

**YUKON FISH AND WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT BOARD**



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March 1, 2018

Brian Melanson, President
Yukon Trappers Association

Dear Mr. Melanson,

Re: Yukon Trappers Association involvement in the Trapping Working Group

To begin, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board would like to thank you for your attendance at our February meeting and for your letter delivered February 21, 2018. It is discussions like these, about the future of trapping in the Yukon, that help keep the Board connected to the people on the land who live day to day as stewards of our Fish and Wildlife.

We would like to take this opportunity to address your concerns in the letter regarding the Trapping Working Group. As you know, the Trapping Working Group was initially formed in the early part of 2004 following the 11th Northern Furbearer Conference in Whitehorse. The Working Group has members from the Board and the Teslin, Laberge, Carcross-Tagish, Dawson, Alesk, and Dan Keyi Renewable Resources Councils. The Yukon Trappers Association has also been a member of the Working Group since its inception, represented most often by Grant Redfurn in later years and by Jacques Jobin and Jamie Toole in earlier years. In addition, the Yukon Government has played a significant role in the Working Group, with representation and participation from the Department of Environment and funding and guidance from the Department of Economic Development.

The Working Group's original mandate was to provide direction on a project to stimulate the trapping economy in the Yukon and support Yukon Trappers. To this day, and since our inception we have held true to this mandate. Our earliest objectives included securing funding for a Yukon Fur Strategy, simple brochures to aid Yukon Trappers in obtaining fuel rebates, business discounts for Yukon Trappers, and regulation changes to improve access to Tourist Trapping revenues and longer trap check times for full time employed trappers. As you know, the most recent project for which the Working Group set the stage, included *Maximizing Economic Potential of Trapping In The Yukon*, and the Working Group were funded by Yukon Government Department of Economic Development. Through the direction of the Working Group, the Board took responsibility for administering the funding of the project which totaled \$70,000. While this decision may not seem appropriate now, given the Yukon Trappers Association improved capacity and resources, as you know at the time this decision was made

the YTA was not in a position to receive funding. As mentioned at our February Board meeting, at no time did the Board take administrative costs for administering the funding for the three phases of the project listed above. It was made clear by the Working Group that every cent of the project funding should be placed in trapper's hands and to that we held true.

With regards to your concern with Yukon Trappers Association members being excluded from the Trapping Working Group in recent years, the Working Group has not met in any official capacity since late 2015, as the work on the project since then has been entirely administrative (completed by the Board's office staff in addition to their regular responsibilities), and the strict parameters on how the money should be spent were set. The Chair of the Working Group however met with the Executive of the Board on many occasions to ensure the project was running smoothly and stayed on task. The project consisted of three stages: Offsetting Auction House Fees, Improving Pelt Handling (Workshops), and Distributing Quality Bonuses. The third and final stage was completed in December 2017.

Now that this project is complete, the Working Group will meet again in the near future to discuss what the long-term vision is to support Yukon's trappers. We look forward to this conversation going beyond simply more offsetting of auction house fees or quality bonuses. The Board acknowledges that the Yukon Trappers Association rightfully should be involved in the development and administration of any projects that concern trappers in the Yukon. The Board wishes to reiterate that the Yukon Trappers Association will continue to be a part of the Trapping Working Group moving forward, and we will be in touch regarding planning for any upcoming meetings or future endeavors. Our hope is to meet ideally in spring 2018 when trapping season is over. In the interest of making sure everyone has a space at the table, the Board has invited Mark Callan (Fur and Outfitting Industries Program Advisor), to attend the next Working Group meeting.

With respect to the unFURled project, the Board has been in communication with the North Yukon RRC and has been supportive of their efforts since the beginning, providing advice and support when requested. We recognize the hard work that the RRC and other organizations, including the Yukon Trappers Association, have undertaken in bringing this project to life. We welcome any opportunity for the Board to support unFURled as it continues, and the direction of this project could also be a topic of discussion at the Working Group's upcoming meeting. It has been stated that a Yukon Fur Strategy will be a component of unFURled and that the Board's participation in this is essential. To that end, we will certainly be a part of any initiative that takes a strategic view towards improving the industry and our Trapper Working Group and

its panel of experts can certainly provide good support and insights should the strategy meet one or several of our agendas.

We hope this letter addresses your concerns and clarifies our intent with respect to the Trapping Working Group. Trapping is first and foremost about the culture and lifestyle of being connected to the land. While the industry and economics of trapping are important, they should not overshadow this aspect of stewardship and culture. This is an exciting time – there are many positive options for all of us to work together to build a future for trapping in the Yukon.

Sincerely,



Frank Thomas

Chair, Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board

Cc: Grant Redfurn