

YUKON SALMON SUB-COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026



Photo: Peter Mather



A Message from our Executive Director



As another whirlwind salmon season comes to a close, we've paused to reflect on the work that we've done, and the moments that made this summer one to remember. Our work, at its core, is about connection. Connection to

salmon, to the land, and to one another. Over the summer, we had many opportunities to strengthen these connections by coming together to celebrate salmon, spending time on the land, sharing stories, and continuing to work together to rebuild the salmon runs that have sustained this landscape for millennia.

These experiences remind us that the work we, and our partners do is both meaningful and impactful. The memories and relationships made this summer will undoubtedly continue to motivate and inspire us as we carry this work forward together through the colder months.

The YSSC extends a heartfelt thank you to everyone who shares our love for Yukon salmon and continues to do the important work of ensuring these incredible fish remain on the landscape for generations to come.

Hannah Turner

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A DAY AT SHÄWSHE

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GET TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS: EMMA HOOGLAND

Who sits on the YSSC? Take an opportunity to get to know one of our members. Emma tells us her favourite species of salmon, the reason she loves this work, and what a healthy salmon future looks like to her.



You may have seen the name Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee around - maybe on a poster, at a community meeting, or in a news story about salmon numbers in the Yukon. You may have asked yourself "Who is the YSSC? What do they do? Why were they created?" If so, you're in the right place. Read on to learn more about who we are, our role, our mandate, and what work we do.

What is the YSSC?

A lot of people assume that we're a branch of government, but we're actually an independent public advisory body. The YSSC was created in 1993 under the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA), which is the treaty framework that laid the groundwork for individual First Nations Final Agreements between Canada, Yukon, and Yukon First Nations.

"A Sub-Committee of the Board shall be established as the main instrument of Salmon management in the Yukon."

-Chapter 16.7.17, Umbrella Final Agreement, 1993

One of the main responsibilities that has been granted to us through the UFA is the ability to make formal recommendations to Yukon First Nations and the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada on anything that has to do with Yukon salmon. These recommendations are developed by the YSSC and are informed by information we receive throughout the year in meetings, conversations, and by listening to communities. Recommendations can be made on a variety of topics, including management, harvest allocations, habitat issues, and mitigation measures to address issues facing salmon.

What We Do

Throughout the year, the YSSC meets four times: once in the winter, spring, summer, and autumn. During our meetings we discuss current projects, pressing issues, and the general state of salmon populations in the Yukon. It is through these meetings that we develop our formal recommendations. Our meetings are generally well attended by Yukon First Nation representatives, members of Renewable Resource Councils, and members of the public. Outside of our regular YSSC meetings, we work on several initiatives. Lately, much of our focus has been on rebuilding Yukon salmon. The YSSC has been working together with many partners to develop two rebuilding plans for Yukon River Chinook salmon – one domestic plan, and one International. We have also been working towards the release of our updated Strategic Plan which sets out longer-term goals and activities for the committee from 2026-2031. Beyond planning, the YSSC tries to keep people informed and interested in Yukon salmon. We publish a newsletter, post on social media, maintain a website, and attend several community events each year to help make sure that salmon remain top-of-mind in communities across the Yukon. None of this work happens in a vacuum. We actively seek out input from communities and the public on salmon management issues. This is one of the most important things that we do as a Committee.

Who sits on the YSSC?

Membership requirements are laid out in the Umbrella Final Agreement, and were created specifically to keep representation on the YSSC balanced. Members are nominated by one of five different parties: the Government of Canada, the Council of Yukon First Nations (to represent the Yukon River basin), the Vuntut Gwitchin Government (to represent the Porcupine River basin), Champagne and Aishihik First Nation (to represent the Alsek River basin), and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board. Each of these parties is allotted two seats on the YSSC, for a total of ten members. Currently, our membership is as follows:

Government of Canada

- Dennis Zimmermann, Chair
- Brandy Mayes, Vice-Chair

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation

- Stanley Njootli Sr
- Jeffrey Peter

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

- Emma Hoogland
- Danny Cresswell

Champagne and Aishihik First Nation

- Dixie Smeeton
- Chuck Hume

Council of Yukon First Nations

- Kadrienne Hummel
- Karlie Knight

From its membership, The YSSC elects an Executive Committee which consists of a Chair and up to two Vice-Chairs. The Executive Committee leads the committee's meetings and represents the YSSC publicly. The YSSC has one staff member, the Executive Director. The diversity of the YSSC is one of our greatest strengths. Our members come from all different backgrounds and communities and represent different watersheds and interests. These differences allow the YSSC to bring together many worldviews, and help us to make well-balanced recommendations.

We work across the border, too

Salmon don't stop at the Canada-US border, and neither does our work. YSSC members make up most of the Canadian side of the Yukon River Panel, a joint body formed under the Yukon River Salmon Agreement, to manage salmon shared between the two countries. As part of the Yukon River Panel, our members attend two meetings each year, one in January and one in April. So, when you hear about cross-border salmon negotiations or catch limits, our members are usually part of that conversation. Another aspect of our relationship with Alaska is the Yukon River Educational Exchange. This program has taken place since 2002, and is focused on building and strengthening relationships across the US-Canada border. This year, a group of 5 Yukoners had the opportunity to visit the Alaskan side of the Yukon River to share stories, make connections, and have conversations about Yukon River salmon and their importance to Alaskan communities. In 2027, a group of folks from Alaska will make the trip to the Yukon to do the same.

2026 SEASON IN REVIEW

As the salmon season starts to slow down, we pause to take stock of the last few months. We consider what the run looked like, what work we are proud of, the connections that were made, and what it all means for the work ahead. This year we're finishing the season with a bit more hope than we are used to. Increased numbers of returning salmon give us some encouragement, even though we still are not seeing the historic run averages of years past.

Photo: Peter Mather

What was the YSSC up to?

We kicked things off in May with a two-day on the land meeting of the YSSC. At this meeting, we focused a lot of attention on updating our strategic plan, which will guide our priorities over the next several years. Starting the season off with a discussion about the YSSC's future and what we want to achieve over the next five years seemed fitting - as we prepared for the next season of the YSSC, the salmon prepared for their journey home. The rest of

the season was a flurry of activity. The YSSC attended a number of summer engagement events in Teslin, Carcross, Minto Landing, and Whitehorse, where we had discussions, connected with community members, and heard from folks who wanted to share their ideas and concerns. We also had the opportunity to attend two salmon gatherings: The Annual Salmon Ceremony and Gathering in Teslin, and the Southern Lakes Salmon Day in Carcross. These gatherings are a celebration of salmon and the relationships that have been built with them over generations. Coming together



to honour the salmon through storytelling, art, and inspired discussion is one of our favourite parts of the summer. In July, the committee came together for our summer meeting, where we discussed in-season run data, the state of both the international and domestic rebuilding plans, and the year's priorities. Work on the rebuilding plans has been a constant thread through the year, both on the international side through our role with the Yukon River Panel, and domestically through the ongoing work to rebuild Chinook stocks here in the Yukon. Neither is finished, but both are moving forward. There are even preliminary meetings to discuss the rebuilding of Yukon River and Porcupine Chum salmon.

We're all in this together

A lot of the work that we do isn't best measured by a run count or a recommendation, but by the relationships that we build and maintain by showing up year after year to the same meetings, the same tables, and the same community gatherings. In our opinion, this is some of the most impactful and important work that we do. With an issue as complicated and high-stakes as salmon,



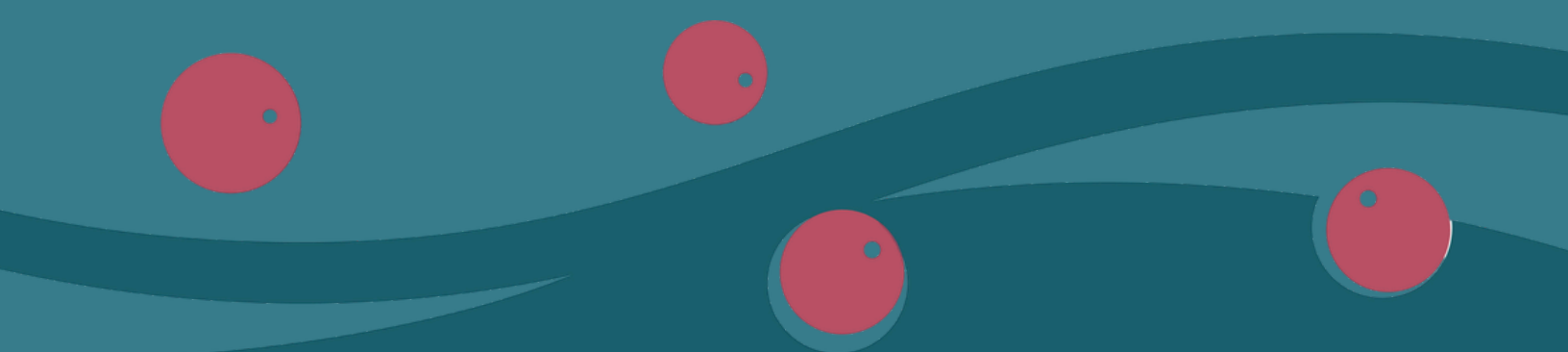
relationships are often what make real progress possible when things get tough, and we're so grateful for the partners who keep showing up alongside us. The YSSC works closely with a number of organizations across the Territory, including Yukon First Nations, the Yukon First Nation Salmon Stewardship Alliance, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and several others. Our partners carry out a number of important projects each year, including assessment surveys, running sonars, telemetry studies, habitat restoration, regulatory reviews, education programs and countless other initiatives. This work forms the backbone of everything the rebuilding plans are trying to achieve. We can't forget about the public as that advocacy and sacrifice is integral to our efforts. As we often say, "if we lose hope, we lose salmon".

So, how did the run do?

The number of Chinook returning to Canada this year has been higher than predicted and up from years previous. Chinook returns crossing into Canada reached levels not seen since 2019, and counts at the Eagle sonar station near the Alaska-Yukon border came in well above the pre-season forecast. The total Canadian-origin run is now estimated at 35,633, far exceeding what was originally predicted prior to the season.

If we consider a year like 2022, when only about 12,000 fish made it past the Eagle sonar into Canada, this year's numbers seem exceptional. However, even with this rebound, experts on both sides of the border have been clear that the run still isn't nearly strong enough to consider opening fisheries, and the numbers remain well below the rebuilding target of 71,000 Canadian-origin fish reaching the border.

This year gave us reason for cautious optimism, and it also reminded us that rebuilding a salmon run isn't something any single government, agency, or committee can do on its own. If we've learned anything, it's that when everyone stays at the table and keeps doing their part, even a struggling run can surprise you.



A DAY AT SHÄWSHE

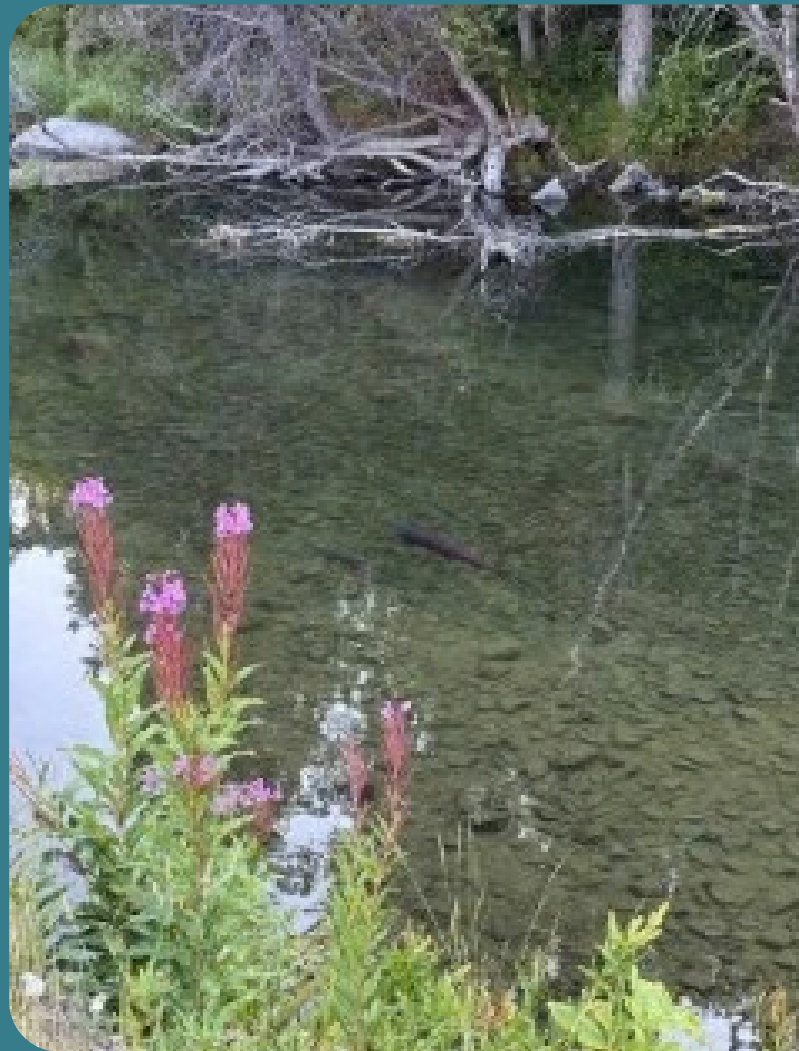
Last month, the YSSC made the trip out to Shäwshe (Dalton Post), an important historic, recreational, and cultural area on the Traditional Territory of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation.

Shäwshe is approximately 242 kilometers southwest of Whitehorse, and it sits at the confluence of the Klukshu and Tatshenshini Rivers. Historically, the area was home to a trading post and a number of cabins. Presently, it serves as an important fishing place for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation, and as an enumeration site for Fisheries and Oceans Canada which operates a seasonal camp in the area.

The week before our trip, we were alerted that the return of Chinook salmon to the Alsek and Tatshenshini River drainages had surpassed the upper end of the escapement goal and there would be a recreational Chinook salmon opening. These days, it's rare that anyone in the Yukon has an opportunity to fish for salmon, so we thought it would be interesting to go see what that might look like.

The next week, we packed up the car and hit the road early in the morning. It was a beautiful day for a drive, made only more beautiful by a stop at the Village Bakery in Haines Junction for an iced latte and a sweet treat before we continued on our way to Klukshu Village.

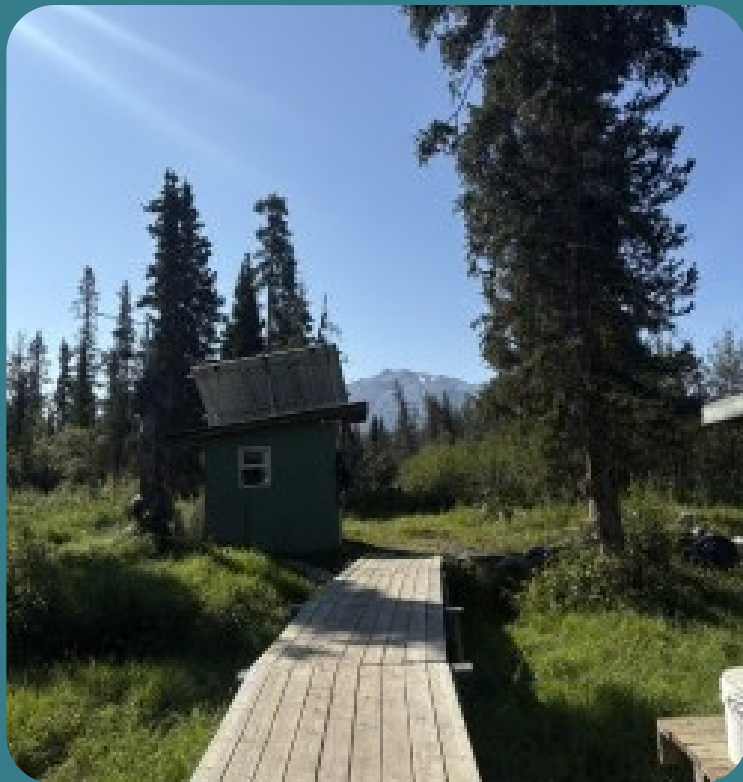
We pulled into Klukshu Village hoping that we might be lucky enough to see some salmon. After a few moments standing on the small foot bridge, we noticed an unmistakable flash of red, and made our way down the creek to find three Chinook salmon swimming alongside a group of sockeye.



The fish darted around one another as we watched from a patch of fireweed; the sparkles of the water adding a subtle, ethereal effect to the already beautiful scene playing out in front of us. We stood in silence for a moment, each of us considering the resilience of the salmon, giving quiet thanks to the fish, the river, and the land before continuing our journey to Shäwshe.

When we arrived, we were greeted by Annika Joe, the Fish and Wildlife Manager for Champagne and Aishihik First Nation, and her energetic pup, Pixie. Annika showed us the area where CAFN Citizens often fish for salmon, and told us about her own experiences in the area, having spent much of her childhood exploring, fishing and learning there.

Following our discussion with Annika, we made our way over to the DFO camp where the folks who operate the Dalton Post weir stay. We were greeted by two friendly DFO staff members who showed us around and shared a little bit about the project before taking us down a winding, boardwalk path to the weir.



The Dalton Post weir is a large structure built by driving narrow posts into the riverbed and then attaching a grate of some sort to prevent salmon from getting by without being counted. A large metal box with a camera and mirror inside it allow weir staff to count each salmon that passes through the weir to give a full picture of the amount and condition of returning fish. Abigail, who works with Fisheries and Oceans Canada told us that occasionally a family of bears will visit the weir, and attempt to fish off of the structure. We saw several freshwater fish swimming around in the

river, and spent a bit of time asking questions before making our way back to the camp.

After we returned from the weir, Abigail showed us some artwork that she had created in her downtime at the camp, beautiful ceramic fish heads inspired by the species she was seeing at the weir each day. We talked for a moment about the importance of connecting to salmon through art before saying our goodbyes and making our way a little further down the dirt road to a large clearing by the river.

We spent some time admiring the river, talking about the future of the YSSC, and what it would've been like to have experienced salmon fishing in the Yukon at it's peak – something that is difficult to imagine given the current state of salmon in the Territory.

Our drive home was smooth and uneventful, giving us plenty of time to think about the day and all the things that we had seen and learned. Sharing space with wild salmon in their natural habitat is always a treat, and is a good reminder that they are still on the landscape and that the work we're doing is important. Learning about the history of Shāwshe and the surrounding area from Annika helped us to build a more full picture of salmon culture in the Alsek River drainage, and the tour of the weir from DFO gave us a better understanding of the breadth of the work that is going on in the Territory.

We arrived home at the end of the day feeling energized and inspired, and we are already looking forward to visiting Shāwshe again.





GET TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS: EMMA HOOGLAND

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE YSSC AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO JOIN?

I've been working with YSSC since I started with KDFN 3 years ago, but only officially joined the YSSC a year ago. My work revolves heavily around salmon and I enjoy the work YSSC does and joining felt like **a good way to contribute** more to the conservation of salmon in the Yukon.

WHAT GOT YOU INTERESTED IN SALMON IN THE FIRST PLACE?

When I first started working with KDFN three years ago, I understood somewhat how significant salmon were, but I don't think I fully understood the depth of that significance. After spending so much of the last few years working with salmon, **learning from people, and hearing about their relationships with salmon**, they've become much more meaningful to me personally as well.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SALMON SPECIES?

Chum are one my favourites because I love their spawning colors, but I think Chinook would have to be at the top. A lot of my work revolves around Chinook and they also hold such **cultural importance** to many Yukon First Nations which makes them especially meaningful to me.

WHAT'S ONE THING YOU WISH MORE PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD ABOUT YUKON SALMON?

The value of salmon. It goes far beyond fishing. **They support entire ecosystems and hold deep cultural and spiritual significance for Yukon First Nations.** I think the decline of salmon affects a lot more than some people realize.

WHAT'S ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE WHAT SALMON MEAN TO YOU?

CONNECTION

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE PART ABOUT WORKING WITH SALMON?

The connections with people and hearing about their relationships with salmon. Everyone's story is different, and I love to hear all the perspectives. **Salmon really bring people together.**

WHAT DOES A HEALTHY SALMON FUTURE IN THE YUKON LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

I would say right now, a healthy salmon future would mean **more salmon returning to the spawning grounds**, with the plants and animals in those areas thriving alongside them. Eventually, I hope there would be enough salmon returning that people could fish again.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

YSSC POST-SEASON MEETING

November 12, 2026 / YSSC Boardroom, 409 Black Street

The Yukon Salmon Sub-Committee meets 3-4 times per year to discuss salmon management, conservation, and community priorities. Our meetings are open to the public, and we welcome anyone interested in learning more or sharing their perspectives to join us!

YUKON RIVER PANEL POST-SEASON MEETING

January 22-28, 2027 / Fairbanks, Alaska

The Yukon River Panel (YRP) makes recommendations to management entities on both sides of the U.S./Canada border concerning the conservation and management of salmon originating in Canada. Unlike other regional panels and committees established under the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the Yukon River Panel follows its own internal procedures and does not report to the Pacific Salmon Commission — the body formed by U.S. and Canadian governments to implement the Pacific Salmon Treaty.



Photo: Peter Mather



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