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## YUKON RIVER PANEL MEETING

March 26 - 27, 2014 – PUBLIC TESTIMONY  
Marriott Hotel, Anchorage, Alaska

**WEDNESDAY, March 26, 2014**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon**

Public Comment/Testimony Opportunity – *None*

**4:30 – 5:00 p.m.**

Public Comment/Testimony Opportunity

### **Joseph Strongheart – Nunam Iqua village, Alaska**

*I want to speak about how we fish out there for salmon. A lot controlled by tide and wind. When we hear there will be an opening, just because it is an opening doesn't mean we're going to catch anything. If the wind is really strong from the north, in Black River there is maybe five miles of sandbar out there. We're limited to what we can do. We also get lots of driftwood and snags and that hampers our fishing.*

*We have the lowest income per capita. My people have told us that they have given up a lot trying to get the fish up the river. We're going into dip netting but it also hurt a lot of people back home because the elders cannot dip net. They have told me to tell people they have given up a lot and don't know what else they can give up.*

*We are well-regulated by fish and game, by the tide, by the amount of gas in the boat, by the snags. Just because there is fish in the north mouth doesn't mean there is fish in the south mouth or middle mouth. My favorite place to fish was Black River and it was busy but not now. Remember we have given up a lot.*

*The kings come at the same time as the other fish. We like to fish. When we're regulated to not go out we don't go out. One elder got caught last year pulling his net 10-15 minutes late.*

*We've struggled and we're struggling and trying to work with everybody to get the fish across the border. A lot of my people don't like the regulations but we are abiding by them which is very hard on the people.*

### **Ron Chambers (Panel member):**

*We need these stories up and down the river. We have to focus on what is it and what can we do. An elder should not be charged for fishing for something he's done for generations. It is ridiculous that we are discussing this, charging our elders and our people. We need to get some answers so we aren't charging our elders. We also have to be involved in the enforcement of it. I appreciate you being at the far end of the river and giving us this information. That river is our river; that to me is what your story is.*

Erick Weingarth (Panel member):

*I commend Joe for sacrificing and abiding by the law. They have no roads or store or much of an economy. They live off the land; what else do you have out there, Joe?*

Joseph Strongheart:

*About 30 years ago we started to get moose. We have moose season. We have birds – geese. Now halibut fishing recently. We are changing the way we eat. It costs more money for gas to move between villages. We have black fish and needle fish which some people don't eat. Everything depends on tide and weather. Airlines couldn't bring our mail for nine days; if we want to go cash our cheques we have to spend money to cash our cheques. Some of our kids say their traditional food is hamburgers, chicken, crackers.*

Steve Gotch (Panel Co-Chair):

*Please take back the message that we appreciate their contribution to resolving the salmon problem.*

**Roberta Joseph – Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, Yukon**

*What I wanted to talk about today was the 2013 projections and the post season management that came out in 2013. The reason why I'm wanting to talk about it, is how it affected our first nations. In terms of the post-season projections, one week we were advised that 70 per cent of the run was Canadian origin. I was concerned about the run, I couldn't understand how the run was projected at 70 per cent origin. It had no reason to ask the citizens to not harvest.*

*A week later we were advised by the agency there was an emergency call with Department of Fisheries and Ocean. The emergency meeting stressed that the run was really weak and border escapement would not take place, so the First Nations volunteered to not harvest. I was aware the border escapement was low.*

*I wanted to stress how important it is for the studies and management to be accurate because of the number of people affected along the river. When the information came in asking us to stop harvesting, that the upper Yukon First Nations were not able to harvest, I felt really bad for people upriver who were not able to harvest. A lot of them had not been harvesting. It is really important to have correct information.*

*There is a lot of discussion but I wanted you to know how that has affected us on the Canada side. I appreciate some of the interim management discussions. In terms of the harvest in the presentations today, the U.S. harvest was about 7,200 and the Canadian harvest estimated at 2,200, and not being able to meet the border escapement and talking about the production of the returns. To me, the run is declined so much that the border escapement is quite dramatic. Reducing harvest all these years, some to zero. It is important to find out what is affecting spawning and production in Yukon.*

*Another issue—we're starting to hear that people in B.C. have quit eating salmon due to radiation in the ocean from Japan. We would like updates on that; it is a question that will be raised. There's been no updates and it is important to know whether this is a factor in the decline.*

Ron Chamber (Panel member):

*There is a video from Dawson about working with the young people. Can you give us some information about this?*

Roberta Joseph:

*You're talking about First Fish. My contribution is my one week to go out enjoy being on the land; enjoy being able to taking the kids out, setting nets, teach them how to clean the salmon, tell them stories, elders tell them stories. There is some trapping. We collect some water for kids to go through to see what they can see, see if we can trap any fries.*

*It is an excellent marine experience. All of our on-land training is recognized for credit for the children and is providing the youth with traditional knowledge so they can become good stewards of the land to carry with them through their lives.*

Erick Weingarth (Panel member):

*Thank you for sharing your story. There is a lot of sacrifice. We recognize that you are enduring a lot of hardship.*

**THURSDAY, March 27, 2014**

**11:00 – 11:30 a.m.**

Public Comment/Testimony Opportunity

**Bob Van Dijken, Council of Yukon First Nations**

*The Department of Fisheries and Oceans had a public information session where a number of recommendations were made. There will be follow-up. I'm not familiar with how the U.S. is conducting their review.*

*The Council of Yukon First Nations signed off on the umbrella agreement and the Yukon River Panel agreement is a creature of the umbrella agreement. These are constitutionally entrenched agreements. We feel it is very important that a review is undertaken by both federal government and the panel as a whole, in terms of the review and what it was intended to do and whether it is fulfilling what it was intended to do.*

*Not sure how the panel is dealing with this and what their plan is.*

*How does the panel intend to be involved in the Salmon Summit?*

*How will it receive comments coming out of the summit?*

*How can the information be worked with for the coming season?*

*Is there a possibility of some of the recommendations coming from the summit making it to management decisions?*

**3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

Public Comment/Testimony Opportunity – None