

**Summary of the Recommended**

# **Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan**

2019

Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council,  
Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Government of Yukon

## We want to hear from you

This document is a summary of the recommended Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan. The plan provides direction for addressing the range of values and interests related to forest management in the region and describes the vision for how forests will be managed in the future.

The Whitehorse and Southern Lakes area is located at the headwaters of the Yukon River and includes public land and First Nation Settlement Land within the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council Traditional Territories. The area covers 1.49 million hectares and includes forests, alpine tundra, subalpine, rivers, lakes, wetlands, rock and communities including the City of Whitehorse and Carcross.

We are asking Yukoners with an interest in forest management in the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes area to provide their views on the recommended plan. The information collected will help the governments make a decision on the recommended plan.

To share your feedback you can submit comments online or participate in a public event. Visit EngageYukon.ca for locations, dates and more information.

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# What is a forest resources management plan?

Yukon forests are managed under First Nation Final Agreements and the *Forest Resources Act*. Considerable planning is completed before forests are harvested in Yukon.

The Act provides a comprehensive planning regime to support the sustainable management of Yukon forests for current and future generations. There are three levels of forest planning described in the Act.

1

## FOREST RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN

These are strategic, long-term plans that are created collaboratively by the Government of Yukon, First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils. Forest resources management plans cover very large areas, often greater than 1,000,000 hectares.

These plans identify forest resources values and sensitive areas and provide broad direction on where and why forest management activities should take place. They provide certainty on how forest management and development will occur in the planning area and guidance to timber harvest plans and site plans.

2

## TIMBER HARVEST PLAN

These are development plans that identify proposed areas for timber harvesting and contain strategies for reducing or eliminating impacts on other important values.

Created at the landscape or watershed level, these plans range between 500 hectares and 100,000 hectares.

3

## SITE PLAN

These are operational plans that identify forest stand-level activities and standards for timber harvesting and reforestation to ensure other important values are protected during harvesting.

These plans are between 1 hectare and 500 hectares.

**NOTE:** Map shape is for demonstration only and does not represent an actual area

# Why do we need a forest resources management plan?

There are many factors to consider in developing a forest resources management plan for the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes area. The plan attempts to provide a balanced approach to addressing these varied interests and issues.



## ENVIRONMENT

### WILDFIRE

Wildfire is a natural and important ecological process in the region and balancing the potential benefits and risks of fire is a complex task.

### WILDLIFE

We share the area with wildlife and need to protect wetlands and other habitat.

### LONGEVITY

Cumulative impacts like increased access and climate change can alter forest ecosystems.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Traditional knowledge and values guide forest management in the Southern Lakes area.



## HUMAN ACTIVITY

### DENSITY

Most of Yukon's growing population and infrastructure are located in the area.

### RECREATION

Many people enjoy spending time in the forest for recreation and leisure.

### HOMEOWNERS

Many people heat their homes with fuelwood and enjoy having access to local wood products.

### INDUSTRY

Some people make their living harvesting fuel wood, saw logs, and other forest products.

## GOVERNANCE

Multiple governments have management responsibilities over forest resources.

# How was the plan created?

This plan was created over a period of eight years by a Joint Planning Committee made up of representatives from Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Carcross/Tagish First Nation and Government of the Yukon, and with help from the Carcross/Tagish and Laberge Renewable Resources Councils.

In developing the plan the committee considered traditional knowledge, the views and perspectives from local people, and the available science. They worked with Taku River Tlingit First Nation and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations who both have traditional territories that overlap the planning area. They also balanced the wide range of values that the forest provides in the region. First Nations traditional values and laws were used to shape solutions to the many issues and interests related to the management of the forests in the region.

## ESTABLISHING THE JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE AND THE PLANNING AREA

**NOVEMBER 2004**

**Locations for forest harvesting** were discussed in a meeting between the Government of Yukon, Carcross/Tagish and Kwanlin Dün First Nations, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Lake Laberge Renewable Resources Council. Requests were made to complete comprehensive forest planning.

**NOVEMBER 2007**

**Developing a forest plan is proposed** by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

**APRIL 2008 - FEBRUARY 2009**

**Terms of Reference are developed** and signed for a Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan.

1

2

## TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

**APRIL 2017**

**The committee applies for funding** through the Natural Resources Canada Indigenous Forestry Initiative to conduct a traditional knowledge study to inform the plan.

**JULY 2017**

**Funding is awarded** and a traditional knowledge study focused on forest use in the area is completed.

**FEBRUARY 2018**

**The plan is updated** to weave traditional knowledge into the fabric of the plan.

**APRIL 2018**

**Public meetings** are held in Whitehorse where the updated plan and traditional knowledge study results are presented.

4

## LANDSCAPE UNITS AND FOREST ZONES

**DECEMBER 2010**

Initial meeting of the Joint Planning Committee.

**DECEMBER 2012**

Regular committee meetings commence and work begins.

**JUNE 2014**

Key issues are identified during six public open houses hosted by the Joint Planning Committee and a First Nation meeting hosted by Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

**MARCH 2015**

Five workshops on key issues take place with the public, stakeholders, and First Nations. 25–45 people attend each workshop and a summary document is written.

**JULY 2015**

A two-day committee workshop where forest values are assigned to landscape units. Forest zones and landscape units are confirmed and the committee begins drafting a table of contents, forest zones descriptions, and other sections of the plan.

## A DRAFT RECOMMENDED PLAN

**SEPTEMBER 2015**

Meetings take place with the City of Whitehorse, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, Yukon Wood Products Association, Renewable Resource Councils and Local Area Councils.

**NOVEMBER 2015**

Community and traditional knowledge is gathered during a workshop with Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

**FEBRUARY 2016**

Comments are received on the vision, forest zones and strategic directions through five public meetings.

**MAY 2016**

A draft plan is created based on input received.

## FINAL REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION

**MAY 2018 – MAY 2019**

Final review of the draft plan by the committee and governments.

**MAY 2019**

The committee recommends the plan to governments.

**JUNE 2019**

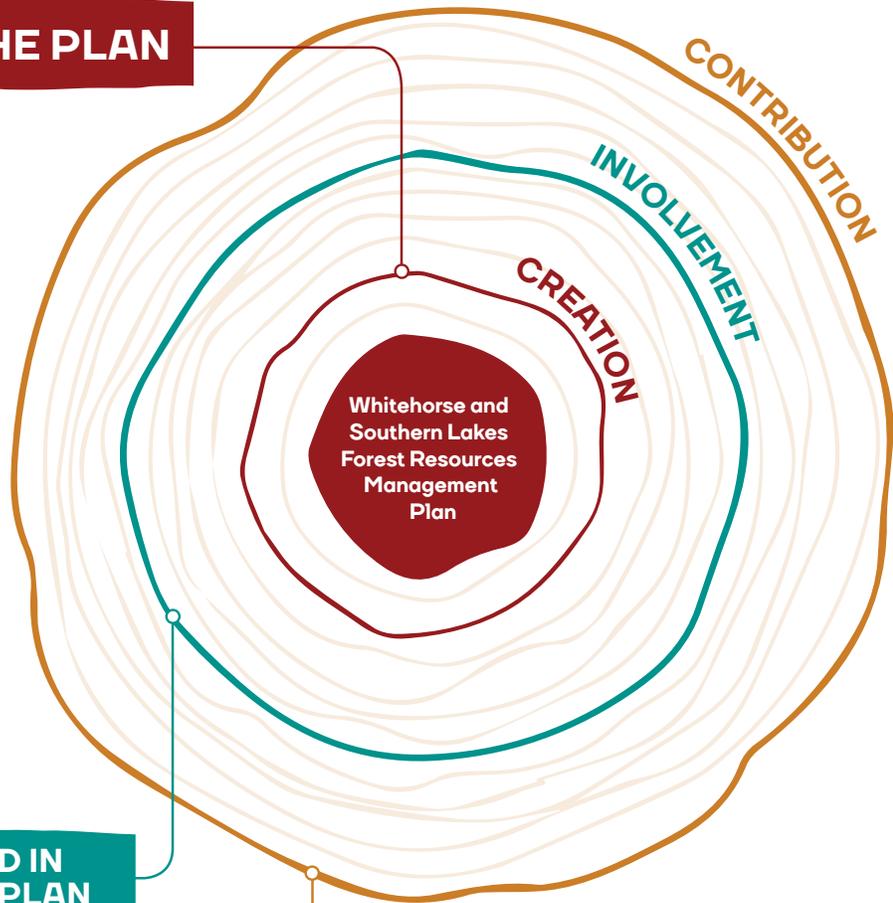
The Forest Resources Act consultation process with the public and First Nations with traditional territories that overlap with the planning area begins.

# Who helped develop the plan?

Many people and organizations worked together and shared information and ideas to create the plan. The plan strives to reflect all the values and interests that were shared.

## PARTIES TO THE PLAN

- The Government of Yukon
- Kwanlin Dün First Nation
- Ta'an Kwäch'än Council
- Carcross/Tagish First Nation



## PARTIES INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

- Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council
- Laberge Renewable Resources Council
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- Taku River Tlingit First Nation
- City of Whitehorse
- Communities of Carcross, Tagish, Mount Lorne and Marsh Lake
- Yukon Wood Products Association

## GROUPS AND PEOPLE WHO SHARED INFORMATION

- Forest industry
- Environmental, wildlife and conservation interest groups
- Recreation interest groups
- Public

## How were forests in the area traditionally used?

For thousands of years, First Nations people have relied on forests to survive, making a network of trails for hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering plants. Indigenous people harvested wood, plants and animals in a way that did not deplete

an area, and always gave thanks for the things the forest provided. At times, fire was used to open forests around camps and improve moose habitat. Traditional laws recognize the importance of sharing the forest with other animals.

## How has the forest changed?

During the gold rush, the forests in the Southern Lakes were cut to build the railway from Skagway to Whitehorse, to fuel steamboats, construct and heat homes, and to build mines.

In the last century, wildfires were suppressed and as a result today, most of the forest is spruce and pine older than 90 years and these fuel-laden forests are at a high risk of catching fire.

## How are the forests used today?

Fuelwood is the primary use of forest resources in the Southern Lakes where standing dead and down timber is harvested. Following the 1998 fire in Fox Lake, four timber harvest plans were created to allow for the commercial harvest of fuelwood for homes. Approximately 1,400 cubic metres of fuel wood is harvested annually in the region.

A relatively small amount of green wood (that is, live trees) is also harvested from three timber harvest planning areas in Marsh Lake, Sawmill Creek/Lewes Marsh and Lubbock Valley. Three small sawmills process this wood to produce dimensional lumber and specialty wood products for local markets.

The demand for biomass is increasing in the territory to fuel bioenergy boilers and it is anticipated this need will increase as the market and technology develops. As well, recently there have been discussions in the community about the need to harvest forests to reduce wildfire risk. Using timber harvesting to return the forests to a mix of young age classes and reducing the risk of wildfires is a primary goal of the plan.

# How will forests in the Southern Lakes be managed?

## HOLISTIC

Holistic understanding of the forest

## LEARNING

The forest as a place of learning

## RESPECTING AND HONORING

Respecting and honouring traditional laws.

Three guiding principles direct how the forests in Whitehorse and the Southern Lakes will be managed.

These guiding principles are based on the traditional values of the First Nations people, information gathered from the communities, interest groups and industry, science and examples from other models and plans. The plan relies strongly on collaboration between governments, communities, industry, interest groups and the public to navigate the challenging issues and adapt to a dynamic and changing ecosystem.

The plan recognizes the values that the forests hold for all people and directs planning for the use of forest resources in a sustainable way.

### FIRST NATION TRADITIONAL LAWS ABOUT HOW FORESTS ARE VALUED AND USED

- Take only what you need.
- Give back something for everything you take.
- Use everything you take, do not waste.
- Communicate and work together to protect the health of the land and water.
- Treat all things in the forest with respect.



Photo: Nicolas Dory

The recommended plan outlines 25 strategic directions to address the many interests and challenges related to forest management in the region.

#### HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE FOREST

- Consider the cumulative effects of timber harvesting, including the location of fire breaks and fire guards.
- Protect wildlife habitat by following forest harvesting standards.
- Collaboratively monitor forest harvesting to make sure harvesters are operating within their authorizations.
- Reduce impacts on wildlife by avoiding bear denning and moose calving areas, and stopping work when caribou move into their winter range.
- Use tree planting and apply seasonal restrictions and buffers to protect berry patches, medicinal plants, lichen, water quality and heritage resources.
- Use selective tree cutting and prescribed burning to return the landscape to a more natural, mixed-age forest.

#### THE FOREST AS A PLACE OF LEARNING

- Review the implementation plan after ten years to see if there is a need to adapt.
- Adjust the plan as needed when a regional land use plan is approved.
- Increase understanding of managers and forest users about trapping, traditional use of forests, forest health, and habitat needs of fish and wildlife, especially caribou and salmon.
- Educate people about how wood cutting can impact and benefit wildlife habitat.
- Educate people about the respectful use of forests.
- Educate people about how they affect forest health and about traditional use of forests.
- Make sure that other activities are consistent with the direction in this plan.

#### RESPECTING AND HONOURING TRADITIONAL LAWS

- Focus timber harvest near communities to reduce the risk of wildfires to people and infrastructure.
- Harvest trees in important caribou winter range only if needed to reduce forest fuel, manage forest insects and disease or for research.
- Coordinate all new forest resources management access with First Nations, territorial and municipal governments.
- Establish a working group to plan landscape-level fuel reduction.
- Establish a collaborative team to plan and implement timber supply and harvest, and develop monitoring programs to see how well things are working.
- Include traditional knowledge in forest management planning.
- Improve collaboration around compliance and enforcement challenges and solutions.
- Salvage timber from other land uses and Fire Smart projects, provide local opportunities to supply wood for biomass energy needs, and allow the public to salvage wood for personal use.
- Use existing access whenever possible and disperse personal fuel wood harvest to avoid excess cutting in an area.
- Replant trees and monitor growth to give back what we take from the forest.
- Encourage wood cutters to cut wood locally.
- Prioritize harvesting dead wood for fuel wood and opportunities for biomass and small scale wood products.

# How will forests be zoned for different uses?

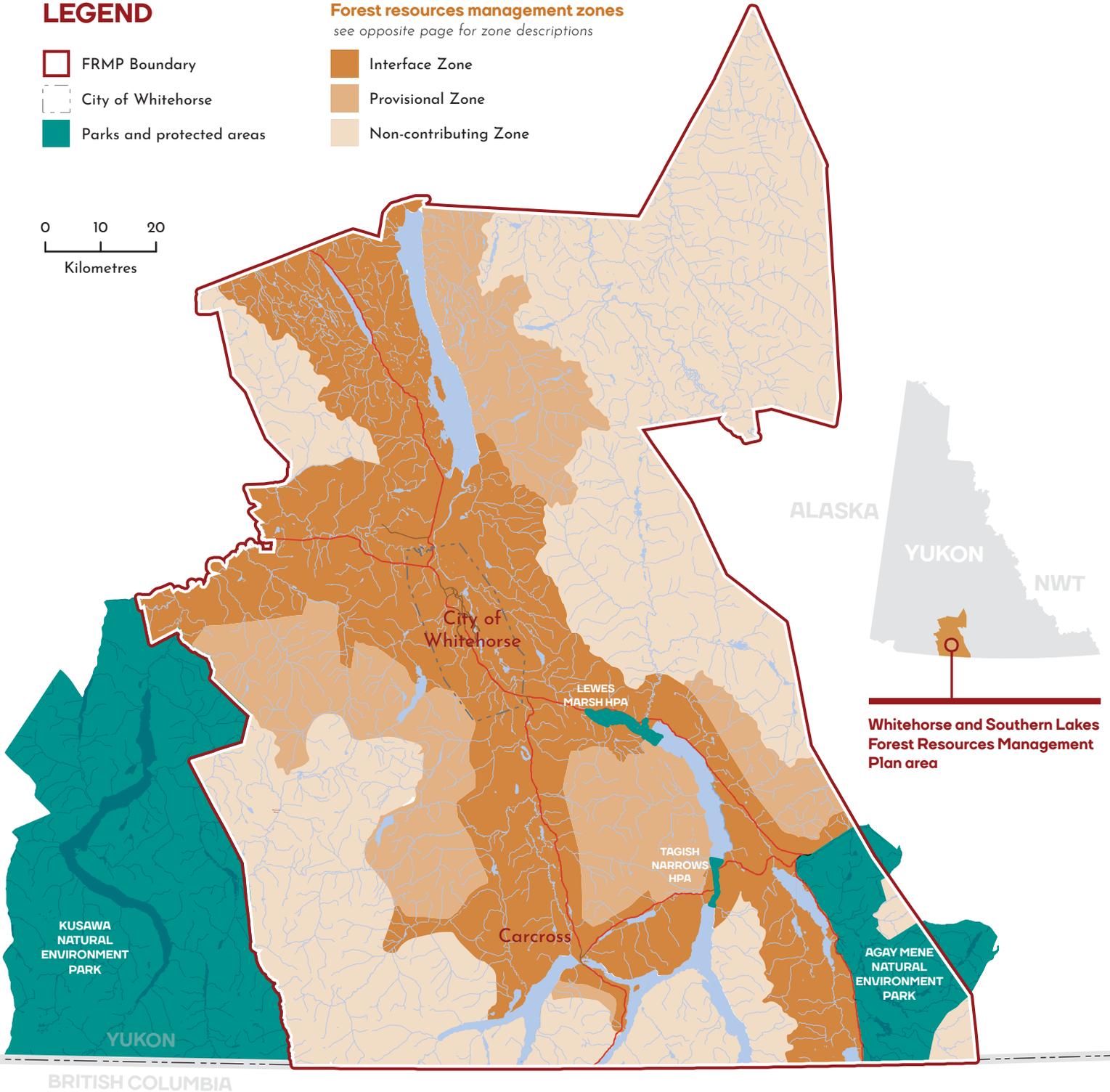
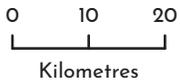
## LEGEND

-  FRMP Boundary
-  City of Whitehorse
-  Parks and protected areas

## Forest resources management zones

see opposite page for zone descriptions

-  Interface Zone
-  Provisional Zone
-  Non-contributing Zone



The region is divided into 17 landscape units using watershed basins as boundaries. Each unit was ranked based on the wildfire risk, timber value, current use, road access, and moose and caribou habitats. Three zones were created based on the rankings. The rationale used in determining the zonation is described in the recommended plan in Appendix D.

### INTERFACE ZONE

This zone includes forests around communities and ranked highest priority for forest management and timber harvesting. Timber harvesting will be focused on reducing fuel load around communities to lower wildfire risk and may also include personal fuel wood harvesting, commercial harvesting and research. Timber harvest plans will focus on protecting identified values and will consider direction from other plans in the area.

### PROVISIONAL ZONE

This zone includes semi-remote wilderness with limited access and areas with high wildlife, tourism and cultural values. Here, timber harvesting may happen after natural disturbances such as forest fires, flooding, insect and disease infestations. Timber harvesting can also occur if a mine, road or other land use requires harvesting trees.

### NON-CONTRIBUTING ZONE

This zone includes remote wilderness with little or no access, and high wildlife, tourism and cultural values. Forest resource harvesting is only allowed for traditional uses based on aboriginal rights and titles, trapping, commercial lodges, outfitters and personal use. Construction of new forest resources roads is not permitted in this zone.

## What happens after the public consultation?

Following public consultation, the Government of Yukon, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Carcross/Tagish First Nation will review the input received and will work together to update the recommended plan. Then, each government will make a decision on whether to approve the plan as it applies to their lands.

Over the coming months and years, governments will be responsible to find ways to work together to implement the plan, in collaboration with the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and Laberge Renewable Resources Council, industry and interest groups. Continued cooperation will help us be successful in navigating the dynamic nature of the forests, and issues, in the area.

The first recommended priorities of the four governments are to coordinate:

- a forest fuel reduction strategy in and around communities;
- cross-cultural monitoring, compliance and enforcement of forest management activities;
- timber harvest plans that integrate traditional knowledge and science;
- monitoring programs and collect information about forest management activities; and
- a collaborative way to implement the plan.

**“A HEALTHY FOREST IS ONE THAT IS USED BY ANIMALS. THE FOREST IS NO GOOD IF YOU DON'T HAVE ANY ANIMALS OR ANYTHING IN IT. THEY IN TURN ADD TO IT. THEY GO AND LEAVE STUFF IN THERE AND LET EVERYTHING GROW. IT KEEPS THAT CYCLE GOING. EVERYTHING IS PART OF THE HABITAT, AND IF YOU TAKE AWAY THE HABITAT THEN EVERYTHING KIND OF STOPS.”**

Albert James, Carcross/Tagish First Nation elder

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a river winding through a dense forest. The trees are a mix of green and yellow, suggesting autumn. In the background, there are mountains, some with snow, under a sky filled with large, white and grey clouds. The overall mood is serene and majestic.

**“THE MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE IN THE FOREST IS KNOWLEDGE.  
THERE ARE A LOT OF STORIES AND KNOWLEDGE. A LOT OF PLACE NAMES.  
THERE ARE IMPORTANT MESSAGES IN THE STORIES.”**

Ann Smith, Kwanlin Dün First Nation elder.

