

Fox Lake Local Area Plan

Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation Citizen Interviews SUMMARY REPORT

September 2017

Introduction

Interviews were conducted with citizens of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (TKC) and Kwanlin Dün First Nation (KDFN) between February and May 2017 in support of the Fox Lake Local Area Plan. A total of 10 separate interviews were administered and recorded by TKC planning staff and contractor using a standard set of questions developed by the planning consultant, TKC, KDFN and Government of Yukon. 10 interviewees were TKC citizens and one was a KDFN citizen.



Photo credit: Government of Yukon

The interviews were intended to supplement input previously gathered from the general public in 2014 and 2015 and the TKC Youth Council in 2015 and achieve a better balance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives to inform the vision and values the Steering Committee will develop.

The following report is a summary of the results of those interviews. Due to the nature and structure of the interviews, the results are

presented in a qualitative manner. Not every question was answered by every interviewee, and the author has taken the liberty of organizing some responses by topic versus the interview question they were intended to answer. The author has made best efforts to capture both the general patterns and noteworthy variations among the responses and use direct quotes to give voice to the interviewees; nonetheless, some sentiments could get "lost in translation". The original source interview forms and transcripts should be referred to as the most reliable source of information.

Topic 1: Family and Personal Connections

Q: Can you tell us about you or your family's connection to the planning area?

Interviewees shared a breadth of family and personal connections to the area. A few spoke to having a long family history in the area, one noting that those connections had been broken by residential school but were now re-established for both themselves and their adult children. Several interviewees were born and raised at nearby Lake Laberge. Another had lived and trapped there periodically over three decades, even raising a family.

Several respondents spoke to a relationship with both the planning area and points further afield in the traditional territory. One citizen grew up at Lake Laberge and while their family didn't have a close connection to Fox Lake in particular, they spent considerable time at Laberge, hunting and trapping, and would travel to Grey Mountain, Alligator Lake, and through to the Takhini River basin as part of their family's seasonal round.

A few citizens shared long-time memories of the area, noting where the sternwheelers had overwintered and the myriad of old trails and connections. Some pointed to places of personal and family significance, such as the site of a first childhood moose harvest and the place where parents had courted before marriage.



Photo credit: Government of Yukon

In Our Own Words: Connections

"Connection goes quite a ways back. We were broken up because of residential schools. We've reconnected back and mygrandparents directed me to an area with trees and hills and a pot that was hanging on a tree as landmarks. The pot wasn't hanging on the tree anymore, but it was on the ground beside it."

"When we moved outta Laberge, there was still ice on the lake. My dad had a big canvas boat, everything we owned was in the boat that was on a sled and hooked up 6 dogs to it and pulled us all the way up to Big Island [interviewer's note: Seagull Island near Richtofen Island]. When we got to the island, my mom was going to make lunch for us, and my mother pointed out a caribou standing there and my dad took a shot and missed him. The caribou was long gone. I had been playing with the gun and moved the sight, which is why my dad missed."

"So...grandma said they walk in the late fall... and they do their hunt, (they) cut through this way and then sometime grandpa would kill two or three moose and then grandma would dry it. Right here where their old camp here, see. Where my grandma put her camp in now..."

"Years ago, pretty big nation there, lot of Indian come from there, Little Salmon area. They say, when you're coming down on the river....Oh maybe about ten, fifteen mile up there....you can hear the drum going there. Now see, that's why they use Little Salmon and half of it goes to Carmacks.... Those Indian in Carmacks, they're Little Salmon Indian just like me too, that's where I'm from too."



Photo credit: Government of Yukon

In Our Own Words. Storied Places

“And then he made a song and he sings that song and he sings that song and then that winter he was monkeying around on that ice and he went through! And that spring he floated up right there...and that's where they took him on that shore right there...cremate him...”

“Sometimes...its all fogged over but the Elders knew when they saw something that in two days there would be a big storm or rain is coming or even wind they could tell that. I don't know exactly myself but you know but that's how they told it and they called it the weather...vane.”

“That trail come out to... you could see Lake Laberge down the other end and ah... Shallow Bay here... you could see that tent...white, eh....because they used to keep it white ah like ah skin... I don't know it made out of caribou skin maybe. Like they tan 'em or something like that or... They could see that, that white tent is up...from highway, Lake Laberge and they know somebody there see, so they had to walk all the way through and get across to Grizzly Creek they get to {sk'au point}...”

“Fox Lakehu'tena'iah, they call them... that means that the lake is so long, it goes right into the bush...that's this means in Native language...”

Topic 4: Values and Hopes for the Future

Q: What do you value about the planning area? What do you want the future generations to be able to do in the area?

***In Our Own Words:
A Bright Future***

“I want to see people use the land the same way First Nation people use the land...I said (to them): remember when you’re out there you only leave your footprint behind. That’s all we ever left.”

“(I want them) to be able to be free enough to go fishing”

“I feel really strongly that our land was going to be taken care of. That was the purpose of the land claim. The First Nations need to be considered when they are doing all this planning because we have lived here for thousands of years and it’s only in the last 120 years that they have wrecked everything.”

Interviewees spoke to the values the planning area has as an important site for harvest, the keeper of family memories and history, the teacher of culture and traditional ways, and an easily accessible part of the traditional territory. The responses indicated that the land, culture, and traditions are viewed as a whole – not separate. The value of being out on the land and in the traditional territory as ancestors had been was repeatedly mentioned.

When talking about their hopes for the future, similar themes emerged. Respondents expressed the hope that future generations of citizens would be able to use the lakes, harvest animals and plants, and interact with the land as they do and their ancestors did before them. The revitalization of culture and traditions, collection of Elder stories, sharing of place-based family history with younger family members, teaching of oral history, learning of language – all of these were mentioned in descriptions of a preferred future in the Fox Lake area. Several interviewees hoped for a lack of constraints on how and when citizens could use this part of their traditional territory.

One respondent felt that TKC needed to collectively work with YG and KDFN to stop future non-citizens and land applications so that the First Nations would have ample opportunity to select areas for family cultural or residential use. Access to land was seen as vital to re-establishing ties back to the land and traditional values for younger generations (both of which were seen as lacking).

Topic 5: Current and Potential Land Uses

Q: Local Area Plans for other areas have allowed for a variety of future land uses. Can you tell us whether the potential land use ideas that the Planning Committee may consider would be acceptable to you?

- ***More houses where people live year-round***

Responses to this question were mixed, but no respondent indicated full support for more year-round residences – with the exception of two who specified that TKC and KDFN citizens need more opportunities for housing and land ownership in the area. Several respondents commented that more housing was inevitable, regardless of how citizens feel. A few others expressed outright opposition to the idea, one of whom felt that “sprawl” directly affects citizens and limits the ability of future generations to use and enjoy the land.

One respondent noted a general poor suitability for building and septic fields in the area; another felt that the Grizzly Valley subdivision had been poorly executed and a similar development should not be repeated.

The sentiments that citizens expressed around the issue of residential density were particularly varied. Several wanted to stop future subdivision of parcels completely. Others expressed a strong dislike for dense residential housing. Another felt it was acceptable for people to want big parcels of land so long as the health of the lakes was protected.

- **More cabins and cottages**

As with the idea of year-round residential use, the idea of more part-time recreational uses received a mixed response.

One respondent enthusiastically supported the idea, but only in the context of developing more fish and hunting camps for TKC/KDFN individual or community use. Another commented that the First Nations deserve compensation for the development footprint that already exists and the loss of their way of life.

Several respondents mentioned the need for controls and conditions tied to any further recreational development. The protection of water quality and fisheries with additional lakeside cabins, absence of conflict with First Nation use, and siting in areas already developed (versus the lake) were specifically mentioned as conditions. Several respondents expressed scepticism about the ability of governments to control the part-time recreational versus year-round residential use once dwellings are established.

- **Farming and/or ranching**

Responses to the idea of farming and/or ranching in the area were also mixed but generally negative. Some felt strongly that no further agricultural development should occur in the area, one noting a need for the governments to meet with citizens and clarify all the issues first. One respondent supported the idea of expanded farming and/or ranching activity, but strictly as a means for citizens to gain knowledge of farming and ranching for self-sufficiency. One interviewee felt that this land use was acceptable as long as it wasn't harmful and locations were thoughtfully selected.

Several citizens mentioned specific negative impacts from current farming and/or ranching activities. The alienation of hunting areas, fencing acting as a barrier to fishing areas, and threats to wild animal populations were cited. One citizen felt that farming and/or ranching prioritizes domesticated species over wild species and that this is inherently contradictory to the values of Yukoners in general.

In Our Own Words: Land Uses

“Drives me nuts when I see that everyone wants to sit on each other’s doorsteps when we have big land.”

“Where else in Canada or North America do they have a place like this? Where you can still see the animals? Where they are still a part of our lives? Not just for the First Nations to hunt and to take out, but also for people to see. For our kids coming behind us to see.”

“Moose stand up in the fence looking at me sometimes-- what am I gonna do? That's where I used to shoot moose...”

“Who’s going to tell the animals to use the Grizzly Valley “game” tunnel to use that trail instead of one they are used to?”

- **Tourism**

Citizen responses to the idea of tourism uses in the area were generally more positive. A few felt that tourism ventures were a good focus for cooperative ventures with other organizations and partners and a potential benefit to both TKC culture and the Yukon. Another felt that TKC had an opportunity to develop a campground and provide guided tours by TKC citizens. The idea of a lodge with nice scenery and a small number of cabins so “people can go have tea” was also mentioned. Another respondent envisioned basing excursions out of Whitehorse and providing visitors with fishing tours, walking tours, or trail riding with horses in the area.

Support for tourism was conditional for some. Motorized access was a concern for several citizens, who felt that tourism should not involve ATV/“argo” use. Another felt that four-stroke motors should be mandatory to protect the lakes. One citizen felt that tourism was acceptable so long as it didn’t alienate land from hunting. Planning around backcountry access was mentioned as a need.

Two respondents felt that there was sufficient tourism activity in the area and opposed having more. One felt that dog team excursions should have to “clean up after themselves”. Another felt that, even though tourism doesn’t directly consume fish and wildlife, the increased presence of humans nonetheless negatively impacts them. They felt that more controls and monitoring were needed to manage safety and the impacts of backcountry travel.

- **Natural resource development**

There were fewer responses to this option, but again – the results were somewhat varied. Some expressed outright opposition to the idea, one commenting that Lake Laberge is too important a resource to risk polluting activities and the area is too precious (and close to Whitehorse) for oil and gas. Another was sceptical about resource extraction values being present in the area, but said that resource extraction would be incompatible with recreation if in fact those values were there. One citizen felt that it was hard to stop development, but that more regulation and management could mitigate negative impacts and the involvement of First Nation businesses was important. Another citizen felt that mining would be acceptable but opposed fracking.

- **First Nation cultural and subsistence activities**

There were fewer responses to this option but it was received positively. One citizen commented that First Nation people should be able to go wherever they want to in the area. Similarly, another commented that traditional uses must continue and it would be terrible if all that was available to First Nation people was their R-blocks. One respondent felt that the continuation of culture and subsistence was unlikely if further residential development was allowed to proceed.

- **Other**

Several citizens spoke to a broader concern about the no-hunting buffer around cabins and residences not applying to R-blocks. This was felt to alienate portions of those R-blocks from traditional activities and facilitate encroachment of non-First Nation people onto Settlement Land. Several other interviewees mentioned a desire to educate both citizens and non-citizens through interpretive signage, the use of traditional place names, and hosting of more cultural events.

Topic 5: Use of Settlement Lands

Q: How do you think (KDFN or TKC) Settlement Lands in the area should be used? Do you have any site-specific interests in the area?

Citizens generally expressed a preference for Settlement Lands to be used for fishing, hunting, trapping, being out on the land, and cultural purposes. The word “protection” was used repeatedly, but some respondents mentioned new hunting and fishing camps and low impact infrastructure as being acceptable forms of new development.

Use by citizens was a recurring theme, but one respondent specified a desire to see Settlement Land fenced off where non-citizens are using the land, particularly with ATVs. One citizen felt that Surprise Lake has good recreational potential and that trails could be developed by the First Nation for hiking and biking, whereas another citizen generally felt non-motorized trail use could be appropriate but didn’t specify a location.

Most of the interviewees had a site-specific parcel in or near the planning area.

Topic 5: Final Thoughts

Q: Is there anything else that you want to make sure the Committee considers when they’re making decisions about how the planning area should be used?

Interviewees generally encouraged the Committee to find solutions that would be mutually agreeable to all the governments and people with an interest in the area. Some emphasized the need to work together for the benefit of everyone. A few citizens spoke to the need for the Committee to understand the different world view of First Nation people in making decisions, one commenting that culture itself was at stake and another citing their longer-term outlook. Another interviewee expressed gratitude to TKC for the opportunity to provide input.

In Our Own Words: Guidance to the Committee

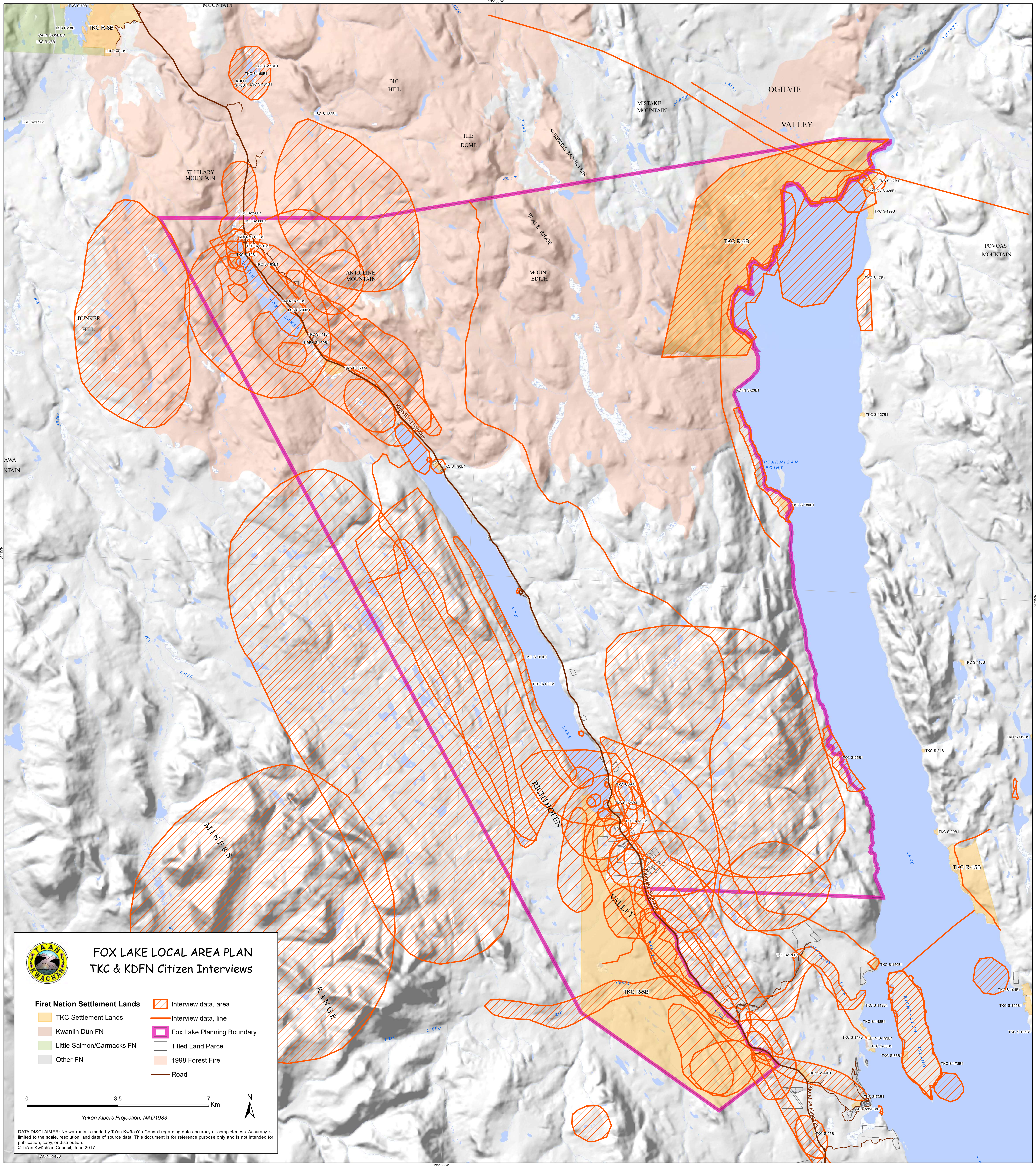
“Once you get all your input from Elders together, you’ll have an idea as to how to proceed. Just one person’s opinion isn’t going to make the plan. Not everybody has the same wish.”

“Make sure you do it right. Finish what you start. Tell the truth.”

“Say all you want about the government (federal/territorial), but our government wasn’t just looking at today, they were looking at a hundred years down the road.”

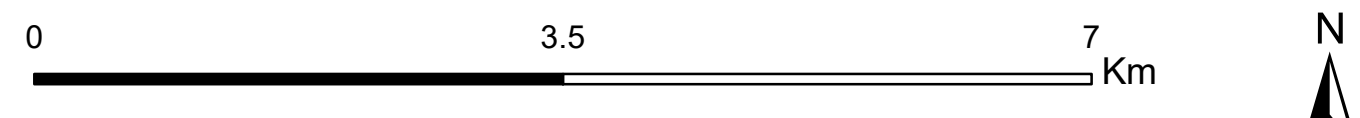
“...the Indian mother would say to her kids, “You know your dad’s been gone for two days now, we don’t know if he got anything so we gonna have to take this little tiny piece of dried meat and we’re gonna have to make that last.” ... what a difference the culture is... So..when we lose (the land)... we’re losing our culture, we’re losing our whole way of life and history there...”

“If we don’t do it in a good way there’s going to be animosity and we already face enough of that.”



**FOX LAKE LOCAL AREA PLAN
TKC & KDFN Citizen Interviews**

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|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| First Nation Settlement Lands | Interview data, area |
| TKC Settlement Lands | Interview data, line |
| Kwanlin Dūn FN | Fox Lake Planning Boundary |
| Little Salmon/Carmacks FN | Titled Land Parcel |
| Other FN | 1998 Forest Fire |
| | Road |



Yukon Albers Projection, NAD1983

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