More than ‘Nature’

Research on Infrastructure and Settlements in the North

edited by

Doris Friedrich, Markus Hirnsperger, and Stefan Bauer

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CONTENTS

Foreword ix
Peter P. Schweitzer

Introduction 1
Doris Friedrich, Markus Hirnsperger, Stefan Bauer

PART I: A VIEW ON THE PAST

Russian Settlements and Infrastructure in Nineteenth Century Finnish Scholarly Texts 7
A Historical Perspective
Markus Hirnsperger

Railroads and the North 29
Historic and Ethnographic Examples from Russia and North America
Peter Schweitzer

Soviet Power in the Struggle for Raw Materials from the Siberian North in the Twentieth Century 45
From Nature to the Environment
Evgeny Gololobov

Dwelling in the Soviet North 69
Interaction with the Environment in New Mining Towns
Alla Bolotova

PART II: ASSESSING SUSTAINABILITY—SHAPING ENVIRONMENTS

Urban Development in Longyearbyen, Svalbard 87
Dealing with Local Challenges in a Town that Serves as a Tool for Svalbard Policies
Alexandra Meyer

Spatial Patterns of Growth and Decline of Two Selected Russian Arctic Settlements as Seen from Space 107
Annett Bartsch

Building a Livelihood in the Arctic 123
Infrastructures and Settlement Patterns Conditioning the Exploitation of Natural Resources
Birgitte Hoffmann, Kåre Hendriksen, Ulrik Jørgensen

Wolf-Related Conflicts and Power Dynamics in Rural-Urban Relations in Norway 145
Doris Friedrich

Trails and Tribulations 167
Lifestyle Migration and Dogsledding as Nature-Based Integration in Northern Sweden
Marco Eimermann, Benedict E. Singleton

How Roads Shape (Im-)Mobilities in Eastern Siberia 187
Gertraud Illmeier, Natalia Krasnoshtanova

PART III: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Building Planetary Preparedness 209
The Arctic Circle as a Space Weather Sentinel Territory
A. R. E. Taylor

Northern Urban Energy Futures in Saskatoon, Luleå, and Anchorage 239
Martin Boucher, Joni Karjalainen

Understanding the Demographic Future of Small Arctic Villages Using Agent-Based Modeling 263
Dean B. Carson, Doris A. Carson

Emergency Response, Infrastructure, and Governance in Arctic Alaska 283
Kathryn Schwaeble, Thomas Birkland, Marie Lowe, Martha Grabowski, Daniel Jimenez, Thomas Sharkey, William Wallace

Living Culture, Learning Skills, Telling our Stories 301
The Making of a Northern Tutchone Cultural Center
Susanna Gartler, Joella Hogan, Gertrude Saxinger

Authors and Editors 325

Living Culture, Learning Skills, Telling our Stories

The Making of a Northern Tutchone Cultural Center

Susanna Gartler
Joella Hogan
Gertrude Saxinger

In this chapter we ask in which ways the planning of the *Living Culture House* by the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun (FN NND) in the village of Mayo, Yukon Territory in Canada, corresponds to ideas of Indigenous planning. We highlight the importance of community-led, participatory planning for the creation of cultural infrastructure aiming at overcoming a colonial past and to indigenize the present while moving toward a future of collective well-being, cultural vitality, and self-determination. We highlight the inclusive and participatory planning approach, which seeks to minimize the division between decision-makers and the community, and the fact that the FN NND has actively engaged in learning lessons from other examples while at the same time adhering to their own cultural protocols of consultation with Elders and the wider community.

The Nacho Nyäk Dun, a self-governing First Nation made up of multiple backgrounds including Slavey, Gwich'in, and Northern Tutchone, is now centered in the town of Mayo, a community influenced greatly by state expansion via settler colonialism and the development of the extractive industry in the Canadian North in the twentieth century. Based on the export of primary commodities, "extractive imperialism" (Petras and Veltmeyer 2014) is usually connected to high poverty levels and unequal distribution of wealth (Acosta 2013; Willow 2016). Within this context, Indigenous cultural centers aim to provide *alter-Native* (Gomes 2012; Melenotte 2015) spaces, and constitute gathering places "for communities and a place for visitors to experience the hospitality and traditions of Yukon First Nations" (YFNCTA 2020). They can be seen as part of what Neufeld (2016) frames as cultural *revanche*—the ongoing process of resistance, maintenance of resilience and agency amongst, in the case of the Yukon Territory, fairly recently colonized peoples in order to achieve cultural sustainability in the sense of "longevity and vitality of a thriving culture or society" (Gartler et al. 2019: 43).

Interpretive or cultural centers can be seen as part of the process of reconciliation between settler and Indigenous societies, too. However, in the

case of the *Living Culture House*, an active engagement with culture, the transfer of skills and the wisdom of the First Nations' stories will primarily help to ensure cultural sustainability and well-being for the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun, while educating visitors and settlers is a secondary advantage. The concept of having a separate place for cultural activities may seem controversial or opposite to the idea that Indigenous culture can and should ideally happen everywhere. However, bearing in mind that not everyone received the traditional teachings in life or has a boat, fish net or smoke shack, one of the center's aims is that everyone can learn at this center and then take their knowledge back to their own homes or cultural and fish camps—thus addressing community needs for more places that promote healthy living and help alleviate social isolation, especially for Elders and Youth.

The *Living Culture House* aims to bring all generations of the community together and to be a place that helps breaking down divides between those with more and those with less cultural knowledge. Cultural centers are not contradictory when compared to an all-Indigenous past, but "continuations of traditions of storytelling, collection and display" (Clifford 1997: 110). Moreover, they "are both translators and translations, agents of social change and products of accommodation" (Christen 2007: 118). While Harvey (2000) calls them "spaces of hope," they are also "sites of local and national desires for material and cultural success and historical redress" (Christen 2007: 118). Hendry describes cultural centers across many different areas in the world, including the Tlingit Heritage Centre in Teslin and the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre in Dawson City, "a wonderful example of the use of architecture to express ideas important to a particular Aboriginal people" (Hendry 2005: 140). Architecture plays an important role in re-establishing connections (see also Schiesser 2016) to what are considered sentient beings in Yukon First Nations ontologies, such as animals, plants, rivers, lakes, glaciers and mountains (see, e.g., Cruikshank 2005). Many Yukon First Nations especially emphasize the connection to waterways and to other-than-human beings by constructing cultural centers in the proximity or against the backdrop of rivers, lakes or mountains and using features that relate to cultural keystone species (Garibaldi and Turner 2004) such as moose or salmon.

This chapter is based on community-based, participatory research conducted in Mayo and the Yukon Territory, carried out within the framework of the project "LACE – Labour Mobility and Community Participation in the Extractive Industries – Case Study in the Canadian North"[1] between 2014 and 2019, and conducted in close collaboration with the Heritage Department of the FN NND (Saxinger 2018). Following Indigenous methodologies

[1] LACE Project Website: resda.ca/?p=1387

(Chilisa 2012; Smith 2012), we acknowledge the need for reflexivity (Russell-Mundine 2012) with regards to our positionality as an author collective, as well as to provide an understanding of the ethical framework and social license with which we interpret the relationships and statements being made about the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun. Joella was manager of the Heritage Department of the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun for more than 10 years. She is a FN NND citizen, resident of Mayo, and leading the directive given by the FN NND general assembly to build a cultural center in Mayo. Thanks to this position, Joella provides this chapter with unique insights into the processes that have taken place so far.

Gertrude conducted substantial fieldwork over the years in the Yukon including the Mayo area. As principle investigator of the LACE project, she has gained in-depth knowledge of the effects of the mining industry in the Yukon and its entanglements with colonization, Indigenous self-determination, and the often-competing narratives of Indigenous and settler cultures. Susanna spent over one and a half years conducting research in the Yukon as co-investigator of LACE. She is currently preparing her dissertation on indigenization (Phillips 2011, Trinidad 2012) and the planning of the FN NND cultural center at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Vienna (Austria). As (central) European citizens, Susanna's and Gertrude's identities are tied up with colonial histories in ways that need to be addressed in this setting. Understanding the responsibility that comes with their positions, they wholeheartedly subscribe to the call of "unsettling the settler within," and to work toward speaking truth, repairing broken trust, and creating "more just and peaceful relations with Indigenous people" (Regan 2010: 2).

The chapter is based on the following data collection and methods: in her previous capacity as heritage manager and planner, Joella held numerous informal conversations with experts and community members in and outside of Mayo and organized several community meetings, which also resulted in the document "Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Cultural Centre: A Vision for the Future" (FN NND 2015). Susanna conducted a qualitative survey with 35 participants on how people want to participate in the making and operation of the *Living Culture House* in November 2017 in Mayo. Data collection also included several informal talks and consultations, such as with Alanna Quock (Regenative Design & Development Consulting), who the FN NND contracted for the planning of the cultural center. Together with Alanna, Joella and Susanna planned and participated in community consultations and workshops including priority setting exercises in 2018 and 2019, which were recorded audio-visually and/or by taking notes. Lastly, Joella, Susanna, and Gertrude conducted participant observation at a variety of events in cultural centers across the Yukon.

To begin with, we provide some historical and legal background of the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun, before discussing Indigenous planning theory. Finally, the last section describes the Indigenous planning process of the *Living Culture House* so far. We conclude with the observation that Indigenous planning requires a participatory as well as an outcome-oriented approach, led by planning and design experts, to achieve long-term goals including cultural and ecological sustainability.

The Yukon's Revitalization Landscape

Most of the Yukon Territory lies south of the Arctic Circle and forms part of the Boreal Cordillera Forest Ecozone. In the North, the Yukon reaches up to the Beaufort Sea. The Yukon has a total population of 42,152 people in 2020, more than three quarters of which live in the capital city of Whitehorse (Yukon Bureau of Statistics 2020a). Several significant factors shaped the contemporary cultural and socio-political landscape of this region: first, the fur trade, in which Hudson's Bay Company employees, drawing upon existing trading relations (Johnson 2009), eventually travelled up the Yukon waterways in the nineteenth century and established several trading posts in the territory (Coates 1982). Second, the Klondike Gold Rush in the late nineteenth century caused a sudden and dramatic influx of tens of thousands of miners.[2] Third, the construction of the Alaska Highway in the early 1940s by the United States Army encompassed major infrastructural, environmental and socio-economic change. Most recently, the atrocities associated with the Indian Residential Schools have started to be dealt with publicly by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation 2020) of Canada. Survivors stress the intergenerational impact of the schools' assimilation program, which further undermined community health and well-being (e.g., Fontaine 2010; TRC 2015a). Resettlement of First Nation communities along the highway, the inclusion of First Nations into a monetary system, the federal provision of services as well as overhunting by US Army soldiers significantly altered family and kinship relations (Cruikshank 1998). Including the "Canada Scoop" (transracial adoption; see Spencer 2017) and residential schools, these factors had a profound and most often negative impact on Yukon First Nations and all their relations (see, e.g., Talaga 2020).

Before contact with Europeans, the semi-nomadic Indigenous peoples of north-western Turtle Island (North America) moved between places in pur-

[2] Today, the Yukon's growing tourism sector still depends on notions of the "great last frontier" associated with wilderness and remoteness, and the advent of the Gold Rush (De la Barre 2012)—however the focus has shifted increasingly toward sustainable, ecological, and "First Nations tourism" (Hull et al. 2017).

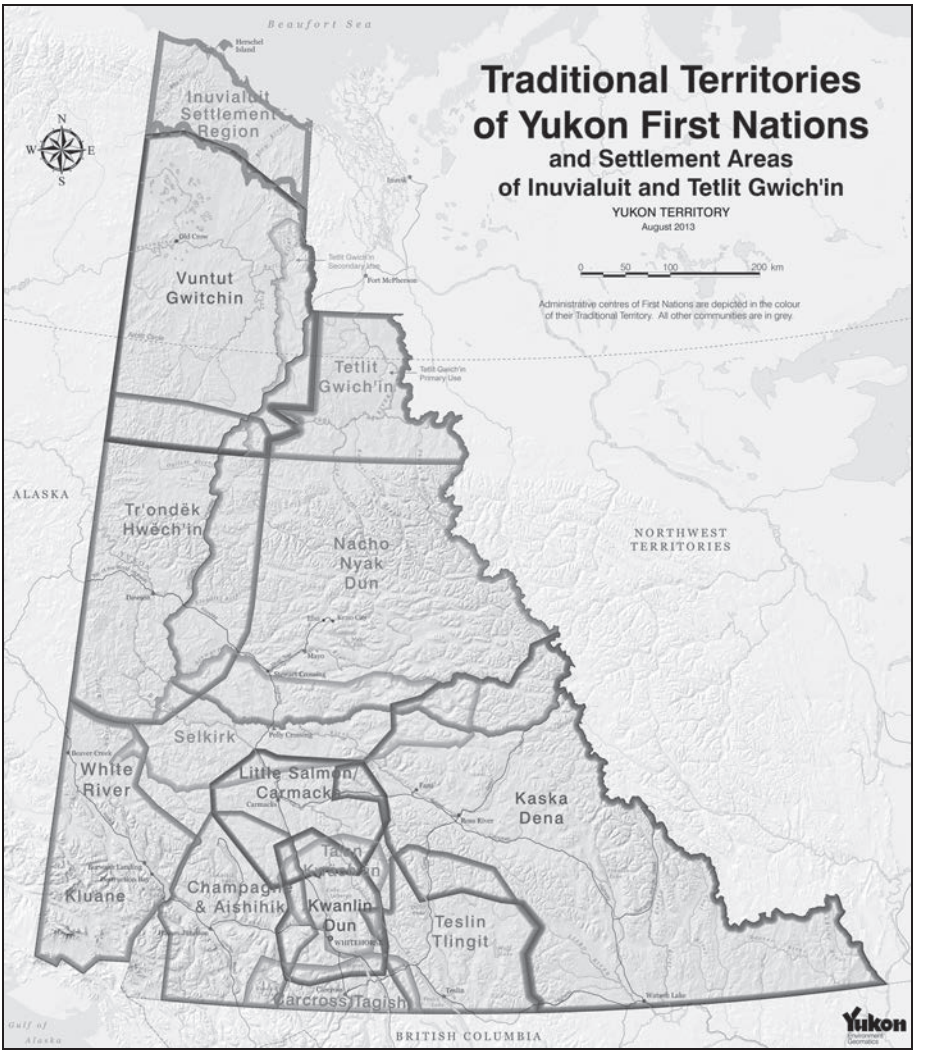
suit of harvest (fish, meat, and berries) and shelter. The term Dän means "People" in Northern Tutchone, the local Indigenous language, and was used to refer to themselves before contact with Europeans. Dän became sedentary after the mining booms at the turn of the twentieth century, when the confluence of the Mayo and Stewart Rivers turned into the transportation hub of Mayo (see map 1). Dän settled in the vicinity of the town and in 1915 built their own village referred to as Dän Kų (Our Home) across Nacho Nyäk Gé (Stewart River). A resettlement was undertaken in 1958 from Dän Kų to the east side of Mayo[3] (FN NND Elders et al. 2019). People still dwell on this site adjacent to the town on marshy ground, where the seasonal thaw of the active permafrost layer leads to very high maintenance costs of infrastructure such as water and sewer systems and damage to homes. Following a decision made at a FN NND General Assembly in 2002 to gradually build new homes on higher ground, plans for an administration building for the First Nation's self-government, now known as "Government House," were drawn up. The subdivision just slightly outside of the town called C-6 now already boasts a large number of houses. A cultural center was envisioned as part of the core area for future development at that time and will be built next to the "Government House," surrounded by the boreal forest.

Map 1: Map of Mayo. The 'Living Culture House' will be built next to the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun Administration Building. (Copyright: First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun)

[3] In 2019, the community of Mayo had a population of around 500 (Yukon Bureau of Statistics 2020b), approximately half of which are First Nation citizens.

The unique legal situation of First Nation land ownership in the Yukon (see map 2) generally resulted from negotiations between First Nation governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), and the Federal Government of Canada. The important document "Together Today for our Children Tomorrow" (Council for Yukon Indians 1973) sets out the terms and conditions for the negotiations that resulted in the 1993 signing of the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA) (Government of Canada et al. 1993) and the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun Self-Government Agreement between the FN NND, the Government of Canada, and the Government of the Yukon Territory (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1993). Section 13.1.1.5 of the UFA states that in order to manage heritage resources, where appropriate, international, national, and territorial Heritage Resources collections and programs standards are to be adopted. Further, the objective of section 13.1.1.7 is "to facilitate reasonable public access" (Government of Canada et al. 1993: 121)—a role cultural centers fulfill, including facilitating repatriation and achieving recognized standards of heritage resource collections. Section 13.4.1 of the UFA states with regards to funding that until an equitable distribution of heritage resources is achieved, priority shall be given to the development and management of heritage resources of Yukon First Nations (Government of Canada et al. 1993: 124). Moreover, number 14 of the "94 Calls to Action" of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada calls upon the federal government to enact an Aboriginal Languages Act that incorporates the following principle: "The preservation, revitalization, and strengthening of Aboriginal languages and cultures are best managed by Aboriginal people and communities" (TRC 2015b: 2). Further, in the same document (call to action number 61) the federal government and the Anglican Church are held responsible to establish funding for language and culture revitalization projects such as cultural centers (TRC 2015b).

The Land Claims and Self-Government Agreements, signed by 11 of the 14 Yukon First Nations, include the rights to retention of aboriginal rights on settlement lands. The First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun signed its self-government agreement with the federal government and Yukon Government in the same year as the UFA was signed. At 162,456 km^2 and expanding into the Northwest Territories, the FN NND has the largest traditional territory of all the Yukon First Nations, 3% of which is designated "Settlement Land," which provides the FN NND ownership and, for some parcels (Category A), subsurface rights. In the latter case, FN NND has full control over the development of these lands including mineral, oil, and gas extraction. The proposed cultural center will be built on Category A land next to the First Nations administrative building (see Map 1), in part because it will thus be able to utilize available infrastructure that has been put in place for the administration.



Map 2: Map of Yukon First Nation Traditional Territories, 2013. (Copyright: Environment Yukon, Dept. of Environment Map ID: ENV.020.01, Yukon Environment Geomatics, Open Government Licence – Yukon https://open.yukon. ca/open-government-licence-yukon)

Yukon First Nations pour an incredible amount of energy into culture-related activities which take place in the Yukon Territory throughout the year. Many of these take place at one of several First Nation cultural centers in the Yukon (Castillo et al. 2020; for the full list see YFNCTA 2020). Cultural centers around the globe play a vital role in the cultural revival efforts of Indigenous societies (Hendry 2005). Whereas in many non-Indigenous institutions, the focus has been (and sometimes still is) on mere display and

preservation of their cultural lives, Indigenous peoples such as the FN NND focus on an active engagement with the living culture of resilient and active peoples—thus moving from representation by others to reclaiming their voices by active self-representation. The next sections deal explicitly with Indigenous planning theory and the planning process of the *Living Culture House*.

Indigenous Planning and Inclusivity

1. People thrive in community;
2. Ordinary people have all the answers;
3. People have a basic right to determine their own future;
4. Oppression continues to be a force that devastates people; and
5. The people are beautiful, already[4]

A large body of literature has dealt with the way identity is re-created in museums, culture houses, and interpretive centers (e.g., Hauenschild 1998; Lawlor 2006; Macdonald 2003). Some literature focuses on displays, exhibits, and how information is transmitted to an outside audience (e.g., Bennet 2006; Bouquet 2012; Simpson 2006; Trofanenko and Segall 2012). Other topics range from the collaboration between non-Indigenous institutions and First Nations (e.g., Brown 2014; 2016; Nicks 2002; Phillips 2011) to the use of new media technologies (Srinivasana et al. 2009). Findings from Russia (Donahoe and Habeck 2011; Habeck 2014) deal, amongst other things, with the relationships between cultural centers and the state. Literature that specifically addresses Indigenous cultural centers has focused on themes such as representation, inclusion, and exclusion (Clapperton 2014), self-determination and reconciliation (Neufeld 2016), as well as power relations. Erikson et al. (2002: 27–28), for example, see the making of a cultural center as a "process of collaboration between diverse peoples amid conditions of unequal empowerment."

Being marginalized in a white settler society, for a long time Indigenous Peoples were not able to participate in decision-making regarding infrastructure in their dwelling spaces. Nrantisi (2020) notes that conventional, eurocentric "[p]lanning has played a critical role in colonial dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the entrenchment of a system of institutionalized racism, land expropriation and resource extraction." Indigenous planners, authors, and activists thus found it necessary to engage critically with what planning means from Indigenous perspectives. Matunga reflects on the term Indigenous planning as "an attempt to 'name the word, name the world,' to carve out a theoretical and practice space for Indigenous people and communities to do 'their' planning 'in' planning, to provide a framework for Indig-

[4] Basic principles of Indigenous planning – Indigenous Planners Network 1995 (Jojola 2000).

enous communities to 'transform their reality'" (Matunga 2017: 640). He proposes an Indigenous people-place-knowledge-worldview/values-decisions loop for planning practice and remarks that Indigenous planning must first ask: "What would flourishing as Indigenous peoples in this place […] look like, feel like, and mean?" (Matunga 2017: 642). The author underlines the empowering capacity inherent in Indigenous planning, by naming it such and thus differentiating it from other forms of planning—characterizing Indigenous planning amongst other things as "Indigenous peoples spatialising their aspirations, spatialising their identity, spatialising their indigeneity" (Matunga 2017: 640). However, he notes that after a definition phase, what is now needed is reconciliation with Indigenous communities and a move toward partnership and collaborative planning and action (Matunga 2017: 643). In a similar vein, Patrick calls for an Indigenist Planning paradigm including "a deep rethink of settler colonial relationships while generating spaces of belonging and inclusion within dominant cultural systems that is not about indigenizing those spaces as much as it is about creating something new—and potentially regenerative" (Patrick 2017: 649).

Jojola (2000) formulated these principles of Indigenous planning: "First, Indigenous people are not minorities. […] Second, the essence of Indigenous scholarship is native self. […] Third, Indigenous voices need no translation. […] Fourth, the Indigenous planning process is informed by the Indigenous world-views." He examined the role of effective participation and emphasizes long-term thinking over several generations as a defining feature in the Indigenous planning context in a "Seven Generations Model"[5] (Jojola 2013), also stressing intergenerational learning and human-environmental relations. Mannell et al. (2013) outline a number of characteristics of community-based, comprehensive planning among First Nations, and emphasize—amongst other things—establishing awareness, building a community, nurturing creativity, seeing the community as a whole, considering local and global contexts, and thinking long-term.

Some authors deal specifically with the question of who is empowered by whom through the workings of cultural centers (Isaac 2007; Nakamura 2014) and how an institution can truly be inclusive. For some members of the community (such as Elders, Youth, etc.), the cultural center might still be an unfamiliar place (Nakamura 2014) or it might be rejected altogether by parts of society (Heldt Cassel and Maureira 2015). This discussion is held

[5] Jojola explains this model in the following way: "Within an individual's lifetime, it is not unusual that an extended family consists not only of oneself, but those that are three generations before and three generations after. […] Fundamentally, the middle generation—you—represents the centre point of a bridge that spans the past and the future. The knowledge of the past informs the present, and, together it builds a vision toward the future. This is known as the Seven Generations Model" (Jojola 2013: 457).

among some Elders, Youth and others in the Yukon Territory: cultural centers are sometimes criticized for being costly and purely representative buildings that do not really serve the needs of communities. Indigenous well-being comprises several domains, including place: perceptions of well-being cannot be separated from connection to ancestral land. Further domains comprise physical, social and emotional, economic, cultural and spiritual well-being—as well as subjective well-being (Fleming and Manning 2019: 6). Following this approach[6], we argue that it is more likely that the FN NND cultural center will be socially, emotionally, spiritually and culturally, physically, and cognitively embraced if community members are actively involved in the planning and construction process. This corresponds to Nakamura's call for the necessity of participatory practices to fulfill what he calls "core functions" of museums and heritage centers (Nakamura 2014: 152). As will become apparent in the next section, in the case of the *Living Culture House* these core functions are co-determined during the planning process by community members as well as professionals and are therefore more likely to be seen as valuable by everyone.

The *Living Culture House* Planning Process

> Our Vision: provide the community with a gathering place that we take pride in, which instils the appreciation of the rich, long history of the Northern Tutchone people and reflects our diverse cultural backgrounds. The cultural centre will be a place for citizens to learn traditional skills and knowledge to live their lives in a good way. It will be a welcoming place for the broader community to learn about our heritage and culture. We acknowledge our past while moving forward as a community (FN NND 2018: 3).

In this section, we focus on the planning process of the *Living Culture House*, illustrating the priority given to participation and a broad involvement of the community, working toward making the building useful and meaningful to the citizens of the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun. We describe the steps in planning so far, including incorporated values, visions, and guidelines. During the making of the *Living Culture House*, much time was given to consultations that collected ideas and opinions of community members. Inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible, and especially Youth and Elders, in planning and decision-making, aims to generate emotional, physical, and cognitive embracement of the building in all its stages, in order for it to become a house "of" the people and not just one "for" them. Moreover, the cultural center will be a space for intergenerational learning,

[6] McCubbin et al. (2013) further propose that Indigenous well-being begins from a relational perspective, with a focus on the collective rather than the individual.

an important aspect of the Northern Tutchone way of teaching and learning new (and old) things. Consultations with experts from the field, with other Indigenous communities, and the intense study of other cultural centers enable the planners to learn from best practices.

Information from several community consultations in Mayo and Whitehorse flowed into the document "Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Cultural Centre: A Vision for the Future" (FN NND 2015), which includes the vision and essential elements derived from community meetings, a brief description of the visioning process for the interior spaces as well as of activities and facilities people want to see as part of the center. It further includes some lessons from other Yukon First Nation cultural centers and some insights on topics such as location, design, and cost. In addition to community meetings, many one-on-one informal conversations have been held by Joella with Youth, Elders, and other community members, who shared their input of what this center should be. The FN NND hosted meetings for its members and the Heritage Department organized interactive displays with photos and information about other cultural centers throughout the Yukon and across Canada and Alaska. One of the largest sessions was hosted in Mayo at the FN NND Government House generating much feedback, information, and support for such a center.

Cultural centers are always also conditioned by transcultural and transnational factors and can be seen as part of the "mechanisms by which groups attempt to articulate with the outside world" (Harkin 2004: xxxiv). Moreover, tourism and visitor experiences are part of Matunga's "third space" of reconciliation: a "hybrid where the coloniser and colonised, oppressed and oppressor can come together to dialogue reconciliation, emancipation, collaboration and collective action for the future" (Matunga 2017: 644). During a discussion with local organizations and the Village of Mayo, which was hosted by the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun to discuss partnerships, gaps in community infrastructure and, in particular, the tourism sector, it was noted that contemporary tourists seek lived experiences. Creating a Northern Tutchone cultural center that is embraced on multiple scales (emotionally, physically, socially etc.) by the largest possible number of people within the community is a prerequisite to enable such lived experiences.

Moreover, if the *Living Culture House* is truly embraced in all senses, this might mitigate several issues that need to be taken into consideration in relation to tourism and Indigenous identity—such as debates on authenticity, commodification, and re-creation of Indigenous identity to satisfy tourist expectations (Heldt Cassel and Maureira 2015), developing "commodified personas" (Bunten 2008), as well as co-creating visitor experiences (Erikson 1999; Hull et al. 2017). The need for diversity in free-time experiences of First Nations citizens (and other locals) needs to be taken into account as well: what is being offered to visitors at the cultural center should be unique

in the territory, and in Mayo. For a case study of cultural centers in Russia, it is noted that "[i]n a place where people can choose from among many options for spending their free time, each House of Culture must find its own niche" (Habeck 2011: 8). The same is true for the *Living Culture House*, which must represent a meaningful alternative to other activities that are available in and around the town of Mayo.

In summer 2018, the resolution that the cultural center will be built was passed at the Annual General Assembly of the FN NND. The report "Some Lessons from Yukon Cultural Centres and Heritage & Museum Organisations" (Gartler 2018), which was compiled for the FN NND Heritage Department and was based on 16 qualitative interviews as well as several informal conversations and participant observation by Susanna, provides information on experiences from other Yukon First Nation cultural centers, including their planning processes. From interviews and discussions with proponents of First Nation cultural centers, festival organizers, museum organizations, and artists as well as federal and state agencies across the Yukon in 2016 and 2017, important elements were identified. This included the symbolic meaning of space, reclaiming First Nation presence at water bodies such as rivers and lakes (which were traditionally used for transport and are still used as important sources of food and recreation), as well as offering information and hands-on experiences to settlers and visitors about First Nation ways of life (Gartler 2018: 33).

Joella created a Facebook group called "Northern Tutchone Cultural Centre" in January 2019 for members of the community working group as well as other interested citizens, who do not all reside in Mayo, but express interest in the planning process. In addition, she founded a community working group, which is meeting regularly. A regular newsletter informs citizens of progress made, appearing both in print and online. Early on in the process, a vision statement, quoted at the beginning of this section, has been devised and it is read out loud at the beginning of each community working group meeting. In addition, community meetings, which included "meetings with Elders, NND Citizens, NND Council plus the Village of Mayo and Silver Trail Tourism Association" (FN NND 2015), resulted in the emergence of several elements that FN NND citizens consider as essential, such as "living culture and learning skills," "telling our stories," financial viability, and flexibility in design. Following an expert discussion, a feasibility study was commissioned in 2017 to look at financial aspects and the revenue generating potential of the center. Together with Indigenous design consultant Alanna Quock, priority setting exercises were conducted in 2018 and 2019 with a large number of Nacho Nyäk Dun citizens, including Youth, the results of which flowed into the further planning process (see fig. 1).

Figure 1: Priority Setting Exercises with Youth in November 2018 at Yukon College Mayo Campus. (Copyright: Susanna Gartler)

A total number of 93 people (and many more throughout the entire process) were reached through the priority setting exercises in 2018 and a community member survey, which asked how people want to be involved, was conducted by Susanna in 2017. The results of the survey were compiled and presented to Joella and Alanna Quock upon completion. After the first community workshop, where the priority setting exercises were done, it became clear that Youth and young adults (under the age of 35) as well as men needed to be targeted more precisely. Therefore, Joella and Susanna organized a specific Youth and a men's workshop in Mayo. These experiences showed that reaching particular sectors of the community is more difficult than reaching others. In order to mitigate power imbalances and enable input from more vulnerable or excluded members of the community, it proved helpful to go to where people already were. Elders were specifically consulted during various stages of the planning phase and will continue to be asked for their input at crucial stages during the making of the building.

The planning process of the *Living Culture House* follows Indigenous principles of planning and is thus informed by Indigenous—in this case Northern Tutchone—worldviews (Jojola 2013). Community consultations showed that First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun citizens want to make sure that the cultural center includes the stories from their ancestors: from the legends and creation stories of long-ago to stories of life in Dän Kų (the "Old Village"), from assimilation policies such as the "Canada Scoop" to the residential school system, from the influx of miners and their families to land claims negotiations and contemporary self-government. Moreover, the participative planning process showed that people want to see their culture being lived

and practiced at the cultural center—it shall be a place to support ongoing practices and a perpetual legacy, and foster the pride and joy that comes with them. The aim of the cultural center is to enable the practice of culture in an everyday manner, and to promote the well-being of the FN NND community, which includes human and non-human persons, such as animals, plants, rivers, lakes, and mountains.

The participatory planning process is also reflected in the gradual process of finding a final name for the building. The working title *Living Culture House* was chosen to reflect the emphasis on living and practicing culture at the cultural center[7] as well as the aim to achieve the "Living Building Challenge" (International Living Future Institute 2020): the best possible classification as an environmentally friendly building, which creates positive environmental impacts. In consultation with Elders, knowledge holders, and language speakers, several suggestions have been made so far—among them, for example, Dän Lâachewdäw kú (Gathering House), Dän k'ehte (Peoples'/Our way) and Dän k'ehte nätsedän (Learning our peoples' way)—but a decision has not been taken yet.

As described, the planning process of the *Living Culture House* engages a broad section of the community, including Youth and Elders. It values Indigenous knowledge, Northern Tutchone values, as well as outside ideas, critical voices, and connects both physical and social components of the community. While the cultural center is a valuable and important community tool, at the heart of cultural revival are the land, the community's Indigenous knowledge, and their use and practice of it. Indigenous epistemologies do not hold dualist and oppositional assumptions about nature and culture. Instead, the well-being of nature and people, including animals and plants to whom personhood is extended, are seen as relational and interconnected (Cruikshank 1998; 2005; 2012; Ingold 2000; Viveiros de Castro 1998). Enhancing community well-being, which extends to human and non-human beings, is one of the overall goals of the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun who understand themselves as stewards of the land, in accordance with an ontology that values good relationships above all. Thus, the *Living Culture House* will need to reflect and foster the specific Northern Tutchone understandings of relationships between human, non-human beings, and ancestors alike.

Ecological sustainability too is an important consideration: "The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Cultural Centre will be a passively designed building to work with northern climate and site conditions. A key value that the project team would like to see instilled in the building is regenerative design. The client team would like the building to pursue petal certification under the Living Building Challenge" (FN NND 2019: 3). The Living Building Challenge

[7] The term cultural center also reflects the emphasis on living culture (see Erikson 1999).

"consists of seven performance categories, or 'petals': Place, Water, Energy, Health + Happiness, Materials, Equity and Beauty" (International Living Future Institute 2020). The challenge is to achieve positive environmental impacts through infrastructure. The *Living Culture House* including its planning process is thus conceptualized taking into consideration the needs of the environment, of Elders, Youth, and marginalized sectors of the population and corresponds to the idea of cultural and ecological sustainability. In line with the planning principles for Indigenous communities that Mannell et al. (2013) lay out, planning itself aims to be part of the societal healing and cultural vitality.

Following a design as well as a financial and organizational preparation phase from 2020 onward, construction is scheduled to take place in the upcoming years (FN NND 2019). According to Van Dijk (2020), collaborations with design specialists, such as Alanna Quock, and architectural firms result in a wider range of possible pathways to choose from, enable more creativity, and make it possible to arrive at decisions, which demonstrate vision and leadership. Achieving the best outcome "takes coalitions which are wider than the assumed problem definition suggests" (Van Dijk 2020: 3). The team of the Heritage Department continuously presented back to the community what they heard to ensure that they had understood it correctly, through the newsletter and by holding community events. Moreover, we argue that involving place managers with intricate knowledge of the local situation and with expertise in community planning, as well as outsiders, enables an even more critical analysis beyond just the communities' wishes and can provide viewpoints, which significantly enhance the collaborative model.

Conclusion

The planning and the construction of the *Living Culture House* are about making the right choices for the future and about First Nation independence and self-determination. Both the participatory planning process and the building itself ideally empower people through practicing culture, fostering a connection to place and the land, and to the "old ways." A dramatic decline of Indigenous knowledge, including loss of language, was brought about in the Yukon by "extractive imperialism" (Petras and Veltmeyer 2014) through the residential school system, forced adoption, and (re-)settlement to new villages near the highways, as well as gradual integration into wage work, especially related to the mining sector. Nevertheless, knowledge continued to be passed on from one generation to the next, and a strong move for cultural revival was institutionalized when many of the Yukon First Nations signed the Land Claims Agreements with the Canadian state and the Yukon Government from the early 1990s onwards. The building of cultural infra-

structure such as cultural centers for learning and reviving practices and skills and fostering strong cultural identities have accompanied this process.

This case study conceptually interlinks the fields of participatory and Indigenous planning, by examining the unique ways of how the FN NND aims at an inclusive cultural center. Embedding the planning process in legal aspects of Yukon First Nation self-government as well as ethical frameworks of reconciliation—such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "Calls to Action," the Umbrella Final Agreement, and the FN NND Land Claims Agreement—this chapter highlights the right to First Nation ownership and control of their tangible and intangible heritage. The making of the *Living Culture House* in Mayo stresses the need for inclusivity and for taking into account as many perspectives as possible. Reflecting a long and thorough participative planning process, the *Living Culture House* is alive already in the sense that it is already serving to support Northern Tutchone cultural protocols in planning and community well-being—even before the FN NND will gain occupancy of the building. Teaching non-First Nation Canadians and others about contact history and colonialism is essential for settler and Indigenous well-being, enabling true reconciliation. However, while reconciliation is part of the possible interaction between First Nations, settlers and visitors/tourists within the cultural center—and the case study meaningfully underlines the relationship between revitalization and cultural centers in a reconciliation context—the *Living Culture House* is designated first and foremost to the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun. Only as a secondary purpose will it serve as an interpretation center for locals and tourists.

Already in its making, through a participatory and outcome-oriented planning process, the *Living Culture House* promotes community well-being, enhances resilience, and aims at reducing the vulnerability of community members at risk. Manifest forms of culture will be translated and embodied into tangible and intangible heritage objects, architecture, and experiences. Ideally, the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun cultural center will stand not only for social gathering and community well-being, but also for reclaiming cultural identity and intergenerational learning. The planning process of the *Living Culture House* is another manifestation that First Nations claimed and succeeded in self-governance within the state of Canada and are aiming toward cultural and ecological sustainability and vitality in the future.

Acknowledgments

Mussi Cho (Thank you) to all participants of this study, and especially all First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun citizens who provided their input during the planning phase of the cultural center, the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun self-government, the Village of Mayo, as well as the ReSDA project

coordinator Valoree Walker (Yukon University) and ReSDA Project lead Chris Southcott (Lakehead University) for their kind support, and our reviewers for their valuable feedback. Further, we would like to thank the funders of the LACE study for their financial and in-kind contributions, including the SSHRC (Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada) funded project ReSDA (Resources and Sustainable Development of the Arctic), the Economic Development Department of the Yukon Government, the First Nation of Nacho Nyäk Dun, the Yukon University, the University of Vienna, the Austrian Ministry for Science, Education and Research, the Association of Canadian Studies in German-speaking countries (GKS), and Arctic FROST (Arctic FRontiers Of SusTainability: Resources, Societies, Environments and Development in the Changing North).

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