

# University of Alberta

Shades of Green: the social nature of Yukon forests

by

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## Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of forests as understood and encountered from numerous perspectives in the Yukon Territory. Dealing primarily with non-indigenous Yukon residents who hunt, trap, work, recreate within, and aim to protect Yukon forests, it addresses the origins and implications of diverse forest perspectives in Canada's north. This work is based primarily off of anthropological fieldwork that took place in the Yukon Territory in 2009. Methods included archival research, interviews and participant observation. As a means of exploring the origin of forest perspectives, the author focuses on four key areas: Yukon forest history and contemporary forest views that invoke forest history, different experiences and knowledge of forests, the implications of regulation and boundaries on the forest experience, and the role imagination plays in forest perception. Forests were approached as multilocal and multivocal place, working from the assumption that forests were experienced and understood differently by residents. As a result, many contradictions became apparent that forest users were living with. For example Yukon forests are experienced as both pristine wilderness and as places of intensive human use, as places of freedom while also being bound by bureaucracy, and as the focus of competing forms of environmentalism. A number of points arise from the examination of such contradictions including the potential for used spaces to once again be experienced as wild, how simplified self-narratives can mask complex human-environment relations, and how the language surrounding forest use and management is not necessarily based on common understandings of forests experience. Rather than focusing on forests as the background to broader social or economic issues, this work examines the multilocal

and multivocal nature of forests as a means to better understanding local views, actions and relationships between forest users.

## Acknowledgments

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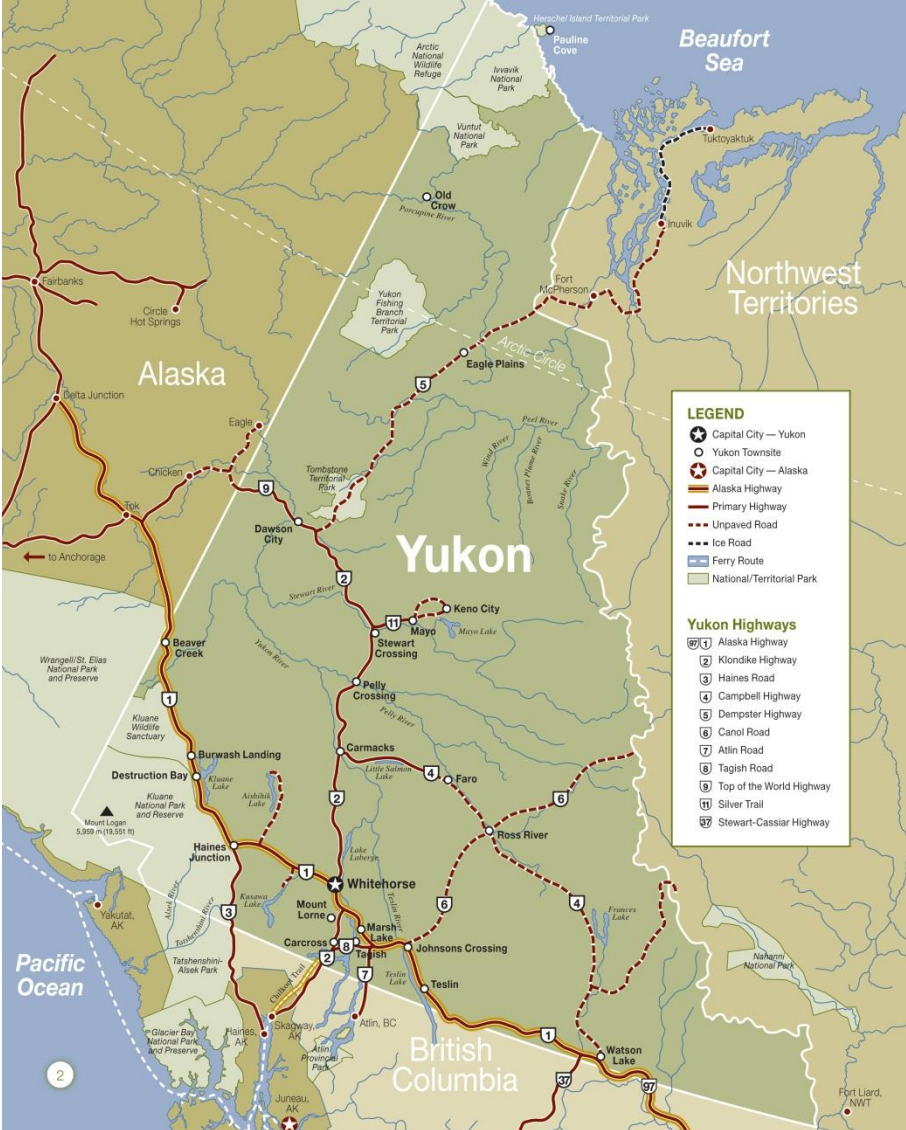
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Map 1. 1 Yukon Territory Canada. Source: Yukon Government, www.gov.yk.ca

## Chapter One

### Introduction: exploring the meaning of forests

This dissertation is an exploration of forests as understood and encountered from numerous perspectives in the Yukon Territory. In it I discuss the relationships that people with different motivations and backgrounds have with Yukon's forested areas. This is done with the intent of better understanding the origins and form of diverse forest perceptions among non-indigenous Yukon forest users. The idea for this project was based on a hypothesis that despite the appearance of a common western and scientific language surrounding forest issues, of a common location and even the appearance of a singular, shared, Euro-Canadian history in the Territory, many forest users' understanding of forests diverged in a way that could not be explained simply by difference in use. It is my belief that in better understanding the origins and form of diverse forest perceptions, differences in local forest priorities and values among Yukon residents can also be better understood.

During research I focused in particular on non-Native Yukon residents as their forest views have not been as well catalogued as those of the First Nations also resident in the area. As non-First Nations in the Yukon are often referred to with sweeping inclusivity (for instance, as the general public) this focus allows me to explore diversity within a group whose easy reference implies a degree of homogeneity. This focus also addresses a recognition by scholars such as Ingold (2005) and Thompson (2008) that northern studies concern all those in the North, whether indigenous or 'settler'. Thompson (idem) also proposes that anthropologists should study the experiences of settlers as something more than agents of change or as perpetual outsiders, especially

as overtime such newcomers developed a sense of belonging and place that can shift their status to that of 'local'.

**Project Outline:**

During fieldwork which took place primarily in 2009, I interviewed 58 Yukon residents who were connected to Yukon forests in a variety of ways. Such forest users include those who hunt, fish, trap, and work in forests, as well as those who recreate or are driven to preserve and protect them from human use. These individuals were connected to forests throughout the Yukon, ranging from recreational trail users within Whitehorse city limits, to forestry workers and surveyors who had visited and lived in many remote areas of the Territory. I also participated in community events, lived in the Territory, followed local land-use planning processes, and explored local archives.

In the following pages I argue that the forest users of this study are building and reinforcing their forest perceptions in four key areas. These include understandings of local history, the use of different references to frame their views (such as concepts of wilderness, boreal, or 'used'), through encountering different boundaries and regulations on the land, and ultimately through different experiences while in forests. I believe that not addressing such diversity of perspectives overlooks a richness of human connection with northern forests that is key to understanding the values and priorities of local users. Overlooking this diversity can also impede a proper understanding of intergroup relations among forest users as well as the importance of forests as places of meaning for residents.

To this end, my research has been guided by a primary question: What are the key influences in the formation of forest perceptions in the Yukon among non-First Nations

residents? It is my belief that to properly understand the implications of diverse forest perspectives held by those who live and/or work in and around forests, we must first seek to understand the origins and forms of these perspectives. From this primary question, four connected questions emerge:

1. How are Yukon forests understood differently by the participants of this study?
2. What sources do they draw from to position and support their views?
3. How do these individuals make sense of, articulate, and act on diverse and sometimes conflicting perspectives on forest use?
4. Within this context, what does the term *forest* evoke or encompass? In other words, what do forests mean for these forest users?

There are also a number of broader contributions I aim to make with this dissertation:

1. Contributing to an understanding of the place of global and national environmental discourse in shaping local forest perceptions.
2. Encouraging alternative representations of type-cast images of forest user groups in the north; in turn allowing for a better understanding of the social forces that influence forest-value formation.
3. Exploring the relationship that exists between user groups, and between user groups and the government, as well as the role these relationships play in formulating forest perceptions and human-environment relations.
4. Exploring the role that historic narratives can play in formulating and articulating local forest perspectives.

I emphasise here that my intent in this dissertation is not to provide a complete and concise account of all forest values<sup>1</sup>. Instead it is to understand some of the elements that are important in influencing, shaping, and forming forest perception, in representing diverse views to others, and provide tools to understand the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> To address the notion of values, I work from Schelhas and Pfeffer's (2005) model that defines the term *values*, as what people think is moral, just, and desirable. These values are located within the individual but are constructed by both individual and social experiences. Although the context of forests being embedded within an economic system is recognised, the notion of value as a 'price' assigned to objects, and as quantifiable or transferable is not followed within this research.

between non-indigenous peoples and the northern environment better. I believe this knowledge can aid in future forest planning, in mitigating forest disputes and multiple-use issues, and can better illuminate the connection between forest users and the forest. As such it should be of interest to land use planners, northern scholars, historians and those interested in place studies.

Figure 1 shows an original lithograph, created by artist Matthew Rangel, titled *Due East over Stokes Mountain*. Rangel's Master's project focused on how human constructs of land influence experience of place. The piece shown below is representative of his larger efforts to demonstrate meaning of, and connection to, the southern Sierra Nevada landscape. Among the many layers of graphic information incorporated within his compositions are maps, which systematically measure and subdivide the land, observation-based drawings, photographs, historic research, and oral narratives gathered during his explorations in the field. His work portrays the depth of meaning that is found within any one landscape, thus emphasising the importance of placing the local and experiential within landscape portrayals while also considering the context of overarching historical, political, and cultural factors.

In some ways my work is similar to that produced by Rangel, in that I aim to draw a literary portrait of a forest by exploring and portraying the ways in which meaning and perception are derived, and that in doing so I draw from a wide range of information and influences. As with Rangel's work, the overall portrait I develop is certainly incomplete. Nevertheless, the diversity of material I present in the following pages points to the importance of understanding experiential, historical, and personal articulations of landscape, place, and nature within any group of people.

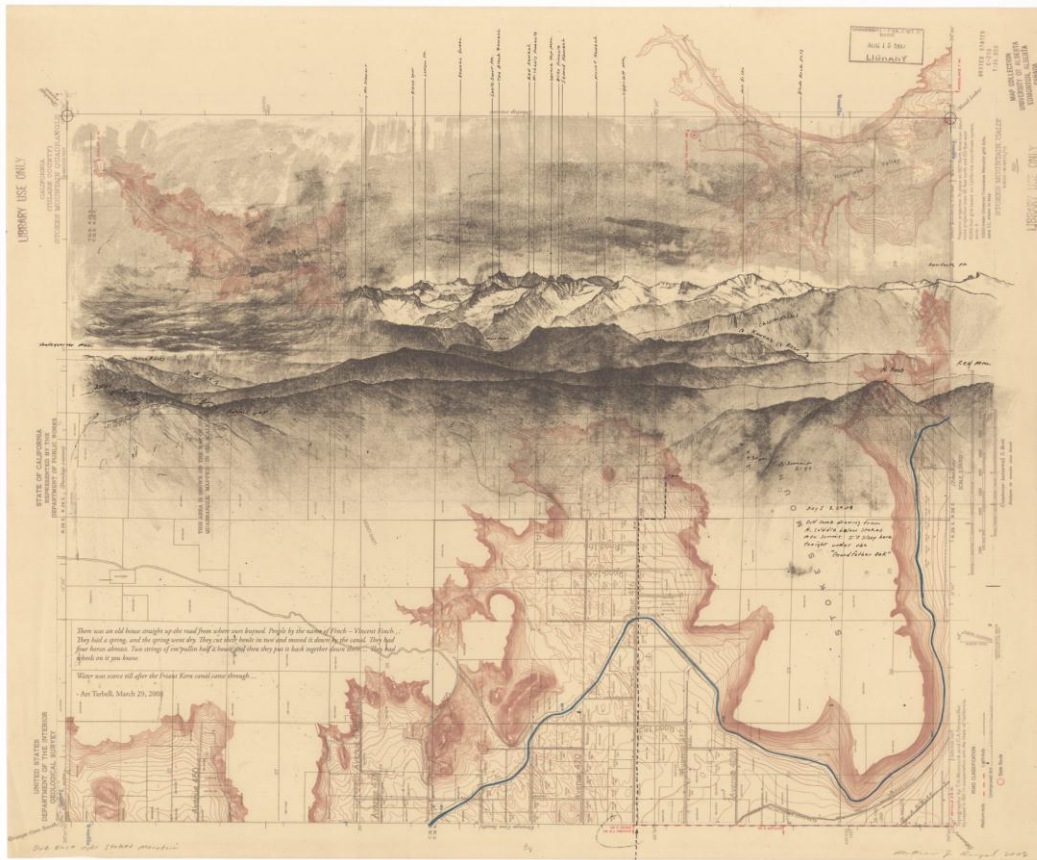


Figure 1.1 *Due East Over Stokes Mountain* from the Suite of original lithographs titled "A Transect - Due East", by Matthew Rangel. Lithograph, digital and chine colle', 2008, 56 x 68.5 cm. Reproduced with permission from the artist.

## Thesis Overview

The arenas of inquiry, historic narrative, socio-environmental structures, experience, and imagination emerged during fieldwork and provide a way of organizing material within this dissertation. Each is employed as a framing tool to explore areas of similarity and difference between users as well as to discuss aspects of individual forest perception. A chapter of this dissertation is focused specifically on each area. *Historic narrative* refers to the histories and stories as revealed in personal interviews with Yukoners which frame and ground modern forest use. *Socio-environmental structures* refer to the socially created structures, such as boundaries or regulations, which are part

of land and which mitigate human interaction with it. *Experience* refers to the different ways individuals move within and interact with forested areas. Lastly, *imagination* points to the importance of less tangible and immediate elements of forest perception which facilitate its conceptual form. Each of these is an aspect of a broader forest portrait, and each is deployed to explore what a Yukon forest is, how it is encountered, experienced and talked about.

#### *Chapter Two-Fieldwork in the Yukon Territory*

In chapter two I introduce the Yukon as a field site, and briefly place Yukon forests in historic and contemporary context. I also provide a description of fieldwork, methods, and discuss the logic behind decision-making and the employment and definition of key terms.

#### *Chapter Three-Theoretical and Social Context*

I have divided chapter three into two parts. In the first I explore the literature which is most pertinent to this study in a theoretical sense, and in doing so link these works to the arguments of this dissertation. I also detail my approach to central issues such as the human-environment relationship, place, and historic context. In the second part I explore Yukon management structures and boundaries in an effort to provide context for the remainder of the dissertation.

#### *Chapter Four- Timber use in the Yukon Territory*

In chapter four I provide a historical picture of Yukon forest use during the last 120 years. In tracing Euro-Canadian forestry practices between the late 19th century gold



rush and today, I show the large amount of forest extraction that has occurred in the Yukon as well as the important social and economic role forests have held in the Territory. I also examine the processes by which Yukon forests have been mapped and surveyed over the last century. Such efforts employ new technologies and add to knowledge concerning the state and composition of Yukon forest, but can also overshadow the extent of previous forestry and survey work. When examined more thoroughly, Yukon's forest history reveals forests to be a complicated and important source for Yukon identity, culture and economy. The motivation for this aspect of research stemmed from encounters with diverse accounts of Yukon's historic forest use.

#### *Chapter Five- Historic Narrative: invoking the past to understand today*

In chapter five I explore the implications of Yukon's forest history in the context of contemporary forest views, in particular the narrative shift between forests as *frontier* wilderness to *pristine* wilderness. This shift, while representing changing values, also portrays the tendency of those 'outside' to redefine the Territory's role in relation to shifting political and social priorities. I also discuss a common theme among participants, that of "the old Yukon," an ideal often held up in contrast to current reality. I explore this idea much as Raymond Williams (1973) does with respect to the concept of "the country" – as a shifting referent, which he argues reveals more about the disappointments and frustrations of modernity than historical accuracy.

#### *Chapter Six- Experience: place making in Yukon Forests*

In chapter six I work with themes that are part of, or stem from individual experience within forests. This includes an examination of the relationship between practice,

knowledge, stewardship, and belonging. This chapter portrays the fundamentally different experiences people can have within forests as well as the forms of knowledge and legitimacy which inform individual decision-making. These experiences both draw from and represent different ways of seeing, understanding and encountering the physical environment.

### *Chapter Seven- The Social Nature of Yukon Forests as Structured Space*

In chapter seven I examine official representations and the official organization of Yukon forested space through looking at the creation, implications and discursive consequences of socio-environmental structures. Property organization, forest categories, management structures, and land-use divisions are often as much a part of forests as trees are, and certainly influence experience within a forest. They influence how forests are visualized, used, managed, thought about, and how people within them behave. In this chapter, the implications of such land divisions and regulations are explored, particularly in reference to the solidification of user-group labels through related land divisions.

In this chapter I also discuss local ways of articulating individual positions in reference to regulations, such as the use of counter-narratives, which challenge simplistic use-based descriptors. The terms and arguments these individuals invoke to counter the political or environmental positions they are popularly placed within are often very revealing. Present within this chapter is also a discussion of the tension created between a regulated landscape and an ideal landscape that is specifically free from such forces. This last is a theme present in many chapters.

### *Chapter Eight- Imagination: framing forest perception*

The term imagination speaks to those aspects of forest use and perception that are influential but not necessarily easily perceived. Rather than employing this term in the typical sense of ‘imaginary’<sup>2</sup>, I understand imagination to be part of the human sensory experience, which allows people to perceive place as containing meaning beyond what is immediately apparent. Imagination, as Walter (1988) argues, is part of the sensual experience, it shapes and informs how we encounter and interact with our surroundings. Similarly, I argue that imagination is a tool that allows for aspects of history, memory, feeling, and even bureaucracy to become part of a forest. In this chapter I look at the impact of ideas such as wilderness and northern in shaping how people encounter forested areas. I also discuss the impact of hidden activities – those actions that take place within forests but are placed or take place out of sight. For instance, while the work of loggers and guide-outfitters is not part of the forest experience for many people, most know such activities take place and draw on numerous secondary sources of information to inform their opinions. Often, the factors that influence perception and use are not immediately visible or intuitive. In the Yukon, this means considering experience, stories, opinions and concerns, as well as those things that are only apparent through their lack of presence.

### *Chapter Nine- Conclusion*

In chapter nine I complete this dissertation by bringing the themes explored in the preceding chapters together in a discussion of various representations of forest including the idea of boreal and wilderness. I also examine some of the implications of

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. in the sense of non-existent or make-believe.

this research, such as the ability of 'used' spaces to become wild and pristine once again. Lastly I outline some of the pitfalls of a space oriented approach to environmental research which can be avoided through embracing the complexity of overlapping and contested places.

## Chapter Two

### **Fieldwork in the Yukon Territory: research description and methods**

In this chapter I briefly introduce the Yukon Territory as a research location and outline my study scope. I then address my choice of participant focus as well as my approach to the idea of 'user groups'. In the remainder of the chapter I provide a description of both the research and my analysis.

My choice of the term *portrait* in describing this dissertation is in part an effort to address the issue of the narrator's authority throughout the text. Post-modern ethnographic critiques often draw attention to the constructed nature of description and the assumed objective authority of traditional ethnography. For example, Hulan (2002) critiques many ethnographic works depicting Canada's north as employing too strong a voice of authority in their explorations of northern identity and belonging. Critics suggest that traditional ethnography tends to silence the author's place in its creation through conventions of the omniscient narrator, in the presentation of apparently objective fact, and through glossing over the role of interpretation in the work of anthropologists. Without addressing this issue at length, I will say that in employing the concept of a forest portrait, I purposefully emphasise my own place in its creation, my own priorities and visions that are inevitably part of this work, while also emphasising the many ways forests can be experienced and interpreted by the participants of this study. A portrait is created by an individual, reflects an individual's desires, but is also a likeness of an object or idea in the real world. While this project is

grounded in participant voice whenever possible, I recognise that the choices I have made have determined how those voices are framed and expressed.

### *Fieldwork Location*

From the windows of a plane flying into Whitehorse or while exploring the Territory from paved roads, a shorter and scraggier version of southern Canadian forests are visible. Mostly spruce and pine with deciduous trees mixed in at lower elevations, the forest seems continuous except for the mountains which, as they rise, have fewer and more brush-like trees. Swamps and wet lowlands are common, leading to denser forests, primarily spruce with thick underbrush covering the ground. Along main travel routes you would also see the remains of forest fires, some decades old, some from the last season. These areas are burnt off; black trees left standing, with brush and small deciduous varieties slowly growing back. Along the roads are also neater, cleaner areas, where branches of trees are no lower than four feet off the ground, trees are spaced far enough apart to easily walk between and ground cover is all but absent. This is a common sign of human intervention: fire-smart programs<sup>3</sup> (see image 2.2). Aside from natural breaks for meadow, mountain tops, rivers, and communities, the forest to the casual eye would seem continuous, seldom broken and difficult to enter.

The Yukon has a variety of ecosystems, with the southern arctic in the north and the boreal cordillera in the south<sup>4</sup>. Forests are generally found on valley bottoms

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<sup>3</sup> Fire smart programs, a federally and territorially funded project, support communities through providing funding for projects which reduce the threat of wildfires. One of the most visible efforts in the Yukon are those such as forest stand modification (thinning) and forest fuel reduction (removing combustibles such as thick undergrowth and low branches) both which leave forests noticeably modified.

<sup>4</sup> The Southern Arctic ecozone is located in the most northern tip of the Territory known as the Yukon Coastal Plain and is marked by long cold winters and short cool summers. The Boreal

throughout the mountainous territory, and because of this, the most productive forests are most often found following rivers and streams. Southeast Yukon has the largest diversity of tree species as well as the largest trees, while the west and north tree stands tend to be more open and discontinuous (Smith et al., 2006). A casual eye would find Yukon's trees to be shorter, less uniform, and less full than southern counterparts. The most common tree species are white and black spruce, pine and aspen.

The location of the northern forest limit depends on one's definition, and here I am following Wonders' lead (2003), and consider the forest limit as more of a variable 'transition zone' than exact line. In my conversations with locals, what was referenced as forest was most often the fuller, denser forests found south of Tombstone Territorial Park. These forests also tended to be found at lower elevations as most mountain tops resemble the sparsely treed tundra more than the forests of the valley bottoms. Don White, in a presentation to Yukon residents and forestry professionals in the 1995 symposium titled *Yukon Forests: a sustainable resource*, defines a common Yukon forest concept in a similar way:

In Yukon we generally describe a forest as a treed landscape where the crowns of trees overtop ten percent or more of the ground....for that reason we set the northern limit at a line roughly equal to the southern extent of the Ogilvie Mountains. (1995: 9)<sup>5</sup>

For the most part this definition suits the forests which are the subject of this study.

However, while my focal point is forests, I have deliberately chosen to employ a broad use of the term. The definition of forest can seem unproblematic, but it is easy to

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Cordillera ecozone covers much of the southern Yukon and northern British Columbia. Summers are warm and winters long and cool, precipitation is moderate. For more information see Smith et al., 2006.

<sup>5</sup> The Ogilvie Mountains lie north of Dawson City and are crossed by the Dempster Highway and Tombstone Territorial Park.

overlook the important connections people make when discussing the forest category that move beyond a treed landscape. For this reason, I also consider the landscapes and places that emerge when speaking about forests, as part of them. This approach allows for situations where people do not draw a line between a forest and a mountain or a forest and brush for example.

The Yukon Territory has a population of roughly 35,800 people, 27,000 (76%) of whom reside in the city of Whitehorse (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Dawson City, and the communities of Watson Lake and Haines Junction are the next largest settlements, with populations of 1959, 1510, and 832 respectively (idem). There are 14 aboriginal groups within the Yukon comprising roughly 25% of Yukon residents. While Whitehorse and Dawson City are home to a majority of non-aboriginal people, within most communities First Nations are a majority. For instance Old Crow, Pelly Crossing and Ross River have over 80% of residents who claim aboriginal identity (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

As a territory, Yukon's governing powers have been historically held primarily by the Canadian Federal Government, represented since 1966 by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND)<sup>6</sup>. However, through the process of devolution, increasing powers have been transferred to the Territorial Government. These include authority over oil and gas, wildlife, agriculture and more recently minerals, forestry and land. Increasingly, efforts to build trilateral relationships between Territorial, Federal and First Nations governments have influenced the political shape of the Territory (Cohn, 2001).

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<sup>6</sup> DIAND was later also known as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), and effective June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011 is known as Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC).



Yukon First Nations are represented through three levels of government: individual community-specific First Nations governments, linguistic or ethnic Tribal Councils, and the Council of Yukon First Nations which represents 12 of the 14 Nations. Both the Umbrella Final Agreement and specific First Nation agreements determine much of how land use and access in the Territory is dealt with. The Umbrella Final Agreement, signed in 1990, is an agreement in principle between the Yukon Indian Council, the Government of Canada and the Yukon Territory, which outlines a framework within which specific First Nations agreements are negotiated. It also outlines recommendations for consultation between First Nations bands, organizations and individuals with the Yukon Government concerning a number of issues, including the creation of new legislation such as the Forest Act. This level of Aboriginal involvement is relatively recent and is the result of a century of struggle on the part of many individuals and groups to institutionalize and recognize First Nations rights. The 1973 document *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow*, put forward by Chief Elijah Smith is often seen as the starting point for serious negotiation and consideration of comprehensive land claims in the Territory. Currently 11 First Nations have finalized their land claims and have agreements in effect.

The Territory's modern forest industry has its origins in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Klondike gold rush. In 1896, a discovery of a substantial amount of gold on the Klondike River marked the beginning of what would become Yukon's gold-rush era. Previous to this period, non-First Nations residents had been few, slowly rising from 50 to 1000 between 1882 and 1894. When as many as 40,000 prospective miners arrived the year after the Klondike River discovery, it forever changed the region's social and physical character (Coates & Morrison, 2005). Aboriginal peoples, trappers, and traders

depended on the animals and timber products within forests, and when gold was discovered, wood also began to be used heavily for steamer traffic along main routes and for mining infrastructure and processes. The furore over the Klondike calmed within a decade and Yukon's timber needs declined. However, the Yukon has continued to have a small but steady timber industry characterised by brief periods of intensive activity. Such periods include the Klondike Gold Rush, building of the Alaska Highway during WWII, industrial development during the 1970s and a brief forestry boom in the 1990s. This mid-1990s peak in production was followed by an almost total standstill of the industry, as a need for a Yukon Forest Act, agreements with First Nations groups, and other forms of legislation were called for. Today, Yukon's forest industry could be labeled as small, with only two operational mills and a shifting number of back-yard operators who supply fuel wood, value added products, and dimensional timber.

Recreation in forests has increased steadily since the construction of the Alaska Highway which allowed easier access to much of the Territory. During the 1970s tourism grew substantially in the Yukon. River travel, backpacking and horseback riding became key components in Yukon's growing wilderness tourism industry, an industry which was increasingly thought of as a viable alternative to a resource extraction-based economy. Many remote wilderness lodges were also established during the 1970s<sup>7</sup> (Department of Yukon Tourism and Culture, 2008). The Yukon Economic Development Council reports that tourism is the Territory's largest private sector employer and that in recent years over 300 000 tourists have visited the Yukon annually (Tourism and Culture Fact Sheet, Aug. 2008).

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<sup>7</sup> While popular this part of the industry has seen limited growth since the federal government stopped considering new applications for remote wilderness lodges in the mid-80s (Department of Yukon Tourism and Culture, 2008). In 2004 there were 80 licensed wilderness tourism operators in the Yukon Territory, offering a wide-variety of wilderness experiences.

Direct conflict over forest use has occurred in the past<sup>8</sup> but is more or less absent at present. Nevertheless, a number of contemporary and concurrent issues affect Yukon's forested areas. Some examples include: ongoing land use planning processes, the impact of tourism on 'wilderness', mining activities, logging, the creation of the new Forest Act, and how the political process of devolution<sup>9</sup> and the Umbrella Final Agreement impact forest use and access.

All of this is also taking place within the wider context of ongoing climate change in Canada's north. By the end of the century, many models predict that mean annual temperatures in Western North America could rise by as much as 2-5°C, accompanied by increasing winter, and decreasing summer precipitation (Spittlehouse and Stewart, 2003; Krannitz and Kesting, 1997). The intensity and frequency of extreme climactic events is also predicted to increase (Duffy, 1997). Dealing with the contemporary reality of a changing climate, and planning for future changes is a major concern for the territorial government and the scientific community. The territorial government is currently working on a number of initiatives to help mitigate subsequent impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions<sup>10</sup>. Recognised effects of climate change by the Yukon Government include among other things, thawing permafrost, increased glacial melting, and rising sea levels seen in coastal regions (Yukon Government, 2006). In terms of forests, some models have predicted whole scale redistribution of trees over the next century due to climactic change (Aitken et al. 2008). In the Yukon, the tree line is

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<sup>8</sup> Most recently was the mid-90s war-of-the-woods, in which green logs were exported from the Territory with little local consultation. Details of this are discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.

<sup>9</sup> Devolution refers to a transfer of governing powers from the Canadian Federal Government to the Yukon Territorial Government. Since the late 1980s a transfer of responsibility for a wide range of services has occurred, including health and transportation, since 2001 this transfer of power has included natural resources.

<sup>10</sup> Such as the Government of Yukon Climate Change Strategy (2006) and the Pan-Territorial Adaptation Strategy (2011).

expected to advance in latitude and altitude, shifting the structure and position of Yukon forests (Danby and Hik, 2007). Furthermore, forest ecosystems already in dry and warm regions are expected to disappear entirely (Hebda, 1997). Soja et al. (2007) have documented that many of the changes predicted in the north are already underway, including changes in tree species composition, and shifting tree line structure and location.

As a result of climate change, forest disturbance due to fires and pests is already underway and is expected to continue to increase (Duffy, 1997). In 2004, the Yukon experienced its most extensive fire season on record (Danby and Hik, 2007). In some predictions it is suggested the occurrence of fire and the area burned in the Yukon may as much as double by 2069, and the area burned during summer months may increase by more than three times contemporary levels (McCoy and Burn, 2005).

In terms of the impacts of pests in the Yukon, of great concern to many locals is the impact of the spruce beetle which is currently affecting forests primarily in the southwestern corner of the Territory. Though spruce beetle infestations have occurred in Yukon's past, this most recent outbreak, first reported in 1994, is considerably larger. As of 2006, more than half of all mature spruce had been killed over an area of more than 380 000 hectares (Garbutt, Hawkes, and Allen, 2006). The spruce beetle kills trees which host its larvae resulting in a number of biological and social impacts. Among these is a decrease in traditional values on the land over the long term as hunting becomes more difficult, reduced visual quality of the forests, reduced timber productivity over the long term, an increase in forest fire hazard over the long term, and negative impacts for local wildlife and hydrological processes (Yukon Energy Mines and Resources, no date).

A wide amount of evidence supports the fact that northern areas are already undergoing biophysical shifts due to changing climactic conditions. Northern communities are affected by these changes and will continue to be. While the effects of climate change were seldom directly discussed by the participants of this study as a factor in forest perception, it is nevertheless part of the broader context within which study results should be considered. In the context of these current and forecasted environmental changes in the Territory, reaching a better understanding of how people use, connect to, and understand Yukon forest is timely, especially considering the increased planning and use pressures that are already underway.



Image 2.1 Remains of a forest fire as seen from Highway 2, between Carmacks and Pelly Crossing. Author's photo



Image 2.2 Results of the fire smart program. Photo taken near City of Whitehorse . Note the spaces between trees, lack of underbrush and lack of lower tree limbs. Author's photo



Image 2.3 Forests south west of Dawson City. Author's photo



Image 2.4 Forests within Whitehorse City limits, Yukon River. Author's photo

### **Study Scope**

Throughout this study I worked with residents of the Yukon Territory who identified as having a strong interest in Yukon forests. This includes recreational, professional or conservation oriented interests, and encompasses those who work within forested areas such as loggers, trappers, guide outfitters, as well as professionals whose work dealt with the management and regulation of forests. This also includes people who expressed a passion for a variety of recreational activities, as well as those who had dedicated a large part of their time and efforts to conserving and protecting Yukon's natural areas. The geographic area of this study includes those forests near the city of Whitehorse, extending east towards the Town of Watson Lake and north towards the Town of Faro. While these areas are those most frequented by study participants, forest users in the Yukon move throughout the Territory, and various forest related services, businesses, and offices are located in communities outside this area and are thus

considered when relevant. For example, I interviewed three forest users in Dawson City, another in Burwash Landing, and many near Watson Lake. I also spoke to trappers, hunters, surveyors, recreationalists and loggers whose personal stories drew from much of the Territory and who often resided outside of the capital city.

### *User Groups*

It is necessary here to comment briefly on the idea of 'user groups'. While at times I employ such a term to refer to a number of individuals who share similar pursuits in relation to forests, the practices of those who are interested in forests is often far more complex. In the Yukon, I encountered such labels as logger, outfitter and environmentalist used in everyday discourse. However, the difficulty comes in that these groups or labels move between personal identity, employment identity, and general interest and are diversely employed in official and unofficial communications. One person can belong to more than one group, or can belong to a group without personally identifying with it. Furthermore, categories can be inverted to suit particular purposes, or when in contact with certain audiences. Such as when loggers identify as environmentalists (Dunk, 2004) or as a grassroots organization (Satterfield, 2002). Yet, the existence of official organizations or recognised interest groups solidifies membership in a way that makes political reference to it superficially unproblematic. For instance, an announcement can be made that the Outfitters Association or the Fish and Game Society or even the Whitehorse Orienteers, have offered their support for a certain initiative. Society at large can also use such labels as means to refer to a general stereotyped behaviour or viewpoint. It is not my intention to create concrete boundaries when referring to a group or a person's affiliation to it. Throughout this



dissertation I consider specific instances of talk derived from interviews to determine a person's various affiliations and also consider their understanding of the affiliations of others.

### *Choice of Participant Focus*

My reasons for a focus on non-First Nations Yukon residents lies foremost on a recognition of the need for a more in-depth understanding of non-First Nations' connection to the Yukon and its natural environment. This need is particularly apparent in the lack of research dealing with non-First Nations environmental perspectives in Canada's North. For instance, there is a solid and growing body of literature which takes into consideration Aboriginal environmental perspectives in the north (see for example Anderson et al. 2000; Andrews, 2004; Cruikshank, 2005; Main-Johnson, 2010; Lewis, 1977; Nadasdy, 1999; Wishart and Murray 2001; Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2000). In comparison research dealing with non-aboriginal environmental perspectives of northern residents is largely limited to project-specific consultation processes in which they are included as the general public, or in research which considers such perceptions peripherally, such as that by De la Barre (2009), McCandless (1988, 1985) and Cohn (2001). However, it should be noted that my focus on non-First Nations residents does not exclude First Nations participants or existing research pertaining to First Nations.

Further support for this choice includes initial project research which revealed that forest related activities and discussions in the Yukon are often divided into First Nations and non-First Nations categories, a dualism which led me to question the assumed homogeneity of each group. The decision to focus on non-First Nations forest users was further cemented after a meeting with one First Nations group, in which a level of

community fatigue on forest-related issues was expressed to me, as well as a desire to see existing research used in future forest studies. Lastly, there are limits to the usefulness of research that extends itself too far. While I advocate multi-group representation within anthropological research, comparative work focusing on many users was already a large undertaking and the inclusion of a separate culture group which also included its own variety of forest users and values would have greatly reduced my ability to faithfully understand and describe the perspective of forest users.

### **Research Description**

I carried out research in the Yukon Territory for a total of 10 months over a period of three years. Primary fieldwork took place in 2009 between January and August, with brief visits before and after. The first stage of fieldwork consisted of a ten day visit in January and February of 2008 for the purposes of seeing northern forests first hand, meeting some of the actors involved in forest issues and exploring Whitehorse and some of the smaller communities. Before this journey I had correspondence with a number of organizations including two Yukon conservation organizations, one First Nations community, Kluane National Park, and the Forestry Department. During this stay I made preliminary contacts, discussed the project, gained input as to the feasibility and usefulness of such research and enquired if there were particular issues of relevance that I had not anticipated.

In the year following this visit, I applied for and gained ethical and research approval from the University of Alberta and Yukon Territory (University of Alberta: Pro00017952, Yukon Territory: 09-04S&E, renewed as 11-01S&E), narrowed my research goals, and continued correspondence with those organizations originally contacted.

Roughly one year later I returned to the Territory accompanied by my family, and stayed in the Yukon for just over seven months. We rented a house in Whitehorse, where I lived with my two month-old son, two year-old son and husband.

| <b>Research Procedures Timeline</b> |               |  |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Jan-Feb<br>(10 days)                | 2008          | Preliminary Fieldwork: Contacting groups of potential interest, exploring Whitehorse, gathering local written material.  |
|                                     | 2008          | Out of the field: refined focus based on preliminary research. Gained ethical approval from University of Alberta, gained research approval from the Yukon Territorial Government. |
| Jan-August                          | 2009          | Main field season.   |
|                                     | 2009-<br>2010 | Out of field: transcription of interviews, analysis of research material ongoing. Gained ethical renewal from the University of Alberta for third field visit.                     |
| Jan-Feb                             | 2011          | Last field visit: Archival research in Whitehorse  |

Figure 2.1 Research Procedures Timeline



Image 2.5 My youngest son and I standing on a naturally occurring sheep-lick (surface mineral deposit) outside of Faro, Yukon Territory. This photo was taken on a guided hike while attending Faro's annual Crane and Sheep festival. Author's photo.

*Fieldwork, 2009*

For the main phase of fieldwork I resided in Whitehorse and, because of its central location, conducted many interviews in the city, though interview participants were not necessarily Whitehorse residents. I supplemented this with many visits to communities or rural sites of interest outside of the city, and through exploring the forests within city limits. My goals throughout were to gain an understanding of forest views and uses from a wide variety of sources through accompanying forest users on the land, conducting interviews, following 'official' value discourse (i.e. existing value studies and consultation processes) and through paying attention to information in the public sphere such as news, advertising, signage, information bulletins and pamphlets. In addition to interviews, much of the information I gathered regarding forest perspectives was collected by living in and participating in the daily life of Whitehorse and surrounding communities.

One of my first experiences within Yukon forests was a guided hike of an area only 30 minutes outside the city. My guide often chose this particular trail for tourists wanting to see forests in the winter because there tended to be signs of, if not sightings of winter animals such as squirrels, birds, wolves or moose. Together we spent four hours negotiating a hard-packed trail on top of thigh deep snow at minus twenty degrees Celsius. We walked as she shared with me her choice of profession, her love of Yukon outdoors and her concerns regarding the future of Yukon's environment. She explained to me the tracks we found, what type and how big the passing animals had been, signs of their foraging or sleeping and details about the trees we passed. At last we came to a rest point on a cliff high above the frozen Yukon river where the only sign of any animal life aside from ourselves were the tracks of a wolf which had crossed the

river far below and had walk up the steep sided hills to the point where we had stopped to rest.

For my guide, this experience was part of why she chose to live in the Yukon Territory and of what she tried to pass on to those who used her services. My neatly clipped recorder attached to my large winter jacket recorded hours of crunching snow but little of voices other than my own. Likewise some of the most revealing conversations I had were in the cab of a loud truck touring a community or lumber yard but unfortunately, with little but the rumbling noise of a truck motor actually registering on my recorder. I made an effort as often as possible to get into the forests with



Image 2.6 My guide at our rest stop overlooking the Yukon River. Tracks mid-photo ran down the steep hill and across the river below. Author's photo.

community members, participate in outdoor activities and when possible, to hold interviews while accompanying someone on the regular activities. These experiences are the foundation of this dissertation.

As the months passed I attended community events and festivals, community meetings, used local services and became friends with Whitehorse residents. My family experienced the long dark of January and enjoyed the quickly growing light that came soon after. I came to follow two processes in which forest views were articulated in official ways: the Forest Values Focus Group (FVFG) and the Whitehorse Official Community Plan review (OCP). I followed these processes in order to identify participants and became more familiar with local forest-related issues.

The FVFG is a committee of seven individuals representing a variety of forest values. The group was initiated by a handful of concerned Yukon residents and eventually received funding and institutional support from the Yukon Government. It had the goal of reviewing and commenting on Yukon's Forest Act during its creation as well as reviewing and commenting on its regulations and proposed best practices. In speaking to participants and those who dealt with the group but were not a part of it, I was able to access articulations of Yukon forest issues which helped me better understand the actors and issues involved.

The OCP public consultation process stems from the City of Whitehorse's review of the Official Community Plan document, which occurs every four to six years. The city's planning commission had taken on the responsibility of conducting city-wide consultation regarding future city plans. The consultation process was extensive and took place over the seven months in which I was in Whitehorse. Various forms of neighbourhood, community, and city meetings were held as were working-lunches,

public information nights and private meetings. By far the most contentious issue within the 2009 review was what areas were to be zoned as park, green space or some other form of protected zoning. As with the FVFG, following this processes allowed me to better understand local issues and gain an understanding of city-specific forest concerns.

During the summer I also had the opportunity to participate in an outdoor weekend aimed specifically at women who wanted to learn wilderness skills; an event which allowed me access to a gendered aspect of forest use that had been developing throughout the study but which were more concisely articulated through a women's-only event. I also attended public tours of Yukon's Research Forest, and participated in many organized and spontaneous outdoor events.

Participant interviews were also a major part of this project. As I moved through the community and participated in events, I spoke with other community members and in that way found many people willing to acts as participants. Purposive sampling, which targets people with a specific knowledge base, rather than random sampling was employed. That is, I specifically sought individuals with a connection to Yukon forests such as loggers, environmental advocates, and guide-outfitters. This approach fit with my original goal of emphasising diversity of perspective, rather than representing any one perspective completely.

The conservation organizations originally contacted provided a starting point for the snowball method of reaching conservation-related forest users. Shortly after arriving in the Yukon I also contacted organizations such as the Yukon Outdoors Club, Yukon Snowmobile Association and Yukon Woodworkers Association. Through contacts with members of these groups other individuals that were interested in participating in the

study were reached. In this way I also came across other forest users I had not initially been aware of, such as birders and orienteers. Other participants included those involved in wilderness tourism, various government employees, and a number of individuals who have an interest in Yukon's forest, such as geologists, historians, artists, small business owners, and agriculturalists.

During the beginning stages of fieldwork, informal interviewing was employed, primarily to gain rapport and become familiar with the area and topics of interest to locals. Once familiarity with the community had grown, I employed relatively unstructured interviews, wherein there are general themes but minimal control over participant responses. This is a particularly productive method when asking people to describe lived experience (Melhuus et al., 2010). Often I would join an individual during a part of their regular day, taking a lunch hour walk along the riverside in Whitehorse for instance, or taking a drive while running errands. Participants were asked to describe their work or interest in Yukon's forested areas, to tell stories relating to experiences on the land, to explain what they considered good or bad use of forests, and to talk about any concerns they had regarding how forests are or could be used. I often asked participants to describe a day for me during which they were partaking in their chosen forest activity. While originally meant to aid in my understanding of their activities, these stories proved to be an enormous source of personal perspective and priorities. They also allowed me to see how, when not constrained by forest-specific topics, the location or focus of a story could shift throughout, displaying a connection between places or ideas that would not have otherwise been apparent. For example, an outdoor enthusiast relating a story about a long hike in a forest included movements and places which were outside of the forest setting but understood by that individual as connected



to the forest experience. These stories are often used as exemplars of forest experience later in this dissertation.

In general the participant led the direction of the interview and questions asked were in response to that. However, I have identified the following discussion themes as common:

- Detailed descriptions of their outdoor activity
- Impressions of other forest users
- Views of conservation initiatives and conservation groups
- Current forest policy
- What was 'good' use of forested lands
- Perceived outsider impressions of the Yukon and the north
- Current events
- Descriptions of favourite sites to visit or use
- Reasons for being in and enjoying the forest

Semi-structured interviews, which provide more structure regarding questions but still allow participants to move in different directions, were employed when necessary (See Appendix B for a list of sample questions). This was primarily with government or city officials who felt more comfortable with a set of general questions to be addressed. These often took place during scheduled meetings at the workplace.

In total, 58 interviews were conducted with a variety of forest users who self-identified as professionally, recreationally, or conservation-oriented forest-users. Some groups are better represented than others, and many individuals fit within numerous headings of forest user. The following chart shows the primary interest of study participants; however, many were interested in more than one area so it should be understood as a rough guide only. *Wilderness professionals* refer to those who work in the outdoors, or whose work concerns the outdoors, this included two wilderness-tourism operators. The category *other* includes among other occupations, birders, a placer miner, a farmer, museum staff and government officials. Female participants

were near even with males in recreation, conservation, trapping and other, while male participation was considerably higher in forestry, wilderness professionals, and guide-outfitting.

| <b>Primary Forest Interest</b> | <b>People Interviewed</b> | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Forestry                       | 9                         | 8           | 1             |
| Guide-Outfitting               | 6                         | 4           | 2             |
| Trapping                       | 4                         | 2           | 2             |
| Wilderness Professionals       | 9                         | 6           | 3             |
| Recreation                     | 11                        | 6           | 5             |
| Conservation                   | 8                         | 4           | 4             |
| Other                          | 11                        | 5           | 6             |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>58</b>                 | <b>35</b>   | <b>23</b>     |

Figure 2.2 Participant's primary interest in forested areas.

While exact dates of residence were not always given, the vast majority of participants had resided in the Territory at least part-time for a decade or longer, though only ten claimed life-long residence in the Territory. Three participants had moved from elsewhere in the last three years, one of these, a government employee had lived in the Territory for less than six months. Those in forestry, guide-outfitting and trapping tended to have on average longer residence than others. Exact age was not sought, however, other than some recreationalists and conservationists, most participants were over thirty years of age. All were over twenty one.

Most interviews were recorded, but if permission was not granted I relied exclusively on note taking. Of the four who chose not to have their interview recorded I did not enquire into the reasons they may have had for not granting permission, particularly as this was a clear verbal option given by me and also appeared on the participant consent form . The majority of participants were interviewed only once, averaging one hour and fifteen minutes per interview; though they ranged from a brief

thirty minutes to day-long discussions. A number of close contacts were made and I met often with those individuals throughout my stay and conducted interviews with them numerous times. Two interviews, not included in my total were conducted, but were purposely excluded from use. In both cases, while written consent was given, concerns about project participation were expressed near the end of the interview which made verbal consent unclear. Both participants had individually expressed concern over the usefulness of academic research overall, and one in research that did not specifically focus on Yukon First Nations. Interview recordings and notes were destroyed for each interview.

Interviews and participant observations form the basis of information gathering techniques applied in the field. I also gathered written material throughout my stay including brochures, maps, pamphlets, and books as well as political agreements, acts, and legislation. Other forms of data collection included taking photos of the land, community members, signs, billboards, etc. Notes were kept while conducting interviews; I also jotted notes during the day and kept a daily fieldwork journal. As this research asked for the time and input from community members I also volunteered my time to certain organizations, most notably the Yukon Conservation Society for which I conducted a research project concerning the status of agriculture in the Yukon, as well as volunteering my time for events.

In January 2011, I conducted my third and final field site visit, this time unaccompanied by my family. After completing my transcription and reviewing field notes, the variety of interpretations given concerning the history of Yukon's landscape became apparent. Subsequently, I spent four weeks in Whitehorse primarily for the purpose of archival research. Of specific interest was forestry activity along the Yukon

River and main travel routes over the last century as well as research into often mentioned disputes or historical events such as a mid-90's forest dispute referred to by some participants as the war-of-the-woods, as well as the building of the Alaska Highway during World War II.

### **Post Fieldwork**

Upon returning from my primary visit in the Territory I began the process of interview transcription. Recordings were transcribed and coded simultaneously; that is, as topics arose during an interview I would code them and add them to a growing master list and as further interviews were transcribed themes emerged. This involved creating a list of nearly 90 acronyms for common topics such as paperwork, bureaucracy, the fire-smart program, specific land use planning processes, references to southern politics, etc. which were placed in the margins in the transcript file with the correct time code attached. These codes were then organized into broader categories which emerged as the coding did. These broader categories included 'personal information and stories', 'outfitting', 'conservation', 'government' etc. In this way I was able to search for themes among the transcript material, but was also able to better see patterns concerning users and topics of interest. However, this method was used to organize interview material and was not itself an analytical technique. Transcription also included encryption codes – that is, numbers or symbols to replace given names – in such a way that participant confidentiality was protected if transcripts should ever be read by someone other than myself. Likewise, pseudonyms have been used throughout this dissertation and key information has been omitted or changed that might point to a person's identity (references to place of work, proper names, specific place names, etc.). A method I

found useful was to transcribe by group, for example all loggers or all guide-outfitters' transcripts would be transcribed in a common or sequential block of working time. In this way I was better able to see patterns in their speech and topics. Once a 'group' was complete I reviewed those transcripts again and created a master document that noted themes as well as my thoughts and questions. Due to the open nature of the interviews and the wide range of topics covered this allowed me to better visualize and think about the material.

Analysis was primarily interpretive and inductive, that is, themes were taken from within the data rather than predetermined and looked for. Connections or divergence in when and how people expressed forest perceptions were sought after, and were then placed within the collected broader historical, social and political context of Yukon forests. This is largely done through what Bernard (2002) refers to as grounded theory. Grounded-theory begins by identifying potential themes from within data – largely based on inductive coding. It then compares those categories as they emerge to each other, considering how they are linked, developing relational models and jotting notes about such ideas. Finally, checking them against the data as analysis continues, 'grounding' the theory to the data continually.

I found that much interview material fit within the four key areas which are the base of this dissertation. Broadly, these were: 1. Historic references specifically used to bolster the point of the speaker, 2. Concerns about regulations of, and access to forests, 3. Stories and explanations of individual experience, 4. References to broader topics such as wilderness, ecosystem health, and the state of the world's forests. These topics, together with academic research as already detailed, led to the selection of the themes which organize this dissertation.

I remained in contact with a number of participants in the months following the final stages of fieldwork. A small number of participants asked during their interviews to see their transcripts as they would be used within this dissertation and I have passed select pages of this dissertation on for review. Only in one case were changes requested and those were primarily stylistic in nature. In a few other instances I was unable to reach the participant, and in those instances choose to omit direct quotes from interviews but still used their interview material for more general reference. Once completed, copies of this dissertation will be sent to agreed-upon representatives of various groups and at that time, I will make myself available for follow-up questions.

## Chapter Three

### Theoretical and Social Context

In this chapter I discuss some of the key debates and issues that often emerge out of research dealing with the perception of place and environment. In doing this, I outline my approach to the human-environment relationship, the role of discourse in constructing place, the role of historic context, and the idea of place itself. This is done while situating this dissertation in relation to other northern and Yukon-specific literature.

The topics discussed within this chapter, mainly the ideas of constructivism, dwelling, genealogy of subject, discourse, and place, are linked together in an overall approach to forests as place. By this I mean that in this dissertation I explore forests as the location of meaningful experiences and encounters to the participants of this study. This has necessitated directly outlining my understanding of the human-environment relationship since a focus on forest perception can too easily be understood as grounded in a thoroughly constructivist approach. I have worked with a number of approaches in order to better illuminate what place means and how it is experienced to study participants. For instance, I discuss in this chapter Foucault's (1993) concept of genealogy of subject as a way to integrate the experience of Yukon forests as linked to diverse histories. Similarly, I also outline my understanding of discourse in order to emphasise my focus on participant experience while recognising the role of discourse in place-making. In outlining these subjects as I have in this chapter, I mean to situate myself in place-focused research, and contribute to place-theory by linking these subjects together in an understanding of what place is to the participants of this study.

I conclude this chapter with a look at some of the property structures and boundaries that mitigate human interaction with Yukon's environment, and subsequently influence people's experiences within them. Before all this however, I begin with a discussion concerning the relevance of research into forest perceptions in the north.

### **Forests as a Focus of Research**

As discussed below, research concerning forest perception is timely on a number of fronts. Firstly, this dissertation contributes to a growing body of literature which explores the human-environment relationship, using forests as a focal point. It is also occurring at a time when there is increasing concern over the state of the worlds' forests, particularly in the context of overlapping and divergent forest values. Furthermore, various land planning processes in the Yukon and the North are working towards a recognition and incorporation of divergent land values. In this context, understanding some of the underlying factors that can influence the perception of forests among local residents, and subsequently their views and actions, can aid in local forest planning and encouraging productive communication between user groups.

While there is not an established sub-discipline concerning an anthropology of forests, research focusing on the people who live within forests, depend upon them, and concern themselves with them has been long present in the discipline<sup>1</sup>. Consistent in

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, both Mary Douglas's *The Lele of the Kasai* (1963), which is an ethnographic study of the Lele of the Congo, and Colin Turnbull's (1968) *The Forest People*, an account of a Pygmy people also of the Congo, both account for the social, economic and cultural lives of their study subjects in part through an understanding of their environment. Victor Turner's *The Forest of Symbols: aspects of Ndembu ritual* (1967), based on fieldwork in Zambia, looks at ritual and symbolism while also considering aspects of the forested environment within which the Ndembu



such forest studies is a preoccupation with how people understand and relate to their environment and what role that environment plays in their lives. Though diverse in focus, anthropological forest studies together create a growing source of literature in the discipline concerning an aspect of nature that is found around the world and that supports the livelihoods of many peoples. Such research is very much an exploration of humanity through a focus on one environmental feature: forests.

Anthropologist Thomas Dunk reminded us that "...the forest is not merely a place for working or playing. It is the raw material out of which the meaningful universe that is human culture is constructed." (1994: 256). Similarly, I argue that understanding forests is an important step towards understanding the people who depend upon them. This is partly because forests are both literal and metaphorical meeting points for social, economic, environmental, and cultural issues. Far more than just a human construct however, forest play a key role in the maintenance of healthy ecosystems around the world, sustain animal, bird, and insect populations, and are integral components of water and air filtration. On yet another level, many increasingly argue that forests and green areas in general can be important for physical and mental health (deVries et al, 2003; Mass et al. 2006; Wells, 2003). While often singular in image, forests encompass any number of experiences, events, ideologies, and viewpoints while also sustaining an important environmental role separate from humans entirely.

In light of the many roles forests play, it should not be surprising that there is growing global interest in the state of the world's forests<sup>2</sup>. A fact emphasised by the

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live. In a northern context, Richard Nelson's work, *Hunters of the Northern Forest* (1973) explores the subsistence lifestyle of the Kutchin of east-central Alaska as forest people.

<sup>2</sup> The 1992 United Nations Council on Environment and Development, the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) all emphasise that the health and state of world forests is an increasing global concern.

United Nations General Assembly declaring 2011 the *International Year of the Forest*. Increasingly, management policies concerning forests are inclusive to the idea of multiple forest values and uses. For instance, Canada's forest strategy currently relies on the paradigm of sustainable forest management that emerged in the early 1980s. Its foundation rests upon recognition of multiple forest values, as outlined in the 1992 National Forest Strategy document, which includes an acknowledgment that forests provide multiple benefits for society, and that it is the responsibility of society to develop forests sustainably (Duinker, 2004).

In line with such strategies, there is also growing recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples to participate in forest management and planning<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Indigenous knowledge and priorities are increasingly being integrated into local planning and management schemes around the world, though with varied success (CAFN Forest management Plan, 2004; Stevenson & Perreault, 2008; Stevens & Webb, 2003; Wyatt et al., 2010). Other forest users, such as professional foresters, loggers, and environmental groups are also becoming vocal regarding their place in forest management (Satterfield, 2002; Dunk, 1994; Robbins, 2001).

Similarly, the Yukon Territory is investing in a number of programs and processes to increase public and First Nations involvement in resource management and policy creation around forested areas. Such programs include working groups and consultation efforts stemming from the Umbrella Final Agreement, Community Stewardship programs run by the Fish and Wildlife Board, and projects through the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESSAB). Another example of

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<sup>3</sup> i.e. International Labour Organization Convention No. 169 (1989), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), Canadian Council of Forest Ministers National Forest Strategy (1998), Gathering strength: Canada's aboriginal action plan (1996).

land use planning in the Yukon that aims to be inclusive towards numerous users and values are regional land use plans. Amy Leach (1999) chronicles the failures and successes of Yukon's first (and still only) completed land use planning process in the North Yukon Region. Leach briefly discusses the many other attempts at land use planning in the Yukon, including planning attempts in the early 70s around Old Crow Flats, two failed efforts in the 1980s<sup>4</sup> and a number of ongoing or aborted efforts which took place post Umbrella Final Agreement<sup>5</sup>. In each, efforts were made to include a variety of land values, including wildlife habitat, recreation, wilderness tourism, First Nations traditional, cultural and economic values, and broader economic values. During fieldwork for this project public consultation efforts were also ongoing for the development of a Land Use Plan for the Peel Watershed Region, a plan which is still not complete.

In forestry, almost every step of the creation of the Yukon Forest Act which was passed into legislation in 2011, included some degree of public consultation and co-planning between First Nations governments and the Yukon Government. For example, the 2004 document *Towards a Forest Policy Framework for Yukon*, was the result of over two years of consultations with First Nations, Renewable Resource Councils, and industry members. From this process also evolved another consultation process, this time resulting in the *Forest Resources Act Public Consultation* (2008).

Likewise, industries such as tourism are increasingly investing in research to better understand how people are coming into contact with destinations, and likewise how

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<sup>4</sup> Northern Land Use Planning Program which began work in 1981, and the Yukon Land Use Planning Commission in 1987.

<sup>5</sup> The Vuntut Planning Commission for the North Yukon (disbanded), the Teslin Planning Commission (disbanded), the Peel Watershed Planning Commission (ongoing), and the Dawson Planning Commission (ongoing).

guides can take part in educating tourists regarding local outdoor places. In the Yukon works such as that by De la Barre (2009) have grappled with how local land values and ideas of sustainability can mesh with the desires of tourists. While others have explored how guides can be trained to better inform tourists of the sites they visit in a way that creates positive shifts in behavior and perception concerning local places (Christie and Mason, 2003).

In this context, a more in-depth understanding of the influences that shape forest perception as well as the place of forests in the lives of local users is timely. By focusing on understanding the roots of difference in perception between users rather than focusing only on difference in use, I hope this work will contribute to a better understanding of the groups involved in such processes as listed above.

### **Approaching the Idea of Environment**

For researchers interested in exploring human understandings of the non-human world, a deliberate decision must be made as to how the environment and humans intersect. Carolan (2005) provides a useful breakdown of the concept of nature as understood in three ways: (1) “nature” (in quotes) as a discursive construct, as in something being natural or unnatural. (2) nature (no quotes) as socio-material. In this understanding there are no pure facts and all is interpreted. (3) Nature (capital N) as physicality, the entity underlying human understanding, such as gravity and ecosystems. Himself a critical realist who asserts there is a difference between the way things are and the way we interpret them, Carolan is critical of views that take a hard constructivist stance, for instance his idea of ‘nature’ as mentioned above. In contrast, critical realism grounds its view in recognition of the underlying reality of nature within which people live, and to

which they may assign meaning. Along similar lines McElhinny (2006) writes that “To suggest that nature is socially constructed is not to argue that humans make it, but rather that humans construct its meaning...” (2006: 128). While I am comfortable with this space between extreme constructivism and pure realism, the question remains, while the biophysical aspects of nature are fully recognized, what is the nature of its assignation by humans, and how can it be approached without imposing non-local values?

I find my answer by drawing on the dwelling perspective (Ingold, 2000) in order to understand viewpoints of Yukon forests as grounded in the life experiences of people. As such I am not considering here how it is the users of this study construct Yukon forests, but instead how they live within them, experience them, and dwell within them as real entities outside of human cognition. I find this approach also fits well with my understanding of place, something to be discussed later in this chapter. While avoiding some of the faults of a purely constructivist approach, the dwelling perspective provides its own sets of challenges. Both constructivism and dwelling are discussed more thoroughly below.

*Constructivism:*

A constructivist approach is, at present, fairly common when contemplating how people understand and find meaning within their physical surroundings. Constructivism postulates that nature is an idea which is culturally and temporally situated. In other words, meaning is layered upon the natural environment by people grounded within their specific cultural and social context. As such it allows for differences in

interpretation and perception of nature while favouring the influence of cultural and social factors.

The collected work edited by Cronon (1995) brings together fifteen different scholars from numerous disciplines who discuss the constructed idea of nature from a variety of angles. Others, such as Cartier (2005) and Hirsch (1995), also explored ideas of nature from a constructivist vantage point. Eeva Hellstrom (2001) lists a constructivist perspective as one of her theoretical tools in dealing with forest conflict, asserting that because social problems are not static but develop on the basis of collective definitions, we must be concerned with how people assign meaning to their world. Hellstrom's preoccupation with how people assign meaning to the world is a common thread among constructivist theorists who assert that meaning is layered on the non-human world, often in advance of actually experiencing it.

This approach can be useful in recognising the influences social and cultural factors have in how the environment is encountered and perceived. It encourages a form of cultural relativism and its premise begs for an inquiry into the power and politics of who can represent certain ideas and forms of nature and to what end. In his discussion of Hobbe's concept of nature as artifice, Coleman (1996) points out that if one pursues either a naturalist perspective in which man is subsumed within nature or an assertion that nature is the by-product of humanity, in the end: "It is about the idea of nature held by different parties as well as political resources at their disposal." (1996: 40). In other words, we must not forget that no matter what approach a researcher takes, power plays an important role in the idea of nature.

However, the constructivist approach is not without its faults, the primary shortfall of constructivism being the implicit dualism present between humans and the

environment. If humans construct ideas of nature prior to its encounter, and as such, experience it within the bounds of those constructions, it is implied that humans are apart from nature in a way unique to any organism. While cross-culturally speaking constructivism can allow for and explain cultural variety in environmental perspectives, it also reduces such perspectives to cognitive creation rather than reality as it is actually experienced.

### *Dwelling*

The constructivist approach is often criticized for its lack of recognition that many Indigenous peoples around the world do not see the nature/culture divide as a given, that rather it is a western approach in which humans are seen as separate from their environments. I would also argue however, that assuming constructivism is a given reality to a broad western public without question also has its faults. As others have argued, (Dunk, 1994; De la Barre, 2005) non-indigenous residents leading land-influenced lifestyles can also lay claim to those creative/social discourses (to borrow De la Barre's terminology) that do not fit within a typical western scientific way of viewing the world.

In any case, Tim Ingold is one scholar that has worked to reframe human-environment relations in a way that overcomes the innate dualism of constructivist ideologies and his approach is broadly applied to my understanding of how the participants of this study perceive forests. Ingold (2000) asserts that if we approach the question from a standpoint of a "developing organism-in-its-environment", rather than as a "self-contained individual", the dualistic problem of man versus nature is overcome. For Ingold, ways of acting within one's environment are also ways of perceiving it;

environments continually come into being in the process of living, we shape them as they shape us. In this *dwelling perspective*, he states that individual awareness of the world and activity within it, are grounded in immediate engagement with the world; it is through being inhabited that the world becomes a meaningful environment for people. The problem, as Ingold points out, is that we must first be in-the-world in order to be able to socially construct it. Engagement precedes all other things. This perspective is further explored in chapter six in the context of the experiences study participants have in Yukon forests.

For the moment however, I will say that the dwelling perspective as employed in this study asks that we privilege experience and take the conclusions that come from those experiences seriously. From this perspective, social and cultural factors, such as stories, are also part of the social experience that draws people's attention to certain aspects of one's environment rather than layering meaning over it. Individuals interpret these moments and take them along as they move through the world to draw from as they will. Ingold writes:

Apprehending the world is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it. (Ingold 1996: 117)

Ingold's dwelling perspective does not immediately negate the findings and opinions of scholars that have approached environmental questions from a constructivist approach, nor does it halt the benefits of cultural relativism and political inquiry, but it does ask that they be reframed in a way that privileges the experience of the environment by the individual as more than mere cognitive constructions. Instead, the stories related to me by participants of their time in forests are part of how they understand their world, create places, and ultimately live in the Yukon.



However, this perspective does come with its own challenges. Its anthropocentric focus on the acts of humans does not address the role of nature outside of human interest entirely. Subsequently the value of something like wilderness, in part defined by absence of human experience, can be difficult to grasp. Furthermore, the concept of dwelling, when applied to the action and movements of just anybody in the environment, can also appear to undermine the difference between those who are culturally more invested in an area than others. In both instances, through placing research within its broader context, describing the activities of forest users, and being open to Ingold's idea of social experience which draws attention to certain aspects of nature (such as wilderness) I hope to minimise these obstacles. I will conclude this section however, by reiterating that while my focus is on human perceptions of forests, it is not my intent to suggest that their value is to be found solely in human understandings of them.

### **Language and Environmental Perception**

In academic research concerning environmental perception, much effort has been dedicated to the idea of place making as cultural activity in which language takes a central role (De la Barre, 2005; McElhinny, 2006; Stokowski, 2002). Such works recognise that more powerful actors can often influence the ways people experience and understand nature. For example, Cartier and Lew (2005) suggest that in terms of seduction, the potentiality of place –which constitutes its seductive quality – must be socially, spatially, and discursively constituted. In another example, Gaffin (1997) deals with rural-urban power struggles in his research concerning the placement of a mega-dump in rural New York state. He finds that through employing the idea of rural in

specific ways, politicians are able to decontextualize place into anonymous space and thus turn it into a commodity. In the case of McElhinny's work (2006), her study of the role of language in the environmental debate surrounding an area in southern Ontario, referred to as the Oak Ridges Moraine, takes the form of discourse analysis in which the myriad of voices around a specific subject are the main focus of research.

This project does not claim a discourse analysis approach, though it certainly could have been fruitful. Instead of focusing primarily on acts of communication, I have chosen to ground my research and analysis by focusing on the everyday experiences of individual actors. With that said, the role of language in formulating positions, in integrating the idea of forest as a political and economic tool throughout history, and in excluding or favoring the interests of certain groups, is a thread throughout this dissertation. This is not simply because my methods revolve so much around talk (especially in the form of interviews) but because of the role of strong narratives (for example history, wilderness, and the north) within the conversations I had with forest users. For instance, I discuss in chapter seven how user-oriented labels can limit the options of certain forest groups to voice opinions that fall outside of these labels. I also discuss in chapter eight and nine how the broader ideas of boreal and wilderness can influence how people talk about and understand Yukon forests. In chapter five, I look at how forest users employ historic narrative to support their forest views.

To help ground my approach in such instances, in the sections below I discuss two elements regarding the role of talk in perceiving the environment. The first is best discussed through Foucault's genealogical approach, and the second through an example provided by Satterfield in her research analysing a forest dispute on the US west coast. However, I will clarify that by discourse I am referring to Foucault's concept

of discourse as outlined by Weeden (1987) in which discourse is understood as “Competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes” (Weeden, 1987:35). This is a definition also employed by De la Barre (2005) in the context of Yukon-based human-environment relations research. This definition recognises that competing meanings of the environment are often power laden, without grounding myself in a discourse analysis tradition.

### *Genealogy of Subject*

Foucault’s (1993) genealogy of subject is understood here as an inquiry into how a subject is formulated and employed throughout history, and importantly, how this leads to contemporary understandings of it. It is an approach that has encouraged me to trace contemporary narratives that rely on certain historic viewpoints. It has two implications for my analysis. The first begs that I question the meaning behind assumed categories, such as forest. With regard to the idea of forest as a category, Theresa Wong (2007) suggests that forests should be understood as an *immutable mobile*<sup>6</sup>, employed in this context to conceptualize how the notion of forest is used throughout the world. Wong sees forest classification systems as an object that moves unquestioned between local and global scales and across localities. In remaining unquestioned, its content and origin are seldom examined. Forest as a concept, she argues, is based on a conventional classification system that prioritises silviculture and downplays the importance to livelihoods and lived spaces. Similar arguments have been made in the context of Indigenous understandings of land and ecology by Main-Johnson (2000) who has argued that modern ecological classification schemes reflect the priorities of Western natural

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<sup>6</sup> an idea first conceived by Latour (1987)

science and are not representative of how others, such as the Gitskan First Nation of northwestern British Columbia, view their environment.

During fieldwork, I dealt with the issue of terminology through allowing the research participant to label forested areas as they chose and then using that assignation myself, and also through openly discussing the different terms available to refer to forested areas. I also examine the idea of boreal, the assumed naturalness of it as a category and in relation to Canadian nationalism in the chapters to come.

The second implication of a genealogical approach is a need to explore how forests have been conceptualized and used over time and how that has influenced contemporary perceptions. As a consequence, two chapters of this dissertation are dedicated to understanding Yukon's forest history, in part through the contemporary narratives which users employ to articulate their views.

Others have taken a similar approach. For instance McElhinny (2006) has outlined some of the different ways the southern Ontario Moraine has been perceived of over time, and suggests that the discourse surrounding the moraine issue has surfaced as a strategy to support other issues such as wilderness, wildlife, and water conservation. Oliver Rackham (1990) also traces the formation and conceptualization of treed areas through time in Britain. Beginning as early as 11 000 BC, Rackham looks at the use of trees by different peoples and generations, exposing the creation of what he refers to as pseudo-histories, such as the idea that fuel-wood using industries were singularly responsible for the decline of Britain's forests<sup>7</sup>. Instead he urges the reader to use the landscape itself as an aid in understanding history, and to refrain from underestimating the changes in viewpoint that can be brought on by passing years.

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<sup>7</sup> Instead, he argues that most forest clearing was done not for timber harvest, but to clear land for alternative purposes, particularly agriculture and the building of roads, fences, and towns.

Another example is given by Fairhead and Leach (1996) who explore the origins of the forest concept and of forest history in Guinea's forest-savannah transition zone. They explore the origins and shape of forest islands which have long been presumed to be the last remaining vestiges of forest in a once abundant forest landscape. Yet, instead of confirming over a century's worth of accepted history, they find instead quite the opposite, showing how these forest islands are anthropogenic in origin.

In a northern context, Kaye and Kurth (2001) explore the creation and growth of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska through history, finding within it wide ranging meanings surrounding wilderness and its value. Similarly, Haycox (2001) argues that a mythologized Alaskan history has played a significant role in Alaskan modern consciousness. Suggesting the images of pioneers, gold seekers, and rugged pipeline crews hide a less pleasant truth that includes displaced peoples, environmental destruction, and poverty. In the Yukon, McCandless' (1985, 1976) research has focused on the social history of wildlife. He correlates social understandings of nature with changes in how wildlife is understood and managed by Yukon's population.

Often such work is particularly revealing in terms of how people today think about and talk about their world. Raymond Williams (1973), for example, explores the idea of the country and city over time. The country, Williams argues, as a conceptual idyllic past, became a primary symbol for expressing the changes brought on through capitalist development in Britain. He argues that the myth of the happier past often refers to a general order of things more than an actual way of life, and often served more to "...cover and evade the actual and bitter contradictions of time." (1973: 45). Williams warns us to question generic and simplified historic narratives, which can quite often reveal more about contemporary priorities and concerns than actual past behaviour.

### *Working with Numerous Groups*

To date there has been limited research that focuses on more than one forest user group. One notable exception to this is Satterfield (2002), who in her ethnography of forest conflict on the Oregon Coast, accounts for many user groups and proposes a “triangular shape of cultural production”. Satterfield argues that it is insufficient to frame a social and political analysis of environmental disputes as a dualistic struggle between hegemony and resistance. Instead, she suggests that a wider ethnographic focus would allow for a variety of voices to be heard, and ultimately lead to a better understanding. Furthermore, such an approach would aid anthropologists in moving away from portrayals of the nature/culture dichotomy and would help policy analysts to better understand how the public values nature. She states:

But as ethnographers...we have generally failed to grapple with the position of more than one party simultaneously, except when the two parties are clearly linked to one another in super-and subordinate positions...The propensity for anthropologists studying environmental conflict to take up the plight of one group or one cause has hampered our ability to focus on the many creative, engaged dialogues between subordinate groups- dialogues about nature, cultural meaning, resource use, and future practices. (2002: 162)

Work that allows for this approach looks specifically at the relationship between groups, in part through how it is they represent each other in talk and position themselves against other users. Such an approach looks not only at how more powerful voices are able to control the terms of discussion, such a case is explored later in this chapter when I look at the Nadasdy’s work concerning the idea of Yukon’s Traditional Territories. Instead it also looks at the relationship between numerous hegemonic groups.

In also working with numerous groups, though with different social and historic backgrounds, I have found Satterfield's approach useful. For instance, the users of this study are Yukon residents subject to the rules and limitations of forest use as put forward by the Yukon Government, thus I am able to look at how groups who are subordinate to the same dominant system also compete with and represent one another. Individuals or groups may undercut the position of others while bolstering their own, revealing different representations of local history, needs, and environment. Such a focus allows for a fuller picture to form regarding the issues being discussed. For example, in later chapters I look briefly at how guide-outfitters feel they are viewed and labeled by some Yukon residents as profit-hunters who care little for the land or animals. Outfitters often then defend their position in part through arguments of being guardians of the land, on occasion claiming commonality between their livelihood and that of First Nations. Indeed, in chapter five I discuss how representations of Yukon First Nations in specific circumstances are used as a discursive tool to bolster individual actions of non-First Nations. Likewise, many loggers in this study are dismissive of environmental advocates while positioning themselves as locals who care deeply for the land. In considering the relationship between groups, one thing that becomes apparent is that the stereotyped categories that many users find themselves fighting against are created and reinforced daily through the everyday talk of other forest users. As I argue in chapter seven, this can lead to narrow use-based labels that they on occasion must work with, even though it may not represent them thoroughly.

Inquiring into how numerous groups see each other and participate within the same system in different ways, highlights questions regarding how individuals use similar terms differently, invoke certain histories or stories to assert their position, or

represent groups in ways that better articulate their own point or position. This is what brought my attention to divergent understandings of Yukon's forest history and to the fact that groups encounter different boundaries and limitations on the land, often resulting in resentment between user groups.

### **A Place-based Approach**

Another area of research that addresses both the physical environment and human perception is that which pertains to place, whose main themes revolve around belonging, locality, identity and connection to, and knowledge of the environment. In this section I will first outline my approach to place and how that approach has influenced my interpretation of research material. Following this I will explore two further aspects of place, the role of experience in place, and relationships and boundaries between places. In conclusion, I look at both experience and relations between places through a brief discussion of Yukon boundaries and land divisions.

Casey (1996) understands place to be a body experience, as one of primal immediate senses. Tilley (1994) likewise approaches place in such a manner: that knowledge of place is derived from human experience, feeling, thought, and bodily activity, and it is because of this he suggests that personal and cultural identity are bound up with place. In both, place is personal not only in a cognitive sense, but physically through sensual perception and connection with one's surrounding environment.<sup>8</sup> My own approach is in line with such understandings, more specifically I

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<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the concept of *space* within this dissertation is understood as the general 'everywhere', a general area stripped of personal experience, a combination of vagueness and objectiveness apparent in much land use planning, quick geographic references in everyday talk, and in certain representations of land, such as maps.



employ Walter's (1988) definition of place as "The whole synthesis of located experience- including what we imagine as well as the sights stories, feelings and concepts..." (1988: 2).

Walter's inclusion of imagination as a sense is important here, as it allows for wider areas to also fall under the umbrella of place. Similarly, Stokowski (2002) has argued that while grounded in location, we must also look at place beyond a specific locality in order to be inclusive to what he terms the artifacts of material culture. She writes:

Thus even when an individual might develop a personal sense of place around a specific site, the 'social place' known and understood across sets of people is created and reproduced through interpersonal interaction, formalized through social behavior, and ultimately persists in collective memory. (2002: 372)

Such places, he argues, could include a series of national parks and forests.

Likewise, it is in taking such an approach that Palka (2000) is able to explore place within an entire national park, all the while emphasising that for him, place is both general and particular. Following a similar argument, Mason (2004) has argued that in terms of ethnographic landscapes in Alaska, the fact that efforts to protect cultural places of significance are focused on specific sites rather than broader landscapes, serves as a challenge, particularly for mobile First Nations whose stories emphasise traveling landscapes more than specific locations. While for the most part the individuals in this study refer to specific locations, they also refer to and draw from broader references such as forests in general, the Yukon, and the North in ways that suggest that they too be understood as locations of experience influencing a person's sense of belonging and identity.

In any case, by employing a place-based approach in this dissertation, I am not suggesting that I have focused only on one specific location but instead that I am

approaching forests as the location of numerous experiences, as places to *someone*, rather than just one broad expanse of trees. In this way, place in this study is about research process as much as specific locality. Rodman's (2003) idea of multivocality and multilocality highlight the usefulness of such an approach (something I also discuss further in my concluding chapter). Rodman (2003) posits that in order for anthropologists to fully grasp the importance of place, they must recognise its complex nature. She writes: "...places, like voices, are local and multiple. For each inhabitant, a place has a unique reality; one in which meaning is shared with other people and places" (2003: 209).

According to Rodman, places are inherently multivocal and multilocal. This idea rests on the recognition of four elements: first, that places are constructed from multiple viewpoints, including non-western. Second, that some events concerning a place arise due to external influence. Third, that some places are seen in terms of already familiar ones. Lastly, that "A single physical landscape can be multilocal in the sense that it shapes and expresses polysemic meanings of place for different users" (Rodman, 2003: 212). In other words, the same locality can be multiple places.

Rodman's understanding of the complexity of place is employed within this work. I argue that those who inhabit, visit, and enjoy, Yukon forests are experiencing them in quite different ways. For example, through drawing on different understandings of history the same locality can be both 'used' and 'pristine'. Depending on one's activities, different restrictions and boundaries are part of the forest experience. Participants draw from experiences elsewhere to understand Yukon forests, as is emphasised in participant references to outside forest use and development. Furthermore, forces outside of that locality work to define and influence them, such as the influence of shifts

in forest management styles and pressure from outside conservation groups. All of which ultimately leads to very different places within the same locality. This approach is not unprecedented; Main-Johnson (2010), in her book concerning Indigenous understandings of ecology in northern British Columbia, also draws from Rodman in her recognition that geographers' and inhabitants' discourses will not necessarily be consistent, and that it is not necessarily true that all of either group will share similar views.

With this in mind, when I state that Yukon forests are contested places, I mean to refocus what can otherwise be understood as a resource issue. Instead the issue is about more than resource use, but of individual actors, their interactions with people, the landscape, and their own experiences. In the remainder of this chapter I will further explore specific aspects of place as it relates to this research. This includes place and experience, place relations, and Yukon land divisions and boundaries.

### *Place and Experience*

A component of place I would like to explore more thoroughly is the role of practice or experience. Hirsh (1995) understands landscape as a cultural process, a flow between elements such as foreground and background – foreground being the actual experiences of everyday life and background being the perceived potentiality of a place. Rather than understanding landscape as a category that represents or symbolises its surroundings, the concept is instead merged with the active, everyday process of landscape creation. I feel that in this way there is room for both locality and wider cognitive constructions. Similarly, Gray (1999) also merges landscape perspective with practice in his work with sheep farmers in Scotland. For Gray, sheep farmers are creating place and comfort with

the land as they walk through it to manage their sheep. The places become good places to be, comfortable and known through daily interaction, and only through understanding their experiences can such places be understood.

Such approaches emphasise that the researcher must recognise the value of actual experience on the land in order to properly explore the role it plays in the lives of the people involved. In a northern context, many have emphasized the connection between experience on the land and the cultivation of a sense of place, as well as skill, confidence, and knowledge. For instance Anderson et al. (2000) in the context of Gwich'in forest use, Buggey (2004) regarding cultural landscapes in northern Canada, Emery (2001) as a local speaking at a forest values conference in Alaska, and Main-Johnson (2010) regarding Kaska ethnoecology, have all explored experience on the land in the context of indigenous knowledge and culture. Similarly, Schramm (2005) in her work with the Little Red River Cree in northern Alberta, has discussed how traditional Cree principles of resource use can be lost when younger generations have fewer experiences on the land, in part because that is where much of the knowledge of living a Cree way of life are passed on. Interestingly, Perrin's (1999) research on a Yukon youth education program that aims to provide youth with outdoor experience, understood as place-based, finds that students with such experiences build stronger connections to the landscape, express concern for local environmental issues, and express a desire to minimize negative impacts on wilderness. In chapter six I explore the role of forest experience for the participants of this study more thoroughly, and in doing so suggest that recognising experience as valuable in a way beyond 'use', is an important step towards understanding the role forests play in the lives of users.

### *The Relationship Between Places*

In speaking of the relational attributes of place I am referring to how one place connects to, depends upon, or relates to another. This area is covered in works such as that of Ardener (1987) who considers the idea of 'remoteness' and its attributes for the feeling of place. Of interest to me is how Ardener approaches feelings of excessive vulnerability and accessibility from both the insider's and outsider's perspective, as well as his foregrounding of the role of imagination in contributing to such feelings. Ching and Creed (1997) build on similar themes in their work concerning rurality or rusticity. The authors assert that rural/urban relations and the subsequent vulnerable position of rural areas and people play a central role in power relations that shape experiences of people in countries around the world. Similarly, Robbins (2001) explores the importance of regionalism in the northwest of North America, suggesting that regionalism exists in contrast to other 'outside' areas, and as such regional identities are bound in a relationship with them.

Understanding the relational attributes of place is particularly important in a location such as the Yukon, which is both remote and northern, and whose political and social position, as well as self-identity of residents, draws heavily from its geographic location. This is particularly apparent in the local use of the term 'outside' to generally refer to areas south of 60° latitude. Eleanor Millard's book, *Journeys Outside and In* (2007), is a semi-autobiographical account of a white professional working and living in the Yukon from the 1960s on. As the title emphasises, Yukoners learn to articulate social and environmental differences often through an emphasis on geographic separations. Throughout this study I will visit works such as those by Hulan (2002), De la Barre (2009), Coates and Morrison (2005), Zimmer and Kaufmann (1998), Zaslow (1988), McCandless

(1976, 1985) and Sandlos (2001), who explore the connection between the north as a region, and Canada as a nation. Any one place does not exist in seclusion, and questioning the relationship between places draws attention to borders and boundaries, and definitions and disagreements, in a way that ensures the complexity of place is addressed.

*Exploring Place through Yukon Boundaries and Land Divisions*

I will take this opportunity to briefly examine some of the boundaries and regulations that are part of Yukon land, and which divide the landscape on numerous fronts. Though a divergence from the above text, from boundaries and land divisions, emerge seemingly separate 'types' of land, each of which become part of the land experience, and which exist in part through relations to other categories. Much of chapter seven is dedicated to discussing the implications of these structures and the bureaucratic system that upholds them.

Access to forests in Canada is foremost a question of rights, property, control, and ownership. These elements are regional and national in nature and can contrast strongly between nations. Strang and Busse (2011) suggest approaching the idea of ownership as a set of processes rather than a static bundle of rights. They write that:

Ownership is a culturally and historically specific system of symbolic communication through which people act and through which they negotiate social and political relations. (2011: 4)

Ownership therefore, is asserted through the agency of individuals involved. For instance, as most of the Yukon is Crown land, managed by either the Territory or Federal Government, a network of government departments and regulations are the main

managing body for different types of land and land uses (Heartwell, 1988). Like Strang and Busse (2011), I understand the function of such systems of governance to be mediating property relations, but also that such systems of property relations ultimately define who owns the state. In other words, the government, through property management and regulation, asserts its position as a legitimate actor on the land.

In one way, management structures and accompanying tools such as maps tend to disassemble nature and recreate it as divisible and manageable space (in contrast to place). Ownership and control is then reified through the management system itself. Through such structures, representations of land, and to some degree land itself, are transformed into cultural artefacts. While the categories that define land use and land type are part of a common Canadian system, they are interpreted and played out in locally unique ways. In the Yukon, ownership of land falls under four categories:

- Fee simple or privately owned land
- Settlement land (belonging to First Nations according to their individual Final Agreement) of which there are three types: Category A, Category B and fee simple<sup>9</sup>.
- Commissioners Land (Territorial), which includes municipalities and Territorial parks
- Crown land (Federal land), which includes the entire Territory outside of settlement lands, municipal boundaries, and Territorial parks.

Both the Umbrella Final Agreement and specific First Nation agreements determine much of how land use and access in the Territory is dealt with. As already outlined in chapter two, the Umbrella Final Agreement, signed in 1990, is an agreement in principle between the Yukon Indian Council, Canada, and the Yukon Territory. It outlines a framework within which specific First Nations agreements are negotiated. It also

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<sup>9</sup> As outlined in the Umbrella Final Agreement, category A land includes ownership of surface and subsurface, Category B includes only surface ownership, and Fee simple land has the same rights as other lands held in the Land Title office (other fee simple land).

outlines recommendations for consultation between First Nations bands, organizations, and individuals with the Yukon Government concerning a number of issues, including forest resource harvesting, protection, access, and management.

Today's land divisions are the result of many decades of work and negotiation on the part of First Nations people to assert a level of control over the management, use, and ownership of land. One category of land created through the UFA is First Nations Traditional Territory. This category represents land that was and is used by First Nations people outside of their settlement area. While First Nations do not own this land, it does contain a number of rights and responsibilities, including the right to be consulted if any changes to that area are being considered<sup>10</sup>.

Land use on Crown lands, which make up the majority of the Yukon (98%), is negotiated through usufruct rights, commonly defined as the legal right to use or derive benefits from property that is owned by someone else. The Yukon Territorial Government has formal control over the management of forest resources and has the power to allocate harvesting rights to individuals (including corporations) usually in the form of tenure – an agreement that includes harvesting rights and not land rights<sup>11</sup>. Timber harvest on settlement lands are primarily controlled by First Nations, but regulated (where one exists) by local forest agreements and land use plans. Speaking of the role of forest tenure in the Yukon, Heartwell (1988) writes that:

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<sup>10</sup> For example, recently, in the Little Salmon/Carmacks First Nation v. Yukon case, it was ruled that this obligation to consult included the situation in which agricultural leases are granted within Traditional Territory. Agricultural leases are a form of usufruct agreement between an individual and the state. Once agreed upon and obligations are met by the individual, the land transfers to a fee simple title and becomes private property.

<sup>11</sup> This control was only recently formally given to the Yukon Territory through the process of devolution. Previous to this, Yukon forests, being in a Territory rather than a Province, were under the control of the Federal Government within the department of Indian and Northern Affairs.



These property rights are crucial instruments of public policy because they govern the way that resources are used and managed. These rights have profound consequences for both the distribution of the benefits from natural resources, and for the economic performance of the industries dependent upon them. Accordingly, the composition and methods of distributing these rights are key components of forest management policy. (1988: 7)

Such property categories in the Yukon divide the landscape according to rules of ownership. The entire Territory belongs to someone or some entity, and through that title rules of access, use, and management are largely determined.

However, this system represents a particular history and way of understanding the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Cohn (2001) sees persistent patterns within it that serve to undermine cooperation between the primary actors: the state as represented through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the Territorial Government, and First Nations governments. Cohn finds that despite the changes that individual treaties have brought, the extent to which such agreements are achieving their goals is being undermined by a tendency towards bilateral relationships of unequal power.

In another example, Nadasdy (2002) has explored how notions of property and ownership, as European legal traditions, have structured and made possible the process of land claims in the Yukon. He writes that:

...the negotiation and implementation of land claims agreements amount to an attempt to incorporate aboriginal peoples unique relationship to the land into the existing legal and political institutions of the Canadian State. (2002: 248)

He argues that the basic assumptions of western property are not compatible with First Nation understanding of their relationship with land. It therefore involves a translation

of ideas into western language which is problematic. Nadasdy posits that while claims to ownership have been both necessary and useful for Aboriginal people in the Yukon, there have also been costs as such ideas can undermine the very social relations they claim to represent. Both settled land and Traditional Territory represent ways of understanding relationships with, and use of, land within a western understanding of property and ownership. Nadasdy argues this understanding is based on the compartmentalisation of land according to rights and use as distinguished from others.

Property structures have implications for non-First Nations Yukon residents as well. Aside from influencing the structure of the relationship between governments and Yukon residents, the ways in which property is managed, as Nadasdy points out according to rights and use, has implications for how the implied *users* are represented and imagined by others. One of the most important and on occasion least visible aspects of forests are the labels of ownership and subsequent rights and obligations that are part of them. We cannot assume that because such labels are not locally unique, that they do not have locally unique implications.

One of the most important tools for creating, managing, and understanding property and management boundaries is the map. Maps often reveal far more about the situation in which they were created than the thing they are supposed to represent. For example, in 2001 Paul Robbins, working within a political ecology framework, looked at the causes and effects of defining land-cover categories for mapping. Through an example involving the mapping of ground cover in India using technologies such as satellite imagery and photos taken in flight, Robbins outlines a process through which 'objective techniques' of defining nature depended largely on institutional and bureaucratic systems of categorization. Thus, the categories on the map were social in

nature – somebody had to decide upon them, and once they had, those categories were accepted as fact.

Cruikshank (2005) critically explored the mapping of boundaries along Yukon's south-west corner during the mid-19th century. Between the 1825 Russian and British negotiation of what is today Yukon's western boundary, and later negotiations between the US and Britain<sup>12</sup>, almost a century of mapping and negotiating went into the creation of today's boundary. These negotiations took place in distant capitals and largely ignored indigenous inhabitants during their creation. The boundary ultimately created was more reflective of assertions of distant political state power than local geography or social structures. Anderson et al. (2000) also critiqued the use of maps in the Yukon, pointing to the fact that maps rely on certain understandings of the world in order to be communicatively understandable. What is communicated then is a culturally shaped view of the world – one that leans towards western values and views.

Likewise, Easton (2001) and Nadasdy (2011) have spent time looking at the creation and impacts of Yukon First Nations Traditional Territories (map 3.1). Within each area depicted is one, in some cases more than one, First Nations people. Within a region, Renewable Resource Councils and First Nations governments can also be found. Both Nadasdy and Easton have explored the degree to which these lines represent a Euro-Canadian state system, more than actual 'traditional' territories. At the time the boundaries on this map were settled upon by local First Nations, state powers had already divided what were originally largely nomadic peoples. Their social structures had been somewhat arbitrarily categorized, combining or splitting up groups depending on

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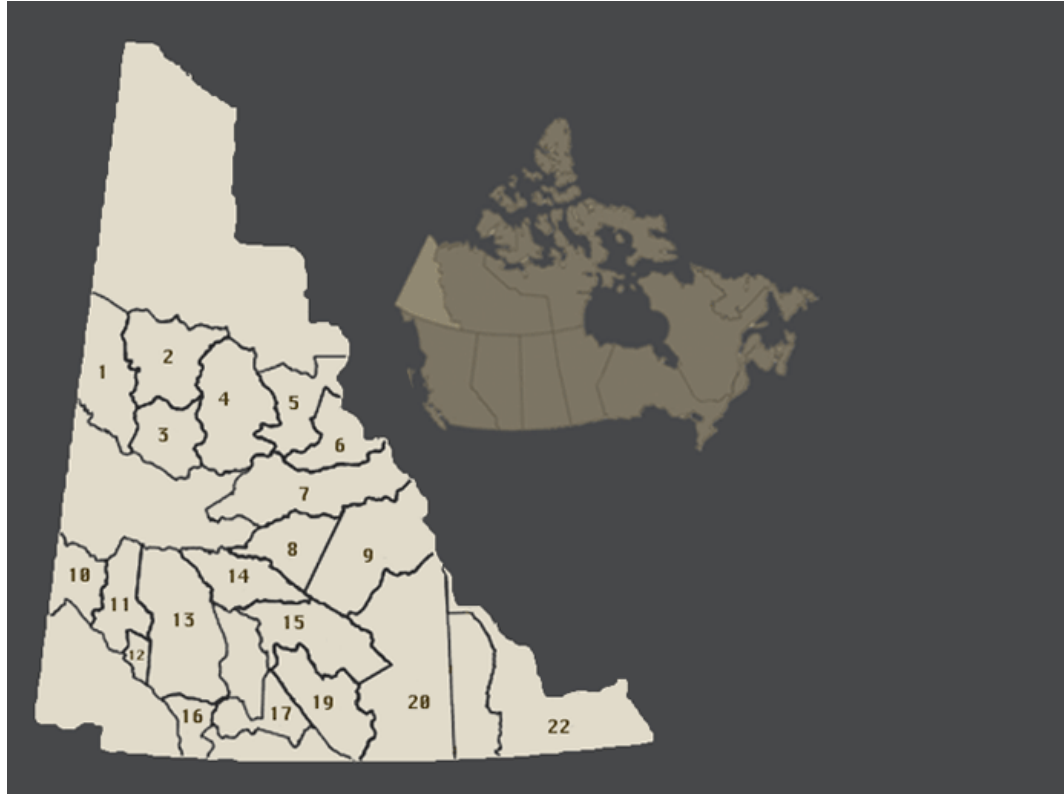
<sup>12</sup> In 1867 the United States government purchased the piece of land which is today known as Alaska from Russia. At that time new concerns arose over the exact location of the Canadian/American boundary.

state need. Nadasdy argues that while the creation of traditional territories was an important step towards settling of land claims and signing the Umbrella Final Agreement, it is not representative of long term land use by Yukon First Nations. The impact of these boundaries on local culture and social structures has been far reaching and has positioned groups in us-versus-them situations that did not exist previous to European intervention, regardless of the relationships previously extant.



Map 3.1 Traditional Territories of Yukon First Nations. Retrieved from the Yukon Government map database available at: [www.gov.yk.ca](http://www.gov.yk.ca)

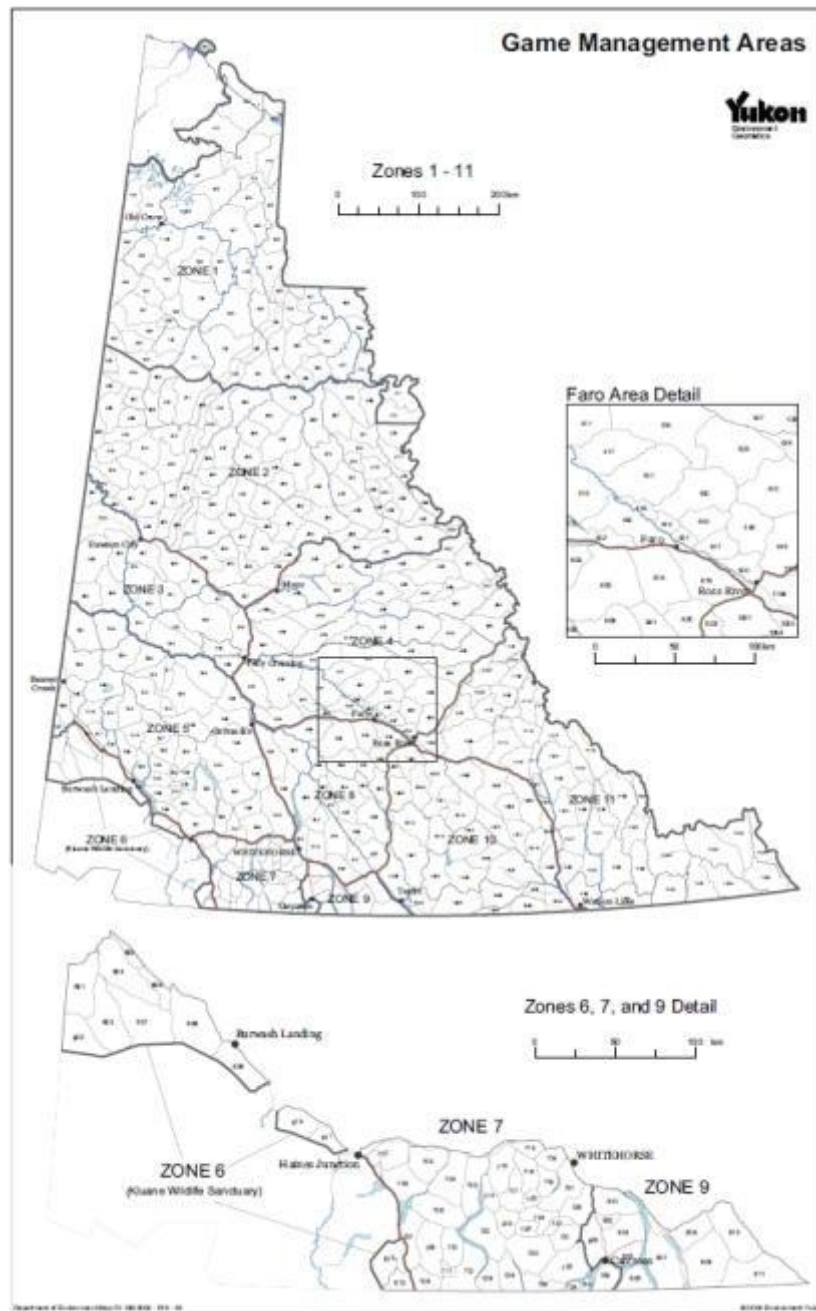
Other examples of how Yukon's landscape is organized are guide-outfitting concessions (Map 3.2) and game management areas (Map 3.3). Within each guide-outfitting concession is one operator that has exclusive use of that area for the purpose of taking non-residents hunting, though they often offer other services such as fishing, trapping, and trail rides. These boundaries are the result of decades of surveying and negotiation of regions and methods during the mid-century. The contemporary system was decided upon in 1958 at which time the requirements to own a guide-outfitting concession were such as to almost ensure the exclusion of a First Nations owner, despite a high reliance on First Nations people as hired guides. Furthermore, they were created hand in hand with the Yukon Game Ordinance; regulations that evolved between the 1920s to the 1950s included almost complete control over all economics and conservation of all game animals in the Territory. This has ensured that guide-outfitting today falls under the power of Fish and Game rather than Tourism, which has consequences for how outfitters and their concessions are viewed within communities, and in relation with other users in that area – particularly wilderness tourism operators. Game management zones are the areas to which various animal harvest and conservation regulations apply. Each zone has limits on what can be hunted, how much and when, which in turn correspond to game management regulations, local and social priorities, and at times negotiations between actors such the public, First Nations, and guide-outfitters. Hunters, outfitters, and trappers among others, must be aware of the zone/s within which they are harvesting animals as they move across the landscape.



Map 3.2 Guide-Outfitting Concessions. Source: yukonoutfitters.net

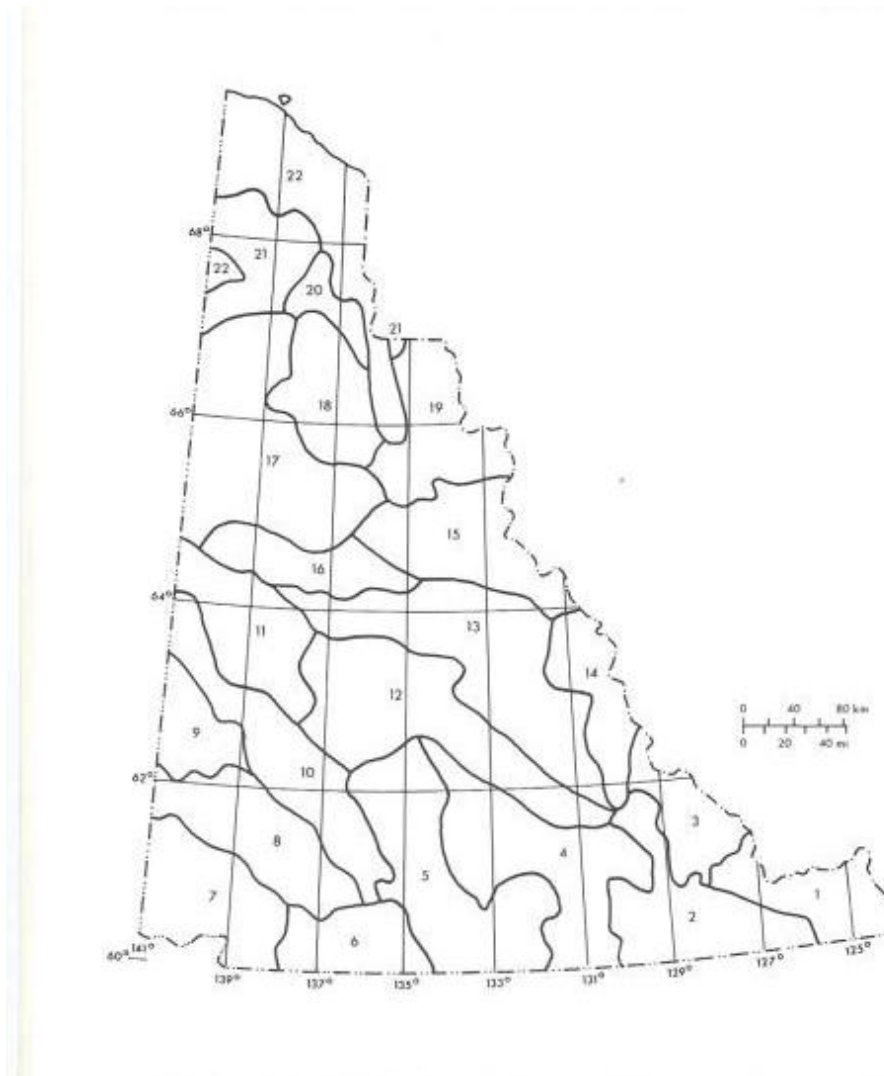
As a final example of some of the boundaries and associated implications that criss-cross the Territory, I turn to Map 3.4, which portrays eco-regions of the Yukon Territory as determined and mapped by the 1975 Yukon Geophysical Survey. Each area on the map corresponds to a description of forest cover, its percentage of the total Yukon landmass, and general meteorological conditions. Maps such as this one are the end result of an accumulation of research that occurred on a number of occasions throughout the mid-twentieth century in an effort to determine the extent of viable timber in the territory with the intent of developing a secondary resource industry. Such maps encourage a specific ecological reading of the landscape, one limited to vegetation type, and represents the mapping of potentiality concerning the development of the forest industry. They are also representative of a federal/territorial power struggle over

resource control and knowledge. To hold knowledge about the landscape is a necessary aspect of asserting ownership and control over it; this survey was one of the first Yukon-wide surveys of vegetation type and has been used as base-data for any number of projects, initiatives, and studies.



Map 3.3 Game Management Areas of the Yukon Territory. Source: Yukon Government map database available at: [www.gov.yk.ca](http://www.gov.yk.ca)





Map 3. 2 Ecoregions of the Yukon Territory, mapped by the 1975 geophysical survey, Oswald and Senyk. Source: Bonner and Oswald (1989) The Yukon Forest Reconnaissance Inventory.

Maps such as these are just a few examples of some of the ways the Yukon landscape and by extension its forests, are structured. Each boundary is representative of a bureaucratic state system of managing lands that ensures almost every activity that can occur in the outdoors are regulated in some way. Such images as those above offer startling contrast to the idea as expressed by participants of the Yukon as unbounded, free and wild. The divide between what people assert the Yukon is and what they

encounter is at the heart of much forest discourse and personal frustration.

Subsequently, while an important part of the Yukon's unique character is the idea of its vastness and relatively unhindered landscape, of equal importance is the way that landscape has been allocated and categorised.

A boundary can only exist in association with some form of restraint or limitation, and it is the nature of a boundary to protect or enhance the rights of some, and to diminish those of others. What activities may be done in a region, who may enter, why, who must be informed, what must be done in advance, and what legislation or policy must be consulted, are informed by these lines and their accompanying legislation. Such boundaries inform relationships not only between places, but between people as well.

## Chapter Four

### Timber<sup>1</sup> use in the Yukon Territory

*The forest industry in Yukon is a small but vital part of the economic fabric of the territory. Moreover the importance of the forest resource to the welfare of Yukon's residents cannot be defined in monetary terms alone. The forest resource provides not only jobs and income during the harvesting of trees, but also intrinsic and invaluable aesthetic views to tourists and residents, and is part of the cultural heritage of this northern society.*  
(Heartwell 1987:7)

*Important as was the rise and fall of gold mining, it was not the sole, or even most important factor in the evolution of the Yukon Territory. This is to be found, more broadly, in the interaction between the settlers and the physical environment, as revealed in the social, cultural, administrative, and economic developments of the period.* (Zaslow 1988: 134)

For many people, it would be unimaginable to think of forests as anything other than being part of the natural environment in the north. As such, they are tied to the dual, though not always contrasting images, of pristine vast wilderness and abundance in, and exploitation of, natural resources. While forests are certainly prevalent in much of the Yukon, what role they have in popular stories and histories tends to be secondary to other events; they are an entity which could easily fade into the background, eclipsed by the shadow of more pressing matters of the time. Yet Yukon forests are the result of a rich natural and social history which has shaped their form, and the people who work and live within them. Understanding this history is necessary in order to understand contemporary forest perceptions and discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Timber is used in two senses here and throughout this dissertation: 1. to indicate wood that has been prepared to use in building, carpentry etc. 2. trees that have been grown or specifically labelled for such purposes, such as a timber permit, which indicates an area where trees may be cut for human use.

Many books dealing with Yukon history, such as Webb's (1985) *Yukon: the last frontier*, Berton's (1958) *Klondike: the last great gold rush*, and Coates and Morrison's (2005) *Land of the Midnight Sun: a history of the Yukon*, mention the Yukon's rich timber industry in passing. With few exceptions, forests appear as a backdrop to the events which were otherwise happening at the time. One exception to this is Kathryn Morse's (2003) *The Nature of Gold*, which deals extensively with most environmental components of the Klondike gold rush, including timber use. Other sources that relate directly to Yukon's logging industry for the most part have been commissioned by the Yukon Government. For instance, in 1993 a consulting firm was contracted by the Yukon Government to document the use of timber resources in the Territory from 1896 to 1970 (Northern Design Consultants (NDC)). While the document outlines nearly a century of human forest use, it and others like it are seldom read by the general public. Likewise Yukon popular fiction, poetry and iconic images rarely include the lumberman. One notable exception to this is Robert Service's (1909) poem titled *The Wood Cutter*, a tale more of the harshness and loneliness of isolated Klondike living than the details of lumber work. Instead, the poem focuses on the violent nature of the Yukon River, of personal isolation, and lost hopes. The second to last stanza reads:

Maybe you've seen me sometimes; maybe you've pitied me then--  
The lonely waif of the wood-camp, here by my cabin door.  
Someday you'll look and see not; futile and outcast of men,  
I shall be far from your pity, resting forevermore. (Service, 1990)

This is hardly the portrayal of the iconic image of the lumberjack which is so often prevalent in southern Canadian history<sup>2</sup>. The lumberjack character is largely lacking in the north, subsumed by more enduring images of the isolated and adventurous

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<sup>2</sup> See Donald MacKay (2007) *The Lumberjacks*, for an interesting portrayal of Canadian lumbermen through Canada's history, though the Yukon timber industry is not featured within it.

prospector or explorer. Yet, while the length and size of the territory's timber industry is hardly comparable to that of the south, on a regional scale it has had a constant and important presence. While the industry has been largely characterised by occasional years of intensive activity, the use of local timber has been a consistent mainstay to the people of the Yukon. In fact, many areas that are today thought of as pristine wilderness were not so long ago cleared land; this is particularly true for forests along important rivers and streams, as well as near communities. The small though consistent timber industry of the Yukon has been well suited to the needs of local residents and has been an important component of a northern way of life and economy.

Before delving into Yukon's timber history however, I would like to emphasise that while this research focuses on the events that have occurred in the Yukon since the Klondike gold rush, it is a chosen starting point rather than a moment in time where anthropogenic forces became a part of Yukon forests. Forests were neither free of human-induced or environmental change at this time. The forests encountered by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century explorers and traders in the North West were not untouched or particularly stable environments. The impacts of anthropogenic change did not begin with European exploration, but with the original inhabitants of what is now the Yukon Territory.

For example, far from being an empty land, aboriginal peoples had been living and thriving in the area for several thousand years and European influence on the land had hardly been the sole source of change (Morse, 2003; Cruikshank, 2005; Coates & Morrison, 2005). Aboriginal people were hunters and gatherers and had modified the landscape to aid their needs. Previous to European arrival, vast trading networks were

already in place between coastal and interior groups<sup>3</sup> (Coates, 1991). Aboriginal people had set fires to forests in order to control mosquitos and to attract animals such as bear and moose that would forage on the young shoots of post fire growth, and had opened up forests for travel and to counter the effects of large wild fires (Morse, 2003)<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, Cruikshank (2005) argues that as well as human changes in the physical landscape of the far North West, natural changes should not be overlooked. For instance, in the meeting corners of what is today Alaska and the Yukon Territory lay the Saint Elias Mountain Range, where late stages of the Little Ice Age<sup>5</sup> were occurring simultaneously with colonial incursions. The movements of glaciers dramatically affected the landscape during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as such the physical form of Yukon's landscape was also being heavily influenced by geophysical changes. In modern times Cruikshank undertook to travel a similar route as explorers John Dalton and E.J. Glave took in 1890, and has noted that where "thickly forested hills" (2005:240) are found today, those explorers had encountered the face of a glacier and displaced rocks from glacial movement.

### **Timber Use During the Klondike Gold Rush**

In 1896 a discovery of a substantial amount of gold on Bonanza Creek (also known as Rabbit Creek) marked the beginning of what would become Yukon's gold rush era.

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<sup>3</sup> The existence of these trading networks also meant that Aboriginal people had been exposed to the effects of disease before non-Aboriginals first entered the Territory. Coates (1991) argues that the pre-contact Aboriginal population was between seven and eight thousand, while it had diminished to only two thousand by the turn of the century.

<sup>4</sup> Similar arguments have been made about First Nations people elsewhere, such as Lewis's (1977) work in Northern Alberta, in which he posits that man-made fires have been an important element of changing and of maintaining natural environments well before European settlement.

<sup>5</sup> The Little Ice Age is a period of cooling which occurred between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, with three distinct periods of cool temperatures, the latest around 1850. Areas of North America including what is today the Yukon Territory, saw increased glaciation during this time.

Previous to this period, non-First Nations residents had been limited. When as many as 40,000 prospective miners arrived the year after the Bonanza Creek discovery, the region's social and physical character was transformed (Coates & Morrison, 2005). During these early years, wood was used to support the mining industry, build infrastructure, fuel steamboats and provide heat. These needs meant that wood was heavily harvested from those areas most visited by the new arrivals such as lake-heads, along rivers and near communities. Attempts were made by local officials from almost the beginning of the gold rush period to manage forest resources, ensuring that there were sufficient supplies for the needs of mining and that a potential source of income for the government was not being overlooked.

Around this time, the idea of a national approach to forestry in Canada was emerging and concerns of about conservation were just beginning to be addressed across the country (Gillis & Roach, 1995)<sup>6</sup>. Canada's first Forestry branch was established in 1899 and was given the responsibility of preserving forests on federal land and of initiating reforestation<sup>7</sup> (Apsey, 2000). However, of primary concern for the south was the continued settlement and economic development of Canada. Though southern regions were experimenting with organized approaches to forestry, nothing of the sort was considered for the little-explored Yukon. From the beginning, Yukon's forest resources were treated as a secondary industry and little would change that view for the next century. Cohn (2001) writes that, "In the absence of central direction, field staff

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<sup>6</sup> This original idea of conservation was created in recognition of dwindling forest reserves in the United States and the need to conserve forested areas so that they could be harvested at a later date (Drushka, 2003)

<sup>7</sup> According to Apsey (2000) this idea of 'wise use' was a huge shift in forestry management. It is under this paradigm that much of Canada's industrial structure, forestry schools and research establishments were first built. However, during this time Yukon forests remained relatively unaffected by southern forest management priorities.

had developed a management system based on cultural practices and local knowledge of local mill capacity.” (2001: 282). Though Cohn is writing of later years, the same was essentially true for the newly emerging Yukon. Local RCMP officers made efforts to keep track of timber use and in later years to issue permits.

The 1896 discovery of gold also heralded many changes for Yukon’s original inhabitants. Up to that time, the non-First Nations population had remained relatively small and First Nations had been active agents in the development and pace of Yukon’s fur trade. However, with the influx of miners that was soon to come, many trading posts shifted their focus away from furs towards providing mining supplies. Furthermore, many of the non-native new arrivals would also begin to participate in the fur trade over the next decades, often to the detriment of First Nations traders (Coates and Morrison, 2005). Furthermore, the fur trade and mining industry were accompanied by differing social structures. For instance in the early pre-Klondike years intermarriage between First Nations and whites was not uncommon, although often men abandoned their natives wives in later years. Also, racial segregation in the more remote parts of the Territory tended to be less rigid both during the gold rush and in the years following (Coates, 1991). In contrast, as discussed later in this chapter exclusionist policies in towns and mining camps were far more rigid.

Some of the first regulations regarding northern forests are found in the Timber Regulations of the Northwest Territories Act which permitted the Royal Northwest Mounted Police to collect dues from timber harvest as early as 1896, though the first official timber permits<sup>8</sup> were not issued until 1899 (NDC 1993). During the initial period of population growth, local authorities dealt with a number of concerns regarding forest

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<sup>8</sup> Timber Permits gave the holder the right to cut wood in a designated area.



use. For instance, by 1898 reports of lumber shortages were already appearing.

Inspector Strickland with the North West Mounted Police reported that:

On Lakes Tagish, Bennett and Marsh timber fit for manufacturing lumber from is getting very scarce. Up the creeks and rivers there is still plenty of it and also on the lakes, but a long distance from the shore, so far that it would hardly pay to haul it. Dry wood is still plentiful and is to be found on the shores of all three lakes. (Strickland, 1898: n. pag.)

Likewise, a report from Inspector Scarth with the North West Mounted Police also in

1898, reporting from Lake Bennet, states the following:

Large camp here with a great many people building boats, some have their boats built. There is a saw-mill west of here at the mouth of river which turns out about 1,000ft per day. It has one small 14-inch saw and is run by steam. Lumber sells \$70 per 1000 ft. This timber being supplied by the purchaser. Mill is owned and run by man named Rudolph. He also builds boats and sells them for \$55. A great many people purchase these and he cannot supply the demand for lumber. Timber is pretty well cut out at head of lake, and has to be brought from some distance back. (Scarth, 1898: n. pag.)

Morse (2003) provides a good description of the work involved in locating, cutting, and sawing timber to make rafts. Locating timber was difficult, as those who had come before had cleared all that was nearby. Once timber was found and fallen it had to be whipsawed into lengths to use. She writes:

The two men pushed and pulled a long crosscut saw between them, cutting the length of the log to produce a thick, rough board. The work proved horrendous. Sawing timber had for these men always been the work of sawmills, mechanized industrial plants. Now it fell back on their arms and backs, another source of physical connection to nature, this time to the tough fibres of stringy northern spruce. (2003: 51)

By this time, the federal government, which up to now had been focused on the fur trade, began to take a strong interest in the region's mineral resources. As the rush of people into the Territory continued, one solution that addressed timber use was to insist that individuals buy permits and decide upon a harvest area prior to cutting, a

practice that was not without controversy. As the 1898 Senate Hearings of April 4<sup>th</sup> show, the scale of these permits and availability of timber for development was a concern for the federal government who wanted to ensure that mining could prosper unhindered. There was fear that a permit of 25 square miles that had been made available to persons with their own portable mill, would mean less wood for miners' needs. Timber was necessary for most gold mining processes in the Yukon. Morse explores the processes of mining gold as a disassembly of nature in which the elements of wood, water, gravel and permafrost were predominant, she writes "... before they could go into the earth they first had to go into the forest." (2003: 93). Wood was necessary to melt permafrost<sup>9</sup>, for underground supports and for infrastructure. The Honourable Mr. M. Macdonald stated that:

We know very well that up in the Yukon country no mining can be done without burning a great deal of timber and fuel to thaw the frozen ground, and in the winter time a great deal of fuel is also required for domestic purposes. We can imagine the dissatisfaction and trouble it would cause if a stranger came into the country and cut off the timber of the miners unless the government took care the limits were outside of the actual mining region. (Holland Bros. 1898: 575)

To ensure that such issues were being addressed, the Territory's first Crown Timber Office was established that spring in Dawson City. The office was headed by F.X. Gosselin and by the end of that same year 51 timber berths were reported to be active near Dawson, and on the Yukon, Pelly, Stewart and Teslin Rivers. As timber use became more organized, the mapping and control of ad-hoc timber berths became a priority. These berths were areas where logging was occurring and to which a timber permit

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<sup>9</sup> During winter months dead wood (often harvested after the deliberate setting of forest fires) was cut and burned on frozen ground. The thawed soil and gravel was set aside to process for gold in the warmer months. This was repeated throughout the winter, burning enormous amounts of wood and stockpiling large amounts of gravel.

should have been allocated. The term 'timber berth' also often referred to the exchange point for timber men working in camps along various rivers to sell their wood to those who needed it. Previous to their establishment, a steam boat would stop roughly every six hours, at which time crew would chop wood and load it on to the boat. As boat traffic increased during the early gold rush years, it did not take long for an industry to develop along major rivers. Wood was cut five inches in diameter and four feet long, stacked on a still no higher than 6ft tall and no farther than 50 ft. from the river boat (Webb, 1993). These berths were also important sources of employment for local First Nations people who were increasingly being excluded from the developing formal economy (Cohn, 2001; Coates & Morrison, 2005). Elsewhere in the Yukon, steamships operating primarily for the Hudson Bay trading posts were also impacting northern forests. Anderson et al. (2000) report that in what is today the Gwich'in settlement area in the Yukon's north east, the combined impact of missionaries, traders, prospectors and steamship companies during the gold rush period and earlier, were devastating for forests. According to the authors of the study, Gwich'in people found Europeans practiced indiscriminate forestry practices, steam ships in particular often requiring an enormous amount of wood. Coates and Morrison (2005) report that during this time, most First Nations avoided mining communities and chose instead to remain away from the newly emerging communities. Even had they been interested, First Nations were unwelcome as labourers in the mining camps, though some found a new source of income through providing wild game to be sold at shops in Dawson City (McCandless, 1985).

At the height of the gold rush, approximately 250 sternwheelers traveled rivers in the Territory, and woodcutter camps and settlements in the Yukon were located

approximately 25 to 30 miles apart along the Yukon River (NDC, 1993). Innis (1936) reported that steamboats between Dawson and Whitehorse could consume as much as 100 cords per round trip. This was the beginning of an industry that would be an important part of the Yukon for more than half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and upon which early transportation was dependant.

Dawson City, the center of activity during the gold rush years, quickly became a lumber capital as its location along the Yukon River and high local demand encouraged the establishment of mills. A sudden and substantial need for wood occurred immediately with the arrival of miners into Dawson City. Sam. C. Dunham, an American official, reported a growth in buildings in Dawson City from only a few in January of 1897 to four to five hundred by that fall (Eamer, 1997). All of these buildings had to be built from the quickest available material: local wood. At the peak of the gold rush there were seven mills in Dawson and many more along the Klondike and Yukon Rivers<sup>10</sup>.

By 1899, the six Dawson-area sawmills had a combined capacity of 100,000 feet of lumber per day. Yet their average output was limited to 60,000 feet due to the limited supply of logs. The great demand meant that milled lumber was seldom given proper time to season. It was quickly utilized by customers eager to make use of the limited supply. (Eamer 1997: 16)

It was not long before wood shortages around popular settlements and stops became problematic. Personal accounts of locals and travelers at the time support this. For instance, in his account of his journey from Juneau to Dawson on the Yukon River in 1899 a traveler named Joseph Greene comments on the forests and stops at timber Berths along his journey as well as the need to stock up on wood before nearing Dawson

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<sup>10</sup> For more detail concerning the operation and function of mills in the Dawson City area, see the *Yukon Saw Mill Company: last of the gold rush sawmills* (1997), prepared by Claire Eamer for the Heritage Branch, Yukon Government

City where wood was quite scarce and could cost as much as \$20-40 a cord where further downstream it was closer to \$8 (Greene, 1899).



Image 4.1 A pile of wood near Dawson City reportedly worth \$750, 000 at the time, thought to be early 20<sup>th</sup> century. University of Alaska Fairbanks Archives. Selid-Bassoc Photography Collection 1964-92-382

Though the Klondike gold rush was short lived, intensive wood use during this period would be felt for many years<sup>11</sup>. In June of 1911, a survey letter directed to the Gold Commissioner reported that “...there is hardly enough timber along many of the nearby rivers and creeks to support the individual mining operation.” (McLeod, 1911). An earlier report from the year before to the Commissioner of the Yukon Territory from McLeod also includes accounts of areas along many creeks which run into the Yukon

<sup>11</sup> By 1900 Dawson City’s booming population had begun to decline, especially after the discovery of gold near Nome, Alaska. Morse (2003), reports that for those miners who left Dawson for Alaska, wood camps were important resting points during their journey.

river being "...practically denuded of wood and timber for 2 miles from the mouth, all of which was taken to Alaska." (Mcleod, 1911). Webb (1985) reports that in many areas demand was high enough that most wood companies in operation along the Yukon River had to move camps every year to ensure their supply continued.

During the Klondike years the federal government had not encouraged the signing of treaties with Yukon First Nations, nor created a reserve settlement system. Some (Coates and Morrison, 2005; Coates, 1991) have argued that the government was hesitant to allocate lands which in the future could prove to hold valuable minerals. Those First Nations that did choose to remain near main settlements were often allocated to the edges of communities, or often to settlements outside of the community entirely. For instance, in Whitehorse, Dawson City and Mayo reserves were set up well outside of the communities. Coates (1991) reports that in the post-Klondike years often First Nations could enter a community to buy goods and see a missionary or Indian agent but they were not encouraged to stay. In fact, in 1933 Dawson City invoked a permit system, requiring those Natives who wished to remain in the city to obtain permission from officials.

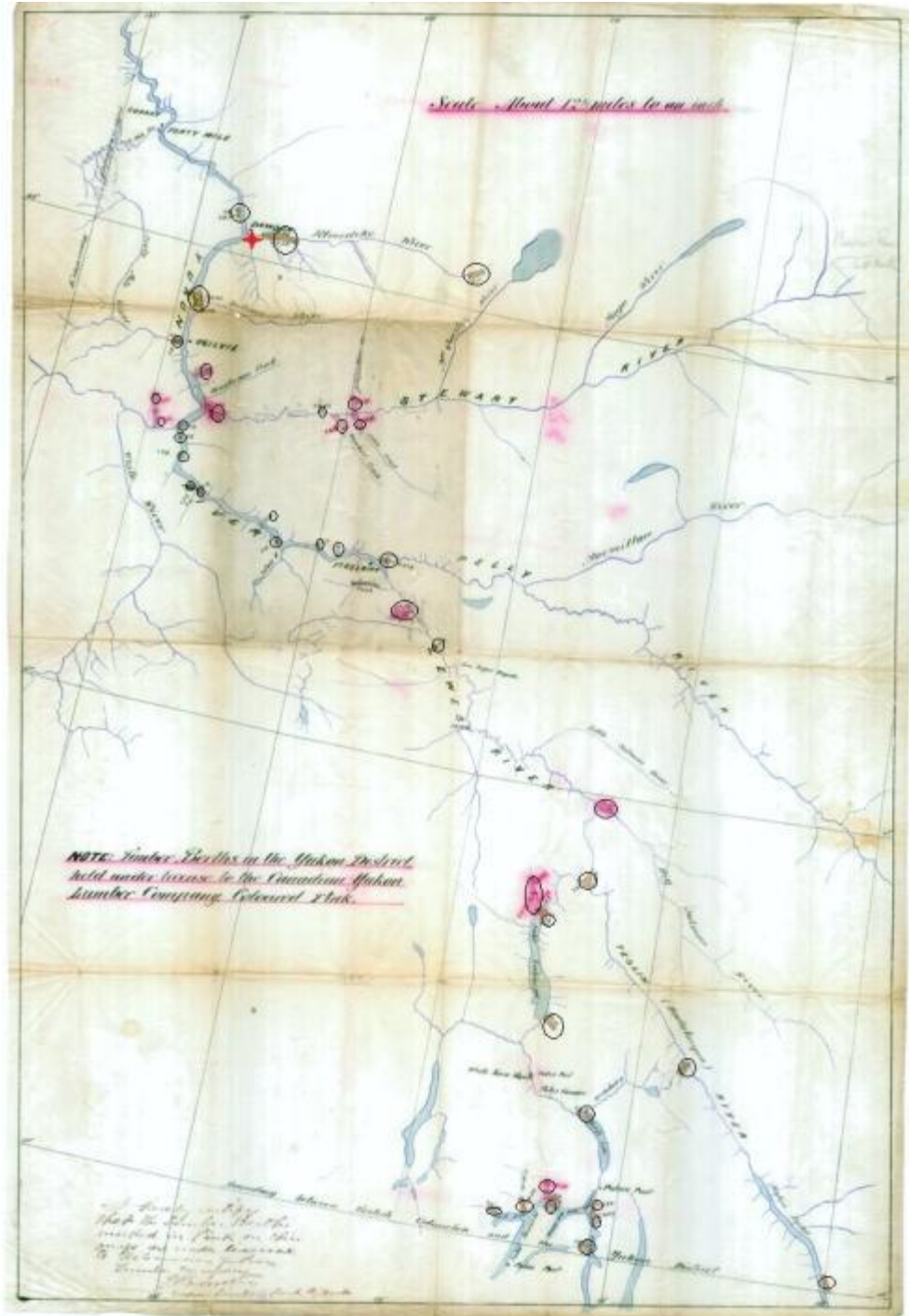
The effects of deforestation were far reaching, not the least of which were the problems of frequent floods, and creeks and rivers being clogged with heavy run-off from nearby bare hills and mountains. Morse (2003) writes that such activity changed the nature and meaning of those places and redefined what was possible within them. For instance, fishing, hunting and gathering became more difficult if not impossible in such areas, altering the potential of these locations to something far more limited.

Morse writes:

Gold seekers stripped vegetation from the earth, rerouted streams, and completely altered long stretches of stream valleys. In order to produce

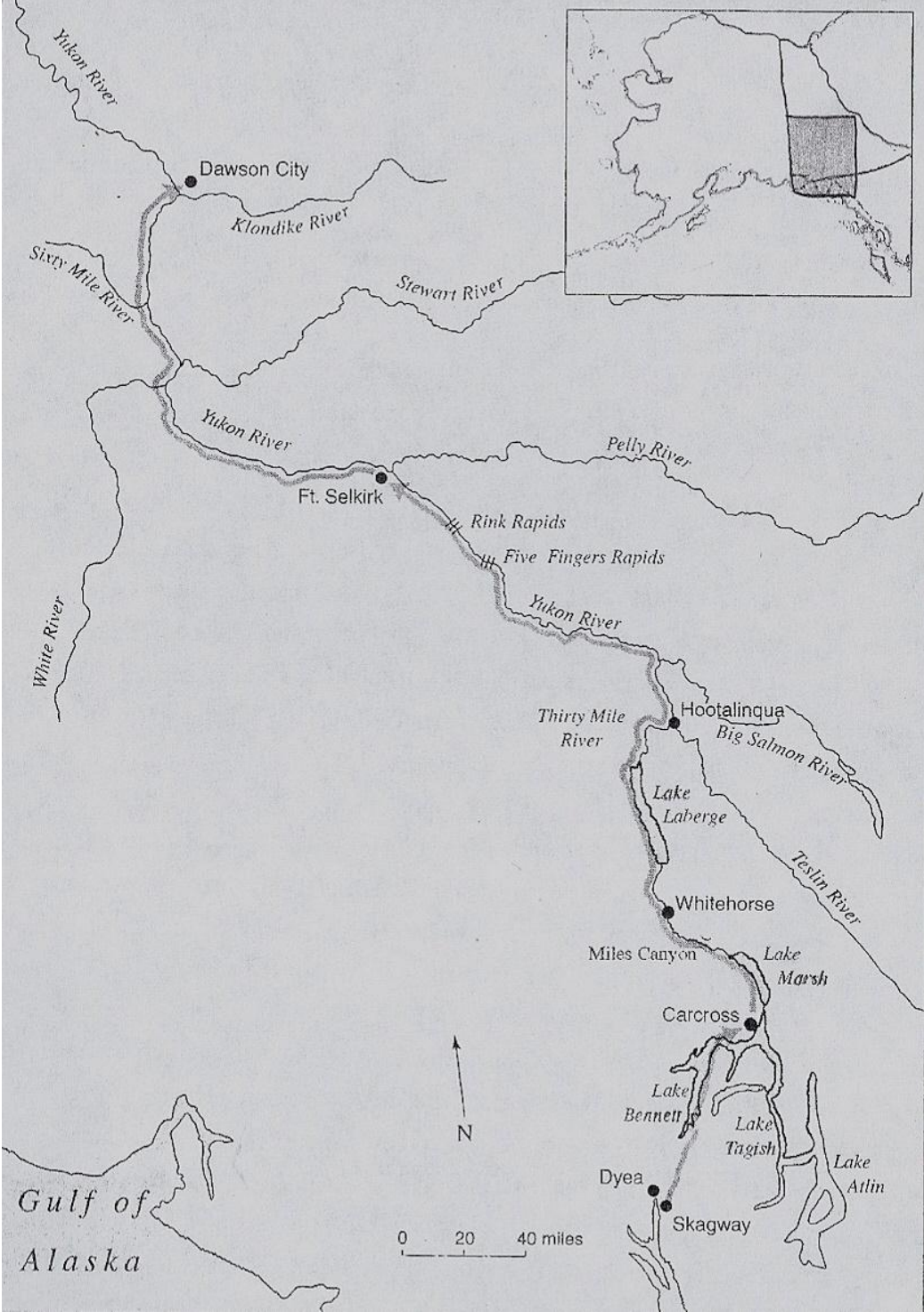
gold, they consumed whole ecosystems, or rather the pieces of whole ecosystems, broken into constituent parts in the form of endless piles of wood and dirt and carefully channeled streams of water. (2003: 91)

Both First Nations and non-First Nations felt firsthand the effects of sudden and poorly planned timber harvesting. Morse (*idem*) and Coates and Morrison (2005) both report that many deliberate forest fires were set during this time in order to secure dry wood for mining processes. Morse (2003) writes that while First Nations had been using fire to influence the structure and content of Yukon's forests previous to the Klondike gold rush, the fires that were deliberately and accidentally set during that time caused far larger scale changes. For example, the combined impacts of timber harvest, fires, and mining made it a difficult habitat for native fish and animals. Morse (*idem*) reports that salmon, grayling and whitefish were unable to feed, migrate or spawn on many of the mined rivers and creeks. As a consequence, many traditional fishing grounds for local First Nations were no longer viable places, particularly for the Han First Nations, also referred to as the Tr'ondek Hwech'in who were the original inhabitants of the Dawson area. The Han village, originally located at the mouth of the Klondike River (Dawson City) had been forced to relocate down river to what is now known as Moosehide. Local hunting and fishing was made difficult for the Han as they were forced to look farther for once local resources.



Map 4. 1 Map of Select Yukon Timber Berths 1898. Note reads: "Timber berths in the Yukon District held under license to the Canadian Yukon Company colored pink." Scale 1: 729 000. All timber berths indicated on the map have been circled in black by the author of this thesis. Dawson City is indicated by the red star. Source: Yukon Archives, Whitehorse H-1774





Map 4.2 For clarity purposes I have included this map of Yukon waterways, borrowed from Morse, 2003. The arrow (grey line) indicates one common route taken by prospectors entering the Territory during the gold rush.



Image 4 2. Image Caption: Wood Camp Bow Shot of the 'Gleaner' docked at wood camp. Stacks of cord wood visible on shore and a man standing at one end of the gang plank with a wood cart that is to be loaded on board. 1915. Source: Yukon Archives, Whitehorse Vic Jane fonds # 004339



Image 4. 3 Wood Camp. Cords of wood piled at a timber berth along the Yukon River. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Source: Yukon Archives, Whitehorse May Menzies fonds #008696

### Post-Rush Years

Though there are conflicting reports as to the availability of wood in the post-rush years, it is clear that intensive use of wood during the Territory's early years had a heavy impact on forests near the most traveled rivers and near towns. In 1945, the Canadian Geographic Journal ran an article written by Lewis Robinson titled *Agriculture and Forests of the Yukon Territory*. In it, Robinson provides a description of the Territory's forestry and agricultural potential. He writes:

The forests were cut to become lumber for buildings and timber for mines; thousands of cords were used as fuelwood for the river steamers or were burned to thaw the permanently frozen ground for surface digging, before the present cold water thawing method was developed. Most of the timber resources of the local Dawson-Klondike area were exhausted during the early mining days, but the total forest reserves of the Yukon were more than adequate for the small populations and remain today for future utilization (1945: 55)

Robinson's optimism regarding the availability of wood reserves for the future, is countered by a report titled *Lumbering in the Yukon Territory* by D.F. Merrill, superintendent of Forestry, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources (1961). Merrill writes that lumbering was one of the most important secondary industries in the early years for the Territory and that for about 30 years after the gold rush nearly all lumber used in Territory was local manufacture; used for heating homes and running the river steamers which traversed the Yukon River between 1898 and 1956. However, he states:

These early timber demands practically exhausted the supply of accessible timber in the Dawson area and after 1930 lumber requirements for Dawson and Whitehorse were supplied largely by shipments from British Columbia. (1961: 2)

While intensive timber use subsided once the rush of late 19<sup>th</sup> century was over, demand for wood did not disappear entirely. Despite a large population drop in the post-rush years<sup>12</sup>, in a report of the Mining Lands and Yukon Branch, H.H. Rowatt writes that in 1920 there were still 82 timber berths held under license to cut timber in the Yukon (Department of the Interior, 1920). Furthermore, while the Yukon River was an important area of wood use, many communities also depended on wood bought from wood camps to heat their homes and to supply material for building. While demand was small in comparison to what it had been, wood camps were still important part of the Yukon's economic and social shape.

One business that operated in the Territory in the post-rush years was owned by the Ryder family, which operated the majority of wood camps in the Whitehorse area until 1965. In a personal account of her family's history, which was compiled from family interviews and published sources, Marny Ryder provides some insight into the place of wood camps in society by tracing her family's story. The Ryder family had eight major locations in 30 mile radius around Whitehorse which were used in their 58 years of operation (map 3.2). Ryder describes the post gold rush and pre-Alaska highway years as relatively quiet and stable. Her family were important employers in the area, especially to local First Nations people. At this time in the Territory the inclusion of First Nations into the established economic sector was still very limited. As mentioned above, though First Nations were not welcome in many communities in the post-rush years, Coates (1991) argues that the existence of a secondary economic sector, most notably trapping, offered First Nations alternative incomes and a means to continue traditional lifestyles. Ryder's unpublished manuscript provides an account of the inclusion of First

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<sup>12</sup> Morrison and Coates report the Yukon's population in 1901 to be 27 000 people, in 1911 to be 8500 people, and in 1924 to be 4,157 people.

Nations into the wood cutting economy on a limited scale. It is possible the Ryder family worked with many different nations, though the Kwanlin Dün, Carcross/Tagish, Champagne and Aishihik, Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation are those most associated with Whitehorse and surrounding area. First Nations employment in wood camps is corroborated by historians such as Coates and Morrison (2005) and by research conducted in the Gwich'in region of the north east Yukon (Anderson et al. 2000). However, Ryder's account lacks the context in which such relations existed. Though the wood industry provided an important source of income, First Nations people were largely excluded from alternative ways to enter the main stream economy and often felt the effects of institutionalized racism. Ryder writes:

During the summer months entire families would move out to the wood lots as early as April – green tree cutting had to be completed by September in order for the wood to dry for winter use. During the peak season, 25-30 men could be employed at any one camp. This number would vary as the Indian families moved in and out of the camp pursuing their own life style. The fishing in the area of the camps was not usually good so a family would disappear from the camp site for several days and then quietly reappear whenever the fishing trip was finished. (1987: 4)

Using interviews conducted with relatives, Ryder describes life in a wood camp. Camps were moved whenever wood supply was exhausted and different camps provided different types of wood<sup>13</sup>. She states that many generations of both whites and Natives often worked in wood camps and that work was often a family affair. Fathers would cut trees, first with an axe and saw and in much later years with a chain saw<sup>14</sup> while other

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<sup>13</sup> Green or dry (dry being dead wood standing, perhaps after a forest fire, or disease). As mentioned above, reports from earlier years suggest that some miners and wood camp owners may have deliberately set fire to forests to increase the amount of dry wood available.

<sup>14</sup> The introduction of the combustion engine occurred in the 1920s, though it was adopted slowly in the Territory, the availability of trucks to transport logs, and the introduction and use of hydraulic power occurred between 1940-1970 (Apsey, 2000). I am unaware of when exactly and

members of the family piled the wood to be taken to town. Work camps changed with the season; winter camps were often located north of the Yukon River as wood could only be brought to town when the river was frozen. Ryder wood camps operated until 1965, when demand had decreased to such a degree that the family chose to consolidate their interests in a Whitehorse lumber supply store within the town. Ryder's positive account of Native-White relations during this time is somewhat supported by Coates (1991) who found that ideas of segregation while still present, were less strong in bush camps and trading posts than in communities<sup>15</sup>.

Forests were an important source of material and employment during this period and often acted as a middle space between town and bush, where trappers and prospectors could stop to pick up mail and hear news. While small on a scale of economy and environmental change, forests during this time played a constant role in the daily lives of Yukon residents. The seasonality of wood cutting has in the past, and still does today, allow for other activities such as fishing, hunting and gathering for both First Nations and non-First Nations residents. In *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, the impact of the loss of steamer traffic on the Yukon River is noted as an important source of change. The document, put forward by the Yukon Native Brotherhood is largely written in first person.

For fifty years 460 miles of the Yukon River between Whitehorse and Dawson were spotted with Indian cabins, Indian Villages and woodcamps. We lived in our own homes, cut our own wood, hauled our own water, hunted, fished and trapped. To buy other things we needed, we cut firewood for the river steamers and sold it to the operators of the boats.

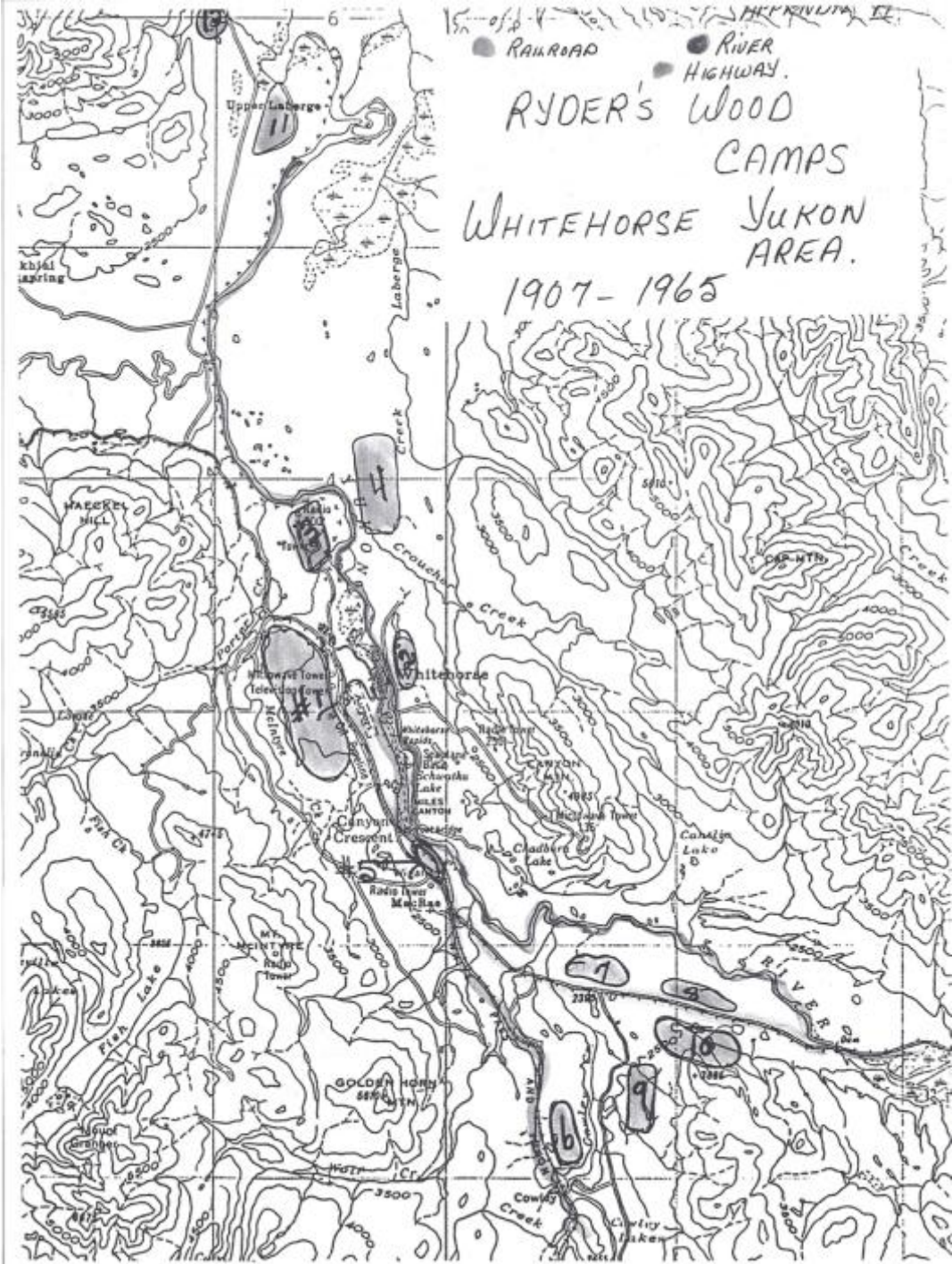
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to what extent the chainsaw began to be incorporated into Yukon logging. The integration of these technologies into Yukon society would have varied on a case by case basis.

<sup>15</sup> During the post-rush years and continuing on well into the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, views that First Nations should be kept out of towns were strong. Justification was based in part on a paternalistic stance that First Nations should be kept away from the immoral influences of cities for their own wellbeing (Coates, 2001).

The boats were taken off when the Dawson Highway was built in the early 1950's. This left us without our main source of income and no communications or transportation. By this time our life had become dependent upon all three. (1973: 11/12)

During the post-rush years, steamer traffic meant a continuous steady demand for wood along major rivers. Horse and sleigh were often used to move logs, which was usually done in winter months. Logs were then hauled to a central spot and either cut into fuel wood for steamer use or milled with a portable sawmill. Otherwise, logs were rafted to the closest stationary mill. In later years, small pickup trucks were used and often shared by the wood cutters along the River. (NDC, 1993) While demand was limited, the timber industry, wood camps, and the use of wood itself were important and necessary aspects of life in the Yukon.



Map 4.3 Ryder Wood Camps Near the Whitehorse Area. Source: Yukon Archives, Whitehorse MSS 249 91/106



### **The Alaska Highway and Timber Use**

A second period of intensive forest use occurred during WWII and the creation of the Alaska Highway which was the second highest period of wood consumption in the Yukon up to the mid-1990s (NDC, 1993). The Yukon once again was of interest to southern powers when, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941, the United States became concerned with northern defense and proposed the construction of a highway that would connect Alaska with the south. Previous to this, post-rush Yukon had been largely ignored by the south and little had changed legislatively regarding the use of wood. However, between 1942 and 1946, thousands of American soldiers entered the Territory to build what is today the Alaska Highway. Also during this time was the building of the Canol road, part of an American-initiated oil pipeline project that was intended to bring fuel from Norman Wells, Northwest Territories to Whitehorse in order to supply demand created by increased road traffic and airfields. The road built for the project is between Johnson's Crossing on the Alaska Highway and Ross River, Yukon. These two projects as well as the creation of a number of airfields throughout the Territory were collectively known as the North West Defense Project. Together they meant the Territory would be connected to the south in a more immediate and permanent way than ever before. (Coates and Morrison, 1992, 2005; Kupperberg, 2009).

Wood used for these roads went towards bridge construction, fuel wood for the army camps, housing, and corduroy road construction. Corduroy road construction was a unique solution to the problem of melting permafrost and muskegs. Early engineers laid corduroy, which are logs placed side by side on a right angle to the roadbed across

its width. This allowed water to drain off and did not disturb permafrost, though it inhibited future levelling or grading (Webb 1993, NDC 1993) see figure 4.4 for an example of such use. During the construction period of the Alaska Highway, cords of wood taken annually jumped from 13,658 in 1942-43 to 20,403 in 1943-44. According to Robinson (1945) this total “...does not include a much larger amount which went directly into defense projects, free of permit requirements. (1945: 71)”.<sup>16</sup> While much wood was used during road construction, much was also wasted. There are reports such as those by Gertrude Baskine (1946) in *Hitchhiking the Alaska Highway* that suggest wood was often left to rot on the side of the road. She writes:

The sides of the highway were untidy and disaster laden: fine spruce and poplar, as tall as any still upright, lay toppled in all direction, sprung and flattened by the merciless dozers...When I asked my companion what would be done with all this wood he shrugged and said: “ I can only tell you what one bulldozer driver said: ‘ We just walk em’ down, shove em aside and let ‘em lay’. “ (1946: 17)

Coates and Morrison (1995) report that near the end of the war many camps switched to oil stoves for heat and as a result as many as 8000 cords of wood cut in 16 foot lengths were stacked and left in the bush. Also a problem was the increase in forest fires which occurred due to the use of heavy equipment, portable sawmills, poor storage of fuel and tossing cigarette butts into dry forested areas. Coates and Morrison also report that such forest fires were probably the most immediate and wide-ranging cause of damage by construction projects of this time. Such fires extended the impact of the Alaska Highway and Canol Road well beyond the narrow geographic regions in which they were placed.

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<sup>16</sup> For further information on the construction of the Alaska Highway and wood use, see Kupperberg, 2009; Coates & Morrison, 1992



Image 4.4 Corduroy road construction along the Alaska Highway. Yukon Archives, Andrew Porubsky Fonds 2007/7 PHO 636#30084

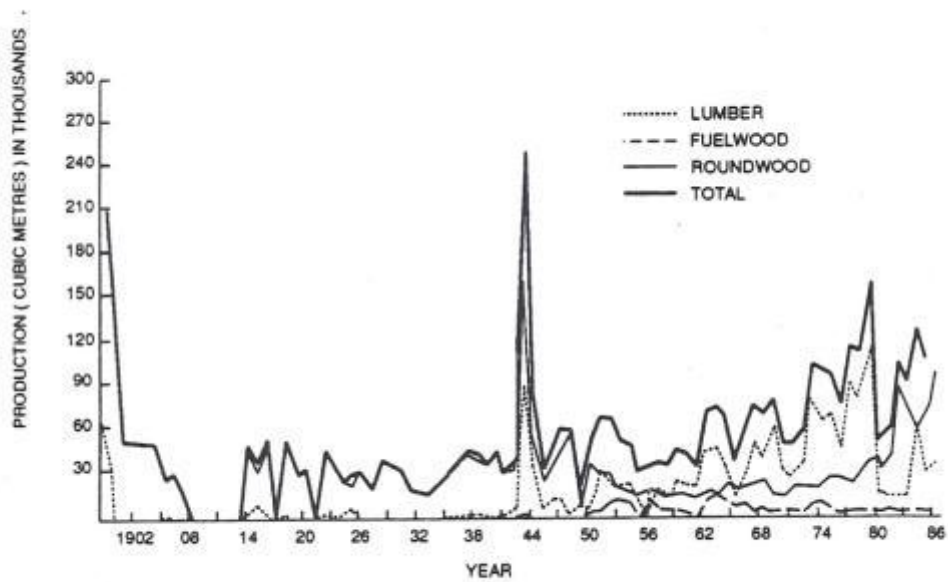


Figure 1. Yukon forest harvest 1899–1986

**Figure 4.1** Forest harvest in the Yukon between 1899 and 1986. Heartwell (1987)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> In his study methodology Heartwell points to a lack of historic research concerning Yukon's forest industry. He states that because of this, most of the material for his numbers are archival

The Canol pipeline and road project initiated in 1943, a smaller endeavour than the Alaska Highway, reportedly used one million board feet of lumber, 144,000 linear feet for telephone poles, and 3000 cords of dry fuel wood (both Robinson 1945, and NDC, 1993, cite this data but neither provide an original source). Two mills were built along the Canol road and finding local timber was an important part of the road's original survey work; as is seen by comments on timber quality scattered throughout survey reports:

April 14th, mile 196, 3800 feet. "The finest timber seen since leaving Camp Canol is found in this lake valley. Spruce, up to 14 inches and about 40 feet high are found here suitable for small bridge timbers. This timber extends for four miles on both sides of Godland Lakes. (Money, 1943)

Marny Ryder states that, though army troops often cut their own wood, her family's wood camps around Whitehorse were kept quite busy during this time supplying lumber to the newly growing city. This time was particularly dramatic for those who lived in the bush and smaller communities, many of whom were First Nations and had not been consulted or forewarned about the changes to come. Coates and Morrison (2005) write:

A year after construction started on the highway, Whitehorse had some 10,000 people, the vast majority from the United States....That these changes were directed by outsiders was nothing new for a territory used to external control and the instability of a boom-and-bust economy. (2005: 253)

First Nations communities were impacted heavily by the changes brought through the Alaska Highway. Though they were not passive actors in these processes, the impacts of new disease and increased segregation combined with decreased isolation of communities meant that impacts were felt by many First Nations communities. As with

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in nature. However, his report provides limited sources for harvest numbers, often quoting incomplete output data from mills that existed at the time. Specific year by year data is available in his work only beginning in the 1960s. Regarding employment in the forest sector, his estimates rely on Census Canada material beginning in 1941.

previous periods of change, many First Nations people were able for a time to take advantage of the economic benefits provided by occasional work as labourers on such projects while also continuing the movements and rhythms of hunting and gathering lifestyle (Coates & Morrison, 1995).

This period along with the earlier gold rush years are considered Yukon's two main timber booms previous to the modern era. As figure 4.1 shows, timber use certainly spiked during these times though its use and importance never entirely faded away.

### **Post-World War II Timber Use**

This period is largely characterized by a marked increase in southern interest in the Yukon Territory and its residents. In the decades that followed the war, the advent of the 1945 Family Allowance Plan, increased regulation of animal harvest, and an increasing southern concern in both northern conservation and development, meant that the federally-controlled Territory was increasingly becoming part of a wider network of influences and priorities.

For example, McCandless (1976) argues that during this post-war influx of new voices, local value was replaced by one imposed from the outside, and which was backed by the force of law. As far as big game hunting and local use of wildlife (including trapping)<sup>18</sup> were concerned, the post war period was the beginning of enormous change. This is particularly true for hunting he argues, as the value of animals for meat, became overshadowed by the value of animals for trophies. This shift is seen by impacts

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<sup>18</sup> Trapping regulations drastically changed during this time. An imposed trap line registration system was introduced in 1951, this combined with the collapse of the fur market and the creation of a \$10 registration fee had enormous impacts on First Nations ability to trap.

of legislation that prohibited the sale of wild meat in 1947<sup>19</sup>, and other legislation that saw the further growth and entrenchment in the big-game hunting industry. Forests as spaces to be used for the necessities of daily life began to be overshadowed as forests as spaces of recreation and retreat. This shift has had lasting impacts on how contemporary Yukoners understand the value of forests and of the Yukon more generally. It created a divide that is still apparent today between those who feel Yukon forests should be used and appreciated through extraction activities (such as hunting and logging) and those who feel its best use is non-intrusive. This last view would not have been possible without the increasing availability of imported food, building material and fuel that began during the mid-twentieth century.

While overall timber production declined in post-war years, an increase in mining, tourism, and government activity after the war led to steady production well through the 1960s and 1970s (Heartwell, 1987). For instance, in 1961, over four million board feet of lumber and one and a half million linear feet of mine timbers were produced for local use (Flanagan, 1963), with six sawmills in operation, though their annual production was small (Merrill, 1961). During this time there was also new investment in the milling sector and several new mills began operation. Dry-kiln facilities installed in one firm even allowed local production to compete with imported timber products. Sawn wood production increased while timber for fuel wood declined dramatically, with the loss of river steamers in the 50s and the import of oil as cheap fuel for heating (Heartwell, 1987). Rapid growth in resource extraction centres occurred in the 1970s,

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<sup>19</sup> Decades after it was made illegal in other parts of Canada, this was made possible by amendments to the Game Ordinance in 1947. This most directly impacted First Nations at the time that had been supplying wild meat to Yukon residents. Interestingly, McCandless attributes this change not to concerns over food safety, but to a public correlation between market meat demand and species endangerment, a spin-off of the bison population drop in the early 1900s.

following strong economic growth and housing shortages. The construction of the Cypris mine which went into operation in 1967 in Faro, as well as numerous others in the following years, including the Keno Hill Mine near Mayo, and Copper Mine near Whitehorse, ensured a continued demand for timber. Production was low but steady and many small mills were in operation to ensure the supply for immediate needs, though by this time many wood products were also being imported from elsewhere on the increasingly well-traveled roadways.

Technology for timber extraction had also changed and a more mechanized industry had been established. The 1970s also saw the growth of forest-related research projects which would continue to take place over the following decades. These included thinning, planting and sowing trials, sample plots and wildfire studies (Yukon Territory Government, 2009). Up to this time, there had been limited official interest in understanding the dynamics and potential of northern forests in an organized manner. Though not large, these projects signalled a new effort by governments to understand Yukon forest potential. By this time Whitehorse had long surpassed Dawson City as the main center of commercial and government activity<sup>20</sup>.

The strong connection between the lumber industry and mining meant that forestry continued to be a secondary, supporting aspect of the economy. Cohn (2001) provides an insightful account of shifting regulations and timber use during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He suggests that new demands made by increasingly mobilized First Nations, increased market demand and Territorial aspirations of self-sufficiency led to a cognitive breakdown among government officials. DIAND during this time was

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<sup>20</sup> By 1950, public administration, the liquor controller, forestry officer and chief telegraph service had all been transferred to Whitehorse. In 1951 it was announced that the territorial council would also move to Whitehorse and on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1953 Whitehorse officially became the new capital of the Territory. (Coates and Morrison, 2005)

responsible for the management of natural resources and also dealt with First Nations demands of self-government and land claims. In 1982, the federal government commissioned an overview of Yukon's forest industry titled *An Evaluation of the Northern Affairs Forest Management Program* (Mactavish, 1982). In it, DIAND identifies a number of 'clients': industry, native northerners, other public and government. Cohn (2001) points out that the division between industry and First Nations interests highlights the fact that DIAND often saw the two as mutually exclusive and that they "...resisted the notion of a commercial component within an Aboriginal right to trees." (2001: 284). Up to this point, First Nations residents had often been employed by the timber industry, but seldom took part in management or planning. As a result, the role of First Nations in forest management, industry, and in local small-scale harvesting, remained a contentious issue during this period, eventually being formally addressed in the Umbrella Final Agreement and individual land claims.

In the early 1980s a national economic recession saw many of the Territory's mines close and timber demand decrease (Webb, 1993). In a 1985 report on the state of forestry in the Territory, it is stated that there were four sawmills in the Watson Lake area which supplied roughly 70% of lumber cut in the Territory and an additional 20 sawmills in the rest of the Territory which were quite small and operated only when demand existed. This report confirms a slump in lumber demand due to mine closures and a recession.

Early-1980s employment in the industry was reported to drop as low as 40 people employed over the entire territory (Heartwell, 1987). However, the slump was relatively short term, and a similar report commissioned by the Yukon Government two years



later, describes the current state of forestry as small but important, with a reported 82 firms operating around the Territory:

These businesses are small firms (< 5 employees) that are predominantly owned by long term Yukoners and are essentially seasonal in nature. Most firms and employees do not generate full-time income from these businesses. Rather, forestry activities allow Yukoners the opportunity to obtain supplemental winter income and thereby supplement other seasonal endeavours such as placer mining, agriculture and fishing.....Overall, the industry contributes about 1% of the total Gross Territorial product, but provides an important source of employment, especially for rural Yukoners. (Heartwell, 1987:7)

However, yet another report meant to estimate the state of Yukon's forest industry, this time for the early 1990s (FERENCE Weicker & Company, 1993), states that of those 82 firms listed as active, only 17, or 21% were still active in 1992.

This turnover was partly due to "...the relatively low capital requirements to enter the industry and the small scale of operation of most businesses." ( FERENCE Weicker & Company, 1993: 48) as well as "...the high degree of mobility of the industry itself and the fact that people move in and out of the industry quite frequently based on market conditions and other potential opportunities available." (Idem: ii). This perhaps best addresses the quick changes in industry status provided by previous reports; the small scale of the timber industry in the Yukon has allowed individuals to take advantage of periods of high demand, while also following other opportunities. While one could argue this is a characteristic of necessity created by a poor and unstable market, it has suited the unique economic and cultural needs of many residents for the last century. While the Yukon timber industry has failed to compare to its southern neighbours, it has been kept alive by small but steady local demand and the ingenuity of small operators who were able to provide for this as well as brief periods of higher demand.

### Modern Timber Use

Heartwell (1987) points out that the absence of a formal forest policy and forest management regime became a problem for the industry in that it restricted firms by limiting their access to timber and by inconsistently applying existing regulations. During the 1980s (the time to which he is referring) the Territory was still following timber regulations under the *Territorial Lands Act* (R.S., C. T-6,s.1.) within which regulations were enacted in 1954 and modified on occasion (White, 1995). As Tough (2002) later pointed out, there was no Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) policy regarding forest extraction and the existing legislation held only two clauses dealing directly with forestry. In a time of gradually increasing timber production, settlement negotiations with First Nations<sup>21</sup> and an increased interest in the state of Yukon's environment from conservation groups, legislation became a priority.

Extensive consultation, studies, and work would follow in the next 20 years that would see control over Yukon forests eventually pass to the Territory in 2003 through devolution<sup>22</sup>, though it was not until January of 2011 that a Yukon Forest Act would be implemented. The 1990 Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA), a document created to ensure equal and just individual settlements for each First Nation, determined the shape of much of the regulative changes and policy shifts to come in the following years. For instance, the UFA outlines the need for regional land use plans. Other plans, such as regional strategic forest management plans and wildlife management plans, would ideally address more specific issues and would fit within the broader land use plan for

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<sup>21</sup> The Umbrella Final Agreement signed in 1990 led the way to individual First Nations Settlements, beginning with the Champagne and Aishihik, Teslin Tligit, Nacho Nyak Dun and Vuntut Gwitchin First Nations in 1995.

<sup>22</sup> Though the transfer agreement between the federal government and the Yukon Territory known as devolution was completed in 2001, it was not until April 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 that the Territorial government gained official control over the management of its natural resources.

that area. The UFA also dealt with issues of land title, land use planning, the creation of the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB)<sup>23</sup>, and the creation of local renewable resource councils. All of which, particularly in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, meant an increase in public consultation and forest planning.

However, while the UFA outlined the need for planning and consultation, the process did not immediately lead to Territorial legislation concerning forests. During the mid-1990s a series of events led to an unprecedented hike in timber exports in the Yukon Territory<sup>24</sup>. For perhaps the first time in Yukon history substantial amounts of wood were being exported south and DIAND was caught unprepared. No annual allowable cut had been set for the Territory, no regional forest management plans existed, and little community consultation had occurred. Cohn (2001) writes:

During the 94-5 harvest season a recently hired RMO in Watson lake advised loggers in BC and his native Alberta about the loose Yukon regulations and low stumpage fees. As word got out, the Watson Lake district was flooded with permit applications from loggers and mills in BC and Alberta, and harvest levels spiked. (2001: 295)

This period included the building of a new mill in Watson Lake, and revived hopes for a long-term sustainable timber industry. However, a series of events including supply shortage and local protest ensured that this was quickly followed by one of the lowest periods in timber production in the Territory's history. The price spike meant that outside companies were able to cut and export raw timber at a much cheaper rate than local mills could process it and as a result many Yukon mills were run out of business.

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<sup>23</sup> The Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB), was established under the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA). The board reviews the social and environmental effects of proposed projects and other activities that have the potential to affect the Territory. This is a requirement as laid out in chapter 12 of the UFA.

<sup>24</sup> Cohn (2001) traces this production hike to increased housing markets in the United States combined with a period of limited timber access in both British Columbia and the US West coast due to a number of conservation and forest management agreements. Strained mill inputs in the south, meant that northern logs became a viable option.

Subsequently, the Yukon became more dependent than ever on imported wood. The exportation of green logs south with little to no consultation with local First Nations and concerned residents, combined with a lack of legislation and an unsteady market, resulted in the near collapse of the timber industry in the Yukon. Local groups including loggers, First Nations, and environmental groups organized a number of protests, either for or against large scale extraction. DIAND was forced to suspend the permitting processes and as a result on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1995, loggers who were frustrated with delays in gaining permits held a demonstration at the DIAND headquarters in downtown Whitehorse "...completely encircling the administrative headquarters with rigs, bulldozers, loaders, and other heavy equipment." (Cohn, 2001: 305). Earlier in the month, the Liard First Nations took DIAND to court over their failure to comply with Chapter 17 of the UFA which outlines wood harvest based on treaty rights. For a short time, forest management combined with social and economic issues and became a major priority for local and federal governments.

George Tough, commissioned by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, released a report in 2002 that succinctly summarised the state of Yukon forest relations at the time. In it, he interviewed a number of individuals interested in Yukon forests, particularly concerning the events of the mid-nineties 'green-gold rush.' Tough finds that mistrust between the Territorial government, DIAND, Yukon Forest Industry Association, and conservationists ultimately halted all cooperation during that period. Cohn (2001) confirms this lack of cooperation, emphasising the:

...debilitating effect of cognitively discontinuous departmental divisions, exclusive territorial provincial aspirations and volatile market forces on interorganizational relations and First Nation access to resources on the ground. (2001: 367)

Tough recommended that agreements be completed before substantial harvest continued. He states:

A Yukon forest policy will have the task of bridging these gaps, and forging a territory-wide consensus, benefiting all Yukoners. The Yukon Landscape includes too many failed forest enterprises. It is also host to an ongoing and largely unproductive debate about forest issues, with strong views along both sides and a vacuum in the middle. (Tough, 2002: 2)

What followed was nearly a decade of intensive consultations and planning efforts.

Ultimately this has led to two finalized Strategic Forest Management Plans and one draft plan<sup>25</sup>, numerous regional timber harvest plans,<sup>26</sup> one completed Regional Land Use Plan, numerous other planning agreements and processes, and of course, the completion of the Yukon Forest Act (which came into force in 2011), a Yukon-created and applied piece of legislature that many hope will once again kick-start the small industry that still exists. Currently the Yukon has two operational mills, numerous back-yard milling operations, and issues an estimated 90 commercial licenses (previously called permits) per year, which allow sales of wood products. On top of that, an estimated 950 personal use permits are issued allowing people to cut wood for personal use without sale. Many individuals currently working in the industry believe that larger scale timber production will take place soon, this time with investment from southern forest companies, though there is no proof of this as of yet. The effects of the 90s green-gold rush have made many wary of potential large-scale outside investment in Yukon's forest industry. Instead, many suggest what is needed is a small-scale demand-based industry that protects local values and economy. At present, southern markets are able to meet their own demand, and lower northern timber quality, combined with distance

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<sup>25</sup> For the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory (2005), for the Teslin Tlingit First Nation (2007), and a draft plan for the Dawson region (2009)

<sup>26</sup> See [www.emr.gov.yk.ca/forestry/](http://www.emr.gov.yk.ca/forestry/) for a complete up to date list of Yukon's timber harvest plans

from markets and a still untested Forest Act, is limiting the potential growth in the industry.

This has been a very brief overview of what is a complicated history of Yukon forest use and management. However, what should be clear is that Yukon forests have been subject to much activity over the last 120 years. While the industry is somewhat defined by brief periods of intensive activity, forests were consistently an important resource for Yukon residents. Furthermore, the shape of the Yukon forest industry has been uniquely suited to the Territory, providing seasonal and occasional work, much needed raw material, and has allowed for a degree of individual independence. How this story is represented by Yukon residents and broader narratives is telling and will be discussed in the following chapter.

## Chapter Five

### Historic Narrative: invoking the past to make sense of today

In this chapter I explore how the past is mobilized in the Yukon to shape and inform contemporary understandings of the physical environment, belonging, and identity. I also employ Yukon forest history to better understand trends in how forests have been viewed over time. History is mobilized and reread or rewritten both consciously and indirectly by study participants, as well as governments, and organizations, for various reasons. I argue that forest users directly draw upon the past in talking about forests, and many common narratives or themes in such talk are informed by specific understandings of historic patterns of environmental perception and use. Subsequently how, why and under what circumstances the past is invoked often reveals much about contemporary concerns and priorities. Therefore, individual historic forest use narratives should be understood as an expression of specific contemporary viewpoints more than the conveyance of historic fact. In taking such an approach, patterns in environmental use and portrayal become more apparent.

With regard to the Yukon Territory, two aspects interest me in particular: claims of untouched landscape in contrast to assertions that forests have been thoroughly 'used', and, secondly, historic influence on contemporary imaginings of forest use and perception. I approach these through an examination of a number of issues. First, I explore two main conflicting narratives among study participants which invoke the past: pristine wilderness and human-influenced space. Second, I consider some of the key historic factors which led to a shift in popular forest perception, in which forests moved from a space of human action and frontier stories, to one of pristine wilderness. Lastly I

explore a consistent thread linking discussions about forests through Yukon's last 120 years: forests as representing permanent potential.

### **Conflicting Narratives and Invoking the Past**

In articulating forest perceptions, competing claims are apparent among participants regarding the character of Yukon forests, many of which are grounded in specific readings of local history. The underlying foundation of many of these divergent forest views is an understanding of Yukon forests as either essentially stable and untouched on any measurable scale, or as influenced and shaped by humans. Although most forest users recognise the gray areas in between, including geographic difference within the Territory, many revert to one end of this argument in articulating and substantiating their views. It is a distinction that underlies much forest discourse and inter-group perception. What a forest is today depends to some degree on what it has been in the past. This section explores the various ways forest use stories are expressed by study participants as a means of supporting their contemporary forest use and views.

Such stories can often invoke Yukon First Nations, either as examples of previous human influence on the land, thus supporting extraction-based activities today, or as naturalized or romanticized people, whose activities when recognized, are spoken of in a way which passively associates their presence as somehow more natural than others.

For instance, comments such as these were relatively common:

T: The Yukon is different for me because it is home, and because it is bigger and emptier. I remember flying out to lakes with my dad and fishing off the float of the plane and knowing that nobody had ever been there. Or maybe just some natives. That is an extraordinary thing in this day and age to feel. That is the value here, to have a place that has not been messed with.



Q: That is what makes the Yukon, we are a big Territory and most of us are not going to get to all of it, yet there are so many eco-systems that are doing their thing. In my mind I go back to First Nations, I am not going to get there, but people are using those areas, nicely, sustainable, traditionally. Then, there is a bit in me that appreciates that as much as the little pieces of forests where I go to sit when I need time. And I think it is great having these areas we will not go to.

Such references situate Yukon First Nations as passive actors on the land and are often employed by those expressing concern over the future of untouched natural spaces.

While many also discuss First Nations cultural and traditional activities, it is most often in reference to their individual land concerns rather than the complex reality of First Nations in the Yukon. In such instances, historic readings of First Nation's presence and influence on forests supports views of contemporary forests as relatively untouched. In contrast is the following statement made by an individual who has been involved in many industries in the Territory, including forestry.

H: I don't see us as separate from the environment. We are part of it, the fact that we are here as a species. We are probably no smarter or dumber than any other species. We will succumb to the same laws that every other species does. For similar reasons. So, and I see that we have, I don't want to call it a right, well I guess I can call it a right, by virtue of the fact that we are here, to use the resources to exist.

And we build houses like this out of wood and steel and plastic and everything for our comfort, just as aboriginal people and their forerunners did exactly the same thing. They just didn't have the expertise, the tools, maybe even the desire. They did the same thing. And they fished it, hunted it, so I think we have a right to use it. But I don't think we have the right to get a D-9 cat and just head off straight up the hill. I think we have an ethical responsibility there too.

In this instance, historic use of natural resources by First Nations is used to support both the morality of contemporary resource use, and to counter narratives of pristine wilderness. In both instances, First Nation historic use of land is accounted for and used to explain contemporary activities by non-First Nations.

Similarly, Satterfield (2002), in her study on west coast old-growth forests disputes, also found that First Nations were often caught up in both pro and anti-development dialogues not of their own making. First Nations in such historic narratives, somehow have to be accounted for, and very often their presence is interpreted in ways to suit particular readings of environmental history. In each of the above cases, this type of historic dialogue represented a culturally and historically diverse group of people with often, brief, singular and all-encompassing generalizations.

As pointed out in the previous chapter, timber extraction has a long history in the Yukon Territory and has had an impact on Yukon's economy, social life and landscape. While this is certainly true, it is also true that in comparison with the south it has also been on a relatively small scale. When seen in comparative terms, it can be seen as insignificant by many. This point is particularly important for Yukoners who originated from other parts of Canada and who use southern or international examples of environmental degradation as a reference point for Yukon's relative pristine state. For instance, A is a wilderness guide who is concerned for the future of Yukon's 'wild' spaces.

A: I want to preserve what we have, I am aware that some development has to proceed but I am really happy we can keep the impact small, and that there are lots of regulations...I always try to bring over, when I am out with clients, that they feel and see how different the Yukon still is compared to the place where they are coming from. Most people, they come from Europe or well-populated areas like Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, that they are aware of what they have up here.

In contrast, Yukon's human-induced environmental history is important to locals who work in forests and who take pride in continuity with the past. B, an established logger in the area tells the following story:

B: One of the neatest things I ever had in all the years we were logging, up on the north fork of the Klondike, before the First World War there was a Russian company in there building a hydro project...We got in there logging and we found a whole bunch of these old drillings that were all caved in and so on. Through the area. ... And I finished up falling for the day and I had probably a ten or fifteen minute walk to get back to the landing so I leaned my chainsaw against a tree and rolled my cigarette standing there taking a break before I started walking back out to the road, and I look around the other side of this tree that I had leaned my chainsaw and axe against and here was ah, cross cut saw and an axe handle and it was from these old Russian guys.

And for me it really touched me, I sat there and had a pretty good visit with that old fella, it was a special day for me. I still got his saw and axe, the saw is still sharp

Jodie: do you come across things in the bush pretty often?

B: oh regularly,

Jodie: signs of people...

B: this is not pristine, people have been here, resources have been used, as it should be

For B and others like him, such encounters ground their understanding of modern extraction activities. What they are doing has been done before, the forests have grown back with no apparent negative results, and their work has a legitimate place in the Yukon.

In light of Yukon's history, B's account is hardly surprising. Many loggers, outfitters and trappers who work in the bush on a regular basis told similar stories. Others refer to unique or out-of-the-way encounters to emphasise how even the most remote locations have been used, for instance finding cabins or debris from passing travelers in difficult to reach areas. For these forest users, such singular stories emphasise the role of people in shaping the landscape. One such unique example is given by Flanagan (1963):

The Canada Tungsten Mine in the upper Flat River Valley, high in the mountains on the border of the Mackenzie District and the Yukon territory, was the scene recently of a sawmilling operation run by the company. The mine area was inaccessible except by aircraft, and it was cheaper to fly in a small sawmill, and log the small but good-quality local timber, than to attempt to fly lumber in. Visitors were treated to the site of a small sawmill operating in the narrow valley between 10,000-foot peaks, just a few hundred feet below treeline. (1963: 32)

While few will ever encounter the forests surrounding the Tungsten Mine, such accounts can be proof that the influence of humans has reached all corners of the Territory.

Yet, the Yukon is little developed in comparison to many other places, and those areas that have seen the impact of deforestation and human activities have often since regrown or can be accounted for as historic, cultural or otherwise acceptable in a wild setting. In this way, A's hope that those visiting the Yukon understand how comparably untouched it is makes perfect sense. The NDC (1993) report on the history of logging in the Yukon surveyed 40 sites of known past logging activity, regrowth was reported to be strong:

In general it was found that most of the old settlement and wood camp sites were adequately regenerating with aspen, balsam poplar, white spruce or white birch. In fact, signs of past logging activities were not as obvious as expected with minimal disturbance noted for those sites used primarily in the early 1900s. (1993: 50)

...In most cases, the signs of the logging activities during the Gold Rush period have disappeared under new growth. Sites of woodcamps noted on the Yukon River charts in the MacBride Museum were not apparent as to clear cut activities. Aspen and spruce regrowth was often covering signs of past activity. Sites of old cabins, and small settlements with larger clearings had returned to Aspen or willow growth (1993: 52)

Natural regeneration in such sites has occurred to enough of a degree that to the casual eye, such areas can appear free of harvest activities. In comparison to the impacts of

southern large scale forest extraction, these areas of regrowth, when recognised at all by those not in the forest industry, tend to be understood as remnants of historic moments long ago, which in many cases only emphasises how little development there has been in the Territory. Such examples support at once both hypothesis as put forward by modern forest users – Yukon forest as used space *and* Yukon forests as relatively pristine.

As another example, G is a Yukon resident who has lived in the Territory since he was a child, he enjoys hiking and canoeing in Yukon's outdoors, and while he tends to find 'out of the way' places for his activities, does not mind signs of historic activity and on occasion finds them an asset.

G: We have mining roads for access, the old wood roads, the steam ships were fired with wood so all along the river there were wood roads. There are lots of trails there. Um, there are mining roads around, not a lot, but I have used them for recreation purposes, to go hiking. You get up high quickly on those roads.

G enjoys the untouched outdoors, but recognises Yukon's historic forest use and does not find it problematic.

The desire to find untouched nature in a time where the state of the environment is a major concern has led to new readings, as well as the continuation of old and inaccurate readings, of the Yukon landscape. For example, recently the Yukon Government sponsored an advertisement in a British newspaper. In it visitors are encouraged to visit the Yukon, '*Canada's Pristine Gem*'. The article states:

Imagine yourself in a land where the sounds of nature reach your ears; where there is unspoiled wilderness farther than the eye can see; and where for miles your only neighbours sport fur or feathers. This is the Yukon. Emblazoned with a rich scenic tapestry of soaring, snow-capped peaks, boreal forests, sweeping tundra, glacier-fed rivers and abundant wildlife, Canada's Yukon is one of North America's major wilderness attractions, with close to 80 per cent remaining pristine landscape....

Here in the Yukon, the lifestyles are found in the great outdoors, through endless days of fishing, rafting, trekking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, camping, canoeing and kayaking, and motoring, with visitors enjoying the sights against a backdrop of spectacularly, environmentally pure wilderness. The Yukon today strikes a balance between the conveniences of modern living and the beauty of a pure and natural environment. (Cowton, 2011)

A feeling of freedom, untouched space and solitude are major components of how many people have, and still do, encounter nature in the Yukon. More than just a tourism campaign, such images and ideas are internalized and felt strongly by locals who understand their connection to the Territory, and their motivation for remaining, as resting on such sentiments. BA is an artist who feels strongly about protecting intact wilderness in the Territory and C is a self-described environmentalist. I asked both to talk to me about wilderness and this is some of what they had to say. In speaking to BA about the Peel watershed region I asked why that area meant something special to him:

BA: It gives you a sense of relief if there is a place that is just the way it has been and can continue to be and change of its own accord...

When you want to blanket protect an area, it is simplistic, but driven by a value that it is nice to leave some places the way they are. If we don't do that, then nothing on earth will be in its original state, we do tend to change things.

C had spoken about moving back to the Yukon after some years of absence and had said that Yukon's untouched outdoors were one of the reasons. I then asked her what she thought wilderness was:

C: for me, wilderness would be untouched by any kind of development, people might travel though it on foot but you don't see any signs of them. And there is really not that much left on the planet, there are ice fields that come close, but I don't want to go sit on top of one of those (laugh) I realise that is a pretty narrow meaning of it, but it developed over the years.

The fact that advertisements such as the one above, as well as the general sentiment expressed by BA and C, essentially empty the landscape of people and history is easily overlooked when focussing on the general sentiment of untouched space. One way of allowing for the reality of a complex and peopled landscape, is to naturalize or historicize such influence. While such narratives of Yukon's pristine landscape increasingly overshadow what is in reality a much more complex space, they cannot be simply dismissed as inaccurate. This vision, combined with the perceived continual threat of potential Territorial development and dwindling world-wide intact ecosystems, is the grounding point from which many people understand and experience Yukon's natural spaces. Such historic narratives are expressions of contemporary concerns and preferences, and are the result of numerous local and extra local influences. CA, a wilderness tourism guide succinctly describes the situation as follows:

Jodie: what changed? You said not that long ago tourism was more highway based, but that it changed to wilderness, why?

CA: What has happened is that pretty much everywhere else in the world has lost its wilderness or is slowly losing its wilderness. Alberta is a perfect example. People from everywhere can see that it is happening to the world and they have to look to an area that still has that, there are fewer and fewer areas that have that.

De la Barre (2009) labels the narratives that Yukoners use to express their place identity as *narratives of the new sublime*. She suggests that such narratives be associated with the reconceptualization and celebration of nature which took place during the romantic period at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. She argues that such a narrative reflects values such as quality of life over material wealth, ideas of being free, of the authentic self, and relies on the characteristics of remoteness. The idea of wilderness associated with such a narrative is an empty one, essentially unpeopled. I argue that de la Barre's description works well for both conservation and extraction oriented forest users. However, in the

case of forest extraction users, the empty notion of wilderness is one tied more to possibility than actual absence of people, for it is the very (limited) presence of people and change that support their case. The fact that the Yukon has been used is precisely their point when they offer their own understanding of Yukon's environmental history. For instance, both B and DA have been involved in the forest industry for a number of years, B is the individual above who spoke of finding the axe and saw while logging.

B: every time they get into one of these debates in the Yukon it becomes the last, the last piece of unprotected pristine wilderness we have. You know that is the story we heard 40 years ago when they established Kluane National Park, Tombstone Park, the line we heard over North Yukon Park, it just goes on and on. Every time we go through this process it is the last piece of pristine wilderness we got, it is a lie.

DA: All around Whitehorse was cleared during the gold rush, Montana Mountain near Carcross, all the areas in there that were logged, and it is just a beautiful part. There have been areas back here where biologists were saying oh that's, I don't want you to log there, that is an open pine stand. But you go there and it has been logged, or opened up and allowed to become pine territory, there are ways of doing things that can enhance that environment for other creatures, it all depends on how you do it...

I think we have taken the human element out of forests a bit, people are, especially people that are from the city, think humans have no place in the forest. People in the forest can be a negative or a positive, in the end the forest grows.

What is necessary is to recognise the base conflict in competing forest discourses: people are not necessarily referring to the same place when discussing a forested space. Depending on historic readings, that locality has very different meanings, very different histories and thus what is appropriate use or appreciation varies accordingly. If an area has undergone human induced change and appears healthy today, it is proof that human influence is not a bad thing. Alternatively, if an area has been relatively free of such influences, given the lack of untouched areas in the world it should be protected. In the Yukon however, both places often overlap.



Concepts of wilderness and pristine exist as temporally situated ideas, also resting on a scale of reference to other areas. Forest, while referred to deceptively easily in the Yukon in one sweeping term, are not the same place for all who depend upon them, and very often it is historic narrative where that difference can most easily be seen. What *has* occurred in an area is a fundamental piece of what *could* occur in the future.

### **Tracing Shifting Values Over Time**

Both pristine and used narratives rely on historic accounts of the past, and neither is a wholly new argument. However, it is possible to trace shifting sentiment regarding Yukon forests in relation to other, broader historic changes, which can then help further illuminate contemporary views. For instance, the idea of Yukon's natural wonders as particularly appealing has deep roots. The creation and development of one of the Yukon's oldest tourist activities, guide-outfitting, relied upon the idea and image of the Territory as a largely unexplored and wild place. As one guide-outfitter described it to me, 'in the old days' a trip easily lasted two months, on some occasions much longer. The guide and his clients would explore a lot of land by foot and horse, eat what was killed, and often find large trophy animals that were part of what the clients saw as untouched populations of animals.

In the post-rush years, early tourists were recorded to be exploring early gold-rush routes such as the Chilkoot Trail, to be canoeing or rafting the Yukon River, and even venturing into more difficult to reach destinations such as the Peel River area (Department of Yukon Tourism and Culture, 2008). The completion of the Whitepass railway during the gold-rush period allowed easier access for those seeking to explore new frontiers and environments at a time when the US frontier had closed and the

hopes of a prosperous new western land in Canada had failed to materialize (Owram, 1992). Though the motivations of early tourists were varied, the reality of settlement as tied to first the fur trade and then later to the Klondike, meant that this early wilderness was of the frontier sort, a place of potential in the face of dashed hopes and constrained urban living elsewhere. Berton (1972) colourfully describes the feeling of the Klondike when he writes:

So, in the era of insecurity, when mortgages were foreclosed on a whim, when robber barons prospered and most others grew more wretched, when the workhouse, the sweatshop, and the pauper's grave were realities and not figures of speech, each man who set off on the golden trail was forced to believe not only in the future but also in himself. (1972: 10)

In this sense, early Yukon wilderness was considered similar to early American wilderness as described by Nash (2001), wild and untamed, but also a place of human activity, something with the potential to be harnessed, controlled and developed. De la Barre (2009), in her work considering remoteness, sense of place, and tourism in the Yukon, explores *masculinist narratives* as one element in contemporary Yukon identity and story. Building on work by Hulan (2002), and Cronon (1996), she explores the origins of such narratives as located in this specific time in history. She suggests that the masculinist narrative rests on ideas of self-sufficiency and individualism which are rooted in the mythic frontier stories of the early Yukon. While concerns regarding North America's depleting wilderness were growing elsewhere, need and necessity ensured that early non-First Nations residents were connecting with the natural environment in primarily a utilitarian way.

However, the completion of the Alaska Highway during World War II marked a shift in the Territory. An increasing population, most of whom were white and male, together with relatively easy communication and access to the outside, meant that changes in the

rest of North America quickly caught up with the isolated Yukon. This, combined with an increased federal interest in development and social welfare, as well as changing trapping and hunting regulations, signalled a shift in resident environmental perceptions. McCandless (1985), in his account of Yukon wildlife during the first half of the twentieth century, suggests that the wildlife preservation idea that had been building, but not realised until the post-war population boom, led to an imposition of external and centralized cultural values on the people of the Yukon.

Up to the building of the Alaska Highway, the Yukon had experienced a period of relative social and environmental stability. With a low population, almost half of whom were First Nations, and most individuals being dependent upon the land in some way, the Yukon was an isolated community. Consequently, shifts in the perception and value of nature that had been occurring in southern regions were less quickly taken up. For instance, while various forms of legislation gave the Yukon government control over its wildlife resources<sup>1</sup>, McCandless (idem) suggests that most people virtually ignored game laws that had been put in place. He states:

The game ordinance of 1920 and the amendments which followed in the next decade reflected not so much a desire to preserve the Yukon wild life, but that community's response to requests from others to bring those laws into line with the attitudes of the rest of the continent (1985: 37)

He goes on to suggest that such regulations were more a matter of survival as a political entity than actual wildlife management. Furthermore, because such rules were for the most part overlooked by residents, they had little impact on their daily lives and went somewhat unnoticed. Understanding how and when such shifts in environmental

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<sup>1</sup> *The Unorganized Territories' Game Preservation Act* of 1894, the *1898 Yukon Act* passed in 1900, and *the Ordinance of the Preservation of Game in the Yukon Territory* enacted in 1901 and amended many timbers afterwards are a few examples.

perception occurred in the Yukon can reveal patterns in influence that continue to be influential today.

### *Post War Shifts in the Value of Nature*

However, during the post WWII period, an influx of new residents brought with it new attitudes as well as pressure to enforce already existing game laws. McCandless (1985) cites certain regulatory changes as evocative of new attitudes, such as: a targeted hatred of wolves, a desire to import Albertan animals such as Bison and Elk, a reduction in bag limit<sup>2</sup> and the creation of a trap line registration system, all events which converged during the same period in the Territory. He suggests that between 1945 and 1950 a different perception of wilderness and wild animals took root, which previously had not existed. For instance, he traces the activities of local organizations such as The Yukon Fish and Game Association, which still exists today, and suggests they were a catalyst for many changes (McCandless, 1985). The Association had been created almost exclusively by newcomers who wanted to see the Yukon reflect more modern legislation and activities with regards to the use of nature and wildlife. Such changes in the perception of wildlife are important indicators for the overall perception of forested spaces that are more often than not the dwelling place of animals. Such shifts specifically target life within and around forested spaces and consequently, visions shift regarding of the role of forested spaces in relation to people.

In talking to one member of the current association, the goal as outlined by McCandless is arguably still present. In speaking of individuals who feel there are too many regulations in the Territory this is what he had to say:

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<sup>2</sup> The limit of a given species of animal that may be harvested by any one individual within a given season.

GA: I don't have sympathy for people like that, cause I want to do things out there and their attitude plays into the hands of the people who want to shut us down. When I first came here you could drink on the streets and in your car, was that the smartest thing going on? No, we all know that, I mean. That is a hard one, I just, personally I don't like rules more than anyone else, times are changing and if you don't change with it you get left behind. I don't have sympathy for people who get left behind cause they don't recognise what the rest of the world does. You can't just hide in your own little fiefdom and protect it from the onslaught, forget it

Jodie: is there the impression of the Yukon being far enough away, distant enough that you could?

GA: there is a big part of the world out there, and I have covered a lot of spots in the Yukon people don't have access to. Not many of those I have been in that I have not seen that other people have been there too, maybe never. That is with helicopter and all that. I mean it is a big country out there but at the same time it is fragile. Weather is changing, who knows what the terrain is going to change into, it has been so dry. It could change the vegetation. This business of the last frontier, the world is just getting too big, at least in my opinion. Why should we be allowed to have whatever we perceive to be our own little fiefdom?

GA's sentiments express a dislike for the old 'frontier' way of living in which he understands there is less concern for regulation, and less understanding of the broader implications that actions within the Territory may have elsewhere. Similarly, another Yukon resident expressed a concern with that same 'frontier' way of living;

FA: I think the primary value is that they value the wilderness, in whatever way you mean the term. I think, people value it for different reasons, they all value it, this frontier mentality that we live in a place that is vast and open and there is lots of opportunity as long as you don't build a fence around it, it is unlimited. But I come from a place where we thought that too, this pattern has just come farther north.

In both instances 'new' (i.e. not born in the Territory) Yukoners reference outside environmental reality in a direct correlation with their views regarding contemporary behavior and attitudes in the Yukon. Parallels are obvious with McCandless' account of

mid-century outsiders insisting game laws be changed in order to better suit the reality of outside needs and concerns.

What was being felt in the Yukon during the post-war years had begun long before in other parts of the continent. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States the importance of nature beyond resource use was steadily gaining popularity<sup>3</sup>. Similarly around the time of the Klondike gold rush Canadians had been growing increasingly unhappy with urban living (Altemeyer, 1995)<sup>4</sup>. Thus, while the Yukon was just becoming established as a Territory, the idea of unlimited abundance of natural resources was increasing coming under scrutiny elsewhere. A growing argument for the preservation and protection of nature had taken root, which by the 1960s, would be in full force. It was in this climate that the Yukon experienced its post-war population boom and a sudden increased interest from the southern Canadian public and government. When today's Yukon residents mention recent changes in the type of people living in the Territory, often using words such as 'Yuppie', they are referring to a far longer process of change than their ten or fifteen years of experience has noted.

Another parallel between the changing value of nature during the post-war period and today can be seen in how those depending on forests for their living are viewed. While First Nations during this time were still hunting and trapping, declining fur prices, pressure to become established in communities, and the push to have First Nations children attend government funded schools, meant less traditional forest-activity

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<sup>3</sup> This time saw the development of what Nash (2001) refers to as the wilderness cult, a series of popular groups and publications that emphasised the intrinsic value of nature. In later years works from authors such as Aldo Leopold (1949) reflect this shift in environmental values.

<sup>4</sup> During this time Altemeyer (1995) argues that nature began to be seen as a cure to the monotony of modern living, and as a result a number of magazines and publications arose which addressed the increasing role of nature in healthy and happy lifestyles. For example: Canadian Athletic, 1892; Pastoral, 1901; Rod and Gun, 1899; Canadian Outdoor Life, 1907; Outdoor Canada, 1905; Western Canadian Sportsman, 1904.

(Coates, 1991). Those who continued to rely on forests and forest products for survival became, by association, less refined than those of urban centers. Similarly Dunk (1994, 1998), has argued that the rise of the modern, urban middle class in Canada ushered in a new appreciation of nature as a place of rest and leisure and as an object of contemplation. Subsequently, those who worked in forests or who depended upon them can be viewed as lacking in the ability to truly appreciate the space in which they live. A Yukon example of such a viewpoint was brought to me by BA, an artists and environmentalists also mentioned above. BA dismisses the capacity of those working in extraction industries to understand nature in a way beyond the utilitarian. He states:

BA: And many people, who also, live close to the land, placer miners for example or in exploration, they often feel they have an even stronger understanding of the land than people who live in the city and appreciate it from there, because they spend more time on the land. Yet, their, um, experience with it is still one of industrial modification of the land. That is normal for them, they will also say this is the natural world, you know?

Other study participants have argued that the frontier lifestyle is old-fashioned, out-of-date, and that those who just want to exploit Yukon's natural resources need to understand that the land can hold values beyond economic. The implication being that such individuals do not understand the land in a way beyond the utilitarian. A contemporary view made possible by broader social changes realised through the changing value of nature, increasing urbanization, and shifting human-environment relations over the last century.

### *Changing Forest Values and Management*

While regulations regarding Yukon forests were not drastically changed during the post-war period, as mentioned above, a social shift in the value of nature was taking

place. In the centuries after WWII, steamer traffic halted, ceasing the need for river wood camps. Infrastructure was created that allowed easier transportation of southern timber products. An increase in government jobs in-town meant less day to day dependence on timber and non-timber forest products for survival, and shortly afterwards, alternative cheap fuel for heating was introduced to the Territory. At the same time, as mentioned in the previous chapter, new technologies had been introduced in the timber industry which allowed for logging sites further away from main roads and communities. All of which lessened a local dependence on wood and importantly, daily interaction with forests, forest workers and wood products, at a time when nature began to be viewed as important aesthetically, intrinsically, and as one part of broader eco-systems.

As a result of many of these changes, contemporary forest management directly considers non-timber forest values when conducting forest planning<sup>5</sup>. While many see this as a positive sign that forestry is becoming more sustainable, others find it frustrating. For instance, DA is a small scale logger, had this to say in speaking of the new Yukon Forest Act:

DA: There are so many other interest groups in the forest that even their initial preamble (of the forest act) didn't mention cutting a tree in the forest. You know, we had to get them back on the page. Like, what is this act for? It is there in order to utilize forest resources. So everyone needs to understand that that is the initial purpose of it.

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<sup>5</sup> Industrial agriculture, suburban sprawl and tourism all coincided in the mid twentieth century (Wilson, 1991), and it was here that the concept of Multiple Use Management was established (Beckley, 2003). This new form of forest management, while focused primarily on timber extraction, for the first time allowed for the consideration of non-timber forest values. This was formalized in 1960, when the Multiple Use Sustainable Yield Act was passed in the United States, although it would not be until the 1970s that similar legislation was enacted in Canada. As mentioned in chapter three, Canada's current forest strategy relies on the idea of 'sustainable forest management' which also emphasises a recognition of multiple forest values.



Similarly, H, the man mentioned above who has worked in many industries including forestry, feels that those who are against logging fail to see it as more than a cultural resource and base their concerns on old-fashioned and southern logging examples:

H: They, do not want to see, they are scared of logging happening up here in a big way that is going back to traditional logging practices like, traditional is thirty, forty years ago. No controlled access, clear cuts, no clean up. SO this is the scenario, the picture they paint. And yet it infuriates the loggers who are here now, they say we don't operate that way. And there is no way. But in order to have a viable commercial logging outfit, you have to go in and cut trees. It is that simple.

...

I think they see it from more a, more a cultural resource as opposed to a resource to be used. And, the irony of that is that they all live in wood houses up here. I don't think they have any idea where the wood comes from, that they use in everyday items. And they don't see that. It is sort of like not in our back yard.

A series of events and changes in North American public priorities and wilderness perceptions coalesced in the Yukon at roughly the same time that local residents had become less dependent on forest products for their way of life. In the years following this, other changes also took place, such as the establishment of a number of National and Territorial parks<sup>6</sup>. The trend of Yukon's environment being for something other than human use, continued and eventually, the reliance on forests and forest products as a way of life became less common and was increasingly associated with either quaint anachronistic lifestyles, or linked with large scale southern-style forest practices. This separation between people and forests was remarked on to me by T, the woman mentioned above who is both a retired trapper and environmental lobbyist. She spoke

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<sup>6</sup> Kluane National Park was established in 1972, Ivvavik National Park in 1984, Herschel Island Territorial Park in 1987 and many more in the years since. Today, according to the Yukon Government, 10% of the Territory is protected in parks and another 2.7% is set aside for conservation.

of a spiritual sense of connectivity when she is in or near the bush, and lamented the lack of first-hand experience modern Yukon residents have within forested areas.

T: Because it is a government town, most people that live here would tell you they love the wilderness because they go camping and fishing and ride snowmobiles all over the place. But they go into the woods, the bush, and, the way I was talking about earlier, creating a wall of noise, taking everything with them.

It is not say they are not enjoying themselves, but it is a very different, suburban approach. People can live here as though they are living in Burnaby, they leave their propane heated homes and start their car while they get their coffee. I know people in town that don't wear winter boots in winter because they do not walk. There is not the connection here like there was a long time ago you know? When homes were heated with wood. Most people in town live without any fundamental connection to the woods...

Twenty years ago there was far more independence, independent business owners, people not connected to the government, a connection to the land, if there is no reason to go out there, not to get wood, we are not with it, there is, we don't have to connect anymore.

The effects of social changes which occurred in the mid-century regarding the place of forests and forest products in the everyday lives of individuals continue to be an element of contemporary forest perception. Whether people are aware of it or not, many of these same issues have been expressed over many decades and are part of much broader issues concerning the role of the outsiders in the Yukon, external motivation for environmental legislation, and shifts in how humans connect to, use and understand the environment.

### **Collecting Data and Organizing Nature: forests as permanent potential**

The last area this chapter will discuss is the idea of an industry on the verge and as resting on a point that is just short of substantial growth. In exploring this idea as a reoccurring theme in Yukon forests I hope to better situate contemporary forest plans,

technologies and to further explore why Yukon's existing forest history is so little understood.

Often the idea of an industry on the verge has been accompanied by efforts for better scientific understanding of the extent and particularities of Yukon's forests. As new technologies, funding, or motivation arose, new efforts were made to understand forests. Often, these efforts were built on a sense of discovery and the hope or idea of creating a new and better industry supported by new technologies and information. The possibility of a strong secondary economy based on forestry has been a persistent theme in the Yukon throughout the 20th century. At each stage the potential of forests is rediscovered and hope for development is invested within them. Within various stages of the mapping and cataloguing of forest is embedded the idea that with just a bit more knowledge their potential could be tapped. This status as permanent potential has meant that often the activities that *have* taken place within forests, have been set aside in favour of what *could* be done in forests, particularly in the case of surveys, mapping and resource extraction. I argue this status makes them ideal for imaginings of potential local economic development, while simultaneously reinforcing a fear that northern wilderness is under threat.

In contemporary terms, this potential is manifested by individual hopes for a developing forest industry. What first brought my attention to the idea of forests as potential, were the many forest workers who discussed the future of the industry with a speculative and optimistic outlook. The individuals below have all already been mentioned in this chapter, each has some involvement with the forest industry.

DA: We have a lot of things we can produce out of a forest right here, we don't have to ship it that far, we can use it for heat, fuel, energy, so it, people keep warming their homes, we can lower our carbon footprint. Kind of makes a lot of sense. I think it just needs the application of how you are

getting the trees, what you are leaving behind, what needs to be done in manner that makes sense

HA: Value added, when it comes down to producing stuff, consumer accepted products. Start with kiln dried, it has to be properly processed and it involves a kiln. There is technology out there and at the time it was not that much money, 60 or 80 or 100 000\$ to set up a pilot project. Comes in a container, it is a dehumidification kiln and you know, I said to people in government why don't you, this is a pilot project set this thing up.

Get a kiln going and then all these little sawmills that are screwing around producing chicken house boards really, could um, turn around and maybe have a way of drying there product. There is a couple planning guys in town who could develop this little cottage industry. But no, they would rather spend 120 000\$ bringing up a bunch of consultants from Vancouver that are going to come up and yap about this whole forestry model.

H: So the group of people who are still interested... have pretty well come to the, recognised that the future of our industry is going to be in bio-fuel. The future of saw logs (is that they) are going to be a bi-product, and those will be high grade. We have a high graded timber up here.

Speculation regarding the future of Yukon's forest industry is strong, some are quite positive, others more negative, and throughout is a concern that southern interest or business will determine the Territory's future as well as the idea that new technology or information will pave the way for future development. There is hope that the new Forest Act and developing agreements with various First Nations will kick-start a forest industry that could be strong and stable. As well as hopes, and concerns, that outside interests will invest in Yukon's forest industry. These ideas however, are not new.

Since the creation of the Yukon as a territory, there has been a continuous effort to map, catalogue, and categorise its resources. The motivation behind such work has been varied. At times it has been part of a search for natural resources as linked to ideas of Canadian state cohesiveness or economic development, at other times it has been a step in a local search for a steady secondary economy that would loosen the Yukon's

economic dependence on federal payments and wavering interest. Still, the continual re-discovery of this forested space represents the hope that new economic contexts, new technologies, or new motivation, might this time allow for a stable and prosperous forest industry. Though the drive to understand nature in order to best manage and control it is not unique, it is an important part of modern forest use, management, and perception in the Yukon.

Prior to 1949, all forest information was held primarily in the reports of land surveyors and other travelers. A notable exception to this was the forest surveys conducted for the building of the Alaska Highway and Canol Road. These surveyor and engineer records of forest appearance and abundance aided in the supply of wood material for road construction and human use. These were some of the first methodical, though limited, surveys of Yukon forests. Yet, despite a lack of information, hopes had already been set that the Territory's forests would provide the means necessary for economic independence and development. Innis (1936), expressed what was and still is the primary descriptor of the industry, that while mineral exploration is the future of the Yukon, the lumber industry would be a strong secondary one that would support its development. Likewise, Robinson's (1945) account of the Yukon's physical landscape, including the extent and nature of forests and the existing forest industry, is founded on the hope that both forest and agricultural industries would allow further settlement and development in the Territory. Robinson's report was based on the often-to-be repeated assumption that further knowledge and understanding of Yukon's natural systems would be fundamental in developing the Territory, and would be sufficient to overcome geographic and meteorological limitations. Although Robinson

is not overly optimistic concerning the future of a Yukon forest industry, he does see it as an essential part of any future development.

By mid-century, the idea had strongly taken root that with just a bit more information, the unknown potential of Yukon's vast forest resources could be accessed. For years to come the Yukon would be host to waves of research and survey projects, all of which have striven to provide the information necessary to at last overcome regional obstacles and tap Yukon's forest potential. While this process has taken place countless times elsewhere, each time such work is acted out in locally unique ways. In the Yukon, it has always been perceived of falling just a little short of its goal. As a consequence, forests have been rediscovered many times, and each time this discovery was accompanied by new motivations to survey, map and categorize them. The smaller size of Yukon trees, slow growing-season, and geographic isolation, though repeatedly mentioned as barriers to industrial growth over the years, have also been repeatedly set aside by the doctrine that with more knowledge, Yukon's forests can be made into something better. This drive to discover has made the Territory and its inhabitants particularly vulnerable as a northern and remote location to outside interests and priorities. Ardener (1987) speaking on characteristics of remote areas wrote the following:

Remote areas are full of innovators. Anyone in a remote area feels free to innovate. There is always a new pier being planned, and always some novelty marking or marring the scene....The next boom is always on the way: kelp, sheep, deer, sheep again, oil, fishmeal. There is always a new quarry for new road materials. We are always seeing the end of some old order. Meanwhile, beyond the new pier is the old pier, and beyond the old pier an even older pier....Remote areas are full of ruins of the past. The corollary of the above is that the remains of failed innovations, and of dead economic periods, scatter the landscape. There is another paradox here: that remote areas cry out for development, but they are the continuous victims of visions of development. (Ardener, 1987: 46)

The Yukon has been the victim of visions of development on more than one occasion and all types of forest users have expressed a concern with outside pressure to develop a forest industry that would be ill suited to local needs and priorities. If new information, technology, and vision is needed to at last develop forests as they could be, often its source is non-local in nature. For instance, H, who was mentioned earlier as stating that the future of forestry rested on the development of bio-fuel, expressed the following hopes and concerns for Yukon's forest industry:

H: Now, a concern of industry people here is that, it is very realistic that we could end up having a huge big, *Atabi*, or whatever, what is the big pellet group? *Pinnacle* out of BC, or *Canfor*....or somebody come in here and they will just take it over. And they will come in with a big bank role and all the guys who are small in the business now they won't get a chance at it. At best they will be out cutting and delivering it.

Gaining knowledge about forests is the first step in planning for their future. Yukon's first forest surveys were completed by Canada's Geological Survey in 1947. Nine parties were sent to the Yukon and Northwest Territories based on information provided by the Wartime Studies of the Dominion Forest Service, which revealed the need for proper measures to be taken to protect the 'neglected and much-ravaged forests of the northern region' (Zaslow, 1988). Their work was expanded upon during the fifties and was the beginning of an organized effort by the federal government to map and categorize Yukon forest resources, as overseen by the Northern Administration Branch. A mid-century boom in research and mapping was largely fuelled by external forces, which were among other things, looking to solidify Canada as a nation through a better understanding, and representation of its geography.

The first forest inventories in the Yukon began in the 1950s and were undertaken by the department of Fisheries and Forestry. A total of 58 000 km<sup>2</sup> was mapped at a

variety of scales for the purpose of providing forest maps and volume data for the planning and control of industrial activity<sup>7</sup>. Despite these efforts, in an article written by members of the Resource Division for the North in 1963, a call is made that if people in the north are ready to prosper, then the natural resources of the land must be developed with the same rigour being given at the time to the development of human-resources. That is, at the time of this article, the availability of a wide range of social services had increased dramatically, though forests the author's state, had not yet been adequately assessed. More information was necessary.

The superintendent of Forestry in 1961, D.F. Merrill, was hopeful of the future of Yukon's forest industry, though it was small at the time:

There are sufficient timber reserves in the Yukon Territory to supply all local needs but the formation of forest industries will hardly precede settlement, road and mining development; they can only follow...The industry is presently hampered by generally poor market conditions although local demand is still great enough to result in imports from British Columbia and Alaska. This situation is expected to change in the next few years with improved logging and sawmilling practices and provision for air drying lumber coupled with an estimated increase in local demand for wood-products. (Merrill, 1961)

While the superintendent's prediction of an increase in production was realised to some degree, it was not enough to firmly establish the industry. Instead, timber extraction grew enough to support an increase in local needs, but not enough to completely fulfil local market demand. Efforts continued to better understand the forests of the Yukon.

Additional studies, centered in the Teslin and Waston Lake (south-central and south-east Yukon) areas, were undertaken during the fiscal year of 1968-69. These studies updated earlier estimates and provided more detail for potential forest

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<sup>7</sup> Surveys varied by year, the Upper Liard, Big Salmon and Lake Labarge region was surveyed in 1954, and previous to that were parts of the Teslin and Lake Country region (Wallace, 1970).



operations. They were part of a project titled the *Forest Inventory of the Yukon and Northwest Territories*, and its intent was to provide forest maps and volumetric data for the planning and control of forest industrial activity (Bonner & Oswald, 1989). While survey work continued, the Gairns report of 1968, was completed, based on ongoing research (Forest Management Branch, 2006). This provided the first reconnaissance inventory of the Territory south of 66 degrees north latitude, though it was largely based on previous reports and aerial photographs. The report provided "...broad cost-effective estimates of area, volume and biomass of forest resources..." (Bonner & Oswald, 1989). The derived area and volume figures from this report would be adjusted for use in the national inventory in 1976 and 1981.

Research continued through various projects with the intent of gaining more detail and finding more accurate estimates as previous reports were consistently found to be lacking in sufficient detail. Growing technology and information databases elsewhere in Canada spurred an increasing interest for the Yukon to be equally well understood. For instance, by 1975, Eco regions of the Territory had been surveyed and mapped with information on landforms, vegetation, soil and climate, all with the intent of developing plans and policies for the Territory, and helping create a national forest inventory (Wallace, 1970). In 1982, a Northern Affairs Program Forest Management Section evaluation identified as priority the completion of small scale reconnaissance inventory of the Yukon. This inventory covered the entire Territory and was completed by the Canadian Forest Resources DIAND with funding from *Energy from the Forest* (ENFOR program), in 1983. Still, in a 1985 forest report, the following is stated:

A diversified economy eliminates the negative effects of the "boom-bust cycle." Although each industry is subject to prosperity and to recession, several industries in an economy will serve to smooth the radical effects of sudden growth and sudden contraction in any one area...The forests in our

territory are a renewable resource which have essentially been unmapped and unexploited. (Demchuk 1985: 2)

The lack of proper forest inventory has also contributed to the poor growth in the industry. Although there have been numerous small inventories conducted in some regions, none have provided sound statistics necessary to base forest policy of forest management plans on. (Demchuk, 1985: 8)

Again there is potential, but more work and studies are needed. Mapping continued and in 1988, a new project was completed, this time mapping the land's specific capability for forestry. In 1994, a project that was first proposed in the late 70's was finally approved, this time for a large scale photo system of the Yukon taken using new technology, called Pod (White, 1995). The Pod system provides aerial photos at an operational scale of 1:10 000, a much larger scale than previously possible.

The signing of the UFA in the early 90s, which specifically addresses forest management and forest use, has increased knowledge held about forested areas in the Yukon within the last two decades. The need for regional forest plans has meant that intensive surveys and mapping done in correlation with community planning and consultation has resulted in well mapped, inventoried, and planned forest regions. An increasingly mobilized First Nations population, combined with a growing acceptance of non-western knowledge and priorities, has also meant a growth in local forest knowledge. For instance, a survey initiated by the Teslin Renewable Resource Council (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2000) looked at local values about the natural environment in south-central Yukon, finding four main concepts of importance: water, land, bush and wildlife. With these values in mind, activities and issues were mapped depending on their proximity to core values. Among others, the timber industry, tourism and traditional activities were consequently evaluated in locally and culturally sensitive ways. In this way, timber values are integrated within and understood as connected to

other important natural values. The *Integrated Landscape Plan for the Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory* (Yukon Government, 2007) is another example of growing knowledge, and organization of Yukon forests. The plan was compiled after much effort by local governments and residents and is the primary document used in guiding future timber harvest in the region. Its intent is to:

...contribute to achieving a forest based economy, a key component of regional economic stability, while protecting and integrating ecological, traditional, resource, heritage and other community values (2007: 2)

Some of the important values considered include heritage and cultural, traditional, tourism, viewsapes, wilderness, wildlife, biological diversity, connectivity, community safety from wildfire risk, timber and the economy. (2007: 6)

Similar plans have been completed or are under process for much of the south Yukon, but much remains to be done. For instance, the Umbrella Final Agreement lays out a need for both Regional Land Use Plans and Forest Harvest Plans. Only the North Slope (North West Yukon) has a completed Land Use Plan, though a second is underway. Connected to this are plans needed to manage wildlife (Wildlife Management Plans) and forests (Strategic Forest Management Plans), few of which are completed at the moment. It is a period of growing knowledge and planning, but has so far not been met by a growing industry. The hope is that with proper plans in place, this time a viable and locally appropriate industry may grow.

As technology and priorities change, it is to be expected that new information will be sought. What is interesting is not the waves of survey work and inventory projects which have occurred in the Yukon; these efforts have been mirrored elsewhere. What is of interest is that at every stage, Yukon forests have been perceived of as on the verge, as having potential for something that if the right circumstances and information

supports it, could be very good for Yukon's development. Most forest workers I spoke to express a number of possibilities for Yukon's forest industry: southern investment and growing mills, increased value-added markets in the Territory, the possibility of using wood for chip fuel or creating specialty wood products. Most were very aware of Yukon's unique limitations but felt that the potential for future growth was still substantial if backed by the right information and handled properly. Many such workers, along with other Yukon residents, also expressed concerns of poorly planned or large-scale development in resource extraction industries. Concerns were based on a feeling that the Yukon was particularly vulnerable to anyone with a vision for development, money, and political support to back it.

Despite a complex landscape filled with people and activities, one which has been written about, mapped and exploited, the Yukon is more often than not, seen foremost as comparably free from development, and subsequently filled with potential. This focus on what *could* be made of Yukon forests overshadows the lives and activities which already take place within them, forcing forest users of all sorts to articulate and justify their use as one that has a place and belonging, specifically because their place is so unsure. Yukon forests have been a symbol of potential since the first outsiders arrived in the area. That potentiality is still strong today and manifests itself in efforts to establish a viable forest industry and to protect them from potential development.

### **Making Sense of Today**

Historic forest use or lack thereof, is part of forest experience, perception, and discourse. It shapes the form and content of forest today. Trees outlive humans, and because of this are repositories for stories of the past and symbols for the future. Yet, as

holders of history, forests are inconsistent tellers of it. Any number of interpretations can be gleaned from stories about, and experiences within forested spaces. Local priorities and needs, and extra-local influences, all coalesce within one geographic locality and inform forest use and perception. In the Yukon, historic narrative is an important part of how forests are perceived and historic processes within and around forests are important parts of the physical, economic, and social shape of the Territory today.

When forests are understood as pristine, those who work within those spaces in extraction industries, such as logging or hunting, are unable to link their livelihood with the past forest users. The arguments of used space mentioned above are articulations which ground and justify contemporary actions through claims of historic continuity. In the Territory, historic connections in the logging industry are tenuous, not only because the industry, while persistent, has been relatively small in scale, but because larger shifts in ideas about human-environment relations occurred at a time when people were becoming less involved with forests, and as a consequence an alternative pervasive story took hold. Today, discourses over forest use and about forest users are often couched in disagreement over local historic narrative. Such claims can also be highly suspect, as overshadowing or ignoring the efforts of First Nations people to assert a degree of control over their traditional territories, based in part on historic occupancy.

Yet, it has not only been local issues and priorities that have led forest perception and use. While many things have changed within Yukon forests and society since the Klondike gold rush, one thing that has not has been the persistent influence of southern concerns and priorities in the north. Ideas of the north, its connection to nationalist sentiment, its place in building a stable economy, and more recently, in asserting

Canadian borders, has often been southern led. Given this, it is no surprise that a good deal of effort has been put into creating a Yukon-made Forest Act. However, even this still acts out a long story of Yukon forests – that of potential. Forests have played a constant secondary role in the Yukon. Supporting primary industry while often being viewed as a potential alternative, never quite enough for a full blast economy, but just maybe enough to help reach current goals, whatever they may be at the time. As a result, in the way they are discussed, managed, and perceived, Yukon forests more often represent what they *could* be more than the reality of what they are.

## Chapter Six

### Experience: place-making in Yukon forests

*Places are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions. (Rodman, 2003: 205)*

*I love visiting areas with trails, not just the Yukon but other places, I am fascinated by what other people are doing. Every trail has a personality, the more time I spend on trails, the more I am fascinated by how a physical construct in the middle of the woods can create all kinds of emotional feelings, I think every trail has a story to tell. (Yukon resident and recreationalist)*

In this chapter I explore how it is forests as places are created, encountered and understood in multiple ways by the participants of this study. To do so, I focus on how Yukon residents engage with forests and how perceptions of, and attitudes towards them are connected to these experiences. I approach such experiences as acts of place making, purposefully emphasising specific aspects of the forest encounter – those of personal engagement and meaning. In having such an approach, the contested nature of forests is revealed to be far murkier than use-based discourse allows for. I do this through the exploration of three reoccurring themes that emerged from my conversations with forest users: practice and place, knowledge, and caring.

#### Practice and Place

By using the term *practice*, I am referring to the physical movements and interactions of people in their daily lives, including physical labour, touch, seeing and hearing, that are part of their forest experience. Imagination is also part of this experience, but while touched on here is dealt with on its own in a later chapter. I have already outlined the dwelling perspective as put forward by Ingold as one which emphasises the rootedness of the human body in the physical world. However, for more detail I turn first to Gray

(1999) who understands dwelling to be about a lack of distance between people, things, and places, and as a perspective which privileges practical and spatial experience.

Ingold's ideas of dwelling build on that put forward by Heidegger (1971), whose work on German post-war urban development led him to theorize about the ideas of building and dwelling. For Heidegger, dwelling is the basic character of human beings. Dwelling, he argues is the most basic level of the relationship between humans and space – it is how we encounter the world. Furthermore, he asserts that through building, we are engaged in the act of dwelling, a fact he considers as lost during city planning of the time. His work and others like it, which emphasise the importance of the primacy of human engagement with the environment<sup>8</sup>, has offered an alternative to constructivist approaches to meaning and place.

Gray (1999) and Basso (1996) have both explicitly drawn on Heidegger's work as a means to articulate a theoretical and methodological emphasis on human process, action, and engagement with ones surrounding environment. Others have worked with similar themes without drawing explicitly from this body of knowledge. For instance, in her work concerning the environmental impacts of the Klondike gold rush, Morse (2003) approaches the topic in part by examining the physical connection people have with the non-human world. She writes how individuals were not able to escape the labour of moving their body through nature, the slowness of that movement, the walking, hauling, and rowing, and then later the involvement of the body in the act of extracting gold from gravel. Morse argues that such work brought new knowledge and created new places as people were connected to the environment through labour and through the labour of others. Countering common narratives of the Klondike as the conquering

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<sup>8</sup> Environment in this sense refers to those things which surround an individual. For Ingold, this can include other humans.



of nature, Morse suggests that instead, nature moved and changed in connection to people, and that those people had no more conquered nature than they had in their home cities and towns, for it is around us always.

My own focus on experience is in line with the above approaches. Those who interact with Yukon forests create places and on occasion change the physical appearance or shape of the non-human environment through their actions within forests. Different experiences draw from a variety of backgrounds and lead to different conclusions about the nature and importance of forests. For instance, loggers, trappers, hikers, guide-outfitters and environmentalists, all engage in different activities in and around forests, they create places, employ specific knowledge and from this come to understand the world and their place in it.

For example, NA is a woman who works and lives in the forest on a cyclical basis. She defines herself in part by her actions as a trapper. Trapping has a long history in the Yukon Territory with both First Nations and non-First Nations residents. An individual may trap when they have the appropriate license, skills, and a registered trap line<sup>9</sup>. During what season, and what animals they trap depend upon their location in the Territory and their own personal inclination. Trapping among non-First Nations is often a solitary practice but can also include spouses and family. There are some in the Yukon who have spent much of their lives in the bush trapping, as well as those who are relatively new to the industry. At the moment, it is not a particularly profitable activity as often the costs of equipment, fuel, and transportation leave little profit after furs are sold.

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<sup>9</sup> The rules and processes of trapping are discussed further in chapter 6.

While NA depends upon fur for some income, like many she has an alternate job in town to support herself. NA learned to trap from another trapper and today she and her husband have two trap lines which are joined by a central cabin. She is in the bush between three and six months per year, though on some years has been unable to go in at all. I asked NA to tell me about a typical day, and in response she described waking up in the dark, doing chores and packing lunch. While her husband often travels by Skidoo as he has farther to go, M always walks her lines. She has two lines, one longer than the other which is checked less often. Once it is light outside, she begins her walk:

NA: And so I headed out with the dog, and then it would take me a good, to go around the lake on those days, it would only take me like three hours max to do everything. Because you have things at certain areas, you have to look, like and you always had your traps marked with flagging or something, sometimes you had to dig them out if it had snowed. Around the lake sometimes it got wind-blown in certain areas, but you had to check every trap, you had to re-bait it, you had to make sure it was in working order and then you carried on. But, the eight mile track was pretty tough too, because sometimes I didn't know where the trail was because of the wind when I crossed the lake, so the dog would show me the way, he was a really good dog, that dog. Yeah, so, that one took me at least five to six hours of walking and checking, and it was a really good work out. And that is why I only did that one like every three days.

Jodie: and in between those days you would do the shorter one?

NA: yeah, and then there was a day of skinning and see that is what X would do. He would go out and do a day, the next he would skin and those skinning days I would head out and do the short loop and the next day I would be doing my long day and he would do his long day, the next day we would be doing skinning. So it was a day travel and check and collect furs and then skinning was the next day. And Saturday was you know, wash day, baking day, because you had to have both fires going. Your cook stove and your other stove, so, and, you would have your bath, do you laundry, back, utilize all the heat in the house, cause we had a (--) cabin at the main camp. And you hauled your water, you had certain days you did certain things and that is how you did it. And then later in the night of the skinning day you

had to turn your furs. After, cause they would dry for so long and then you would have to turn your furs.

NA moved across the landscape with knowledge and skill that was acquired through years of practice and learning. Her senses and that of her dogs are employed in this movement. Once her lines are checked, the work of dealing with the animals and household chores is attended to, before she begins the cycle again. She places furs on a board, hide-side out so they dry, and then brings them in the cabin for three or four days, turning them on occasion. Afterwards, they are hung in a high cool place where rodents will not bother them. Once or twice a week, she also hauls water from the lake where a hole had been dug and then covered with a board and snow piled on top, so it would not close again.

NA encounters forests in this way, through the process of walking within them, setting traps, harvesting animals, skinning, collecting water, and through leaving the bush when the season is over to attend to her other job and her life in town. There is value placed upon her work – she describes it as useful, immediate, independent and liberating and she describes the places of her work as filled with sounds, stories and meaning.

Trapping is a specific use of forested space and from talking with other trappers I came to understand that they often share common knowledge and experiences in forests. These commonalities not only stem from the actual use – the setting of traps, skinning and sale of animals – but of common experiences and difficulties in the full array of dwelling. A retired trapper, who had trapped as a primary source of income for five years had this to say of the overall experience:

T: What trappers value more than anything else is the lifestyle, because it is all about connectivity, about recognising that you are not the boss, that you

have a place in this and that you are respectful and extraordinarily vulnerable. I would not enjoy that feeling now, I feel vulnerable enough at (age) and I don't want the dog to knock me over.

But (when I was younger), that is such a great feeling. But if you fall off your horse six miles out in the bush and you don't have the radio phone and no one knows where you are. You have to learn to be aware, to be alert all the time to everything that is going on, and, to, really be self-sufficient. For five years every mail I got, none of it was a bill, I never had a bill. I liked that feeling of planning ahead, with the wood and the groceries, being able to hold up for three months at a time and not have to go anywhere or do anything. You get your own rhythm of sleeping or eating and being active, and playing around, it is all part of everything that is going on around you.

People trap for a variety of reasons, some have learned from their families and continue as a way of life, many have moved to the Territory from other countries and are searching to purposely enact a lifestyle reflecting certain values. These motivations are part of trapping and part of the place making experience. Each is unique to the individual, but history, skill, and social experience link them.

A second example of forest experience comes from B, a logger who has worked in the Yukon for many years. Logging in the Territory is on a relatively small scale, and many of the individuals I spoke with have been involved in various aspects of the industry at different times. Felling, surveying, hauling, and processing are all aspects of logging, and when the operation consists of a backyard portable mill, it can involve as few as one or two people. Larger operations involving established mills tend to separate tasks, and those who work in the mill may not be part of bush harvest. When I speak of loggers, it is of people who have been involved in harvest activities within Yukon forests at some point. I asked B to tell me broadly about his work and this is part of his response:

B: ....two most enjoyable jobs I have done in the whole process is number one, falling, I used to do all of it myself with a chainsaw, ultimately I

became quite efficient with the chainsaw, I didn't kill myself learning how to use it. It is a job that is challenging both physically and mentally, a lot of satisfaction. The other job was sawing at the sawmill, very similar, challenging physically as well as mentally to do it right and do it productively. I would go home at night and have a little gob of spruce pitch stuck in my hair and right ear, some sawdust stuck in my belly, it smelt good, I miss it. I don't have the time to do those jobs anymore, I don't have the physical stamina, to do them all day, so it does not happen.

When asked more about tree felling and what that implied, B described the process necessary to 'eye up the tree' and see the way it wanted to fall. He had to ask himself where the tree would fall and then how it would be skidded out of the bush once it was on the ground. B logged selectively, stating that while he didn't have a problem with clear cutting he felt it was a method that had its own place and time. The work was dangerous if done incorrectly, and as a rule he always worked with someone else so if an injury occurred help would be available. He went on to describe the act of felling a tree:

B: You would have to fall the tree into a position where you could get it out of the woods, load it onto the truck without damaging all the other trees around it, without breaking your (back) so it becomes important that your trees are all fell a certain way, that they are not crossed up, and it is ah, comes to be a challenging process because these trees don't stand up perfectly straight, or stand up the way you want, all over. The hinge that you leave on the stump, the little techniques that you learn over the years. One of the hardest ones to learn is to recognise that some trees you just can't make go where you want to go.

In the end, he states that sometimes you have to let a tree fall where it wants to go. B's work depends upon specific skills, moving and interacting with trees, men and equipment. Like most, B learned the skills necessary for his work through first-hand experience in the industry. As a younger man, B had employment outside of forestry,

and at some stage chose to take advantage of perceived economic opportunity through logging. Some of the loggers I spoke to came from logging families, others were involved with industries such as agriculture and decided to move into logging when an opportunity arose to make money. Many in the industry today came up during the mid-nineties with the promise of plentiful work and good wages and choose to stay despite the reality of limited employment.

For B, logging is team work and he seldom encounters forests for his work by himself, though he does enjoy being alone in the bush on his free time. Heavy equipment, noise, the smell of sawdust, oil and gasoline are part of this experience, as is moving to different locations. At the end of the day, B returns home, back to his family and house. When I asked why he logs, this was his response:

B: it smells good. I'm, not a religious man but if I was gonna say there was somewhere that I felt closer to god, whatever my god may be, that is where I feel at home. ... it is disrespectful not to use the forest, it has been put there for us to use, not to be wasted but to be used wisely, and it would be disrespectful not to do so. As well as wasteful.

Economy is a primary motivator in such work. It would not be necessary or possible if money were not involved. Yet many loggers describe their work as good in a sense beyond the economic, as a healthy way to live, as part of a lifestyle which is closer to the land and often compared against a stark urban office-bound alternative. The work of logging is a type of place making. Individuals understand that locality through their experiences in it, and create changes upon the landscape that influences its basic character as experienced by others. Like early miners, the changes they cause on the landscape shift the potential of that place, make new things possible and old things more difficult. It is also a predominantly male profession, one in which masculinist

narratives of independence and freedom as described by De la Barre (2009) are particularly strong<sup>10</sup>.

Recently, popular attention has been paid to logging in the media, though more often to selective logging of large trees with helicopters. The Discovery Channel currently airs a show called *Extreme Loggers* and the TLC channel a similar show called *Heli-Loggers*. Both emphasise the dangerous aspects of logging, such as the dangers of falling trees and branches, and the risks associated with the use of heavy equipment. The documentary *Death In the Forest*, directed by Gordon McLennan (2007), focuses on logging as a way of life for those involved in the industry. While all of these programs focus on unique and sometimes extreme aspect of the industry, the premise of these shows is that logging is something more than economic activity, but is instead tied to a unique and sometimes dangerous way of life.

While the activities of trapping and logging on occasion overlap, for many city-dwellers the two conceptually take place in the same *space* – within the open expanse that is Yukon forests. However, each activity is part of creating different places and connects people to them physically in different ways. Each has its own narratives and social and environmental implications.

A last example of personal experience within forests comes from E and F, a couple whose surveying work takes them into forests, but who state they primarily enjoy forests on a recreational level. Forest recreation in the Yukon is varied by use and among users: canoeing, hiking, biking, skiing, exploring on ATV or snowmobile, etc. Most individuals I spoke with had one or two favourite activities and often certain areas or

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<sup>10</sup> Reed (2004) has also explored the difficult position women in British Columbia face who want to enter the forestry industry in a manner beyond office work, finding forests to be a persistent barrier to job equity.

types of area they favoured. One common thread among them is that they in visiting areas, they move through them but do not extract material on any regular or large scale basis. Some recreationalists in the Yukon belonged to groups such as the Outdoors Club, some enjoyed their activities on their own or with families and friends, and still others came together with like-minded individuals solely to partake in the same activity.

Recreation in forests can occur near cities and be as simple as walking along Whitehorse's many paths, or can involve experiences lasting many days and taking place deep in the back country. Despite such variety, with exception to those who primarily use motorized vehicles a<sup>11</sup>, most recreationalists I interviewed felt affinity with others.

E and F organize their schedules to ensure a maximum amount of time is spent outdoors, most often together. When asked to tell me about a day that came to mind, they choose to tell me of a day-long hiking/biking trip in Kluane National Park in the south east Yukon. Their day began with a visit to the warden's office to log their intended trip. Afterwards, they located their trail along an old highway, and after parking their vehicle, were able to ride on their bikes about two kilometers before they encountered a braided stream. It was a sunny day, though they were caught in an unexpected rainstorm as they were crossing the stream and had to wait under overhanging rocks until the rain ceased.

E: ...then we headed back out again, the sun opened up, warm enough to be in shorts and a tank top, then we get into the mountain. All the mosquitoes hatched that day, because there must have been, I had a photo of my leg, there must have been about 80 mosquitoes down my leg, and I am not normally one to use chemical anything but I was spraying, I was so

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<sup>11</sup> Recreating with ATVs and Snowmobiles is a contentious issue for many Yukon residents. Noise, environmental damage, and risk of personal injury are often brought up by those who feel there should be less motorized activity. Others argue that the use of motorized vehicles is a way of life and if done well, not particularly damaging or dangerous.



mad by that point I didn't care. And ah, biking up we passed a really large fresh grizzly footprint, scat here and there, followed his trail. You probably biked the whole thing (looking at JS), I got off now and then. And walked a little ways

F: you start out on that hike to that observation mountain and you can see that typical Kluane view with the glacier but um, about a third of the way down that trail there are two trails that are old mining roads that kind of branch off and go up the side of the valley and we took the very first one and, old silver claims, there are, somebody had about 100 years ago had carved some silver or gold out of the mountain so these roads are visible, not maintained

E: but you could see them

F: we followed one of these, it took us up the side of the valley and you are able to see down the main valley, for a beautiful view

E: at the top it was low bush, cranberries and moss, bare rock, just above the tree line. The mosquitoes went away up there, or maybe we just didn't care anymore. Warm and sunny and we just passed out and laid up on the rocks. The clouds I think started to come in again, we did consider to keep going but, we thought there was a storm coming in. So we got on our bikes and just tore down it, you know ¼ of the time. You are ringing your bells the entire time cause it is definitely thick bear country and the whole way you sing or shout.

Evident in their story are ideas of discovery, personal challenge, solitude and sharing of experience. Though they enjoy returning to favorite spots, for E and F, the location of their experience can often change. Specific skills are necessary to encounter the environment in the way they choose and they both enjoy challenging themselves as individuals on the performance of those skills. They also told other stories of similar experiences, often discussing weather, trail conditions, things or places found on the way and joking about each other's achievements or shortcomings. Such stories were often grounded in the feeling of that-day. That is, the environmental and personal

conditions that provided context for experience. For instance, it was warm or cold, wet or dry, the smells of sunblock or bug spray, being stressed or relaxed, energized or tired. They also often mentioned that specific aspects of their day such as the view or freshness of the air gave them a sense of peace and freedom.

None of the examples provided are complete representations of the associated user groups or even of those individuals' range of experiences. Instead, I employ them as windows on different acts which take place within forested areas. Though these three specific stories do not overlap geographically, they could quite easily. For instance, guide-outfitting concessions cover most of the Territory, trap lines are found throughout and recreationalists often use old logging or mining roads to access their sites, subsequently bringing them into areas used for those purposes. This is not to mention First Nations Traditional Territories that also cover much of the Yukon and many other 'user' categories. As each of the people mentioned above moved around the land, their connection to it may be characterized as more than a simple 'use'. They were involved in acts of place making, of becoming familiar with the land, placing memories and stories, associating smells and ideas with the surroundings their bodies encountered. However, none of the above experiences created the same place, such that even when such activities overlap the 'place' they create is fundamentally different. Subsequently when one impinges upon another in a way that cannot be overlooked, in a way that impedes desired activity, the conflict is more than one of overlapping uses. I argue that this matters because experience and the places it creates, are at the root of how people express their forest use and articulate conflict, and because for many, such experiences are part of a sense of belonging and of what the Yukon means to them.

*Places Gather*

A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people's engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance. Thus whereas with space, meanings are attached to the world, with the landscape they are gathered from it. (Ingold, 1993: 155)

As a last note on the topic of practice and place I turn to the idea that places have the capacity to gather experience. This aspect of place was made clear to me as forest users related their experiences, on occasion speaking of the capacity of place to evoke feelings or memories from the past. Walter (1998) posits that places bind people together by the common emotions they elicit, through their ability 'to lead the mind somewhere else', and that places themselves have the capacity to gather experience. While working in urban environments Walter enquired into how certain places were understood by the many people who passed or inhabited them on a regular basis. His examples of how slums, dark alleys and abandoned buildings are felt and experienced suggest that some places can have the ability to elicit common feelings. In a similar way, Casey (1996) discusses the capacity of places to gather, suggesting that they can keep thoughts and memories and in one's presence, release them. In other words, while people tend to change the character of a locality through their actions, the land also interacts with them. All of this points to the agency of place.

For instance, JA is a long-time trapper who has worked a number of jobs throughout the Territory. In our interview we spoke of encountering signs of other people while on his trap line. He talked of finding long-forgotten objects such as tent

poles, or on one occasion a stove stashed under trees for safe keeping. He also related the following encounter to me:

JA: One time I found a blaze on a tree and it was all grown in, so I cut the tree 'cause I was widening the trail, and I counted the growth rings and there was 89 growth rings, that was the year 2000, so it was from about 1910 that somebody had a trip. That is another thing, often you are scouting for a trail and if it is a good place to put the trail in today, 100 years ago it was still a good place to put a trail. So you find a connection to the old days. We found some old cabins, rusty pots. Occasionally they made caches also, you shoot a moose and you know, maybe two feet high, five logs high. A small enclosure and put a bunch of poles and rocks on top to keep the scavengers away. We found a few of those. Stuff like that.

Similarly, R is an individual who has explored much of the Yukon while doing various forms of surveying work. He often comes across signs of other people and remarks that it bothers him to see messes left behind, however, if the remains or signs are old enough he can find them interesting.

R: It is very common to find where a prospector's camp is, a campfire, some stakes around where the tent was. What I look for to find out if they were prospectors is to find a little cache of rocks somewhere, a little pile near a place where it was nice to sit and write notes while examining them. And I always go into that pile of rocks and see what they were finding, it can help me, I 'didn't know we had this rusty shale in the area' it helps me, but also, you know 'what did they get out of this country?'. That is the other side, eye sore if it clearly being left abandoned, but being done nicely and prospectors usually clear up after themselves, um you just look at bits of evidence.

Like the logger in the previous chapter, who found an old axe and saw leaning against a tree, experience on the land can often involve seeing continuity with what has been done before. The idea of places gathering involves various elements. In Heidegger's (1971) sense, it is that in creating a place – his example is a bridge – other places

'become' in reference to it; the river banks for instance come into existence in a way that did not previously exist prior to the bridge. Similarly, in moving across the land new places come into being in reference to known or familiar places.

Alternatively, Walter (1988) concentrates on the idea that places have characters of their own that evoke similar responses in people, gathering those responses and experiences, marking the place and then evoking them again in someone else. Scenic viewpoints provide an example. Numerous forest users, particularly recreationalists told me stories of certain spots or viewpoints creating a sense of wonder and freedom. In contrast we can think of abandoned buildings in a run-down area of town that are encountered with fear or apprehension. They are locations of intense experience to many, a place which evokes common feelings. For Walter, these places gather such emotions and experiences and reflect them back on observers.

JA's story is an example of places gathering. The physical land held characteristics that evoked certain responses – this was a good place to walk, perhaps because of its slope, or drainage, or lack of underbrush. Thus, people walked there, left their mark and then experienced the land in reference to that trail, gathering other places to it. Often animals will also use such trails for easy movement or to eat fresh grass or leaves along its edges, thus the land encouraged a flow of organisms through a particular locality in a certain way. Both Heidegger and Walter I believe would argue it is the trail that does the gathering. Similarly, the logger who had stopped to rest and found an old saw and axe on the same tree he was leaning against was in a spot that held characteristics, perhaps a good view, or a bare trunk in an otherwise brushy area, which drew individuals to it.

This continuity of experiences with unknown individuals from the past also involves an element of skill and knowledge. The knowledge involved in where to cut a trail is similar despite a century of time passing. Likewise, it would take somebody with knowledge of the work of prospectors and surveyors to recognise the small pile of rocks for what it is, to take from those previous experiences, use the material left behind and perhaps reach the same conclusions. Marks of experience are left behind, gathered into the landscape and in turn go some way to shape how people understand them in future encounters. The capacity of forests to hold markers of human history is important to many who find continuity in their own actions with those that have taken place in the past.

Andrew Garner (2004) explores the relationship between identity and material culture in his research considering the social place of trees in Hatfield forest, Britain. The forest had been actively shaped by people for most of its existence and he asserts that as space is worked, it is marked with intimate memories through which people become aware of their own contemporary actions in such a way, they are renewing a deeply patterned cycle which echoes the past. While many of Britain's forests have a much more intense and documented human history than those of the Yukon, the capacity of forests and trees to gather experiences and reflect them back on people remains the same. In moving within and through them other places come into being, particular histories are drawn from and the bodily movement involved in forest experience is acted out.

### **Knowledge and Skill**

From the perspective of people who encounter, work, and move within them, it can often take specific skills and knowledge to interact with forest in a proper way. That is, without getting lost, injured or causing harm. This section explores knowledge and skill as part of the forest experience. In it, I suggest that forest users understand experience as leading to knowledge and skill, often judge each other based on it, and can use its absence as a reason to dismiss alternative uses and viewpoints.

Knowing the world and knowing what to do in it are important markers of legitimacy among forest users, and such issues appeared often in narratives about forest use. Often cited examples were the actions of ‘outsiders’ whose lack of knowledge, and some would argue common sense, caused them trouble. For example, M is a long time Yukon resident and avid recreationalist, and has concerns about environmental protection:

M: I think one thing that drives Yukoners crazy is that, with some of those societies (conservation groups) that people will just move here from Vancouver or somewhere and then they will join those societies and before they have an idea about what the Yukon is all about will start shooting off their mouths and people get upset about it.

And then you have people like, some Greenpeace people, and they don't have an idea what they are talking about. That guy, X, he came up here during the wolf kill, and I don't agree with wolf kills at all, but he came up here, didn't have an idea, he wanted to go out there and stop them from killing the wolves so he goes out somewhere and walks into the bush, gets lost, nowhere near any wolves at all, he comes back and says he's leaving!

This individual lacked a sense of the landscape that would keep him from getting lost, of local issues regarding wolves, and of his social position as an outsider. Knowledge and experience are interconnected, and in order to understand forest discourse,

comprehending what is respected or recognised knowledge and experience among users is necessary.

Knowledge is a form of familiarity and understanding and its content and form varies greatly. It can be grounded in first-hand forest experience, such as in setting traps or getting a tree to fall the right way, while at other times is more reflective of formal education such as scientific understandings of ecosystems. For instance, later in my discussion with NA, I asked her why she chose to trap. This was her response:

NA: it is just that you are on your own, you are independent, you get to know that land really well. You have markers, you notice things, you see things around you. There is the odd animal out so you are always looking for tracks, seeing what birds are out, and it is just a real, different way of being. You kind of get grounded, I don't know if that makes sense to you, but you kind of, you're grounded, you are who you are, where you are, and you are just enjoying yourself. And you still have a purpose and but, it is just a way of living more than anything.

NA is expressing a connection between practice, skill and being-in-the-world in a way that makes sense for her. She talks about noticing things around her which she can do based on years of experience on her trap line and this ability is an important part of her self-image.

As a second example I turn to Q, an avid environmentalist who has formal training in forestry practices. When asked what was important about forests she spoke primarily about her personal connection to outdoor spaces, of what it felt like to walk through the bush and feel connected to the forest around her. She also pulled from her formal training to understand the processes which were occurring within them. For instance, in discussing the existence of mycorrhizal fungi, small organisms which grow on tree roots and aid in the absorption of water and nutrients. While Q experiences forests on many fronts, her knowledge of their internal workings directs attention to certain aspects of



them. Both Q and NA draw on a body of knowledge, which is grown from experience and which they understand to be important and valid.

Yet knowledge and skill are not only tied to a specific place. For instance, in the fall of 2011 I accompanied my family into the forests near my parents' house in British Columbia to cut the wood necessary to heat their home for the coming winter. The event took the better part of a day and the language and knowledge involved in choosing which trees to fell and how to fell them were similar to that used by loggers in the Yukon. Similarly, recreationalists can find a sense of kinship among people from different areas but who share an interest in similar activities. While experience is place based, the knowledge employed in a particular act is in many cases transferable and can be shared among people in distant areas.

Proper or good forest use, a concern of many forest users, is an idea which represents engagement according to certain principles and priorities and which, while varying widely can be generally held by people who share skill and knowledge in their use of forests. For example, the guide-outfitters I spoke to held very similar ideas of what it was to properly engage with animals, people and the land, only some of which was in line with guide outfitting regulation. Holding the correct knowledge and skill is part of how forest users judge each other's actions, opinions and 'legitimately' ignore or complain about regulations which do not fit with their understanding of proper engagement.

For instance, a common idea among forest users in the Yukon is that only through encountering the environment in a certain way can a person fully appreciate it. An avid hiker might feel that the only way to truly appreciate and engage with the environment is in being a silent witness, challenging the self but leaving nature intact. In contrast,

Dunk (1998) found that many forest workers in Ontario were dismissive of 'naive' ideas of environmentalists who mistakenly imagine natural processes as relatively benign. For them, as well as many forest workers in the Yukon, nature is understood as potentially dangerous and as something that needs to be tempered by human action. In both cases, without the right experiences and the subsequent knowledge involved, a person lacks authenticity and therefore the right to legitimate opinion as recognised by other users.

For instance, many I spoke to in the logging industry felt that those against logging lacked sufficient knowledge to understand what was involved in the process. Comments such as these were common:

HA: How much logging do these people do? I want to ask them a few questions, how many payments have you made on hire, how many hours you put in the seat? How much do you really know about any of this? If I took you out to see, would you know the difference between a feller-buncher and a skidder and a fricken V8, you know? Would you know the front end from the back end of a sawmill?

B: ...the reality is that most of them peddle their bicycles along the waterfront in Whitehorse and have lots of opinions about the forest and how the forest should be looked after, but they really don't know bugger all about it. They don't spend any time there. I don't have a lot of time for them.... they have opinions, they don't have knowledge, in a lot of cases they have education but they don't have intelligence.

The argument that personal experience limits the possibility of perception is not new.

As previously mentioned, Dunk (2004) argues that those in the forest industry are often judged as a class unable appreciate the value of nature. Likewise the arguments of those in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century who advocated the enforcement of stricter wildlife regulations in the Yukon felt their views were better informed in the full gamut of wildlife appreciation, than those whose livelihoods depended upon animals. Similarly, Campbell

(2002) argued that early settlers in southern Canada were only able to express their experiences in terms in which they were already familiar: that the idea of wild primeval nature in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, heavily entrenched in discourse of the romantic period, created a ready-made category and set of expectations, limiting their ability to really 'see' the new environment they encountered.

As with the two examples from loggers mentioned above, forest users in the Yukon judge each other through their experiences and knowledge: are they familiar with the equipment, the skill, do they have the capacity to appreciate what is in front of them? T, the wife and business partner of a guide-outfitter told me the following:

T: We all have close family values, wanting to live a healthy lifestyle and doing what you want to do and that it is all the time. We hope the kids are going to take this into their next life as part of them. But it is not going to be given to them, they have to work their butts off and pay for that just like my husband had to pay his dad to do it.

It is getting back to, so many people don't know what is out there and never had the opportunity, and I believe it is our job to provide opportunities to our children. And the more tools they have in their belt, they are set for life. You will find with many outfitting families, they are carpentry, plumbing, electrical, business men, marketing, they are well rounded people.

A lot of people are envious of our lifestyle, they would die to have that. They see that we are all wealthy people, but we have worked our asses off. But the benefits of the way we live and the hard work is a part of it.

The skill and hard work involved is something that is learned and earned over time and something that is a source of pride for T and her family. The flip side of such sentiment is the implication that without having experienced the outdoors in a certain way, or having gained a certain form of knowledge, one simply cannot understand the meaning of certain areas or the lives of those who depend upon them. Much of this can be thought of with the idea of enskilment as put forward by Ingold (2000) in which learning is not

separated from the act of doing and is embedded within acts of engagement with the world, that is, through dwelling. Using such a frame, it is understood that the knowledge necessary to act in an appropriate manner within forests is not a thing which *exists* outside of context, but is instead a type of understanding gained through practice and in which attention is drawn towards certain aspects of the environment. The inability to have this obtain this form knowledge without engagement is a factor in the heavy dismissal of government regulation, consultation processes, and enforcement that I encountered by those who work in forests. For instance, L, a logger expressed an active dislike of the high number of government jobs in Whitehorse.

L: Bring people from Toronto, Vancouver and East Coast. They bring their views with them, they see the pristine wilderness and they like it. It is not hard to like. They sit there in Whitehorse and they are secure. Whitehorse has no industry and it is still a secure town. Government, government, government. The biggest renters in town.

According to L, those government workers lacked real experience, had no understanding of Yukon issues, and were unaware of what 'real' work involved. De la Barre (2009) explores such anti-establishment and anti-bureaucratic sentiment in the Yukon as part of a strong masculinist narrative of place, emerging in part from frontier stories. Masculinist narratives, she asserts, are a big part of Yukon-place identity. While I agree with her, anti-establishment sentiments among rural workers and residents is not limited to the Yukon. My own work in northern Alberta (2007), Dunk's work in Ontario (2004), and Satterfield's (2002) work on the US west coast provide evidence of similar sentiment. Woven within masculinist and rural narratives, as well as in expressions of anti-intellectualism, are differences in the understanding of what legitimate knowledge, skill and experience is. As an example, CA, the wilderness tourism guide mentioned in previous chapters told me the following:

CA: I think what is really unique about the Yukon is that people are more in touch with the land. People up here even if they live in Whitehorse they feel a connection to the land and environment, if they live in Riverdale they are walking the Grey Mountain trails, or canoeing down the river. People in the Yukon, even though we have this vast wilderness, people realise the value of it and are willing to take the effort to protect it.

CA is expressing a connection to and understanding of Yukon outdoors as a general sentiment, that people in the Yukon are 'more in touch' with the land. His views however are from a specific standpoint, one of recreation, tourism and urban living. The connection he speaks of is often dismissed by others who see it as lacking a foundation in real experience and knowledge. In such cases, real experience tends to involve more physical interaction with forested spaces, often through extraction activities.

### *Acquiring Skill*

Skill, as I define and understand it for the purposes of this dissertation is the correct application of knowledge in the correct context. Acquiring skill through practice implies a process of becoming familiar with areas and the actions that occur within them, and of using tools and applying them in the right context. The process of learning was often expressed as a valued aspect of forest experience among forest users. This was particularly true when done through learning in-the-bush and from someone who is experienced themselves. Some, such as T the outfitter above, have spoken about teaching skills to their children and in such a way connect broader social and familial priorities with forest use. Others, however, lacking the knowledge necessary and someone to teach them, have to turn to other means of education: courses or workshops for instance.

NA told me stories of learning to trap and live on the land. Her mishaps, such as falling through the ice and walking home cold and wet, a small injury while working, losing trails and trying to find them again, were stories of the lessons she learned through experience. In one case she told a story of learning how wolves hunt after seeing a female wolf distract her dog while another came up behind it. NA and her husband clothed in slippers and aprons and armed with flashlights chased them away and shortly after, trapped seven close by their cabin. In another instance NA was away from her cabin and hearing wolves howl was concerned they would harm a dog that had been left behind:

NA: well, they were calling up in the hills and I heard them and I said to X " I am going to walk back and make sure our other dog is OK" cause she would not back down on anything. And so I did, I walked back, and X said when he came back one had tracked me just to, within half a mile of the cabin. It, I kind of was aware of them, they kept howling to each other up in the hills. And that is why I went back, so I was walking fast, I didn't have a pack or anything, but I was walking fast. I kind of had a feeling that 'I better just get home', and that was the fastest couple miles I ever walked or ran, I was really worried about the dog, he was a good dog. He was OK, but, shit! I, then when he told me that I said "God, I kind of had this feeling", you know, you kind of know. I think too, I always carry an axe, I think as long as they know you are healthy and alert and moving they will leave you alone.

These experiences are part of learning about an area, of place making, growing skill and learning to trust your own instincts through experience in the bush. JA, another long-time Yukon trapper spoke to me about adjusting to the solitude of being a trapper in the bush and accidentally finding a resource which at once minimized and emphasized that feeling. Like many, JA uses a radio in his cabin. Originally he used it rarely, primarily to

verify he was in good health in a daily or weekly check called a *sked*<sup>12</sup>. He found out by accident however, that when not used for the sked the radio was a place of social activity:

JA: ...you come in for lunch or whatever, turn the radio on, there is somebody there so you chat. It is not as isolated as it could be if you didn't have the radio, often you don't know what those people look like. You have never seen them but you have been talking to them for ten years. And how is things, you got a problem, building, mechanical, somebody is going to tell you how to do it.

The individuals available through radio often shared knowledge about problems, each often having their own skill sets, for instance, one may be better with machinery, another able to give medical advice. Being on the land and learning through experience is a valued trait among all forest users.

For another example I turn to JB, an outfitter who learned outdoor skills from his father and worked alongside an outfitter for many years before purchasing his own concession. Guide-Outfitting in the Yukon originated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide wealthy clients with long guided hunts in Yukon's wilderness. Over the years, it developed into a structured and monitored profession, with 20 concessions (geographic allocations to one guide-outfitter). Some concessions have changed owner often, others have remained in the same family since their inception. JB is a relatively new outfitter and spoke about gaining the skills necessary in the context of both his staff and his children who he hopes will one day want to become guides themselves. He feels that children who grow up in the outdoors become good citizens, are well rounded and know how to work. He also takes on employees who know little about the land but are willing to learn:

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<sup>12</sup> A time when an agreed upon person contacts other individuals alone in the bush by radio to ensure all is well. The concept is that after too many un-answered calls others will search out that individual in person, or ask around to find news about them.

JB: ... we train them, we start them out as wranglers, or packers<sup>13</sup>, I have another guy who is learning, he might guide this year... That is my idea, I want my wrangler to be guides. I have a star right now, he is 21 now and I can put him out with a millionaire. He handles that guy like a professional, some guy told me last year it was the best guide they had and they didn't even get anything.

The skills involved in being a good guide are wide ranging. A guide needs to be knowledgeable about land, animals and outdoor survival, while also being personable and able to manage clients who are unfamiliar with the outdoors. While some clients are seasoned hunters, others are looking for a challenging and unfamiliar experience, and need a knowledgeable guide to ensure they can encounter the outdoors and animals in a safe and satisfying way. As JB accounts, authority is also an important aspect of being a guide:

JB: Some of these guys are very successful and used to being the boss but you have to be firm enough, that hunter is your responsibility. You also have to, what you say goes, not what he says. This guy comes up on his private jet, has 400 people working for him and some 21 year old kid is going to tell him how it is going to go? Some of these guys have never ridden a horse and here they are.

JB learned how to guide over a number of years from various sources, the most important source however was long-term exposure to the land and to the clients he guides. I spoke with outfitters who teach their children, both boys and girls, to ride as early as three years old, who trail-in at the beginning of the season at the same age and by five, have their own horse and are no longer led by the reins. Likewise, some are wrangling alongside their parents and other workers as early as eleven years old, some with the ultimate goal of becoming a guide themselves. This continuity over time is

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<sup>13</sup> Wranglers deal primarily with the care and transport of horses, while packers deal primarily with the care and transport of equipment, guides deal directly with the client and are in charge of the hunt.



valued by many forest users who enjoy sharing their knowledge with their children. This is seen as not only building skills, but also sharing a way of life that is good and healthy. I was also told similar stories from biking enthusiasts, who valued teaching their children the skills necessary to navigate backcountry terrain on a bike. On occasion this included inviting friends on trips planned specifically to teach different biking and outdoor skills. For instance, E detailed the bike route that he and his children often take during the summer months that goes around and through Whitehorse:

E: People have built things on those trails, teeter totters and ramps and jumps and stuff like that, the kids love it. I often take my son and few of his friends up there. They spend a lot of time going back and forth on those. Then we bike down, if we have loads of energy we bike back up to X and it turns into a 40 km ride, but if people are lagging a bit and it's a Saturday we pick the bus, put the bikes on.

They get to experience an outing that is self-propelled and at the end of the day they have had a fantastic time. Then over the summer, you do that ride in early June late May, kids can barely do that ride, they are done, by the end of August and September they have loads of energy, right back up to Porter Creek, the health value is there, it is a family type of things, you are there with your kids and their friends, it is community oriented and you are out there using the forest and trails and wild spaces, it is not lecturing, kids are learning the importance of these areas and these spaces without you saying anything, they are just out there having fun right.

In each of the above cases, learning and the practice of skill are examples of how people are connecting to and understanding their environment. Those trails then become something beyond a mere feature of the landscape, but a place of stories and memories and experiences. When discussing forest use, these experiences are part of individual perception and without understanding or acknowledging them communication about forests and between users is hindered.

The fact that knowledge and skill are necessary to encounter forests is emphasised by the difficulties experienced by those who have the desire but lack the experience to engage with the outdoors. For example while in the Yukon I had the opportunity to

participate in a number of education workshops on different outdoor skills including birding, orienteering and on one occasion an annual weekend event called Yukon Outdoor Women (YOW) aimed specifically at teaching women outdoor skills they may not have had the opportunity to learn otherwise. The focus on female participants was based on the premise that women seldom had the chance to learn such skills in the male dominated outdoors and that learning in a female-only environment avoided feelings of incompetency or inferiority while encouraging a fun and open atmosphere. The fact that many outdoor activities are dominated by men, in particular motor vehicle use, hunting, and trapping, can make it difficult for women to learn the necessary skills. In a Yukon-wide survey conducted by Yukon Fish and Wildlife (Yukon Fish and Wildlife Board, 2009), it was reported that significantly more men hunt and trap than women and that in an average week, men spend twice the amount of time outdoors than women (8.9 vs. 4.3 hours). However, female participation in outdoor recreation including hunting and fishing has been steadily increasing throughout North America (Henderson, 2000)<sup>14</sup>.

In her paper concerning gender inclusion in recreation, Henderson argues that the most significant determinant in participation in recreational activities is whether or not a person was exposed to that activity as a child. However, she also reports that skill-based courses aimed at under-represented groups such as women who want to learn outdoor skills in later years are of growing interest. The Yukon, YOW courses included how to

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<sup>14</sup> In a study concerning rural participation in hunting in the US between 1980 and 1990, Heberlein and Thomson (1995) report that over the ten year period there was a steady decline in hunting by males and a slight rise in hunting by females in the same time period. Bissell, Duda and Young (1998) also report that overall fewer people are participating in hunting in the U.S., though female participation is rising. Heberlein, Serup and Ericsson (2008), in a study spanning 13 European Countries, 50 States and 6 Canadian provinces/territories found that while numbers vary and stability in some areas is found, overall hunting participation numbers are declining, though female participation has risen.

identify, gut and fillet fish, how to set up a fishing rod and how to fish, how to back a boat trailer into water and get a boat into or out of the water, gun safety and target practice, ATV driving, using GPS devices, herbology, map reading and use, outdoor skills including making fires and camp sites, and much more. The weekend emphasised hands-on and repetitive experience. For instance, three women and I spent the better part of an afternoon handling different guns, loading and unloading them, passing them between ourselves, walking with them, and firing them. The event is held outdoors over three days (courses change every year) and it is immensely popular<sup>15</sup>, often filling up months in advance. Many women stated that they would not have felt comfortable doing such activities without this knowledge but had not known of a way to gain it in a comfortable manner.

Interviews with those involved in outdoor organizations, and hunting and fishing organizations, pointed to the need to host events such as YOW or 'family fishing days' in order to introduce people to the outdoors. Many suggested that if a person wasn't introduced to activities such as hunting at an early age it was difficult to learn later in life, especially if they were among a group that was not otherwise exposed to such outdoor pursuits. GA, a member of the Yukon Fish and Game Society, spoke to me about what he perceived as declining participation in outdoor activities.

GA: I think people are using the land less, probably what use there making out of it is more intrusive than what was in the past. When I say more intrusive, the introduction of ATVs and snow machines, more of them. There is no question, it is change to access, change, especially ATVs, they have really made things a lot easier to access, made it so hunters, a week hunt is now a two day hunt.

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<sup>15</sup> Similar events are held in many provinces across Canada, often filling up well in advance and creating demand for more opportunities of similar style. Community groups, hunting and fishing organisations, and NGO's organize them, most often with an emphasis on women-only participation.

That is the biggest change I have seen. In terms of fishing, fewer younger people being involved, a lot of the smoking, the racking, the curing, are work, and kids don't want to do it. The same thing in wildlife, in terms of skinning the hide, looking after it, lot of work, and even as simple as going catching some fish, that is fine it is fun. But then you clean them and look after them it is a lot of work. And there is less, I would say less of take in terms of, effort. That is a trend that I perceive, my perception

Jodie: With fewer people getting out on the land to hunt and fish, does it have implications for community and society?

GA: Yeah. If it keeps on, if it keeps on going down this path there would be less regard, less understanding or appreciation for the wilderness we have. You have to be exposed to that to appreciate it, if as parents we are not exposing our kids, it would change.

Yukon groups such as birders, orienteers, and the Outdoors Club, also offer courses and workshops available to the public aimed at providing the skills and knowledge necessary to actively engage with Yukon outdoors. Such introductions do not make a skilled person, but they do provide the basic starting information – the common sense knowledge and experience – that allows further learning to occur in a safe manner.

It takes knowledge and skill to encounter forests, to know them, a person's place in them, and to use the tools that are part of that encounter with skill. Over time, mistakes are learned from, for instance after falling in the ice NA learned how to assess the safety of water crossings in the winter. Over time an individual builds experience and knowledge and from this, legitimacy, authenticity and respect is gained or refused by others. When HA asked earlier:

HA: If I took you out to see, would you know the difference between a feller-buncher and a skidder and a fricken V8, you know? Would you know the front end from the back end of a sawmill?

It was a question of experience and whether or not those expressing opinions regarding the actions of loggers knew enough to be legitimate speakers. That is the perspective from which future experiences and knowledge will be understood, in which

communication about forest use takes place. It is also the way through which we can understand the perspectives and priorities of these individuals, by recognising and respecting the place people speak from and speak about.

### **Caring for Forests**

Heidegger (1971), in exploring the meaning and implications of the act of dwelling, approaches the subject linguistically in an attempt to locate the root meaning of the concept. In doing so he suggests that one of these root meanings of the German word for dwelling is to “...cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine. Such building only takes care- it tends the growth that ripens into fruits of its own accord.”(1971: 147). Heidegger is emphasising the processes through which people connect to their environment – they engage it through their movements, through their actions. Thus, dwelling implies a degree of care, either through allowing it to be as it is, encouraging what is already there, or through building and creating new things.

This idea of caring for natural areas is one that arose often in discussions of land use in the Yukon. Placed as it is between experience, knowledge and the often connected ideas of proprietorship and authority, the idea can be politically and culturally loaded. Especially as assertions of knowledge and connection to land are often part of a claim to an area and can exclude of others. The sentiment was expressed by participants in many ways: as self-declarations of environmentalism and conservationism, as calls for protection and in claims of being forest managers or stewards. While these statements stem from a similar source – from engaging in the world, from dwelling – their difference lies in the connection people have with those

places, their knowledge of them, and their claim to them. In other words, sentiments of caring are based on or represent different types of engagement and of knowledge of the environment.

My aim in this section is to explore ideas of caring as expressed by those who experience forests. Invariably discussing activities and the places frequented by forest users brought up concerns about Yukon's non-human environment and feelings that as a person connected to that area, they know it in an important way. I aim to illuminate experience-based practices which led to feelings of caring for the natural world. As the form this caring takes is grounded in the experience from which it came, it is not unproblematic among different forest users, indeed conflicting sentiments of caring were common. In every case however, such claims were an expression of experience, knowledge and often a plea from a particular viewpoint for a voice in the use of those places. Taken as such, they emphasise the complex nature of environmental experience and act as counter narratives to utilitarian and self-interested descriptors of their chosen activity.

While it is not always the case, many outfitters and trappers are often connected to the same piece of land over long periods of time. Their interaction is one with not only plant life, but human and animal life as well. Their experience is connected to economy, family, seasonal change and a range of other factors. Often ideas of stewardship were used by such participants to describe the results of and motivation for their action on the land. Stewardship implies the conscious management, supervision and care for something else and often has a moral element which suggests the form of that care is good for its recipient.

For instance, D is a long time outfitter in the Yukon. He has a family and his children are learning to wrangle and often help in camp as does his wife. Like many others, he learned his trade from his father. For D, consciously managing the number of animals which are taken from his concession and paying attention to where they are taken ensures his concession remains sustainable. This is some of what he had to say:

D: We spread our harvest around and take limited hunters. Say for moose I will hunt in my northern part one year, my eastern part the next year. I will hunt my central area where we have our sheep every year and for the odd moose take one to two out of that zone. Our sheep, I will harvest anywhere from eight to twelve rams a year, it depends on what I am seeing for older rams. If I am not seeing any older rams this year, we will take nine sheep hunters this year.

It wouldn't sustain twelve rams a year, I could get that but I would be shooting younger animals so I cut my harvest back. Next year, I am about half booked for next year, it is unlikely I will book more till after the season is out, but if I don't see any of these older rams at the end of this season then I will book only eight or nine hunters for next year. When I start getting an increase I might go to twelve.

One year back in 1991 I took 18 sheep out because there were so many old rams in there, they are dying anyway and that year we were a 10.2 year age average which is really good. When you harvest those kinds of rams, you are leaving the younger ones to come behind and take the place of the older guy. We have always done that and dad has always done that...

...

And it feels good to go out there and kill a ram that has no teeth left because he is old, and you know he is going to die that winter, you know you are managing, when you shoot an old bull moose that has grooves in his teeth because of eating willows, he is going to die. You have made room for that young guy.

Many outfitters emphasise the advanced age of trophy animals as proof of good land management. They believe such old animals will die the coming winter anyway, and in such a way are not harvesting from growing stock. There is a conscious management of land use and numbers of animals taken. This is based on previous years' experience,

weather, the presence or absence of other animals and a range of other factors. JR, the outfitter mentioned early, expressed a similar style of management, stating that he recognises he doesn't own the animals in his concession and does not want anything to be eliminated as a species. Those guide-outfitters who consciously manage their land often hold themselves in contrast to a specific few who are talked about as not caring properly for their concession. As it was expressed to me, those select individuals make it difficult for others to be recognised as land stewards. Many guide-outfitters live on their concession, some trap, fish, and enjoy horse-back riding and other forms of outdoor recreation. There is an investment in their concession to see it sustainable over the long term for more than purely economic reasons.

NA, the trapper mentioned throughout this chapter, expressed similar concerns regarding the management of animals. She feels that those who have no experience with trapping tend to judge it harshly. She also feels her work has continuity with the past, with how Canada was settled and that it is a sustainable, historic and good activity to be a part of. In speaking about how she traps, she stated the following:

NA: And it is a viable resource in that it is sustainable, it is something that can keep going, there are regulations and limits. After such a percentage of female caught you stop a certain area. And you do it yourself as a trapper as well, you watch and you know. "that is not doing good I am going to pull it", or "I am getting too many young ones or too many females" you have to think because that is your future, you want your breeding stock there for the next year. You kind of regulate yourself and you observe and you know how the animals are, where something is bothering you so you talk about it with the other trappers "what do you think about this, why is this happening, what do you think?" and it is all by observations, they are all kind of like biologists themselves and things like that.

...

That is what happened to the sealing industry in the NWT and Newfoundland. Those people that was their livelihood, they used the fur



and they used the meat. And that is how they survived and that is their history and I don't think it is right for someone who lives somewhere else in a different manner to tell the north how to live and what they should do because they have no idea all the ramifications and why those people have to live a certain way. The fact is they don't over harvest if they are true trappers, or whatever.

While I certainly met individuals who worked within forests who were primarily economically driven or who were less conscientious of their activities, they were rare. What was far more common were people such as D, JB and NA, who felt that according to their understanding of animal and land dynamics, they were a positive force on the land.

Both outfitters and trappers, while they do not own their land, have a long-term legal connection to it through a concession or trap line agreement. Their connection to those spaces while somewhat tenuous is one of some duration and upon which they build increasing feelings of proprietorship and care. Many felt that if their presence was to halt, those areas and the animals within them would be adversely affected. This reflects a view that the harvesting of animals is a natural act, that people are part of a system of beings who participate in cycles of harvest which if done properly is part of healthy eco-system functioning. It also reflects a view in which forests are active and used spaces of which people, when acting with proper knowledge, skill and within recognised 'proper' behaviour can be a part.

Many workers in the forest industry also framed their work as one that was good to do, often connecting forest extraction with the minimizing of forest fire threat, an issue that arises every year throughout the Yukon. They also often spoke of their work in a way that suggested human intervention in the environment was morally good, as using the earth as humans were meant to do. For instance as providing necessary material for

people to heat their homes or build their communities and that using Yukon wood products reduced the territory's 'environmental footprint'. Some also suggested that forest clearings were beneficial for animal habitat if done in the correct manner. Often they pointed to areas of regrowth as proof that nature is not adversely affected by timber extraction. However, for the most part these individuals move to different areas of land to conduct their work. Long-term connection with the same space occurs less often and they therefore express less intimate knowledge about the areas they are in. The experience, knowledge and skill involved are quite different from other forest uses and subsequently their claims of caring, often expressed as a form of environmentalism, are quite different as well. Such individuals do however express the desire to see forests in healthy conditions, that they be used in a sustainable way and that the organisms that depend upon them are able to continue to do so.

DA is small-scale logger in the Yukon, he works a separate contract-based job to help with expenses, but is trying to grow his forestry work to a level where it would be financially stable. He has worked in both the extraction and production side of the industry and spoke about logging as a form of agriculture in which people can enhance or subtract from forests. Like many, he felt that not managing forests was wasteful and at times dangerous, for instance:

DA: Like really, our forests are a tinder box cause, well, we haven't really managed them, just left it alone, gone to the point where we fought every single fire and had a lot of fire loading, there is a lot of fuel underneath the timber, this forest around Whitehorse is 120-140 years old now. And it is about time it is ready to burn.

DA expressed his work as a natural thing to do, one that if done correctly caused little irreparable harm to the landscape. Particularly strong among loggers were stories about

past forest use, glaciation and the first establishment of forests in the Yukon, as well as impacts of logging during the Klondike and pre-war years. DA asserts that trees grow back quicker than most people realise, that forest disturbance is natural, and that forests are quite resilient if people act within reason.

DA: I'm like what is wrong with going and cutting a tree? There is nothing wrong with that. I think putting that, in that perspective is not that healthy for anyone, I think that is the perspective certain people will pick out, they got to realise that our energy comes from somewhere, and it makes sense for the Yukon to look at their forest, maybe thin it out a bit, harvest it, utilise it in a way that is not going to make a tinder box for ourselves or, least, maybe stop a few oil trucks from traveling up the highway. It would be nice to be a little more self-sufficient.

Present throughout our interview was the argument that logging was a beneficial activity on a number of fronts. Fire prevention and self-sustainability were often mentioned by DA and other loggers, as particularly important aspects of the logging industry. In this sense, it is not stewardship that is being discussed but proper management, an approach grounded in a care for the areas within which people work, yet based less on an intimate knowledge of a particular area and more on the practice of a transferable skill and a general proper way of living. These claims to management are also premised on a particular articulation of the nature/culture divide.

Dunk (1998), in his work with forest workers of Ontario has argued that loggers are challenging the human-nature divide by suggesting the work they do is 'good'; that it can be a natural act to cut a tree. A theme in some of his work that parallels mine is the perception of forest fires and the proposed question by forest workers of why it is forest fires would represent nature while labour invariably represents culture. In such cases a claim is being made that interacting with one's environment if done properly, is not that

different than acts of nature which have the same result. In a similar way hunters claim that in killing older animals they are imitating or replacing a 'natural' process of death which would have occurred shortly anyway.

These statements are often placed in opposition to viewpoints asserting that environmental protection indicates a lack of human-induced change in the landscape. This point of view is often stereotyped by those who work in forests as fairly standardized: no development in any natural area, ever. Yet, environmental views as expressed by Yukon residents are far more complex. What was common to most conservation oriented views I encountered was the expression of a clear line between the natural world and the human world. Subsequently, assertions of care tended to focus on the lessening of human activity.

For example, K is a self-labeled environmentalist who feels strongly about the protection of certain places in the Territory. Her beliefs rest on declining world-wide biodiversity of animals and plants and the idea that in the Yukon, as a relatively pristine environment, there is a chance to protect natural areas before the same occurs.

K: The natural eco-systems in their state are also for our own benefit. There is a part to it, it is also about survival. ... it is an ecosystem based approach in the sense that I believe a lot of our work is that we must maintain the systems in which we rely, and based on those (systems) human cultures flourish, and based on those human economies flourish, that is the order of operation. ... I don't believe and it has not been proven well to me that we can mitigate our actions and still maintain those values. I think that we just need some areas... we need some areas left alone, whether they have forests or lakes or rivers, or mountains.

K enjoys the outdoors primarily through recreation, supports the use of wood heat and feels strongly against hunting except in limited circumstances. She has hiked and explored much of Yukon's backcountry and expresses a particular affinity for a few

specific places. Her philosophy and concerns do not rest primarily on experience in-the-wilderness, but on experience and knowledge of an expanding consumer-based society and the fragility of the non-human world. For her, the primary meaning of caring for the world is mitigating human-activity. The idea of caring is an important aspect of what she does, indeed it defines her actions in most aspects of her life. She expresses a deep connection to the outdoors and is very concerned about the future of humanity if those areas are not protected from human development.

In the case of the above narratives there is physical overlap in the places K, DA, and NA referenced. Despite this, they spoke of different experiences, meanings, stories, histories, and sense of concern for the environment. All felt that their actions were for the most part beneficial and that in acting based on their experience, knowledge and skill, they were engaging with their environment in a good and proper way. The idea of care, expressed as stewardship, concern, or environmentalism, reflects diverse perceptions of what forested areas are, the role humans have in them, and their social and environmental history. The logger and guide-outfitter pulled from a different idea of the human-environment relationship than T, asserting that it can be a good thing to extract material from nature through logging, hunting or trapping, not just manageable or permissible, but actually good.

All are “dwelling” in Heidegger’s sense of the word – through engagement with the world, they care for it. Understanding the environmental perspectives of people is not as much about recognising the veracity of what they state, as counter examples exist for each of the above – instead, it is about recognising the validity of the experience upon which each opinion is based. It is also about recognising the personal nature of such claims, which are often connected to a sense of identity and belonging.

### Understanding Forest Encounters

There is a richness of human experience within Yukon forests. In presenting an argument concerning the multilocal and multivocal aspects of place, Rodman (2003) challenges anthropologists to address the contested nature of place directly, rather than provide one unchallenged location within which ethnographic fieldwork takes place.

She writes that in doing so we can look:

...through these places, explore their links with others, consider why they are constructed as they are, see how places represent people, and being to understand how people embody places (2003: 218).

In this chapter I have explored Yukon forests as being multiple places at once for different forest users. Activities within forests are varied, but more than that, people *experience* the forests in different ways. Such experiences shape part of how these individuals encounter and understand forests, as places of work, of solitude, as places separate from humans or as integral to human life and engagement. To speak of forest use should be to invoke and address the complexity of human experience within them.

De la Barre writes:

Issues arise around the promotion of one place identity over others. Local level 'place identity clashes' point to the need to consider the way some place discourses are more powerful than others. (2009: 55)

She is addressing here the impact of the promotion of place identity for tourism purposes, but in doing so highlights the fact that place discourse is a powerful medium which can silence or strengthen the expression of certain narratives. Experience, place, knowledge and stewardship are bound up in the activities of forest users and become markers of identity on the boundaries where activities and viewpoints meet. Cohen (1982) emphasises that there is a sense of difference among people that must be

attended to because it matters to those individuals, informs their actions and is central to how people express their attachment to locality. Similarly, forest users encounter and understand forests in different ways, relate to them and to the Yukon community in different ways, assert that difference, and because of this it matters. However, as I discuss in the following chapter, forest users seldom actually come across each other as users within forests. Instead it is very often through land use management structures, regulations and media that they most often encounter the views and demands of others. One definite exception to this is in planning processes and public consultation efforts where individuals may encounter each other face to face, often in a situation where multiple-use is the key subject at hand and where people are asked to articulate their views. In such situations it can be beneficial to recognise that the places they speak from is one of experience.

Ingold (2000) asserts that we must privilege the experiences people have in order to understand how the environment is perceived. To know forests and to understand differences in their perception we must know in what ways they are encountered. Tilley (1994) wrote:

Perception of the world and the constitution of that which is important or unimportant to people does not work in terms of a 'blank environmental slate' on which perception and cognition sets to work, but in terms of the historicity of lived experiences in that world. (1994: 23)

People engage with a world that is already lived in, their experiences draw from it and create it and the same is true for Yukon forests. How people experience forests matters. The act of engaging with those places is one that often involves the application of skill and knowledge. This is tied to a sense of belonging and knowing the world and is part of a process of connecting to and caring for those places. This is not to say that all people

who care for forests, or who draw from them and feel connected to them are benign actors on the landscape. The point instead is to emphasise the importance of recognising the validity and groundedness of people's experiences and opinion.



## Chapter Seven

### The Social Nature of Yukon Forests as Structured Space

*As George Litchenberg once said about books: “A book is a mirror. When a monkey looks in, no apostle can look out” (Litchenberg, 64). Likewise when we look into the forests – at what happens in them, at how they get represented, at their allegorical implications – we see a strange reflection of the order to which they remained external. From this external perspective the institutional world reveals its absurdity, or corruption, or contradictions, or arbitrariness, or even its virtues. But one way or another it reveals something essential about itself which often remains invisible or inaccessible to the internal perspective (Harrison, 1992:63)*

No forest anywhere in the world has escaped some form of categorization by humans, a fact made clear by global forest classification maps. Keeping this in mind, one element of forests is how they are created, structured, and organized to fit human priorities, beliefs, and principles. This chapter approaches the organization of forests and forest activities as part of a social structure that both informs and reflects how forests are understood by people. Such structures include the use of categories, property systems and management regimes to frame the shape and use of forests and they are an important part of how forests in the Yukon are encountered and experienced. Approaching forests as natural artefacts without considering human influence ignores an aspect of their form which can be as important to human perception as the trees from which they are made.

To provide context for the main body of this chapter, I first briefly outline the management structures of forests in the Yukon Territory. In the remainder of the chapter I delve into their implications through three examples. Firstly, I explore the impacts of boundaries on the idea of unbounded wilderness as expressed by participants. Second, in the section titled *Challenging Use-Based Labels*, I demonstrate

that a rigid interpretation of land use through official mechanisms limits options and representations of forest users. Furthermore, that such interpretations for the most part are not true reflections of their full interest in forested spaces. Lastly, in the section, *Breaking Rules as Common Sense*, I suggest that rule breaking can be a useful tool in understanding how regulations are understood and at times actively countered by individual actors. Together, these sections explore the role socio-environmental structures play in forest perception, use, and discourse in the Yukon.

### **Management Structures in Brief**

In the Yukon, all activities taking place on Crown land must be supported either by authorization or tenure. Non-intrusive recreational activities are permitted on Crown land not designated for another purpose and are encouraged in certain areas through the provision of infrastructure such as trails. For example, some motorized use with quads or snowmobiles, are informally encouraged to stay away from pedestrian use areas, though near cities and towns their trails are often shared by other users. Other short term activities are usually authorized through a permit issued by the Land Management Branch or a mining land use approval from Minerals Branch. Permanent infrastructure is only authorized by a land tenure policy that details the terms of use through lease, license, or agreement (Yukon Lands Management Branch, 2010).

Most forest uses occur on land categories formally or informally dedicated to that use. For example, guide-outfitters buy rights for their activity through land concessions which endow them with certain rights and responsibilities to a specific area of land. An outfitter concession is a form of usufructary agreement and does not mean that a guide-outfitter *owns* that space. While an outfitter may feel a sense of proprietorship, a concession only means they have the exclusive right to equip and guide non-resident

hunters on a hunting expedition, provided they follow the rules embedded within the agreement. Their right to be consulted regarding changes within their concession is relatively informal and not always followed through with. While guide-outfitters may also trap, take clients fishing, or on occasion live within their concession area, their official connection to that space is primarily through a land-use agreement specific to their guide-outfitting activities. Other activities are understood through separate agreements.

Access most often implies compliance with regulations or restrictions regarding not only the activity which takes place, but the status of the individual. For instance, activities such as trapping are only permitted if the user has a specific form of permission in the form of a trapping concession, known as a trap line. In order to trap an individual must also have a trapper's license or assistant trapper's license. Furthermore, to obtain a concession that person must pass a trapping course, demonstrate to a Conservation Officer their ability to trap according to regulation, and pass a one year probationary period<sup>1</sup>. According to Environment Yukon there are 333 registered trapping concessions in the Yukon and 18 group areas and approximately 50% of trappers are First Nation.

Those residents who hunt and fish have access to most Crown lands and lakes provided they follow local regulation and have the appropriate use licence<sup>2</sup>. Many recreational activities also have specific areas. For instance, Whitehorse and some communities upkeep walking and biking trails within municipal limits. Other trails,

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<sup>1</sup> For further information concerning trapping regulations, see the environment Yukon website, under trapping and concessions. <http://www.env.gov.yk.ca/huntingtrapping/>

<sup>2</sup> Of the 311 individuals, both First Nation and non-First Nation surveyed for the 2009 Fish and Wildlife report, 85% reported fishing in the past, (68% in the two years preceding the survey) and 47% of respondents had hunted (66% of whom had hunted in the two preceding years).

campsites and rest stops are cared for by the government, parks management or volunteer groups. For instance, snowmobile trails are almost exclusively created and cared for by members of the Klondike Snowmobile Association, though trail use is not exclusively for motorized vehicles. Hunters are required to pass the appropriate course before partaking in the activity and to have a gun license which involves a practical and written test on gun use and safety. While recreational activities such as fishing and hiking have no pre-activity requirement, there is currently a debate among Whitehorse residents that motorized vehicle use should involve more licensing, allowing the city of Whitehorse to have more control over ATV and snowmobile activity.

Access for the purposes of hunting, fishing, and recreation on First Nations settlement land is regulated by that First Nations Band Office. Non-First Nations Yukon residents who wish to hunt on or near settlement lands have the right to cross over settlement land to hunt on the other side and except in the case of elk and bison, have the right to hunt on undeveloped category B settlement lands without proof of consent. In all other cases, individuals who are not members of that First Nations group, including other First Nations, must obtain permission.

In such ways, the physical landscape becomes representative of broader social relations and priorities. Federal and Territorial lands are managed by a state structure which compartmentalizes land use and management under a number of departments which then regulate the rules and information that correspond to access type and use. However, the bureaucratic processes through which such regulations are realized are separated from the actual activity on the land. It is the users themselves who represent the common ground between regulations, property structures and the actual land. They experience firsthand the effects of such regulations and must negotiate discrepancies

and contradictions made apparent when socially created structures and physical environment meet. As discussed in more detail later in this chapter, the skills or desire necessary to work with one are not always present to work with the other.

### **Encountering Bureaucracy and Use-Based Labels**

In accessing land through the processes outlined above, individuals are often associated with a specific use and are asked to negotiate the bureaucratic system built around it. This is especially true for highly regulated activities such as guide-outfitting, timber harvest and animal harvest. A branch of the Yukon Government oversees activities, provides licenses and informs users of regulations. Subsequently, the work and skills involved in encountering the structured and managed landscape can become part of the forest experience; one many find a frustrating task and often counter to goals of their outdoor pursuits. As outlined above, when individuals or groups would like to expand their activities to include other types of forest use, they then apply to the appropriate branch for the licenses necessary, or simply access the land while following appropriate rules. They do so as an outfitter, as a logger, as a trapper or as a recreationalist (when applying for a park permit for example). These land use divisions often coincide with user-archetypes that are reflected in assumptions about individual priorities. For instance, guide-outfitting is an economic activity, and as such an outfitter's interest in his or her concession is often described as stemming from primarily economic motivations. This section examines how it is people encounter forest bureaucracy and use-based labels as part of the forest experience. An experience which often typifies their personal priorities and characteristics based on broader use-categories.

*Bureaucracy as Part of Forest Experience*

Ultimately, it is not just boundaries and their accompanying regulatory processes that divide up the Yukon landscape and create hurdles for access, but the processes behind them that influence the social relations between forest users and forest users and the government. In part, I explore this subject through the idea of barriers – barriers are considered here as both obvious and subtle constraints that are part of what people think of and have to deal with in regard to forest access and use. In many cases barriers are the consequence of boundaries. Barriers to access are an important part of how people understand Yukon forests and their place in relation to both the environment and other forest users.

The biggest barrier to forest access in the Yukon as expressed by participants is bureaucracy. The paperwork, policies, licences and regulations that must be dealt with for those who work, live or recreate within forests. Often this can have very little to do with accessing the outdoors, but instead consists of insurance claims, safety training, taxes, obligations to sit on boards, employee benefit packages, and accounting for time used. Bureaucracy does not sit well with the free and unbounded Yukon image, and for many who express a desire to be out on the land, it is a source of immense frustration. Particularly as the skills to negotiate such demands are not always part of the skill set of people who work in the outdoors. For instance, JB a guide-outfitter, spoke to me about learning to manage the paperwork involved in his work when he first began:

JB: I had three years to prepare, but until you are in it. Boy it is ah, it ah, confusing me on a lot of things, three different permits for the same things, wilderness tourism license, your outfitting license, and all this and they do the same thing. It is a money grab, all these different branches you have to deal with, the lands branch, environment, you know, we are getting an audit on our pay structure. Yeah, it is quite a learning curve for me. It takes

too much time. I don't enjoy it either. That is part of it, but I find it confusing.

Even those who have been in the industry for decades find the bureaucracy imposing. P and S, two people involved in guide-outfitting, spoke to me about the 'office' side of the operation, something that S tends to handle more:

P: it is easier dealing with the government than with the bureaucrats. Government workers, they are all fighting for their jobs, they all have their pile they are in charge of, they don't work together, they are so defensive. But you talk to the MLAs or whatever, at least you get some results or info back. I am the one that does more of the paperwork than T does

Jodie: is there a lot of paperwork?

S: it is horrendous

...

it is the business, I have to fill out this much right now for workman's compensation (showing a space of two inches with her fingers) for two months. The same restrictions for a business that is open 365 days a year. And the other, it just seems like there are meetings all the time and you feel you should be at them.

...

we just had a review, that is important, one just came through, we just were in Whitehorse for a compensation one, a conflict resolution course, getting audited with employment insurance. We asked the lady if they have had any problems, she said no it just had not been done, we had year-end that is a bunch of work

Jodie: is there knowledge that September, October, November is a busy time and you might not be available?

S: from the renewable resource department yes, they do not bother us a whole lot during that time period. Although, we accuse them of trying to get things through during that time. That is what happens, sometimes, a hidden agenda, I think sometimes. It is because we trap too, but have not made it to a trapping AGM for a while.

The imposition of bureaucracy was also a particular trial to organized recreational groups who ran on a volunteer basis. Often these groups had hundreds of members, all who shared a likeness for a certain form of outdoor sport, and who came together to create or upkeep trails, have event days and to represent their interests when land use

issues arose. Very often the role of president had to be held by a retired person who was able to commit, often full-time hours, to managing the organization. W, an avid snowmobiler has had some dealings with this:

W: it is challenging, not prohibitive. You need to work with the system. For example, when I am trying to put a culvert into this (D) road, it is a two lane road, the main chunk of our trail, a beaver dam broke, I have been trying for more than a year. You play the game with the city, they hum and haw, they decide they have money, then don't, then you go through YESSA, that's another application and meeting, I have a full time job, then when you go through that, it goes into land use, you get a land use permit, time sensitive, then you look for funding, apply for a grant, those come in cycles, by the time you get your money the chances are that your land use permit expired, so you get it renewed, A humungous amount of red tape, where as you stick a chunk of pipe in the ground, bury it with dirt that is right there, zero negative effect on the environment, a lot of positive effect because we have stopped ATVs from driving through a creek bed, or someone from falling in the hole and hurting themselves.

Red tape you know, it does get frustrating. That is why on our board I am the only one that pushes through, the other five refuse to because of the red tape, meetings with government all the time, headaches, these guys don't have the patience for it. There are times when all week I don't spend a single night at home because of meetings. ....But, I have an appetite for that, I used to work for the government so I speak government-ease, and am used to pushing paper. It is frustrating and alienating for the rest of the group, which is why they leave me to it. What gets tiring is being at these meetings all the time when I have other stuff to do, spending my evenings in meetings or at the computer.

In a region where people emphasise the importance of forest access for their way of life, the structures and processes that restrain such access are an important part of how forests are understood and experienced. They also represent a fundamental contradiction of Yukon living: with increased human pressure on wild areas, human intervention by way of regulation is often thought of as the only means of protection. Thus, bureaucracy increasingly becomes part of the outdoors. CA, the wilderness guide mentioned above explains the situation like this:



CA: It is not just one vast area where there isn't anybody anymore, you have to start taking control of the land if you want the other values to still be there. If you want intact caribou herds you have to deal with access issues, if you want to be able to go catch a fish, we have to deal with water quality, and that is a trend that is happening, not just the activists anymore, but general people from all ages are seeing that... you are getting these groups that are willing to go the protection route. ....tourism and outfitting are growing industries, people in the Yukon like to know that they can go somewhere and it will be the way it was, without, impacts everywhere.

Yet for most guide-outfitters and wilderness professionals I spoke to including CA, the experience they value and work for is one related to their activities on the land, often feeling it is impeded by the demands of regulation.

The above section is meant to highlight the interwoven and sometimes contradictory reality of forest places and bureaucracy. The multilocal nature of forests is emphasized as the influence of distant places and priorities becomes imposed on the experience of a specific local. Furthermore, because management boundaries overlap, and barriers such as bureaucracy are felt unevenly by actors on the land, the forest itself is encountered in different ways. Lastly, discrepancies between how a space is structured, managed, and how people imagine or believe it to be, influence social and individual behaviour as well as environmental perception. As pointed out in chapter two, while many may imagine the Yukon Territory as a wide and boundless space in which people are able to move freely, it is in reality very much structured. This contradiction is at the root of much frustration for many study participants.

### *Countering Use-based Labels*

For many people the need and rationale for accessing land is more complicated than is described by any permit, agreement or license. Firstly, most people experience forests

in a number of ways at once and secondly, they often connect their experiences with feelings such as belonging, identity, and stewardship. Subsequently, a common frustration with many forest users was that such processes did not represent them or their needs on any in-depth level. As a consequence, the act of gaining access through official processes involves at once conforming to and struggling against such a system. Land categorization and management determine one form of how forest users represent themselves in the Yukon and these representations are often simplified forms of the self, as defined by an assigned status as a stake-holder according to a particular type of interest in forests.

Individuals often struggle against such simplified versions of both their activity and priorities. The following is an extract of a conversation I had with an established guide-outfitter. I had asked D if he felt that his work was respected; this is his response:

D: no, not at all, it is a constant fight, with community people, government people, Yukon people, and maybe we created some of that ourselves. We own where we are at and it pushes people away. I have reminded people, myself, that my only right is to take out non-resident hunters in the concession that I hunt in.

...

D: ...you might have all of these government programs that are supposed to protect your land, the land that we hunt in. But with mining say, as an example, with permitting you could push a cat road into a pristine wilderness area to do some exploration work, and after that work has been done the road isn't reclaimed. Now with four wheelers it stays open forever at the end of that road you just get more and more trails, more and more access into the back country. At the end of the day you see you have more and more harvest on game population. The first person to be restricted is the outfitter. At times I feel I am the only one out there managing...

Like many outfitters, D feels protective of his concession and that the work he does is part of wildlife and land management. He also has concerns and enjoyment of it beyond that which is commonly thought of as part of the guide-outfitter category. He feels an

attachment to the land that is not reflected in his concession agreement, stating that even he has to remind himself at times that his only actual right is to take non-residents hunting. When asked what makes a good experience in his line of work, the response also challenges assumptions of the guide-outfitter stereotype:

D: ah, when you are riding down the trail and you have three or four pack horses between you and your hunter. All the horses are trailing along fine and you spot a moose and you glass it for a while, but no that is not what we are looking for, but it sure is nice to see. You just stop and look at a cow and calf and carry on, you sit around the camp fire at night, tell a few stories, drink some coffee. You make some spaghetti, but you don't have noodles, and you have flour and egg and ah, some sugar and flatten it out and grill these noodles and make this great sauce. You make some bannock, and you go up on top of the mountain and you look for miles and miles and don't see nobody.

Ah, you know, you will see thirty rams that day, you don't shoot any, you just look at them. You go back to camp and have a shower and go out on the lake and do some fishing, and hear the loons calling. You know. In the morning the hunter stays by the fire and it is cold, September. You hear this grunt and you call a big bull moose into camp, or you go out in the morning to get your horses and the hunter is standing there in camp and you chase these horses in while you are riding bare back and he can't believe that you do that. That experience, is what they want. They just can't believe, people aren't tough like they used to be and a guy that never done that...or some guys that have hunted a lot and seen that, they want to relive it.

Narratives such as this one are not uncommon, and while discussion of the hunt and kill, the money made, and the booking of clients were also common, such stories reveal a depth to the outfitter experience of land which is beyond that of a business person and their concession.

As pointed to in Chapter Six, similar sentiments have been expressed by those involved in the forest industry. While most loggers in the Yukon are very concerned about economic difficulties in the forestry sector and would like to see further

opportunities for employment, most also expressed an appreciation of the outdoors beyond this use. DA is a small scale logger with a backyard operation I have already mentioned in previous chapters. He enjoys skiing, hiking, and being out in the woods. I asked him what drove him to be in the industry and he stated:

DA: ... Um, and you now, it is just the. Well, running through a plainer you really make something and you can see what you did at the end of the day, it is hard work, but I think our bodies are meant to actually work, versus sit down in an office all day. Like that is not our history, we had to work to survive. And it feels good, to work your body a bit.

Later on he stated:

DA: I like seeing finished product. I do have to feed the family, pay for things, pay for the land that I live on, and I like it out in the woods, you know, definitely lots of mosquitoes then I try to stay out of there a bit, but, you know there are times, it, it is nice out there. You know you hear a chain saw now and then too but you also hear the quiet after the chainsaw. Ya, I believe we should be a little more physically active than we have been, industrial age, the age of robots and computers to do our work for us.

For DA, not only does he appreciate other aspects of nature, but the work itself means more than a way of making living; it is a way of life that was consciously chosen by him that he sees as healthy and good. He would like to see his children in the same industry if they choose it, and feels that his family has a healthier way of life for the choices he has made in his profession.

Yet, while individuals may not feel their needs are fully understood, they are nevertheless required to participate within the system of land management. They do so through following regulations, filling out paperwork, attending the obligatory meetings and acting as stakeholders in processes which require their input. In order for them to obtain and retain access rights, these are the steps that must be taken. For instance, many loggers are members of a forest workers association which makes it easier to ask

for official representation during policy reviews or certain consultation processes. Most I spoke to, however, were frustrated with the bureaucracy of the association, the paperwork, how they had to represent themselves, and the narrow view the association had to take in order to be effective in political arenas. They begrudgingly participated because they viewed it as the only, though not very effective, means of collectively voicing their claims and needs regarding forests. However, through this process forest users are participating in an official discourse which defines them as individuals by a specific type of use. This discourse is not only bound within an abstract bureaucracy, it is also part of the common understanding of how users understand each other.

For example, D, the outfitter mentioned above is particularly frustrated with the number of meetings that are required for him as a stakeholder. He felt that his knowledge of animals on the ground, and his particular needs were not being heard<sup>3</sup>. What made these meetings even more frustrating however, was the sense that people felt his input was not needed at all. Relating a story about one particular meeting he stated:

D: ... People have this perception that we are only in there to kill game and don't care. As an example we went to a meeting a while ago by a management board, but one of the locals said to this outfitter "what are you doing here, you don't care about anything but money..." that is the perception. And granted there are a few that are. But you can't go in and kill everything anymore, if it ever happened it can't any more. ...

Likewise, JB related a similar story. For him, it is the media that ensures the image of outfitters as interested only in killing animals is kept alive.

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<sup>3</sup> In this instance, his need concerned quotas set in advance. Guide-Outfitter quotas for animals to be taken are set every three years through talks with Renewable Resource Councils. While often quotas remain the same for a number of years, because Guide-Outfitters often book their clients the year before, a change in quotas can mean a client has to be turned down after being accepted, or that one that could have been accepted was refused for no reason.

JB: ... a lot of outfitters have a black eye against them, just because of competition on hunting issues. But, it is funny, there is not a lot of, the Yukon is so massive, it is very rare for resident hunters and outfitters to run into each other. Long and short everyone thinks outfitters and these rich Americans are killing out game. 99% of the time we hunt animals that no one else will, we are so far back and isolated. That is the same with most outfitters. But some with those smaller concessions, there is competition there. Nobody has approached me from an organizational standpoint. You read letters in the paper, there are a couple yahoos in town, and every second day they have a letter in there. Everyone else, you know, you read the paper you know who I am talking about. Every second day it is outfitters, hunting....

While the Yukon landscape is neatly divided into use areas and categories, reality seldom reflects this pattern. Uses overlap, individuals partake in more than one activity, and therefore represent more than one viewpoint. However, both the land management system and character stereotypes about those who are in forested spaces often reduce an individual to one use and one associated value. While the individual or group may participate in this discourse, it is not necessarily a complete reflection of the self, but instead a compartmentalized portion of what is in reality part of complex human-environment relations.

Trappers, hunters, outfitters and loggers fill out the necessary forms and comply with regulations that are centered on one narrow use even though their interests are often far more complex. As a consequence, individuals often find themselves fighting against stereotypes that are reinforced through the land management system, a system they themselves participate in. In response they often produce generalized discourses emphasising certain aspects of their activities, for instance the claims to environmentalism or stewardship as seen in the previous chapter. Such discourses can simplify the activities individuals take part in and can appear to unify all of a user-group.

For instance, that good guide-outfitters act in a proper manner, 'true' hikers don't leave signs of their passing behind them, etc.

To clarify this point, I turn to Murray Li (1996), who in working with case studies in Indonesia and the Philippines, looked at how the image of community was used as a tool to assert property rights. She suggests that the notion of an idealized community, while not ethnographically accurate, did create potential discursive space for actors to make their claims to land. She states that:

Their analysis may fail to convince or impress anthropologists, but it is presumably not their goal: simplified representations can be more effective than subtle ones, when deployed in a macro-policy context. (1996: 504)

Images of community are central to questions of resource access at the local level, not because of any self-evident qualities of moral economy, but as culturally available points of leverage in an ongoing process of negotiations. (1996: 509)

In this same way forest user groups can create a cohesive image of themselves and their interests as a tool of representation, often based on simplistic readings of the Yukon environment. For example the narratives of the Yukon as a working space, natural space, as frontier or wilderness, which underlie the positions of many residents. These images, for instance of a concerned environmentally friendly logger working in an area that has been harvested many times before, or of a law-abiding family-man hunter who acts only as a positive force on the land, or alternatively as a grounded and knowledgeable citizen concerned about the status of the world's forests, are all knowingly simplistic in their portrayal, but serve as points of leverage to ensure voice in future planning, and to counter negative popular images available in the public and media.

While on occasion these narratives are contradictory and not necessarily completely accurate, they are not inauthentic. Instead, I suggest we must understand these voices as tools of self-expression to the outside, spoken in terms which are relevant to today's political and environmental priorities. For example, many individuals use language and issues that are of particular relevance to today's Yukon to put forward their own positions. Such narratives draw on fire safety, climate change, environmental protection, economic growth and independence, and a reduction of one's environmental footprint. In doing so, people are able to express portions of what are in reality complex and often contradictory needs and perceptions. How people talk about forests, understand their management and categories and how they act with or against them should be understood as revealing narratives. These narratives, as Murray Li suggests, provide a vocabulary for legitimation and a space of potentiality which is created by idealized visions of forest use.

### **Breaking or Bending Rules**

Thus far I have looked at the ways in which Yukon residents obtain lawful access to Yukon Crown land through participating in a land management system that organizes their needs according to use. However, the inability to access land or to act as desired when on the land due to prohibitive management structures, is a problem for many forest users. This was most often expressed to me through a justification of unlawful, or at the very least frowned-upon acts, in which the individual or someone known to him or her had participated. The foundation of these arguments was similar on all accounts: that the structures and regulations which control access in such situations are not suited to the Yukon, and therefore, can be circumvented or broken in ways that make those



acts justifiable. In such instances, forest or land values are articulated in direct contrast to land management and property systems.

Nadasdy (2002) asserts that Euro-Canadians see claims of property as claims of exclusive possession and control, and that ownership confers a set of rights that allow owners to act in certain prescribed way towards things and people. While he suggests these assumptions about property can be problematic for First Nation concepts of land, on the surface it appears the property concept is unproblematic for non-First Nations forest users. For instance, among study participants, the premise that access to forested spaces on Crown land meant following the rules of access as determined by the state, and that access to settlement lands meant following rules or access as determined by that First Nations group, was not openly contested.

While the rules and system itself may be thought of as non-sensible and poorly functioning, few openly challenged its root assumption that land (as space) could and should be divided and managed in the first place. However, friction between the ideal unbounded Yukon and the reality of a highly managed Territory points to a discrepancy. In such cases, it is not a challenge to the idea that humans should not divide and manage nature, but that it should not be done in such a way here, in this particular *place*. This is true as much from the common-sense working-landscape narrative of loggers and guide-outfitters, as from the scarce-nature narratives of dedicated environmental lobbyists. The idea that somehow the Yukon is unique and should follow a different set of rules which cater to its being as separate from other areas of Canada is prevalent.

Access to what locals see as reasonable forest use with limited hindrance on lifestyle is a major concern of Yukon residents; whether that access includes safe and

quiet hiking trails, space, and freedom to use motorized vehicles like ATVs or snowmobiles, the ability to build a cabin in the bush, to hunt ,or even to log. These needs, though quite different from each other, were often expressed with a reference to a time not so long ago when rules were relaxed enough, and residents few enough, that the ideal of a free and open wilderness where one could do what they wanted was a reality. Regardless of whether or not this time actually existed, the notion of a bureaucracy-free and common sense based land management is one many forest users connect with and reference. It is this type of discourse that is commonly used to justify ways of avoiding, skirting, or simply ignoring increasing regulations concerning forest activity. Such instances discussed with interview participants included:

- Accessing timber for the purpose of logging by obtaining agriculture leases with no intent of conducting agriculture.
- Accessing land outside of city limits to build a home or cabin by obtaining agricultural leases with no intent of conducting agriculture.
- Accessing land on which to build a cabin by obtaining a trap line or mining claim with no intent of mining or trapping beyond the absolute minimum required to maintain access rights.
- Ignoring guide-outfitting hunting regulations which state an animal's meat must be removed from the kill area before its horns and skin (or cape and trophy)<sup>4</sup>.
- Hiking off designated trails, or ignoring barriers across access roads which block ATVs or snowmobiles.
- Hunting and fishing without permits.
- Building without permits, particularly in the bush.

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<sup>4</sup> Hunters paying for the service of a guide outfitter often want to first claim the 'cape and trophy' of an animal, in other words its horns and skin. While the meat is hauled out of the bush, most hunters are non-residents and are unable to bring it back to their place of origin. Thus the guide-outfitter wants first to ensure the hunter has their 'trophies' and then deal with the work of removing meat from an animal, then cutting, wrapping and distributing it as they see fit. Meat wastage regulations however, state that the opposite order must be followed.

While such activities can be seen by others as a threat to Yukon's wilderness, it is most often viewed by the offender as a common sense way of accessing or acting in a way that makes most sense for the Yukon. For example, one major issue for guide-outfitters is the inability to easily build new infrastructure on concession lands. The unauthorized occupancy guidelines for the Yukon Territory state that:

New structures built by Big Game Outfitters after devolution (April 2003) must be documented, investigated and managed as an unauthorized activity consistent with all other unauthorized occupancies. (Energy, Mines and Resources, 2011)

Ideally, new structures are allowed if the concession holder goes through an approval process. However, the general consensus among outfitters is that for the moment, no new structures are being permitted. People involved in other types of land use, such as trapping and mining, are able to build new infrastructures if the appropriate process has been followed. Trappers that I spoke with have stated that this is done with relative ease. However, as a trapper, JA, states that it is no longer possible to own ones cabin, only to lease.

Jodie: so most of the cabins are out there, they stay pretty simple, or now...

JA: oh yeah, mine, they can be like this, this was my other neighbour (looking at photographs). These were my two neighbours on the B- river. That was pretty basic. But now, there are people with satellite TV, internet, solar power, full, yeah, houses. There are a few people, usually people who spend a long time in the bush or even spend their full time, their set up, they have a house in the bush.

Jodie: but you don't own it, is that how it goes, it is all leased?

JA: no, it depends. Some people have title. Now-a-days they don't want people living in the bush, the government doesn't. So it is only leases, tied to your trap line, but in the old days you had to work at it but you could get title to some bush land. So people own what they have.

Jodie: why doesn't want people to live in the bush?

JA: it is easier to control people in town.

Guidelines limiting the building of infrastructure on Yukon Crown lands have been interpreted loosely in the past. Yet in recent years the process of devolution, combined with a number of court cases and issues raised by concerned individuals, have resulted in a limited ability to build and/or own a building in the bush. An outfitter who will remain unlabeled stated the following on the subject.

X... It is energy mines and resources who can go out and build a camp on the land. There is no policy for me to build new camp, I can go out and apply on my old site and maybe get one. What the industry have always done, and everyone else, trappers and stuff, is when you needed a cabin you went out and built. That was a common practice and an accepted practice. I can give you many names of people, trappers, who went out and built homes out there and then applied on it.

Last fall on the agriculture meeting they gave farmers a year to (apply) there were guys that developed all their land and then after went and applied for his agriculture parcel and everybody laughed, because that is how we do it in the Yukon. Well he broke the law and it is no big deal and nothing was done about it, he still got his agriculture parcel. And that is OK, I don't have a problem with it.

But then you get these young people that bought an area in the Yukon, they go out and build at A up in B-town and the department hung them over it, took them to court. Right now, they want to build a new camp, then you go build. I don't have a lease in my area, that is what we did. You can't go and apply anyway, he went and asked the lands branch and they said go do what outfitter do, go build, when you are done we will make a lease out to you. Then it hit the fan. ....There is a person building a structure, galvanized, on a lake on my concession, there is a guy on the east end of the lake with a lodge, pays his dues, all legal. But this other place is owned by a native. He was told to take it down, he wrote on there F-off, they told him again, he didn't do nothing. That cabin is still there today. When the rangers were up in there, doing an exercise on that lake, they flew up some of his windows to him. I don't have a problem, but this guy didn't have a

trap line, no concession all that, then he didn't have a right. But I feel I have a right in my concession to build.

This individual brings up two access issues in the Yukon that are particularly relevant today. The first is the difficulty as an outfitter to build. Though some may build anyway, and even be told by officials to do so, it is illegal and s/he could potentially be fined or charged. Indeed, in 2005 two outfitters were charged with illegally squatting on Crown land for having built a cabin in one case and a lodge in the other<sup>5</sup>. Because not all who build are fined, perceptions are that certain groups are being targeted more than others. Many outfitters feel they are being used as examples that legislation limiting new building on Crown land will be enforced. Others like D, have suggested that First Nations residents are able to build or hunt where they choose and are being unfairly favoured by official bodies.

The second instance X brings up is the use of agriculture land for purposes other than farming. In recent years it has become difficult for people to buy Crown land for residential use. What the City of Whitehorse labels as country-residential lots are being increasingly limited in order to reduce urban sprawl into wilderness areas. One way to get around this problem has been through obtaining an agriculture parcel, in which the applicant was obliged to clear a certain portion of land and break ground, after which the lot would transfer to fee-simple title. Through this process many people, including some I interviewed, reportedly gained access to private land for the purposes of having a country residence, or on occasion for obtaining access to timber for harvest under the guise of developing agriculture in the Territory. After the minimal work had been completed to ensure fee-simple title, the resident halted any further agricultural

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<sup>5</sup> Yukon Government vs Bonnet Plume Outfitters and Mervin's Outfitters.

development. BA, a local Whitehorse resident bought his current home from someone who had done just this. For BA, rules that limit country-residential living also limit those who want to live in, and look after natural areas.

BA: This also, goes into the area of bureaucratic ways of dealing with land use issues. We live here because we love nature. That is why we have a rural property. You cannot get land in the Yukon unless you are miners or farmers. If you like 20 acres and want to be a conservation custodian, that is not in the picture. You have to be, um, domesticating land, you have to be using the land in a very high way to qualify in the Yukon. And, so what are we on, we are on an ag parcel that was purchased by someone else, developed and sold it, so we are now on land we would not have unless someone applied for agricultural land. Those are our values, and now other people on the street have come in, the only way to get land is to apply for an ag use, clearing trees, destroying forests, even though it never gets used for agriculture.

This process of obtaining land was most often justified with reference to a past where land was easier to access and issues were decided on a case by case basis. In such a system, the implication is that the individual would have had no problem gaining access as he or she chose.

While some Yukon residents expressed concerns to me about the impact such lots have on Yukon wilderness, others have suggested that it is the only reasonable way left for individuals to live the kind of lifestyle that the Territory is known for. As PA states:

PA: I think that is what Whitehorse and the Yukon is all about. People like having green space, and there is a strong city leaning to in-fill, to get development in every corner. And I understand the sustainability, you don't want your city spread out. But at the same time that is why people come to the Yukon. That is why I believe people stay here and come here.

According to PA one of the pulls of the Yukon is access to wilderness spaces and ability to make one's own place within them. The assumption is that a relatively small

territorial population and distance from southern governing centers should imply, as it apparently has in the past, that need and common sense dictate actions more than regulations.

A last example involves recent changes in fish and game legislation for outfitters that state that if an animal's skin and horns, or cape and trophy, are in camp then it is assumed all meat from that animal has been harvested. The regulation reportedly developed after an incident with an outfitter who was charged with meat wastage but was not convicted because the definition of wastage was unclear. I spoke to no outfitters who expressed a dislike of regulations that ensure meat of animals harvested is used. Yukon law states that all meat must be consumed, and as foreign residents, the clients are unable to export any large quantity with them. As a consequence meat is cut, wrapped and distributed to nearby communities as well as consumed by guides and their families. The meat before cape and trophy rule, however, has not been accepted easily. Many feel that the government is micro-managing their actions in the bush and have no real sense of how things actually work. I spoke to two individuals who have broken this rule on occasion when they felt "no harm would be done", however, if caught an outfitter could face stiff penalties including fines and the possibility of having ones license revoked. Many expressed that when on the land with a hunter who has been traveling and hunting for a good length of time, it is the desire of that hunter to claim their trophy. To keep the hunter happy, the cape and trophy are harvested with as much meat as the group is able to carry, the remainder of the meat is then harvested on a return trip shortly afterwards. While the cape and trophy rule is meant to reduce meat wastage, it can be seen as another example of bureaucratic control over even the small details of bush-life.

One common way of justifying such action is through reference to an *old Yukon*, brought up with a sense of nostalgia by those whose work brings them in close contact with both bureaucracy and forests. This time is also referenced with less fondness by those whose work revolved primarily around conservation issues and who can see it as a time of unregulated human-action on the land. The idea is characterized by a lack of government control and by a wealth of individual freedom. McCandless (1985) suggests that it was during the initial post WWII period that the idea of the 'old Yukon', one that was freer from the southern influence and bureaucracy, would take hold. However, I would argue that a slowly though erratically increasing government presence in the Yukon due to the growth of government jobs, an increasingly urban Whitehorse population, and an increase in government programs, has meant a more general past is referred to, temporally shifting as time moves forward. This is especially true for Yukon residents whose residency began in the post-war years. Much like Raymond Williams' (1973) idea of 'country' as an idyllic space referenced in contrast to the limits and frustrations of capitalist modernity, references to the *old Yukon* serve to highlight frustration by residents with growing development and southern influence in a space people desire to see as separate. More than a specific past, such narratives provide an outlet to articulate frustrations with modernity.

As for the actions themselves, it would be easy to view such offenses as either ignorance or as thoughtless rule-breaking, and on some level they may be. However, the discourse used to justify such actions, as in fitting with a Yukon-way of doing and being, was common despite the variety of offenses discussed with participants. This, combined with a high degree of frustration regarding bureaucratic processes and a sense of loss of local control to southern interests, points to an alternative view. Such ways of accessing



land could instead be understood as a means of affirming local control and asserting a Yukon identity in the face of an increasingly urban and bureaucratic Whitehorse population and land management system. Proof of some sort that one can still do what they choose.

### **Socio-Environmental Structures and the Forest Encounter**

I began this chapter with a quote from Harrison, (1992) who examines forests as a metaphoric shadow of civilization, following its growth and movement, reflecting its own shape. To repeat, he writes that:

From this external perspective the institutional world reveals its absurdity, or corruption, or contradictions, or arbitrariness, or even its virtues. But one way or another it reveals something essential about itself which often remains invisible or inaccessible to the internal perspective.

What is revealed in this case are the inherent contradictions and tensions which arise when complex connections to nature are reduced to an archetype category or use-based assumption, and when the imagery and narratives which support the feeling of place clash with the reality of actual experience. What is also revealed is a specific way of ordering and managing the landscape through which the actions of individuals are controlled and ownership is continually reaffirmed. Coleman (1996), in his discussing of the works of the 17<sup>th</sup> century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes, writes that modernity requires a degree of social order which remedies the difficulties of nature. The form of this order becomes the state, and modernity's final project is to replace nature by artifice. Thus, the control and structuring of nature is part of its transformation into cultural artefact; it is divided and controlled through aspects of management and this management in return affirms state control. Yet, the idea of the Yukon, understood as a unique place whose wildness in part defines it, does not exist

easily with the reality of modernity's bureaucratic and structured space. It is a contradiction felt by individuals who mediate the space between land and regulation.

Forest users in the Yukon connect to land in a number of ways and are aware of and struggle with the contradictions of needs and desires meeting highly structured and bureaucratic space. They also express discontent with cultural systems of managing land through their own actions, discourse and by drawing on specific historic narratives. However, while I certainly interviewed people who had encountered problematic situations with other users while in forests, what was most often referenced were the uses of other groups as learned about through encounters with land management institutions, changing regulations and policies, and media. From this perspective, land management structures are in some ways a meeting ground for forest users. For instance, the guide-outfitter may never actually meet those making claims to his or her concession, but encounters them through paperwork, bureaucrats, and the organized and official claims of others.

It is through understanding what an individual's rights are in relation to those of others, or through encountering the demands of others as felt through the impacts of restrictions or regulations that forest users in the Yukon most often encounter the multiple-use scenario. There is lot of space given the number of people who live in the Territory, with less than 0.1 people per square kilometer, compared with 3.5 as a Canadian average, 248 in the United Kingdom and 345 people per square kilometer in India (Yukon Health and Social Services, 2009). Outside of Whitehorse City Limits and the transportation corridors along the Trans-Canada Highway in the south and Highway 2 to Dawson City, few of the forest users I interviewed reported a high level of human encounters while in forests. Some, such as guide-outfitters reported meeting only two

people on their concession in over two decades of operation. Yet multiple-use is a very real issue to many of those same people. While they do not often physically encounter others, they encounter their demands and the potential for future encounters through development proposals, media, and processes such as land use planning.

Barth's (1969) work on ethnic boundaries suggests that identity is often asserted and reaffirmed at the point where different groups come into contact. Similarly, in Cohen's (1982) work concerning the symbolic construction of community, he suggests that localities become aware of themselves when they interact with others. While the Yukon forest users I interviewed and worked with hardly count as diverse ethnic groups, I would suggest that through encountering the demands and viewpoints of others, forest users are placed in a position in which they must choose a standpoint against which their own needs are explained and justified. They are aware of doing things in different ways and are pressured to articulate needs and perspectives within a system that asks only certain questions of them. In such instances, the socio-environmental structures which comprise the structure of Yukon forests are key agents in forest-user discourse.

How users are officially portrayed becomes a primary component of how they are perceived among other forest users. This portrayal also limits the range of their expected input in land use processes as a user-group. In any case, the reality of multiple forest use in the Yukon is reflected not only through official means of land division and management, but through individual and group understandings and re-articulations of those structures and user-based identities.

## Chapter Eight

### Imagination: framing forest perception

In 1989, L.E. Hamelin published an article concerning images of the north in Canada. In it he stated that there are “so many images of the north within the north” that it “...consists rather of a whole series of disparate and poorly connected interpretations” (1989: 10). Through fieldwork and research my understanding of Canadian forests has become much the same. As I have shown, forests are part of broad, historically articulated narratives, are imagined and defined by people, and their importance fluctuates over time. I have argued that as places gather, forests as places tend to do the same, over time growing thicker with overlapping layers of experience, structure and meaning. This is not to say that forests are pure social or cultural constructs, but that individuals, communities, and nations tie increasing amounts of external information to them and that this information to some extent can inform human experience. Imagination has a key role in this process. It bundles the non-human environment, history, experience, ideas, feelings, and that which is beyond immediate perception together into a single though complicated idea: forest.

Imagination, as employed by Benedict Anderson (1991), in his exploration of the idea and form of nationalism, is not understood as an aspect of falsity or invention, instead it is about the ability to grasp that which is beyond our experience and too large to conceivably encounter. His well-known example is that of the nation, imagined because most members will never meet each other, yet who share some aspect of collective identity and sense of comradeship. Tuan (1989) also positions imagination in contrast to fantasy, understanding it as the application of creative thought to the

empirical world and as grounded in reality while fantasy is explicitly free from it.

Likewise, Walter (1988) recognises imagination as grounded in reality, he sees it as an organ of perception and as an integral component of how the world is understood.

Similarly, in this chapter I am concerned with the idea of imagination insofar as it explores those aspects of forest perception and meaning which are less tangible or too large to be encountered. At times, imagination is employed to bring into focus activities or aspects of the landscape which are out of sight or invisible to people. At others, imagination is the tool that allows an idea or structure too large to be grasped any other way to be conceived of. For instance, northern forests span hundreds of kilometers, blanket mountains and valleys, surround towns and roads and only a small part can be experienced by the individual at any given time. Yet they are pictured and spoken of as one conceivable and manageable entity. Hence it is imagination which makes the broader, non-local idea of forest possible.

This chapter looks at some aspects of imagination which are part of the idea of Yukon forests. Through discussions with Yukon residents, and reviewing published material, I have settled upon three themes: Yukon wilderness, *the unseen* and nature and nationalism. The boreal forest concept, certainly an element involving imagination, is discussed in the following concluding chapter. While somewhat an elusive topic, imagination is part of how forests are framed and placed within the context of other issues and events.

### **Yukon Wilderness: “Yukon, larger than life”**

Close your eyes now and breathe in crisp Yukon air. Smell spruce sap and the earthy scent of tundra, and listen for the excited howls of husky sled dogs. Open your eyes and drink in Yukon landscapes under dancing aurora borealis. Canoe a Yukon River and dip your hands into the clearest water

you've ever seen. A vacation in Canada's Yukon is a larger than life experience. Stay awhile—you won't want to leave. (travelyukon.com 2012, author unknown)

But the frontier is with us still and it shapes us in its own fashion. The expanse of naked rock and brooding forest, of slate-coloured lakes and empty valleys, of skeletal birches and gaunt pines, of the wolf's haunting howl and the loon's ghostly call is one that is still shared by a majority of Canadians... (Berton, 1972: xiii)

Here, unbounded and colourful mountain ranges frame pristine taiga forests and subarctic watersheds. Robust woodland and barren ground caribou, free-ranging wolverine and grizzly bear, the vulnerable peregrine falcon, unspoiled aquatic habitat, and thousands upon thousands of boreal songbirds and migratory waterfowl occupy an ancient and unfettered landscape that is the essence of wildness. (Peepre, 2005:7)

Though its content varies greatly, the idea of wilderness is an important part of the Yukon as expressed by forest users. However, wilderness is not limited to forests. Depending on who is speaking, it can include the entire territory or only small portions of it. Some, such as Littlejohn (1989), understand wilderness in a general sense to be that which is not metropolis, a vague place which was host to key historical events such as the fur trade and building of the national railway. His wilderness is one viewed from afar, the essence of which is summoned through imagery on tee-shirts, currency, wildlife art, and children's summer camps. Critical of this view of wilderness, scholars such as Chapeskie (2001) see such a concept as a category which erases local history and people, creating an untouched landscape through ignoring the pre-existing reality of human presence and agency. Such critiques have strong historical basis, as much early writing concerning North America's wilderness emphasised its wild and untamed nature that was, if not free from people certainly free from any form of *civilization*.

For instance, Nash's (2001) major work *Wilderness and the American Mind* explores the changing meaning of wilderness in North America (specifically the United States) through history while also tracing the origins of the North American conservation movement. He begins with the idea of wilderness as a harsh and threatening place to new settlers who saw it as an entity to be pushed back and conquered by the power of civilization. Nash outlines broad shifts in society, in which wilderness moved from a threatening and dangerous space, to one of possibility and potential upon which ideas of nationalism could be built, eventually morphing into the idea of pristine, pure, and scarce nature.

The idea of wilderness is also a question of power: if wilderness is untamed and wild, then taming it is a stamp of ownership and control. Cook (1995), writing on early European impressions of nature in Acadia writes that:

The distinction between the "wilderness" and the "garden," between "savagery" and "civilization," between "wandering about" and commanding "all that is here below," is more than a philosophical one, important as that is. It is also both implicitly and explicitly, a question of ownership and possession. (1995: 73)

Who has the power to determine the character of a region? Cruikshank (2005), Coates and Morrison (2005), and Zaslow (1988) all discuss the power of the state and interested outsiders in shaping the image of the north that at times, encouraged the idea of a space free of people and history. This aspect was not only apparent in the waves of effort to discover, exploit, and develop Canada's north, but also in later attempts to protect it from such exploitation. For instance, returning to McCandless' (1985) writing of wildlife regulation in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he writes:

The dominant society cherished wildlife because it satisfies and reassures some deeply-felt concerns about the health of the wilderness, so it creates and enforces laws to apply to those who are perhaps the least part of that society (1985: xiv)

McCandless has traced the origins and transformations of Yukon's wildlife regulations and perceptions, emphasising throughout the enormous impact shifting southern values has had on the lives of northern peoples.

Grove (1995), in exploring the origins of environmentalism, moved farther back in time than scholars such as Nash and argued its roots lie not in 19<sup>th</sup> century America, but in a much earlier period of colonial expansion and environmental uncertainty. Grove makes a case that the core of environmental concern is consistently rooted in contemporary anxiety about society and its discontents. He argues that environmental concern arose during colonial expansion as the impacts of social and environmental change became apparent. Such concern was met with some of the first conservation efforts, often melded together with efforts to control the actions of local peoples<sup>1</sup>. In this way, not only wilderness but concepts that are tied to its contemporary form are shown to have shifting and historical roots.

McCandless' account of wildlife regulation changes is a Yukon example of such concern mixed with a desire to control the actions of local actors. Another is the establishment of the Kluane Game Sanctuary in the Yukon Territory. Established in 1943 in response to overhunting by military personnel, the sanctuary essentially cut off local First Nations from the area for the better part of 50 years. It was not until the 1990s that efforts were made to connect local First Nations back to their traditional territory and to allow for co-management of the park between the park board and First Nations governments. Similar issues occur today as the idea of wilderness becomes increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, the earliest recorded systematic forest conservation efforts took place on the island of Mauritius between 1768 and 1810. At the time the climactic consequences of deforestation and fears of species extinction led to controls on forest use, and also served to control the actions of original inhabitants (Grove, 1995).



important to people who are disconnected from its locality, but who encourage protectionist efforts that can affect local people. As seen in previous chapters, many residents whose work involved extraction activities expressed concerns that southern worry over the state of nature would result in less resource access for northern residents. Wilderness can be a powerful political and value-laden category which, while used in the every-day discourse of many forest dwellers, often houses deeper ideas about the nature and form of forests.

As expressed to me by study participants, while fluid, the idea of wilderness tends to be made up of core elements present in varying degrees. These include: a distance from development or signs of humanity, an independence of self and dependence upon the self, some degree of danger or 'living on the edge', and a degree of 'untouched' or 'wild' nature. This idea of wilderness provides possibility, that it holds something special other places don't and that people may find within it something they seek which is not otherwise available. FA, M and E, all avid outdoorspeople expressed the idea of wilderness in the Yukon as follows:

M: I think it is because it is one of the last places in the world where there really is wilderness... I think if you travel much you realise how priceless this land is, you hardly ever see a fence in the Yukon, there are not many places like that. Miles and miles of wilderness.

E: And when you arrive on the north slope of the Yukon, along the Beaver River in the south east, you don't have to ask any more about wilderness. It is abundantly clear. You can stand on a, on a, high hill on the south east Yukon in the Beaver River water shed and see nothing in the way of human disturbances as far as the eye can see. It is a place where the landscape and the ecosystems are still naturally functioning and regulating as they have for the past 10 000 years. So, this, not everybody spends all there time thinking about this, but virtually everybody I met and talked with in the Yukon, that is what appeals to them in about this place, you don't have to go more than a few miles out your back door until you are in some pretty wild country, and there is definitely an appeal to that.

FA: Yeah, there are not a lot of people between here and Haines Junction or up on the ride to Dawson, but still, if you break down the Alaska highway you won't sit there for very long. So you are not in my concept of wilderness. You know, if you can walk to the road, within a couple of hours, you are not truly there; it has many of the components but is still fore-country. There is a risk factor with wilderness, a self-reliance factor, maybe that more than risk. Less people to depend upon, you just have yourself. You know.

Each had expressed to me a varying idea of what wilderness was, ranging from anything that is nature including the trails around Whitehorse, to only the most difficult to access and remote backcountry. While tied to specific geography, wilderness is conceptual insofar that integral to its character is a degree of vastness beyond the sights and experiences of people. Furthermore, it pulls from a wide array of history, imagery and ideas for its formulation. While varying in definition, each person above agreed that wilderness was an important part of the Yukon and one reason why they chose to live there. The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Survey (2009) found that space and wilderness were listed as second only to work for a reason to live in the Territory. Also in the top six, were safety and freedom.



Image 8. 1 Signs such as this one, located along a walking trail within Whitehorse city limits, are common throughout the capital city. Information is provided on walking trails, birds, fish and other animals. Note the title: *Whitehorse, the wilderness city*. Author's photo.

The idea of wilderness is also avidly promoted within the tourism industry that often employs romantic and highly descriptive imagery. Such narratives might call upon people to come see the last of the great wilderness still untouched by man, to experience adventure and wildness that they are unable to experience elsewhere, and to test and challenge themselves by going into the wilds. Such narratives draw both on frontier history and contemporary environmental concerns to emphasise their point. For instance, the following is an extract from a pamphlet aimed at ensuring people are properly prepared when exploring in the outdoors:

The Yukon is a true wilderness. Vast areas are completely undeveloped, and most of the territory is outside of cellular telephone range. If you plan to go out into the backcountry, you're going to be a long way from help. In many ways, your wilderness travels will be similar to the journeys of the old-time prospectors, trappers and First Nation peoples. (Environment Yukon, 2009)

Similar in content is the positioning statement put forward by Tourism Yukon in their 2007-2008 Strategic Plan:

Yukon is a destination of unparalleled scenic beauty that captivates visitors under the spell of the midnight sun and dancing Northern Lights. It's a land that provides larger than life experiences distinguished by vast, wide open spaces and the freedom of unending, pristine wilderness. For residents and visitors alike, Yukon delivers larger than life history, culture, characters and adventures. (Tourism Yukon, 2007: 7)

A connection between wilderness and the past, as mentioned in both of the above extracts, is also a common theme among forest users. With it is a desire to be like those who have come before, or alternatively, in a place that is still similar to previous times. In this sense, the nature found within wilderness will ideally only change insofar as it *naturally* would, but may admit social influence as long as its presence is distant enough to be of a particular historical or cultural narrative. E and F, the young couple whose work takes them into the backcountry quite often, both agreed that the idea of wilderness and possibility were a large reason why they chose to live in the Territory. F expressed it as such:

F: It is for the ideal that people come, it is really magical, a place where you can learn to be yourself, you can figure out who you are. There are no expectations or, the picture you had in your head of what an old Yukon prospector might look like. Yeah I could chop wood and live in a cabin, the opportunity is still here to do things like that.

A long time Yukon resident and guide-outfitter mentioned to me that what tourists and many residents are seeking today is not so dissimilar from what those who came during the Klondike gold rush were seeking: adventure, a personal challenge and an escape from a busy, demanding and challenging modern society.

During the Klondike gold rush, the American frontier was just closing and a recession was causing economic and social difficulties. At the time, the Yukon was seen

as the last great frontier and a place where dreams could come true. Webb (1993) looks at the history of the Yukon using Turner's model of successive frontiers –waves of distinct occupational or cultural groups that confronted and modified new lands. While recognising the shortcomings of the frontier thesis, particularly the exclusion of less powerful groups such as women and First Nations, Webb makes a strong argument that the history of the Yukon is a history of the extension of western movement. Webb points to a typical frontier character, that of isolation which forces self-reliance and self-assurance, as an important component of Yukon history. This aspect of Yukon character, self-reliance and isolation, while in a different form than it was during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is still an important part of how residents understand their position within the Territory and within Canada. It is also an integral component of the wilderness idea.

The idea of Yukon as wilderness also resonates with Canadians outside of the Territory. Many non-residents feel a connection to northern wilderness, as attested to by those who moved to the Territory from other parts of the country. Q is an avid environmentalist, she states:

Q: I think Canada is a country where people do appreciate northern forests, because most people won't ever get to them, when I lived in Alberta it was nice, that Canadian thing that it is nice to know the north is there, the north is still what the rest of Canada used to be like, this last chance to do it right.

This aspect has particular relevance to conservation movements who pull much support and funding from southern regions. I had the opportunity to have lunch with a woman who had been involved with a conservation organization for some time in the Territory. At the time of my fieldwork, the Land Use Planning process for the Peel region of north/central Yukon was underway, and much of our conversation focused on her work in that area. She spoke of how the Yukon still held certain values that other places did

not. Specifically that biodiversity, clean water and clean air were still abundant in the Yukon and that such things should be protected. She also spoke of the importance of the region to others who are not necessarily Yukoners:

K: ...Mining exploration, it is an industry in itself and oil and gas. We have never said those can't be everywhere in the Peel or Yukon, or world, or whatever scale. But that, it is part of the land use processes. You use the information you know, we will never know everything and should stop pretending we will. With what we know, the traditional knowledge we know, how can we make the best decision?

And a lot of people agree, it has been interesting to hear the tourism industry association, which is separate from wilderness tourism, more of the real industry focused guys, a higher calibre, saying that it is because of places like the Peel and how it is known, its image and brand, that people are coming to the Yukon. Even people that don't go there. We have had hundreds of letters come in from Canadians about the Peel Watershed, probably over the campaign, thousands, in the last few months it has been 500, but for a lot of people they just want to know that these places exist. That they may be able to go there, or their children, that options are not closed.

It is a Canadian Heritage that we have vast wild expansive places. It comes down to the responsibility of the people in those jurisdictions to make sure that we do have those places, federal, territorial.

We continued to speak of the planning involved in the Peel land use process when after a short pause, she changed the direction of our conversation and began speaking of the importance of the Peel Watershed to her. She said that different people have different experiences in their life that move them, remind them of the "power of feeling small". She went on to say:

K: Being put back in your perspective. I am tiny in the LARGER picture, and the cleanest, clearest, brightest blue moving water I have ever seen other than the Caribbean ocean, fresh that you can drink from at any given place. I spent a month in the snake watershed and, over the last few years, those rivers, tributaries to the Peel, I don't hesitate to get my head in there and drink from it. It is phenomenal, if it is recreational pleasures that get you

going, then it is incredible water to paddle and move fluidly, or to hike and get a view of this huge valley and meandering water systems below it.

In this, it is sort of a place where you can unwind, we just slowed down and unwound and soaked in it, for some people that might happen in their back yard, for sure. But there is something about knowing that in any direction I look...Between the Wind (river) and the Bonnet Plume (river), you just look and there are mountains, you feel the spatialness and vastness of existence, it brings it out, and I think it needs to be left alone.

You can get attached to it, if you have experiences there. Decision makers at this point in this Territory, if they have been there, that changes people. It is like how kids in urban settings need to get out and touch moss and touch trees, and look up in a canopy, because you have to be connected through it, in order to give it the justice it demands.

While this personal story was from one particular perspective, that which supported the protection of large areas, its expression is similar to many other personal stories I heard regarding the experience of Yukon's natural areas. In common among these stories are elements of personal reflection, an understanding of the land based upon its vastness, openness, and a sense of personal freedom, and a connection between the idea of wilderness and an element of Canadian identity. While not limited to forested landscapes, the sentiment is an integral layer of Yukon forests and in part determines both local and outside interest in their use and planning.

Returning to I.E. Hamelin's (1989) thoughts on images of the north, he proposes that two visions of the north underlie all others: one is pessimistic and the other idealistic. He posits that it is the duality between appeal and disappointment, a means to develop and a propensity to avoid difficulties, which underlies much of Yukon history. In this sense, the notion of wilderness embodies both visions, at once an ideal, splendid space while also a space of difficulty, harshness, and challenge.

The wilderness idea is an important part of the Yukon not only for those touring travelers seeking adventure and novelty, but for residents who often explain their choice of habitation or occupation in reference to it. As the character of wilderness is somewhat flexible, the base narrative is not so different for those who work in forests, those who recreate in forests, or those who are dedicated to their protection. It is a part of how people place themselves in relation to their environment and often part of their reasoning for being in the Yukon and doing what it is they do.

When keeping wilderness in mind, forests become about distance (literally and metaphorically) from the noise, pollution, priorities and ideas of the outside. The distance needed is determined by individual preferences, but stems from a historical picture of the Yukon landscape and an image of both the Europeans and First Nations people that lived there in the past. As a natural form, forests represent an unspoiled element which is less and less available in other parts of the world. As a social form, they are a historic place of challenge, adventure and adversity still accessible in the modern world while simultaneously being a place of repose, calm and personal reflection. My argument is that the idea of wilderness in the Yukon is part of how individuals make sense of the Territory's history, vastness and position in relation to the rest of the world. It is not a concept reserved exclusively for wilderness tourism or environmental advocates, but a conceptual tool that is flexible enough in form to be diversely applied by many forest users in different ways. It is the tool of imagination that allows wilderness to play this role, gathering to a single place a conceptual vastness and emptiness that allows for the sense of freedom and independence expressed by



study participants. Wilderness then is a key component of forest discourse and should be understood as a conceptual link that situates Yukon forests in relation to other areas and people, both today and in the past.



Image 8. 2 Photo of sign taken near the Yukon River within Whitehorse city limits. Author's photo.

### **Nature, North, and Nationalism**

While Yukon forests are to some degree geographically isolated from the rest of the nation, the connection between Canada as a nation, nature, and the north, ensures that conceptually they are linked with it. In this sense, Yukon forests are influenced by pervasive and rooted ideas that forever link them to a broader world. This connection is of enormous importance in how forests are managed, experienced and understood by residents and it is only made possible through the power of imagination.

Throughout Yukon's history, the Territory has been subject to intense, though wavering scrutiny from southern interests. Its location as a northern region has connected it directly to national campaigns for economic development and often to ideas of Canadian nationalism. The connection between Canada's non-human

environment and its national character is a strong one and ideally can connect all citizens no matter how diverse. Historian Eric Kaufmann (1998) traces the growth of what he terms naturalistic nationalism in the United States and Canada and suggests that there are two ways nationalists can apprehend their landscape:

-The first being the nationalization of nature: the processes of settling, naming and historically associating the nation with control over a particular territory.

Here, culture is placed upon nature and nature comes to represent the nation.

-The second is the naturalization of the nation: when the nation comes to view itself as an offspring of its natural landscape. In this sense, the landscape informs culture.

Both, Kaufman states, are idealist constructions also shaped by material forces. That is, they are conceptual in form but influenced by actual environmental and social factors. However, he also emphasises how highly malleable geography tends to be in that it is able to shift in reference to social influence. In the Yukon, both processes are particularly apparent. The nationalization of nature is seen through the creation of boundaries and the claiming of space as specifically Canadian, a process which meant ignoring or erasing local place names and histories of original inhabitants. In later years however, one moved to the other as Kaufman argues most often occurs, in which the Yukon began to be defined instead by its environmental character. A process, Kaufman suggests that was already taking place in the south from the time of confederation as Canada looked towards its northern climate and location for its national identity. This was an important theme during the early years of the 20th century, as popular artistic works by the group of seven for instance, began to reflect a connection between the Canadian landscape and nationalist feelings. Similarly, Harold Innis's influential

Laurentian thesis in 1930 proposed that Canada's climate led to a nation dependent upon the staples of fur and later timber and minerals that shaped the country as a northern rather than western destiny – the nation's geography shaped its national character.

Northern historian Zaslow (1988) has explored southern interest in the Canadian north on a number of fronts. He states that the Yukon's strategic position during the Cold War era, coupled with recognition of a wealth of untapped resources to be found in northern area, led to increasing Federal Government interest. For example, at the end of World War II the Bureau of Northwest Territories and Yukon Affairs jumped from only 40 people, embedded within another branch of a much larger department<sup>2</sup>, to having its own department with a specific focus on northern development (The Department of Northern Affairs and Natural Resources). He suggests that the concept of northern development as not only a priority but as a national duty reached political center stage in 1958 with the federal election, in which Prime Minister Diefenbaker campaigned upon the idea of an aggressively assisted northern development program. The north during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century represented both economic potential and state cohesiveness. The north and nature were part of the nation and were promoted and exploited as such.

The idea of the north was a growing interest to southern Canadians for many years. Sandlos (2001), in tracing the connection between aesthetics, politics, and wildlife in Canada's north, succinctly describes the situation as southern interest in the north increased. He states that:

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<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Northwest Territories and Yukon Affairs at this time was part of the Lands, Parks and Forest Branch which was within the Department of Mines and Resources

...the northern landscape could, without consequence, take on any significance deemed necessary by the architects of an emerging Canadian culture (2001: 1).

...Canadian artists and intellectuals created an idea of North that would, for them, become the North. Their effort to extend imaginative and intellectual sovereignty over the North ensured that the legitimate basis for social and political action in the “unexplored territories” would always be understood in southern terms (2001: 10).

As Sandlos points out, one of the greatest contradictions of increased regulation in Canada’s north was the growing desire for the protection of what he calls wilderness primeval, combined with a desire to exploit abundant natural resources and develop the northern landscape. This was just one stage of what Coates and Morrison (2005) lay out as cycles of intensive southern interest followed by neglect. Indeed, Zaslow reports that when hopes of a rich future realized through northern development began to fade near the beginning of the 1970s, so did federal interest and money.

Commenting on the changes which have taken place leading up to and since the Klondike gold rush, Webb (1993) suggests the land itself has been the sole sense of stability over the period of enormous change during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He writes that:

Only the land seems static. It has been constant throughout the successive frontier waves that rolled over the Yukon. Although the army and the steamboat companies nearly deforested the land, it has now essentially returned to its appearance before the gold rush. Recent forest fires appear more destructive than the exploitive activities of miner, trapper, and townspeople. Historically, game populations rise and fall, nearly as much in response to natural forces as human pressures. Today, the same historic and dynamic cycles of nature and man continue, and the land and its animals fluctuate accordingly. (1985: 308).

Such accounts create space for individuals to reinterpret environmental history through emphasising the ability of nature and natural forces to influence the shape of the landscape. As outlined in chapter four, today’s popular Yukon environmental history to

a large degree glosses over the presence of Yukon's forest industry. This shift in narratives is the result of many converging factors which have rewritten (once again) Yukon's landscape to suit modern values and needs. Southern values and priorities have long influenced the shape of human-environment relations in the Territory. For instance, Baldwin (2004) asserts that the boreal forest in Canada simply cannot be separated from its colonial context and nationalizing discourse, that together those narratives have allowed the concept of a national forest to exist. A process which silences people actually living in those spaces, a silencing, which Yukon scholars have asserted is large part of the North's history.

Despite regional variation, Canada's physical features and northern geographic location provide a symbolic sense of continuity for its residents. Aspects of nature and northerness have been persistent elements of Canadian nationalism and of southern economic and social plans for the territories. The idea of the north as wilderness, as potential, and as representing a remaining frontier, provide adequate fuel for continued interest among Canadian's who may never visit the region.

Argyrou (2005), in his book *The Logic of Environmentalism*, argues that the environmentalist movement is not as big of a conceptual shift as many believe it to be. Instead, he suggests that the new environmental consciousness rests on similar understandings as that of modernity: an anthropocentric search for meaning which in turn attempts to redefine the world. He argues that what is at stake is the ability of a group of societies to yet again redefine the meaning of the world for everyone.

Similarly, while the Yukon has been subject to shifting visions of its natural areas, these have often been initiated by outsiders who at different times have redefined the importance of nature and humans in the north. Imagination as a conceptual tool, allows

nature to be reconfigured in response to shifting priorities and encourages people to link conceptual ideas such as the nation, to the everyday forests they encounter.

In this way Yukon forests become Canadian forests and the interest of southern residents in them is legitimized through nationalism. It is only with a sense of imagination that a link can be made between the physical forests as encountered in the daily activities of study participants and the nation as a whole. Nevertheless the power of national sentiment and imaginings had very real consequences throughout history. This will most likely continue in the future as the desires and demands of the nation are felt in the forest planning and management of the Yukon and the north more generally. In this way the Canadian nation is part of Yukon forests and how they are understood and experienced by not only Yukoners, but those elsewhere that lay claim to them.

### **Hidden Activities**

In a concrete way a forest is a physical barrier to sight. Traveling roads and paths in the Yukon, a person's view is limited by the forest edge. Even upon entering, one's view is restrained until a less forested spot such as high ground or a clearing is found. As a consequence, many things happen within forested areas that are simply not seen. Some of these activities naturally happen at a distance, for instance mining tends to occur where the mineral is found, and the activities of guide-outfitters are removed from society by the basic characteristics they promote. As such, some of what occurs in forests is often hidden, by design, by necessity, or both.

While not a common part of many people's forest experience, these activities do impact forest perception. Firstly, because most people know they do take place, and secondly because personal interaction is replaced by interaction at a distance – through

media, talk, and story. The idea of something being hidden also has its own implications as by virtue of it being out of sight, questions arise as to why it has to be so. For instance, what is being said about people who do such activities and what is their place within the community? Whether or not such activities are openly discussed, they do impact how people think about and interact with forests and influence how user groups see each other and make decisions about forest issues.

On occasion, certain activities that were once quite a common part of life are no longer. As I have argued earlier up until the 1970s the products and visual reminders of timber harvest were an everyday part of community life for many people in the Yukon. While stern wheelers still traveled it was necessary to have timber camps along the length of the rivers they used. For anyone who traveled by river, timber camps and surrounding cut blocks were a common site. As a consequence of such activity, stretches of forest along these rivers or just over the hills of the river edges were often heavily thinned. Furthermore, as heating and cooking fuel for homes depended on wood, timber camps were an important part of both the economic and social landscape. In later years, as the river boats ceased their journeys up and down stream and gas and electricity began to fuel homes, these sights and daily reminders of forest use became less common. Added to this was a gradual shift towards an aesthetic appreciation of forests, and changing technology that enabled forest extraction activities to be placed farther away from common public sight-lines. This, combined with the necessity of removing heavy equipment, sounds, smells, and erosion issues away from areas where the public would be most affected, has meant that many people have very little exposure to many of the activities which occur in forested spaces.

Some such activities have been worked into the common historical narrative of the Yukon. Trapping and mining for instance are part of a territorial character that is presented to visitors and inhabitants alike through popular story, poetry, murals, media promotions. Other activities, such as guide-outfitting and logging have long histories in the Yukon though they are less often included in Euro-Canadian narrative of Yukon settlement and growth. As I have outlined previously, due to the concentration of logging activities along roads and rivers, much of the forests that tourists and locals see on a daily basis are in fact second growth. This fact is not one unknown to people who work within forested spaces and is often expressed as part of a broader, common sense view of nature as a space that has been and should be used by people. In a conversation with a gentleman who had lived in the Yukon for the past 40 years, and who had been employed in a number of different ways in the outdoors during that time, I was told the following story:

H: In the 70s I guided parks Canada system planners down the Yukon River. We were talking about a park all the way from Seattle, all the way to Gold Rush River Park, the Klondike. And anyway we were sitting drinking rum at the Salmon (a local restaurant) one night and they were just marvelling saying "look at this wilderness" and I said what the hell are you talking about?( *and they said*) " well it just doesn't get any better than this". I said don't you recognise that this is the highway up here? Hundreds and thousands of people have traveled up this river, they denuded it, from ridge top to ridge top.

They didn't believe me. I said let's go! We walked back a mile in the bush and here are stumps this high (*showing a height about a foot off the ground*), I said those are all 80, 90, 100 year old stumps and they cut it to feed the boilers on the paddle wheeler. And they would use 130 or 140 cord to do a round trip. Dawson and back up. SO I said, isn't his ironic that we have Parks Canada systems planners that are on the ultimate edge of the extreme in terms of conservation and they couldn't recognise the difference between an area that served people for years and years and a pristine area.

So I think, spatially, temporally, and number of different ways, can separate uses and eventually it can serve and people won't even know the



difference. I don't think conservationists, they don't accept that, they seem to want, well I'm not even sure what the message is in what they want. They don't want anything to happen, but usually it is not in their back yard, they still drive cars, they still smoke cigarettes and live in wood houses and burn wood for heat and use gas to run their car. I'm not sure what it is they really want, I'm not sure it is conservation in the truest sense; it is probably this NIMBY thing more.

While the current use of forests is beyond the sights of most people, so then is their historic use. However this tension is not a simple dualism between pristine and 'used' forests but is also about the *story* of Yukon lands. As an example I will turn to one of the two company mills currently operating in the Territory.

When the Dawson City mill recently moved their mill site and lumber yard to a location nearer the main highway, the city asked that a barrier of trees be kept between the operation and the road. This was meant to mitigate worries expressed by locals that the small mill and lumber piles would be unsightly. The tree barrier that was kept was fairly minimal, it was not difficult to leave, and though some thought it a little 'silly', nobody objected to it being left. It is worth note however, that the mill yard is not far down the highway from the dredge piles that are encountered upon entering the city. These large, high and long piles of gravel are lined up one after another and are the remains of historic dredge mining near the city. They dominate the landscape where they are found. With this in mind, it appears the notion of what is unsightly has more to do with the accepted historical narrative of a town than a desire for abundant nature and wilderness. The historical narrative of Dawson City includes the impacts of mining but not the existence of a modern mill – despite the fact the mills were a major component of historic Dawson City. Rather than an aesthetic appreciation of trees it becomes a question of what is an acceptable story to tell.

The point of this is that there are implications to people not seeing what occurs in forests. While logging has been removed from public sight, other reminders of forest activity have also decreased, most notably within the capital city. For instance participants reported that it is rarely that fur is seen being worn, that the carcasses of animals hunted are found in the back of pickup trucks, or even that firewood is sold from trucks on the side of the highway<sup>3</sup>. Certainly there are many exceptions, particularly within the smaller communities, but as noted by residents and non-residents of the capital city, it is possible to live in Whitehorse without exposure to any of the activities which occur in forests other than the recreational. That people no longer experience timber extraction activity was brought to my attention first by B, a man who has worked in the industry for quite some time. When I asked how he viewed the cut blocks he creates, he stated the following:

B: I would like to be able to look at it and say we did a good job, we haven't messed up the residual stand, haven't left garbage behind, we have left the forest behind in a good productive condition, for the future. We take pride in how we work, I don't want to go out there and see a mess and think I should be hiding this from somebody, or, apologising to somebody for the way I have treated the resource. I have lived with trees all my life, I got a lot of respect for them, we need to take care of them.....I'm a logger, it doesn't bother me to have people looking at it. And quite frankly I think if some of this stuff is more visible, and well done, then lots of people would have a better understanding and that would be more acceptable. Forming opinions based on knowledge than opinions based on propaganda. Or hear-say or whatever.

According to B, *seeing* forest extraction activity is a form of first-hand experience that provides one with at least some semblance of common-sense and experiential knowledge that aids people in forming opinions – the alternative source of information

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<sup>3</sup> The city has fined such individuals who try on a number of occasions, nor is wood to be sold on the popular radio show 'trader-time'

being 'hear-say' and 'propaganda'. B feels that if people were exposed to his work, then more would accept it as a regular and acceptable activity.

A common topic with participants who worked within the forest industry was the effect of media and 'campaigning' on people's forest views. The implication was that less visible forest activity left people with imagination, memory, media, and talk, to inform and shape opinion. Images of clear cuts are especially easy to bring to mind when discussing forestry as they are commonly connected to the industry. Just search for logging on an internet server and clear cut images will be among the first to appear. It is a topic with no shortage of material available regarding the harms that can be done if mismanaged. Despite the fact that very little logging has occurred in the Yukon for the past 15 years, a shortage of first-hand experience, an abundance of information and images from the outside, combined with the importance of the wilderness narrative, results in fear concerning the future of Yukon forests. An important part of what makes up a Yukon forest is what has happened within them, what is happening, and what could *potentially* happen.

For example, I mentioned in a previous chapter the mid 1990s 'war of the woods' in which locals became aware of logging which was occurring in the south east corner of the Territory. This brief forestry boom was unsupported by legislation and planning and led to tension among individuals, businesses, various levels of government and First Nations. Permits to cut were given without community consultation, with no forest act in place, and with little regulation or monitoring. The story was told to me from a number of viewpoints, including local loggers, forest officials, conservationists, guide-outfitters and the general public. The common thread through all narratives was that the average citizen didn't have a clue "until they saw loaded logging trucks on the

highway heading south”. In reality, the ‘boom’ lasted a number of years and was not as sudden as many remember it. Nevertheless, it has become part of the Yukon forest narrative. A lesson learned, depending on one’s viewpoint, of mistrust of the government either for its lack of concern over environmental planning, or its lack of follow-through with the promise of permanent jobs.

When non-forest industry workers speak about this story, it is often to state “who is to say what is happening in our forests and by implication, what is happening *could* be very bad”. A similar issue affects guide-outfitting, which occurs entirely away from public view and is represented in Whitehorse by a city office with usually one full time employee. The image of rich guys who kill for money is one outfitters encounter often. Trying to counter what people say is happening with what *they* say is happening when out in the woods is a large part of public relations. Forests cover vast tracks of land and few encounter first-hand any large portion of them. However, images and ideas of the activities which are possible in forested spaces fuel people’s understanding of them and imagination allows the un-experienced to become part of forest perception.

None of this should give the impression that outdoor activities that include harvesting are not supported in the Yukon. Quite the opposite is true, the 2009 Fish and Wildlife Survey showed strong support for such activities by the general public. Aside from providing factual data for what many consider common knowledge, such as the fact that people within the smaller Yukon communities spend more time outdoors, and that Whitehorse residents are far more likely to walk, garden, camp, hike and bike in the outdoors, it showed that the vast majority of Yukoners approve of fishing (97%), hunting (93%) and trapping (81%). It also reports that 67% of Yukoners feel that fish and wildlife are extremely important to their way of life.

The point instead, is that much more occurs and has occurred within forests than most people will ever encounter. The implications of these activities not being part of people's lives, is that media and other sources come to play a large part in how people form opinions regarding forest activities, and by implication of what they think a Yukon forest is. As such, images and information from elsewhere become a part of local landscape, they inform people as to what is occurring or could potentially occur within Yukon forests.

### **Imagined Forests**

Imagination is an element of forest perception which brings together and makes sense of divergent sources of information, feeling, and experience. It enables an individual to picture vast expanses of space that can otherwise not be experienced, and to pull from other places and times in formulating the feeling and meaning of Yukon forests. Its role in forest perception is integral to the forest experience, to how views are articulated, and to understanding what a forest is.

This chapter has explored Yukon forests through examining the less tangible aspects of their meaning. Wilderness, nationalism and unseen activities, frame and inform the idea of what a Yukon forests is and how it is experienced. These layers are reflections of Yukon priorities, of a power struggle between governments, of individuals who are seeking a particular lifestyle, of the historical use of forest resources, and the story of Yukon history that is told. Each is shared by forest users, pulled from as a communal reference pool, yet each is malleable enough to fit within individual interpretations.

Terms such as wilderness are laden with meanings and implications that when not examined overlook an important aspect of how forests are perceived and experienced. It represents a particular view point, lends itself towards certain types of discourse and is used in daily conversation to articulate how this forest, the one experienced by an individual, relates to other, unseen forested spaces. The influence of nationalizing discourse should also not be overlooked, in nations which tie themselves heavily to the character of its environment, pervasive elements such as forests can become symbolically heavy, belonging at once to all citizens and none.

Lastly, I examined some aspects of forests which are part of their common conception, but are not experienced by most people. The role of media and talk in forming ideas and opinions about such activities is particularly large, as are pre-conceived ideas about the character of those involved in such activities. How hidden elements are discussed is a particularly revealing aspect of forest perception, it highlights where it is people draw their information from, what they think of other uses and users, and who has power in influencing perception. Forests are for the most part simply too vast to be fully experienced by any one individual, and as such, imagination plays an important role in forming a full picture of what that forest means, what occurs in it, and what value it has.

## Chapter Nine

### Yukon Forests: past, present, and future

In this dissertation I have explored the multi-faceted reality of forest perception in Canada's north. The overall forest portrait I have laid out contributes to an ethnographic understanding of some of those who are connected to Yukon forests, and to northern forests themselves. More specifically, I have contributed to a dialogue on the nature of human-environment relations among those who are economically dependent upon nature. I have shown the complex reality of this relationship, often built on a sense of caring, belonging, and on a world view that recognises ones chosen activity as morally good. Throughout this work I have also provided concrete examples of the usefulness and importance of understanding places as multilocal and multivocal. For instance, the way in which forests are experienced as having different histories, in turn, influencing how forests are planned for in the future, or how boundaries and borders are encountered unequally; further diversifying forest perception and experience. It is because forests are *places* to the people of this study that they matter so much. It is also the point from which much frustration emerges between those connected to forests. The inclusion of imagination in the sensory experience of forests has been a key element of this work. It has facilitated the melding of external influence, the power of geographic imaginings and internal maps and places, and of the actually physical experience of forests on the land as felt by individuals.

When brought together the content of this dissertation is an example of how the landscape can be approached as an ethnographic tool, used as a focus point from which to understand the people who depend upon local natural resources, and as a means to limit some of the assumptions that can be made about forest users and uses.

Finally, this work contributes to what I see as a growing area of inquiry within the discipline: an anthropology of forests. By this, I am referring to the building literature sourced throughout this dissertation that is preoccupied with forest peoples and the increasing attention that is paid to forests as a resource, as a home, and as the location of specific knowledge, skills, and livelihoods around the world.

### *The Boreal Forest Concept*

There are currently a number of research bodies that are actively encouraging boreal-focused research both in the humanities and sciences<sup>4</sup>. In this context, I would like to take this space to explore this idea of boreal in more detail. In doing so we can perhaps question the implications of its status as an uncontested setting, background, or field site in the Yukon and elsewhere.

In much of this thesis I have focused on some specifics of Yukon forests and their perception and use on a local scale. Yet, the political boundaries that determine the Yukon are not acknowledged by the forest, just as those who are interested in northern forests do not only reside in the north. Yukon forests are part of a much bigger, global forest system. While this is not a priority for most locals – except for a few conservation-oriented conversations I seldom found the Yukon forest referred to as Boreal – it does have some implications. This is because the idea of *forest* is one that tends to be part of an experiential entity that is perceived, seen and imagined, while the idea of *boreal* is instead confined to a discourse that is more scientific and eco-system

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<sup>4</sup> Canadian examples include: the Boreal Research Institute through the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology ([www.nait.ca/47691.htm](http://www.nait.ca/47691.htm)), the Canadian Boreal Initiative ([www.borealcanada.ca](http://www.borealcanada.ca)), the Canadian Forest Service ([cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/projects](http://cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/projects) for a list of research initiatives), the Sustainable Forestry Management Network ([www.sfmn.ales.ualberta.ca](http://www.sfmn.ales.ualberta.ca)), Boreal Ecosystem Research and Monitoring Sites ([berms.ccrp.ec.gc.ca](http://berms.ccrp.ec.gc.ca)).



based. Nevertheless, as part of a broader system, those who live in or near the boreal forest have some degree of claim upon other areas within it. As such there are consequences for proprietorship and control.

The boreal forest is ideally unbounded, spanning across nations, an ecosystem loop that circles the globe. Defined by flora, fauna, and natural systems, it is shared by most northern nations. In Canada, the boreal forest is a link across the nation as something almost all provinces and territories have in common and is often used as a symbol for Canadian pride and identity. Canada is home to approximately 30% of the world's boreal forest, one of three global forest types that accounts for 33% of the earth's forests and 11% of the earth's surface (Natural Resources Canada, 2011). According to the Canadian Council of Forests Ministers (2006), it is estimated that 2.5 million Canadians reside in 522 boreal-forest-dependent communities. This band of trees is more than 1000 kilometers wide and stretches from the Yukon and British Columbia to Labrador and Newfoundland. It is primarily publicly owned (93%), and is governed by provincial, territorial and federal governments. In a pamphlet authored by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, aiming to inform the general public of the wealth of Canada's boreal forest, it is written that:

The word 'boreal' is derived from Boreas, the Greek god of the north wind. To Canadians, this reference to an ancient deity has taken on the modern connotation of a sacred trust – a legacy that must and will, be sustainably managed for the benefit of present and future generations. (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 2006: 2)

Here the boreal forest is a single Canadian entity, something to be proud of and to watch after. Ideally these spaces are anybody's to explore, belong to all Canadians and when imagined as a single pervasive entity, allows diverse histories, eco-regions and peoples to be referenced to in one, quick, all-encompassing term. For instance, the

online Atlas of Canada, available through Natural Resources Canada, provides information on a national scale concerning forest health, disturbance, and threats. All while referencing the importance of this one entity to the lives of Canadians.

The boreal forest is an integral part of our economy, history, culture and natural environment. It gives birth to new life through its diverse ecosystems and helps to sustain our lives through the renewal of the air above and soil below. This vast body of land provides the lakes, streams and rivers that act as the veins and arteries of so much of our country. It is also an important source of forest products, and, thereby, a significant part of the economic base of Canada. (Natural Resources Canada, 2012)



Map 9. 1 Northern Circumpolar Map of the Boreal Forest. Source: Atlas of Canada (<http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca>) adapted from Larson 1980.

It is through such discourse that the idea of a boreal forest is reified, standing unquestioned despite the enormous amount of complexity and variety present within the Boreal forest region. Furthermore, despite the fact that the vast majority of Canadian people live in the southern regions, the idea of a Boreal forest encourages a sense of propriety over forests that can be ideally accessed by all citizens.

Though a powerful narrative, the idea of one type of forest connecting a nation is primarily anthropogenic in nature. Both the categorization of the forest, and the place of forests in a Canadian national narrative have specific historical roots. For example, how forests are categorized around the world can be traced back to Germany in the 1700s where forest science first developed (Wong, 2007). The intent of those early scientists was to aid in efficient timber extraction activities. As a consequence the type of wood and the appearance of the tree became the main factors by which forests were defined. It did not necessarily have to be so; theoretically categories could have been created focusing on the animals that were present, age of the area, human presence or ground cover for instance. Nevertheless this type of categorization became popular in powerful western nations, and in turn, their colonies.

As discussed in the previous chapter, many scholars have explored the role of Canada's natural environment in Canadian nationalism. Campbell (2002) has also explored the role of landscape and its connection to Canadian identity. She traces European encounters with Canada's rugged forests of the Georgian Bay area in Ontario and their quest to find the words and expressions necessary to describe and explain a new landscape. To her, the growth of stories and art depicting Canadian landscapes is one link between Canada's natural environment and feelings of patriotism. She traces the development of regional identities as connected to the wooded landscapes in Central Canada – a pride in the strength necessary to live in such a difficult landscape and the knowledge necessary for one to feel comfortable in such surroundings.

The boreal forest is a big part of this image and the art produced by the Group of Seven in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are a good example. Images that are neither picturesque nor comfortable but instead depict the cold, rugged, uneven land of Canada became

iconic images that Canadians everywhere connect with. Campbell suggests that regional fragmentation is a characteristic of Canadian art and has become a part of Canadian nationalism. Images of the stoic Rockies, the boreal forest, the Great Plains, while regional in nature, are national in who they reach out and speak to.

Baldwin (2004) explored this type of naturalistic nationalism by comparing discourse dating back to the turn of the century with modern day narratives that stemmed from a conservation campaign aimed at raising awareness of the boreal forest. Both types of narrative are found to rely heavily on the boreal forest as an *abstract universal*. That is, a space all Canadians have in common but none completely inhabit. One could also think the North in the same way. As such, the boreal forest is portrayed as an unproblematic, naturalized space that is part of a long historical narrative linking forests, the nation and Canadian identity. This is a vision of a space all Canadians share and one that is free of cultural and social influence.

Mapping plays a big role in the visioning of a nation and its resources. In 1937, Canada's first forest classification map was completed for the entire nation. From this point on, it became easier to plan national forest strategy from a distance. Now, it was possible to manage, track, and divide forested space easier than ever before. However, along with maps come decisions on how, when and why land that is represented should be used. Through mapping of resources comes an expression of power and knowledge. As an example I will look at the work of Willems-Braun (1997) on the assumptions that are made based off of such knowledge.



Map 9.2 1937 Forest Classification Map of Canada. Source: Baldwin, 2004

Focusing on the Clayoquot Sound dispute on British Columbia's west coast which concerned the logging of a particular part of old growth forest, Willems-Braun suggests that a dualistic 'environmentalist vs forest company' dialogue which was often present in media and society marginalized other voices such as First Nations, labour and community. His question then became: to what degree are politics *over* nature complacent in the politics *of* nature? By focusing on examples of early mapping of the area he shows how the writings and survey work in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought a specific mode of intelligibility. Through describing features, places and sites and breaking down the landscape in categories (soil, minerals, Indian area) the landscape could be read. He argues that in such cases, maps give the appearance of order that is thought to emanate from nature itself rather than the deliberate ordering of appearances. In such a way First Nation claims to land are not denied but instead are located and contained within

certain spaces. In conclusion Willems-Braun finds that both forestry and environmentalist discourse speak to a logic which concerns a mute nature, using science and common sense to gloss over the question of who has the right to be there at all. In other words, buried epistemologies naturalized as common sense.

Willems-Braun's intent is to bring the First Nation voice back into nature debates in an in-depth manner and to question the state of post-colonialism that still relies on the same assumptions and technologies to categorize nature. However, there is no need to limit this argument to First Nations people. The fact that the representations of nature, through mapping, media and discourse displaces localness and resituates it in the space of the nation and public, affects all people who have a personal interest in such places. Furthermore, the recognition that the nation-state rather than being accomplished, is continuously articulated, affects all people of that state.

With this in mind, the assertion that the boreal forest spans from coast to coast, is publicly owned, and is accessible to all Canadians, is questionable. That Canada's vast tracks of Crown land belong to everyone implies they do not belong to the people who live within them. The process that created this reality was not benign and how we see forests today are a reflection of land seizures throughout Canada's history. From 1728, in which the Surveyor General of his Majesties Woods implemented what would be Canada's first forest regulation, Canada's forests have been increasingly managed<sup>5</sup>. How they are managed depends upon an objective view of nature as separate from the social and cultural surroundings in which they are found.

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<sup>5</sup> Drushka (2003) reports that this first rule in reference to wood use took place in what is today Nova Scotia, in an attempt to protect those trees particularly suited for the use of ship masts from being cut for domestic reasons. Europeans who were fishing off the east coast often stayed on shore for periods of time, penalties were enforced for cutting 'marked' trees.

I had the opportunity to spend some time with a long-time Yukoner who had some familiarity with mapping in the Territory. While looking through stacks of maps, some 60 years old, some only months old, we spoke about what they meant. I asked him, once a map is made, what the power of it was. He pulled out a number of maps on the table in front of me, some with incredible details, some with much less and began his answer:

R: .... Lets start with the bigger Yukon picture, you know the shape well and you can see this one here, shows the various parts of the Yukon that are tied up in some way, so parks are green, land claims are striped. This map, although it is just a piece of paper, it says who goes where, or who has legislative attachment to the landscape here. The areas that are brown are mineral interest, then First Nation interests are the striped, and conservation areas are green. So you see the blank areas where nothing is going on, but as you get closer to roads and communities there is cluster, and there is no surprise that where there is a community there are mining claims. Development is high in those areas, Mayo, Faro, that kind of thing. But because those communities were where the First Nation people tended to congregate, when they settled the land claims they wanted the lands they traditionally used around those areas. So that is when you get overlaps, it is worse in some areas. But there are mining interests and First Nation interests, one on top of the other, see? (he points to an area layered with color and stripes) And as you know those mining interests are often sub surface and so, you see, you can own your property but one meter down, it is somebody else's.

Jodie: when you began, how clear were the maps, the same activities were occurring, but these lines, were they there?

R: generally clear at the local level. But until five years ago nobody had taken all land claims and put them on a single base like this so you can see the overall content. ....

We then focused on a map made in 1947 and talked about the difference in how much more detail the recent maps had, how the technology of satellite imagery impacted elevation information and the like. When I asked about the implication of moving from one to the other, of less detail to more detail he said that a map is all about telling a story, and trying to tell a story that is backed up with information. That the early mapped showed what was, not how it got to be there. Where the later map, with all of

its added layers, helped the reader understand why something was the way it was. He also spoke of the impacts of maps for local people:

R... (those who map ) are obligated to make it public, there goes some secret people might have held. Maybe it was spiritually significant, or maybe it has been their source of fresh water, this lake, and if somebody wants to come dig a trench and find the reason it is such nice water because of a high zinc anomaly, unfortunately that makes it, devalues the land in terms of that resident. On the other hand there are people delighted to see *them* come in, because they always wondered about something, wondered what they could do with that landscape besides try to eke out a living by trapping or prospecting. ...

The boreal forest that is found in the Yukon Territory is part of a broader system, a type of world forest of which Canada is part custodian and is part of the national forest resources that make up Canada as a forest-nation. The ideas we have of it are created through a history of categorizing and mapping a massive natural feature in a specific way. Yukon's own forests were not completely mapped until 1968 – as part of the national program to inventory all of Canada's forests commissioned by the Department of Northern Affairs. These maps which were created were done so under the specific needs and priorities of a government, and a specific paradigm of managing forests.

The boreal forest is a space of imagination. As a broad category it can be manipulated to represent many priorities and to represent or reflect particular ideas. It is also a resource people have access to and its boundaries and rules have implications for those who live, work and recreate within it. The underlying categories and structures that make it possible to imagine this vast space as connected and as an integral part of the nation are not benign. They rely upon an uninhabited, cultureless space, which is then appropriated and managed by different bodies for very specific reasons. Yukon forests are enmeshed within this broader category and all the structures and assumptions that come with it are part of how they are thought of and managed.



*Wilderness Anew*

Some categories or labels of forest are saturated with history and assumptions, and can situate seemingly distant places as bound to the priorities and values of others when applied without consideration. I have argued in this dissertation that another such way of representing forest is through the idea of pristine wilderness, a representation with little room for the actors who live and depend upon the land. For instance, within the idea of wilderness, First Nations are often reduced to historic or romanticized figures and can be naturalized as part of a landscape, a view which severely restricts not only the reality of complex human-environment relations among a heterogeneous group, but also First Nation's interest in local economic development that depends on resource extraction. Other forest users are also left out in such depictions and are left with the task of reconstituting their place as legitimate actors on a landscape which is consistently redefined by others.

Yet, this dissertation has facilitated an investigation of Yukon forest history in the context of contemporary historical narratives, and it is in doing so that another implication of the wilderness narrative in the Yukon comes to light, one where a more positive lesson can perhaps be learned. I have shown that many areas of Yukon forests have been logged at different periods. Though not equal to the large scale logging of some southern provinces, many of the forested areas along major waterways and near communities in the Yukon are second or third growth. Despite this, these are promoted and experienced as wilderness by many people. In light of such an example, I believe there is potential for a fuller and healthier view of forests to develop. This is in part due to some basic characteristics of trees; the fact that they are living, and are often able to live longer than people.

For instance, how old is a forest if we look at it as made up of trees? It could potentially be as old as its oldest tree, stand, log, or piece of decomposed wood, and if looking at forests as a whole, as long as some trees have been present they can be seen as nearing eternal. Because forests are alive, they have an ability to incorporate human induced change to a certain degree. While northern forests have shorter lifecycles than many southern forests, both because northern trees tend to naturally live less long and because forests fires are so much a part of northern ecosystems, most still live longer than the average human. Consequently, any one forest can often be as old as many generations of people. In taking a historic view of forests, there is potential for those areas in need of forest regeneration and restoration to once again be experienced as wild nature and to support animal life and wild waterways, all the while leaving traces of those who have come before. With time, wilderness can grow out of depleted and fatigued areas, and can be experienced by the people that depend upon it as untamed and natural.

Furthermore, those traces that are left need not always be a bad thing. Forests are an anchor for stories of the past and possibilities for the future. They are a physical anchor in the sense that they exist on the land, and a conceptual anchor in their capacity to evoke memories or imaginings. Changes over time make physical marks upon them, their shape when planted by people, their form when impacted by animals, their size and height when once burned or cut, their species make-up, their very existence hold stories of what people have and have not done to them and of the role of nature itself. Trees anchor stories through their physical presence, allowing people who contemplate, use or come into contact with them, to think of the future or past in a manner at once grounded and unbounded.

In this way the marks that have been left behind by previous use, when noticed at all, can serve to anchor people to events of the past and in them, find their own place in the here and now. At the same time, those marks can be overlooked by those who seek the wilderness experience, and a forest once cut and managed by people can once again become the complete opposite of 'used'.

### *Beyond Boreal and Wilderness*

The questions that have motivated this project are broad enough to be asked elsewhere, and a local, place-based approach in answering them will ensure that locally-relevant and grounded answers are sought. Questioning the uncontested nature of the field-site and exploring alternative understandings of local place is a step towards a more complete representation of forests user needs. It also directly addresses two issues often grappled with in academic literature that explores human-environment relations.

The first are the pitfalls that occur when the complexity and messiness of place is overlooked in favour of simpler all-encompassing space<sup>6</sup>. For instance, discussions that revolve around terminology such as boreal, or more simply 'forest resources', can overlook the complexity of the forest category in favour of an all-encompassing space which is by far easier to organize, manage, and incorporate into national discourse than overlapping places. As a consequence of this space-creating tendency, this process often means that individuals and groups are charged with the task of reconstituting place, and asserting its value in a way that is meaningful to outsiders.

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<sup>6</sup> I have discussed in this dissertation an example put forward by Gaffin (1997) in which he argues authorities were able to decontextualize place in favour of anonymous space by representing a rural area in upstate New York as empty and unused, the perfect location for a large dump.

Space-oriented discourse is particularly problematic for rural and northern areas which, as less populated regions, are often seen both as empty or void and as a potential resource for larger centers. Combined with this, they can be subject to rigid or static portrayals of traditional lifestyles or distant pasts – images which while restraining can also be creatively drawn from to situate local needs in a way outsiders understand. As outlined in chapter five, the north has often been subject to changing priorities of southern centers, the same is also true of many Canadian rural areas. An approach that begins with the idea of place asks that we not only move beyond descriptive imagery that decontextualizes and empties such localities, but that their diverse and dynamic reality not be overlooked in favour of simplistic or caricatured representations of static uniform place – even if some of those representations are promoted by local actors.

Secondly, approaching the environment in a way that embraces the competing meanings of place can go some way to address arguments that have been put forward by scholars who are critical of the dualistic representation of not only human-environment relations, but of forest disputes in particular. For instance, Gail Wells (1999) in tracing the history of a forested region in Oregon, challenges researchers to move beyond dualistic lock-it-up or log-it-off portrayals of forest issues. Instead she urges us to explore the more ambiguous notions of what a forest is and of how key narratives collide and mix to create new, local understandings of place and the people within it. As outlined throughout this dissertation, others such as Satterfield (2002) and Dunk (1994) have made similar arguments. Place-based approaches challenge simplistic portrayals of forest issues and ask that both the physical environment and human actors be considered in all their complexity.

The main themes of this work, historic narrative, experience, socio-environmental structures, and imagination, were chosen as frames relevant to discussing forests-as-place within the context of this project. However, as broad themes they can also be applicable tools in other situations and localities and can be a useful component of a place-based approach. The content and importance of each would vary greatly, and certainly new themes could be added as well, but they can provide an initial point of departure and inquiry for discussing the multilocal and multivocal nature of forests as place. Each invites multiple viewpoints and allows for the contradictory nature of experience and feeling.

#### *Living with, and Expressing, Contradictions*

The title of this dissertation, *Shades of Green*, is meant to emphasise the variations and subtleties of meanings which are gathered from forest places and that are expressions of different experiences, priorities, and understandings of human-environment relations. It expresses a density of meaning within forested areas, but also a diversity of meaning expressed by the same individual whose own understanding of forest use and priorities is more complex than any single label allows for.

One thing this dissertation has revealed are some of the ways in which local forest users are able to live with what others would see as contradictions. One of my goals has been to explore the perceptions of study participants in a manner that went beyond use and it is in doing so that many of these contradictions became apparent. For instance, working in the forest, yet also living and playing within it, or alternatively, working to protect it against human-induced change while recognising the important role that resource-based industry plays in the livelihoods of locals. Subsequently, participants in

this study found ways to approach forests on a number of levels (though often with much frustration). Assuming their interests are limited to one aspect of forests is problematic in part because assumptions about user values can silence the possibility of alternative relationships between users. Such assumptions pre-suppose that 'types' of use are incompatible, and therefore types of users are as well. When individuals are labeled by use, the potential relationships between groups who could work together towards common goals are undermined from the beginning; from the lack of recognition that people can and do live and work with contradictions on a daily basis.

The Yukon is currently undergoing a period of intense land-use planning and much of this has been directed towards recognition of multiple uses. However, many of the participants of this study expressed frustration with these processes because they failed to do exactly that; in representing themselves and others in a limited way, most felt unrepresented and concluded that 'government' would do what it wanted anyway. The Yukon is a vast area and forest users do not often encounter each other on the land. However, the increasing resource, recreation, and conservation demands such planning is meant to prepare for will mean that uses will increasingly overlap and users may come into contact with each other more often.

In-depth analysis of consultation and land use planning procedures and methods was beyond the scope of this research. However, in light of the multiple forest viewpoints and perspectives this work portrays, an area of future research could be how to better bring together 'users' while transcending the use category and its assumptions. A number of grass-roots organizations in the Yukon that have sprung up around

planning processes could be a fruitful place to start<sup>7</sup>. Often such groups develop out of a sense of frustration or lack of trust with existing procedures and in an effort to better represent their views, may provide new and innovative ways to represent the perspectives of others as well. Another challenge such research could work on is how to best represent the idea of forest in planning discourse while also remaining aware of the implications behind certain forms of forest terminology.

### *Looking Forward*

Throughout this dissertation I have explored Yukon's unique forest history, suggesting that the territory's small (on occasion booming) forest industry has been well suited to Yukon residents, who have often been able to adapt to shifting needs and wavering outside interest. At the same time I have emphasised that as a northern and remote region, the Yukon is subject to many of the same challenges of rural areas, particularly the tendency to fall victim to other's visions of development. Being very aware of this tendency and of past 'development' efforts, many study participants have expressed wariness of future development that is not locally-led, that is too large in nature, and that is built up from non-local expertise. This has been in part the motivation to create a Yukon-made Forest Act, and to create complex and integrated Land Use Plans that balance the diverse needs of locals with the growing demands of industry.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the Forest Values Focus Group mentioned in chapter two, consisted of a group of individuals representing different forest values (as opposed to use). The group was initiated by local residents who felt the public consultation component of the Forest Act was falling short of true consultation. Another example is a group called The Friends of McIntyre Creek that in part grew out of the city of Whitehorse's Official Community Plan review. Events held by the group included an evening where people came to speak about how they used the McIntyre Creek area, a part of the city that was slotted for potential development. During that one evening a number of 'users' came forward including birders, orienteers, the local fish farm, hikers, snowmobilers and many more. Most in the room had been unaware of the many uses that were part of the area and the wide range of people involved.

Throughout the territory's history however, one constant has been its remoteness and northern climate, a barrier that has limited external influence to some degree; also making transportation difficult and limiting the quality of timber products available in comparison to southern markets. However, the north is once again under the eye of a southern federal government whose military and resource interests mean that the Yukon is under increasing pressure from outside priorities. This time however, a warming climate is offering the increasing potential for northern shipping routes, northern sovereignty is under question, and the potential of northern forests in a new climate is unknown. While a small scale and adaptive industry has in the past provided the territory's residents some degree of resilience, as the Yukon becomes less remote, those influences may become less easy to incorporate into the existing economy and social structure. It is precisely because of this that the Yukon's current planning initiatives are so timely, and if they are able to find a way to truly represent, consider, and integrate overlapping forest perceptions and priorities, it could be in a very strong position to deal with future challenges.



## Appendix A: Copy of Participant Consent Form

**Perceiving the Forested Landscape: diverse views in southwest Yukon  
Participant Consent**

You are invited to take part in a study researching how different people perceive, think about, and use forests in the Yukon. This participation involves being accompanied and/or interviewed by a researcher who will be taking notes and/or tape recording your comments with regards to activities, importance, history and understanding of forested lands and nature in general in your region. The objective of this study is to describe and document the forest-views and uses of numerous forest-user groups. There are no foreseen risks associated with participation in this research project. Nevertheless, you have the choice to remain anonymous if you so choose, no information compromising confidentiality will be shared with third parties without your consent.

The information gathered through this research will be used to fulfill the dissertation requirement of a Doctoral degree in Anthropology and could be used for further publications or presentations.

Your participation in this research will be recorded through note-taking and/or tape recording of interview. Up until the time results are published, should you wish to withdraw from the study, all information concerning your involvement will be destroyed. Furthermore, copies of all transcripts and tapes concerning your input into this study will be made available to you upon request.

You will receive a copy of this contract.

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) give consent to Jodie Asselin to use the information that will be collected during an observation of my daily activities, or in an interview, for the purposes of the project "Perceiving the Forested Landscape: diverse views in southwest Yukon", as outlined above. I am invited to do this freely and know that, at any time up to the point of study completion I can withdraw from the project.

I choose for my participation in this project to remain anonymous.

I consent to the recording of my interview with a tape-recorder.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jodie Asselin

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Contact Information :  
Jodie Asselin  
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## Appendix B: Example of Semi-Structured Interview Questions.

Semi-structured interviews were used almost exclusively for those connected to forests in a professional manner. Questions were adjusted heavily according to the profession of the individual involved and wording often varied. For the sake of confidentiality, questions which would reveal a person's specific occupation are not included below.

### General:

1. How long have you been residing in the Territory
2. Can you describe your occupation for me?
3. How long have you been in this position?
4. What brought you to work in this office/occupation?
5. What brought you to the Yukon? (if not already a resident).
6. Can you describe your interest in Yukon's green areas?
  - a. Potential discussion of forest terminology and details of their work
7. What are the main issues you see as relevant to Yukon forests?
  - b. From your point of view, who are the main actors in these issues?
  - c. In what way are you involved in these issues?
8. Do you have any concerns, or alternatively, positive statements to make, regarding Yukon forests?
9. How do you feel about Yukon Forest Management?
10. Are you able to access Yukon forests as you need? Do you feel other users are able to?
11. Where in the Yukon does your work take you?
12. Are you currently involved in any planning processes or committees related to Yukon's green spaces?
  - a. Can you describe that involvement for me/describe the issue for me.
  - b. Are you aware of: Peel Watershed Planning Process, Forest Values Focus Group, Official Community Plan Review, (*others as was relevant*)
    - i. discuss
13. Can you talk to me about the idea of wilderness as it pertains to the Yukon?
14. (*If relevant*) can you describe a typical day of work for you (or a typical day in the forest)
15. Outside of your work, in what ways do you get into Yukon's outdoor areas?
  - a. Follow-up questions regarding any recreational activities, or other outdoor involvement.
  - b. Do you come across other users during these activities?
  - c. Do you come across signs of humans?
  - d. How do you feel about these signs?
  - e. Do you have any favorite areas in the Yukon?

**Profession Specific:**

1. Are you able to provide details regarding Yukon Forest Planning?
  - a. (Alternatively) Your work with protected areas, land use or community planning etc.
2. Who are the groups you work with?
3. What are the primary forest issues you work with?
4. Where do you get your information from? (Alternate: how do you disseminate information to the public?)
5. What are the key pieces of legislation you work with?
6. Are there any forest user groups that are more of a concern than others in your profession? In what ways?
7. From your position, what are the main issues regarding Yukon forests?
8. *Depending of Interviewee, questions may include a discussion of:*
  - a. Guide-outfitting regulations and perceived concerns
  - b. Wilderness-tourism regulations and perceived concerns
  - c. Details concerning the procedures behind the creation of the Yukon Forest Act or other legislation
  - d. Details regarding hunting regulation, and/or access to Settlement Lands
9. During your work, what types of forest uses do you come into contact with?
10. Do you often encounter other users on the land?

**All interviews ended in some semblance of the following:**

1. Do you have anything you would like to add? Or that you feel I should know?
2. Do you feel there are certain topics that are of more importance than others to study?
  - a. Why/in what way?
2. Do you have any concerns regarding this research (*also discussed in advance*)

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