

Yukon Conservation Society 2017 Highlights

Energy

Renewables

We research and provide information about renewable energy options for the Yukon:

- We commissioned a study to learn about renewable energy co-ops across Canada. We concluded that the best option for the Yukon is to partner with an existing co-op, such as Dawson Creek-based Peace Energy Co-op. We continue to work with interested individuals to investigate creating a Yukon-based co-op.
- We researched, wrote and distributed a policy paper on carbon pricing. We have subsequently been invited by Yukon government to sit on an expert panel on integrating climate, energy and economic policy.
- We hosted a Solutions Economy week, bringing social enterprise expert Shaun Loney to Whitehorse and Watson Lake for four workshops and evening events. We brought together local entrepreneurs, First Nation and Yukon government representatives and NGOs to explore how social enterprises can innovatively solve social, environmental and economic problems.

We advocate for improved policies within government- and utility-led processes:

- Our intervention at the Yukon Utilities Board (YUB) succeeded in preventing ATCO from investing \$5M dollars of ratepayers' money in LNG-electricity-generating infrastructure in Watson Lake. Through this intervention and our follow-up cost claim, we continue to push the YUB to consider environmental and social factors rather than just the financial business case in its decisions.
- We are participating in the 2017 Yukon Energy General Rate Application before the YUB with the goal of greater integration of small scale renewables and storage.
- We are participating in the Aishihik Advisory Committee, a joint First Nation/utility relicensing process for the Aishihik Hydro Dam; this included taking part in a Southern Tutchone language immersion camp at Aishihik Village.
- We met with Yukon government Ministers to discuss areas of common interest and ways to achieve shared goals.

Fossil Fuels

We facilitate public discussion and provide information about proposed industry projects, while holding government accountable:

- The oil and gas industry in Yukon in 2017 is essentially moribund, with the Kotaneelee field being abandoned and Eagle Plain in legal limbo while Chance (formerly known as Northern Cross) Oil is trying to sue Yukon over the fracking moratorium. YCS has held Yukon's Oil and Gas Branch to account for failing to require sufficient abandonment deposits. The Branch's failing at the Kotaneelee is costing the public purse hundreds of thousands of dollars; we continue to pressure the Branch to revisit the (in our view) inadequate deposit at Eagle Plain.
- The concerns we raised over a parcel of land around Ni'iinlii Njik (Fishing Branch) Territorial Park that industry had indicated it wanted to explore contributed to the parcels being withdrawn.

We work to hold government accountable on environmental impacts:

- We continue to watchdog the Yukon government's Oil and Gas branch. We asked that the Request for Postings of interest by oil companies and the results from a spill at the Kotaneelee site be made public – YG has yet to do so. We successfully raised public interest and conducted several media interviews on the inability of the branch to require adequate bonding for well site reclamation (abandonment).

Peel Watershed and Land Use Planning

We brought the Peel Watershed case to the Supreme Court of Canada:

- On March 22, the Peel Watershed case was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. It was an incredible experience to be in Ottawa with representatives of the Peel First Nations and CPAWS Yukon. We were welcomed by the local Kitigan Zigi Anishinaabeg with a water ceremony, and the hearing was followed by a press conference on Parliament Hill.
- The Peel Watershed was featured in high profile media including *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, the *National Observer*, *The Walrus*, *APTN*, and more.
- We collaborated with CPAWS Yukon on a photo exhibit featuring Peel people and landscapes. It premiered in Ottawa in March and has since toured Mayo, Fort McPherson, and Dawson City.
- We launched the new www.protectpeel.ca website, featuring beautiful photographs and extensive information about the campaign to protect the Peel Watershed.
- More than 4500 Yukoners and people around the world have signed the Peel Pledge.

Outreach

We connect people with nature:

- We had a great season on the trails, reaching more than 1600 people through our summer programming (an increase of 30% from last year). We took 769 people on guided hikes to Canyon City, our Kids Ed-Ventures programming helped 393 children explore nature, and 488 people enjoyed our outdoors art event, *Created at the Canyon*. Thanks to Sarjana, Tessie, and Tannicka, our fantastic trail guiding team for 2017!
- We kept our membership informed – and reached new people – through our quarterly newsletter, *Walk Softly*; our weekly news email; and social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- We spoke about our work with students from Carleton University’s journalism program, Watson Lake, Yukon College, visiting researchers, and others.
- We began preparations for our upcoming 50th anniversary year. YCS was founded in 1968 and we’re putting together a series of events celebrating 50 years of conservation in the territory for 2018.

We celebrate people doing great work:

- The 2016 Gerry Couture Stewardship Award (\$1000) was awarded to Jimmy Johnny. Jimmy is a Na Cho Nyäk Dän elder, a longtime guide in the Peel Watershed, and a tireless voice for the land, water, and animals.
- The 2017 Ted Parnell Memorial Scholarship (\$500) was awarded to Sonny Parker of Dawson City. Sonny is a nature photographer and a third year student at Yukon College who has worked in bird monitoring and plans to pursue a career in conservation.

Wildlife

- In partnership with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, we hosted a two-day event celebrating the Porcupine Caribou Herd. It brought together the best in western science with traditional knowledge and culture to inform and inspire Yukoners. The event included talks by Elders, management experts and scientists from across Canada; a sneak peek at the new film *Camera Trap* and a screening of *Being Caribou*; handicraft and storytelling presentations; a taste of caribou donated by VGFN and prepared by Miche Genest; and children’s activities.
- We contributed to three national-level environmental law consultations: the Navigable Waters Protection Act, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Fisheries Act. All three were gutted by the Harper regime. It appears that the Fisheries Act will be fixed, but there is ominous silence regarding the other two pieces of legislation.
- We engaged in YG’s Grizzly Bear Conservation and Management Plan development process and provided comments on the proposed changes to the Yukon Wildlife Act Regulations.

Mining

Our contributions help shape mining decisions in the territory:

- We submitted comments to assessors highlighting environmental concerns on a wide range of mining and related projects: 15 hard rock projects, 2 placer projects and 1 municipal water project.
- We raised serious concerns about the access road for the Dixie Creek placer project located just north of Haines Junction. Thanks in part to our intervention, the environmental assessor recommended against this project proceeding.
- Our Kudz Ze Kayah and Northern Minerals submissions led to the regulator asking for more information from the proponent to ensure environmental considerations could be properly evaluated.
- Thanks in part to the concerns we have raised over the proposed Casino Mine, that project is effectively on hold and has yet to commence a Panel Review environmental assessment.

We advocate for strengthened or new policies and regulations to improve the efficiency and reduce the risks of mineral development:

- We continue to lead an effort to protect Yukon wetlands. The Indian River valley will be the test case for how Yukon approaches wetlands stewardship in placer mining country. We provided comments on wetland reclamation guidelines and advocated for wetlands protection, including in the *Yukon News*.

We provide information to the wider Yukon and Canadian community about mining issues:

- This was an unprecedented year for media coverage on Yukon mining issues. YCS raised the Faro Mine cleanup in both of Canada’s national newspapers (*The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*). Over forty local interviews were done with Yukon-based media (television, radio, and newspapers) on everything from proposed mining access roads to large multinational mining companies investing in the Yukon.
- We published a series of editorials in the *Yukon News* to inform Yukoners about mining issues.
- We raised concerns over the Yukon Resource Gateway Project. The Prime Minister and Premier announced hundreds of millions of taxpayers’ dollars for mining access roads. YCS was one of only a few organizations to speak out against this initiative, pointing out that no land use planning or environmental assessment have been done on these resource roads.
- Thanks to our partnership with LightHawk, YCS is able to fly over and photograph minesites such as the Faro Mine. Videos and pictures are available on our website, www.yukonconservation.org.