

# Our Story

A historical reflection of the  
Carcross/Tagish First Nation's land claims process



by Marilyn Jensen



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Cover photo and photo opposite page 1 courtesy of Brian Shanahan.

*Marilyn Jensen is from the Daklaweidi Clan and a Carcross/Tagish First Nation member. She has been involved with educating the Yukon public about the land claims process for many years. Marilyn was happy to write this book because she felt it was important, at this point in time, to tell this story in the words of the people.*

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## Land tour



*On May 11, 2005, Albert James led a land tour through some of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation Settlement Lands and Special Management Areas. Pictures from the tour are interspersed throughout this book to show some of the land selections that the Carcross/Tagish First Nation members have fought for over the long years of negotiations.*



# Introduction

*“This settlement is for our children, and our children’s children, for many generations to come. All our programs and the guarantee we seek in our settlement are to protect them from a repeat of today’s problems in the future. You cannot talk to us about a bright new tomorrow when so many of our people are cold, hungry and unemployed. A bright new tomorrow is what we feel we can build when we get a fair and just settlement.”*

TOGETHER TODAY FOR OUR CHILDREN TOMORROW, 1973

Yukon First Nations people have been engaged in a long, arduous process of negotiating a modern-day treaty. It began as a people’s vision 32 years ago, with the sole intent of changing their destiny and working towards a better future.

In 1973, Yukon Indian people presented *Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow: A statement of grievances and an approach to settlement* to Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau.

The Carcross/Tagish First Nation was party to this movement and, along the way, has made many contributions towards making this dream a reality.

In the words of the people themselves, this book tells the story of the Tagish, Athapaskan and Inland Tlingit, who belong to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. It is a story of struggle and victory, and of resilience and determination to move forward, regardless of obstacles.

This extraordinary movement began at a time when Yukon First Nations people knew they had to take drastic action in order to ensure their survival. By the 1960s, conditions for many of the Yukon's Aboriginal people had become bleak, with few signs for a better future. Struggling with racism and poverty, and with their spirits almost annihilated by the mission schools, tremendous determination was needed in order for the people to pick up the pieces and begin the long fight to regain their traditional way of life.

*“We must understand where we have been  
in order to understand where we are going.”*

DORIS McLEAN



Doris McLean, a member of the Daklaweidi Clan, has worked for the progress of Yukon Indian people for many years. She was a key player in protecting the rights of Yukon Indian women and non-status people through the Yukon Association for Non-status Indians and later served in the position of Chief for the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. (Marilyn Jensen, Telegraph Creek, 2002)

# Our past the Old ways...

The people of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation traditional territory are descendents of the Tagish and the Inland Tlingit, who originated in southeast Alaska. For thousands of years, the Tagish built a strong way of life that was dependent on the land and the animals to flourish. It was not an easy existence, requiring flexibility and innovation to develop a culture in harmony with the often harsh climate of the southern Yukon. Their Tlingit neighbours on the coast cooperated with the interior Tagish people in extensive trade and over time, the people began to inter-marry and merge their cultures.

Over the centuries, people followed an annual cycle, which took them to certain areas for fishing, hunting and berry picking. There was a constant and powerful connection to the land, which was seen as not something human beings own but simply what human beings care for. The old way of acknowledging the Creator meant that people respected and valued all that the environment gave, because every living thing contained a spirit.

A clan system ensured that there was balance, respect, reciprocity and protocols to provide boundaries. The people knew the traditional laws that guided them and held

their society together. There were two wolf moiety clans: Daklaweidi and Yanyedi, and four crow moiety clans: Deisheetaan, Ganaxtedi, Ishkahittaan and Kookhittaan.

*“They had a good life in Carcross. They would fish and hunt and trap. In the summer, they would take the kids. So I grew up in that kind of an atmosphere. We didn’t live off the land entirely but we always got our moose or caribou or salmon or fish.”* EDI BOHMER



Edi Bohmer, a member of the Ganaxtedi Clan, with her grandparents: Grandma Edith and Grandpa Patsy Henderson. Carcross, Yukon, 1937. (Edi Bohmer)



A potlatch celebrated life, death and other momentous occasions. It was at the centre of the community and brought people from other villages closer together.

The potlatch was a time to honour a loved one's life. It provided, and continues to provide to this day, an opportunity to visually see the clan system in motion. It was a chance to see who was who and to arrange marriages, alliances and plans for the future.

The last large, old-time potlatch was held in 1912 for Dawson Charlie and was hosted by Skookum Jim and the Daklaweidi Clan.

Life was lived in balance and harmony, with all aspects of society in order, functioning to suit the needs of the people.

The people were self-reliant, hunting and fishing for their food and making a living by trapping furs, sewing and selling their goods.

*“Grandma was a real hunter and a go-getter even though she was getting blind and stuff. She always wanted her own money and she worked hard for her own money, a few dollars. My dad used to work on the railroad. The railroad came in 1902 and dad used to work on the railroad in the summertime. My mother sewed stuff for*

*sale. It seemed like everyone worked really hard for our living and I don't remember any time that we had a hard time. My dad trapped in the winter time and worked on the railroad in the summer."* IDA CALMEGANE



In the 1960s, Ida Calmegane, of the Deisheetaan Clan, was a member of the earliest Indian organization, Yukon Indian advancement association. (Marilyn Jensen, Moosehide, Yukon, 2004)

## Land tour



*Participants on the May 11, 2005 land tour found it very useful when Albert James, the tour leader, pointed out the proposed Settlement Lands, both on the ground and on the map.*

# The Change

## Gold rush

The 1898 Klondike gold rush brought about 40,000 people to the Yukon, with the traditional territory of the Tagish and Inland Tlingit being the first to experience the impact of this huge influx of newcomers.

In areas such as Bennett Lake, prospectors forever upset the natural environment by cutting down all the trees to build boats and rafts and for firewood. Game, especially the southern lakes caribou herd, was depleted by the sudden need to feed thousands of new people.



Looking south over the boom town of Bennett, 1900, with the White Pass railway running through the town. (Yukon Archives, Vogee Coll., 45)

Clara Schinkel from the Daklaweidi Clan was a key player in negotiations for the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, serving on the caucus team. (Marilyn Jensen, Moosehide, Yukon, 2004)



The aboriginal people of the area accommodated and adjusted to the changes, even negotiating a pact with the newly built railroad, White Pass & Yukon Route, to ensure that the original peoples would have jobs. This agreement is still acknowledged today.

*“They negotiated with White Pass so that there would always be jobs for the Indian people. That was my Grandpa Tagish Johns who negotiated that, early, way back in 1899 they did this.”*

CLARA SCHINKEL

*“My dad worked on the railroad from one end of it to the other end. He drove horse team, mail team I think they call it, between Whitehorse and Dawson City.”* WINNIE ATLIN



Winnie Atlin, a member of the Ishkahittaan Clan, pictured here as a small child with her mother, Martha Johnson and her brother, and Edith and Lillian Henderson. (Edi Bohmer)

As a result of the gold rush, Jim Boss, who was Chief of what is now the Ta'an Kwächän Council of Lake Lebarge, attempted to protect his people by settling a treaty with the Crown.

*“Tell the King very hard, we want something for our Indians because they take our land and game.”* CHIEF JIM BOSS, 1902

At that time, the Ta'an people received a small reserve. From then, until 1973, no further efforts were made to settle with Yukon First Nations.

## Highway

In 1942, in response to the second world war, a highway connecting Alaska and the U.S. was bulldozed right through the traditional territories of many Yukon First Nations people. This significantly changed their way of life forever. As had happened during the gold rush decades earlier, diseases that First Nations people did not have tolerances for accompanied the thousands of road builders who came north. It is estimated that half of the Yukon's aboriginal people died in the ensuing epidemics.

*“And when the Alaska Highway came through everything changed. People started smoking cigarettes and drinking beer all the time and other liquor and they did not go out trapping. They had no money and so I guess had to apply for welfare. It was pretty hard. Lots of children were very ill; the kids were so sick from dysentery and died.”* ADA HASKINS



Ada Haskins, a member of the Yanyedi Clan, is the daughter of Johnny Johns. She remembers his commitment to the land claims process and his desire to see improvements for future generations. (Yukon Language Centre, 2001)

*“During the wartime, they segregated the Indians and Negroes. They were supposed to sit upstairs, there was just a little place up there to sit down in the movie. The restaurants were the same and even the schools. Carcross Mission School was for Indian children only and up in Dawson they had a school for half-breeds. They kept us separated. It was really hard because after those kids that went to Dawson City, they weren’t really accepted into the white world or the Indian one too.”* IDA CALMEGANE

Many Yukon First Nations children became very ill with tuberculosis and were sent to the Charles Camsell Hospital in Edmonton. There, they were isolated, often spending years away from their homes and families trying to recover from this horrible disease.



Postcard of the Tutshi at Carcross, Yukon, early 1942. (Eric Irvine)



## Land tour

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*The first stop on the land tour, at Emerald Lake, was a chance to see the scope of the proposed land claims, ranging from Category A Settlement Land blocks over Montana Mountain (above) to Category B land blocks towards the west (below).*

# The Indian Act

## Department of Indian Affairs

The traditional ways were also disrupted and changed forever by the federal government's *Indian Act*, which governed First Nations people in Canada. The central purpose of the act was to assimilate aboriginal people into mainstream society. This plan was set in motion by such actions as enfranchisements (the loss of one's status) and residential schools. As well, the government sought to control the lives of First Nations people by operating their governments and dictating how every little aspect of their existence would unfold.

In 1947, the Department of Indian Affairs arrived in Carcross, changing the way of life known to the Tagish and Inland Tlingit people.

The potlatch was outlawed from 1884 to 1951, making it against the law to participate. In the Yukon, the potlatch went from being a large, dynamic event to being a quiet, subdued one as it went underground.

*"In the early days it was against the law to have potlatches. We couldn't have potlatches so this is when a lot of our young people, we didn't*

*practice. And I went to the mission school and you were not allowed to speak your language and this is where I lost my language and I was so afraid of getting the strap and it was just a blockage for me. Now I have a hard time trying to speak it. If you do not speak it all the time, you have a hard time trying to remember. We were not allowed to do any dances and we were not allowed to do any potlatches or anything. We weren't allowed to participate because we would get fined or go to jail and this is what I was told as a kid."* ANNIE AUSTON



Annie Auston, a member of the Deisheetaan Clan, began her involvement in the Yukon land claims process with the Indian advancement association in the 1960s. She later worked on behalf of non-status people and has witnessed the entire unfolding of the Yukon land claims process. (Marilyn Jensen, Tagish, Yukon, 2004)

## Mission schools

Consistent with the federal government's policy of assimilation, residential schools were set up with the purpose of removing aboriginal children from their homes at an early age, and forcing them into an environment that stripped them of their identity. These schools were operated by churches that were anxious to claim souls and teach their different ways to the children. The churches believed that the children would then return to their homes and have the ability to influence their parents to change as well.

In 1911, Bishop Bompas and the Anglican Church opened the Choutla Residential School in Carcross. Many kinds of abuses were inflicted on the children by some of the people working at Choutla, resulting in severe trauma.

Even today, the effects of mission schools resonate loudly in the communities and with individuals who only recently have started to talk about what happened to them. This is a problem that aboriginal people across Canada share and are struggling to overcome. Much of today's social dysfunctions



Choutla Residential School, Carcross, Yukon. (Yukon Archives, National Archives of Canada collection, #398)



Children in a classroom at Choutla Residential school, in the 1930s. Status First Nations children came from all over the Yukon to attend school in Carcross. (Yukon Archives, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon, 86/61 #637, PHO 333)

and illnesses can be attributed to mission school syndrome. Ada Haskins from the Yanyedi clan and daughter of Johnny Johns explains her experience at Choutla.

*“At the age of six I went to mission school in Carcross. And I stayed there until I was 12 years old. At the age of 12, I told my dad about the mistreatment we had at the school, about everything, including food and other things. So, of course my dad wrote a letter out to the government. The principal got the letter back. They told me to pack my things and get out. So I did. I packed my personal things and I left. I walked home. They didn’t inform my father about anything and I just walked by myself all the way home. After that, I had no education. I couldn’t go to the public school in Carcross because that was only for white people. Therefore, I got no education.”* ADA HASKINS



Choutla School boy scouts, 1933. (Heather Jones collection)

*“In those days, there was a lot of prejudice in our communities, there was a lot between the native people and the Caucasians. And that has come a long ways too. It isn’t how it used to be. The native person was not allowed to go to public school. They had the mission schools, and even going to the movie, there was an invisible line there where the native people had to go to a certain part of the theatre, which was way up close and looking up. Some of our people couldn’t go to the public dances.”* ANNIE AUSTON

The Tagish and Inland Tlingit peoples, who had made their homes and way of life here for thousands of years, clearly did not have the same kind of options that other people did.



*At the next stop, participants learned how long stretches of Category B lands parallel parts of both sides of the Carcross Road.*

# The 1960s

Nineteen-sixty was a pivotal year for Aboriginal people across Canada as it was the first time they were allowed to vote in federal elections. This spurred an interest and desire to fight for the rights of First Nations people. Many organizations were formed during this era, including the National Native Brotherhood which later evolved into the Assembly of First Nations. As well, during the 1960s, the consciousness of the general public changed a great deal, with an emphasis on the injustices of the world coming into the forefront.

In the Yukon, the early days of the movement saw several key people decide they wanted change and they would take action to see it happen. The Yukon Native Brotherhood and Yukon Association of Non-status Indians (YANSI) formed.

*“My dad (Johnny Johns) started in with this land claims in about 1960. And they had no idea how to get started. They didn’t know how to do it. And I used to read a lot. I was reading about Australia when they were trying to get theirs, and I told my dad you have to go through the aboriginal rights to get started and he said*



*how do you know? So I told him about reading it. So he went and told Elijah (Smith) and that is how they got started. That is the way I thought it was supposed to go. I read the story about Australia and that is why I told him and I thought it would work the same way with other native people or other people who got cheated out of their country.”* ADA HASKINS

*“Way back in the '60s, there was the Indian advancement organization in Whitehorse. The Indian people were involved with that but I know Joanie and Ted Anderson were the ones who started that, and then, when it came time, they said it was time for the Indians to take over their own organization. I remember we had an election that was stemming from the Indian advancement organization. We had an election. I happened to be the secretary/treasurer, and a Morris from Teslin was the president. And I remember Elijah Smith was there at that, at those early, early days. I happened to be the secretary/treasurer but you know, we could not have a meeting because I was not Indian. I was non-status. So that is when we realized, hey, our people are different, there is status*

*and non-status. This is where it came to be the two organizations: Native Brotherhood and YANSI. At first I was involved with YANSI on a voluntary basis but later these organizations developed jobs.”* ANNIE AUSTON

*“When I was young I remember Joe Jacquot, Johnny Johns and Elijah Smith walking the halls of what used to be Coudert Residence (formerly, the Council for Yukon Indians building) and talking about all the stuff they needed to do, and people didn’t think it would become a reality because we were just stupid Indians.”*

BEVERLY SEMBSMOEN

*“Elijah (Smith) told Mike Smith and Dave Joe that they had to go to university and become lawyers because we needed them to help with the land claims, so they did.”* EDI BOHMER



Beverly Sembsmoen, of the Daklaweidi clan, daughter of Shirley Lindstrom and granddaughter of Peter and Agnes Johns has been involved at the negotiation table for a long time. (Heather Jones collection)



*At Bear Creek, the tour stopped to discuss the lands in this area.*

# Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow

In 1973, Elijah Smith and a delegation of Yukon Chiefs, including Dan Johnson of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, went to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister of Canada. Armed only with their determination, courage and the historic document, *Together Today For Our Children Tomorrow*, they were able to convince the federal government to begin a negotiation process for a modern-day treaty, the first in Canada. The Yukon had previously been left out of the treaty process and the Crown still had an obligation to fulfil

Elijah Smith and Yukon First Nations Chiefs, including Chief Dan Johnson of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, in front of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, 1973. (Yukon Archives. Andrew Joe collection 94/98 #2, PHO 477)



with Yukon First Nations based on the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the 1870 Order of Canada. Winnie Atlin of the Ishkahittaen Clan talks of the involvement of Dan Johnson, her brother.

*“Dan went with Elijah (Smith) and a whole bunch of them. He was a good chief here, he was well liked. That was him and Elijah and Ray Jackson and Johnny Smith, Percy Henry and a whole bunch of them. They are all on that poster. He was well liked, I know he was. It didn’t matter how cold it was, he used to make his rounds up to Little Atlin, Squanga, wherever he was supposed to go.”* WINNIE ATLIN



William, a former Chief, and Winnie Atlin have both worked in various capacities for the First Nations. They are dedicated to the preservation of language and culture and also to seeing a better future for their grandchildren. (Marilyn Jensen, Carcross, Yukon, 2005)

*“In 1976 or 1977, I sat on the board of directors for the Yukon Association of Non-status Indians. I was privy to many of the conversations and decisions that were made during that time period, and the respect and admiration of many of the people who laid the framework of what we are dealing with will forever remain in my heart. A lot of them got tired and stopped working. A lot of them passed over, but a lot of them are still in the trenches, still trying to work for the betterment of their people, bless their souls.”* BEVERLY SEMBSMOEN



Edi Bohmer, a Gaanexteidi Clan member, pictured in the days when she was working with the Yukon Native Brotherhood and was part of a community consultation process that took her all over the Yukon and Canada. (Edi Bohmer)



*Next the land tour drove down the Annie Lake Road and stopped at the Red Ridge pullout. Here, large Category A Settlement Land blocks were chosen to cover potential mineral deposits in the area.*

# All one people

One of the ways that the government separated the people was through enfranchisement. This meant that Status Indians could lose their status in numerous ways, thereby breaking their fiscal ties to the Department of Indian Affairs.

For instance, if a man served in a war, he lost his status. When a status woman married a non-status man, her status was removed and she was no longer considered an Indian by the government.

*“When Mom married Dad she lost her native rights and she was considered white.”*

ANNIE AUSTON

If a man wanted to work, he had to take out his “white rights” to do so. This started a chain reaction which resulted in everyone in his family losing their status.

*“I had to take out my white rights in order to get a five-dollar-a-day job. It was hindering my progress.”* JOHNNY JOHNS, “A LONG JOURNEY HOME” (VIDEO)





Johnny Johns worked with YANSI and was instrumental in making sure that land claims were for both status and non-status Yukon First Nation people. (CTFN collection)

This created two distinct groups: status and non-status Indians.

Many non-status people had to leave their communities and migrate to Whitehorse in order to get a job. The Department of Indian Affairs was not responsible to assist with housing, or other programs run through the band system, such as social assistance.

Early in the land claims process, elders and leaders realized that this separation between status and non-status was affecting the way land claims negotiations were unfolding. It seemed to be that only status people would benefit from the settlement.

This simply was not right. With much difficulty and determination, it was decided that all Yukon First Nations people would be recognized under the Yukon land claims, regardless of their status. But this was not an easy process.

Beverly Sembsmoen remembers those early days and her involvement and that of her mother, Shirley Lindstrom.

*“In 1979, I was 19. As a representative of the Yukon Indian’s Women Association I went to Montreal, to the Oka reserve. I went with people like Sandra Lovelace and the women’s organization from that reserve from Ontario. We walked from Montreal to Ottawa to fight for Native women’s rights because women were being treated unjustly compared to men. And the kids were being kicked off the reserve. When I came home I realized women weren’t being recognized here too...if they were non-status then they were less than, that was so unjust. So many women, my mother, my aunties, my mother’s friends. They all worked together, they came together on a grassroots level. They said, this is wrong, this is unjust, we got to take care of this business. They wanted to correct what was going on.”* BEVERLY SEMBSMOEN

In 1980, the Yukon Native Brotherhood and Yukon Association of Non-status Indians merged to form one organization, the Council for Yukon Indians. This new group was to represent all Yukon First Nations people and their interests.



*The tour stopped at the junction of the Carcross Road and the Alaska Highway (above) to discuss community lands in the area. This land was chosen so that the Carcross/Tagish First Nation will have a subdivision close to Whitehorse. The Lewes Marsh Habitat Protection Area (below), a critical waterfowl habitat, is a Special Management Area.*

# The Negotiations

When the chiefs and Elijah Smith returned from Ottawa ready to begin negotiations, they were met with opposition from members of the Yukon's public who voiced their opinion that there should be no such thing as Indian land claims. They argued that this would cause inequality, not realizing things were in no way equal to begin with. Ada Haskins described the times.

*“Johnny Johns did well with the land claims, he always tried to help any way he could. He tried to tell them to keep some land that belonged to us for years and years. One of them was Scotts meadow. That is where the natives used to come from all over and they would meet there, even coast Indians from Yakutat and Juneau. They would all meet there and have a big pow wow for two months sometimes. A lot of places that Dad tried to tell them to keep in the land claims, and he did tell the girls like Doris and Shirley*

*and his sisters. Places that they should keep like Tagish and fish camp. Fish camp was just a few miles out of Carcross, down the narrows which the natives used for years and years. In the early spring it always opened up and the people would go down and set a net. Everyone would take their turns and set their nets. And in the summer people would camp out there and stay for a few days and move on because they would all share it...which is a different story than nowadays. They had many places like that where they would*



Dora Wedge, Peter Johns, Angela Sidney and Johnny Johns at a family gathering in 1977, with a land claims map in front of them. Each of these elders cared deeply for the progress and betterment of their people. (Geraldine James)

*camp and hunt all along Tagish Lake, different places. Most of those places that were precious to us, now you go there and somebody has a building there.”* ADA HASKINS

## 1984

In 1984, Yukon First Nations were ready to sign a deal that called for a very large amount of money. However, some First Nations stepped forward to say they were not happy with a number of issues. Along with the Nacho N'yak Dun, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and Chief Stanley James fought to reject this agreement at this time.

The deal failed because it fell short on protection of hunting and subsistence rights, called for total extinguishment of aboriginal rights, did not include self-government, and included insufficient amounts of land.

After this, the land claims process barely survived. However, some of the key players, such as Elijah Smith and Harry Allen, rallied the troops to continue to move forward. The following year, the process regained momentum with a renewed negotiation method and focus.

*“During this time, the main issues in the negotiations were working out the details, things like the sharing accord and getting more land and also self-government. We gained more land*

*as a whole for the Yukon. The negotiators worked out the fine details.”* DORIS MCLEAN

## 1993

After aggressive and difficult negotiations, on May 29, 1993, Yukon First Nations people signed the Umbrella Final Agreement at a public ceremony in Whitehorse. The Umbrella Final Agreement acted as a framework agreement, after which all Yukon First Nations final agreements would follow with their own specific provisions.

The agreements included land, money, self-government, and hunting and fishing rights, with aboriginal rights retained on settlement lands. This was significantly different than the 1984 claim.



Judy Gingell, Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations, signing the 1993 Umbrella Final Agreement with Minister of Indian Affairs Tom Siddon and Yukon Government Leader John Ostashek. In the back row are Chiefs Dave Keenan, Paul Birckel, Robert Bruce and Robert Hager. (Yukon government)

*“For me it has come a long ways from those early beginnings....I saw the amalgamation and from there it branched out into the community. Each community wanted their own.”* ANNIE AUSTON

Over the next 11 years, 10 of the 14 Yukon First Nations ratified agreements and became self-governing nations.

During this time, when Andy Carvill was Chief, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation continued to negotiate to finalize its settlement. Over the years, the caucus of negotiators from all six clans gave their best. The last negotiating team was comprised of Art Johns, Ted Hall, Clara Schinkel, Anne Wally, Colleen James and the late Darrell Beattie. The technicians on the team were Mark Wedge, Beverly Sembsmoen and Frank James. All of these people received gold pins for their hard work and devotion.

Gunałchîsh for your courage, wisdom and guidance.



Art Johns of the Yanyedi Clan, served on the caucus team. (CTFN newsletter, September 2003)



Ted Hall of the Deisheetaan Clan served on the Carcross/Tagish First Nation caucus team. (CTFN newsletter, September 2003)





Anne Wally, of the Kookhittaana Clan, has worked for the Carcross/Tagish First Nation for many years. She was the first female Chief in the 1980s and, most recently, served on the caucus team. (CTFN newsletter, September 2003)

*“Every part of those agreements were fought for. It was a very hard thing to negotiate and sit at the tables. We fought hard for every little part of it.”* CLARA SCHINKEL

*“I remember when Peter, Uncle Johnny, Dan and William worked all night until 4 a.m. on the Land Claims.”* WINNIE ATLIN

*“Negotiations were really difficult on families, lots of families separated. Negotiations were not easy and they were costly.”* PATRICK JAMES

Patrick James, of the Daklaweidi Clan, was a former Carcross/Tagish First Nation Chief. (Marilyn Jensen, Carcross, Yukon, 2005)



## Land tour



*At the top of the Atlin Road, participants discussed the value of the Agay Mene Natural Environment Park and were privileged to see a number of goats on White Mountain.*

# Self- government

Self-government is important to the people of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation because it gives people the opportunity to move away from the *Indian Act* and govern their own destiny, just as they did for countless generations long ago. The main fight over all these years has been to gain independence and self-determination.

*“I am looking forward to when we can be self-governing, when we can govern ourselves, when we are in charge of our own destiny. When we are all able to pull together and be effective for our children who benefit from the wise counsel of our elders who had a vision that outshined every land claims and treaty of the past. We can be proud of our stalwart warriors who hung in there and never gave up.”* DORIS McLEAN

Land tour



*Participants talked about the strategy of protecting large amounts of land by careful choice of land around water bodies. (top) Further down the Atlin Road, above Little Atlin Lake. (bottom) At the Tagish Bridge, a Special Management Area.*

# Our future

Yukon First Nation people have fought hard for over 32 years to regain their rights and dignity. Many feel that significant progress has been made to bring Yukon First Nations people onto an equal playing field with the rest of society. However, this is just the beginning. The hard work comes with implementation of these agreements and making self-government work for the people. This takes commitment and a shift in attitude.

The present members of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation come from a long line of self-sufficient, strong people who, despite hardships, continued to move forward and never gave up on their vision for a better future. There are struggles within the community that divide the people. These issues must be overcome so that the initial dream and vision of the elders can be realized fully, with the people of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation working towards the common interest of building a healthy, flourishing and progressive nation.

Many Carcross/Tagish First Nation people worked very hard and dedicated their lives and careers to further this vision. Their legacy will always be remembered.



The younger members of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, with the guidance of our elders, are our future. They can sing our songs in our languages and dance our dances of the ancestors. (Marilyn Jensen, Whitehorse, Yukon, 2005)



