Happy Birthday YESAB: May All Your Recommendations Come True! - pg. 3

Photo: Robert Postma

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Welcome to the fall edition of YESAB’s coveted newsletter. It’s our birthday this month and our five year anniversary since implementation. In this edition of The Voice we look back at the foundations of YESAA and do our best to look into the future. We’ll update you on the recent work of the Executive Committee and highlight some of the work we have been doing on the YESAB Online Registry, and it wouldn’t be a YESAB newsletter without some tantalizing statistics. Read on.

– YESAB Communications

YOR Gets a Makeover: Searching and Submitting Made Easy

What do you get when you combine a highly motivated Client Support Officer with a knowledgeable Assessment Manager and a room full of computer programmers? You get plenty of coffee refills, strange jargon and a little gem known as the YOR (YESAB Online Registry)!

The YOR isn’t just a cutting edge interactive data base anymore. Oh no, YESAB has stepped it up. Now when you go to www.yesab.ca\registry you won’t just find all assessment documents related to all proposed projects within the entire territory. You will now have a number of cool features that will help you navigate through all those documents and make it faster and easier to find the project you care about. The new YOR boasts custom mapping features to help you find projects quickly, a new projects list on the home page to find new projects instantly, better search, print and report functions and a hot new look. Of course you can still draft, edit and submit project proposals, edit your user profile, submit comments on any project and download project information at your leisure.

We hope the YOR will continue to be your first stop for project and assessment related information.

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Happy Birthday YESAB:
May All Your Recommendations Come True!

When the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) was passed by Parliament in May 2003, it was the culmination of years of work by the Yukon Government, the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nations and a variety of stakeholders. The legislation established a process to assess adverse effects of proposed projects and other activities in Yukon, or that might have effects in Yukon. The Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) and Yukon First Nation final agreements set the foundation for YESAA and provided a fair and equitable approach that would apply to the federal, territorial and Yukon First Nation governments. Regardless of where a project may occur in Yukon, the current federal legislation known as YESAA will likely apply.

YESAA sets out how assessments will be conducted for a variety of activities, including projects, existing projects and plans. Assessments look at the environmental and socio-economic effects of activities and integrate scientific information, traditional knowledge and other local knowledge. The assessment process fulfils the objectives of Chapter 12 of the UFA and incorporates principles that include recognizing and enhancing traditional First Nation economies and providing meaningful participation opportunities for all interested persons.

YESAB became operational on November 1st, 2005 and was tasked with administering YESAA by conducting environmental and socio-economic assessments and making recommendations to Federal, Territorial and First Nation governments who would act as Decision Bodies on projects.

In the past five years YESAB has grown rapidly and has worked hard to make the process work for all stakeholders. Balancing diverse interests and values while assessing a broad range of project activities has been challenging and the staff and Board continue to meet those challenges head on.

From the day our doors opened, YESAB has committed to providing certainty, transparency, and efficiency in the process and will continue to do so. However, in the end, the YESAA process is about balancing the values of Yukoners, having your voice heard and making sure that we all work to develop projects responsibly so that generations can enjoy the land, air, water and wildlife and benefit from balanced economic prosperity.

Dave Keenan, (far left) stands together with other chiefs and government officials at a land claims signing ceremony. Dave Keenan is in his third term as a board member with YESAB. Land claim agreements were instrumental in creating and implementing YESAA.

The Next Five Years

YESAB has always worked towards improving the process for everyone involved and the next five years will reflect those same principles. Specifically, YESAB will be looking closely at its outreach program. We will be focusing on identifying specific opportunities for outreach and extending invitations to engage in a wide range of issues. Attention will be placed on communities, First Nations and anyone else who plays a role under YESAA. We will also continue working on producing consistent assessment reports that reflect mitigations that are specific to activities, locations and context of proposed projects. Work will be done on a range of guidance documents to assist proponents and other participants in their responsibilities and roles under the legislation and we will be closely monitoring the implementation of our new rules that came into effect this past summer.

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QUICK FACT

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Executive Committee Screenings

Mactung Mine Project – North American Tungsten Corporation

North American Tungsten Corporation (NATC) is the proponent for the proposed Mactung Mine development project (Mactung), which was submitted to the Executive Committee in December 2008. The Mactung property is located in eastern-central Yukon, approximately eight kilometers northwest of the Macmillan Pass. Based on the size of the deposit as well as the average grade, NATC has estimated that the development of an underground tungsten mine could produce tungsten concentrate over an 11-year mine life. The purpose of the proposed Mactung project is the construction, operation, decommissioning, and closure of a tungsten mine and concentrating plant.

YESAB deemed the project proposal adequate last year. After the first public comment period the Executive Committee completed a review of submissions received and determined that additional information would be required. Most recently, YESAB sent an information request to the proponent to better clarify some of the water quality, acid rock drainage and metal leaching potential at the project site.

Silver Hart Mine

CMC Metals Ltd. submitted a project proposal to the Executive Committee in February 2010 for the development of a silver lead zinc mine located in south central Yukon between the Meister River and the Oake Lake/Oake Creek watersheds. Mine production is estimated at 63,000 tonnes of ore over a 3 year period with a mill capacity rate of 80 tonnes per day. The project is anticipated to have a lifespan of approximately 5 years.

The Watson Lake Designated Office referred the project proposal to the Executive Committee concluding that the Designated Office could not determine whether the project would have significant adverse environmental or socio-economic effects after taking into account mitigative measures included in the project proposal.

Currently the Executive Committee is anticipating a response to an Executive Committee Adequacy Review Report that identifies additional information required by the proponent before a screening can begin. The Executive Committee has met with CMC and their consultants to discuss the content of the adequacy review focusing on water balance and water quality information.

Holland America Line - Yukon Queen II

The Yukon Queen II is a marine vessel that takes summer tourists on 164-kilometre river tours between Dawson City and Eagle, Alaska. The Executive Committee received a project proposal from Holland America Line for the continued operation of the mv Yukon Queen II this summer.

YESAB is currently undertaking an adequacy review of the project proposal to determine if the proponent has complied with the applicable rules, consultation requirements under YESAA, and whether there is adequate information to proceed with the assessment.

Holland America has been actively engaged with the Executive Committee as they work through the process of determining if they have met their consultation obligations. The Executive Committee has sent letters to potentially affected First Nations requesting their views on the consultation efforts made by HAL and continues to examine the technical aspects of the proposal. Once the proposal has been deemed adequate, the project proposal and related documents will be made available through the YESAB Online Registry (YOR).
Conference Updates

2010 Self Government Conference: Building on Success

Yukon First Nations have more than fifteen years of experience with Self-Government and are leading the country in implementing their agreements. Over the past decade and a half they have faced numerous challenges and celebrated many achievements. Some of YESAB’s staff and Board recently attended the 2010 Self Government Conference: Building on Success in Whitehorse. The conference was an opportunity for First Nations and other attendees to share their experiences, gain understanding about the intention of the agreements and learn from each other. YESAA was a direct result of the signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement and First Nation Final Agreements. Chapter 12 of the UFA was instrumental in the development of YESAA.

Liard Resource Summit

The 3rd Annual Liard Resource Summit was attended by a number of YESAB staff and Board in October. Watson Lake is seeing an increase in project activity recently and the Resource Summit was a great opportunity for industry, community, First Nation and territorial governments and YESAB to talk about some important issues such as: community engagement, opportunities in the mining sector, self-sufficiency and sustainable First Nation economies. YESAB has conducted some controversial project assessments in the area and has engaged the Liard First Nation to discuss and address concerns. This kind of dialogue is important for YESAB as the Selwyn Mine Project moves closer to an Executive Committee Screening submission.

Always on the Clock! Timelines Revealed

One of YESAB’s key operating goals is to remain efficient. As an independent organization that sits arms length from government, this goal can and has been achieved on a consistent basis. Regardless of the sector, the project, or the proponent, YESAB works hard to adhere to strict timelines. Part of our secret for a great track record is the adequacy stage. This stage allows the proponent to ensure that all the information required for a thorough assessment is contained in the proposal before the official assessment stages begin. Michael Muller, YESABs fearless Project Assessment Manager says, “We always encourage proponents to talk to assessors and work with us to make sure their project information is accurate, complete and relevant”. Below are some statistics that show the number of days a proponent can expect from the average assessment.
In Loving Memory

Aliesha Narain
FEBRUARY 6, 1977 – NOVEMBER 4, 2010

For all the warm memories,
We thank you.

For the laughter and joy you brought us,
We thank you.

For your dedication, commitment and convictions,
We thank you.

But perhaps most of all,
Thank you for sharing yourself.

So openly, honestly and selflessly.

We love you, we miss you,
And we are all better people for having had you in our lives.

Your YESAB Family