



# E - CURRENTS

Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council



*Happy Holidays from the Yukon River  
Inter-Tribal Watershed Council!*



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# *Announcements*

### **Have News to Share?**

If you have an announcement, newsworthy story, or would just like to update everyone on your recent projects, please consider submitting content to our next newsletter!

If interested, please contact Tasha Mockta at (907)258-3337 or by email [tmockta@yritwc.org](mailto:tmockta@yritwc.org)

**Us at the Yukon River Inter- Tribal Watershed Council would like to wish you the Happiest of Holiday and wish nothing but a Healthy and Happy New Year!**

If you would like to share any announcements that your community would like to share with the Yukon River Watershed, please feel free to contact Tasha Mockta at [tmockta@yritwc.org](mailto:tmockta@yritwc.org)

YRITWC's Brownfield Department would like to inform those who would like to join the Brownfield Leadership Group that we are currently accepting applications. They are available through Tasha Mockta at [tmockta@yritwc.org](mailto:tmockta@yritwc.org) If you have any questions feel free to contact Birgit Hagedorn at [bhagedorn@yritwc.org](mailto:bhagedorn@yritwc.org)

Would you like to stay up-to-date with potential trainings or webinars? Contact Kari at [kyoung@yritwc.org](mailto:kyoung@yritwc.org) to join the IGAP Listserv!

**The YRITWC would like to give a big Thank You! to the Following Tribes for their kind donation! Their donations are greatly appreciated!**

**Alatna Tribal Council  
Chalkyitsik Native Village  
Gana-a'yoo Ltd.  
Koyukuk Tribal Council**

**Any Donors through our Pick. Click. Give portal!**

**Native Village of Nulato  
Native Village of Rampart  
Yupiit of Andreafski Tribal Council**

We would also like to remind everyone that donations are welcome at anytime through Pick. Click. Give!  
We at The YRITWC Thank You!



## *From the Alaska Executive Director*

Merry Christmas!

As 2020 comes to a close and reflecting over the past year, it certainly has been a strange one. We, here at the Watershed office, have been keeping each other safe and complying with mandates to address Covid-19. Most staff have been teleworking from home. Fieldwork and travel on the Yukon River and tributaries have been minimal and restricted to highway locations and worksites this year. Staff is looking forward to getting back to somewhat normal status if at all possible this next year. 2020 was a year for Zoom and other on-line and teleconference meetings and workshops; the Watershed was no exception. We at Watershed Council continue to meet with the Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association and recently with the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission to collaborate and expand our science and research projects on the River. The decline in salmon on the river is devastating to our people living along the rivers. Joining together with these two organizations we will be able to pool our resources to streamline and expand our studies and research areas on our rivers. It is exciting to be working together with Serena Fitka and Catherine Moncrieff of YRDFA and Stephanie Quinn-Davidson of the YRITFC. We here at the Watershed Council wish you and your family a very Happy New Year.

- Theresa Clark

## *News from the Brownfield Department*



**Birgit Hagedorn**

This was a different Year but we were still successful. Our program is heavily involved with traveling and visiting communities but thankfully phone, email, and other online services helped to get us moving forward with our work plan – and THANK YOU to everybody who hung in there and stayed in contact. We are now in the second year of our Brownfields grant. The funding is used to assist communities in identifying Brownfield sites, performing assessments, and applying for grants to repurpose the site including cleanup activities.

What exactly is a Brownfield?

A Brownfield is a property with a potential contamination AND has no viable responsible party AND it has a repurposing plan that is important for community advancement and health. If there is such site in your village please contact us or use our Brownfield App. Unsure if it is a Brownfield? – we can help you to figure this out!

Another big part of this grant is to provide capacity building training in interested communities. To do so we formed a Brownfield Leadership Group with Tribal Environmental Technicians last year. We provide stipends and training opportunities to this group and, if spots are still available, we provide this service to interested persons outside the Leadership Group.

How to become a Brownfield's Leader?

Contact us and we send you an application – fill it out – and you are in!

A big Thank You to all Brownfield leaders who took this on in their communities' last year. You are a leader and important to help your communities' making living in your village safer and healthier!

Last but not least, we applied for more funding that can be used for site assessment and will know if we got this funded in May. We also welcome Maryann Fidel to our Brownfield program. Maryann will spend part of her time working on Brownfields mostly to include abandoned mining sites.



# *The Hap with YRITWC IGAP*

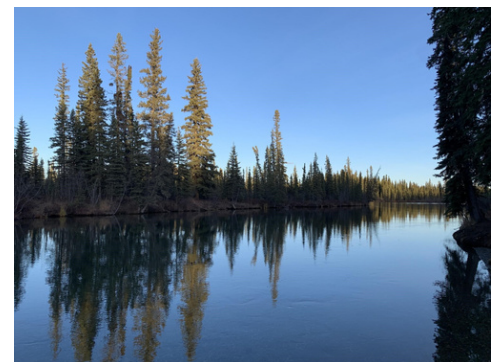


**Eliza Perkins and Kari Young**

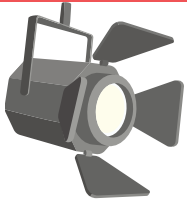
This quarter, the IGAP Department at YRITWC has had its hands in several projects. We created an educational toolkit to be used by all educators around the watershed; took some water samples in the watershed along the road system; developed a Climate Studies Inventory reference resource for Alaska Tribes and First Nations; participated in Northern Connections' Data Management and Communications workshop; participated and presented at Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management; participated in the Alaska IGAP training online; presented a webinar on the Indigenous Observation Network program and Water Quality - which you can now be viewed on our recorded webinars page on our website and YouTube; launched two social media campaigns; wrote a grant application that would help support our environmental education efforts; compiled water quality data for the release of our 2020 community reports; helped wrap up the 2020 open-water sampling field season by organizing supplies and offering logistical support; shared opportunities with other IGAP professionals through our listserv; drafted a standard operation plan for our program; and are currently making plans for future work.

It has been a whirlwind, with some lovely COVID-safe Thanksgiving and holiday office occasions thrown into the mix, which served to break up the work-from-home rhythm and simultaneously build up our office community in a refreshing way. Thank you to all the YRITWC staff and YRITWC partners for your continued efforts and hard work this quarter to work together and help support the organization's overarching mission, even during a pandemic. We are so thankful for you as we have learned from each and every one of you. We hope you are doing well, staying safe, and taking care of yourselves.

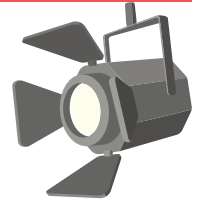
Wishing everyone happy holidays and a joyous start to the new year!



*Photos are from our last water sampling field trip this season in mid-October when we sampled around Fairbanks, Minto, the Yukon Bridge, Delta Junction, and Tok.*



## *YRITWC IGAP Spotlight*



**Name:** Augusta Edmund

**The tribe you work for:** Native Village of Alakanuk

**Years of experience in IGAP or similar work:** 5 years

**Proudest accomplishment completed through you IGAP program:** Successful participation in Backhaul Alaska Pilot Project 1, Partnering with Alakanuk Tank Farm for the last 4 years of backhauling waste out of Alakanuk being sent to Seattle and Nome, All IGAP Employees certified in Freon Recovery and Water Sampling, within the last two years IGAP backhauled approximately 120,000 lbs. of scrap metal to Nome (80,000 lbs. this summer season during COVID Epidemic). IGAP recently received their smart ash burner and a plastic shredder, we are planning to burn PETE Plastics # 2-7 instead of dumping them into the landfill.

**Something that motivates you in your work:** I was raised to respect our land and to treat it with respect including land and water animals. To keep our community with the environment and waters as clean as possible.



# Drone Pilot School

Maryann Fidel

YRITWC's in partnership with Delta Backhaul Co. is hosting a Drone Pilot School March 2-4, 2021. Currently, we are planning this as an online class via zoom, but there may be a possibility to join us in person in Anchorage. We will decide if this can safely be done as the date gets closer.

This class will prepare you to take the FAA Part 107 exam to become a certified drone pilot. In order to fly a drone professionally, you need to pass this test to demonstrate you know the 'rules of the sky', similar to a pilot's ground school. This class will cover what you need to know to take that test. You will need to make arrangements on your own to take the test at an approved FAA testing center, in Anchorage, Fairbanks or Kodiak. This is a certification through the FAA that qualifies you to fly a drone as part of your job.

The class is geared toward people who are serious about using a drone professionally, instead of flying drones recreationally (or just for fun). If you would like to use a drone for your IGAP program, or any other federally funded grant program, this certification is required. Before taking the class you may want to think about how possible it is to incorporate drones into your work and what value they will add to your programs. For example, if you would like to use drones for repeated flights to monitor river erosion, you will need to fly the drone many times during the year, and having a certified drone pilot in your village will be necessary. But, if you just need one aerial picture of your landfill, then you may want to hire a contractor to come out once to take that picture. Keep in mind the cost of starting a drone program as well. Minimum cost include a drone (\$550 for a good affordable option), cost of taking the test (\$150), registering the drone (\$5), a durable case to protect the drone (\$150), HD cards (\$50), a computer to upload images, and additional insurance coverage (we pay \$1900 annually, but this can be purchased monthly if you are just flying during summer months, you need to check with your organization's insurance provider to get a cost estimate). Additional cost for more complicated tasks, like creating 3D models and working with additional sensors vary.

During the class we will cover: applicable regulations, airspace classification, weather, small unmanned aircraft loading, emergency procedures, crew resource management, radio communication procedures, determining the performance of small unmanned aircraft, physiological factors affecting pilot performance, aeronautical decision-making and judgement, airport operations, maintenance and pre-flight inspection procedures. Study manuals will be provided. We will discuss what to expect and how to get registered for the test. Additionally, we will provide a flying demonstration to show how to set up the drone for flight and how the controllers work. If people are able to join us in person, we will practice flying drones in a nearby park.

Drones are an extremely useful tool in environmental work. If you think they will contribute to your work we encourage you to register for YRITWC's Drone Pilot School.

ONE PEOPLE ONE RIVER  
Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council  
www.yritwc.org

YRITWC WILL HOST DRONE PILOT SCHOOL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH DELTA BACKHAUL CO., MARCH 2 - 4, 2021. THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL ZOOM TRAINING.

**HARNESS THE POWER OF DRONES**

Learn everything you need to know to pass your FAA Part 107 test to become a certified drone pilot and fly a drone professionally. Class cost \$99, scholarships available. For more information contact Maryann Fidel at mfidel@yritwc.org

**DELTA BACKHAUL COMPANY**

# *Educational Toolkit for All Types of Educators*

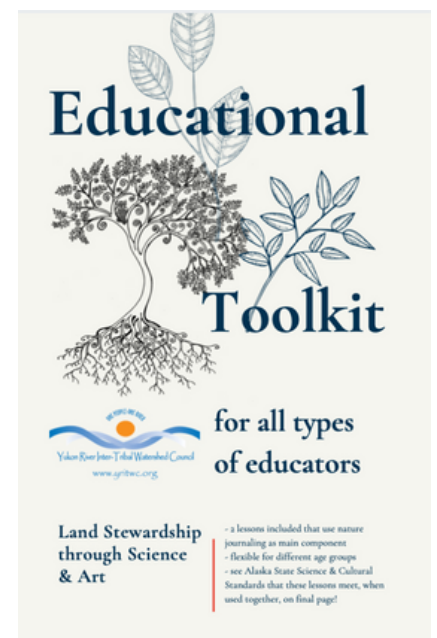
**Eliza Perkins**

Recently, the IGAP department created an educational toolkit to be used as a resource around the Yukon River Watershed by educators - including parents, IGAP coordinators, teachers, environmental educators etc. The educational toolkit includes: first, an overview of nature journaling and how it can strengthen one's inner naturalist and help facilitate a deeper connection with one's natural surroundings; second, two environmental lessons that can be used with all age groups; and lastly, a list of Alaska State Science and Cultural Standards that these lessons can help educators meet.

The first activity is about using one's senses to make keen observations about one's surrounding environment and it really emphasizes the importance of starting the first phase of the scientific process, inquiry, with curiosity and wonder. We can learn a lot by engaging with our sense of sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste. This lesson provides a great structure for educators that encourages students to notice the details of the flora and fauna around them and to use the information learned to develop a stronger emotional connection to the spot at which they do the lesson. The lesson also increases the ability of students to speak knowledgeably and passionately on Earth's behalf. I have done this first "sit spot" activity in this educational toolkit multiple times in multiple places and every time I do it I gain a deeper connection with my surroundings, develop a greater sense of self and find new energy that comes from making new discoveries.

The second activity is about the interconnectedness of all living organisms and it builds on the observational skills gained from the first lesson. By reviewing the relationships between land features, such as rivers, and organisms, students will see how organisms rely on one another in many different ways. Once students understand these relationships, they will also understand the importance and sensitivity of these connections. This lesson aims to highlight how humans, plants, and animals within the watershed are related and how the quality of water can impact entire ecosystems for better or for worse if not adequately protected. Both of these lessons encourage students to bring cultural knowledge and their personal experiences with them to the learning space.

Lastly, on the final page of the educational toolkit, educators will be able to see Alaska State Science and Cultural Standards that these two lessons help meet - sourced from the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development's K-12 Science Standards for Alaska and the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, adopted by the Assembly of Alaska Native Educators. While it is not necessary to use these lessons in a traditional classroom setting, the YRITWC hopes that the inclusion of these state standards will allow teachers who do work in a classroom setting to lesson plan with greater ease. In addition, the YRITWC hopes that the toolkit inspires educators to utilize the act of nature journaling in new and creative ways. This educational toolkit will be shared on our YRITWC website soon, but is also available upon request. Please contact the IGAP Department, [kyoung@yritwc.org](mailto:kyoung@yritwc.org) or [eperkins@yritwc.org](mailto:eperkins@yritwc.org) for more information!



# *Updates From the Drinking Water Improvement Program staff*

**Thomas and Katherine Brower**

There was a Community Wastewater Safety Enhancement Mini-grant program to help communities with their wastewater facilities. This was to help improve their systems operation. The program is completed, congratulations to Arctic Village, Birch Creek, Chalkyitsik, Kotlik, Loudon, and Rampart that participated in the mini-grant program.

Tribal Leaders Summit was a success as it was the first virtual conference for Region 10 that includes Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. The Tribal Leaders Summit was supposed to be held in Anchorage.

ATCEM Scholarships were announced to Tribes to help with registration funding. There were two communities that were assisted to attend the conference.

Presently we are looking for training opportunities for Tribes to attend training with water programs that include RUBA water operator, financial and managerial training to help increase the Best Practice Scores so that Tribes can become eligible for improvement grants and assistance programs. When travel opens, we are ready and looking forward to traveling to the communities to give technical assistance with drinking water programs. Travel and training scholarships will be available for people that work with water, clerks, managerial and financial operations workers to travel for training. These training are geared to help the communities improve their Best Practice Scores so that they can become eligible to apply for grants for their facilities.





# Activity Page



## DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE Yukon River

With the Yukon River stretching nearly 2,000 miles across Alaska and Canada, it can look a bit different depending on where you are. Do you know which Yukon River communities are in the pictures below?

Choose from the list of communities below. Answers can be found on the bottom of page.

Options:

- Beaver      Emmonak
- Eagle      Tanana
- Holy Cross      Kotlik
- Alakanuk      Ruby



## Did you know?

The name Yukon, or ʉ́yǵ han, is a shortened version of the words in the Gwich'in phrase chų́ gajjı́ han, which means *white water river*.

## Show Gratitude

We all know that 2020 was a difficult year for many reasons. However, it has shown us that we need to show more appreciation for what we do have.

List 5 things you are grateful for:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_

## Action.

Now show your gratitude to at least one (or more) subject on your list.

## Habitat

**Definition:** the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.

### Circle the FOUR main components of a habitat:

Shelter      Space

Trees      Water      Camouflage

Food      Oxygen

Answers can be found on the bottom of page.