



Yukon Conservation Society



2021-2025 Strategic Plan

How to read this document:

The plan is structured around five strategic themes or priorities. Each theme sets out a number of **impact statements** that collectively speak to why the Yukon Conservation Society *matters*, summarizing our vision for the Yukon. Each theme then identifies specific strategies that the YCS will employ to help ensure that it can meet related challenges and achieve its goals. Lastly, the specific strategies the Board will employ to help ensure that it can meet related challenges and achieve these impacts over time are discussed for each theme.



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OUR VISION. Indigenous and non-Indigenous Yukoners are united in nurturing, protecting and celebrating the Yukon's extraordinary and world-renowned biodiversity and ecosystems.

OUR MISSION. Strengthen the Yukon's resilience, resistance and response to the twin climate and biodiversity crises through meaningful partnerships - recognizing that all life is dependent upon healthy ecosystems.

Our core values and beliefs.

- ▶ The Yukon is in a climate and a biodiversity crisis.
- ▶ The Voiceless deserve a seat at the table and we strive to be their voice.
- ▶ Solutions require both scientific and Indigenous ways of knowing.
- ▶ All life is inter-connected, and it is our collective moral obligation to conserve and protect the ecosystems that support life.
- ▶ We support the ideals of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and UNDRIP.
- ▶ We practice the ideals of Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- ▶ Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination.
- ▶ Partnerships, knowledge, advocacy and outreach can affect change.
- ▶ We acknowledge the passion and dedication of members, volunteers, and staff.

Our strategic priorities.

The Conservation and Protection of Yukon Ecosystems and Species

Toward the Sustainable Use and Development of Energy

Responsible, Sustainable and Socially-Relevant Mining

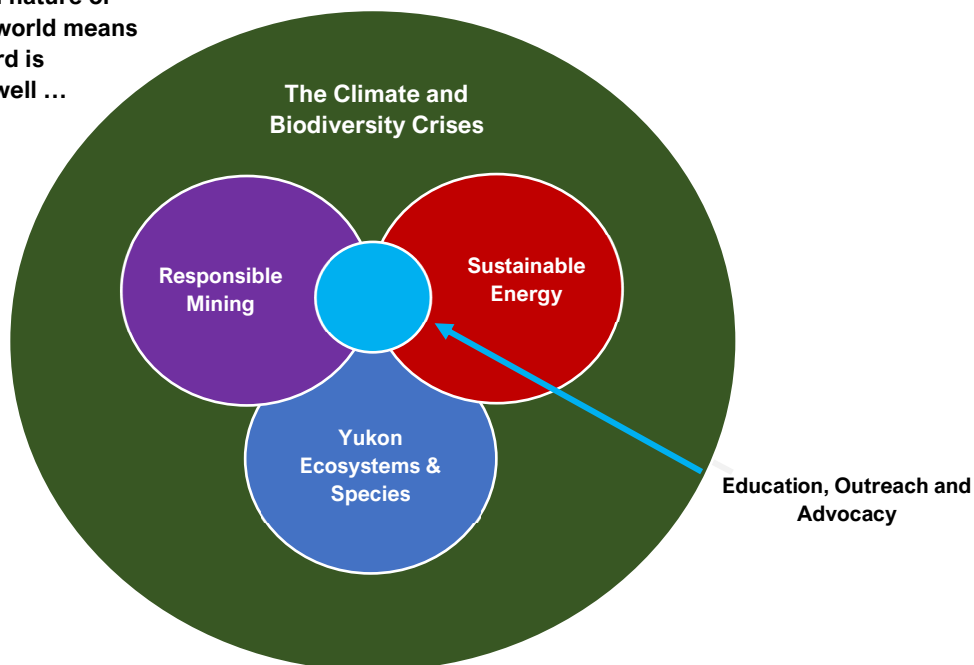
Education, Outreach and Membership Engagement



Foreword

It is difficult to argue that climate change – or, more accurately, the climate crisis – is not an existential threat to every aspect of our biodiversity. As the chart below shows, we believe that the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss must inform our path forward as we engage with our membership and others to educate, inform and advocate for immediate action to address these threats. It also captures the interconnected nature of our world, and the role we collectively play as insatiable consumers of resources. For example, while mining provides employment and the opportunity to earn profit, it also has significant and negative impacts on Yukon ecosystems and habitats. The clear implication is that we, as a society, must conduct these economic activities in responsible, sustainable and socially-relevant ways. The same interconnection occurs in how we develop and consume energy, particularly energy from non-renewable and ecologically-damaging sources. Ultimately, we are completely reliant on the health and vibrancy of our rich and diverse ecosystems, and it is this framework that our 2021-2025 Strategic Plan is designed to support.

The interconnected nature of our actions on our world means that the path forward is interconnected as well ...



As Yukoners, we each have a responsibility to care for, and about, our world. The implication is that we must come together to participate in solutions and approaches that recognize the interrelated and interconnected nature of our collective actions.

A. Conservation and Protection of Yukon Ecosystems and Species

The Yukon is now facing an unprecedented climate crisis that is adversely impacting our northern ecosystems and rich biodiversity. We believe the path forward lies in education, the building of coalitions, and a passionate and reasoned advocacy for ethical conservation and protection of Yukon's ecosystems and species. In determining our strategic priorities, we explored a number of considerations, including:

- ▶ how we can better support or participate in management plan reviews, land use planning processes and legislative reviews to ensure that ecosystem and wildlife considerations are meaningfully and appropriately addressed;
- ▶ how we can effectively work with Yukon First Nations and others to advocate for the majority of the Yukon to be set aside for conservation and protection within the next 25 years;
- ▶ what role should we have with respect to igniting action to address our climate and biodiversity crises;
- ▶ how can we better inform Yukoners of the role and impact of tourism, agriculture and wilderness outfitting on our ecosystems and habitats;
- ▶ how can we support Yukon's at-risk species, including advocating for Yukon Species-at-Risk legislation;
- ▶ how we can best build a strong coalition to advance Yukon-wide efforts to protect highly-valued ecosystems such as wetland and alpine habitats from adverse human interactions (for example, mines and mining roads, off-road vehicles); and
- ▶ supporting humane, sustainable and responsible harvesting and trapping in the territory, which recognizes that trapping and hunting are culturally important ways for people to sustain themselves and connect with the land.

WHAT YCS STRIVES TOWARD

- A1.** At-risk Yukon species are protected and restored to healthy populations.
- A2.** Culturally-based land use and management plans exist for every Yukon ecosystem.
- A3.** “Trophy hunting” does not occur in protected areas in Yukon.
- A4.** YCS recommendations are effectively reflected and incorporated in conservation-related programs, practices and initiatives.
- A5.** Yukoners are conservation-literate – they fully understand the interconnected nature of all living things, and the challenges and threats to Yukon's biodiversity, ecosystems, habitats, and species.
- A6.** Yukoners have impactful opportunities to participate in efforts to protect, preserve, and restore Yukon ecosystems and species.
- A7.** Decisions affecting Yukon's fish, wildlife and their habitats equally consider scientific and Traditional Knowledge.

Note:

The numbers (A1, A2, etc.) represent the "What YCS Strives Toward" statements on the preceding page.

1. In support of A1, A3 and A4, develop a broad-based advocacy coalition to ensure that the Government of Yukon develops Yukon Species at Risk legislation.
2. In support of A2, A4 and A5, initiate an outreach campaign that informs, recruits and supports YCS members to participate in planning processes such as YESAB, Land Use Planning and other processes.
3. In support of A4, A5 and A6, and in partnership with like-minded organizations, develop a Yukon-specific climate crisis advocacy strategy that:
 - supports Yukoners in collectively holding government accountable for meeting stated commitments;
 - raises public awareness of corporate green-washing efforts;
 - identifies critical habitats requiring immediate protection; and
 - provides specific recommendations on how Yukoners can do their part to address species extinction.
4. In support of A1, A3, A4 and A7, develop and promote a Yukon "Bill of Rights" that:
 - protects ecosystems and species;
 - calls on governments to enact legally enforceable penalties;
 - ensures that no trophy hunting occurs in protected areas in Yukon; and
 - grants personhood to rivers.
5. In support of A1, A3, A4 and A7, and based on best available research and TK, initiate an outreach and educational campaign to raise the profile of Yukon species currently at risk, and to advise decision-makers on what is needed to restore these populations.
6. In support of A1, A3 and A4, continue to support the Yukon River Salmon Summit for First Nations, which seeks to bolster conservation and education efforts, and foster increased information sharing between First Nations, salmon users, and salmon management bodies.

"In 1979, I was down the Peel River in a First Nation camp, above Fort McPherson. 104-year-old Annie Roberts was at the camp, and her willingness to come out to the island camp and meet the people coming down the Peel river – that local combination of interest and connection – that spirit is embodied in YCS history."

- A Board Member

B. Toward Sustainable Energy Use and Development

We envision a sustainable energy future for the Yukon. Energy use and peak electricity demand must be drastically reduced by improving efficiency and conservation, and adopting smart technologies. Local, low-impact renewable energy projects must be developed to reduce or eliminate our reliance on fossil fuels, substantially lower emissions and pollution, and increase our energy security and resilience. Efforts must also be made to demonstrate how smart energy approaches can help a regional economy transition to 'clean jobs' that provide valuable economic development opportunities and revenue streams for communities.

We appreciate that change can be a challenging and long journey, and are committed to working with industry, all levels of government, Yukon First Nations organizations, environmental organizations and Yukoners to champion the transition from imported fossil fuels to sustainable energy. Through education, advocacy, and direct action, the Yukon can transition more of its energy use to low-impact energy sources such as hydroelectricity, wind, solar, and geothermal energy. Other strategic considerations explored include:

- ▶ how can YCS support efforts to increase the availability and use of renewable energy in Yukon;
- ▶ what can we do to further inform and motivate Yukoners to reduce unnecessary energy and resource consumption;
- ▶ recognizing that reasoned and evidence-based advocacy is both a key to speaking 'truth to power' and a means to bringing multiple stakeholders together to effect change, how best to engage with industry, all levels of government and Yukon First Nations organizations to ensure that existing and proposed energy projects effectively and appropriately address critical conservation-related considerations;
- ▶ how can we ensure that climate change is effectively considered in the design and implementation of new infrastructure in the Yukon;
- ▶ how to support the dissemination of the rich body of knowledge around the environmental impact of energy projects to inform decision-making on projects, technologies and approaches that may have significant conservation and biodiversity implications; and
- ▶ to what extent should YCS take a leading role in promoting and advocating for greenhouse gas reduction targets in the Yukon.

WHAT YCS STRIVES TOWARD

- B1.** Yukon's energy needs are met through non-fossil fuel sources by 2050.
- B2.** Renewable energy is affordable and accessible in all Yukon communities by 2030.
- B3.** YCS recommendations are effectively reflected and incorporated in energy-related development approval processes.
- B4.** YCS is a respected and leading 'voice' for ethical and sustainable energy consumption practices in Yukon.
- B5.** Decisions affecting Yukon's clean energy future equally consider scientific and Traditional Knowledge.
- B6.** Greenhouse gas emissions in Yukon meet or outperform Canada's commitment by 2030.

Note:

The numbers (B1, B2, etc.) represent the "What YCS Strives Toward" statements on the preceding page.

1. In support of B1, B2, B3, B4 and B6, develop a strategy to build support for a Yukon-wide, multi-scale energy grid transformation that:
 - includes best practices from jurisdictional review;
 - builds on the Electric Thermal Storage (ETS) program and energy requirement reduction programs;
 - supports reduced consumption; and
 - transitions the Yukon to 100% renewable, carbon-free energy sources.
2. In support of B4 and B6, develop a public awareness campaign to help transition the Yukon to more environmentally-friendly lifestyle practices with respect to energy consumption, such as buying green, commuting using lower-impact means, and using alternate renewable energy sources for heating.
3. In support of B1 and B3, advocate for, and participate in, negotiations with the Government of Yukon to adopt firmer, evidence-based regulations and co-management based plans for the energy sector.
4. In support of B2, B3, B4 and B5, develop community-based education and advocacy plans that works with affected First Nations and other stakeholders and address the ecosystem and species effects of large-scale energy projects.
5. In support of B4, B5 and B7, work with other ENGOs and other partners to develop a "conservation aware" series of workshops or conferences that would bring together leaders and experts associated with key decision-making bodies in the Yukon where key conservation concerns are effectively raised and addressed.

"What sparks my interest in sustainable energy is seeing a northern community having a close relationship with nature, yet is using fossil fuels to energize its community. Community-focused energy planning can assist reconciliation and conservation efforts by providing resources to northern, Indigenous communities that seek a healthier way to meet their energy needs."

- Eric Labrecque: ETS Project Manager

C. Responsible, Sustainable and Socially-Relevant Mining

YCS has long advocated for responsible, sustainable and socially-relevant mining in Yukon. We have worked hard to develop a solid understanding of this industry and its practices, and how best to work within the systems to ensure that the voice of conversation is clear and resonant in all current and proposed mining and mining activities.

While we acknowledge that mining is an important economic development engine for Yukon's economy, significantly more effort is needed to ensure that Yukon's precious wetland areas are protected. YCS will continue its effort to work with, and support, all levels of government, the Yukon Socio-economic Assessment Board, the Yukon Water Board, Yukon University and the community to ensure all wetlands are protected areas. Other strategic considerations explored include:

- ▶ how can YCS effectively advocate for ethical mining in Yukon in terms of reducing mining for 'investment' metals, holding mining companies responsible for any ecosystem damage or disruption they have caused, and building coalitions to oppose the development of new mines associated with companies with poor international track records on human and/or animal rights, and environmental protections;
- ▶ recognizing that reasoned and evidence-based advocacy is both a key to speaking 'truth to power' and a means to bring multiple stakeholders together to effect change, how best to engage with industry, all levels of government and Yukon First Nations organizations to ensure that existing and proposed energy projects effectively and appropriately address critical conservation-related considerations; and
- ▶ how best to make available the existing body of knowledge, research and data on the environmental impact of mining, the benefit of new technologies, and other practical considerations to better inform decision-making on proposed mining activity.

WHAT YCS STRIVES TOWARD

- C1.** No placer mining activities occur in Yukon wetlands.
- C2.** Mining laws, regulations, policies, and approaches in Yukon reflect current conservation perspectives and priorities.
- C3.** Mining in Yukon is responsible: limited to critical minerals and only in that amount not available by best practice recycling, and occurring in areas only where such activities are ecologically and culturally appropriate.
- C4.** The long-term impacts of mining operations are effectively mitigated, and existing contaminated sites are fully remediated.
- C5.** YCS recommendations are effectively reflected and incorporated in mining, and mining-related, development approval processes.
- C6.** YCS is a respected 'voice' for ethical, sustainable, and socially-relevant mining practices in Yukon, and a definitive source of conservation-related knowledge and information for those involved in, or impacted by, mining.
- C7.** Yukoners are engaged, informed, and educated about the impact of mining (both on our climate and ecosystems) and can effectively participate in YCS advocacy efforts.
- C8.** Decisions affecting or impacting the mining industry and reclamation efforts equitably consider scientific and Traditional Knowledge.

Note:

The numbers (C1, C2, etc.) represent the "What YCS Strives Toward" statements on the preceding page.

1. In support of C1, C2 and C7, and based on available data and research, develop and implement a Yukon-wide education and advocacy campaign to inform and motivate action toward the protection of all Yukon and transboundary wetland areas from placer mining.
2. In support of g C2, C3, C4 and C5, conduct research that engages with mining companies who have made strides to adopt best practices in the North in both sustainable and non-sustainable mining practices.
3. In support of C2, C3, C4, C7 and C8, develop and implement a Yukon-wide "only responsible mining" campaign to generate awareness of and support for:
 - a reduction of mining for 'investment' metals;
 - a Yukon prohibition on international mining companies with poor track records in terms of human and animal rights, environmental protections and site remediation commitments;
 - holding mining companies, their shareholders, and executives legally, financially and morally responsible for any damage or disruption they cause; and
 - building coalitions to oppose the development of new mines associated with companies that also operate in countries with poor track records on human and/or animal rights and environmental protections.
4. In support of C5, C6, C7 and C8, develop and implement a YCS digital library that is a definitive source of 'best practices' with respect to responsible mining, with a focus on impact mitigation, remediation and restoration, conducting outreach with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and that equally considers Indigenous and scientific knowledge.



YCS board member Dave Mossop, recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2018 Nature Inspiration Awards.

D. Outreach, Education and Membership Engagement

At the heart of the Yukon Conservation Society's over 50-year history in Yukon is a belief that outreach and education are at the core of who we are. By building and maintaining connections with Yukoners – including our passionate members – and providing opportunities to learn about the Yukon's incredible biodiversity and ecosystems, we are better able to effectively advocate for needed environmental protections and practices. As we continue to build coalitions of knowledge and experience, we recognize we need to have a greater presence and connection with Yukoners who reside in communities outside of Whitehorse – this will ensure that their voices and perspectives are heard and acknowledged. Given the challenges in conducting outreach across such a large geographic area, we believe it is critical to work closely with allies (such as the Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, WildWise Yukon, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Friends of McIntyre Creek and the Trails Only Yukon Association, among others) to foster greater understanding of the need for immediate action to address the increasingly destructive impact of climate change. Other strategic considerations explored include:

- ▶ how best to promote and facilitate open and honest dialogue with members and the general public on important conservation issues, particularly those in which positions (such as off-road vehicle use) are likely entrenched;
- ▶ how we can make stronger connections with First Nation governments and Indigenous-based organizations to ensure that the path forward is infused with Indigenous perspectives, values, and Traditional teachings and knowledge;
- ▶ how best can we continue to meet our role as a watchdog for industrial or other development, while also advocating for policies, legislation, process and actions which support the conservation of the Yukon's natural resources and protection of the Yukon's ecosystems;
- ▶ building on the success of our publications such as *Tread Lightly* and *Walk Softly*, are there other approaches or platforms to ensure that our members and the general public are well-informed and updated on critical conservation challenges and opportunities to make a difference;
- ▶ how to build on successful YCS education and outdoor engagement initiatives (such as the BioBlitz, winter wildlife and mammal tracking workshops, and YCS-guided hikes) in order to continue to promote an appreciation and understanding of wildlife and their habitats through educational programs;

WHAT YCS STRIVES TOWARD

- D1.** Yukoners are engaged, informed and educated about important conservation matters, including the climate and biodiversity crisis, and how they can participate in innovative and impactful solutions to these.
- D2.** Open science is advocated for in Yukon.
- D3.** YCS is a trusted and valued partner and resource to Yukon First Nation governments and citizens.
- D4.** Yukoners fully understand and appreciate the climate and biodiversity crisis, and adopt recommended measures to address the impact of this crisis on Yukon ecosystems.
- D5.** YCS members and partners have opportunities to participate in engaging and informative outdoor events that further their support and knowledge of key conservation priorities.

- ▶ given that we believe that the Yukon is in a climate change crisis, what specifically can we change in our digital outreach approach, and to what extent do we need to adjust our overall outreach approach to ensure that Yukoners are more informed on conservation issues and topics, including the climate crisis, and have opportunities to show their support for important conservation solutions;
- ▶ how we can effectively raise our profile in Yukon, Canada and internationally through the sale of YCS-branded merchandise that is organic and/or fair trade certified (or otherwise consistent with our conservation values); and
- ▶ how to foster greater awareness in Yukon of 'greenwashing' so that Yukoners can collectively raise their voice against companies and governments that engage in such practices.

THE PATH FORWARD: 2021-2025 STRATEGIES

Note:

The numbers (D1, D2, etc.) represent the "What YCS Strives Toward" statements on the preceding page.

1. In support of D1 and D5, develop an annual calendar of regional or community events, and other outdoor engagement initiatives or campaigns, to support, promote or educate Indigenous and non-Indigenous Yukoners on important conservation issues, challenges or opportunities.
2. In support of D2, D3 and D4, work with other ENGOs to explore the need and feasibility of a digital knowledge hub, where scientific and permissible Indigenous Knowledge, information and data can be accessed, disseminated, and used to support education, outreach and advocacy efforts for conservation.
3. In support of D4 and D5, develop and implement a community roadshow of interactive workshops, paired with a social media campaign, to promote and encourage engagement in YCS' conservation efforts.
4. In support of D1 and D5, formalize a membership and volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition program.

E. YCS Organizational Capacity, Diversity and Effectiveness

This priority speaks to our ability to promote and participate in important conservation and protection initiatives by having the capacity, expertise and resources needed to achieve our strategic priorities. As a learning and knowledge organization, we constantly seek ways to develop our conservation 'toolkit' through training opportunities and gatherings with knowledge partners. Other strategic considerations explored include:

- ▶ how to more actively engage with universities, scientific organizations and Indigenous organizations to enhance our collective capacity to effectively advocate and address wildlife and habitat issues;
- ▶ recognizing that there may be some degree of overlap and duplication in Yukon's conservation efforts with respect to governments and ENGOs, how can we better share information, knowledge and resources toward common goals;
- ▶ how we can better connect with communities outside of Whitehorse to enable us to better support their conservation-related programs, activities, perspectives and research needs;
- ▶ ways to increase the diversity of our Board staff and membership to better reflect Yukon's diverse demographics;
- ▶ ensuring that we are well-positioned, particularly in terms of compensation and benefits, to effectively recruit and retain the body of skills, qualifications and experiences needed to be a relevant, vibrant and impactful ENGO;
- ▶ ways to enhance our financial sustainability, particularly in terms of enhancing existing revenue sources, creating new revenue sources, and advocating for more long-term funding agreements with funders that are less project-based and more similar to core funding; and
- ▶ in support of our strategic priorities around biodiversity, the climate crisis, mining and energy, how can we better disseminate, and make use of the wealth of scientific data and Traditional Knowledge in Yukon, to inform decision-making and priority setting both in Yukon and elsewhere.

WHAT YCS STRIVES TOWARD

- E1.** We are financially, operationally, and environmentally sustainable.
- E2.** We conduct our work ethically, and with full transparency and accountability.
- E3.** Reconciliation is integrated into all aspects of our operations.
- E4.** Diversity, equity, justice, and inclusion is integrated into all aspects of our operations.
- E5.** Our working relationships with federal, territorial, First Nations governments, and ENGOs are strong, resilient, and culturally-appropriate.
- E6.** Our board and staff have the tools, training, and support they need for excellence.
- E7.** Our members and volunteers are fully engaged and committed toward the conservation and protection of Yukon's biodiversity and ecosystems.

1. Facilitate a study on the manner in which organizations working towards social justice and conservation, including the establishment of a physical hub, can be better connected, reduce overlap and unnecessary duplication, and discover synergies and mutually-beneficial opportunities to act as a unified voice.
2. As part of our ongoing efforts to ensure that our staff receive appropriate compensation for their contribution to our organization, develop a revenue generation strategy that:
 - engages with universities to facilitate access to university research and capacity development funding;
 - formalizes a planned fundraising/donation program, primarily focused on money 'without strings';
 - explores the use of targeted business or social enterprise sponsorships or core funding partnerships, where appropriate to, and consistent with, YCS guiding values and ethical considerations; and
 - provides consistent opportunities for members and others to purchase branded YCS merchandise in support of specific educational or advocacy campaigns.
3. Work toward reconciliation targets, facing conservation's past role in colonial practices.
4. Develop and resource a community-based internship or co-op education program that
 - partners with northern colleges and universities;
 - enhances YCS' and Yukon's access to early career scientists and researchers;
 - supports their development by providing real-world, practical experience; and,
 - help build long-term capacity and diversity within our organization.
5. Develop a diversity and inclusivity human resource strategy that:
 - assesses YCS's current policies and practices;
 - identifies gaps in diversity at all levels (Board, staff, membership);
 - considers different ways that people may be 'qualified' for positions; and
 - identifies ways, through time, to nurture, mentor and support Indigenous and visible minority youth interested in a conservation-related career.
6. Develop a Board and staff orientation program that is, in part, steeped in opportunities to strengthen understanding of Indigenous views and perspectives, and how to effect strong working partnerships that are grounded in respectful and culturally-appropriate collaborations.
7. Conduct a study that identifies and explores options (such as partnering with other NGOs on joint benefit packages) to ensure that our compensation and benefit offerings are sufficient to effectively recruit and retain staff.
8. Develop an annual calendar of research, conservation-related forums and conferences targeted to the strategies contained in this document, and prepare briefings and presentations to ensure Board members and staff are sufficiently prepared to advocate on important conservation files.
9. Based on membership feedback, develop and implement a new, more interactive YCS website, including a media/knowledge hub page and monthly events calendar.



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