

Imagine: Yukon's Awesome, Global Digital Presence / A Conversation

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we live, work and meet on the traditional territories of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation, self-governing nations that negotiated modern treaties (2002; 2005) under the Umbrella Final Agreement (1993) between the 14 Yukon First Nations and the Governments of Canada and Yukon.

The Invitation

This go-minute session was designed as a bold conversation where current limitations were cast aside so we can image a world of our own making. This conversation was inspired by the life-altering effects of COVID-19 pandemic responses and an embrace of the persistent new digital age that might follow. It also comes from several conversations in recent years about creating a digital window for the Yukon; some of these have been facilitated by Inga Petri. It was offered on the personal initiative of Inga Petri, and included in Yukon Innovation Week 2020 to engage a wider range of people.

Imagine

People around the world are flocking to the Yukon for fun, entertainment, cultural experiences, our multi-faceted histories, outdoor experiences, guided tours, culinary extravaganzas, unique Northern products – and they are doing that online right now.

Let's talk

How can we build a true Yukon digital platform to put our collective foot forward to the vast online population? What would Yukoners and Yukon businesses have to build together to achieve such an awesome, global online presence? What kinds of content would we need to have, what kinds of digital technologies would we use to create awesome digital experiences, and what kind of visionary web presence would we create to be a global online force? How do we develop a business model that returns revenue to Yukoners and Yukon businesses, while maintaining the technology backbone of this kind of made-in-Yukon solution?

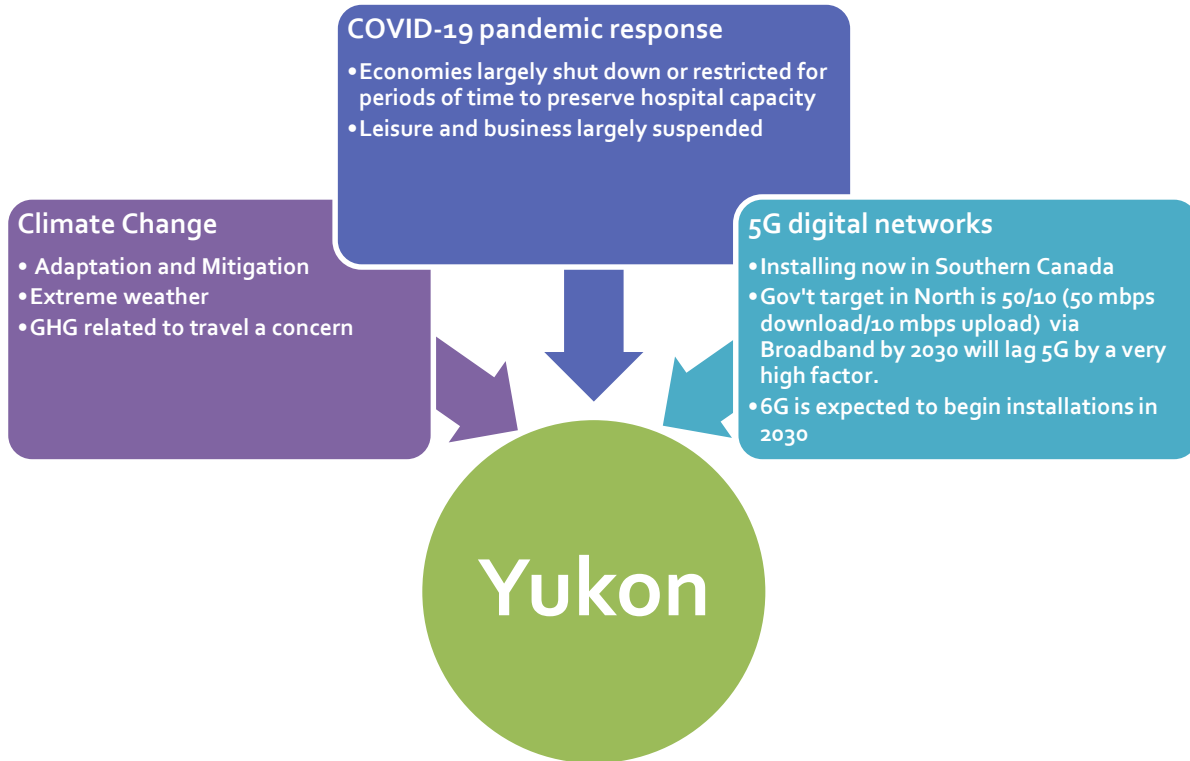
Registration

40 individuals pre-registered and 31 were able to attend, spanning creative (film, music) and cultural (theatre, literary) industries, tourism, museums, as well as government.

[Zoom recording with chapter markers is here.](#)

External Pressures and Realities

Several external pressures have combined to hit tourism (travel, accommodations and food service) and arts and culture industries especially hard in 2020. These industries are important to Yukon's overall economy including employment as well as bringing 'new' money to the Yukon from outside travelers.



Emphasis on *buy local*, while helpful, cannot be expected to make up for 400,000+ annual visitors given the small population (42,000) of the Yukon. Therefore, it is important to consider how we as Yukoners can develop a compelling digital presence that allows people from outside Yukon to buy unique Yukon experiences and products. And given our size, it may be most effective to build this presence by building a more powerful technology backbone for the Yukon, than can be achieved by simply putting up individual businesses websites.

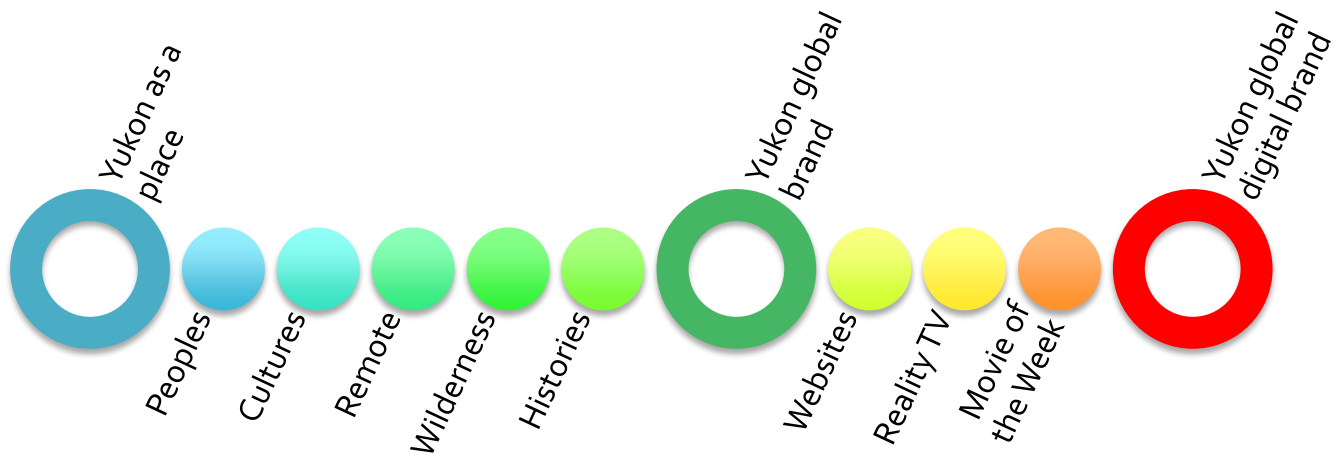
The structure of the Yukon's economy benefits from the Federal Territorial Funding Formula which is an unconditional transfer to the Government of Yukon for the provision of public services. (In 2020-2021 that transfer to Yukon is \$1.1 billion. The total annual budget for Yukon is \$1.6 billion with close to \$400 million slated for capital investments.) Further, about 43% of Yukon's work force is employed by one of the four levels of government. Like all capital cities, a strong public sector tends to provide a cushion relative to the private sector market's greater instability.

Inserting Yukon into the Global Digital Market Place on Our Terms

A range of concerns were shared such as:

- Technology is not value-neutral = technology reflects the values of those who build it. What and who rises online and what and who is demoted largely depends on the algorithms major Internet technology companies deploy.
- What are the values we want to embed in how the digital window on the Yukon functions?
- Yukon's digital window to the world should not merely be an old-style website, but instead should leverage leading technologies resulting from the semantic web in the form of structured, open and linked data. Creating and maintaining a Yukon knowledge graph (which represents a collection of interlinked descriptions of entities that use standardized semantic descriptions) could be a game changer in how the world sees the Yukon online and whose works are available online.
- Who is best positioned to build and maintain such a knowledge graph and develop a digital platform solution for Yukoners that puts us in a leading position and makes us highly visible online?
- Technology should follow strategy, not the other way around. When we understand how we want to be in the digital world and what the current and near-future opportunities are, then we can develop an inclusive, territory-wide strategy and use digital technologies to deliver on it.

From a Place Brand Toward a Global Digital Brand



Yukon is a place with unique characteristics and long-ago stories and recent histories that have already put it on the map in the global market place. Most leverage today has come as a tourism brand and so it is fair to say that Yukon's brand has significant room for growth when considering the digital opportunities.

Building a remarkable global digital brand for the benefit of Yukoners and Yukon businesses requires taking digital technologies to build leading applications. It's not merely a Yukon portal, but a true real time window on Yukon using semantic web technologies.

Resources and Projects

- Finland's 6G vision for 2030: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r4iDnGMQNqo>
- www.culturecreates.com and <http://kg.artsdata.ca/> - Building knowledge graph for the performing arts (Tammy Lee, Montreal, QC)
- <https://www.bemusednetwork.com/> and <http://n.octagram.net/> essential tools for the business of the arts and independent artists; technology consulting (Margaret Lam, Waterloo, ON)



Featuring Innovative Yukon Projects

1. <https://yfnarts.ca/> - online store for Yukon Indigenous arts and products (Charlene Alexander, YFNCTA)
2. <https://yukononlinemarket.ca/> - just launched online store for artisans and crafters (Jasmine Roush, Willow Gamberg, Yukon)
3. <https://availablelight.watch/> - launched in October 2019, ALD makes Yukon films and shorts available to Yukoners and the world for viewing and renting (Braden Brickner, Yukon)
4. <https://digitalartsnation.ca/> - national digital literacy and intelligence project (Inga Petri, Yukon)
5. <http://digitalinnovationcouncil.ca/> - conversations, insights from digital practitioners in the arts and culture sector (Inga Petri, Yukon)
6. <https://yukonorganics.ca/> - sharing food orders to get high quality foods into remote locations at good prices (Scott McKenzie, Yukon)
7. Creative Lab North (Melaina Sheldon & Jayden Soroka, Yukon) – in development
8. ThePitch.ca: Online Showcase for the Performing Arts (Debbie Peters, Yukon) – in development
9. Yukon Transportation Museum – developing digital products and services (Janna Swales, Yukon) – in development

Yukon Transportation Museum (Janna Swales)

YTM like many museums is a facility-based organization which is dependent on revenue from admissions, space rentals and government funding.

The idea: Develop diversified digital revenue opportunities targeting people outside Yukon. Develop sustainable digital business model for YTM.

YTM will experiment with new digital experiences, largely video-based, that are directly related to our mandate and that are valuable enough to particular audiences in the rest of Canada and the world to generate incremental – and in some cases recurring - revenue streams.

YTM will continue to offer a range of services free of charge, e.g. educational or school-based programs.

Timeline: In development now. Launch early 2021.

The Pitch: Online Showcase for the Performing Arts (Debbie Peters, Magnum Opus Management/Inga Petri, Strategic Moves)

ThePitch.ca is envisioned as a fully featured showcasing web service bringing artists and presenters together digitally 24/7/365. As a business-to-business (B2B) subscription-based web service, The Pitch seeks to build a broad, trusted community of touring artists and presenters seeking live performances. This project was conceived a year before COVID-19 pandemic responses shuttered much of regular life and in particular sectors that rely on the ability to bring people together. Despite the loss of most live performance events for the time being, the performing arts and live arts sectors are working through their comeback. As such this new service under development pivoted immediately to contemplate the needs of artists, agents and managers, presenters and regional presenting networks to facilitate digital performance bookings as well.

This project has received funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, Digital Strategy Fund.

Timeline: User research is complete. Database development; public beta launch slated for summer 2021.

Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association (Charlene Alexander)

The idea: Improve access to market for Indigenous artists and makers; create a centrally managed online store and fulfillment for Indigenous artists and artisans at <https://www.yfnarts.ca>

Initially, intended to launch sometime in 2021, YFNCT accelerated development of the online store using the Shopify platform in response to COVID-19. The online store opened in early October 2020 and close to 50 artists are already available on the site. This initiative is seeking to broaden the market for Indigenous artists and makers outside of their local community and outside the Yukon. They have been onboarding artists which means artists who don't have adequate Internet access or previously simply did not have an online presence now have access to a broader digital audience.

YFNCT has centralized order fulfillment at their Whitehorse offices, rather than making artists responsible. They have sorted out what is required to successfully run an online store, and they have figured out the logistics of shipping and handling orders.

Yukon Film Society / Available Light on Demand (Braden Brickner)

Report from the first year 2019-2020):

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16o_-pO1BAJnMhP4u-NEi9wgPO2uF66vg/view

A partnership between YFS and the Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture in Dawson City. Initial uptake of the platform for Yukon films and shorts accelerated significantly when COVID hit with 7,000 in April 2020. For all content on the site, including filmmaker interviews and video-on-demand from November 2019 to November 2020 they had 16,500 views, 8,600 unique viewers. Not surprising, the rental aspect is slower to build. When rental takes place, ALD has a system in place to compensate the artists whose works are rented. The best engagement is shorts under 10 minutes that are free to watch; or features that are shown for free for a time.

ALD seeks to attract people outside Yukon to view films on the site as well. This is the greatest opportunity and one that has only become more important as the world continues to deal with COVID-19 shut downs.

Yukon Organics <https://yukonorganics.ca/> (Scott McKenzie)

The idea: how to bring high quality food into remote locations and communities at affordable prices.

Scott looked at the grassroots opportunities of how buying clubs have traditionally been carried out, and how they're not as available in our current world. Yukon Organic supplies a curated selection of fine organic foods that can-not be grown in the Yukon. They are brought into the territory with the lowest possible footprint. Coupled with our proprietary sharing feature, Scott developed from scratch because that option simply did not exist in any online shopping modules, customers are able to save on packaging, meet people to share with, and realize the savings from purchasing in bulk.

This digital application is specifically designed around the needs of the Yukon in hopes of later being able to take it to every small community, in every remote location in Canada. But currently it's around the isolation, what we talked about earlier about the geographic limitations, the cost of import and export. So I have this venture that's launching right now fill the funnel again consolidate shipping mortar, and I can share for 30 seconds and think about from screening.

Creative Lab North (Melaina Sheldon)

Creative lab north is looking to bring leading technology and put it into the hands of artists. While we're at it we want a home that brings everyone all together so that we have creatives in the same space and fostering greater collaboration and innovation across artistic and creative media. We are moving forward and our next steps are to establish a space in Whitehorse. That might soon be announced. A space where we will start working and we will offer kind of hot desks there but also bring in XR (extended reality) media technologies.

The bold vision is to build creation, production and presentation space(s) at the confluence of art, culture, creativity and technology. And we think we can catalyze and grow a new creative industries high tech industry in the Yukon by creating Yukon-wide training opportunities, work opportunities and attract great talents to both stay up here and join us in the Yukon.

Timeline: Pending start-up funding

Jenny Fröhling with Dennis Shorty

"We're in a very remote community here and for us it is really difficult to do an online show, for example, because of our internet. We have to pre-record, we have to learn all the technologies and we have to learn how to do all that and streaming; those things are really new to us. We're used to perform live, have a live audience and so that's really difficult.

It's so needed, but we're missing that human contact. We had that first week in April I think one of the first of the shows online at the Yukon Arts Centre and it felt so weird, to have nobody there just your phone. You don't exchange that energy; you can't have that relationship with somebody right now using the technology.

What I do now, because people are interested in the lifestyle and where we live, how we live and what we do. I'm on WhatsApp, and that's really a good platform for me and for us to stay in contact with overseas, with Germany. I actually do short videos. I think maximum of 23 seconds, and boom, you can post them on WhatsApp on your status. And that's what I have been doing for the last two months. And I have a lot of people like it a lot. I get

really good feedback from the people that it helped them. That is encouraging for them, inspiring, that they're grateful that we can share. They can be part of our lives, because we do all kinds of things, even though we're in lockdown. But then it's almost like a lockdown before anyways, since we live in a remote community.

Still we create music and Dennis is a visual artists, too. We travel still on the land, we go fishing, medicine picking and I kind of document it on those short videos and send it to share with Germany, with our contacts over there. And it has been a really, really great feedback from them. So actually for me a question would be how could I do that and have a stream. What platform could I use to do that, other than WhatsApp, to reach people in the world to help them with what we do, just by being authentic. 20 seconds to a minute a day. And sometimes it feels like people are really hungry for that information for that little moment. What we share: picking berries in the woods and making jam afterwards and showing them the jars. It's inspirational to them. Then they suddenly show you what they made, what they cook like pickled beets or whatever. But both of those little things, during COVID especially, it helped people and me to stay in contact with them and getting feedback from them individually.

It sometimes just brings me to tears because it's so emotional and people need that.

On Technology Opportunities - Reflections From Our Guests

Tammy Lee, Culture Creates

"All these projects sound really awesome actually! I like the way that you frame the discussion about what the Yukon's global digital brand might look like. Once there's a digital presence, it can be leveraged. The type of work that I do is all about how do you leverage the Internet for the art and culture sector - so at my company we are building a national Knowledge Graph for the arts. It's about how do you technically solve the problem of findability or discoverable, and build a useful infrastructure at the same time.

At Culture Creates, we also see an opportunity to create a digital infrastructure that increases the number of ways that more diverse groups of people get access and benefit from the opportunities available on the internet. And the reason why I say that is because we live in a society today, where those opportunities are concentrated in the hands of a few major large scale multinationals. We are motivated to devolve that concentration of power, and help generate benefits that are more inclusive. We believe that we are good for society because through our work we can increase diversity and different voices; and we can begin to use technology more to meet our aims.

My child is not going to be visiting a website in the future, but my web presence is going to be super important in the future, but it's not by visiting websites. How you put your data online, how you connect your data to other bits of information is going to be super important. If you want it to be useful, you're going to build a knowledge graph and knowledge graphs are connections between facts and entities, so it's like you're building meaning and, and this is old school semantic Knowledge Graph making. We're going back to old school categorizations of ontologies and taxonomies and classifications. So you build a knowledge graph of information that's connected together that machines and people can read.

Today, when you translate your website so Google can understand, Google uses it and we're happy, but that's not the whole story. When we do what Google wants us to do and they translate our websites so they can understand it, we kind of give up the fuller opportunity, just for Google. That's where the concentration of power is problematic. Let's say the Yukon gets together and they build a knowledge graph for all the Yukon businesses so it's easily searchable, products are easily found, experiences, artists' work are all captured. There is real value in that knowledge graph. You can create your own data set that you now can provide to other innovators besides Google. And the reason why that's so important is because algorithms are running more and more of our daily lives. And the majority of algorithms are attached to business models associated to shareholder wealth. We have another opportunity when we work together as a sector, as a geography or a territory.

It's not about technology it's actually solving a real problem. It's about finding that problem that you want to solve. You're going to use technology anyways because we live in the 21st century, but it's really just strategy and what is that business problem that you want to solve."

Margaret Lam, Bemused Network

"The way I tend to think about tech problems, personally, is not the common technologist's view. I think innovation happens in places we're not looking. People tend to look at Silicon Valley or urban centers, and yes, those are the places attracting all the attention but in my experience, the most interesting innovation happens at the edges where nobody's looking. On this call today, I'm seeing museums and associations taking risks, and reinventing themselves in a way I'm not seeing happening in urban centers. Given the challenges around Yukon as a place ... I think if there are common human problems that are solved, those solutions are actually exportable. And if it's a region-wide solution, then that's exportable within Canada and that's exportable to other places.

COVID is turning our lives upside down. People are rapidly rethinking everything: what does it mean to go to work, what does it mean to live. A lot of our assumptions, even our personal, professional friends are completely up in the air. I just can't imagine a better time basically to be reinventing ourselves and reimagining, throwing risk to the wind and say "let's just try this crazy idea that we never really thought we would try because what do we have to lose?"

When we're new to technology, we tend to think that we got to look to technology first and let that dictate our decisions about what it's going to do for us, how much it costs, how it's going to change us. But so many innovative processes actually begin with the human, and I think some people don't believe that. They feel as though technology is complicated, they don't understand it. But really, the first step is articulating the needs on the ground and most technologies --- many, many technologists --- don't go there. They have a bit of a god complex -- I'll try not to generalize; it's not all technologists but the most extreme personalities are like that they're in a bit of a mental silo. They think of the world in their own ways, when in reality we actually have to get into the messy part of understanding what do people want, what do people pay for, what do people need and only then do you start making decisions about what you build. Unfortunately, the conversation doesn't always start there, so the business question becomes really hard to talk about, because we've already made decisions about technology before thinking about what the business challenge is to begin with.

Technology as not value-neutral. It may seem like just this innocent little thing floating around; but every piece of technology was designed by a human being or by human intention, and therefore every piece of technology

has values embedded within it. That means two things: one, it means technology you're using might not actually be aligned with how you'd like to live your life; two, we can reimagine the technologies we've taken for granted and that opens up room for creativity. As an outsider, I see Yukon as a really exciting place for so much possibility that is waiting to be untapped.

From the CHAT in the Zoom meeting:

[Zoom recording with chapter markers is here.](#)

00:18:42 Inga Petri: Welcome! In chat: Please introduce yourself briefly Your Community, Your work, Your Role.

00:19:06 Margaret Lam from Waterloo, Ontario. Design researcher and digital lead on a variety of arts and culture initiatives, especially those involving building software. (Looking forward to learning from Yukon folks!)

00:19:28 Valerie Archain: Just arrived in Whitehorse last week! I'm from Montreal, just crossed Canada by car! I used to be a communication advisor for the Laboratory of Urban Innovation for the city of Montreal. Voilà!

00:19:38 Heather Steinhagen: Practising artist and art educator, former ED of Yukon Art Society and now working with YTM for Digital Outreach. Currently in Alberta. I design websites for fun and have a knack for marketing.

00:19:41 Ross Burnet: Hello! I'm an Arts Advisor with Yukon Government

00:20:00 Tammy Lee: Hi this is Tammy, I am a cofounder of tech startup for the arts.

00:20:03 Debbie Peters, Magnum Opus Management, spearheading the development of an online showcase platform called The Pitch.

00:20:11 Charlene Alexander, Executive Director, Yukon First Nations Culture and Tourism Association.

00:20:12 kjmunro: Hi everyone - I'm a poet in Whitehorse...

00:20:50 Dennis Shorty: hi from Jennis in Ross River we are artists

00:21:03 Patti Flather from Whitehorse, Yukon. Writer, theatre artist, arts producer. Involved currently with performing arts, theatre and literary projects (YFNCT, Yukon Words, my own projects).

00:21:15 Kim Beggs: singer songwriter, recording artist, Yukon based

00:21:16 Manuela Larsen: Hello everybody. I am a wilderness tourism operator just outside the city limits of Whitehorse

00:21:41 Hi, this is Braden Brickner from Yukon Film Society. I'm the distribution coordinator for Available Light On-Demand.

00:21:43 Erin Corbett: Hi, I'm the Visual Arts Project Coordinator at Tourism and Culture and based in Whitehorse :)

00:21:53 Justin Lemphers: Hey folks. I'm based in Whitehorse, and work between there and Burwash Landing. My paid job is Environment Officer with Kluane First Nation. My unpaid work is social activism. Here to learn from Inga :)

00:50:04 Tammy Lee: For YTM... I totally see the potential for a game with all those historical planes... Roblox is a great idea

00:58:13 Justin Ferbey: This is really great, Charlene. Re: online store.

00:59:39 Debbie Peters: kudos, Charlene

01:00:27 David Curtis: nice site. thanks, look forward to see how it builds over the years.

01:00:33 Janna Swales: Gorgeous site YFNCTA!

01:00:46 Liz Hanson: Charlene, your vision and persistence is amazing

01:03:26 Charlene Alexander: Thank You Everyone. Visit www.yfnarts.ca

01:05:22 Katrine Frese: any idea what the geography of the 16,000 views are?

01:07:55 Braden Brickner: Large majority of views are within Canada, with the majority of those in YT and BC.

01:09:39 Nicky Rosenberg: Is there any "Yukon Portal" not only for government, but also to businesses and other activities in Yukon?

01:09:40 Braden Brickner: Here is our Year 1 Report (tracking the first six months of the initiative): https://drive.google.com/file/d/16o_-pO1BAJnMhP4u-NEigwgPO2uF66vg/view

01:16:47 Debbie Peters: Love what Margaret said - innovation at the edges! Yes!

01:24:06 alida munro - Yukon Convention Bureau: Yes - great insights Margret. Well said.

01:25:55 Katrine Frese: re. tech is not value neutral: as an educator, I face students refusing to use various tech more than I expected. I see it as crucial to motivate students (mid career professionals) to become more tech literate

01:26:53 margaret lam: Scott - Northern Ontario, which I have visited briefly, could use a solution for that!

01:27:57 Inga Petri: <https://availablelight.watch/>
<https://yukononlinemarket.ca/>
<https://yfnarts.ca/>

01:28:49 margaret lam: Costco and Amazon had a baby!

01:29:52 Tammy Lee: It also builds communities for people

01:32:04 Scott: If anyone wants to check it out<https://yukonorganics.ca>

01:33:03 Debbie Peters: interesting that during this time of very limited performances, once the Yukon Arts Centre installed video production capacity, they are now booked solid until after March 31.

01:46:13 Debbie Peters: As Tammy said, findability is important

01:46:19 Katrine Frese: i am super interested in building knowledge graphs etc.

01:47:03 Debbie Peters: Thank you, Inga, for bringing us together!

01:47:14 alida munro - Yukon Convention Bureau: EXACTLY - Who is responsible?

01:47:31 Melaina Sheldon: Yes! Thank you Inga!

01:47:41 Janna Swales: Thank you. Looking forward to seeing these projects and the infrastructure unfolding and growing.

01:47:49 margaret lam: Good to meet everyone! happy to work on this and hatch a plan

01:47:56 alida munro - Yukon Convention Bureau: Thank you Inga - sorry I was late. Great facilitating.

01:48:01 Tammy Lee: Thank you everyone.

01:48:59 Katrine Frese: are there any good resources re. knowledge graphs? a uniform way of creating webpages is also intriguing

01:49:25 Katrine Frese: thanks all for sharing your projects and thoughts
01:50:20 Liz Hanson: Inga, thank you . fascinating conversations..look forward to next steps..there are so many possibilities
01:51:12 David Curtis: thanks Inga, Tammy, et al for your work and insights into this. much to think about going forward.
01:54:20 kjmunro: thanks Inga! this applies to literary arts as well...
01:54:59 Alistair Maitland: Thanks so much Inga and everybody on the call!
01:55:11 Kim Beggs: thanks everybody!
01:55:20 Braden Brickner: Thanks so much!
01:55:25 alida munro - Yukon Convention Bureau: Great discussion. GO Team YUKON!
01:56:43 Erin Corbett: Bye! Thank you Inga, Tammy and Margaret and everyone else who spoke!

Next Steps

Now that this report is done and I've shared the Zoom recording out...

Let's talk some more and see where we want to go! Anyone can call the next meeting. Or I will do that for early January 2021!