

## CULTURAL ROUTE AND THE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE: THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH : A CASE STUDY

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Canada's cultural itineraries, or routes, are testimonies of epic journeys. They are multi-dimensional in nature as they relate to different purposes like the exploration of the territory, cultural and cultural practices, trade and commercial routes, exploitation of natural resources, etc. They are dynamic linear spaces shaped by the movement of the people. More, the cultural routes are a result of human interaction within an immediate geographical environment, often characterized by a cross-fertilization of cultures and social values.

The thesis of this paper is to consider the need for an international charter on cultural routes. In the meantime, this paper will refer to Parks Canada's Value base Cultural Resource Management policy and other documents as a background to describe a particular Canadian cultural route: the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Site of Canada. (Figure 1)

Gold!, exclaimed Skookum Jim Mason to his friends George Carmack and Taggish Charlie along the Rabbit Creek, later named Bonanza Creek, on August 22, 1896. When the words "discovery of gold in the Yukon Territory" cascaded down and reached the outside world, a gold rush began. The Klondike Gold Rush captured the imagination of the world. No image better represents that historic event than the line (Figure 2) of thousands of gold prospectors struggling over the Chilkoot Pass during the winter of 1897-98.

Today, the Klondike Gold Rush is recognized for its outstanding history of human interaction on a 700 kilometres route from Dyea in Alaska, up to the Chilkoot Pass and down to the gold fields and to the boomtown of Dawson City within the Yukon Territory's dramatic natural landscape. As a whole, this extraordinary heritage route is enriched by a series of places of historical significance that make it up and through which it gains its cultural significance. These places of historical significance include several National Historic Sites: the Chilkoot Trail

NHSC, the Discovery Claim (Claim 37903) NHSC, the Dredge No 4 NHSC and the Dawson City Historical Complex and the Heritage River: the Yukon River. All these national historic sites attest to the determination and ingenuity of the gold seekers that transformed the natural setting (Figure 3) into a mining landscape.

Developing a protection and conservation strategy for this 700 kilometres cultural route is a tremendous challenge. This paper will focus on the Chilkoot Trail NHSC , a 26.6 km trail of amazing natural landscape challenges, viewscapes and natural stops which became instant cities during the Gold Rush, such as Lindeman City and Bennett City. This paper will also describe this extraordinary route's overall heritage values and its character defining elements in accordance with Parks Canada Cultural Resource Management policy, the Standards and Guidelines of the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, the International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes definition, and the Guidelines on the inscription of specific types of properties on the World Heritage List. (Annex 3, page 88-89).

### **CONTEXT: VALUE BASE POLICIES AND DESIGNATION**

In 1987, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada declared the Chilkoot Trail a national historic site. The management of protection and conservation activities for a national historic site is based on its commemorative intent which states the reasons for designation of national significance. For this site, the Statement of Commemorative Intent reads "The Chilkoot Trail was designated a National Historic Site for the role it played in the mass movement of people (Figure 4) to the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush". The Chilkoot Trail NHSC is also part of the Canadian National Historic Sites related to the Gold Rush. These Sites, some identified with recommendations as such as early as 1926, consider the social, economic and political components have shaped up the Yukon region over the last century. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada thereby recognized the intimate connection between the gold rush and the importance of the Chilkoot Trail in the movement of goods and people into the Yukon.

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The National Historic Sites of Canada Directorate of the Parks Canada Agency has the mandate to ensure the protection and presentation of and commemorative integrity as a priority in the administration and management of these sites. Commemorative Integrity is a term used by Parks Canada to describe the health or wholeness of a National Historic Site. A National Historic Site possesses commemorative integrity when the following occur: *1) Resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat; 2) Reasons for the Site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public; and 3) Site's heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.* To effectively focus on commemorative integrity it is necessary to understand those characteristics of a site that led to its designation. Parks Canada Cultural Resources Management policy, the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, International Scientific Committee on Cultural Routes and the Guidelines on the inscription of specific types of properties on the World Heritage List share and have a universal conservation principle in common. This is the principle of understanding.

## **UNDERSTANDING HERITAGE ROUTE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

A comprehensive understanding of a place of historic significance is the first element of commemorative integrity which focuses on the resources that symbolize, or represent the heritage route, in this case the Chilkoot Trail's heritage values and its character defining elements. These tangible character defining-elements have been instrumental in, or integral to, the designation of the site as being of national significance. They are:

- 1) the designated place, 2) the natural and cultural landscape; 3) the built resources; and 4) the In-situ and Collectable Objects.

### **1 Designated Place;**

The Chilkoot Trail extends from Taya Inlet in Alaska to the Yukon River in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. As a traditional trade and travel route used over thousand years period by the First Nations people of the region, the trail encouraged a long-term mutually beneficial communication between culturally distinct First Nations groups. For the gold rush prospectors, the trail became a meeting place for exchange and work with the First Nations. It is also, the departure point, and part of a larger network of trails and river routes followed to reach the Klondike Gold Fields of the Yukon interior. The character

defining-elements are the location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the heritage value of the overall heritage route: 1) overall geography of the route through the coastal mountains; 2) the linear nature of the route; 3) visual sense of containment; (Figure 5); 4) the natural stopping places and the surrounding topography were and continue to be central to the visitor's experience; and 5) on the intangible aspect, the physical challenge and visual excitement of this striking mountain environment. That shared experience was and is the central element in defining the social character of the gold rush on the Chilkoot .

### **2 Natural and cultural landscape:**

Cultural features in the landscape are other physical expression of designated place. People have left an imprint of their presence and of the social organization developed to cope with their mass movement through the pass during the gold rush. These physical attributes are directly connected to the place of national significance and contribute to the overall testimony of the heritage route. These include: 1) the foot trails from the period of commemoration 1896-1900; 2) vestiges, water routes, surviving log and stone work, docks, roadways; 3) the natural stopping places (Figure 6) along the trail, the shores of the lakes, creek crossing and grave yards.

### **3 Built Resources:**

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church at Bennett Lake is the most important landmark and is therefore an important tangible resource directly related to designation of the Chilkoot Trail NHSC. The church sits on a hilltop overlooking Bennett Lake and the White Pass and Yukon Railway Station. The church has an important symbolic value as a sole surviving structure from the commemoration period 1896-1899. The character defining elements of the church are: 1) location and orientation, (Figure 7); 2) massing and rustic cladding, 3) and remaining of original material and architecture.

### **4 In-situ and Collectable Objects**

The gold seekers's route is littered with the remains of their long journey including: discarded tin cans and boxes, boat frames and old sleds, wagon wheels, graves and cemeteries; etc. They are associative indicators of the appearance and lifestyle of the new arriving people. These in-situ artefacts (Figure 8) are valuable for being directly linked to the mass movement of people.

## **HERITAGE ROUTE MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE: MAINTAINING HERITAGE VALUE, INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

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With reference to a preliminary draft on an international charter on cultural routes, the “identification of a cultural route must be based on a set of tangible evidences and elements that witness to the significance of the route as such” and understand its significance and associative heritage values and character defining elements. The management of Cultural Routes implies ensuring that all activities related like the preservation and conservation are respectful of international, national and local policies and principles related to heritage conservation.

Natural erosion, land-use zoning, and visitor activities are a few examples of human impacts to be managed on the overall heritage route character defining elements. Maintaining the heritage value, integrity and authenticity for a 700 kilometres heritage route is a tremendous management planning challenge and a primary goal. The goal of management planning of the Chilkoot Trail NHSC, is to ensure the commemorative integrity of the site, and is administered by the Parks Canada Agency. In managing cultural resources, Parks Canada adheres to 5 principles and practises; value, public benefit, understanding, respect and integrity. These principles provide a means for determining the appropriateness of the management plan goals, objectives and key actions. For example:

- 1) Principle of Value: which embraces the whole trail including natural setting and cultural landscape, built resources, in-situ artefacts;
- 2) Principle of Public Benefit: will be achieved by the protection and presentation of that which is nationally significant through ongoing care and maintenance;
- 3) Principle of Understanding: the care and presentation of cultural resources requiring knowledge, adequate research of the Chilkoot Trail as a key element of the Klondike Gold Rush commemorative period;
- 4) Principle of Respect: those who hold our heritage in trust are responsible for passing on that heritage / cultural route in ways that maintain its potential future understanding, appreciation and study. As an irreplaceable testimony of that event, the cultural resources will be managed with continuous care and respect for their heritage value and character defining elements;
- 5) Principle of Integrity: relates to the presentation of the past in a manner that accurately reflects the range and complexity of human history commemorated;

The management plan establishes an accountability framework which includes: 1) strategic goals for an overall Place of Historic Significance, a Place for people, and a Place for Stewardship; 2) a set of objectives or measurable target for each stated goals; 3) a set of key actions to be

carried out for each set of objectives. Here are some examples:

A) Strategic Goal related to the Designated Place:

- To preserve the heritage route through the Chilkoot Pass down to Bennett Lake and its role during the Gold Rush period of 1897-1900, as a means of access to the Yukon;

1) Objectives related to the Designated Place:

- Maintain the geographic character of the historic trail corridor, which is characterized by its linear aspect and visual sense of containments within its valley;
- Maintain the relationship between the commemorated trail and the natural stopping places and the local topography;
- Maintain, in an unimpaired state, the viewscape from the summit of the pass and the historic trail corridor;

2) Key Actions related to the Designated Place:

- Employ the land-use zoning as guide for the protection and preservation of the Site, and to screen all developments and activities proposed for the Site;
- Collaborate with First Nations and adjacent land holders to ensure the viewscapes of the designated place are maintained.

B) Strategic Goal related to the Built Resources:

- Preserve the church architectural integrity as the sole surviving structure from the commemoration period;

1) Objectives related to the Built Resources:

- Maintain the location and orientation of the church;
- Retain its appearance, defined by massing, rustic cladding and architecture

2) Key Actions related to the Built Resources:

- Take appropriate measure to protect the structure from vandalism and fire;
- Maintain, record and monitor conditions of the structure.

Those two strategic goals, objectives and key actions show what the ultimate goal is. The heritage route as whole must be preserved to minimize impacts on its heritage value and its character defining elements.

Canada's newest document entitled “*Standards and the Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*” is a heritage value-based conservation approach. It is composed of fourteen general standards for the preservation, rehabilitation and restoration and a series of guidelines for the preservation, rehabilitation and restoration

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of historic places in Canada. The primary purpose of the 14 General Standards is to provide sound practical guidance to achieve good conservation practice for a particular project. The guidelines are intended to assist in applying the standards. The specific Guidelines for archaeological sites, landscapes, buildings, and engineering works and other considerations could be part of a Historic Place like the Klondike Gold Rush Heritage Route. The use of this document complements the above mentioned management plan accountability framework.

For instance, the general standard number one (1) states: Conserve the heritage value of a historic place. Do not remove, replace or substantially alter its intact or repairable character-defining elements. Do not remove a part of a historic place if its current location is a character defining elements. This is a very important general standard. The first part focuses on the broad concept of preservation of the heritage route *raison d'être* and its tangible elements. The second part focuses on the removal of any part or character defining elements that can jeopardize the overall heritage route integrity and authenticity.

The general standard number six (6) states: Protect and preserve archaeological resources in place. Where there is potential for disturbance of archaeological resources, take mitigations measures to limit damages and loss of information. This is respectful of the Gold Seekers / Stampeders social life in this harsh environment.

The general standard number 7 states to Evaluate the existing condition of character defining elements to determine the appropriate intervention needed. Use the gentlest means possible for any intervention. Respect the heritage values when undertaking an intervention. This standard focuses on the principle of understanding and a minimal approach to conserve heritage value and avoid destruction of tangible elements directly associated with the significance of the place;

The guidelines are divided in recommended and not recommended actions related to the preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of a project. The following guidelines on landscape particularly the sections on Viewscapes, Circulation and Built Features are of interest for the Klondike Gold Rush Heritage Route. Here are some examples. Viewscapes are character defining elements of the heritage route. The following actions are recommended to preservation the viewscapes and therefore the heritage value and character defining elements:

- 1) **Documenting the viewscapes:** including their foreground, middle ground, and background,

landmarks, edges and skyline; prospects both to and from the historic place/heritage route;

- 2) **Protecting and maintaining** viewscapes by using non-destructive methods and daily, seasonal and cyclical tasks, such as pruning to retain sight lines,

In the case of the Landscape Built Features, the preservation actions are as follows:

- 1) **Documenting** the condition, materials and surroundings of built features and the relationship of these features to each other; 2) **Protecting and maintaining;** 3) **Repairing and stabilizing** deteriorated built feature elements by structural reinforcement or correcting unsafe conditions. Repairs should be physically and visually compatible; 4) **Replacing in kind.**

As St. Andrew's Church is the sole surviving structure from the commemoration period (1896-99), the guidelines for Buildings apply. Here are some examples: Exterior wood, Roof, Windows, Interior Spaces, Features and Finishes, Structural Systems. The guidelines on exterior wood preservation are as following:

- 1) Documenting the form, type of split log and the condition of exterior wood features prior to beginning project works; 2) Protecting and Maintaining; 3) Retaining; 4) Repairing and Stabilizing; 5) Replacing in kind extensively deteriorated or missing parts of exterior wood elements where there are surviving prototypes. The new work should match the old in form and detailing.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Applying the value-base Cultural Resources Management policy and the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada has been found by all policies concerned to provide an appropriate framework to identify, understand and conserve the Klondike Gold Rush cultural route heritage value and the character defining elements integrity and authenticity.

Today, the Klondike is included Canada's Tentative List for World Heritage Sites. Here is an excerpt of the text which can be viewed on Parks Canada website ([www.parkscanada.gc.ca](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca)). "The history of the Klondike is written on the land. First Nations story cycles speak of thousand of years of surviving and thriving in challenging environment, and to a remarkable record of adaptation and innovation. These stories also speak to a way of life that was radically and indelibly altered by a brief moment on the timeline of the region's human occupation – the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-1898, and its aftermath."... Although the Klondike Gold Rush cultural route is not entirely included in the overall proposition for nomination, the 26.6 km trail of

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the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Sites is instrumental to  
the nomination.

## Abstract

Canada's cultural routes are diverse in nature. Upon the discovery of gold in 1896-98, the Klondike Gold Rush began. It captured the imagination of the world. The gold seekers struggled over the Chilkoot Trail a traditional aboriginal travel trail and in the Yukon Territory challenging landscape. Thousands of gold seekers had in few months interacted and transformed the natural landscape into a 600 km cultural route composed of stop-places, camps, goldfields and development of a boomtown.

Today, that memorable cultural route contains several national historic sites of Canada commemorating the Chilkoot Trail, the discovery of gold, its associative technologies and transportation systems. Ensuring commemorative integrity of those sites becomes the primary priority for development of management plans. More, as outstanding example of a landscape which illustrate exceptional adaptation and innovation by First Nations people (criteria iv) and outstanding example of landscape mining (criteria v), the Klondike is part of Canada's Tentative List for World Heritage Site.

This paper will focus on what is nationally significant about those sites, their heritage values and character defining elements, their holistic inter-relation with the modified setting and the cultural route as a whole. It will also focus on a management mechanism of conservation and presentation for the resources that symbolize the national significance and approach to maintain the cultural route integrity and authenticity.

## References

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2. Guidelines on the Inscription of specific types of properties on the World Heritage List, Chilkoot Trail NHSC Management Plan, Parks Canada, 1999
3. Parks Canada Cultural Resources Management Policy, 1994
4. Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, 2004,
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Fig. 1 Canada Map and Location



Fig. 2 On the Chilkoot Pass 1898,Pierre Berton,The Klondike Quest,p.81



Fig. 3 Bonanza Creek Mining and Tailing,Guy Massson 1990



Fig. 4 Chilkoot Traill of 1898, Parks Canada 10.99.06.08

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Fig.5 Lake Bennett - GM 1987



Fig.6 Tent City - Lake Bennett 1898



Fig. 7 St.Andrew`s Church 1900



Fig.8 Boiler for train Parks Canada H.10.99.06.01(16)