

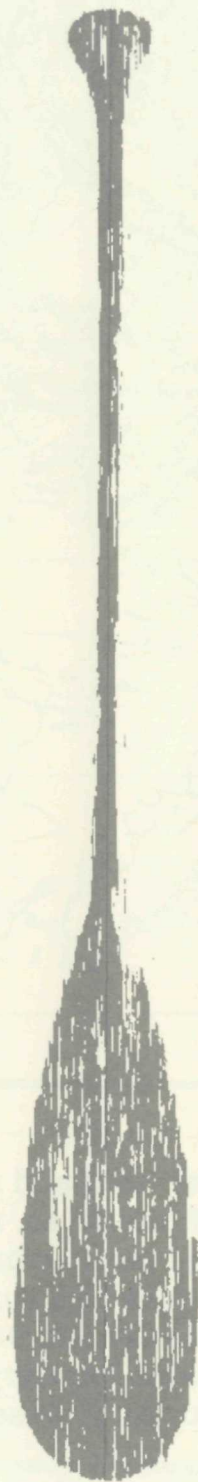
COMPLETING THE JOURNEY

Exploring the Columbia river past the present site of Mount Revelstoke National Park

In the summer of 1811, Thompson travelled south from Kootenae House and rejoined the Columbia River overland in what is now Washington State. His party canoed down-river to the coast, only to find that the Pacific Fur Company ship had reached the river's mouth first. The Americans had claimed the area and erected "Fort Astoria" that spring. After a week as guests at Fort Astoria, Thompson's party travelled north on the Columbia to the river's hairpin turn around the Selkirk Mountains. When they had passed the area that is now Mount Revelstoke National Park and reached Boat Encampment, Thompson became the first European to have travelled the entire length of the Columbia River.

Thompson journeyed past the Mount Revelstoke area twice during the following eight months - heading south in the autumn to over-winter in Montana, and travelling north in the spring of 1812. It was his last trip on the Columbia. Thompson paddled north to Boat Encampment, crossed Athabasca Pass on foot and travelled by canoe to eastern Canada, never to return to the west again.

Settling near Montreal, Thompson was appointed to the commission that established the Canada-US boundary after the War of 1812. Had his boundary proposals prevailed, almost all of Washington State and much of northern Idaho would be part of Canada. Until his death in 1857, Thompson continued work on his atlas of Canada from Hudson's Bay to the Pacific Ocean.



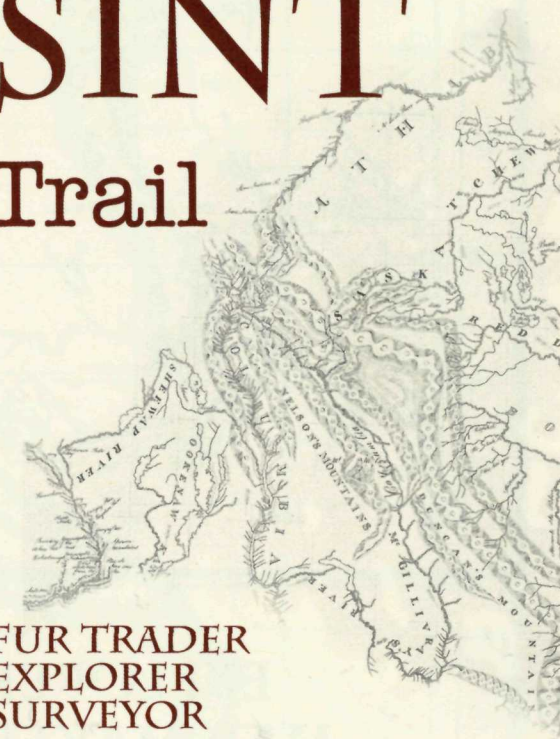
A 200 YEAR LEGACY

For more than 40 years, Thompson's Columbia River - Athabasca Pass route was the main continental overland route from the Arctic Ocean and Lake Superior to the Pacific. Voyageur "express" parties carrying company mail took three and a half months to make the trip between York Factory on Hudson Bay and the mouth of the Columbia River. Settlers and missionaries often accompanied the voyageurs on the river and many were lost in the deadly rapids that existed just out of view on the river below this viewpoint.

Today, the Columbia River flows quietly past Mount Revelstoke National Park. The deadly rapids on the river below have been diminished by the Revelstoke Dam. Boat Encampment now lies beneath 160 m (525 ft) of water, behind the Mica Dam. David Thompson's historic campsite is now commemorated at a viewpoint near Mica, 150 km north of Revelstoke on Highway 23N.



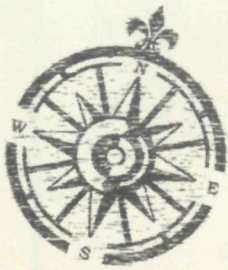
The KOO KOO SINT Trail



FUR TRADER
EXPLORER
SURVEYOR

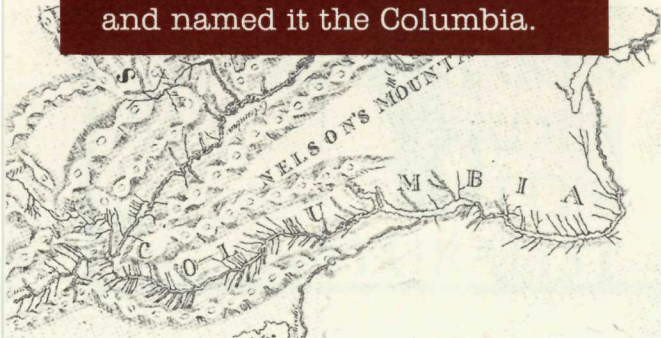
Let the story of David Thompson and
the mapping of the Columbia River

unfold...



THE GREAT RIVER OF THE WEST

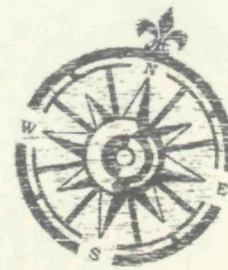
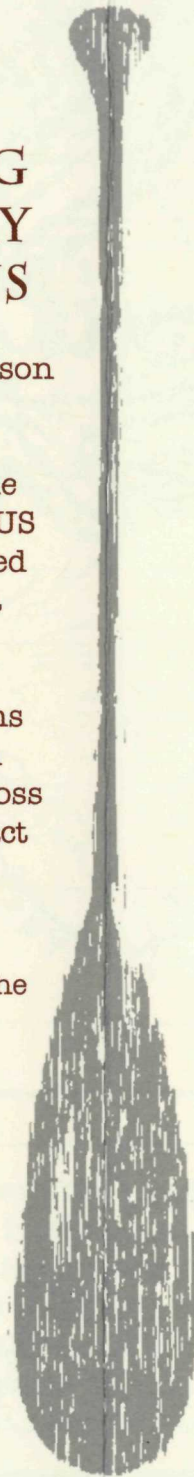
18th Century European explorers were certain of the existence of a water transportation route across northwestern North America. Geographers and scientists believed that a series of connecting rivers could link Hudson Bay to the Pacific Ocean, and eliminate the need for a long, perilous journey around Cape Horn at the tip of South America. It was widely held that a “great river of the west” flowed from the Continental Divide down to the Pacific Ocean. Maritime fur traders from Boston discovered the mouth of this great river in 1792 and named it the Columbia.



CROSSING THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

By 1800, fur trader David Thompson had spent more than ten years exploring and surveying west of the Great Lakes. His employer, the North West Company, knew that US President Jefferson had dispatched Lewis and Clark in 1803 to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. Within two years, the American team crossed the Rocky Mountains and reached the coast. Thompson was sent to find a river route across the northern Rockies to counteract the potential American threat to business.

Leaving Rocky Mountain House on the east side of the mountains in 1807, Thompson made his first successful crossing of the Rockies at Howse Pass. From the pass, Thompson followed the Blaeberry River down to the Columbia River, but he did not recognize the north-flowing Columbia as the “great river of the west” and instead turned upstream (south). That season, he established Kootanae House, his fur trading post at present-day Invermere, B.C.

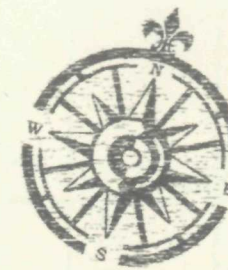


KOO KOO SINT

From Kootanae House, Thompson explored present day Montana, Washington and Idaho in 1808 and 1809, and established trading posts on Lake Pend d'Oreille in Idaho and the Clark Fork River in Montana. Thompson was guided through the lands west of the Continental Divide by the people who had lived on the land for centuries. Thompson was respected by the First Nations people who guided him and traded with him.



His Salish-Flathead companions named him **“KOO KOO SINT”** (the man who looks at stars) for his nightly sextant navigation.



A WINTER AT BOAT ENCAMPMENT

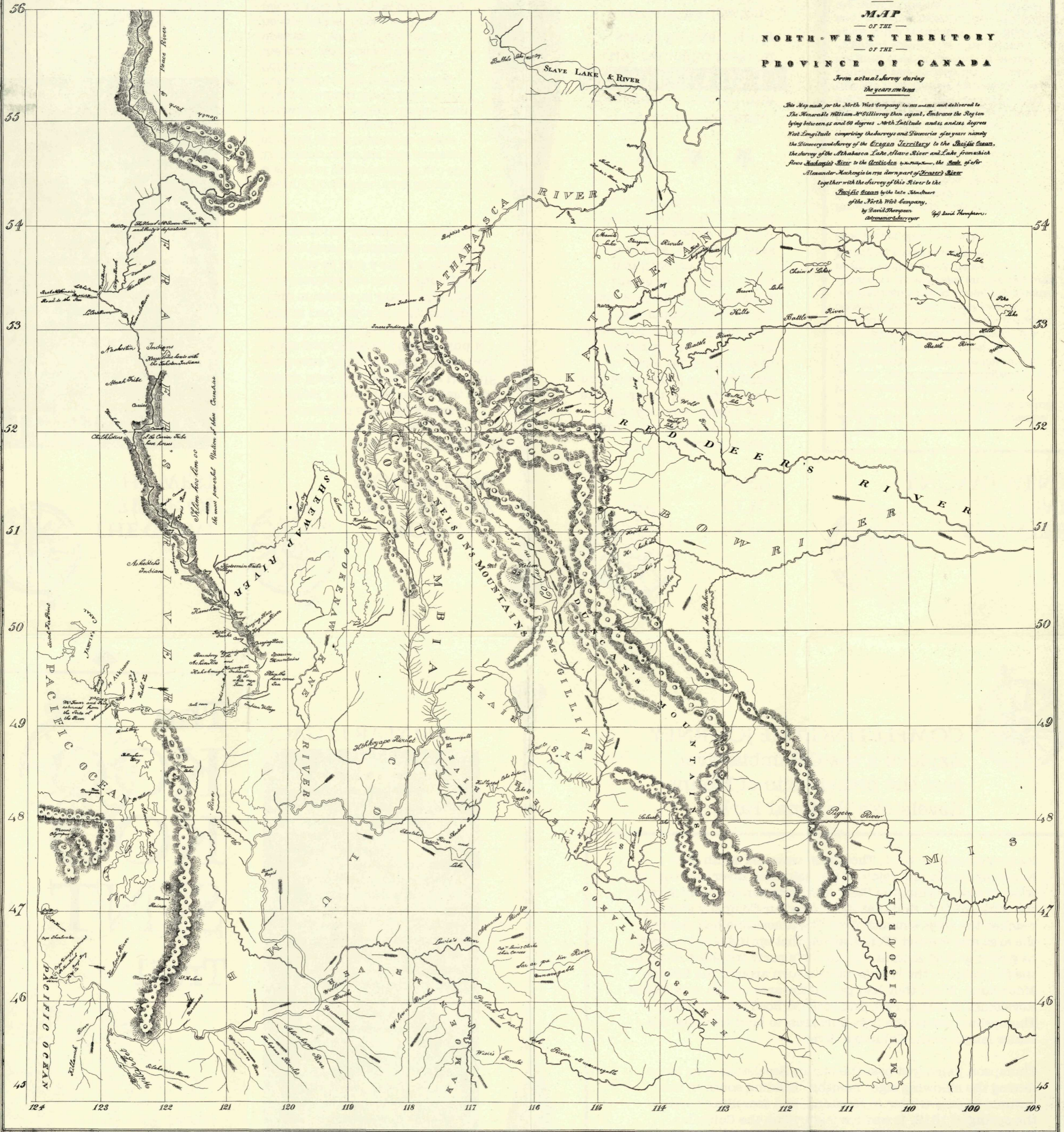
In the autumn of 1810, a Pacific Fur Company ship left New York bound for the mouth of the Columbia River. By then, the North West Company had directed Thompson to follow the Columbia down to the ocean and establish a company presence on the coast ahead of the Americans. A dispute between the Peigan (Blackfoot) and the Flathead blocked Thompson's usual route over Howse Pass, and he detoured north to follow the Athabasca and Whirlpool rivers through what is now Jasper National Park.

Struggling through deep snows on the Divide, his party made it down to the confluence of the Wood, Canoe and Columbia rivers in January 1811. Thompson was forced to spend the entire winter there at the “big bend” of the Columbia River, at a site which later became known as Boat Encampment. Over the winter, he determined that the river that he had named the Kootanae was actually the Columbia, the great river of the west. If he had originally turned north rather than south at the confluence of the Blaeberry and Columbia, he would have discovered the route to the sea four years earlier.

MAP
OF THE
NORTH-WEST TERRITORY
OF THE
PROVINCE OF CANADA

From actual survey during
the years 1811 to 1814

This Map made for the North West Company in 1811 and delivered to
The Honorable William McGillivray then agent, embraces the Region
lying between 55 and 60 degrees North Latitude and 105 and 125 degrees
West Longitude comprising the surveys and Discoveries of five years namely
the Discovery and survey of the **Crowfoot Territory** to the Pacific Coast,
the survey of the **Athabasca Lake, Slave River and Lake** from which
flows **MacKenzie's River** to the Arctic Sea, the **Route** of Mr
Alexander MacKenzie in 1791 down part of **Pratt's River**
together with the survey of this River to the
Pacific Ocean by the late **John Ross**
of the **North West Company**,
by **David Thompson**
Astronomer & Surveyor



EXPLORER
MAP-MAKER
TRADER
WRITER
NATURALIST

In his lifetime, David Thompson explored and mapped 3.9 million square kilometres (1.5 million sq. mi.) of North America. Thompson travelled more than 100,000 km (60,000 miles), including his work as a surveyor with the commission that established the Canada-US boundary. His grand 1814 map of the Northwest Territory of Canada was considered to be the most accurate representation of the area for the next 75 years.

Parks Canada strives to protect cultural resources and present the cultural history of Mount Revelstoke National Park.