
YRITWC E-CURRENTS



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming TAT Trainings and Events:

- July 12 - 16 Mountain Village Community Workshop
- July 19 - 23 Fairbanks 40-hr HAZWOPER
- August 9 - 13 Tanana Community Workshop
- August 23 - 27 Fairbanks Community Workshop



We would like to thank GCI for a \$2,500 donation! This year we were able to extend interns' time with us this summer!

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

FROM THE ALASKA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THERESA CLARK

The Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council has started the summer travel season with the opening up for travel to communities through lessening COVID-10 restrictions. Trainings are being conducted by staff in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and the Yukon River communities, as well as being able to conduct more sampling. We are looking forward to the continued work throughout the summer to the villages.

Exciting news for our Brownfields department as Birgit Hagedorn and Tasha Mockta secured additional funding to complete additional site assessments for the communities of Alakanuk, Huslia, Grayling, and Russian Mission. We are looking forward to working with these additional communities to work toward brownfield clean-up and repurposing.

Because of Covid-19 and travel restrictions to Canada, the YRITWC Executive Council has canceled the Bi-annual Summit that was to take place this year.

We are thankful for the funding we receive from Alaska Community Foundation to host interns. This year we received funding for two: Sophie Burgess from Colorado and Henry Westly from Oregon. We welcome back Temyka Aluyuk, a returning intern from last year through the ANSEP program. They are able to assist YRITWC with summer projects through their up to 12 weeks internships.

THE BIGGEST BATTERY IN THE NORTH

BY HAROLD GATSBY | CARCROSS/TAGISH FIRST NATION

Hello to all my relations living downstream from the headwaters of the Yukon River. I hope my update will flow like the river and reach all of you downstream from the Southern Lakes. My name is Harold Gatsby. I have been honored to be involved in the YRITWC since it began. I haven't been much involved in the last few years, but am still considered an Elder advisor for YRITWC. We started the watershed council to help us embrace our ancestors' traditional laws and reclaim stewardship for the next generations coming. For the salmon, all the fish, for the moose, caribou, muskrats, otters, beavers, insects and two legged beings. For all the Living Beings and Life that flows and thrives from this great body of water from here to the Bering Sea. To drink the water from the river once again, and try to keep it that way.

As a council, as best as we could, we used our ancestors' laws to govern the YRITWC. Since time immemorial this body of water was always treated like a living being by our ancestors. They had songs and ceremonies to honor this life-giving body. The lakes used to be our spiritual teacher, food source, transportation, our class room for stewardship etc. Our ancestors knew we had more water in our bodies than anything else, (80%) and they also knew what we did to the water we did to ourselves and the next generations coming, so honoring this life-giving body was a way of life for our ancestors.

Today, in the Yukon, there is a Corp. call Atco Electric that has decided to turn this life-giving body (our southern lakes) into the largest battery in the north and they seem to be proud of their accomplishments. Atco electric and the governments Yukon Water board have decided to raise the levels of the lakes to their highest level in the middle of winter. A completely unnatural event. I no longer see the muskrats house on the lake. There is always water on the ice in the winter, no more lake beaver houses on the shore. Use to see frogs on the beach but not anymore. I don't know how it's impacting the fingerling fish. I have lived on the shores of these southern lakes most of my life so I can see the impact of turning our life-giving southern lakes into the biggest battery of the north. Batteries are toxic. They pollute and contaminate.

In the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by US and Canada on September 13, 2007 it says we have a right to live a life base on our ancestors' traditions and laws if we choose to.

All the indigenous people I talked to about turning our lakes into a battery for industry we're never consulted or informed of Atco's intentions. The indigenous people I talked to are against this unnatural level changing of our lakes but we're never given an opportunity to express their concerns. No consultation, no meetings for indigenous input. Industry is exploiting this land and water as it always has. The north has always been a source of raw material extraction for govt, industry and corporations, and the village people get left with the mess. Corporations need to try and understand We are not all on this earth for shareholder's profit.

I believe what happens at the southern lakes impacts the whole of the watershed. So just giving my relations downstream a heads up of what going on at the headwaters. It's my Prayer today that we can honor and hold up the valves and traditions of our ancestors and reclaim stewardships for the next generations coming to our Mother Earth, for all our relations. Blessing to you all. Harold at the headwaters



MEET OUR SUMMER INTERNS!

SOPHIE & HANK & TEMYKA

Hi everyone, my name is Sophie Burgess and I am very excited to be joining the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council as one of the Environmental Conservation interns. After moving to the United States from the UK at two years old, my family and I settled in Rhode Island, which is where I grew up. I am joining the YRITWC team after having spent the past two years in Aspen, CO, working as an environmental educator and adaptive ski instructor.

After graduating from the University of Colorado Boulder in 2019 with a Bachelors of Environmental Design and a Minor in Renewable and Sustainable Energy, I had the opportunity to explore my passions in environmental justice and environmental monitoring as the Air Quality Intern for the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley. During this time, I monitored various ecological components affecting the air quality of the region, performed relevant data analyses, conducted surveys, and wrote reports on the impacts of climate change affecting the watershed sourced from local snowpack and glaciers. While completing this research, I had the opportunity to learn about the unique cultural background of the area and how modern day policies and practices are affecting environmental resources.

This experience taught me the importance and significant connections between environmental conservation, advocacy, and policy. Therefore, I am looking forward to exploring these topics further with YRITWC's staff and continuing this critical work. During this time, I especially look forward to learning from the staff and communities throughout the Yukon. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, running, painting, gardening, and exploring. I am very excited at the opportunity to work with YRITWC, and look forward to an educational and extraordinary summer experience!



Sophie Burgess - ACF Intern



Hank Westly - ACF Intern

Hello! My name is Hank Westly. I was born and raised in Philomath, Oregon. I recently graduated from Beloit College in Beloit, WI where I majored in environmental geology and minored in philosophy. I helped create an outdoor program at my school and love to backpack and canoe! The first time I came to Alaska was when I was young. My friend's family had a boat in Ketchikan where we went fishing for Coho and Chinook. I am very excited to be back. I am also very excited to be a part of the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council through the Alaska Conservation Foundation as an environmental conservation intern. I think this internship will be extremely beneficial to both my career and personal advancement. I look forward to sharpening my environmental science skills in this new context. I appreciate the focus on other knowledge systems outside of the scientific method for understanding our environment that YRITWC possesses. I also am looking forward to working for the communities within the watershed.



Temyka Ayuluk - ANSEP Intern

With the new season here I'm happy to be back with the watershed! I had a nice school year despite the Covid-19 restrictions that were placed on us, students. I've been looking forward to being back in the office as well as being outside in the Yukon collecting water and soil samples. This summer I have a few projects I'm ready to work on and I'm excited to get more involved as well as completing them.

In my month as an intern, so far, I've taken two trips: one to Tok for a Qualified Environmental Sampling class (taught by Birgit Hagedorn) where I sat alongside amazing classmates who were engaged in class, often volunteering to do a task. On the second trip, we went on the road system to Circle. We traveled along the Yukon River in a canoe with the mines as our destination to collect water and soil samples. It was my first experience on the Yukon River. I couldn't help but be reminded of my home on the west coast of Alaska. I took a mental note of how alike our lifestyles are, the only difference being location.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

KATHERINE BROWER

Bethel April 12 - 16

40 Hour HAZWOPER class there was only one person that registered for the class; since there was no interest from the Lower Yukon and Coastal Villages to attend the training in Bethel the venue was moved to Mt. Village.

Mt. Village May 17 - 21

40 Hour HAZWOPER with 12 students that passed successfully. There were two people from Emmonak, one from Marshall and the rest of the class were from Mt. Village. There was a little field trip outside the city garage on their waste oil facility.

Ft. Yukon May 3 - 7

Community Workshop was held in Fort Yukon, four people from Arctic Village and one from Venetie attended the workshop. The class included an 8-hour refresher, Integrated Solid Waste Management, Bio-Hazards, Drinking Water Protection. Maps of the villages of Arctic Village and Venetie were used to help the class for locating traditional water sites, landfills, possible 55-gallon drums or other waste left and forgotten to put back on their attention for future work, possible Brownfields, and other sites that need to be protected from environmental damages from human use and waste. On Friday, a gentleman from Rural Utilities Business Advisory, RUBA gave a class on what municipalities need to do to improve their Operations Best Practice Scores.

Nulato June 14 - 18 five people from the community attended the workshop. We had a tour of the facilities and the landfill. In the tour to possible new landfill sites were done but a new erosion of glacial permafrost melting and making a big new creek that broke the road to the next possible landfill site prevented us from going further. The Environmental Coordinator took footage of the site with the drone. Maps were used of where the three possibilities are for a future landfill facility.

Due to COVID-19, the TAT department wasn't able to fulfill last year's FY19 work plan. Therefore, in addition to working on the TAT FY20 grant, we are also including FY19 work in this fiscal year's work plan. This includes several capacity-building group trainings in Fairbanks or a hub community that is focused on safety, operational efficiencies, and management. Our first capacity-building group training will be July 19 - 23, in which staff will provide and deliver a 40-hr HAZWOPER course in Fairbanks.

TAT UPDATES

ELIZA PERKINS

The YRITWC TAT department is excited to share our third quarter work with you.

This quarter, we traveled to Fort Yukon for our kickoff 2021 Community Workshop, Mountain Village for a 40-hr HAZWOPER training, and Nulato for our second Community Workshop. We also provided a virtual Biohazard Workshop in the spring before the majority of COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

Our community workshops include maintenance and management training material on topics including integrated solid waste management; drinking water regulations, risks, and protection methods; and operations safety, such as 8hr HAZWOPER refresher training and biohazard information, which is especially relevant in times of COVID-19. The workshop essentially covers three general areas: planning - assessing needs, developing Integrated Solid Waste Plans; health and environmental assessment - identifying and prioritizing health and environmental issues, including water and air quality; and community involvement - sharing educational outreach materials, and providing on-site presentations.

It has been so great to get out and work with our community partners in recent months. From meeting water plant operators and touring water facilities, using our drone capacity to take aerial imagery for communities, learning more about utility management from Rural Utility Business Advisory (RUBA) staff, and visiting community landfill sites, it is great to see the ongoing hard work and environmental stewardship on behalf of the Yukon River Watershed.



Mountain Village 40-HR HAZWOPER Training Group



Assessing Community Resources, Environmental Conditions, and Risks, Nulato Community Workshop June 14-18



Touring the water facilities at Nulato, Nulato Community Workshop June 14-18



Fort Yukon Community Workshop May 3-7

YRITWC'S IGAP IS HERE TO SUPPORT TRIBES

KARI ESCHENBACHER - YOUNG

Summer is finally here! I know that this time of year is busy for all but as we enter the last quarter of the fiscal year I wanted to remind our readers what YRITWC's IGAP sole purpose is: to support its signatory Tribes. YRITWC's EPA IGAP grant graciously provides funds for YRITWC staff to support tribes through:

- Water Quality Training and Technical Support
- Assisting with Environmental Concerns through Environmental Testing or Drone Work
- Outreach and Education
- Assisting with Integrated Solid Waste Management Planning
- Assistance and Support in Grant Writing

If your IGAP program would like support, someone to discuss ideas, or would like to partner, then please reach out to me at kyoung@yritwc.org or call at (907) 258-3337. YRITWC shapes this program based off of the needs of its Tribes and we want to ensure those needs are being met.

Additionally, our department has a YRITWC IGAP Update Listserv that sends email messages once or twice a month that include opportunities with the organization as well as other information and opportunities from other organizations that may be helpful to IGAP staff within Alaska. If you are interested in being added to the YRITWC IGAP Update Listserv please let me know by emailing me at kyoung@yritwc.org.

IGAP SPOTLIGHT

This section is to highlight IGAP staff throughout the Yukon River Watershed and the amazing work they are doing. Please enjoy!

Name: Susie Martin

Tribe you work for: Mentasta Traditional Council

Years of experience in IGAP or similar work: 5 years

Proudest accomplishment completed through you IGAP program: Since I started working for my tribe more of our community members started to recycle. Our recycling shed went from completely empty to being filled every month. The IGAP program has removed tons of solid waste from our village. Each year we do major backhauls of white goods, furniture, fuel tanks, water heaters, bulk items over 30 lbs, etc. Since working with the community our village is noticeably cleaner and safer, especially for the youth.

Something that motivates you in your work: Educating and working with the youth in Mentasta Lake. Every time I do any activities with the kids, I can see their brains working and see the interests in their faces. They always have a lot of questions about their environment and what they can do to be apart of keeping our home clean and safe for future years.



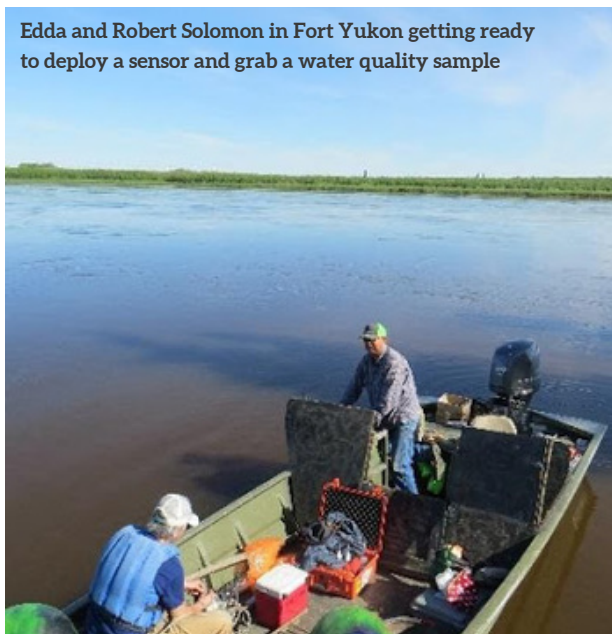
Susie Martin in her 2nd year as IGAP Coordinator at ATCEM when awarded A Rising Star Award. ●

SCIENCE UPDATES - NEW SENSORS DELPOYED

EDDA MUTTER

From winter to summer, the science team has been traveling across the state to capture environmental data to assess climate change impacts on the landscape and water quality through monitoring activities. Besides collecting water quality samples for the Indigenous Observation Network, we are working closely with communities to deploy water temperature and conductivity sensors across the Yukon River Watershed this summer. These sensors are part of the Arctic Rivers project that focuses to study changes in river flow, water temperature, and salmon habitat, such as you have been observing over the years. This project is a partnership with the Tribal Councils and First Nations, YRITWC, University of Colorado Boulder, USGS, and the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals and aims to collect continuous water temperature and conductivity data throughout the open water season. Communities, such as yours, play an essential part in collecting monitoring data by helping us and the researchers to assess the current environmental conditions to better understand and forecast future landscape and water quality changes. Working together, we all can support the upcoming generation by gathering these critical data, therefore there are tools to address and potentially mitigate environmental changes for sustaining traditional ways of life. The science team thanks you for all the support in our monitoring efforts and in keeping our sites active and running.

Edda and Robert Solomon in Fort Yukon getting ready to deploy a sensor and grab a water quality sample



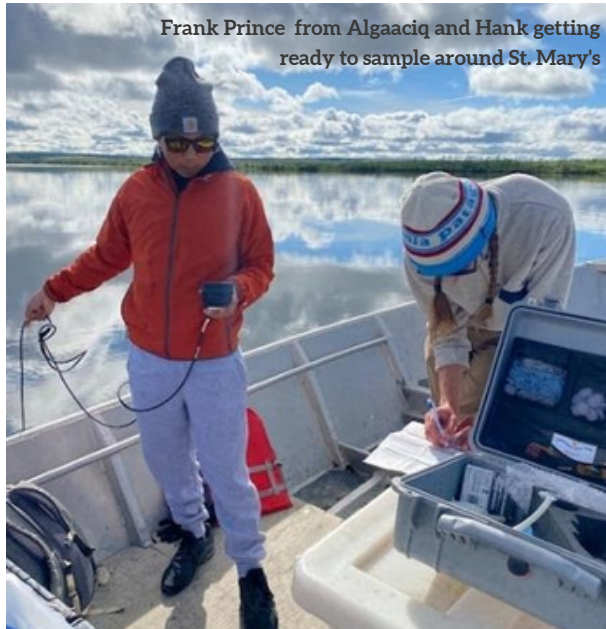
Kari grabbing an under ice sample



Alakanuk IGAP deploying a water quality sensor



Frank Prince from Algaaciq and Hank getting ready to sample around St. Mary's



MINDING THE MINES

BY MARYANN FIDEL

YRITWC is working to address the impacts of mining activity to clean water. The main focus areas of our Mining Program are: 1. Building capacity, 2. Creating user-friendly informational tools, 3. A water and soil sampling effort near mining activity and, 4. Advocating for clean water.

When it comes to clean water, no one has more at stake than the communities and residents downriver of mine operations. This is why we are working to further develop the capacity of residents to monitor their waters. YRITWC hosted a Qualified Environmental Samplers training in Tok, AK last month. Tribal Environmental Professionals from the region learned how to take quality environmental samples. We hope that the skills gained will support tribal members in protecting and preserving clean waters for current and future generations.



Additionally, Temyka Ayuluk (YRITWC's ANSEP Intern) and I traveled to the Tok, and Circle Mining Districts where we took a total of 14 water and soil samples downstream of active and abandoned mines. After the lab processes the results they will be posted to our website, on our Mining Map (www.yritwc.org under Mining). YRITWC's Mining Map will undergo some improvements in the coming months. It will be linked to other water quality datasets, and a color-coded dashboard will highlight when water quality standards are not being met. YRITWC provided comments on the Ambler Road and proposed changes to water rights in Alaska. The Ambler Road would run about 211 miles from the Dalton Highway to the Ambler Mining District. This summer \$35 million is going toward predevelopment. During the 2021 summer season, Ambler Metals will be doing exploratory drilling at the Arctic deposit, which will be accessed by the Ambler Road. They have plans to initiate the mine permitting process by the end of 2021. YRITWC is going to follow these developments and work with stakeholders to ensure the best possible protections for clean water are in place.

It was wonderful to be back on the mighty Yukon River, where large chunks of winter ice were melting on the banks. We look forward to getting some important work done this summer!



BROWNFIELD UPDATES

BIRGIT HAGEDORN

Our Brownfields Department together with Alakanuk, Grayling, Huslia, and Russian Mission was awarded a Community-Wide Assessment Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. This grant will be used to do Phase I and Phase II Assessments and Building Inspections in these four communities and to prepare for the next step which would be either a Phase II assessment or supporting the community to find funding for cleanup grants.

We taught a Qualified Environmental Sampler Workshop in Anchorage the second week of June. The workshop had an in-class and field hands-on section. It will provide communities with the possibility to provide labor for Phase II and Cleanup projects. ANTHC gave an oil spill training using a 55 gallon and 5-gallon oil spill kit during the QES workshop. If any of you are interested in the training and/or receive an oil spill kit please contact us.

Another QES workshop may be held in Fairbanks the first week of August if there is enough interest. Please contact us if you are interested in attending the workshop. Travel stipends for this workshop are available.

We are traveling to Communities to do outreach and visit sites of concern. Please contact us if you have a site of concern.

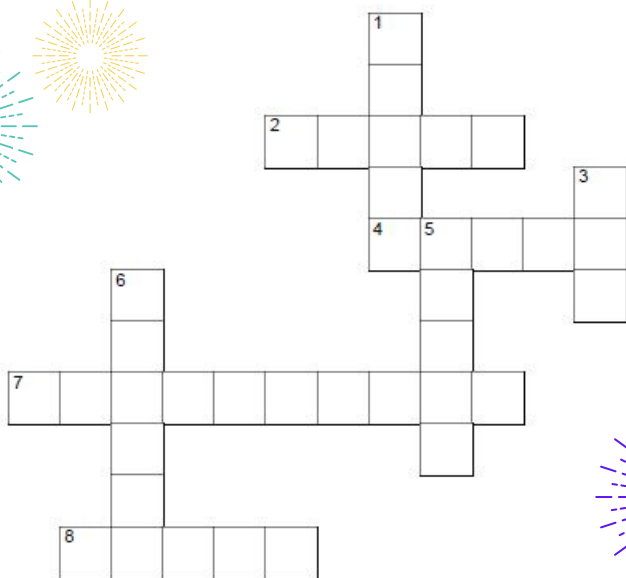


ACTIVITY PAGE

YRITWC Crossword

Quiz your knowledge of YRITWC and the Yukon River Watershed! Use the clues below to help you complete the puzzle. Answers can be found at the bottom of the page.

Have fun!



ACROSS

- 2 YRITWC's 50 Year Vision: To be able to _____ water directly from the Yukon River.
- 4 The Yukon River community that is located near the Alaska and Canada border.
- 7 The Yukon River Watershed is twice the size of this state.
- 8 Another name for a watershed.

DOWN

- 1 The name Yukon comes from the shortened Gwich'in phrase, chuq gajj han, that means _____ water river.
- 3 The Yup'ik word for water.
- 5 The lake that is the headwaters of the Yukon River.
- 6 The community where Indigenous leaders throughout the Yukon River Watershed came together for their rivers' protection and where YRITWC was eventually formed.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

Circle the rivers below that are Yukon River tributaries (a stream or river that flows into a larger river). Answers can be found at the bottom of the page.

Tanana River

Koyukuk River

Pelly River

Russian River

Kuskokwim River



5 Star
Google Reviews of
the Yukon River



"There is NO place like the Yukon."

"The Yukon River is gorgeous and inspiring in all seasons."

"So happy I made it here. Check it out and plan to fall in love."

"Home."

"Best river in Alaska!"

"How can you not love the Yukon River?"

How would you review the Yukon River on Google?

Share your review with YRITWC & we'll share it in the next newsletter!
info@yritwc.org



Did you know?

The Yukon River is home to one of the longest salmon runs in the world.

Join us for a
**QUALIFIED ENVIRONMENTAL SAMPLER
TRAINING**

Fairbanks August 2-5, 2021

hosted by the Brownfield Department

We have 10 stipends for this training on a first come first serve basis. This includes travel and lodging in Fairbanks. To register please contact Tasha Mockta at tmockta@yritwc.org or over the phone at (907)258-3337. When reserving a spot please provide flight details that would accommodate the training dates listed above.

Gain practical marketable skills as Alaska Qualified Environmental Sampler with a focus on the Arctic.

Learn environmental data collection and sampling methods for soil and water following federal and state regulations. Packing and shipping of samples, chain of custody forms, and more. Course instructions are relevant to compliance, environmental assessments and cleanup, and permafrost engineering with a strong emphasis on hands-on exercises.

The workshop will cover:

- Groundwater, surface water, and soil sampling;
- Water quality laboratory analytical methods;
- Field screening methods (PID, YSI);
- Physical and chemical soil properties;
- QA/QC samples and documentations;

For more information please contact Birgit Hagedorn at bhagedorn@yritwc.org or Tasha Mockta at tmockta@yritwc.org

They can also be reached over the phone at (907)-258-3337





August 9 –
13, 2021
9am – 5pm



YUKON RIVER INTER-TRIBAL WATERSHED COUNCIL

FAIRBANKS COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

Maintenance & Management training topics include an 8hr HAZWOPER refresher, integrated solid waste and landfill management, drinking water improvement, and Rural Utilities Business Advisory (RUBA) materials. Workshop cost is free to participants, but participants are responsible for travel to and from training and lodging.

**Workshop Location: Pikes Landing,
4438 Airport Way, Fairbanks, AK 99709**

To register and to have full agenda, please contact Eliza Perkins, eperkins@yritwc.org or Katherine Brower, kbrower@yritwc.org or call (907) 258-3337.



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