

# The Northern Review

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*Special Issue. The Northern Research Institute:  
Fifteen Years of Building Yukon Research Capacity*

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## *Opinion*

# Science in the Changing North

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*C.R. Burn*

**Abstract:** In the last five years, northern science has been rejuvenated as national and international attention has been drawn to the Arctic. The principal forces driving the increased interest in the Canadian North are the worldwide demand for minerals and hydrocarbons, and the opening of the Northwest Passage as a result of climate change. The renewed scientific activity is taking place in a social context that has evolved, primarily as a result of land claims' settlements, so that local agencies require considerably more consultation regarding research projects than they did in the 1980s. Northerners aspire to have research conducted "in the North, for the North, and by the North," but it is likely that collaboration with outsiders will be necessary for some time before there is sufficient capacity in the North to set or fulfill a comprehensive research agenda. This phase in the development of a full northern research capacity requires scientists from outside to engage communities as partners, and to develop the research skills of the resident population.

### **Introduction**

This essay is a personal perspective on the evolving practice of environmental science research in northwest Canada. The paper draws on experience in the Yukon and Northwest Territories (NT), and so it is an account from a specific geographical context. It is also an account from a specific time, 1982 to 2008, during which research interest in the North declined before a renaissance leading to the International Polar Year, 2007–2009. The period has witnessed settlement of many land claims, devolution of responsibilities to territorial governments, and, particularly in the NT, resurgence in resource development. Climate change has become an international issue and its impacts on the North have been at the forefront of an evolving discussion.

Brief autobiographical details are presented next, in order to sketch the context from which this perspective has emerged. The three principal sections of the essay discuss the forces driving environmental research in northwest Canada, the changing context of fieldwork in the North, and

# “It’s Hard Enough to Control Yourself; It’s Ridiculous to Think You Can Control Animals”: Competing Views on “The Bush” in Contemporary Yukon

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*Norman Alexander Easton*

**Abstract:** Aboriginal Athapaskan (*Dineh*) conceptions of the “bush” and its occupation by “other-than-human persons”—and the nature of proper relations between “human persons” and the bush and its occupants—stand in vivid contrast to Euro-Canadian views of the “wilderness” and its “natural resources.” Because of these distinctive perceptions, misunderstandings arise in the arena of “joint management,” which is a provision under the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) on Aboriginal land claims, signed by the Council of Yukon First Nations and the governments of Yukon and Canada. Alternating between *Dineh* and western academic perspectives, in this article I examine the competing discourse that has arisen in the Yukon during efforts to implement joint management provisions of the UFA, using the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board’s consideration of the issue of catch and release in recreational fishing. Due to a variety of cross-cultural factors, including different orientations to the notions of personhood, power, consensus, and embedded colonial relations, the current structure and implementation of “joint management” is, in practice, contrary to one of the over-arching goals of the UFA: that of the “wish to recognize and protect a way of life that is based on an economic and *spiritual* relationship between Yukon Indian People and the land.”

## **Bush Lessons**

I’d like to begin by relating two anecdotes from my fieldwork experience in the 1990s.

The first involves the title of this paper; the second a more subtle evocation of a difference between what I’ve come to know as Indigenous Yukon *Dineh*<sup>1</sup> values regarding the bush and its inhabitants (and, by extension, humans and

# A New Skin for an Old Drum: Changing Contexts of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá'í Storytelling

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*Lynn Echevarria*

**Abstract:** This article examines the construction of the religious self through the storytelling processes of Yukon Aboriginal Bahá'ís. Previous anthropological work has studied the social factors involved in the maintenance of faith amongst Aboriginal Bahá'ís. This sociological study focuses on the manner in which people put together stories to construct their contemporary Bahá'í identity. Examining recorded life histories, public stories, and archival materials, I present one perspective on how people story their religious identities in changing historical contexts.

## **Background to the Study**

In 2003, I was the recipient of funding from the Northern Research Institute to conduct a qualitative research project. The focus of the project was twofold: to recuperate materials about the history of Yukon Bahá'ís,<sup>1</sup> and to record life histories of Aboriginal women in this community.

Between the years 1960–1975, 204 people became Bahá'ís in the Yukon, 104 of which were from one family—the Johns (Tagish Nation).<sup>2</sup> Since the beginning of the religion in the Yukon (1953), materials such as oral recordings, archival paper records, family pamphlets, and other written works have become widely disseminated. My intent was to bring the materials together, catalogue them, and then deposit them in the Yukon Archives. There they would be protected for posterity and accessible to local Bahá'ís, the interested public, and researchers.<sup>3</sup>

The initiative to record life histories of Aboriginal women arose from my doctoral work on religion and identity in the lives of elderly Canadian Bahá'í women.<sup>4</sup> I was not able to include any Aboriginal women in this study (1990s) because the women who were early Bahá'ís had passed away. And

# Designing Protected Areas Networks in the North: Identifying Representative Area and the Use of Focal Species in a Yukon Case Study

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*Yolanda F. Wiersma*

**Abstract:** The science of conservation biology has made many contributions to improving biodiversity conservation within protected areas around the globe. Northern ecosystems are unique, and principles for protected areas design developed for temperate and tropical ecoregions may not readily be extrapolated to northern regions. Recent increases in ecological threats to the Canadian North have spurred interest in improving conservation and representation of northern ecosystems. Here, I present an overview of issues relevant to protected areas planning in the Canadian North, with a focus on the Yukon. I highlight recent Northern Research Institute-supported research on protected areas design in the Yukon, with a particular focus on the issue of representation and an examination of the potential utility of so-called “focal” species in identifying the location of representative protected areas. I show how Geographic Information Systems (GIS) may be applied to test questions of how many protected areas may be required to adequately represent mammal diversity in the ecoregions of the Yukon. I also use two different approaches to identify focal species for the Yukon to show that there is a great deal of ambiguity involved in how these species are identified.

## **Introduction**

The Canadian North is perceived as a vast wilderness by many, yet is also under increased pressure from resource activities (logging, mining) and from global phenomena such as climate change. Since the early part of the twentieth century there has been interest in protecting northern biodiversity and ecosystems. The motivation for protection, and the methods employed in identifying potential protected areas have changed over time. Recent

# The Role of Glacial Lakes in the Pre-Contact Human History of Southwest Yukon Territory: A Late Drainage Hypothesis

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*Ty Heffner*

**Abstract:** Archaeological site KaVn-2, located in the White River valley near Beaver Creek in the southwest Yukon, was first occupied between 10,130 and 10,670 BP, shortly after the area became deglaciated at around 11,000 BP. Despite the early occupation of KaVn-2 just after glacial retreat, and the presence of alpine sites as old as 8360 BP to the south, there are no known valley-bottom sites that have been dated to before 7200 BP. If deglaciation was complete in the area by 10,000 BP, as suggested by glaciologists, then why do we not have evidence for human occupation of the valleys until nearly 3,000 years later? The only known palaeogeographical phenomenon that could account for this void in the archaeological record is a large glacial lake—Glacial Lake Champagne—that occupied the major valleys of the southwest Yukon during deglaciation. Traditional interpretations suggest that this large lake drained between 9000 and 10,000 BP. Data summarized in this article support the hypothesis that Glacial Lake Champagne did not completely drain until well after 10,000 BP, and perhaps not until as late as 7200 BP. Other glacial lakes that formed in the study area within the past 2,000 years may have buried archaeological sites under thick deposits of silt and clay, and raised lake levels may have submerged archaeological sites around Kluane Lake under as much as thirty-five metres of water. Clearly, further research into the history of these lakes is critical to our understanding of the Holocene cultural and natural history of the southwest Yukon. This article describes dynamic hydrological processes that have occurred in the study area over the last 10,000 years and explain implications for the archaeological record.

## **Introduction**

Complex environmental processes and events have occurred in the southwest Yukon (figure 1) over the past 10,000 years. Besides events common to all formerly glaciated areas, such as deglaciation and repopulation by aquatic

# Property Ownership in North Dawson City During the Klondike Gold Rush

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*Michael Brand*

**Abstract:** This article examines the development of Dawson City during and immediately after the Klondike Gold Rush. The focus is on a series of cabin platforms recorded during archaeological survey on the hillside in north Dawson City. Property ownership information collected from the Yukon Archives and Whitehorse Land Titles Office is used to compare lots on the hillside with those in the level portion of the Government Addition, and this is used to identify the owners of lots containing cabin platforms. The results indicate that hillside lots were less desirable than lots in the level portion of the community. Hillside blocks witnessed lower levels of construction during the gold rush, very few were subdivided, property values were lower, and more lots remained in government ownership up to 1903. Evidence suggests that very few identified owners of hillside lots with cabin platforms actually lived on their property.

## **Introduction**

This article explores the contributions of property ownership records and archaeological survey data to our understanding of settlement development and community organization in Dawson City during the Klondike Gold Rush. Dawson City is located on a flood plain at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers (figure 1), the closest access point for river steamers to the goldfields. The terrain is characterized by a small, relatively level area along the Yukon River, backed by a steep hillside on the east and north sides of the town. Joseph Ladue applied for the Dawson City townsite shortly after the discovery of gold in 1896. The town grew quickly, particularly after the ice left the rivers in the spring of 1898, and large numbers of stampeders floated down the Yukon River hoping to make their fortunes in the goldfields. While the core of the settlement was located on the level portion of the flood plain, historic photographs clearly indicate a substantial occupation of the hillside. In 1899, after the height of the gold rush in 1898, approximately 500 structures were situated on the slopes overlooking the

# Observations on the Natural History of Bats in the Yukon

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*Brian G. Slough and Thomas S. Jung*

**Abstract:** Until recently, bats have not been well surveyed or studied in the Yukon. The little brown bat was known to range north to Mayo and Dawson City in the summer, but little was known of its biology or natural history, or if other species occurred. In this article we report from studies conducted between 1997 and 2008, funded in part by the Northern Research Institute. Current studies are answering questions about bat species that occur in the Yukon, their daily and seasonal activity patterns, foraging and roosting habitats, and population dynamics within roosts and roosting areas. We studied bats by detecting and interpreting ultrasonic echolocation calls (acoustic surveys) and by live capture. Acoustic surveys were conducted at over 100 sites across the little brown bat's range in the Yukon, where over 7,000 bat passes were recorded. Most of them were little brown bats but we also recorded northern long-eared and big brown or silver-haired bats. We have banded 1,043 little brown bats at twelve maternity colonies in buildings, bat houses, and rock crevices. Locations of hibernating sites remain unknown, but the bat species that occur in the Yukon are migratory and may hibernate a great distance from their summer range. The annual timing of birth of the little brown bat in the Yukon, at the northern edge of their range, is typical for the species. Recaptures of banded bats has documented roost fidelity and the use of multiple roosts within a larger foraging area. We have also documented cohesive movements of colonies during roost switching, long distance dispersal to new roosts, and survival for at least twelve years. Further research is needed to address the substantial gaps in our knowledge about bats in the Yukon.

## Study Objectives

The first studies directed at bats in the Yukon were initiated as recently as 1997. The primary objective of these field studies was to determine bat species diversity and distribution in the Yukon. Secondary objectives of the work were to investigate the biology and ecology of bats in the Yukon, including daily and seasonal activity patterns, possible migration routes and hibernating sites, foraging and roosting habitats, and maternity colony