

CARCROSS/TAGISH TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Community-Based
Fish and Wildlife

**Work Plan
2020-2025**



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Caribou and cisco art created by Keith Wolfe-Smarch.

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Acknowledgments

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The work described herein evolves from the foundational hard work of those that contributed to these efforts in the previous decades. Legacies were left by many individuals including Art Johns, Patrick James and those that have passed on and are no longer with us: Art Smith, Ted Hall, Albert James, and others. Their efforts and sacrifices made a difference and the focus is now on how to protect and maintain this precious heritage.

Finally, the planning team would like to thank the fish and wildlife dwellers for their silent contributions, inspiring everyone to work together in a spirit of interconnectedness.

Common Abbreviations

GC/TFN	Government of Carcross/Tagish First Nation
C/TRRC	Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council
FWWP	Community-based fish and wildlife work plan
YG	Government of Yukon



Language

English	Lingít	Taagish
animals <i>creatures of all kinds</i>	ldakát yéide át	
bear		shash
black bear	s'eeek	
caribou	watsíx	wejih/ wedzih/ medzih
conservation <i>things are saved for later</i>	at dusneeex	
enforcement	yéi at wududzinee	
enhancement <i>it was made better</i>	wududlik'éi	
equality <i>things are weighed evenly</i>	wooch yáx at koodáal	
fall	yéis	
fish	xáat	
grizzly [brown] bear	xóots	shashchō
grizzly bear <i>term used by speakers who respect the bear so much that they do not use its real name</i>	yatseeneit	
habitat <i>their home</i>	has du neilí	
lake trout	daleiyí	
land	aan/ tl'átk	
least cisco (herring)	yaaw	
marten	k'óox	
moose	dzísk'w	xandēy
our way of life/ being	Haa Kusteeyí	
People	Lingít	Dené
place names	aan saax'ú	
respect	at yáa ayuné/ at yáa awunék	
sheep	tawei kukalt'éex	tūge
spring	taakw éeti	
stewardship <i>the land is/was cared for</i>	aan daat kaa yawsiták	
summer	taakw.eeh'	
thank you	gunalchéesh	
trapping	gaatáa	
water	héen tl'átk	tū
winter	taakw	
wolf	gooch	

A note on language: GC/TFN worked diligently to source all the proper Tlingit and Tagish names; native speakers are scarce and since Tlingit is more comprehensively available, most common words that recur in the themes and descriptions in this Plan are provided in translation.

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The Beginning: What is this plan about?



The community-based fish and wildlife work plan (the Plan) is a way for the Government of Carcross/Tagish First Nation (GC/TFN), the Government of Yukon (YG), and the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council (C/TRRC) to come together to decide the management priorities for fish, wildlife, and habitat in the Traditional Territory. It honours the spirit of reconciliation and direction from the Carcross/Tagish Final Agreement, building on previous work while also including ideas brought forward by the communities.

Within the Plan, all things are considered cumulatively and holistically, recognizing that everything is inter-connected. This emphasizes a continual focus on the larger picture and the long-term time horizon.

The plan is operational, expresses the voices and choices of the communities within the Traditional Territory, and identifies how, and by whom, these issues will be tackled. The Plan addresses a range of topics, including caribou and bear management, declining fish populations, habitat degradation resulting from recreational access pressures, and the need for better use of local and Traditional Knowledge.

Vision

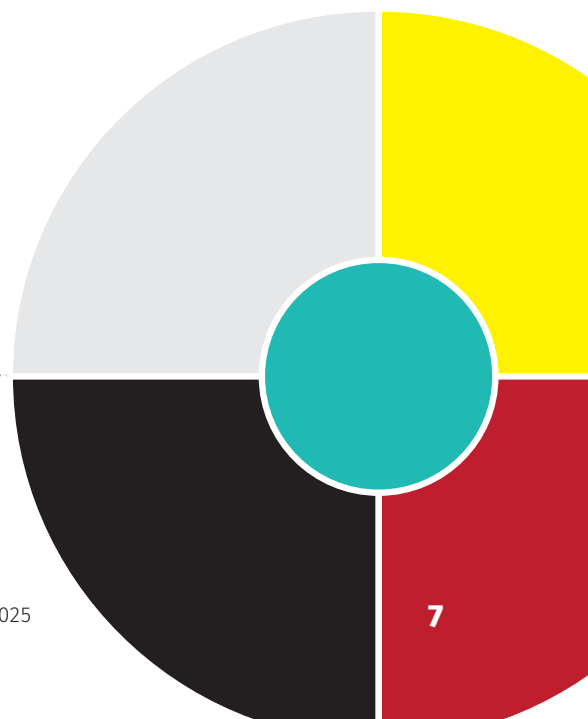
The Plan represents a shared vision for fish, wildlife, and habitat management in the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory over the next five years. The following vision was crafted collaboratively by the planning team consisting of representatives from GC/TFN, the C/TRRC, and YG, with inspiration from the Elders' Statement in the Carcross/Tagish Final Agreement:

We have been entrusted by our Elders and the public with the responsibility of looking after the land and waters, including the fish and wildlife that we share it with. We take this responsibility to heart and understand it is imperative for future generations that we do this in a meaningful and respectful way. We work side-by-side in an enduring relationship to collaborate and share ideas and resources on how to understand and best safeguard fish, wildlife, and habitat values within the Traditional Territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Ldakát át a yáa ayaduwanéi (all things are respected)

“The most important point in regards to the human relationship with animals is that the Ancestors of this land recognized animals as beings with powers that often seem to be far greater than their own. Animals, birds and insects are highly significant inhabitants of the earth. Encounters with them are often as important, and sometimes even more important, than are meetings with other human beings.”

Statutes of Carcross/Tagish, Book 1 (2014) Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our Place, Our Responsibility (p. 45)



Guiding Principles

From the beginning, the planning team embraced a set of shared principles to guide the planning process and the plan itself:

- › Equal consideration and representation of local and Traditional Knowledge and scientific information. Provide an ethical space where learning and understanding of different worldviews held by those living within the Traditional Territory is supported;
- › Provide a physical seat at the table for the fish and wildlife “dwellers” as a symbol and reminder of our inter-connectedness, kinship, and the vision we are working (together) toward. This gesture signifies due respect and consideration for the plants and animals that are without a voice by those at the table;
- › Guide the coordinated work of governments and the C/TRRC over the next five years. Define actions that are relevant, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely;
- › Build on existing efforts – coordinate and share information and resources so as not to duplicate efforts;
- › Empower local residents to be more involved in fish, wildlife, and habitat stewardship within the Traditional Territory.

Our Journey

Haa Kusteeyí translates as “Our Way of Life/ Being” and refers to the way of following natural law by the Tlingit and Tagish people. The concept of Haa Kusteeyí is elemental to this Plan because Traditional Knowledge is embedded into it and into the process that created it. There are stories and cultural facets that are relevant to the long-term relationship between the people (Lingít/Dené) and creatures of all kinds (Idakát yéide át). This Plan is also a narrative of understanding between the parties that created it, the people from the communities, and a sense of responsibility and caring for the dwellers and the world in which we all live.

C/TFN is a clan-based government organized around the medicine wheel – a circular representation of balance, respect, reciprocity and relationship. The Plan was developed in 2019 and early 2020 and will be implemented from June 2020 to June 2025, five full circles of the sun. Several cycles of community input and deliberation informed the content and format. The direction expressed here is also part of a living and adaptive process, allowing new priorities and ideas to surface alongside the actions described below.

To arrive at the current version of the Plan, two sets of public meetings were held in Carcross, Tagish, Mt. Lorne, and Marsh Lake – led by the C/TRRC in early 2019 and another in February 2020 to review draft content. The Plan reflects the priorities of the planning team and the communities within the Traditional Territory. A draft plan was prepared by the planning team leading up to a final release at the On the Land Gathering in September 2020.



Public meeting in Carcross |
Photo Credit: Ryan van der Marel



Nares Narrows | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

Connections Within the Traditional Territory

Many different plans and guidance documents cover various aspects of fish, wildlife, and habitat management in the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory. The multitude of plans can be confusing. Community-based fish and wildlife work plans are relationship-based and action-oriented. They take strategic directions and recommendations from many different plans and policies and provide a clear path on delivering those commitments within a 5-year time period.

This Plan is not intended to be duplicative. It aligns with, celebrates, supports, and upholds the following initiatives:

- › Indigenous Land Relationship Plan: How we Walk with the Land and Water (underway)
- › Local Area Plans for Carcross, Marsh Lake, Mt. Lorne, and Tagish
- › Regional Assessment of Wildlife in the Yukon Southern Lakes Area (Vol. 1; SLWCC, 2012) and (Vol. 2; SLWCC, 2012)
- › Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan (draft 2020)
- › Southern Lakes Caribou Management Plan/Steering Committee (underway)
- › Southern Lakes Caribou Monitoring and Inventory Project (underway)
- › Southern Lakes Salmon Plan/Committee (underway)
- › Southern Lakes Lake Trout Movement project (underway)
- › Tagish and Nares Cisco Research Project (2019)
- › Tagish River Habitat Protection Area Management Plan (draft 2020)

The representatives from GC/TFN, C/TRRC, and YG are involved in various capacities with the initiatives identified above. The objectives and actions brought forward in this plan are those that best meet multiple outcomes identified in various plans. For example, actions for monitoring caribou are consistent with direction provided by the Southern Lakes Caribou Management Plan/Committee and recommendations by the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee.



**What are we
looking at today?**

Ice formation on Windy Arm | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

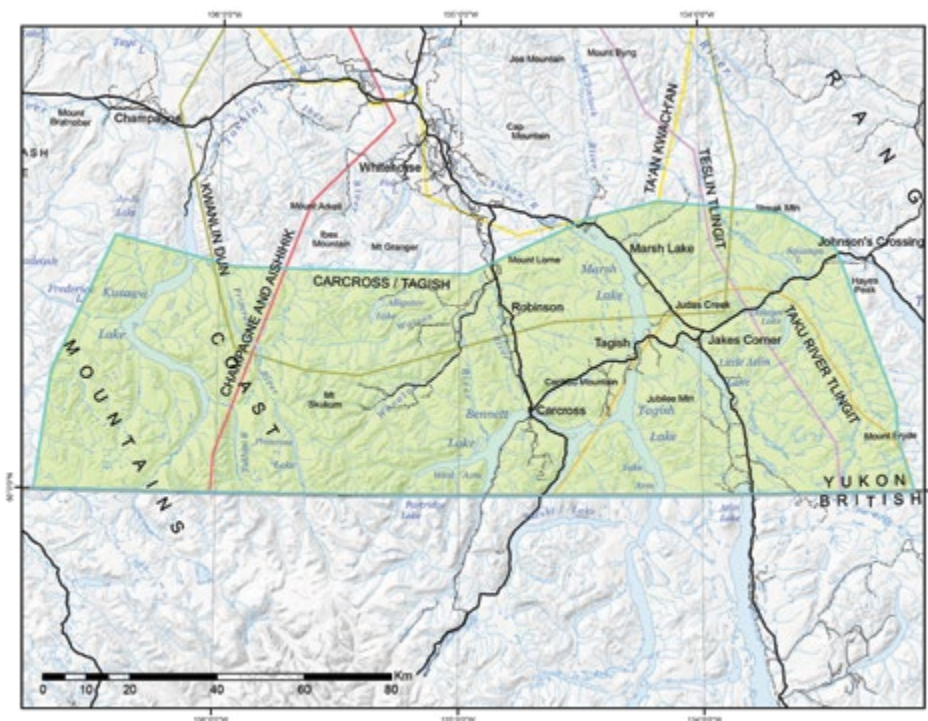
Apart from Whitehorse, the Southern Lakes area – in which the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory lies – is the most populated part of Yukon. Its proximity to the capital make it a popular destination for visitors. As such, the communities expressed many concerns related to the amount of human activity and disturbance to fish, wildlife and their habitat. Although there were many good ideas emerging from community members, some did not meet this Plan’s criteria for being specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. There were many good ideas emerging from community members, and this plan focuses on those ideas that met the criteria of being specific, measurably, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

How this Work Plan is Organized

The Plan is broadly organized by the themes of:

- 1) The Water & the Land (Wé Héen ka Wé Aan/ Tl’átk);
- 2) The Animals (Wé Ldakát Yéide Át); and
- 3) The People (Wé Lingít/ Dené).

These themes are not meant to indicate divisions, but rather for clarity in guidance. The final section of the plan contains The Next Chapter – Implementation Tables which describe the exact actions for each objective and details for how, by whom, and when those actions will be completed. Throughout this Plan, stories, anecdotes, and photography are used to inform the reader about various aspects of these themes.



Carcross/ Tagish Traditional Territory in Yukon

The Water & the Land

Wé Héen ka Wé Aan/ Tl'átk



Gull on Tagish River bridge | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

The Southern Lakes region supports a diversity of ecosystems, primarily dry boreal wooded grasslands consisting of mixed coniferous forests and grasses. Along with the lakes are an abundance of rivers, wetlands, and riparian areas. This landscape has the most number of mammal species in Yukon and many unique plants. Since time immemorial, First Nation people in the Yukon lived a nomadic lifestyle. They followed the seasonal movements of wildlife to different locations where sources of food were known to be. Although life was simple it was by no means easy. Elders tell us that when an area needed rest, the community did not hunt or harvest in that area until it was replenished.

In the community meetings, there were many concerns about the use of lakes and aquatic environments (including volume of boat traffic, garbage on shorelines, and water levels), the quality of brushing along roadways, and increased human activity in the area's headwaters. There was general interest in regional land-use planning and better habitat protections. The Judas Creek area and Nares Narrows were identified by the planning team and by community members as important movement corridors for caribou with the Judas Creek drainage also containing high quality caribou winter habitat. Nares Narrows is also key spawning habitat for cisco, an ecologically and culturally significant species.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support the water and the land include:

- › Update and gather fish and wildlife data with priority on sensitive habitats
- › Explore and collaborate on habitat protection for priority areas

The land has provided for the people for as far back as anyone can remember. It has seen many changes over time. The landscape has changed and the creatures that have walked over it have changed, but the spirit of this country has not. It is alive and dynamic. It is one of the most healing places on the planet. The pulse and energy of the land and its resources can be felt by one who is in rhythm with nature. Its food and medicine is free and plentiful. As stewards of this land, we have a responsibility to see that future generations have access to the same blessings.

.....
Statutes of Carcross/Tagish, Book 1 (2014) Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our Place, Our Responsibility (p. 38)



Some places identified in the Plan

The Animals

Wé Ldakát Yéide Át



The Finned

The Fish Wé Xáat

Fish have always been important to Carcross/Tagish First Nation Citizens, residents of the Southern Lakes, other Yukoners and visitors. The Southern Lakes sustain the largest and most extensive aquatic systems and fisheries in the Yukon. First Nations people have always traveled to fishing spots on lakes, creeks and rivers to harvest salmon. Other species fished throughout the year included grayling, burbot, whitefish, northern pike, cisco and lake trout. In recent times, observed declines in various fish populations or reduced fishing success have raised concerns. These concerns are echoed by observations from Elders, such as with the decline of cisco documented in a 2019 research project: Annie Auston, a C/TFN Elder, said “I remember when I was a kid, in Carcross there used to be so much herrings [sic] there.

It was just black, because on that train bridge, we’d go on the train bridge and it was just like a black blanket right across, it was just thick. Really, really lots of herrings [sic].” There is a sense that the cisco are still around, just not in the narrows in the same concentrations anymore.

At the community meetings, many participants also raised concerns about declines in fish numbers, particularly about lake trout (daleiyí) but also grayling (t’ási), cisco (yaaw), and northern pike (tásleiyí). Specific community concerns were raised about catch limits, live release ethics, poor fish handling practices, overfishing, tourism and overcrowding at boat ramps and in fishing areas, degradation of fish habitat, and climate change. Yukoners have varying views on catch and release, known as live release in Yukon. Many First Nations, including meeting participants, view the practice as ‘playing with your food’ and do not support it. Even among non-indigenous anglers there is a belief that the purpose of fishing should be to put a meal on the table. Other hand, recreational anglers see live release as a conservation practice, returning those fish to the ecosystem that are over the maximum size limit or within slot limits.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support fish and fishing include:

- › Increase education and outreach with residents, non-residents, and First Nation Citizens on regulatory live release and the need for selective harvest tools for management
- › Develop a signage strategy to support fishing education at key fishery take-off points
- › Develop a plan for high-use fishing areas, including:
 - › Little Atlin Lake (Tlingit: Xáat Tlein Áayi “Big Fish Lake”, Tagish: Łúu Chó Méne’ “Big Fish Lake”)
 - › Snafu Lake (Tlingit: Naagas’éi Áayi “Fox Lake”, Tagish: Nústséhé Méne’ “Fox Lake”)
 - › Tarfu Lake (Tlingit: Gooch Áayi “Wolf Lake”, Tagish: Ágáz Méne’ “Fox Lake”); and
 - › Lubbock River (Tlingit: Xáat tláa “Fish Mother”).



Least Cisco | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight



Handle with respect

Please limit your fishing effort, including catch and release in this area.

Minimize air exposure – keep the fish in water and avoid taking pictures.

Eliminate contact with dry and hard surfaces – use a soft, rubber net, hold fish with two clean, wet hands and don't squeeze.

Reduce handling time – bring the fish in quickly, use single barbless hooks, use pliers or cut the line if deeply hooked.



Campaign to Support Vulnerable Spring Fisheries

The C/TRRC and a consortium of organizations and Governments are working together to deliver an angler outreach and education campaign to support vulnerable spring fisheries in the Southern Lakes. The outreach and educational campaign includes outdoor signage, a social media campaign and a physical presence in certain areas.





Woodland Caribou | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

The Four-legged

The Caribou *Wē Watsix/ Wejih*

First Nations within the Southern Lakes area have relied on the caribou for subsistence, and traditional and cultural needs since for as long as can be remembered. Declining caribou populations have been the focus of wildlife conservation initiatives in the Southern Lakes area for close to three decades, beginning with the Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program and formation of the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee (SLCSC) in the 1990s. The SLCSC was replaced in 2008 to form the Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee, which completed an assessment of wildlife and associated series of recommendations in 2012. Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Teslin Tlingit Council, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, and Taku River Tlingit and the governments of Yukon, British Columbia, and Canada recently re-formed the SLCSC in 2018 to create a management plan for the Carcross, Ibex, Laberge, and Atlin caribou herds. The size of the herds is currently being reevaluated and early indications suggest the herds have continued to recover slowly since the last population estimates were obtained for each herd in the late 2000s.

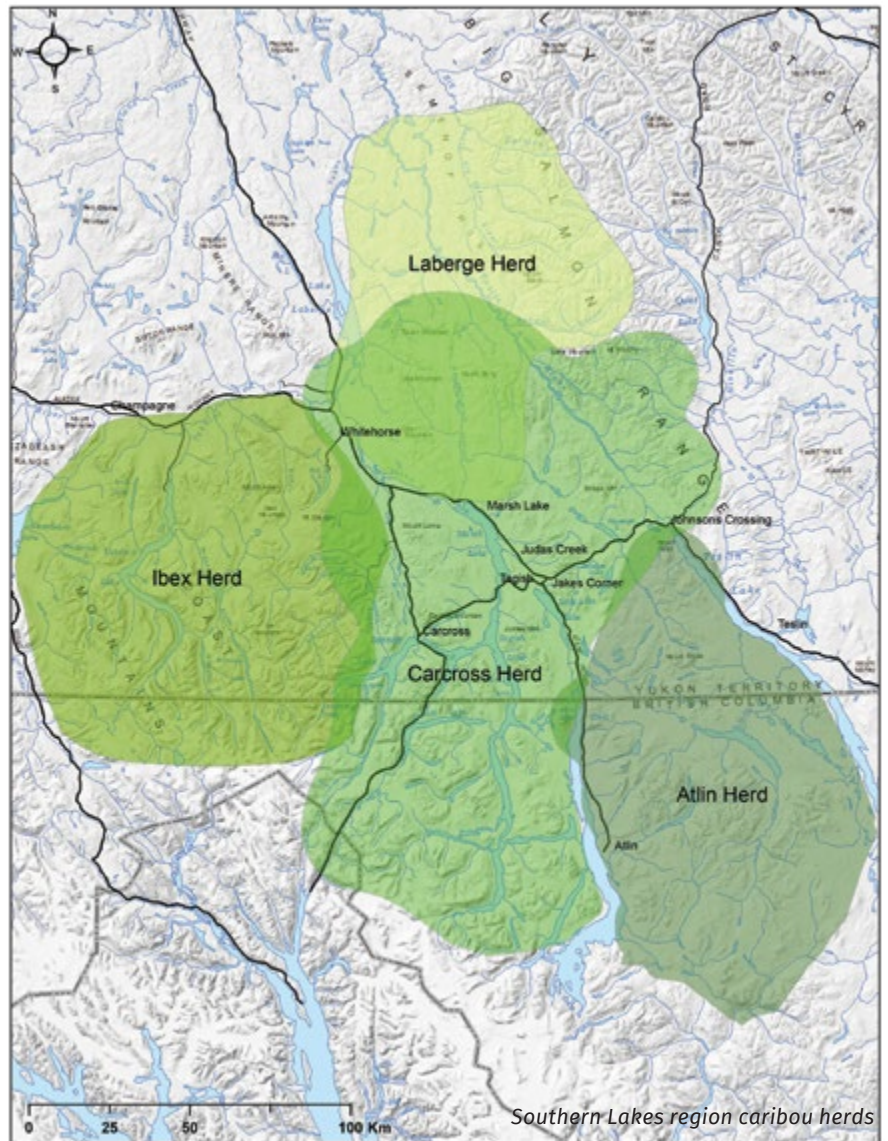
One of the keys to recovery success has been the leadership of First Nation governments and citizens, who have maintained a voluntarily suspension of their subsistence harvest rights for caribou since the early 1990s. Other activities included gathering of local, Traditional, and scientific information on the herds, extensive public communication and education, the caribou-in-the-schools program, and mitigations to prevent vehicle collisions. In particular, the Department of Environment has a working group with Highways and Public Works to mitigate highway mortalities, and signage and public service announcements are tools continue to be used to educate motorists and minimize caribou mortality on the highways.

Results from the 2017 surveys of the Carcross and Ibex herds, show that calf survival outweighs adult mortality at a rate that indicates stable populations. Despite optimism about caribou recovery, these caribou are still at risk and careful management of human activities and caribou habitats remains a priority in the region. Human development, particularly in the relatively limited winter range, will continue to place pressure on the herds as the human population of the Southern Lakes region grows. This population growth is causing increased activity and disturbance from snowmobiles, dog teams, skiers, fat-tire bikers, hikers, and highway vehicle traffic. Reducing traffic collisions with caribou will continue to be a priority, particularly on increasingly busy roads that pass directly through important caribou winter range.

Hunting was one of the main causes of the past decline of the herds and any future harvest of these herds will have to be carefully monitored to ensure future declines are prevented.

The long-term impacts of climate change pose additional uncertainties, making it necessary for governments, boards and councils, communities, and citizens to work together to address these diverse and challenging issues to ensure the caribou's future.

What we heard in the communities was concern over caribou/vehicle collisions, impacts of human disturbance from recreation and trail building, and the impacts of dog teams on caribou. Even though there are more caribou, range plans (which provide guidance to how a herd's range should be managed to ensure protection), ground-based monitoring, and continued education are required to ensure caribou populations continue their upward trend. It was also heard that despite concerns for caribou, we should take this opportunity to celebrate their recovery.



Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support caribou include:

- › Coordinate with other caribou management agencies to ensure goals align
- › Expand efforts to reach out to communities on caribou recovery
- › Continue to develop tools to reduce caribou mortality on highways
- › Develop a range plan for Southern Lakes caribou
- › Continue to update caribou range information with ground-based monitoring efforts and local observations
- › Document and spatially map human recreation impacts on caribou



The Story of the Creatures

“In the old days, the mountains were black and moving with caribou coming down and crossing the Nares River. [...] The Southern Lakes caribou herd spends most of the year in smaller groups that move between the boreal forest and open mountain ranges. Caribou generally can be found in alpine areas in the summer. [...] Caribou are the only ones in the deer family where both the male and female have antlers, of which no two antlers are alike. A warm, hollow-haired coat that protects the caribou from extreme temperatures covers their compact body, including their muzzle, tail, and feet. The large feet of the caribou can act as snowshoes and helps the animal to stay on top of the soft snow. Their broad, sharp-edged hooves easily break and clear the snow when their great sense of smell tells them that their favourite food, lichen, is below the snow. During the summer, they feed on grasses, sedges, and willows. In autumn, they enjoy a special treat of mushrooms.”

HEADS UP

Watch for caribou
Take extra caution while driving

Look out for the warning signs

Most collisions occur in these areas

The Carcross caribou herd is back in its winter range. Caribou will frequently cross the **Alaska Highway** and the **South Klondike Highway** and **Tagish Road** until the end of April.

For your own safety and the sake of the caribou, watch for them on the highways, particularly in the dark. Drive to the conditions, use winter tires, and make sure your headlights are clean and functional.

Through the concerted efforts of the Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program, this herd has been slowly recovering since historic low numbers in the early 1990s. Your careful driving helps ensure a healthy caribou population.

If you are involved in a wildlife-vehicle collision or see struck wildlife along the highways, call the Yukon TIPP Line at 1-800-661-0525.

Collaborative efforts on caribou awareness material

Statutes of Carcross/Tagish, Book 1 (2014) Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our Place, Our Responsibility (p. 42)



The Moose *Wé Džísk'w/ Xandēy*

Moose provide valued meat to families and are very popular with Yukon hunters. They also play an important ecological role in large predator-prey relationships and with plant species and water. Moose numbers in much of the region declined in the 1980s because of overharvesting, leading to limitations for licensed harvest in the late 1980s. The last moose survey in 2010 showed that moose populations have not recovered, but have not declined further. Local and Traditional Knowledge substantiate this trend, with overharvest cited as the biggest threat to moose populations. Other factors also contribute, such as human disturbance to moose calving in the springtime, particularly from recreational activity. Moose recovery planning in the region has been discussed many times since the late 1980s, yet no cooperative recovery actions have been implemented to date. The Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee recommended in 2012 that governments work together on moose recovery goals, including managed harvest and monitoring of moose populations.

The concerns expressed by community members in the public meetings included impacts to moose numbers due to overharvest, predation, habitat loss, and access and development pressures. There was a desire to have more discussions to establish moose recovery goals and to work towards these goals. Everyone agreed that moose recovery efforts require community support and planning.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support moose include:

- › Host a series of location-specific moose management workshops in the Southern Lakes for future planning
- › Develop a plan to monitor and estimate moose harvest and mortalities and other important indicators (e.g. calf mortality) in the Southern Lakes
- › Develop a process, identify resources, and begin discussions with C/TFN Citizens on how to report moose harvest

The Story of the Creatures

“Traditionally, men harvested animals by hunting in areas where plants that were favourable to the animal grew. For example, a moose is likely to be found in a jackpine stand or in a swampy area lush with his favourite treat, yellow pond lilies. [...] The first caribou or moose killed each year, by anyone in the village, is especially honoured. A boy becomes a man when he kills his first big game. The meat of his first kill must be given to his father’s people as a priority. The rest of the village will get meat from the youth’s first kill after his father’s people have been gifted appropriately. The young hunter has to prepare for the kill in a reverent manner prior to the kill. [...] In the old days, when these acts had been completed he would be given a sinew garter wound with swans down to wear until the end of the hunting season. This would be like an announcement the young man has made the step into adulthood. Throughout his life, the young man and the people of his [Traditional Territory] will have respect for, and place high value on, the relationship between all creatures and humans in the C/TFN [Traditional Territory].”

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Statutes of Carcross/Tagish, Book 1, Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our Place, Our Responsibility (p. 46)

The Sheep *Wé Tawéi Kukalt'éex/ Łūge*

Sheep are widespread in the area, with the largest population occurring west of the Carcross Road. These populations have a long history of monitoring using both aerial and ground-based surveys. The most recent surveys were in 2015 and 2016 and found about 2000 adult sheep south of the Alaska Highway and between Kusawa and Tagish Lakes. These sheep populations have remained very stable since the late 1970s when they were first surveyed. Sheep harvest is managed conservatively and hunting in much of the area is limited by permits, with additional areas placed on permit in 2020. Sheep are sensitive to disturbance, particularly during the lambing period, and they have been known to abandon ranges in response.

At the public meetings, community members were increasingly concerned about the well-being of sheep in the area. Growing use of off-road vehicles and associated trails are used to access alpine areas that are frequented by sheep. It was suggested that more knowledge is needed to understand what habitat sheep are using, and whether increased disturbance and displacement of sheep in some areas needs to be addressed.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support sheep include:

- › Implement a sheep collar program and share results



Dall's Sheep | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

The Story of the Creatures

“Dall’s sheep usually stick to open grasslands above the treeline, and must have scree slopes and broken cliffs nearby for escape routes and for spring lambing grounds. Mineral licks, a good winter range high in the mountains and safe migration routes are vital. Since sheep are grazers, they need to get at grasses and other favourite plants buried by winter snowfalls. They will dig in snow up to 30 cm deep, but rely on high mountain winds to sweep the slopes clear of deeper snow. If ewes do not get enough food energy during the winter, they will not produce lambs in the spring, and that would have a serious effect on the yearly sheep population. Dall’s sheep are high strung, and use the same migration routes and seasonal feeding grounds generation after generation. They are known to abandon an ancient use area because of new noise disturbances, such as mining exploration work. Once they leave their rugged mountain landscape, they become vulnerable to their natural predators wolves, coyotes and grizzlies. Dall’s sheep are only found in Canada’s northwest and Alaska. Their age can be counted by the number of rings in their horns. [sic]”

Statutes of Carcross/Tagish, Book 1 (2014) Traditional Beliefs and Practices: Our Place, Our Responsibility (p. 42)



The Black Bears & The Grizzly Bears ***Wé S'eeek ka wé Xóots (Yatseeneit)/ Shash***

Both black bears and grizzly bears occur in the Southern Lakes region. The grizzly bear population was estimated in 2012 and 2013 using genetics collected from hair captured at bait stations between Kusawa Lake and Tagish Lake. This study estimated that there were about 95 grizzly bears in this area. This was the first survey of its kind so we do not know if there are more or less bears than there used to be. Bear movements were also tracked with satellite collars during that time. Bear mortality can be high in this area as a result of conflicts with people. Local knowledge from past public meetings suggest that there is an increase in the number of black bears relative to grizzly bears. Bear activity can depend on the season and success of various prey and forage species (e.g. berries). Bears are often attracted to local gardens, compost, garbage, bird feeders, and other attractants which must be managed properly to ensure conflicts do not occur.

Bears are of concern in all communities even though there is uncertainty over whether bear populations are increasing or decreasing. In areas where there are perceived increases, community members worry that bears may be getting bolder than before. Most recommendations from the community were about the need for better awareness and outreach activities, ensuring compliance around attractant management and roadside viewing of bears. There were concerns raised about roadside hunting of bears and trophy hunting for grizzly bears in particular, which are desired to be addressed at a community-level.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives pertaining to bears include:

- › Continue public outreach and education around bears
- › Develop a community strategy for grizzly bears and human/bear relationships
- › Minimize attractants in the communities to reduce human-bear conflict mortalities



Wolf Track / Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

The Wolves

Wé Gooch

Wolves are apex predators at the top of the food chain and are therefore an integral part of natural ecosystems. They are an important predator of ungulates and often show up in conversations about moose and caribou management. Historically, First Nations occasionally sought out wolf dens and several, but not all, pups were eliminated. This would ensure wolves would return to the same den year after year, but packs size was suppressed in order to have more moose and caribou.

Wolves have been intensively managed in the Southern Lakes area in the past, including aerial controls in the 1980s to reduce predation on moose and livestock. As the intricate relationships between predator and prey became better understood, approaches to management shifted. Currently, wolves are managed as big game and furbearers under the *Yukon Wildlife Act*, therefore they can be hunted and trapped. There is a long tradition of trapping wolves in the Traditional Territory and this has been used in contemporary times to reduce local predation on moose. Guidance for management of wolves can be found in the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (2012).

Concerns from the communities emerged that wolves use linear corridors to hunt caribou and moose; they are more efficient on landscape where trails have been cleared or packed down in the winter, or even where climate change has produced freeze-thaw cycles. Anything that facilitates wolf predation success must be better understood to get the full picture of how these species interact on the landscape. Community members made it clear that managing human activity as it relates to access and ungulate harvest is important to understanding full predator-prey relationships. More information was desired overall to inform better decision-making.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives pertaining to wolves include:

- ▶ Continue the wolf-ungulate relationship study and share results

Understanding C/TFN Moieties and Clans

Culturally, wolves occupy an important place in First Nation clan structure, identity, and ceremony. They are sometimes referred to as ‘the doctor’ of wild animals. C/TFN has two moieties: Wolf (Gooch Naa) and Crow (Yéil Naa). Within these, six clans are recognized, which fall within the two moieties: Killerwhale (Dakl’aweidí) and Wolf (Yanyeidí) are Gooch Naa, and Split-tailed Beaver (Deisheetaan), Woodworm (Gaanax teidí), Raven with Children (Kookhittaaan), and Frog (Ishkeetaan) are Yéil Naa.

The Winged

Local First Nations use some of the bird species that reside and move through the area for food and for their down feathers which are used for insulation and ceremony. Around one hundred and thirty migratory bird species return to the area each year, including several waterfowl and shorebird species that seek the early ice-free waters. While there were no objectives directly tied to bird species, the overall identification and protection of ecologically sensitive areas will support bird nesting and migratory habitat, particularly around wetlands and riparian areas.



Trumpeter Swans | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

The People *Wé Lingít/ Dené*

The First People of the Traditional Territory are the descendants of the Taagish Dené of Yukon and the Tlingit people of coastal Alaska. The inland Lingít and Taagish people have co-evolved on this landscape since time immemorial. In more recent history, settlers and gold miners on the Klondike Route came to the Yukon seeking their fortunes. Many stayed and the resulting fabric of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the Southern Lakes is a testament to diversity and the appreciation for the land that most people hold.

Recreation and Access

In the Southern Lakes region there are many different activities that compete for land, including mining, timber harvest, wilderness recreation, and agricultural and residential developments. As the population grows, pressure on the land and water is cumulative. With increased use and activity comes increased human footprint and fragmentation, including new trails, linear corridors, resource roads, and land clearings.

The concerns held by the community members included the quantity of trails, unsanctioned and prolific trail-building, the impact of trail-use on wildlife by off-road vehicles and dog sled teams, tourism activities that do not promote respect for the land or support the desires of the communities, habitat degradation due to human footprint and activity, human-wildlife conflicts, and increased risk of wildfire. Even if there are eyes and ears out on the land, there isn't always someone that respond when rules are broken – currently the closest conservation officer is in Whitehorse.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives pertaining to recreation and access include:

- › Identify areas and develop awareness focused on recreational activities in key habitat areas
- › Coordinate action to address the impacts of user groups and access
- › Research potential tools and approaches to limit and/or manage access and associated disturbance
- › Add a Conservation Officer in Carcross
- › RLUP

Cross-Cultural Knowledge Sharing

The Carcross/Tagish First Nation has maintained a deep and meaningful relationship with the land and water for many generations. In the spirit of the medicine wheel, by understanding the world as a series of relationships, we open pathways for collaboration and sharing, respect and reciprocity. This highlights the importance of sharing cross-cultural knowledge, practices, and traditions to strengthen the relationships between First Nation Citizens, Citizens of other Nations, non-Indigenous residents, and the dwellers. Bridging these relationships is part of reconciliation and upholding the Final Agreements.

Working across jurisdictions and with partners is important to building and maintaining relationships. Many of the initiatives extend beyond the boundaries of the Traditional Territory. The boundaries of the Traditional Territory are a modernized line but traditionally the area's First Nation people were more nomadic and traded with other neighbouring Nations.

The community meetings echoed a strong joint statement: there needs to be more education on Traditional Ways – for youth, for all Yukoners, for visitors. Place names are an important starting point, but steps must be taken to embrace, share, and strengthen or “braid” the use of local and Traditional Knowledge, and western science. In particular, telling and re-telling stories is seen as an important way of communicating respect.

Over the next five years, the objectives to support cross-cultural knowledge sharing include:

- › Identify traditional fish and wildlife related topics for workshops and teach local residents and general public
- › Coordinate programs and monitoring efforts with other First Nations
- › Develop a process, identify resources and begin discussions with C/TFN Citizens on how to report harvest
- › Host On the Land Gatherings with cultural activities
- › Facilitate a dialogue with BC Conservation Officers, Natural Resource Officers, and other compliance and enforcement agencies about enforcement and monitoring in the Traditional Territory

Description of On the Land Gathering

The On the Land Gathering is typically held over one or two days in the early summer. The C/TRRC hosts participants “on the land” in one of the Southern Lakes communities to discuss issues pertaining to fish, wildlife, and habitat management, and to share knowledge about what is happening on the land.

The structure of the days is designed as an indigenous process, with song, story, ceremony and conversations with Elders and youth. Technical staff from various governments support the meetings with western science-based updates. These could include the status of various caribou herds or fish stocks.



On the Land Gathering in Tagish | Photo Credit: Dennis Zimmermann



Red Fox | Photo Credit: Karlie Knight

Trapping *Gaatáa*

Another large part of First Nation heritage, Haa Kústeeyí, is trapping. This is mainly done in the winter months because this is when the animals have acquired their winter coats and the fur is in prime condition. Before the exchange of money, furs were used as currency as a means of trade. Hunters caught a wide variety of fur-bearing animals by snares or deadfalls using different kinds of bait. The animals were skinned out and placed on forming boards. The lightest and warmest furs were used to make robes and blankets.

Marten are a commonly trapped species and the Marten Conservation Area encompasses 81 Registered Trapping Concessions and about 32,000 km² in South-Central Yukon. The area was created in 1983 in response to reports of low marten abundance throughout much of the area. Traplines in the area have a limited number of marten that are allowed to be captured. Many trappers have raised concerns about their quotas and the purpose of the Marten Conservation Area in general, and a discussion about its future is due.

In the community meetings, participants vocalized the need to have better education for the public on respecting trapping trails, emphasizing the need to minimize impacts from recreational access. In one discussion, the impacts of beaver dams to fish spawning reaches was raised; however, beaver dams are also important for creating and maintaining fish habitat. This highlights the importance of communication and education, while having discussions about potential dam removal in important areas.

Over the next 5 years, the objectives to support trapping include:

- › Host a discussion around the future of the Marten Conservation Area
- › Address concerns around beaver dams impeding fish passage, particularly where access to spawning grounds is impacted
- › Support local trapper programs

The Next Chapter: Implementation Tables



The Water & the Land

Wé Héen ka Wé Aan/ Tl'átk

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Update and gather fish and wildlife data with priority on sensitive habitats	› Collect data and map ecologically sensitive areas as a component of broader land use planning work	GC/TFN	Ongoing
	› Update Wildlife Key Areas when data is available, or if identified as a priority	YG	Ongoing
	› Gather and compile local knowledge from identified community members to support fish and wildlife objectives	C/TRRC	2021 - 2025
Explore and collaborate on habitat protection for priority areas	› Engage the public on this concept to gauge support, interest and priorities › Identify appropriate mechanisms for habitat protection and develop proposals suited to each area	C/TRRC	2021 - 2022

The Animals

Wé Ldakát Yéide Át

The Finned

The Fish Wé Xáat

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Increase education and outreach with residents, non-residents, and First Nation Citizens on regulatory live release and the need for selective harvest tools for management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a collaborative respectful angling strategy and communications materials with licensed anglers and the GC/TFN that focusses on fishing ethics and limiting excessive live release. 	C/TRRC, GC/TFN & YG	Ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver Fishing Education and Ethics D (FEED) workshops and online education focused on best practices around fish handling in order to reduce regulatory live release mortality. 	YG & C/TRRC	2021-2025
Develop a signage strategy to support fishing education at key fishery take-off points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a communication strategy that provides awareness for anglers including regulations, best practices, advisories, etc. Install signs as per the strategy. 	YG	2021 - 2023
Develop a site-specific plan for high-use fishing areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site-specific plans are created for priority areas including Lubbock River, Snafu Lake, Tarfu Lake, Little Atlin Lake, and Lewes Lake. Continue the creel surveys and initiate human dimensions and licensed angler behavior change research for the Lubbock River grayling fishery. 	YG, C/TRRC & GC/TFN	2021 - 2023

The Four-Legged

The Caribou Wé Watsíx/Wejih

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Coordinate with other caribou management agencies to ensure goals align	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Involve BC in cross-boundary conversations around caribou 	GC/TFN & YG	Ongoing
Expand efforts to reach out to communities on caribou recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Continue the Caribou in the Schools education program › Provide public advisory about where caribou are moving to reduce impacts › Improve outreach on Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program › Support annual ski-bou event (Mt. Lorne) and other events 	YG, C/TRRC, & GC/TFN	Ongoing
Develop a suite of tools to reduce caribou mortality on highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Assess effectiveness of potential mitigations and report back › Continue to work with Highways and Public Works and engage with communities 	YG	2022
Develop a range plan for Southern Lakes caribou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Develop an updated range plan for the Carcross caribou herd, and develop a range plan for the Ibex caribou herd along with other management partners and following guidance from Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee and Caribou Management Plan 	GC/TFN & YG	2021
Continue to update caribou range information with ground-based monitoring efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › As monitoring efforts continue, update spatial data and present results › Implement public reporting system for caribou and make results available to public 	GC/TFN, YG & C/TRRC	Ongoing
Document and spatially map human impacts on caribou	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Monitor, map, and update trail network & recreational use, as well as development activities 	YG & GC/TFN	Ongoing

The Moose
Wé Dzísk'w/Xandēy

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Host a series of location-specific moose management workshops in the Southern Lakes for future planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A workshop is held that includes GC/TFN, YG, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and other neighboring RRCs and First Nations to discuss strategies and actions for moose harvest management › Focus attention to areas identified as concern (e.g. Wheaton Valley) 	C/TRRC	2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Host Nation to Nation moose workshops in overlap areas 	GC/TFN	2021
Develop a plan to monitor and estimate moose harvest and mortalities in the Southern Lakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Complete a moose survey in the identified Moose Management Unit 	YG	2021

The Sheep
Wé Tawéi Kúkalt'éex/ Łūge

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Improve sheep monitoring and share results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Implement a sheep collar program to assess population units and important habitats › Map important sheep habitat › Establish ground-based monitoring project at Caribou Mountain › Make results available to public 	YG	2021

The Black Bears & The Grizzly Bears
Wé S'eeek ka wé Xóots (Yatseeneit)/ Shash

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Deliver public outreach and education around bears	› WildWise is expanded to the communities in the Southern Lakes	GC/TFN	2021
	› Advise locals to report concerning activity using the COSB hotline, preferably using license plates for identification	YG	Ongoing
	› COSB presents to C/TRRC and GC/TFN on compliance and enforcement activities in the Traditional Territory		
	› Host bear aware workshops for community members	C/TRRC & YG	Annually
Develop a community strategy for bears and human-bear relationships	› Develop a strategy that understands the needs and wants of the broader communities and addresses roadside hunting of grizzly bears in the Traditional Territory	GC/TFN	2025
Minimize attractants in the communities to reduce human-bear conflict mortalities	› Deploy more Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders and/or provide incentives to reduce attractants (e.g. compost, chickens)	YG & GC/TFN	Ongoing
	› Erect high caches in the communities (two in Carcross and one in Tagish)	GC/TFN	2021

The Wolves
Wê Gooch

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
<p>Complete wolf-ungulate relationship study and share results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Deploy wolf collars and monitor wolf locations › Scat analysis to research what wolves are eating › Link this study to the caribou work and use existing communication channels for outreach workshops 	<p>YG</p>	<p>2020 - 2023</p>

The People *Wé Lingít/ Dené*

Recreation and Access

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Identify areas and develop awareness focused on recreational activities in key habitat areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Install focused signage at identified areas and helps alert people that the area is shared with wildlife › Develop recreational guidelines for what to do when wildlife is encountered (e.g. caribou) 	YG & GC/TFN (Land Management Board)	Ongoing
Coordinate action to address the impacts of user groups and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Host a workshop with dog team owners on the impacts of noise, new trails, and wildlife attractants (food) related to dog teams › Create an ongoing dialogue between dog team owners and land managers 	C/TRRC, YG & GC/TFN (Land Management Board)	2022
Research potential tools and approaches to limit and/or manage human access and associated disturbance	› Explore tools to manage winter recreation activities including snowmobile access	YG	Ongoing
	› Investigate, prioritize, and designate high-use areas for recreational access	YG & GC/TFN	2022
	› Represent community concerns about managing trail building, particularly those pertaining to access falling under the 1.5 m threshold for requiring a permit	C/TRRC	Ongoing
Add a Conservation Officer in Carcross	› A conservation officer is dedicated to service in the Carcross and Tagish areas	YG	2025

Cross-Cultural Knowledge Sharing

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
Identify traditional fish and wildlife related topics for workshops and teach local residents and general public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant and interesting topics are chosen on which to enact workshops and learning opportunities (e.g. Muskrat Camp) 	GC/TFN	Ongoing Camps: Annually
Coordinate programs and monitoring efforts with other First Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve First Nations in conversations pertaining to overlap areas of Traditional Territories 	GC/TFN	Ongoing
Develop a process, identify resources and begin discussions with C/TFN Citizens on how to report harvest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A framework for harvest reporting is developed 	GC/TFN	2021 - 2023
Host <i>On the Land Gatherings</i> with cultural activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold annual <i>On the Land Gatherings</i> every year to share knowledge with partners and community members 	C/TRRC	Annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold seasonal gatherings to share knowledge with partners and community members 	GC/TFN	Ongoing
Facilitate a dialogue with BC Conservation Officers, Natural Resource Officers, and other compliance and enforcement agencies about enforcement and monitoring in the Traditional Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold routine meetings with identified partners to discuss enforcement and monitoring priorities and activities 	GC/TFN	Ongoing

Trapping Gaataá

OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES	ROLES	TIMELINE
<p>Host a discussion around the future of the Marten Conservation Area (MCA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Hold a meeting that includes trappers, Yukon Government, GC/TFN, TTC, KDFN, TKC, CAFN, LS/CFN, and RRCs to discuss direction for the MCA › Explore options on the ability to adaptively adjust quotas › Discuss whether the MCA is needed in the future 	<p>C/TRRC</p>	<p>2021</p>
<p>Address concerns around beaver dams impeding fish passage, particularly where access to spawning grounds is impacted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Communicate the location of problem areas and permit issuances (e.g. Haunka Creek) › Verify areas with respective trappers and either pursue permit or assistant trapping capabilities 	<p>GC/TFN & YG</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Support local trapper program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Continue to build capacity for the local trapper program › Update local trapping guidelines › Identify and communicate opportunities for wolf trapping (trappers to access other areas) › Trapping coordinator collaboration – develop process for administration of Category 1 traplines: 70/30% within Final Agreements, trapper registry, management framework guidelines, trapping support program, cultural revitalization. 	<p>GC/TFN, C/TRRC & YG</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>



All Plans are Stories

“Stories are much more than the recording of events. They are social activities designed to serve a specific purpose and audience. As the purpose and audience change, so does the story. The underlying story line and values do not change, but the details, emphasis, and themes do change. There is not one, but many versions of the same story. The same story teller changes the story to fit the immediate purpose, audience and social activity. Changes are necessary to ensure stories provide relevant, useful guidelines for living, the dealing with specific difficult and joyous events in life.”

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