



Council of Yukon First Nations

Selkirk First Nation **Cultural Orientation** **and Protocols Toolkit**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	HISTORY	1
2.0	CURRENT STATUS IN LAND CLAIMS, SELF GOVERNMENT OR OTHER	3
3.0	COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS	4
4.0	SPECIFIC CULTURAL VALUES AND BELIEFS	4
5.0	BIRTH AND DEATH	5
6.0	POTLATCH TRADITIONS	5
7.0	MARRIAGE	5
8.0	TRADITIONAL LAWS	6
9.0	TRADITIONAL HEALTH AND HEALING.....	6
10.0	PROTOCOLS	6
10.1	Approaching Elders for advice or teachings.....	6
10.2	Accessing and sharing traditional knowledge	7
10.3	Home visiting & invitations.....	7
10.4	Speaking /meeting with individuals of the other gender.....	7
10.5	Meetings	7
10.6	Dealing with conflict and confrontations	7
10.7	Expected Behaviour	8
11.0	COMMUNITY PEOPLE, HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING	8
11.1	Population and Demographics.....	8
11.2	Education and Income.....	8
11.3	Health and Social Status and Well-being	9
11.4	Health and Social Strengths	9
11.5	Community Challenges and Issues	10
11.6	Community Uniqueness and Spirit.....	10
11.7	Community Health and Social Services Staff.....	11
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	12

Photo Credits

Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #7283
Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #8196
Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #8432
Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #8236
Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #8242
Yukon Archives, Claude and Mary Tidd fonds, #7114

Gladys Netro
Louise Parker
Randy Taylor
Yukon Government Collection



SELKIRK FIRST NATION (SFN) SPECIFIC CULTURAL ORIENTATION AND PROTOCOLS

1.0 History

Members of the Selkirk First Nation consider themselves the people of the Pelly River. They are Northern Tutchone and their language is Athabaskan. They live along the Yukon River drainage which includes the Pelly, Ross, Stewart and McMillan Rivers.

The Athabaskan people may have first come to their homeland as part of a slow, eastward migration of people from Siberia to North America across the Bering Land Bridge. "The first migrants had to change their way of life very little. When they first settled in an area, they developed local adaptations to the environment. When the land changed, they adapted to new conditions, or moved on". (Cruikshank, 1976). The Northern Tutchone of the Pelly River area constitute one of these traditions, not clearly cut from neighbouring peoples, yet still distinct. There is an archaeological site on the Lower Pelly, three kilometres upstream from the Yukon River that was occupied around 6,500 B.C by hunters of bison and elk.

Poole Field was a trader on the Upper Pelly from 1903-1913. He learned through stories and observation that the people of the Pelly River formed three distinct groups: those who lived at the headwaters of the Pelly, South and East of the Lapie and Ross Rivers and in Francis Lake; those who lived on the Lower Pelly and in the Little Salmon area; and those who lived in the mountains at the headwaters of the Macmillan and Ross Rivers.

Other people only distinguish them into two groups: the people on the Upper Pelly and the people on the Lower Pelly. The people on the Upper Pelly would be the same as the third group mentioned above, those who lived in the mountains. The other group was called the Knife Indians (some people refer to all the Pelly people as the Knife Indians - they were sometimes feared).

Pre Contact Lifestyles

Before the people began to trade with white men in the 1800's "they depended on the land for everything they required to sustain life..." (Cruikshank, 1976)

Moose were hunted in the Upper Pelly drainage area until the early 1800's when they were replaced by caribou until 1870. "Poole Field was told by the oldest men that when they were young, there were no moose in the area, only caribou." (Cruikshank, 1974) These would have been woodland caribou from the Cassiar region. The caribou were gone by the 1900's and they were again replaced by moose. The Pelly people had to learn to hunt caribou (they used bows and arrows, spears, snares, deadfalls and large fenced caribou surrounds) and then they had to relearn how to hunt moose. When the moose returned, they prospered, and the

Upper Pelly/Liard/Francis Lake area became known as the "best moose country in the continent of North America". (Pike, 1896)

Caribou or moose would have been the main food for the people of the Pelly in the winter, and fish were the staple in the summer. Salmon come up the Yukon and into the Pelly and its tributaries to spawn. Salmon fish camps could support large numbers of people. Furbearing animals provided clothing and beaver were also an important food.

Tlingit from the coast came inland regularly on well established trails to trade. They travelled as far as the place that became Fort Selkirk where the Yukon and Pelly Rivers meet, and there they met the Pelly people. "It is probable that early epidemics carried from the coast in trade greatly reduced the population before the 20th Century." (Cruikshank, 1976)

As well, there are many historic ties with the Southern Tutchone people (Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and Ta'an Kwach'an Council) to the southwest, with whom they share language and culture.

Impacts of Early Exploration and Trade

Before 1840, the Pelly River area was used only by First Nations people. There were traders on the Liard soon after 1800 and by 1838 the Hudson's Bay Company had established a post on Dease Lake. The people from the Upper Pelly travelled to this post to trade. In 1846, Robert Campbell established Pelly Banks, a trading post on the Upper Pelly. This post burned accidentally in 1850. The post at Fort Selkirk was burnt in 1852. Both Pelly Banks and Fort Selkirk were important trading centres before the posts had been built and they remained so after the posts were gone.

The fur trade rapidly attracted large numbers of white trappers and led to over trapping. In 1903 Sheldon commented on the abundance of marten and lynx on the Macmillan River. Three years later, trappers in Dawson told him that the Macmillan had been "trapped out" (Sheldon, 1911).

The actual site of Pelly Crossing was traditionally a campsite on the way to Ta'tla Mun (Tatlmun Lake), which is "an important food fish lake southeast of Pelly Crossing in the traditional territory of the Selkirk First Nation.

Gold Rush

The gold rush of 1898 brought the next wave of outside influence to the Yukon, and though there was no gold mining on the Pelly, outsiders came into the region and had a profound impact on the First Nations people in the area during this time.

Establishment of Pelly Crossing

The people of Pelly Crossing today make up the Selkirk First Nation. They, along with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun in Mayo, and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in Carmacks comprise the Northern Tutchone though some members of the Selkirk First Nation claim Southern Tutchone heritage.

Pelly Crossing was established in 1952 when the Klondike Highway was completed. This road linking the south to the central Yukon replaced the rivers as the main means of travel. "The Riverboats were beached. Trading Posts were subsequently abandoned" (Cruikshank, 1974). People first moved to Minto, but the Yukon Government hoped to concentrate services along the Highway, so people were encouraged to leave the river and settle at Pelly Crossing. Others who left Minto settled in Mayo, Carmacks, Dawson and Whitehorse.

Residential School

Similar to many First Nations across the country, the Northern Tutchone attended residential schools. Before the children were taken away from the security of their family and community, the members lived life in harmony with the land and had strong spiritual beliefs and values. Children were happy and were an important part of the community. Families strived for their children, so they could be a nation with people of strength and wisdom.

All this changed with residential school. The goal of these schools was to assimilate the people into another culture that did not reflect the traditional ways of the Northern Tutchone. The children were traumatized by their experiences in residential school and made to feel ashamed of their ancestry. Family bonds and connections were broken. Some lived through unspeakable physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Families were devastated when the children were taken from them. A huge gap was left behind as traditional family roles and responsibilities were disrupted.

The Health and Social staff work with the people to rebuild the missing pieces within the family and community structure. Improved communication within families is being focused on to help prevent hurting citizens from suffering in silence. Today, with the strength of the community behind them, people are taking steps toward healing and building a stronger community.

2.0 *Current Status in Land Claims, Self Government or Other*

The land claim and self government agreements were signed on July 21, 1997 and SFN became a self governing nation on October 1, 1997. The implementation of the agreements is major priority for the Selkirk government and requires ongoing negotiations with the Yukon and Government of Canada.

SFN Governance and Structure

The First Nation is governed by a Chief and Council whose responsibilities and authorities flow through a constitution, and who report on an annual basis to the General Assembly, an aggregate of all the citizens. The Selkirk First Nation has turned to a modified form of traditional government, in that the Chief is elected and the councillors are selected by their respective Wolf and Crow clans. Leadership is made up of the Chief, a deputy Chief and two council members.

The Northern Tutchone Council was formed between the three Northern Tutchone Nations in order to work together on common issues. The two other nations are the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun in Mayo, and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation in Carmacks.

Selkirk First Nation Government includes the following departments:

- Administration
- Finance
- Health & Social
- Capital Works and Operations & Maintenance
- Lands & Resources
- Education and Training
- Self Government
- Type 11 Project Coordinator

3.0 *Communications and Relationships*

Developing good communication and strong relationships is most important to the community. It takes time and commitment to do this. A good starting point is to spend time with the Health & Social staff getting to know them and how things work in the community. This will branch out to other departments, the leadership and getting to know people in the community. Once relationships are established, resource person will have greater success in making their contribution to the First Nation's goal of building a healthy community.

In a small community, relationships are close and everyone knows one another. It means the community is able to come together in times of need and work toward the common good. It also can mean personal disagreements or conflicts are felt on many levels in the community. To prevent misunderstandings, contact the Health and Social department with contentious issues. Being aware of and understanding family networks and dynamics is critical.

4.0 *Specific Cultural Values and Beliefs*

Historically the Northern Tutchone were nomadic people who travelled and covered a lot of territory and whose survival skills have been passed down through many generations. The cultural values and beliefs are all rooted in this way of life on the land.

During hunting season, which is most important to the people, most staff go out on the land with their families and relatives. These times are very quiet in the community, so consult with the Health & Social staff, before making any plans during these times.

The people want their children to learn to respect the land and harvest traditional foods. The Elders encourage the future leaders to work together and be helpful to one another to continue an ethic that was so strong in early history.

The Northern Tutchone rely on relatives to take care of family concerns. Through time the people have always cared very deeply of each other, their families and extended families. However residential school severely disrupted some people's ability to carry out this role.

The Clan System of Wolf and Crow is a Northern Tutchone traditional law. This means that marriages cannot occur between people of the same clan. Wolf clan members marry Crow clan and vice versa. This helps the people and the community to maintain a balance. Within this system, the women play an important role as the children follow the matriarchal line.

5.0 Birth and Death

Birth of a new baby is an exciting time for community members. A baby is welcomed by all community members, especially the Elders.

Death is a sacred time. The protocol is for the First Nation to assist the family with the funeral arrangements and initiate the legal aspects of the process. The family takes the lead with the decisions for a potlatch. Community members help with the funeral. The Wolf and Crow system is followed. If a Wolf clan member passes on the Crow clan takes responsibility for the funeral and the potlatch and vice versa.

6.0 Potlatch Traditions

The potlatch is a spiritual time. Potlatches are hosted for all special times when a community needs to come together. Community members will travel far to be present and show their respect. It is a traditional way of celebrating with joy and also a time of grieving and closure for the family and community.

Community members and resource people are welcome and encouraged to attend potlatches. It is best to contact a staff member at H & S department or the family that is hosting the potlatch. People dress casually and one can expect to meet and be among many people. The potlatch consists of prayer, presentations by community members and a huge meal. It is an honour to attend and an opportunity to get to know people at these special times.

7.0 Marriage

Selkirk First Nation has many family groups with inter-marriage relationships and like most other First Nation communities, there are many extended family members. Historically people travelled from other northern communities to marry, creating family connections throughout the north. "The real social units of the Tutchone are the inter-marrying matrilineal lineage groups (moieties) Crow and Wolf..." (Cruikshank, 1976).

Today, most marriages are held at the local church. The wedding potlatch is a big celebration that everyone is invited to.

8.0 Traditional Laws

There were many traditional laws that were strictly followed for many generations. These laws were modeled by the people and passed down through stories and legends. The laws covered family structure and behaviour, food harvesting and how to show respect to other members of the clan and community.

The Clan System of Wolf and Crow is a Northern Tutchone traditional law. Within this system, the women play an important role as the children follow the matriarchal line. As well, it means that marriages cannot occur between people of the same clan. Wolf clan members marry into the Crow clan and vice versa. This is a traditional way of keeping the family lines clear.

9.0 Traditional Health and Healing

Seasonal activities such as food gathering are critical to community members and are key to family wellness. Fishing, hunting and berry harvesting times are of high importance and the First Nation supports people's ability to get out and do these traditional activities.

Most people naturally feel the connection to the land and find health and healing while they are out there. Returning to town where they face negative situations can be a real challenge for some people.

During fishing season, family bonding comes naturally. This is time when the Northern Tutchone live their true traditional ways. Where love, kindness, respect, sharing and natural teaching skills come alive. Some community members attend church in Pelly Crossing, and many live their spirituality when they are out on the land. This is where they give thanks and appreciation for all the land provides for them and their nation. They are proud of who they are and are connected to what the land has to offer. This is the place where resource people can see the people at their best. The staff of Health & Social invite resource people to experience this and to ask questions and have discussions.

The people take pride in their language, like all parts of their culture. It is mainly Elders that speak it fluently. Northern Tutchone is a language shared with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun in Mayo, with Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and a small population in Beaver Creek.

10.0 Protocols

10.1 Approaching Elders for advice or teachings

When an Elder speaks, it is respectful to be patient and listen carefully. Elders take time when they speak and there are often pauses as they convey their thoughts. Wait until the speaker shows they have made their point before speaking. It is recommended to talk with the Director of Health and Social in advance of meeting with Elders.

10.2 Accessing and sharing traditional knowledge

First Nations use the term traditional knowledge to describe information passed from generation to generation. This information may be rooted in: storytelling, ceremonies, traditions, ideologies, medicines, dances, arts and crafts or a combination of all these.

First Nations culture has developed over many generations - through traditional knowledge of the land, natural resources and environment. Traditional knowledge is known to communities as the foundation or base of all key information from the past and is blended into all departments within the First Nation. Elders are getting older and their knowledge has been documented to pass on to the community.

There are policies to protect this knowledge as it must be treated with the highest respect as this wisdom is sacred. The Heritage department has put in place an application process. Anyone looking to access any traditional knowledge must complete this application. For more information, contact the Heritage department.

10.3 Home visiting & invitations

Home visits are normally done with a SFN staff member and/or a family member(s) included. Most people feel comfortable, if a person of the opposite gender enters the home when someone else is along. Contact the appropriate staff in the Health & Social department prior to arranging home visits. A family or community member may be needed to act as translator in some cases.

Each person reacts differently to people that they do not see on a daily basis. To show respect, especially to the male gender, it is important to explain your plan and process so they are clear of what will happen.

10.4 Speaking /meeting with individuals of the other gender

When meeting with individuals of the other gender have a staff member from the H & S department attend with you. This is protocol when dealing with children as well.

It is disrespectful to touch anything that belongs to the men of the community unless they give you permission.

10.5 Meetings

The community has regular public meetings on a variety of subjects. Posters are usually put up around the community. When it is posted publicly, anyone can attend, unless it is noted that it is open to the First Nation only.

10.6 Dealing with conflict and confrontations

To prevent conflict and confrontation with a community member, it is wise to check in with the Director of H & S before meeting on issues or concerns that are contentious or could be misunderstood.

When a conflict or a confrontation occurs with a member of the community, it is most important to contact and involve the Director or Manager of the H & S department. Allow them to assist in further discussions with the person(s) until a resolution plan is arranged and agreed upon. Inviting an Elder to assist with finding resolution is an option.

When a conflict or confrontation occurs between two First Nation government employees, an attempt should be made to resolve the situation between the two staff members. If that doesn't work, then the supervisors should be brought in. Having effective communication amongst the staff is critical for the First Nation to be able to effectively serve the community. Inviting an Elder to assist with finding resolution is an option.

10.7 Expected Behaviour

The staff of the Health & Social department is very aware of community issues and concerns and would ask that resource people make a concerted effort to understand and respect the issues. The staff expects resource workers to follow these four principles: respect, care, share and teach. Staff would like to see resource workers not only sharing their skills and experience but being open to experience and learn from the Tutchone people. This will enrich ones overall experience in the community.

The staff invites resource people to visit their offices, ask questions and get a better understanding of the issues they are working with at the outset of their work in the community. Begin by meeting with the appropriate staff and learning how best to interact and blend into the community in a positive way.

Community members are encouraged to attend public events. This is a way to build positive relationships with staff and community members.

11.0 Community People, Health and Social Well-being

11.1 Population and Demographics

The population in Pelly was 291 in 2008 with the majority being First Nation. The SFN registered population with INAC as of December 2008 was a total of 503 citizens with 294 living on reserve, own crown land and 209 living off reserve. The population is made up of 252 females and 251 males. (Registered Indian Population by Sex and Residence December 2008, INAC).

11.2 Education and Income

The Eliza Van Bibber School offers grades K-12 in Pelly. There is a Community Education Liaison Coordinator working closely with First Nation students at the school.

There is a Yukon College Campus in Pelly where continuing education programs are offered, with special programs that are developed together with the First Nation. As well, members of the community attend the main Yukon College campus in Whitehorse or other institutions for specialized education.

SFN has a mixed economy where people are employed by the First Nation, Yukon Government, Culture Centre, private business etc. and also support their families through harvesting traditional foods and doing traditional activities like beadwork, carving and other arts.

11.3 Health and Social Status and Well-being

The health and well-being of the Selkirk First Nation is expressed through art, carving, beadwork, music and harvesting from the land. The youth are strong members of the community and live with a close connection to the land and the Elders.

11.4 Health and Social Strengths

The Northern Tutchone take pride in culture and the strength of family connections, especially when something serious happens in the community. During these times, the community is full of love and care for one another.

The people have made major gains in recent years. However, sometimes it is easier to focus on the problems than recognizing the positive changes. The Health & Social staff focuses on being supportive to everyone and helping people where they are at.

The community has many determined women who care deeply for the people, take the lead in bringing the community together and making things happen. The men contribute with their strength by teaching traditional skills and passing on knowledge of the land.

The potlatch practices are quite strong and the community takes pride in them.

The Elders are pleased to have resource people involved in the traditions they have shared and passed on.

As part of skill development among the youth, the First Nation has on the land programs, where Elders teach their traditional knowledge. At these special times, the youth are able to work beside Elders and the leaders of the community to learn traditional ways like how to catch their first salmon in a respectful manner.

One of the traditional activities that youth are involved in is stick gambling. The Elders are very proud of them. It is a game that brings people together and gets everyone very excited. This is the kind of event that resource workers are encouraged to get involved with – learn the game, watch, participate, have fun.

During the happy times, there is always a lot of humour and laughter among the people.

The leadership and staff are part of the community and strive to work on the goals and priorities voiced by the people. The strength comes from land-based programs and the integration of knowledge of culture and traditional ways.

11.5 Community Challenges and Issues

A major challenge for the Health & Social Department is maintaining adequate funding for long term programs and capacity development. The staff knows what needs to get done to make positive change in the community, but the length of program funding is usually too short to complete the job and policies often restrict full services to the community.

Capacity is a big issue. The department hires local members where possible and provides on-going training. The tendency is for local staff to stay for the long term and people from outside stay for periods too short to build the necessary trust within the community to bring positive change. It means local staff often feel overwhelmed with workload which leads to burn out. They often don't seem to be able to get enough benefit from the skills and expertise of workers coming from outside.

A lot of the social issues within the community stem from the devastating inter-generational effects of residential school. Elders spoke out about this with heartfelt concern at a conference "Words of the Elders", in October 1993. Today it still remains a major community issue. There are community members who want help with their problems, but don't seek support from resource people. It takes time to build trust within the community, where social issues stem from grief and loss, especially multiple loss, and intergenerational effects from residential school.

Child welfare issues are also sensitive in the community. The First Nation needs to be contacted before decisions are made in regard to a child. They are more than willing to help with options to avoid having the child re-located.

11.6 Community Uniqueness and Spirit

Selkirk First Nation is located in a beautiful part of the Yukon along the Yukon and Pelly Rivers. It sits in the centre of Northern Tutchone territory with Little Salmon Carmacks to the south and First Nation of Na-Cho Nyak Dun to the north.

Though the nation has experienced major changes through time, the traditional ways still support the culture and are helping the people create the healthy community they envision.

11.7 Community Health and Social Services Staff

Selkirk First Nation: Main Line (867) 537-3331
Director of Health and Social ext. 279
Health Promotion Coordinator ext. 233
Parent Capacity Coordinator ext. 230
Elder Care Coordinator ext. 277
Social Assistance Administrator ext. 237

BIBLIOGRAPHY



Cruikshank, Julie, "Reading Voices: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past, Dan Dha Ts'edenintth'e", Douglas & McIntyre: Vancouver 1991

Cruikshank, Julie, "Through the Eyes of Strangers: A preliminary survey of land use history in the Yukon during the late nineteenth century" Report to Yukon Government and Yukon Archives, 1974

Elders Council Assembly, "Words of the Elders – Elder's Council Assembly, October 26-28, 1993, Whitehorse, Yukon

Krech, Shepard, "The Subarctic Fur Trade, Native and Economic Adaptations", University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver 1984, Reprinted 1990

Legros, Dominique, "Oral History as History: Tutchone Athapaskan in the Period 1840-1920", Cultural Services Branch, Government of the Yukon, 2007

McClellan, Catharine, edited by Julie Cruikshank "My Old People's Stories – A Legacy of Yukon First Nations Part, 2007. Published with assistance of Yukon Tourism and Culture

McClellan, Catherine, "Part of the Land, Part of the Water", Douglas and McIntyre Ltd, 1987

Pielou, E.C., "A Naturalist Guide to the Arctic", University of Chicago Press, 1984

Pike, Warburton, "Through the Subarctic Forest", London, Edward Arnold, 1896

Sheldon, Charles, "The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon", 1911

Tyrell, J.W., "Across the Sub-Arctics of Canada" Coles Publishing Company, Toronto, 1973

Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, edited by Urquhart, D. "Two Eyes: One Vision - Traditional Knowledge Conference Summary", 1998

Yukon Government Bureau of Statistics, "Yukon Monthly Statistical Review" August 2009 from www.eco.gov.yk.ca/pdf/mr_aug09.pdf

Yukon Government Bureau of Statistics "Business Survey 2008 Report" from www.eco.gov.yk.ca/stats/pdf/2008_Business_Survey_Report.pdf

Websites www.selkirkfn.com
 www.yukoncommunities.yk.ca
 www.cyfn.ca
 www.eco.gov.yk.ca
 www.aboriginalcanada.gc.ca
 www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/index-eng.asp

APPENDIX 1: SELKIRK FIRST NATION AND PELLY CROSSING COMMUNITY PROFILE



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This community profile is for the Selkirk First Nation (SFN), a Yukon First Nation located in and around Pelly Crossing, Yukon. The purpose of the community profile is to provide some background information on the community.

2.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE

2.1 *Yukon Context*

Geography

Yukon Territory is in the extreme northwest corner of Canada. It is bordered by the Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alaska and the Arctic Ocean. The territory is 483,450 square km (186,661 square miles), about one third the size of Alaska. Landforms in the Yukon are mainly plateaus bordered and crossed by mountains. The highest range is the Elias Mountains in the southwest where the highest peak in Canada, Mount Logan rises 5,951 metres (19,524 feet) above sea level. The Yukon and Peel rivers drain virtually all of the territory and in the far north the tundra stretches 160 km southward from the Arctic ocean.

Economy and Transportation

Mining has historically been Yukon's chief industry and remains important along with tourism. Gold, along with zinc, lead and silver are the mineral of interest and exploration and mining contribute significantly to the Yukon economy.

Air travel is used to access Whitehorse and flights are also available to Dawson City and Old Crow (the only fly in community). The Alaska Highway and Klondike Highways are heavily used and all communities other than Old Crow are situated along these highways.

Population / Demographics

The population of the Yukon was 28,674 in 2001 (Census 2001) and has risen to 34,157 by June, 2009 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics Monthly Statistical Review August 2009). This is the highest population on record. The overall population increased 2.6% from June 2008 to June 2009. Thirteen of seventeen communities in the territory showed population increases during the same period. Whitehorse has 71% of the population with 25,636 people with the remaining people distributed throughout 16 other communities. There are slightly fewer women than men – males 17,407 and females 16,750. Persons under the age of 15 years accounted for 16.7% of the population, while 8.2% of the population was aged 65 or over. The 2006 Census recorded 7,580 Yukoners (23%) as being of Aboriginal

identity. According to Statistics Canada, 3,665 of that total were aboriginal males and 3,915 females. The percentage of the aboriginal population aged 15 and over was 72.8% and 18.2% under the age of 15.

Health and Social Status

The overall life expectancy has risen from 73.4 years in 1994 to 75.7 years in 2006. Yukon female's life expectancy is 77.7 years and for males, it is 74.0 years. Life expectancy at birth is lowest for Aboriginal males in the Yukon with an average of 8.8 years less life expectancy than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Aboriginal males also had the highest increase in life expectancy of 7.3% or 4.6 years from 1994 to 2006. Aboriginal females had the second highest increase of 4.5% or 3.2 years.

The Canadian Community Health Survey (2006) for Yukon aboriginal people reported that 47.4% of self-rated their health as very good or excellent (2396 responses) and 65.7% self-rated their mental health as very or excellent (3319 responses). 21.5% of people over 18 years reported that they had quite a lot of life stress (978 responses). 69.4% felt a strong sense of belonging to their local community (3509 responses).

The Yukon Bureau of Statistics reported the Yukon labour force at 17,500 in October 2009 and of that 16,400 were employed with an unemployment rate of 6.3%. Federal, territorial, municipal and First Nation governments employed a total of 7,000. Private Sector employed 7,300 and 2,100 reported as self-employed.

2.2 Pelly Crossing Location and Infrastructure

The community of Pelly Crossing is located along the Klondike Highway and on the banks of the Pelly River, 283 km northwest of Whitehorse and 254 km southeast of Dawson City. Pelly Crossing is a small community of about 300 people, with the majority of the population being Northern Tutchone and from the Selkirk First Nation.

The main mode of transportation to and from Pelly Crossing is by the North Klondike Highway which is well maintained and paved.

The community has a K-12 school, Yukon College campus, curling rink, baseball field, swimming pool, church and youth centre.

Big Jonathan Heritage Centre is situated along the highway, near the community. It is a replica to the original building in Fort Selkirk. One feature of the centre is learning about Fort Selkirk and the transition that happened when the people moved in to Pelly Crossing. Beautiful handicrafts are on display showing the strength and talent of the people. All pieces are made locally including beaded clothing, birch bark baskets, baby birch bedding and tools.

SFN built a new Administration Building and owns and maintains many housing units. New homes continue to be added each year and older homes renovated.

Environmental Trends and Issues

SFN wants to ensure healthy lands and plentiful resources for their future generations. They are moving forward on the principles of sustainable development. The leadership keeps this in mind as they form business partnerships. They want to ensure the health of land and wildlife is continued and that these partnerships lead to economic gains and employment opportunities for SFN citizens.

2.3 Business and Government Services

Business

The North Klondike Highway runs through Pelly Crossing and it is here that the local businesses are found which include a gas station, store, take-out restaurant, cultural centre, motel, campground and laundromat. Tourism and local travellers are a big part of the community's economy. Travellers stop as they drive north, or stop as they travel along the Pelly and Yukon Rivers and others access the back country from Pelly.

First Nation Business

The Selkirk Development Corporation was developed to create employment and business opportunities for members of the First Nation. They are developing joint ventures with other First Nations as well as building their own economic opportunities.

The Selkirk Development Corporation is an investor in Great River Journey, which provides a luxury 8-day Wilderness Tour on the Yukon River (Whitehorse to Dawson City). The owners of 'Great River Journey' are Great Northern Journeys Inc. and FNIC Development Corporation which is a consortium of Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Selkirk First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'an Council.

Minto Mine which is owned by Capstone Mining Corp. is a new copper-gold mine 45 km west of Pelly Crossing and 240 km northwest of Whitehorse. SFN entered into a Cooperation Agreement with Capstone that ensures local employment, training and contracting opportunities for First Nation businesses and covers environmental issues.

The Northern Tutchone Store & Gas Station is owned by the Selkirk First Nation.

Fort Selkirk and Minto Landing are located along the Pelly and Yukon Rivers near Pelly Crossing and are both the original home of the people. Fort Selkirk is now a historic site, rich with history and legends of the Northern Tutchone people. SFN members are hired to provide tours to people travelling on the river during the summer.

Many people in Pelly Crossing combine the wage economy with subsistence activities like hunting and fishing. Some see trapping as their main area of work and many do arts, carving, beadwork.

Yukon Government Services

The Yukon government provides a full range of services to the territory from education, health and social services, environmental services, economic and community development. Please visit www.gov.yk.ca for more information.

Pelly Health Centre – employs a nurse who provides health care services. For any acute care, people must travel to Whitehorse. An ambulance is available with fully trained paramedics supported by Pelly volunteers.

Government of Canada Services

Over time, Federal responsibilities for many services including fisheries, mine safety, intra-territorial roads, hospitals and community health care were transferred to the Yukon government. In October 2001, the Yukon Devolution Agreement was concluded enabling the transfer of the remaining province-like responsibilities for land, water and resource management to the Government of the Yukon on April 1, 2003. As a result, the presence of the Federal Government in the territory has diminished. Services provided in Pelly include police, postal services, environmental protection. Visit www.canada.gc.ca for more information.

Non Government Services

Many Rivers Counselling Services – is a Whitehorse based organization who offer non-emergency counselling for individuals, couples, families and groups in Pelly. A counsellor is assigned to Pelly and makes regular visits to the community.

Alcoholics Anonymous – meetings are held in the community.

Child Development Centre – is a Whitehorse based organization providing early supports and services to Yukon children from birth to school age, particularly those whose needs are special. Outreach workers visit Pelly Crossing.

Blood Ties Four Directions – Whitehorse based organization that provides outreach services educating people and supporting those with blood born diseases like HIV and Hepatitis C.

First Nation Services

The self governing First Nation provides a range of services to the community including social, health, heritage, lands and resources and others. The services are funded directly by the federal government or through financial transfer agreements linked to programs and services transfer arrangements that are the method for implementing self government.

The Selkirk First Nation Health and Social Department is a key strength in the community. The Department of Health and Social department administers a list of programs: Parent Capacity Program, Canada Prenatal Nutrition, Health Promotion, Elder Care, HIV/AIDS Awareness, Hot Lunch, Diabetes Prevention, Tobacco Awareness and Prevention, Youth Leadership, Community Recreation, Social Development, Social Assistance, Funerals and Potlatches. As well, land programs with local resources are offered.

Social and Economic Trends and Opportunities

The Northern Tutchone have a long history of living off the land and its resources, with gratitude and respect. The people were governed by traditional laws that ensured their commitment and obligation to the wholistic health of their people. Through time, the social and economic objectives have shifted, but have always focused on improving the quality of life for the people.

As a self governing First Nation, Selkirk now has the ability to make laws on behalf of its membership and to deliver programs and services to its citizens as well as develop business opportunities. Employment opportunities continue to increase as they move forward implementing their agreements and developing business partnerships (ie. Minto Mine).