a commitment to “modernize” the regulation and bring it into the next millennium as a set of rules that will protect fish and fish habitat from the polluting effects of metal mining. The Metal Mining Liquid Effluent Regulation (MMLER) has been the subject of eleven different consultations, plus workshops, working groups, and special committees, beginning in November 1992. These exercises have produced regional syntheses of mine effluent problems, recommendations and reports, and — in 1999 — a draft regulation that Environment Canada expects to be published in December 1999 (or maybe March).

Representing the Yukon Conservation Society as the Canadian Environmental Network’s delegate to the toxicity subgroup, Sue Moodie surmises that after twenty-two years since the regulation was first passed into law, and 7 years of review, the regulation is still focused on providing mining companies with permission to pollute, and sadly, to pollute a lot.

The new proposed regulation is still extremely weak. The allowable levels for the substances that are included remain largely unchanged. Other than a slight lowering of the limit for total suspended solids (TSS), all other levels remain the same as they were in the original 1977 MMLER, and toxic substances that are not on the MMLER “list” but are known to be a problem at many mines, such as cadmium and mercury, are still not included. These limits for prescribed deleterious substances are too high, and fail to reflect the ability of current technology to achieve much lower and environmentally protective levels. The only new substance to be regulated under the

HACK!  
GASP!  
CHOKE!



MMERs is cyanide (CN), and the limit established for CN is 500% higher than the government’s consultant determined was economically and technically achievable (SENES, 1999). Similarly, the limits for both arsenic and TSS are well above the levels that were deemed feasible in the SENES report and MMLER continues to exclude an



upper limit for pH, when it is widely recognized that pH in the range of 6.5 to 9.0 is appropriate for the protection of aquatic life (CCME).

The prescribed limits remain concentration-based. Mining operations can meet concentration-based limits with the aid of dilution, yet still be discharging tonnes of metals into watersheds if the effluent is being discharged at high volumes. Loadings-based standards are a more appropriate measure to control the amount of metals entering the aquatic environment.

The regulation has definitely been improved with the addition of a fish test for “acute lethality” using rainbow trout. This means that a mine’s effluent must not kill more than half the fish that are left in the effluent for the test period of 96 hours. While the general public may still be shocked to learn that effluent can kill half the fish and still be acceptable under the federal regulation, it’s an important improvement over the current version of the law, which has limits or levels for the amount of each toxic substance allowed in the effluent but no requirement that the effluent pass a test and show that it is not acutely lethal with the full chemistry makeup of the effluent (including all metals and process chemicals).

Unfortunately, there remains a failure to include a regulated requirement to use *Daphnia magna* as a test species to determine if the effluent is acutely lethal to organisms farther down in the food chain of aquatic ecosystems. Ontario and Quebec, provinces with extensive mining, have legislation requiring acute lethality tests be passed for both *Daphnia* and rainbow trout. In the interests of

maintaining a level playing field for all mining companies in Canada, as well as achieving harmonization of regulations and comparable environmental protection across Canada, it is absurd to consider that the federal regulations would be designed to lower standards than those

which have already been in force in parts of Canada.

Finally, an important opportunity to provide affected communities and concerned Canadians with an ability to know which mines are releasing toxic effluent into the environment is being passed by. While relatively easy to establish and consistent with the Government’s commitments to openness and accountability,

there is no requirement under the revised regulation or the EEM program to set up and maintain a national toxicity registry where incidents of acutely lethal effluent would be posted, allowing communities to understand how the environment in their area is being affected.

The pollution prevention sections of the *Fisheries Act* prohibit the discharge of substances deemed deleterious to fish and fish habitat. If the new MMER has as its goal the protection of fish and fish habitat, the regulation should recognize the fact that the health of all organisms within the aquatic ecosystem must be maintained and information about mines who fail to do so must be easily available to concerned citizens. Unfortunately, this regulation is proceeding with the goal of regulatory permission to pollute, little commitment to enforcement of these regulations (even as poor as they are) and secrecy of effluent quality from the larger public who may be affected.

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**...limits for prescribed deleterious substances are too high, and fail to reflect the ability of current technology to achieve much lower and environmentally protective levels.**

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### ***MiningWatch Canada***

MiningWatch Canada had its first official members meeting in October. The Yukon Conservation Society is a founding member of this pan-Canadian organization. It was created to monitor social and environmental impacts of mining exploration and development; and to influence mining policy and practice within Canada and with Canadian mining companies operating abroad.

For more information on programs of MiningWatch Canada, contact Sue Moodie through the YCS office.

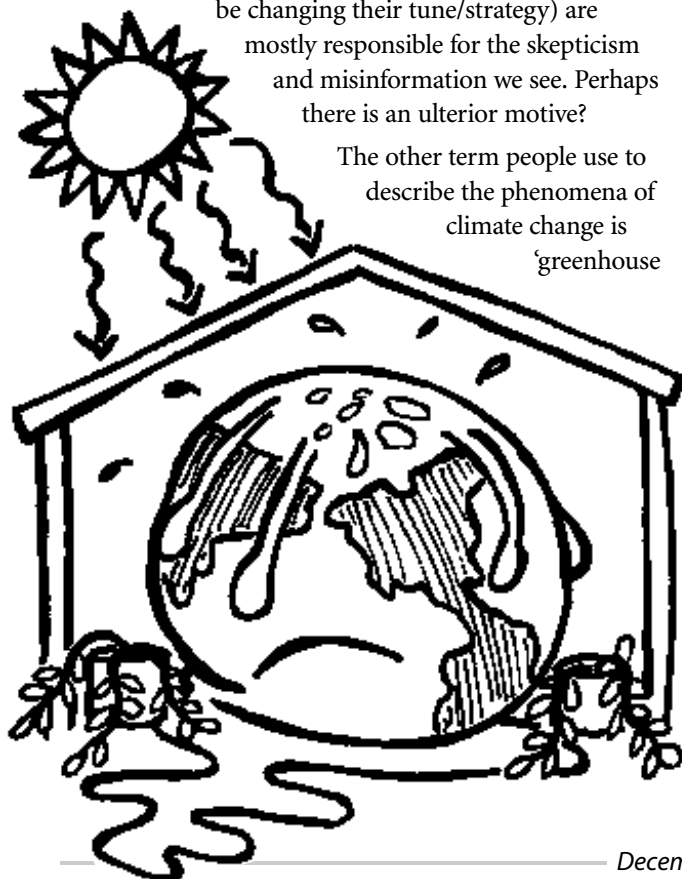
# Climate Change

Climate change is something that has scientists, environmentalists and even parents concerned. But what are people talking about when they refer to climate change anyhow? It's a confusing issue and to complicate matters, other terms are often used to describe climate change.

The first one to come about was 'global warming'. Global warming is technically a correct term, but is open to much misinterpretation. For politicians especially, the term conjures up images of basking in the sun on a beach somewhere, hardly cause for alarm. The idea that global circulation patterns have the potential to shift drastically and alter weather patterns is completely lost on them. Global warming is also the term most easily misinterpreted to 'disprove' what is really happening. Skeptics use unusually cold seasons or NASA data showing upper atmosphere temperatures cooling, to cast doubt or cause deliberate confusion on the issue. We are lead to believe that there is a balance of believers and non-believers of climate change. But within the scientific community there are few skeptics. Not very surprisingly we find that groups like Imperial Oil, the Fraser Institute, and the Coal Association of Canada (although it seems they may be changing their tune/strategy) are

mostly responsible for the skepticism and misinformation we see. Perhaps there is an ulterior motive?

The other term people use to describe the phenomena of climate change is 'greenhouse



effect'. Carbon dioxide, water vapour, and methane in the earth's atmosphere stop some of the sun's heat from leaving the atmosphere. This results in a warming of the earth. These gases compose less than 1% of our atmosphere but they are responsible for warming the earth from a predicted average temperature of -18 C to an actual temperature of +15 C, making life on earth possible! The greenhouse effect is not really the problem but rather the **enhanced greenhouse effect** caused by human activity.

What has scientists concerned is the human contribution to the carbon dioxide level in the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels. The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has had a natural variability of 180 parts per million at its lowest to about 280 PPM at it's highest over the last 200 000 years. The present level of carbon dioxide is about 360 PPM; that's by far much higher than it's ever been before. The 200 000-year record also shows a very tight correlation between carbon dioxide, methane, and temperature. Based on this information it is not much of a leap in logic to predict an increase in temperature with our increase in carbon dioxide. Incidentally, methane has increased from a previous high of 0.7 PPM to a present level of 1.72 PPM too.

Trying to state exactly when we will see catastrophic impacts of our activities or just what they will be is a bit more fuzzy due to the complexity of the earth as a system, but there are certainly indications that we have upset an important balance. Although it is hard to prove that they are climate change related, many changes in weather patterns are being witnessed worldwide: unusual heat and cold, droughts, melting ice caps, or just unpredictable weather. One could speculate that climate change is upon us now.

What can we do? Certainly reducing carbon dioxide emissions is a good start. Canada committed to reducing our emissions to 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2010. Scientists say that is not nearly enough, but it is a start. Individually we can all make a difference by: supporting green energy such as wind, driving our cars less and buying more fuel efficient models, insulating and sealing our homes, buying products from companies that are energy efficient, and of course letting politicians know that climate change is important!

*craig olsen*

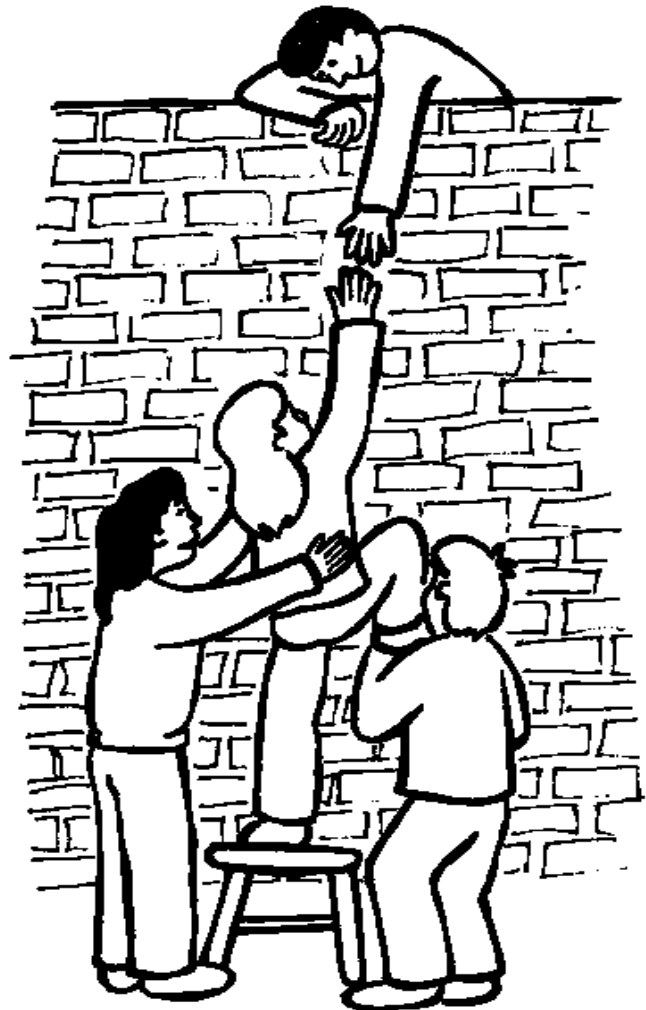


# The Low Road

What can they do to you?  
Whatever they want  
They can set you up, bust you,  
they can break your fingers  
burn your brain with electricity,  
blur you with drugs 'till you  
can't walk, can't remember,  
They can take away your children  
wall up your lover, they can do  
anything you can't stop them doing.  
How can you stop them?  
Alone you can fight, you can refuse.  
You can take what revenge you can,  
but they roll right over you.  
But two people fighting  
back to back can cut through a mob  
a snake-dancing fire can break a cordon,  
termites can bring down a mansion  
Two people can keep each other sane,  
can give support, conviction,  
love, message, hope, sex.  
Three people are a delegation  
a cell, a wedge.  
With four you can play games  
and start a collective.  
With six you can rent a whole house  
have pie for dinner with no seconds  
And make your own music  
Thirteen makes a circle  
a hundred fill a hall.  
A thousand have solidarity and your  
own newsletter, ten thousand  
community and your own papers,

a hundred thousand, a network  
or communities.  
A million our own world.  
It goes one at a time.  
It starts when you care to act.  
It starts when you do it again.  
After they say no.  
It starts when you say we  
and know who you mean  
and each day you mean  
one more.

marge piercy





## Out to Pasture

For those of you who may be finding out the news only just now, our longtime Executive Director, Jennifer Ellis, is leaving us for 'greener' pastures. Hanging out with all those straw bales while building her house has her itching for a change. Although we welcome Christine Cleghorn to the much sought after position (are you kidding?) of Executive Director, we will sorely miss Jennifer and will long remember her substantive accomplishments.

Jennifer's tenure at YCS was marked by a number of key areas of growth for the organization. Most notably, the past five years have brought an increase in the number of office staff and an increase in the number of paid hours for the Executive Director. Additionally, there was a marked effort to increase the number of youth involved in YCS projects through internships and other special programs.

These significant changes enabled a substantial increase in the total number of person hours available for YCS issues and projects. Although YCS still relies heavily on the efforts and expertise of volunteers, the benefits of increasing paid staff affect YCS in a number of important ways. Increased staffing has resulted in an increase in the number and scope of issues YCS is able to tackle, a greater consistency in our approach to these issues, and in many cases, brought a greater level of professionalism to the organization in the eyes of the community.

Jennifer's keen interest in building capacity and empowering people at the community level played a major role in YCS projects and outreach activities. The Sustainable Communities project, was an excellent example of her belief in 'people-power.' From articulating the concept through to promoting and organizing the project on the ground, through to participating in every one of the workshops in the communities, Jennifer was able to focus her attention on individual participants, while never losing sight of the big picture. This

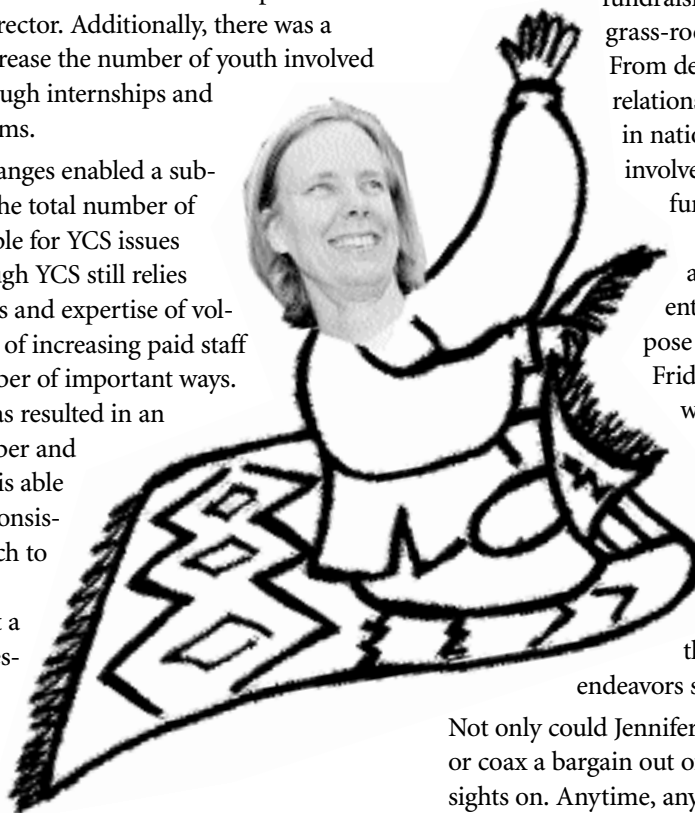
immensely proactive project, funded by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, unfolded under Jennifer's leadership.

To this day, several years after the 'official' conclusion of the Sustainable Communities project, YCS continues to benefit from the outreach of that experience. Not only did it increase the profile and credibility of YCS in the communities, but it also made a huge individual difference for some of the participants in their level of environmental awareness as well as their ability and confidence to address environmental issues that affected them.

Much of Jennifer's focus and expertise was around fundraising, an activity dreaded by many grass-roots, volunteer-based organizations. From developing and cultivating working relationships with key contacts in national foundations through to her involvement in local activities, no fundraising activity was too big or too small for Jennifer's dedication and commitment. Her boundless enthusiasm and single-minded purpose were never so evident as those Friday nights in a favorite local bar where she cajoled her fellow patrons and sold countless tickets for a Harley Davidson motorcycle raffle to raise money for YCS. This particular example also indicates how willingly she saddled a major part of the responsibility for making YCS endeavors successful.

Not only could Jennifer raise the money, she could find or coax a bargain out of almost every target she set her sights on. Anytime, anywhere, if Jennifer launched herself on a bargain-finding mission, she'd seek out the weakness in her victims and pounce on their vulnerability. Nobody was immune to her confidence and ability to chat them up for a good deal.

Jennifer was adamant about sharing knowledge. She believed that the more people who knew what was going on and were able to speak on the issues, the stronger we would become as an environmental community. She recognized that the long term viability and strength of YCS as an organization depends on that sharing of knowledge.



She believed that individual voices should always be replaceable; we should always share our knowledge around our community so that whenever, for whatever reason, if another voice (or the next voice) was needed it was there to take up the cause.

Throughout the Yukon and across the country it is easy to find people talking *about* First Nations' people and issues. Unfortunately, it is still much harder to find people talking *with* them. In her many communications and conversations with Yukon First Nation people, Jennifer always demonstrated an honest respect for and valuing of First Nations' experiences, culture and perspectives. Largely as a result, the door between YCS and First Nations often swings wide open offering opportunities to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and concern.

Jennifer's strengths in policy and planning served YCS interests exceptionally well in numerous government processes. Her relentless participation in federal and territorial processes toward developing Yukon forest policy (for example) kept YCS interests on the front burner for several years. She never seemed to tire of bureaucratic delays and excuses, nor did she ever cease to point her finger squarely on the specific issues she wanted the policy-makers to address, again and again and again, as often as necessary to get the job done.

Her keen editing skills and analytical approach made her a fearsome reviewer of articles, editorials, and anything else that left the YCS office for public consumption, without exception. Over the years, she earned the reputation of the 'ultimate editor,' crossing the 't's' and dotting the 'i's' of

anything that came across her desk (whether it had anything to do with her or not!).

Never short on a sense of humour or the ability to laugh at herself, Jennifer's wry exchanges with people often led to enduring comradeship that helped to ease the often serious nature of her work at YCS. One long term board member fondly refers to Jennifer as 'old grey eyes', and a co-worker recalls Jennifer as 'always the snappy dresser,' even on those special occasions when her shirt was on inside out or her buttons were in the wrong buttonholes. Jennifer's acute listening abilities occasionally backfired according to one colleague who recalls her falling hook line and sinker for straight-faced tall tales on a very regular basis.

Jennifer had an admirable tolerance for this high profile position, this somewhat thankless job with less than impressive financial rewards and its demands for 'expertise' on a crazily divergent array of issues. However, despite the hectic pace and scope of her work, Jennifer was always willing to set the issues aside (briefly), to enjoy excellent food, saunas, a hot-tub, the company of friends and/or a wee dram of scotch.

Accepting this position in the first place is an act of sheer lunacy and to find someone who would keep at it for over five years is truly astonishing. YCS is extremely fortunate in holding Jennifer's interest for this long and we send her off with our very best wishes in every direction she launches herself from here. Thanks for everything Jen.

*shelley gerber alice hartling janne hicklin  
val loewen sally wright*



## **Be a GREEN Volunteer for the Arctic Winter Games**

We are the Green Committee of the Arctic Winter Games 2000 and we will be operating an extensive recycling and energy conservation program for the Games.

The main thrust of the Green Committee is thanks to the efforts of volunteers and employees of the Raven

Recycling Society, as well as the Yukon Energy Corporation. The Green Committee hopes to make these games one of the most successful major green sporting

events ever. Our goal: To capture all recyclables and compostables generated during the games. We have given the opportunity for sorting and refund collection to local non-profit organizations to assist them in their fund-raising efforts. But we need lots of other help: volunteers to supervise the sorting, to collect and deliver the recyclables and to help us set up and remove our recycling stations at the various events.

A large number of volunteers is crucial to the success of the Green Committee. And with your help, we can make sure the athletes know that not only should they go for the gold, but more importantly, go for the Green!!!!

Please contact Lea-Ann at Raven for more info: 667-7269.





# BOOK REVIEW

David Suzuki **earth time**

Stoddart, 1998, 271 pp., ISBN 0-7737-6009-1

Is the earth going to collapse in 25 years under human exploitation? Does the birth control pill really cause hermaphroditism in fish and other wildlife and infertility in men?

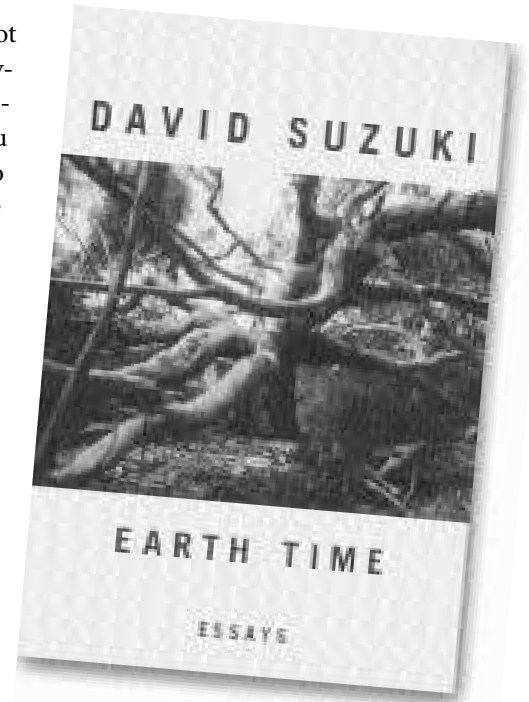
As well as computers and technology, over consumption and mass marketing, these are just some of the issues discussed in David Suzuki's *Earth Time*. With reference to numerous scientists, writers and politicians, the facts are there—if we don't change our behaviour today, there won't be much of a tomorrow for us, our children or our environment that sustains us.

In *Earth Time*, you'll find a collection of essays containing a plethora of information regarding our environment and our government's lack of action. There's nothing humorous or

entertaining here—it's all raw, if not frightening facts. Facts that our government isn't willing to acknowledge. But as Al Gore says, "If you want change, you have to take it to the people...then people like me will trip over ourselves to climb aboard the band wagon."

When I was asked to do this book review, my first thought was, "What could I write about?" After a moment I realized, "What could I not write about?" I believe this book could be used as a tool to encourage people of all ages and cultures to take action. If you don't know what I mean, read it and you'll see.

*melissa delaney*



## 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 3S9

Advocacy  Research  Environmental Education  Planning  Consultation

*Did you know?*

...



A \$12 compact fluorescent light bulb will pay for itself in just two years, and keep working for many years..



Correctly composting food and yard wastes — by regularly watering and turning them — eliminates the methane that they would cause at a landfill.



It can take 5 to 6 tons of ore to make one gold wedding band, leaving the rest as waste.

Conservation  Sustainable Communities  Grassroots  Non-profit  Volunteers

**Yukon Conservation Society**

Box 4163, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 3S9

