



OUR WAY: YUKON FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE LAW



“Anything and everything you do, the way you live is your heritage.
I walk it, that’s who I am.”

Angie Joseph-Rear, Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Elder

WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

(about storytelling) *In our way, we tell stories to get something out. The story comes from a true incident or experience and it tells us how someone had learned from that event. Because it is based on a true incident it is a valid lesson. Rather than trying to teach someone something, you tell a story about something you experienced. This shows the listener that they are not the only one who has experienced that kind of situation. It is a way of teaching so that the listener doesn't become offended or defensive. We live our culture, that's how we were taught.*





WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

*(about living “in a good way”) Heritage is our way of life. The stories about creation and how we learn from the animals and the land teach us about how to take care of ourselves and to survive on the land and to do it “in a good way.” And I guess that “in a good way” means respect. That is our biggest law. Respect is the one that encompasses everything. When you go against doing things “in a good way,” that is with respect, that’s when Doolj **[traditional law]** comes in. When we do things in a bad way, it is disrespect – meaning that you have gone against all the natural laws. You bring all the negative to yourself. It is the same concept as – the idea that what you put out there comes back to you.*

WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

(about being part of the land) *Heritage is our knowledge of and connection to the land. We are part of the land. When we are out there on that land, we are part of it, but we are not the be-all and end-all. Every rock, plant tree and animal are part of the land and the water is part of it. Everything has a spirit. Our connection to the land is a spiritual connection.*

(about place and identity) *The land is very much a part of our culture. People connect themselves to place. Place is very critical for us. In the past, we had no maps but there were lots of sacred areas – and landmarks that always provided for us. The land is who we are.*





WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

(about responsibility and survival) *The land insures our survival. You have to look after the land, you have to look after the animals. The land is heritage because we use it, because it's everything, everything comes from the land. Keep your land clean, keep your animal, that's your friend. You look after them, they look after you. You look after your water, land, trees, you look after it, respect it. That's our spirituality.*

WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

(about relatedness and ownership) *My grandma always said when we were out on the land “you remember, this is the animals home, and the home of every living thing.” They are all an integral part of the land. Everything is an integral piece, we humans are just one part. The land is our lifeblood. The land is not our land, we belong to this land: we are born on it, we are raised up on it and we are going to die on it. This land owns us, we don’t own the land.*





WHAT OUR ELDERS SAY

(about living heritage) *Our culture is our inheritance. When we live our culture we are keeping it alive, we are sustaining it. You don't know traditional knowledge, you have to live it. You have to be a First Nations person to understand – the way we grow up, the way we hunt, the way we live on the land. The land is our university and our church. I went to school out on the land. That's my university.*

THEY WERE TOLD WHAT TO DO BY TSÀ' WĒZHÈ. - PERCY HENRY

The territory of the Athapaskans is created, understood, described, explained and owned by these stories of travel and interaction. The stories instill and reinforce a sense of cultural identity and morality, they remind the participants of their responsibility in maintaining the balance of the world and, through their detailed ecological knowledge, the power to envision and control their future. The stories are also potent statements of ownership and the guides to proper behavior, instructions in the exercise of land skills to build a desired future and the cultural foundation of the Athapaskan civilization.

- David Neufeld



TOGETHER TODAY FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW AND THE UMBRELLA
FINAL AGREEMENT



“WITH A RESPECT FOR YUKON INDIAN VALUES AND CULTURE”

OUR WAY

Where do you begin
telling someone that
their world is not the
only one? – Lee Maracle



THE YUKON FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE FRAMEWORK



OUR LAND

Keep your land clean, keep your animal. That's your friend. You look after them, they look after you. You look after your water, land, trees, you look after it. Respect it. That's our spirituality. — Elder Percy Henry



OUR RELATIONS

The measure of wealth is perceived explicitly to be the strength of the social relationships between people. That is the currency of the society because without that bond and without that collective commitment to the well-being of all, everybody can die.
— Wade Davis



OUR LAWS

The interchange between humans and environment is based on an elaborate code of respect and morality, without which survival would be jeopardized. The intimacy of their relationship to nature is far beyond our experience. This close daily interaction provides a theme upon which their cultural lives converge. — Richard Nelson



OUR HERITAGE

Our culture is our inheritance. When we live our culture we are keeping it alive, we are sustaining it. You don't know traditional knowledge, you have to live it. -- YFN Elders

YUKON FIRST NATIONS MODEL HERITAGE LEGISLATION

Living heritage is about relationships and responsibilities that bring people together to sustain a common future

Indigenous Law still exists and forms the foundation

“Law is for the Lawless”: the Heritage Act is, in many ways, a bridging tool for co-governance

Community engagement and guidance were key



OUR LAWS: GOING THROUGH THE WORLD IN A GOOD WAY



RESPECT

To demonstrate respect one must carefully control one's own actions and most importantly determine how to behave in a manner that will be perceived by others as an authentic expression of respect in all of those domains. That is the way in which the tapestry of respect is built.

- Stephen Langdon



HUMILITY

"We're not even animals yet."

- Percy Henry



RECIPROCITY

"If people do not fish for King Salmon, the King Salmon spirit will be offended, and it will not return to the river."

- Jim Davis



RESPONSIVENESS

The basic principles enunciated in the mythic charter is the responsibility of the person to continuously return to the teachings for guidance and application to current conditions.

- Stephen Langdon

THE YUKON FIRST NATIONS HERITAGE ACT

An Act that:

- recognizes and affirms the inherent right of the First Nation to manage its heritage and culture.
- recognizes and affirms the First Nation's Self-Government Agreement Section 13 powers over heritage and culture;
- recognizes the uniqueness of Yukon First Nations concepts of heritage; and
- fulfils the Final Agreement Chapter 13 provisions to respect and foster the culture, history and values of Yukon First Nations People.





HERITAGE DEFINED

Yukon First Nations Heritage refers to the way of life and worldview inherited from previous generations and is evident in both tangible and intangible elements of Yukon First Nations heritage. Our heritage lives in the complex and dynamic relationships of interdependence between land, spirit and living things, transmitted from generation to generation, interweaving land, places, names, stories, families and events. Heritage resources include everything of heritage value – whether found in or on the land or water, whether animal or human or any other product of the land, that at any time was or is related to the culture and history of Yukon First Nations People.



TANGIBLE HERITAGE

Tangible heritage refers to those heritage values that are physical in form and allow us to live our heritage.

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

Intangible heritage refers to those values that are central to our cultural identity and that are impacted by land disconnection or dispossession.

STEWARDSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Our law requires us to respect and honour our heritage, practices and protocols, including respect for the land and acceptance of our stewardship responsibilities towards it.

Our law is founded on the principles of respect, humility, and balance that beget a code of conduct based on reciprocity; a concept of moderation and self-control, of taking and giving back.

These principles guide the interplay of values like gratitude, adaptability, openness, responsibility, honour, truthfulness, and self-reliance that are reflected in expected behaviors that people demonstrate between each other and the land.





CULTURAL IDENTITY

Our cultural identity derives from the land. Upholding our responsibilities to the land is central to our identity. This reciprocal relationship has been sustained by our ancestors. It is our responsibility and legacy to pass this heritage on to our children and grandchildren.

Any activities that may impact our lands and/or our connections and responsibilities to our lands or that have the potential to alienate us from our lands, physically, culturally, or spiritually, also have the potential to impact our cultural identity and our human rights as indigenous people.



NEXT STEPS

Regulations

Education

Heritage Stewardship Guide

Learning as we go

ENACTING HERITAGE LAW

TR'ONDĚK HWĚCH'IN

AUGUST 28, 2016

VUNTUT GWITCHIN GOVERNMENT

OCTOBER 19, 2016

FIRST NATION OF NA-CHO NYAK DUN

2016





HERITAGE AND MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

RECONCILING OUR LIVING
HERITAGE AND OUR
STEWARDSHIP
RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE
LAND WITH MINERAL
DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES
UPHOLDING THE
PRINCIPLES AND VALUES
EMBEDDED IN “OUR WAY”.

“COSMOLOGY IS A LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN.” - Wade Davis

APPROACHES TO LAND USE BASED ON “OUR WAY”:

- Built upon the vision captured in Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow.
- Respects the values and culture of “Yukon Indian People”
- Focuses on how we conduct ourselves and make decisions about a shared future
- Emphasizes taking responsibility and being accountable for our decisions
- Centres on reciprocity, on giving back
- Respects treaty and aboriginal rights and considers impacts on cultural identity
- Leaves a legacy for future generations



YFN-YG COLLABORATIVE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

There is the First Nations' understanding of a dynamic *living heritage* – rooted in the land, in the places and names and stories and families, in traditional ways of knowing, speaking, and experiencing the spiritual. Heritage is what we live; it is our understanding of our relatedness to our environment and each other; and it involves respecting the traditions that have helped us survive.

The Western science-based practise of heritage resource management, sometimes called “cultural resource management,” has been focused on a fixed past that is separate and distinct from present day reality. Heritage objects serve as a memorial of an event or period. Disciplinary practices, conservation methodologies, determinations of relatedness, and so on are governed by the western scientific tradition.

Our Heritage"



MÄHSI CHO