

Joe Linklater: Chief, Vuntut Gwitchin

Vuntut Gwitchin began planning land use when we started negotiating our land claim over 30 years ago.

- On a map of North Yukon, land use negotiated for North Yukon, appear as one territorial park, one national park, and several special management areas that are all jointly managed by Vuntut and Territorial government.
- In terms of land selection, all of the headwaters of the Porcupine River have been protected except for the Eagle River, which has not achieved permanent protection. We have negotiated land use for many years. Chapter 11 of Yukon Final Agreement is the land use planning chapter. This was the last management tool we negotiated. The first budget covered three years, 10 years later we finally signed off on the plan. This area has very few third party uses, still took 10 years.
- North Yukon Land Use Planning Commission is an independent commission. The first commission imploded due to lack of technical support and other reasons. For the second commission, we put in place a senior officials group and a technical working group. The mandates to implement the plan did not exist within government, so FN and Territorial governments had to guide the process so that the completed plan would be implementable. These were essential component to land use planning. Old Crow is a traditional community, the only fly-in in Yukon. Still hunt and fish for the majority of food, and our land use planning was based on that fact. Now 60-70% of our territory is now protected as a result of land use planning. Our process was based on our principles of continued traditional use of the land.
- Yukon Government had negotiated in meantime the 1991 devolution agreement, for provincial-type powers over land. They can write laws for federal and territorial lands.
- A unique feature of the Yukon self-government agreement; if we write a law for settlement land (such as a fish and wildlife act), to the extent that it differs from Yukon laws, Yukon has to amend their laws to be consistent with FN laws. This gives our self-government agreements some teeth
- When we sat down to negotiate land use planning, Yukon government was cognizant of the fact that we could write a law for our land that would impact their laws. This gave us a good negotiating position for land use planning. We have a very effective land use plan for North Yukon. It's the only in land use plan in Yukon right now that is being implemented. Kluane Park has a land use plan that hasn't gone anywhere.
- We may be the only First Nation to remove subsurface rights to a piece of our settlement land, to be consistent with land that's been protected in a wildlife corridor.

We are committed to this plan, the Yukon government is as well. Other planning regions will be much more complicated. If it took us 10 years it will be interesting to see how long it will take in other areas with more third party interests to accommodate