

visions north

TALKING ABOUT YUKON LAND CLAIMS

Carmacks Greenhouse Blossoms

Not only is the Carmacks greenhouse the largest tourist attraction in Carmacks after the Tago Cho Hudan Interpretive Centre, it has also raised the town's community spirit.

It started in 2000 as Dawn Charlie was working in her garden at home in the small First Nation community. She began to think about what would happen if there was a catastrophe so severe that it threatened the North's food supply. Appreciating that her small town would not be a high priority in a large-scale emergency, an idea for a local food source started to germinate.

Almost a decade later, the root cellar she started has evolved into two greenhouses and a garden plot. At first, funding came from the Yukon government's Community Development Fund and Agriculture Canada. Then the community became so enthusiastic about what was happening that before long the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation permanently adopted the project.

Produce this year included potatoes, tomatoes, beans, corn, melons, peppers, peas, lettuce and cucumbers. All produce gets shared—part goes to community members in the Carmacks diabetes program, part goes to the First Nation for local events and part is sold farm-gate style to tourists and locals. The greenhouse has also given extra vegetables to the local school lunch program.

"All of our produce is what I like to call 'user-friendly' organic," said Charlie. She explained that even though the greenhouse has never used chemical pesticides or fertilizers, their food can't be certified organic because much of their composting material is donated from uncertified sources.

Greenhouse operators have also tried growing some unique items. One year, they planted a crop of Stevia, a somewhat-controversial South American plant that has extract 10 times sweeter than sugar and is often grown as a sugar substitute.

The experiment was initially successful. "The sugar content in the Carmacks



Pat Bill checks to see if a cucumber is ready to be picked

greenhouse plants was higher than that from plants produced by experts in Ontario," said Charlie. Much to her amusement, a Canadian company that specializes in the production and distribution of the sugary plant was so impressed with the greenhouse's success that they asked Charlie if she could provide training to other Stevia growers. Ultimately, the labour involved in the project proved to be too expensive to be practical.

Each year the greenhouse employs local students and social assistance recipients but, as in so many other parts of the territory, the greenhouse operation always needs enthusiastic volunteers.

Part of Charlie's vision for the future of the greenhouse depends on an increase in staff. She'd love to see enough vegetables produced so that some could be canned or frozen for winter sales. Year-round sales would help the greenhouse profits, as well as provide a permanent source of high-quality local food for the community.

Charlie would also love to see gardening projects catch on in more communities. "My dream is that every community in the North would have a greenhouse option.

It's so much healthier, so much more environmentally friendly," she said. "People from other Northern communities come here all the time to look and to learn. I tell them the key is to have a good composting program and to hire the right people to run the greenhouse – people with a passion."

Charlie's own passion is contagious. She's excited that the national media attention the greenhouse has received has sparked an interest in other communities, and she's equally excited about the enthusiasm of Carmacks residents. "We have people involved in so many ways. From the farmers who donate their grass clippings and manure for our compost, to the elders who enjoy the tasty fresh food, to the student employees who have planted gardens in their own yards, our greenhouse has touched everyone. There is way, way more gardening in Carmacks now."

Apparently the way to a community's heart is through its stomach. "It's the taste!" said Charlie. "It makes such a difference to have fresh, local food – food that's clean, healthy, and contributing to your community. Nothing tastes better."

For more information contact:
Dawn Charlie at (867) 863-5905. ☎

Part of the crew that helped make the greenhouse a success: Alice Boland, Dawn Charlie, Chris Gull and Pat Bill (left to right)



WHAT'S INSIDE?

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WHAT IS VISIONS NORTH?

Visions North: talking about Yukon land claims is a bi-annual newsletter that raises awareness about land claims and self-government and related issues in Yukon communities.

Visions North is produced and distributed by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) with the participation of the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN).

Built to Last: The Story of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation's Post and Beam Building

It began as an idea from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to provide a central open-air gathering place for the community. It became a reality on September 5, 2008 as a brand-new pavilion on the shores of Nares Lake opened with a celebration and the sounds of drumbeats and Tlingit voices.

Members of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN), the local emergency services and the community gathered as children from the Ya Dak Du Hidi Centre sang in Tlingit to start off the events. Storytellers and community members honoured individuals from the area whose actions have enriched the lives of many in Carcross.

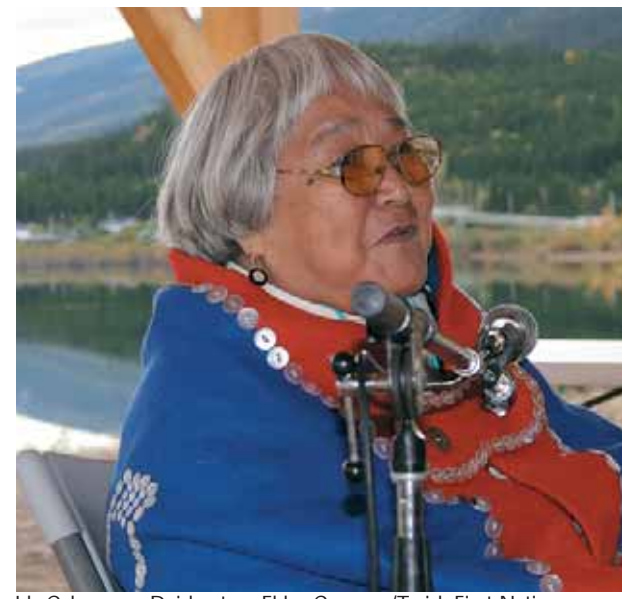
After a chili and hotdog dinner, guests were entertained by the First Peoples Performance Group and the Tagish Nation Dancers. Later that evening, the pavilion's new electrical system was put to the test as the Southern Lakes Comfort band rocked the house. The community event finished slowly as the bonfire kept burning, welcoming runners from the Klondike Road Relay into the community. For CTFN government staff, the celebration was a chance to see the entire community out having fun, coming together and honouring each other through stories and dance.



Young drummers from the Carcross daycare with Beverly James

Construction began in June 2008 next to the CTFN administration building. While cutting and preparing the beams took a few months, it took just five days to complete the traditional post-and-beam structure. Carvings and other traditional First Nations art will be added with time. Funding came from the CTFN Executive Council. The contractors, Dave Brook and Michael MacDonald, are residents on CTFN's traditional territory. The building will serve members of CTFN, the community at large and all Yukoners by providing a home for farmers' markets, outdoor concerts, and other social gatherings.

For more information contact:
Gavin Gardiner, Carcross/Tagish First Nation at (867) 821-4251 or gavin.gardiner@ctfn.ca



Ida Calmegane, Deisheetaan Elder, Carcross/Tagish First Nation

Old Crow Enlightened by Solar-Powered Multi-Use Centre

Old Crow's newest building resonates with echoes of the community's oldest history. The John Tizya Centre, which officially opened its doors on July 15, contains a collection of oral history recordings, local artifacts, and a map of place names constructed from years of research carried out with Vuntut Gwitchin elders.

As well as helping to preserve Old Crow's history and educate new generations, the centre will be used for community events. It also has an upgraded editing suite for the production of local films and documentaries and a multimedia theatre for film screenings.

Megan Williams, heritage manager for the Vuntut Gwitchin government, said, "We wanted a place that would fit our everyday life. If it had been a big museum with fixed exhibits, people might have come once and never bothered to return. We needed dynamic displays and programming to encourage people to come back over and over to learn about their heritage and culture."

Owned by the Vuntut Gwitchin government, the centre owes its success to collaboration between Parks Canada, which leases office space for Vuntut National Park workers, and the Government of Yukon, which is providing financial support and training opportunities.

The exhibit design team included members of the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Committee, the Vuntut Gwitchin Heritage Branch, a design specialist from Parks Canada, and representatives from the Yukon



Candace Tettichi interacts with the displays at the centre

government's Tourism and Culture and Environment departments. Taking the needs of the community into account, the team kept the displays focused on education. Learning packages will be provided to schools to encourage them to visit the centre often. They designed the centre's displays on a smaller scale and created them to be portable so that the space inside the centre can be used for community events.

"We're also really excited to have a full-time interpreter at the building," added Williams. "The interpreter position is new and is funded by both the First Nation government and Parks Canada. Our interpreter will be able to focus on finding ways to creatively pass on the heritage and culture of our elders to younger generations and visitors alike. The elders have been very supportive of this work and have expressed so much appreciation for our focus on respectfully educating, primarily, our younger generation and, secondarily, all others who are interested."

In Yukon's northernmost community, energy efficiency and environmentally friendly practices are always important considerations. The centre, assembled by an Inuvik contractor, was pre-fabricated and then shipped, eliminating the need to transport excess building material. The centre also features large solar panels and a system that tracks energy efficiency. Architects Kobayashi and Zedda carefully considered the centre's location and

angled the building to get the most out of the arctic sunlight. All unused power gets fed back into the Old Crow community power grid.

Comments in the centre's guest book show that visitors from Japan to Switzerland have all enjoyed the building and its exhibits. "Awesome place!" a visitor from Prince Edward Island wrote. "Superb exhibit," wrote a visitor from France.

However, the success of the centre can be measured by community members' reactions. Dorothy Frost, the building's interpreter and a community member said: "To me, it means having visitors understand the entire social culture and history of the Vuntut Gwitchin people, and why the Porcupine caribou herd is so important to the web of life we call home. These messages are strengthened by the wealth of information that has been collected, managed and preserved, and are to be shared as was taught to us by our elders."

For more information contact:
Megan Williams at (867) 966-3235



Northern sunlight brightens the new displays at the John Tizya Centre

Log Homes — Building a Yukon Tradition

With their first year of training complete, graduates from the Council of Yukon First Nation's Log Home Capacity Building project have secured jobs and are excited about their future prospects.

A total of 30 students, members of 11 Yukon First Nations, most of whom were young adults, participated in the log home building course that was offered in Dawson City, Haines Junction and Carcross. The students built seven log homes.

"The program has helped our members increase their skills and find jobs," said Justin Ferbey, Executive Director of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (CTFN). "Some of the graduates worked all summer building log homes for Carcross/Tagish First Nation citizens. CTFN has commissioned eight more log homes, so the students will be busy for some time to come."

Leahanna Dickson, of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation said the course really helped increase her self-confidence. "It was exciting for me to see that I could actually do it—build a log home from the ground up. The skills I



Learning to scribe (Carcross camp)



R-22 Crew (Dawson camp)

learned will help me in the future. I have real, marketable skills now that I can use to find work," Dickson said.

"I love to fish and hunt. I intend to spend more time out in the bush," said Blaine Peters from the First Nation of Nacho Nyak Dun. "I'll be using the skills I learned from this course to build a cabin so I can stay in the bush even longer to trap, hunt and fish."

A group of individuals from the First Nation Forestry Management Committee designed the project, which was coordinated by the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). The committee recognised the need to develop practical forestry skills through a course that was supported by all Yukon First Nation communities. With a tremendous amount of work, collaboration, coordination and some financial assistance from Canada, the eleven participating First Nations, the CYFN, the Yukon government, the First Nation Training Policy Committee and the First Nation Forestry Program, the project reached fruition.

"We wanted to provide students with enough knowledge, skills and confidence to venture into the log-home-building business," said Ann Marie Swan, one of the program coordinators. "This course will have a long-lasting, positive economic impact in Yukon communities. Our graduates are using their skills to develop economic opportunities and to work in related fields."

Three trainers were hired with over 20 years of experience each in log home building to

deliver the on-site skills mentorship course. The students worked six days a week and lived in camps for two months.

"We lived closely together, we learned a lot from each other and we learned a lot about ourselves," said Robert Otterholm from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. "We left with real pride in our skills and our achievements. Most of us got jobs right away. I put my skills to work building a cook shack on the Dempster Highway. It was awesome!"



Almost there - Klukshu (Haines Junction camp)

In total, the first Log Home Capacity Building project generated 21 new full-time employment opportunities throughout the Yukon.

The project was initially approved for two years and it is expected to continue in 2008/2009.

For more information contact:
Ann Marie Swan at (867) 393-9236 or annmarie.swan@cyfn.net

New Country Residential Subdivision

In the true spirit of the North, the Ta'an Kwäch'an are treading uncharted territory in the Yukon with their vision of a new country residential subdivision north of Whitehorse. The C-23 development is no ordinary subdivision. The 27-lot residential area is poised to open up new sources of revenue and ownership options for the self-governing Ta'an Kwäch'an First Nation through a new-to-Yukon leasing option for potential residents.

Only 15 minutes from downtown Whitehorse, you'll find crews working on the development of the area, which is located on the North Klondike Highway across from Hidden Valley. With funding support from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Northern Strategy Trust Fund, the Ta'an Kwäch'an Development Corporation developed plans and carried out a business case and feasibility study.

What makes this project unique is the ownership of the land and lots. The premise is to create 27 new lots, where each lot will be leased, not sold. The residents will retain the lease for a specific number of years (yet to be determined), after which they will be given the option to renew.

The potential behind this innovative home-ownership option stems from tax-sharing arrangements available to all self-governing First Nations. The arrangement, which has been in place for over six years, means First Nation governments will receive a large share of the personal income tax of residents living on their settlement land.

Since the Ta'an Kwäch'an will retain ownership of the land that is being leased, the First Nation

is able to collect lease payments and income tax from the owners of the lots. This will bring in an estimated \$600,000 in revenue annually.

The business strategy of the Ta'an, the tax revenue opportunities, the prime location near an urban centre and the need for housing in Whitehorse, all add up to make a strong product.

Ta'an Kwäch'an Development Corporation CEO, George Gottschall, says there is already much interest in the area from prospective homeowners. Individuals seeking to make a home in the C-23 subdivision will benefit from affordable lease rates and the standards set for the types of homes that will be built. "It will be its own little community," said Gottschall. "There will be walking trails, playgrounds for kids, and it will be a safe place to live."

Citizens of the First Nation have already seen benefits from the development, since many



Site preparation along the North Klondike Highway

are working on the construction of the lots and access roads. "It was a requirement of the project to involve as many of the Ta'an Kwäch'an citizens as possible," Gottschall said. Following its completion, the administration of the subdivision will be handled by the Ta'an Kwäch'an Development Corporation.

In the longer term, the revenue generated from this venture will be re-invested into other economic development projects by the First Nation. Gottschall emphasized, "this is going to be one of many Ta'an projects in the not-too-distant future. We are currently involved in many negotiated joint ventures with other First Nations."

"This is a major project for the Ta'an. It's the first of its kind in the Yukon, and we'll learn a great deal from its planning and development," Gottschall said.

As a legacy, the First Nation's efforts in planning and developing the subdivision will provide a strategic model that other First Nations can use to implement similar projects. Funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada was provided to develop a business strategy template for this venture. Through the funding of the template, all Yukon First Nations can benefit from the findings of the C-23 development and apply them to their own similar projects.

With this project well underway and with the prospect of lots hitting the market as early as next summer, the Ta'an Kwäch'an are focused on the future. With planned developments in Porter Creek, the experience gained from this unique northern venture will enhance future projects the Ta'an Kwäch'an undertake to strengthen their long-term sustainable economic growth.

For more information contact:
George Gottschall at (865) 335-2510 or ggottschall@taan.ca

Building Foundations for Meaningful Economic Development: *Foundations Economic Conference a Success*

It usually takes more than a good idea to bring a new business to life. Sometimes, success requires sharing ideas and discussing common interests with other groups and ultimately creating partnerships with other like-minded businesses. Speakers, conversations, a tradeshow and a business gala at the first-ever Foundations Economic Conference in June 2008 provided such a forum for delegates to establish new relationships and highlight current First Nations economic successes in the Yukon.

Representatives from each of the Yukon First Nations, their development corporations, the Yukon government, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and the national and First Nations' business communities gathered at the Foundations Economic Conference in early June to celebrate Aboriginal business achievements and to share strategies for creating mutually beneficial corporate partnerships.

Speakers and panellists representing a combination of regional, national, urban and rural points of view shared their struggles and advice with the audience through interactive panel discussions. The focus of the lectures was on how to establish and maintain successful economic partnerships. Delegates learned from representatives from many Yukon First Nations businesses including the Klwane

Sheep Hunt Auction, Latitude Wireless, Air North and Northern Windows. Through the transfer of personal knowledge and expertise, the conference positioned many businesses and organisations for increased future success.

The Foundations Economic Conference marks the first time that the Aboriginal and broader business communities have collaborated to hold a joint business event. The conference was organised by the Yukon Indian Development Corporation (YIDC) with support from dāna Nāye Ventures, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Kwanlin Dun First Nation, the Government of Yukon and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

As an adjunct to the conference, on the evening of June 3rd, the YIDC and the Whitehorse and Yukon chambers of commerce hosted a tradeshow and business gala to provide an opportunity to truly develop the conference's theme, "Showcasing Today's First Nations Business Success Stories and Supporting Tomorrow's." Successful Aboriginal businesses such as Great River Journey, Latitude Wireless, dāna Nāye Ventures, In Land Art and Design, the Vuntut Development Corporation, Yukon Indian Development Corporation, Northern Windows and others were showcased. The evening provided an opportunity for business entrepreneurs and owners to get to know each other better and discuss common goals and ideas.



Vuntut Gwitchin Development Corporation representatives Brenda Bingham and Maxine Fehr

For Yukon First Nation businesses, the broader Aboriginal business community and businesses from across Canada, this was a chance "to learn about each other while creating an opportunity to introduce new partnerships," explained Stanley Noel, Chief Executive Officer of the Yukon Indian Development Corporation. "The conference was really about building relationships, which is the foundation to making businesses succeed." The groundwork for greater future success in business partnerships has begun.

For more information contact:

Stanley Noel at 867-668-3908 or
snoel@yidc.ca or
www.foundationsconference.ca

After the Gold Rush

Since the signing of their self-government agreement, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have been working to perfect the balance between responsible governance, cultural protection and economic development. The First Nation is currently working on the development of an economic plan that reflects this balance in the Dawson City area.

"We live in a world of traditional pursuits and protecting our rights," says Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in former Chief, Darren Taylor, "but it is also a world that revolves around economic opportunities."

Getting involved in the Klondike's potential is helping the First Nation safeguard their millennia-old culture by ensuring any regional economic development activities take into consideration the land, its resources and the First Nation lifestyle.

"We are a land-based people," says Taylor, "but there are many of our citizens that don't live out on the land. We need to generate opportunities for them to pay their rent, feed their families and get the appropriate training so they can take advantage of employment opportunities."

In the last ten years, the Dawson City-based First Nation has developed those opportunities right at home and established themselves as the area's single largest employer in the process. Between the government and Chief Isaac Incorporated – the economic arm of the First Nation – and its subsidiary businesses, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in employs nearly 120 of the area's 1,700 residents.



And there is more growth on the horizon. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are developing a regional economic development plan, a requirement of their final agreement, that's drawing all levels of government together to design the region's economic future. When completed, the plan will identify some of the Klondike's "unmined" economic potential.

Taylor believes one of those under-utilized opportunities – presenting Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in culture to visitors – would generate wealth for First Nations citizens while contributing to Dawson City's reputation as a world-class tourist destination.

"Guests to Dawson City are interested in Aboriginal culture, the pristine nature of our traditional territory, and area wildlife," says Taylor. "I believe we are rich in those areas, but we don't have a plan in place to get the most out of those opportunities, even though the options do exist – including partnering with existing operators or encouraging citizens to go into business for themselves."

"No one should be afraid of economic development," he adds. "When it's done right, it creates wealth, employment and training opportunities for everyone."

For more information contact:

the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at (867) 993-7100.

Left: Dānojā Zho cultural centre, Dawson City

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For information or to share your feedback:

INAC – Communications
phone: (867) 667-3888, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca>

CYFN – Communications
phone: (867) 393-9225, <http://www.cyfn.ca>

Government of Yukon – Communications
phone: (867) 667-5339, <http://www.gov.yk.ca>

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Contributors: Dawn Charlie, Megan Williams, Dorothy Frost, Justin Ferbey, Wayne Potoroka, George Gottschall, Ann Marie Swan, Gavin Gardiner, Stanley Noel, Elizabeth Effa, Rick Massie, Rebecca Johnson, Ed Schultz and Marie-Louise Boylan

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