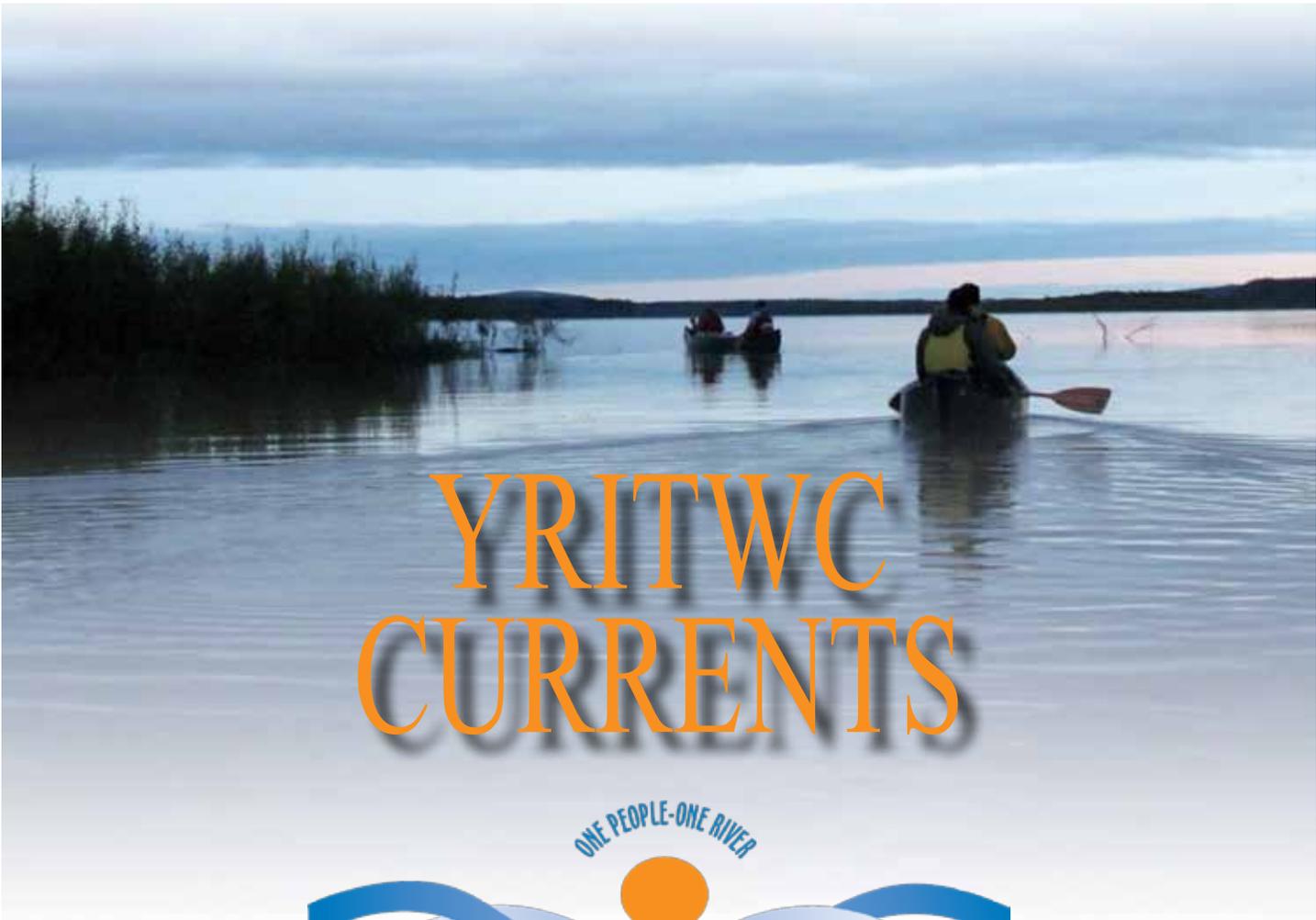


YRITWC  
A SPECIAL ISSUE  
CURRENTS

PROTECT OUR WATER



September 2012 - Vol 6 Issue 2



# YRITWC CURRENTS



Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

September 2012 - Vol 6 Issue 2

|                               |           |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Watershed Spotlight</b>    | <b>04</b> | Rachael Peltola- Scammon Bay, AK    |
| <b>Sustainable Lands</b>      | <b>05</b> | Hughes Brownfields Project          |
| <b>Community IGAP Plan</b>    | <b>06</b> | How The YRITWC Can Assist           |
| <b>Teslin Tlingit Council</b> | <b>07</b> | Elects A New Chief                  |
| <b>Solid Waste</b>            | <b>07</b> | 2012 Backhaul Season                |
| <b>Protect Our Water</b>      | <b>08</b> | Yukon River Water Quality Plan FAQs |
| <b>Science</b>                | <b>10</b> | 2012 Field Season                   |
| <b>Energy</b>                 | <b>11</b> | Renewable Energy                    |
| <b>Welcome</b>                | <b>12</b> | YRITWC Staff                        |
| <b>2013 YRITWC Summit</b>     | <b>14</b> | Save The Date                       |
| <b>The Healing Journey</b>    | <b>15</b> | Visits Tanana                       |



## From The Director

*Jon Waterhouse*

This has been an exceptionally productive summer for the Watershed Council. We have made great strides this year toward realizing YRITWC's vision and I'd like to take a moment to share some of the many successes we've seen in recent months:

The Science Department has expanded the effort along the upper reaches of the Yukon River and its tributaries. The Whitehorse office is buzzing with the addition of two new team members. The Brownfields/Sustainable Lands department has welcomed a new member and expanded their work to include an environmental cleanup project on the Koyukuk River. Our Administrative/Finance department has added capacity and a new member, while developing new and streamlined procedures. Renewable Energy is creating new ways of lighting and heating homes. The Backhaul/Solid Waste folks have expanded their reach and added a new member. And, the work toward Water Governance/Water Rights is moving ahead by leaps and bounds. This work is so very important to the Watershed and the People and it is inspiring to see how far we have come on this vital issue since the leadership directive given at the 2011 Summit in Ruby, Alaska.

Did I say "Summit"? Yes, I did, so let me announce officially that the 2013 YRITWC Summit will be hosted by the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun in Mayo, Yukon Territory on 2-4 August. ([www.nndfn.com](http://www.nndfn.com)) We certainly hope to see you there.

Finally, I'm happy (and sad!) to report that Rachael Peltola has decided to dedicate herself to being a full-time mom for a while as her son, Jayden, begins school this year. This decision could not have been easy for a young mom, but it is truly an admirable one. Many of you know Rachael for her bright smile, positive attitude and her "get the job done" spirit. It's been a great honor and pleasure to work with Rachael. When she first came to work for the Council we had a tiny 10'x10' office, very little money and one desk to share. Her commitment to the success of this organization, to the vision of the Council and to the betterment of Native People was inspiring and invaluable. Her focus and drive has certainly helped push the Watershed Council forward year after year, and though we wish Rachael, her husband Ruslan and son Jayden the very best, we will all miss her immensely and hope she will return to the Council someday!

Handwritten signature of Jon Waterhouse.

Jon Waterhouse  
Executive Director  
Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

# WATERSHED SPOTLIGHT



## Rachael Peltola

*Scammon Bay, Alaska*

When I first began working for the watershed council, one of the first people

I came to know was Rachael. She is absolutely one of the most kind, generous and determined individuals I've had the honor of working with. Being a Native woman from rural Alaska, Rachael brought a wealth of knowledge and unique perspective to our offices at the watershed council. Over the years, she has dedicated so much of her time and energy in giving back to the communities and helping with the on-going effort between YRITWC and its signatory Tribes/First Nations in protecting the Yukon River Watershed. Rachael always had such great enthusiasm and pride in everything that she did, and I am so happy to have had the time to work alongside such a great, caring person. Thank you Rachael for everything and I wish you the best in your future endeavors!  
~ Carol Thomas

Rachael was just a teenager but not only could she dress smart and run the front desk but she would go out and help Tribes prepare their hazardous waste for transport getting as dirty as everyone else. I've known Rachael for as long as I've worked at the Watershed Council and now that she has rightly gone on to bigger and better things (and spending quality time with her husband and son) it hurts just a little bit when I walk in and there's only an empty chair to greet me. Miss you much Rachael and hope our paths cross again soon! ~Stephen Price

I am so grateful for the four years I worked with Rachael here at the YRITWC. She has an incredible energy and passion for the dreams and well-being of others, from her beautiful family to all of the communities and people along the Yukon River. I am inspired by her sincerity, grace and drive as a mother, a young woman, and (I hope!) a future leader in this state. Thank you, Rachael, for sharing your stories, supporting everyone around you, and offering your friendship! I feel lucky to know you! ~Faon O'Connor

*continued pg. 14*

I think Rachael's beaming face was the first thing I saw when I walked in the YRITWC Anchorage office for the first time over six years ago. It's that smile that made coming into work a pleasure even on the coldest, darkest December days when just getting out of bed felt like pushing a boulder uphill. When I started out in the Backhaul Program,

**Watershed Spotlight  
NOMINATION**

*If you would like to nominate someone for the Watershed Spotlight, please submit a picture and short blurb telling us about your nominee, and why they should be considered for the Watershed Spotlight to [mmasonry@yritwc.org](mailto:mmasonry@yritwc.org)*

### Executive Council

Chief Carl Sidney  
(Co-Chair)  
Teslin Tlingit

Clarence Alexander  
(Co-Chair)  
Yukon Flats

George Sheppard  
Carcross / Tagish

Darren Taylor  
Vuntut Gwich'in /  
Tr'ondek Hwech'in

Chief Eddie Skookum  
Northern Tutchone

Sam Donnessey  
Kaska Tribal Council

Geraldine Pope  
Southern Tutchone

Jessie Dawson  
Kwanlin Dun

Chief David Johnny  
White River First Nation

E. Hancock/ Victor Lord  
Tanana River

Pat Sweetsir  
Middle Yukon

Harry Maillele  
Innoko Confluence

Karen Kriska  
Koyukuk River

James Landlord  
Lower Yukon

Roberta Murphy  
Coastal Communities

Elder Advisors

Stanley James  
(Carcross, YT)

Peter Captain  
(Fairbanks, AK)

Sarah James  
(Arctic Village, AK)

# IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL TRIBES

## Write Your Letters NOW!



The Environmental Protection Agency has drafted an Agency-wide "Plan to Provide Solid Waste Management Capacity Assistance to Tribes." This plan outlines how the EPA intends to deal with severely reduced solid waste funds, and redirect efforts through the Of-

fice of Solid Waste (OSWER) and the Indian General Assistance Program (IGAP). Changes include elimination of solid waste funding opportunities through OSWER and the redirection of IGAP solid waste funds toward drafting Integrated Waste Management Plans. This could greatly affect

Tribes' access to direct solid waste funding and backhaul capacity. There is a public comment period for the draft plan, open now until 24 September 2012.

For information about the draft Plan and to obtain copies of relevant documents, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/wyl/tribal/capacityassist.htm>

Comments should be sent by email to:

[agencywideplan@epa.gov](mailto:agencywideplan@epa.gov).

Please call Stephen Price or Mike Grundberg in the YRITWC Solid Waste Department if you would like to discuss this change and share what you think about the draft plan. Anchorage Office Phone: (907) 258-3337, [sprice@yritwc.org](mailto:sprice@yritwc.org), [mgrundberg@yritwc.org](mailto:mgrundberg@yritwc.org)



*The site of the YRITWC Brownfields Program cleanup project located in Hughes, Alaska.*

The YRITWC Brownfields Program has had a long history of documenting known or suspected contaminated sites within the Yukon River Watershed through on-site inspection and inventory, as well as Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) and Environmental Management Plans (EMP). Since 2005, the Brownfields Program has been steadily building its capacity to help usher cleanup projects within the Watershed, and 2012 has seen the Brownfields Program amidst the long process of navigating the waters of this Yukon River Watershed cleanup project. The focus of the project is the former generator building footprint and buried fuel pipeline in the village of Hughes located on the Koyukuk River. The excavation activities will be limited to the removal of on-site petroleum contaminated soil identified at these locations during previous investiga-

tions of a Phase I and limited Phase II ESA, and an EMP in 2008 and 2009. Once the soil is removed and stockpiled in the community, the areas will be replaced with clean fill. A Corrective Action Plan and a Quality Assurance Project Plan have been drafted, and work is moving ahead.

As this article goes to print, the YRITWC Brownfields Program is in its final week of preparing for fieldwork. Trained personnel and excavation equipment from the City of Hughes will be utilized to keep jobs local. Shannon & Wilson, Inc. and YRITWC will conduct scientific sampling, site monitoring, and overall fieldwork management. More updates on the Hughes cleanup project will be released as the next steps of the project are completed. For more information about the Sustainable Lands Department Brownfields Program, please visit our website at: <http://www.yritwc.org/>



*Hughes community members discussing contaminated soil cleanup and site alternatives with YRITWC and DEC representatives.*

# COMMUNITY IGAP PLAN

## Indian General Assistance Program

### How can the YRITWC assist with your community's IGAP plan?

The YRITWC is here to assist communities through our 5 main program areas: Energy, Backhaul, Brownfield, Science and Capacity. Since 1997 we've helped many communities develop IGAP proposals and each year our trainings benefit many more community members. In order to better leverage IGAP resources and make our programs more accessible to community members we've accumulated a list of potential line items that can be included in an IGAP budget. If your tribal IGAP worker is interested in any of these options when developing your proposal please contact the appropriate YRITWC staff!

### Using IGAP Funds to Assist Your Tribe with Solid Waste Issues

As you may know, IGAP funds can be used to address Tribal solid waste issues. Items like burn boxes, used oil burners and battery totes are just a few things that can be written into your work plan and can have very positive impacts for your entire community. When dealing with solid/hazardous waste like lead acid batteries, electronics, fluorescent bulbs, white goods etc, it's good to have a plan to transport those items out of your community and recycle them properly. The YRITWC Solid Waste Department has several partnerships with transportation and recycling companies across Alaska and Washington and can assist you in calculating the related fees into your IGAP budget. You can also apply in for an IGAP Supplemental grant which can be up to \$75,000. The Solid Waste Department also holds regular Hazardous Waste Specialist trainings so that your solid waste removal efforts are done safely and effectively. Call us today for more information!

**Back-Haul Department. Contact Stephen Price e-mail: [sprice@yritwc.org](mailto:sprice@yritwc.org) ph: 907-258-3337**

### Using IGAP Funds to Assist Your Tribe with Energy Solutions

A small portion of an IGAP budget can be used for Renewable Energy (RE) or Energy Efficiency (EE) Pilot/Demonstration Projects to reduce Tribal Council operating costs and help encourage community self-sufficiency. The YRITWC Energy Department has the expertise to assist your community in making this plan a reality. Up to \$5,000 per year can be budgeted into your grant application for the purchase of supplies relating to an EE or RE project. With proper planning and assistance from the YRITWC, this idea can be brought to life! Examples include: a small solar array on a Tribal Council building, energy efficient lighting upgrades to a tribal hall or community building, lighting sensors and energy metering to track tribal building energy costs. We would love to work with your community to leverage IGAP funding and other resources to make these projects a reality! **Energy Department. Contact David Messier e-mail: [dpm@yritwc.org](mailto:dpm@yritwc.org) ph: 907-978-1866**

### Brownfields

IGAP funding can be used to bring Tribal employees into Fairbanks for a Brownfield Training or bring a YRITWC Brownfield technician into your community to assist with a Brownfield Assessment.

**Brownfield Department. Contact Caleb Aronson e-mail: [caronson@yritwc.org](mailto:caronson@yritwc.org) ph: 907-451-2530**

### Finance

Financial management is an important part of any Tribal Council. The YRITWC organizes QuickBooks trainings and can provide details on how to bring Tribal Council members into Fairbanks or Anchorage for a training.

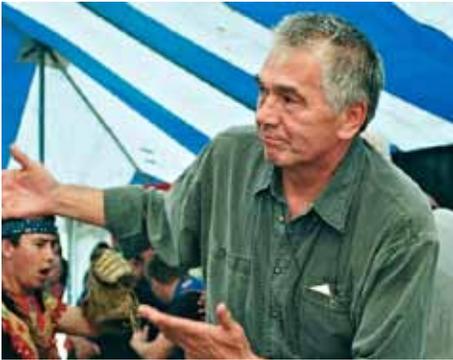
**Finance Department. Contact David McGraw e-mail: [dmcgraw@yritwc.org](mailto:dmcgraw@yritwc.org) ph: 907-451-2530**

### Science

The YRITWC manages and maintains the largest Indigenous - based water monitoring program in the world. This network spans more than 35 fixed sites across a watershed about 1/3 the size of the continental US. Many IGAP programs are already working with the YRITWC Science department to assist with baseline water monitoring in their community but there are numerous expenses that can be integrated into an IGAP proposal to offset the cost of this project and purchase better equipment to improve the reliability of samples. This includes integrating the cost of shipping samples into Fairbanks, new meters for water samplers, funding for refresher courses and even funding to extend samples into the winter season and take under-ice water samples to better gain information on the health of the Yukon River.

**Science Department Contact: Ryan Toohey e-mail: [rtoohey@yritwc.org](mailto:rtoohey@yritwc.org) ph: 907-451-2530**

## Carl Sidney Elected New Chief By The Teslin Tlingit Council



*Carl Sidney dances after the community feast at the Teslin Tlingit Council general assembly.*

Excerpt from the Yukon News:

“Check by the water,” one citizen said. “He’s always by the water.”

Sure enough, standing alone on the bank of Teslin Lake at the far end of Brooks Brook, was Sidney. The Big Salmon Range towered behind him and the sound of drums accompanying stick gambling games echoed from across the field.

“See the beaver?” Sidney asked, nodding his head over to the ripples in the otherwise glass-top water. It was all he needed to start describing the lake; its size and how it snakes from here, all the way up and around far-distant mountains. Sidney grew up on the land, and he’s proud of it. It’s something he wants for the future of his First Nation. An on-the-land curriculum for school-aged citizens is a priority, he said. Sidney, who ran for the Liberal party in last fall’s territorial election, is also a senior member of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, co-chair of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and is a technician for the National Chiefs Committee on Fisheries. He plans on refocusing his people, and the First Nation as a whole, on traditional life.

“I’m going to be a stay-at-home chief,” he said. “I want to subsidize the trappers and give them assistance so they can get back out on the land and feel proud of themselves and their accomplishments. After we finish that, then

we’ll start moving forward to looking at businesses and all that other stuff. We want to heal our community and we want to be healthy and know what we’re doing in the future before we start getting into businesses because the businesses would never make it if we’re unhealthy.”

Employment is also a major priority for the new leader, who feels the self-governing council has been elbowing out its own people because they do not have degrees or certificates, he said.

“They don’t even get a job interview. We want to make it so they have access to the jobs,” he said. “Whatever they’re lacking, we can help them gain those certificates and diplomas and all those other things. We realize that our people are intelligent people. We want to be able to make employment for them so that they can become directors and managers and future leaders.”

Stasyszyn, Roxanne. “Teslin Tlingit Council selects new leader.” <http://yukon-news.com/news/29414/>. Yukon News, 20 July 2012.

## Solid Waste Backhaul

The 2012 Backhaul Season has started off strong and looks to get better and better! Over the winter our Hazardous Waste Specialist trainings were a big hit with dozens of trainees who have gone on to do great work within their communities. Most recently, Brandon Garnett from Arctic Village successfully backhauled almost 2 tons of solid waste through Evert’s Air Cargo. Thanks go out to Brandon for his hard work, Evert’s Air Cargo for their assistance as well as C&R Pipe in Fairbanks for recycling all of that backhaul! This summer has also seen the collaboration of the Solid Waste and Science Departments produce very positive results. As most of you know, Federal funding can be a cycle of boom and bust but regardless of the amount of funding available work still has to be done. To save funding for other projects, Carol Thomas from the Science Department and I teamed up to visit road communi-

ties such as Mentasta, Tanacross, Dot Lake, Northway, Tetlin and Tok as well as representatives from Eagle. During these visits I was able to do backhaul work with our trusty 20ft flatbed trailer while Carol conducted inventories to build community capacity to self-regulate and monitor sewage discharge under an ANA (Administration for Native Americans) grant. All together we backhauled three 20ft trailers worth of material out of the road communities and hope to be able to go back for more in September!

For 2013, the Solid Waste Department has secured USDA funding to hold another Hazardous Waste Specialist training this winter at Pike’s Waterfront Lodge in Fairbanks, AK. This training will cover HAZWOPER, Emergency Response, Oil Spill Awareness, DOT Hazardous Waste Transportation Regulations, Confined Space and First Aid/CPR. Once the dates are known I will send out an announcement and applications to all Yukon River Tribes. We will also be holding two trainings in com-



*Just another day in the office for the YRITWC Solid Waste Department.*

munities next summer that will cover a 24hr HAZWOPER, 16hr DOT Hazardous Waste Transportation Regulations, and then on the last day the trainees will collect solid waste from around the community and stage it to be backhauled. If your Tribe would be interested in hosting this training please contact Stephen Price at [sprice@yritwc.org](mailto:sprice@yritwc.org) or 907-258-3337. See you on the river!



Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

# PROTECT OUR WATER

## Yukon River Water Quality Plan FAQs

### Why is the YRITWC developing a water quality plan for the Yukon River?

The YRITWC's Executive Council directed the staff to draft a watershed plan for the Yukon River that includes enforceable standards to protect the quality and flow of the water in the Yukon River. The Executive Council asked that the plan combine the best of modern science and the Traditional Environmental Knowledge of the indigenous governments and people of the Yukon River. The plan will be designed to improve and protect the Yukon River to sustain the coming generations of people, fish, wildlife and plants of the Yukon, supporting the participation of the Tribal and First Nation governments in the governance of the Yukon River.

### Why now?

Developing a watershed plan that emphasizes water quality is the next logical step in the Watershed Council's stated mission to clean up and preserve the Yukon River, with a vision of water so clean we will be able to drink directly from the Yukon River. The Watershed Council and its signatory Tribes and First Nations have been working for nearly 15 years to monitor water quality and clean up indi-

vidual contamination sources. At its 2011 Summit in Ruby, Alaska, the YRITWC leadership decided it was time to be more assertive in bringing our knowledge and capacity into a collective inter-tribal water quality plan for the whole of the Yukon River.

### What will the plan include besides water quality standards? -- a watershed management plan

The idea is to include the water quality standards as part of a broader watershed management plan. The management plan will also identify the threats to the water quality of the Yukon River, including the detrimental effects of mining, transportation, municipalities, urban development, and abandoned mining and military sites on water quality. It will identify strategies to deal with those threats and protect or improve water quality to satisfy the standards. The watershed plan will also include provisions for implementation, and provisions for measuring progress and making adjustments in the effort over time.

As governments, Tribes and First Nations within the Yukon River watershed have inherent powers to govern. These powers include the rights of Yukon River Tribes and First Nations to enter into government to government agreements to implement the water quality plan and help manage the watershed's resources to meet our water quality objectives. The watershed plan will provide the framework to manage these resources and work with the other governments in shared governance of the Yukon River.





**What is YRITWC doing to help communities participate in the creation of the watershed plan?**

Following the Summit in Ruby in August 2011, the YRITWC staff is working on a draft basinwide or “umbrella” watershed plan for the river as a whole with a basic set of proposed water quality standards. When completed, the YRITWC will share that draft with the member Tribes and First Nations for review and feedback.

Meanwhile, the YRITWC staff will also be working with individual communities interested in watershed management to develop sample local watershed plans for their part of the river that are consistent with but more detailed than the umbrella plan. The sample local watershed plans will identify water quality issues within a local area and specific objectives and actions to deal with those issues. The YRITWC is also developing sample water quality codes and ordinances for communities to adopt, and will be available to assist communities who want to partner with federal and state agencies in watershed co-management.

The Yukon River inter-tribal watershed plan in all its elements – including the umbrella water quality plan, a set of associated local water quality plans, sample codes and ordinances, and implementation and governance provisions - will be submitted for all of the Yukon River Watershed Tribes and First Nations to consider for approval at the 2013 Summit in Mayo.

For more information contact  
Faon O’Connor, Operations Manager, at [foconnor@yritwc.org](mailto:foconnor@yritwc.org)  
Ryan Toohey, Science Department Manager, at [rtoohey@yritwc.org](mailto:rtoohey@yritwc.org)

# Science Department

This field season has been one of the busiest yet, with new projects underway, grants closing out, and new faces within the Science Department. This summer, YRITWC welcomed back Elli Matkin (Fairbanks), Nick Wilson (Whitehorse), and newcomers Mary Patzel (Fairbanks) and Sam Gallagher (Whitehorse).

Following the group training in Fairbanks, YRITWC Science staff continued with several on-site trainings in Alaska (Chevak, Huslia, and Kaltag), as well as in Canada (Dawson, Mayo, Teslin, and Whitehorse). In total, an impressive 45 people from 25 communities have been trained in water quality sampling this field season. The water quality sites, with 39 in Alaska and 15 in Canada/Yukon Territory have been and continue to be sampled from May to September, some sites for over 10 years! The data being collected is currently being developed into reports and an exciting online map that will be introduced later this fall.

Also occurring this fall is the closure of the Environmental Regulatory Enhancement grant from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), which supports the Sewage Monitoring Project. Though the grant may be ending, we are looking at ways of continuing to make this type of sampling available to communities. If you would like to continue sampling for bacteria, please contact us! Since 2009, the Sewage Monitoring Project has had amazing success. Over 30 inventories assessing the state of wastewater facilities have been completed, 40 E. Coli and Total Coliform samples have been analyzed from 16 communities since last year, and 332 discharge measurements have been taken throughout the Alaskan Yukon River. The project, which was honored with the 2010 Innovative Grantee Award from ANA, has been a driving force in addressing wastewater issues in rural Alaska.

The YRITWC Science Department would like to thank all of the Tribal Environmental Coordinators, Lands and Resources Directors, Environmental Technicians and Youth Interns throughout Alaska and Canada who made this year's field season a huge success. It cannot be done without your time, dedication, and hard work - THANK YOU!

While the Sewage Monitoring Project may be winding down, two new projects have begun this summer. The YRITWC Science Department has received funding from Health Canada and the National Science Foundation, for the project

*continued pg. 12*

*Pictured from top to bottom:*

*Richard Mueller, Teslin Tlingit Council Lands and Environment Officer, and Roger Smarch, Teslin Tlingit Council Game Guardian*

*Coralee Johns, Ta'an Kwach'an Council Fish and Wildlife Steward, and Emon Williams, youth apprentice*

*Participants at the onsite training in Kaltag, filtering samples*

*Shelley Inkster, youth apprentice*

*Participants at the onsite training in Kaltag, learning sampling protocols and methods*





*Participants in the PV 101 class held at the UAF Cooperative Extension Service in Anchorage Alaska in Early June 2012.*

As energy prices continue to rise for our communities’, the YRITWC Energy Department has been actively pursuing energy production and efficiency measures to make our communities more sustainable places to work and live.

Our energy efficiency project with Nunamiut Corporation in Anaktuvuk Pass has yielded some excellent energy saving results. Simply by switching to LED lighting in 4 corp-owned buildings we have saved over 2500 gallons of diesel from being flown into the village to power their electric generators. In one building, the repair shop, this LED change-out resulted in a 75% reduction in their electric bills. The project replaced 12 - 400 Watt HID shop lights with 12 - 120 watt LED lights adding occupancy sensors to reduce

the amount time the lights were on. All told our efficiency measures from this project are on track to save over 35,000 kWh/yr! This is 700% more energy than the 5,000 kWh/yr our solar project in Nenana produces each year bringing home the point of Efficiency First when discussing energy reduction. Money saving, energy efficiency measures mean more money can stay in the community and less fuel is needed to keep a village operating.

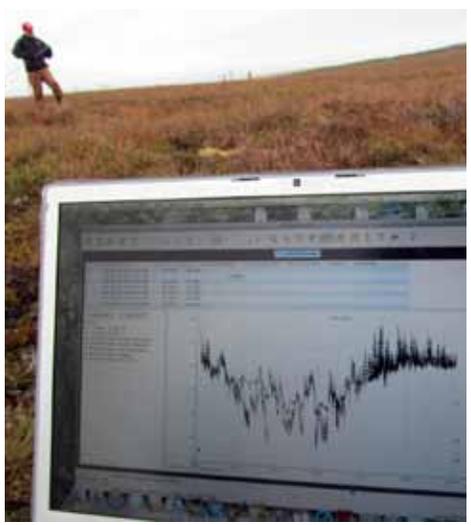
The YRITWC is also proud to report that over 100 individuals from across the state were trained in a very successful Renewable Energy training program during the summer of 2012. Solar Energy International, the nation’s premier Renewable Energy trainers came to Alaska for the first time and taught 4 courses – Grid-tie Photovoltaics 101,

Battery-based Photovoltaics 201, Solar Thermal 101, and Wind Power 101. We are grateful to the Alaska Dept of Labor and Workforce Development for providing the funding that allowed these trainings to happen and we hope to provide similar trainings in the future! Coming up on the horizon, the energy department is planning an Energy Efficiency and monitoring Training for 25 building operators and owners based in Fairbanks this coming fall. Please contact the YRITWC Energy Department if a representative from your community is interested in attending. The YRITWC is also teaming up with the City of Tanana and other partners to host a Biomass workshop in early November that will highlight the city of Tanana’s accomplishments in diesel fuel reduction through the use of Woody Biomass in their community!

# Favorite Time Of Year

By time you are reading this, there is a good chance Nicole, Melinda, and YRITWC staff may already be out in your community! For the Science Department, our largest and most intense field campaign will be happening from August 27-September 14 for the Active Layer Network (ALN) Project.

Since 2009, ALN has been a collaborative effort between YRITWC, USGS, and Yukon River Basin Tribes and First Nations, to further understand climatic shifts and their effects, as well as facilitate better decision-making and scientific rigor in a region on the front lines of climate change. Over 2009 and 2010, 20 sites were installed across the entire Yukon River Basin. Each site is a 50 x 50 meter grid, where software continuously (data collected every 5 minutes!) records air temperature, soil moisture, and soil temperature. The data from the software is downloaded, and the ‘active layer’ of soil above the permafrost is measured annually, during the last week of August and first weeks of September. Timing of this project is critical, as the peak thaw of the ‘active layer’ occurs at this time.



*A look at the data being collected at the ALN site in Marshall*

## Staff Directory

Anchorage Office  
(907) 258-3337

Jon Waterhouse  
Executive Director  
jwaterhouse@yritwc.org

Stephen Price  
Backhaul/Solid Waste  
sprice@yritwc.org

Michael Grundberg  
Capacity/Solid Waste  
mgrundberg@yritwc.org

Ryan Toohey  
Science Manager  
rtoohey@yritwc.org

Faon O'Connor  
Operations Manager  
foconnor@yritwc.org

Carol Thomas  
Science Department  
cthomas@yritwc.org

Manny Masony  
Special Projects  
mmasony@yritwc.org

Fairbanks Office  
(907) 451-2530

Leah Mackey  
Science Department  
lmackey@yritwc.org

Caleb Aronson  
Sustainable Lands  
caronson@yritwc.org

Merna Wharton  
Sustainable Lands  
mwharton@yritwc.org

David McGraw  
Finance Officer  
dmcgraw@yritwc.org

Dan Goodman  
Admin. Assistant  
dgoodman@yritwc.org

Dave Pelunis-Messier  
Energy Department  
dpm@yritwc.org

Whitehorse Office  
(867) 393-2199

Jodi Inkster  
Science Department  
jinkster@yritwc.org

Sam Gallagher  
Science Department  
sgallagher@yritwc.org

## SCIENCE

*continued from pg. 10*

ects “Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program for Northern First Nations and Inuit Communities” and Strategic Needs on Water in the Yukon (SNOWY), respectively.

For the months of August and September, YRITWC along with our partner University of Alaska Anchorage Alaska, will be visiting Teslin, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in, Kluane, White River, and Carcross/Tagish First Nations, to document the concerns and impacts contaminants and climate change have had on water and public health. In addition, baseline levels of contamination will be measured in each of these communities. Up to 20 individuals are being sought in each community for the interview and focus group activities, and we ask that participants are 18 years of age or older. In recognizing the time and value of knowledge being contributed, participants will be provided with a \$200.00 honorarium. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Nic Wilson at (867-393-2199), and keep a look out for the flyers in your community for information as well!

Also on the horizon is the SNOWY Project. This collaborative effort between YRITWC, U.S. Geologic Survey (USGS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Colorado State Univer-

sity (CSU) will focus on communities in the lower Yukon River Basin. In March 2013, the SNOWY Team will travel from Marshall to Emmonak to Chevak by snow machine, stopping in each community along the way. This is a ‘two part’ endeavor, where quantitative data such as snow, ice, and water data will be collected on the Yukon River, as well as qualitative data, where communities will be engaged in interviews, group discussions, and mapping activities with regard to climate change. All activities will help in gaining a better understanding of the relationship between communities and their environment, and the yearly hydrologic cycles of water quantity and quality in the Yukon River.

By March 2013, there will be several trips to the lower Yukon River to prepare for the project. A ‘dry-run’ of the route from Marshall to Chevak will be done in December 2012. Approaching quickly is the September 10 to 14 trip, where Ryan Toohey (YRITWC Science Manager), Nicole Herman-Mercer (USGS), and Melinda Lautari (CSU) will be visiting Chevak, Kotlik, St. Mary’s, Marshall, and Emmonak to further discuss about the project, as well as setting up some preliminary meetings with community members who would be interested in participating.

---

# W E L C O M E

## New YRITWC STAFF



My name is **Merna Lomack Wharton** and I am the newly hired Environmental Technician in the Sustainable Lands Department for Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council located at Fairbanks, Alaska. I am originally from Akiachak, Alaska, which is a Yup’ik village on the Kuskokwim River. I have a home here in Fairbanks with my husband Matt and our two girls, Helen and Lanakila. I received my BA degree in Alaska Native Studies, minor in Education from UAF. My expertise is in Restricted Native

Allotments and Townsite land management. I am pursuing my Master Degree in Rural Development at UAF. I make a living off the land and water whenever the season is ready: gathering greens and berries, traditional preparation of fish and game as they become available. My favorite place to be is at our family fish camp on the Kuskokwim River. When I find time, I enjoy making traditional garments, carving wooden ladles and writing poetry. What I enjoy the most is helping communities and individuals make economic and sustainable progress in their livelihood.

**Nick Wilson** grew-up in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Calgary, AB. Nick holds a BA in Development Studies from the University of Calgary (2006) and an MS in Natural Resources with a minor in American Indian Studies from Cornell University (2013).



She has held a number of positions in the field of community and cooperative development in Canada and internationally in Peru and Bolivia. She began working with the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and the Ruby Tribal Council in 2010 to conduct research on the impacts of climate change and other stressors on the Indigenous peoples of the Yukon River Basin. Nick is passionate about doing environmental work with Tribes and First Nations. She continues to work with the YRITWC as a researcher on a Health Canada funded project that investigates the impacts of contaminants and climate change on water and public health in five Yukon First Nations.

**Sam Gallagher** Sam Gallagher is a graduate of the Renewable Resource Management Program at Yukon College. He is originally from New Brunswick, but has been living in Yukon for the past 12 years. He is extremely interested in working for the YRITWC as it will allow him the opportunity to assist First Nation communities in protecting their most important resource.



**Dan Goodman** grew up in a small town in Southern Oregon at the foothills of the Siskiyou Mountains. After graduating high school Dan gained valuable work experience in the hospitality industry working at hotels and hospitals. As he gained experience



he moved his way up into managing I.T. systems throughout Southern Oregon and Southern California for growing businesses. Dan's passion is the outdoors where he enjoys activities such as hiking, camping, hunting, and fishing. We are lucky to have him as part of our staff and are continually benefiting from his business experience.



Renewable Energy  
Alaska Project

REAP will be hosting its first Clean Energy Forum of the year on Wednesday, September 12th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the Anchorage Museum Auditorium. The event is a part of our 2012-2013 Clean Energy Lecture Series, which will occur on the 2nd Wednesday of each month. Since October is Energy Efficiency Month, we will be focusing both September and October's forums on energy efficiency retrofits both at home and in commercial buildings. The topic of September's event is "Saving Energy and Money in Residential Buildings" and we will have both a contractor and a homeowner talking about their experience with EE retrofits.

## TOTAL RECLAIM ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Total Reclaim in Anchorage provides recycling and management services for hazardous materials. We are committed to protecting the environment and preserving the natural beauty of the state for all Alaskans.

(907) 561-0544

[www.totalreclaim.com](http://www.totalreclaim.com)

Did you know? You don't have to continuously visit our website to stay updated with the YRITWC and it's upcoming events, trainings, or projects. Stay informed daily by joining our Facebook Fan Page and stay updated with the latest news and events from around the Watershed.

Find us on Facebook

facebook.com/YRITWC

### Watershed Spotlight - continued from pg. 04

I first met Rachael at the 2005 YRITWC Biennial Summit at Moosehide, YT, when she had just joined the YRITWC team. I was impressed by her youthful exuberance, as well as her eagerness to serve as a YRITWC staffer and environmental steward. Over the years, Rachael has been more than the face behind the front desk, and the calm voice on the YRITWC phone, she has been the glue that attaches the Tribes we serve to the organization itself.

Beyond getting to see what Rachael's position at YRITWC entailed, I was blessed with the opportunity to paddle with her during the 2010 YRITWC Healing Journey on the Koyukuk River. We not only talked while we paddled, we got to spend some quality time and have some great heartfelt conversations while picking blueberries and salmonberries! I was amazed at how committed to her culture and heritage she really is. Maintaining her connection with her roots in the village, while living in the City, holding down a full time job, and being a parent at the same time is quite a plateful. While it is not always fun and games, and at times can be quite stressful, Rachael has always maintained a positive and upbeat attitude that is just as contagious as her smile. Rachael will be missed at YRITWC, not only for her skill and hard work, but for her great sense of humor, and upbeat attitude. She has definitely made a lasting and positive impression on me, and I know she will continue to spread that contagious enthusiasm and happy attitude wherever she goes! ~ *Michael Grundberg*

It is remarkable to think that 18 months ago I was first feeling my way through the YRITWC. There were days when I was trying to figure out the workflow and culture within the

organization. I felt like a fish out of water most of the time. But Rachael helped me through that with her kind words and encouragement.

I look back on that time with a bit of amusement. The things that seemed so difficult then are a breeze now. Thank you, Rachael, for going out on a limb to assist me during those times. I really appreciate the encouragement and support you have given me from Ruby, AK to Capital Hill, Washington DC.

You have truly inspired me to work with sincerity and dedication. I will miss you, my friend. ~ *Manny Masony*

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Spring 2013 White House Internship Program Application Now Open

*Location: Washington, DC*

As White House Interns, young men and women from across the country dedicate their time, talents, energy, and service to better the White House, the community, and the nation. While their tasks vary by department, all interns are united through weekly events including a weekly speaker series with senior staff members, off-site field trips, and mentorship opportunities. Most importantly, the internship experience includes an emphasis on service and interns participate in regularly scheduled service projects at schools and non-profit organizations in Washington, D.C.

**Please encourage the young leaders you know to apply  
for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.**

**Tell them to visit [www.whitehouse.gov/internships](http://www.whitehouse.gov/internships)**

## SAVE THE DATE

# 2013 YRITWC SUMMIT

On behalf of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council and the First Nation of Natcho Nyak Dun (Big River People), we are pleased to invite you to our ninth Biennial Summit, August 2-4, 2013 in Mayo, Yukon Territory, Canada.

The 2013 Summit is bringing together delegates from our 70 signatory Tribes & First Nation governments, as well as friends & supporters from across North America and abroad, to take part in two full days of trainings, working sessions, speakers, and entertainment. The Summit is an opportunity to learn about the diverse watershed, make important decisions about Watershed protection, and ensure that our many efforts to preserve and protect the Yukon River and its tributaries are continuing strong.

We would be honored by your participation in our gathering and look forward to seeing you in Mayo, Yukon Territory, Canada, the summer of 2013.

If you have any questions or would like more information on our Summit, please contact our Summit Coordinator - Manny Masony at (907) 258-3337 or email [mmasony@yritwc.org](mailto:mmasony@yritwc.org) or Steve Buyck at (867) 996-2265 ext 144 in Mayo.



Frontier Flying Service  
Hageland Aviation  
Era Aviation  
Toll Free: (800) 866-8394



Marine Solutions,  
Transportation and Logistics

907-777-5505  
<http://www.crowley.com>

# THE Healing

We heal the water, the water heals us

# Journey

## The Healing Journey Goes To Tanana

By: Jon Waterhouse

Our arrival in Tanana came during a significant salmon harvest and the many drying racks along the riverbanks were full and bright orange with drying fish. What a great sight to behold! The fish management

challenges along the Yukon have been ongoing for years and recent summers have seen drying racks underused often. My conversations with tribal leaders during this visit revealed deep concerns over the health and the future of the salmon. The Healing Journey is about the people and their environment and this is exactly why I'm here. I see my job as a conduit between these people and a solution to their concerns about their river. I'm honored they trust me to help.

The picnic we hosted upon our arrival in Tanana was great! We saw several old friends and made many new ones. Paddler Anne has paddled on the Yukon several times and was eager to see friends she'd made on her prior trips through Tanana. Her first stop was the Elder's Center where all the residents she'd met previously are living still, and doing well. Jackie, 76, was quick to offer Anne and Mary his shower and they were quick to take him up on that! The guys had to make our way to the public showers in the community Laundromat, and I'm happy to tell you they were spotless.



*"Clean water is important to our community and culture." The people of Tanana have a deep love and connection to their rivers and the environment.*

The high level of environmental stewardship in Tanana is inspiring. This is a community of people who truly care about each other and want a healthy World for their children and future gen-



*Racks of drying fish were a common sight along the Yukon in Tanana.*

erations. The Elders there were welcoming and happy to talk with us about their two rivers and their personal histories of living with them.

We enjoyed our time spent with the wonderful people of Tanana and feel that ending there was the perfect conclusion to this Healing Journey on the Tanana. This place is a prime example of what inspires the Healing Journey and it is this inspiration that encourages us to spread our message of environmental stewardship, helping the people we meet to reconnect with the natural world and with one another, all over the globe.

So now that we are back in the city, having stowed our tents and paddles let me take a moment to lament the realities of returning to 'civilization' after a month on this wonderfully remote Alaskan river.

Sleeping at night under the stars with only the sounds of the river whooshing by and the occasional splash of a large mammal swimming across it is heaven in my book. Hearing a couple of owls chatting during the night is icing on the cake. Now, again in the saddle of the city and all of the sounds that come with it, I am slow to adjust and a bit rebellious about doing so. As a matter of fact, if I were 5, I'd have my balled up fists in the air, tears streaming, stomping my feet dramatically, eventually falling into an exhausted and pitiful heap on the floor. Yep, my protest of having to come back indoors would be

extreme.

But that's ok. The Healing Journey is ongoing and this winter the Healing Journey will head back out onto the frozen Yukon River via snow machines to collect snow, ice and water samples for more testing by the USGS. Typical temps during February on the Yukon are around 30 below so this event will put a new spin on our effort. This trip will take us to the villages of Russian Mission, Marshall, St. Mary's, Pitkas Point, Mountain Village, Pilot Station, and Emmonak to visit with residents and learn about the changes they have seen occurring in their communities during winter months on the Yukon.



*Photographs and stories from the Tanana paddlers will be posted at [www.thehealingjourney.org](http://www.thehealingjourney.org)*





725 Christensen Drive, Suite 3  
Anchorage, AK 99501

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

# FEEDBACK

NEWSLETTER

Help us improve our newsletter. Send us your feedback on its content, layout, frequency, as well as topics you would like to see featured in future issues.

You can forward your feedback to:

Manny Masony  
725 Christensen Drive Suite 3  
Anchorage, AK 99501

[mmasony@yritwc.org](mailto:mmasony@yritwc.org)  
907.258.3337

# Past Currents

Download your copy of the past Currents  
and the 2012 Annual Report at:

<http://www.yritwc.org/Media/Newsletter.aspx>

or please feel free to contact us directly at  
1-907-258-3337

# As Winter Approaches

The YRITWC offices will be buzzing with activity during the ‘conference season’ (AISES, ATCEM, AFE, IGAP etc.). Keep an eye out for YRITWC presentations, booths and staff at these events! We also will be taking under-ice water quality samples each month throughout the winter.

In closing, we would like to thank everyone for making this such a great field season. We are grateful to all our partners, funders, and most importantly, to the YRITWC Signatory Tribes and First Nations.

Does your Tribe or First Nation have a project idea? Would you like to work more closely with the YRITWC? We are always interested in assisting Tribes or First Nations in community-based research and service projects. If you have any questions or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact the YRITWC.

**AIR LAND TRANSPORT, INC**  
Serving Alaska since 1976

Toll Free in Alaska: 800-478-2040  
<http://airlandak.com>

