

## The Welcome Mat A Guide to Volunteering

### Welcome to the Yukon Conservation Society!

This booklet will give you an idea of what YCS is and how you can be a part of it as a volunteer. YCS is what its members make of it. It is defined by the interests and enthusiasm of the people who get involved. Volunteers (like you!) are integral to YCS. By perusing this booklet, we'll bet that you can find something (a lot!) that interests you and that you have to offer to YCS!

#### WHO IS YCS?

YCS was established as a non-profit organization in 1968. That's nearly 50 years of conservation action!! Our office at 302 Hawkins Street in Whitehorse is wholly owned by YCS and provides a permanent base for our activities. The office is open weekdays from 9 am to 5pm.

The Yukon Conservation Society pursues ecosystem well-being throughout the Yukon and beyond, recognizing that human well-being is ultimately dependent upon fully functioning healthy ecosystems.

***We accomplish this through advocacy, research, and environmental education, and by participating in planning and consultation processes.***

YCS has hundreds of members, a Board of Directors and 6 staff positions. Membership with YCS entitles you to use our library, vote at the Annual General Meeting, receive our quarterly newsletter 'Walk Softly' and, most importantly, be part of a vital and active environmental organization. Annual individual memberships cost \$25 (students \$10) and a family membership costs \$40, but you're welcome to volunteer without becoming a member!

#### HOW DO THINGS HAPPEN AROUND YCS?

- ❖ **Meetings** (and lots of 'em!), brainstorming and actions coming out of them...
- ❖ Through the tireless work of our staff
- ❖ Through the energy of **inspired individuals** that dream up an idea and go with it...
- ❖ Big Decisions go to the friendly and approachable **Board of Directors**. Board members are nominated and voted in at the Annual General Meeting. All members are welcome to come and observe Board meetings or the AGM. You'll find board members popping in and out of the office on a regular basis (they're volunteers too!)

## WHY ARE YOU HERE?

The Yukon is faced with a wide variety of environmental concerns. The issues that YCS works on vary according to the priorities of the membership, the urgency of the issue and the availability of interested volunteers.

YCS folks are a diverse group of people with a wide array of interests and skills. Each of us remembers the first day we ventured through the door of YCS...so, why do you want to get involved? Well, maybe....

- ❖ you see environmental problems and you want a voice...
- ❖ you like the work that YCS is doing and want to add your support...
- ❖ you have an idea for an educational project...
- ❖ you are great at helping with fund-raising...
- ❖ you're in school with extra time to work for the environment and gain job skills...
- ❖ you love birds, flowers, trees, lakes and bugs (with or without formal training)...
- ❖ you know lots about Yukon issues and want to apply your knowledge...

It is not always easy for YCS to decide “on the spot” what to suggest to the energetic volunteers that come through the door. You can help us by reading on and doing some of the figuring out for us. The next section will give you an idea of the areas YCS tackles and where your interests might fit.

## ADDRESSING THE ISSUES...

Some of the issues below are very hot, while others go through periods of dormancy. Check with staff about your areas of interest – is there a YCS committee or are we active on the issue?

**Mining:** YCS works to ensure that mining and mineral exploration in the Yukon are done responsibly and in appropriate places. We provide input into proposed regulatory changes, respond to environmental reviews of mining and exploration projects, and keep the public informed through the media. A long term goal is to end the Free Entry system that allows mining exploration everywhere on 79% of the Yukon's land base.

**Peel Watershed:** YCS is working closely with CPAWS Yukon to protect one of the last vast intact natural areas in North America: the 68,000 km<sup>2</sup> Yukon portion of the Peel River watershed.

**Energy:** The oil and gas industry is being considered as a new source of economic development in the Yukon. Most of our gas reserves are shale gas – if they are developed, hydraulic fracturing (fracking) in the Yukon is inevitable. YCS opposes fracking because it causes huge surface disturbance, air emissions, health impacts, water consumption, and pollution. The good news is that our economy is not yet dependent on fossil fuels. This gives us a unique

opportunity to develop renewable energy. YCS promotes wind, solar, and small scale bio-fuel and hydro power, as well as energy conservation.

**Forestry:** During the Yukon's logging boom in the late 1990s YCS' Forestry Committee was very active, calling for ecologically sensitive logging, forest management planning, and value added manufacturing of wood products at home in the Yukon. Our volunteers helped prevent massive clear-cutting of the southwest Yukon's beetle-affected old growth spruce forests. Now there is much less logging in the Yukon we take a proactive role by commenting on forest management plans and proposals, and educating about the ecology of the boreal forest.

**Wildlife:** YCS promotes habitat protection throughout the Yukon. One of our current issues is protection of the McIntyre Creek Watershed, Whitehorse's largest, continuous east-west wildlife corridor. Besides being an ecologically diverse system, and important urban wildlife habitat, McIntyre Creek provides recreational and educational opportunities to residents and visitors.

**Waste, Contaminants, Sewage:** YCS initiated recycling in the Yukon through the creation of Raven Recycling. YCS was instrumental in ending the burning of garbage at Yukon land fill facilities.

**Tourism:** YCS receives requests from all over the world for information about the Yukon's spectacular natural heritage. We have produced a number of brochures and publications that help tourists keep their visits environmentally sound. The Hikes and Bikes Guide provides detailed maps and descriptions for numerous trails in the vicinity of Whitehorse. Our Free Guided Interpretive Walks at Miles Canyon & Canyon City throughout every summer help us reach out to visitors and locals alike.

## **KEEPING THE WHEELS ROLLING...**

There's a lot to do in the inner workings of YCS too! Here are some of the activities that we are always involved in – and always looking for help!

**YCS Board:** We have a hands-on, active board of directors, with diverse skills and knowledge. Our board provides strategic direction to the staff and volunteers.

**Education:** One of YCS's main objectives is to promote greater environmental awareness and understanding. We're often called upon to give presentations in schools or to organizations. When appropriate we develop educational materials, and organize guest speakers and public meetings. Currently oil and gas and renewable energy are a big focus for our educational activities.

**Outreach:** YCS often has a table or stall at local events, including the Fireweed Market in Whitehorse. We need friendly volunteers who would like to talk to the public about environmental issues in the Yukon and what YCS does!

**Fundraising:** YCS needs the resources to function effectively, so fundraising is an important ongoing activity. Some of the ways we bring in money include: memberships, mail-out campaigns, establishing a bequest program, special events, service contracts, and grants from foundations and government agencies.

**Policy Development:** As staff and board members come and go it's important for YCS to have policies that provide continuity. But policies need to be updated occasionally.

**Office Support:** Volunteer to help out in the office for a few hours! (You'll be amazed at the response!) You'll be put to work immediately doing something very fun, like stuffing envelopes, addressing mailouts, staffing the office on Fridays or responding to requests for information. There are even tasks you could do at home!

**Library:** The YCS library is a full wall of resources on all sorts of conservation related topics. Volunteers can discover what's available by helping to update the system, record recent additions, categorize and enter information into a computer cataloging system.

**Newsletter Production:** Four times a year YCS produces our newsletter Walk Softly, which is distributed to all members. Volunteers are needed to contribute articles, drawings, photos, poems and help with editing, envelope stuffing and mailouts.

**LAST BUT NOT LEAST!** Lots of little tasks need ongoing attention (like vacuuming, shoveling, gardening, cleaning, delivering recyclables). Maybe you're one of the folks who would rather "get your feet wet" for a few hours with an unglamorous but much-appreciated job!

....So did you find stuff that interests you? If you didn't find exactly what you were looking for, ask about it!

## **GREAT EXPECTATIONS**

**YCS is a volunteer run organization** - we rely on people to do what they say they'll do. Please don't commit to something unless you can really do it, and try not to overcommit yourself: it's better to volunteer for four hours and do it ten times than to volunteer for forty hours and find you can't do it all.

We want to add your energy to YCS, so don't be shy - try different ways to get involved. You're an important part of our volunteer core and we appreciate every reliable bit of your time!

**Ready to get into it? OK, so your options are:**

- ❖ **Find out more about your favourite issue.** Talk to a staff member, do internet research, and contribute your own thoughts and ideas. Have coffee with a veteran volunteer and find out more...
- ❖ **Jump into the guts of YCS! Offer your help with the day-to-day running of the office.** Talk to the staff and tell them to put you to work. There's always something to do (don't be surprised if it's vacuuming or yard work!) to keep YCS fully functioning and effective.
- ❖ **Dream up your own project!** See if it falls under the YCS mandate and find out what support YCS can provide.
- ❖ **Drop in to YCS board meetings** (the first Tuesday of every month at 5:15pm at the office) to meet the Board, find out what YCS is up to and get involved. Minutes of past Board meetings are available upon request if you'd like to get a snapshot of current activities and discussions.
- ❖ **Raise your enviro-voice at the Annual General Meeting** (March). Help us vote in a new Board, review the past years activities and throw in your ideas for the coming year!

We are so GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US!!! It's people like you that make YCS an effective voice for the Yukon environment!



302 Hawkins St., Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1X6

Phone (867) 668-5678

Email [outreach@yukonconservation.org](mailto:outreach@yukonconservation.org)

[www.yukonconservation.org](http://www.yukonconservation.org)