

# Walk Softly

Newsletter of the  
Yukon Conservation Society  
Summer 2015

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**Inside:** • Meet the new staff • YES Launch • Summer Trail Program

## Meet the New YCS Staff

Hello! I'm Andie Britton-Foster, and am so excited to be the legal intern with YCS this summer! I have just finished my first year at the University of Victoria Faculty of Law, where I was involved in the environmental law club, I wrote for the Environmental Studies Student Association newspaper, and was an enthusiastic but talentless member of the ultimate frisbee team. After a book-heavy academic year, I am thrilled to apply what I have learned as I work with YCS to explore how different places account for social and environmental protection in their laws around mining. Coming from a small mining town in Northern Ontario, and with the recent closure of the Wolverine Mine, this research feels particularly relevant in my studies right now. When I am not looking at mind-numbing legislation, I like practicing yoga, camping, doing grunt work on farms, and listening to soft folk music that all of my friends insist became irrelevant years earlier. I feel so lucky to spend another summer in the Yukon, and to be working with the YCS team and such an environmentally engaged community.



Hi, my name is Shawna Smith and I'm this summer's Trail Guide Coordinator! I was born and raised on a hobby farm in Southwestern Ontario. Through international travel, I have been fortunate enough to experience the wonders of natural landscapes in diverse parts of the world. However, nothing has inspired me quite like the vast land and diversity we have to explore mindfully right here in Canada. A passionate advocate and active explorer, I am really excited about the opportunity to work not only within the Guided Nature Hikes and Kids Ed-Venture program, but also to contribute to YCS' current campaigns such as Protect the Peel. As an avid rock-climber and trail runner, I'm excited to get out and explore the wild well secret places of the Yukon!

Hi! I'm Julia Duchesne, the new Outreach and Communications Manager at YCS. This means I'm the new contact for members and supporters (like you!), I will invite you to volunteer with YCS, I'll be working on the YCS website, Walk Softly, and social media channels, and I'm excited to schedule outreach events. I've worked with a range of environmental organizations in the Maritimes, Ontario, BC, and the UK, but when my M.Sc. research brought me to Whitehorse last year to study resource and energy governance in Yukon First Nations, I knew I had to return to the north. When I'm not at work I can be found hiking, kayaking and taking photos outdoors. I'm thrilled to be joining the YCS team and I look forward to meeting you at one of YCS' events in the near future!



**A big thank you to the City of Whitehorse for donating a bike to YCS! We're looking forward to running errands this summer.**



## Peel Court of Appeal Date Set

The date for the Yukon Court of Appeal hearing of the Peel case has been set for August 20 and 21, 2015 at the Federal Courthouse in Whitehorse.

As you recall, the Peel case was first heard at the Yukon Supreme Court over a week in July of last summer with a one day continued hearing in October. In early December, the presiding judge, Justice Veale, released his ruling which granted us the remedy we were seeking: Yukon government's unilaterally developed plan is quashed and the final consultations must be redone properly on the Commission's Final Recommended Plan. Further, government's proposed modifications regarding access and the amount of land protected are off the table.

In early January 2015, Yukon government appealed this ruling and in March retained new legal counsel, Torys, to represent them at the Yukon Court of Appeal hearing.

At the Court of Appeal hearing this August, the Yukon government will present their argument for why Justice Veale's ruling should be set aside. We, the respondents (the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, CPAWS Yukon, YCS), represented by Thomas Berger will present an argument for why Justice Veale's ruling should be upheld. The Gwich'in Tribal Council will be intervening in support of our case, as they did at the Yukon Supreme Court hearing.

Justice Veale's landmark judgement means we could not be starting from a stronger position to defend against Yukon government's appeal. Veale's ruling concludes "damage has been done to the process of reconciliation," that Yukon government "did not respect the planning process" and "Its interpretation and execution pursuant to s. 11.6.3.2 is impermissibly flawed."

Join us on August 20 and 21 in support of the legal case to protect the Peel Watershed. You filled the court rooms last summer, let's do it again!

In the lead up to and during the court case, CPAWS Yukon and YCS will be using Twitter, Facebook and other social media outlets to keep you up to speed with what's going on. With our First Nation partners we will also be organizing public events, including a Water Ceremony, to bring people together in solidarity for protecting the Peel. Stay tuned for more details!

Check out [www.protectpeel.ca](http://www.protectpeel.ca) for more information and to view ours and the Yukon government's factums (arguments).

Thank you for your unflagging support as we work together to protect the Peel Watershed.

*Christina Macdonald*

## Rotary Centennial Bridge Update

As you know the Rotary Centennial (Pedestrian) Bridge (RCB) and adjacent Millennium Trail will not be motorized. They will retain their current non-motorized (summer and winter) designation. In addition, administration has been directed "to improve public education related to [the] proper use of trails on the east side of the Yukon River." We hope this means that an effort will be made to ensure motorized users have a better understanding of what trails are available for their use on the East side of the river, and that the East Yukon River Trail Plan will be made better known to the general public.

The City has blocked off the illegal trail on the West side of the Millennium Trail next to the Robert Service Campground parking lot. It has done an excellent job constructing effective barriers. The barrier near Robert Service Way is well located in that it is impossible to get around unless trees are cut down. Another much longer barrier, which is also intended to block entrance to the illegal trail, is located close to where the Millennium Trail branches off in the direction of the Robert Service Campground parking lot.

The information on one of the posted signs says, "This area is closed to motorized traffic to allow for site revegetation." This seems to suggest that the area will never again be opened to motorized use, as once it is "revegetated" the only way it can stay that way is to prevent its use by ORVs.

These new barriers should reduce the number of ORVs that illegally use the RCB to gain access to Robert Service Way from the East side of the river, and to the Riverdale area from the West side of the river.

*Keith Lay*  
Active Trails Whitehorse Association  
[www.activetwa.org](http://www.activetwa.org)  
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### Walk Softly

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We welcome newsletter submissions and letters to the editor. Deadlines for submissions are Feb 1, May 1, Aug 1, and Nov 1. Views expressed in **Walk Softly** are not necessarily those of the Society.

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## Editorial

by Christina Macdonald

We don't toot our own horn at the Yukon Conservation Society very often – environmental victories aren't often clear-cut and there's a reluctance to 'let our guard down'. But with the 'happening' atmosphere at the blue cabin with the owl these days I can't help myself!

An editorial should express a strong opinion, so I will put forward this: YCS is where it's at, and with a recent influx of new staff and Board members, we're positively rocking!

Here's why:

Julia Duchesne is YCS's new permanent staff member and will be strutting her stuff in the position of Outreach and Communications Manager. This position was created so that YCS and the campaigns we run reach a wide audience and our membership is strengthened and diversified. We are very excited to welcome Julia to the team, supporting our members and volunteers and promoting YCS to the community.

Shawna Smith is YCS's Trail Guide Coordinator this year. With four precious summer months to plan and deliver this well-loved fixture in the community, Shawna has hit the ground running and is brewing up fresh, exciting ideas for the Miles Canyon & Canyon City trails. Two Trail Guides will help deliver her vision - interpretive hikes, 'Created at the Canyon' (a multimedia arts event), YouTube videos, and more are coming your way! See you on the trails!

Andie Britton-Foster joins us this summer as our legal intern. This is the third year that YCS has tapped into the Canadian Lawyers Abroad internship program and it has been so helpful to have these research contributions to our campaign work. Growing up in a small mining community, Andie is particularly interested in the Yukon's mining regime and will be working with Lewis Rifkind, the YCS Mining Analyst, to develop model mining recommendations. This is timely given the recent mine closures in the Yukon that have revealed the serious failings of our mining regulatory system, and Yukon government's launch of a Mineral Development Strategy for 'regulatory streamlining'.

Three new people have joined the YCS Board – Alberto Suarez-Esteban, Chris Rider and Mike Tribes – and bring with them a suite of insights and knowledge to complement the rock solid crew of veterans who direct the Society. Long-time Board member, Meagan Christie, who cut her teeth as a YCS Trail Guide Coordinator some years ago, has stepped up to the helm as Board President.



YCS has amazing volunteers who produce this newsletter, spruce our gardens, contribute photos to support campaigns, feed us cutting edge information, 'hold the fort' at the office and sit on Committees. Most recently, YCS member Gerry Whitley joined the Volunteer Pilot Corps of LightHawk – an organization that designs flight campaigns for conservation partners – and will be working with YCS staff to document development activities and our natural environment from the air.

And last but not least, YCS staff continue to passionately and tirelessly produce and deliver cutting edge programs, events and commentary with the goal of protecting nature and providing environmentally and economically sustainable solutions for Yukon's citizens.

Thank you to everyone who is helping make YCS 'where it's at' and cultivating this vital and prosperous, Society.



## Yukon Government seeks input on draft Biomass Energy Strategy

The Government's draft Biomass Energy Strategy is looking for new and better ways to burn wood to heat buildings by developing a biomass industry.

Space heating is the second most greenhouse gas intensive sector (behind transportation), so biomass could be a way to replace fossil fuels with local renewable energy resources.

The Yukon has a long history of burning wood for heat, and this will likely continue into the future. A biomass industry for cordwood, chips, and/or pellets would require targeted logging, which would need to be done in a truly sustainable way on a small scale for local use.

YCS believes that our space heating needs currently met by burning fossil fuels should first be reduced with efficiency improvements, then met with renewable energy. Biomass can play a role.

Electricity generated from renewable energy sources like wind, solar and hydro can be paired with electric thermal storage (ETS) heating units in homes and buildings to replace fossil fuels, reduce peak demand on the grid and maximize utilization of intermittent renewable energy sources.

We need to carefully plan fossil fuel replacements for space heating starting with increased efficiency to reduce heat energy requirements. We must identify the ecological limits of our forests – whether mature stands, beetle-killed or fire-killed – for biomass harvest, and ensure our biomass heating targets don't require us to exceed those limits.

We would like to see how ETS heating systems (powered with renewables only of course) could be backed up with biomass, to completely displace fossil fuels with local renewable energy resources.

YCS will elaborate on our concerns about and hopes for biomass in a comment submission that we will get to after the YES Showcase.

Yukon Government will accept public comments until June 26. Sign up for our weekly email updates and follow us on social media to read our comments if you want to be inspired to submit your own.

*Anne Middler*

### Find out more:

<http://www.energy.gov.yk.ca/biomass-energy-strategy.html>



If you have forestry or biomass expertise and want to help inform YCS's comments on the draft Biomass Energy Strategy, please contact Anne at 668-5678 or [ycsenergycoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:ycsenergycoordinator@gmail.com)



## YES Showcase launches the YES project – THANK YOU

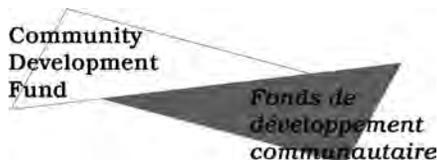
### YES awards

Thank you to the YES Solutionaries for your leadership and commitment to actions that reduce the environmental impacts from energy use! We were proud to present these awards to you! Formal recognition is a good way to nurture, develop and uplift the characteristics we value in society – that you exemplify. Thank you to carpenter Peter Heebink for sharing wood off-cuts from your worksite! The wood is locally milled Yukon poplar with a beautiful heartwood grain - fast growing Yukon biomass and a local value-added product (tongue and groove boards) with even more value added at our local makerspace! Thank you to YuKconstruct for being an incubator of awesome innovation and community, and for letting Anne challenge the exam on the big cross cut saw (she did attend trade school for benchwork and joinery many years ago) and especially thank you to Michelle Clusiau for assistance in setting up and operating the laser etcher.



### YES Showcase funders

Thank you to our funders who believed in the YES project and made it possible:



### THANKS YES CHAMPIONS

This was a big project with many parts to pull together. YCS would like to thank all the people who made the YES launch a success.

Thank you to all the Solutionaries featured in our films for being open and awesome.

YCS would like to thank Marty O'Brien of Old Pal Productions for producing four beautiful short YES films that recognize and celebrate local energy champions. Marty was a fantastic professional to work with. He filmed and helped conduct interviews, shot b-roll, did all the editing, production and uploading of the films. Thank you Marty!

YCS would like to thank Guiniveve Lalena for her vital role in the YES project. She coordinated all the graphic design, promotion, film graphics and website. We are grateful for her ideas and contributions, and for keeping Anne fed and organized.

Thank you to Kristina Mercs at the Old Fire Hall and all the YCS staff, board and energy committee who championed and worked hard at this event and its planning.

Thank you to the film-featured energy champions, and to everyone who takes action to reduce the environmental impacts associated with energy use. If you know a Solutionary that YES should profile, let us know!

YCS looks forward to continuing this conversation and is excited about where it will take us. Let's utilize the Yukon's rich human capital to build social capital in the form of strong relationships between governments, organizations and people, to protect and enhance our natural capital while breaking our addiction to fossil fuels, meeting our energy needs in ways that maximize local benefits and minimize harm.

## Peace Energy Cooperative

YCS would like to thank Don Pettit, Vice-President and Steve Rison, Past President of the Peace Energy Co-operative for travelling to the Yukon from Dawson Creek BC to be part of the YES Showcase and a more in-depth workshop.

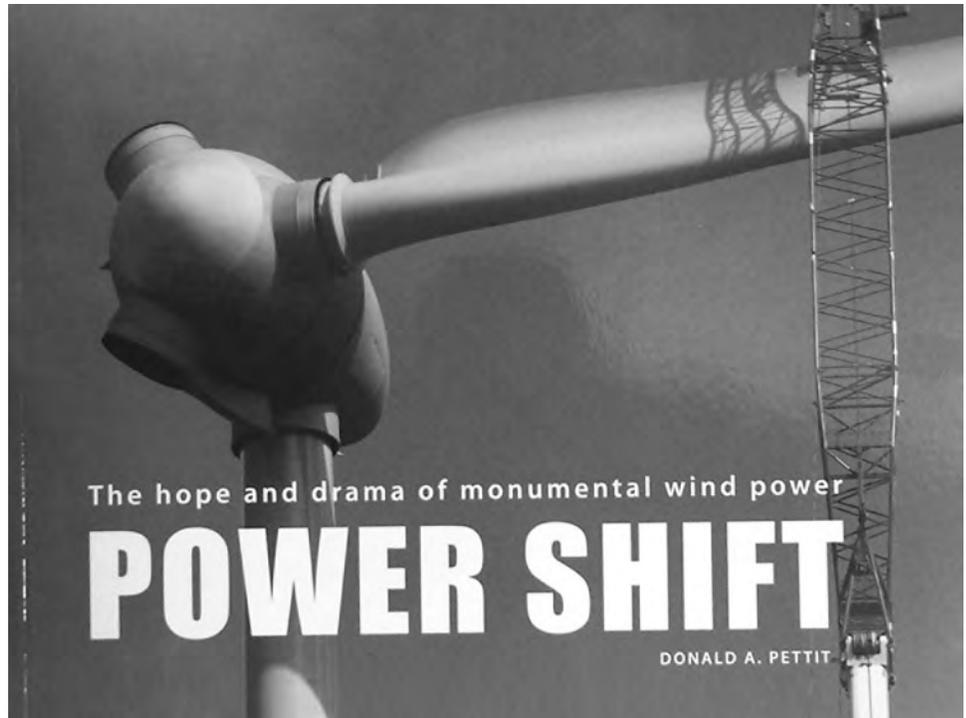
Steve and Don told the story of how people with shared values in the Peace River region are working together to pursue a sustainable energy future while keeping energy dollars in their community.

The co-op helped develop BC's first wind park (34 x 3 MW wind turbines = 102 MW!) in a way that respected ecological limits, other land uses and community values.

The Bear Mountain Wind Park was built in two years, on schedule and on budget. You can read the inspiring story in Don Pettit's book *Power Shift: The hope and drama of monumental wind power* (available to buy at YCS). The book has amazing photos and it truly is remarkable and motivating to see what the Peace Energy Co-operative has achieved.

YCS is very excited about the seeds planted by Don and Steve, and we look forward to a continued relationship with the Peace Energy Co-op and the activated Yukon people about how social enterprise could play a role in the Yukon to move us towards energy democracy and a sustainable energy future. Power to and for and by THE PEOPLE! Learn more at [www.peaceenergy.ca](http://www.peaceenergy.ca)

If you missed the YES Showcase, YCS launched website to host the four made-in-the-Yukon energy solutions short films, and lots of great information and links. We are excited to make it grow and help solutions gain traction.



**YCS is proud to launch our new YES website [yes.yukonconservation.org](http://yes.yukonconservation.org).**

Please visit to watch four films featuring local energy trailblazers, read YES News (to be updated often!) and find links to information relevant to Transportation, Conservation, Efficiency and Generation.

We welcome all feedback and suggestions. Like YCS on Facebook and sign up for our weekly e-mailout to get notifications when there's YES news.

## Yoga Musings: The tree is in the seed

For any human who has ever found themselves walking their spandex-butts into a crowded yoga class, you will have likely heard of the concept of *san kalpas* in yoga. *San kalpas* are loving intentions set for your practice (remember: the practice moves with you beyond the mat. ) Think of *san kalpas* like a new years resolution, but without the shame and sense of imminent failure.

The language around these loving intentions is for one to plant an intention.

This never really resonated with me, as despite my best intentions, I tend to quickly kill all pet plants. This loving intention would inevitably follow the fate of my basil plants and end up in a metaphorical compost, to ironically turn to fertile soil which something could be planted in.

It wasn't until I first heard the word *bhijavrkshanyaya* and the meaning behind it in the Upanishads that something clicked. In Sanskrit, *bhija* mean seed, *vrksa* means tree, and *nyaya* means logic. Put together, this magic word prescribes that the seed contains the tree; or the tree is in the seed.



This tiny seed of a good intention already holds the truth of the intention. By planting a loving thought, it has already taken root and become a reality. Unlike something you work towards, a *san kalpa* in this way is a concept that is at work within you. In other words, you are already that which you grow into.

All people afraid of failing! Gather around. We have found the loophole. You cannot fail here. Your intention is the seed that already contains the reality. You do not have to seek it out, as it is within you. You simply have to nourish and grow into it. There is nothing unattainable; it has already been attained. This renewal and regrowth of the spirit comes to fruition the moment that you set

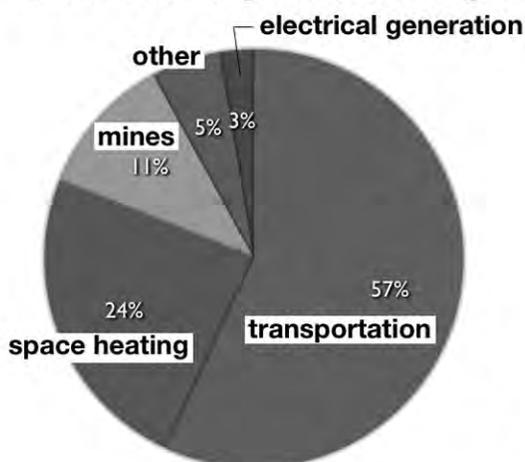
the intention. The work is done. Now live the truth of the intention, and give life to the tree that is within the seed.

Wondering where to plant this intention? Try your heart. If your heart is full of poison, remedy that by eating 6 chocolate pudding cups in a row and giving yourself permission to heal and be well.

The light within me loves and celebrates the light within you!

*Andie Britton-Foster*

### total Yukon greenhouse gas emissions in 2012



#### transportation breakdown

- 44% - on-road gasoline
- 32% - on-road diesel
- 12% - interprovincial/through carriers
- 12% - aviation (jet fuel + avgas)

Check out this graph showing the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions from 2012. The Yukon needs some transformational change to address emissions in this sector! Check out our [yes.yukonconservation.org](http://yes.yukonconservation.org) for inspiration and ideas to reduce transportation emissions.

from *Yukon Greenhouse Gas Emissions: The transportation sector updated report 2015* by Malcolm Taggart in association with Forest Pearson



*YCS Energy Analyst Anne Middler wrote a children's story to encourage reflection on a challenging conservation issue for her Community Organizing class. She completed the Community Economic Development Certificate Program with Simon Fraser University this spring.*

## Whooo speaks for us?

In April, shallow and thawed parts of Tagish and Marsh Lakes host thousands of migrating water birds. The biggest and most impressive are the swans. Their beating wings drum in the Yukon spring.

Honking and whistling swans congregate in open water at the ice edge.

Ravens greet the first arrivals with the welcome song.

"We are grateful for this safe resting place to rejuvenate and replenish on our long journey," Swans sing in return.

Most northern lakes are still frozen, but the ice has melted at the river outlets on these lakes. The birds can reach and feed on underwater plants here.

Huge black webbed feet push over their massive bodies, their white bottoms look like snowy mountain peaks as their long necks and black beaks reach for aquatic plants growing in the mud.

This is an important stop for the birds on their great migration. Many are heading to arctic tundra wetlands where they build nests, lay eggs and teach their young to fly. After the short intense summer, they fly south again.

This year, the birds chatter about changes in the works for this place.

Owl convened a circle of resident and migrant birds to learn, reflect, talk and listen about a plan the humans had hatched.

Raven explained that the people with the hydroelectric dam on the river downstream want to hold back more water – raise the levels of the lake and wetlands in the fall – and draw down more water in the spring.

"It's because they need more water through the dam to generate more power in the dark and cold winter," said Raven.

"Every year it's harder to find solitude and sustenance on our way north and south," said Swan. "Can't the people do something else?"

"They could burn liquefied fracked gas in the generators in town," said Eagle. "But upstream and downstream and everywhere in between: fossil fuels harm water, land, air and the climate. Changing the lake for the dam could be less worse."

Swan was leery – not sure if Eagle dreamed of eating struggling swans and troubled trout at this place if it were altered. No one knew how the change in water levels and shorelines would affect the plants, fish, frogs, birds and animals. But Swan knew the horror of the fracking heartlands and is always glad to get far away.

"Must all man's power be so destructive?" asked Swan.

Raven clicked and cawed. "Humans are so greedy and wasteful," said Raven. "If they use less, they won't have to do harm to make more!"

Calls, coos, honks and quacks in agreement. "Naturally! Conservation!"

"Whooooo's going to tell them?" asked Owl, who had been quiet until then.

*Anne Middler  
...won't quit her day job.*



YCS was proud to play an active role in Bike To Work week! Despite the fact it was a hectic week with the YES Showcase and Peace Energy Co-operative workshop happening right in the middle, we achieved some days where everyone in the office rode our bikes to work. Most of us live up the hill and ride every day, and one bike commutes from the hot springs road! Three cheers for a zero carbon commute!

## Guided Hikes Program

### Free Guided Nature Hikes

It is that time again - our free guided hikes at Miles Canyon and Canyon City start soon!

**When:** 10am & 2pm - Tuesday through Saturday

**Where:** Meet at the Robert Lowe Suspension Bridge below the Miles Canyon parking lot

The **2 hour, easy walking** hikes are fun for avid nature enthusiasts, hikers and families alike. Learn about the Gold Rush, First Nations history, geology, plants, animals and so much more! The hikes with our knowledgeable guides will run rain or shine. Check our website for the up to date schedule of special themed hikes.

### NEW This Year For Families...

We will offer interactive nature and conservation related drop-in activities for children of all ages each **Wednesday at Miles Canyon from 12:30pm-1:45pm.**

Meet us at the Robert Lowe Suspension Bridge below the Miles Canyon parking lot! AND... each regular hike will incorporate an interactive activity for any children who are on the hike so that everyone is able to enjoy their time at this historic site!

### WE TAKE REQUESTS...

Do you have a larger group that would like to join us for a hike?

Do you have a specific theme you would like to hear more about?

Would you like to schedule a specialized Kids Education Program?

Contact Shawna at 668-5678! Our guides are happy to accommodate your requests.



## CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS!

### Join our Summer Youth Education Team!

Are you interested in sharing your passion for conservation, and building your skills and knowledge while you do it? We are looking for motivated young people to join our Summer Education Team! You will gain:

- Interpretation skills
- Kids conservation education experience
- Knowledge of the natural and cultural history of the Yukon
- Access to passionate mentors in the field of conservation
- A certificate indicating your contribution at the end of your term
- An amazing summer experience with the YCS staff!

### Volunteer for Created at the Canyon!

We are looking for volunteers to assist with our Created at the Canyon live multi-media art event on Friday July 24th and Saturday 25th at Miles Canyon/ Canyon City, and the following open exhibit in early August. We require volunteers to help in the planning process and also on the day of the events. Come join our creative team in making this community event a reality!

### Got knowledge to share? Be a guest guide!

Do you have specific knowledge and passions that you want to share? For example, are you a mushroom expert, passionate birder or Yukon history enthusiast? We are looking for guest speakers from all walks of life to join our guides at Miles Canyon and Canyon City on special themed hikes. If you have knowledge that you want to share with tourists and locals alike with the goal of connecting with nature and/or history, contact us!

For more information on these volunteer opportunities contact Shawna Smith at [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678.



## Created at the Canyon

**Original live art and performances inspired by the natural and cultural history of Miles Canyon & Canyon City.**

**When:** Friday, July 24th from 2pm to 8pm &  
Saturday, July 25th from 10am-4pm

**Where:** Miles Canyon & Canyon City

This event will be followed by an open art exhibit in mid-August at a local venue.

### Artist Call-Out – Created at the Canyon

The Yukon Conservation Society is currently accepting applications (until June 30th) from artists and performers of all sorts. The selected six artists are expected to create an original art piece in the Miles Canyon area, while interacting with each other and the public. YCS invites artists in all media, including (but not limited to) performance art, installation, mixed media, writing, storytelling, photography and sculpture, to apply for this event.

Please contact Shawna Smith at [hikes@ycs.yk.ca](mailto:hikes@ycs.yk.ca) or 668-5678 for more information and artist application packages.



*“Funding for this project is made possible through the assistance of Arts Fund, Department of Tourism and Culture, Elaine Taylor, Minister”*



## The Yukon Environmental Training Fund

The goal of the Yukon Environmental Training Fund (YETF) is to support training, retraining, upgrading and improving of occupational skills of those employed by Yukon’s environmental groups or individuals working on environmental issues and activities in the Yukon.

Training opportunities offered to assist Yukoners with securing immediate employment or keeping Yukoners up to speed in the Yukon non-profit conservation sector have been funded in past years. Individuals can be successful in obtaining funding if the training makes them immediately employable in the Yukon non-profit conservation sector or if they’re currently working in the Yukon non-profit conservation sector and like to benefit from training to stay current in their field.

### The Yukon Environmental Training Fund is available for you!

Check our website [yukonconservation.org](http://yukonconservation.org) for more information about this Fund and whether your training project is eligible for funding or contact Judith at YCS 668-5678.



## IN PRAISE OF LESS WORK

Who likes to take holidays? I think it is safe to say we pretty well all like to take time away from work, whether it is a “staycation” to putter in the garden - and if you are also growing a little food, reducing still further your ecological footprint - or exploring the world.

Working less is good. The more we work, the higher our ecological impact and the less we enjoy our lives. The average Canadian puts in about 36.5 hours a week, about 1600 hours a year after holidays and other time off.

So why do we work so much?

Back when we were hunter-gatherers, we worked far less, perhaps as little as 3 hours a day. Not that we were idle, we would still be cooking, cleaning, fixing clothes and tools and caring for children. Life was pretty good, most people who made it through the dangerous years of young adult hood lived long and fulfilling lives. After the agricultural revolution, when most of us were farm laborers, the hours we spent working soared to about 1600 hours a year. In 1850, early in the industrial revolution, we averaged over 3,000 hours a year.

Why have we since reduced the number of hours we spent slaving away?

The answer, it appears, is because we could. With the aid of fossil fuel powered machines, humans could perform far more work in an hour; our productivity rose dramatically. Steadily our workweek shrank back to pre-industrial levels.

The average person now accomplishes as much in 10 hours as they did in a 40-hour week in 1950. We can see the reasons for this all around us: as an example, to write this article in 1950, I would have written it long hand, hired a researcher to dig through archives that are now on line, taken it to the post office where it would have been taken by river boat (or if the roads were passable, it would have taken two days) to Whitehorse to be hand typeset then printed and mailed out again.

But despite massive productivity gains, we still work more than we evolved to do.

Too much work, it has been shown, is bad for our health and bad for the environment, it is hard on families and our society suffers with fewer hours left to volunteer. When we work too much, we do not have the time to cook properly and end up eating out more, we do not have time or energy to commute using active transportation and more often opt for motor vehicles.



OK, we know that work sucks and it is bad for you, it is time to find out why we do this awful thing at all.

Firstly, we work because otherwise we would starve. Anyone who has been out of work and has completely run out of resources knows just how terrible it is. Going from no work and skirting starvation to even the most menial of work is a very happy thing. But after we have achieved a certain level of income, once we are adequately nourished and housed, additional income does not make us feel any happier.

In Yukon, it is likely that a disposable income of about \$20,000 a person per year is the sweet spot. So if you are a single person with no dependents and you have more than about \$20,000 a year to spend, consider cutting back. Share your job. Do less. Sleep in more often. Grow a garden; go for a ski or a bike ride. Hang out with your idle friends. You will probably get more done at work in the hours you do put in.

Work less and save the planet!

*Sebastian Jones*



The connection between income and wellbeing is naturally a hot topic.

There are several ways to consider wellbeing and its relation to income. For more information, check out the “Easterlin Paradox”, or this study: <http://www.princeton.edu/main/news/archive/S15/15/09S18/index.xml?section=topstories> or this one: <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/52/22463>

For the opposite perspective, that money can indeed buy happiness, the authoritative source is Betsey Stevenson: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14282>



## The Casino Mine is coming – your comments needed!

The Casino Mine is a proposed large (by Yukon standards) copper-silver-gold-molybdenum project located roughly due west of Pelly Crossing and due south of Dawson City. If it goes ahead, it will be one of the largest mines in Canada, and most definitely the largest in the Yukon.

As discussed in the Fall 2014 issue of *Walk Softly*, this proposed mine would have a massive tailings pond contained behind an earthen dam, very similar in concept to the Mount Polley one (the dam that failed in Northern BC) which was about thirty-five metres high. Except the Casino earthen dam would, at its deepest point, be 286 metres high. This is pushing engineering design, construction and environmental safety into dangerously deep and uncharted waters.

As this project currently stands, the Yukon Conservation Society (YCS) is utterly opposed to it. The very name of the project, Casino, is apt given the unthinkable gamble we will be taking with the Yukon's environment should we allow the mine to proceed.

The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB) is conducting an adequacy review of the project. The project proponent, Western Copper and Gold, has submitted a lot of documents to YESAB. These are all available online for those interested in this sort of thing. What might be of particular note are the statements from YESAB and from various governments (Federal, Territorial and First Nations) requesting more information. In other words, the project proposal has not yet been deemed 'adequate' by YESAB.

However, once YESAB deems the proposal adequate it will be opened up to public comments, probably sometime this summer. And this is when all Yukoners who care about the land and water should submit their viewpoints. YCS encourages everyone to keep an eye on the YESAB website and to monitor the project's progress through the adequacy state. It's at [www.yesabregistry.ca](http://www.yesabregistry.ca) and look for project 2014-0002 - Casino Mine Project.

*Lewis Rifkind, Mining Analyst*

### 12 Short Sentences

A bright green night sky in January, brings memories of the eternal sunshine in July

A sauna after a February snowshoe adventure, is like a refreshing August swim

The longer evenings in March, are like the fall colours of September

The first crocus in April, remind me of the disappearing leaves in October

The first camping trip in May, feels like the first November cross-country ski

A midnight mountain bike ride in June, is like a December solstice ski

*Judith van Gulick*

## Students, this is for you!!

### Ted Parnell Scholarship

YCS is happy to offer its annual scholarship of \$500 for 2015. This scholarship is awarded to a student pursuing any aspect of environmental studies, demonstrating outstanding interest and motivation in the field. Interests pertaining to northern environments such as wildlife, ecology, renewable resources, energy, and environmental education are appropriate areas for eligibility.

### Application Requirements

Applicants must be Yukon residents and should be entering or currently enrolled in a post-secondary school program (excluding graduate work). Proof of acceptance will be required before the scholarship is awarded.

**Applications should be made in writing by June 30, 2015.** Details regarding the application can be found on our website, [yukonconservation.org/funds](http://yukonconservation.org/funds)

For more information call Julia at YCS: (867) 668-5678

## Energy, Fracking, and the Shale Gas Revolution: Myths, Realities and the Implications for Yukon's Energy Future

Few readers of *Walk Softly* think fracking is a good idea anywhere, much less in Yukon.

Over the past few years, we have received plenty of information and testimony about the negative impacts of fracking on land, water, wildlife and communities.

What we had not seen was a solid description of how fracking fails the economic and sustainability tests as well.

J. David Hughes, retired government of Canada geologist, has dedicated the last part of his career and his retirement to examining the myth that fracking will deliver us to some petro-filled nirvana, with exports sufficient to stuff treasuries and provide jobs for all.

David Hughes has delivered his presentation hundreds of times to audiences around the world.

He has addressed universities, petroleum executives, communities and international conferences.

Yukon Conservation Society was fortunate to catch his attention and convince him to leave his bucolic homestead on Cortes Island to customize and present his latest findings at the Beringia Centre on May 14th.

The evidence Hughes showed us described how our global civilization has been built upon steadily increasing consumption of fossil fuels, to the point where we now use 50 times the energy we did at the start of the industrial revolution.

This trend towards using more is still increasing and half the fossil fuels ever used have been consumed since 1987!

Then he showed us that this gluttonous party is about to shudder to a halt; we can no longer keep

increasing the amount of fossil fuels we dig from the earth. Outside the frack fields of North America, fossil fuel production is flat or declining.

Despite throwing staggering sums at finding more oil and gas, global production is barely keeping up with consumption.

Fracked wells lose over 80% of their capacity within 3 years, compared to twenty to fifty years for conventional wells. This means, said Hughes, that frack fields need to be repeatedly drilled to maintain production, and the fields themselves get depleted rapidly, sometimes within five years.

What we need to understand, went the presentation, is that not only does the productivity of frack fields decline really fast despite increased drilling, only about one in four fields are very productive.

Hughes illustrated the disconnect between the dreams and promises of politicians, and the geological reality by using the 2013 B.C. throne speech, which promised that liquefied natural gas (LNG) would deliver over one hundred billion dollars to a savings account, mitigate global warming and provide 75,000 jobs. These dreams, however, were based on vastly overstated claims of the amount of gas available.

B.C. promised, Hughes observed, to export more gas than all of Canada can produce, meaning it would have to import gas to export it!

Hughes described how Canada's oil production peaked in 1965, and would be declining still were it not for the Alberta bitumen mines (tar sands), which now produce two thirds of Canada's oil.

Regarding Yukon, he said, it is unlikely that there would be an economic case to be made for

exporting gas, given the shaky numbers for the resource (only the Kotaneelee in the extreme south east of the territory has proven reserves) and the very high cost of building the infrastructure to get the gas to market. Kotaneelee in the Liard Basin, however, has established export infrastructure with a pipeline to Fort Nelson. If BC started exporting LNG, the southeast Yukon would be at risk of fracking when BC's basins were played out.

Hughes did not think much of the switch to LNG underway by Yukon Energy: he noted that storing LNG is not the same as storing diesel. LNG has to be kept at minus 162 Celsius or colder and this takes considerable energy. If it is not used to generate electricity, it boils off and has to be vented or flared.

Another weakness of LNG as an electricity source is its long and fragile supply chain; it needs to be trucked up from the Fortis LNG plant in Delta, near Vancouver B.C.

So, he asked, what should Yukon do to supply growing electricity demand? Well, he observed, Yukon has substantial hydro in place that is an ideal backup source for wind and solar. Instead of fretting over how to integrate intermittent wind and solar into our grid, we should instead aggressively install solar and wind, ramp up demand side management programs (conservation) and reserve hydro for backup.

Hughes concluded that inevitable fossil fuel depletion will cause a transition to a renewable energy world. The question, however, is whether we transition purposefully in a controlled, proactive manner, or we wait until it is forced upon us and chaos reigns.

*Sebastian Jones,  
YCS Energy Analyst*



**YES! I want to protect the Yukon's environment and support the Yukon Conservation Society!**

**I'd like to make a tax deductible gift!**

\$60  \$200  \$500  \$1000  Surprise us! \_\_\_\_\_

I'd like to make a monthly pledge by visa of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (charged on the 15th of each month)

I have made a bequest to YCS in my will

**Please, sign me up as a member:**

Student \$10  Individual \$25  Family \$40 (2 or more people)

I am a **new** member!

I am **renewing** my membership for 2015!

Do not send me newsletters. Instead, **notify me by email** when they are online.

*Memberships are activated on day of receipt and good for 1 year, and include a subscription to the Walk Softly newsletter. Both donations and memberships are tax-deductible.*

**Payment Method:** Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque # \_\_\_\_\_ enclosed (payable to Yukon Conservation Society)

I am putting it on my Visa # \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email – for Tax Receipt and YCS Email List \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail completed slip to: 302 Hawkins St. Whitehorse, YT Y1A 1X6 – Phone: 668-5678 – ycs@ycs.yk.ca**

**Thank You Volunteers!**

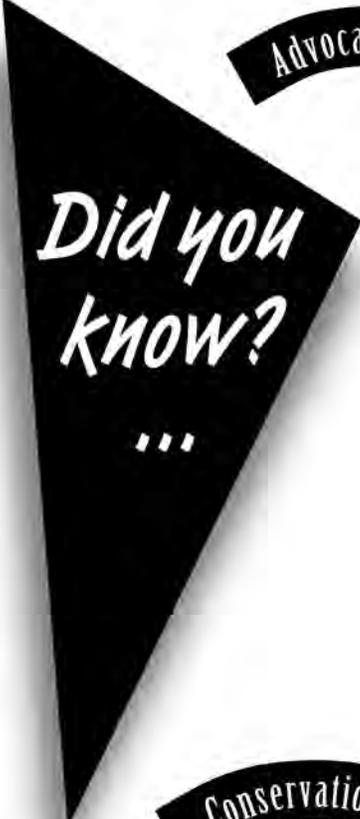
*The Yukon Conservation Society wouldn't be the vibrant, active organization it is without your help!*



- Computer maintenance, back-ups and support: Joshua Hunt
- Energy Committee: JP Pinard, Sally Wright, Skeeter Wright, Lee Carruthers, Nick de Graff, Bonnie Burns & Karen Baltgailis
- Communications: Tanya Handley, Lewis Rifkind & Mary Amerongen
- Wood for the YES Showcase awards: Peter Heebink
- Office Support: Julie Frisch
- Recycling: Raven Recycling
- Yard cleanup: Mary Whitley



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**Keep your eyes out for this summer's BioBlitz in middle McIntyre Creek!!**

A BioBlitz is a short (usually one-day), intense team effort to discover as many different life forms as possible in one location. This often involves volunteer scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members working together to identify as many species of plants, animals, microbes, fungi, and other organisms as possible in a 24 hour period.

YCS is working with the Friends of McIntyre Creek and other stakeholders to host a BioBlitz in the middle McIntyre Creek area this summer. Don't miss this fun event!



Follow the Yukon Conservation Society on Twitter: Yukon Conservation @YukonConservati and 'like' us on Facebook: Yukon Conservation Society

