

**Kwanlin Dün First Nation Community Advisory Committee:  
Submission to YESAB *Seeking Views and Information***

Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station  
and Lewes Dam Relicensing Project

Kwanlin Dün First Nation  
Community Values and Calls to Action



**COVER:**

The piece is titled "*Summer Fish Camp*" and it was created by the KDCC Sewing Group.

Artist Acknowledgement: Anne Taylor / Diane Olson / Florence Moses / Darcy McDiarmid

Pauline Livingstone / Karen Lepine / Deb Enoch / Amelie Druillet

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## *Seeking Views and Information*

Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station  
and Lewes Dam Relicensing Project

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Community Values and Calls to Action

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## **Suggested Reference for this Document:**

Kwanlin Dün First Nation Community Advisory Committee, Mikah Fox – *Wallachea*, Rick Gingell – *Kashgék’*, Rae Mombourquette – *Kikchuks*, Elder Larry Smarch - *Gooch Shádia*, and Carissa Waugh - *Ékè Éwe*. (April, 2024). Submission to YESAB Seeking Views and Information Re: Whitehorse Rapids Generating Station and Lewes Dam Relicensing Project.





## Purpose of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation Community Submission to YESAB

Yukon Energy Corporation's (YEC) existing water license for the Whitehorse and Lewes dams was issued in 2000, and is scheduled to expire on May 31, 2025. To continue operating the dams beyond 2025, YEC will need a new water license. As a result, YEC needs to submit a proposal to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Board (YESAB). The YESAB process guarantees opportunities for Yukon First Nation participation through the *seeking views and information* phase of the assessment.

This submission to YESAB comes directly from the Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) Community Advisory Committee, appointed in 2023 by KDFN Chief and Council. The mandate of the Committee is to support the development of a KDFN community values submission report to YESAB, to guide the participation in community engagement and provide input into the project negotiations, including recommending potential compensatory and reconciliatory actions from a Kwanlin Dün perspective.

The Committee has worked with the KDFN Government, its community, and contractors to present the *Community Values & Calls to Action* as part of this submission.

The intention of the information presented within this submission is to influence where the assessment is focused, and the mitigations and/or recommendations issued at the conclusion of the assessment.

◀ *Kwanlin Dün First Nation Elders Effie Campbell (left) and Annie Smith cut moose meat, with Phil Gatensby of Carcross/Tagish First Nation in the background, ca. 2000.*



“

*Teach and involve the youth and children in the connection. Keep talking about it. Respect all water bodies. Respect all fish and wildlife. Respect all plants and bugs. Everything is connected.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

# Community Values, Calls to Action & Markers for Success: At A Glance

## The values described within the document are:

- 1 Interconnectedness, Respect for Nature and Ecological Health
  - 2 Stories, Cultural Heritage and Connection to the River
  - 3 Reconciliation, Recognition of Rights and Displacement
  - 4 Representation, Collaboration and Push for Infrastructure
  - 5 Knowledge Transfer and Youth Involvement
  - 6 Relationship Building and Trust
  - 7 Equity, Justice and Social Responsibility
  - 8 Advocacy for Salmon Conservation and Restoration
- 

## The calls to action presented within the document are:

- 1 Acknowledgement and Accountability
  - 2 Access, Food Security and Resource Permanence
  - 3 Freshwater Fish, Birds, Mammals, Amphibians and Habitat
  - 4 Barriers to Salmon Passage and Restoration
  - 5 Relationships Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Land and Water Users
  - 6 Economic, Capacity and Compensation Efforts
  - 7 Placing Indigenous Peoples and Languages on the Landscape
- 

## The markers for success regarding the impact of this document are:

- YESAB, YEC and Partners have read and reflected upon this document
- YESAB, YEC and Partners have discussed internally and brought the appropriate partners together to discuss how to best move forward
- YEC and Partners align the calls to action within the respective First Nation agreements associated with this process
- YEC and Partners agree to sit down with the KDFN Committee to discuss the community values & calls to action
- Together, KDFN and YEC and Partners lay the foundation of moving forward together by reaching consensus on calls to action implementation, realistic time frames, and identifying our collective responsibilities



Dennis Zimmermann

## Navigating OUR Process

“

*We need to work with Yukon Energy, Governments and the Yukon First Nations because it is important for us to sustain all waterways for future generations.*

*We can share our outlook on water and how we can take care of it, because it is so important for us and the fish and other animals that live in this water and land.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

The YESAB process guarantees opportunities for Yukon First Nation participation through the *seeking views and information* phase of the assessment. Review and reflection of this document requires an investment in time and resources in order to meet the Kwanlin Dün community where we are at. Under one banner, our Nation is diverse and we all have different life experience and family identity that shape the way we approach the Whitehorse and Lewes dams water-use relicensing. The information within this submission has been collected through Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, and is presented by our community in an authentic and direct way.

We acknowledge the scope of this submission is broader than the parameters currently set by YESAB; and the subsequent requirements for YEC to address stated impacts. However, it also provides a reconciliatory opportunity for all Governments, the City of Whitehorse municipality and its residents, industry and partner organizations to work with KDFN to support collective goals.



Sonny Parker

YEC's December 2023 proposal to YESAB states that there is an interest in a "commitment to collaboration and a long-term relationship" and "the ways of the past are not the ways of the future". Furthermore from the YEC proposal:

*"Yukon Energy believes that being better together starts now. Maintaining and building the electricity system Yukoners rely on continues to affect First Nations Ways of Knowing, Doing and Being today. Yukon Energy recognizes the strong connection of First Nations people to the land, water, culture, and heritage, and commits to learning from the Elders of the past, present, and future about the impact our operations have and how to work better.*

*Strong relationships with First Nations will shape the Yukon's energy future and shared success. Yukon Energy commits to walking and working together with First Nations Governments and communities in a good way to build a better path forward and long-term relationships based on reconciliation, respect, trust, collaboration, and accountability.*

*Yukon Energy will acknowledge the past, listen and learn from First Nations perspectives, and seek shared understanding with First Nations communities and Governments. Yukon Energy commits to making its projects and operations stronger by incorporating First Nations Knowledge and guidance in decision-making. Yukon Energy commits to developing opportunities for First Nations people to grow and benefit from the work Yukon Energy does."*

Reconciliation in action will require much dialogue and hard conversations; never-the-less we hope to move forward together with YEC and other partners in a reconciliatory manner. We see our calls to action as a way to formulate plans for action based on community values and perspectives.

# The KDFN Community Advisory Committee

The membership of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation Community Advisory Committee (hereafter referred to as “Committee” or CAC) was formally appointed by a KDFN Government Order in Council with approved terms of reference in March of 2023.

The mandate of the Committee is to support the development of a KDFN community values submission report to YESAB, guide and participate in community engagement activities and provide input into the project negotiations, including recommending potential compensatory and reconciliatory actions from a Kwanlin Dün perspective.

The Committee is made up of five KDFN Citizens and Beneficiaries with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills and experiences. They are **Mikah Fox – Wallachea, Rick Gingell – Kashgèk’, Rae Mombourquette – Kikchuks, Elder Larry Smarch – Gooch Shádia, and Carissa Waugh - Ékè Éwe.**

The Committee facilitated special events and open houses, surveys, site visits and on-the-land tours to understand the Kwanlin Dün perspective on the YEC water relicensing proposal. Information and updates were shared with the KDFN community through our website, social media and newsletter mail outs.

February 22, 2023

**Community Open House & Launch of Survey**

August 4, 2023

**Community surveys at the KDFN Salmon Day**

August 24, 2023

**Dátsuq̓ k̓ yù d̓án̓l kw̓ändür  
“Our Grandma’s house, there she tells us story” Story-Sharing Event**

September 15, 2023

**Yukon River Boat Tour with ERM**

October 21, 2023

**Site-visit to Yukon Energy and the Whitehorse Rapids Fish Ladder**

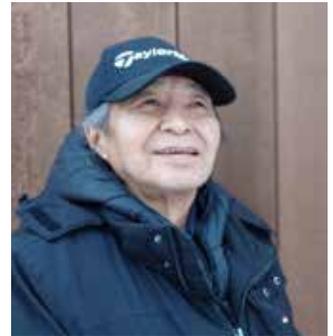
For more detail around the personal motivations and aspirations of the committee members, see Why We Are Participating & Why Do We Care in Appendix A.

THE COMMITTEE HAS MET A TOTAL OF EIGHT TIMES THROUGHOUT 2023/2024:  
APRIL 18,  
MAY 23,  
JUNE 12,  
JULY 25,  
NOVEMBER 27,  
JANUARY 16,  
FEBRUARY 20,  
AND MARCH 26.

**Carissa Waugh - Ékè Éwe** (Northern Tutchone, meaning Caribou Hoof Noise after her late Great-Grandma Emma Shorty), is a Kwanlin Dün First Nation member belonging to the Crow Clan. Her parents are Charlene and Charles Waugh and her grandparents are the late Linda and Allan Waugh. Carissa is the Project Coordinator with Northern Council for Global Cooperation for the UNLEASH project. She graduated from the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship in February 2023 but continues to do advocacy and work for the Fellowship. Carissa also represents the Assembly of First Nations Yukon Region in the National AFN Women's Council where she represents all Yukon First Nations women. Carissa runs her at-home business called Ékè Éwe Art where she sells her beadwork across Canada, using the art to bring awareness to Indigenous issues such as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and 2 Spirit People, Every Child Matters, Reconciliation, and Climate Change.



**Larry Smarch - Gooch Shádia** (Tlingit meaning Wolf Head) is a Kwanlin Dün First Nation Elder of the Wolf Clan. Elder Larry received his name from his Great Grandfather who resided in Johnston Town, his name was Shorty Johnson and he was the brother of George Johnston. Elder Larry's parents were the late Peter Smarch and Sophie Morris. Elder Larry was born in Whitehorse, Yukon and grew up in Teslin. He has 4 children, they are all grown - and one last daughter at home named after his late mother, Sophie.



**Rae Mombourquette - Kikchuks** is a Lingit Acadian Citizen of Kwanlin Dün First Nation. She is a granddaughter of the Big Salmon Northern Tutchone people and great-granddaughter of the Marsh Lake Tagish Kwan. Rae is an Indigenous researcher specializing in Yukon First Nations heritage co-management and Final Agreement Heritage implementation. She has a B.A. in Canadian Studies from Thompson Rivers University and a certificate in Indigenous Women in Community Leadership from the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University. Rae is the Yukon representative to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Rae has over 15 years of experience working in the Yukon Heritage field, and is passionate about promoting and preserving all aspects of Indigenous Canadian history. She sits on the Community Advisory Committee as a Citizen of KDFN.



**Mikah Fox - Wallachea** is a member and Beneficiary of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and belongs to the Crow Clan. Mikah has a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree and has been subsequently working for numerous Indigenous organizations over the past 20 years. This work has helped him understand various ways in which KDFN can uphold our promise as stewards of our Traditional Territory, while providing opportunities for our people. Mikah takes pride in upholding cultural values and traditions, as well as intertwining modern business practices in economic initiatives for the betterment of the next 7 generations.



**Rick Gingell - Kashgèk'** is a Citizen and Beneficiary of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and belongs to the Raven Clan of the Gaanaxtei.di. His parents are Judy and Don Gingell, his Grandparents were Annie and Johnny Smith and his Great-Grandparents were Kitty and Billy Smith. Rick is a Red Seal Journeyman Carpenter and has many years of experience in business and economic development as a local VP of Commercial Operations. He has also served as chair of KDFN's Development Corporation, Chu Níkwän. He enjoys being on the land - hunting, fishing and spending time with his family.



# Dátsuą kų yù dánāl kwändür Story-Sharing Event

With funding provided by YEC, we hosted a special story sharing engagement called Dátsuą kų yù dánāl kwändür “Our Grandma’s house, there she tells us story”, with the purpose of ensuring:

- KDFN interests are represented and prioritized throughout the dam relicensing process;
- The preservation or enhancement of KDFN environmental, cultural and heritage values in the Southern Lakes region, as well as the health and well-being of the KDFN community are represented; and
- Acknowledgment of historical and ongoing impacts of dams, and potentially seek compensatory or reconciliatory actions for those impacts.

We brought forward four central themes based on previous community engagement and work in advance of the event. We listened to the community on their thoughts, ideas and concerns under these four themes.



Max Zimmermann

## 1 “We are River People”

### Rosie Charlie

KDFN’s historical connection to activities such as fishing, hunting, trapping and foraging; as well as the significance of salmon, are intertwined with the present-day relationship to the waterfront and surrounding area. The river is what sustained us and is why we chose to live in this area in the first place.



## 2 “Water is a Big Spirit”

### Nakhela (Hazel) Bunbury / Cory Holway

Acknowledging the cumulative impacts over time, the influences of climate change, and the many stressors on salmon, fish, animals and habitat, the importance of ceremony and water as a sentient being.



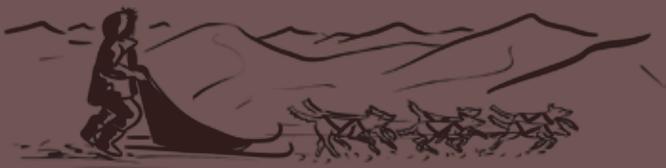


*“Our Grandma’s house, there she tells us story”*

### 3 **“Break Trail”**

**Charlie Burns**

The final and self-government agreements took hard work and a long time to negotiate and set up our Governments. We are now in a lawful and legal position to set our own laws, our course for self-determination and work to fix the broken salmon trail.



### 4 **“Bring Back Voice / Power to Our People”**

**Larry Smarch**

KDFN want to be partners and collaborators not only held with equal value, but acknowledged for the strength and leadership we provide. Despite the impacts and past wrongs, there are obligations, reconciliatory actions and opportunities that our Government and Citizens and Beneficiaires, the public and City/industry partners would like to realize through this experience.





All photos: Max Zimmermann



Elder Pat Joe, Elder Dr. Norma Shorty, Elder Joan Viksten and facilitator Rae Mombourquette, offered traditional, community and academic insight on growing up along the Yukon River and the importance of the connection between genealogy and geography; the historical challenges of negotiating waterfront settlement land within the City of Whitehorse boundary; past work with the Whitehorse Fish Ladder and trying to understand Juvenile Chinook Salmon mortality rates and First Nation representation within the Whitehorse Fish Ladder Interpretive Centre; the vital importance of place-based research models to discourse across generations; how oral histories can be applied to water and water management; and reconciliatory action when it comes to the Yukon River, Salmon and the Kwanlin Dün community.

The *What We Heard* report regarding this event has already been submitted as part of YEC's proposal to YESAB. We hope that this report written by KDFN is read in detail as part of the YESAB review.

*We invited our community, leadership and other partners to share their perspectives and priorities in relation to the dams and the impacts and opportunities through: graphic illustration, engagement stations, presentations, a film screening of the movie Gēs Tū'è King Salmon River T'ahini and an esteemed panel of KDFN Elders.*



*We are Salmon People.  
We are River People.*

*Frank Slim (seated with hat) accompanied by friends and family aboard the Drew on the Liard River.  
Photo by Willie Broeren, 1940. YA 82/429, PHO 60 "Their Own Yukon" Collection.*





# Kwanlin Dün Community Response to YEC Water Relicensing:

## *We are Salmon People. We are River People.*

In order to better understand our submission to YESAB, we present a brief summarization of our relationship to the River and to Salmon<sup>1</sup>.

In 1996, Kwanlin Dün Citizen Sweeny Scurvey worked with the community to bring forward the impacts the Whitehorse dam has had on KDFN fish and fisheries. Excerpts from his *Report*<sup>2</sup> are highlighted in brown throughout this next section.

*Since time immemorable, members of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation fished along the areas of the Yukon River and its many streams and lakes in order to fulfill subsistent and cultural needs. Fishing was very much an integral part of Kwanlin Dün's culture. Before the Dam was built, the Yukon River was abundant with fish and provided the most important food source for the Kwanlin Dün.*

*Since the construction of the Whitehorse Rapids Dam, however, there has been a significant decrease in the numbers of fish that were caught each year. Numerous Elders in the Kwanlin Dün community have expressed concern and regret for the depletion of the fish stocks in the Whitehorse area. The Elders have also expressed concern over the environmental damage that has been done.*

From the beginning, we have relied on the salmon to make their 3,000-kilometer journey from the ocean back to their ancestral birth-waters to spawn within our Traditional Territory. The salmon were dependable and predictable, always arriving around the same time and the same places every summer. As Salmon People and as River People, we knew where to gather and when to harvest salmon. We respected the difficult and long journey against the river current, without eating. Laying and fertilizing their orange-gold eggs before giving up their lives to continue providing nourishment to plants and animals. We acknowledged this through gathering and through ceremony; by leaving their young ones alone while they grew in lakes and streams; by harvesting only what we needed to survive, keeping our traditional food practices alive; and by using every part of the salmon. Today, we are a Salmon People facing a global decline in salmon populations; and a River People who are working to create better situations for both our people and our salmon.

◀ *"Norman Jr. and Jason Shorty in a boat made by Ugut - Norman Shorty Sr., at Big Salmon, ca. 1970."*

Photo source: Norma Shorty, KDFN Family Photo Collections

<sup>1</sup>Salmon content in this section adapted from: Connecting the Broken Salmon Trail, Our Relationship with Southern Lakes Salmon (May 2023) by: Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Ta'an Kwächän Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Dennis Zimmermann, Whitehorse, Yukon.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpts from: 1996 Dam Impact Report, by Sweeny Scurvey, KDFN – pursuant to Contribution Agreement CA95-333



# *BEFORE the Whitehorse Dam*

*All of the Elders interviewed stated that the Kwanlin Dün fished along the Yukon River from the City of Whitehorse to Marsh Lake and in Lake LeBarge [sic]. They all stated how fishing was plentiful before the Dam was built. Fishing was an integral part of the Kwanlin Dün culture and was a great food source.*

*Elders say that there were different types of fish that were caught along the Yukon River such as pike, whitefish, lingcod [sic], greyling, trout and salmon. Numerous Elders recall their parents gaffing along the banks of the Yukon River and especially along the Whitehorse Rapids. They remember there being so much fish that they never went hungry during the summer. The Elders also described how the fish would be dried for easy consumption.*

*Although there was plenty of fish to go around, the Elders stated that the Yukon River was never over-fished. According to their knowledge, everyone took what they needed in order to survive. They did not get greedy. One Elder told me of a fish legend whereby a little (First Nation) boy who over-fished turned into a fish for his greediness. Conservation was a very important value that governed the traditional Kwanlin Dün fishery.*

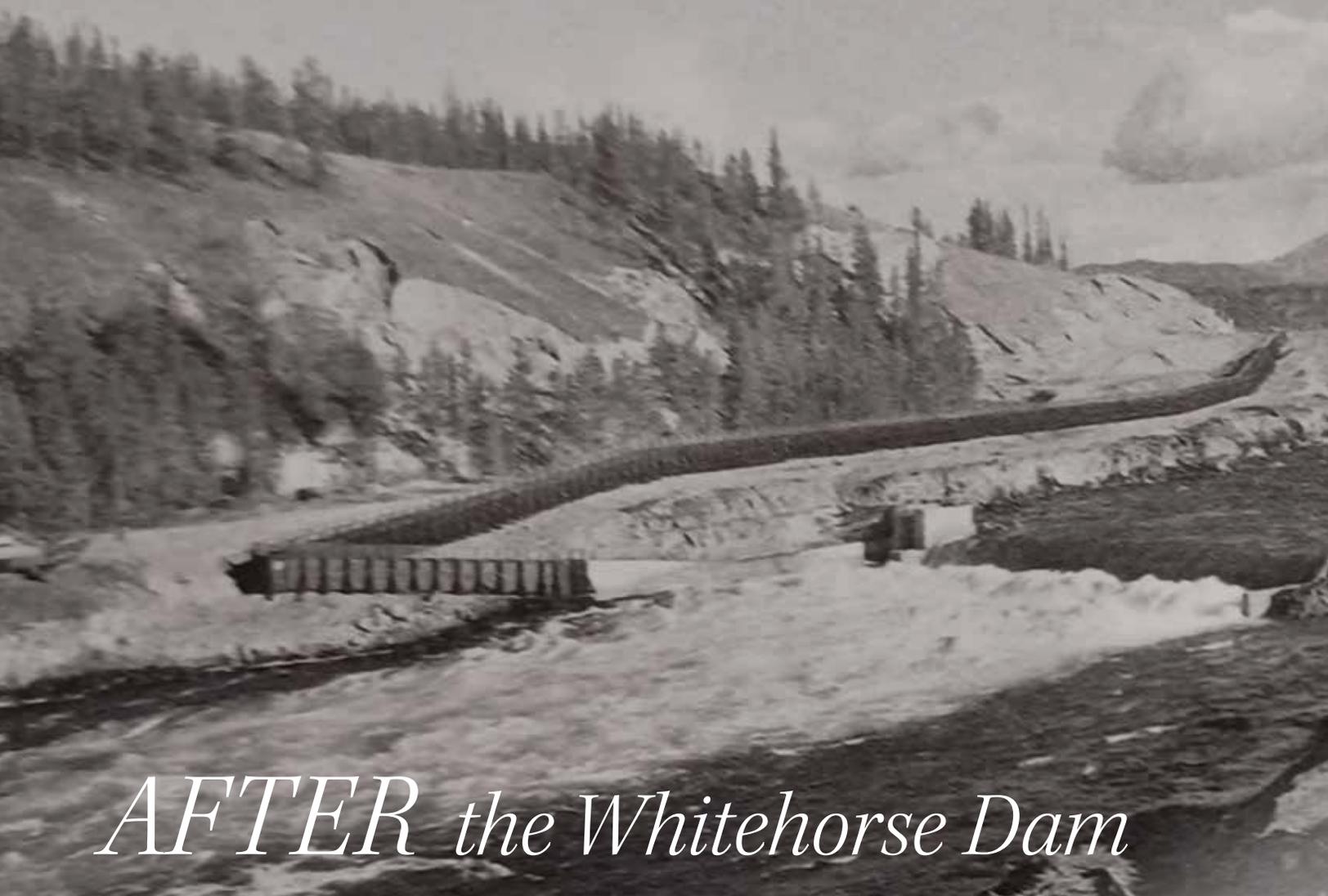


*Whitehorse Rapids*  
YA, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #7581

The Taga Shāw (Yukon River) flows through Canada and the United States, annually bringing our precious salmon across the Traditional Territories of the Inland Tlingit, Tagish, Southern Tutchone, Northern Tutchone and Hän-speaking people. For thousands of generations, our people have lived, harvested and traveled throughout the vast Yukon River drainage systems and the salmon have connected us all, interacting with the land, water, sky and animals. These sacred connectors have returned to us each year distributing nutrients and food for all living things along their way and leaving us their future generations, a promise of returning to renew this precious relationship.

The Southern Lakes region, situated in southern Yukon, encompasses approximately 25,000 km<sup>2</sup> within shared Traditional Territories. This region includes some of the largest rivers and lakes in the Yukon and represents some of the most important habitat for a full range of northern boreal species and ecosystems, including the Yukon River Chinook salmon.

Our ancestors passed onto us the responsibility to protect our lands, our waters and our resources; to pass on our traditional values and practices to all future generations. We have always been Salmon People and we have always been River People; we acknowledge the harsh histories that have, for many reasons, cut off our connection to the salmon trail, which itself has been broken. Culturally, spiritually, and physically we have struggled to maintain this connection. Salmon have supported us for thousands of years and now they need us to support them.



# AFTER *the Whitehorse Dam*

“

*We need to be helping the salmon. Why are we making it so hard for them to swim up the ladder? They are already tired from the temperature change in the water.”*

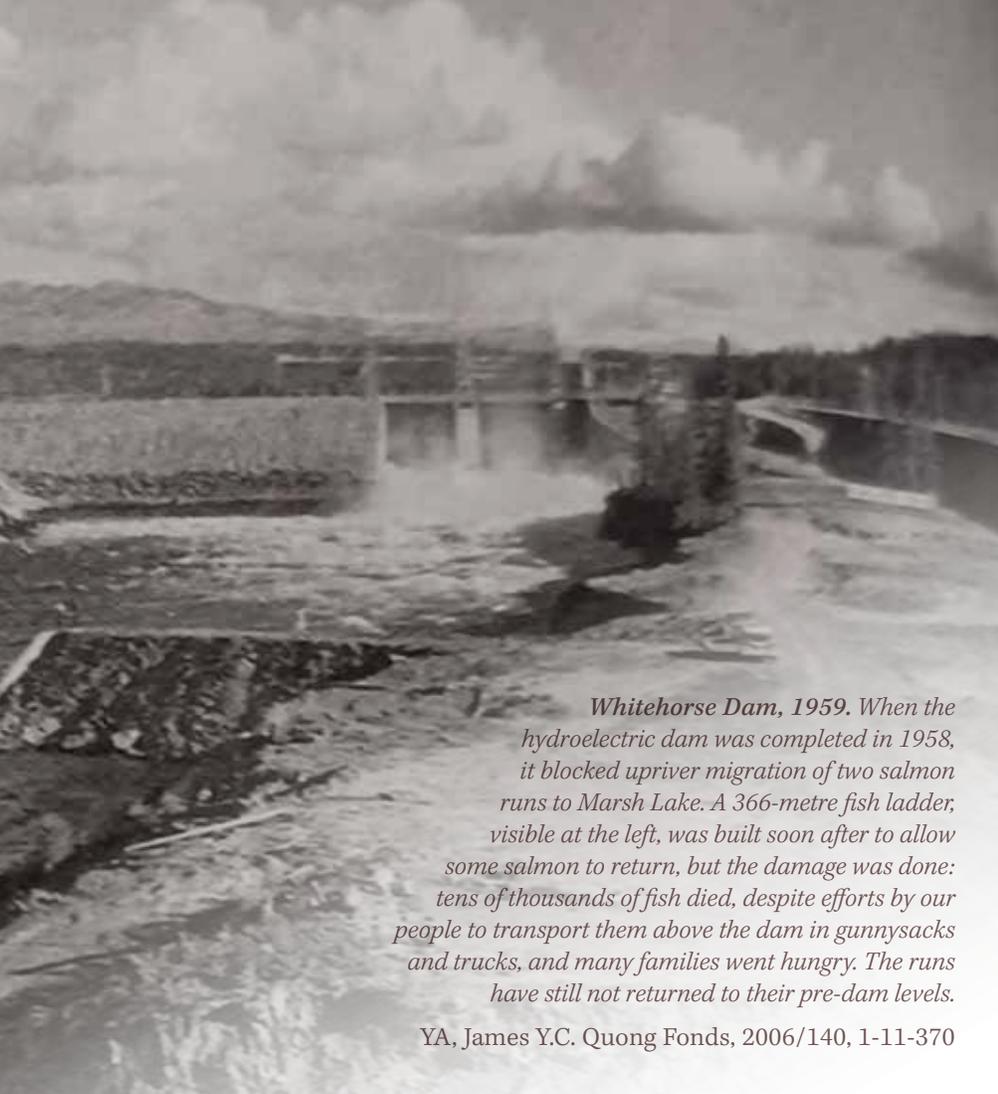
STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

*All of the Elders interviewed reached the same conclusion: the construction of the Whitehorse Dam has systematically destroyed the traditional fishing patterns of the Kwanlin Dün.*

*All of the Elders expressed the concern that the water levels of the Yukon River [have] decreased to such a point that the natural fish habitat has been disturbed.*

*They also express the concern over the amount of pollution in the Yukon River itself. The low water levels combined with the environmental damage has resulted in the disruption of traditional fishing patterns.*

*The Elders no longer fish along the many banks of the Yukon River as they did before because of the fear that the fish are polluted and not good to eat. They also say that there are fewer fish because of the Dam and they are scared to fish for fear of depleting the fish stocks even more. They realize that the fish ladder was made to mitigate the effects of the Dam but express the concern that one fish ladder just isn't good enough.*



*Whitehorse Dam, 1959. When the hydroelectric dam was completed in 1958, it blocked upriver migration of two salmon runs to Marsh Lake. A 366-metre fish ladder, visible at the left, was built soon after to allow some salmon to return, but the damage was done: tens of thousands of fish died, despite efforts by our people to transport them above the dam in gunnysacks and trucks, and many families went hungry. The runs have still not returned to their pre-dam levels.*

YA, James Y.C. Quong Fonds, 2006/140, 1-11-370

“

*We can no longer fish for Salmon. There are always restrictions now. My Grandma said she thought she'd never see it in her lifetime of no fishing there. Can't gather and live in that area. It is all a recreational area around it. One of my Uncles had a camp there, and was told to move. Forever changed the way we live.”*

KDFN SURVEY - FEBRUARY 2023

*The Elders would like to see the creation of another fish ladder so that more fish could be able to travel in the Yukon River...*

*All of the Elders said they have to fish elsewhere in order to survive. They travel to Carmacks, Dawson and Pelly to get their fish. They state, however, that they would like to see more Kwanlin Dün fishing in their Traditional Territory.*

*The Elders say that improvements could be made to the Yukon River to enable the Kwanlin Dün to revitalize their traditional fishing patterns in and around the City of Whitehorse...*

“

*Family structure has broken down.  
We need to engage the next generation.”*

CAC - JUNE 2023



*Left, Virginia Joe (Vallevand) and Right, Millie Joe holding salmon at Julia and John Joe's house near the confluence of the Yukon River and Marsh Lake.  
Submitted by Brandy Mayes*

“

*Kwädāy ch'āw, nena utlāchu kwätānliyūkwānjēnā. Long-time-ago it-is animals alot water area-rapidly-flowing there they lived before. The animals were impacted the most.”*

KDFN SURVEY - FEBRUARY 2023

“

*Reconciliation includes teaching the next generation and empowering them to lead.”*

STORY-SHARING - AUGUST 2023



KDFN

At one time, KDFN and other Southern Lakes First Nations were able to sustainably provide food for themselves. Early estimates collected indicate that approximately 10,000 fish were historically harvested annually in the M’Clintock River<sup>3</sup>. During peak fishing season our fish camps within the area could harvest up to 300 Chinook salmon a day. In the past few years just over 150 salmon have been counted at the Whitehorse Fish Ladder; as a result and as a demonstration of our stewardship we have voluntarily not harvested Chinook in our Traditional Territory for many decades.

Salmon populations face many pressures throughout their life history, from successful hatching and feeding in stressed tributaries as fry, to successful navigation of barriers such as the Whitehorse Hydroelectric Dam as out-migrating juveniles, to surviving long enough in the ocean to make the legendary journey back to their home streams for spawning. These challenges add to the increasing problems faced by all fish and wildlife including climate change, development, human harvesting, human-made barriers, pollution, predation and invasive species. It is therefore no surprise that over the past decades, salmon runs from many species and populations have gone down in number and salmon are not reproducing in the same numbers as before.

Salmon need us to listen. Listen to their story, listen to their struggle and to acknowledge that they are in trouble. This is important for us today and will be even more important in the future. Salmon need us to share our knowledge with all future generations, across Nations and industry so they too can learn respect for salmon, understand the importance of salmon and clear waterways and care about the conservation and reconciliation of salmon in Indigenous territories. Salmon need us to maintain passage to spawning and rearing habitats and ensure their young ones have a chance to make it below the dams, to the ocean and back again.

*In order to complete a full review of the Kwanlin Dün fishery one must address the impact that the Whitehorse Dam has had on the traditional fishing patterns of the Kwanlin Dün. Only with this knowledge are we able to properly assess the fishing patterns of the Kwanlin Dün.*

We will work to connect the broken salmon trail and ensure salmon are back on our landscape again. In our calls to action, we provide a path forward and call upon Yukon Energy Corporation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance, Yukon River Panel, the Government of Yukon’s Department of Environment and others to demonstrate commitment through a series of actions.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Cox, J. (1999). Salmon in the Yukon River Basin, Canada: A Compilation of Historical Records and Written Narratives (CRE-17-98). Restoration and Enhancement Fund. Whitehorse, Yukon: Research Northwest.



KDFN

# *COMMUNITY VALUES*

Over the course of many meetings and engagements we listened to and recorded Kwanlin Dün community values and perspectives brought forward by our Citizens and Beneficiaries. We have categorized these values under the following themes and provided testimonials from Citizens and Beneficiaries.

# 1 Interconnectedness, Respect for Nature, and Ecological Health:

- Emphasizing the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of all elements in nature, including rivers as lifelines for ecosystems, so that we may continue a respectful and spiritual connection, relationship and stewardship with the river, its inhabitants and their habitats for many generations to come.
- Highlighting the detrimental effects of damming rivers, disrupting natural cycles and ecological health by replacing them with human-controlled flow rates, so that we can learn from the past and apply better management strategies and technologies that actively mitigate impacts of these disruptions in the future.
- Addressing the loss of nutrients and vital conditions for ecosystem health due to damming, so that we can apply the most advanced methodology, technology and research to restore naturalized cyclical ecological health systems within our Traditional Territory's waterways.
- Observing ongoing and cumulative environmental and climatic changes, including warmer river temperatures and reduced oxygen levels, affecting fish populations and overall river health, so that we may collectively work with partners toward mitigative measures on addressing ongoing and cumulative environmental and climatic changes in order to restore and maintain ecological health, specifically addressing those affecting fish populations.



“

*Now we have to go far away from that area to find wildlife that used to reside there. We can't find much if any, muskrat, beaver, duck, salmon, etc.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

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“

*Conducting a salmon ceremony to help them; like putting fish bones back into the river so the salmon can regrow... We (used to) talked to the river. It is alive and we always knew this. It is all connected”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

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“

*My memories are of the stories of the past and how important the river was for our people for transportation and food, and to live on their on-the-land homes. My grandfather had a fish camp where the SS Klondike is currently.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

# 2

## Stories, Reconnection to Cultural Heritage and Connection to the River:

- Our collective oral histories, stories, memories and lived experiences reflecting the deep historical connection to the river are considered in decision-making, so that we may continue a connection to cultural heritage through spiritual, communal and cultural connection to the river as a vital and sacred resource; and that we may implement our own values in management processes as a tool to educate industry and the public.
- Our individual and collective connection to the landscape such as ancestral fish camps and areas of traditional activities like berry picking, snaring, trapping, medicinal plant harvesting and foraging are designated as culturally significant and mitigative measures are developed to protect the cultural connection to these places, so that we can maintain and strengthen the vital and intergenerational importance of passing down cultural knowledge and traditional activities to younger generations; and we may use our experiences as a tool to educate industry and the public.
- Our family traditions, gatherings, and recreational activities centered around the river are highlighted and considered in decision making, so that the river can maintain its significance in shaping our identity, solidifying family bonds and restoring traumatic and/or colonial impacts.
- Stressing the significance of traditional practices related to fishing, fish camps, gathering, preparation, and consumption of fish and the transmission of intergenerational knowledge and skills in decision-making, so that we may maintain these as integral parts of our cultural identity, heritage and story.

“

*Our whole family came together at Fish Camp. They could come and go whenever”*

CAC – APRIL 2023

“

*As a KDFN Citizen, I do not feel valued, seen or understood at the Fish Ladder. There is no representation, no ceremony, no First Nation values”.*

CAC – APRIL 2023

“

*Because I was taken away (to residential school) I didn't grow up along the waterfront. I sort of feel like I was robbed of my culture and opportunities to learn from my Elders, like fishing with my grandpa. I felt lost for many years”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023



# 3

## Healing, Reconciliation, Recognition of Rights, and Displacement:

- Advocating for reconciliatory efforts that acknowledge and address the displacement experienced by First Nation communities due to urbanisation and infrastructure projects, particularly for those who were forcibly removed from our ancestral lands, so that our history and languages can be truthfully acknowledged, represented and reflected in the history of the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront with the aim of publicly and authentically presenting this updated perspective across many platforms.
- Discussing the loss of fish-culture, food sovereignty and associated impacts to community health and wellbeing resulting from declining salmon populations caused by impacts of the dam, so that we can formulate options and develop sustainable solutions regarding food-sovereignty, traditional subsistence and resource permanence.
- Acknowledging our displacement from our river homes, society and sacred burial sites, loss of cultural practices and disproportionately unfair economic impacts caused by dam construction and its legacy, so that we can discuss options for reconciliatory actions including methods of compensation.
- Recognition of trauma caused by events like residential schools and the 60's scoop, displacement and the modern epidemics of drug and alcohol use and murdered and missing, so that we may focus on healing and reconnecting through intergenerational teaching and learning.

“

*These were special places before the dam and colonization. We have seen pressures on our fish and wildlife. Our relatives are buried there.”*

CAC – APRIL 2023

“

*We always have lived near the river. It was a big disruption when the dam was built, it destroyed our harvesting and hunting grounds; destroyed all connections and brought drastic changes to our ways”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

“

*We got pushed down and around to where the sewage came out”.*

CAC – JUNE 2023



# 4

## Representation, Collaboration, and Push for Infrastructure:

“

*While the town of Whitehorse gained a reliable supply of hydroelectric power, we lost one of our most important food sources, the salmon. Life was changed again and it was becoming increasingly difficult to find alternative places to hunt, fish and trap. Also, with the dam came the bridge across the Yukon River to Riverdale in 1956. This new subdivision meant that houses were built on an area where we had traditionally camped. The bridge ran through the community of Whiskey Flats where many of our people lived. Soon, these two areas where we lived would be cleared and we would have to move even further away from the centre of town. Our people were “treated like squatters in our own territory”, and displaced. From the salmon to the muskrats, it’s a similar story. All for the sake of a big hydroelectric dam to support the petty modern “necessities”. I like to philosophize about what things would be like without these new-age things that I grew up with at the sacrifice of learning our culture, ways of life and education.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

- Asserting our community voice in decision-making processes related to infrastructure development and river management, so that we may ensure the protection of our First Nations’ interests and the consideration of our cultural values regarding sustaining ecological and cultural health in development.
- Challenging colonial values that prioritize infrastructure projects over ecological sustainability and Indigenous rights, so that we can emphasize the need to decolonize and update river management and urban development strategies and development assessment practices.
- Ensuring adequate Yukon First Nation representation and appropriate relationships are in place regarding the continued operation of the Whitehorse Hydroelectric Dam, so that we may continue to benefit from hydropower, while also discussing additional options for renewable sources of electricity.
- Advocating for collaboration between industries, Governments and First Nations to uphold ecological and cultural values and ensure the sustainable management of the river and its resources, so that we can all move forward with a spirit of collaborative intent.



“

*The dam affects the natural cycle of the river and therefore the salmon and other life. It’s a shame but we also need the dam for hydro.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

# 5

## Knowledge Transfer and Youth Involvement:

- Ensuring the preservation of our cultural identity and traditions, such as passing down knowledge, history, ceremony and cultural practices to children and youth are considered in decision-making and programming, so that we may maintain the practice of knowledge transfer and ensure the legacy of our cultural resilience.
- Involving children and youth in activities such as cross-cultural ambassadorship, cultural fish camps and on-the-land-and-water experiences, so that we may ground and involve our youth and future generations in our cultural heritage, stewardship for lands and waters and the economy.
- Ensuring stories from our Elders are remembered, shared and considered, so that we may bridge the gap between generations and re-establish connections to our knowledge and to our cultural heritage.
- Rebuilding relationships with the land, water, air, fish and wildlife, with a focus on sustainable practices, so that we may prioritize the well-being of all future generations.

“

*Connect the youth and elders - bridge that gap. Teach the kids the old ways...teach children old ways.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

---

“

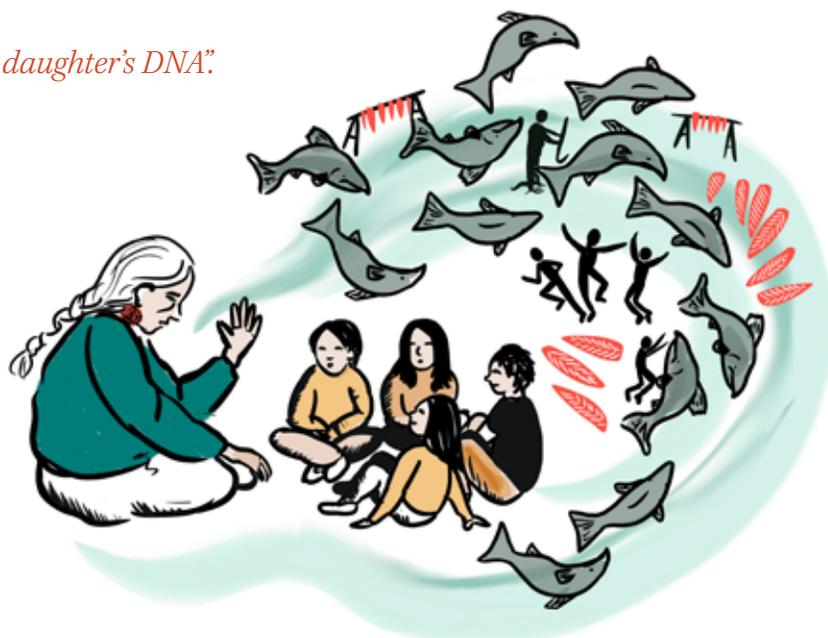
*What are we leaving for our young people? Keep ceremony, it shows our respect, we are losing that within everything today. Who might need it for tomorrow”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

“

*I want the Yukon River chinook to be in my daughter's DNA”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023



# 6

## Relationship Building and Trust:

“

*60 years (after the construction of the dam) we hope to be a part of every project or decision going forward. 60 years has already impacted our Chinook salmon migration and possibly other salmon species. We need to expand so that we do not dam up Yukon Territorial Rivers or Lakes, tapping onto other resources of power... solar, bio energy, etc.. Better understanding and awareness”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

- Building respect and trust between Yukon First Nations, Governments, and other stakeholders through honest dialogue and meaningful engagement, so that we can move forward together in a spirit of collaborative intent.
- Establishing laws and policies that recognize the Yukon River as a living entity with inherent rights, so that we may foster and promote our understanding and respect for the natural world.
- Practicing inclusive decision-making processes that involve all relevant parties, including researchers, universities, NGOs and industry, so we can ensure the best and the brightest voices are represented alongside Yukon First Nations traditional knowledge and are central in water governance and conservation efforts.
- Advocating for inclusive and collaborative governance structures that involve Indigenous communities, Governments, organizations and other stakeholders in decision-making processes related to water management and conservation, so that we may continue establishing and maintaining relationships and trust.



“

*To build respect and trust between YFNs and the federal government and our Territorial government. We all have the same decision-making powers. Establish laws and policies that the Yukon River is alive and has a spirit. As a place, person or thing”.*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

“

*Talk about the damage that has been done, and how we move forward”.*

CAC – JUNE 2023

# 7

## Equity, Justice, and Social Responsibility:

- Recognizing the need for equity, justice and social responsibility in water governance and conservation efforts, particularly in addressing historical injustices and inequalities, so that we are guaranteed opportunities to participate in all levels of water governance, water conservation management and data interpretation and analysis.
- Advocating for the rights of Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities to access and steward water resources, so that we can express, promote and maintain our cultural, spiritual and socioeconomic needs.
- Commitment to address systemic issues such as environmental racism, urban waste colonialism, displacement and unequal access to clean water, so that we may aim to build more fair and equitable water systems for all, rooted in our traditional laws.



“

*The white folks celebrated the “bonanza” of fish on the Yukon River that was struck by the dam. The FN people were hired to push dead stinky salmon down the stream.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

---

“

*Yes, YEC needs to assume responsibility for inherited impacts, they always say ‘well we didn’t do that’ but they need to be accountable so we all can move forward together.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

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“

*My hope is for the acknowledgement of historic and on-going impacts of the hydro-dam to KDFN resource collection, camps, trails, knowledge and transmission and for YEC to make meaningful efforts for KDFN representation and partnership going forward.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

# 8

## Advocacy for Salmon Conservation and Restoration:

- Advocating for changes to infrastructure, such as rebuilding fish ladders or creating natural stream easements, to facilitate inward and outward salmon migration and access to spawning grounds, so that we can ensure salmon have safe passage above and below the dam and continue to be a corner-stone species for our people into the future.
- Emphasizing the need for education and awareness on environmental issues, including the historical use of rivers and the impacts of human activities on salmon populations, so that our people, our culture and languages are represented in interpretive materials and recreational spaces, in a way that others may learn how to respect the river and its inhabitants from our perspective.
- Addressing the urgent decline of salmon populations, including declaring an emergency state and implementing measures to protect and restore salmon habitats, so that we may ensure the restoration of salmon populations for all future generations.
- Advocating for improved management practices, such as re-evaluating dam operations and establishing fair distribution systems for salmon harvesting, so that we may establish collaborative and cooperative strategies towards conservation and restoration.
- Emphasizing the need for honesty, trust, and collaboration among Indigenous communities, Governments, organizations and other stakeholders to bring back salmon populations, so that we can ensure the sustainable management of salmon for all future generations.

“

*I want to see better representations of Kwanlin Dün values, history and culture at the Whitehorse Fish ladder and hatchery (and fish stocking program).”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023

“

*I think the impacts of dams in general are misunderstood, and people don't understand the long term impacts they have on the waterways they affect. My grandfather worked on the dam during construction, I get a sense of pride knowing that, I always remember going to the fish ladder as a kid and watching the salmon swim up the ladder. I also question its effectiveness.”*

KDFN SURVEY – FEBRUARY 2023

“

*I see the fish ladder removed and replaced with a more sustainable way for them to go upstream.”*

STORY-SHARING – AUGUST 2023





# *OUR CALLS TO ACTION*

In order to redress the legacy of rapid and urban colonization of our Traditional Territory; including the removal of our placenames, our homes and our camps, the disregard of our trails, our languages, our laws and the obstacle this colonization has been in our continued connection and relationship with our lands, our waters and to our kin who inhabit those areas; the Kwanlin Dün Community Advisory Committee stress the need for YESAB, YEC and the City of Whitehorse and Partners to review and participate in our calls to action in the following areas:

- 1 Acknowledgement and Accountability**
- 2 Access, Food Security and Resource Permanence**
- 3 Freshwater Fish, Birds, Mammals, Amphibians and Habitat**
- 4 Barriers to Salmon Passage and Restoration**
- 5 Relationships Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Land and Water Users**
- 6 Economic, Capacity and Compensation Efforts; and**
- 7 Placing Indigenous People and Language on the Landscape**

# 1

## Acknowledgement and Accountability:

**We seek redress** for the historical and ongoing lack of acknowledgement, accountability and Kwanlin Dün presence on the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront as a direct result of previous mindsets strengthened by historical Federal and Territorial Government legislation and policies. This includes the forced relocation and removal of Kwanlin Dün families off the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront, infrastructure and development without consent within then unceded Traditional Territories and the impacts of residential schools which accelerated the loss of Indigenous languages and perpetuated pressures on Indigenous lands, waters and resources. At the time the dam was constructed in 1957, First Nations people had no right to vote, hold public office or own lands.

Furthermore, limited and inconsistent responsibility has been taken and reflected in published information about the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront, as well as the associated surveying, planning, development and construction of the City of Whitehorse within the Kwanlin Dün Traditional Territory. Community-level documentation and research of Kwanlin Dün oral history, stories and lived experiences regarding the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront and development of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams have been limited and have never been publicly supported nor provided the opportunity to be widely promoted, shared or learned about.

**We call upon** YESAB, the City of Whitehorse, Government agencies, Territorial and National Parks, land holders, local businesses, the public and developers including the Yukon Energy Corporation and other partners to demonstrate commitment through the following actions:

- Respect and honour Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreements by affirming the right to establish and maintain our own waterfront histories through Chapter 13, Schedule C; and through public declarations of allyship.
- Public acknowledgement and written apology that Schwatka Lake was created from flooding without consultation with local First Nations; and the impacts of erosion along the Yukon River from increased and fluctuating water levels upstream have impacted Kwanlin Dün's access to ancestral fish camps, trap lines, trails, boat launches and water resources; and have impacted all our relations downstream.
- Provide adequate resources to enable Kwanlin Dün First Nation to conduct a full archival, historical and heritage review to enable the creation of a written or other culturally appropriate report to present an authentic community history of the planning, construction, operations and impacts of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, acknowledging that it was part of the rapid colonial industrialization of the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront. This should include an extensive archival search at multiple archives for information regarding past land holders, construction companies, property transfers, legislation, news articles, images, labourer wages, employee records (specific to First Nation employees), journal entries, photographs, maps, oral histories and lived experiences.

- Ensure the findings of the historical and heritage report are promoted, maintained, shared and made available to the Kwanlin Dün community through websites, social media, interpretive signage and interpretive displays, fish ladder interpretive and walking tours, employment and cultural training; and are used to inform potential renaming of prominent features such as structures, buildings, trails, roads, landmarks etc.
- Improve education and promotion of the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront heritage and history with a focus on reconciliation.



# 2

## Access, Food Security and Resource Permanence:

**We seek redress** for the profound limitations on access to traditional lands and waters, food security and resource permanence resulting from the impacts caused by the Whitehorse and Lewes dams including fluctuating water levels, flooding and bank erosion. Together, these impacts led to the disruption to our right of continued access to traditional lands, waters and resources - our right to be sustained by them and to transmit intergenerational skills and knowledge regarding them. This includes Kwanlin Dün's reduced access and use to known and inherited fishing spots, berry patches, small and large game and their habitats, cultural connection and traditional transmission of knowledge, health and wellbeing, parenting and food sovereignty.



**We call upon** the Yukon Energy Corporation and partners to demonstrate commitment through the following actions:

- Respect and honour the Kwanlin Dün First Nation Final Agreements by affirming the inextinguishable right of Kwanlin Dün to access, harvest, travel and camp along the Yukon River.
- Provide adequate resources to enable Kwanlin Dün First Nation to conduct an extensive review of past fish camps and Kwanlin Dün families impacted by fluctuating water levels, flooding, erosion, lack of access, reduced salmon and freshwater fish populations, pollution and contamination as a result of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams – with the aim of calculating damages.
- Investing in and supporting Kwanlin Dün food sovereignty through purchase and distribution of traditional foods and supporting sanctioned community harvests and culture camps including fish and game.
- Provide adequate resources and partnership in the identification, interpretation and development of dedicated cultural spaces for Kwanlin Dün to fish, forage, recreate, gather and host families, communities and visitors.
- Ensuring that employees and others who conduct business and recreation in the areas of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront colonization; and equipped with actions for reconciliation.

# 3

## Freshwater Fish, Birds, Mammals, Amphibians and Habitat:

**We seek redress** for the social and biocultural impacts from the Whitehorse and Lewes dams related to ecosystems, freshwater fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and their habitat. The project area within Kwanlin Dün's Traditional Territory includes rivers, lakes and wetlands which are a key part of the seasonal round, a major stop along an intricate network of trails and important locations featuring many family fishing and hunting camps and areas to gather and harvest. The disruption of water flow, water levels including flooding and erosion of vast areas of land and further fragmentation of habitats have altered the land and water to the extent that some freshwater fish (such as lake trout, whitefish and northern pike), fur-bearing mammals (such as muskrat, otters and beavers), bird populations and amphibian populations declined to the extent that they were no longer accessible to a cultural and economic way of life; and people that depended on them for generations.



**We call upon** Yukon Energy Corporation and Government of Yukon's Department of Environment to demonstrate commitment through the following actions:

- Require the monitoring and assessment of peak migration, reproduction and rearing times relative to relevant freshwater fish, mammals, birds and amphibians; and identify how and to what extent the power generation and associated water level needs are affecting them and ways to mitigate these effects.
- Ensure all future environmental and socio-economic assessments include the cumulative effects on the landscape including evaluating the operating conditions of the dams to water flows, levels, quality and river channels and the relationship to the ecosystem, freshwater fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and their habitat.
- Monitor, assess and implement freshwater fish habitat restoration and enhancement efforts at the Whitehorse and Lewes dams.
- Establish, as a priority, a requirement that the fish ladder and related water diversion structures (spillway and turbines) provide and allow for safe year-round upstream and downstream passage of freshwater fish and mammals.
- Prepare and publish annual reports regarding monitoring and mitigation efforts to support and steward relevant freshwater fish, birds, mammals, amphibians and their habitat.

# 4

## Barriers to Salmon Passage and Restoration:



**We seek redress** for the barriers to salmon and fish passage and to implement measurable restoration and enhancement efforts at the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, including improvements to the current fish hatchery that replaces the amount of assumed salmon fry that perish when pushed through the turbines or spillway. The current fish ladder is celebrated as the longest wooden fish ladder in the world, but it smells of tar and pollutants which may deter fish from entering the ladder and could harm their health. Little to no information exists around salmon who do not migrate up the fish ladder to get to their spawning grounds, though Elders have been talking about it for years. Current information published about the lack of passage of migrating salmon at the Whitehorse dam from 1956-58 does not convey the grave seriousness and devastating impacts this has had on the Yukon River Chinook salmon. This speaks to an overall disrespect to the salmon who died at the base of the dam during the years when the fish ladder was not completed and the fish had nowhere to go, therefore breaking the salmon trail. People were encouraged to harvest the “bonanza” of fish backed up from the dam to Robert Service campground, which were later pushed down river when they died because the smell was offensive to the non-Indigenous City of Whitehorse residents now living in areas we historically occupied. First Nations experiences recount loading hundreds of salmon into gunny sacks and trucking them upstream of the dam to be released, in hopes some could reach their natal streams and spawning grounds.

**We call upon** Yukon Energy Corporation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee, Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance, Yukon River Panel and the Government of Yukon's Department of Environment to demonstrate commitment through the follow actions:

- Acknowledge the irreconcilable altering of the salmon trail including historic estimates of the number of salmon unable to spawn upstream of the dam between 1956-1958 when the fish ladder was not completed for those runs, as well as historic and ongoing numbers of salmon that do not migrate past the current fish ladder to spawn upstream.
- Conduct studies and make necessary investments with Kwanlin Dün First Nation towards implementing a phased naturalization of the current fish ladder; and initiate talks for building a new and improved fish ladder. Reconvene, inform and seek final direction from the Elders.
- Develop specific strategies that will promote the use of the fish ladder while juvenile salmon migrate downstream to avoid and mitigate entrainment mortality through the turbines and spillway. Prepare and publish annual reports on entrainment monitoring, including presentations and publications with accountability for fish mortality rates.
- Establish, as a priority, an investment strategy in salmon restoration and enhancement programs that focus on 'salmon first' with the measurement of success focused on increased numbers of returning adult salmon. This should include the full range of restoration and enhancement efforts from habitat and spawning ground improvements to small scale conservation or stewardship hatcheries. We need to move beyond compensation objectives.
- Provide adequate, long term support and investment in an Indigenous-led Salmon Stewardship Centre with potential for land lease or transfer, use of existing salmon-related assets such as the fish hatchery and fish ladder interpretive centre. It's essential that the Salmon Stewardship Centre and hatchery demonstrates that Kwanlin Dün are occupying that space.
- Ensure the increased visibility of Kwanlin Dün along the Yukon River with an active role in co-management of the hatchery and fish ladder interpretive centre, to ensure Kwanlin Dün are conducting staff orientations and benefiting from tourism and economic opportunities. These spaces will attract schools and the public and will provide opportunities for learning and education.
- Adopt appropriate evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of such fish passage and restoration programs.
- Consider demand side management for electricity consumption during times of key salmon migration both upstream and downstream of the dam.

# 5

## Relationships Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Land and Water Users:

**We seek redress** for the gaps in the relationship, respect and understanding outcomes between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous land and water users. The Whitehorse and Lewes dams supported the commodification of water as an economic resource for the public, resulting in a wedge between interests. To this day, Yukon Energy Corporation positions the economic interests for supplying electric power in the Yukon against the Yukon First Nations, which by design creates tension, conflict and mismatched expectations and understanding. All Yukoners, including Kwanlin Dün want reliable, renewable power; however, the use of the nearly 70-year-old dam continues to be the major source of Yukon's power and a foregone conclusion for continued use. The commodification of water and the resulting rapids has also contributed to a lack of respect for water and salmon as some recreational use groups see it as a playground which in itself is disrespectful especially during salmon spawning and migration season.

**We call upon** Yukon Energy Corporation, the public, the City of Whitehorse and partners to demonstrate commitment through the follow actions:

- Review and assess trails around the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, focusing on new and widely used recreational areas such as Schwatka Lake; and evaluate the effects of overuse, pollution, erosion to trails and decimation of heritage sites and values and seek mitigations.
- Support enforcement efforts around safe and respectful usage of motorized watercraft activity to reduce disturbing fish and wildlife in Schwatka Lake recreation area, especially during migration, reproduction and rearing seasons.
- Facilitate the development of a respectful code of conduct with recreational users, clubs and tourism operators and limit activities such as whitewater rafting or kayaking during the annual salmon spawning and migration season below the dam.
- Install signage and garbage bins to promote stewardship and deter illegal dumping at recreation sites and boat launches; and prohibit unauthorized off-road vehicle access on foot trails and cultural sites.
- Support an annual open house and gathering with all parties around the land, waters and operations of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams to discuss mutual topics of interest with the overall goal for relationship building and respectful co-existence.



# 6

## Economic, Capacity and Compensation Efforts:

**We seek redress** for the relative inequities to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation through participation in the benefits and revenue currently accruing to Yukon Energy, Government of Yukon, other residents, businesses and individuals. Yukon First Nations need more information, more options and more involvement in decision making. Recognizing that the Yukon First Nations are self-governing with an interest in self-sufficiency and interest in participating as equals in the economic realities of today. Citizens and Beneficiaries want the same opportunities to succeed and have opportunities to be trained, mentored, educated and employed through Yukon Energy and the operations of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, the Fish Hatchery and the Fish Ladder Interpretive Centre. This can be done with a positive impact, as KDFN has interests in renewable energy such as solar, wind and hydro power.

**We call upon** Yukon Energy Corporation, Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Government to demonstrate commitment through the follow actions:

- Support KDFN economic development in the operations of Yukon Energy and the Whitehorse and Lewes dams. Including current and future energy projects related to battery storage, solar, wind, hydro or other forms of renewable energy.
- Provide access to electrical power at discounted rates for Citizens and Beneficiaries as compensation for use of our resources.
- Guaranteed representation and decision-making role of Kwanlin Dün on Yukon Energy and related boards and committees.
- Establish dedicated opportunities for employment, mentoring, training, bursaries, scholarships, research grants for Kwanlin Dün Citizens, Beneficiaries, youth and students.
- Adopting appropriate evaluation mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of such economic, capacity and compensation programs.



# 7

## Placing Indigenous Peoples and Languages on the Landscape:

**We seek redress** for the displacement and forced relocation of Kwanlin Dün families off the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront due to rapid industrialization including the building of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, resulted in a loss of many things including our connection to place, access to traditional foods, culture, teachings and practises, ceremony and language. Kwanlin Dün reclamation of traditional lands and waters can be done through an emphasis on cultural renewal and connection. Camps and the river were a way of life – a conversation with the water and animals around you. We have experienced displacement through both the physical relocation of our ancestors’ settlements and through the disconnection created by changing our relationship with the river. Current efforts at interpretation are piecemeal, ad hoc and reflect a “simple” understanding of the Indigenous way of life.

**We call upon** Yukon Energy Corporation and partners to demonstrate commitment through the follow actions:

- Acknowledge Indigenous languages as a fundamental and valued element of Canadian and Yukon culture and society; and that there is an urgency to preserve them through redressing colonial place names.
- Rename Schwatka Lake and other affected areas within Southern Lakes First Nations Traditional Territories to better reflect the importance of this area to Indigenous people.
- Promote First Nation representation, traditional use, repatriation, Indigenous traditional values and traditional law in new investments in the Millennium Trail, Robert Service Campground, Riverdale and the Kwanlin (Whitehorse) waterfront through new and highly visual interpretive displays, signage, public art, publications and communications.
- Identify cultural, heritage and museum grants and opportunities to showcase Kwanlin Dün Elders, Citizens, Beneficiaries and voices back on the water through song, story, art and ceremony.
- Support an annual salmon ceremony to “call the salmon back” led by Southern Lakes First Nations and recognition of salmon as a corner-stone species to Kwanlin Dün.
- Establish gathering, teaching and ceremonial spaces within the vicinity of the Whitehorse and Lewes dams, Robert Service Campground and the Millennium Trail.



# OUR MARKERS FOR SUCCESS

**We will know we have succeeded regarding the impact of this document when:**

- YESAB, YEC and Partners have read and reflected upon this document;
- YESAB, YEC and Partners have discussed internally and brought the appropriate parties together to discuss how to best move forward;
- YEC and Partners align the calls to action within the respective First Nation agreements associated with this process;
- YEC and Partners agree to sit down with the KDFN Committee to discuss the community values & calls to action; and
- Together, KDFN and YEC and Partners lay the foundation of moving forward together by reaching consensus on calls to action implementation, realistic time frames, and identifying our collective responsibilities.

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We suggest a meeting within six months of the submission of this document. We see this only as the beginning and look forward to moving forward together with YEC and other partners in a reconciliatory manner.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to recognize and extend our gratitude to the following people for their contributions to this work:

### **KDFN Committee Members**

Elder Larry Smarch - *Gooch Shádia*

Rae Mombourquette - *Kikchuks*

Rick Gingell - *Kashgék'*

Carissa Waugh - *Ékè Éwe*

Mikah Fox - *Wallachea*

### **KDFN Community**

To the voices from the past that inspired us and those coming in the future to guide us. To our Elders, Leadership, Citizens and Beneficiaries who participated in the open house, survey, story sharing event, river tour and YEC site visit we say Shàw níthän and GunałchÎsh. To the lands, waters, plants, fish and wildlife who have supported us through generations we express our utmost respect, gratitude and appreciation.

### **Project Team Members**

Emily McDougall - KDFN Staff - Project Lead

Dennis Zimmermann - Big Fish, Little Fish Consultants - Project Facilitator

Gúnta Business Consultants - Community Engagement

### **Visuals, Photographs and Design**

Esther Bordet - Yukon Graphic Recording

Chera Hunchuk - Bird's Eye Design

Helene Dobrowolsky and Rob Ingram - Midnight Arts

Shàw níthän and GunałchÎsh to Rae Mombourquette - *Kikchuks* whose contributions went beyond participation on the Community Advisory Committee, and provided much needed leadership, research and writing support through her position at KDFN Heritage, Lands and Resources.

# APPENDIX A:

## Why are we participating and why do we care?

### **I** Why have you given your time for this effort?

**Carissa:** I wanted to help be the voice for our salmon and our culture. I am an artist, I do a lot of beadwork and through my work with the Yukon First Nations Climate Action Fellowship I have realized that I can do so much with my beadwork. I can tell stories and I can do some activism for things such as; Reconciliation, Salmon and Caribou, Climate Action, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and 2Spirit, and Every Child Matters. I also have a huge passion for climate action, but not in a “let’s all bike to work” kind of way, more so in a “Reconnection is Climate Action” kind of way. Meaning we have all been looking at the symptoms of climate change, and we need to start looking at the causes. We have all become so disconnected in our own ways through language, not being out on the land in a good way, mind, body, spirit, and so many more ways.

**Larry:** I’m dedicated to this relicensing not just for the fish, but for the younger people. We have to do this right. It all starts with the water, it needs to be taken care of. My solution was to put a culvert bypassing the dam where the fish can go. We can even put trees in there to make more natural, low light. We don’t have to come in contact with the fish, the fish can go right through. We’re living in the age where everything will be done with computers, counting the fish, lowering water temperatures to attract the fish. There are hardly any moose, whitefish have moved from where they used to spawn. Hardly see any trout anymore. Believe me our people were here for thousands of years and we didn’t have this problem. We didn’t overhunt, overfish or over trap in one area, so please take this into consideration and listen. We know what we’re talking about. We need to hang on to the culture we have left, fish played a big part of our culture. It kept a lot of people from starving. Our diet, what we ate was all fat-free, no diseases, no heart attacks, everything was good food. The moose, we learned how to preserve our meat, our fish, we learned how to hunt, we learned how to walk in snow, we learned how to build canoes, we learned how to build shelters.

**Rae:** When I first voiced concerns in 2019 regarding a loss in food sovereignty and kinship to the salmon impacted by the dam, lost opportunities for cultural practises through the intergenerational transmission of skills and knowledge, and the continued sterilization of Kwanlin Dün from the Whitehorse Waterfront due to flooding, development and a historic resistance to allow Indigenous people prominent presences on the waterfront within the City boundaries, I did so as a Citizen who had only cut one salmon in her adult life. That salmon was caught in my grandfather's territory, I was a visitor there, and I did not ask why we were there, even though I grew up a literal stone's throw from the Yukon River. As a 16 year old woman, I felt that I had learnt all the lessons required to be a caretaker of salmon as a food source. That salmon had to be fed to the dogs because I did not stretch the skin to allow airflow between each cut mark while in the smoke-house and blow flies got to it. Now 30 years in a salmon harvesting moratorium on the Yukon River, I have the mind and the voice to ask why – and to be part of the strong talks that will acknowledge an alternative history of the Yukon River, bushwhacking a way forward so that Kwanlin Dün, and all Yukon First Nations shall never be left behind again, and fixing that trail so that my own children, and all Yukon children will see a Yukon River Salmon and know how to be a caretaker of this land, these waters and our kin who rely on those of us who can speak, and now, in a day of reconciliation, can be heard.

**Mikah:** I have always been invested in how we treat the land and what affects it will have on the next 7 generations. We are taught that we are stewards of the land and we do not own it. Therefore we must do our part to inform, protect, conserve and make it known that we are the first people of this land and we have a responsibility to uphold.

**Rick:** I wanted to learn more about what our people lost from the river once the dam was put into place, and to bring back our traditional teachings on the river.

# 2

## What is most important to you to bring forward to YESAB?

**Carissa:** Salmon, art and culture are most important to me. I have seen so many stories get told through art and those stories have important life lessons. Our salmon are almost extinct, and a lot of non-Indigenous people may not realize how much culture and traditions would die with our salmon. Our salmon have kept us alive and given so much, now it is our turn to take care of them and we need everybody for this. It's so disheartening to boat down the river and see so many empty fish camps.

**Larry:** The most important thing, why I'm sitting on this committee is for the children and to put things in a better way for them in the future. It's not only for the children but the unborn children that have to live if we don't get this problem resolved. Good faith has not been kept in our land claims, I'm only one man but what I've seen on the river was devastating. Where the trees and the land is eroding away from holding the water back, and trapping the water. Who is going to pay for all the damages done? We used dogs, we used the wind, the water was the highway - there is no one thing that is most important in this - there are lots of things that are important to our people. The land, the water, the language, the practices of our traditional way of living are gone, it's not just one problem - it's many problems. Our children and their children are the ones who will be suffering if we don't get this right.

**Rae:** YESAB falls short of establishing resolutions and determinations regarding the enduring relationship that Yukon First Nations people have to the land, to the water and to the animals, whom we call our kin – referring to a time before there was YESAB, a gold rush or a name for the Yukon Territory, before Canada, before British North America, before the Bering land bridge. We have endured the onslaught of resource takers, we lived to see our homes destroyed, our food sources decimated, the imposition of then foreign Governments, laws, enforcers, educators, languages, the removal of our children and the attempt to permanently sever relationship to the land, water, animals and each other. We are told, through the YESAB process, the past is not important in considering factors for ongoing and modern Yukon development. It is important for me to remind decision makers that my Aboriginal Rights, given to my ancestors by Raven, and handed down to me are inextinguishable, they prevail Final Agreements and exist even if your process considers them but fails to mitigate for them.

**Mikah:** KDFN and the other Indigenous communities were here long before the building of the dam and the dam has affected all the generations since its inception. The stories and pictures show physically the land has changed and as a result how our ancestors' lives were changed and displaced. The history must be known and we need to conserve the land and make sure proper procedures are in place in order to revitalize the land and the salmon population.

**Rick:** That they are responsible for the salmon decline and need to be accountable. We have lost our traditional ways, we are river people and it has been taken away. How are you going to bring the salmon back?

# 3

## What do you care the most about to bring forward to YESAB?

**Carissa:** I care about our traditions and our culture, and our future 7 generations. My family has a “fish” camp by the Yukon River, called Atsua Ku. We used to be able to set our fishnet across the river to catch salmon that we could harvest and feed multiple families. There is so much culture and traditions just in that, but because our salmon are almost gone, we cannot set the net and we haven’t been able to teach the younger generations. I’m thinking of our future and what my future grandchildren will have. I do have lots of hope but our Governments need to work with us, everyone needs to work together to properly bring our salmon back home in a good way.

**Larry:** I would like to see more value placed on our traditional knowledge, our knowledge is just as good. It’s important that First Nations have a role in these projects and how the decisions get made. Where they built the dam, they didn’t even ask us. I don’t remember when they decided that, they just claimed it - they didn’t even ask us. There was no First Nations voting at the time, we didn’t have our rights yet. They did what they wanted to, a lot of negative impacts from pollution, loss of salmon and pushing us away from our place along the river. They made sure we were pushed away from the river, my generation did not even know there were fish going through. One day I was sitting by where the mall is now, and I saw all these salmon, they were all red, in the river - they are not there no more.

**Rae:** Regarding the YEC water relicensing proposal, and the YESAB process it is most important for me to contribute to a Kwanlin Dün community-based calls to action regarding the historic and on-going truth of Kwanlin Dün on the Whitehorse waterfront – including the impacts of the construction and continued operation of the hydroelectric dam, speaking truth for the salmon and freshwater fish, animals and Indigenous families impacted by the dam and water levels associated with the dam. Regarding YESAB generally, it is most important to ask for the redress of the legacy of Yukon ‘frontierism’ which has not meaningfully nor substantially included a holistic Indigenous perspective by establishing and adopting a new-normative legacy of reconciliation action in Yukon development.

**Mikah:** We need to take heed of past mistakes and have prior informed consent on decisions that will be made regarding our Traditional Territory. We need to have an equal seat at the table when making decisions and our people also need to be properly compensated for the use of the land which we all are fortunate to live and reside on.

**Rick:** What are they going to do to make sure the salmon comes back for all future people? We lost our ways on the river, our future generations will never experience what our grandparents experienced. I would like to be able to go salmon fishing where my grandparents did.

