



NEWSLETTER Spring 2021

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President's message

Hello Fellow Members

It has been a fast Spring for most of us in the Yukon. The snow has melted for the most part and the rivers are rising. I hope those of you close to the water ways are nice and dry. Recently the Executive Board had hosted a Spring Fur Sale for Trappers and Crafters. In today's world I think it was well attended. (with Covid and its restrictions in place.) Many people are just not traveling. But all in all it was a good event where many familiar faces showed up and many new ones were greeted. The need for more Fur Crafters was evident by several people who attended and were looking for someone to make them custom hats or a pair of mitts. I hope to see a few more crafters at our next Sale. But the Covid restrictions affecting people's desire to travel discouraged many people from attending - which is part of the reason for the low Auction results and lack of attendance. Buyers can not come from out of Country to bid on the hard earned pelts available through North Bay's Fur Harvesters Auction. The Yukon Government has said they are easing restrictions for us, which should help get our economy going better for the Tourism Industry. I see across the country there is a wide range of restrictions being imposed from continual lock downs to protests and blatant disregard for law. We are fortunate that we have such a big back yard to go explore and not bump into other people. I wish you all a healthy and relaxing summer.

On June 19, 2021 is the YTA AGM. This would be a good time to come and contribute to the discussions and let us know what we can do to help.

Be safe, prepare for this up coming season by taking a first aid course, or learning a new self sufficient skill. If you have a trapline, think of giving a new trapper the possibility to be an assistant trapper on your line and help them continue our traditional industry. We have to support the youth and let them see it's more than just catching animals.

With great respect,

Brian Melanson, President of the YTA

PAST President's message

by Robert Stitt

By now most trappers should be out of the bush, reflecting on what they did right, what they did wrong and planning for next season. A smooth, stream lined operation is essential to a well managed trap line and never was this a more accurate statement than in these times of low fur prices.

This past season I was fortunate enough to spend 6 full months at my remote fly-in trap line located 130 air miles east of Watson Lake taking "social distancing" to the extreme! After the wet, cold, miserable non-summer we experienced, the Fall was a most pleasant and welcome change. From the day I flew into the line on September 3rd to October 10th the weather was warm, and sunny-very

conductive to getting maintenance, and repair dealt with on my main cabin roof. Keeping our cabins in good condition is an ongoing task equally important as brushing trails.

Never in my near 50 years of trapping have I experienced such a poor market! On the FHA August sale I had \$3.20 for a mink. On the December sale in 1980 at the very same auction house I had \$102.00 for a mink! That's right folks you have read the numbers correctly, ONE HUNDRED AND TWO DOLLARS! Such is the fickle nature of the fur industry. Hopefully prices will improve once the restrictions on international travel are lifted.

Once I began opening my sets in mid-November it quickly became apparent to me that it was a year of low marten numbers. Once out of the bush and comparing notes with other trappers it seems like this was the case over a large area of Alaska, Yukon, and NT.

I have attached some photos from my season on the line. Enjoy.



River frozen over Oct 19/20



Snare poles for beaver



A perfect stike on this marten



my dogs Erik and Meeka in the sun in Feb 21

Fur Depot

by Jackie Yaklin

Do you bypass the Association and deal directly with the tannery or the auction house? When you do this, you not only lose our bulk discount, you also create more work for yourself. You'll have to get your furs sealed, get an export permit and pay the shipping cost. When you work with the Association, you only bring your furs to us, and we do all the rest.

The Association has worked diligently and with purpose: we negotiated a good tanning rate; we ship regularly; we're organized.

When your tanning returns, you are notified. Yes, sometimes the notification is not received, but we do leave messages.

For those who do not bypass the Association, thank you. We appreciate your support.

It should be noted that the Association does not earn a large income from the tanning fees.

Opening hours

Tuesday to Friday from 2pm to 5pm

Saturday from 11am to 4pm.

Closed Sundays and holidays.

If you arrive at other hours, check next door at the Match Girl Knitting Shop. If Jackie is there she can assist you with YTA business.

Our Fur Depot services include: free shipping to the auction house; export permits; sealing for lynx, wolverine and wolves; advances from the auction house when available; and operating hours include Saturday and evenings until 7pm. If you require the Fur Depot at any other time, please phone 668-5648 to make an arrangement.

YTA buys good quality un-tanned furs directly. We pay the tanning fee and then sell the dressed furs at Our Store. Foxes and beavers are in high demand.

YTA continues to advocate on behalf of the trapping industry.

Memberships

Your membership expires on June 30th. We have membership applications and membership cards here at the Depot. With a membership, you receive a 10% discount from Our Store, bulk tanning rates, Fur Depot Services and you will be part of an advocacy group interested in trapping. The Association relies on memberships as the number of members makes us a more representative Association. So please sign up and support us and yourself! THANKS.

When you join the YTA, you enjoy a 10% discount on products from Our Store – new lures, more traps, more snare materials, a cost-effective tanning service.

Last Receiving & Auction Dates

2020/21 Auction Schedule FUR HARVESTERS

YTA last rec. date	FHA rec. date	Auction date
April 9, 2021	April 17, 2021	July 7-11, 2021

If you have Facebook, Fur Harvesters Auction is on it too and they also post videos.

Upcoming Events

The **AGM** is happening on June 19, 2021, 10am to 4pm in the Grey Mtn. Room of the Mt. MacIntyre Centre in Whitehorse, 1 Sumanik Drive. Hope to see you all there! Support yourself by supporting the YTA by becoming a member.

Past events

Mobile Fur Depot

On March 15-17 2021 YTA director Robert Stitt went to Mayo and Dawson City on a mobile fur pick up run. A sealing service was provided, and furs were received from trappers for shipment to auction, or sent for tanning. Several trappers expressed their gratitude for this run which saved them the long drive to Whitehorse.



Fur and Craft Sale, April 24th, 2021

by Shannon Pearson

On Saturday April 24, 2021, YTA sponsored its third 1-day fur show at Mount McIntyre Recreation Center. It was a beautiful day and many trappers and non-trappers dropped by to spend time visiting, learning about what it is we do, touching fur and taking it home. The event also attracted vendors who utilize Yukon fur for their crafting items.

Despite Covid, the event was a success on several levels; as a fundraiser for our fur/trapping depot, as a public awareness builder, as an educational opportunity and for our trappers as an alternate market for their fur and fur products. The fur show provides Yukon trappers with an additional choice in how we make money from our fur. In Yukon we are fortunate that most of the public does not view our passion as a horrible thing. I watched as many of our vendors stepped up and took the time to educate the people who came to the show. Visitors were truly interested in the science, the research and development and the trapping process. Attendees spent time listening and learning about the many ways industry standards have changed over the last 100 years. Many folks we talked to had no idea about how much testing and improvements have been made towards more humane trapping practices.

It's quite satisfying to talk with someone, who clearly has a negative attitude and misconception about why and how we kill animals for fur. By taking the time to educate them about what we do and sharing our passion for the lifestyle, we change their perception. Once they find out we often work with Wildlife Management as contributors to wildlife studies and are stewards of the land who often are the first to identify disease among species and how all parts of the animals are used and go back into perpetuating the "circle of life", they look at the industry through a different lens. They finally understand that trapping is a fully sustainable practice.

By just allowing our passion for the lifestyle we live come through in our interaction with people, we can often see the switch 'flip' in a person's eyes. We may not change everyone's mind but at least they have a bit more truth-based knowledge to begin to see the industry in a different light. They may one day become a customer...This is what will make this market grow.

While Covid has knocked the heck out of tourism over the last year or so, tourists represent an addition to our developing local market. They are hungry to learn more about the lifestyle we love and live. They want to take a piece of the 'romantic' Yukon home. Our products can be that piece.

These YTA fur shows can become another viable stream of income for trappers. We just need to develop the market through education and a consistent presence. People will come to know that Spring and Fall there is a fur show in Whitehorse. It's where they KNOW they can get ethically sourced Yukon/Canada caught quality fur. Bottom line is – our trappers will have another choice in the way they sell their furs.

This event is new and therefore we have the ability to make modifications that will work for all parties. Positive/constructive feedback from the trapping community is important in order to make it an increasingly valuable and lucrative show for us all.

Miscellaneous

The following is a letter from YFWMB. Please let us know what you think of this proposal and how you would go about it.

Recommendation to Minister of Environment.

From Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board; 2017-December 15

The goal is to manage furbearers and administer trap lines effectively, across the entire Yukon Territory.

In 2017, Yukon Fish & Wildlife Management Board put forward two recommendations: one, to require a sealing certificate for marten pelts; and 2, to develop a fur harvest reporting system in collaboration with trappers, the Yukon Trappers Association, the Renewable Resource Councils and First Nations Governments.

Recommendation ONE did not go forward because there was not enough support. Yukon Trappers Association did not support this recommendation.

11.2 The Board recommends undertaking the development of a comprehensive, mandatory fur harvest reporting system, in direct collaboration with trappers and the Yukon Trappers Association, as well as all Renewable Resource Councils and First Nation Governments.

The department is asking the Trappers Assoc. as to what form this mandatory reporting would be. The Board suggests that this reporting, completed each year as required, could be in lieu of the five-year concession renewal harvest portion of the report now required. In addition, the board also suggests that the Department provide trappers with the results of these annual surveys of harvest in a timely basis as to assist with the trapper's planning for the following year. (i.e. trends, population declines, etc.) This reporting should be required of all trappers in all category lines, both concession holders and assistant trappers. There are bits and pieces of data now collected in different forms, fur sealing, local conservation offices, some RRCs, tanneries and taxidermist, but no one location. The idea of this mandatory annual reporting is to capture the entire trapping harvest in one document.

The Board further suggests that there be a five-year period of implementation, at the end of which a review will be undertaken by all parties.

Trapper and Outdoors people Tips and Tricks

by Trapper Paul

Try duct tape – it works! Wrap it around the frame of your trap and so you can, most of the times, remove the marten without damaging it, then set the trap again right away.



If you'd like to share your tips and tricks, be it what you have learned about snowmobiling, storing items, cooking or trap setting, let us know! We'd love to hear from you. Send text and photos to Sonja at yukonfur@yknet.ca.

Seeking raw fur skins

Dear Yukon Trappers. We are fur manufacturers located in Nanaimo, BC and are seeking raw fur skins to buy. Would you entertain selling some raw skins to me? We currently need 500 marten and 100 lynx. Wolves as well. Check out our website. Incidentally we also offer 5 day fur/seal workshops. And the big 10 day intensive fur program slated for November 1 called the "Learning hub of education & design school". -Which is front and center on our home page. Thank you, I look forward to your reply.

Best regards,

Calvin E. Kania, Kania Industries Inc./FurCanada. C-2345 Delinea Place, Nanaimo, BC, V9T 5L9
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Obituary – the life of Larry Smith

by John Firth

I never knew Larry 'Cowboy' Smith as a trapper.

The closest I came to that aspect of his life was dropping mail at his cabin on Coffee Creek in the 1970s whenever I paddled down the Yukon River. He was one of those folks who dwelled along the river and chose a not easy way to live. Snow machines were around but had yet to become a mainstay for trappers. Larry relied on his dog teams to run his trapline or haul wood and ice. In the summers he mined for gold so was rarely home when the mail arrived.

There was no postal service for those who lived along the Yukon and river people didn't like going into town very often to check at the post office. So when people learned I was making a trip down

the river they would give me letters to drop off at the various cabins along the way. It would often be a year before I learned whether or not Larry had found them where I put them out of the weather. Occasionally I would run into him in the Eldorado Hotel in Dawson City or the Taku Bar in Whitehorse and he would buy me a beer to say "thanks" for delivering the mail. Usually I only stayed for one beer since to stay for more meant I had to rehear his stories about his exploits in bronco busting and rodeoing which earned him the nickname of 'Cowboy' - stories he loved to tell over and over and over again.

He never seemed to feel the cold of a Yukon winter.

One minus-40 day in Dawson I discovered that the hand brake on my truck had frozen in the 'on' position and it looked like I might have to wait until spring to drive back to Whitehorse. Larry was sitting at a table in the bar in the Eldorado and asked me why I hadn't already headed out on the road. When I explained to him about the brake he slapped his cowboy hat on his head and stumbled out the door without coat or gloves. Grabbing an axe from the back of his truck, he dropped to the snow and wriggled under the truck. I heard his axe pound on the underside of my truck a couple of times and he crawled out again.

"There," he said, "That should work. Just don't apply your brake in winter. The pad will freeze onto the axle." Then he wandered back into the Eldorado without so much as a shiver or a need to warm his hands.

It was his fierce competitive drive, his toughness and his dog teams that made him a legend in both Alaska and the Yukon.

In 1983 I was the sports reporter at the Whitehorse Star. Larry was making his third run at the Iditarod. He had once stated that he could win the race in under 10 days. He had pushed the top teams hard in his first two races but never managed to catch them. Along the way his ambition and drive had gained him a dedicated following in the interior villages along the route. I saw people in the villages literally line up so they could watch over his dog team when he was either sleeping or eating. He was changing the Iditarod and the way it was raced and they loved him for it.

For a guy notoriously shy of the media, whose one-word answers were often not much more than a grunt, he was getting a lot of press coverage - almost as much as the race winners themselves.

Not that Larry didn't trust or disliked the media. Quite the contrary. Like most people who spend much of their winters isolated in off-the-grid wilderness cabins, warmed by firewood and lit by coal oil lamps, Larry read a great deal - books, old magazines and newspapers and relied on his radio to keep him in touch with what was happening elsewhere in the world. From media he gained a rather eclectic type of knowledge where he knew a little about everything and a lot about a few things.

His reluctance to speak in public or to the media were not because Larry didn't want to talk to them. It's that he just didn't know what to say in those circumstances.

His media and public speaking shyness enhanced his mushing mythology. The public knew him as a private man of few words. They hadn't sat down with him and waited until he got a couple of drinks under his belt and discovered that he was someone who loved to tell stories - especially about himself.

In 1983, in his third try at the race, it looked like he might actually do it. He was within hours of eventual winner Rick Mackay and runner-up Ep Anderson. When they talked about the race, they talked about how nervous Larry was making them and they still weren't sure just how fast his team really was. The Star sent me to cover the race and I finally connected with him at White Mountain, just a day's run from the finish line in Nome.

We chatted briefly then I just left him to talk with the vets about his "dawgs" and get some much needed rest before the final push. The next time I talked to him was in the Breakers Bar in Nome. He had a few drinks and spun the tales of his race without his usual media reticence.

Larry tackled the Yukon Quest starting in 1988. I wasn't a journalist any more but was involved with the organization as president of Yukon Quest in 1995 when he ran his final 1000-miler. He had a good team and for about six months leading up to the race would regularly turn up in my office just to sit and talk about his dawgs and his plan to complete the race in under 10 days.

But his dog team couldn't match the ambition of their musher and they quit on the final climb up Eagle Summit, just 200 yards from which might have been his crowning accomplishment. Had he made it over the top with the lead he had at the time, it would have been challenging for anyone to catch him before the finish line. 1995 Quest champion Frank Turner passed him as he sat on the slope followed by four more teams before Larry's team decided they had rested long enough.

Can't say we were ever friends. Acquaintances, more like it. In the years that followed we didn't run across each other very often - usually only when I traveled down the Yukon River and he was piloting the Jacobs river barge servicing mining camps between Carmacks and Dawson City. The last conversation we had was at Fort Selkirk when he tied up for the night and went for a walk among the buildings - possibly looking for female company to join him in the little travel trailer he used as living quarters on the barge. Instead he found me and we talked about his time as one of the best in the 1000-milers and how he would like to take one more final run at the race.

His cabin at Coffee Creek had deteriorated quite a bit since he moved out. Subsequent owners hadn't taken care of it and eventually it was demolished to make way for a proposed resort. When I last saw it the roof was mostly gone and it had been pillaged by years of curiosity hunting river travelers. There was no sign of any undiscovered mail in the regular spot.



Photos: Larry's cabin at Coffee Creek in 1979. Larry talking to vets and race officials about his "dawgs" at White Mountain during the 1983 Iditarod. Photos by John Firth

John Firth is an award winning storyteller/writer who lives in Whitehorse, Yukon. His books include The Caribou Hotel: Hauntings, hospitality, a hunter and the parrot, One Mush: Jamaica's Dogsled Team, Yukon Sport : An Illustrated Encyclopedia, River Time: Racing the Ghosts of the Klondike Rush, Better Than A Cure: One man's journey to free the world of Polio (with Ramesh Ferris) and Yukon Quest: The 1000-mile sled dog race between Fairbanks and Whitehorse. His website is johnfirth.ca.



The last time Larry Smith came to the YTA was in April of 2020. Here Jackie and Larry, exchanging a story or 2.

Hope to see you all at the AGM. Enjoy the short summer and don't think too much about fishing but trapping, as the next winter is around a short corner, we are sure!

Sincerely,

the Board of Directors