



Briefing Note

Prepared for: DRLUP Commission
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TOPIC: Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha (*We look after our land*): Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Land Stewardship Framework

KEY MESSAGES:

- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) is currently undertaking a substantial project called **Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Land Stewardship Framework (LSF)**. Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha is the Hän translation for “We look after our land.”
- The overall purpose for the LSF is to enable us to take strong stewardship actions over the lands and waters in our Traditional Territory (TT). This is being accomplished by capturing and recording the essence of our cultural traditions and beliefs **Tr'ëhudè** (“Our Way of Life”) in documents, that describe Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens' relationship to the Land.¹
 - *The process of developing the guiding documents relies on engagement with TH citizens – listening to and recording their values and vision for the TT. This collective knowledge and wisdom will subsequently inform TH's participation in regional and internal land use planning and natural resources management.*
 - *The resulting documents will guide our achievement of real stewardship on the ground, through land and natural resources planning that will include efforts to establish new protected areas, conserve culturally important and/or threatened species, guide a sustainable modern and traditional economy, and strengthen our relationship with the land.*
 - *The guidance will be provided to TH leaders and staff participating in finalizing the Peel Watershed Land Use Plan, and will have the ability to inform the Dawson Regional Land Use Plan process.*

¹ See attached *We are Dënezhu* as example



KEY MESSAGES Cont'd:

- The key objectives of the LSF are in support of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in:
 - Participation in the management of public resources,
 - Progress in internal TH settlement land and traditional territory planning and management,
 - Participation in regional land use planning processes,
 - Capacity to exercise stewardship obligations, and
 - Cultural revitalization and resilience.
- It is anticipated that the LSF will primarily be supported through Federal funding. TH recently submitted a funding proposal for the Target 1 Challenge: Canada Nature Fund. If successful, this funding will support LSF progress for another four years, until March 2023.
- TH's commitment to Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha will continue beyond funding horizons, such as efforts towards a TH-YG Guardianship/Monitoring program for the traditional territory and ongoing planning and management efforts for settlement land and the traditional territory.
- Success of the LSF also requires supportive partnerships and cooperation with other Yukon First Nations, Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations, Yukon Government and the Federal Government.

BACKGROUND:

- Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Land Stewardship Framework (LSF) has been an outstanding priority for Chief Joseph. The TH Implementation Department recently received Federal funding to help realize this priority of our leadership.
- TH has been working on components of the LSF since October 2018, such as researching and learning about Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs), and gathering techniques and methodologies from Revitalizing Indigenous Law for Land, Air and Water (RELAW) and the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) that will be used in creating our values framework.
- The formal TH community launch for LSF took place January 23rd, 2019 with guests Herb Norwegian, former Grand Chief of Dehcho First Nations, and Petr Cizek, award-winning environmental consultant. The speakers provided an overview of the work they



did together to establish the first Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA) within Canada.

- Additional LSF activities over the winter months included a cultural mapping workshop, several Stewards of the Land gatherings out on the land, dozens of cultural mapping interviews with TH citizens, digitization of older TH land-use maps, a wetland workshop with Ducks Unlimited Canada, data collation and analysis, and several draft guiding document outputs from TH consultants and project partners.

KEY TAKE-AWAYS:

- As exhibited through customary TH law, we have stewardship responsibilities to the land within our TT. *Ninànkäk hqzq wëk'àtr'ènhcha* aligns with fulfilling our spiritual and cultural obligations to the land.
- The LSF documents provide Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government the capacity to exercise Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in stewardship obligations to the Land and to participate in the management of public resources.
- LSF outputs, such as mapping products, can be provided for DRLUP Commission consideration by way of TH TWG members Natasha Ayoub and Lee Whalen.
- Although the LSF will help TH participate in regional planning processes, such as Dawson Regional Land Use Planning, it is a distinctly separate TH initiative and will not interfere in any way with the planning process.

ATTACHMENTS:

- *We are Dënezhu*



We are Dënezhu. The people of this land.

We are Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The people of this river.

We have occupied this territory for all time. Our enduring relationship with our land is our heritage. Our stories are written on the land and our place in this world is created, understood, and owned through these stories.

When our world was different than it is today our culture hero Tsà' Wëzhè travelled our territory and brought order to the world. He established relationships with our non-human relatives and formalized our responsibilities to them and to each other.

His journey and the agreements he made are Tr'ëhudè, our way of life, our law. Living our law by engaging with our land brought our society into existence and has shaped our culture and created our identity. Central to this is the requirement to uphold a reciprocal relationship with the land and all living things and to maintain the integrity of our homeland as an interconnected entity.

This is the essence of our existence as Dënezhu.

When we live Tr'ëhudè we sustain what is most valuable to us.

Our Identity as Dënezhu

We are people of this land. It has shaped us for generations and we have cared for it as it has cared for us. The land itself brought our worldview into being. It teaches us that we are an essential part of a bigger environment. We understand ourselves and our place in the world in relation to all other beings. This is the foundation of our identity.

Our society is born out of this landscape. It demands that we remain mobile, that we occupy a vast territory, and that our communities remain fluid. It requires us to fulfil obligations to each other, to our non-human relatives and to the land itself. These responsibilities are reflected in our core relationships and our code of conduct. They are embedded in our language and in the ways that we declare our relatedness with each other and the land.

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Our cultural practices and our technology are formed by our land. We have learned how to live with this landscape by responding to the challenges that it presents. Our non-human relatives, especially the salmon and the caribou, are our teachers. We live with them and we live like them. We journey as part of a dynamic and fluid community. As we move through our territory we concentrate and disperse as the land requires.

Our wealth is in our stories, our songs and our connections with each other. Our strength is in our knowledge. We have the wisdom inherited from our ancestors as well as an openness to adapt and move forward in a good way.

Our Families, Our Community

Our measure of wealth is in the strength of our relationships with each other and with our land. We identify as individuals and as a people based on the ties that we have with our relatives, both biological and fictive. Our relationships with others are maintained through an on-going responsibility to take care of each other. This is one of our core laws. It is embedded deeply in our social organization and is applied to our close relatives and community members as well as to others who share this land. We know that we will always be supported and held up by our people as dictated by Tr'ëhudè. We also strive to conduct ourselves well to avoid bringing hardship or shame upon our relatives.

Our sense of relatedness and our responsibilities toward others extends beyond the human world. We are equally connected to, and have responsibilities for, our non-human family. Our language reflects our respect for animals. We acknowledge them. We speak to them, and about them, as one would a family member. Our survival requires us to kill living beings. Our cultural practices and ceremonies require that we do so in a good way. This is how we reconcile our love and respect for our animals with our hunting way of life. We maintain a respectful and balanced relationship with all beings who share this land.

Our Traditions

Our traditions thread through the various manifestations of our culture. They reflect what is important to us, those things that we value most. We have many ways to celebrate who we are. We sing, we dance, and we tell stories. We honour our language with our efforts to revitalize it.



We recognize our lands by naming our places and by hanging our stories on them. We practice ceremony when we acknowledge what we value, when we conduct ourselves well, when we sustain each other and when we celebrate our identity as Dënezhu.

Our traditions grow as we do. They stay alive because we are open to expressing ourselves in many ways, old and new. Our existence as Dënezhu is sustained because we remain true to our traditions while adapting to our environment. Our land keeps us vital by challenging us to live in the best ways that we can. When we live Tr'ëhudè we celebrate our identity and experience the joy of knowing who we are in this world.

The Integrity of Our Land

Our land lives and breathes. It is alive with power. Our land is the earth, the water, the sky, the stars and the wind. It is the people and the animals, the fish and the plants. It is a life force. Our land shapes our world. Our beliefs, thoughts, and actions are responses to the land itself and in return the land provides for us. We work together to maintain this reciprocal relationship.

It is our law to care for the land as it cares for us. We live in balance with its rhythms and respond to its demands. We make our decisions, from the smallest to the most complex, with the future health of the land and ourselves in mind. We know that the smallest action can cascade outward in time and space and will impact the integrity of the land as a whole. In turn our beliefs, thoughts and actions also cascade outward and impact our wellness as a community.

It is the land who teaches us to always be aware of our impacts and to consider our role in sustaining our whole selves and our communities.

Our Knowledge, Our Wisdom

Our culture is a mature culture. It has grown and evolved within this land. It is shaped and refined as we respond to challenges and reflect on their lessons. Our long-standing relationship with our land leads us toward wisdom.

In our culture we recognize and respect the knowledge that all of our people practice. We ensure that everyone has the space and the support to learn through experience and to



determine their own path to wisdom. We are open to multiple ways of knowing and being. We share our thoughts and our skills and continually seek to build upon them by learning from others. It is not our place to judge the authenticity or validity of another's experiences. We believe there are many truths and perspectives and together they make us stronger.

Our Purpose

Living well on our land is the central challenge of our lives. Sustaining ourselves in this demanding environment requires knowledge and energy and constant movement. Our culture is built upon our relationship with the land and with the beings that keep us alive. We find animals. We know them and we hunt them. We feed ourselves and acquire everything we need. We build confidence in our ability to live on into the future. We do all of this while raising our children and caring for our Elders. We have faced many challenges and we will continue to face challenges. Ours is a culture that embraces movement, through time and through space. Our purpose is to continue living our law and applying it in the face of new challenges. This is how we ensure a future for those who will come after us.

We sustain what is most valuable to us by living Tr'ëhudè.

We Live in Harmony and Balance

Our reciprocal relationship with the land and with each other is fundamental to our existence as Dënezhu. It is the lived expression of Tr'ëhudè. The purpose of reciprocity is the maintenance of relationships. Our existence depends on the principle of mutual benefit gained through an active, long-term exchange of goods, energy, thoughts, ideas, and more. It involves sharing, acknowledgement, gratitude, and humility, all of those principles that ensure our survival. The legacy of relational sustainability is an intact homeland that will continue to support our people. Reciprocity is harmony and balance realized.

We Build and Practice Respect

In our world respect surrounds our thoughts and actions. Everything is done with respect. Our way of life generates a habit of keen attention to our surroundings. We are always aware and thinking about how to build and maintain respect as we move through space and time. The relational nature of our culture drives us to think about how our thoughts and actions impact



others, including the land. This continual practice of engagement builds a tapestry of respect upon which our lives depend.

Respectful behavior is shown in many ways. At its foundation is a sense of humility, gratitude, and acknowledgement. We demonstrate respect by carefully controlling our own actions and by determining how to behave in a manner that will be perceived by others as respectful.

We Are Humble

We are fortunate to be a part of this land. It is our greatest teacher. The land shapes our way of being in many ways. The land is powerful. Although it cares for us it also constantly reminds us that we are one small part of a greater life force. To think otherwise would jeopardize our survival as Dënezhu. It is humbling to know our place in this world and wise to understand that our success depends on this modesty. Thinking and acting in humble ways maintains balance within our community, our families, and ourselves.

We Care for Each Other, We Cooperate

We recognize that our wealth is in the relationships that we maintain with each other and the land. Caring for each other and cooperating as a community are fundamental to our well-being and are a central principle in Tr'ëhudè. When we care for others by thinking of their needs, by sharing food and resources, we are building social capital. This is essential in a land where one simply cannot survive alone. Every thought and action can have impacts through time and space. We take care to maintain harmony with others so that when we need them they respond in kind.

We Show Gratitude

We are thankful for all that our land, our animals, and our people provide. We are aware of the many ways that the land and our relatives hold us up. We show our gratitude by acknowledging the gifts that we receive, big and small. These acknowledgements are reflected in our ceremonies as well as in more subtle everyday thoughts and actions. We choose our words carefully. We walk lightly on the land. We recognize the plants and animals that sustain us. We are grateful to be Dënezhu.



We Adapt, We Survive

Our stories, our technology, and our practices all focus on overcoming the challenges that we face as we move through our time on this land. We are forward thinking. We make decisions that ensure a future for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We have endured because we are a strong and knowledgeable people. We know who we are. We are not afraid to welcome new ideas and ways into our lives. We have faced many trials and move forward with our culture and our land wrapped around us. We determine our own future. We endure.

We Move, We Journey

A defining feature of our culture is movement through both space and time. Our foundation stories tell us about the importance of journeying, of never staying still. One of our most important culture heroes is Tsà' Wëzhè, the Traveler. He journeyed through our lands, always moving forward. We do the same. We live like our animal relations, the caribou, the salmon, and all of the others. As we navigate through our land we care for it and we care for each other. We survive. We journey forward through time. We acknowledge our past but we do not live there. We learn from our ancestors as we continue to move forward. Our Elders tell us that Tsà' Wëzhè is still traveling, still going forward. And so we continue our journey as Dënezhu.

Tr'ëhudè keeps our land and ourselves whole. We live it every day.

Our Future

Our identity as Dënezhu is born out of our land and shaped by our relations with our home, our animal relatives, and each other. The integrity of our culture and of our land depend upon this relationship. They are intertwined.

Our existence as Dënezhu is our inherent right.

We are Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The people of this river.

We are Dënezhu. The people of this land.



YUKON LAND USE PLANNING COUNCIL

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Role of Yukon First Nations (YFNs) in Regional Planning (Chapter 11)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

YLUPC	Yukon Land Use Planning Council, (the Council)
Commission	Regional Land Use Planning Commission
UFA	Umbrella Final Agreement
CYFN	Council for Yukon First Nations
YFN	Yukon First Nation
TT	Traditional Territory

What Roles for Yukon First Nations are Identified for YFN in the Land Claims?

As a Party to the Final Agreements, Yukon First Nations have many roles associated with regional land use planning (Chapter 11). These include:

Initiator of the regional planning process (11.4.1):

The agreements indicate that regional planning commissions “may” be created and the actions that are taken to create the commission occur after a Yukon First Nation indicates a desire to start planning.

Nominator of commission members (11.4.2, 2.12.2.4):

YFNs nominate potential commission members candidates to the Minister for appointment;

Information Provider (11.4.5.5, 11.4.5.6):

The commission’s planning process are to include the use of Yukon First Nation traditional knowledge and take into account the traditional land management practices of Yukon First Nations;

Approver of Plan Production Timeframe (11.4.4):

Timeframes for the production of the regional plan is set through consensus between the Yukon Government and affected Yukon First Nation(s)

Budget Reviewer (11.9.2):

The commissions consults with affected Yukon First Nation (s) regarding its budget before it submits it to the Yukon Land Use Planning Council;

Approval Party of the Regional Plan (11.6.2; 11.6.3.2):

Yukon First Nation (s) approve the regional plan for settlement lands.

Regional Plan Implementer (11.7.2):

Yukon First Nation (s) implement the land use plan on their land and work with the Yukon Government (and Canada) to implement the plan throughout the planning region.

What is an “Affected” First Nation?

An affected First Nation is any Yukon First Nation whose traditional territory is included within a Yukon land use planning region. In the event that there are multiple YFNs in the planning region, all of the “affected” First Nations are part of the regional planning process. The Yukon First Nations that approve the plan are those with settlement lands in the planning region.

How do Yukon First Nations initiate the regional planning process?

A Yukon First Nation that would like to begin planning should write the Yukon Land Use Planning Council. The Council begins the process by assessing the “regional readiness” to plan. If it is determined that the region is a priority region, a Terms of Reference for the commission’s work will be developed. This would involve defining the planning boundaries; traditional environmental knowledge data collection, the planning process, membership on the commission and the terms of references for the Senior Liaison Committee and Technical Working Group.

How are YFNs interests represented on the Commission?

The regional commissions are comprised of 1/3 YFN nominated individuals, 1/3 nominated by Yukon Government and on 1/3 based upon the population ratio of the region. Commissions are not representatives of the nominating bodies. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources appoints the commission members.

How are YFNs interests represented during the planning process?

Yukon First Nations staff are part of two committees that support the commission’s work:

- 1) the Technical Working Group (TWG) provides technical input and advice to the commission, acting as the primary point of contact between the commission and governments. The Yukon Government and the Yukon Land Use Planning Council are also on this committee.
- 2) the Senior Liaison Committee (SLC) provides coordinated senior intergovernmental input, advise and support. This occurs at key stages in the planning process. This includes providing advice on relevant issues policies, programs and initiatives. The Yukon Government is also on this committee.

How is the knowledge and experience of Yukon First Nation people utilized to achieve effective land use planning?

Regional Commission collect and use the knowledge of the Yukon First Nations as they produce the plan. The information collection stage will involve the commission gathering knowledge from elders council, current users of the land and the historical record, both from the oral and written traditions. The Commission will work closely with the Yukon First Nations governments heritage and cultural programs and will make recommendations in the plan that recognize and promote the cultural values of the Yukon First Nation.

How can an individual YFN citizen be involved in the planning?

An individual YFN can contribute to the regional planning through the work of their First Nation government. A citizen may attend Chief and Council meetings, special meetings or General Assemblies. There are also opportunities provided by the commission and these would include focus groups, workshops and public meetings. Commission meetings are open to the public.

When do the Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Government have to come to consensus in the planning process?

There are two places indicated in the agreements where consensus is required;

- 1) During the formation of the commission, as both Parties need to agree to establish a commission;
- 2) The agreement required with respect to the timeframes for the production of a land use plan.

Consensus between the Parties is encouraged by the Objective of Chapter 11, where a single planning process applies to both settlement and non-settlement land.

What is the Role of Yukon First Nations during the Regional Plan Approval Process?

Upon receipt of a recommended plan from a regional planning commission, the YFNs Consults with the Yukon and may then approve or reject portions of the plan and/or propose modification back to the commissions for settlement lands. Once a final recommended plan is submitted, the Yukon First Nations are the final decision making body for the plan for their settlement land. Ultimately, they may approve, modify or reject the final recommended land use plan that is submitted by the regional planning commission. YFNs are also Consulted by the Yukon Government for the plan proposed for non-settlement land.

How are Yukon First Nations without Agreements involved in regional planning?

The UFA assumed all Yukon First Nations would settle their land claim agreements and 14 YFNs are listed in the UFA. As this did not happen, it is not clear how Yukon First Nations without Agreements are involved in any regional planning that might take place in their traditional territory.