

# Currents

One People

One River

## Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

FEBRUARY 2004



*Special points of interest:*

### **Advocacy Seminar**

*Hosted by the Institute for Tribal Government at Portland State University and the YRITWC.*

**April 5-8, 2004**

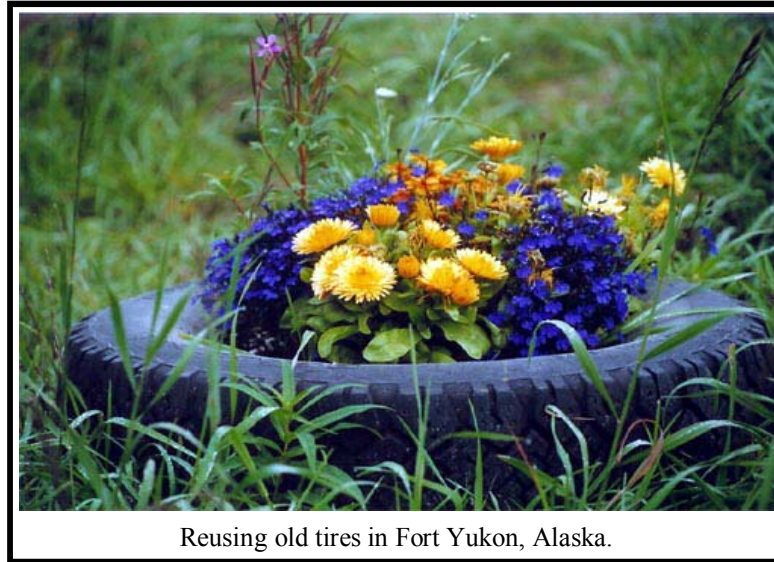
**Fairbanks, Alaska**

*Call Darcie Warden at 451-2538 for ad-*

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### 1. REDUCE



2. REUSE

3. RECYCLE

Reusing old tires in Fort Yukon, Alaska.

### WATERSHED COUNCIL PRESENTS ADVOCACY SEMINAR

At last summer's Leadership Summit, the YRITWC determined that it was time to develop an advocacy strategy that would empower Tribes and First Nations to address major factors contributing to contamination of our river and the food we eat. Mining, military contamination and urban sewage all present big challenges, and we need to make our voice heard on these issues.

Now YRITWC is teaming up with the Institute for Tribal Government to present a four-day training in advocacy in Fairbanks, April 5-8. Training will be provided in getting attention and resources for indigenous issues. The training will focus primarily on specific opportunities for advocacy in the U.S., where the Institute operates. However the general advocacy skills and procedures are just as applicable in Canada.

The training is for leaders and decision-makers who will be able to use the skills developed to advance the needs of Native communities in the halls where policy is made and financial resources are allocated.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

50 YEAR VISION: 'To be able to drink water directly from the Yukon River'

## Taking off the runway

By Rob Rosenfeld, Alaska Region Director

Chief Peter M. Captain Sr., Pat Sweetsir, Sarah James, Ken Margolis and I recently went on a resource gathering and fundraising trip to the West Coast. We met with two foundations, the International Indian Treaty Council, the Institute for Tribal Government at the Hatfield School of Government, Portland State University and the Public Media Center.

This trip was filled with positive responses. We received an invitation to draft a proposal for developing an advocacy strategy to present to the leadership in Nenana during August of 2004. In addition we were invited to draft a proposal that will provide funding to implement an approved advocacy strategy.

Our meeting with Herb Gunther at the Public Media Center was inspirational as Herb acknowledged that the environmental justice issues and concerns of the Yukon River are of international importance and that the infrastructure has been built by the Yukon River Indigenous leaders to effectively maintain high water quality standards and prevent the health of the River from declining any further. Herb agreed that the Yukon River is perhaps one of the largest intact ecosystems in the world and that there will be many individuals and entities in North America that will lend their support with a well organized communications and media strategy. We look forward to working with the Public Media Center in the future as the leadership identifies top issues and priorities.

Ken Margolis has introduced us to the Institute for Tribal Government who will be providing an advocacy seminar in Fairbanks during the first week of April. Darcie Warden is organizing the event and can be reached at (907)451-2538 for more information. This training will be designed for two leaders from each Indigenous Government on the Yukon River. The Institute for Tribal Government will take care of all the travel, lodging and food. Please see the front page article for more information about the Institute and the types of resources that they have available. We look forward to a long partnership with the Institute.

Thank you to Chief Captain, Sarah James and Pat Sweetsir and Ken Margolis for putting in a 60 hour week in order to make the trip as productive as possible.

Lastly, I want to compliment the Yukon Region Director, Roberta Auston for getting the Yukon Office going again and I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Darcie Warden for joining our team at the Fairbanks office.

### **YRITWC - WEBSITE**

*Have you visited us on the web at [www.yritwc.com](http://www.yritwc.com)?*

*We just recently had our 5,250th visitor and it is such a great resource that the YRITWC staff use it in their daily jobs. Spend some time checking it out as we feel it is a valuable resource!*

**OLD GREETING CARDS?** St. Jude's Ranch for Children (non-sectarian) in Texas and Nevada helps abused children. To do this, they need to raise money! Well, they have found a great fund raiser. They recycle greeting cards. 1. Be sure to cut off the front of the cards as they only use the "picture part" 2. Do not send any card fronts with personal notes written on them 3. The cards should be of a size that can be trimmed to fit a 5" x 7" card back 4. They accept all occasion greeting cards, Christmas, Hanukkah, Easter, Birthday, etc. Mail them to:

St. Jude's Ranch for Children  
100 St. Jude Street  
Boulder City, NV 89005

For more information: [www.stjudesranch.org](http://www.stjudesranch.org)  
(Source: EPA Region 10 Tribal Newsletter)

***Watershed Approach***, by Kip R. Cronk

Simply put, a watershed is an area with a common drainage point. The Yukon River is the common drainage point for the Yukon River Watershed, which means precipitation that falls within the Watershed will eventually make its way to the Yukon River. Water within the Watershed that is dripping off mountain ledges, flowing along a small creek, slowly wandering out of a wetland and quickly running through the rapids of a river will all end up in the Yukon River and out into the Bering Sea.

It is important to approach the protection of the Yukon River through the entire Watershed. If we were to only focus upon the Yukon River in an attempt to protect it, we would most likely fail because pollution within the rest of the Watershed eventually drains into the Yukon River. There are many villages within the Yukon River Watershed such as Fairbanks, Cantwell, Tok, Anaktuvuk Pass, Old Crow and Mayo that are not along the banks of the Yukon River, but still have the potential to impact the river. Since there is a true desire to clean the Yukon River we must also protect the entire Watershed to ensure that all of the water entering the River is clean.

The map below shows the size of the Yukon River Watershed compared to the lower 48 states. In my estimate it takes up the equivalent space as seven states and if stretched straight out it would take up the entire east coast from Maine to Florida. This is a huge Watershed of over 330,000 square miles. That is 330,000 square miles that drains into the Yukon River. The task of protecting an area that size is daunting, but one that can happen if we work together.

In managing the Yukon River Watershed all of the indigenous, federal, territorial, and state governments along with the YRITWC and other organization will have to work together and share resources. We will need to identify problems, point source and non-point source pollution, within the Watershed, along with those areas that we think are critical and need immediate attention. We also will need to collect water quality information to create a baseline assessment for the water, which will allow us to recognize trends over time. We will have to put our expertise and knowledge together to remediate and restore sites throughout the entire Watershed to increase the health of the whole system.

A watershed is an area with a common drainage point, but also a complex system that has many interactions between the physical, chemical and biological states. It is important to remember that it is a large system that can only be fixed as a whole and with cooperation.



Map created by Laris Karklis

**TRAINING AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES**

EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
<i><b>Environmental Community Oriented Problem Solving</b></i> March 10, 2004	Anchorage, Alaska Environment & Natural Resources Institute at UAA	Jane Oakley, 907-257-2717 <a href="http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/rs1.html">www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/rs1.html</a>
<i><b>Tribal Solid Waste Administration Course</b></i> March 16-19, 2004	Kotzebue, Alaska	928-523-3840 Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals & US EPA
<i><b>Introduction to Environmental Mediation</b></i> April 14-15, 2004	Anchorage, Alaska Environment & Natural Resources Institute at UAA	Jane Oakley, 907-257-2717 <a href="http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/rs1.html">www.uaa.alaska.edu/enri/rs_site/rs1.html</a>
<i><b>River Rally</b></i> May 21-25, 2004	Wintergreen, Virginia	River Network <a href="http://www.rivernetnetwork.org">www.rivernetnetwork.org</a>
<i><b>Phase I, Water Quality Course</b></i> May 24-25, 2004	Anchorage, Alaska	Karen Stickman, NAFWS 907-222-6005
<i><b>13th Annual Protecting Mother Earth Conference</b></i> June 17-20, 2004	Bear Butte, South Dakota	877-436-2121 <a href="http://www.ienearth.org">www.ienearth.org</a>

**ADVOCACY SEMINAR CONTINUED...**

Since 2001, the Institute for Tribal Government, directed by former Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, has presented 16 tribal seminars to leaders of the Navajo Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, and the Tribal Council of the Lumi Nation, among others.

In addition to training sessions and tribal consultation, the Institute has created a video interview series called Great Tribal Leaders of Modern Times. These fascinating accounts portray the many challenges that confront Native Americans. They demonstrate how character and leadership have been forged in spite of formidable obstacles. Leaders featured in the series include Wilma Mankiller (former Principle Chief of the Oklahoma Cherokee Nation), Billy Frank, Jr. of the Nisqually Tribe, and John Echohawk (Pawnee), the founder of the Native American Rights Fund. Chief Peter Captain Sr. has been invited to contribute an interview to the series.

Through arrangements with the Institute for Tribal Government, the Council is able to offer full payment of travel and hotel costs for workshop participants. This provides an opportunity to get members of both the Alaska and Canadian Executive Committee together for planning. We are asking board members and tribal administrators to hold the dates of April 4-9 for this event. We will be sending out additional information soon. In the meantime, if there are any questions about the session, please call Darcie Warden at the Alaska Office (907) 451-2538.

Links to the following websites, as well as many others, can be found on our website at [www.yritwc.com/links.htm](http://www.yritwc.com/links.htm). This is a valuable tools for people looking to gain information about the Yukon River Watershed, Indigenous Governments and the environment. If you have additional links that you would like to see on our website, please email them to [kipcronk@yritwc.com](mailto:kipcronk@yritwc.com).

**Council of Yukon First Nations** - <http://www.cyfn.ca>

The Council of Yukon First Nations is the central political organization for the First Nation people of the Yukon. It has been in existence since 1973 and continues to serve the needs of self-governing First Nations within the Yukon.

**Index of Native American Media Resources on the Internet** - <http://www.hanksville.org/NAresources/indices/NAmedia.html>

This site is constructed primarily to provide information resources to the Native American community and only secondarily to the general community. The information is organized, insofar as possible, to make it useful to the Native American community and the education community. The information presented here is the product of much cooperative work.

**Northern Alaska Environmental Center** - <http://northern.org/artman/publish/>

The Northern Alaska Environmental Center promotes conservation of the environment in Interior and Arctic Alaska through advocacy, education, and sustainable resource stewardship.

**Old Crow's Official Website** - <http://www.oldcrow.yk.net/index.htm>

Welcome to the Official Website of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (VGFN) in Old Crow, Yukon. Old Crow is a small town of about 300 aboriginal people; known as the Vuntut Gwitchin. Old Crow is located at the confluence of the Crow and Porcupine Rivers within the Yukon River Watershed.

**Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Network (TSWAN)** - [www.tswan.org/main/main.asp](http://www.tswan.org/main/main.asp)

Founded in 1997, TSWAN is a non-profit alliance of Native American Tribes from throughout the Pacific Northwest. TSWAN strives to make effective and environmentally responsible solid waste management a priority on our reservations and in our communities.

*Grant programs administered by the US EPA can be found at [www.epa.gov/epahome/grants.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epahome/grants.htm)*

Current and past issues of YRITWC's newsletter, 'Currents', are available on our website at:

[www.yritwc.com/newsletters.htm](http://www.yritwc.com/newsletters.htm)

**YRITWC Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy:**

This past summer at our 4th Bi-Annual Summit the YRITWC Executive Committee requested that the staff put together a Comprehensive Monitoring Strategy for the organization and the Yukon River Watershed.

Currently the staff is working with indigenous, federal, and state governments as well as non-profit organizations. It is a large task with many interested, knowledgeable and experienced parties.

We have had one teleconference and a break-out session at the Alaska Forum on the Environment to begin the process. The information that we have gathered at these two meetings has been valuable and we look forward to gaining additional information in future meetings.

The goal is to work with all of the various parties and put together a plan to present to the YRITWC Executive Committee in August 2004.

[www.yritwc.com/cms.htm](http://www.yritwc.com/cms.htm)

**Increasing Administrative Capacity and Strengthening Networks:  
Grant Writing and Management Workshop in Koyukuk**  
Tija Karklis, YRITWC Organizational Development Intern

As part of its objective to provide technical assistance to local communities, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council provides training on grant writing, reporting, and management. Improving the capacity of tribes to acquire funding and run successful grant programs ultimately leads to continuity of efforts and effective communication, and thus strengthens our unified commitment towards the protection and preservation of the Yukon River Watershed.

The YRITWC is supported in this effort by an EPA special projects grant, which aims to develop administrative capacity in communities by working with program managers, council members, and the tribal administration. Two workshops took place in late 2003 in Ft. Yukon and Ruby, and a third workshop was held January 26-29, 2004 in Koyukuk. Feedback from these workshops has been encouraging. We find that people appreciate the opportunity not only to improve their technical skills working with grants, but also to become more strategic in planning efforts, strengthen ties with neighboring villages, share experiences, and become better informed of the YRITWC and how it serves the Watershed communities.

In Koyukuk, the Grant Writing and Management Workshop was jointly organized by the YRITWC and the Koyukuk Tribal Council. The Tribal Council's Environmental Technician, Leona Kriska, created a comfortable living and working environment for all of the participants. Lodging was provided at the school and the workshop was held at the community hall. The YRITWC contributed snacks and drinks, but village members were particularly generous in providing a steady flow of food throughout the duration of the workshop. The community even held a cover dish in honor of the workshop participants on the final evening.

Nine people attended the workshop from Koyukuk, Huslia, Chalkyitsik, Nulato, Galena, and M.E.T. Tribal Joint Venture in Fairbanks. Facilitators included Rob Rosenfeld and Tija Karklis from the YRITWC, Jean Gamache from EPA, and Eileen Jackson from Huslia. A combination of lecture, discussion, hands-on, and one-on-one methods were used during the training. Throughout the four days, Koyukuk elders and members of the tribal and city councils sat in as observers. We created a participatory and open environment to share experiences, knowledge, and realistic examples of obstacles and successes.

The workshop focused on specific issues regarding GAP grants and coincided with the deadline for submitting grant proposals to the EPA. Participants brought laptop computers and were prepared to work directly on their proposals. Among the topics covered were the following: GAP grant conditions and terms, properly filling out forms, tools for managing quarterly and final reports, the components of a good proposal (objectives, goals, problem statement, narrative, etc.), budgets, and strategic planning as it relates to grants.

The workshop was a success on various levels. We achieved clarity on the various GAP forms required by EPA; comprehension of the elements of a grant proposal and their relationship with overall strategic planning, reporting, and management; progress towards completing the GAP proposals; and renewed contacts and networking opportunities.

The YRITWC would like to continue to collaborate with tribes who are interested in hosting a workshop. We invite you to contact us for further details!

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## YRITWC Executive Committee

### YUKON REGION

DAHKA TLINGIT NATION: Harold Gatensby, Carl Sydney - Alternate

VUNTUT GWITCH'IN/TR'ONDEK HWECH'IN: Chief Darren Taylor, Deputy Chief Clara VanBibber - Alternate

NORTHERN TUTCHONE: Chief Steven Buyck, Chief Lucy McGinty & Chief Eddie Skookum - Alternate

KASKA TRIBAL COUNCIL: Chief Sam Donnessey

SOUTHERN TUTCHONE: Geraldine Pope, Chairperson Bonnie Harpe - Alternate

KWANLIN DUN: Lesley Smith

*"Water is the one substance from which the earth can conceal nothing; it sucks out its innermost secrets and brings them to our very lips."*

--Jean Giraudoux

### ALASKA REGION

YUKON FLATS: Clarence Alexander, James Nathaniel Sr. - Alternate

TANANA RIVER: Edna Hancock, Charlie Stevens - Alternate

MIDDLE YUKON: Chief Peter Captain Sr., Pat Sweetsir - Alternate

KOYUKUK RIVER: Karen Kriska, Chief William Derendoff - Alternate

LOWER YUKON: Chief James Landlord, Mary Andrews - Alternate

INNOKO REGION: Roger Hamilton Sr., Chad Walker - Alternate

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### **Newsletter Report from the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, Yukon Region By Roberta Auston; Yukon Region Director**

Since October of 2003, this office is in a place of transition, there has been much developmental work for the website which is wonderful and now more relevant technical work should be developed for the concerned communities. This arm of the organization has a need to establish a firmer foundation based on how the communities perceive their needs in relation to the goals and objectives of the whole organization. I would like to travel to as many communities as possible to speak directly with the community workers and develop a rapport with individuals to best determine outcomes that are suitable for each community. A lobbying effort continues to endorse other First Nations as signatories to the Inter-Tribal Accord. Several agencies have been approached to develop a pilot project for the children's web site on environmental education for children's culture camps that focuses on traditional laws respecting water. A meeting is slated for late March with the Executive Committee to plan to establish this office as a resourceful organization that the First Nations can call upon in areas that relate to the effected water systems and access useful information. Efforts are underway to work with the Indian Law Resource Center to develop the second handbook "Opportunities for the Protection of the Yukon River Watershed". I have found the first handbook to be useful information and highly recommend it. With the self governing agreements of our First Nations in Yukon Territory the second handbook promises to be interesting. I have been familiarizing myself with the non-government agencies and government departments that this organization exchanges information with. I have been asked by some agencies to present and explain what we are about and found there is much to report and useful tools developed to do so. There is very much to learn. I am happy to look forward to Advocacy Training in Fairbanks in April and meeting the Alaskan members of the YRITWC.

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Darcie Warden	Special Projects & Advocacy	907-451-2538	dwarden@yritwc.com
Tija Karklis	Organization Development	907-451-2531	tijakarklis@yritwc.com

"The latest threat is global warming, which scientists say could wipe out more than 35 percent of all species by 2050."  
EU Urges Rapid Action to Save Endangered Species

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes seeks nominations for its 2004 awards. The Barron Prize recognizes young people ages 8 to 18 who have shown leadership and courage in public service to people and our planet. Half of each year's winners are honored for their work to protect the environment. Barron Prize winners each receive \$2,000 to be applied to their higher education or to their service project. Nomination deadline is April 30, 2004. For more information, visit [www.barronprize.org](http://www.barronprize.org) or call Barbara Ann Richman at 970-875-1448.

"Cooperative management relies upon the participation of all parties on an equal footing. The tribes are an integral part of the continued process. This has decreased confrontation and increased mutual understanding while avoiding costly litigation. Cooperative management results in increased economic vitality and a healthy environment. Everyone will benefit from rational management of our natural resources that contributes to the overall health and diversity of our ecosystem."

Chairman Billy Frank, Jr. found on the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission's website ([www.nwifc.com](http://www.nwifc.com))

**YRITWC NEW STAFF WELCOME**

Darcie Warden, Special Projects & Advocacy  
Coordinator

dwarden@yritwc.com, 907-451-2538

I have the honor and privilege of knowing and working with many of you already. I lived in Galena, AK a little over two years. I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in subsistence activities with my boyfriend PJ Simon. We went fishing, moose hunting, spruce and willow grouse hunting and even checked some snares together. With great pride and much instruction I learned how to cut, dry and can King Salmon. I am forever grateful for these experiences because I now know how much work it takes to bring home my own food, process it and store it. I also understand how important a subsistence lifestyle is, that it is a lifestyle, a way of living in the world, and that it must be protected just as the river needs to be protected.

I worked for the Loudon Tribal Council and then U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) during my time in Galena. My work with the Loudon Tribal Council included participation on the military contamination and remediation workgroup, solid waste assessment and planning, environmental education, community garden planning, grant writing, and participation in the Yukon-Koyukuk Environmental Consortia. At the USFWS I learned about the bureaucracy of the federal government (a good thing to know when obtaining money from them), biological studies, and met some great people in the office. All in all, I made great connections with people who care about the water, the land and the wildlife.

I moved to Fairbanks in January with my son Cailan and was thrilled to start work with the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council. I am inspired by the mission to drink water directly from the river in 50 years. I sometimes worry about our future, the environmental conditions and climate change, but with so many people working together to identify negative impacts and protect this massive watershed, I have hope. I know we can make a difference because we already have. Under the directive of Tribes and First Nations within the Yukon River Watershed, I will do my best to meet the challenges ahead of us.

**Alaska Representative Don Young**

Excerpts from his speech at the YRITWC Summit 2003,  
Fort Yukon, Alaska

*“Thank you for inviting me down here....This is an important gathering. And I will say that I’ve had only one other girlfriend in my life, other than my wife, and that’s been the Yukon River. And that brings me back to this town, our home, every year, because I love the river.*”

*...I think what’s important about this gathering is recognizing that all of you, including myself, have a role in keeping the river as clean as possible from our efforts and make sure we don’t make the mistakes we did in the past.*

*I will be working with you in the Congress as much as possible to make sure that there will be financial aid to make sure that we can continue to clean up- including some of our waste sites that have been there for many, many years; including some of the oil tanks, as you know, in the Denali Commission that we’ve moved some of our oil tanks farther away from the river so that they’re not threatened or will not threaten the river in the case there’d be an ice break-up or other damage. But again, from all the way to the mouth of St. Mary’s, and all the way to Eagle, all the way into Canada, and Old Crow, and Dawson, and Whitehorse; work together as a collective group and I think you will be rewarded.*

*The river will never be blue, it’ll never be clear, only in the winter, because you know it’s silted. But we can take away those things that man added and we can not have that happen again; and that’s really what I hope this meeting is all about.”*

**YRITWC THANK-YOU!!!!**

The YRITWC staff would like to take this opportunity to thank Dana Nossov. Dana has been graciously volunteering with the YRITWC for the past month. She has been helping transcribe speeches for last summer’s Summit, including Representative Don Young’s speech above.

**Thank-you Dana, we appreciate all of your help!**

## YRITWC Newsletter

Yukon Inter-Tribal Watershed Council

### Alaska Region Office

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### ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNICIAN/LANDS WORKERS QUESTIONNAIRE

**Please return your answers to the YRITWC Office in Fairbanks, Alaska.**

What do you think is the most important environmental problem in your community?

Do you think most people in your community would agree?

Is there any other environmental problem that might be considered almost equally important?

Is anything being done about the problem?

What is being done, and who is doing it?

Who else plays a lead role in addressing environmental issues in your community? Please provide us with contact information.

What can the YRITWC do to be most useful to your community?