

# Yukon Conservation Society 2019 Highlights

## Energy

**In order to displace the need for fossil fuels, we advocated for improved policies and renewable energy options for the Yukon:**

- We applied for significant federal funding to lead an Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) demonstration project with support from Yukon government, Yukon Energy, and Yukon College. ETS systems store heat during off-peak hours and then release the stored heat during peak hours, reducing the load on the electrical system. Our application has been conditionally accepted for 2020.
- We continued to provide a strong voice in support of carbon pricing and other carbon reduction policies as a member of the Low Carbon Yukon Stakeholders Committee.
- We intervened on a Yukon Utilities Board (YUB) decision that blocked our energy utilities from delivering energy conservation programs. We also elevated the public and political profile of this decision to the point that Yukon Energy (YE) has taken the YUB to court over the decision.
- We fought against the construction of a major new fossil fuel power plant in Yukon... and won! YE has decided to continue renting backup diesel generators until another solution can be implemented.
- We continued to push for the conversion of Whitehorse's streetlights to LED.
- We submitted comments to YESAB calling for more sustainable water management practices at Yukon Energy's Aishihik dam.
- We said goodbye to Cody Reaume who has been the YCS Energy Analyst for the past 1.5 years.

## Peel Watershed and Land Use Planning

**We celebrated the signing of the Peel Watershed Final Land Use plan this August in Mayo!**

- The final Peel plan includes 83% protection! 55% permanent protection as special management areas (SMAs), 25% interim protection as wilderness areas (WAs), and 3% interim protection as Wilderness Area-Boreal Caribou (WA-BC). Any changes to the WAs and WA-BCs will require a Plan review that will be conducted jointly by all parties. Meaning, all parties will need to agree to changes in interim protection.

### **Other Land Use Planning in the territory**

- Dawson Land Use Plan—YCS is participating in the process. This is the first regional land use plan to be tackled after the Peel. The Dawson LUP is the third of a total seven plans that must be completed throughout Yukon. YCS is advocating for, and making a case for a conservation-oriented plan, building on the precedents set in the Peel and the North Yukon.
- Beaver River—We are speaking up for conservation of habitat and species in the ongoing sub regional planning process near Mayo.
- Yukon South Beringia—We are participating in work towards an innovative method of protecting ecological values in the South Beringia part of the Yukon, called priority place initiatives (PPI).
- Kluane National Park—YCS recommended a more comprehensive monitoring program, and the installation of a hut system in the park as part of a Management Plan review.
- Consistent with the science around the global biodiversity crisis, YCS has developed a position that at least half of Yukon should be set aside for conservation purposes.
- YCS and Liard First Nation (LFN) staff worked together to secure funding for the planning of a network of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas on lands which LFN has stewardship responsibility. YCS will continue our collaboration with LFN on this important initiative.

## Wildlife

**We raised awareness about threats to Yukon landscapes:**

- The Road Ecology presentation continues to be a successful way to bring attention to the effects of roads on the environment. We have presented the talk in Dawson, Whitehorse, and Mayo with more presentations planned.
- YCS submitted comments on the Southern Lakes Forest Management Plan.
- YCS participated in the development of Off Road Vehicle (ORV) regulations and amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act (MVA) for ORV regulations.
- We are working with First Nations, the Yukon Government, and other stakeholders in the development of new wetland policy.

**We spoke up for wildlife in government processes:**

- YCS submitted comments on Yukon Parks Strategy, Moose Harvest regulations, and the American Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR).
- YCS participated in the development of new regulations for Burbot fishing and advocates for the protection of Salmon at Yukon Salmon Sub Committee meetings.
- Federal Fisheries act: Canada introduced amendments to the Act intended to restore protection of fish and fish habitat. YCS supported these changes and they are now law.
- YCS submitted extensive comments on the Yukon Forum-led review of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. YCS is keen to see the Board reach its full potential as the "primary instrument of fish and wildlife management in the Yukon".

## Outreach

### We connected people with nature:

- We had a great season on the trails, reaching more than 1700 people through our summer programming. We took 628 people on guided hikes to Canyon City. Special themed hikes about edible plants, Beringia, northern adaptations, invasive species, history and archaeology were attended by 131 people. We had incredible numbers in our Kids Ed-Ventures programming where 452 children participated! That's an increase of 42% over last year. There were 524 people who attended our outdoors art event, *Created at the Canyon*. Thanks to Katie, Sylvie and Wyatt for their excellent work as our 2109 trail guiding team!
- We kept our membership informed—and reached new people—through our quarterly newsletter, *Walk Softly*; our fortnightly news email, now called *Tread Lightly*; and social media, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

### We honoured people doing great work:

- The 2018 Gerry Couture Stewardship Award (\$1000) was awarded to Dorothy Bradley, who has been working hard to help protect the last remaining wildlife corridor in Whitehorse, from Whistlebend to Fish Lake. The 2019 award will be announced at our holiday open house on Friday Dec 13 at 6pm.
- The 2019 Ted Parnell Memorial Scholarship (\$500) was awarded to Christine Spencer a student in the Environmental Conservation Science (Northern Systems Major) Degree Program at University of Alberta, through Yukon College.

### Other:

- We engaged with the public during the 2019 Federal election by hosting an Environmental Debate. All five Yukon federal candidates participated and there were over 200 people in attendance and over 100 watching the live stream online. Our debate was part of a national initiative, 100 Debates on the Environment. Over 10,000 people across Canada attended these debates to show our political leaders that the Environment is an important issue for Canadians!
- YCS took part in the Climate Strikes in September, where hundreds of Yukoners took to the streets of downtown Whitehorse to demand climate action.
- We said goodbye to Julia Duchesne who left YCS to pursue a journalism graduate school program and welcomed Davon Callander to the role of Outreach and Communications Manager.

## Mining

### Our contributions helped shape mining decisions in the territory:

- Provided input on over 15 Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board mining exploration projects. Our comments help minimize the damage these operations can do to the land.
- Wolverine Mine is finally under the care and maintenance of the Yukon Government, thanks in part to YCS constantly bringing attention to the conditions on site.
- Faro Mine is having urgent repair works done on site right now, and the reclamation plans are moving through environmental assessment. YCS has been calling for this to happen for decades.
- We are participating in the Victoria Gold water licence amendment and the Alexco Keno Hill water licence renewal hearings being held by the Yukon Water Board. Ensuring mines follow high water standards protects the rivers and lakes for everyone and everything.
- The Yukon Mineral Development Strategy is underway, which will allow YCS to raise a huge number of concerns we have with legislative and regulative aspects of mining. This ranges from royalties to permitting to environmental monitoring.
- YCS made interventions to the Yukon Water Board (YWB) regarding mining in wetlands, and consequently we have been invited to a public hearing, organized by the YWB to develop rules around mining in wetlands. Developing appropriate wetland regulations will ensure these sensitive ecosystems do not get destroyed by resource extraction projects.

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

- Abandoned Mine presentation was (and continues to be) a roaring success! It has been presented to over 150 Yukoners. Look out for more presentations in the future.
- We spoke to Yukon College students on several occasions about mining in the north.

## Around the Office

### We are taking steps to ensure our building is energy efficient and worked with our YCS vegetable garden:

- Installed a smart thermostat to reduce energy use and enhanced our weather stripping to reduce heat loss.
- We have undergone a house energy audit to identify areas where we can improve our efficiency.
- Trimmed trees in the back of the lot to clear them away from the power lines and house foundation.
- This spring we planted the garden boxes with many types of vegetables and then saved the seed for next year. The seed will be made available at our Holiday open house on Friday Dec 13th.