

SUBMISSION #14

- 14) Submitted by:** Bonnitta Ritchie, Co-Chair, Tagish Local Advisory Council
Date Submitted: February 12, 2018
Electoral District: Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes

Tagish: Presentation to Electoral Boundaries Commission

Welcome to Tagish! Thank you to Commission Chair, Justice Veale, and members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission for coming to Tagish and allowing Tagish residents the opportunity to address the issue of the proposed boundary change.

I am Bonnitta (Bonnie) Ritchie and am speaking both as Co-Chair of the Tagish Advisory Council and as a resident of Tagish and a resident of the current Southern Lakes Electoral District. I came to the Yukon in 1977, purchased the cabin in Tagish in 1988, water access only at the time, moved out to Tagish full time in 2010. I have seen a lot of growth and changes in Tagish.

We understand the Commission's role to adjust the boundaries north of Whitehorse and the domino effect that results. We also understand the challenge of forming electoral boundaries in Yukon's vast geographical area which are sparsely populated in comparison to Whitehorse.

On Page 6 and Page 12 of the Interim report, considerations for electoral boundaries include geography, accessibility, history, culture, shared common interests, to name a few. The existing electoral boundary meets those criteria.

The Southern Lakes district is often affectionately referred to as 'the Loop'. The Southern Lakes district starts at the Carcross cut off along the South Klondike highway past Mt. Lorne and Annie Lake Road, past Bear Creek homes, Lewes Lake homes, Emerald Lake, Spirit Lake Lodge, Yukon Natural Historical Museum aka Cariboo Crossing, the world's smallest desert, into Carcross and then along the Carcross-Tagish road past Crag Lake, the Southern Lakes Wilderness Lodge at Ten Mile, through Tagish to Jakes Corner, turning left on to the Alaska Highway past Judas Creek, New and Old Constabulary subdivisions, Scout Road, Army Beach, North and South McClintock, all part of Marsh Lake. The current electoral boundaries share those roads.

We share the water system from Tagish Lake through the Six Mile River to Marsh Lake and into Yukon river.

We are defined by both the road and the water system.

The communities of the current Southern Lakes each have their own unique personalities however we are all part of the greater unofficial community – the Southern Lakes district – the Loop.

Not only is this a very doable and pleasant drive it is also a group of communities that share many things. We share concerns over the water levels and erosion, the previous issue of possible proposed fracking, fishing, boat traffic (including sailboats, motorboats, kayaks, water paragliding to name a few), wildlife (caribou, moose, mule deer, lynx, wolves, coyotes, foxes, etc) waterfowl (especially the Swans, the best Swan viewing is from the Tagish bridge) and the highways.

We share the only post office in 'the Loop', -- the Carcross Post office -- which by the way is the oldest operating corporate post office in Canada and is 112 years old.

We share protective services. A fire in any of our areas may be answered by Tagish VFD, Carcross VFD, Mt. Lorne VFD or Marsh Lake VFD. We share the Carcross RCMP police services, who regularly come to our Advisory Council monthly meetings. We share the Carcross Nursing Station. We share out Ambulance Services. Carcross and Tagish share the school in Carcross.

Tagish shares with its neighbour's events, such as Spring Carnival & Poker Run, Easter events, Canada Day events, Oktoberfest, Hallowe'en, Seniors Christmas Dinner, Family Christmas Party, and monthly Pancake Breakfasts, to name a few. We share events such as the bike race that does the 'Loop' known as the Grand Fondo, alternating amongst the communities which community will be the host that year. The Recreation Association is presently planning some craft classes and the information will be shared amongst our neighbouring communities. Tagish is hosting a Valentines dance this Saturday and there will be Marsh Lake and Carcross residents attending as well as Tagish folk.

Historically Tagish and Carcross are linked to the Klondike Gold Rush and the development from that. There are many long standing families, First Nation and non First Nation that share relatives between Carcross, Tagish and Marsh Lake. Environment and lifestyle are shared values between residents of all 4 communities.

Tourism is a strong interest with the Yukon Government and the 'Loop' offers many tourist-based businesses and attractions. The lakes accessibility, campgrounds, restaurants, (Spirit Lake Lodge, cafes in Carcross, Southern Lakes Lodge, Tagish Wilderness Lodge, Six Mile Resort, Jakes Corner, etc), many many B & B's along the 'Loop' each community having its share. Many artisans located in Tagish and Crag Lake sell their products in the Carcross Commons, and many small businesses in all four communities offer fishing and hiking excursions. The possibilities for vibrant tourism industry growth apply to all four communities.

Not only does the 'Loop' attract Outside visitors, but Yukoners enjoy such things as the Honda Goldwing Motorcycle Club regular Sunday bike trips around the Loop. Locals in the 'Loop' will often meet for a meal or coffee at Jakes Corner, or Six Mile Resort, or Southern Lakes Lodge, Spirit Lake Lodge or the many choices in Carcross. It is a pleasant half or full day excursion for folks from Whitehorse that want to experience the beach in Carcross or the campground in Tagish or ice-cream at the bridge.

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Four of the five advisory councils are in the Southern Lakes District: Tagish Advisory Council, South Klondike Advisory Council (Carcross), Mt. Lorne, and Marsh Lake. Ibx Valley, the fifth is north of Whitehorse. Our annual or bi-annual forums are usually held in one of the Southern Lakes communities rather than in Whitehorse. We now have a representative on the Association of Yukon Communities who attends the AYC meetings and the advisory councils share the cost. The LAC's have a cohesive relationship and share information and support.

At Advisory Council meetings in the last couple of years, regional governance has come up for discussion similar to workings in some of the provinces. The Southern Lakes at present has an identity as Southern Lakes and should the government go in that direction it is logical to keep the Southern Lakes communities together and operate as a region.

I believe there is a strong pride and identity for each of our communities being a part of the "Southern Lakes" district.

In our democratic process, our MLA is our connection to the governing party. In the Yukon, we are very fortunate to have such available access to our MLA's. Our MLA is a resident of our Southern Lakes district and is understanding and aware of any concerns that residents may have. Our MLA's have attended our functions, even sharing in cemetery clean ups in Tagish.

Although taking Marsh Lake and Mt. Lorne out of the Southern Lakes district will not change some things, it will possibly affect many of the government services that we currently share. If there is one MLA for Carcross Tagish Teslin, that individual may or may not be in the same political party as the MLA for Marsh Lake and Mt. Lorne. If the MLA is based in Teslin, will that person regularly attend Tagish and Carcross functions?

We welcome Teslin and Johnsons Crossing to join into Southern Lakes just as Chief Carvill, CTFN, suggested. In fact, the Yukon Government Tourism website refers to the Southern Lakes including Mt. Lorne, Carcross, Tagish, Teslin and Marsh Lake.

Whether or not the Commission recommends adding Teslin, we respectfully ask that you consider keeping the communities of the Southern Lakes together as one electoral district.

Respectfully,

Bonnitta Ritchie

Co-Chair, Tagish LAC

Resident of Tagish

TAGISH

PRESENTATION TO ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

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