

# *Adapting to Climate Change and Keeping Our Traditions*



BY: SELKIRK FIRST NATION, YUKON TERRITORY in  
collaboration with THE ARCTIC INSTITUTE OF COMMUNITY-  
BASED RESEARCH

**MARCH 2016**

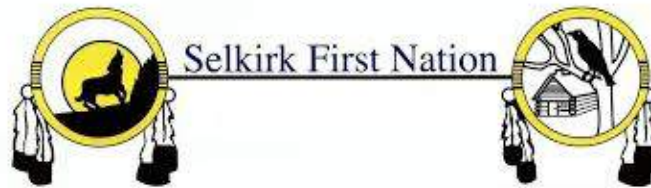
# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Selkirk First Nation (SFN) government of Pelly Crossing, Yukon Territory, would like to thank Health Canada's *Climate Change and Health Adaptation Program for Northern First Nations and Inuit Communities* for generously funding this project. We would also like to acknowledge the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR) who worked in partnership with us on this project; namely Marilyn Van Bibber and Norma Kassi who led the research efforts; and Molly Pratt and Marilyn for writing this report.

Special thanks to SFN citizens, especially the youth and Elders who formed an important part of this project; to those involved in the Advisory Committee, we thank you for your guidance and knowledge. We also wish to thank the Selkirk Spirit Dancers and Eliza Van Bibber School for their energy and support, and to all those who worked above and beyond expectations to make the project a success; especially Teddy Charlie for keeping everyone safe while at the winter fish camp. We also appreciate those who took the photos and videos included in this report, particularly Marilyn Van Bibber, Norma Kassi, Colton Blackjack, Daniel Tuck, Kylie Williams, Tamara Silas, Dylan Alfred, Cameron Silas, Lois Joe and videographer Robert Joe.

*The views and opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the recipient and may not reflect the views and opinions of Health Canada.*



Arctic Institute of  
Community-Based Research  
*For Northern Health and Well-Being*



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# SUMMARY

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The goal of this project is to seek community strategies for keeping Selkirk First Nation traditions and practices while adapting to climate change. The following 6 themes are key ways that our people can adapt. These strategies are further explained in the **Research Results** section of this report. They are built upon the priorities of the First Nation to revitalize our connection to the land and traditions for the benefit of the community and our youth.

The 6 themes gathered from the research are the following: **keeping our traditions** by supporting ongoing activities such as the Northern Tutchone gathering each May and helping the whole community to experience on-the-land activities such as spending time at the fish camps; celebrating our culture, values, and traditional knowledge, skills and laws is also important. We need to **connect youth to the land** through a number of initiatives such as summer employment, culture camps, winter fish camp, and utilizing a fish camp guidebook, which can be used to educate our youth and promote youth mental health and wellbeing. We also must **raise our voice** locally, regionally and internationally as we are at the forefront of climate change. There is a need to be proactive in finding solutions to climate change by limiting our harvest of salmon but also **thinking outside the box** by helping the salmon get to their spawning areas, encouraging inter-governmental collaboration and promoting things like tourism and employment to assist with food security. **Decision-making** is key, especially regarding when and how much we can fish based on our rights, results from our own research and from our traditional knowledge. We can also secure our food sources by feeding traditional foods to our young, keeping fish camps clean, promoting community gardens, expanding our harvesting practices, and providing compensation for loss of fish. We can accomplish these things by building our own **food security** strategy supported by our knowledge of the land and the bounty of our resources.

***First Nations peoples have always lived off the land, therefore we can adapt to the challenges we face with climate change. Our people are knowledgeable and resilient and will continue to protect our homelands for future generations.***

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## COMMUNITY HISTORY



Selkirk First Nation (SFN) people have been living off the land for thousands of years. Our traditional territory spans 15,000 square miles and is home to many lakes, creeks and three major rivers (*for map of traditional territory see **Appendix 5***). Traditional lifestyle is crucial to the health and wellbeing of our people. The connection between the land, the animals and people is a way of life. Elders say you cannot separate the people from the land - we are one. Our ancestors traveled across a wide traditional territory hunting, fishing and gathering. There were few tools but a deep knowledge of the land, plants and animals; age-old teachings helped to keep things in balance and were key to survival and good health. These traditional practices helped keep people well fed, active and connected to each other year-round.

There have been many changes since colonial contact and the health status in the community of Pelly Crossing, Yukon Territory, reflects similar health conditions as other First Nations communities across Canada. Government policy and laws have resulted in lost lands and resources, which has heavily impacted Selkirk First Nation people. When people first settled in Fort Selkirk, there was still a strong connection to hunting and fishing spots and there were long trips out on the land; however this seasonal activity was interrupted when the people were relocated twenty miles upriver to Minto and two years later, to present day Pelly Crossing. In addition to the social and economic disruption caused by relocation, throughout this time many children were taken to residential school, which further amplified the community upheaval. Most of the children were taken to Carcross or Lower Post in Southern Yukon. Some of the men in the community tell stories of escaping and heading back to Pelly on foot, surviving on their bush skills, only to be picked up like criminals and put back in the residential school to face certain punishment. The loneliness is still deeply etched in the psyche of the school survivors. In the history of Pelly, residential school is easily the most destructive force that continues to claim the health and lives of our people.

Despite this dark Canadian history, the old way of doing things and guiding people is still an important foundation for personal and community development. Knowledge and practice of our age-old traditions is an important resource especially as we heal from the traumas of residential school and meet the challenges of climate change.

**Chief Kevin McGinty speaks about the importance of traditional knowledge and practice as a gift from the ancestors to today's youth.**



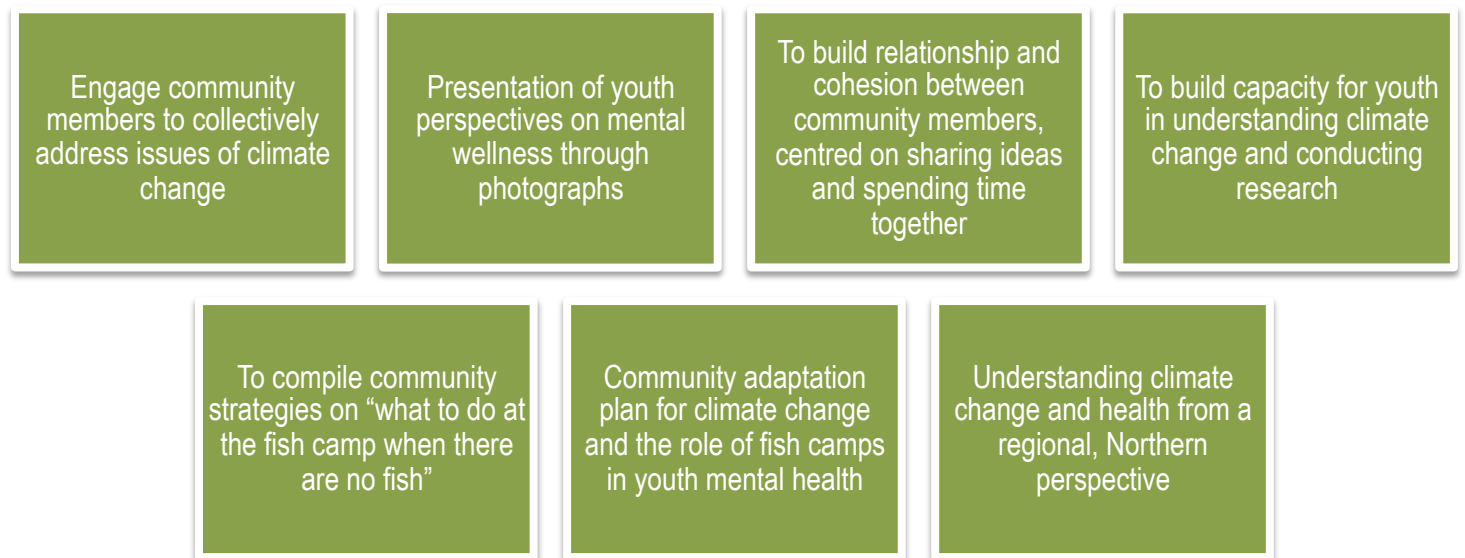


# THE PROJECT AND OBJECTIVES

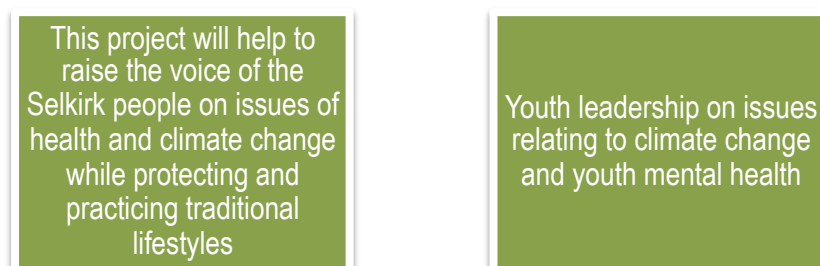
Over recent years, the rapid change in climate has brought forth a number of challenges for our people and the land that we live so closely with. Habitat decline and shifting landscapes and animal behaviours alter the way we have traditionally traveled upon and used this land. Managing the river systems and accessing the bounty of our lakes must now be done with extra caution. Bear safety is a concern as they have recently been roaming closer to the community in search of food. The decline of salmon in particular, has been a threat for several years. In 2014, most fish camps remained empty until later in the season due to a ban on fishing salmon; coincidentally, police call-outs rose dramatically over July and August. This raised alarm in the community of Pelly Crossing and prompted the research question for this project: ***“What will we do at the fish camp when there are no fish?”***

Many northern communities consider traditional practices as a pathway to mental health and wellness for First Nation youth (1-3). This work is a compliment to other SFN climate adaptation strategies; the focus of this report however, is specific to keeping traditional Tutchone practices alive in the wake of a changing climate. It raises awareness of youth mental health and wellness and how we must raise the voice of Selkirk people, who are at the forefront of climate change.

## Short-term objectives



## Long-term objectives



**The main project team consisted of the following people:**

**Project Researchers:** Marilyn Van Bibber (*Selkirk First Nation*), AICBR, Norma Kassi (*Vuntut Gwitch'in*), AICBR, Molly Pratt [*data analysis and report writing*], AICBR, and Molly Payne [*literature search*], Quest University

**Advisory Committee:** Lucy McGinty, *Selkirk First Nation*; Elder Danny Joe, *Selkirk First Nation*; Jeremy Harper, *Selkirk First Nation*; Roger Alfred, *Selkirk First Nation*; Eugene Alfred, *Selkirk First Nation*; George Magrum, *Selkirk First Nation*

*\*Additional Advisory Committee members:* Milly Johnson, *Selkirk First Nation*; Ellie Marcotte *Selkirk First Nation*; Lori Joe, *Selkirk First Nations staff member (Teslin-Tlingit)*; Emma Alfred, *Selkirk First Nation*; William Sidney, *Selkirk First Nation staff member (Teslin-Tlingit)*; Keifer Johnny, *Selkirk First Nation*

**Community Research Coordinators:** Rebecca Roberts and Jessica Alfred, *Selkirk First Nation*

**Youth Researchers:** Colton Blackjack and Daniel Tuck, *Selkirk First Nation*

**Project Management:** Albert Drapeau and Lucy McGinty, *Selkirk First Nation*; Katelyn Friendship & Jody Butler Walker, AICBR; Sandra Roach, *Selkirk First Nation*

## THE PROJECT TEAM

This project was a joint partnership between Selkirk First Nation Government and the Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research (AICBR). Selkirk First Nation citizens were involved at every stage of the research project and took on a number of roles in administration, advisory, research, and youth participation. An Advisory Committee consisting of Selkirk First Nations citizens, Elders and representatives from SFN Lands and Resources and SFN Health and Social worked closely with the researchers from AICBR to ensure the research activities were carried out in an ethical manner. The last months of the project saw a change in SFN Executive Directors with Sandra Roach replacing Albert Drapeau. The Eliza Van Bibber School, Pelly Crossing and Bringing Youth Towards Equality (BYTE) youth facilitators from Whitehorse, collaborated with youth activities.



# THE RESEARCH PROCES

We used a mixed methods approach of community-based research and Indigenous methodologies. Indigenous methodology means to listen deeply to the community and follow the community's direction. In addition we paid close attention to the guidance of the Elders and followed their wisdom. The following is a list of the key methods and principles used in this research project:

## ***Advisory Committee:***

First and foremost, the project established an Advisory Committee of community people that were strategically picked to ensure collaboration with other SFN initiatives, such as salmon enhancement projects.

## ***Community involvement:***

The community was informed initially about the project through a community newsletter article and the 2015 May Gathering. Later, a community-wide meeting was held to provide project updates and gather input on ways to promote youth involvement at summer fish camps. Two presentations were made to SFN Chief and Council to provide updates and to discuss potential funding. Many community members were involved in the summer fish camp interviews as often more than one person sat in on the interviews. Several more community people were involved in holding the winter fish camp including EVB School, local coordinator, volunteers and workers who drove the skidoos, student chaperones, youth workers, camp workers, traditional knowledge teachers, RCMP, and SFN Chief.

## ***Youth participation:***

**Capacity building** of youth was a main focus throughout the project. The fish camp interview involved two youth researchers and the winter fish camp (WFC) employed youth workers to gain experience and knowledge of running a WFC. High school students, grades 9-12, from the Eliza Van Bibber School came to the WFC and learned about seasonal fish camp traditions.

## ***Youth training sessions:***

- Community-based research methods (2 days)
- Youth mental health - Healthy Minds (1 day)
- Climate change - Our Land (1 day)
- Winter fish camp (4 days)
- Life skills/Communication (throughout)

Mental health and climate change topics can be devastating and crippling, thus the focus of these trainings were on the positive role traditional knowledge can play in the lives of Selkirk's youth.

## ***Youth focus group:***

While at the Tatla'mun Lake winter fish camp, the high school students brainstormed ideas on future camp curriculum. Under-ice fish netting, youth workshops, trapping, cross-country skiing and ski-doo safety and maintenance were some examples of future winter camp activities.

## ***Fish camp and Elder interviews:***

Ten semi-structured interviews with family members were held at fish camps along the Pelly and Yukon Rivers. The youth researchers mainly conducted these interviews; notes were taken and conversations were recorded. Additional interviews were completed with select Elders recommended by the Advisory Committee.





### Action oriented:

The direction from the Elders and the Advisory Committee was to produce action rather than a report that would end up on somebody's shelf. It was agreed that a fish camp guidebook would be created that focused on the variety of traditional knowledge and practice teachings that a youth could learn at the fish camp. Specific approaches were developed in collaboration with the community to ensure engagement and ownership.

### Literature search:

The focus of the literature search was on the role of traditional knowledge and practice in promoting youth-Elder relationships and youth mental health. The Committee advised that there already exists much research on Yukon River salmon as well as climate change in the North. Due to the limited amount of time allocated to this aspect of the project, it was recommended that the project focus on youth and preserving traditional practice.

## Focus group and interview questions

The questions asked were meant to gather information about the benefit of fish camps and ways we can continue the traditional practice of fish camps even when there are no fish. *Please find a full list of questions in Appendix 3.* A list of suggestions made by the community on how to encourage youth to come to fish camp is included in *Appendix 4.*

Prior to focus groups and interviews, participants were given an outline of the project and purpose of the interview/discussion and were asked to review and sign a consent form. The quotes in this report come from the summer fish camp interview, winter fish camp, Elders, and Advisory Committee. The information that was collected was compiled and analyzed by grouping similar responses into themes and drawing connections between them. There are 6 themes, which are described below in the *Research Results* section as “*the 6 approaches to adapt to climate change*”. These themes were presented to the community and later reviewed and approved by the Advisory Committee. These are the findings that will go forward to the First Nation.



## THE RESEARCH RESULTS

*What are the main concerns around climate change and how must we adapt so that can we continue protecting our homelands and preserving our culture?*

Salmon is the traditional food most savored by Tutchone people. There is no replacement for our salmon or the traditions of harvesting at the fish camp. There is a long history of the annual migration to the fish camps along the Pelly and Yukon Rivers. In times past, groups of families joined together and spent the summer fishing and drying salmon, after a long winter being at smaller camps.



There have been noticeable changes in plant growth patterns and declining fish populations. Cost of living is rising, which places further strain on people's ability to access adequate, safe and nutritious food as well as their ability to get out on the land to hunt, fish and trap for the traditional lengths of time. We worry for the younger generation especially; we need to teach them how to survive in this rapidly changing world. Cultural preservation is something very important to our people. The age-old practice of fish camps must be sustained in order to keep our traditions for the wellbeing and security of the next generations. This is our way to prepare for the changing climate within our homeland. It is also our way of healing from the traumas of residential school.

Fish camps are an important part of the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of our people. There are lots of things we can teach at fish camps even when there are no fish.

***First Nations peoples have always lived off the land and so we can adapt to these challenges.***



*"And your grandpa, your grandma — from way back...they travelled on this land. You know what they pray for? They ask, "I sure hope my grandchildren to be able to walk [this land] like I did"... So, today, our job is to do the same. So, for me — for my grandson — his kid, his kid, his kid — they go seven generations. All these generations — they should be able to walk and hopefully to be in this fish camp where I am, years from now."*

## WAYS TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The practice of both summer and winter fish camps and keeping our traditions is vital to adapting to climate change and maintaining the nutrition from fresh fish in our diet. Selkirk First Nation has already been on a path to revitalize Northern Tutchone traditional laws, document and teach our unique heritage and get back on the land. We have programs to monitor the fish and wildlife on our territory and to find ways of protecting our natural resources. There is no doubt that Selkirk people are concerned about climate. There is also a determination and resilience to meet the challenges we face today.

We gathered ideas from the fish camps, the Elders, the youth and the community into six strategic approaches to adapting to the future of our land and culture. ***If we work together and build off of our current initiatives, with our strengths in mind, we can ensure our children and our children's children will be able to walk this land as our ancestors did before us.*** The goal is to build on the efforts that are already going on in our community to protect our cultural heritage for the benefit of our youth. We believe deeply that our traditional knowledge will help us through the hard times that are coming.



### **6 APPROACHES TO ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE:**

**Keeping Our Traditions**  
**Connecting Youth to the Land**  
**Raising our Voice**  
**Thinking Outside the Box**  
**Decision-Making**  
**Food Security**



## Keeping Our Traditions

Preserving culture while adapting to climate change is very important to Selkirk people. Some of the suggested ways in which we can connect back to our traditions is through following Dooli law, supporting and celebrating cultural activities, passing on our traditional knowledge and skills, and practicing traditional principles and values such as sharing. By promoting our traditional laws, culture, knowledge, skills and values, we can harness the strengths of our ancestors and build resiliency against the impacts of climate change.

*“Our laws — we have to follow it every day — Indian law. They call it “Dooli” laws — our traditional laws. Those were followed every day. We use that one we call “principle” — “traditional principles”. You respect, you care, you share and you teach your young ones, right up to adults — the ones that need to learn those things.”*

### **Dooli law**

**Dooli laws** are our traditional laws; passing on and following these traditional teachings is an important way in which we can protect our land and show respect for all living things.

*“Respect is the most important traditional law.”*

### **Support cultural activities**

**Support May Gathering:** The May Gathering is where Elders, youth and community members come together from three Tutchone communities to learn how the fish and what the wildlife are doing; it is a time to celebrate Tutchone culture and knowledge.

**Time off for cultural activities:** Designate a time on the yearly calendar to bring all families out on the land for hunting and fishing.

**Support fish camps:** In order for fish camps to continue they need to be well supported by SFN government; more program funding will help to ensure these activities can continue. We could hire youth and/or a bull cook to help Elders set up and coordinate the camps.

*“If they say, “Okay, for one month out of the year, we are going to take all our families to the land. We’re going to introduce all our families and their children and the young people to the land,” they can do that...”*





## **Focusing on traditional knowledge and skills**

**Support Selkirk Spirit Dancers:** **Arts, dance and culture** help build resiliency and allow us to share our stories about the land, practice traditional ceremony and encourage respect. Selkirk Spirit Dancers are truly an example of the power of traditional practices in promoting youth wellness. Making regalia, learning and practicing the traditional songs make the performances a community effort. The songs and dance performances lift up the spirit of both the dancers and the audience. This dance group was developed out of a partnership between Selkirk First Nation, the school and the community.



**Teach hunting, fishing and trapping:** Hunting, fishing and trapping are all part of our culture and identity; it is important to pass on these skills as we face an uncertain future.

**Learn medicines:** Preserving the knowledge of our traditional medicines is another way we can adapt to a changing world. Part of teaching people about medicine is to learn to have respect for everything.

*“Well, just the tradition, you know. We got to keep that. The more we learn about our traditional ways, you know, things going to work. Going to work better for you. You learn how to fish; you learn how to hunt — all that, you got to learn. How safety — rifle, you handle — all that kind you got to learn.”*



## **Practicing traditional values and principles**

**Learn and practice the four principles of respect, caring, sharing, and teaching** that guide the Tutchone traditional practices. These principles and values along with the Dooli traditional laws are what all the teachings are based upon.

Practicing the **First Fish Ceremony** is about sharing the first salmon with others and saying thank you for the return of the salmon to the Pelly River. It is a time of celebrating those values that are our culture. Encouraging and bringing back the many different ceremonies is both a healing practice and a celebration of our ancient ways.

Encourage the traditional ways of sharing with the **whole community** so that nobody goes hungry. Sharing is part of the circle of life that connects us to past and future generations; by passing down traditional knowledge from our ancestors, we are sharing the gifts given to us from past generations. Just as we must share our knowledge, we must also share the land and its resources with our young; we must be mindful of the past and of the future with every step we take on this earth.



*“Sharing means each household, consider how many people live in each house, single house. Every household, every Elder, every young family...should get salmon. It is respect. Give widow family member fish, have to look after all family. It is part of the tradition. People come – don’t want to ask. Got to share what you have. People used to go along the river, sharing and trading with camps.”*

*“After you learn it [traditional knowledge] and you do it, and then you keep it behind your mind. When you become older and into Elders, that’s when you start teaching. You start teaching, not only your family, but others too — everybody. That’s why they call it a concept “sharing” because you care for your own people. You don’t want them to go in a different direction in life. That’s how all the people were raised long time ago.”*



## Connecting Youth to the Land

It is an important part of our culture to think about the welfare of future generations. We must try to rebuild connection between youth and the traditional culture and values. In order to do this we need to educate our young, promote mental health and wellbeing and bring youth to the land. There are a lot of competing priorities in the lives of many young people today; we need to communicate with each other, learn from each other's wisdom and encourage youth to put down video games and get outside.

*"Leave behind boredom. You can be taught so much. Run into animals. Reconnecting is important... Now we are disconnected because we stay in one place. We can teach youth by having a little circle talk – here [at the fish camp]. I want to hear you. If youth have problems – may be able to share. And always say thank you if they give you advice."*

### **Education**

**Teach youth:** It is important for parents to teach their young about traditional lifestyles and laws (Dooli). The younger generations will be hardest hit by climate change and so they need to know how to adapt and live off the land.

*"Kids have to learn lots to survive."*

**Elders as best teachers:** Elders possess the traditional knowledge of the land and of our culture. We need to utilize their knowledge before it is lost. We need to talk more to our young about how past generations learned from Elders and that preserving culture is important.

*We need to encourage mutual respect. Youth must respect their Elders and Elders must respect youth. Having good, non-judgmental communication will help create an inclusive, inviting environment for youth to come and learn in.*

### **Youth mental health and wellbeing**

**Promote happiness:** Being out in nature is also good for your mental health because it reduces stress. Many people feel happier when they are connected to nature.



**Practice Storytelling:** Youth appreciate traditional storytelling; this makes camps fun and interesting for them. Storytelling is a good way to pass on knowledge about land, culture and life. It is a way to build strong connections across the age groups and among families.



**Hire youth to work at fish and hunting camps:** Working on the land is good for mental, physical and spiritual wellness. Connecting work, hunting or fishing to ceremony helps us stay connected to our culture and to other species. We must build respect for the land in order to protect it. Hire youth to set up the camps with Elders, youth need to be part of developing the economy. We can also provide incentives (draw prizes) and host youth workshops.



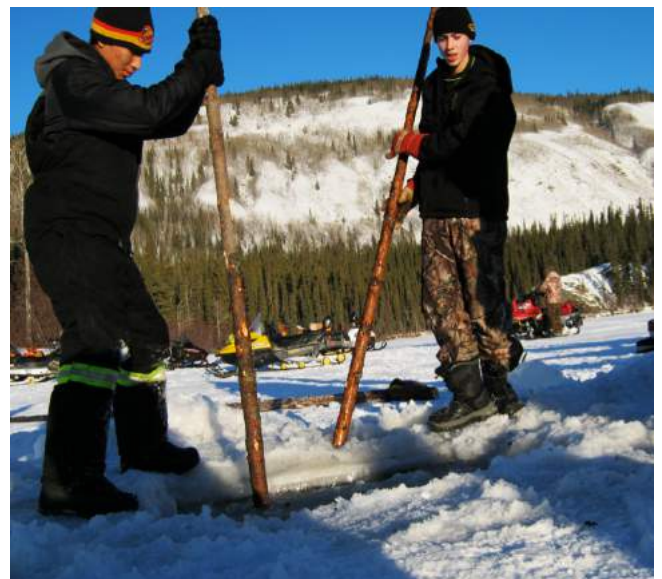
*“Here, you work. You have to cut your wood, prepare your wood, make your fires. You’re always busy here...and that’s good for your mental health and your physical, spiritual. Like when we get our fish and our moose, we always have a little potlatch ceremony, like, and we give gratitude for that fish. Like, we offer tobacco and stuff.”*

## **Getting out on the land**

**Reconnect to the land and traditional values:** Going back to the land not only helps ease mental, physical and spiritual health but it ensures we are continuing to adapt to the land just like our ancestors did.

*Part of reconnecting to the land means being present and leaving behind phones and music. Involving technology in a positive way through taking pictures or producing film can allow us to see fish camps through the eyes of our youth.*

*“We work together as a family here. Working together as a family is really important to build trust amongst each other— you always have your aunties to train you and you have your grandparents. It builds strong bonds between the family members and the kids can play freely and they’re really happy. When you have a really good camp put together, the children will be really happy and people — the Elders are happy; everybody is happy in the camp. And happiness helps your mentality. You’re not sad all the time and you’re together and supporting each other.”*





**Develop an annual winter fish camp program for youth:** Tatla'mun is known as the "bread basket" of the Tutchone people. Our ancestors fished, hunted and gathered medicines at this lake. Today a large wilderness camp is waiting for our people, to come to hunt, to fish and to feel the healing nature of the land. It is a perfect place to take youth each year to learn such things as setting a net under the ice, hunting, trapping, snaring rabbits, preparing traditional food, winter survival, ski-doo maintenance, and sports such as cross country skiing. Traditional Dooli laws are also practiced to connect our youth to the ancient ways of being one with the land. It is an opportunity to blend traditions with classroom teachings such as sciences, art, language, and writing.



**Eliza Van Bibber School:** The new Outdoor Education Program at EVB School is a good example of how we are bringing youth out the land. They are learning culture and traditional land skills, including survival skills. We must ensure this program and programs like it remain supported.

**Fish Camp Guidebook:** A fish camp guidebook is being created from this project to facilitate conversations around activities to do at fish camp when there are no fish, connect youth to the land and enable sharing of traditional knowledge and skills traditionally taught at fish camp.

**Reconnect while staying safe:** Being out on the land for the traditional length of time that our ancestors did, means longer exposure to potentially harsh weather. With hotter summers and erratic weather patterns, we have to protect each other, especially our young, by making sure they are wearing *appropriate clothing*, *protecting their eyes* against the sun with sunglasses and keeping them *in the shade*. We can also teach traditional skills for safety.



## Raising Our Voice

We are at the forefront of climate change and food insecurity. Our health is in jeopardy and so our voices are important. If we want our voices heard and action on issues that are important to us, we need to speak up. We need to speak out against activities like overfishing that impact our salmon populations and support Indigenous voices in leadership. By talking to each other and telling our stories we can help to raise awareness of issues that are important, particularly about climate change and the need to preserve our culture.

Research that combines traditional ways of knowing as well as science can help us achieve our goals.

*“Climate change — well, the First Nation people have always adapted to that because we live off of the land and we have to talk about it at our General Assemblies so that we all know.”*

### **We are leaders**

We are at the forefront to climate change and therefore **we are the leaders** who must tell the world what we are seeing. Our traditional principles have kept us connected to the land, the water and to each other. We must protect our salmon and way of life by speaking up at the local, regional, national, and international level.

### **Do good research**

We need to do **research that combines Indigenous and scientific knowledge**. Gathering the knowledge of our Elders is a matter of urgency. With the passing of each Elder, we lose a wealth of knowledge.



When it comes to research **we need data and ongoing information** about our salmon. Gaining the knowledge, scientific and traditional, **will help us to raise our awareness and ensure that the leaders hear our voices.**

*“Write about it; do reports with statistics.”*

## **Fishing regulations on open sea fishing**

**Over fishing/commercial fishing:** Our people are very concerned with the level of overfishing in the oceans and in the lower Yukon River; fewer fish are making it back to our rivers. We need to call for increased regulation of ocean fishing, especially commercial fishing.

## **Telling our stories**

On the simplest level, **we can talk to each other.** We have general assemblies to talk about community issues and we can discuss with each other out at camps. Raising our voices and telling our stories is an important pathway to healing and reconciliation. It is a way to make change happen.



*“Talk to each other about it... Like, be active in [Aboriginal Peoples Television Network] national news and tell your stories. You know, tell your stories to the world on how we do things so that they know... We’re all in protest right now in Idle No More. I’m active in that, eh. You know, I phoned up — I phoned up all these Chiefs and I said, “What are you guys doing for Idle No More?”*”

*“There’s processes in the government —it’s just a matter of getting consensus from everybody and it’s okay.”*





## Thinking Outside the Box

There are a lot of things we are already doing to adapt to climate change but we need to continue to think outside the box and utilize our creativity. We must be proactive in determining solutions and there are many ways we can do this. We can look to the past for ideas and bring back traditional practices such as trading and sharing to respond to present challenges as well as keep fish camps going. We can change our habits but also need to expand our thinking; we need to work together nation-to-nation and also try new things, such as tourism. Working within a framework of tourism though has to be done responsibly and can be guided by our traditional principles and values.

*"We have to also come up with other ideas. We possibly can trade with other people. The Northern Tutchone people used to be traders a long time ago. I think we have to look elsewhere. Who may have a little more fish than we do? So, we're totally not beaten yet. We just have to open up our horizons..."*

### **Trading**

**We must expand our horizons and revitalize our trading history** so that we can continue accessing traditional foods in the future. Northern Tutchone people used to be traders a long time ago. We can trade with other native communities, exchanging what we have for fish. These are the kind of options we can look to if we open up our horizons for finding solutions.

### **Changing our habits and expand our thinking**

We have already been **changing our fishing habits** to help counteract climate change and overharvesting by *eating other fish, cutting back on fishing and releasing the [live] females in the net*. Other ways we can do more include such things as clearing the creeks, so salmon can get to spawning areas, monitoring the spawning salmon and clearing beaver dams.

## 2015 SFN Salmon Harvest

Due to this year's low Chinook salmon numbers, SFN is recommending a total catch of 15 Fish for each camp.

*(One 50ft net per camp)*

*"And keeping things clean is very important for the fish. Keeping the water clean."*

### **Fish Camps**

**Keep fish camps going:** Fish camps are more than just a time to fish, they connect family, bring people together on the land, especially Elders and youth, and they feed the spirit. There are lots of things we can do at fish camp even if we are not able to fish.



We can:

1. Tell our **stories**, speak our **language** and **sing songs**
2. Learn/teach **survival and navigation** techniques
3. **Hunt and trap** (and/or dry meat)
4. **Sew, cook** and **gather berries**
5. **Hike** and teach about **how to use the land properly**

In order to keep our traditions alive, we need to encourage more people to go to fish camps and continue finding ways to carry on doing something meaningful there. The community and Selkirk First Nations government can organize these harvest camps collaboratively.

**Establish a teaching fish camp:** Many families don't have access to a traditional fish camp. It is important that all citizens have access to this important traditional activity. One solution is to set up a teaching fish camp so that those who want to participate but who may not necessarily possess the knowledge on setting up a camp and running it could learn. This way all people can participate if they want to. In addition, we can involve youth to document the traditional knowledge that is passed down through video and photography projects.



*"I tell them it's time for action now. Last year, we voluntarily just went ahead and left the salmon, eh. We didn't bother [fishing]. Nobody did last summer, I don't think. We just stayed here."*

## **Improving inter-governmental relations**

**Working with other governments** is important, especially the other First Nations, the territorial and federal governments and our neighbours in Alaska. **Climate change knows no boundaries** and our fish have to travel across international borders to reach us, so we need to collaborate on fish management strategies (especially in coastal areas) in order for all peoples to continue enjoying a fish-plentiful diet for generations to come.

*"They can do better negotiating with the American government because our fish have to go through a different country before they get here. So, they should be negotiating with the government [there] — so that we have the same amount of care for the fish...there's no solution unless we have good negotiations and unless we have support from the American government — the Alaskan government."*

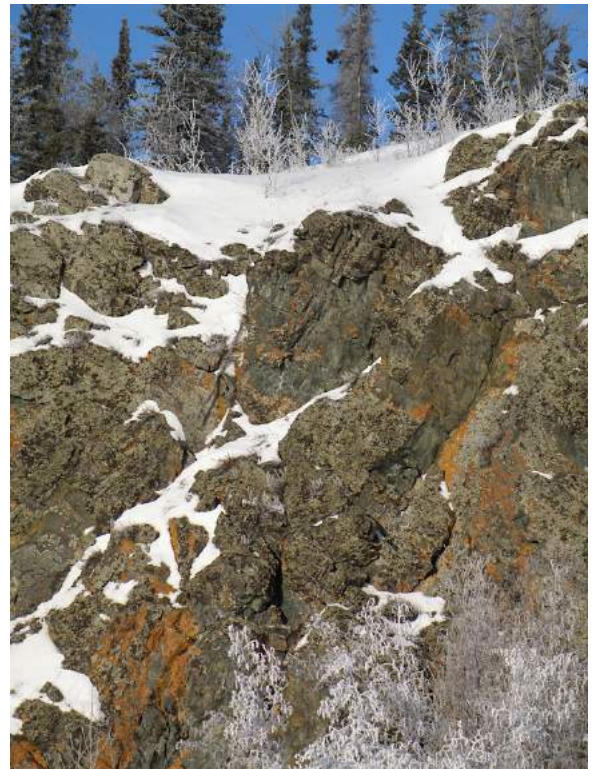
## **Promoting tourism & employment to assist with food security**

One suggested strategy is to **promote our nation's traditional arts and culture and the pristine nature of our territory.** By encouraging people to play stick games and get involved in singing and drumming, we celebrate our culture, tell our stories and help to keep these art forms alive. We can offer guided hunting and fishing adventures to those visiting our territory and partner with photographers to take pictures of our beautiful land. Another idea that was brought up was a riverside restaurant where tourists could enjoy traditional foods.



*"And working with tourism — that's really important. The tourists actually tell us they wanted a restaurant beside the river and they wanted to have a little boat ride and they want to come and eat a little bit of salmon or fish. Like, that's what they said, "How come you guys don't make that up here?"*

*"Tourism is really, really awesome. It's for people to come here and photograph, like, the pristine water that we have. Like, it's so important to tell people that there are birds here that migrate every single year. **We have to look after them.** Look after their habitat where they nest. And the caribou — we got to look after their habitat so they can continue on the cycle. It's really important to look after the land. We've always been doing it and we should always do it continuously."*



## Decision-Making

Having the power to make our own laws is one of our nation's strengths. We can make our own decisions and do what is best for us. If climate change and continuing our fish camps are made a priority, we can make sure things are accomplished. Some of the ways in which we are already active with self-government in the areas of environmental preservation are with fish management and research; we need to continue doing this good work, managing our lands well and strengthening existing partnerships.

*"We signed a self-government agreement. In the past DIA [Department of Indian Affairs] told us what to do. Now we are responsible for our self. If we say we are going to take all families out on the land for one month...we can."*

### **Fish management**

**We need to negotiate with other governments and other countries** to speak up for our salmon. We have the rights; we have self-government. We can also work in partnership and collaboration with the fisheries department on coming up with new ways to manage our fish populations. Some ideas include:

1. Start our own **fish hatchery**
2. Be proactive in **clearing creeks**
3. **Build channels** for fish to pass through when water is low
4. **Get kids involved** (i.e. partner with EVB School)
5. Our own **salmon management plan**

*"Selkirk First Nation can clear creeks for spawning, get our own monitoring in place of creeks and Pelly River, measure water quality, start our own fish hatchery – can do that with the kids at EVB school."*



We can also work **with other users of the Pelly River** on conservation, especially cross border users who may be the cause of diminished populations reaching Yukon river systems. We have to work together with other users to ensure that we all can enjoy fish now and in the future.

### **Managing our lands well**

**Staying strong in our land claims law** is one of the ways we can help ensure proper land management. We need to make the decisions on when and how much to fish, based on our data, our own monitoring and our own traditional knowledge. We know our lands and we can teach people how to use land properly.



**Limit resource development:** We must tighten mining regulations and fight against companies who contaminate our waters in order to preserve our environment and culture for future generations.

*“Need to be more strong in lands claims law.”*

### **Doing our own research**

Many people see the role that **monitoring and research** plays in adapting to climate change.

**Leading these activities ourselves** is an important part of self-government. Activities are already going on at Selkirk around fish monitoring and salmon enhancement; further activities we can do are:

1. **Tracking seasons**
2. **Watching the weather**
3. **Monitoring** creek/river, plant and animal health



## Food Security

The definition of food security is when all people at all times have access to enough food that is affordable, nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate(4).

**Indigenous food systems** consist of all the land, air, water, soil and culturally important plants, animals and fungi species. Indigenous peoples around the world have relied on these elements for survival over thousands of years. The parts of the system are inseparable(5,6).

The picture of food security is not just how food is grown or how it is eaten but also how it is disposed. It all plays into the food system, which we ourselves are a part of; we need to do our part to ensure the connections between all parts of the system remain in order for us to sustain all the land, air, water, soil and living species we rely on into the future. We can include all the things we are doing right now and build on our strengths to create a comprehensive food strategy for our people.

### **Feed more traditional foods to our young**

**Feeding traditional foods to our young** at a very early age and encouraging youth to eat more traditional foods will help improve health and wellness, while ensuring a connection to the land.



### **Keeping the camp clean**

**Managing waste by recycling and cleaning up our garbage** will help to limit the impact we have on our environment. People are already starting to incorporate recycling into camp life; we also know that less garbage means less bear activity so cleaning up our garbage is both good for the environment and improves the safety of our community.

**Our dooli laws teach of respect; respect the plants and animals, respect the people and respect the land.**

### **Promote community gardens**

**Community garden and greenhouse:** For the past few years the community has had a community garden and greenhouse project. It provides short-term employment for community members and produces a big harvest of vegetables. It is an important example of community self-sufficiency.



Source: (7)

*“One thing, we’re really fortunate in the Yukon. We’re fortunate because we have practically 24-hour sunlight and we have really rich grounds to make a garden. Teaching the kids how to make a garden and actually sustain yourself is really important. You have to plant your seeds early in the spring so that they germinate and you can do that inside and then when the sun comes, you just put it outside in the garden right away. Like, the whole community should be doing it. We don’t even need to bring those vegetables in. We should actually grow them ourselves. Make it here and teach them how to do it. ”*

## **Compensation**

**Giving out fish:** Compensation for loss of fish is important but must be done according to traditional ways of sharing, meaning that everyone who needs and wants fish has access to it. Currently fish are only given out to active fish camps but not everyone can get out on the land to benefit. We need to store the fish properly, distribute it with care and only give out the amount that is needed so none goes to waste.

**Giving out fish not only keeps people healthy but it also helps ensure land foods are in the diet, which reduces the need to supplement with expensive store-bought foods.** If we can get out on the land to fish and share what we catch it will help counteract this financial burden.



## **Eating fish is also good for the mind, body and spirit.**

When you have a good meal of healthy fish, you feel physically and emotionally satisfied. Fish is full of nutrients and helps fight against diabetes. Fishing brings us closer to nature and is one of the ways that people can stay strong mentally and spiritually.

## **Expand harvesting to small game**

There are fewer large animals than in the past so we must **expand our harvesting to more small game**. We will still be getting out on the land, learning traditional skills and knowledge and having healthy traditional foods to eat.

## **Community food strategy**

All this wealth of information points to the need to create a comprehensive food security strategy for our people.





## CONCLUSION

This community-based research project found not only a deep commitment to continuing the practice of the summer and winter fish camp but a resilience to do so in the face of changing times and an uncertain future, even if there are fewer or no salmon returning to our rivers. As a self-governing nation, Selkirk is determined to be part of the solutions by making decisions on the future of salmon in the Yukon and Pelly Rivers, rather than simply following the direction of other agencies and governments.

In order to do this, fish camps have a significant role to play. The traditional skills and practice of our people as well as the fundamental principles that guide these traditions are passed from one generation to another at the fish camps. Fish camp is where families come together to live off the land; everyone pitches in to run the camp and youth learn life skills and communications. Most importantly, by being on the land, Selkirk people can see first hand what changes are taking place and find solutions to challenges we are all facing. The ways that we can adapt to climate change and preserve our culture are through **keeping our traditions, connecting youth to the land, thinking outside the box** in order to find solutions, **raising our voice** as Selkirk First Nations people, utilizing our strengths in self-government to **make decisions**, and focusing on **food security** so that we can ensure our people can continue living off the land now and in the future. Because of these changing times, it is crucial that we redouble our efforts to ensure our young learn traditional practices, skills and values that have kept us strong as Selkirk First Nation people for generations.

*“Traditions have to keep going. It is our identity and who we are”*



# APPENDICES

## *Appendix 1. Materials Produced*

- A brief literature review on climate change and mental health of Indigenous youth in Northern Canada
- 2 youth workshops on climate change, health, and traditional practices of Selkirk people
- Selkirk First Nation climate change adaptation plan that focuses specifically on the role of fish camps in youth mental health
- Youth photos developed into fish camp guidebook
- A fish camp guidebook
- Presentation of findings and analysis at community gathering
- Newsletter report
- Activity Report for Health Canada
- Video

## Appendix 2. Timeline of Events

<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Deliverables/Outputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>
July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Confirm work plan</li> <li>• One page communiqué on project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish relationship with SFN project manager and Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Initial community meeting</li> <li>• Discuss and confirm work plan</li> <li>• Prepare communication plan (frequency of updates and reporting)</li> <li>• Prepare one page summary of project for newsletter</li> <li>• Meet with youth.</li> <li>• Prepare and submit documents for ethics review</li> </ul>
July - August 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature search</li> <li>• Confirm Indigenous methodology</li> <li>• Knowledge translation with youth on community-based research, climate change, and mental health wellness</li> <li>• Youth engagement and training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete brief literature search</li> <li>• Meeting with Elders to confirm interview questions</li> <li>• Education and training sessions with youth</li> <li>• Update report and information sharing with Advisory Committee</li> </ul>
July – August, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community interviews in Pelly or fish camps</li> <li>• Family interviews at fish camps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct interviews with key informants (5)</li> <li>• Family interviews by youth (10)</li> <li>• Present update to community and receive input</li> </ul>
September – December 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Computer/thematic analysis</li> <li>• Adaptation strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update report and information sharing with Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Renegotiate extra funding</li> </ul>
January 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth photos on wellness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth took pictures used in guidebook</li> </ul>
January – March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft report</li> <li>• Guidebook</li> <li>• Winter Fish Camp</li> <li>• Photographs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focused meeting with Elders and youth</li> <li>• Draft final report</li> <li>• Present findings to community at community feast</li> <li>• Review with Advisory Committee</li> <li>• Review with community</li> <li>• Develop adaptation strategy with youth input</li> </ul>
March 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community knowledge translation</li> <li>• Newsletter article</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community discussions on research report and adaptation plan</li> <li>• Print reports</li> </ul>



### **Appendix 3. Focus Group and Interview Questions**

1. What is the history of this fish camp? How long has your family been coming to fish camp? How many people come to stay? To visit?
2. Can you describe the importance of being at the fish camp?
3. How can Selkirk people continue practice our traditions during this time of no fishing? Is there something meaningful we can do at the fish camps?
4. What role does the fish camps play in promoting mental wellness amongst Selkirk youth? What can we do at the fish camps to promote youth mental health when there is no fish?
5. How can Selkirk First Nation or other governments support or encourage families to continue the practice of staying at their fish camps during the fishing season?
6. How is climate change affecting fish camps? What can we do about it?
7. What can we do about the loss of salmon? Does the government have a responsibility to mitigate the loss of salmon?
8. How can other cultural practices be strengthened at the fish camps and in the communities

## Appendix 4. Encouraging Youth to Fish Camps

### *How can youth be encouraged to come to fish camps?*

The fish camp survey as well as guidance from the Advisory Committee raised the concern that the older youth were not coming to the fish camps as often as the younger children. They were either not interested, had summer jobs or they only came out and visited the camp but did not stay for longer periods. Therefore, we sought ideas from community members of all ages on the ways that youth can be encouraged to come to fish camps. At a community meeting in August, a booth was set up and everyone was encouraged to write down one or more suggestions on how to encourage youth to come to the fish camps. In recognition for their ideas, raffles were drawn.

### **The following ideas came directly from the community:**

- Start young, in elementary school.
- Teach more culture in school.
- Have a permanent culture camp for youth.
- Story telling at fish camps around campfire.
- More fish camp interesting for them.
- Encourage them.
- More family members come together/get involved.
- The families at fish camp should teach the youth and kids how to live off the land; teach them how to:
  - Cut fish/check fish net/make fish net
  - Chop wood
  - Keep fire going
  - Set rabbit snares or trap for gophers
  - Respect the land: never walk over net or play with fish eyes
  - Tell stories
  - Cook
- Use cameras and laptops to show fish camps today and see through youths' eyes.
- Hold youth meetings about fish camps.
- Do our best to restore the traditional values of harvesting and family roles and responsibilities; build family unity.
- Have more on-the-land practices, training with youth on outdoor survival, harvesting, etc.
- Pay them.
- Do not let them take their phones or music with them; tell them to leave it at home.
- Hire bull cook to cut dry meat like moose, beaver, and fish (whitefish and salmon).
- Have bull cook helper to set up camp:
  - Set net
  - Set tent up
  - Make cache
- Instil traditional values (by their parents and peers).
- Have more family, particularly parent involvement.
- The way it works in my family is that the mothers, grandparents, and fathers take us out since we were young. We get used to it and enjoy it. Also the family needs to keep busy: taking down wasp nests, fishing, swimming, cutting salmon, and playing card games.

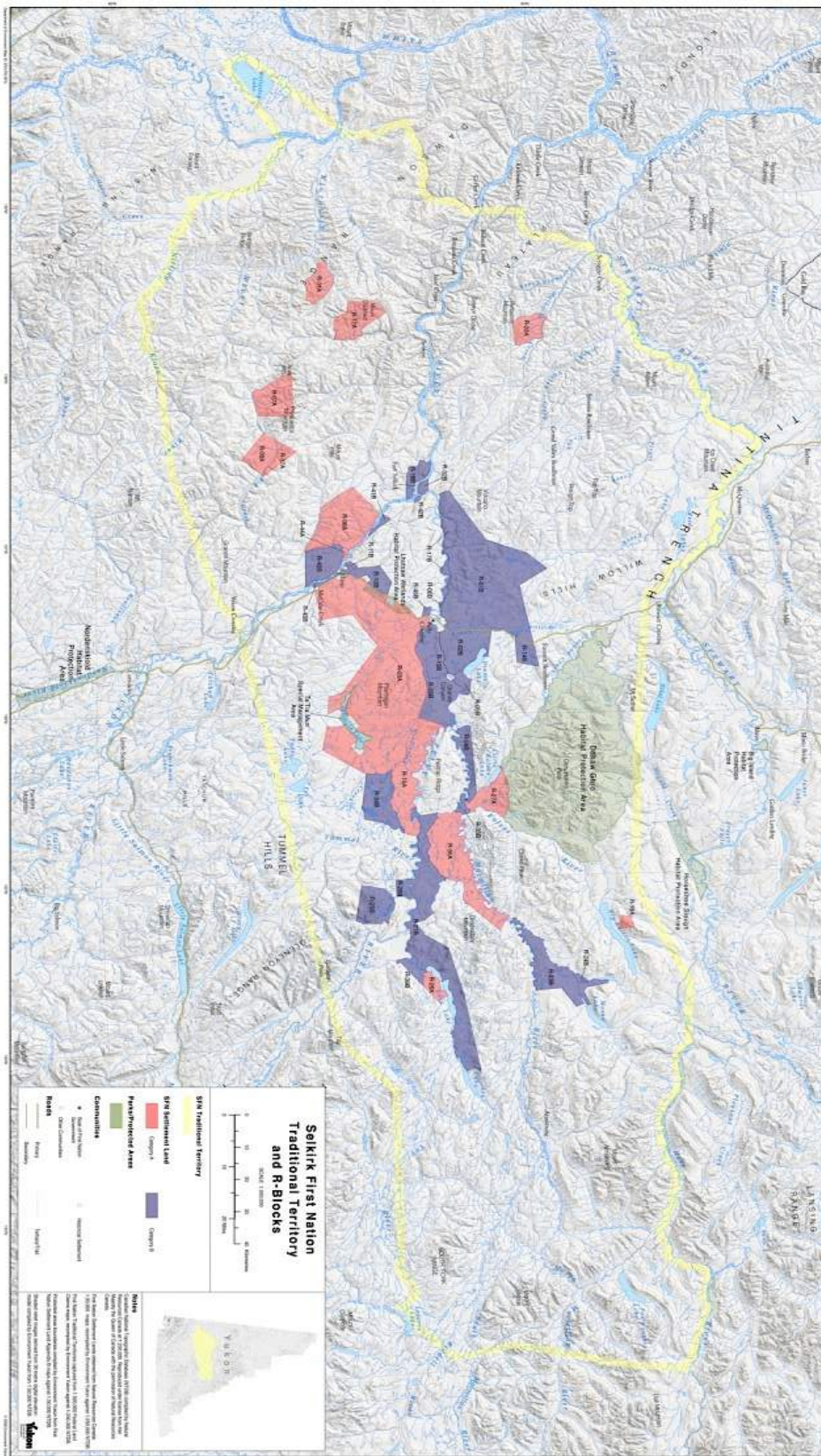
- Have the hired students to help the Elders at fish camp for the afternoon. Have a fish camp for youth camp to learn fishing and trapping and hunting: Youth culture camp. They can have sewing classes, art classes in the evening; they can learn to fish/hunt also.
- The children should be encouraged by family
- All starts from home. Kids learn from family. Family should be taking family out fishing, hunting all the time. All starts from home...how kids are raised.
- Families should need to be taking more responsibility to talk and share their knowledge. There should be traditional pursuits for a week out on the land or fish camps, hunting.
- Have a workshop for all youth to encourage them to keep our traditions going for generations to come.
- To have prizes for various days spent at the fish camps
- By teaching them about fish camp.
- Get cultural camp set up;
  - Have Elders there
  - Have the parents to attend with children
  - Have the parents and their children to help set up; and show how to set up their camp at the cultural camp.
- Long ago whether I like it or not, my parents were the boss when I have to go out to fish camp. I had no choice even when I was 15 years old. Parents are the boss they should say who goes to learn their culture and history in fishing or trapping. Kids are not the boss, nor are the teenagers.
- Deal with bigger issues of keeping fish camps going.
- Too many rules. \* Chief and Council need a better plan for fish coming from outside.
- Be positive and keep it fun. Long ago I never thought it was work because I enjoyed it and knew I was learning.
- Talk, talk, and talk to them about family/community values and being self-sufficient.
- Parents should teach their younger children all this traditional activities;
- Hunting, boating,, setting nets with them:)
- Since the youth are not working on jobs – pay would be useful for their spending money: working at camp and learning to earn it.
- Traditional values must be instilled into the youth by parents and family. Too many youth are into social media scene. Fish camps should be social media free.
- Need to practice traditional fishing style, for example, let first run go by and fish the next run.
- The only way youth can be encouraged to go to fish camp is when they are working (summer jobs). They all have to work to go to fish camps. Their job for the day (each day).
- Tell them they have to learn their traditional values so they can teach their siblings and the next generation to come. Tell them that hard time is coming up and we need to keep on harvesting to live off the land.
- The only way, have transportation available with each camp. Select a youth to stay at camp with one worker to help support to help get this going. So the Elder could teach how to find wood, how to turn fish. Mostly family members are working fishing season.
- Tell the youth have important our culture is. Tell them that you will show them how to cut fish. Tell them how you learned from Elders. Tell them how you learn from watching how they do things at fish camp. Tell them stories about you learning from Elders.
- Make it fun. Do a teaching plan. Produce a film – youth could make a film on Elders showing techniques on how to do things.
- Pay them.
- To me, fish camp is a family event where everyone works together to run and set the net, cut the meat and dry and cook the meat. Keeping the camp clean; have time to relax. For youth to become involved in fish camp, you need to involve them and show them what to do. Youth should have a sense of accomplishment from the contributions they make. They should also have a time for relaxation, where



family and friends get together, tell stories, be surrounded with food and sit by the fire. It is about the experience and enjoying the time.

- Elders and people should talk to youth kindly or they don't listen. Elders have to understand youth too. Don't put them down. Make it look interesting for youth. Have good, non-judgmental, respectful Elder there to talk to them. They need strong people to talk to them. Not put them down, its way different (today) from long ago. Youth are heavily into technology, into computers, x-box (360 games), and Facebook; this is a concern, so therefore there needs to be a project for youth involving fish camps. Get them to help out, check fishnet, and maybe pay them too. **Just let them come and learn.**

# Appendix 5. Map of Selkirk First Nation Traditional Territory



Source: (8)

## Appendix 6. Bibliography

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