

VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT



Letter of Approval for the North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan

In accordance with the approval process described in Section 11.6.0 of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation Final Agreement (VGFNFA), the Yukon and Vuntut Gwitchin governments hereby present the approved “*North Yukon Regional Land Use Plan*”.

The review and approval of the North Yukon Regional Planning Commission’s Final Recommended Plan under 11.6.0 of the VGFNFA included formal consultations in Old Crow and with the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun as an affected First Nation.

We congratulate the North Yukon Regional Planning Commission for its outstanding work in completing Yukon’s first regional plan under a First Nation Final Agreement. Their dedication and commitment to the process and their vision for sustainable development in the North Yukon Planning Region is to be commended. We offer our sincere thanks to the Commission and its staff.

In approving this plan, the Vuntut Gwitchin and Yukon governments are approving the following:

1) Landscape Management Units

The governments recognize and approve the 23 land management and sub-management units.

2) Land Use Designation System

A zoning system based on intensity of use rather than type of use is also approved.

The Vuntut Gwitchin and Yukon governments will address and immediately implement the zoning recommendation concerning the areas affected by the lifting of the North Yukon land withdrawal.

The governments approve the specific Land Use Designation system wherein Land Management Units are designated either Protected Area (PA) or Integrated Management Area (IMA). Designated IMAs are further classified into one of four zones (or management intent) which range from a conservation emphasis to a development emphasis based on the values and the sensitivity of the land and natural resources.

3) Cumulative Effect Indicators

The governments will use surface disturbance and linear density indicators to track new activity, with consideration being given to previous activity in the planning region. For greater certainty governments will use these indicators as guides for adaptive management and will establish necessary protocols as part of implementation of the Plan. The indicator levels will not necessarily be construed as limits to development as these will be determined by the Parties depending on the particular circumstances.

4) Recommendations

Subject to the above points of clarification, the governments approve and commit to implement all the recommendations in the Plan including (but not limited to):

- a) Establishing a Whitefish Wetland protected area and a study area for the proposed Summit Lake – Bell River protected area and related land withdrawals;
- b) Accepting the recommended zoning for the balance of the North Yukon withdrawal area and removal of related land withdrawals as soon as possible;
- c) Tracking surface and linear disturbance, and agreeing to meet to discuss management options if an LMU disturbance (indicator) level is reached; and,
- d) To review and modify the plan at regular intervals.

5) Plan Implementation

In addition to committing to implement the plan recommendations, the governments will:


- a) Establish a protocol so that either party may trigger a review and amendment of the plan as it applies to its respective jurisdiction to accommodate significant nonconforming uses or changing circumstances;
- b) Commit to tracking access from the Dempster Highway which is utilizing existing linear disturbances; and,
- c) Take into consideration the general management directions in making land and resource decisions.

The Vuntut Gwitchin and Yukon governments will continue to jointly monitor plan implementation and to ensure proponents and resource decision makers understand and adhere to this plan.

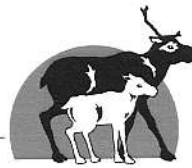
Mahsi' Cho / Thank you,

Signed in Old Crow, June 29, 2009


Joe Linklater
Chief
Vuntut Gwitchin Government


Honourable Dennis Fentie
Premier
Government of Yukon

About the North Yukon Planning Commission



NORTH YUKON
PLANNING COMMISSION
NICHIH GWANALIN • LOOKING FORWARD

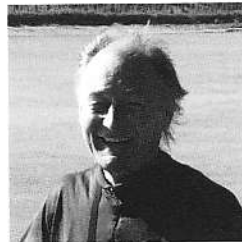
The logo of the North Yukon Planning Commission depicts the significance of the Porcupine Caribou Herd to the people of North Yukon. The Mother and calf signifies the responsibility of parents and the older generation to their young and to the future. The circle shows how we are all inter-connected and dependant on a healthy environment. *Looking Forward - Nichih Gwanal'in* is a value inherent in the Vuntut Gwitchin culture; it is the responsibility of all to work towards a sustainable future for generations to come.

Commission Members

The North Yukon Planning Commission is an arms length public planning body nominated by the Yukon and Vuntut Gwitchin governments.



Shirlee Frost
Chair



Dave Brekke



Dennis Frost Sr.



Marvin Frost Sr.



Jane Montgomery

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Or, visit the North Yukon Planning Commission web site: www.nypc.planyukon.ca

Acknowledgements

This land use plan was produced with the assistance of many Plan Partners. Several groups and agencies directly assisted NYPC with information collection and analysis, planning concepts and approaches, and writing/editing of various planning documents.

Major contributors included Yukon Government (special thanks to Tim Sellars), Vuntut Gwitchin Government (special thanks to Shel Graupe), Ducks Unlimited Canada, Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service and Northern Ecosystems Initiative), Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Yukon Land Use Planning Council (special thanks to Jeff Hamm and Ron Cruikshank) and the Peel Watershed Planning Commission (special thanks to Brian Johnston).

Vuntut Gwitchin Elders shared their traditional knowledge, wisdom and humour during the planning process. Several Elders passed on during production of the land use plan but their legacy, spirit and teachings remain. To them, we extend a special Mahsi' Choo (thank you).

Many Old Crow community members and land users made significant contributions to this regional land use plan. Without their knowledge and ongoing participation, this exercise would not have been possible.

Doug Brownlee participated as a commission member during the initial years of the planning process. The NYPC members wish to extend a special thank you for his valuable contributions to land use planning concepts and efficient administration.

The experiences and lessons learned by the prior Vuntut Planning Commission greatly assisted the NYPC. Thank you to the previous commission members for their contributions to the region and Chapter 11 regional planning.

Other assistance was provided by Parks Canada, the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council, Environmental Dynamics Inc., Gartner Lee Limited, the United States Geological Survey — Cooperative Research Units (Alaska), the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (Alaska), Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, the Yukon Environmental & Socio-economic Assessment Board, Yukon College, the Yukon Habitat Stewards Program (Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board), Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, Devon Canada Corporation and Access Consulting Group.

Landscape management unit photos were provided by John Meikle, Val Lowen, Geoff Bradshaw, Cameron Eckert, and Jim Hawkings.

Geoff Bradshaw of the Yukon Geological Survey provided the NYPC with an assessment of the region's mineral potential, greatly assisting the planning process. Geoff died in a tragic helicopter accident in the summer of 2006. His energy, enthusiasm and dedication are greatly missed.

Plan Highlights

ENGLISH

- The Plan provides a Sustainable Development framework for land management in the North Yukon Planning Region.
- The Plan addresses two key issues: 1) oil and gas development in a significant portion of the annual range of the Porcupine Caribou herd; 2) management of development impacts in wetlands outside of Protected Areas.
- The Plan divides the region into 13 landscape management units and designates each unit (see Map 1, Appendix 1).
- Of the total region:
 - 50% is the Integrated Management Area (IMA), and can be considered the 'working landscape'. 80% of the IMA has a higher development focus.
 - 36% has Protected Area status. The Plan recommends Protected Area designation for central Whitefish Wetlands and Summit Lake – Bell River (1,993 square kilometres, 4% of region).
 - 12% is affected by the North Yukon Land Withdrawal.
 - 2% is the Fishing Branch HPA.
- The Plan recommends a land use designation option for future consideration within the North Yukon Land Withdrawal.
- Plan recommendations include:
 - Conservation measures for the Whitefish and Bluefish-Cadzow wetland complexes, and the Richardson Mountains.
 - Managing the effects of multiple land use activities (cumulative impacts) through the consideration of cumulative effects indicator levels.
 - Additional specific recommendations related to achieving social, economic and ecological objectives.

GWICH'IN

- Nits' òo nanh, nin, luk ts'at gah jidii vit'idaach'uu datthak vik'ahanaatyaa geenjit dinehtl'eh zhìt gwidinithatl'oo.
- Neekaii ch'andòo geenjit gwidinithatl'oo: 1) Nijin vadzaih nahaa'òo gwa'an khaii, khaiits'ò' hèe gwandòo jii nan zhìt khaii juuk'a' ts'at chuu juuk'a' haa gwitr'it t'agwaa'in; 2) Van ts'at han gwinjik gwa'an gwitr'it t'agwaa'in jì' duulèh van ts'at han gwinjik gwiizuu gahahtsyaa.
- Nanh vakak gwiinlit gwitr'it t'agwaa'in jì' nits'ò' gwitr'it t'agwahaayaa geenjit gwidinithatl'oo.
- Nanh nihlinehch'i' didich'uu nilii aii gwik'iighè' dinehtl'eh tr'adantl'oo.
- Jii geenjit nits'òo gwitr'it t'agwahaayaa, ts'at nits'òo nanh vak'ahanaatyaa datthak:
 - Nanh 50% nan zhìt khaii juuk'a' ts'at chuu juuk'a', nan zhìt chii, gah nits'òo nan kak gwitr'it t'agwahaayaa geenjit ke'gidiniitin. Whitefish, Bluefish-Cadzow ts'at Richardson Mountain gwa'an ch'andòo gwiinzii gwik'ahanaatyaa.
 - Nanh 36% agwahchii vigwak'anahtyaa. Jii Whitefish ts'at Summit Lake – Bell River gwitèetl'an geenjit chan dinehtl'eh k'eejit gihidinèetl'oo, ezhik danh nanh thok nitr'ihee'aa jì'.
 - Ch'oodeenjìk ee ts'aii khaii juuk'a', chuu juuk'a', nan zhìt chii geenjit vigwak'anahtyaa, ezhik gwa'an duuwèh nanh hàà nigogwihee'aa. Yeendoo jì' duulèh zhat gwa'an vigwak'anahtyaa kwaa. Yeendoo nits'òo nihlinehch'i' gwizhit gwitr'it t'agwahaayaa tthak geenjit gwidinathatl'òo.

Message from the Chair

For thousands of years, the Vuntut Gwitchin and its neighbouring Gwich'in Nations have used and managed the land. Our ancestors were highly educated in land use and the management of all resources. Their land use practices were effective. What we take from the Mother Earth, we give thanks for and use with the utmost respect. Our ancestors taught us the most sacred of teachings...not to use or take more than you need and only what Mother Earth or all of Creation can provide. This teaching ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

In North Yukon, the Porcupine Caribou hold a special place in Gwich'in culture and life. It has been said that the Gwich'in and the Caribou hold a piece of each other's heart. The Creator gave the Gwich'in the Caribou to feed and sustain the people, and to keep the teachings and responsibilities to our past, current and future generations alive. Like the relationship between the Gwich'in people and the Caribou, the Porcupine herd holds a special place in this land use plan.

The Vuntut Gwitchin are a resourceful people and will not shy away from economic opportunities. However, the teachings of our ancestors resonate with each land use issue we are engaged in, and with each decision we must make. Vuntut Gwitchin Elders have been consulted throughout this process to gather, document and map important traditional use and wildlife areas. Their knowledge is represented directly in the North Yukon land use plan.

We have been taught to do things in co-operation with others. The Plan Partners concept initiated from the beginning of this exercise embraces this teaching. Our intent has been to develop a regional land use plan for the Vuntut Gwitchin traditional territory with cooperation and engagement of our Plan Partners. The end result is a Plan that reflects the values of residents, is balanced, assists in making informed land use decisions, and can be implemented. A special Mahsi' Choo (thank you) to our Plan Partners.

Our staff worked extremely hard to produce this Plan. Their skills, energy, dedication and commitment throughout this long and challenging planning process was a source of inspiration for the Commission members. Thank you to Shawn Francis, John Ryder, Richard Vladars and Kathleen Zimmer. We couldn't have done this without you.

The North Yukon regional land use plan embodies the guiding principles of the Vuntut Gwitchin people – *Nichih Gwanal'in, Looking Forward*. We trust this land use plan will assist in establishing a framework for sustainable land use in northern Yukon.

Mahsi' Choo,



Shirlee Frost, Chair
North Yukon Planning Commission