

2023 On the Land Gathering Proceedings Report



June 16-17, 2023 - Skookies Camp, Carcross Yukon

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For a copy of the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025* visit: <https://yukon.ca/en/carcrosstagish-traditional-territory-community-based-fish-and-wildlife-work-plan-2020-2025>

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Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council On the Land Gathering - Overview

The Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council (C/TRRC) has always supported bringing together management partners and diverse groups to discuss fish, wildlife, and habitat. The annual 2023 On the Land Gathering (OLG) was held at Skookies Camp, located outside of Carcross.

Approach to the OLG:

- Where possible, meet outdoors and around a fire, without electricity and PowerPoint presentations.
- Agenda should allow space for meaningful discussion prioritized over technical presentations.
- Support all knowledge systems, whether western scientific or led by traditional and/or local knowledge.
- Utilize the 2020-2025 Community-based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan as the guiding document for the OLG.



Participants:

Over one and a half days there were approximately 35 people participating. The following organizations and interest groups were in attendance:

- Fish, Wildlife and Habitat - represented with a "seat at the table"
- Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation
- Teslin Renewable Resources Council
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board
- Dän Keyi Renewable Resources Council
- Taku River Tlingit
- Government of Yukon
- Parks Canada
- *How We Walk with the Land and Water Initiative*
- Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee
- Carcross and Whitehorse residents
- Supporting consultants

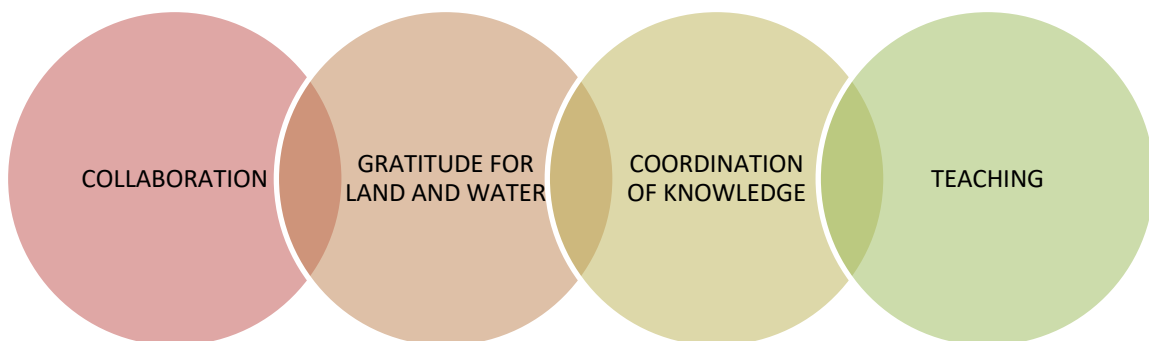
Objectives for the 2023 OLG

- Bring the RRCs, First Nation Governments, public, and other partners together to share information and identify values and perspectives around Southern Lakes:
 - Moose populations and management
 - Caribou recovery efforts, and
 - Angling education and related First Nation ethics.
- To review progress related to the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025*.

Overarching Themes from the OLG

Within this proceedings report, information from the OLG is aggregated into key themes and then presented by agenda topic. The agenda is located in appendix A, with the general progression of topics featuring: 1) Interacting with Southern Lakes Moose, Caribou and Fish, 2) Moose Management, 3) Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Planning 4) Fish and Fisheries.

In addition to the discussion items, a section called *Suggestions for the Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan or other initiatives* is presented for consideration as future actions for the C/TRRC or other parties. It is not suggesting that these actions will be implemented, nor are they the primary responsibility for the C/TRCC.



COLLABORATION

- All people (not just First Nations and Governments).
- Coordinated management is powerful.
- Opportunities for informed regulation changes due to collaborative relationships.
- Continued conversations.
- Lean into difficult conversations with outfitters, industry and government.
- "Don't Give up"

"There is beauty around us. Animals and fish are plentiful. We have to be grateful to our ancestors who did all that work so we could have this now. We are working together and that's the main thing". C/TFN Elder Participant

GRATITUDE FOR LAND AND WATER (finned, four-legged, winged and rooted)

- Leave areas to rest.
- Responsibility to take care of things that take care of us.
- Conservation areas for protections of critical habitat.
- Respectful understandings (e.g. don't play with fish, take the entire animal).
- Need to maintain salmon on the landscape by following the success of Southern Lakes caribou.
- Hunting and fishing are a privilege and comes with great responsibility.



COORDINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

- More consideration of spiritual, ceremonial, and cultural connections.
- More coordination of the two data streams (traditional knowledge and western science), rather than separation. Both sources are valuable.
- Scientific data needs to be communicated and held to equal value with on-the-ground monitoring efforts and local knowledge.

TEACHING

- Importance of youth involvement with skill development and experiential learning (e.g. survival skills, traditional hunting techniques, mentoring).
- Information sharing (e.g. signage, pamphlets, booklets, courses, etc.).
- There is a generation that may not have the skills but wish to hunt and fish.
- Utilize existing skills in the community (e.g. Guardians and Elders).
- Bring back traditional values such as sharing, trading, and the traditional economy.

"We need to get the youth interested in harvesting in the first place. We need to get down to the level of youth and when we have youth at these meetings, some information might go over their head. Don't force them to go on the land. They should want to go on the land themselves". Youth Participant

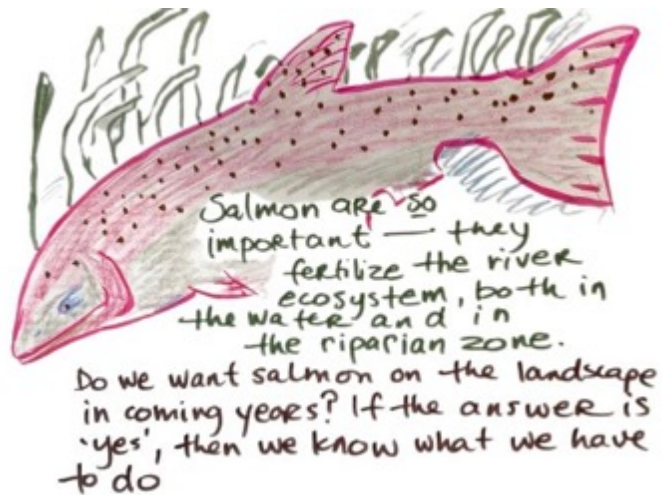
June 16, 2023 - Agenda Item - Campfire Talk - Interacting with Southern Lakes Moose, Caribou and Fish

This session started with a high-level overview of the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025* and featured two prompting questions directed at all participants:

- What is truly unique about Southern Lakes moose, caribou, and fish?
- Share one special and personal interaction you have had with Southern Lakes moose, caribou, or fish?

Discussion:

- Salmon need help and the successes with Southern Lakes caribou could be a blueprint. There were few caribou on the landscape, and all parties made a decision a long time ago to support rebuilding. This decision needs to be made for salmon. Do people want to keep seeing salmon on the landscape? If they do not survive this could be a huge ecological loss.
- Don't take the recovery of the Southern Lakes caribou for granted. Need to keep thinking about habitat, especially wintering range. Fire is a large consideration and features in their relationship with the landscape. They may not return after a large fire.
- What values and considerations rooted in a respectful relationship should guide the decision-making process regarding caribou hunting?
- Habitat protection areas and giving areas rest is a key consideration.
- Overharvesting and lack of respect towards animals takes place within all user groups (e.g. tourists, First Nations, Yukon public, new Yukoners). All should be held accountable.
- New Yukon residents need to understand this special relationship between First Nations and the land and water.
- Outfitters from outside of the Yukon focussed on trophy hunting and maximizing revenues is a concern.
- Hunting license and permit fees need to be re-considered with revenues going directly to environmental or stewardship based projects.



Suggestions for the Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan or other initiatives:

- Use various tools to given critical habitat areas "rest".
- Work with other Yukon First Nations to begin to rebuild the harvesting relationship with caribou (e.g. Vuntut Gwitchin). They have offered to help in the past.
- Support traditional use and traditional economy workshops (e.g. buckskin jackets and utilizing bone and sinew).
- Work with Government of Yukon on increase license fee revenues supporting fish, wildlife and habitat projects. Not directed towards general revenue.

- Continue dialogue in critical overwintering range for caribou with a broad group of interests, such as industry, dog mushers, snowmobilers and other recreationalists.
- Focus on outfitter-related conversations, and updating the out-dated policies, and legislation.

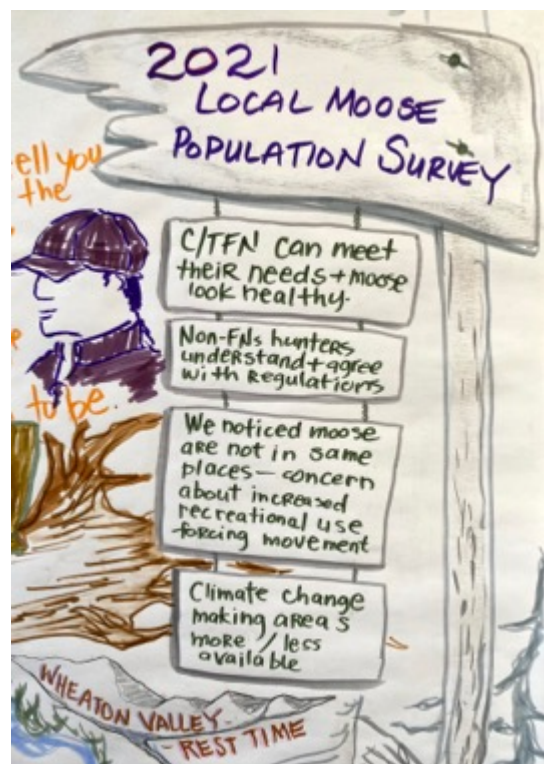
June 17, 2023 - Agenda Item - Moose Management Morning

This session started with a review of the moose related objectives/actions and outcomes within the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025* (page 33). This was followed by short presentations from:

- Government of Yukon, Department of Environment, Southern Lakes Moose Census Data and Monitoring Program.
- C/TRRC Moose Local Knowledge Survey Update, and
- YFWMB Ungulate Working Group.

Discussion:

- There are positive results with the moose census in specific areas. These numbers are similar to those identified in the 1980s. Government of Yukon is pleased with the survey methodology. The data is a snapshot or point in time rather representative of longer-term trends.
- There is a need to ensure ground-based monitoring and local knowledge aligns with the census data. There are areas where local observations and those from First Nation monitors differ from the data presented. Contradiction between traditional knowledge and western science provides an opportunity to discuss the interaction between the two. Government of Yukon is supportive of working with all to discuss any discrepancies in the data. This will require data sharing from all parties.
- The rebound for moose may be attributed to a lack of hunting in specific areas and associated higher bull to cow ratio. Areas that are accessible to hunters are generally understood as having lower populations (e.g. Wheaton Valley).
- The local knowledge survey provided information related to perceptions towards moose populations, their health the state of moose habitat.
- There are many people recreating and living in the Southern Lakes, it is "human management" rather than wildlife management. Focus on respectful behaviour in the backcountry so as to not stress cow moose during certain times. For example, restricting ORV usage during the calving season.



- The discussion around outfitting needs to take place with many hunter quotas taken by non-resident hunters.
- In the past, caribou management was prioritised over moose management. Now that there may be more moose, it is the time to develop moose management plans like that of caribou.
- Youth have not had the opportunity to harvest (moose or caribou). They are the next generation that need the skills to harvest and be on the land. Have them at meetings and give them time to talk, not just to listen. Don't tokenize them.
- Financial barriers to hunt are real for youth today. Look at ways for interested youth to enter beyond financial. One suggestion was a requirement to invest with their time or mentoring opportunities.
- The YFWMB Ungulate Working Group is in progress and will utilize information from this meeting in the development of its approach and strategy.

Suggestions for the Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan or other initiatives:

- Facilitate initiatives that align First Nation and local knowledge with the current Government of Yukon census efforts and monitoring program.
- Suggestions as presented through the local knowledge survey:



- increased education to hunters
- implement rotational hunting practices
- developing protected areas
- continued predator control
- developing programs for on-the-ground monitoring.
- Delivery of youth trapping programming and continued incentives to support predator control.
- Focus on specific areas like the Wheaton Valley with continued rest for moose harvest, implement trapping, and monitoring programs. Focus on all user groups.
- Develop information and education packages built around traditional knowledge and traditional hunting (e.g. Kaska have this).

"Take kids out and show them how to trap during the winter at trapline close to town. Show them how to respect the land, the animals, and the practice of trapping". KDFN Elder Participant

Agenda Item - Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Planning



Representatives from the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee hosted the caribou session. The steering committee made up of nine governments is focussed on the development of a caribou relationship plan. There were two breakout sessions with one focussed on the concept of rebuilding a relationship through hunting and the second on implementation of the relationship plan and the role of the annual gathering for decision-making. The session started with a review of the Southern Lakes caribou related objectives/actions and outcomes

within the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025* (page 32).

Discussion Break-out #1:

- Continue to dialogue around a respectful cultural "hunt" and First Nations readiness. This takes time and is not about a general "harvest" discussion. This needs to be done "in a good way".
- Some would like to see continued voluntary no harvest in the short term; others suggest one to two caribou for a cultural hunt could be reasonable for recovery.
- A First Nation cultural/community hunt for Elders and youth could be supported with a community feast. It would be delivered with traditional teachings, monitoring, mentoring, and education. The voluntary harvest moratorium remains in place while this is done. This could support the discussion around a broader shared harvest.
- The hunt is about a generation that has not been a part of harvesting. They need to be re-educated about caribou.
- Habitat protections, highway mortality and predator management needs to enter the discussion.



"Before a hunt, we need to prepare. Maybe this can be our preparation, to show the youth, before we actually hunt." C/TFN Elder Participant



Discussion Break-out #2:

- The coordinated approach from the nine governments holds great value and follows in the success of the recovery efforts started decades before. The steering committee process is working so why change it? Funding is a continual issue and a need to maintain consistent participation.
- People need to continue to care for Southern Lakes caribou. The public was invested and there was a great deal of political support and media attention at the time. This public support is also required for habitat protection efforts.
- A need to focus on the purpose of a Southern Lakes Caribou Annual Gathering. It would apply traditional practices and teaching brings things back to a more traditional way of making decisions. Would there be decision-making beyond making recommendations?

Would there be clan-based discussions? This requires more discussion.

"The committee should put in effort to reconnect to the public so the public is inspired to protect caribou habitat. We can't get complacent because we start seeing more and more caribou". C/TRRC Member Participant

Suggestions for the Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan or other initiatives:

- Consider formalizing the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee into a model like that of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board with a professional chair and possible communications staff.
- Continue to use the C/TRRC OLG as a venue to sharing information on Southern Lakes caribou with all.
- Dialogue with other organizations such as Highways and Public Works, Klondike Snowmobile Association, Dog Mushers Association, and conservation NGOs.
- Continue with public outreach and education, including supporting the Caribou in the Schools program.

Agenda Item - Fish and Fisheries in the Southern Lakes

This session started with a review of fish related objectives/actions and outcomes within the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan 2020-2025* (page 31). This was following by short presentations around:

- C/TRRC Fisheries Education and Outreach Initiatives.
- Respect for Fish/Fisheries Education and Ethics Development (FEED) course, and YFWMB Angler Conservation and Stewardship Team (CAST) efforts.

Discussion:

- Survey results were shared with notable quotes provided to demonstrate polarizing perspectives around catch and release and the differences amongst anglers.
- The Southern Lakes continues to be under pressure from anglers throughout Yukon. This is negatively affecting fish and fisheries. For example, Little Atlin Lake is being overfished. Are all (First Nations, Government of Yukon, C/TRRC) working together to address this?
- There are differences in opinion around terminology and whether to call it "live release" or "catch and release".
- Anglers can change behaviour as they become more educated or aware.
- First Nation concerns around "playing with food", fishing for pleasure, not fishing during spawning seasons continues to be an issue. Need to keep reminding anglers to only fish for what they need. Need to find a happy medium and balance these two worldviews.
- Anglers' using treble hooks and not single barbless hooks is still a concern.
- There is a gap in understanding slot sizes and the benefit of protecting the prime breeding fish. These breeders are not replaceable. This can be confusing for Anglers and First Nations, as it requires people to release fish, even if too small or hurt. It is an imperfect tool, however using Lake Trout as an example, it is required given they don't reproduce until they are 10 years old.
- There is a discrepancy between what the scientific data is reporting and local knowledge about fish populations in certain areas. Elders are fishing and not catching anything in lakes that are supposed to have healthy populations.
- C/TRRC and other partners educational signage around fishing ethics is working and should be kept up.
- There are efforts from other partners, such as the YFWMB CAST group that can align with the C/TRRC interests.



"When we fish with our Elders we go when there is a whole bunch of fish. They only take what is needed, the only catch and release was of spawning females. We never saw catch and release. It is disrespectful". KDFN Elder Participant



Suggestions for the Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan or other initiatives:

- Continue education and outreach effort and celebrate the success of the new *Fish Ethics in the Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory* brochure. Need to continue to educate in an effort to change behaviour.
- Consider a requirement to take the new Fishing

Education and Ethics Development (FEED) course before getting a fishing license.

Add content to the course around: gripping fish carefully, not wasting fish, and the correct tools in how to release a fish.

- Support a Pike Derby with recipes and cooking demonstrations.
- Continue to build in the First Nation spiritual and cultural connections into the FEED course and other educational initiatives.
- Continue to address the Southern Lakes fishery pressures through regulation changes with Government of Yukon.

"Look at an otter, it will never overfish a hole. They will leave it so there will be more in the future. Even a bear won't take everything." KDFN Participant



Appendix A: Agenda

C/TRRC On the Land Gathering June 16-17, 2023

Location: Carcross “Skookies” Camp

Join the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and partners at the annual on the land gathering.

Objectives for this gathering:

- Bring the RRCs, First Nation Governments, public, and other partners together to share information and identify values and perspectives around Southern Lakes:
 - moose populations and management
 - caribou recovery efforts, and
 - angling education and related First Nation ethics.
- To check-in on progress related to the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work plan 2020-2025*.

Friday, June 16, 5pm – 9pm

Campfire Dinner and Talk – Interacting with Southern Lakes Moose, Caribou and Fish

- Review the progress of the *Carcross/Tagish Traditional Territory Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work plan 2020-2025*
- What is truly unique about Southern Lakes moose, caribou, and fish?
- Share one special and personal interaction you have had with Southern Lakes moose, caribou, or fish?
 - What did the animal teach you?
 - What can others learn from your behaviour during this interaction?
- Moose calls, Campfire Songs and Stories – *bring an instrument if you wish*

Saturday, June 17, 9am – 6pm

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner provided

Southern Lakes Moose Management Morning

- Government of Yukon Southern Lakes Moose Census Data
- C/TRRC Local Knowledge Survey Update and YFMWB Ungulate Working Group Update
- Break-out groups and discussion

Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Planning

- Update from the Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee
- Break-out groups and discussions

Fish and Fisheries in the Southern Lakes

- Overview of C/TRRC Fisheries Education and Outreach Efforts
- Respect for Fish/Fisheries Education and Ethics Development (FEED) course, and YFWMB CAST efforts
- Break-out groups and discussion re: Catch and Release/Live Release

Remember:

- Free camping so spend the night (space for campers, tents and some wall-tents)
- Meals are provided (bring a potlatch kit)
- Bring an instrument and a camping chair