

# Yukon **WALKING** Strategy

## Imagine a Yukon where...

- ... every road-side viewpoint, every campground, every school, every community, every neighbourhood has well marked, interpreted walking trails.
- ... territory-wide community stewardship ensures variety in kinds of trails and interpretation, and that trail construction, wayfinding and mapping follow standards.
- ... schools use their walking trails and greenspaces as part of a Yukon land-based, experiential outdoor curriculum.
- ... schools and communities work together in a stewardship fashion on both school and community trails.
- ... the student Y2C2 program works to make student services a viable, affordable choice for schools and communities needing help with their trails.
- ... walking tourism, a stay-another-day initiative, is supported by tourist-related walking materials and programming.
- ... recreation and health organizations actively foster a walking culture; a walkNet gets established.

Prepared by  
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## Why a Yukon walking strategy?



“Start a public conversation about how to make your community a great place for children and families.”

**Wellness plan for Yukon’s children and families**

“We need creative approaches to address barriers that limit opportunities to be active.”

**Renewed Yukon active living strategy**

The idea behind this strategy is to provoke a public discussion on walking, a big part of a healthy lifestyle.

Don’t get me wrong, the Yukon is a great place to walk and many people hike. Yet, while it has lots of trails, scenic vistas and an abundance of nature — it doesn’t have a walking culture. My *whitehorsewalks.com* website looks at walking in Whitehorse, but there are many advantages to looking at Yukon-wide walking.

Creating a walking culture is not easy. We’re a small northern population, in wilderness, with a tough climate. While we have a very vibrant organized sports and recreation culture, a focus on recreational walking has generally not been a tradition here.

One way to change this is through walking leadership. While most people walk as part of their daily lives, there’s no organized voice for walkers: no NGO with a specific walking focus, no sports or recreation body for walking and no walking advocate within any of the governments. Opportunities to better walking experiences, to address barriers to walking, get missed.

There are interesting walking role models: Ireland, England, Newfoundland, Edmonton, Richmond... places with larger populations but nonetheless, creative ideas.

This walking strategy is broad, yet seems worthwhile, realistic and achievable. We could have new and improved community walking trails, many with interpretation; schools could have walking–learning facilities. People might walk more with their families. More Yukoners could connect with nature; they may even discover a passion. We’d create a walking culture. And we’ll attract more tourists.

### Am I overly optimistic? Think about

- health care costs growing dramatically;
- technology increasingly being prevalent in our lives;
- sedentary, screen-based lifestyles leading to less fitness;
- full and busy lifestyles leaving little time for nature;
- 1 of 3 high school students feeling unconnected to school;
- diminishing quality time between generations;
- many Yukon occupations using land-based skills;
- lifestyles in rural communities being sustainable;
- 62% of visitors coming by road don’t overnight here;
- walking is neither a sport nor an organized activity;
- organized recreation offsetting idle playtime in nature
- walking is affordable, not needing special equipment.

**Peter Long, [pjl@whitehorsewalks.com](mailto:pjl@whitehorsewalks.com)**

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“...over half the Yukon population faces unnecessary health risks due to inactive lifestyles... Children and youth are not getting enough activity for optimal growth and development... Adults face unnecessary risks of premature death and chronic disease. High numbers of inactive people pose a considerable public health burden, in terms of increased individual suffering and stress on the health care system.

**Stated in the Yukon Legislature**

Canada is at a stage in its developed economy where it needs to be innovative, to create new value and opportunities with the talent and resources we have.

**Doug Watt**

**Conference Board of Canada**

Give back – take action on something that matters to make the community a better place to live, learn and play.

**Build wellness into activities, programs and events for children and youth**

To promote walking as an indicator of sustainable, healthy places...

Engaged communities demanding infrastructure and services that give residents the chance to choose to walk as an everyday activity. **Canadian walking master class, City of Whitehorse**

Promote and support fun, safe and accessible opportunities to be active for every Yukoner regardless of circumstances or ability.

**Renewed**

**Yukon active living strategy**

Regular walking can have a tremendous positive impact on overall health and well-being.

There are many benefits in taking these walks in natural environments, such as parks, trails, and other green spaces. These benefits include lowering stress levels, increasing mood and enhancing short-term memory.

Studies have shown that people are more likely to walk and be physically active, as well as enjoy higher levels of health and well-being, when they have easily accessible green spaces in their communities.

**Walk Richmond**

## Walking activism

### Becoming more healthy, more active

Is a walk around the neighbourhood an athletic event?

As a society, we put a lot of time and money into encouraging healthy living, much of it going into organized recreation and sports. While good for those participating, realistically, everyone is not going to mountain bike, ski, run, swim or play soccer.

Of course, no matter their age or physical condition, most people generally walk. Walking is free, can be done year-round and needs no equipment. For some, possibly many, walking is their main exercise.

Trail walking satisfies a need for being outdoors, for activity, for recreation; it counters nature deficit disorder. Walking, hiking and snowshoeing are similar activities, varying in season and place.

Walking trails are integral to a northern community wellness strategy. These free active recreation spaces allow participation by all ages. In particular, seniors and elders can stay active, and parents can share the joy of walking with children.

People, both visitors and locals, need to feel confident and safe when walking. Wilderness, long harsh winters, mosquitoes and bears are some Yukon realities. Some people are apprehensive to venture far from their cars or homes. Innovative approaches are needed.

### Encouraging more people to walk

There are many ways to build more walking into our lives, such as walking with a dog or two, or with friends. However, for many people, more discipline is needed. Social networking and positive peer pressure can help make healthy choices the norm.

Recreation and sports bodies and community groups like RPAY can play a role. One idea is to set up a walking non-profit to speak for the broad needs of walkers — hikers, school kids, neighbourhood walkers, active transportation. This group could both advocate for removing walking barriers, as well as instigate social events around walking.

People's need for safety and social interaction could make regular weekly (or more frequent) group hikes very popular. There could be an email of walking

events, naming a place and time. Leaders could be trained volunteers, local experts, politicians, town officials... There could be dog/no dog walks.

Artsnet is a big success; would a Walknet work? It could link walkers in Whitehorse and rural communities. Participants could share walk ideas, photos, nature observations. Thinking of walking themes, art-based walks would be popular.

Fitness would be a big theme. Walks with pilates instructors or physiotherapists would be popular: hill strategies, stretching, breathing, posture, stride; a walk using the new outdoor fitness and play equipment that RPAY and the city are installing along the Yukon River.

A walking passport, targeted at both locals and tourists, would promote walking in different areas of the Yukon. It could be a variation on Tourism's *Yukon Gold Explorer's Passport*, or Ontario's *Step into nature—healthy hikes* program; it could even be just within a community.

Look at holding various weekend events. Friends of the Dempster have bird, geology, botany, and mushroom and lichen weekends at Tombstone Park.

Walking festivals are popular in Europe. People who attend are often locals. Whitehorse is well suited for a festival, but any community could put one together.

### Identifying good places to go for a walk

Social encouragement is good, but the best way of encouraging people to walk more is to have pleasing places to walk. Whitehorse's Millennium Trail and Rotary Centennial Bridge is a prime example. Statistics show that about 3,000,000 people have used this trail.

The heart of this walking strategy is identifying, developing and interpreting walking trails. There would be trails at schools, hospitals, care facilities, neighbourhoods and subdivisions — in every Yukon community. There would be walking trails at historic sites, territorial parks, special management areas, campgrounds and roadside viewpoints. Having no walking trail should be an exception.

“Walking at least 1 hour per day is considered “physically active”. **Canadian fitness and lifestyle research institute**

Set up physical environments so that healthy choices are easy to make.

Resist the temptation to wait for new programs, facilities, or money before taking action — small, low cost actions taken by many people add up.

**Wellness plan for Yukon's children and families**

Active lifestyles prolong independent living for seniors.

Active Yukoners can promote and encourage all Yukoners to engage in active lifestyles on a daily basis by being role models in their communities and amongst family and friends.

Increase cross-generational programming and special events (e.g. family events, community walking challenges). **Renewed Yukon active living strategy**

Typical Yukon adult: Choosing to walk; 87% walk in summer and 79% walk in winter; and preferring to be active at home, outdoors and in a non-organized setting.

**Yukon healthy living segmentation study**

Health Walks – a great way to start some gentle exercise and meet people. Ideal for those new or returning to exercise. Walks will be led by a qualified leader and taken at a distance and pace suitable for all.

**Walking for health, Oxford City Council**

Physical activity is not something to check off on your list of things to do. It's a way of life... But only 37 per cent of parents said they often play actively with their children. **Active Healthy Kids Canada**

There is something about the pace of walking and the pace of thinking that goes together. Walking requires a certain amount of attention but it leaves great parts of the time open to thinking. I do believe once you get the blood flowing through the brain it does start working more creatively.

**Geoff Nicholson  
The lost art of walking**



## Develop walking tourism

### Connecting visitors to the land

Walking tourism is the icing on the cake of a Yukon walking strategy. A system of walking trails that fits Yukoner's needs would be a gift for visitors who want to experience the Yukon. Our spectacular landscapes and long hours of summer daylight cry out for doing more. Walking trails are always open, and free!

Many of our tourists are driving to Alaska, privately or on tours. Those from Europe are very used to recreational walking. Travellers can be quite frugal, but still want an active holiday. But these people do come here and could be enticed to do more.

However, we can be offering more than windshield tourism, sitting for hours on long drives between larger communities. Our tourism goal should be to get them to slow down, stop, get out of their vehicles and experience the Yukon, hear the silence, smell the clean air. With a strategy of ubiquitous walking trails, every time one stops at a highway view point, a campground or a community, they could take a walk, a hike. Walking can be a highlight of people's holiday stories.

And for Yukoners? How many of us have walked around Pelly Crossing? Stewart Crossing? Carmacks? No? Yet we've likely walked down the stairs and took the advertised trail over to Five Finger Rapids. As community walking trails become more well known, we'll stop and walk more often.

### Making the Yukon a walking destination

We have only 15 communities and well maintained highways link most of them — even Old Crow has a transportation link with its co-ownership of Air North. By working together and making great walking trails, we could promote the Yukon as a destination for walkers.

Our network of walking trails will portray us as a place to really experience nature. Promoting nature-based fitness walking holidays would add a new dimension to our tourism sector! YG Tourism has a *Product Development Partnership Program* that could help develop a walking tourism sector.

Imagine walking tourism as part of a stay-another-day program. Walkers do pass time in coffee shops, buy

food, stay in campgrounds and B&Bs, attend cultural events, buy music and art, and do other touristy things.

Promotional materials will have a new topic to explore as we try to entice visitors here. Tourism material can start to highlight trails. A booklet with overviews of walking trails, in the style of *Art Adventures on Yukon Time*, will make people travel around more. There will be opportunities for making more descriptive guide materials as well. As well as informing visitors, good walking materials will be well used by locals.

### Thinking creatively

Supporting walking will especially promote those involved in tourism-related ventures.

Larger communities such as Whitehorse and Dawson City are well poised to benefit from walking tourism. Their economic development strategies should include a walking focus.

Walking tourism will attract people who would travel at a slower, more thoughtful pace — good for community entrepreneurs such as restaurants, B&Bs, stores, and artists and craft people.

“Organizations should diversify their offerings and create new products that appeal to new demographics and meet the needs of travellers from a range of cultural and geographic backgrounds.

**Canada's federal tourism strategy**

Entering by road (air travel not included):

people in private vehicles:  
82,843 left same day, 115,081 stayed longer

people in motorcoachs:  
128,302 left same day, 16,774 stayed longer

**Yukon tourism indicators  
year-end report 2013**

“Nature walk or hike” was the most cited activity people did in their Whitehorse visit.

would encourage them to stay longer: more activities; less expensive overall; better communication/packaging of activities; more attractions open; and, more heritage and culture.

A top 3 barrier: Hours of operation that do not reconcile with visitor itineraries or schedules.

**Tourism and visitor  
development in downtown Whitehorse,  
Main Street Yukon Society**

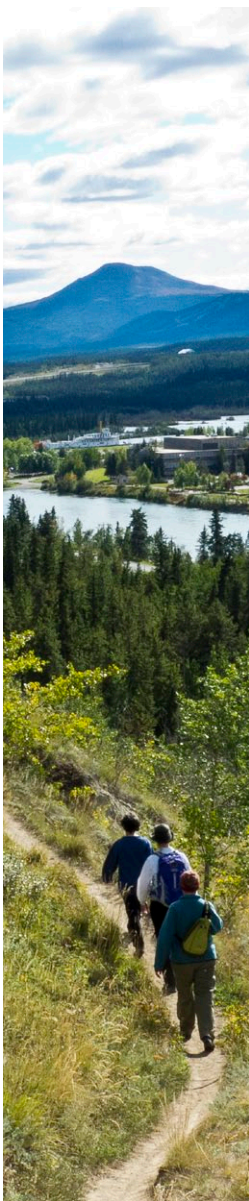
...highest-rated overall experiences: hearing about traditional uses of the land; seeing the way Aboriginals used to live; hearing Aboriginal legends; interacting with local Aboriginal people. **Demand for  
aboriginal cultural tourism in Yukon**

With more leisure time and fewer family responsibilities, the world's rapidly growing retiree population is equally keen to travel (retirees are among the highest-spending international travellers)

**Passport to growth  
How international arrivals stimulate  
Canadian exports**

... by ignoring the international market we are overlooking a lucrative source of diverse economic growth and investment... **the Canadian tourism industry,  
a special report**

No landscape on Earth is more compelling than the Yukon. It's writers' territory... artists' territory... full of longing and distance and spirit. **Charlie Wilkins  
Berton House writer-in-residence**



## Quality walking experiences

### Walking trails

Well mapped walking trails with clear waymarking address both safety and encourage people to walk more. With the proliferation of trails in some places and the wide variety of confidence — by both local and visitors — in the outdoors, marking needs to be very obvious.

Trailhead signs showing difficulty, estimated time to walk and other information can help one decide whether to walk a particular trail. Setting some trailheads in a park-like setting with recreation facilities like picnic tables would attract more walkers.

Trails would vary — short, long, easy, hard, gentle, strenuous. They would be well-made with bridges, switchbacks, stairs, viewpoints and boardwalks, and where possible they'd be loop trails. Geocaching could be a family-friendly aspect of some walking trails.

Trails that access high points or ridges are popular for the views. Often communities are on rivers or lakes, or have nearby wetlands, all interesting places to walk. Watson Lake's Wye Lake Trail is a nice in-town trail.

There would be special inclusive trails such as for the blind, for wheelchair users and fragile walkers. Trails could be paved like Whitehorse's active transportation trails (extra nice when there's natural surface trails alongside).

Some trails would be along the edge of towns such as Dawson City's Ninth Avenue Trail. Yet others would be longer ones such as the one planned from Dawson to the North Klondike by Friends of the Dempster and Klondike Active Transport Society.

Trails are long-term community commitments and can be expensive. Allowing sufficient time to plan and design a trail will ease community acceptance and long-term maintenance, getting most value from the money. Instead of just creating new trails, it's important that we upgrade trails that are commonly used.

Trail design for seasonal use is also important. From a health perspective we need year-round walking trails for neighbourhood/community trails. Winter walking can be slippery, spring can be wet, muddy. For many, such as dog walkers, walking is a daily all-weather activity.

Impacts of each trail on wildlife and the general environment needs to be monitored. This would include collecting and sharing data and observations, news, stories, experiences, and different perspectives (e.g. First Nation, environmental).

### Walking interpretation

Interpretation of natural history will make walking trails desirable places to go. A well interpreted trail can become a destination. Educating walkers, making walking more interesting and encouraging longer walks are some goals.

Unlike moose and bears, many elements of nature are visible a lot of the time. Birds, insects, plants can make a wetland walk memorable. Some European city dwellers are thrilled to see squirrels. We could learn the names of our local mountains.

Getting people with passion to lead walks, experts such as geologists, scientists, naturalists and artists is a good model to follow. Environment's wildlife viewing program or Geological Survey's hikes are leaders here.

Walks on the theme of safety would be popular: fire safety, wildlife safety, not getting lost, weather...

Explaining geography would also make road travel more enjoyable — topics could include wetlands, forests, rivers and lakes, mountains and Beringia.

Interpretation could be books, brochures, colouring pages, plant identification keys, mobile device apps, audio/graphical files, trail mapping and GPS tracks, all designed to be very locally relevant. There are many opportunities here for the Yukon's knowledge sector.

### The broader territorial overview

It will be important to plan interpretation, spreading out stories to minimize repetition and allowing broader topics to be told in regional bites.

Coordinating trails and interpretation with various Yukon research, in plain language, will broaden our Yukon understanding. With almost 23 ecoregions, 300 birds, 1200+ plants, fossils and climate change, there's many natural history stories and unique or niche ideas to learn, to talk about.

“90% of Yukoners use local walking trails. When asked what encourages them to be more active, 55% of Yukoners replied “access to parks and trails”. **Renewed Yukon active living strategy**

Places where families can meet, socialize, swap ideas, support each other, play, have fun. **Wellness plan for Yukon's children and families**

...goal reflects the importance of protecting, interpreting, and promoting this rich heritage for the enjoyment of Yukoners and visitors and to ensure its preservation for future generations to enjoy. **Tourism and Culture strategic plan • 2013-2018**

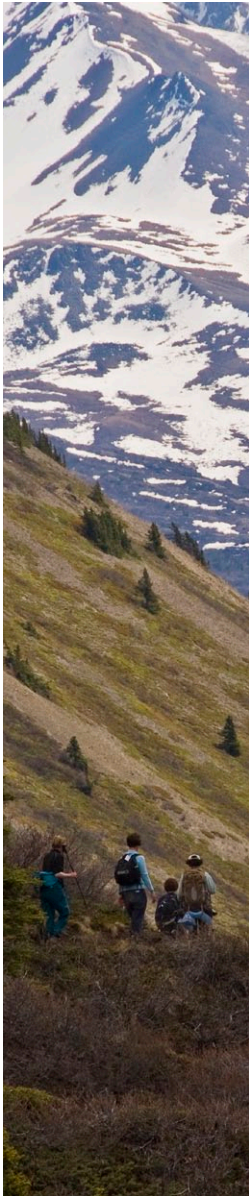
We are looking forward to forging new partnerships that capitalise on local knowledge and build capacity in communities to share what is special about their area. **Yukon's Wildlife: Strategy for developing and promoting viewing opportunities**

With its awe-inspiring natural landscapes, natural phenomena, authentic experiences, vibrant culture, and strategic geographic location Yukon offers a unique set of opportunities. **2013–2016 Tourism marketing strategy**

Market research on Irish tourism indicates that increasingly, visitors seek quality looped walks in areas of high physical and amenity value where they can interact with locals and savour the relaxed pace of life. **Loop walks, key criteria, Ireland National Tourism Development Agency**

Walkers and hikers will find collections of trails that offer a variety of experiences, distances, and degrees of difficulty. There are urban strolls, coastal hikes, backcountry expeditions, and a sunset walk to a lookout and back. **Newfoundland, Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation**

Adopt a Trail programs can work well, but make sure the adopting group has the knowledge and tools they need to truly help. Without proper trail education, some of these programs do more harm than good. **Trail Dynamics Trail Maintenance – Problem solving and repairing trail damage**



## Students and school walking trails

### Active outdoor learning

Balancing screen time and fitness is a challenge. It used to be that we watched too much TV, but now our screen time also includes computers, technology and the internet. With society's increasing dependence on technology, fitness and our kids may be the losers.

By blending technology with nature, kids can achieve healthier lifestyles. More outdoors in the schools could improve kids' learning experiences.

The walking strategy calls for schools to have walking trails, as well as stewardship on the trails and their surrounding greenspaces. A walking trail around a pond will be a hands-on environmental classroom, similar to gyms and libraries.

From simple activities in lower grades to complex projects in college, active outdoor learning can help stay-in-school and attendance initiatives. Trail learning will form the basis of a broad, practical education, and possibly, a lifetime love of walking and the outdoors.

An experiential outdoors course around stewardship and walking trails could include aspects of: trail aesthetics, trail building, geography, First Nation culture, science, art, engineering, trades, technology, databases, design, mediation, marketing, business, publishing, social media, health, first aid, CPR, guiding, ecotourism, business, entrepreneurial skills... and physical fitness!

Skill transfer will be high with students engaged in outdoor programming. They will be especially good candidates to go on in higher schooling and various land-based employment or self-employment. We should also remember that some of their future jobs will be in occupations not yet invented.

### Yukon school system

Yukon teachers already have access to creative tools such as: Northern Rural Experiential Model where schools meet to participate in week-long learning-by-doing classes; experiential science and MAD-style courses; EnviroWild nature-based courses; online blended learning.

Expanding classrooms into walking trails and their greenspaces will require imagination and departmental flexibility. For instance, dealing with weather will be challenging.

Many opportunities exist for others to share their passions with classes. Expanding programs like artists in the school could be interesting: elders, geologists, environmentalists, naturalists, fish and game workers, miners, geographers, birders and athletes are but a few possible visitors to the outdoor classroom.

### Community integration

The Yukon's walking trail system will require constant attention — researching, designing, interpreting, promoting and work like trail surfacing, building boardwalks, stairs, bridges... Rural youth will have meaningful opportunities in their community with options for trail crews, trail wardens, interpretation and youth leadership.

Providing students with meaningful outdoor work experiences with the walking trail system is a good fit. Environment's Y2C2 program could provide communities with affordable trail workers. Even those involved in CAT would find a role in walking trails.

Northern Research Institute could research best trail construction practices and affordable trail structures such as boardwalks, bridges and signage. (NRC's Arctic program has a target of community development.) Could we incorporate recycling?

College extension courses could be offered on aspects of community stewardship of walking trails.

Students' web-based materials could promote walking and natural history to their own community, tourists and others with Yukon interests. Walking the school's trails will be extra special for families of the kids.

With the Yukon's spread out communities, schools, especially rural ones, could fight feelings of isolation by sharing stories on walking trail projects, climate change, and how they are working with their community on stewardship issues.

“And most importantly, wellness is about the relationships that children have with adults and their peers at home, in schools, and in our neighbourhoods and communities. Children live in a web of relationships, and thrive when these relationships are based on genuine caring, fairness, tolerance and respect.

### Pathways to wellness Our children and families

Provide a broader range of learning opportunities to rural students, including experiential and land-based programming, access to applied skills and trades training, enhanced use of technology, and on-line learning opportunities.

Support young people to develop confidence, competence and connection through activities that ignite their passion...

Continue to engage, train, and support adult allies, with emphasis on rural adult allies.

### Wellness plan for Yukon's children and families

Community campuses will provide a broad range of innovative learning options and delivery methods to address the specific needs of each community.

... will work cooperatively with the Yukon Department of Education, First Nations and other partners to increase rural student secondary and post-secondary participation and achievement.

### Yukon College strategic performance indicators

Blended learning, alternate learning centers and e-learning are just a few of the ways we are bringing more educational opportunities to northern rural communities.

### Minister of Education Elaine Taylor Yukon's rural equity action plan

Fostering environments which support healthy behaviours and active lifestyles demands collaboration across governments, within communities, between groups and organizations, and amongst individuals.

### Renewed Yukon active living strategy



## Community health and walking

### Community trail stewardship

Mixing a sense of excellence with some competitive spirit can result in interesting walking trails where both locals and visitors feel at home and safe.

Realistically, trail responsibility would vary with the size of the community; likely it would be volunteer based. Using schools as hubs for community stewardship of the walking trails would create opportunities for youth–adult relationships.

Some trail work, such as constructing bridges and boardwalks, will be large projects for a community. Topics such as geology/geography are complex to explain well. Stewardship groups need access to Yukon-relevant trail maintenance and interpretation resources.

Programs such as CDF would be a source of funding. Building community capacity for trail projects would be more important than spending a lot of money outside the community.

One way to improve a specific trail problem would be to work with an organization such as the Sierra Club (built a switchback trail at King’s Throne in Kluane), or the military (helped the city trail crew on Whitehorse’s Copper Ridge Connector Trail).

Organizing a yearly Yukon walking trail summit will build group strength. Communities would work together to ensure a degree of uniqueness to walking trail offerings, interpretation and events. They could discuss successes and failures in walking tourism.

Events, such as wetland keeper workshops and culture camps, would add to community stewardship. Holding mixed community science and art fairs focussed on local trails would allow both adults and kids to share their knowledge.

### A cornerstone of community wellness

A task for walking leadership and a significant part of a healthy living strategy, is a focus on neighbourhood walkability, ensuring that neighbourhood trails are welcoming, very obvious, very good and well mapped.

Identifying and promoting walking network improvements such as wetland crossings, bridges, switchbacks and stairs would be good for raising the

profile of walking, and offer a variety of walking choices, important for motivating walking.

Fair access to greenspaces for walking would help create a walking culture. Ensuring a variety of short and long loop walks, accessible without driving, means more people would use walking trails, and walk longer.

Using zoning to protect potential walking corridors is an active living strategy. Clearly marked public right-of-ways will encourage neighbourhood walking.

Addressing barriers to walking — highways and major roads, wetlands, rivers, large land users such as golf courses or ski trails — by ensuring walkable crossings at places appropriate for walkers, can reflect a community’s walking health.

Technology such as Google Earth democratizes access to mapping, allowing understanding of both traditional and modern land uses, making environmental aspects more understandable. It also allows planning to be done on realistic maps.

### Economic opportunities

Unlike the promotional opportunities for companies directly involved with their customer base, i.e. snowmobiles, bike shops, ski suppliers, sporting good stores, walking will present different opportunities for business–community partnerships.

Sponsorship of both physical walking infrastructure and social walking initiatives show ties to people and families. Healthy communities mean healthy customers and happy employees.

One example of creative community growth would be to build a pedestrian bridge from Main Street to the hospital and the Long Lake trails. It would give the downtown access to nature, scenery and walking. Good hospital walking trails and easy access to downtown can give the hospital area a feeling of a pleasant oasis. A vibrant downtown would attract more tourists to our businesses, the arts scene and the waterfront.

As this is a Yukon-wide walking strategy, innovative companies could focus on communities with small populations.

“Community capacity is about people who, through their actions, provide opportunities for their communities to engage in active, healthy lifestyles. Both human and financial resources are needed to build and sustain community capacity. It is recognized that a greater investment is needed in rural Yukon communities to improve access and equity across the territory. **Renewed Yukon active living strategy**”

Successful health-promoting schools actively reach out beyond the walls of the school into the community, and foster relationships and create a school environment that welcomes and engages people of all ages.

Many businesses contribute funding and in-kind services and goods to support sports, recreation, and cultural activities, and provide part-time and summer job opportunities for young people. **Wellness plan for Yukon’s children and families**

With new sustainability plans in place, now is the time for the Council to promote a strong policy position that not only supports walking but establishes a clear action plan for walking. This plan should place pedestrians at the top of the road user hierarchy and outline how resources, personnel and projects will build a culture of walking in Whitehorse.

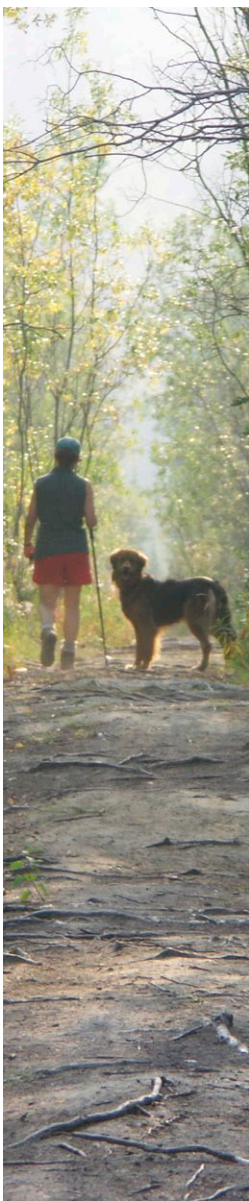
**Canadian Walking Master Class  
City of Whitehorse**

Recreational trails make it easier for people to visit areas, to be active in the outdoors and to connect with nature and heritage. In urban & rural areas, recreational trails provide safer places to walk or cycle.

**A guide to planning and developing recreational trails in Ireland**

Hike Ontario has developed standards and training programs for Hike Leaders ... used by our member clubs, community colleges, universities, activity clubs and outdoor training organizations for course delivery. Currently, Hike Ontario offers Standard Hike Leader, Youth Hike Leader and Wilderness Day Hike Leader certification courses. **Hike Ontario**

**Best practices for increasing trail usage by hikers and walkers**”



## First Nations

An important part of a walking strategy will be First Nations stories about people's lifestyles, both today and long before the gold rush and the Alaska Highway.

First Nations languages and place names used in interpretation will give a better sense of traditional lives, and a broader view of the land.

Walking trails would be a good basis for elder/youth programming, especially with elders who are active.

The role of the walking strategy in rural education could be very strong if integrated with First Nation needs.

First Nations traditional trails will be very popular walking trails. For example, imagine a continuous foot trail linking Marsh Lake to Lake Laberge, centered on Kwanlin Dün's cultural centre on the waterfront. While some of the route exists as community trails, there are still places where the traditional route is obscure. Public pressure and zoning can help ensuring this can still happen one day.

Some First Nations, such as Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, are bringing their trails back into use.



“Build bridges and partnerships between First Nations and non-First Nations, governments and business, young and old.  
**Wellness plan  
for Yukon's children and families**

Culturally focused physical activity and improved recreational programs... for Aboriginal children and youth...

**Healthy kids, healthy futures  
Task force, First Nations communities  
(Manitoba)**

Business leaders, school principals, elders and community members are distressed by the number of Yukon youth and adults who either do not complete high school or complete high school but then must take College preparation courses before entering a Yukon College program.

Community members and elders as well as youth workers say that this disconnect ... is setting youth, particularly rural youth, up for failure.

Experiences were shared and examples were given ... to demonstrate that the difficult transitions from a rural community to Whitehorse or from high school to a post secondary institution are often exacerbated by this gap.

**Yukon College strategic plan, 2013-18**

Place Names: Traditionally livelihood came from the land. Almost every geographic feature was named by the people who worked every day in the natural environment. The places and their names are an essential part of native culture, and of native language.

**Yukon Native Language Centre**

[Elders] are needed in their villages to help us regain our appreciation of the old way and of the Indian values. It is from them that we will learn how to keep our Culture alive.

The whole Yukon is our school. In the past we learned from our surroundings.

Courses about the land must be taught on the land - not just in the classroom.

**Together today  
for our children tomorrow**



## Putting it all together

### Walking trails for health and recreation

While parts of this walking strategy already happen in isolation, overall effectiveness will depend on implementing the bigger picture.

A lack of demand for walking trails, for community walkability, should be seen as a community health problem.

Governments plan years in advance for health, the economy, education. Walking infrastructure needs to become like electricity, communications, roads, sewers, water. Money saved in promoting walking will be offset by lower health costs, stronger community dynamics and walking tourism.

Walking trails can be a lot of work, especially in small communities and neighbourhoods. Governments can't do it all; they need to lead, to encourage walking. We need partnerships, sponsorships, and balancing top-down, policy-driven approaches with local stewardship.

### Walking trails

Initially, for each community, focus on a main walking trail project that might only need brushing and simple repairs. While it need not require expensive, complicated solutions, it will still cost money. Open public discussions can ensure community consensus.

- Inventory walking trails; describe and assess using a recognized trail rating system.
- Compile northern/winter best trail solutions: cost, what worked and for how long, and what didn't.
- Develop sustainable methods for making boardwalks, bridges, surfacing, signage.
- Vary focus of interpretation and trails, such as geology, mining, wetlands, botany, climate, forest.
- UK towns can join *Walkers are welcome*. They have ways to report trail problems that trail authorities can arrange to be fixed.
- Arrange for workshops on such topics as stewardship, and trail design and construction.
- Lobby for updating imagery on Google Earth so community planning can be more effective.

- Query local citizen scientists on possible roles.
- Look at liability — communities shouldn't have to individually look at insurance implications.

### Turning vision into action

- City of Whitehorse — designate a special senior walking administrator to work with recreation, city tourism, environmental sustainability, parks and trails, engineering, planning, ...
- First Nations and communities should examine their unique roles within the strategy. Establish a group in each community to spearhead the project.
- Identify community leadership, whether a committee, a coordinator, a group; engage youth leadership.
- HSS, RPAY, and Sports and Recreation must address healthy active living needs of the already walking silent public, as well as focus on non-walkers.
- Environment to foster walking stewardship groups; ensure Y2C2 program can scale with demand.
- Tourism and TIYA focus on promoting the Yukon as a walking destination; Tourism's *Product Development Partnership Program* to help with creating and promoting walking trails, enhancing interpretation, ensuring safety.
- Involve Yukon College, Wildlife Viewing and Yukon Geological Survey in approaches to interpretation.
- Community Services enhance walking at roadside pullouts and campgrounds.
- YG Education integrate walking trails as part of outdoor experiential learning.
- Involve businesses in walking, both territory-wide and locally.
- Set up special access for community walking trail projects to CDF, Lotteries and Yukon Foundation.

“Governments must assume responsibility and accountability for the health of our population, but so should individual citizens.

**Renewed  
Yukon active living strategy**

Continue funding and other efforts to engage, train and empower youth and develop youth leadership skills, with emphasis on rural youth.

Continue to support affordable, accessible recreation for parents, children and families of all abilities.

**Wellness plan for  
Yukon's children and families**

By taking nature experiences out of the leisure column and placing it in the health column, we are more likely to take children on that hike — more likely to, well, have fun.

**Richard Louv  
Last child in the woods – Saving our  
children from nature-deficit disorder**

We need to stop wishing for a past that will never return and overestimating the value of organized activities, when the real answer may lie closer to home. Kids, like adults, prefer to spend their precious free moments doing what's most enjoyable. Let's make exercise more fun and do it together as a family.

**Yoni Freedhoff  
Inactive kids? The solution is child's  
play**

Walk Richmond is an initiative aimed at building a legacy of healthy lifestyles in Richmond by engaging people in life-long walking. Free guided walks for people of all ages are led ... on a weekly basis.

**Walk Richmond  
Volunteer walk leader overview**

The importance of building a relationship and involving the parents, families, and communities of your students in their education cannot be emphasized enough. ... Incorporating local knowledge and traditional teachings into your students' education on a regular basis provides both you and your students with an opportunity to learn through hands-on experiences.

**A handbook of Yukon First Nations  
education resources for public schools,  
2013-14**

