

CARCROSS/TAGISH RENEWABLE RESOURCES COUNCIL - *ON THE LAND GATHERING*  
PROCEEDINGS

JUNE 17-19, 2022

CARCROSS, YUKON



All photos: C/TRRC - Andrew Serack



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## OLG INTRODUCTION

After a few years hiatus due to the pandemic, the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council (C/TRRC)- *On the Land Gathering* (OLG) has taken place. Bringing diverse groups of people together to talk about fish, wildlife and habitat has always been a core mandate of the C/TRRC.

The 2022 OLG was held over two and a half-days at Skookies Camp, located outside of Carcross. Sessions were held within the Gazebo or outdoors around a fire without the distractions of electricity or PowerPoint presentations.

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### APPROACH TO THE OLG:

- Acknowledge the pandemic has been hard on people, communities, and organizations.
- Build upon the diversity of voices and knowledge and meet people where they are at.
- Agenda to allow space for meaningful discussions, prioritized over technical presentations.
- Supporting all knowledge systems, whether western scientific or led by traditional and/or local knowledge.

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### OBJECTIVES:

- Review the purpose and guiding principles of the 2020-2025 C/TRRC Community-based Fish and Wildlife Workplan (CBFWWP).
- Review and potentially add to the CBFWWP implementation table.
- Provide space for discussion around priority topics such as: human-wildlife interactions (especially bears), fish and fisheries, Southern Lakes Caribou, and *How We Walk with the Land and Water* (HWWLW).

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### PARTICIPANTS:

Over the two and half days there were approximately 23 people on day 1, 25 people on day 2, and 11 people on day 3. The following organizations and interest groups were in attendance:

- Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation (including Land Management Board)
- Teslin Renewable Resources Council
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board
- Teslin Tlingit Council
- Taku River Tlingit
- Government of Yukon
- Government of British Columbia
- Wildwise Yukon, and
- Carcross residents.

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### PROTOCOLS:

A verbal discussion around protocols took place explaining how the information was going to be used. Quotes are not attributed to individuals, only organizations where relevant. It was explained that

content can be used for related projects such as HWWLW, Wildwise Yukon, and the Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Plan process.

*“Knowledge shared at this meeting is to be treated with respect as well as how it is to be used.”*  
C/TFN Knowledge Holder



All photos: C/TRRC - Andrew Serack

## THEMES

Information from the OLG is aggregated through key themes and then presented by specific subject areas. The agenda is located in appendix A, with the general progression of topics featuring: 1) humans and land and wildlife interactions - focus on bears, 2) overview of the C/TRRC CBFWWP, 3) Southern Lakes Caribou Relationship Plan, 4) Fish and Fisheries in the Southern Lakes, and 5) HWWLW.



Key themes included:

### ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ANIMALS AND HUMANS BASED ON RESPECT.

*“We were taught not to talk about bears or swear around them. If we shoot one, we bury the eyes, facing the sun so they do not follow you”. TTC Knowledge Holder*

- Take the perspective of the bear as we are in their habitat and they live with us. If we flip the script around to focus on the “problem human” or relocate humans rather than bears. Newcomers to Yukon are especially impressionable.
- People are very grateful when you have a positive bear experience.
- Hard to express the importance (spiritual/cultural) of caribou to others. If people don’t care about them, people are not connected to them and they won’t want to protect them.
- Tired of people playing with animals (collaring and tagging). First Nations should get the funding and be doing this work in a more traditional way.
- Another reason why animals are not coming back is because cultural hunting practices that respect the animals are not being followed.
- Indigenize the hunting regulations. Include traditional hunting practices and rules.
- As humans we have a voice and can speak for those that don’t have a voice.

- We need to walk with respect, and the way you do it is ask for permission. Example of Patsy Henderson that left with a backpack and a gun for six months and he respected the land the whole way.

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### PEOPLE HAVE COMPLEX AND DIFFERING RELATIONSHIPS WITH FISH AND BEARS (E.G., CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING AND ROADSIDE BEAR HUNTING).

- How we talk about bears matters. We can change perspectives in the way we tell our stories. In most stories and the media bears are featured in the most extreme ways. They are “big and tough” predators that are aggressive.
- RRCs have put in regulation changes to protect ungulate populations from bears. They often don’t get traction. Bears can also be a form of sustenance as eating bear fat and meat is not uncommon. You can render bear fat to eat it with dry meat as well.

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### CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING CONFLICT.

*“People don’t understand the importance of fish to First Nations and catch and release is affecting our way of life. Only take what you need. If you are not going to eat it then don’t do it.” C/TFN Delegate*

- Problems with catch and release overall and “playing with food” and “fishing for fun”.
- The term recreational or sport fishing is problematic given they are not harvesting. Prefer the term food fishery. We need action on this as First Nation lives off these animals.
- Catch and release fishing is hard to think or talk about. We need action on this as First Nation live of these animals. We need to have this conversation.
- Why do you have to take a hunter education course but not a fishing education course.
- Sometimes slot sizes don’t work (e.g. Teslin Lake Pike) where fish are often larger than the maximum allowable size.
- Need to look at the impacts of ice-fishing.
- The number of fishing outfitters is not really measured.
- The C/TRRC angler outreach project has identified that there are varying motivations in the 13,000 anglers with fishing licenses. Recommend a slow educational approach with positive messaging to change mindsets to understand the ethical conflict with catch and release.

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### MORE FISHERY RESEARCH IS REQUIRED.

*“There are two different stories with Government and the First Nation. Local knowledge says the First Nations are fishing but not catching much and then government saying the population is healthy. How can we reconcile this?” C/TFN Elder*

- There is a concern that there are few studies, they are many years apart and we are making fishing management decisions on this.
- Bennett Lake study last done in 2014. Prioritize this and do not base decisions on outdated studies.
- Teslin - there is a problem when people are setting nets in the winter and not catching anything.
- There should be more catch and release studies specifically in the Yukon. Yukon has a unique ecosystem whereby they may be impacted more.

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## CONTINUE TO BRING PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TOGETHER ON THE LAND. THIS IS THE WAY WE USED TO MAKE DECISIONS.

- Northern Tutchone May Gathering is a great example of how to discuss fish and wildlife. People speaking from the heart, rather than government presentations.
- Look at more gatherings with Tlingit, Tagish and Southern Tutchone people on the land. This could include more joint clan meetings.
- Remember how to work together and have respectful conversations.

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## BUILD TRADITIONAL PRINCIPLES INTO ALL FISH AND WILDLIFE WORK.

*“When we lived on the land, we did not rush and made things easy. We camped on the land and prayed for any animal we took.” KDFN Elder*

- Another reason why animals are not coming back is because cultural hunting practices that respect the animals are not being followed.
- Indigenize the hunting regulations. Include traditional hunting practices and rules. Example, don’t talk about bears.
- There is a fundamental difference between how people ‘view’ the resource and ‘use’ the resource.
- Tie things to a seasonal round schedule because this is how it was done.
- Hunters should ask for permission from the First Nation and need to use all the meat. They should also hunt together and share tags.
- Along with harvesting, we should host workshops on how to use all parts of a caribou (including the bones and the skin).

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## GIVING AREAS REST:

- Giving areas and animals rest is a traditional principle that should be followed.
- Provide fishing licenses for specific areas and let them rest in other areas.
- First Nations used to shut down areas to rest and buildup taking into account all the seasons and the traditional knowledge. Old tools to bring into new ways of managing land.

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## KEEP UP THE SOUTHERN LAKES CARIBOU RECOVERY WORK.

*“Thanks to the six Yukon First Nations for supporting caribou recovery. This has only been successful because we worked together.” C/TFN Delegate*

- First Nations voluntarily gave up harvesting caribou for the government to stop giving out caribou permits a long time ago. Gratitude to the First Nations and government for stopping to harvest.
- Good to be talking to the schools about how to integrate a caribou hunt into the curriculum. Presenting this to the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.
- Focus on the whole generation that has no knowledge of caribou harvest.
- People don’t understand the gravity of hitting a caribou. RRCs are working on this and using the tools we currently have to address the situation.
- Hard to express the importance (spiritual/cultural) of caribou to others. If people don’t care about them, people are not connected to them and they won’t want to protect them.

- Long time ago people would have rolls of babiche and people would walk around with beautiful clothes made from caribou hides.

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## TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT AND SHOULD INFORM RRCS.

*“Evidence-based decision making. What is evidence? Doesn’t just have to be statistics. It can be knowledge. Just because it is science doesn’t mean it’s true.” C/TFN LMB Representative*

- “Find that knowledge and wisdom, respect it, and use wherever we go”.
- Caribou collar data is only so good and can go so far. Traditional knowledge can really help to complement the data they have.
- Need to start harvesting predators (bears and wolves) because they are eating the calves.
- Tired of people playing with animals (collaring and tagging). First Nations should get the funding and be doing this work.
- Why has no one asked me how many fish there are? FNs also know exactly how many fish they have caught.
- Teslin RRC put together a strong proposal based on TK related to Pike that was rejected by Government of Yukon.
- There are few cisco and I think it may be linked to the pilings in the river.
- When we work with technicians, First Nations don’t get the same respect, neither does their traditional knowledge. Scientific knowledge always wins.
- There are old stories we have to follow and recognize. They hold practices that have worked for the Elders.
- Support living quarters in each community where knowledge holders and sharers can stay when visiting other communities. Elders are kept in Whitehorse at old folks homes with the knowledge locked away.
- It is our responsibility as Elders to bring the knowledge forward.
- Elders provide true-earth knowledge.

## PRESENTATION OVERVIEWS

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### HOW WE TALK ABOUT BEARS - WILDWISE YUKON

Wildwise Yukon held a discussion surrounding the relationship between humans and bears. Often, stories of bear interactions are centered on the human experience and emphasize the dangerous and scary nature of bears. Wildwise Yukon invited us to share our stories of bear interactions while taking into consideration the bear’s side of the story.

If we can better understand what the bear might have been feeling, we can better understand why the bear reacted in a certain way. This can help us develop a relationship with bears that is no longer built on fear and animosity, rather on mutual respect. We discussed a wide range of topics, including our own experiences with bears, traditional knowledge surrounding bears, current issues with bears, and potential solutions.

Much of our discussion content relates to objectives in the *Community-Based Fish and Wildlife Work Plan (CBFWWP)*. Namely, there was a focus on delivering public outreach and education around bears in the form of a proposed hunting educational course on how to manage a kill site. Also, minimizing

attractants in the communities to reduce human-bear conflict mortalities with Wildwise's projects regarding electrical fencing.

Additional notes from the presentation/discussion:

- Harm reduction is very important and we don't tell people to stop their behaviour or they will not listen. Supporting electric fences around caches and chicken coops are a big part of Wildwise Yukon's programming. Bear spray clinics are increasing with a focus on backcountry runners and cyclists.
- There are examples where malnourished/skinny bears have mauled humans.

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## CARIBOU - SOUTHERN LAKES CARIBOU RELATIONSHIP PLANNING

The Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee facilitated various table discussions on caribou. Tables: 1) SL Caribou Relationship Plan - Inner Circle - Spirit and Caribou, 2) Outer circle - Human Use and Implementation, and 3) Technical Table - Mapping.

Elders expressed gratitude to the six First Nations who voluntarily stopped caribou harvesting and have contributed greatly to the rise in caribou populations. Nonetheless, this resurgence in caribou populations has also meant that a whole generation of FN youth have missed out on fundamental parts of their culture and traditional knowledge that surround caribou harvesting.

There was a large emphasis on integrating traditional knowledge surrounding caribou into school curriculums, potentially through the Yukon First Nations Education Directorate. This could include a caribou hunt along with a workshop to show youth how to use every part of the caribou. This connects to the objective in the CBFWWP to identify traditional fish and wildlife related topics for workshops and teach local residents and the general public. There was also a large emphasis on ways to reduce caribou mortality on the basis of respect. For example, by following traditional hunting practices, indigenizing hunting regulations, and limiting the collaring and tagging of caribou.

Additional notes from the presentation/discussion:

- The Carcross herd is now at 800 and still today people are scared to open the harvest. "The door needs to be opened with lots of care and respect".
- Impacts of climate change and snowpacks on caribou and their movements across landscapes. Concern over zones for hunting and how they may change over time. How do we look forward and use the data?
- Nice to see the caribou back on the west side of Kusawa Lake.

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## FISH AND FISHERIES - GOVERNMENT OF YUKON AND THE C/TRRC

In this section, attendees were given an update on the state of fisheries in the southern lakes by a Yukon Government Fisheries Biologist. As the southern lakes are very accessible, fish populations are often pressured and this is especially true for Lake Trout. There were concerns that the scientific information and data are not telling the full story, as studies and surveys are not conducted often and miss out on important local knowledge (Bennett Lake was an example cited by C/TFN representatives).

First Nations also expressed concerns that their traditional knowledge was not being considered enough in regards to fish as many people told stories of having little to no fish in their nets. It was emphasized that fishing regulations are not doing enough and that anglers also have to be educated on best

practices for fishing. Namely, many expressed concern about catch and release and the idea of “playing with your food.” For many, catch and release goes against subsistence harvesting, and many people expressed concerns that catch and release is disrespectful.

Discussions touched on various parts of the C/TRRC fisheries education, outreach, and survey work that took place earlier this year. Topics explored included increasing education and outreach with residents, non-residents, and FN Citizens on regulatory live release through a mandatory anglers education course and outreach programs targeting the ethics of catch and release. Relating to the development of site-specific plans for high-use fishing areas, people emphasized that there should be a focus for surveys on specific sites (e.g. Snafu, Tarfu, Lubbock, and Little Atlin). Bennett Lake was brought forward as an example where decisions should not be made using outdated data. On day 3 a confiscated Lake Trout from the Tagish Bridge was gifted to a C/TFN Elder illustrating the education around regulations needs to continue.

Additional notes from the presentation/discussion:

- There are pressures on the southern lakes with some of the most accessible lakes. Programs and studies have taken place on Snafu, Tarfu, Little Atlin, and Lubbock in order to address the pressure and vulnerable species.
- The large-bodied and small-bodied lake trout issue and the lack of prime lake trout habitat are a challenge in the southern lakes. Regulations are only on part of the solution with education requiring time.
- Lake trout recovery means that you will be catching fish. The public often thinks this means the population is rebuilt.

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## HOW WE WALK WITH LAND AND WATER

HWLW is a multi-government initiatives with representatives from other Southern Lakes First Nations with one objective as a means to prepare for land-use planning. A participant brought forward that under the C/TFN land claim agreement, a land-use plan for C/TFN traditional territories was supposed to be completed within three months, however, there has been no such plan to this date. HWLW aims to get ahead of this process by determining which areas hold significance to FNs and to the animals which they rely on. This information is gathered primarily through traditional knowledge.

In this session we heard from advisors and project members of this initiative. They emphasized that usually traditional knowledge is not taken as seriously as Western science, and therefore this committee is vital as it centers traditional knowledge for land-use planning. Gathering participants also said that this committee could be useful to do a “deep dive” into Chapter 11 of the Final Agreement, which outlines the parameters for regional land-use planning.

These discussions contributed to exploring and collaborating on habitat protection for priority areas and identifying areas and developing awareness focused on recreational activities in key habitat areas as the committee uses traditional knowledge to identify such areas.

Additional notes from the presentation/discussion:

- This is a project to bring people together, to remember how to work together. and reach consensus. It starts with the tools to rebuild trust.
- We need to go over chapter 11 and use it for what it worth. It is about putting different layers on it.

- Regarding overlapping areas, we were told by the Elders these are to be called “joint-use areas”.
- Traditionally we knew where we were supposed to be. The clan laws guided us and we were more grounded in them. It provides a traditional way of setting disputes.
- Chapter 11 was supposed to happen within these months, now it has been 30 years.
- What is the relationship between the C/TRRC and the C/TFN Land Management Board?
- When we work with technicians, First Nations don’t get the same respect, neither does their traditional knowledge. Scientific knowledge always wins.
- Conforming self-government with the Yukon Wildlife Act.
- Things are getting better, there is more traditional knowledge within these processes.
- With more communication with First Nation people, western science can be more useful.
- Just because there are no letters behind and Elders name does not mean they don’t have the expertise. The *BTCS* approach, Been There Common Sense degree.
- We need to look back at our life and how we did things.
- Things are changing. We learn as we go incorporating traditional knowledge, and implementing UNDRIP and other legislation.
- How do we remember how to work together and have respectful conversations.
- Government structures are stopping our ability to work together.
- Colleen Gatensy’s degree is a good example of how to work together.
- It is the how we work together that is important. Everyone is in a different place and each can do it their own way. 100% guided by the Elders and based on traditions.
- Tools need to be developed to work with everyone (e.g. YG and Parks Canada).
- Chapter 11 - need to understand planning in general and lays the ground work in a good way. It is about layers and how open it YG to it. Need to utilize to our benefit, what are the ground rules that we can build on. Need to look at it with a “magnifying glass”.
- We need a group of 2-3 people together to review the agreements - use it or get rid of it.
- Can we add another layer of indigenous planning and this is what it is?
- Use the RRCs to address specific land use issues (e.g. Nursery and protected areas).
- Each point on the map has a voice of a person or an animal.
- As humans we have a voice and can speak for those that don’t have a voice.
- Land and Water Proclamation speaks to jurisdiction and changes relationship with other First Nation governments - response has been greater than anticipated. Gives a how are we going to do this and how to change the relationship.

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## APPENDIX A: AGENDA

C/TRRC On the Land Gathering June 17-19, 2022

Location: Carcross “Skookies” Camp

### **Objectives of the C/TRRC On the Land Gathering:**

- Review the Purpose and Guiding Principles of the 2020-2025 C/TRRC Community-based Fish and Wildlife Workplan (CBFWWP)
- Review and potentially revise implementation table of the CBFWWP
- Provide space for discussion around priority topics such as: human-wildlife interactions, fish and fisheries, Southern Lakes Caribou, and How We Walk with the Land and Water (HWLW).

### ***Friday, June 17 - 6pm - 9pm (~3 hours)***

6pm - Opening Prayer

Dinner - provided

Welcome and Introductions (includes TK protocols, agenda overview) - Opening Remarks

### **Session 1 - Humans and Land and Wildlife Interactions**

- How we Talk about Bears - Wildwise Yukon
- Other Interactions to focus on (e.g. ATVs, dog teams, bikers and hikers)

Campfire Talks - Bear Stories and Smore - Wildwise Yukon

### ***Saturday, June 18 - 9am - 6pm***

9:30am - Breakfast - provided

Welcome and Introductions

Agenda Overview

### **Session 2 - Carcross/Tagish CBFWWP Overview - Facilitator and C/TRRC**

- Partners Opening Remarks (C/TRRC, C/TFN and YG)
- Review the Vision and Guiding Principles
- Review the objectives, actions and outcomes for 1) “the water”, 2) “the animals”, and 3) “the people”.
- Overview of the Implementation Tables
- Discussion and Q and A

12pm - Lunch- provided

### **Session 3 - Southern Lake Caribou Relationship Plan - Southern Lakes Caribou Steering Committee**

- Introduction - Caribou Ceremony and story
- Updates from the Steering Committee - plan framework/seasonal round
- Monitoring Updates
- Discussion and Q and A - Need to discuss potential for breakout groups

### **Session 4 - Fish and Fisheries in the Southern Lakes - C/TRRC and Yukon Government**

- Fish stock status
- Fisheries Management and YG Fisheries initiatives
- C/TRRC Angler Outreach Initiatives (Lubbock, Snafu, Tarfu and Little Atlin)
- Discussion and Q and A

6pm - Dinner - provided

Campfire Songs and Stories

*Sunday, June 19 - 9am - 12pm*

9:30am - Snacks available

**Session 5 - How We Walk with Land and Water**

- Overview and Short Video 'Land of the Wildlife'
- Present Framing Questions:
  - o How do we interact/relate with the land, water, animals in a good way?
  - o If I were an animal how would I want to be treated? - Stations around the room

10:30am - BRUNCH - provided

- CBFWWP Recap
- Closing Remarks and Prayer

12pm - Adjourn