



Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) is a small self-governing Yukon First Nation that operates with relatively small annual budgets. This results in limited funds to support reactive and /or proactive projects that are required to support our mandated work that is guided by TH's strategic plan. Outside of those mandated obligations, issues and opportunities arise within our traditional territory and senior staff recognize the importance to dedicate time and resources to that unanticipated file. When this is the case, due to our funding and capacity restraints, many of our projects rely on external funding sources, and in order to secure those funding applications, it often takes a large amount of work to get an application ready for submission. This takes hours away from staff whose schedules and workloads are already at maximum capacity. This is to say that, while we may recognize the value of a project or research study, we often simply do not have the time to dedicate to the funding application, let alone sufficient time to take on the actual project. Because of the reality of strained capacity, TH relies greatly on partnerships and collaborations. Additionally, the reality of having a small staff in the Natural Resources Department equates to each one of us assigned to (numerous) files that support our citizen base, their needs and the TH government mandate – *this is not only our focus, but must be our priority*. Often this means that necessary methodological research does not get the attention it requires. While our staff has a technical background for whichever position we have been hired for (GIS, Land Use Planning, Conservation Sciences, Environmental Assessment and Review, Env. Monitoring, etc.), our workload does not necessarily permit us to undertake this much needed research and technical work that informs our government's direction.

Establishing partnerships and collaborations with Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Canada over the past number of years has greatly assisted TH with numerous large and meaningful projects and has allowed us to participate in progressive approaches to land and resource related matters. Without these partnerships in place, TH would not have had the capacity to proceed with relevant and purposeful research to further our indigenous governance lens. The project work that has been completed not only serves to support our internal work by lending us additional capacity, but it also provides TH staff with insight and training into progressive and innovative research approaches which results in further development and strengthening of TH staff's technical skills.

Land use planning is an extremely important focus for TH; our traditional territory experiences many pressures from development (mining, roads, water withdrawal, etc.) and without adequate and effective planning, the rights guaranteed under the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement are at risk of being undermined and eroded.

Key projects that WCS Canada has significantly assisted TH with include:

Area of support and collaboration	Meaningful contribution
Indigenous and Protected Conservation Areas - proposal writing	IPCA's are an approach to land use planning that engages indigenous governments in co-management in a way that traditional land and park management approaches do not allow for. Through the IPCA work, TH has been able to



	<p>explore options for our government, as well as meet with some prominent nations who have shared their experiences and who have greatly benefited from taking this approach in their traditional territory.</p> <p>Key result: staff capacity development, as well as opportunity to learn about a progressive approach to conservation that will advance TH in the long term. Without WCS's support in drafting the proposal, internal TH staff would not have had the time to meet the deadline and we would have missed this opportunity.</p>
<p>Indigenous land use interviews, digitization and cultural mapping</p>	<p>Partnership with WCS directly resulted in TH's increased ability to collect vital traditional knowledge about individual family use patterns within the traditional territory. This greatly assisted identifying priority areas for conservation in the Dawson Regional Land Use Planning (DRLUP) process.</p>
<p>Participation in the Cumulative Effects working Group</p>	<p>TH's participation in the DRLUP 'Cumulative Effects Working Group' is essential in order to identify TH's concerns from CE in the TT. Our identified values often differ from those of Yukon Government (YG) and other stakeholders in the region. This group is technical in nature and the support provided by WCS was critical with respect to the required communication of research priorities that could be more beneficial to TH than a YG preferred focus. The technical analysis provided by WCS was essential and allowed TH to have a strong voice at the table.</p>
<p>Human Footprint mapping</p>	<p>Understanding linear and surface disturbance within our traditional territory is absolutely necessary when engaged in a land use planning process. TH staff assessed existing YG data and had determined critical gaps for our region. Due to capacity and financial limitations, again, TH would not have been able to create products that would allow us to perform the regional assessment of current disturbance. Our partnership and collaboration with WCS not only informed the regional land use planning process, but also worked to identify areas of highlighted concern due to excessive change over time. Once again, this positions TH to be a strong voice at the</p>



	<p>table when a) identifying disturbance data gaps in our region; and b) identifying areas of concern due to pace and scale of disturbance. This will hopefully result in the designation of lower thresholds for these areas due to our knowledge and understanding of what currently exists on the land with respect to human disturbance.</p>
<p>Conservation Priorities Zonation Analysis</p>	<p>This exercise was a foundational piece that supported TH staff in vocalizing and mapping conservation areas of key importance to TH citizens. This was an in-depth and technical exercise that TH would not have been able to embark on. The identification of these “conservation priority areas” spoke so strongly to citizens and TH staff benefitted immensely from having this material on hand when we conducted TH citizen interviews and consultation. This exercise highlighted the benefit in having succinct and appropriate tools to spur meaningful conversation during our internal consultation and engagement sessions with citizens.</p>
<p>Research partnerships on cumulative effects</p>	<p>Cumulative effects are acknowledged to be an acute gap of understanding for our region. TH recognizes that the development pressures that exists in the traditional territory have the potential to forever alter ecosystems, movement corridors and critical habitats. We also recognize that there is a deficit of baseline data and that much research is required to better understand where important thresholds lie, so that we can work to put protection mechanisms in place to safeguard the ecological values that support TH cultural persistence and our way of life. TH supports meaningful research collection in the traditional territory, but without partnerships, again, we lack the internal capacity to undertake this essential work.</p>

Over the years, we have been able to meet with WCS Canada and convey our vision for the intended outcome for various projects. WCS Canada has been supportive, professional and adaptive in their approach to these individual pieces of the puzzle that work to support our larger vision of a meaningful and informed land use planning process. We recognize the extreme value and contribution that WCS Canada has provided to TH and acknowledge that without their assistance and expertise to support us,



TH would not have been able to present our values and concerns in an informed and defensible manner, such as we have been able to do through the support of WCS Canada.

Mähsi cho,
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