

## CRE-09-08 Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Student Steward



Derek Scheffen and Ryan Peterson, above photo

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## ABSTRACT

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) believes that our children are our future, that we must address the needs of our citizens, that we must devise ways and means to improve opportunities, capacities and skills of our youth, and that we must help to empower our people. To that end, the CRE-09-08 Student Steward project was designed to involve a local youth by familiarizing him or her with the activities of the TH Fish and Wildlife branch and encouraging him or her towards a career in renewable resources (stewardship).

Over the course of the summer of 2008, beginning June 9 and ending August 8, the incumbent, Derek Scheffen, worked with Fish and Wildlife personnel on a daily basis. As a result, he was exposed to a variety of other existing Yukon River Panel Restoration and Enhancement projects presently under in the Dawson City region. This was done in a collaborative fashion, working with, for example, First Fish, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Fish and Wildlife Branch on Test Fisheries.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| CRE-09-08 TR'ONDËK HWËCH'IN STUDENT STEWARD..... | 1 |
| ABSTRACT .....                                   | 2 |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS .....                          | 3 |
| INTRODUCTION .....                               | 4 |
| DISCUSSION .....                                 | 4 |
| CONCLUSION .....                                 | 6 |
| RECOMMENDATIONS.....                             | 7 |
| PHOTOS .....                                     | 7 |
| APPENDICES .....                                 | 9 |

## INTRODUCTION

The Student Steward project was proposed and developed by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) Fish and Wildlife Branch, whose mandate is provided by Chapter 16 of the TH Final Agreement. To be sure, the objectives outlined in Chapter 16 include the preservation and enhancement of the renewable resources economy, as well as the culture, identity and values of Yukon First Nations. In addition to that, the Branch is expected to find and develop means through which we can collaboratively and cooperatively integrate the relevant knowledge and experience of both the Yukon First Nations and of the scientific communities in order to achieve conservation<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the Fish and Wildlife Branch is guided by the TH vision statement:

“Our vision is to achieve an interdependent and united self governing First Nation by re-establishing our traditional culture and reclaiming our identity and rightful place as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation People. By committing to work together to provide training, education and employment, we will build a strong, healthy and stable future.”

## DISCUSSION

The Student Steward position was funded primarily by the Yukon River Panel, whose members administer the Restoration and Enhancement fund (“the fund”). Of course, the Panel entertains a variety of proposals on an annual basis and provides funding to projects that have to do with the restoration and enhancement of salmon and their habitat, among other things. Following that, the Student Steward position was designed to meet the principles and guidelines contained within the Yukon River Salmon Agreement (2001), which establishes the fund.

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<sup>1</sup> TH Final Agreement, Chapter 16.

More specifically, this project aimed to provide the opportunity for a youth from the community to learn traditional and conventional conservation and stewardship methodologies, which, when combined and incorporated into the Work Plan (Appendix B), helped to create and promote awareness towards the activities involved in by the TH Government and by other local salmon restoration, management and enhancement projects. Local knowledge was also incorporated into the student's weekly activities as the TH Student Steward received hands-on training. He also participated in, and is expected, should he decided to work with the Fish and Wildlife Branch in the future, to eventually lead restoration and enhancement projects.

Results of the Plan included:

- Identifying and participating in activities that fostered stewardship by providing stewardship incentives and by promoting community-based management. Such activities included the First Fish program annually administered by TH, as well as the Upper Yukon River Test Fisheries program jointly run by Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, Yukon River Region. Although, we anticipated the Student to also experience the over-wintering and rearing program jointly run by the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council and the Fisheries and Oceans, Canada, Yukon River Region, the schedule did not workout this season.
- Priority was assigned to involving local people in all activities associated with the Plan. For the most part, this included the involvement of TH personnel and citizens, as well as other interested parties.
- Training for the TH Student Steward was a significant component of this project. Derek Scheffen received his TH Cross-Cultural training, ATV Training Certification, Bear Safety as well as Boat Safety Training

Certification, which will be a mandatory requirement for all boat operators starting in 2009.

- It was anticipated that the Summer Students could participate in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) river trips with Conservation and Protection personnel. However, due to scheduling and liability concerns, we were not able to incorporate that component into the Summer Student's activities.

## CONCLUSION

The project was successful insofar as it involved a local youth in the summer activities of the Fish and Wildlife Branch. Furthermore, we helped train the Student Steward in salmon stewardship and conservation, ATV training, Boat and boat safety. In addition to that, Derek Scheffen was exposed to leadership as he was required to give a presentation to students at the First Fish and attend a Climate Change Scenarios Workshop organized by Yukon Government. The workshop had been broken into groups which allowed the TH Students to participate in the discussions. For the Panel's consideration, Derek has produced a first hand account of his activities with the TH Fish and Wildlife Branch and with our partners.











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| <p><b>First Fish:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation of nets</li> <li>▪ Assist in hauling to Moosehide</li> <li>▪ Assist in planning and coordinating</li> <li>▪ Set up/Take down camp</li> <li>▪ Provide support and guide youth</li> </ul>     | <p>TH Staff</p>   | <p>July, 2008</p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assist with teaching youth traditional and modern fishing techniques</li> <li>▪ Learn to set nets</li> <li>▪ Learn boat safety</li> </ul> |  |
| <p><b>Test Fisheries:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Weekly 2-4 days of salmon distribution</li> <li>▪ Salmon filleting</li> <li>▪ Information collection</li> <li>▪ Contact and communicate with participants</li> <li>▪ Attend TFSC Meeting</li> </ul> | <p>TH Staff, DDRRC, Commercial Fisherman's Association, DFO staff</p> | <p>June, July and August 2008</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure adequate border and spawning escapement numbers</li> <li>▪ Expound on local capacity</li> </ul>                                    |  |
| <p><b>DFO River Trip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ River trip downriver for observation on conservation/enforcement efforts by DFO and check fish wheel counter</li> </ul>   | <p>TH staff, Conservation and Protection, DFO</p>                     | <p>July, 2008</p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gain familiarity of conservation/enforcement efforts by DFO and check fish wheel counter.</li> </ul>                                      |  |