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A Cultural Cartography of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike: Mapping plural Knowledges

Abstract:

Since their first meeting 150 years ago, Yukon Indigenous peoples and Western settler Newcomers have exchanged narratives of meaning. These attempts to engage with the other include a jostling of stories, pageants, and rituals highlighting the values and interests of their culture. Largely place-based, these contact experiences reflect the distinctly different ways peoples understand the world, their place in it and highlight the complexity of cross-cultural encounters. Richard White's concept of a middle ground and Julie Cruikshank's work on Yukon Indigenous narratives both focus on the significance of these encounters. The marks left by these encounters can be charted. The resulting cultural cartography provides a way in which diverse and incommensurable ways of life can be understood and appreciated. The paper applies a cultural cartography to frame the present interest in a world heritage site nomination for the Tr'ondëk-Klondike region of the central Yukon. Mapping these ephemeral contacts makes it possible to better understand the shared history and material culture written on the landscape of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike. Cultural cartography contributes to the negotiation of a respectful and meaningful heritage commemoration built on the mutual interests of all parties.

Résumé:

Depuis leur première rencontre il y a 150 ans, les peuples autochtones du Yukon et les nouveaux colons occidentaux ont échangé des récits significatifs. Ces tentatives de s'engager avec l'autre comprennent une bousculade d'histoires, de spectacles et de rituels mettant en évidence les valeurs et les intérêts de leur culture. Largement basées au niveau local, ces expériences de contact reflètent les manières très différentes des divers peuples de comprendre leur monde, la place qu'ils y occupent et mettent en évidence la complexité de rencontres interculturelles. Le concept de Richard White du terrain d'entente et le travail de Julie Cruikshank sur les narratives autochtones du Yukon focalisent tous les deux sur l'importance de ces rencontres. Les traces laissées par ces rencontres peuvent être cartographiées. La cartographie culturelle qui en résulte, fournit un moyen par lequel ces manières diverses et incomparables de vivre peuvent être compris et appréciés. Dans cette contribution j'applique une cartographie culturelle pour encadrer l'intérêt actuel d'une candidature pour déclarer la région Tr'ondëk-Klondike du Yukon central comme site du patrimoine mondial. La cartographie de ces contacts éphémères permet de mieux comprendre l'histoire commune et la culture matérielle

inscrite dans le paysage de la Tr'ondëk-Klondike. La cartographie culturelle contribue à la négociation d'une commémoration du patrimoine respectueuse et constructive fondée sur les intérêts mutuels de toutes les parties.

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Introduction

Cultural knowledges rise from human communities' responses to being in the world. Communities construct an intellectual frame rising from the perceived needs and opportunities they experience in their homelands. These multi-varied cultural knowledges are coded into stories of meaning – a cultural narrative – incorporating the values passed on by their Elders and privileging the skills and knowledge needed to manage the future.

When vastly different communities meet, each with different cultural narratives, there may be a clash of lifeways. Each group attempts to impose, or at least demonstrate the validity of, their own way of life. With a large power differential and different values it becomes almost impossible for the more powerful to understand, or even recognize, that there is another way of life present and another way of knowing the world and presenting one's world views. If they do note a difference they work to incorporate that difference, on their own terms, within their frame of understanding.

With Western European civilization's expansion into North America through the nineteenth century, their cultural narrative was framed by Enlightenment ideas of rationalism and a universally applicable science. The resulting ordering of nature and its mid-nineteenth century expression in the theory of evolution became the universal frame applied by Europeans to the rest of the world. In a cultural sense these Settlers

felt they were the intellectual and cultural vanguard of a shared humanity. In meeting other cultures, European settlers viewed Indigenous peoples as still incomplete, as relics of their own past. Difference was denied by absorbing other peoples into a model of human development that they were the leaders of. Some peoples might be able to emulate European success; others, incapable of being, or unwilling to be like Europeans, were deemed an unsuccessful species doomed to pass out of history (de Sousa Santos, 1). In the late nineteenth and into the twentieth century this attitude challenged northern Canadian Indigenous peoples in their attempts to accommodate Newcomers.¹ One of the most prominent points of this contact was the Klondike gold region in the middle Yukon River where European origin settlers met Northern Athapaskan peoples, specifically the Tr'ondëk Hän, who struggled to incorporate these Newcomers into their ways of being in the world.

Potlatches and Pageants – A Century-long Conversation in the Tr'ondëk-Klondike

In May 2004 the Government of Canada released its second “Tentative List for World Heritage Sites.” On the list of diverse cultural and natural sites was “The Klondike.” Originally conceived as recognizing both the “exceptional adaptation and innovation of First Nations people” and “an outstanding example of a mining landscape,” the site was promoted as an illustration of “life before, during and after the world’s great 19th-century gold rushes” (Canada 2004, 21). Of the seventeen world heritage sites recognized in Canada, as of 2014, fifteen are based upon Western settler society values, either recognizing European settlement and development of northern North America (L’Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site, designated in 1978; Historic District of Old Québec, 1985; Rideau Canal, 2007), or highlighting the Western scientific interests in natural history (Dinosaur Provincial Park, 1979; Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, 1995; Joggins Fossil Cliffs, 2008). Two sites, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump (1981) and SḠang Gwaay (1981), address Indigenous history and culture. Both of these nominations, however, were originally based upon Western archaeology (Neufeld 2001, 61-62) and settler society’s romanticization of the disappearance of Indigenous peoples. Neither nomination included input from contemporary First Nations communities. In fact both nominations explicitly noted the absence of Indigenous peoples in the present.² Significant chang-

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- 1 The three terms, Newcomer (the gold rush population and clique of government employees most of whom were transient), Locals (that part of the non-Indigenous population that stayed in the Klondike to run businesses or work, that is, they made the Klondike their permanent home) and First Nation (the Indigenous population long resident in the region), each identify distinct populations in the Klondike region. While newcomer and local are generally understood as generic terms, they are capitalized in my text as identifiers for specific groups of people in the same way that Indigenous and First Nation are used.
 - 2 “[The Head-Smashed-In bison jump complex is] directly and materially associated with the survival of the human race during the pre-historic period” (Advisory Body Evaluation of Head-Smashed-In Bison Jump Complex).

es over the past 25 years, to both UNESCO world heritage site nomination criteria and the Canadian national commemoration programs, address some of this earlier culturally entrenched imbalance.³

The Klondike Gold Rush of 1896-98 has been incorporated into Canada's national story. In the mid-1950s the national commemoration program began identifying themes, items and buildings that would eventually form an interconnected set of national historic sites. These included the international Chilkoot Trail as part of the travel route of the miners, a pair of paddlewheel steamboats celebrating the Yukon River traffic connecting the Klondike gold fields with the world, and many of the historic buildings making up the core of Dawson. For almost four decades the national government supported a massive restoration and development program contributing to the economic fortunes of the region. Today this web of historic sites retains a comprehensive gold rush interpretive program, annually hosts over 300,000 tourists and courts a continuing series of film and television productions (Yukon Tourism Indicators).

As the Parks Canada historian for these historic sites from 1986 to 2012, I was immersed in the development and presentation of this gold rush history. The interpretive themes of the Klondike national historic sites emphasize the establishment of Canadian government control of the region and the development of corporate industrial infrastructure – the Mounted Police presence, court houses and commercial buildings, the enormous gold dredges, the railways and riverboats. What was preserved and presented was the all-embracing grand narrative of the modern Canada of the 1950s and 60s, the development of a Western industrial nation-state, the establishment of a social safety net, and the acknowledgement and celebration of Canada's "cultural mosaic," the diverse immigrants that built modern Canada.

The Klondike commemorations are an artful articulation of Harold Innis's 1920s nationalist idea of Canada's boundaries and development as the outcome of trans-Atlantic settlement patterns and economic enterprise. Subsequently developed into a historiographical idea, the Laurentian thesis (Francis 2006) describes a Western discourse of nation building and civic accommodation. This fulfillment of the Western Enlightenment model of statecraft explains the organization and evolution of the modern democratic state, which provides its citizens with "peace, order and good government."⁴ In this grand narrative, economic, social and cultural agency is exercised only by the state, in the pursuit of democratic governance and material progress.

"The abandoned [sic] village of Ninstints on Anthony Island bears a unique testimony to the vanished civilization of the Haida Indians ..." (Advisory Body Evaluation of Anthony Island).

- 3 International changes are summarized in Harrison (93-94 and chapter 6) and national changes are noted in Neufeld (2008, 21-22). Susemihl provides a detailed assessment of the different character of contemporary management of these sites and the outcomes for the agency of Indigenous peoples (51-77).
- 4 A brief analysis of this shared British Imperial constitutional obligation of the Canadian Government is offered by Reynolds (2012).

While a significant story and certainly an important element of a World Heritage Site nomination, the overwhelming weight of the existing national commemorations creates challenges in addressing the history of both the non-Indigenous Locals of Dawson and regional First Nation people. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, since their 1998 agreement with Canada the self-governing First Nation of the Tr'ondëk Hän of the region, have qualms about their lack of presence within the grand narrative of Canada presented at the Klondike region national historic sites.⁵ They have little interest in being tolerated and accommodated by the national government. The recent Yukon First Nation self-government treaties with Canada are premised upon a model of culturally pluralist governance. As Roddy Blackjack, an Elder of the Carmacks/Little Salmon First Nation, stated, we must become "two cultures side by side" (Blackjack quoted in Graham, 6).⁶ According to respected political philosopher James Tully, this type of cultural pluralism means a state with distinct cultural groupings constantly negotiating with each other on the basis of mutual recognition, respect for the continuity of group traditions with governance rising from mutual consent (Tully 1995, 116). In the post-treaty Yukon, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in wish to present their own cultural narrative of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike region alongside that of Canada.

Originally prepared for the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Advisory Committee, this paper outlines a historical approach including these different perspectives of the past. By focusing on the communications between peoples across a cultural divide, instead of considering only their incommensurable ways of life, it is possible to more equably appreciate the cultural values and social interests of all perspectives. With such an approach it may be possible to negotiate a respectful and meaningful commemoration built on the mutual understanding of all parties. The Tr'ondëk-Klondike committee needs a cultural cartography⁷ of the century of conversations amongst the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Dawson Locals and the Canadian government – between Western and Indigenous discourses – to navigate a path to cultural pluralism. This cultural cartography maps the *performances of contact*, those public events, shared activities and formal exchanges through which one group expresses its identity and values in an attempt to communicate to or influence another. By investigating these ephemeral contacts, the pageants, the potlatches, the court cases and the football matches, it becomes possible to better understand the

5 The recognition of the cultural imbalance of heritage commemorations in the Yukon is acknowledged in *Chapter 13 – Heritage of the Agreement*. Sections 13.4.1. and 13.4.2., known as the "catch-up and keep-up clauses," require the Canadian and Yukon governments to achieve an equitable balance of investment between First Nation and non-Indigenous heritage (Canada, 1993).

6 The basis of the Yukon First Nations approach to making an agreement with Canada, and their recognition of different histories, is presented in Yukon Native Brotherhood (1973, 11).

7 White and Cruikshank (1998) provide the inspiration for the idea of a cultural cartography. Both describe trans-cultural contacts between North American Indigenous people and Newcomers as set in and shaped by place.

shared history and distinctive material culture written on the landscape of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike. It makes visible the cultural narratives of all parties.

Meeting Strangers – Chief Isaac at Moosehide

The Hän people of the middle Yukon River were well aware of the wider world when the first gold rush stampeders arrived in the late 1890s. For over half a century, the Hän had been trading with Euro-American fur buyers and had met, and lived with, gold prospectors. By the early 1890s the Hän had also met the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP), there to enforce British Law, and a proselytizing Anglican Missionary. In addition, they had suffered the ravages of a series of epidemics accompanying these newcomers, but nevertheless remained an active and coherent community, well known for their sharp trading ability and their ebullient dancing and singing tradition. The dramatic arrival of tens of thousands of stampeders on their lands, while not completely overwhelming the Hän, demanded considerable adjustments. In keeping with their custom of welcoming people to their camps, the Hän worked diligently to establish positive working arrangements with these Newcomers, yet the overcrowding forced them to relocate from their fishing camp, Tr'ochëk, at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers. Chief Isaac of the Hän led the community downriver, from the new city of Dawson to another of their camps, known as Moosehide. Despite this, he maintained continuous contact with the Newcomers for some thirty years, always actively forwarding the interests and values of his community through a wide-ranging program of public announcements, ceremonies and demonstrations.

Every Christmas, Chief Isaac issued an invitation to all Dawsonites to visit the Hän village of Moosehide. On Christmas Eve 1902 he joked with the attending Newcomers about being approached by a group of San Francisco businessmen interested in buying the Yukon. He claimed to be considering their offer and was making arrangements for his own people's retention of certain lands. He was, however, uncertain of what the Newcomers would do when their eviction notice came. Two days later he hosted the townspeople at a potlatch, a far more serious act of diplomacy. The visitors' acceptance of his gifts cemented their agreement to his earlier statement of ownership to the lands they were settling upon. The gift response by Major Wood, the NWMP Superintendent, emphasized the government's recognition of Chief Isaac's claims (*Klondike Nugget*, 09 Dec. 1902 and *Dawson Daily News*, 24 Dec. 1902).

The following year a large group of First Nation dancers from the central Yukon put on a cultural show at the Dawson Auditorium Theatre. Some one hundred dancers performed two shows of their traditional dances to packed audiences. The evening was hosted by Henry Phillips, a mission-educated Tlingit from Alaska, who provided an interpretive commentary on the dances. Phillips, used to the closer and much longer engagement of the coastal Tlingit with Russians, British and Ameri-

cans, expressed his surprise at the apparently limited contact between the peoples of Dawson and Moosehide (*DDN*, 20 Dec. 1903 and 02 Jan. 1904).



Hän men performing ceremonial dance for Newcomer audience in Dawson City, Empire Day May 24, 1901 (*Yukon Archives, Bill Roozeboom collection, #6290*).

Chief Isaac also attempted to assist the Newcomers when they ran into problems. The central Yukon has limited summer rainfall, and a drought in 1905 made it difficult to wash out the placer gold, hindering production. Early in the new year a number of the larger mining companies and the Territorial Council invited a professional rainmaker, Charles Hatfield from California, to sign a \$10,000 contract “to increase the rainfall [...] to insure a successful and prosperous summer for the placer gold mining industry of the Dawson District” (Canada 1906). By June 11, 1906, Hatfield’s equipment was in place and he began his demonstration. “Threatening clouds” soon gathered, but despite fulminations only two small showers resulted. The *Yukon World* noted “the sluice boxes [remained] as dry as a wagon tongue” (*YW*, 12 June 1906, 13 June 1906, 14 June 1906, 16 June 1906). Chief Isaac then intervened, claiming that Hatfield’s failure was due to the power of the four Hän Medicine Men. The chief announced he would stop all rain until Hatfield was dismissed but promised his Medicine Men would produce “oceans of rain” for just \$5000. The Territorial Council, sold on the “scientific method,” attributed Hatfield’s failure to the still imperfect understanding of the principles of scientific rainmaking (*YW*, 14 June

1906).⁸ Already subjected to national ridicule for the original rain making contract, the Territorial Council had no appetite for taking up Chief Isaac's offer, they dismissed it as superstitious nonsense.⁹ While the contact between cultures remained limited, it did not entirely preclude co-operative activity. In the summer of 1915 the Peel River people visited to challenge the men of Dawson to a football match. Differences in equipment – the ball was of moose hide stuffed with caribou hair – and rules were negotiated, compromises in playing style accepted and a spirited and well attended match followed. It was actually possible to do things together if both sides put their minds to it (*DDN*, 10 July 1915).

Despite Chief Isaac's efforts to reach out to the Newcomers, there appears to have been little reciprocal interest in, and even less comprehension of, their First Nation neighbours. Fully engaged in the construction of their own world, the Newcomers expected the exotic "natives" to be transformed into more recognizable elements of the pioneer landscape. The *Dawson Daily News* regularly published editorials requesting the government to educate the "natives" on the benefits of farming, or to introduce "Reindeer herds, so that natives [...] may substitute them for the present wasteful and costly dogs, and become self-sustaining and well-to-do owners of herds" (*DDN*, 06 June 1911).¹⁰ The refusal of the Hän to fulfill these expectations began to render them less visible. One journalist, suggesting Chief Isaac was spoiled by his 1902 trip to San Francisco, characterized him as one of the rural bumpkins in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (*DDN*, 25 Feb. 1908). Moosehide and its inhabitants were not considered by the Newcomers to be a part of the real world. From the Newcomers' perspective of racial evolution, it was impossible for the "Indian" to be in the present, or have a future, unless they embraced the lessons of Western civilization. The Hän had to either abandon their cultural identity, thus becoming invisible, or if they stubbornly retained their values and land-based life ways they would be isolated as a spoiled people destined to disappear after contact with a superior race. Either way they became exiles in their own land.

Making Home – Anglo-Saxon Pioneers become Tr'ondëk-Klondike Locals

The citizens of 1900 Dawson understood their community as a triumph of Western colonial civilization. They were proud of its modern services, its connections to the wider world, and of its mining wealth in particular. While nationalist tensions periodically flared between Canadians and Americans over the then current Alaska

8 Weather information courtesy of Don Watt, A.E.S. Weather Station, Whitehorse and Daily Climatological Data 2.0, Climate Services Division (A.E.S. Sept., 1989).

9 I was present when Julia Morberg, a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Elder, "cut the sky" with her knife to prevent rain from interrupting a field research program. This act was not about power, rather it demonstrated the significance of a world view focused on right relations (Neufeld, 2011).

10 "The government might do a great service for these natives by teaching them to farm" (*DDN*, 13 July 1912).

boundary dispute, Dawson community leaders worked to focus attention on the shared elements shaping their new identity. Although diverse in national origin, the vast majority of Dawson's populace were Caucasians from Canada, the United States and Western Europe. The nineteenth-century racist belief in (vaguely bounded) Anglo-Saxon superiority, demonstrated by the power of imperial Britain and the burgeoning possibilities of the American Republic, provided the Newcomers with a sense of a shared destiny to civilize and lead the world (Horsman, 84, 189-190).

In Dawson, the Newcomers also engaged in a shared economic activity. Their livelihoods – whether from mining or the supporting infrastructure of transportation, commerce or government – depended upon the extraction of gold from the creeks. The pursuit of gold also established a shared annual round of work. In the early days this meant a winter down the mine shaft digging out the gold bearing gravels. “Clean-up”, the spring sluicing out of the gold, was completed by early June. Miners were paid their winter's wages, stores had their bills settled and the river boats arrived with the first fresh fruit and crates of liquor after a long winter. It was a time to celebrate (Neufeld 2000, 77-79). It is through the celebration of the resulting holidays that we witness the formation of a community in the Yukon and the transformation of Newcomers into Locals. The earliest public holiday of the Yukon Newcomers was Empire Day, usually held on May 24. In turn-of-the-century cosmopolitan Dawson, it was also known as All Nations' Day. Conveniently fitting into the seasonal round of mining the celebrations, including a parade and sports program, also emphasized the racial Anglo-Saxonism identity bonding together of Americans and Britons.¹¹ In 1902 the parade was led by the NWMP detachment. Chief Isaac, wearing his father's fifty-year-old beaded buckskin suit (*DDN*, 26 May 1902) followed, ahead of the Dawson militia and nine British veterans of the Riel Resistance.¹² The main body of the parade included leading government officials, with the US consul, then union members, the fire department and the floats of the different town businesses. The children, trained in drill by the NWMP officers (*YS*, 13 May 1902), joined the parade at the school. The afternoon's games were governed by the North American United Caledonian Association rules. The rules reflected the ethnic pride in Scottish cultural identity thus superseding any national jingoism and minimized nationalist bravado.¹³ There were also mid-summer celebrations of Canada's Dominion Day (1st of July) and the American 4th of July. These, generally limited to

11 The *Yukon World*, July 8, 1905 provides a July 4th oration typical of the time: “We who are called Klondikers are here today in obedience to that imperial spirit of conquest and love of adventure which animates [...] Anglo-Saxons, to wrest from unwilling and inhospitable nature the riches and resources she commands.”

12 The Riel Resistance was a brief and unsuccessful uprising by Indigenous peoples in the western prairies against the government of Canada in 1885.

13 Redmond notes that because of the internationalist character of these rules they are recognized as instrumental in creating track-and-field athletics in North America (188).

sports and speeches, similarly emphasized the unity of the Newcomer community and the expansion of the Anglo-Saxon race.

These public celebrations minimized national distinctions in a very diverse community.¹⁴ Seeking unity through a racial Anglo-Saxonism, represented by the democratic governance institutions of Britain and the United States, the community established clear boundaries of belonging in their remote northern setting. They celebrated the establishment of a modern city and the possibilities of individual success through placer gold mining. Settlement of the Klondike region by individual miners on their own claims was understood to be the same as settlement of the Western plains, where individual families staked their future on pieces of land. These active settlements in the "New World" were moving the centre of the Anglo-Saxon empire across the Atlantic from Britain to North America.

The notion of Anglo-Saxon racial identity grew out of the popularization of the late nineteenth-century ideas of evolutionary science. Clearly Great Britain and the United States, with their democratic institutions, well-educated populations and colonial possessions, were the future.¹⁵ It was understood that "less advanced" races were clearly incapable of effective self-government and needed to be ruled. This prevailing racial attitude, while not necessarily promoting direct violence against others, provided a "scientific" explanation of why the neighbouring Indigenous "races", like the Hän, would gradually disappear. They were simply unfit; contact with a more civilized race invariably meant the less civilized "melted away."¹⁶ Chief Isaac's presence in the 1902 Empire Day celebrations was doubtless due to his desire to forward the interests and future of his people. Whatever his intent, the editor of the *Yukon Sun* framed his speech within the dying race paradigm.

Chief Isaac's Pathetic Oration

The last feature of the gathering was a pathetic address by Chief Isaac. He referred to the days long past when the Indians were here in as a great numbers as the whites are at present. At that time the Indians were all rich, had plenty of meat and fish and otherwise were in the most prosperous position [...]. The white men then arrived and the Indians were driven east, west, north and south, lands were taken away from them, the whites had taken possession of their country, taken their gold, their game was destroyed and driven away, and nothing but a remnant

14 Over forty different countries of birth were noted in the 1901 Census for Dawson (Porsild, 203).

15 "Canada's great West has the climatic conditions, the resources and the laws to breed, maintain and wisely govern the most virile community of Anglo-Saxons in the world. Its vastness and its unlimited capacity make it today one of the best guarantees of the indefinite supremacy of the race. [...] it would seem that Anglo-Saxonism united in sympathies and ideals will largely control the progress and evolution of humanity for many generations" (YW 04 July 1906).

16 On the Russian colonization of the Aleuts Julia McNair Wright notes: "This intermingling of races had its usual effect, and the less civilized melted away" (Wright, 55).

is left, and they are reduced to poverty and are without means of sustenance. (YS, 25 May 1902)¹⁷

Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century there were major changes in the character of the Klondike mining industry. Individual claims operating on a small scale were replaced by outside corporations grouping whole creeks into extensive holdings to be more efficiently mined out with large dredges. The resulting disruption of the individualistic mining system resulted in a significant population drop and a much-reduced government presence. The withdrawal of this leadership left the community rudderless for several years. In consequence, there was a near cessation of formally organized public celebrations. Dawson old timers, those non-Indigenous prospectors and traders in the Yukon before the gold rush, stepped forward to reinvigorate the social life of their town. In concert with the town's business men, the Yukon Order of Pioneers (YOOP)¹⁸ undertook the establishment of a new celebration, one more closely associated with the geographical and historical roots of the Klondike.

The new celebration organized by this group of Locals emphasized the experience of finding gold and celebrated the earlier individualism of the prospectors and hand miners. As pioneers they were self-reliant and helped each other out. And they were successful – gold was found in astonishing quantities. The YOOP members met informally in late summer each year to clean up their Pioneer cemetery and enjoy an evening of stories in a quiet celebration of the original discovery of gold on August 17, 1896. The first Discovery Day holiday was organized in 1911. The new holiday was a practical adaptation, and visceral response to, the seasonally altered work schedule of the summer industrial mining methods and the related transformation of the pioneer into an industrial proletariat. The celebration offered a deeper local grounding of their experience of the Klondike. The *Dawson Daily News* opined:

The Discovery Day celebration [...] stimulates a love of the Yukon and pride over the success[ful] ... development of the Northland. ... Yukon has been their home. They have been afforded a pleasant home. The country has been good to them ... Little wonder is it then ... that the Klondiker has seen fit to ... celebrate the day which marks the discovery that ... made this a place of permanent occupancy, a land of homes and profitable pursuits. (*DDN*, 18 Aug. 1911)

17 Jack London's *The League of the Old Men* (1902) offers a more developed version of this narrative of racial superiority from the assumed voice of a Yukon River First Nation old man. Thanks to Peter Lourie for this reference.

18 Mutual aid society, established at Forty Mile, Yukon, 1894. Membership was originally limited to those in the Yukon watershed before the gold rush. The society was subsequently dedicated to the development and settlement of the Yukon (Neufeld 2004, 680).



Discovery Day Parade ca. 1919 (*DCM 1997.213.1.124*).

The central feature of the celebration remained a parade. In contrast to the Empire Day parade's promotion of an Imperial presence and an international destiny for Anglo-Saxons, the Discovery Day parade is a local history pageant celebrating pioneer settlement on the frontier. Nevertheless, the new parade retained a connection to the earlier Anglo-Saxon governance narrative. In its early days, the Discovery Day parade was led by two YOOPs with large Union Jacks (*DDN*, 19 Aug. 1912). They were followed by a group of Mounted Police and the musical strains of the Dawson Brass Band. The main body of the parade was a collection of floats, representing the businesses and industries of the region. In 1912, these included the mining industry, the Northern Commercial Company, the Cascade Laundry and the delivery wagon of the O'Brien Brewing and Malting Co. Other floats showed off a full-size replica of the first log cabin in Dawson, a sourdough boat and even Olaf Olsen's "great wooden cart, the first wheeled vehicle made and used in Dawson." Chasing behind the floats were the children of the Klondike, "between 100 and 200 strong, many of them born in Dawson or on the gold creeks, all radiant in their glowing health." After them came the Eagles and "the hardy men who opened the Yukon to the world", the almost 500 members of the YOOP. The parade ended with the Dawson fire department rigs.

A grand parade, variations of it have wound through the streets of Dawson annually since then. A First Nation float has periodically appeared in the parade since the early 1970s.¹⁹ The parade remains an important element in the community's shared

¹⁹ Joe Henry and a group of Indigenous youth dressed in traditional clothing on a float entitled *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* were in the parade in the early 1970s. *Dawson City Museum* photo 1995.155.8.

history. First, the YOOP enter the “wilderness” – the chaotic and wild space and time before the discovery of gold. Their position at the head of the parade, at the point of creation in the Yukon, reinforces their place at the apex of the community’s social hierarchy. They are supported by the Mounties on horseback, the paramilitary representatives of the Canadian government who first arrived in the Yukon in 1894. As the guardians of law and order, the Mounted Police lay a foundation of order for future development. The Stampede itself is represented by the big brass band which in its turn announces the tidal wave of civilization, and connection to the Outside and the innovations of history – log cabins and the wheel. These however, are merely the prelude for the arrival of the real benefits of modern life – economic development. The floats of the mining industry and the various related businesses are ordered by their time of arrival in Dawson, their contribution to the structure of a modern colonial community in the “wilderness”. And with this structure, there is a possibility for a future – the children. Finally, after the remaining stalwarts of the fraternal order of the Eagles and YOOP have been acknowledged, there is the highest order of Anglo-Saxon civilization – the local organization of self-government for the common good, the fire trucks.

Although Anglo-Saxon identity was backgrounded to the story of the pioneer and the creation of a new home place, the “whiteness” of the achievement remained. William Ogilvie, the Yukon Commissioner during the gold rush, identified Skookum Jim Mason (Keish) in his Tagish First Nation identity, as the discoverer of gold (Ogilvie, 125-130). However a pioneer narrative of making home needed white men as founders. Thus discovery, and the establishment of the community, was jointly attributed by Dawson Locals to George Carmacks, an American, and Robert Henderson, a Canadian. This convenient pairing was supported by one of the earliest national historic designations by the Canadian government in May 1926.²⁰ The plaque, posted on the portal of the Mining Recorders Office in Dawson, stated:

YUKON GOLD DISCOVERY

To the memory of the indomitable prospectors and miners, who braving extreme dangers and untold hardships, crossed over the Chilkat and Chilkoot passes into the unexplored valley of the Yukon, and thus paved the way for the discovery in 1896 of the rich gold fields with which the names Robert Henderson and George W. Carmack are inseparably connected.

With the representation of an established social hierarchy and the various elements of the civilization they have built, the parade, in reality a moving pageant, is a

20 F.W. Howay of the Historic Sites Board re-inforced the intent of the commemoration in a Feb. 21, 1930 letter to J.B. Harkin, the Canadian Parks Commissioner: “We are purposely avoiding the Klondike rush of '98 and doing homage to those who pioneered the way” (National Archives Canada, RG 84, Vol. 1398 f. HS-10-46 pt. 1).

microcosm of the imagined history of the Yukon. The annual parade celebrates the birth of the Territory, the start of history in the North and the progress of its self-governing citizens in a new land. It describes and reinforces the set of values forwarded by the Newcomer community. Until well into the twentieth century it also left out any reference to First Nation peoples, though Chief Isaac, and later his descendants, continued to make regular appearances at Discovery Day celebrations.²¹



Chief Isaac, his wife Eliza and daughter Angela at Discovery Day celebrations in 1923 (DCM 1990.77.15).

Modernisation and the State

Both the Hän in Moosehide and the Locals in Dawson settled into a quiet co-existence. As these communities lived distinctly different lives, relations between them were limited, but generally congenial. Hän leaders continued to remind Locals of their presence and their determination to persist. Despite the cultural differences there was a gradual adaptation by both Locals to their adopted environment and Hän to the new economy through this period. Locals became more adept at making use of the land. Learning from the subsistence practices of their First Nation neigh-

²¹ Local esteem for Chief Isaac is also evidenced by the granting of an honorary membership in the YOOP to him (Dobrowolsky, 80). Keish's role in the discovery was not officially recognized until 1972.

bours they supplemented the expensive, and tasteless, canned goods imported from outside with berry picking, fishing and hunting. There was also a growing recognition of the First Nation way of life and the challenges that their own presence created. Locals began to question the wisdom of the changes their society was imposing upon their First Nation neighbours. Perhaps their way of living was not for everyone. In 1938 the *Dawson Daily News* editorialized on the future of the "native": "The grasping white man rushed in, a Bible in one hand and a bottle of liquor in the other, to wish upon the native every balmy idea to disrupt his normal mode of living. We have done everything to the Arctic native except to leave him alone to live as he chooses" (*DDN*, 14 Jan. 1938). This new concern for the freedom from interference was perhaps a distinction between the experienced Locals and the previous more aggressive Newcomer society.

The Hän continued their traditional hunting and fishing rounds out of their village at Moosehide. However, through the period they also adopted new practices. The Anglican Church was allowed to run a day school and several respected Elders became Special Constables for the Mounted Police in the village. Young men began to reach into the cash economy through wood cutting, seasonal work on the river boats and supplied wild meat and fish to the Dawson shops. Women continued the contract sewing and beading work that had started well before the gold rush. Life was not easy but there was a general recognition of the different ways that people could and did live in the Yukon. This slow acknowledgement and exploration of each other's life ways was soon to end. The Second World War and the rise of the national social state in the 1940s and 50s would dramatically alter the lives of all Yukoners.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and the demands of global conflict surrounding the Second World War radically altered the form of Canadian governance. The national government's organization of resources to fight the war and subsequently enhance the quality of life for citizens made social security a pillar of the Canadian state. This signal achievement, still a cherished vision of what Canada is, included the provision of universal health care, old age pensions, family allowances and numerous other social benefits. In addition, it included a drive to massively expand the economy through industrial and natural resource development. This modern structure was carefully designed to meet the needs of Canada's increasingly urban and secular Caucasian society. These changes redefined the normal way of living, changes not quite so amenable to Indigenous peoples like the Hän.

The expansion of the modern social state was built upon the idea of individual citizens and their rights and responsibilities to the state (Erickson, 109-114). Canadian citizens needed to fit within the parameters of this civic service in order to be recognised by the state. First Nation peoples, classed as wards of the state under the *Indian Act*, needed to be transformed in order to become citizens. State attempts to modernize the Hän resulted in a disastrous and painful set of enforced separations; between generations, from the land and even from their history:



“Here this big red truck came along with kids behind. Holy man they load a whole bunch... of kids on it, just like cattle [...] There is nothing to sit on... You got to sit on your bag... All those years they tried so hard to make us into white people, but the only time they succeeded was when we arrived at that school after 500 miles in the back of that truck... all covered in white dirt” (Yukon Archives, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, 86/61, #477 and Clarke, 61).

We were young children when we were pulled from our homes, our land and our loved ones. We were away at school for a long time; our parents became strangers to us over the years. At school we could not talk to each other in our own language, or laugh, or smile, or cry – we were silenced and were abused in many ways. We became ashamed of being ‘Indian.’ (Bullen (Blanchard), viii)

The Canadian government, in cooperation with the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, instituted Indian Residential Schools in 1883 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 5) with the intention of “civilizing” the children of Indigenous peoples. The government deemed it essential to separate the children from their families to ensure success. While a Yukon Indian residential school was established early in the twentieth century, few Hän children were sent there for any length of time in the first half of the twentieth century. However, in the 1950s the Anglican day school at Moosehide was closed and many Hän children were “scooped” and sent to distant

residential schools. The resulting social devastation undermined Hän culture, effectively separated children from their families and both from any place in the future.

The construction of the Alaska Highway and expanded air connections to the south dramatically ended the isolation of the Yukon from metropolitan Canada. In the 1950s and 60s many new mines and more towns were built. Government support included an expanded road network to support exploration and development and a vastly increased northern bureaucracy to survey, assess, manage and allocate lands and resources to maximize economic growth. Recreational hunting and fishing and commercial outfitting were privileged in new game regulations and First Nation subsistence activities were increasingly regarded as wasteful of meat. Percy Henry, a young Hän man during this time, noted the changes in his ability to make a living. The informal cash economy opportunities his father's generation had enjoyed in the 1920s and 30s were gone. It was no longer possible to just go off into the woods and cut fire wood to make a few dollars: "Regulation, regulation, regulation, halfway up to heaven. Every piece of land has a number on it" (Personal communication with Henry). Thus disconnected from the land, the Hän, unable to pursue their traditional land use practices, were separated from, and made to disappear in, the present.

Finally, the imposition of Canada's grand narrative, the historiographic Laurentian thesis and its physical manifestation, the Klondike Gold Rush commemorations of the 1950s and 60s, also deeply affected the Hän. The national grand narrative describing the creation of a modern industrial nation state is granted universal status. By its monopoly on agency, this narrative absorbs alternative accounts and justifies existing political structures and cultural mores (Macey, 25). The national historic sites in the Klondike region emphasize the technological evolution of mining method, the establishment and growth of government administration and, in the magnificent restoration of selected elements of the past, the propagation of the government's grand narrative. The absence of First Nation people is almost total, the only recognition comes to Keish (Skookum Jim), who, in the grand narrative, acted most like a white man by discovering the gold that started the rush (Cruikshank 1991, 134 and 1998, 155). The Hän, not a significant contributor to this grand narrative, were thus rendered invisible in the past. The early expectation of the Anglo-Saxon racialists was now fulfilled, the "Indians" had completely "melted away."

First Nation Revanche



Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Elder Percy Henry, with his beaded tie showing Chief Isaac welcoming and guiding the missionary, and with a wink, "you government fellows" into his traditional lands. (Neufeld, 2003, Dawson A4 Natl Abo Day meeting people 004a mod.).

Edward Said identifies this denial of history as a tool of imperialist power, seeking control over and creating an understanding of a foreign region. The creation of a past gives control over the present (Said, 66, 108-109). Thus, by denying northern Indigenous peoples their past, present and future, the national administration helped create and maintain the Metropolitan vision of an empty land (before their own settlement), one noting the Indigenous presence only as a contrast to the strengths of the immigrant population. Through its programs and policies the state regularized this absence of Indigenous people as the norm.

But the Hän had not disappeared. Organized as the Dawson Indian Band by the Department of Indian Affairs, they continued to live in the Klondike. And they continued the struggle to make themselves known and to regain their status as a people with agency. Having suffered a social and cultural reversal, as a result of settler "modernity", the Hän and the other Yukon Indian Bands drew on their skills and

knowledge to formulate a response. They also investigated the tools of the state attempting to crush them. Working together in the 1960s and 70s Yukon First Nations applied their traditional knowledge and diplomatic skills and also incorporated Western law and the concepts of Western justice as tools in a campaign of Revanche.²² Their effective combination of these discourses resulted in a successful campaign to bring the Government of Canada to the negotiating table.

Yukon First Nations were willing to enter Canada but they wished to do it on their terms. Tolerance of their difference was not enough; Yukon First Nations wanted a new narrative of inclusion that acknowledged their power, knowledge, interests and agency. In 1972 the Yukon Native Brotherhood²³ prepared a statement of its position entitled *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow: A Statement of Grievances and an Approach to the Settlement by the Yukon Indian People* (Yukon Native Brotherhood). On 14 February 1973, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau met with Yukon Native Brotherhood representatives and accepted their submission as the basis for negotiations of a settlement. *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* laid out a plan for a settlement to recognize Yukon First Nations as equal partners in the development of the territory's future.

Even as negotiations began, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued to challenge the existing limitations of government regulations and worked to address the separations rendering them invisible. James Tully refers to such a dual strategy as the fight for freedom – making changes to be free, and the fight of freedom – acting as though there are no constraints (Tully 2000, 36-59). One of the most high profile actions of the fight for freedom was the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in recovery of Tr'ochëk, their traditional salmon fish camp at the Klondike River confluence with the Yukon River. The Hän had reluctantly left the site at the height of the gold rush in 1897. With the start of treaty negotiations in the 1970s the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in asked that the mining claims on the site (a form of Crown land lease) be cancelled, and the land set aside as part of their future agreement land selection. The federal government mining office refused this request. The First Nation consequently launched a law suit challenging Canada's right to alienate land, i.e. to issue mining claims, on lands unsurrendered by Indigenous peoples. For Canada this was a serious challenge. Most of the Canadian north and almost the entire province of British Columbia was unsurrendered land; that is, there were no treaties with the Indigenous peoples regularizing the state's power over and responsibility for land stewardship. The case had the potential to lead to the cancellation of all mining claims in these areas, seriously undermining the security of the Canadian mining industry.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were not interested in shutting down the northern mining industry. They were concerned only with two mining claims. One was the claim at

22 Schivelbusch notes that in history victory is temporary and defeat "appears to be an inexhaustible wellspring of intellectual progress" (4). The defeated adopt a selection of the victor's tools, re-purposing them for their culturally-centred use.

23 McClellan summarizes the history of Yukon Indigenous organizations in the Yukon (99-104).

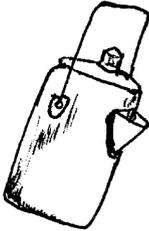
Tr'ochëk. They wanted their fish camp back. The other was a claim on nearby Bonanza Creek, the original discovery claim. Discovery Claim was the revelation that sparked the gold rush. The gold discovery there continues to be celebrated as the non-Indigenous Yukon's founding moment and the claim is where Canada commemorates its grand narrative of nation building. For the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, "discovery" means "the day [our] way of life began to disappear" (Yukon Native Brotherhood, 17). They wanted their way of life back. The nullification of Discovery Claim would make the story of the Newcomers, both those now "Locals" for a century, and the more recent Canadian northern story, illegitimate. Thus the northern gold rush epic and Canada's nation building narrative would be rendered invisible. Debbie Nagano, a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in member of the Tr'ochëk management planning team, on her first visit to the site after the subsequent successful out-of-court settlement, said "Now we can take all this white man's junk and throw it in the river." (Personal communication with Nagano) Ultimately both the Hän and the "white man's" heritage were recognized by the First Nation. The site was also recognized by Canada as a national historic site. Tr'ochëk, as both a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in heritage site and as a national historic site of Canada, commemorates the traditional life ways of the Hän on the Yukon River, the First Nation's successful challenge to Canada's assumptions of sovereignty, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in inclusion in Canada on their own terms (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 20-21).

This community revival by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in included their children. In the mid-1980s a group of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in mothers urged their brothers (uncles are the traditional teachers) to take their children hunting. This activity was formalized by the community in the early 1990s and "First Hunt" is now an annual fall trip into the Tombstone Mountains where Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Local youth meet the migrating caribou. Hunter safety, firearms practice and environmental awareness exercises combine traditional and school lessons in this three-day event. The hunted animals are skinned, gutted and hung. A few weeks later the meat is prepared for a community feast where the new hunters, both First Nation and Local, share their luck and give thanks to the animals for giving themselves once again to the people. Subsequently First Fish, meeting the salmon in their mid-summer spawning run; Beaver Camp, early spring hunting and skinning of beaver; and Moose Camp, fall tanning of moose hide for clothing and gear, amongst other seasonal land activities, have been introduced as a contemporary adaptation of the traditional annual round. Youth from both cultures learn together how to live on the land. All of these activities are supported by Elders who share stories and advice, the staff of both the First Nation's government departments and Robert Service School help out and the Dawson unit of the Canadian Rangers²⁴ does the organizing and heavy lifting for

24 The Canadian Rangers are community-based military units of the Canadian Armed Forces Reserve. Their detachments are located in sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada. Dawson City's Ranger patrol was the first, established in 1942 (Lackenbauer, 83).

the hunting camp. It is an extraordinary performance of cross-cultural sharing, instilling First Nation values and helping to build the kind of plural society that *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* describes.

The Canada and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments signed their self-government agreement in summer 1998 at a Moosehide village potlatch ceremony. Like Chief Isaac's efforts in the early twentieth century, this potlatch explicitly forwarded a Hän narrative of First Nation sovereignty and gifted all of the attendees to cement their acknowledgement and recognition of the claims of the First Nation. In our family's annual Christmas letter I described my experience there:



Hanging on the wall of my office is a camp coffee pot. Suspended by the blue ribbon that wrapped it, the pot is a symbol of obligation, of connection. I received it from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in this summer. The First Nation was celebrating their treaty with Canada and with all Newcomers, like us, who live in the Yukon. A big three-day potlatch was held at Moosehide village. Hundreds of visitors validated this event by witnessing the signing. We were rewarded with gifts. In this way we accepted an obligation to remember this important event and make it part of our history. And through this shared history we, both First Nations and Newcomers, are connected to each other. This is a reason to celebrate.

Conclusion

Most Yukon First Nations have now signed self-government agreements with Canada. These agreements identify the Canadian and Yukon governments as stewards of Yukon lands and resources. The agreements also establish a set of advisory bodies, with both First Nation and Local representatives to consider fish and wildlife, heritage, land use planning and other shared interests. These advisory bodies are to guide the government in the development and application of law and regulation. They are charged with minimizing conflicts and ensuring meaningful and respectful consultation with the Yukon people in the preparation of their advice.²⁵

At this time the Government of the Yukon, Yukon First Nations, and a number of community groups are seeking clarification from the Supreme Court of Canada on the powers of these advisory bodies.²⁶ They wish to identify the balance between

25 Relevant chapters of the agreement include the creation of these boards and describe their responsibilities. (Canada, 1993)

26 Two recent cases shape this interpretation, a court case on the free staking regime for mine prospecting ("The Bell Tolls for Free Entry in Canada") and the land use planning for the Peel region of the northeastern Yukon "The Future of the Peel", *YCS Newsletter – Walking Softly Winter*, 2012.

stated political positions and objectives supported by the election process, the British democratic institutions that inspired the Anglo-Saxon identity, and the necessity of accepting the advice of the Umbrella Final Agreement bodies and their public consultation processes that draw on public thought on specific aspects of future planning, the institution of First Nation consensus building. The relationship performances between the two cultures, the subject of cultural cartography, seeks to ensure the recognition of and respect for the decision-making mechanisms of both cultures. The present legal challenges indicate the uncertainty amongst Yukoners about how this recognition and respect for both democratic leadership and community consensus can be implemented. Both cultures have equal roles in the determination of who owns this place, its past, its present and its future. Governance needs to respond sensitively and appropriately to the cultural pluralism expressed in both *Together Today for our Children Tomorrow* and the self-government agreements if the ideals of these cultures are to be fulfilled.

On a positive note, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in accepted the responsibility to lead the community consultation for the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site nomination. The First Nation has undertaken extensive community consultations in preparing an inclusive, culturally pluralistic story of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike. The nomination, focused on the First Nation's subsistence salmon fishery and the Newcomer's globalized placer gold mining, promises to equitably tell the story of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike. This process is just one element of the ongoing conversation that started well over a century ago and continues in the present. The distinctive First Nation cultural knowledge of northwestern Canada has retained its character and content. Yukon First Nations continue to forward their interests through interventions – humorous, forceful, oral, literary, legal, and diplomatic – using both their own knowledge and by selectively, and carefully (Willow, 882-883), referencing the morality of the Western cultural narrative and drawing upon its tools to re-enforce their position. There is some progress in the practical acknowledgement of cultural pluralism. In the community of Dawson, Locals and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in work together on building their regional future. Canada's 1993 Agreement with Yukon First Nations describes a pluralistic approach to decision-making. Conversations about decision-making take place between cultural narratives. There remain serious difficulties in understanding the implications of the Agreement but there are mechanisms that prevent either side from abandoning the conversation. Yukon First Nations and non-Indigenous Yukoners have to work their way through the difficulties. The contemporary "Mapping the Way" publicity campaign²⁷, about the implementation of the Yukon First Nations' agreements, suggests Yukoners are accepting a broader and

27 The "Mapping the Way" campaign website provides details on present initiatives while the video *Mapping the Way: Yukon First Nation Self-Government* (2013) includes many of the people who have helped educate the author.

more inclusive set of cultural narratives and recognizing Indigenous knowledges to guide them into the future.

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