

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Great Upheaval: Mining, Colonialism, and Environmental
Change in the Klondike, 1890-1940

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

History

Department of History and Classics

University of Alberta

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Abstract

This study examines the colonial history of gold mining in the Klondike region of the central Yukon from 1890 to 1940. The Klondike Gold Rush (1897-1900) marked the beginning of major transition in the lives of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in that lasted well into the 20th century. Mining worked to reorganize and disassemble the local Klondike environment through both placer mining and industrial dredge mining. Along with direct environmental impacts, gold mining had indirect impacts on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people such creating competition for resources and conflicts over access to resources, and the emergence of a new industrial economy to the Yukon.

Throughout this period the state imposed southern colonial bureaucracies and administration in the Yukon that favoured colonial ideologies and practises of land use over local Indigenous practises that led to the displacement and relocation of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples from previously used areas. State imposition often clashed with colonial authority on the ground, creating a complicated history of colonization of environment and humans in the Yukon. This study also examines the various ways in which Indigenous Yukoners shaped the structure of colonialism in the Yukon through a variety of responses.

This dissertation argues that the Klondike Gold Rush began a pattern of long-term systemic alienation of Yukon First Nations from traditionally used resources and areas; in part this resulted from the physical impacts that mining had on the environment of the central Yukon, but Indigenous displacement also resulted from the role of colonial bureaucracies and state extension into the Klondike. The colonial structure of the Yukon was complicated and contested, creating conflicts between colonizers over how best to administer to the realities of the Yukon; it was also shaped by the responses and

contributions of Indigenous Yukoners who frequently challenged their loss of access to resources and the outside imposed changes mining brought to their lives.

Preface
(Mandatory due to research ethics approval)

This thesis is an original work by Heather Green. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Historical Investigations into Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Experiences During and After the Klondike Gold Rush, 1890-1950”, No. Pro00049921, 2015 (renewals in 2016, 2017). This research has also received Yukon Scientists and Explorers Research License (No. 6800-20-984) approval and has been carried out according to an agreement with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in Heritage Department’s Protocol for Conducting Traditional Knowledge Research and/or Accessing Traditional Knowledge, 2014.

Acknowledgements

This research has been supported by a number of individuals and organizations without whom it would not have been possible. Firstly, I wish to thank my supervisor Liza Piper for her mentorship throughout the time of my doctoral degree. Her constant support and cheerful attitude has been crucial in fostering a positive research environment and her ability to balance providing detailed feedback and allowing me to figure things out on my own has been a beneficial aspect of my development as a researcher. I also want to thank Sarah Carter for her guidance, support, and feedback that has helped me think more critically about my writing, and David Mills for his support, especially his encouragement and confidence in me in developing my teaching methods and pedagogies.

Thank you to Paul Nadasdy and Shannon Stunden Bower for serving on my examining committee, to James Muir and Mark Nuttall for providing helpful feedback at the important early stages of thinking through this project, and to Andy Parnaby and Matthew Papai for reading and providing feedback on an early version of one of my chapters. I am also grateful to the members of our Northern Reading Group - Crystal Fraser, Sara Komarnisky, and Hereward Longley - who offered insightful points of discussion that helped me better articulate the points I wanted to express in this dissertation.

The time it takes to complete a dissertation is not an insignificant commitment and I have been lucky to meet some fantastic friends who became family along the way. There are too many to list here, but some individuals who have gone above and beyond in their support and encouragement over the years include Gino Canlas, Heather Kerr, and Andreea Resmerita who have provided laughter, discussion, and rides to the airport more

times than I can count. I also wish to extend a warm thank you to those friends in the Yukon who have provided hospitality, great conversation, and a warm bed over the years, specifically Colleen Dirmeitis, David Neufeld and Joy Waters, and to my family back in Cape Breton who have helped provide needed breaks from Edmonton winters.

My many research trips would not have been possible without the financial support from Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Northern Scientific Training Program, UAlberta North, and the Department of History and Classics. I am also grateful for the research assistant and teaching opportunities that I have had along the way from the University of Alberta.

I want to extend warm gratitude to the entire staff at the Heritage Department for accommodating my presence sitting in the office and putting up with the sounds of me rifling through files and continuous camera clicks as I photographed (and re-photographed) material. Staff at the Yukon Archives, especially Donna Darbyshire and Chelsea Jeffery, over the past several years have fostered a creative and supportive research environment. Jody Beaumont and Sue Parsons at the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department have been invaluable in their knowledge, time, and support throughout my research. I also wish to thank Parks Canada for allowing me access to the Bear Creek Complex.

Finally, I am thankful to those in Dawson City and at Moosehide who have taken the time to talk with me, whether a quick exchange or a formal interview – especially Peggy Kormandy, Angie Joseph-Rear, and the late Julia Morberg – over the course of this project. Their willingness to share knowledge, memories, and stories with me has been a foundational aspect of my learning experience in the Yukon which I hope to continue for many years. Mahsi Cho.

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List of Acronyms

ACC	Alaska Commercial Company
AK	Alaska
AYPA	Anglican Young People's Association
B.C.	British Columbia
BYNC	British-Yukon Navigation Company
CKMC	Canadian Klondike Mining Company
CMS	Church Missionary Society
DIA	Department of Indian Affairs
HB.C.	Hudson's Bay Company
KMR	Klondike Mines Railway
NWMP	North West Mounted Police
NWT	Northwest Territories
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RNWMP	Royal North West Mounted Police
YCGC	Yukon Consolidated Gold Company
YGC	Yukon Gold Corporation
YT	Yukon Territory
YTG	Yukon Territorial Government

Chapter 1: Introduction: Mining, Environment, and Colonialism in the Klondike

Mining has been the largest industry in Canada's North since the turn of the 20th century.¹ New mining projects are discussed and developed continually in the North providing employment opportunities for people both within and outside the region.² The mining industry has become an important focus for Northerners, with programs in northern based institutions like Yukon College offering employment, research, and training opportunities for northerners that best suit the realities of mining in the North.³ In the Yukon specifically, mining is a foundational aspect of regional identity and cultural heritage. However, both past and present mining operations in the North have significant long-term impacts on the local environment and these impacts are a visible reminder of the transformative nature of mining. In the Klondike, the most striking legacy of mining is the manufactured landscape of tailings piles and dredge ponds that scatter the region.

While this visual legacy of gold mining in the Klondike makes clear some of the environmental impacts of mining, these tailings piles and ridges do not reveal the impacts that mine development had on local Indigenous populations. This dissertation analyzes the environmental and socioeconomic impacts that gold mining had on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

¹ While I acknowledge the provincial norths as a part of northern Canada, throughout this study my description of the North is focused on the territorial North – the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. There has been excellent historical work on the provincial norths that have contributed to my understanding of resource development in the Yukon, but the ways in which industrial development in the provincial norths and the territorial North have occurred have some significant differences. Most notably, the pattern of state involvement in each region has been much different.

² Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples have expressed concerns and encountered conflict with Canadian mining company Goldcorp arguing that the company has ignored Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in concerns and failed to properly consult with them regarding the new Coffee Mine project. In Nunavut some developing mines include the Mary River mine and Hope Bay mine. The Clinton Creek asbestos mine in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory was abandoned in 1978. Some other examples of abandoned mines in First Nations traditional territory includes the Faro zinc mine and the Mount Nansen gold and silver mine in the central Yukon, and the Ketza gold and silver mine in the southeastern Yukon.

³ Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining program focuses on labour, technology, and environmental precautions and monitoring specifically designed toward mining in the North.

population, the local Indigenous population in Dawson City, between 1890 and 1940. Such a study is crucial to understanding the historical roots of contemporary mine struggles in Northern Canada. The Klondike Gold Rush was the first large-scale colonial mining project in the North, overshadowing previous mining activity, and setting a framework for future mining developments in the Yukon and across the North into the late 20th century.

Mining conflicts are not relegated to the past and continue today in the Klondike region. In September of 2016 two Dawson area miners holding subsurface rights to the land under the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in subdivision ordered the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to move from the subdivision into Dawson City so they could mine the area. The men applied to the Yukon Surface Rights Board to evict the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from this land, but the subdivision is located on settlement land under the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement finalized in 1998 and the Yukon Surface Rights Board rejected the miners' application.⁴ There is also a current open-pit mining operation in the development stage 130 kilometers south of Dawson. Goldcorp Inc., a Vancouver-based mining company and one of the world's largest gold producers, is developing the Coffee Mine with expected operation in 2021. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, along with other First Nations groups such as the Selkirk First Nation, the Na Cho Nyak Dun, and the White River First Nations, argued that the company has ignored their concerns and failed to sufficiently consult with them regarding the new mine project.⁵ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are not opposed to the mine, but they want

⁴ This specific dispute was nearly 15 years old. In 2002 one of the men demanded \$80,000 in compensation (\$10,000 per each of his claims) from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in for his claims. The Hwëch'in offered \$10,000 total. Ashley Joannou, "Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in chief vows to fight placer claims on settlement land," *Yukon News* (September 9, 2016).

⁵ Though Goldcorp submitted an Environmental Socioeconomic Assessment application in early 2017, the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board discontinued reviewing the application in July, stating that Goldcorp needed to consult with local First Nations before resubmitting. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in argued that Goldcorp did not respond to more than 130 questions submitted by the First Nation and other

to ensure it is carried out with consultation and reducing environmental impacts on the land and water. Their biggest concerns focus on mining waste, water use, and impacts open-pit mining may have on local caribou, moose, and fish habitat. As of February 2018, the Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Board rejected Goldcorp's second application and ordered more environmental planning before further resubmission.⁶

Because mining development and conflict continue into the present, knowing the history of mining in the Yukon is critical in understanding and evaluating the costs and benefits of present day developments. Beyond its importance to mining in the North, the history of gold mining in the Yukon is relevant more broadly to studies of Indigenous history and colonialism. During the frenzy of the Gold Rush and in the decades following, Indigenous peoples across the Yukon, and specifically the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, bore the brunt of mine developments. Aside from direct environmental impacts, miners and mining also brought land use ideologies and southern institutions which combined to create a structure of governance and control over the local land and imposed a dominant white, southern society on local Indigenous peoples. Studying this process in the Yukon offers perspectives on how the colonization process was similar to processes elsewhere in Canada, and also how it was different. Throughout 1896 to 1940, colonial power in the Klondike region was challenged by local government officials who tended to adjust policies from above to better suit the lived realities on the ground. More importantly, Indigenous Yukoners challenged colonial authority as well. This dissertation connects more broadly to examinations of how Indigenous populations responded to and shaped

questions were not answered adequately. Lori Garrison, "YESAB says Goldcorp failed to consult First Nations, halts Coffee mine assessment," *Yukon News* (July 14 2017).

⁶ The Board rejected Goldcorp's first application due to lack of consultation. Ashley Joannou, "Goldcorp's Coffee proposal deemed 'inadequate'," *CB.C. News* (February 8, 2018).

colonial society. In the Yukon, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Yukon Indigenous groups implemented a variety of responses to colonialism, but much of their concern was rooted in the ways that colonization altered their relationships with the environment and led to a loss of access to vital resources.

This intersection of Indigenous histories and environmental histories of resource development and extraction is a growing sub-field in environmental history. Over the past fifteen years there has been an increased interest in the historical study of mining among environmental historians and historical geographers. This emerging field of mining environmental history has demonstrated the connections between science, technology, and extractive industries, ecological consequences of mining, human health, perceptions of the environment that shape human relationships with minerals and mines, the influence that mineral dependence has had on political and economic structures, and the deep cultural connections that human societies often feel in locations with mining heritage. In *The Nature of Gold* Kathryn Morse examined the environmental impacts of the Klondike Gold Rush between 1896 and 1900, specifically through analyzing attitudes miners and other outsiders held about the relationship between nature and culture, and how shifts in production and consumption reveal human relations with nature.⁷ Another study based in the Canadian North that includes an analysis of miners' relationship with the natural world is Liza Piper's *Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*. Studying the large lakes region from 1920 to 1960, Piper argued that miners formed intimate relationships with, and deep understandings of, nature through their work disassembling the local environment and their dependence on the natural world. Tim LeCain's *Mass Destruction and Mining North*

⁷ I use the term "outsiders" to refer to the population of people born outside of the Yukon who arrived for any purpose between 1880 and 1940.

America, a collection edited by J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis, includes studies from 1500 to the present that focus on the environmental impacts that mining has had in different parts of North America for over 500 years.⁸ The studies in John Sandlos and Arn Keeling's edited collection *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada* specifically analyze the history of mining in Northern Canada, most of which concentrate not only on the environmental impacts of mining but on its colonial nature as well.⁹ What the studies in this collection make clear is that mineral extraction transformed nature, and this environmental change resulted in colonial groups gaining power while locals most often lost power and control over many aspects of their own lives.

To this point, historians of the Klondike Gold Rush have largely overlooked the Indigenous experience. Instead, historians have given their attention to the outside population and its experience.¹⁰ While these works are diverse in their various analyses, including social histories of the Rush, imperial histories, economic and transportation histories, even gender histories, the absence of Indigenous peoples is a remarkable gap.

⁸ Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003); Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2009); Timothy LeCain, *Mass Destruction: the Men and Giant Mines that Wired America and Scarred the Planet* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009); JR McNeill and George Vrtis, *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017). Some other recent publications in environmental history of mining include Karlhein Spitz and John Trudinger, *Mining and the Environment: From Ore to Metal* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2009) and Brian Leech, *The City That Ate Itself: Butte, Montana and Its Expanding Berkeley Pit* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2018).

⁹ John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, *Mining and Communities in Northern Canada: History, Politics, and Memory* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2015). Nicholas Robins, *Mercury, Mining, and Empire: The Human and Ecological Cost of Colonial Silver Mining in the Andes* (Indians University Press, 2011) is another study of the colonial impacts of mining on the environment and local populations, though in a different geographic region.

¹⁰ Douglas Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades, A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Jim Wallace, *Forty Mile to Bonanza: The North-West Mounted Police in the Klondike Gold Rush* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, 2000); Charlotte Gray, *Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010); Francis Backhouse, *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap, 1995); Melanie Mayer, *Klondike Women: True Tales of the 1897-1898 Gold Rush* (Ohio University Press, 1989).

Perhaps historians have overlooked Indigenous narratives because the Indigenous groups who experienced the Gold Rush were largely marginalized from the direct business of digging for gold. However, in ignoring the experience of the Gold Rush as part of Indigenous history and historical writing has paralleled that exclusion during the Rush. Morse's study of the Klondike Gold Rush is the most geographically and thematically related to my own. Her study greatly contributes to our understanding of the direct environmental impacts that gold mining during the Gold Rush had on the Klondike ecosystem, but her study overlooks the ways in which local Indigenous populations experienced these changes to their homeland, therefore, she does not consider the cultural change connected to this environmental transformation. Further, because her study does not extend beyond the immediate Gold Rush period, it does not provide an analysis of environmental change over time.

While Morse is primarily concerned with the transformation of the land, I am interested in examining the colonization of both land and people in the Yukon in connection with gold mining. I hope to expand on Morse's study by investigating the ways in which environmental change was both material and cultural and examining how what happened environmentally in the Klondike impacted local Indigenous populations. Throughout this study of the environmental transformation resulting from gold mining in the Klondike region between 1896 and 1940 I am interested in three main questions: What did colonialism look like in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940?; How did gold mining in this particular region shape the environment and local peoples' relationships to that environment?; and, in what ways have colonized populations adapted to and shaped the dynamics of colonialism? Broader debates about the histories of mining and the

environment, colonialism, and Indigenous resistance have guided the overall framework for this study. Though examining an event concentrated on mineral extraction and environmental change, the history of the extension of the state into the North and histories of Indigenous-settler relations are foregrounded. It is my hope that this study will shed new light on the long history of gold mining in the Yukon and will contribute to historical literatures and debates about the North, colonialism and natural resource development, and human relationships with the natural world.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in refer to the Klondike Gold Rush (1896-1900), and the immediate four decades following, as "the great upheaval."¹¹ For them, the Gold Rush was not a single event, but a process in which outside forces brought rapid and profound change to their cultural, social, and economic lives which altered their relationship to the natural world. Indigenous people of the region knew of gold in the water long before outsiders entered the North. They knew of the "soft yellow stone" in the earth along the rivers, but they had little use for it.¹² Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in children used to play around with gold at Rabbit Creek and other places, picking up nuggets and often tossing them back into the water. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder Doris Adair reported that her elder, Lucy Wood, once told her that as a child, before the white man came, "She picked these yellow stones, she said it was pretty, pretty little stones so she packed a pouch of it. She didn't know it was gold."¹³

¹¹Helene Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones: A History of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in*, 2nd ed. (Dawson: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 2014), 6. Craig Mishler and William Simeone, *Han: People of the River* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 13. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in means People of the River. Tr'ondëk meaning "hammer stones" in reference to the stakes the Hwëch'in hammered across the mouth of the river, hanging fishing traps between them to catch salmon swimming upstream to their spawning grounds.

¹² Dobrowolsky, xiii. Julie Cruikshank, "Images of Society in Klondike Gold Rush Narratives: Skookum Jim and the Discovery of Gold." *Ethnohistory* 39, 1 (Winter 1992): 20-41.

¹³ THA, Traditional Knowledge Recordings, Lousetown Oral History Project, Doris Adair April 19, 1993.

The first recorded gold rush in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory was in 1885 on the Stewart River.¹⁴ In 1886 prospectors found gold on some of the tributaries near what later became the community of Forty Mile, which was the most significant discovery before the Klondike.¹⁵ Two smaller discoveries followed in 1888 (Seventy Mile River) and 1895 (Birch Creek), but these gold rushes remained local affairs limited to those gold diggers already in the region, as they lacked means of spreading the news to the outside world.¹⁶ Though the Klondike Gold Rush was not the first series of environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural change the Hwëch'in had to contend with in their homeland, it overshadowed fur trade relations and small-scale mining in its rapidity and the extent of changes which mining brought to the Klondike region and to Indigenous relations with the natural world. In four short years, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experienced a physical transformation of their homeland and the implementation of southern administration connected to colonial perceptions of, and desires for, land and resource use. However, gold mining in the Yukon has a much longer history than the years of the Klondike Gold Rush; the Gold Rush was a short-term event at the outset of a major transition in Yukon history. Between 1896 to 1940 the constant presence of miners and mining companies worked to reorganize the landscape and waterways of the central Yukon and introduced a new economic structure based on natural resource exploitation and colonial land use ideologies. Throughout these four decades, outsiders such as miners, missionaries, and Dominion and territorial officials

¹⁴ Mishler and Simeone, 14.

¹⁵ Don Sawatsky, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* (Langley.: Stagecoach Pub. Co., 1975), 8. The community of Forty Mile was a direct result of miners from Alaska and the Yukon working in that area.

¹⁶ George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades : A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 128. Earlier than this in British Columbia there were a number of localized gold discoveries at Cariboo (1860), Stikine River (1860), Cassiar (1870).

institutionalized bureaucratic and administrative control over nearly all aspects of life in the Klondike Valley.

When gold was found in Rabbit Creek (later renamed Bonanza Creek) in August of 1896 rumours travelled fairly quickly, but the outside world did not hear about the discovery until spring of 1897, nearly a year later. Once the news of rich gold deposits in the Yukon made its way south, the news had "set in motion one of the most sudden and dramatic population movements in the history of man."¹⁷ The Gold Rush brought an influx of approximately 40,000 "cheechakos" (a contemporary Chinook term for a newcomer to the goldfields of the Yukon) into Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory.¹⁸ Not all of these were miners; many travelled North to capitalize on the Rush by providing services for miners or to administer to the region. Entrepreneurs, traders, shop keepers, prostitutes, labourers, missionaries, and Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) officers arrived with miners. This Gold Rush influx shifted the demographic dynamic of the Yukon, with non-Indigenous peoples far outnumbering Indigenous populations for the first time (see Table 3.1 in Chapter Three for population data). The Klondike Gold Rush was contained within 800 square kilometers of goldfields, bounded by the Yukon, Klondike, Dominion, and Indian Rivers. Within this space, thousands of placer miners dug for gold in river beds and creeks; reaching gold required consuming local resources and miners cleared forests to thaw permafrost, diverted waterways, disassembled the local land, and used chemicals such as mercury in the mining process. As outsiders made more demands upon the land for mining and sustaining themselves, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had more trouble sustaining

¹⁷ David Morrison, *The Politics of the Yukon Territory, 1898-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 3.

¹⁸ Traditional territory refers to the geographic areas in which Indigenous peoples have long-standing ancestral ties used for subsistence, social, and spiritual practises.

themselves off the land or earning a living in the new economy.¹⁹ Aside from direct mining activities, the increased population relied on local wildlife harvesting and contributed to competition with Indigenous Yukoners for fish and game.

After 1900 the population of the Yukon declined from 27,219 in 1901 to 8,512 in 1911. However, the productivity and scale of mining in the Klondike increased.

This seems to be a pattern that was common in gold rushes everywhere, but it is one that has yet to be studied in the Yukon Territory. This likely is due to the drama of the initial rush in the Klondike; the history of southerners trekking to the Klondike for the Gold Rush is undoubtedly a fascinating narrative of grit and determination. The attention historians have given to the Gold Rush years as opposed to the decades following is logical considering the monumental amount of historical records that remain from media coverage, government officials, and individuals journeying to the Yukon and recording their experiences along the way. In his study of global gold rushes, historian George Fetherling argued that by the 1880s, most gold rushes were controlled by mining companies and small groups of wealthy men instead of individual miners that epitomized the days of the California Gold Rush in 1848.²⁰ After 1906, the scale of human intervention into the local ecosystem changed when mining companies consolidated claims in the Klondike and controlled most of the goldfields by 1910. In his study of the Colorado Front Range from the mid-1860s to 1899, George Vrtis argued that industrialization intensified mining and environmental change and dramatically recast the natural world and reshaped

¹⁹ Dobrowolsky, 28.

²⁰ Fetherling, 4-5. Fetherling looked at gold rushes in California (1848), Australia (1850), Otago (1861), South Africa (1886) and Chile (1884) and Klondike (1896).

mining landscapes across North America.²¹ This process occurred in the Klondike. As mining companies took over, they mechanized the technologies employed in the mining process – hydraulic mining and dredging replaced placer mining and enhanced the scale of change in the Klondike Valley and mining-related infrastructure expanded beyond the goldfields across the central Yukon. Environmental degradation from hydraulic mining and dredging outweighed the scale of environmental transformation resulting from placer mining. While placer mining did disrupt waterways, leaving mining discard behind and consuming local resources, dredging has left lasting legacies on the Klondike landscape that remain visible today.

Mining historian J.R. McNeill proposed that environmental histories of mining had three typologies. The first are those studies concerned with material change, or "changes in biological and physical environment and how those changes affect human societies." Second are cultural environmental histories concerned with "representations and images of nature in art and letters, how these have changed, and what they reveal about the people and societies." Third are political "law and state policy" studies.²² In examining environmental history and mining in the Yukon from 1890-1940, this dissertation includes a consideration of all three perspectives. The material changes to the Klondike ecosystem discussed above were accompanied by southern colonial ideologies that perceived land and resources as something to occupy, develop, and own and outsiders imposed their own institutions, administrations, and bureaucracies in the Yukon to formalize these uses of

²¹ George Vrtis, "A World of Mines and Mills: Precious-Metals Mining, Industrialization, and the Nature of the Colorado Front Range," in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. JR McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 74.

²² JR McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory* 42 (2003): 6.

land and resources. But this same land that outsiders occupied, developed, and owned was homeland to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and the landscape contained ancestral memories and spiritual significance. Conflicts over land use led to the dislocation of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from ancestral land at the meeting of the Yukon and Klondike Rivers where their fish camp was overrun by miners, forcing the Hwëch'in to relocate to a different settlement downstream. The environmental transformation of the Klondike region included significant material and cultural change to the local land and Indigenous population. While the physical impacts on the landscape and local environment happened on a wide-scale and many of these changes to the land had direct consequences for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, it was the new economy and the new social order that contributed most the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's shifting relationship with the natural world.

While this is a study of the environmental transformation of a region in the Yukon resulting from the expansion and industrialization of gold mining, it is also a study of the ways in which colonized populations have contributed to the shaping of resource and settler colonialism. In this sense, this study is rooted in both environmental and social histories and is concerned with issues informed by both fields: social conflict and power relations, cultural notions of human relationships with the natural world, and the ways that human societies live within particular environmental frameworks. In the Klondike, these processes were bound within a colonial framework. The nature of gold mining in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940 shaped a specific type of colonialism that blended aspects of settler colonialism and resource-oriented colonialism. In *Making Native Space*, historical geographer Cole Harris argued that colonialism was about control of land and the

dominance of land use.²³ Harris studies British Columbia (B.C.), where the focus on land use was primarily for settlement. Land appropriation in the Klondike occurred for mining more so than for settlement but using the land for mining and the immediate impacts of this mining on the land, had similar effects on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in compared to land appropriation for settlement in southern Canada.

Also examining B.C., historian John Lutz argued that colonialism, as it occurred there, was part of a larger international process of colonization which included the displacement of Indigenous peoples from the control of resources, resettlement of land by non-Indigenous peoples, and a partial incorporation of Indigenous peoples into the new Euro-Canadian economy.²⁴ All three of these processes were present in the Yukon throughout the first half of the 20th century as well. Though southern interest and presence in the Yukon originated in mineral extraction, colonial southern bureaucracies and institutions shaped the development of Yukon society after 1896 and strongly contributed to the ways in which the Yukon was colonized. Indigenous communities felt the impacts of colonial governments as the state played a role in reshaping Indigenous relationships to traditional territories and homelands.²⁵

Historian Lisa Cook argued that the Klondike Gold Rush is a story of Canadian colonial expansion.²⁶ Northern historian Morris Zaslow wrote in 1971 that southern ideologies and institutions were brought into the North, essentially transplanting southern

²³ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 185.

²⁴ John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 4.

²⁵ Cecilia Morgan, *Building Better Britains?: Settler Societies in the British World, 1738-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 11.

²⁶ Lisa Cook, "North Takes Place in Dawson City, Yukon, Canada," in *Northscapes: History, Technology and the Making of Northern Environments*, ed. Dolly Jorgensen and Sverker Sorlin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013): 227.

society to a northern setting.²⁷ The Klondike Gold Rush was the first major event that drew Dominion government officials, resources, and attention to the North, and the policies the Dominion government implemented to administer to the North were rooted in the region's potential for resource exploitation and economic interests.²⁸ This was particularly true for the application of Indigenous administration in the Yukon. Examining the ways in which colonialism impacted Indigenous peoples and the ways in which they acted within the system of colonialism - either integrating into or remaining separate from settler societies - requires recognition of the contradictory, and often conflicted, nature of colonialism in Canada. Ken Coates' *Best Left as Indians* deals with the federal government's 'hands-off' approach regarding northern Indigenous policy arguing that due to the expense and reality of life in the North, the government decided the best approach to administering Yukon Indigenous peoples was to have them remain harvesters.²⁹ Historian René Fumoleau argued that, "In the North, as everywhere else, economic considerations far out-weighed all others in the formulations of Indian policy."³⁰ In the Yukon until 1940, the Dominion government's principal concern was the potential expansion of mineral development, which directly influenced the decisions it made regarding Indigenous peoples in the territory. For example, government documents demonstrate that the government refused to enter treaty with Yukon Indigenous peoples, set aside areas for their exclusive resource

²⁷Morris Zaslow, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914*, The Canadian Centenary Series (Toronto,: McClelland and Stewart, 1971).

²⁸ Shelagh D. Grant, *Sovereignty or Security? : Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988).

²⁹ Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*. (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991). Another work which deals with state ambivalence and state dominance regarding Native policy is Frank Tester and Peter Kulchyski's *Tammarniit (Mistakes): Inuit Relocation in the Eastern Arctic, 1939-63* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 1994) which is an analysis of Inuit Policy in the High Arctic and the relocations of 1939 and 1963.

³⁰ René Fumoleau, *As Long as This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 40.

harvesting use, or expand areas under reserve was due to the concern that another gold strike was on the horizon.³¹

Furthermore, colonizers often disagreed about how best to administer Yukon Indigenous peoples, which created a long history of contested colonial control and imposition in the territory. The conflicted nature of colonization in the Yukon acts as a reminder that colonialism was an ideological project with many different (and often contradictory) agendas and interests.³² Northern environmental historian Steven Bocking argued that colonialism “must be understood not solely in terms of overarching themes of power and domination, but as a local phenomenon that is fractured and contested.”³³ This fracturing of the colonial structure was most clearly demonstrated in the Yukon through the implementation of wildlife regulation. The Gold Rush prompted an application of wildlife regulation that was in direct conflict with Indigenous systems of resource ownership and management.³⁴ However, local authorities frequently disagreed with those regulations and often failed to enforce them due to the lived realities on the ground.

Indigenous peoples themselves also shaped the ways in which colonialism worked out on the ground, though they were frequently limited in their reactions by the constraints of the local setting; as Cole Harris argued, land appropriation and cultural change could be resisted in a variety of ways but it could not be stopped completely.³⁵ The restrictions

³¹ Letter from William Ogilvie to Secretary of Department of the Interior, February 4, 1901 (DCMA, Moosehide). January 15, 1936 letter from the Yukon Comptroller to the Department of Interior Director of Lands NWT and Yukon Branch. YA, Game Branch, 1/3 GOV 1895 f. 12-15B.

³² Nadasdy, 4.

³³ Stephen Bocking, "Indigenous Knowledge and the History of Science, Race, and Colonial Authority in Northern Canada" in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada*, ed. Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audry Kobayashi (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2011): 41.

³⁴ Peter Usher and Lindsay Staples, *Subsistence in the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Economic Development Department, Council for Yukon Indians, 1988), 129.

³⁵ Harris, 193.

placed on Indigenous peoples and the range of responses to challenge the colonial structure they used was shaped by local realities, which means that colonialism had peculiarities everywhere it was present. Discussing colonialism as linked to mining in the North, John Sandlos and Arn Keeling explained,

the territorial north in the 20th century[...] was a thinly populated but still largely Indigenous space where the long reach of mining severely impacted pre-existing subsistence economies, provided few local employment or investment opportunities, and often left severe environmental problems with which Aboriginal communities have to contend.³⁶

With indigenous population facing the negative and often irreversible environmental consequences of mining, it can be difficult to imagine the ways they were able to resist the onslaught of outside imposed change that resulted from northern mining, but studies of Indigenous responses to mining developments in their homeland and communities have shown that human populations have expressed resistance and resiliency both during and after mining.³⁷ Sometimes this resistance included taking advantage of opportunities in the mining industry such as selling meat and fish or adapting to the new economy of mining by seeking out employment opportunities. In her study of Fort Chipewyan, Patricia McCormack argued that Cree people resisted the regulatory and restrictive activities of the state by directly challenging government agents and regulations, sometimes couched as advice or requests, or through subversive tactics which circumvented regulations. These actions both minimized the harmful effects of government policies and affirmed traditional culture and practises.³⁸

³⁶ Sandlos and Keeling, in "Introduction" to *Mining and Communities*, 7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁸ Patricia McCormack, "Romancing the Northwest as Prescriptive History: Fort Chipewyan and the Northern Expansion of the State," in *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*, ed. Patricia McCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1993): 93-95.

Though they were faced with dramatic environmental change and increasing pressure from colonial agents, viewing the Hwëch'in as victims deprives them of a role in shaping their own past.³⁹ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in Moosehide and Dawson City, the main settled communities in the Klondike region throughout the 20th century, shaped the structure of colonialism through a variety of responses including accommodation and resistance. Some of the ways they expressed these responses include subverting colonial attempts at bringing Indigenous peoples in as collaborators in the colonial process, challenging authority, asserting themselves in the industrial economy, ignoring and evading wildlife regulations, and vocalizing their discontent.⁴⁰ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in confronted colonial power by relocating away from newcomer society on their own initiative, safeguarding their traditional songs and dances, calling out unsatisfactory missionaries, engaging in the industrial economy, speaking publicly about their concerns and discontents, among other tactics.

In her study of the Dene, historian Kerry Abel argued that "modern scholarship has underestimated the power of small societies to maintain their sense of identity."⁴¹ Her work stresses the Dene's adaptability and demonstrates that they were able to maintain cultural distinctiveness in the face of economic, political, and cultural pressure. This was largely true of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well. Yukon historian Helene Dobrowolsky has argued for the resiliency of the Hwëch'in, stating that families continued to make most of their living from the land, and they adapted to the new economic order, and new religious and

³⁹ Mishler and Simeone, xxv.

⁴⁰ Gold Seekers had impacts on other Indigenous groups as well. The Tlingit and the Tagish were negatively impacted by gold seekers passing through their land on their way to the Klondike. In 1902 Laberge Chief Jim Boss wrote to government officials in Ottawa seeking protection and resolution to the problems his people encountered. This was the first petition by Yukon First Nations toward negotiated ownership and protection of traditional lands and rights. Search File: Council for Yukon Indians (YA), 1.

⁴¹ Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1993), xii.

education systems.⁴² Though the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have experienced many changes over the past century their connection to the land has remained strong and they have worked hard from within the community to revive aspects of their culture that either disappeared or declined through the first half of the 20th century. Together with other Yukon First Nations, their experience encountering and confronting colonialism and environmental change since the late 19th century has fostered a long fight to protect the land and their access to resources which culminated in the publication of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, a document developed by the Yukon Native Brotherhood to establish a basis for negotiating Yukon land claims, in 1973 and the negotiation and finalisation of Yukon Land Claims agreement in 1990.

Throughout this research I have attempted to be cognizant of the relationships and power dynamics between myself as a researcher and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community.⁴³ I do not attempt nor claim to speak on behalf of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I am an outsider to not only the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community, but to Indigenous Canada more broadly, as well as to the North. Because of this, I have sought community input throughout the course of my research and have spent much time in the local community to attempt to better understand the long-term effects of the issues in this study. The methodological approach I have taken in my research and analysis have taken two major forms: the frameworks I use in my analysis as well as the historical sources employed.

⁴² Dobrowolsky, xiii.

⁴³ Some works that have informed my methodological approach to working with communities include Leslie Brown and Susan Strega, *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2015) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* 2nd ed. (New York: Zed Books, 2012 [1999]).

The Gold Rush has been one of the most reproduced stories in the history of the Yukon. Settler histories of gold rushes, and the Klondike Gold Rush in particular, generally cast the Yukon as a resource frontier and often retell this discovery of gold in the Klondike and the subsequent gold rush as a frontier narrative.⁴⁴ Typical to frontier narratives is the idea that a frontier, in this case the Yukon, is an unsettled land at the edge of civilization in which settlers and frontiersman can easily conquer the land and environment and impose structures on a new society. Telling the story of the Klondike as a frontier myth distills its history into a simple narrative focusing on the protagonist's conflict with, and triumph over, opposing forces. Historian Elizabeth Furniss argued that in frontier narratives, the complexity of historical processes is reduced to a series of "epitomizing events" (dramatic incidents that serve as easily understood symbols that represent more insidious forces of historical change). These events generally focus on the heroic actions of an individual or group whose values, morals, motives, and struggles define public ideas of Canadian culture - independence, freedom, self-sufficiency, courage, and progress through hard work.⁴⁵ Of course, this narrative makes invisible the diversity of experiences within colonial contexts. Making the experiences of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in central to my analysis of the Klondike Gold Rush has allowed me to examine more clearly

⁴⁴ Some of these works that cast the Yukon as a resource frontier and describe its history as beginning with the discovery of gold in the northern frontier include Charlotte Gray, *Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010); Jim Wallace, *Forty Mile to Bonanza: The North-West Mounted Police in the Klondike Gold Rush* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, 2000); Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1998); Francis Backhouse, *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap, 1995); Melanie Mayer, *Klondike Women: True Tales of the 1897-1898 Gold Rush* (Ohio University Press, 1989); William Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1985); William Hunt, *North of 53: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier, 1870-1914* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1974); Pierre Berton, *The Last Great Gold Rush, 1896-1899* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 1972); Harold Innis, "Settlement and the Mining Frontier," in *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement* v. 9. (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936).

⁴⁵ Furniss, Burden of History 17-18.

the complicated history of colonial relations in the Yukon from the 1890s into the mid-20th century, the ways in which Indigenous locals responded to outside pressure and change resulting directly from the Gold Rush, and the central role the environment played in these responses. In extending my study beyond the Gold Rush years to account for the longer history of mining challenges previous works that end in the early 1900s. Extending my study into 1940 I analyze significant transitions in the history of gold mining and colonization in the Klondike, such as the shift away from placer mining to industrial dredging operations and the resulting increase in scale of environmental change and productivity as compared with the Gold Rush years. This longer study also allows for an examination of societal change over time and the ways in which southern-style bureaucracies and institutions continued to contribute to Indigenous dispossession of land and resources long after the Gold Rush ended.

Further, throughout this study I attempt to center my lens on these events from within the Yukon. The idea of remoteness and isolation that previous studies of the Gold Rush tend to convey casts the North as a periphery and a place on the margins. However, to Indigenous Yukoners the North was not an isolated region, but a homeland and a centre from which people could easily move around for hunting, harvesting, and visiting.

The Klondike Gold Rush opened up the Yukon to the rest of the world and in doing so, a rich historical record has been left behind. Primary sources range from contemporary books, advertisements, diaries, newspapers, photographs, traditional knowledge, and present-day landscapes that contain these changes within them. I have analyzed archival records from the Yukon Archives in Whitehorse, Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa,

and the Dawson City Museum Archives in Dawson. These sources included collections relating to mining claims and technologies in the goldfields, colonial agents' correspondence, and records relating to the implementation of fish and wildlife regulations.

Some sources are better at shedding light on Indigenous perspectives and assessing environmental change than others. Most people who left behind written records did not often record the ways in which the environment was impacted by mining. Instead, their records generally focus on the act of mining itself and ways in which the Dominion government prioritized mining over other activities. However, reading a variety of records such as mining corporation annual reports, NWMP and government reports, and miners' letters and published journals has been useful in understanding the scale of environmental transformation of the Klondike region from the early days of the Gold Rush into the 1940s. Further, the historical record of the Klondike also contains thousands of photographs, and where the written record is not particularly helpful in understanding the scale of environmental change, photographic evidence from the period 1896 to 1940 significantly helps in demonstrating how mining created environmental change over time in the Klondike.

Written documents also have several limitations in understanding Indigenous perspectives and experiences. First, they are almost exclusively written from a colonial perspective. There are a few individual examples during the period of study where Indigenous leaders' personally written letters are recorded within DIA, missionary, or Yukon Territorial Government files. However, more frequently any Indigenous voice that comes out through these documents is filtered through the lens of colonial authority writing on their behalf or reporting on what they claim Indigenous Yukoners said or desired.

Secondly, most Europeans or Euro-Canadians who wrote letters or published their accounts of life in the Yukon were male, and of those men who did leave comments in their letters or publications about Indigenous Yukoners, most are about their interactions with Indigenous men.⁴⁶ Because of this, the historical record tends to diminish Indigenous women's role and participation in this changing society.

These records are still important, though, and fortunately there is a rich enough collection of letters and reports from prominent individuals involved with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in such as Bishop William Carpenter Bompas, Bishop Isaac O. Stringer, and individual government officials to offer a larger context in understanding their relationships with the Hwëch'in. When evaluating this material, it has been crucial to keep in mind the objectives that colonial organizations and each individual had for Indigenous Yukoners and to evaluate sources based on these objectives, biases, and individual personalities of those who created the documents. Reading between the lines of historical records has been necessary in my study. Julie Cruikshank argued that when missionaries, traders, scientists, and government officials came to the Yukon they wrote down their observations in journals, letters, and reports which are valuable for historians, especially because these accounts often became the basis on which government policy was based and had real economic, political, social, and environmental consequences for Indigenous Yukoners.⁴⁷ However, Cruikshank also argued that many early written accounts about Yukon life are from short-term visitors, many of whom arrived during the Klondike Gold

⁴⁶ Though there are publications from women like Laura Berton, and letters in the archival record from women living in the Klondike during this period of study, though these documents are much rarer. Laura Berton, *I Married the Klondike* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1954).

⁴⁷ Julie Cruikshank, *Reading Voices/Dan Dha Ts'edenintthe'e: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), 101.

Rush, and these accounts often tell us little about Indigenous peoples' lives.⁴⁸ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are nearly invisible in written historical sources before the onset of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1896.⁴⁹

To counteract this lack of Indigenous presence in the written record, I conducted a very small sampling of original interviews with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders in the summer of 2015 which has contributed greatly to my understanding of gold mining, colonialism, and environmental change in the Yukon. Oral histories are the result of a research method where a sound recording is made of an interview about first-hand experience of something that happened during the lifetime of the eyewitness; this can include information on animals, plants, landscape change, seasonal changes, mineral resources, industrial development – the range is wide.⁵⁰ Historians often employ oral history to better understand or discover the experiences of people who are overlooked or underrepresented in written records.⁵¹ Through informal conversations and three formal recorded interviews, elders and community members revealed some of the major changes and concerns they have faced as individuals and as a community over the years between 1890 to 1940. However, the pool of people available to interview is quite limited – with my study reaching back to between 128 to 78 years ago, most of those still here to speak with were born just at the end of my study and, though their stories and memories were extremely beneficial, much of what they could recall from their own lives fell outside of my study.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁹ The one exception is in fur trade records, but even there the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in do not receive a large amount of attention.

⁵⁰ Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues" *Canadian Historical Review* LXXV, 3 (1993): 404.

⁵¹ Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History, Third Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2105 [2002]), 6.

However, those I spoke with often recounted traditional knowledge their elders or parents told them, and I have been privileged with access to a large collection of Indigenous traditional knowledge and recorded oral histories housed at the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department, without which this study would not be possible. Traditional knowledge refers to knowledge systems embedded within cultural structures and is generally passed down orally over generations. Such knowledge can contain information about changes in animal populations, observances about the weather and climate change, events like glacial surges or volcanic eruptions or landslides, or the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples and settlers.⁵² Elders and the chief were custodians of culture, keeping alive the stories, songs, and dances of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Their most important tools were these stories and the knowledge handed down through generations from elders, for it was this knowledge that supplied them with the know-how to live off the land.

Traditional knowledge and oral history has become increasingly important and accepted in studies of the environment over the past two decades as non-Indigenous researchers have recognized that Indigenous peoples have unique knowledge about local environments and environmental change based on lifetimes of first-hand experience. For example, systematic scientific observations in the Yukon date primarily to the 1930s and 1940s, and so elders' knowledge about these changing relationships is particularly important.⁵³ The field of Northern history has also influenced including Indigenous

⁵² Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition," 18.

⁵³ Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 40.

knowledge in non-Indigenous scholarship as Indigenous understandings and knowledge of the past have been critical in studying the North.⁵⁴

Aside from the archives mentioned above, I have read and listened to the extensive traditional knowledge collection held at the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department. Many of these recordings pertain to issues associated with mining, the extension of the state, and Indigenous reaction to these changes throughout the period of my study. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community has undertaken a remarkable amount of historical work to record, revive, and pass on elements of their culture, language, and traditions. Throughout the years of this research the conversations I have had with Dawson locals, especially Indigenous elders and heritage workers, has informed my understanding and knowledge of the consequences and legacies of these events and processes in ways that archival research could not. When I reference original interviews throughout this study, I have left grammar and voice as is, without making editorial changes.

Some of the decisions I have made in terms of periodization and concentration in this study were limited by constraints of available sources. For example, in my examination of resource regulations, the historical record of the fishery in the Yukon is quite sporadic and limited, while there is a more robust collection of records on game management. Further, my analysis does not include trapping, primarily because trapping was not regulated in the Yukon until 1950, which is outside of my period of study, though trapping was an important activity for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Indigenous Yukoners. There are hardly any written records pertaining to trapping before 1950 and the limited knowledge I have gathered comes primarily from Tr'ondëk elders' personal

⁵⁴ Liza Piper, "The Landscape of Canadian Environmental History: Canada and the Circumpolar North Coming in From the Cold," *Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (Dec 2014): 572.

experiences, again, after the 1940 period. Further, in some instances where data was lacking for the Yukon, I have had to rely on comparisons with places in Southern Canada, especially British Columbia, or the NWT where comprehensive information on the Yukon was lacking. Literature on the NWT and B.C. have been helpful in comparisons of federal Indigenous and resource policies, and because in many instances these places have similarities in terms of no treaties, small reserves, and generally low numbers of government officials in these areas.

Employing this range of sources through the interpretative frameworks of environmental and social histories have led me to conclude that the Klondike Gold Rush began a pattern of long-term systemic alienation of Yukon First Nations from traditionally used resources and areas; in part this resulted from the physical impacts that mining had on the environment of the central Yukon, but Indigenous displacement also resulted from the role of colonial bureaucracies and state extension into the Klondike. The colonial structure of the Yukon was complicated and contested, creating conflicts between colonizers over how best to administer to the realities of the Yukon; it was also shaped by the responses and contributions of Indigenous Yukoners who frequently challenged their loss of access to resources and the outside-imposed changes mining brought to their lives. The individual chapters that follow clarify this argument by bringing out specific examples that relate to the environmental colonization of the Klondike and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's range of response through which they challenged colonial authority.

Chapter Two provides a general overview of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in social and economic life in the century before the Klondike Gold Rush. Between 1800 and 1840 Yukon Indigenous peoples had very little interaction with non-Indigenous and southern

populations. After 1840, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Indigenous groups in the Yukon formed relationships with fur traders, and there was small-scale prospecting and mining in the Klondike region since the mid 1880s, though the first significant discovery was at Forty Mile in 1886. This chapter demonstrates that the Hwëch'in did not encounter non-Indigenous ways of life for the first time in 1896, and, further, mining itself, on a small-scale, did not necessarily create dramatic transformations of the local environment and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lives, but rather it was the scale and rapidity of the Klondike Gold Rush, the scope of mining activity, and the accompanying expansion of southern institutions and values that created remarkable change to the environment of the Yukon.

The third chapter examines the nature of colonialism in the Yukon, concluding that the process of colonization in the Yukon was unique to both general processes in southern Canada as well as elsewhere in the North; it did not neatly fit into any one category, but was instead characterized by aspects of both settler colonialism and resource-oriented colonialism. Colonialism in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940 had consequences on both local environments and Indigenous populations linked to ideas of land use ideologies and southern, colonial values that shaped the ways in which outsiders to the Yukon used land. Specifically, miners perceived the Klondike as a resource frontier of unused land filled with resources for their taking. These perceptions and values of land led to the displacement and relocation of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from traditionally used land bases to reshape these spaces into privately owned property. Finally, this chapter questions the conflicts that arose in such colonized spaces and the ways in which Indigenous populations asserted themselves within, or challenged, these structures. The colonial nature of the Klondike Gold Rush as the initial years of gold mining in the Yukon set the tone for their

relationship into the 20th century including outside impositions on land and resources and active Indigenous involvement in shaping the colonial process in the Yukon.

Chapter Four furthers the examination of the ways in which the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in shaped the structure of colonialism in the Yukon through analyzing the relationships between the Hwëch'in, the Anglican church, and the Canadian state. Through an analysis of daily life at the Moosehide reserve, this chapter examines the colonial reconfiguration of space and the ways that the same space acted as both an area of colonial control and surveillance as well as Indigenous cultural persistence. Though the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in faced increasing pressure from colonial agents to conform to non-Indigenous society, they managed to use Moosehide as an Indigenous space where they challenged colonization with a variety of responses including accommodation, resistance, and subverting attempts at colonial collaboration. An examination of colonizers' goals and actions also demonstrates the frequent clashing within colonial structures suggesting that colonization was neither straightforward, concrete, nor clear to those on the ground.

The focus of the fifth chapter narrows in on the practises of gold mining between 1896 and 1940 and the direct, material impacts that mining had on the local ecosystem and, in turn, on Hwëch'in relationships with the natural world. While the Gold Rush itself was a short-term event, it laid the way for a capitalized system of the exploitation of mineral resources in the Yukon that continues today. This chapter examines the two major mining methods in the Klondike throughout this time frame – placer mining and dredging – which led to the environmental transformation on the Klondike region. The scale and geographic range of mining post-1906 led to increased production and development as industrial mining expanded across the Klondike Valley. However, in attempting to view this

environmental transformation through the lens of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens, the decade from 1896 to 1906 had a greater influence on shifts in Hwëch'in's relationship with the natural world due to the rapidity and scale of socioeconomic transformation of the Klondike and the strengthening of a capital economy. Further, colonial environmental management connected to resource extraction ensured that mining in the North often had a more serious effect on local Indigenous groups, as resource extraction gradually eroded much of their subsistence base through environmental transformation without replacing it with anything more permanent, creating unequal distribution of environmental benefits and harms.

The final chapter examines the indirect results of mining activity on Hwëch'in environmental relationships. The Gold Rush led to a long trajectory of Indigenous displacement from access to necessary natural resources. Accompanying mining was the emergence of a new industrial economy and the extension of colonial bureaucracies and regulations pertaining to the management on natural resources. The ways in which fish and game regulations were imposed and enforced in the Yukon during this period again indicates the complexities of colonialism; government authorities in the Yukon often overlooked the regulations they were hired to impose when such colonial laws did not make sense for the realities of life in the North. Instead of enforcing regulations that restricted Indigenous access to resources, local authorities encouraged the continuation of harvesting activities. Though faced with extreme environmental change in the Klondike region and displacement from required resources, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in asserted themselves into the new socioeconomic order of the Klondike through their involvement in

the industrial economy and in vocalizing and challenging the colonial restrictions on resources use.

Knowing the history of mining in the Yukon is crucial in understanding and evaluating the costs and benefits of present day developments. The history of gold mining in the Yukon provides a foundation for understanding the direct and indirect environmental and cultural impacts that mining developments have had, and could have, on local Indigenous populations and acts as a warning to ensure that those populations most impacted by contemporary mine developments in the Yukon are consulted and included in all stages of a mine's lifecycle. What happened in the Klondike region between 1896 to 1940 foregrounded a long history of struggle and conflict over resource use and access to resources that Indigenous Yukoners continue to fight for control and authority over their cultural, physical, and spiritual lives.

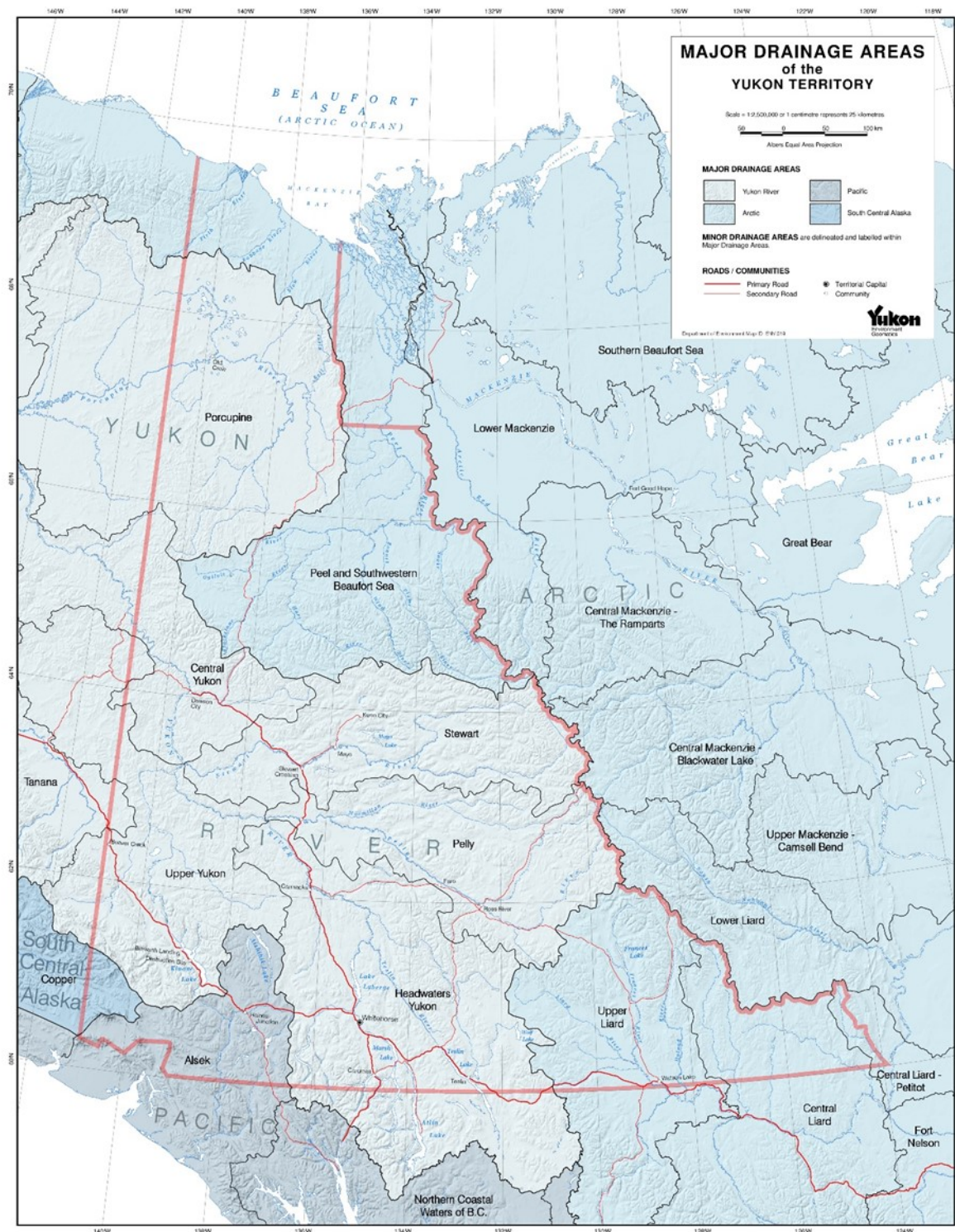
Chapter 2: People of the River, 1800 to 1896

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people based much of their lives around the Yukon River where they set up fish camps in the summers and which they navigated while hunting in the fall and winter months. The Yukon's headwaters are in the northwest corner of British Columbia and the river extends approximately 3,100 kilometers north through the Yukon Territory and northwest into Alaska, eventually spilling west into the Bering Sea [See Map 2.1]. The section of the Yukon that passes through the Klondike region is a clear and gently flowing river lined with thinly populated and low-growing white and black spruce trees.¹ In the Klondike region, the Yukon river is dotted with many low islands which break the channel. According to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders, their ancestors and relatives traditionally occupied some of these islands to set up fish camps in the summer months where they caught and dried fish in preparation of the winter months.² The Yukon River was not only important for fish protein, but also for game meat. Moose first arrived in the fall in marshes and swamps near the Yukon River. Moose were later followed by caribou who walked and swam along the Yukon into present-day Dawson City and the hills surrounding the river. Along the Yukon River was also where the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples first experienced sustained contact with non-Indigenous, southern peoples.

In 1871, Leroy 'Jack' McQuesten, Alfred Mayo, and Arthur Harper, fur traders with the Alaska Commercial Company, came into the Yukon where they prospected and became involved in the pre-existing Indigenous trade network that stretched across the

¹ Robert McCandless, *Yukon Wildlife: A Social History* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), 23.

² Georgette McLeod and Rachel Olson, "Edward Roberts Interview," (Dawson City, July 23 1999) THA Tape/Transcript #: 99-16. Julia Morberg, interview with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.



Map 2.1. Major Drainage Areas of the Yukon Territory. Yukon Department of Environment Map

ID: ENV.019.

Yukon interior into the southeast Alaskan coast.³ All three men married Koyukon women from the lower Yukon River in the early 1870s.⁴ McQuesten and an unidentified helper established a trading post along the Yukon River in August of 1874. This post was called Fort Reliance and was located six kilometers downstream from the area that would become Dawson, and three kilometers downstream from land traditionally used by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (which would later become Moosehide Village in 1897). It was located directly across the river from the island the Hwëch'in often occupied as a fish camp and was the first trading post in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory.⁵

McQuesten established the post at the same time that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in prepared for the fall moose hunt, but those who stayed behind helped McQuesten put up four cabins. After the fort was completed, McQuesten hired Hwëch'in men to carry logs for firewood and he paid them to hunt and keep the traders supplied with meat throughout the winter of 1874. Though Fort Reliance was not a settlement, the fort was a busy and important location in the Yukon fur trade network – the Fortymile and Sixtymile rivers were later named for their distance from Reliance – and after its establishment the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had regular contact with non-Indigenous people.⁶

Al Mayo, Arthur Harper and their families, along with McQuesten's family, lived at Fort Reliance for the first year it was established, but in the winter of 1875 McQuesten complained that the Hwëch'in were becoming restless, though he regarded them as friendly, and the three men decided to spend the winter in Fort Yukon instead, after

³ McQuesten is referred to as the “Father of the Yukon” as he did some prospecting and grubstaked many miners.

⁴ Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department, “Forty Mile Interpreters Manual excerpt: Early Traders and Steamboats” (Dawson, n.d.), 2. Thomas Hammer and Christian Thomas, *Archaeology at Forty Mile/Ch'ëdä Dëk* (Yukon Government, Department of Tourism and Culture: Whitehorse, 2006).

⁵ Don Sawatsky, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northbush Publications Ltd., 1975), 58.

⁶ THHD, “Forty Mile Interpreters Manual,” 2.

aching their company supplies at Fort Reliance. Once the men left for Fort Yukon, the Hwëch'in broke into the cache and took most of the food supply. One of the items they took was tallow which was laced with arsenic to kill rodents. Three women died after unknowingly consuming the poison.⁷ When McQuesten returned once winter ended, the Hwëch'in were welcoming, but they insisted that he pay restitution for the dead women. They also repaid him for the items they took from his cache. After this incident, there was a period of nearly ten years in which no traders wintered at Fort Reliance, choosing other forts along the Yukon river, until the winter of 1884/1885 when sixteen men wintered there.⁸

Unfortunately, no details of the outcome of the arsenic incident are available to properly analyze continued relations between the Hwëch'in and McQuesten after the winter of 1875. It is unclear whether he paid restitution for the women's deaths, what form such restitution took if it did occur, or whether McQuesten continued to hire Hwëch'in people to provide firewood and meat. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are nearly invisible in written historical sources before the onset of the Klondike Gold Rush in 1896. As the narrative above demonstrates, though, the Klondike Gold Rush was not Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples first interaction with a non-Indigenous, southern population. Before the Gold Rush began, the Hwëch'in interacted and worked with outsiders, engaged in wage labour, experienced change from outside forces, and faced conflict with outsiders. The above narrative also suggests that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, like most Yukon Indigenous populations, were open to amicable relations with outsiders.

⁷ Sawatsky, 58-59.

⁸ THHD, "Forty Mile Interpreters Manual," 3.

The Hwëch'in did not encounter non-Indigenous ways of life for the first time in 1896, but the scale of outside pressure, change, and conflict before the Klondike Gold Rush was miniscule in comparison to the rapid and profound change that accompanied with the Gold Rush. This chapter describes the Hwëch'in way of life from 1800 to the onset of the Gold Rush. It briefly examines Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in society before interaction with non-Indigenous populations, their relationships with fur traders after 1840, and small-scale prospecting and mining in the Yukon before the Gold Rush. Though the Klondike Gold Rush was not the first series of environmental, economic, and cultural change the Hwëch'in had to contend with in their homeland, it overshadowed fur trade relations and small-scale mining in its rapidity and extent of change which mining brought to the Klondike region and to Indigenous relations with the natural world.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in before 1840

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in are one of three Hän speaking peoples of the Athapaskan linguistic group who were once spread out over hundreds of miles along the Yukon River drainage system in western Yukon and east-central Alaska (between 64° and 66° north).⁹ Before the creation of countries and territories, their traditional territory stretched across varying terrains of mountains, forests, valleys, creeks, and rivers, resulting in a bonded relationship with the environment.¹⁰ Map 2.3 outlines the traditional territories of the fourteen different Yukon First Nations within the Yukon, however, it does not include the

⁹ The other two groups are in Alaska.

¹⁰ Alexandra Winton, "Łuk Cho Anay/Big Fish Come," Tr'ondëk/Klondike World Heritage Site Nomination Thematic Research (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives 2015): 2.

areas of traditional territory in Alaska. Prior to the international boundary, the Hwëch'in

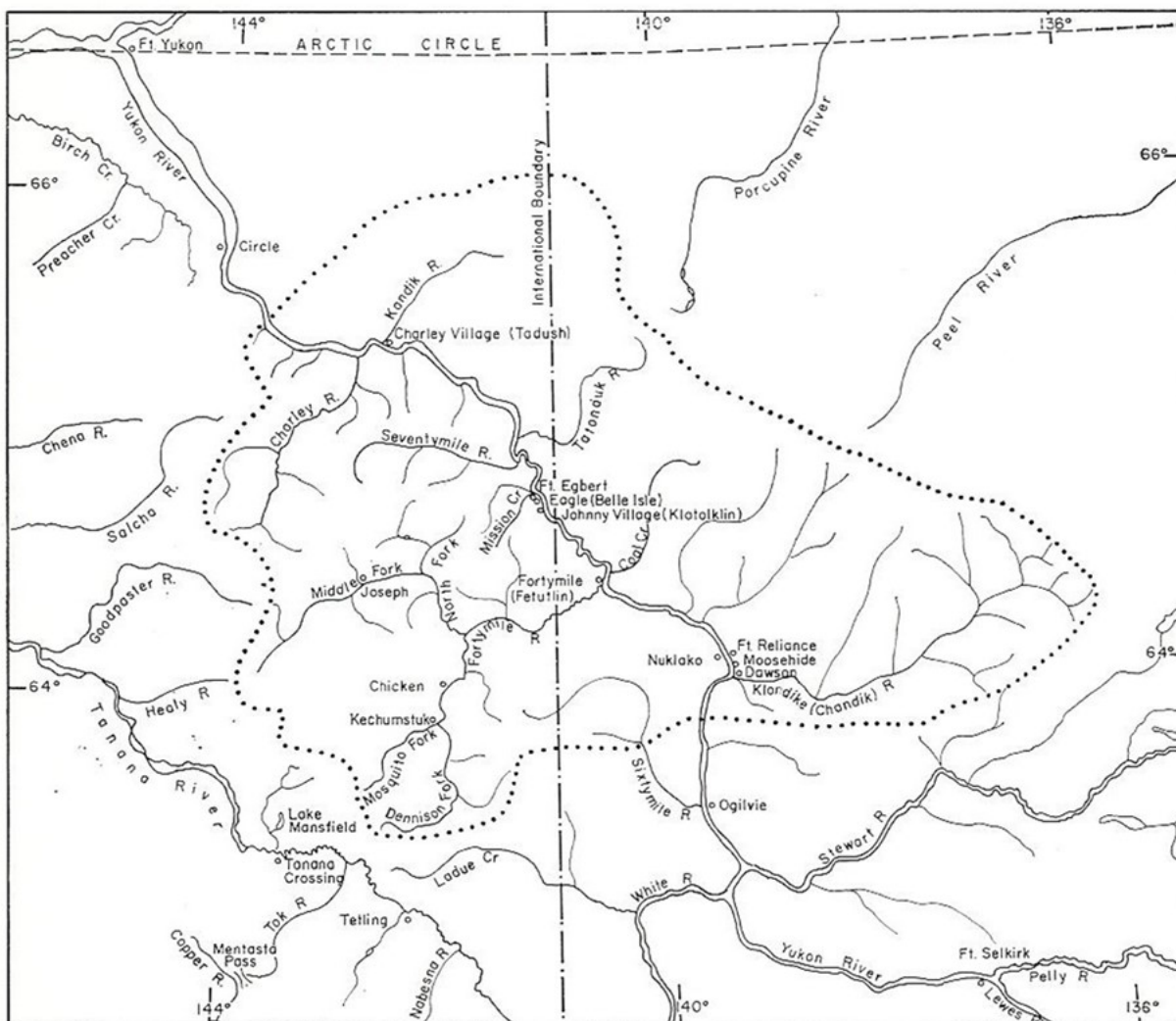


Image 2.1. Hän Territory. Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 11.

lived and hunted in central Alaska, as pictured above in Image 2.1, where there was abundant game and a dependable annual supply of salmon.¹¹ Traditional territory refers to the geographic areas in which Indigenous peoples have long-standing ancestral ties used for subsistence, cultural, and spiritual practises. This traditional territory reflects the

¹¹ Dawson Indian Band, *Hän Indians: People of the River* (Dawson: Dawson Indian Band, 1988), 4 (YA PAM 1988-0088 C.2).

important and strong connections that Indigenous peoples had, and continue to have, with the land, with previous generations, and with other Indigenous groups. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory overlaps with the Vuntut Gwitchin to the north, the Nacho Nyak Dun to the east, and Selkirk First Nation to the south. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in estimate that they have been established along the Yukon River flats, occupying seasonal settlements such as present-day Klondike City/Tro'chëk, Dawson City, and Moosehide from as early as 1300 CE, when the Moosehide landslide occurred.¹²

Until the late 1800s, all three Hän groups moved freely for seasonal rounds of hunting, fishing, trading, and visiting. Territorial limits were not sharply defined, and different groups shared the same resources. Resources not available in one area were obtained through trade with people in another. The Hän groups were linked with Northern Tutchone peoples in the Central Yukon, Teetl'it Gwich'in in the Northwest Territories and the Peel River region, and Tanana in Alaska through trade and family ties.¹³ Today, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in population is concentrated in different communities on either side of the international border: Dawson City, Yukon and Eagle, Alaska.¹⁴

For generations, the Hwëch'in fished and hunted all over the traditional landscape, they knew the migration patterns of caribou and the medicinal properties of plants. They were a riverine people, depending more on salmon than on any other food. They lived a semi-nomadic, mobile culture in which they moved throughout their territory based on life cycles of the plants and animals they relied on for subsistence (food, clothing, shelter,

¹² Dawson First Nation, *Kentra Tay Moccasin Trails*, August 1994.

¹³ Helene Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones: A History of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in*, 2nd ed. (Dawson City, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 2014), 69.

¹⁴ Cornelius Osgood, *The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 11.



Map 2.2. Traditional Territories of the Yukon First Nations. Yukon Territorial Government. August 2013.

tools, medicine, trade items, and the maintenance of culture and traditions).¹⁵ During seasonal rounds, the Hwëch'in travelled over their traditional territory, returning to the same places annually.¹⁶ Before Dawson became a city, the swampy grounds and marsh land of the area made it a popular moose pasture.¹⁷ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's seasonal rounds revolved around the Yukon River and the summer salmon run especially, as this was the time of most abundance for them. Their dependence on rivers led to the Hwëch'in developing semi-permanent, seasonal villages and permanent buildings such as moss houses and dwellings at fish camps.¹⁸ One of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's most important seasonal camps was Tro'chëk, at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon Rivers, where they lived, hunted, and fished at different times throughout the year. Tro'chëk, pictured below, was a base camp for moose-hunting expeditions into the Klondike valley.¹⁹

In autumn, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in prepared for winter by coming together in large groups to catch and preserve food, especially fish from the last of the summer chum salmon run. Women and children picked berries and stored them in birch bark baskets sewn closed with spruce roots and placed them in holes on the ground to preserve the berries indefinitely. Women also spent a significant portion of this season sewing winter clothes. Autumn was also hunting time, and preparing for hunts occupied much of the band's time.²⁰ For the autumn hunt, the whole group migrated inland, upstream along the

¹⁵ Manfred Hoefs, *Yukon's Hunting History* (Whitehorse: AMBOCA Ecological Services, 2017), 10.

¹⁶ Dawson Indian Band, *Hän Indians: People of the River* (Dawson: Dawson Indian Band, 1988), 4 (YA PAM 1988-0088 C.2).

¹⁷ Chris Clarke and the K'anacha Group, *Tr'ehuhch'in Nawtr'udaha: Finding Our Way Home* (Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 2009), 8. A literal moose pasture, not in the mining industry use of the term "moose pasture."

¹⁸ Dawson Indian Band, 6.

¹⁹ Dobrowolsky, 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

Yukon River tributaries to construct and repair caribou corrals. The confluence of the Fortymile and Yukon rivers was important for caribou, as this location was one of the major fall river crossing points of the Forty Mile herd.²¹ Twelve Mile was another important site, located thirty-two kilometers south of Dawson, as it was on a caribou migration route and had a natural moose pasture.²²

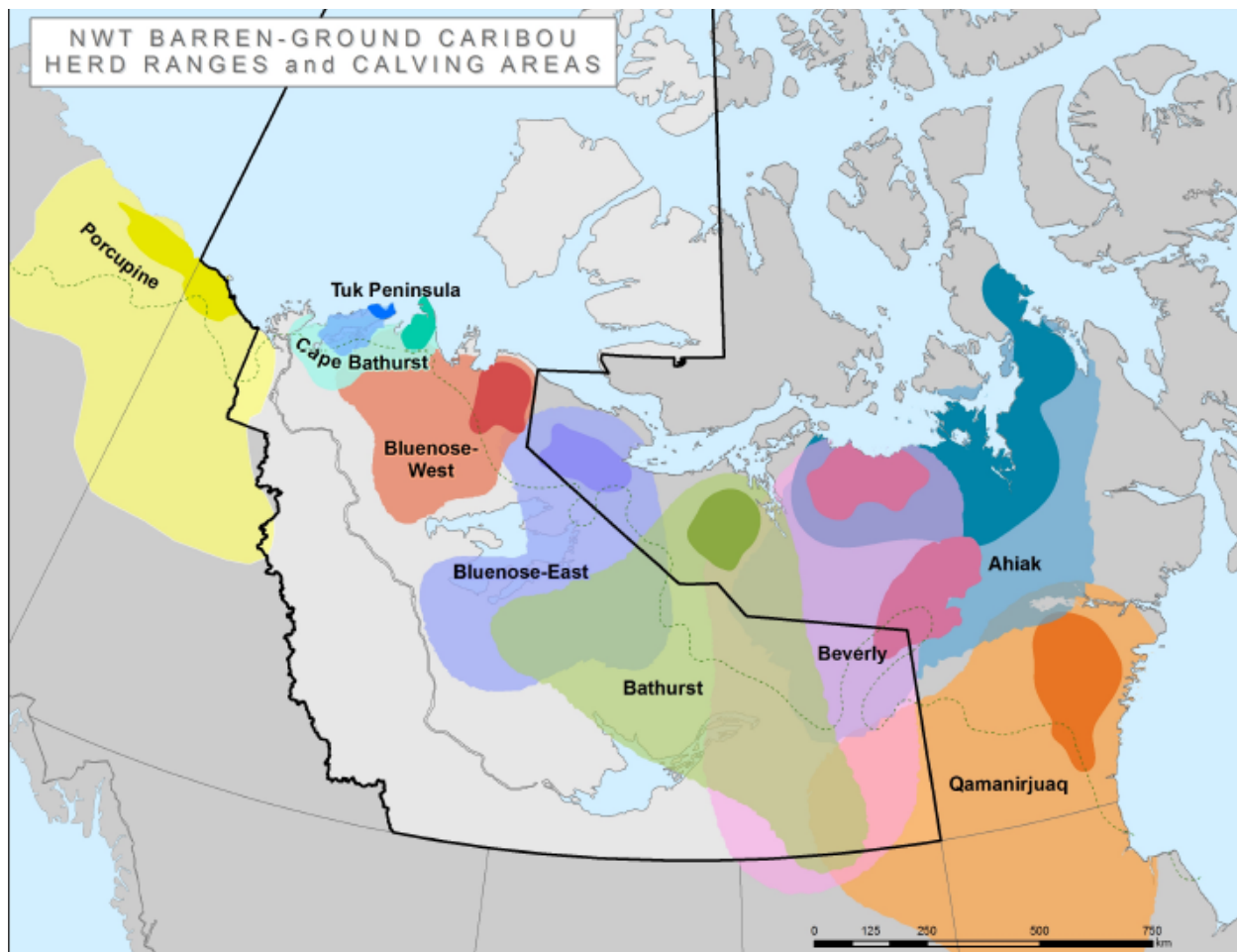


Image 2.2. Caribou Herds in NWT and Yukon. Brenda Parlee, John Sandlos and David Natcher, “Undermining subsistence: Barren-ground caribou in a “tragedy of open access,” *Science Advances* (2018):2.

Until the 20th century, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in also travelled from the Yukon River up the Chandalar River or the North Klondike into the present-day Tombstone Territorial

²¹ Thomas Hammer and Christian Thomas, *Archaeology at Forty Mile/Ch’ëdä Dëk* (Whitehorse, 2006), 1.

²² THA Twelve Mile History.

Park area during the fall hunt.²³ The Blackstone Uplands was also an important site for the Hwëch'in. In fall, they went to Black City, a settlement located near the Blackstone River along the Porcupine caribou herd migration route (highlighted in yellow in the above image), for hunting and to fish whitefish. The men went to hunt, and on their return, they all worked to cache their catch for winter use. The primary hunting techniques, prior to trade engagement with non-Indigenous peoples, were spears and bows and arrows. Men carved and smoothed out birch bows about five feet long. These bows had only a slight curve and were strung with sinew approximately eighteen inches to two feet long. They also made arrow heads, about five inches long, from caribou horn or bone.²⁴ The Blackstone Uplands was a space pivotal to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relations with neighbours



Image 2.3. Forty Mile herd crossing the Yukon river, c.1900. YA, Claude B. Tidd Coll #7038.

²³ The Takudh Gwitchin and the Teet'it Gwich'in also used the area. Aside from hunting, Tombstone was a site of gatherings for trade and socialization.

²⁴ Cornelius Osgood, *The Hän Indians: A Compilation of Ethnographic and Historical Data on the Alaska-Yukon Boundary Area* (New Haven: Yale University, 1971), 70.

to the north of Dawson and many Gwich'in from Blackstone travelled to Dawson in winter to sell caribou meat staying at Moosehide. After Black City was abandoned in 1927, many Gwich'in people settled in Moosehide.²⁵

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in moved further inland from the Yukon River for the winter caribou hunt.²⁶ The larger groups broke into smaller groups, usually family units, and prepared for the winter.²⁷ They followed the Forty Mile caribou herd and the Porcupine herd during their winter migrations.²⁸ Caribou was the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's most valuable game resource. Starvation was a real threat if the caribou population decreased or if their migration patterns changed.²⁹ In the *Moosehide Oral History* project from 1994, elder and former Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in chief Percy Henry recounted a story about a chief who separated a large gathering into smaller groups and sent them to different areas so there would be enough game for everyone and so it would not upset the balance of game in each location.³⁰ The Hwëch'in of Dawson and Eagle, Alaska hunted together, gathering at a caribou fence, or caribou corral, in the mountains in Chicken, Alaska, west of Tro'chëk where caribou passed. Building the caribou fence was typically a group endeavour with

²⁵ THA Black City, 1. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in negotiated the establishment of Tombstone Park to help protect the cultural and natural heritage of their ancestors so that future generations could maintain these ties to the land.

²⁶ Dawson Indian Band, 4-6.

²⁷ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 4.

²⁸ Dawson First Nation, *Kentra Tay Newsletter*, August 1995.

²⁹ Dawson Indian Band, 7.

³⁰ Developmental Studies Program, *Moosehide: An Oral History* (Dawson: Yukon College, 1994), 28. Percy Henry was born in 1927 near the Ogilvie River and grew up with his six sisters and five brothers in the Blackstone Uplands. His parents were Joe and Annie Henry, well known and well respected Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens from the Peel River region. They moved to Moosehide in 1935. Percy was chief from 1968 to 1974. He is one of the last fluent speakers of the Hän language, is active in cultural activities within the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community and was a primary participant in the 1970s during Yukon land claims negotiations. Kim Sigafus and Lyle Ernst, *Wisdom from Our Elders* (Toronto: Second Story Press, 2015), 23-29.

multiple families helping. Once constructed the fences were often permanent structures repaired when necessary.³¹

Caribou fences were large (generally around 1.5 kilometres long and 2 meters wide), open-ended structures they used to funnel animals into a corral so they were together and could be easily killed. When caribou arrived near camp, the hunters worked together to drive the caribou into the fence by howling like wolves and waving their arms while chasing the caribou near the fence. Once a part of the herd was corralled into the fence, the hunters snared or speared the caribou.³² It was a community effort to skin and butcher caribou, but it was primarily the women who cut, dried, and stored the meat near the site of the kill in high caches.³³ When they went moose hunting in winter the whole village went, and they built portable dome houses or returned to permanent moss houses.³⁴ By the early 1890s, after they began trading with non-Indigenous people for metal tools, the Hwëch'in began building log cabins. There were log cabins in Tro'chëk by the early 1890s before the arrival of gold seekers.³⁵

In spring, animals began to emerge from winter dens and birds returned north. Percy Henry explained that after spring break-up, the various family units travelled along the rivers to the mouth of the White River and met up with Northern Tutchone and Tanana people for potlatch ceremonies.³⁶ In late spring and early summer, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

³¹ Catharine McClellan, *Part of the Land, Part of the Water: A History of Yukon Indians* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1987), 119.

³² *Ibid.*, 119-120.

³³ THA Black City file, 3.

³⁴ The Hän had three main types of shelter according to season. The moss house was the most substantial and served as permanent dwellings in the coldest part of the year. The second was the winter travelling house. It was somewhat elongated, hemispherical and skin-covered, with a smoke hole in the middle. The third was a lighter variation of this one, with no smoke hole and lighter covering for summer. Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 84-88.

³⁵ Dobrowolsky, 7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.



Image 2.4. King Salmon, 1898. DCMA 1994.255.31.

families would meet in groups of twenty to fifty people at fish camps along the banks of the Yukon River, at Forty Mile, and Twelve Mile, and prepared canoes, fish

nets, weirs, and repaired semi-permanent homes at fish camps in preparation for the summer salmon run.³⁷ The summer salmon run was an essential source of food for the Hwëch'in, and Tro'chëk was their primary salmon settlement. Chinook, or king, and chum salmon were the two species that migrated into the Yukon River each year, with chinook arriving from mid-June to early August and chum from August to October.³⁸ Salmon was not the only fish the Hwëch'in caught; each spring, until the 1930s, they gathered at Forty Mile (Ch'ëdä Dëk) to fish for grayling, but salmon was the most important fish and a vital

³⁷ Some traditional fishing sites the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had used for thousands of years include Tr'ochëk, Moosehide, Twelve Mile and Forty Mile. Winton, 10.

³⁸ Five types of salmon are chinook, chum, sockeye, coho, and pink. Chum salmon was explicitly used to feed sled dogs. Ibid., 6.

food source (for both humans and dogs) for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in for thousands of years as it was a reliable source of sustenance that, once dried, could last for most of the year.³⁹

In the early 1920s, ethnographer Cornelius Osgood spent a year living among various Athapaskan groups in the Canadian subarctic. He published an account of his research and observations in 1936 and a second book specifically about the Hän in 1971.⁴⁰ Osgood provided a detailed description of traditional Hän fishing techniques dating from the late 1880s described to him by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people. The two most common types of fishing gear were dipnets and fish weir traps. Dipnets are large, netted bags approximately five feet deep and three feet wide attached to a sturdy pole. Fishing with dipnets was a collaborative effort. The technique required erecting a stage along the river bank and a watchman would stand on this stage watching the water for salmon. When he saw salmon approaching, the watchman gave notice to men who then launched their canoes away from the bank holding the dipnets in the water. Once salmon entered the net, the men pulled it from the water and stabbed each fish with a knife or hit it with a club. Dipnets were used primarily for king salmon, which could weigh between 45-50 pounds. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in also used a fish spear for king salmon, though this method was less common than the dipnet.⁴¹

Fish weir traps, shown below in image 2.6, were the other widely used fishing technique among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Charlie Isaac, one of Chief Isaac's sons, told Jim Robb in a 1970s interview that his parents told him that Hwëch'in men used fish weir traps

³⁹ Ibid., 16.

⁴⁰ Cornelius Osgood, *The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936); Osgood, *The Hän Indians: A Compilation of Ethnographic and Historical Data on the Alaska-Yukon Boundary Area* (New Haven: Yale University, 1971). Osgood was Curator of Anthropology at the Yale Peabody Museum from 1934 to 1973. Best known for his ethnographic fieldwork among Athabaskan groups in the subarctic, he also did field work in Connecticut, China and Korea.

⁴¹ Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 66.



Image 2.5. First Nations Fish Trap, 1898. DCMA 1970.2.1.60.

on side
streams
of the
Yukon
River.
Charlie
explained
that a fish
weir was
a line (or
a fence)
set across

the river (the Klondike, in his memory) with a small opening to direct the passage of fish into strategically placed baskets. When the fish were in the baskets, the men would spear them.⁴² Osgood provided further details in his account of fish weirs. Hwëch'in fishers made the basket-shaped frame of the trap from birch wood or willow tied together with spruce-root line, and they used line cut from bull caribou skins to weave the net attached to the frame.⁴³ These traps caught other species of salmon as well as other varieties of fish weighing between fifteen to eighteen pounds. The line was set across the stream, with baskets attached with their openings facing the current upstream and set up in front of the angles of the weir. The fish swimming upstream would be swung sideways at the weir and turned back into the trap. A second weir trap method was reported, in which the weir was

⁴² YA, Jim Robb Collection, SR6_1_A1 [Interview with Charlie Isaac by Jim Robb] c.1970.

⁴³ Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 66- 68.

strung along the stream in a straight line with no angles and the basket trap was placed at an opening in the weir against the current.⁴⁴ Fish weirs were common fishing technologies employed by Indigenous fishers along the Pacific Northwest, but dipnets appear to be a more Yukon-specific technique, though after the 1910s in most areas these technologies decreased in use as Indigenous fishers were influenced by regulations imposed by the Canadian Department of Fisheries and new technologies of the commercial fishery.⁴⁵ Even with these pressures, Henry Harper of Moosehide reported in 1932 that fish weir traps remained the most widely used method among Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fishers.⁴⁶

Osgood claimed that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relied so heavily on salmon that the amount of hunting they did was “inversely proportional to the amount of salmon available.”⁴⁷ Salmon was important to their diet and health but were also part of Hwëch'in cultural life.⁴⁸ Elder Gerald Isaac, Chief Isaac's son, described an important event that happened around the arrival of king salmon each year in June and July. He said that when the first salmon were spotted coming up the Yukon River, all the families who gathered together celebrated by dancing, singing, and feasting. Gerald explained that the arrival of salmon was so important because, after the winter, it brought life back to the community.⁴⁹

While men were occupied with salmon fishing in the summer season, women were equally as busy, if not more so. They cut all the fish into strips and hung them to dry and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁵ In her study of Indigenous peoples and the fishery in British Columbia, Dianne Newell discussed techniques used among B.C. Indigenous fishers including fish weirs, nets, and spears, but she mentioned that dipnets were not traditionally used in B.C. According to Newell, fisheries regulations began having an impact on Indigenous people along the B.C. coast almost immediately after the beginning of the commercial fishery in 1870. Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18-22; 33-38; 89.

⁴⁶ Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 69.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Winton, 1.

⁴⁹ Developmental Studies Program, *Moosehide: An Oral History* (Dawson City: Yukon College, 1994), 37.

smoke on racks over fire.⁵⁰ During this time, women picked berries and tanned moose and caribou skins that were killed and cached during the winter hunt. In summer travel was relatively easy and socialization was more frequent than in the winter months. Indigenous groups of the upper Yukon and central Alaska visited and set up meetings for potential marriage partners.⁵¹

Yukon First Nations groups distinguished between themselves by social structure more so than language, with the immediate family serving as the basic, traditional economic unit.⁵² An important part of early Athapaskan culture was the sibs and moieties system. Matrilineal lineage groups meant that an individual had to marry outside of his/her own group.⁵³ This kin system, formed through marriage, was an ideal way of insuring the presence of kinsmen wherever a group traveled during seasonal rounds, widening possible hunting areas. Furthermore, kinsmen offered hospitality and protection when travelling for potlatches or trade.⁵⁴

John Semple of the Teetł'it Gwich'in, referred to locally as the Peel River People, arrived in Moosehide while Osgood was living and studying there and provided the names of Hän clans.⁵⁵ There were three exogamous matrilineal clans among the Hän referred to as Proud People, People Who Act Funny, and Middle People.⁵⁶ At the time of Cornelius

⁵⁰ Dobrowolsky, 3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8. Sigafus and Ernst describe the arranged marriage between Joe and Annie Henry in 1921 in Moosehide. They did not know each other until the marriage day but remained married for 82 years until Joe's death in 2002. They were entered in the *Guinness World Records* in 2000 for the longest marriage in history. Sigafus and Ernst, 24-25.

⁵² Dawson Indian Band.

⁵³ Sally Robinson, "The Hän: A History of Change 1847-1910." (KHL First Nations – Hän), 6.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 8.

⁵⁵ Semple was born in 1888 and he had lived in the Klondike region in the period immediately after the Gold Rush.

⁵⁶ Exogamous means that marriage was allowed only outside of one's own social group. Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 40.

Osgood's first study of the Northern Athapaskans in 1932 he claimed that the clan system had disappeared, however traces of the early social structure had not completely disappeared as it was common for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples into the 1940s to marry outside of their band. Elders in Dawson today recall that many people living in Moosehide until the move to Dawson in the 1950s married people from the Peel River and Blackstone areas. In fact, marriage between different groups remained so common that in Moosehide, and in Dawson today, some members of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation are originally from the Peel River area.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's focus on river life meant they were more sedentary than most neighbouring peoples; in fact, they were one of the few Yukon groups to develop semi-permanent villages, such as Tr'ochëk and Moosehide. However, even with semi-permanent villages, they moved around seasonally, returning to villages along their routes. Because of their migration, the Hwëch'in did not accumulate and move around items that were easily replaceable at the next camp or village.⁵⁷ Only items of ceremonial or cultural significance "such as copper tools and weapons, medicine pouches, and amulets of shamans were kept and handed down to succeeding generations."⁵⁸ For the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, heritage was rooted in the landscape and in oral tradition.

They had a spiritually rich storytelling, dancing and singing tradition. Early H.B.C. fur traders knew them as the *gens de fou* (people of passions) for their elaborate dances and songs.⁵⁹ Elders and the chief were custodians of culture, keeping alive the stories, songs,

⁵⁷ Dawson Indian Band, 6.

⁵⁸ Yukon Government, "Searching for our Heritage: A Review of Artifact Collections Outside of the Yukon" August 1989 (THA Han - Bibliographical Resources), 3.

⁵⁹ Various scholars mention the term "gens de fous" used by fur traders as a positive descriptor of Hän people and their culture. John Bockstoe, *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North: The Contest among Native and Foreign Nations for the Bering Strait Fur Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 209. David Neufeld, "Parks Canada, The Commemoration of Canada, and Northern Aboriginal Oral History" in *Oral*

and dances of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Their most important tools were these stories and the knowledge handed down through generations from elders, for it was this knowledge that supplied them with the know-how to live off the land.⁶⁰ Education was primarily centered on learning to survive and thrive on the land. Children were taught how to travel through a vast terrain, how to identify places most likely to provide fish, game, edible plants, and other useful resources. They learned to make the things they needed for survival, such as shelter, clothes, weapons, tools, storage containers, and modes of transportation. Children also learned how to behave within the social world around them.

Elder Percy Henry reported that dance, song, and the drum were crucial to the traditional ways and in praying to the Creator. When they went hunting and fishing they held ceremonies with song and dance to thank the Creator for their harvest and to show respect and value for natural resources.⁶¹ Hwëch'in traditional society relied on cooperation and mutual support with each other and with the natural world. People who disrespected the rules of behaviour in showing respect to the land and animals could jeopardize success of a hunt or fish catch. As Yukon historian Dobrowolsky explained, "The unwritten code of *dä'ole* laid out the proper procedures for hunting and fishing with respect for the land and its animals, thereby ensuring the land would continue to provide."⁶²

History and public Memories, ed. Paula Hamilton and Linda Slopes (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008): 16. Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 152.

⁶⁰ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 4.

⁶¹ Yukon First Nations Elders' Council, *Walking Together: Words of the Elders from the Elders' Council Assembly* (Whitehorse, 1993), 137.

⁶² Helene Dobrowolsky, *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in: The Changing Nature of Leadership, Governance and Justice* (Dawson City: Midnight Arts, 2008), 5.

One of Osgood's informants was a Hän man from Eagle, who described how the arrival of the first salmon was celebrated. They would boil the first fish (usually a king salmon) caught each year and share the broth with everyone except for nursing or menstruating females. People in Moosehide reported to Osgood that the man who caught the first king salmon gave everyone a small piece of the fish in celebration of fresh fish after having eaten dried fish all winter.⁶³ When children made their first fish or first hunt the band celebrated with a feast.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in generally had good relations with neighbouring Indigenous groups. Disputes between groups were negotiated between leaders. If both parties agreed that one group "had been wronged by a member of another group, justice was exacted by either retribution or compensation."⁶⁴ Former Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Darren Taylor reported that if someone was a hindrance in the community, or endangered other people by their behaviour, that individual could be sent away to live alone on the land for a period of time before they were invited back into the community.⁶⁵

These good relations with neighbouring Indigenous tribes meant that cultural celebrations with other Indigenous groups was an important part of Hwëch'in culture. The potlatch in particular was an act of diplomacy, but also a way for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to meet and visit with their kin across the North, especially after the international boundary was implemented in 1887. Anthropologist William Simeone's *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads: Identity, History, and the Northern Athapaskan Potlatch* explores the potlatch as practised by the Tanacross people (Athapaskan-speakers in the Upper Tanana Region of east-central

⁶³ Osgood, *The Hän Indians*, 54.

⁶⁴ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 23.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 24.

Alaska), though he says it is likely much of this ceremony was shared by Northern Athapaskans living in the Alaskan interior and west Yukon Territory, including the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.⁶⁶ The western interior subarctic potlatch ceremonies were similar to those celebrated by Indigenous groups elsewhere along the Northwest Coast.⁶⁷ The potlatch is a sacred ceremony with a public distribution of gifts and a feast to commemorate a special event in one's life such as a first hunt, a return from a long absence, or to honour someone. They are also held for a birth or following a death. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder 'Gramma' Mary McLeod stated the Hwëch'in most commonly held potlatch when someone died, but also to celebrate visiting with other Indigenous groups. For example, she recalled that "Long time ago McPherson bunch would come to Moosehide every summer. When we have big potlatch sometimes it lasts one week."⁶⁸ Percy Henry believed that the Moosehide Gathering held at Moosehide in the summer of 1993 was the first potlatch there since 1918.⁶⁹

Prior to cultural exchange with non-Indigenous newcomers, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in swapped and shared elements of culture with other Indigenous groups.⁷⁰ In a 1994 oral history interview, Titus David from Tetlin, Alaska recalled stories from the early days,

⁶⁶ William Simeone, *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads: Identity, History, and the Northern Athapaskan Potlatch* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), xvii.

⁶⁷ Historians have studied widely the potlatch, or aspects of the potlatch, with considerable attention given to British Columbia. Some works include Paige Raimon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Ken Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004); Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 1999); Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric

in B.C., 1884-1951" in *The Canadian Historical Review* 73,2 (1992): 1-26.; JR Miller, "Owen Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy" in *Ethnohistory* 37,4 (Autumn, 1990): 386-415.

⁶⁸ THA, (Gramma) Mary McLeod, 17.

⁶⁹ Percy Henry, "Alaska Oral History: Interview with Titus David in Tetlin, AK" February 17 1994 (YA PAM 1994-80), 4. "McPherson bunch" refers to the Gwich'in from Fort McPherson.

⁷⁰ I use the term "newcomers" to describe the individuals and groups of European background who colonized Indigenous homelands around the globe.

when the Moosehide and Dawson people would travel to Tetlin to have a potlatch. David said “We [Tetlin people] have no dance, we find dance from Dawson and Moosehide.” In his own lifetime, he remembered the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in bringing their songs and drums to share in Tetlin. As of 1994 in Tetlin, David said, they continued to sing the Moosehide songs, although they did not know what they meant, because they were in the Hän language and the Upper Tanana in Tetlin spoke a Tetlin dialect of Athapaskan.⁷¹

As discussed above, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in had strong relationships with other Indigenous groups throughout the Yukon, the NWT, and Alaska, and spent much time between the Yukon and Eagle, Alaska. When Russia sold Alaska to the United States in 1867, the international boundary split the Hän population into two camps – one in Dawson, YT and the other in Eagle, Alaska. The international border along the 141st longitude bisects natural environments which have been home to Indigenous peoples for generations. The Yukon-Alaska border meets at the base of the Alaskan Panhandle and borders British Columbia and the Yukon. Initially, the boundary was not enforced, and certainly was not impressed upon Indigenous inhabitants. As Ted Binnema has described, the 49th parallel which separated the United States and Canada remained largely irrelevant for many years after its implementation.⁷² Similarly, the Yukon-Alaska boundary was more symbolic than functional in the first few decades, with no real enforcement until the Klondike Gold Rush began. Trading continued across the border until 1887 with a small gold rush in Forty Mile (called Ch’ëdä Dëk, “creek of leaves” referring to Fortymile River in the Hän language). George Dawson and William Ogilvie, a geologist and surveyor, respectively, with the

⁷¹ Percy Henry, 5.

⁷² Ted Binnema, "The Case for Cross-National and Comparative History: The Northwestern Plains as Bioregion," *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-Ninth Parallel*, ed. Sterling Evans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 18.

Canadian Geographical Survey, surveyed the Alaska-Yukon boundary area and reported mineral potential in the region. During their survey, they placed the first boundary markers in the winter of 1887 and 1888 and it cut right through Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory, and both Canadian and American governments agreed Indigenous peoples should chose which nationality they would prefer to belong to.⁷³

However, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued to cross the international border following caribou herds, especially once resources depleted on one side of the border or the other.⁷⁴ A Vuntut Gwitchin man, Charlie Thomas, stated that, "no border [was enforced] for Indians in them days. [People] moved back and forth, no customs. A policeman was there in New Rampart- but they didn't bother the Indians."⁷⁵ Clara Tizya, another Vuntut Gwitchin, said that for a long time after the boundary was marked out, Indigenous Yukoners largely ignored it. They just continued hunting and trapping as they had previously.⁷⁶ Once the Klondike began, the American and Canadian Norths were formally monitored by law enforcement in the areas in which stampeders crossed from Alaska into Canada via the Chilkoot Pass.⁷⁷

In his examination of the Alaska-Yukon borderland, geographer Michael Pretes argued, "In many respects, this border is the least visible, the least obvious, perhaps the

⁷³ Victor Konrad and Heather Nicol, *Beyond Walls: Re-Inventing the Canada-United States Borderlands* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 258-260.

⁷⁴ Konrad and Nicol, 74. Shelia McManus discusses how the Blackfoot continued to move across the Alberta-Montana borders quite easily in "Making the Forty-Ninth Parallel: How Canada and the United States Used Space, Race, and Gender to Turn Blackfoot Country into Alberta-Montana Borderlands" in *One West, Two Myths: A Comparative Reader*, Carol Higham and Robert Thacker, eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 109-132.

⁷⁵ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, *People of the lakes: Stories of our Van Tut Gwich'in Elders/Googwandak Nakhwach'anjoo Van Tat Gwich'in* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 241.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 241-242.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 260.

least real of all the American-Canadian frontier zones."⁷⁸ This statement erases the history of Indigenous cross border relations in the Yukon and Alaska. In their study of the Dene, Berkes and Berkes argued that Dene social organization was in relation to caribou migration patterns which influenced their movement, kinship and marriage practises within the range of migration (for the Dene this was along the subarctic belt of northern Canada from Manitoba to the Alaskan border).⁷⁹ Predating the border, the Hwëch'in also followed the migration pattern of caribou herds. Aside from resource harvesting, the international border imposed an arbitrary separation between the Hwëch'in that had impacts socially and culturally. The experience of the Blackfoot in western Canada is similar to the Hwëch'in experience in the Yukon in that, like the Hwëch'in, the Blackfoot were divided by an international boundary along the 49th parallel. Though they continued to move back and forth, eventually they had to settle on one side or the other as citizens (or "wards of the state" in Canada).⁸⁰ When the border between the Yukon and Alaska was implemented and the Hwëch'in were forced to chose which country they would be residents of, they held a grieving potlatch for loss of connection to family and land. They sang and mourned for three days and, believing they would not see each other again, many people cut off their hair.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Michael Pretes, "Northern Frontiers: Political Development and Policy Making in Alaska and the Yukon," in *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations*, ed. Robert Lecker (Toronto: ECW Press, 1991), 310.

⁷⁹ Mina Berkes and Fikret Berkes, "Subsistence Hunting of Wildlife in the Canadian North," *Northern Eden: Community-based wildlife management in Canada*, Leslie Treseder, Jamie Honda-McNeil, Mina Berkes, Fikret Berkes, Joe Dragon, Claudia Notzke, Tanja Schramm, and Robert Hudson eds. (Canadian Circumpolar Press, 1999): 25-26

⁸⁰ Shelia McManus, "Making the Forty-Ninth Parallel: How Canada and the United States Used Space, Race, and Gender to Turn Blackfoot Country into Alberta-Montana Borderlands" in *One West, Two Myths: A Comparative Reader*, ed. Carol Higham and Robert Thacker (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004): 109-132.

⁸¹ Developmental Studies Program, *Moosehide: An Oral History* (Dawson: Yukon College, 1994), 31.

Percy Henry recalled a story passed down to him from Moosehide elders when he was a child about the grieving potlatch, which he called a sorrow dance. Percy said,

When they heard the boundary's going through, I guess they really got nervous, uptight about it. They thought what really going to happen is separate them forever. They not going to see one another ever again. [...] So they had a big gather at Moosehide and so that's last big dance, Indian dance they had. And then when they gathered here, you see what they do, they make a fire, eh. [...] And that fire never go out 'til it's finished, probably to the end. And these dancers got to go on until the last man stand. [...] That's a real sorrow dance, eh? That's when they have that kind of dance, that's really, really from their heart and they weren't themselves.⁸²

Though they could still cross the border after this, the boundary created a separation of Hwëch'in people and it impacted their ability to sustain themselves off the land. The Hän were not only separated from each other by the boundary, but they were also later separated from their ancestral lands and villages by the influx of stampeders in Forty Mile, the Klondike, and Alaska.⁸³ Another process that brought change to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in happened congruently with the boundary was their engagement and interaction with non-Indigenous fur traders beginning in the 1840s.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the Fur Trade, 1840 to 1890

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experienced economic and social change long before the Klondike Gold Rush and before sustained contact with Euro-Canadians. In her social history of the Klondike Gold Rush, historian Charlotte Gray claimed they were "canny traders" who dominated the commerce in fox, bear, and lynx furs with the Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.) for years.⁸⁴ According to Hudson's Bay Company (H.B.C.) trader

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Craig Mishler and William Simeone, *Hän: People of the River* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), xxii-xxiii.

⁸⁴ Charlotte Gray, *Gold Diggers: Striking it Rich in the Klondike* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2010), 8.

Alexander Hunter Murray, the Hän population was approximately 230 in 1840, the largest population in the area, which has been attributed to living in a salmon-rich territory.⁸⁵ The size of their population helped in establishing the Hän as intermediaries in an extensive trade network of Indigenous groups stretching across coastal and southeast Alaska into the Yukon interior which allowed them to acquire European goods without ever encountering Europeans. Within these Indigenous trade systems, caribou, salmon, sheep and goat skins, ochre, flint, obsidian, and copper were commonly traded items between coastal and inland Indigenous peoples.⁸⁶ The Gwich'in and the Tlingit also brought items such as kettles, knives and blankets, which they had traded with European traders for fur, therefore, long before the arrival of outsiders within Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory, their economy experienced changes.⁸⁷ Hunter Murray was the first non-Indigenous man to publish his documented meetings with the Hän in a 1910 publication, though his writing dates from 1849, in which he alludes to the Indigenous trade network when he references dentalium shells used for personal adornment, which were available only on coastal areas.⁸⁸

Indigenous peoples relied on fur-bearing animals long before the European-based fur trade began. Yukon First Nations trapped beaver, for example, for meat and for its hide. However, the fur trade is important to the history of the North for a variety of reasons. It brought people from other regions and other countries into the North and it linked

⁸⁵ Alexander Hunter Murray, *Journal of the Yukon 1847-48* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1910), 82. Murray refers to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as the "Han-Kootchin (gens du fou)" as the largest band. He further comments that the Han occupy a wide expanse of the Yukon, from the Porcupine River to the Peel, to the River of the Mountain Men, and visit Russians on the coast for trade.

⁸⁶ Yukon Government, *Searching for our Heritage*, 2.

⁸⁷ Helene Dobrowolsky and Rob Ingram, *Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine Historic Site Interpretation Plan* (Dawson City: Midnight Arts, 2007), 18.

⁸⁸ Dawson Indian Band, 8. Dentalium shells "derive from short, tusk-shaped mollusks found in the waters off the Northwest Coast." They are symbols of wealth and prestige that were valued by Athapaskan groups in Alaska and the Yukon. Simeone, *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads*, 54. Hunter Murray, 71. Hunter Murray also married an Indigenous woman.

Indigenous peoples to European economies. This connection typically had greater benefits for Europeans than for Indigenous peoples.⁸⁹ Though Indigenous peoples welcomed the fur trade, at first, and gained access to new technologies and raw materials, they also faced disease, game depletion, and considerable socioeconomic change.⁹⁰ For example, the fur trade brought prosperity for a short period of time, but after 1870 with expanding non-Indigenous presence in the territory, it also created shifts in Hwëch' in economic activities away from hunting and gathering to a trapping and trading system in which they increasingly depended on imported goods. To obtain trade goods, Indigenous Yukoners began to spend more time trapping fur-bearing animals and treating hides, when trading posts were established people were usually drawn to these areas and began spending more time near them and less time on hunting trips for caribou.⁹¹

In her discussion of the Yukon fur trade, Julie Cruikshank identifies three phases of trade. The first was pre-1840 Indigenous trade networks based on cultural understandings that had developed over generations of trade and interaction. The second was the 1840s and the arrival of the first white traders to the Yukon with the H.B.C., causing some changes to longstanding patterns of Indigenous trade, though largely adopting Indigenous methods of trade. Finally, the third phase was the 1870s with the arrival of independent American traders into the Yukon River Valley who brought different ideas about how best to conduct trade that clashed with the older Indigenous systems.⁹²

⁸⁹ Julie Cruikshank, *Reading Voices/Dan Dha Ts'edeninthe'e: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), 77.

⁹⁰ Kenneth Coates, *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1985), 50.

⁹¹ Dobrowolsky and Ingram, 18. John R. Crow and Philip R. Obley, "Han," in *The Handbook of Northern American Indians* ed. William Sturtevant (Washington: The Smithsonian Institute, 1981), 510.

⁹² Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 77.

Fur trade history has been a popular topic for scholars of Indigenous, economic, and Canadian histories and it has created much discussion about the ways in which Indigenous peoples acted and reacted in these events. Economic historian Harold Innis was the first to place Indigenous peoples in an active role in the fur trade in his *The Fur Trade in Canada*, though his focus was mostly on the economic history of the European business.⁹³ Arthur Ray's *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* examined the economic relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous traders and J.C. Yerbury specifically examined the subarctic fur trade in his work, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860*.⁹⁴ His work is most closely related to the impacts of the fur-trade in the Yukon. Yerbury explained that the fur trade influenced the structure of Athapaskan society since its beginning in 1680. For example, they altered previous harvesting activities to better meet demand, including new times for trapping, new technologies, and numbers of fur-bearers caught.⁹⁵

Indigenous women were usually excluded from these early economic studies, and feminist historians have written histories arguing that Indigenous women played crucial roles as intermediaries in the fur trade. Sylvia Van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties* and Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood* both argue that Indigenous women, rather than being exploited, played pivotal roles as leaders, especially through intermarriages with non-Indigenous traders and secured their positions as cultural mediators.⁹⁶

⁹³ Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁹⁴ Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). J.C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1986).

⁹⁵ Yerbury.

⁹⁶ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670-1870* (Chicago: Watson and Dwyer, 1999); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1980). Bruce White also discusses the intermediary role for women in the fur

Other histories have contributed to fur trade historiography. For example, in *Land of the Midnight Sun*, Ken Coates and William Morrison argue that the period of pre-contact to the fur trade era had not created major change in the Yukon, but there was great change to Indigenous economic and social life between the fur trade and industrial activity.⁹⁷ In *Best Left as Indians*, Ken Coates extends this argument stating that Indigenous Yukoners adapted to the various forms of European economic encroachment, focusing mostly on the fur trade and mining, through partaking in a mixed economy where they continued as hunters while also participating in white-dominated economic activities. He argues that fur trade society led to integration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Yukon, but with later mining, discrimination and exclusionist policies created segregation in towns and mining camps.⁹⁸ In *Drum Songs*, Kerry Abel briefly discusses the fur trade in her examination of Dene life, and argues that the Dene maintained old economies while becoming accustomed to the new, despite the fact that southern Canada and the North were "two independent economies, two very different societies, [with] a significant power imbalance."⁹⁹ Her work further demonstrates that northern Indigenous peoples have been straddling the line of two worlds for a very long time.

According to historian David Morrison, non-Indigenous men entered the Yukon in the late 1830s and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's first sustained contact with non-Indigenous people was in the 1840s when traders entered the region to establish trading posts for the

trade. Bruce White, "The Woman Who Married a Beaver: Trade Patterns and Gender Roles in the Ojibwa Fur Trade," in *Ethnohistory* 46,1 (Winter, 1999): 109-147.

⁹⁷ Ken Coates and William Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun, A History of the Yukon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 49.

⁹⁸ Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 73.

⁹⁹ Abel, *Drum Songs*, 203.

HB.C..¹⁰⁰ In the 1840s when European explorers, fur traders, and missionaries first came to the central Yukon the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in still followed the seasonal round; however, at this time they were beginning to incorporate European trade goods into their activities and lives. Trading companies, especially the HB.C., generally carried out a policy of as little disruption to Indigenous culture and trading styles as possible, as this approach was more effective and profitable.¹⁰¹ Indigenous trade centres were different than those important to Europeans because European traders followed conventional river routes, and did not walk to the centres where Indigenous trappers walked to trade.¹⁰² Working with Indigenous trappers in these inland areas allowed the HB.C. a wider expanse of harvesting lands. However, even with this policy, the fur trade still had lasting impacts on Indigenous culture.¹⁰³

Political philosophers John Dryzek and Oran Young's examination of colonialism in Alaska applies to the Yukon as well. They disagree with Coates and Morrison's view of the fur trade, at least that of the late 19th and early 20th century periods. They argue that the most obvious element of internal colonialism is the degree of economic dependence that characterizes remote northern communities. Some of this dependence began with the earliest contact with fur traders, whalers, and miners, but, the authors argue, more common forms of economic dependence in the North were an outgrowth of late 19th and early 20th century social transformation. Economic dependence occurred alongside a decline of

¹⁰⁰ David Morrison, *The Politics of the Yukon Territory, 1898-1906* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968)

7. Even before traders arrived in the Yukon, scientists and ethnographic collectors travelled along the Mackenzie and Yukon Rivers. Robert Kennecott was the first scientific and ethnographic collector in the Yukon River basin in 1860 at Fort Yukon. Glenn Icton, "Profits, Prophets, and Profiteers: Local and Global Economies of Wildlife in the Northern Yukon 1860-1910" (University of Calgary: MA Thesis, 2009), 1.

¹⁰¹ Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 78.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 79.

traditional subsistence lifestyle of northern Indigenous peoples. In Alaska, two economic transitions particularly led to this decline. The first was the fur trade as an export economy controlled by Europeans (and later Americans and Canadians). Introducing a cash economy took attention away from subsistence harvesting to focus more time on fur harvesting. Further, the establishment of trading posts, which became focal points of permanent or semi-permanent settlements, gradually undermined the semi-migratory lifestyle of Alaskan Indigenous peoples. The second economic transition they identify is capital-intensification of subsistence activities. As Indigenous peoples used more advanced technologies for hunting and harvesting there was a depletion of stocks and the need to travel further to hunt successfully.¹⁰⁴ While the above studies offer important insights into the impacts of the fur-trade in the Yukon, literatures from other areas offer useful points of difference as well.

In *As Their Natural Resources Fail* historical geographer Frank Tough examines the industrialization process in northern Manitoba in the 1870s to 1930 and offers an alternative perspective on the fur trade. Tough is critical of scholars who have argued that the fur trade was in continuity from a subsistence economy. He argues that there was more continuity between the fur trade and industrial capitalism than between pre-contact activity and the fur trade and that the adjustment from subsistence hunting and trapping to an organized mercantile trade was a major challenge to northern Manitoban Indigenous populations; however, once adjusted to the mercantile concept of “work” it was much easier for Indigenous people to adapt to later industrial labour.¹⁰⁵ He further argues that

¹⁰⁴ John Dryzek and Oran Young, "Internal Colonialism in the Circumpolar North: The Case of Alaska" in *Development and Change* 16 (1985): 123-45.

¹⁰⁵ Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1996), 11.

economic colonialism took form during the fur trade years with Indigenous peoples of northern Manitoba under colonial authority of the H.B.C. and, because furs were an international staple commodity, they were dependent on the vagaries of external markets.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Tough argues that as mining and state involvement in the North expanded in the 1920s and 1930s, the bonds of economic colonialism loosened and Indigenous peoples had a smoother transition into the world of industrialism from the fur trade after having been involved in a mercantile economy for decades; he believes that industrial labour in fact offered more stability to Indigenous people in northern Manitoba than the fur trade did.¹⁰⁷

Toby Morantz disagrees with Tough's assessment, at least in the context of the Cree in northern Quebec. She argues that the Cree's 18th and 19th century fur trading relationship with the H.B.C. was mutually beneficial, but Canada's 20th century interest in administering its remote regions posed the greatest challenge to the Cree way of life. She explains this hardship through a discussion of bureaucratic colonialism - the imposition of administration from the South meant that the Cree had to confront a new set of foreigners whose ideas and plans were very different from those of fur traders they had worked with previously. In most cases, the new bureaucratic control from Ottawa imposed on these remote areas included efforts to completely alter Indigenous ways of life and encourage assimilation and integration into non-Indigenous Canadian society.¹⁰⁸

While Tough's theory applies to northern Manitoba, it does not fit as well with the experience of Indigenous Yukoners, especially his argument that mining and industrial

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 288.

¹⁰⁸ Toby Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha: The Colonial Challenge to the Cree in Quebec* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

capitalism offered more stability to Indigenous peoples. Instead, both Morantz' and Coates' arguments fit more closely with the Hwëch'in experience. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Three, but in short, the rapidity and scale of environmental and economic change resulting from mining in the Yukon at the turn of the 20th century far outweighed the experience of change related to the subarctic fur trade. While the pressure from the state to completely alter Indigenous ways of life was not as extreme in the Yukon as it was in northern Quebec, the Klondike Gold Rush and the four decades following it created a new environmental and social order in the Yukon to which the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had to adapt.

Before European fur traders arrived in the subarctic, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had been involved in an extensive Indigenous trade network. Though the focus of this trade network was not exclusively on furs, nor was it a mercantile system of trade, the concept of trading furs for European goods was not foreign to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. While it is likely that the largest influence of economic colonialism directly in Indigenous Yukoners' societies was the fur trade, other historians have argued that the biggest change that occurred as a result from the fur trade was shifts in Indigenous Yukoners' relationships with fur-bearing animals. In exchange for European goods, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traded an increasing amount of furs; as a result, life changed from a hunting and gathering existence to a trapping and trade system.¹⁰⁹ As competing traders came into the region, trapping shifted from use value of those furs to exchange value. Calvin Martin's *Keepers of the Game*, though problematic in some respects, was the first to argue that the relationship

¹⁰⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 12.

between Indigenous peoples and animals was altered as a result of the fur trade.¹¹⁰ In his Master's thesis, Glenn Icton focused on changes to Northern Athapaskan economy and material culture brought through the fur trade and other modes of exchange. Focusing on harvesting practises and uses of wildlife in both Hän and Gwich'in groups, Icton identified tension between subsistence and commodified uses of wildlife by Indigenous Yukoners. These tensions included the changes to Indigenous material culture and conflicts of authority concerning the harvesting and management of Yukon wildlife.¹¹¹ In a 1981 study on wildlife and conservation in Northern Canada conducted by the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council, author Ian McTaggart-Cowan argued that the fur trade began a revolution in Indigenous relationships to wildlife in the North. Accompanying the introduction of a trade economy was changes in residence patterns, disease, changes in hunting technology, depletion of some wildlife species, and a new perception of wildlife as commodifiable resources.¹¹² Accompanying changes in human-animal relationships, new technologies also contributed to changes in the trapping economy.

The shift from subsistence trapping to exchange trapping resulted in the Hwëch'in procuring European tools and implements from non-Indigenous traders, which changed the focus of subsistence harvesting. For example, as the rifle became more widely used, caribou corrals were no longer necessary to achieve a successful hunt and declined in use, which created changes in the structure of communal caribou hunting.¹¹³ Aside from

¹¹⁰ Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships in the Fur Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹¹¹ Icton.

¹¹² Ian McTaggart-Cowan, "Wildlife Conservation Issues in Northern Canada," *Canadian Environmental Advisory Council* No. 11 (Ottawa: October 1981): 3-6. George Colpitts is another scholar who has studied how western attitudes to wild animals changed according to subsistence and economic needs - including the fur trade - and how wildlife helped shape social relations in western Canada. George Colpitts, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2002).

¹¹³ Robinson, 11.

technology, other goods from the fur trade also altered the material culture of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well. Beads replaced quills, manufactured clothing and materials replaced animal-based clothing, and metal kettles replaced spruce root pots, and Indigenous Yukoners began building log houses.¹¹⁴

The social structure of the Hän remained mostly intact during this period of increasing pressure; however, it was altered in one significant way.¹¹⁵ Trading companies awarded the highest returning Indigenous traders with prestige items, such as dentalium shells, which were symbols of wealth and power. Unlike most property, these shells did not become communally owned or redistributed. Instead, the Indigenous men who received these items wore them as symbols of individual status.¹¹⁶ As Simeone argues, even though traders wished to disrupt Indigenous trapping methods as little as possible, their engagement in the commercial trade network drew Indigenous peoples into the capitalist-market, which began to alter ideas of collective versus individual status and wealth.¹¹⁷

The fur trade brought prosperity for a short period of time. In their involvement in the fur trade, the Hwëch'in remained an independent people providing for themselves while engaging in a new market of commodity exchange. They were able to maintain a position of pre-eminence in the regional economy up until the Klondike Gold Rush.¹¹⁸ The relationships the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in formed with various traders active in the Yukon allowed them to assert control over the extent and context of change in their own communities. Once an influx of 20,000-40,000 people rushed into the region throughout

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, 11.

¹¹⁶ Simeone, 55.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹¹⁸ Mishler and Simeone, *Hän, People of the River: Hän Hwëch'in An Ethnography and Ethnohistory* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 6-8.

the Klondike Gold Rush, it was much more difficult, and in some instances, impossible, for the Hwëch'in to maintain the same level of control over the extent of change to their communities and livelihoods. A brief examination of the Forty Mile Gold Rush demonstrates that mining itself did not necessarily create dramatic transformations of the local environment and Hwëch'in lives, but rather it was the scale and rapidity of the Klondike Gold Rush, the scope of mining activity, and the accompanying expansion of southern institutions and values that create remarkable change to the environment of the Yukon.

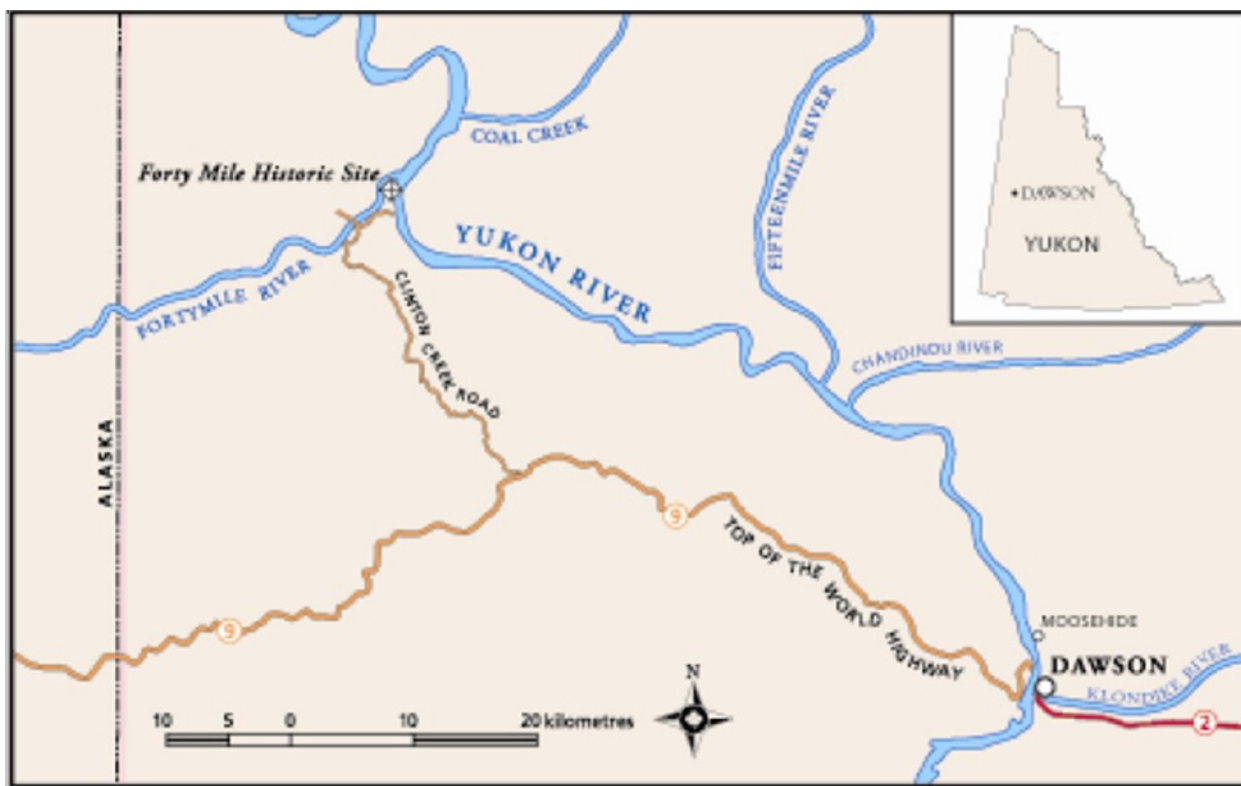
Mining in the Yukon, 1886-1896

Before the Klondike Gold Rush there were approximately 300 individuals mining in other areas of the Yukon. The most significant of these was Forty Mile, located at the confluence of the Yukon and Fortymile Rivers.¹¹⁹ As discussed above, this location was one of the fall migration routes of the Forty Mile caribou herd, a commonly used location for grayling and salmon, and it fell within the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. In 1886 two prospectors made the first significant gold discovery along the Fortymile River and the area was established as a small mining camp that same year where white prospectors, merchants, and trades gathered.¹²⁰ Indigenous locals took advantage of this mining community and sold meat and fish to the inhabitants of Forty Mile and engaged in trade with the Alaska Commercial Company, which had relocated its headquarters from Fort Reliance to Forty Mile in 1887.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Fortymile river is one word, where as the townsite is referred to as two words. This is the same for areas like Twelve Mile and Sixty Mile (and Twelvemile River and Sixtymile River).

¹²⁰ McClelland, 82.

¹²¹ Dobrowolsky and Ingram, 11.



Map 2.3 Map Indicating the Forty Mile Historic Site. Dobrowolsky and Ingram, *Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine Historic Site Interpretation Plan* (Dawson City: Midnight Arts, 2007), 3.

Forty Mile in 1886 was a microcosm of Dawson City in 1896. Many of the trends that worked to transform the social lives of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people in Dawson during the Klondike Gold Rush also occurred in Forty Mile though there were also important differences in the scale and rapidity of change that occurred at Forty Mile and later in the Klondike. Until the establishment of Forty Mile, H.B.C. traders and Church of England Missionaries were the main representatives from the Outside interacting with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples.¹²² Some miners and traders married Indigenous women – in some cases

¹²² Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 107. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s there were scientists coming into the Yukon and classifying and controlling land and resources but there was only limited interaction with local Indigenous populations.

they remained together throughout their lives, but more frequently, they abandoned the wives and any children once they left the area.¹²³ It was in Forty Mile that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in first met representatives of the Anglican church and the Dominion government who would come to strongly influence their lives in the coming decade.¹²⁴



Image 2.6. Forty Mile, c1901. DCMA 2006.33.1.51.

Forty Mile was the headquarters of the first Anglican mission on the Yukon River. Reverend John W. Ellington established the Buxton Mission and learned the Takudh Gwich'in language while he was there. After Ellington left the Yukon, Bishop William

¹²³ Dobrowolsky and Ingram, 17.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

Carpenter Bompas, a Church Missionary Society missionary with the Church of England arrived to Forty Mile in 1892 with his wife Charlotte Selina Bompas and Reverend Benjamin Totty.¹²⁵ Bompas and Charlotte Selina built a church and the first mission school for Indigenous Yukoners was the Buxton Mission school house operating between 1892 to 1901, which ran similarly to a residential school as Bompas and Selina took live-in students.¹²⁶ Soon after the school was established, Bompas feared the Indigenous peoples in Forty Mile would be negatively influenced by alcohol and gambling in the town and he relocated the Buxton Mission to Mission Island, a small island in the Fortymile River.¹²⁷

Forty Mile was not a cosmopolitan center, as Dawson became, but it reflected the steady increase in population in the region. By 1894 Forty Mile had two trading company stores, ten saloons, two restaurants, a theatre and an opera house, and several distilleries.¹²⁸ The presence of alcohol was worrisome to Bishop Bompas who undertook a campaign writing letters to the Dominion government beginning in 1893 requesting police presence in the Yukon to monitor and enforce the rules of the *Indian Act*, which made it illegal for Indigenous peoples to consume alcohol and for anyone to supply or sell them alcohol. Bompas' concern with Indigenous alcohol consumption is discussed in detail in Chapter Four. Bompas' attempts to bring federal authority to the Yukon largely went overlooked until the Dominion government feared the influx of American miners in Forty Mile may

¹²⁵ Hammer and Thomas, 11-12. Where most of the population at Forty Mile were men, there were at least three women – Charlotte Selina Bompas, the bishop's wife and active in church work, Emilie Tremblay, who later became a successful entrepreneur in Dawson, accompanied her trader husband, and the (unnamed) wife of another trader were all in Forty Mile by 1894. William Hunt, *North of 53: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier, 1870-1914* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1974), 16.

¹²⁶ Hammer and Thomas, 6.

¹²⁷ Hammer, 12. In response to requests from some Catholic miners, a Jesuit priest, Father William Judge, arrived in Forty Mile in 1895. Judge was the first Roman Catholic to establish a mission in the Yukon. When the Klondike gold rush struck, Father Judge relocated to Dawson. Dobrowolsky and Ingram, 20.

¹²⁸ Michael Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek: Early Days in the Yukon* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1994), 74.

persuade the United States to claim the Yukon and sent NWMP Constable Charles Constantine and Staff-Sergeant Charles Brown to the Yukon in 1894 to assess the mineral potential of the region. Constantine established the first NWMP post in the Yukon, Fort Constantine in 1894, and the Dominion government sent nineteen more officers in 1895.¹²⁹ However, only two years later the Fort was abandoned when the NWMP followed the Forty Mile miners to the Klondike Valley.



Image 2.7. NWMP, original contingent leaving Regina June 1, 1895 for the Yukon. Constable Charles Constantine third from right in second row. YA Ernest Brown fonds #858.

The peak population of Forty Mile was 600. When the word of a large discovery in the Klondike spread the population of Forty Mile halved in 1896 and by 1898 it was abandoned by all but a few non-Indigenous fishermen as the miners moved south to the

¹²⁹ Michael Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek*, 88-89.

Klondike, and with them, the NWMP and missionary headquarters relocated to Dawson as well. Many of the miners who staked the original claims in the Klondike came down from Forty Mile.¹³⁰ As the first non-Indigenous settlement in the Yukon, Forty Mile was significant in that it was a precursor to the monumental transformation that occurred during the Klondike Gold Rush and the decades following. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had their first sustained interactions with outside populations in Forty Mile as well as facing the colonizing institutions of the Anglican church and Dominion government that would have a significant role in their lives by the turn of the century. However, the environmental impacts that emerged as consequences of large-scale placer mining during the Klondike Gold Rush and industrial dredging into 1940 was a challenge that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had not faced in Forty Mile.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the Klondike Gold Rush was not the first instance of change in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lives. The connectedness the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had with the natural world before the Gold Rush, and their reliance on the environment continued into the fur trade era, though the relationship did change over time. The Gold Rush was also not the first instance of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in encountering non-Indigenous peoples and society. Long before meeting European traders and non-Indigenous miners, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in social and economic structures began to shift due to their engagement in an extensive Indigenous trade network in which material items generally reached the central Yukon without being accompanied by non-Indigenous

¹³⁰ Gates, *Gold at Fortymile Creek*, 127.

traders. By 1840 the Hudson's Bay Company and the Alaska Commercial Company established trading posts across the Yukon and Indigenous peoples actively participated in the fur trade through trading furs, supplying meat and fish, acting as guides, and helping build trade posts. The establishment of Forty Mile as the first non-Indigenous settlement in the Yukon and the first mining community acted as a precursor to some of the transformations that would occur on large scale throughout the early 20th century. The establishment at Forty Mile was the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's introduction to the colonial forces that would most strongly shape their lives: miners, missionaries, and government officials.

Anthropologists Craig Mishler and William Simeone argue that the 1870s to the 1890s was "a time of continuous change, almost all of it initiated by outsiders."¹³¹ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in encountered a new economic system, new religion, and foreign concepts of sovereign nations and borders. They also had to deal with by-products of the new culture(s) they encountered: disease and alcohol. There was little, if any, official government concern for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and their ancestral rights to land were not recognized.¹³² While the Hwëch'in certainly did face half a century of outside-induced change between 1840 and 1896, the scale and speed of this process was small and slow in comparison to the enormity of environmental and socioeconomic transformation the Klondike Gold Rush brought to the Yukon, with its accompanying human populations and ideologies. Gold discoveries that preceded the Klondike had relatively little effect on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as earlier gold rushes attracted an insignificant number of non-

¹³¹ Mishler and Simeone, xxiii. However, the arrival of the H.B.C. marked the beginning of Anglo-American direct and sustained contact with the Hän.

¹³² Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 17-18.

Indigenous peoples to the region. The 1896 population in the upper Yukon was approximately 1000 people. There was little competition for resources; even as gold became the economic staple of the regional economy, fur remained an important commodity and the Hwëch'in continued to be involved in that trade. In the winter of 1896-1897, the arrival of 40,000 newcomers to Hwëch'in territory altered the landscape, overtook territory, brought new ideologies of land use, bureaucratic and administrative systems, and caused the Hwëch'in to make adjustments to their way of life.

Chapter 3: Colonialism, Land Use, and Dispossession in the Klondike

The front page of the April 15th, 1932 edition of the *Dawson Daily News* opened with the following passage:

For centuries, all of the wealth of the Klondike lay within the radius of a day's hike from the home of Chief Isaac and his people, yet, endowed with the wealth equal to the ransom of a score of kings, they knew not of its existence or value until the white man came. The Indians practically gained nothing from that great store of golden treasure and even after the strike they lived the simple life of the native within the shadow of the great gold camp and Dawson its capital city.¹

This paragraph, an excerpt from a two-page article by Reverend John Hawksley, who was also Yukon Indian Agent from 1914 to 1932, after the death of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in leader Chief Isaac, expresses some of the colonial attitudes non-Indigenous people held regarding Indigenous Yukoners and the perceived use value of the natural environment. Hawksley, like so many of his contemporaries, believed that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in did not make use of the gold in the area, and more so, they did not even know of its value until the 'white man' clarified it for them. His description of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in living simple lives overshadowed by gold mining around Dawson oversimplified the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in social structure and overlooked the many ways in which the Hwëch'in, too, participated in the new economy associated with mining in the Yukon. Finally, it paints an image of the Hwëch'in as hopeless recipients of a new socioeconomic order which they had no ability to shape. Hawksley's comments are from 1932, over 30 years after the Klondike Gold Rush had ended, yet they make clear that colonial attitudes regarding Indigenous peoples' use, and knowledge, of the natural environment as inferior to that of Western populations persisted in the Yukon into the 20th century.

¹ John Hawksley, "Chief Isaac Called Across the Great Divide," *Dawson Daily News* (April 15, 1932).

Chief Isaac, pictured below, was the longest-serving chief of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, from the 1890s to his death from influenza in 1932.² Often described by non-



Figure 3.1. George P. Mackenzie, Commissioner Yukon Territory, Chief Isaac of Moosehide, Isaac Stringer Bishop of Yukon. August 3, 1923. DCMA 1990.77.12.

Indigenous contemporaries as tall, friendly, and intelligent, he was an exceptional hunter and leader with great understanding of traditional ways but also with an interest in learning about the novel ideas and technologies that accompanied newcomers.³ He learned to speak English through his interactions with non-Indigenous people. He was born around 1860 on the Alaska side of the international boundary cutting through Hän territory. When he was a child, white traders, prospectors,

missionaries, and explorers entered Hän territory seeking furs and gold. Chief Isaac grew up learning traditional ways but came of age "when his country was being overrun by

² Chief Isaac's birth year is estimated 1847, baptized in 1892, and passed away April 9th, 1932. Jonathan Wood was his brother; he had two other brothers - Walter Isaac in Mandfield Lake, AK and Walter Benjamin in Eagle, AK. Walter was a catechist in Eagle. Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 80.

³ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 6. I use "traditional" to refer to customary and long-standing practices and beliefs passed down through generations within Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community.

newcomers."⁴ He spent part of his young adulthood in Forty Mile until he married Eliza Harper at Tro'chëk and joined the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at the mouth of the Klondike River.⁵

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples in Dawson say that Isaac was made chief in the 1890s partially due to his knowledge of English and his skills at negotiating with outsiders.⁶ Chief Isaac learned quickly to deal with white missionaries and traders in Hwëch'in territory. He and his people welcomed outsiders to the area and worked to establish cordial relations with these new neighbours in accordance with Hän custom. Chief Isaac acted as a bridge between old and new ways. He met Anglican Bishop William Bompas in 1892 and was baptized, formally receiving his English name at that time. Chief Isaac had a special relationship of mutual respect and friendship with Bishop Bompas and later with Bishop Isaac O. Stringer. In 1918 Chief Isaac was surprised to hear that the late Bompas had bequeathed him his watch. The Chief later gave Bishop Stringer his grandfather's stone hunting knife.⁷ Though Chief Isaac was a practicing Anglican, he seemed to have found a middle ground between this new religion and his existing beliefs, remaining grounded in the spirituality of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

Chief Isaac was well respected by other First Nations and was often asked to lead potlatches in communities such as Eagle, Forty Mile, and Fort Selkirk among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Teetł'it Gwitchin and Northern Tutchone who frequented these areas. He was a wonderful orator, and frequently gave speeches at events in Dawson and Indigenous celebrations around the territory. He was also well-liked by tourists; Indian Agent John Hawksley wrote, "In summer, during the tourist season, he was often seen going among the

⁴ Ibid., 5.

⁵ Robb, "Interview with Charlie Isaac."

⁶ Dobrowlosky, *Changing Nature of Leadership*, 6.

⁷ Chief Isaac 1 of 2 (THA), 2.

tourists, extending to them a welcoming hand and eagerly as well as interestingly telling them of the wonders of his native land."⁸

Though Chief Isaac was friendly with the newcomers, he was wary of this "great upheaval" seeing drastic changes to his peoples' way of life. Fearing that his people would lose much of their culture in this transitional time, Chief Isaac sent the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional songs, drums, and *gänhäk* (sacred dancing stick) to their Hän relations in Tetlin, Alaska for safekeeping sometime shortly after their relocation to Moosehide Village in 1897.⁹ These decisions, among many others that Chief Isaac made during a time of rapid change, are essential to understanding the colonial experience in the Klondike region. Though the Klondike region saw a massive influx of 40,000 people take over the land and impose colonial institutions on the Indigenous locals, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued to negotiate a space for themselves in these new circumstances and speak out against oppressive forces.

This chapter opens with an overview of colonialism(s) at work in the Canadian North arguing that the process of colonization in the Yukon did not neatly fit into any one category, but was instead characterized by aspects of both settler colonialism and resource-oriented colonialism. It then turns to an examination of land use ideologies associated with colonialism and the image of the Yukon as mining frontier. Miners perceived the Klondike environment as unused land ripe with resources free for them to take. Finally, it examines how ideas of private property overtook Hwëch'in land bases and resulted in the dislocation of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from traditional use areas. The Dominion government representatives supported miners' use of land in this way and insisted that the Tr'ondëk

⁸ *Dawson Daily News*, "Chief Isaac Crosses the Great Divide," (April 12, 1932).

⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 77.

Hwëch'in remove themselves somewhere more suitable and out of the way of mining. In the background to all of this, this chapter questions the conflicts that arose in colonized spaces and the ways in which Indigenous populations asserted themselves within these structures. This conflict over land use between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and outsiders set the tone for their relationship into the 20th century including outside impositions on land and resources and active Indigenous involvement in shaping the colonial process in the Yukon.

Colonialism and gold mining in the Yukon

Just as gold rushes motivated people from around the globe to migrate to different continents in search of gold, colonialism, too, migrated around the globe. An ideological framework that people carried with them as they explored, traveled, worked, and settled in new-to-them areas, colonialism shaped the ways that newcomers interacted with Indigenous populations and the environment in these areas. Colonizers did not necessarily agree on the objectives of the colonial project or what methods to employ to achieve these ends. In many instances, the objectives of colonization in Canada were not met – Indigenous peoples did not disappear; their culture was not replaced by colonial culture; colonial control over land remained contested –which makes the study of colonialism a particularly difficult, and intriguing, one. Colonialism was not unique to Canada or to North America, but was part of a much wider progression of empire and expansion, with Indigenous peoples, natural resources, and conflict central to the ways that colonialism played out around the world in places from North America and Latin America, to Australia and South Africa.

The ways in which colonialism played out in Canada's past varied depending on geography and historical period. Colonial relations between Indigenous peoples in the territories that became Canada and Euro-Canadians has a complicated history but examining the ways in which colonialism applied to the Canadian North is even more fraught with difficulty as the northern region developed much later, and differently, from trends elsewhere across the nation. The Yukon specifically has a unique blend of settler colonialism and resource-oriented colonialism, making it an anomaly to both the rest of the northern territories and to the South.

German historian Jürgen Osterhammel defined colonialism as:

a relationship of domination between an Indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis.¹⁰

In these situations, colonialism involves the domination of an external colony by a "mother" country. The colonizing power generally was interested in the extraction of resources from the local environment and exploitation of labour power. Sociologists Terry Wotherspoon and Vic Satzewich describe colonialism as "an unequal political and economic relationship between two or more spatially distinct regions of the world."¹¹ Furthermore, colonialism depended on the dispossession and dislocation of Indigenous peoples from ancestral and territorial land. In colonial discourse studies, Edward Said argued that most representations produced by Western colonizing nations were interested in marking the difference between "us" (the West) and "them" (the Other). The forms of

¹⁰ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005), 16-17.

¹¹ Terry Wotherspoon and Vic Satzewich, *First Nations: Race, Class, and Gender Relations* (Regina: University of Regina, 2000), 6-7.

knowledge produced in this discourse reinforced the idea of colonized peoples as fundamentally different from (and inferior to) colonizing peoples. These representations came to be accepted as truth and served as strategies of power that justified dispossessing Indigenous peoples from their land base and legitimated and necessitated surveillance, control, and subjugation of colonized peoples.¹²

These definitions apply to some aspects of Canadian history - specifically to the colonization of Canada as a staples-producing resource extraction zone in which fishers, fur traders, and miners extracted resources from Canada and sent either the raw materials or the profits from trade to Britain, France, and the United States – but it does not appropriately capture the colonialism(s) that operated within most areas of Canada, especially after 1867. Instead, settler colonialism is the more applicable model to understand Canada's history. Historian Lorenzo Veracini argued that settler colonialism is intimately related to, yet distinct from, colonialism in that it was a global and transnational phenomenon that included permanent movement and reproduction of older communities, as well as the dominance of exogenous agency over Indigenous peoples. Settlers were a unique type of migrant because they were founders of political orders and carried their own perceived sovereignty with them when relocating to new locales.¹³ Settler colonialism is premised on forcibly displacing Indigenous peoples from their land, restructuring non-capitalist economies in order to fuel capitalism, and replacing Indigenous societies with

¹² Furniss, 12. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993). Anthropologist Nicholas Thomas criticized Said's work has been criticized for its over-homogenization of colonial discourses and recent critics argues that there is no simplistic explanation of colonial discourse - we must pay attention to diverse discourses as they are articulated by different colonial agents in certain geographic settings and distinct historical periods. Nicholas Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

¹³ This is in comparison to emigrant-migrants who are appellants facing a political institutions and order already in place when they arrive. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 3-4.

new orders and institutions.¹⁴ Colonizers often promoted settlement to permanently secure their hold on land and resources and worked to integrate Indigenous peoples into industrial economies.

Examining the colonial relationships between Indigenous peoples and settlers in *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada*, sociologists James Frideres and Rene Gadacz' definition of the colonial process included seven parts: the incursion of colonizing groups into a geographical area (usually tied to a search for staples); the destruction of social, cultural, economic, and political structures of the Indigenous group; establishment of systems of external political control (such as the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Indian Act); Indigenous economic dependence, often tied to the reserve system and the exploitation of non-renewable resources on Indigenous land; the provision of low quality social services for the colonized; and the emergence of racist ideologies and segregation to regulate social interaction between groups.¹⁵

In *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada*, Sarah Carter explained that the experiences of colonialism are highly varied in both administration and in impacts, but scholars who have studied settler colonialism have agreed on some key elements that characterize the process, many of which are also part of Frideres' definition. In the Canadian Northwest from the 19th century, settler colonialism included the intrusion of an outside force; the dispossession of land; the domination (or attempted domination) of one group over another leading to imbalanced relationships and strict social, economic, and

¹⁴ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (Washington DC: Cassell, 1999). Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 23.

¹⁵ James Frideres and Rene Gadacz, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*, sixth edition (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2001), 4-7.

spatial distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized; suppression of Indigenous culture; the extension of state power; and a bureaucratic structure of management and regulation to control the actions of Indigenous populations.¹⁶ Part of the rhetoric of expansion included the opportunity to extend British (and French) values and influences over remote regions of Canada and to shape a society based on British or French heritage, customs, and Christianity.¹⁷ This left little room for groups lying outside of these parameters, including Indigenous peoples. Generally, colonies were run by Europeans, and later, Euro-Canadians, for their own profit and power, based around economic growth and resource exploitation.

Many scholars who studied settler colonialism in Canada and the United States further defined their understanding of colonialism to include internal colonization. Osterhammel described internal colonialism as a situation in which colonial dependencies appear, not between a “mother” country and a colony, but within national states or regions.¹⁸ Theorists such as Gramsci saw internal colonialism as a term to explain intersecting economic exploitation and political exclusion of marginalized or subordinated groups (especially those which differed racially or ethnically from the dominant group) happening within a polity.¹⁹ Literary critic Epifanio San Juan explained in his study of internal colonialism in the United States, that what differentiates internal colonialism is the

¹⁶ Osterhammel; Linda Gordon, "Internal Colonialism and Gender" in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 427-451; Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900: Themes in Canadian Social History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 103.

¹⁷ Carter, 104-105.

¹⁸ Osterhammel, 17. In her study of the history of how minority groups have been colonized from within the United States, historian Linda Gordon argues that the concept of internal colonialism in the United States studies emerged in the 1960s and early 1970s leftist discourse and arose from the Marxist tradition. In its application, the concept described racial minorities and Indigenous reservations in the United States and Canada. Gordon, 427-28.

¹⁹ Gordon, 427-28.

total cultural domination of people of colour, their alienation from a land base, and their numerical size. Communities of colour in the United States are situated in metropolis-periphery relations and share conditions with Third World nations, namely economic underdevelopment, a heritage of colonialism, and a lack of real economic and political power.²⁰ Clearly, internal colonialism contains many of the same principles as colonialism though the application of the colonial process occurs from within the nation, usually when a more politically powerful, concentrated centre implements elements of colonial policies and authority in a less politically powerful, marginal periphery. In short, internal colonization occurs when the global pattern of conflict over land and resources continues from within even after a nation, such as Canada, is no longer a colony of the British empire.²¹

Internal colonialism calls attention to colonial relationships within a nation and these processes have been central to the historical development of Canada, especially to Indigenous interactions with the state. In adopting an internal colonial model, historians have shown that colonialism continued past the Confederation and western settlement eras into the present. It is within this framework of internal colonization that, between 1890 and 1940, the Yukon developed at the intersection of settler colonialism and resource-oriented colonialism. The internal colonization concept applies doubly to the Yukon— to the colonial relations between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Canadian state as well as to the North as a region internally colonized by southern Canada.

In *Canada's Colonies*, Ken Coates argued that the northern territories developed, economically and politically, as colonies of southern Canada and that the North has

²⁰Epifanio San Juan Jr. *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 156.

²¹Carter, 101.

typically been of little concern to the Dominion, and Canadian, governments unless there was a threat to national sovereignty or potential for resource development. The pattern of colonization in the North differed from that in the South, primarily due to the North's climate and environment, lack of suitable land for agriculture, and, hence, inappropriateness for settlement.²² Therefore, the North generally developed more as a periphery for resource extraction for the South. As Liza Piper argued in *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*, subarctic industrialization was driven by demands from outside the region and controlled by southern interests.²³

Though settlement in the North was sporadic, and generally slow, until after the Second World War, the potentially rich natural resources and profit led to anxieties over Arctic and Subarctic sovereignty. In William Morrison's *Showing the Flag*, he argues that the Mounted Police were the medium through which the Canadian government maintained a presence in the North as agents of government policy by maintaining sovereignty in the

²² Liza Piper and John Sandlos, "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North" in *Environmental History* 12,4 (October 2007): 760.

²³ Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2009), 69.

region.²⁴ The Klondike Gold Rush was the first serious attempt to assert sovereignty in the North as the region became flooded by American gold-seekers.²⁵

According to Coates, the power of a national bureaucratic administration of the North, a reliance on federal services and subsidies, and the federal intervention into Northern affairs with little to no input from the region's inhabitants – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – point to the North's colonial status.²⁶ Coates specifically refers to the Territories as colonies of southern Canada, as he argues the history of the Territories followed a different political path from that of the provincial Norths.²⁷ Political scientist

²⁴ William R. Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1985), xvii. Shelagh Grant's *Sovereignty or Security* is another work that examines sovereignty in the North between 1936 and 1950. Grant traces a pattern of ambivalence and intervention in the North, shaped by international factors such as threat of American occupation during the Second World War. Shelagh Grant, *Sovereignty or Security?: Government Policy in the Canadian North, 1936-1950* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1988). Ken Coates and William Morrison's *The Alaska Highway* examines the American occupation of the Canadian North in WWII focusing on the cultural, environmental, and socio-economic changes occupation brought to the north. Ken Coates and William Morrison, *The Alaska Highway in World War II: The U.S. Army of Occupation in Canada's Northwest* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). Ken Coates, Whitney Lackenbauer, Bill Morrison, and Greg Poelzer, *Arctic Front: Defending Canada in the Far North* (Toronto: T. Allen Publishers, 2008), 31. Coates et al. argue that sovereignty concerns have been a constant anxiety in the North beginning with the Klondike gold rush and extending into the present.

²⁵ The presence of federal representatives only after the region was discovered to be resource rich relates to historian Harold Innis' argument that institutions were an accessory to resource production. Harold Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1940) and *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

²⁶ Coates, *Canada's Colonies*, 9. Frances Abele concurs with Coates' argument that the North has been administered as colonies of southern Canada. She also discusses that enthusiasm for the North often came in brief spurts, particularly after a rich mineral discovery, in which the Dominion government drafted regulations along the same principles as southern Canadian mineral development. Frances Abele, "Canadian Contradictions: Forty Years of Northern Political Development" in *Arctic* 40,4 (December 1987): 311.

²⁷ Coates, *Canada's Colonies*, 11. Northern historians Kerry Abel and Ken Coates argue that in other provinces provincial government often served between the people and federal power, however in the North, territorial administrations were dominated by federal government, commissioners held a lot of power and authority, and the seat of authority often lay outside the region, for the NWT, political authority laid in Ottawa until 1960, but the Yukon gained some administration authority in 1902. Abel and Coates, *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History* (NY: Broadview Press, 2001). There is a robust literature of resource development and colonialism in the provincial norths. Jim Mochoruk describes the history of Manitoba from 1850-1930 as a transition from a 'fur frontier' to an industrial resource frontier. He argues that due to the rushed nature and poor planning of northern development, it brought environmental disaster, conflicting relationships between southerners and northerners, and conflict between First Nations

Jerald Sabin also argues that the Yukon existed as a colony of Canada stating that much scholarship on colonialism concentrates on the colonization of foreign lands and peoples, but following Confederation in Canada, this process occurred from within where a central government established “satellite jurisdictions in its own hinterlands.”²⁸

While colonialism played out in different ways everywhere it was present, there was a general pattern of colonialism in northern Canada including a set of relationships between the core of an industrial society and its peripheral areas and populations based on natural resource exploitation. In "Internal Colonialism in the Circumpolar North," political scientists John Dryzek and Owsam Young argued that relationships of economic exploitation and political domination formed the basis of northern development, alongside sociocultural change, economic marginalization of local groups, and environmental restructuring.²⁹ As Dryzek and Young argue, “[The peripheral region], is controlled by decision makers at the core and conducted according to the needs of the industrial society. In short, the periphery becomes, for all practical purposes, an exploited colony.”³⁰

During the Gold Rush period, the Yukon was embedded in a core-periphery relationship where southerners perceived the Yukon as a resource extraction zone on the periphery of the nation and decisions impacting the Indigenous peoples and local environment were made from a distant metropolis. The focus on agriculture, land

and various levels of government. Jim Mochoruk, *Formidable Heritage: Manitoba's North and the Cost of Development, 1879 to 1930* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2004). In *Changing Places*, Kerry Abel examines the displacement of Indigenous groups in the early 20th century by newcomers drawn to northern Ontario by opportunities in mining, agriculture, and pulp and paper production. Kerry Abel, *Changing Places: History, Community, and Identity in Northeast Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

²⁸ Jerald Sabin, “Contested Colonialism: Responsible Government and Political Development in Yukon” in *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 47, 2 (June 2014): 376-77.

²⁹ Dryzek and Young, 125.

³⁰ Ibid.

ownership, and permanency of settlement colonialism that existed in southern Canada was mostly absent in the Yukon, where the colonial focus was on extraction and exporting wealth back to the colonizer, which in the case of the Klondike was the individual miner, mining corporations, southern Canada generally, and Ottawa specifically. While the desire to stake claims to ownership of land existed in the Yukon, until 1920 they were most strongly tied to the goldfields, where securing ownership of land was essential to the extraction of minerals from that land through subsurface leases and claims. In a sense, gold seekers' knowledge that their time in the Yukon would be temporary rather than permanent resulted in more serious environmental dismantling and destruction than in areas in southern Canada where the intention of permanent settlement dictated the relationship with the surrounding natural environment.

In *On the Edge of Empire*, Adele Perry examines a case in British Columbia that shares much in common with the colonization of the Yukon; studying the gendered and racialized aspects of colonialism between 1849 to 1871 her work reminds scholars that settlement was often economically and socially tied to resource extraction.³¹ While the overwhelming majority of outsiders who came into the Klondike during the Gold Rush did not intend on permanently settling there, and in fact most left once the rush ended, a small permanent population, closely tied with the mining industry, did remain. Table 3.1 below shows the scale of demographic shifts in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940. Unlike Western Canada where the government intended to develop agricultural settlements, settlement patterns in the Yukon occurred *because* of resource extraction.

³¹ Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Unlike pure settlement colonialism, between 1896 and 1920, the Yukon was a place of

Table 3.1. Yukon population 1898-1951.³²

	Total Population	Indigenous Population
1898	40,000 (15,203 in Dawson)	---
1901	27,219	3,322
1911	8,512	1,489
1921	4,157	1,390
1931	4,230	1,638
1941	4,914	1,508
1951	9,096	1,563

short-term settlement. Most people who did settle in the Yukon during the Gold Rush era (1896-1900) were almost always tied to colonial agendas and generally intended to remain short-term, until their job was completed, until they were posted elsewhere, or until minerals ran out. This was part of a larger pattern of a global gold rush trend.³³ The presence of missionaries, miners, and the Northwest Mounted Police in the Klondike is one

³² There is no population data for the Yukon prior to 1898. The only available data for Dawson City specifically comes from an 1898 and a 1900 census compiled by the NWMP. After this time, the only available population numbers include the entirety of the Yukon Territory. The NWMP completed the first Yukon Census in 1898, where they estimated a total population of 40,000 people in the Klondike region, 15,203 of which were living in Dawson City. Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver; U.B.C. Press, 1998) 203-205. According to the *Dawson Daily News*, citing NWMP data, there were 5,404 people living in Dawson as of May 1900. *Dawson Daily News*, May 2, 1900. Population numbers for the Yukon from 1901 to 1951 found in Statistics Canada (formerly Dominion Bureau of Statistics), *Census of Canada, 1951*, vol. X, table 1. Indigenous population numbers 1901-1951 from Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 74. 1898 population of Indigenous Yukoners is not recorded.

³³ George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

example of this short-term settlement.³⁴ Like in the NWT, the settlement patterns of Anglo-Canadians and Europeans in the Yukon between 1896 and 1920 were frequently transient and seasonally mobile; though they settled in the Yukon, they almost always left when seasonal work ended.³⁵ Unlike settlement zones where permanent settler populations implemented and carried out colonial change, rapid change in the Yukon during the Klondike Gold Rush resulted from outside populations, who generally did not remain in the area once economic activity declined. However, the Yukon did not fully fit the migrant patterns of pure resource colonialism either. Once the Gold Rush ended, a small population of non-northerners stayed in Dawson. The presence of a steady population of approximately 4000 people in the Yukon after 1920 indicates an important demographic shift - where the size of the non-Indigenous population from the outset of the Klondike Gold Rush exceeded that of the Indigenous population - which occurred in the Yukon and endured throughout the 20th century.

Similar patterns of settlement occurred elsewhere in the territorial North, on a smaller demographic scale, but the Yukon was most significant in that it happened earlier and was the first instance in which a significant, non-Indigenous population remained after a resource boom.³⁶ Those who remained after the Gold Rush were mostly a by-product of

³⁴ Though the Klondike sparked what was the closest example of a settler society in the Yukon, and the North more generally, this population was still a mobile one. When the Klondike rush ended and the Nome rush began, the population of Dawson dramatically dropped. Table 1 indicates that between 1898 and 1901 the population of the Yukon (almost exclusively contained in the Klondike) declined by nearly 13,000 people. Within a ten-year period, the population dropped to nearly 1/3 of the 1901 population.

³⁵ Ken Coates and William Morrison discuss the seasonal mobility of settlers in the North (both Alaska and the Canadian territorial North) in *The Sinking of the Princess Sophia: Taking the North Down with Her* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Liza Piper also discusses the presence of transient workers in the large lakes region of the Northwest Territories in *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* in the 1920s. Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2009).

³⁶ For example, in the Northwest Territories, after the initial gold boom in 1935 the population of the territory increased from 9,316 in 1931 to 12,028 in 1941. Statistics Canada (formerly Dominion Bureau of Statistics), *Census of Canada, 1951*, vol. X, table 1.

the Klondike and other smaller gold rushes in the Yukon, but within a decade of the Gold Rush permanent communities took hold in communities in the southern Yukon such as Whitehorse and Carcross. Table 3.1 demonstrates the rapid decline in population following the end of the Gold Rush in 1900 and a stable population between 1920 and 1940.

Political scientist Jerald Sabin identifies those arriving in the Yukon between 1896 and 1980 as settlers rather than migrants, as he argues they founded the territory's political orders, and that migrants join existing societies whereas colonial settlers remade their own.³⁷ Outsiders who came to Dawson, like settlements elsewhere in Canada, made concerted efforts to reproduce older communities in the Klondike, even when they did not necessarily make sense in the Yukon environment.³⁸ There are numerous historical accounts focusing on social life in Dawson during this period.³⁹ A few examples of reproducing older communities in the Yukon included setting up social clubs and organizations that existed in southern Canada such as church organizations like the Women's Auxiliary. Sabin discusses the formation of the Yukon Order of Pioneers in 1894 which rooted men in their past heritage while also celebrating their pioneering ventures in the northern 'frontier.'⁴⁰ People had luxury items shipped to Dawson such as silk stockings and pianos to better reproduce a class-based societal structure reflecting southern values.⁴¹

³⁷Jerald Sabin, "Contested Colonialism: Responsible Government and Political Development in Yukon" in *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 47, 2 (June 2014): 379.

³⁸ Morris Zaslow discusses the reproduction of Victorian ideals in the Klondike in a comparative study of Canadian and American frontiers in "The Yukon: Northern Development in a Canadian-American Context," *Interpreting Canada's North*, eds. Ken Coates and William Morrison (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1989) 141.

³⁹ Charlotte Gray, *Gold Diggers: Striking It Rich in the Klondike* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010); Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1998); Francis Backhouse, *Children of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books Ltd., 2011) and *Women of the Klondike* (Vancouver: Whitecap, 1995).

⁴⁰ Sabin, 381-82.

⁴¹ Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1998), 129.

Although they had access to local game meat and fish, Dawsonites also imported livestock not present in the Yukon such as cows and chickens to reinforce southern diets.

Photo 3.2 shows men importing packaged beef and live cows into Dawson from British Columbia.

The Yukon also replicated settlement patterns elsewhere in Canada including ideologies of race and racial superiority that led to a believed justification of attempted



Figure 3.2. Beef Going to Dawson 1898. DCMA 1998.34.24.6.

domination of Indigenous peoples by southern populations and the attempted suppression of Indigenous culture through government legislation, western education, Christianity, and integration into a capital-based economy. While the economy in the Yukon was restructured to fit the capitalist, market-economy model, the subsistence economy of Indigenous locals was never erased as miners and newcomers to the area relied on

Indigenous harvesting practises for survival in the early years of Yukon mining. The new economy in the Klondike did have profound impacts on Hwëch'in subsistence practises (discussed in detail in Chapter Five), but these impacts were less a purposeful elimination of the Indigenous economy and more of an indirect consequence of Indigenous engagement in the new economy. For example, the introduction of a cash economy and mining-related labour reduced the amount of time the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in spent preparing for and practising subsistence harvesting.

Whereas elsewhere in the North the political and economic decisions were made by a distant center, the Yukon attained territorial status in 1898 as a direct result of the Gold Rush. This included a local government consisting of a Territorial Commissioner (referred to as the Gold Commissioner) and a small elected Council. After 1902, the Yukon also had autonomy in regulating its own game laws. While the Yukon did have autonomy in passing regulations pertaining to the territory, the Gold Commissioner was appointed by Ottawa rather than elected locally until 1970.⁴² Council decisions could be vetoed by the Gold Commissioner, often on advice from the federal Minister of the Interior.⁴³ In this way, the Yukon functioned more similarly to the provinces than to the NWT, which lacked autonomous power as the federal government continued to administer the territory into the postwar period.⁴⁴ However, while the Yukon could administer to itself, like everywhere else in Canada, Indigenous administration fell under federal jurisdiction (the *Indian Act*). In the Yukon, the NWMP, a federally administered organization, first administered to the Yukon's Indigenous population until the territory got an Indian Agent in 1914. Even after

⁴² Ken Coates and William Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun*, 98. Sabin, 375.

⁴³ Sally Robinson, "The Home Front: The Yukon's Economy During the First World War" in *The Northern Review* 44 (2017): 32.

⁴⁴ Sangster, 11.

the appointment of an Indian Agent, there was only one for the entire territory, so NWMP officers continued to help with administering to Indigenous peoples while the Agent traveled. Colonizers in Canada paternalistically argued they had a responsibility to bring civilization to Indigenous peoples, which included Western education, agriculture, and Christianity.⁴⁵ In this regard, internal colonialism was extremely insidious including daily attacks on Indigenous peoples' inner selves – their culture, spirituality, ways of learning, ways of speaking, and ways of thinking – propagated most extremely through the church and western education.⁴⁶ After mining became the primary reason for non-Indigenous presence in the North, and with the wealth being extracted from the region, the Canadian state became much more involved in the region in the 1920s and 1930s and more involved in Indigenous Yukoners' lives.⁴⁷ After 1920 in the Yukon, the state extended its power by implementing a bureaucratic structure of management and regulation to control the actions of Indigenous peoples. The increase in government activity and implementation of regulations had unequal impacts, affecting Indigenous peoples the most, and often worked to marginalize them from the capitalist economy.

Furthermore, the environmental inequalities of colonialism were more pronounced in northern Canada than in the South; in most cases, the outside populations who contributed to environmental transformation most often did not remain in the region once a mine collapsed and did not feel the impacts of this change long-term. Therefore,

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶ Joan Sangster, *The Iconic North: Cultural Constructions of Aboriginal Life in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2016), 14. Elizabeth Furniss, "Challenging the Myth of Indigenous Peoples "Last Stand" in Canada and Australia: Public Discourse and the Conditions of Silence" in *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and memory in Australia, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa*, ed. Annie Coombes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006): 172-73. Furniss studied British colonies Williams Lake, B.C., a forestry city, and Mount Isa, a mining town in Queensland.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 288.

Indigenous populations in the North were disproportionately affected by colonial-driven environmental change. Historian Caroline Desbiens' study of the James Bay hydroelectric development in northern Quebec does not deal primarily with Indigenous peoples, but she does take their experiences seriously by examining their reactions to development. She argues that while Quebec was colonized by English Canada, the Québécois treated northern Indigenous land as a colony of the south. They regarded James Bay as blank space and sought to carry out resource exploitation beneficial to the south.⁴⁸ Damming and hydro development modified the landscape of James Bay and the impacts of these changes were felt most strongly by the Indigenous populations in the area.⁴⁹

Environmental historian John Sandlos and geographer Arn Keeling have made explicit connections between colonialism and the destructive nature of mineral development in the North. Though exploration, whaling, and the fur trade significantly contributed to the colonial and socioeconomic development of the Yukon, mining has been at the forefront of economic activity since 1896.⁵⁰ Like colonial mining projects in other

⁴⁸ Caroline Desbiens, *Power from the North: Territory, Identity, and the Culture of Hydroelectricity in Quebec* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2013).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 53. Hans Carlson argues that rapid change came to James Bay with modern technology and modern ideas (capitalism and hydro power); however, the Cree continued, evolved, and manipulated their relationship with place considering these developments. Carlson discussed the neglect or disinterest that the province of Quebec had for James Bay, until the 1970s when Quebec suddenly had use for the James Bay area to begin hydro-electricity developments. The Cree took their complaints to court, indicating that the area is an important hunting ground. Hans Carlson, *Home is the Hunter: The James Bay Cree and Their Land* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2008).

⁵⁰ Dorothy Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989). Authors such as Harold Innis, Shepard Krech, and Arthur Ray have written on the fur trade. Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962); Shepard Krech, *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984); Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Explorers and scientists in the North, especially the Arctic reaches, date back to the 18th century, prior to colonial government presence. Andrew Stuhl, *Unfreezing the Arctic: Science, Colonialism, and the Transformation of Inuit Lands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) and Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009) both demonstrate that scientists played important roles in colonizing the North through gathering knowledge about the northern environment

areas such as the United States, Australia, Africa, and Latin America, the Yukon case demonstrates the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and harms due to colonial environmental management in connection with resource extraction.⁵¹ Mining in the North often had a more serious effect on local Indigenous groups, as resource extraction gradually eroded much of their subsistence base through environmental transformation without replacing it with anything more permanent.⁵² The demographic balance in the Yukon dramatically changed with the onset of the Klondike Gold Rush. Before 1896, there were about 100 miners in the area, but with the rush the existing pattern of social relations was replaced by a new order of which Indigenous peoples remained on the margins by prejudice, regulations, and choice.⁵³

Sandlos and Keeling's work suggests that, in the northern mining industry, Indigenous peoples have not only been marginalized from participating in the industry, but they were the populations left to deal with environmental and social problems which remained after mines closed.⁵⁴ Though the Yukon is the one exception to Joan Sangster's argument that the definition of settler colonialism (which stresses a numerically dominant

and people. Here is a robust literature on exploration in the North including Janice Cavell, "The True Northwest Passage: Explorers in Anglo-Canadian Nationalist Narratives" in *The Northern Review* 32 (Spring 2010): 5-34. Piper and Sandlos discuss 18th century explorers recording accounts of disease outbreaks in the North in "A Broken Frontier," 764. Other works that focus on Arctic exploration include Richard J. Diabaldo's *Stefansson and the Canadian Arctic* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), Robert McGhee, *The Last Imaginary Place: a Human History of the Arctic World* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2004), Peter Mancall's *Fatal Journey: the Final Expedition of Henry Hudson - a Tale of Mutiny and Murder in the Arctic* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), and Anthony Brandt's *The Man who Ate his Boots: the Tragic History of the Search for the Northwest Passage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

⁵¹ Kenneth Coates and William R. Morrison, *The Sinking of the Princess Sophia : Taking the North Down with Her* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 1991).

⁵² Julie Cruikshank, "Cultural Explanations of "Indian Drinking": Are They Valid?" Whitehorse: Government of Yukon Territory, 1975, 7-8. (YA PAM 1957-50 C.1).

⁵³ Coates, "Controlling the Periphery," 83.

⁵⁴ From Environmental Studies, another work which has examined the connections between mining, environment, and Indigenous populations is Saleem Ali's *Mining, the Environment, and Indigenous Development Conflicts* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003).

white majority) does not apply to the Canadian North where the population of Indigenous northerners outnumbered non-Indigenous peoples the small population that remained after the Gold Rush did not feel the environmental transformation as harshly as did the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.⁵⁵ Where the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in either personally witnessed drastic environmental change in their lifetime or learned about it from the previous generation, outsiders who remained in the Klondike after 1900 had little knowledge of the area before the mining rush to which they could compare. Further, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experienced a fair amount of change to their subsistence lifestyle and economies resulting from gold mining activities, where as the outside population transported and recreated their previous economic structures into the region.

In brief, while the Yukon shared many of the elements of internal colonization as resource zone at play in the Northwest Territories throughout the first half of the 20th century, it also held much in common with settler colonialism elsewhere in Canada. The Yukon is an anomaly, in a sense, in that it neither easily fits into the category of extractive colonialism nor settler colonialism. Instead, beginning with the Klondike Gold Rush, the Yukon's colonial experience has been a hybrid of the two. As discussed in the previous chapter, Indigenous Yukoners had colonial encounters before the Klondike began, but these experiences fit more closely to the extractive colonialism of the North more broadly. The Klondike, on the other hand, was the first time when Indigenous peoples in the Yukon, specifically the Klondike region, were outnumbered by non-Indigenous peoples. It was the first time a steady, though small, population remained in the region after resource extraction came to an end, and the first time the Dominion government actively sent law

⁵⁵ Sangster, 13.

enforcement into the region to regulate and control not only Indigenous peoples, but also a non-Indigenous population. Within the Yukon, over time, colonial approaches shifted. In the first two decades of increased southern presence in the Klondike, the Dominion government was primarily concerned with extracting gold from the region. Official reports back and forth from federal representatives in Dawson, such as the NWMP and the Gold Commissioner, to civil servants in Ottawa overwhelmingly focus on monitoring criminal activity and enforcing law around mining camps, and in ensuring Canada was earning revenue from gold royalties.⁵⁶ By the 1920s into 1940, though, the federal and territorial governments took more steps to be involved in aspects of the territory beyond that of mining and increasingly set regulations for the Yukon.

Colonialism in the Yukon was not one-sided. While the above definition focuses on the elements at play in the Klondike, a final component of Yukon colonialism was that it was relational and reactional. Adele Perry makes an important contribution to the literature of internal colonialism in her argument that British Columbia's colonial project was challenged by both First Nations people and white unwillingness to conform to prevailing constructions of appropriate behaviours and identities in colonial settlements. With this argument, Perry demonstrates that the principles of colonial ideologies did not often translate to the ways in which colonialism occurred on the ground. Such was also the case in the Klondike, examined in detail in the following chapter and in Chapter Six, where the

⁵⁶ YA, Search File Yukon File Force includes a discussion of NWMP officers and Field Force officers collecting royalties from gold miners. NWMP, *Report of Inspector Constantine* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1894), 19. NWMP, 1894. NWMP, *Report of Assistant Commissioner Wood* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1908), 209. Constantine's report and Wood's reports discuss the police's concern with Indigenous peoples' alcohol consumption as well as criminal activity in Dawson and the gold fields.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in frequently challenged colonial authority and agents of the state often found it necessary to adapt their orders to local conditions.

Kerry Abel has also challenged the assumption that colonization was a totalizing force in the North. In *Drum Songs*, she looks at the persistence and distinctiveness of Dene culture in a changing economic, social, and political world. Like Zaslow, she focuses on the various institutions the South brought into the North; however, she analyzes the ways in which the Dene were involved with and reacted to such institutions. Finally, Abel argues that the Dene maintained old economies while becoming accustomed to the new, despite the fact that southern Canada and the North were "two independent economies, two very different societies, [with] a significant power imbalance."⁵⁷ Across the North, Indigenous peoples were aware of their colonization. Mel Watkin's collaborative work with the Dene in response to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in the 1970s demonstrates that they spoke out against the application to build a natural gas pipeline through their homeland and made use of the Berger Inquiry to speak about their recognition of the extent in which they had become a colonized people and had begun to take steps in decolonizing their nation and earning the right to self-determination.⁵⁸

Elizabeth Furniss' study of colonial resource industries in British Columbia and Queenstown suggests that the forces of colonialism were not always overpowering. There were many ways in which the colonized could respond to colonial processes and colonial authority. Though she examines violent resistance to colonial authority, challenge to colonial authority has not always been violent; there were many other means of resistance

⁵⁷ Ibid., 203.

⁵⁸ The Dene found examples in the successful struggles of colonized peoples elsewhere in the world, such as South Africa and Rhodesia, who decolonized themselves in the 1950s and 1960s. Mel Watkins, ed. *Dene Nation: The Colony Within* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

that colonized peoples practised.⁵⁹ What Furniss overlooks are instances in which colonized peoples did not react by challenging the colonial structure. In Moosehide and Dawson City during the Klondike Gold Rush, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in reacted to colonialism in a variety of ways, including acceptance and accommodation as well as resistance.⁶⁰ Just as not all colonizers agreed on how they should go about their work, Indigenous peoples did not all agree on what elements of colonialism they would accept or reject.

Colonialism was a lived experience that resulted in conflict and struggle over land and resources. Throughout his lifetime, Chief Isaac was vocal about his fight for his peoples' access to resources of their ancestral lands, and he often protested when outsiders made it harder for his people to earn a subsistence living.⁶¹ During the Gold Rush, struggles over land and resources were one of the most pressing matters for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. As more miners moved into the region and began transforming the Klondike landscape, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in found themselves pushed off their ancestral lands at the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike rivers. This incident, examined below, was a crucial moment that set the course for colonial relations between the Hwëch'in and

⁵⁹ Some scholars who have examined Indigenous groups engaging in non-violent colonial resistance include John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2007); Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Mary Black-Rogers "Varieties of "Starving": Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850" in *Ethnohistory* 33, 4 (Autumn, 1986): 353-383.

⁶⁰ Gold Seekers had impacts on other Indigenous groups as well. The Tlingit and the Tagish were negatively impacted by gold seekers passing through their land on their way to the Klondike. In 1902 Lebarge Chief Jim Boss wrote to government officials in Ottawa seeking protection and resolution to the problems his people encountered. This was the first petition by Yukon First Nations toward negotiated ownership and protection of traditional lands and rights (YA, Search File: Council for Yukon Indians).

⁶¹ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 6.

outsiders bound to colonial land use ideologies and Indigenous response to outside pressure.

Colonialism, Land Use, and ‘The Mining Frontier’

Though most settlement in the Yukon around the turn of the century was short-term, primarily centered on a transient mining population, land use ideologies associated with colonialism - specifically the view that nature was meant to be assessed, controlled, used, and valued in commercial terms - had the same consequences of Indigenous dispossession and relocation which occurred in settlement colonies.⁶² Where agriculture brought the most profound environmental change to the Canadian Prairies, resource extraction did so in the North.⁶³ Though the whaling industry and the fur trade certainly disrupted earlier patterns of Inuit and Indigenous whale and fur-bearer harvesting and altered their engagement with the natural environment, mining has had the most impact on northern landscapes.⁶⁴

Beyond these changes to northern ecosystems, and unlike the fur trade or whaling industry, mining was inextricably linked to ideas of private property and ownership of land, which had profound impacts on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations with the natural world. Canadians and Americans perceived gold rushes around the globe as

⁶² David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 121, 131. Harvey argues this view of the natural world is traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

⁶³ Peter A. Russell, *How Agriculture Made Canada: Farming in the Nineteenth Century* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012); Clint Evans, *The War on Weeds in the Prairie West: An Environmental History* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002); Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

⁶⁴ Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Dorothy Eber, *When the Whalers Were Up North: Inuit Memories from the Eastern Arctic* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989); Morris Zaslow, *Northward Expansion of Canada 1914-1967* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988) and *Opening of Canadian North, 1870-1914* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971).

taking place in frontier areas. The idea of the frontier was a pervasive concept among Americans beginning in the 1830s and into the 20th century. In his 1893 essay on the history of the United States frontier, historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued that American democracy and society developed because of the frontier and the west-ward movement of civilization.⁶⁵ Turner defined the frontier as the last region of settlement in the United States, on the edge of a previously settled area, and envisioned it as a wilderness in which egalitarianism, individualism, and violence collided to create a new society.⁶⁶ However, in other contexts, the geographic boundaries of frontiers shifted over time. In Canada, settlers regarded the Prairie West as the original Canadian frontier; by the turn of the 20th century, they regarded the North as Canada's second frontier, or, "the last great frontier."⁶⁷

There are other factors that are generally present in areas perceived as frontiers. For example, frontiers contributed to nation-building through their commercial value and

⁶⁵ Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in the American History" in *The Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (1894): 119-227.

⁶⁶ Since the time of this publication, historians have used Turner's arguments as a theory about frontier development in other contexts and it has become widely known as the 'frontier thesis.'

⁶⁷ George Fetherling, *The Gold Crusades: A Social History of Gold Rushes, 1849-1929*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 125. Douglas Francis, William Katerberg, and Morris Zaslow all offer comparative analysis between the American and Canadian frontier. Douglas Francis, "Turner versus Innis: Two Mythic Wests" in *One West, Two Myths II: Essays on Comparison*, ed. CL Higham and Robert Thacker, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006): 15-30. Katerberg argues that Canadian frontiers were tied to a larger world, whether national or global, as peripheries shaped and controlled by distant capitals. William Katerberg, "A Northern Vision: Frontiers and the West in the Canadian and American Imagination," in *One West, Two Myths II: Essays on Comparison*, ed. CL Higham and Robert Thacker (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006) 63. Writing specifically in a northern context, Zaslow argues that while both countries' frontiers had similarities, the Northern frontier in Canada continued a colonial dependency on Ottawa into well into the 20th century. Zaslow, "The Yukon: Northern Development in a Canadian-American Context," 134-35. H.V. Nelles discusses the perception of the north as a resource frontier from the 1890s to 1940 in his examination of resource production's impacts on politics in northern Ontario, concluding that government and its policies played a crucial role in the development of resource industries. Henry Vivian Nelles, *The Politics of Development: Forests, Mines and Hydro-Electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1974).

economic contribution to national centers.⁶⁸ The economic activities in frontiers were primarily based on natural resource extraction or working closely with nature. In “Kennecott Journey,” environmental historian William Cronon compares frontiers in Alaska with the American West and argues that in both areas, the population was mostly single men, from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, primarily engaged in resource industries which created a strong connection with the natural world.⁶⁹ Peripheries, as frontiers were, were eventually incorporated into the industrial economy, moving products along paths in and out of town.⁷⁰

Janice Cavell further engages with the importance of the environment to the idea of the frontier in her essay, “The Second Frontier”, where she characterizes the northern frontier as different from western frontiers in the relationships frontiersmen formed with the natural world. Unlike the American and Canadian wests where frontier settlers held confidence that they could overcome and conquer nature, northern frontiersmen lacked confidence in the likelihood that they could tame the northern wilderness.⁷¹ The idea of the North as an untamed wilderness remained a defining characteristic of the ways southerners conceived of the region until the 21st century. Historians have also examined the concept of the northern frontier shaping Canadian national identity. In “The True North Strong and Free,” Carl Berger argued the myth of the North was powerful in shaping Canada as a

⁶⁸ Janice Cavell, “The Second Frontier: The North in English-Canadian Historical Writing” in *Canadian Historical Review* 83,3 (2002): 379.

⁶⁹ William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town,” in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, William Cronon, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin eds. (New York: Norton, 1992): 45.

⁷⁰ Cronon, 39-40.

⁷¹ Cavell, 369.

northern nation, and maintaining a sense of wilderness and remoteness was essential to this image of Canada.⁷²

Frontier areas where mineral extraction, and not settlement, was the impetus for non-Indigenous presence were defined as a 'mining frontier.' At the turn of the 20th century, nowhere was promoted as frontier zones for resource extraction in the public imagination more so than the Klondike and Nome, Alaska. Scholars have also accepted this notion of the Yukon as frontier. Harold Innis was the first to examine the Yukon as a Canadian mining frontier. Northern historians Ken Coates and William Morrison have both referred to the Klondike Gold Rush as an important frontier episode in Canadian history, Morrison framed the North as a frontier in his examination of the RCMP and Canadian sovereignty, and Morris Zaslow examined the North as a frontier that was a part of, yet distinct from, the American frontier.⁷³ While many American miners did partake in the Klondike, Zaslow argued that what differentiated a Canadian frontier from an American frontier was a more orderly (due to the early presence of the NWMP before the Gold Rush began) reproduction of Victorian values in the Yukon as opposed to the looser, makeshift ideals of the American frontier often characterized by violence.⁷⁴

⁷² Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free" in *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Company of Canada Ltd., 1966): 3-26.

⁷³ Harold Innis, "Settlement and the Mining Frontier" in *Canadian Frontiers of Settlement* v. 9, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936). Northern historian Ken Coates argued in *Canada's Colonies* that the Klondike gold rush did not begin with the discovery of gold in 1896 but was part of "the unfolding of the North American mining frontier" in the 19th century. In *True North* historian William Morrison referred to the Klondike Gold Rush as "the quintessential frontier" episode in the history of the Canadian North. Coates, *Canada's Colonies*, 66. William Morrison, *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories*, The Illustrated History of Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78. William Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1985), 1. Morris Zaslow, "The Yukon: Northern Development in a Canadian-American Context" in *Interpreting Canada's North: Selected Readings*, ed. Ken Coates and William Morrison (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989): 133.

⁷⁴ American social modes and customs, such as open gambling, the sale of liquor, and prostitution characteristic of the American west were alien to the Victorian respectability that prevailed across Canada at that time. While these things did certainly take place in Dawson City, but they were more monitored, regulated, and looked down upon than they were in the American west. Zaslow, "The Yukon: Northern

However, classifying the Yukon as a frontier is problematic. Though during the years of the Klondike Gold Rush, the Yukon certainly demonstrated some of the characteristics of frontier regions the above scholars discuss, framing the Yukon as a mining frontier casts it within a Western and colonial understanding of the North. Identifying the Yukon as a frontier overlooks the long and established presence of multiple Indigenous groups who conceived of the Yukon as a homeland.⁷⁵ In *The Burden of History*, historian Elizabeth Furniss examined the colonial power relations between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians in a small resource town in the Cariboo-Chilcotin area of British Columbia during land claims conflicts. She argued that the symbolism of the frontier contributed to the type of power relations that has worked to reinforce inequality and the subordinate position of Indigenous peoples in Canada. In the logging industry, a frontier spirit emphasized the importance of independence, hard work, and competitiveness. Racialized ideas of Indigenous peoples as lazy, and their marginalization from the industry contributing to their inability to be competitive, classified them as outside of this frontier spirit, all while logging occurred on their traditional territory.⁷⁶

While I do not frame the Yukon as a frontier in my analysis of gold mining and environmental change, most contemporaries from the South who went to the Yukon carried

Development in a Canadian-American Context," 141. George Stanley argued that in Canada people brought old values to the frontier and adapted them to the new economic and environmental conditions. Quite unlike frontiers elsewhere, the Victorian standards that dominated mainstream Canadian life and law persisted in the Klondike. George Stanley, "Western Canada and the Frontier Thesis" in *The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada* 19,1 (1940): 105-117.

⁷⁵ George Vrtis and JR McNeill argued that interactions between miners and ranchers acts as a further reminder that industrial mining districts were more than frontiers but places people called home. Vrtis and McNeill, "Introduction: Of Mines, Minerals, and North American Environmental History," *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. JR McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 9.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 1999) 5-7. Adele Perry further discusses the concept of frontier ideologies contributing to racialized and gendered stereotypes in British Columbia in *On the Edge of Empire*.

with them frontier ideologies and perceptions about the environment that had detrimental consequences for Indigenous peoples in these areas, especially the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. In *Regeneration Through Violence*, Richard Slotkin's studies the frontier myth in America, describing the frontier myth as one of the most important in understanding the history of colonization and settlement in the United States. Slotkin argues that, in American history, frontier narratives begin with settlers' journey to the wilderness and their cultural, moral, and material regression to a more primitive state as they encounter conditions in unsettled and uncivilized areas. This journey includes a series of encounters with binary forces such as wilderness and civilization, humans and nature, whites and Indigenous peoples. Themes of violence and conflict are central to these encounters as settlers' struggle against the environment and unknown, possibly hostile, Indigenous peoples. Common narratives of gold discovery in the Klondike, as well as first-hand accounts of life in the Klondike, also express themes of empty land and struggle against nature.⁷⁷ The idea of empty wilderness is the strongest mythic icon associated with Canadian frontier narratives.⁷⁸ Image 3.3, below, is the most commonly reproduced image from the Klondike. The row of stampedeers ascending the massive, snow-covered Coast Mountain range alludes to the binary between humans and nature, and the struggle stampedeers faced in a harsh northern wilderness. The

⁷⁷ William Haskell, *Two Years in the Klondike and Alaska Gold-Fields 1896-1898* (Hartford: Hartford Publishing Company, 1898). The discovery narrative of the Klondike also includes elements of struggle between white and Indigenous peoples. The most popular narrative of the Klondike discovery begins when a Tagish man named Keish ("Skookum Jim" James Mason), his nephew K̄áa Goox̄ (Dawson Charlie), his sister Shaaw Tláa (Kate Carmack), and her American husband George Carmack discovered gold on August 16th, 1896 on *Gákdek*, or Rabbit, Creek (later renamed Bonanza Creek). Scholars have debated the origin of gold discovery. Many accounts claim that Nova Scotian Robert Henderson first found the creek where Carmack, Keish, and Charlie later discovered gold. They failed to pass along this information to him, claiming the discovery as their own. This story is contested within Yukon history. Julie Cruikshank published an account from Tagish oral histories that challenges the common story of the discovery by centering on Keish and how the cultural structures of Tagish life eventually led to the discovery of gold. Julie Cruikshank, "Images of Society in Klondike Gold Rush Narratives: Skookum Jim and the Discovery of Gold," *Ethnohistory* 39, no. 1 (1992): 20-41.

⁷⁸ Furniss, 19.



Figure 3.3. Packing Up Chilkoot Pass, c1898. Dawson City Museum Archives 1998.22.691

Klondike fits into a wider trend of emerging critique of modernism in late 19th century and early 20th century North America when anti-modernists feared industrial society had a corrosive effect on human health and spirit and they looked toward the natural world to escape from modern life.⁷⁹

Environmental historians Tina Loo and Tina Adcock have each examined the role of outdoor recreation as restorative activities, especially for men, for whom anti-modernists feared would become effeminate and soft due to prolonged exposure of modern life. In “Of Moose and Men,” Tina Loo discusses sport hunting in British Columbia from 1880-1939

⁷⁹ Tina Loo, "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in B.C., 1880-1939" in *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Autumn 2001): 300. Tina Adcock, "Many Tiny Traces: Antimodernism and Northern Exploration Between Wars," *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History*, ed. Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016): 139.

as an opportunity for men to escape the stress and pressures of city life and strengthen their masculinity.⁸⁰ In “Many Tiny Traces,” Tina Adcock argues that anti-modernism and the back to nature movement paralleled the conversion of ‘empty space’ into places of settlement and industry.⁸¹ This feeling of disconnect with nature led to the middle- and upper-class turning to Northern wilderness holidays in the interwar years as recourse for flailing masculinity.⁸²

Historians George Fetherling and Kathryn Morse make explicit connections between this anti-modern trend and the popularity of the Klondike Gold Rush. In his examination of global gold rushes, Fetherling argues that one of the reasons the Klondike captured the world’s imagination was because it was a return to an older, simpler way of gold digging not dominated by corporations, but by the individual and what he could do with his own two hands.⁸³ In her environmental history of the Klondike Gold Rush, Morse argues that industrialization led to a feeling of human alienation from nature, but those who participated in the Gold Rush stepped away from the industrial world in the Yukon and came to rely on direct relations with the natural world and subsistence living. The idea of the Klondike offering a pre-industrial way of living and labouring attracted many Americans (and Canadians) to the Gold Rush as they sought an escape from the boredom of industrialized life and society.⁸⁴ The idea of the Yukon as a pre-modern wilderness drew

⁸⁰ Loo, 298.

⁸¹ Adcock, 132-136.

⁸² Adcock, 139-140. Gabrielle Zezulka-Mailloux also discusses the rejuvenating aspects of “wilderness” at the turn of the 20th century in Ian McLaren’s edited collection examining parks as escapes from the strife of modern city life in “Laying the Tracks for Tourism: Paradoxical Promotions and the Development of Jasper National Park” in *Culturing Wilderness in Jasper National Park: Studies in Two Centuries of Human History in the Upper Athabasca River Watershed*, ed. Ian McLaren (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2007): 245-47.

⁸³ Fetherling, 4-5.

⁸⁴ Morse, *Nature of Gold*, 12. Morse’s study is an American history of the Klondike Gold Rush.

many outsiders to the region who wanted to escape the confines of industrial society, or adventure-seekers who wanted to experience the thrill of the journey North and the challenge of survival once there. As southerners migrated into the Yukon, and began sending literature back South, the Yukon developed a reputation for its harsh and unforgiving conditions, and “the desire to conquer and reap its land became symbolic of defeating nature itself.”⁸⁵

This desire to master nature is strongly linked with the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from subsistence land bases. Brenda McDougall argued that property and discourses around property rights and ownership were at the centre of colonial society, and that the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their traditional land use areas is at the core of colonization.⁸⁶ Settler societies delineated settler space from Indigenous space. In the Yukon, the displacement of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in to Moosehide Village, a reserve located nearby but separate from Dawson City, worked to place distance between outsiders and the local Indigenous population.⁸⁷ Writing about the Indigenous reserve system in British Columbia, geographer Cole Harris argued that development and dispossession worked together within a short time frame in the Canadian Northwest where there were two opposing stories of land use in these areas - dispossession of land from Indigenous locals and development of that same land for new settlers.⁸⁸

The colonial histories of British Columbia and the Yukon have much in common, such as their economic dependence on natural resources, histories of fur trade activity and

⁸⁵ Jen Laliberte, “Frozen in Memory?: Indigenous Identity in Gold Rush Imagination and Reality” PhD Dissertation Dept. of Indigenous Studies (Peterborough: Trent University, 2006): 5.

⁸⁶ Brenda MacDougall, "Space and Place within Aboriginal Epistemological Traditions: Recent Trends in Historical Scholarship" in *Canadian Historical Review* 98,1 (March 2017): 65.

⁸⁷ Sabin, 381.

⁸⁸ Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 200).

gold rushes, absence of treaties until the 20th century, and their perceived remoteness from Ottawa. Settlement patterns occurred in similar trajectories in both places – beginning with low populations of non-Indigenous fur traders, then small resource camps with a fluctuating population, and eventually the development of permanent settlements - though British Columbia developed more, and larger, permanent settlements much earlier than the Yukon.⁸⁹ Further, both the Yukon and B.C. had few Indian Agents who were more often absent than present on reserves and in communities.⁹⁰

But there are also important differences in the histories of British Columbia and the Yukon, especially between 1890 and 1940; for example, by 1890 British Columbia had already attained provincial status in 1870 and had a permanent population of 98,173 by 1891.⁹¹ Both colonial and Dominion governments had been actively managing Indigenous peoples in B.C. since the mid-1800s.⁹² Assimilation policies under the *Indian Act* directed at British Columbia's Indigenous peoples played out more aggressively than the ways that assimilation policies played out in the Yukon.⁹³ For example, residential schooling in the Yukon, while restrictive to children and Indigenous cultures, had more flexibility in the way they were conducted due to realities of life in the North, such as limitation of climate and lack of industrial activity. Where residential schools in British Columbia, like elsewhere in southern Canada, focused on teaching children industrial and agricultural

⁸⁹ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

⁹⁰ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 271.

⁹¹ Statistics Canada, *Census Population of British Columbia, 1871-2016* (Ottawa: Bureau of Statistics, 2016).

⁹² Harris, *Making Native Space*, xviii.

⁹³ Potlatch laws appear to have been reinforced more strongly in British Columbia than in the Yukon. Tina Loo, "Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric in B.C., 1884-1951" in *The Canadian Historical Review* 73,2 (1992): 1-26. JR Miller, "Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy" in *Ethnohistory* 37,4 (Autumn, 1990): 386-415. William Simeone, *Rifles, Blankets, and Beads: Identity, History, and the Northern Athapaskan Potlatch* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995).

skills, accounts from residential school survivors at the Carcross school in the Yukon suggest that instructors encouraged a continuation of hunting, trapping, and fishing.⁹⁴ In this sense, residential schools in the North included some retention of Indigenous customs that was not present elsewhere in Canada.⁹⁵

The Yukon case was similar to Harris's description of two opposing stories of land use in British Columbia, except that instead of the creation of reserves to remove Indigenous peoples from land desired for settlement and agriculture, colonizers in the Yukon displaced Indigenous peoples from traditional territory to claim the land for mining. While Indigenous peoples perceived their local environment as integrated into their culture, Euro-Canadians who perceived the North as a mining frontier only saw physical landscape and attributed value to the resources it contained.⁹⁶ A crucial component of colonialization is the images that colonizers held of pre-colonial space as *terra nullis*, or empty land.⁹⁷ In the North, particularly, where extraction of resources was the impetus for non-Indigenous presence, ideologies of the northern environment as empty or blank space and open wilderness contributed to miners' lack of concern about possible environmental impacts they may leave behind in the area. Colonial assumptions about a discovery of unused land as free for the taking acted to justify its taking.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Mary Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1999), discusses residential schooling in B.C., as does Jean Barman and Mona Gleason in *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia* (Edmonton: Brush Education Inc., 2003).

⁹⁵ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*.

⁹⁶ Sangster, 6.

⁹⁷ Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, "Colonialism and State Dependency" in *Journal of Aboriginal Health* (November 2009): 45.

⁹⁸ Lisa Cook, "North Takes Place in Dawson City, Yukon, Canada" in *Northscapes: History, Technology and the Making of Northern Environments*, ed. Dolly Jorgensen and Sverker Sorlin (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2013): 228.

Cultural and ideological differences in perceptions of land resulted in colonizers believing that only they could properly and effectively make use of this space. Therefore, they believed, until Europeans arrived, most of the land was wasted or put to inadequate use.⁹⁹ For instance, Harris argues that in British Columbia in the 1860s, white settlers claimed that Aht did not occupy the land in a civilized sense - according to western standards, they were not appropriately using the land. They believed that developing land through labour was what defined proper use. As early as the 17th century, the English pointed to "houses, fields, and fences as tangible evidence of occupation on the ground."¹⁰⁰ This evidence signified ownership and the right of private property, secured by action rather than word. This was similar in the case of mining in the Klondike. According to the 1898 regulations for mining, miners were required to either work their claims to retain property rights to their claims or they had to pay \$200 for each of the first three years of ownership and \$400 in lieu of work for any years following four years of ownership.¹⁰¹ In 1899, regulations for dredging stated that if a lessee failed to efficiently work the area through an operating dredge within two years of the date of his lease, the lease became void.¹⁰²

Capitalism's focus on private property ownership and labour as proving rights to land overrode the communal way of life of Indigenous groups, turning communal land into private lots. That land which was unsuitable for farming, mining, or other development

⁹⁹ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 46-48. Harris also discusses this land use ideology in "How Did Colonialism Disposes? Comments from an Edge of Empire" in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): 168.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 48-49.

¹⁰¹ YA PAM 1898-0153, *Regulations for the Disposal of Quartz Mining Claims on Dominion Lands in Manitoba and the NWT (including the Provisional District of the Yukon)* (Government Printing Bureau, 1898).

¹⁰² YA PAM 1899-47, *Regulations Governing the issues of leases to dredge for minerals in the beds of rivers in the Yukon Territory* (Government Printing Bureau, 1898).

was labelled as waste land or wilderness.¹⁰³ This concept applied to land in the North especially; while colonizers perceived the northern frontier as valuable for trapping, mining, logging, hydro development, and sport hunting the categorization of the region as remote and marginal justified their view of improving northern wildlife, Indigenous peoples, and environment for the economic good of southern and urban Canada.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, since the earliest period of colonization in Canada, colonizers have actively engaged in the process of alienating land from Indigenous peoples, turning collective land into state controlled land, and then to privately-owned land controlled and monitored by the state.¹⁰⁵

Colonial land-use ideologies contributed to Indigenous dispossession from traditional land bases and to reorganization and destruction of the landscape and waterways in and surrounding the Klondike goldfields as well. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory was transformed into property, which denied existing Indigenous relationships with the land. Such a discursive gesture was central to making the northern environment a colonized space.¹⁰⁶ As non-Indigenous people occupied and used local land, they prevented Indigenous peoples from carrying out subsistence activities there.¹⁰⁷ The remainder of this chapter turns to an analysis of how the process led to the relocation to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from a traditionally used fish camp in 1896.

¹⁰³ Donald Wetherell, *Wildlife, Land, and People: A Century of Change in Prairie Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 25.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Michelle Man, "Capitalism and the Disempowerment of Canadian Aboriginal Peoples" in *Natural Resources and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Readings, Cases, and Commentary* 2nd ed., ed. Robert Anderson and Robert Bone (Concord: Captus Press, 2009): 22.

¹⁰⁶ Cook, 227.

¹⁰⁷ Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1997), 184.

Displacement and Relocation: The Move to Moosehide

These colonial conceptions of land and land use shaped the interaction between miners and the physical environment in the Klondike, but they also shaped the relationship between outsiders and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as well as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relationships with the environment. Shortly after the discovery of coarse gold on Rabbit Creek, trader and businessman Joe Ladue staked the flat of land at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, naming his town site Dawson and selling lots of land for up to \$300 each to incoming stampedeers.¹⁰⁸ Many miners either unable to afford, or refusing to pay, these exorbitant rates moved across the Klondike River near Tr'ochëk, a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fish settlement where at least twenty or more families had annually gathered in the spring and summer to fish and dry their catch. They also used it to dry meat when hunting and picked berries on the hill.¹⁰⁹ The miners staked all empty lots of land, even those between Hwëch'in dwellings, appropriating Tr'ochëk and renaming the settlement Klondike City, though Dawsonites more commonly called the settlement Lousetown.¹¹⁰ Rather than a fish settlement, Tr'ochëk became a collection of white-owned cabins. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in felt that the white population of miners were forcing them out of Tro'chëk.¹¹¹ Photos 3.4 and 3.5 below compares Tr'ochëk in 1895, with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fish shacks along the Klondike River to Tr'ochëk in 1898 after miners took over the area.

¹⁰⁸ Coarse gold is a sizeable grain of gold, colloquially referred to as a nugget of gold, as compared to gold dust.

¹⁰⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, xxii.

¹¹⁰ The name Lousetown became popular when Dawsonites decided the red-light district in the city was morally deteriorating women and children of Dawson. Prostitutes (who, generally, were accepted by most people, including the North West Mounted Police) were asked to move across the river. Lousetown soon developed into a small community with stores, hostels, and a residential area. It solved the problem of getting prostitutes out of sight in Dawson. Don Sawatsky, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northbush Publications Ltd., 1975), 116.

¹¹¹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 20.

Furthermore, a confusing transaction occurred between these newcomers and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. In an interview conducted in 1993 for the Lousetown Oral History Project, Chlora Mason of the Hwëch'in First Nation recalled her grandmother telling her that the miners cheated the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with gold-painted rocks in exchange for land and buildings.¹¹² However, a series of correspondence between Anglican Bishop William Carpenter Bompas, NWMP Constable Charles Constantine, and the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa documents that in September of 1896 as a rush of miners were coming into the area, they expressed interest in buying the houses in Tr'ochëk. The Hwëch'in did not have time to contact Constantine, Commissioner William Ogilvie (then Dominion Surveyor), or Reverend Frederick Flewelling (the missionary stationed with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at the time) as these men were all away, and they sold fifteen of their cabins for between \$100 and \$200 each. In a letter to the Department of Indian Affairs, Bishop Bompas explained that the Hwëch'in thought they were only selling the buildings to the miners who would then move them across the river to Dawson.¹¹³ This did happen in a few cases, but the majority of miners, who assumed they had purchased both the cabins and the land beneath them, took permanent occupancy of the dwellings with the intention of creating a new town.¹¹⁴ More devastating to the Hwëch'in than having the land on the settlement privatized was losing access to resources in the area, especially because Tr'ochëk was their harvesting spot for their main summer salmon run.

¹¹² Chlora Mason, "Lousetown Oral History Project," April 19, 1993 (THA Traditional Knowledge Recordings).

¹¹³ An extract of a letter from Bishop Bompas copied for NWMP Constable Constantine March 5th, 1897. YA, Bompas W.C., S.1 V. 19 GOV 1629 f.4682. 40 Acre Land, Junction of Yukon and Klondike Rivers, afterword surveyed as Klondike City.

¹¹⁴ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 20.



Figure 3.4. Tr'ochëk, 1985. Yukon Archives, Robert Coutts fonds, 82/358, #2.

The confusion of the "sale" of Tr'ochëk is more understandable when considering the fundamental difference in ideologies of land use between the two groups.¹¹⁵ As previously discussed, to those people coming from the United States, Britain, and Canada, who held common law understandings of land, it was meant to be owned as private property, to be worked and improved to garner various types of profit. This meant dividing

¹¹⁵ Stephen Bocking discusses the difference in views of nature in the North upon the arrival of outsiders to the region in the introduction to *Ice Blink*. Stephen Bocking, "Introduction," *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History*, ed. Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016): 14.



Figure 3.5. Hundreds of stamperers' tents on the Tr'ochëk site and the west bank of the Klondike River, summer 1898. YA 2160, Vancouver Public Library Coll.

land into small parcels and then buying and selling these parcels for ownership and control by individuals.¹¹⁶ This concept was completely foreign to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in who perceived the land as common, shared with other humans, animals, and the rest of the natural world. Where this land was homeland and life-giving to Indigenous locals, hence, respected, for outsiders, the same area was a commodity to conquer, exploit, and possess.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ John Weaver, *The Great Land Rush and the Making of the Modern World, 1650-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 4. Harris also argues that the English colonial idea of property rights was based on developing, improving, and making use of land – a premise John Locke called the labour theory of property. Harris, *Making Native Space*, referring to John Locke's 1689 *The Second Treatise of Government*, 48-49.

¹¹⁷ Mishler and Simeone, *Hän, People of the River: Hän Hwëch'in An Ethnography and Ethnohistory* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Press, 2004), xiii.

Bompas wrote to the federal government in October of 1896 requesting compensation for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Chief Isaac requested a sum of \$2000 for Tr'ochëk stating this was a fair price if the miners intended to stay on the land and turn it into a town, as at that point it was only the houses the miners had paid for.¹¹⁸ However, more urgently the Hwëch'in wanted protection in the occupation of a plot of ground where they relocated so they would not be driven out once again. Throughout this correspondence, Bompas made clear that, "The Indians do not wish to be tenacious of their rights or troublesome to the Government or the miners, for whom they work and whom they supply with provisions."¹¹⁹

After the miners forced them out of Tr'ochëk, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in moved to the south end of Dawson, which was relatively close to their traditional fishing area. They built a cabin and several brush shelters, and were joined by Anglican Reverend, Frederick Flewelling, in October 1896. Bishop Bompas had sent Flewelling to establish a mission among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. In an October 28, 1896 letter to the Department of the Interior, Bishop Bompas requested to purchase a forty-acre plot of ground at the junction of the Klondike and Yukon rivers for mission purposes and for "Indian occupancy." Unfortunately, this new site they selected was the same site the North-West Mounted Police had chosen for themselves. Bompas requested if the NWMP would not allow the Hwëch'in to share the site they would approve an adjoining lot for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. He explained that this was an urgent matter as this lot was the one available site in town

¹¹⁸ YA, Bompas W.C., S.1 V. 19 GOV 1629 f.4682. 40 Acre Land, Junction of Yukon and Klondike Rivers, afterword surveyed as Klondike City, 1897.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

that was not on swampy ground.¹²⁰ Constable Charles Constantine denied Bompas' request, as he regarded the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as undesirable neighbours.

Later, in June of 1897, Constantine wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs claiming the Hwëch'in relinquished their claim to the land at Tr'ochëk, with the knowledge and approval of their missionaries, as far as the NWMP Department was concerned. He then wrote if the Hwëch'in wanted to communicate with himself, Ogilvie or the missionary, they could have done so as it was "less than eight hours [run] from Klondike to Forty mile. Not only this but both W. Ogilvie and myself have visited Klondike." It was his belief that the Hwëch'in should not receive compensation for the land on Tr'ochëk, as he claimed they received a good price for their cabins. Furthermore, he stated that

The Indians have expressed themselves as greatly pleased with the arrival of the miners as it means plenty of foods, plenty of money and better times generally for them. In winter, they will always have a ready market for their game and in summer can make good money as boatmen and packers. The lowest wage in which these Indians will work is \$4.00 per day.¹²¹

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in remained at the south end of Dawson for the winter of 1896-1897 while Bishop Bompas continued his campaign to find them a suitable area for a new settlement. There was a long debate between Ottawa and Yukon representatives: the two issues in this debate included deciding where the Hwëch'in would settle and protecting the Hwëch'in salmon fishery from non-Indigenous use.¹²² Constantine objected to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in remaining in Dawson altogether. He suggested the Hwëch'in relocate

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ YA, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, COR 262 Series 1-1C Box 14 f. 6.

¹²² Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 21.

to, "either of the well wooded islands in the Klondike or on its banks a little above the mouth or on a large island in The Yukon directly opposite their old winter quarters."¹²³

However, there seemed to be disagreement among Dominion government departments, as on March 29th of 1897, the Assistant Secretary of the Department of the Interior wrote to Indian Affairs, and to Constantine, in support of Bishop Bompas, and ordered Constantine to "protect the Indians as desired" in their new occupation.¹²⁴

Though the Bishop's application for a plot of land was successful, the news took approximately two months to reach Dawson. In the meantime, Constantine, Bompas, Chief Isaac and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in made an agreement on a third location. Chief Isaac requested that his band relocate to Moosehide Village (Jëjik Ddhà Dènezhu Kek'i), a traditional camp located five kilometers downstream of Dawson on the Yukon River¹²⁵. Though the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had cordial relations with outsiders, Chief Isaac was displeased with the large numbers of white newcomers; the influx of thousands of Klondike prospectors, and other outsiders, had already overwhelmed the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in population and overtook Tr'ochëk. He was fearful of the impacts that close and prolonged contact would have on his people. He particularly worried about the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in drinking alcohol provided by the white population.¹²⁶ Moosehide was a logical choice as it was already well established as an important site for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in having been occupied for at least 8,000 years. Furthermore, it had a high bank to protect

¹²³ YA, Bompas, W.C., 1/19 GOV 1629 f.4682. 40 Acre Land, Junction of Yukon and Klondike Rivers, afterword surveyed as Klondike City, 1897.

¹²⁴ Dobrowolsky writes that in this correspondence there is never mention of protecting salmon fishing camps. Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 23.

¹²⁵ Moosehide is almost equally between Dawson and Fort Reliance, from which it is 4.8 kilometers upstream.

¹²⁶ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 16.

from flooding, fresh water from Moosehide Creek, and had access to winter hunting grounds in the Ogilvie Mountains.¹²⁷ The cultural and economic significance of Moosehide paired with the fact it was an appealing physical location made it a logical option for



Figure 3.6. Moosehide Village c.1902. DCMA 1983.180.1.55.

relocation.

According to Sawatsky, Moosehide is one of the earliest Yukon Indigenous villages in the territory, estimating it was established in the late 1770s with as many as 500 dwellings at Moosehide long before the Gold Rush.¹²⁸ Moosehide was also a preferred location because Chief Isaac believed a downstream location would make it more difficult for his people to go into Dawson regularly. In Spring of 1897, Chief Isaac and his band moved to Moosehide. Within just a short year and a half, Stampeders overtook the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's ancestral home at the mouth of the Klondike, forcing them to appeal

¹²⁷ Winton, "Łuk Cho Anay/Big Fish Come," 18.

¹²⁸ Sawatsky, 61.

to a remote government in a distant land to secure a new home. Where they could freely move around the land prior to 1896, by 1897 they found themselves confined to a small tract of land with limits imposed by outsiders.¹²⁹

Even with the relocation to Moosehide, government officials continued to suggest that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in move even further from Dawson in favour of using and developing the land for future mining. In September of 1900, William Ogilvie attempted to convince Bompas of further relocation. His argument rested on two bases: one, he stated that since Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples themselves complained about the lack of game in the area this indicated they should not lie near any densely populated areas; two, he argued that the timber reserve around Moosehide was stripped of timber by 1900 and because so many whites lived nearby, the government preferred to preserve timber as much as possible for the use of miners and others in Dawson.¹³⁰ However, five months later, Ogilvie reported that his attempt to relocate the Hwëch'in to either Twelve Mile or Fifteenmile creek was a failure because "their spiritual directors were averse to the plan." Bompas and Flewelling argued that Moosehide was the most convenient location for the Hwëch'in as they were near fish camps and close enough to town to sell meat, fish, and other products. However, they argued that the reserve was not large enough (at 160 acres). In his letter to the Department of the Interior, Ogilvie agreed that the reserve was too small, but, "discoveries of gold bearing gravel have been made in that vicinity, and before I recommend any extension of the 160 acres, I will await the development of this ground, as

¹²⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 28.

¹³⁰ Letter from William Ogilvie to Bishop Bompas, September 17, 1900 (DCMA, Moosehide). Letter from William Ogilvie to Secretary of the Department of the Interior, February 4, 1901 (DCMA, Moosehide).

gold mining ground.”¹³¹ This continued favouring of land in the Yukon for development created future contention with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in regarding access to land and resources that followed similar patterns into the 1930s.

Conclusion

From 1896 to 1940, the Yukon was defined by characteristics of both extractive colonialism and settler colonialism. The colonial experience in the Yukon included the intrusion of an outside force and a forcible take over of land and resources primarily linked to resource exploitation. Many of these intruders into the Yukon in 1897 were miners - though missionaries and government administrators were there as well – and it was through their gold mining activity and ideologies about proper uses of land and resources that the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in were quickly alienated and dislocated from their traditional subsistence land base near Dawson City.¹³²

The relocation to Moosehide Village highlights a few important points about the colonization of the Yukon. Firstly, that the perception outsiders held of land as private property and holding value only in it’s ability to be measured, used, and commercialized led to the displacement of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in from Tro’chëk. Common law understandings of land and the privatization of land as property overlooked and superimposed Indigenous relationships with land and resulting socioeconomic structures.

¹³¹ Letter from William Ogilvie to Secretary of the Department of the Interior, February 4, 1901 (DCMA, Moosehide).

¹³² According to historian Peter Pigott, in 1897 there 2000 miners in the Yukon. Only one year later the population of miners had grown by nine times to amount to 18,000. Peter Pigott, *From Far and Wide: A Complete History of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 88. In comparing his numbers to the NWMP census of 1898, there remains 7,000 people in the Klondike region, living outside of Dawson City. This population includes the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in living in Moosehide, with the remainder likely working as general labourers around the goldfields.

Secondly, this case demonstrates that Indigenous peoples spoke out against and challenged colonialism in the Yukon. Chief Isaac not only demanded compensation for his people, but he foresaw the potential for drastic change to his peoples' ways of live and made a proactive choice to limit the opportunity for negative colonial experiences by moving his people away from the Dawson and Klondike City town sites. Even once the Gold Rush ended and the population declined in the Klondike region, Chief Isaac and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued to challenge the colonial order and speak out against inequalities they experienced.

As Cole Harris argued, colonized people can reject the message of colonizers yet still be affected by it.¹³³ In most instances in the relationship between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and white society, they found means other than rejection for interacting with the new order. Indigenous peoples could resist land appropriation and cultural change in a variety of ways, but they could hardly stop them altogether.¹³⁴ Until 1920, a distant Euro-Canadian government imposed new laws on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and after 1920 the Yukon Territorial government did the same. Though they attempted to maintain their traditional lifestyle as much as possible, this was difficult as mining drove away game; however, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in managed to mix older subsistence activities with the newly emerging capital economy, not only adapting to new society, but creating a mixed hybrid economy that commonly prevailed in the North, as analyzed further in Chapter 5.

While the Klondike was not the first gold discovery, or even the first gold rush, in the North, it certainly was the largest and the one to create the most environmental change

¹³³ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia : Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1997), 193.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

in a very short span of time. The Klondike Gold Rush came to an end just as quickly as it had begun. Rich goldfields were discovered in Nome in 1899 and in the Tanana Valley in 1903 and thousands of men moved on from the Klondike to these new rushes.¹³⁵ Though the Rush itself was ephemeral, it had both short- and long-term impacts on the environment of the Klondike region as well as the local Indigenous population leaving a legacy of environmental disruption that often accompanied colonial resource extraction as well as new social and economic structures and systems of managing the local land, animals, and Indigenous populations.

Most of the outsider who came into the Yukon in the Gold Rush era never did fulfil their dreams of striking it rich, but they did make a tremendous impact on the social, economic, and environmental life of the Yukon and the Yukon Indigenous populations, primarily the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Although most of the stampede population left the Yukon soon after arriving, the August 16th, 1896 discovery marked the beginning of rapid disruption of traditional Indigenous ways of life in many parts of the Yukon. In less than three years, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in became a minority in their own land. Their ancestral home was overrun by tens of thousands of gold seekers, and where they faced little to no competition before they now had to compete for vital resources as hunting and fishing grounds were overrun by stampeders. They were at the economic and social margins of society.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ David Morrison, 6.

¹³⁶ Chris Clarke and the K'anacha Group, *Tr'ehuhch'in Nawtr'udaha: Finding Our Way Home* (Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 2009), 8. Mishler and Simeone, 15.

Chapter 4: Surveillance, Resistance, and Persistence at Moosehide Village

In September of 1985, respected Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder 'Gramma' Mary McLeod recounted the following legend of the Moosehide Slide that helps to explain why Moosehide was an important space for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in:

In the early days there were cannibals everywhere and they bothered people. So, one time people climb hill near where is now Moosehide to get above them. Lots of big trees on these hills that time. People had only axe made of sharp rock in those days. They cut down the biggest tree with stone axe and they thrown that tree down the hill on cannibals. The tree start big slide. It kill all the cannibals. That slide is shaped like hide of moose so people call that place Moosehide. When I was a young girl, my old grandma took me one time. She showed me bones of those cannibals. They are all covered with moss now. So I know this is a true story.¹

This legend explains why the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in began using Moosehide many generations ago as a seasonal encampment. Moosehide Village (Jëjik Ddhà Dënezhu Kek'i), also known as the Moosehide Indian Reserve after 1900, is located three kilometers downstream of Dawson where Moosehide Creek meets the Yukon River. As discussed in chapter three, Moosehide was a traditional camp used for generations by the Hwëch'in.

According to a different oral legend, many Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were killed by the Moosehide slide, a geographic landmark at Dawson, shown below in image 4.1, when they were living at the north end of what later became Dawson. According to this legend, the great spirit Manitou became angered at the people when they engaged in thievery. He asked them to stop stealing, lying, and cheating among themselves, and when they persisted, Manitou decided to end these behaviours himself. With one sweep of his hand,

¹ Dawson Indian Band, *Moosehide Trails*, September 1985 (YA Moosehide Trails), 2. *Moosehide Trails* was the Dawson Indian Band newsletter printed quarter-annually from 1985 to 1989. After this it was renamed *Kentra Tay* and remains in publication.

he pushed the side of the mountain down upon the village, killing half the population. After this occurred, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in moved to safer ground at Moosehide.²



Image 4.1. Moosehide Slide. Photo by author, May 2013.

Moosehide both because of its traditional significance and its access to resources important to his people's subsistence lifeways.³ He also wanted to keep his people away from the

In both these legends, Moosehide was chosen and perceived as a space for safety and security. In the history of the Klondike Gold Rush, Moosehide remained an important cultural safe space for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. When they were forced to leave Tr'ochëk, Chief Isaac chose

² Don Sawatsky, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northbush Publications Ltd., 1975), 54.

³ Archeological evidence suggests there was seasonal habitation at Moosehide as early as 1730 B.C.E. The resettlement to Moosehide in 1897 marked the beginning of the longest known period of permanent habitation lasting into the 1950s and 1960s when the last families moved back into Dawson, though some

negative aspects of the new society developing in Dawson and around the goldfields. He maintained this perspective after the turn of the century as well, reporting to the *Dawson Daily News* that dance halls, alcohol, and even the air and water in Dawson were not good for his people.⁴ However, after the onslaught of the Gold Rush and accompanying colonial institutions, Moosehide became both a safe space as well as a space of colonial control.

From the beginning of the Forty Mile Gold Rush in 1886 into the 1930s the Anglican Church and the Canadian state, specifically the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) and the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA), were the most visible agents of colonial power in the Yukon. The project of colonialism differed from one geographic location to the next as the political, historical, and institutional context differed, and the way in which it played out in the Yukon differed from that in southern Canada, creating unique relationships between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Anglican church, and the state. Where the broad goals of assimilation, civilization, and agriculture persisted in most places in southern Canada, conditions in the North made it necessary for the DIA to not only allow, but encourage, Indigenous peoples to continue subsistence hunting and trapping. Where the colonial grip was slightly weaker in the North between 1896 and 1940, it allowed for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to instigate more cultural negotiation, and accommodation and the subversion of attempted collaboration were viable responses to colonialism as well as resistance.

While the church and state often worked together in the administration of Indigenous affairs, in the Yukon, the NWMP and DIA appeared happy to let the church

families and individuals continued to camp at Moosehide in the summer months. Sally Robinson, "The Hän: A History of Change 1847-1910," (DCMA, First Nations - Hän).

⁴ "Moosehide Healthy", *Dawson Daily News* (Sept 12, 1905).

carry out the majority of civilizing and assimilating activities. The reasons for this were twofold: firstly, the federal government feared the costs of administering to Indigenous northerners. In the Yukon specifically, the archival record points to instances where Indian Agents and DIA officials expressed limitations within the region's budget and the desire to restrict spending in the North. For example, in 1927, when an Indigenous reverend, Richard Martin, was blinded by a shot gun, the Anglican church appealed to the DIA for help with the costs of Richard's medical expenses, being an Indigenous person, but the DIA denied any responsibility stating because he was a catechist the church held responsibility for his health care.⁵ Again, in 1933, the DIA refused students into the Carcross residential school in the Southern Yukon if parents could not afford their transportation as their budget would not allow for travel expenses.⁶ Secondly, there were

⁵ Richard Martin lost vision in one of his eyes as a child, and in January of 1926 he lost sight in his remaining eye when his gun exploded and backfired into his eye while hunting on the Blackstone River. An eye specialist from Chicago who happened to be travelling in the Yukon examined Richard and believed an operation could restore his vision. Richard went to Vancouver for this operation in July of 1927. Reverend Daimpire, who was the missionary at Moosehide at the time, sent a \$200 cheque to pay for Richard's hospital fees in July, followed by a \$250-dollar cheque on August 15th. Richard only required \$180 of that which Daimpire sent, as Sovereign arranged that Richard's stay at the Vancouver General Hospital was at no charge. His only expenses were travel back and forth from Dawson, a new suit and a razor, medical fees, and special payment to stewards while travelling for their extra assistance with Richard. The operation was unsuccessful and Richard returned to Dawson in September completely blind. Before sending the second cheque, Reverend Daimpire wrote to Indian Agent John Hawksley requesting reimbursement for Richard's travel to Vancouver and medical expenses for an operation. Hawksley replied stating that he presumed the Diocese of the Yukon would provide the necessary expenses as Richard was a catechist.⁵ Bishop Stringer argued that the Church provided, and covered the expense of, all training for Indigenous catechists for the benefit of Indigenous communities, and that working for the church did not revoke one's Indian status in any way, and that the DIA was still financially responsible for Indigenous catechists just as it was for all Indigenous peoples with status. Daimpire and Stringer's appeals did not result in much, as by June 1928 the DIA had still not contributed any financial help to cover Richard's expenses, though by November of 1928 the DIA agreed to provide Martin with \$25 a month allowance. Letter from Reverend Daimpire to Sovereign, July 31 1927; Letter from Sovereign to Coldrick, Sept 15 1927; Letter from Richard Martin to Bishop Stringer, November 12 1927. YA, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, COR 253 Series 1-1a Box 5 f.5.

⁶ Indian Affairs, School Carcross, YA, 1/11 GOV 1621 f. 2335-6. John Sandlos argued that the Department of Indian Affairs consistently opposed conservation aims and game regulations in the first half of the 20th century in the NWT that may undermine the ability of Indigenous northerners to live off the land. Of particular concern was the cost of providing relief that regulations could create. *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2007). Ken Coates also discussed the DIA's concern that Canada's Indigenous people would become an economic

more church representatives in close proximity to Indigenous groups than federal government officials – the one exception to this was Dawson, but even there the Indian Agent still was not at Moosehide frequently, the NWMP rarely visited, and a missionary lived among the Hwëch'in on the reserve.

Anglican missionaries and federal representatives with the NWMP (before the assignment of an Indian Agent) frequently clashed in their approaches to administering to Indigenous Yukoners, as demonstrated in the case of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relocation to Moosehide. While the Anglican church and the Canadian state tumultuously worked together in the administration of Indigenous Yukoners, the more interesting and revealing relationships were those between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the Church, and state representatives. Land and space were monitored under the colonial setting in the Yukon, and agents of church and state sought Indigenous peoples as collaborators in this system of surveillance. However, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in found ways to subvert church and government pressure and surveillance and ensure a degree of cultural persistence.

Focusing on life at the Moosehide reserve, this chapter examines the ways in which the reconfiguration of space contributed to colonial relationships between Indigenous populations and agents of church and state, and how Indigenous populations responded to colonial pressures. First, this chapter discusses the ways in which church and state powers

charge and hoped that Indigenous communities would have economic independence from the state through their engagement in the new economy. Ken Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 195. Coates makes similar arguments in *Canada's Colonies: A History of the Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Toronto: James Lormier and Company, 198), 123. Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians*. In examining famine in Ungava Bay in the 1880s, Hugh Shewell argued that the federal government attempted to ward off costs of providing relief to Indigenous Northerners, specifically because they did not fall within treaty areas. *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 76-79. Shewell also discussed the DIA's hesitancy in providing relief to northern Indigenous peoples under Duncan Campbell Scott between 1913-1932. Shewell, 97-98.

used reserves to further their agendas through a structure of disciplinary surveillance. It then provides a brief history of church and state approaches to colonization of Yukon Indigenous peoples and land, primarily focusing on the ways in which each acted to carry out colonial surveillance at Moosehide. Finally, it explores various approaches of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in dealing with colonial surveillance and pressure at Moosehide arguing that even though the Hwëch'in faced increasing pressure from colonial agents to conform to non-Indigenous society, they managed to use Moosehide as an Indigenous space where they challenged colonization with a variety of responses including challenge, accommodation, and resistance.

Moosehide Village, Indian Reserves, and Surveillance

Not only was Moosehide the first northern reserve, but it operated differently than most reserves in southern Canada for three main reasons. First, when the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relocated to Moosehide Village in 1897 the location, and purpose for relocation, was primarily determined by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Chief Isaac worked with the Anglican church in securing this location for his people, under his desire to protect them from the harmful effects of non-Indigenous society in Dawson. Unlike most places in southern Canada, with the exception of B.C., the selection of Moosehide as an Indigenous reserve did not follow treaty negotiations, as there was no treaty in the Yukon. Secondly, in southern Canada, after the creation of the NWMP in 1873, one of their primary tasks was to remove Indigenous peoples from desirable land for settlement and confine them to

reserves where they would be assimilated into broader Canadian society.⁷ As discussed in Chapter Three, the search for gold and extraction of resources, rather than establishing permanent settlement and agriculture, attracted most outsiders to the Yukon between 1896 to 1940, so the ways in which the church and state attempted to control the actions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in reflected this difference from the South. Finally, the limited presence of an Indian Agent at the Moosehide reserve, as compared to the more regular staffing of this post on reserves in the South, meant that the church tended to play a larger role in surveillance in Moosehide than did the state.

In his article "How Does Colonialism Dispossess?," geographer Cole Harris argued that most colonial scholars identify culture as the primary locus of colonial power, but have not done as well in examining the ways in which land and environment contributed to the colonizing process.⁸ In the Klondike region, miners used Indigenous land for their own purposes in line with their vision of proper land use, often forcing Indigenous peoples to move beyond their traditionally occupied areas. In *The Resettlement Of British Columbia*, Harris argued that small reserves had little meaning to Indigenous peoples while they were able to hunt, fish, and gather in their former traditional areas; however, the implications of reserves and the way they worked to exclude Indigenous peoples became more apparent as non-Indigenous people occupied and used local land preventing Indigenous peoples from carrying out their subsistence activities there.⁹ In his study of British Columbia, Harris argued that once relegated to reserves, Indigenous peoples could no longer use off-reserve land and resources controlled by non-Indigenous peoples. In Alberta and Saskatchewan,

⁷ Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009), 8.

⁸ Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess?," 165.

⁹ Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, 185.

Indigenous peoples were prohibited to leave their reserves without permission, enforced under the pass system, which limited their ability to continue with traditional subsistence harvesting and restricted movement from and between reserves.¹⁰ In his study of the Stoney-Nakoda exclusion from Banff National Park, historian Courtney Mason explained that passes were granted on the decision of local Indian Agents, and if found off reserve without a pass, Indigenous people could be heavily fined or incarcerated.¹¹

However, in the Yukon the reserve system differed from British Columbia and the Prairies in that, for the most part, Indigenous peoples were not often barred from hunting, fishing, or gathering off reserve. In fact, the DIA and Dawson NWMP officers encouraged the persistence of subsistence resource use to avoid the cost associated with providing relief to Indigenous Yukoners. As early as 1913, Superintendent Major John Douglas Moodie expressed concern about declining game species and the rise of sport hunting arguing that if game continued to decline, Indigenous Yukoners would require government distributed relief.¹² Also in 1913, a letter from the DIA Assistant Deputy and Secretary, J.D. McLean, to Gold Commissioner George Black outlined that there was no provision which confined the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to the reserve and, in fact, highlighted that they had the right to "pursue their avocations of hunting, fishing, etc., as before."¹³

Ken Coates argued that, though not subjected to the pass system, the federal government had several approaches to keeping Indigenous Yukoners out of non-

¹⁰ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 273. Keith Smith also discussed the pass system in his study of the Prairie West and argued that the pass system originated with the NWMP to control border crossing into the USA to hunt buffalo and steal horses. Smith, 61.

¹¹ Courtney Mason, *Spirit of the Rockies: Reasserting an Indigenous Presence in Banff National Park* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 34.

¹² NWMP, *Report of Superintendent Major Moodie* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November, 1913).

¹³ June 10, 1913 letter from DIA assistant Deputy and Secretary, J.D. McLean to George Black (DCMA, Moosehide).

Indigenous spaces. Physical segregation of the races was foremost by establishing reserves outside of towns. Many of these reserves were close to, but separate from, places like Dawson as Indigenous peoples often lived near towns seasonally for employment. This helped to limit interaction, prevent Indigenous presence in towns, and limit non-Indigenous access to Indigenous settlements.¹⁴ However, Indigenous Yukoners rarely remained within the confines of reserves; reserves were small and there was no treaty, thus an absence of treaty obligations, such as rations, encouraged Indigenous Yukoners to continue subsistence activities off-reserve. The Hwëch'in seasonally left Moosehide for prolonged periods to go on hunting trips. In his personal diary, Reverend Frederick Fairweather Flewelling frequently commented on their absence whenever the Hwëch'in were away hunting or fishing.¹⁵

According to JJ Van Bibber, a Métis elder from the Pelly Crossing area of the Yukon who lived in Dawson, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in did not come into Dawson often, only once in a while to go to stores, until they started attending school in Dawson in the 1950s.¹⁶ When John Hawksley became Indian Agent in 1914 he set a curfew for Indigenous peoples, which was continued by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Moosehide Council after 1921, but by 1933 he allowed them to reside in Dawson with a special permit of employment for the duration of work (usually temporary) and they returned to Moosehide once work ended.¹⁷ Like B.C., the Yukon lacked treaties, had fewer reserves, and did not get the same relief and assistance from the government (such as annuity

¹⁴ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 93.

¹⁵ YA, Flewelling Family fonds, 1896-1897, 82/176, MSS 013.

¹⁶ JJ Van Bibber, *I Was Born Under a Spruce Tree* (Vancouver: Talus Publishing Group, 2012), 23.

¹⁷ YA, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1/9 GOV 1619 f. 1490-J1. Letter from John Hawksley to the Secretary of the DIA in Ottawa, November 16th 1933.

payments) that Indigenous groups elsewhere in Canada received, therefore seasonal movement was crucial to survival. This reality of northern life was reflected in the ways in which Anglican missionaries and state agents, primarily the NWMP and Indian Agents, enforced Indigenous policies in the Yukon.¹⁸

Though the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were not restricted to the Moosehide reserve under a pass system, colonial agents still managed to monitor and attempted to control their actions and behaviours. Harris, Mason, and Keith Smith all draw on Michel Foucault's work on the relationship between power and space in places like prisons, asylums, and reformatories. Though Foucault did not include land in his analysis, his theories apply to land as well, especially in colonial settings where land was appropriated and reconfigured into new patterns of social control, as in the application of the reserve system.¹⁹ Reserves created a physical geographic border in addition to cultural and racial barriers. In *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance*, Smith described reserves as closed sites where missionaries and Indian Agents "could indoctrinate Indigenous populations in economic behaviour, political activity, religious practises and social conduct acceptable to liberal Canada."²⁰ Reserves acted as social laboratories where Indigenous communities were confined to limited and controlled spaces where colonial agents of church and state worked together to monitor and control Indigenous peoples and prepare them to deal with Euro-Canadian ways of life.

More so, as Mason examined, these spaces were also places in which colonial authorities hoped the disciplinary gaze would be internalized and individuals would

¹⁸ Smith, 2.

¹⁹ Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, 185.

²⁰ Smith, 9.

become the source of their own discipline. However, it is difficult to provide evidence of self-surveilling practises and the ways in which Indigenous peoples internalized the disciplinary gaze, as people are generally not aware of this process.²¹ Mason argued that historians can examine this process by analyzing the ways in which Indigenous people acted as collaborators in the colonial process. For example, some Indigenous men passed on information to police and Indian Agents pertaining to the behaviour of community members, individuals, and families on reserves. These informants were recruited based on compliance (or expected compliance) with government and church objectives.²² In Moosehide, Indigenous men took on similar roles as catechists and special constables. However, my research indicates that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in carried out considerable cultural negotiation regarding their role as collaborators in the colonial context and often subverted these positions of expected compliance – this is discussed in more detail below. In this way, reserves had much in common with the spaces in which Michel Foucault discussed in his examination of disciplinary surveillance in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.²³

Though Anglican Bishop William Bompas played a large role in the negotiations with the Dominion government for allocating Moosehide as a permanent home for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the move to Moosehide also served the agenda of the church.²⁴ Not only did Moosehide act to isolate the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from the negative aspects of white influence, it also allowed the church to mould Indigenous character into what they

²¹ Mason, 67-68.

²² Ibid., 69.

²³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

²⁴ Here I do not mean that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lived in Moosehide all year without leaving the reserve. Instead, by permanent, I mean that Moosehide became their base camp, where they departed from and returned to when hunting and fishing. They spent much more time in this one location year-round as opposed to earlier patterns.

regarded as civilized through regular church services, a church-run day school, and a constant missionary presence within the community. The state agreed with the location of Moosehide because it would keep the Indigenous population separated from white society, decrease a reliance on state relief through the continuation of a subsistence lifestyle, and provide a contained space for state surveillance.

The Anglican Church in the Yukon pre-1896

Anglican missionaries were involved with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in since the 1860s. While there were Catholic and Presbyterian missionaries in the Yukon, the Anglican church was the most widespread denomination in the territory, arriving thirty-five years before the discovery of gold on Rabbit Creek in 1896. Those Anglican missionaries who served in the Yukon worked under the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), which was an evangelical Anglican group founded in London in 1799.²⁵ According to anthropologists Craig Mishler and William Simeone, the CMS rested their agenda on three points: 1) to respect Indigenous culture as much as possible, 2) to appoint Indigenous catechists, and 3) to translate the Bible into Indigenous languages.²⁶ While this philosophy may appear liberal, the CMS had a fixed belief and a strict value system which the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Yukon Indigenous peoples did not fit into, therefore, missionaries aimed to replace Indigenous beliefs and values with western religious beliefs and values and to convert them to Christianity, ultimately leading to social and cultural changes altering all

²⁵ Elizabeth Elbourne, "Religion in the British Empire" in *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives*, ed. Sarah Stockwell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008): 138. The CMS worked primarily among Indigenous groups, though in areas like the Klondike region, CMS missionaries would administer the rites of the church to non-Indigenous peoples on occasion, such as those miners on the creeks in the goldfields. YA, RG Bowen Collection, 80/121, MSS 123.

²⁶ Mishler and Simeone, 8.

aspects of Indigenous ways of life, though the center of Christian acceptance was to be the Indigenous communities themselves.²⁷

Anglican clergyman and mission theorist Henry Venn founded the concept of Indigenous run churches in the mid 1800s. His Native Church Policy had the ultimate goal of Christianity taking on a grassroots, Indigenous religion rather than a foreign concept imposed by an alien culture.²⁸ Hence, one of the fundamental goals of the CMS was to establish Indigenous-run churches which would preserve Indigenous cultures and languages, develop an Indigenous clergy and theology in harmony with Indigenous traditions but tied to Christianity.²⁹ Venn's idea was that the missionary was a temporary figure aided by local people while building up the necessary institutions to get an Indigenous church organized, and once completed, the missionary would move elsewhere and start developing a new Indigenous church, leaving behind an Indigenous clergy to lead the church.³⁰ Venn argued for Indigenous peoples trained in all levels of the church - from catechist to ordained clergymen to even bishop.³¹ Historian Ian Getty argued that the CMS introduced Venn's Native Church Policy to the Canadian Northwest with few

²⁷ Ken Spotswood, "The Rush for Souls: Missionaries, Mayhem and Memories on the 100th anniversary of St. Paul's Pro-Cathedral, Dawson City, and St. Barnabas Church, Moosehide" (Dawson City: St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, 2002), 1.

²⁸ Ian Getty, "The Failure of the Native Church Policy of the CMS in the North-West" in *Region and Society in the Prairie West, Canadian Plains Studies 3*, ed. Richard Allen (Regina: University of Regina Press, 1974): 21.

²⁹ L.G. Thomas, "The Church of England and the Canadian West" in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: University of Regina, 1991): 16.

³⁰ David Nock, *A Victorian Missionary and Canadian Indian Policy: Cultural Synthesis vs. Cultural Replacement* (Waterloo: Laurier University Press, 1988), 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

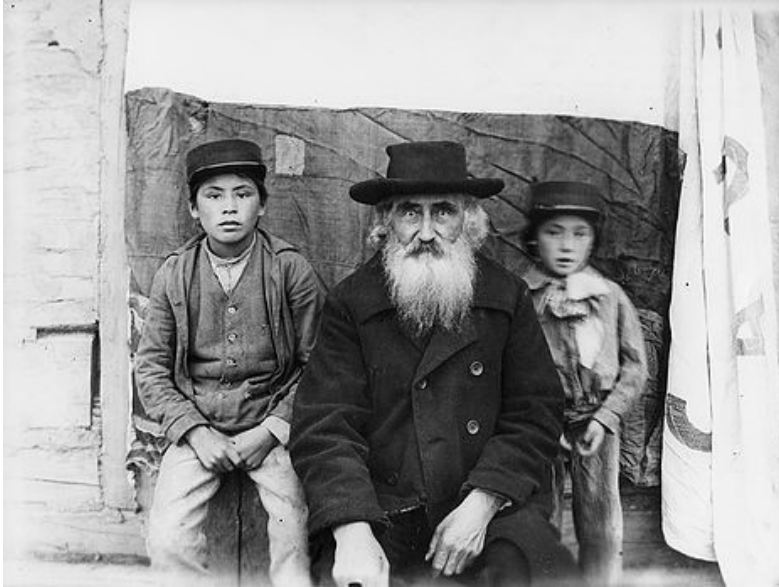


Image 4.2. Archdeacon Robert McDonald and his two sons. YA, Anglican Church of Canada, General Synod Archives fonds, 78/67, #90.

modifications. However, missionaries took orders from the bishop, therefore, the bishop's influence was decisive.³²

William Kirkby was the first CMS missionary in the Yukon in 1861,

stationed at Fort Yukon on the Porcupine River.

Kirkby recruited two of the most influential early Yukon missionaries: Robert Macdonald and William Carpenter Bompas. Macdonald was an Anglican reverend, later named Archdeacon of Mackenzie in 1875, with extensive experience at Red River.³³ He was born in that area to an Ojibwa mother and a Scottish trader father and was one of the few CMS missionaries who did not come from England.³⁴ He was stationed among Gwich'in peoples in his missions at Fort Yukon, La Pierre's House, and Fort McPherson from 1862 to 1905.³⁵ Macdonald held service and school each day for three months of the year, sequentially, while the Gwich'in were stationed at Fort McPherson and when they were away fishing or hunting, he traveled from camp to camp to preach and hold school. Most

³² Getty, 22-24. In the 1850s there were several native clergymen ordained in the Northwest missions. The first was Henry Budd in 1850 from the Red River colony, most of the others were Metis. During the 1850s and 1860s several mission stations were started in the NW by native clergy.

³³ Frank A. Peake, *From the Red River to the Arctic: Essays on the Anglican Missionary Expansion in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: Canadian Church Historical Society, 1989), 94.

³⁴ Robert McDonald was an exception to the norm of Missionaries in the Yukon - exception both because of his Indigenous heritage and Canadian origin. Ken Coates, "Send Only Those Who Rise a Peg: Anglican Clergy in the Yukon, 1858-1932," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society* (April, 1986): 3-18.

³⁵ Peake, 58-60.

succeeding missionaries followed Macdonald's travelling approach in later years. In keeping with CMS objectives, Macdonald translated the Bible and Anglican prayer book and hymns into Takudh, the Gwich'in language, with the help of his Gwich'in wife Julia Kutug and he trained Indigenous peoples as catechists who then travelled to surrounding areas to preach to other Indigenous communities.³⁶ While Macdonald had an important influence on missionary work in the Yukon, he did not work with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and was not present in the Klondike region between 1890 and 1940.³⁷ Instead, Bishop Bompas had the biggest impact on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from 1891 to 1905, followed by Bishop Isaac O. Stringer in 1906.

When Macdonald became ill in 1865, Kirkby recruited William Carpenter Bompas to take over his duties. Bompas (1834-1906) was born in London to a well-off family. He arrived at Fort Simpson as a deacon in the Church of England in December of 1865. By the time Bompas arrived in the Yukon, Macdonald was nearly recovered, so Bompas took on the duties of a traveling minister and expanded his missionary efforts south, to Tro'chëk on the Yukon River and later to Carcross, though he travelled around the North extensively. Through his travels, Bompas encountered large numbers of Indigenous peoples and learned many of their languages. He often spent as little as a few days to as much as several weeks

³⁶ *Northern Lights* No. III, Vol III (August 1915). Chris Clarke and the K'anacha Group, *Tr'ehuhch'in Nawtr'udaha: Finding Our Way Home* (Dawson City: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, 2009), 6. Myra Rutherford, *Women and the Whites Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

³⁷ Vuntut Gwitchin elders recalled that missionaries were generally well treated and accepted in the Yukon and Hwëch'in were grateful that missionaries taught them to read. In 1977, a Vuntut Gwitchin man named Joe Netro recalled that MacDonald did much work for his people, such as translating the bible and hymns into their language. Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, *People of the lakes: Stories of our Van Tut Gwich'in Elders/Googwandak Nakhwach'anjoo Van Tat Gwich'in* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 141.

with one group before journeying to the next. Bompas formed a close friendship with Chief Isaac and spent an entire winter with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at Moosehide in 1896 working with another reverend, Frederick Fairweather Flewelling who lived with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from 1896 to 1898, to secure the Hwëch'in a new settlement.³⁸ When he arrived in the Yukon, Bompas already had thirty years' experience working among

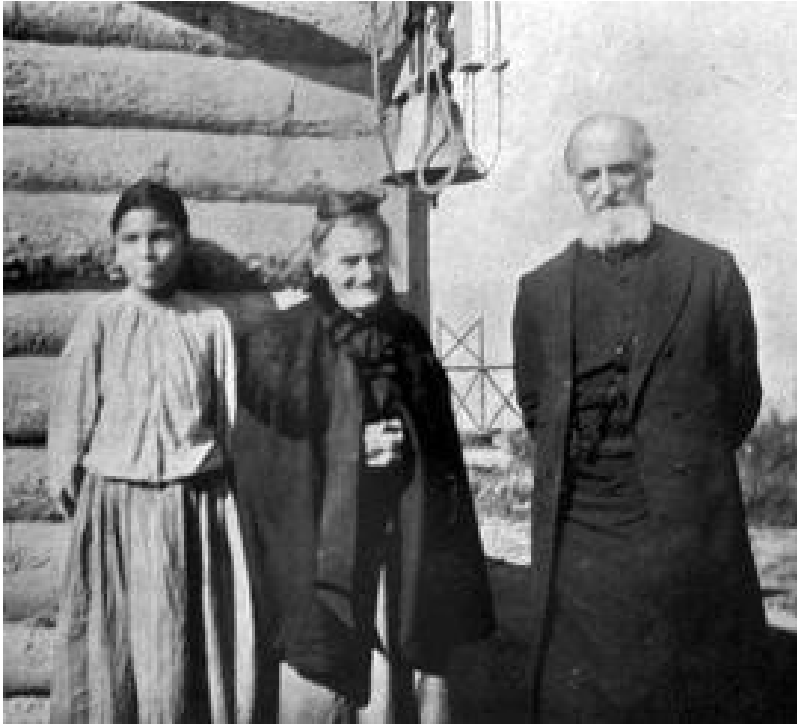


Image 4.3. Bishop and Mrs. Bompas at Carcross; seen with a young First Nations woman. B.C. Archives. c-08324.

Indigenous peoples, and was consecrated the first Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Selkirk (later renamed Diocese of Yukon in 1907) in 1890.³⁹

Historian David Nock's study of the CMS Native Church Policy demonstrated how individual missionaries

could, and did, alter this policy. Though Venn advocated a degree of cultural synthesis, this did not always go as planned in the field. Bishop Bompas was one example of the ways in which individual missionaries altered such policy.⁴⁰ In *Drum Songs*, Kerry Abel argued that establishing Indigenous-run churches was never given a real trial in the North due to

³⁸ *Northern Lights* No. III, Vol IV (August 1916). Bompas also wintered at Moosehide again in 1900.

³⁹ Kerry Abel, "Bishop Bompas and the Canadian Church" in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: University of Regina, 1991): 114. In 1874 Bompas was appointed Bishop of Athabasca, in 1885 Bishop of McKenzie River, and in 1890 bishop of Selkirk (Yukon). He died in 1906.

⁴⁰ Nock, 34.

Bompas' concerns. He was dogmatic in his evangelicalism and feared that an Indigenous-run church would drift from its evangelical purposes.⁴¹ Myra Rutherford also argued that Bompas did not support Indigenous ministry and that he believed Indigenous peoples themselves opposed the idea, as he claimed, "they seem to view Christianity as a message from the White man's God."⁴² Coming from a British background, Bompas was influenced by the values of his culture, hence he was committed to civilizing and educating Indigenous peoples. In 1866 while Bompas was in Fort Simpson, the H.B.C. built him a schoolhouse and hired a schoolmaster to teach children, who were primarily orphans of a scarlet fever epidemic in 1865.⁴³ In 1879, two young Métis men from Mackenzie River were assigned to Bishop Bompas for training in the St. John's College's CMS program. Shortly after they began the program, Bompas expressed doubt about Indigenous catechists stating, "I think the want of intelligence and civilization is such that the improvement must come from without."⁴⁴ To further demonstrate his belief that education was best from white society, while posted in Forty Mile in 1885, Bompas and his wife Charlotte Selina Bompas began a school for Indigenous children where they were supervised and educated in Western ways.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Abel, *Drum Songs*, 119-120. Abel's study is of Dene people in the Mackenzie and Athabasca regions. She says that CMS admitted that most people in the Athabasca-Mackenzie region were nominally Roman Catholic; Bompas' mission had failed among the Dene who showed very little interest in settlement or agriculture, that the Anglican Church withdrew from the region. Martha McCarthy, *From the Great River to the Ends of the Earth: Oblate Missions to the Dene, 1847-1921* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995).

⁴² Rutherford, 144.

⁴³ Hiram A. Cody, *An Apostle of the North, Memoirs of the Right Reverend William Carpenter Bompas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002 [London: Seeley & Co., 1908]), 57. This school only ran for two years, closing in 1868.

⁴⁴ Abel, "Bishop Bompas and the Canadian Church," 117.

⁴⁵ Julie Cruikshank, *Reading Voices/Dan Dha Ts'edeninthe'e: Oral and Written Interpretations of the Yukon's Past* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), 107. This was Bompas' second attempt at setting up a school, but this was the first one meant for Indigenous children. In 1865 he established a school in Fort Norman, but this school was open to all children in the area.

Like many people of his time, Bompas held condescending beliefs about the Indigenous peoples with whom he worked in the Yukon describing them as wild and superstitious and living in decay and degeneration. In 1893, Bishop Bompas published a book titled *Northern Lights on the Bible*. This book sheds light on his thoughts and experiences, but it was published before the Klondike Gold Rush, so does not discuss his relationship with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in specifically.⁴⁶ Throughout his book, Bompas made numerous references to the ideas of savagery and civilization. For example, he wrote, "A savage race appears in a state of decay and degeneration, nor do we see any evidence of a tendency in untutored races to rise above themselves."⁴⁷ Hence, he argued that European missionaries were superior as only they could raise the Indigenous peoples to high intelligence and civilization.⁴⁸ Fellow Anglican reverend and friend, Hiram A. Cody, published a biography of Bompas in 1908 and drew on Bompas' own writing. Bompas' diary, like his published work, had a tone of moral superiority and paternalism when he wrote of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁹ The diary spans from approximately 1894 until his death in 1906, and demonstrates that his sense of superiority over Indigenous Yukoners did not subside over time. While he did not perceive Indigenous peoples as social or cultural equals, and he did not encourage their culture to flourish, he tolerated its continuance.⁵⁰

Missionaries struggled to implement Indigenous run churches because they lacked financial backing and fundraising was often the responsibility of bishops.⁵¹ As Abel

⁴⁶ William Carpenter Bompas, *Northern Lights on the Bible, Drawn from a Bishop's Experience During Twenty-Five Years in the Great North-West* (London: J Nisbet & Co, c 1893).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁸ Abel, "Bompas and the Canadian Church," 119.

⁴⁹ Ken Coates and William Morrison, forward to *Apostle of the North*, xxxii. Cody arrived in the Yukon in 1904, serving in Whitehorse, and formed a friendship with Bompas for the last two years of Bompas' life.

⁵⁰ Coates and Morrison, foreword to *Apostle of the North*, lxxv.

⁵¹ Getty, 19-20.

explained, Bompas isolated himself in the North, refused to do fundraising, and he only visited Outside twice in his forty-one years in the North. Furthermore, he was reviled as a madman by many non-Anglicans in the Yukon and he had great difficulty gathering support from within the territory.⁵² Instead, Charlotte Selina Bompas spread the word about the Anglican church's work with Indigenous Yukoners. She went on a speaking tour of Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa, lecturing on the effects of gold mining on the Yukon Indigenous populations, specifically emphasizing disappearing game, landscape change, and alcohol.⁵³ However, her words seemed to have little impact as there was no surge of financial support after this.

While missionaries were committed to converting Indigenous Yukoners to Christianity, they also took on more active roles in other aspects of Indigenous lives. Though Bompas refused to raise funds for the church, throughout his forty-one years in the Yukon he lobbied the federal government for measures to protect Indigenous peoples from the influences of outsiders. His records include forceful letters to government officials expressing his particular concern about the presence of miners in Forty Mile in the early 1890s, specifically about miners' influence on local people and common law alliances with Indigenous women and the introduction of alcohol. He lobbied for law enforcement officers to enforce liquor laws in the region. He carried out a letter writing campaign in 1892 and 1893 in which he expressed concern over miners in Forty Mile manufacturing intoxicants and giving or selling them to Indigenous peoples. He requested NWMP presence in the Yukon on a number of occasions and this, paired with federal interest in

⁵² Abel, "Bompas and the Canadian Church," 115.

⁵³ Peter Pigott, *From Far and Wide: A Complete History of Canada's Arctic Sovereignty* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 62-63.

resource potential in the region and desire to secure national sovereignty over the Yukon, worked to stimulate government interest in the Yukon.⁵⁴ Aside from alcohol consumption, Bompas was concerned with famine and disease. Eye diseases were common around the Yukon in the late 1800s and Bompas attended several lectures in London on eye health when he returned to England for consecration and he was able to then help Indigenous peoples who suffered from snow-blindness.⁵⁵ Paternalism, interventionism and activism were all present within Bompas' approach to missionary work. According to Vuntut Gwitchin elder Myra Moses, in January 1980, she recalled that Bishop Bompas, like Macdonald, was remembered quite fondly among her people. When he arrived in Fort Yukon they shot a moose to share and the people in Fort McPherson made him a skin parka, mitts, and fur boots. She recalled that her father learned about the bible from Bompas by firelight, and that he worked for them as well as baptizing them.⁵⁶

Bompas' efforts intensified following the Gold Rush. Miners converging on the Dawson area vastly outnumbered those in Forty Mile and increased Bompas' concerns. He was so concerned about moral degradation caused by the Gold Rush that he moved the seat of his diocese from Forty Mile to Moosehide, where he stayed for the winter in 1899/1900 and from Moosehide, he easily travelled around the region visiting those under his

⁵⁴ LAC RG 10 Vol 3906 file 105378 C-10159. Bishop Bompas to Frederick White, Comptroller, May 1893, Forty Mile. In a separate letter to Reverend DD Fenn, Bompas wrote that a large number of Indigenous people at Forty Mile had succumbed to drink. He expressed concern that violence could erupt in future, though it had not yet, and that they were in need of a police force in the Yukon and suggested the federal government send ten. May 9 1893.

⁵⁵ Allen A. Wright, *Prelude to Bonanza: The Discovery and Exploration of the Yukon* (Sidney: Gray's Publishing, Ltd., 1976), 130. According to his diaries, Bompas gained a reputation for healing and whenever he came to a village he drew a crowd. Apparently, he amputated a man's leg above the knee shortly after becoming Bishop. Cody, 174.

⁵⁶ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, 144-45. She also recalled a story passed down that Bompas told them that in the future the white man was coming and there would be lots of them.

supervision.⁵⁷ At Chief Isaac's request, he attempted to secure two thousand dollars in compensation from the federal government for the land they lost at Tr'ochëk when miners bought their cabins.⁵⁸ However, aside from money, he also argued that education was another way of compensation as it would introduce the Indigenous peoples of the Yukon to the benefits of civilization; he made this argument without consultation with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and instead spoke on their behalf from his own self-interests.⁵⁹ Bompas' demands for medical relief and rations as the influx of outsiders drove away game and competed for remaining resource soon became impossible for the government to ignore completely, and the NWMP generally provided surgeons for Indigenous peoples and distributed some food after the 1900.⁶⁰

After the Klondike Gold Rush, it seems that Anglican missionaries were more open to appointing Indigenous church workers, if not an Indigenous-run church itself. Isaac O. Stringer was named Bishop after Bompas in 1906. Stringer had extensive experience in the Arctic and Subarctic, he spoke both Inuktitut and Takudh and regularly taught and preached in those languages.⁶¹ Shortly after being made Bishop, Stringer began recruiting Indigenous catechists, including a Vuntut Gwitchin man, Julius Kendi, Teetł'it Gwich'in brothers Richard and John Martin, and Amos Njootli who all worked among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at Moosehide. Though Stringer was open to Indigenous church workers he was

⁵⁷ Cody, 288.

⁵⁸ LAC RG10 3962 file 147, 654-1, pt. 2, Bompas to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 5 August 1896. The response sent March 29 1897 was that the Department of Indian Affairs has no jurisdiction in the matter. Constantine replied June 26 1897 with his explanation that land is reserved for NWMP and government buildings.

⁵⁹ Ken Coates, "Asking for All Sorts of Favours: The Anglican church, the Federal government and the Natives of the Yukon Territory, 1891-1909" in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: University of Regina, 1991): 129.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶¹ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, 233.

initially hesitant to ordain them, writing “some of the Indians are inclined to get 'swelled heads' when given positions of responsibility.”



Image 4.4. Group shot with Bishop Stringer and unidentified priest in front of St. Barnabus church, Moosehide. Yukon Archives, Anglican Church of Canada, Diocese of Yukon fonds 89/41, #296.

However, he did ordain some Indigenous men after 1918. The presence of Indigenous catechists in places like Mayo, Ross River, and Old Crow allowed these church stations to stay open whereas they would have closed otherwise due to lack of missionaries and funding. However, Stringer believed Indigenous people needed better education before being ordained and one of his primary concerns after becoming bishop was establishing schools in the Yukon.⁶² Like Bompas, Stringer was similarly active on behalf of Indigenous peoples though he took a different approach. Stringer avoided confrontation

⁶² Coates, “Send Only Those,” 11. Seven Indigenous men were ordained reverends while Stringer was Bishop (J. Kendi, K. Kunizzi, Richard Martin, John Martin, Amos Njootli, J. Pelisse and John Tizya).

with local officials in the Yukon and with federal officials, instead favouring quite negotiation. Furthermore, he traveled throughout Canada and Britain to gather financial support. With his approach, Stringer was more successful in negotiations with the federal government in terms of establishing a residential school in Carcross than Bompas had begun negotiating for before Stringer took over.⁶³ However, Stringer found failure in his attempts at securing treaty rights for Yukon Indigenous peoples, as discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

Though colored by missionary self-interest, these representatives were often the only non-Indigenous voices speaking out against the physical and social dislocation of Indigenous peoples which accompanied the advance of Euro-Canadian society into the Yukon.⁶⁴ Beyond seeking religious converts, Anglican missionaries had a constant presence in Indigenous lives, living on the Moosehide reserve. Missionaries monitored the actions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and attempted to shape their behaviours, actions, and beliefs through encouraging adaptation to Christianity, Western education, and Euro-Canadian values.

Church Surveillance and Indigenous Catechists at Moosehide

Anglican missionaries had a major influence over daily life and played a key role in community life at Moosehide. They taught at the Moosehide day school, organized both Christian and Indigenous celebrations, converted Yukon Indigenous peoples to Christianity, and spoke on behalf of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in communicating with the

⁶³ Coates, "Asking All Sorts of Fav, 133.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 126.

Dominion government on issues of concern to the Hwëch'in.⁶⁵ Missionaries also relied on parishioners for fuel, fish, resources, and guides when travelling.⁶⁶ From 1897 to the 1940s there was always a missionary who lived among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at Moosehide and ran the church and day school. Of the 160 acres of land that made up the Moosehide reserve, seven of those acres were set aside specifically for church use. The presence of a missionary at Moosehide constantly worked to further Anglican surveillance of the Trondek Hwechin. The very spatial layout of Moosehide suggests how entrenched the church was in matters of surveillance. A sketch of the reserve from 1929 shows the church, church-run day school, and the mission house all located at the south end of the reserve, which was the entry point into and out of Moosehide (see the sketch in Appendix B). The only way to get in and out of the reserve in relation to Dawson was either on foot via the Moosehide Trail beginning at the north end of town and crossing over the Moosehide slide, or on water, or ice, depending on time of year. With all of these options, the first structure one encountered upon entering the reserve, and the last encountered when leaving, was St. Barnabas church, indicated in images 4.5 below. The church was located on a bench overlooking the Yukon River and the dock along the river where everyone tied up their canoes and boats. The Moosehide Trail began right behind the church winding behind the day school and eventually up along the Moosehide Slide into Dawson. While there was no clear presence of the DIA or the NWMP at Moosehide, the church buildings stood as clear indications of disciplinary surveillance on the reserve. The position of St. Barnabas and other church buildings at the south end of the reserve also represented a contact zone where

⁶⁵ YA, Bishop Bompas fonds, 81/83, MSS 125.

⁶⁶ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 58.

non-Indigenous land met Indigenous land. While this ambiguous space was a display of surveillance, the church zone in Moosehide also acted as a spatial representation of



Image 4.5. Moosehide Village, 1934. View of the Mission House and St. Barnabus church looking north. DCMA 1981.58.1.150.

accommodation between the church and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

often experienced on the reserve.

At Moosehide, church surveillance applied to most aspects of daily life. The broad goal of civilizing and assimilating Indigenous peoples was enforced here in similar ways as anywhere else in Canada. One of the primary means of encouraging Indigenous peoples to strive for civilization was to push for permanent homes and cleanliness.⁶⁷ Though the

⁶⁷ Mary-Ellen Kelm, in *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1999), and Warwick Anderson, in *Colonial Pathologies*, both discuss the role of sanitation and cleanliness in assimilative aims in non-northern settings. Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). Concentration on promoting cleanliness was not unique to Indigenous peoples; church organizations and moral reformers in southern Canada also promoted cleanliness and sanitation

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued moving around seasonally for subsistence gathering, each family had a permanent log home at Moosehide. Missionaries often remarked in their diaries on the state of cleanliness at private homes, as well as at the Moosehide day school



Image 4.6. Moosehide Village, 1908 DCMA 1993.67.1.123

and the church.⁶⁸ Much of this concern with cleanliness was connected with ideas about health and disease. In 1907, Reverend Benjamin Totty requested the Gold Commissioner supply him with whitewash and two brushes to whiten and disinfect the cabins at Moosehide as many people at Moosehide had contracted tuberculosis.⁶⁹ In 1913, Bishop Stringer visited Moosehide planning to give a lecture on sanitation, ventilation, and

among ethnic minorities and the working class. Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

⁶⁸ *Northern Lights* No III Vol IX (August 1921).

⁶⁹ Letter from Reverend Benjamin Totty to Gold Commissioner, June 15, 1907 (DCMA, Moosehide).

tuberculosis prevention, but on his arrival was surprised to find Moosehide cleaner than Dawson.⁷⁰

Regular attendance at church and at school was closely monitored by the missionaries. The 1931 census shows seventy-six residents at Moosehide, and the church recorded an average attendance at regular church service was thirty-three with sixty at the Christmas service.⁷¹ Missionaries and their wives also organized social clubs and activities at Moosehide including the Moosehide Men's Club and the Senior Women's Auxiliary.⁷² Selina Totty, Reverend Benjamin Totty's wife, began an 'Indian branch' of the Women's Auxiliary at Moosehide in 1910 and encouraged Indigenous women to run it. She kept reports from 1910 to 1917 on the progress of the club and reported that the women who attended in those years carried out the meeting with 'Indian prayers and hymns'; in 1910 she recorded five members who regularly attended. In 1913 that number grew to twelve members but shrunk just two years later when many of those women stopped coming to meetings. In 1916 Selina imposed an elected executive where members of the Auxiliary voted in Chief Isaac's wife Eliza Isaac president and her sister, Sarah Harper, vice-president and Selina appointed the remainder of the executive.⁷³ Reverend Daimpire's wife wrote to Bishop Stringer in November of 1928 reporting that the Women's Auxiliary flourished with 12 women regularly attending and they enjoyed sewing, drinking tea, and

⁷⁰ "Moosehide Puts Dawson to Shame on Clean-Up," *Dawson Daily News*, (May 3, 1913).

⁷¹ YA, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, COR 257 Series 1-1b Box 9 f.10, Moosehide.

⁷² Mishler and Simeone, 23. Myra Rutherfordale examined Anglican women in the mission field - many were teachers or nurses hired by the Anglican Church to help convert Indigenous peoples but most often they were missionaries' wives who accompanied their husbands across the North. Charlotte Selina Bompas did missionary work in her own right and dedicated for life in the North to the work that Bompas began. She cared for seven Indigenous children in her home at various mission houses across the Yukon and referred to herself as "Mama Bompas." Myra Rutherfordale, "Mothers of the Empire: Maternal Metaphors in the Northern Canadian Mission Field" in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, ed. Alwyn Austin and Jamie Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 46-49.

⁷³ Rutherfordale, *Women and the White Man's God*, 134-35.

eating hardtack.⁷⁴ Other church run social organizations in Moosehide included the Junior Women's Auxiliary, and the Anglican Young People's Association (AYPA) – the AYPA had twenty-eight members in Moosehide and was the first, and only, all Indigenous AYPA in Canada.⁷⁵

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in preferred to have their own people in leadership roles. Jonathan Wood, who served as catechist, also taught at the day school in Moosehide. When he left Moosehide to move to Selkirk with his wife's family, his son, Jimmy Wood took over teaching the day school in 1916.⁷⁶ Whenever a community member taught at the day school, such as Jimmy Wood did in Totty's absence whenever he was away, and later when they were between missionaries, the children generally enjoyed school better.⁷⁷ Again in 1929 there was period of several weeks when Moosehide was without a reverend. The school was taken over by Patricia Isaac and Susan Simon until Reverend and Mrs. Bentley arrived to take over the mission and the school in September. The *Northern Lights* periodical suggested that school attendance was slightly higher when an Indigenous person taught at the school.⁷⁸

Further, Indigenous peoples also responded to Christianity more readily when preached from within their own community. Where Bompas was hesitant to allow Indigenous peoples to carry out church work, the rate of dramatic change that accompanied the Klondike Gold Rush caused anxiety among missionaries, such as Stringer, that their work to date would be compromised, and soon after they began appointing Indigenous

⁷⁴ Moosehide #2 (THA), Letter from Mrs. Daimpre to Bishop Stringer, November 30 1928.

⁷⁵ *Northern Lights* Vol XX No III (August 1932).

⁷⁶ *Northern Lights* No. II vol. IV (May 1916), 1. Jimmy Wood also took over as chief while Charlie Isaac, then chief, enlisted in the army during the Second World War. Wood was a graduate of Chootla; he became an Anglican lay reader and catechist, a teacher at Moosehide day school, and a prize-winning gardener.

⁷⁷ Julia Morberg, Interview with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.

⁷⁸ *Northern Lights* No IV Vol XVII (November 1929).

church workers. Incorporating Indigenous clergy and catechists into their work not only strengthened the church's grip in communities but created more congenial relationships with Indigenous peoples and fostered an environment where catechists usually conducted their work in a manner which helped maintain elements of culture at a time when Indigenous lifeways, landscapes, and environments were under threat from the new society developing in the Klondike region. Indigenous church work was critical to the survival of the Anglican church in the North. It is likely that some of the Anglicans' success in converting Indigenous peoples to Christianity can be attributed to the fact the Anglican church was the only major branch of the Christian church that regularly ministered to the Indigenous Yukoners, visiting Indigenous peoples miles away at their seasonal camps where they did not often encounter other non-Indigenous peoples, and so they were more exposed to Anglican missionaries. However, historian Ken Spotswood argued that the Anglican church found more success in the Yukon in the numbers of Indigenous people missionaries converted as compared to other denominations because of its willingness to accommodate Indigenous interpretations of Anglicanism.⁷⁹

Indigenous catechists helped to increase interest in the Anglican church as they often preached in the local Indigenous language, and Indigenous communities, such as Moosehide, preferred to see their own people in leadership roles. In *Women and the White Man's God*, Myra Rutherford also argued that a gradual accommodation of the church to Indigenous culture created a context in which Indigenous peoples could become leading Christians in their communities, though white missionaries still guided these people in their work.⁸⁰ Jan Hare and Jean Barman's historical work on missionaries in the Pacific

⁷⁹ Spotswood, 2.

⁸⁰ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*, 144.

Northwest argued that missionaries were as much transformed by Indigenous peoples as were Indigenous peoples by them and Indigenous peoples also were involved in shaping the colonial and missionizing process.⁸¹

In the Yukon, most of the Anglican missionaries and their wives learned the local languages which they included in their church services and in day schools.⁸² Indigenous missionaries' wives also played a pivotal role in Yukon missionary work, though they were not paid for their services.⁸³ Rutherford has also studied the roles of female Anglican missionaries in the North from 1860 to 1940, particularly the relationships these women formed with Indigenous women. According to Rutherford, women actually outnumbered men in mission work, if both unmarried female missionaries and missionaries' wives are included.⁸⁴ Selina Bompas and Sadie Stringer (Bishop Isaac Stringer's wife) are two examples of white women who engaged in missionary work in the Yukon resulting from their marriages. Indigenous women were also active in missionary work in the Yukon, with Julia Kutug, as discussed above, helping Robert Macdonald translate the Bible and prayer and hymn books into Takudh. Selina Totty, the wife of Reverend Benjamin Totty who worked at Moosehide, was also an Indigenous church worker at Moosehide. Her parents were trader Alfred Mayo and his Koyukon wife Margaret. Benjamin and Selina moved to Moosehide in 1898 and they spent twenty-five years there. She served as translator at Moosehide, was very active in social and community life, and acted as a bridge between her husband and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Jan Hare and Jean Bareman, *Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2006).

⁸² Spotswood, 2.

⁸³ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*, 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Helene Dobrowolsky, *A History of Moosehide Settlement, A Thematic Outline* (1999), 7 (THA Moosehide #2).

In the past three decades, the literature on Indigenous catechists in Canada has grown to include debates on the agency of Indigenous peoples in shaping their acceptance of Christianity. As historian John Long argued, acceptance or rejection were not the only options - adaptation of Christianity to Indigenous beliefs was the most common outcome. In his examination of the Western James Bay Cree he argued Methodist and Anglican missionaries found that Christian beliefs were easily reconciled with existing Indigenous thought.⁸⁶ In her work on the Dene, Kerry Abel argued that there was a process of syncretism, where elements of Christianity were incorporated into existing Indigenous practises and beliefs, between Christian and Indigenous religions where Indigenous peoples took from Christianity only what they chose to incorporate.⁸⁷ In her examination of the North, Myra Rutherford made a similar argument, stating that missionaries often did not understand that two different streams of belief could blend together to create something new and instead sought full conversion.⁸⁸ However, examining the Yukon, Ken Coates and William Morrison argued that missionaries, such as Bishop Bompas, did not always insist on the abandonment of Indigenous beliefs and frequently encouraged a synergy between Indigenous and Christian worldviews; for example, they argued, that Indigenous Yukoners found the music, sense of community, ceremonies, and social aspects of Anglicanism attractive and fitting with many of their own spiritual beliefs.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ John Long, "The Anglican Church in Western James Bay: Positive Influence or Destructive Force?" in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*, ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: University of Regina, 1991): 104.

⁸⁷ Abel, *Drum Songs*, 116-119.

⁸⁸ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*. Susan Neylan also discusses the process of syncretism in *The Heaven's Are Changing: Nineteenth-century Protestant missions and Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

⁸⁹Coates and Morrison, foreword in *Apostle of the North*, lxxiv

Historian Tolly Bradford examined Indigenous people's direct involvement in the missionizing process through serving as Indigenous missionaries in both Africa and North America. In *Prophetic Identities*, Bradford made important connections to missionary work and Indigenous identities in the colonialization of local areas.⁹⁰ Two missionaries in Bradford's work, Henry Budd (Western Canada) and Tiyo Soga (Cape Colony) used their involvement in British mission organizations to respond to colonialism (largely to critique it).⁹¹ Peggy Brock has also examined Indigenous identities in the missionizing process in her work on Tsimshian catechist Arthur Wellington Clah. Brock argued that Clah was open to Christianity and to learning from missionaries but he refused to be subservient to them, instead he wished to be an equal to them and his interest in Christianity evolved on his own terms.⁹² Susan Neylan also studied the life of Clah and also argued that his engagement in Christianity was a dialogue, though not necessarily a mutually beneficial one, and that Clah developed a syncretic Christian identity that was Indigenous in nature.⁹³ Clah's diaries point to instances where he disagreed with Euro-Canadian missionaries over who should teach and interpret Christianity to Indigenous peoples. His faith was reflective of

⁹⁰ Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2012).

⁹¹ Tolly Bradford, "World Visions: 'Native Missionaries,' Mission Networks and Critiques of Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Canada" in *Grappling with the Beast: Indigenous Southern African Responses to Colonialism, 1840-1930*, ed. Peter Limb, Norman Etherington, and Peter Midgley (Boston: Brill, 2010): 311.

⁹² Peggy Brock, *The Many Voyages of Arthur Wellington Clah: A Tsimshian Man on the Pacific Northwest Coast* (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2011), 125; 155. She also argued that Clah was fundamental in his Christian beliefs and saw Christianity as a challenge rather than a counterpart to previously held beliefs where people could only hold one of the other. Brock, 135.

⁹³ Susan Neylan, "'Eating the Angels' Food': Arthur Wellington Clah - An Aboriginal Perspective on Being Christian, 1857-1909" in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, ed. Alwyn Austin and Jamie Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005): 88. Other works on Indigenous Christianity include Donald Smith, *Sacred Feathers: The Reverend Peter Jones (Kahkewaquonaby) and the Mississauga Indians*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013). Sarah Carter, "The Missionaries' Indian: The Publications of John McDougall, John McLean, and Egerton Ryerson Young," *Prairie Forum* 9,1 (Spring 1984): 27-44.

Tsimshian life and his diaries reveal what the transition to Christianity may have meant ideologically to other Indigenous peoples.⁹⁴

Indigenous men and women took an active role in missions as founders, church leaders, preachers, and Christians. They participated in both the production and consumption of Christianity and what it meant to be Christian. However, they never entirely controlled the process of missionization.⁹⁵ In the Yukon, there were several Indigenous peoples trained as catechists to spread Christianity among their people, including missionary Robert Macdonald and his wife Julia Kutug, as discussed earlier. Indigenous catechists in the Yukon acted as mediators between cultures and helped their people adjust to European life while maintaining elements of their culture. Much of their work was voluntary and unpaid and included only brief instruction in Christian beliefs, prayers, and hymns.⁹⁶ According to Coates, occasionally Indigenous catechists in the Yukon were paid a small fee and they were willing to accept lower pay than white reverends, usually working in areas in which white missionaries were uninterested.⁹⁷ Archival records confirm Coates' argument and demonstrates that catechists who played a large role in carrying out church work received some payment from the Church, but very little, and were expected to supplement their income with fishing and hunting. One catechist, Jonathan Wood, earned \$20 a month when he oversaw the Selkirk and Forty Mile mission in 1910s, as did Richard Martin while at Moosehide in the 1920s. However, when Jonathan Wood came to Moosehide in 1918, his payment was at the discretion of the local missionary, Benjamin Totty, whenever Totty had him do occasional work for the

⁹⁴ Neylan, 88.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Abel, *Drum Songs*, 119-120.

⁹⁷ Coates, "Send Only Those," 12.

mission. Bishop Stringer informed Wood in a letter of August 1918 that payment should be of secondary consideration in catechist work; doing God's work for his own people was first priority and any monetary payment was a present.⁹⁸ Reverend Julius Kendi also noted in 1921 that with all his mission work he was not able to get dried fish and dried meat and his cache was smaller than usual.⁹⁹ Supplied with bibles, prayer and hymn books, and little else these men led Indigenous communities in observing Christian practises.

Though Bompas did not appoint Indigenous catechists, Stringer did, but was hesitant to ordain them, until 1918 when Stringer ordained at least two Indigenous reverends and allowed them more control in their communities. On July 29 1918 the *Dawson Daily News* printed an article titled "Yukon Native is Ordained as Preacher - Full-Blooded Indian Vested with Authority in the Church" reporting on Vuntut Gwitchin man Julius Kendi ordained by Stringer at Moosehide. The article stated that several Indigenous people in the North had been ordained the past few years as reverends by the Church of England.¹⁰⁰ Julius Kendi worked in Moosehide originally, but eventually he relocated to other Yukon communities, eventually settling in Old Crow in 1929.¹⁰¹

Many of the Indigenous catechists among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were Teetl'it Gwich'in, from the Peel River area or the NWT, but they spent time in Moosehide working with the local missionary as translator, teachers, and assistants to the missionaries and they stepped in when the missionary was travelling. When the community was between

⁹⁸ Dobrowolsky, *A History of Moosehide Settlement*, 2.

⁹⁹ Diocese of Yukon, *Report of the Synod of the Diocese of Yukon held at St. Paul's Cathedral Dawson, Y.T.* (July 29th, 30th, and 31st. 1923) (THA Anglican Church File).

¹⁰⁰ "Yukon Native is Ordained as Preacher - Full-Blooded Indian Vested with Authority in the Church," *Dawson Daily News*, (July 29, 1918).

¹⁰¹ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, *People of the Lakes*, 233.

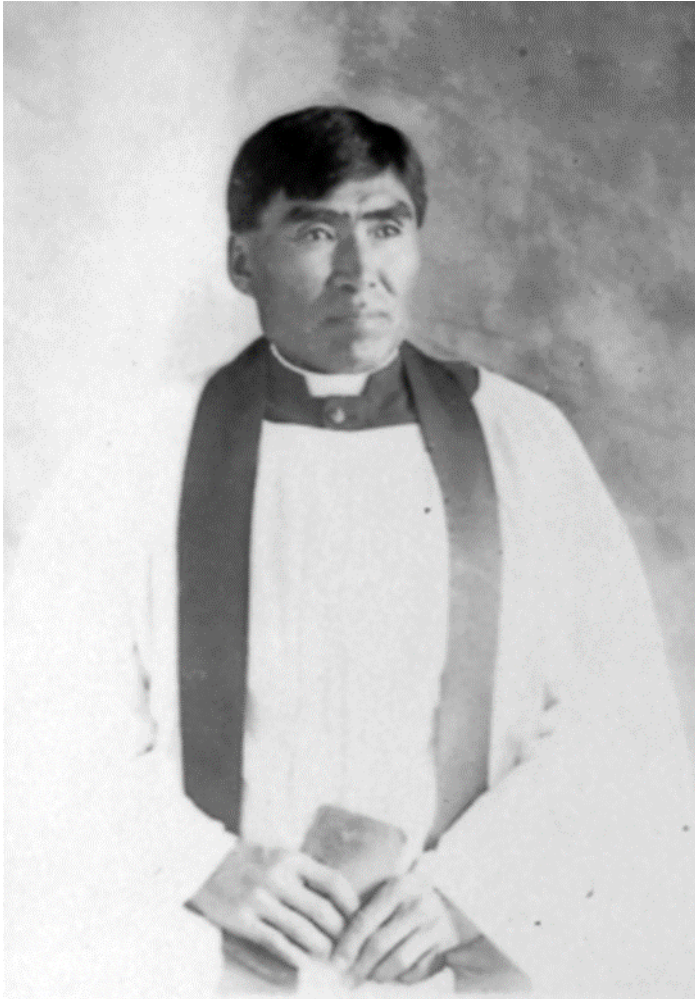


Image 4.7. Reverend Richard Martin, n.d. DCMA 1999.13.27.

missionaries, Indigenous catechists would carry on the work.¹⁰² It is unknown exactly how many Indigenous catechists were in the North between 1896 and 1940, but one of the most well known Indigenous catechists was Reverend Richard Martin, a Teetl'it Gwich'in man born in 1879 at Blackstone. He was among the first Teetl'it Gwich'in to visit Dawson after the Gold Rush began and was one of the "Dawson Boys" who came from the Peel down to Dawson every summer to

sell caribou meat in Dawson, staying with the Hwëch'in in Moosehide whenever they came down.¹⁰³ Richard Martin was an excellent hunter, trapper and guide, as well as a leader to his people and in the Anglican church.¹⁰⁴ Stringer ordained him a reverend on August 22nd 1926 in Moosehide at St. Barnabas Church and he served along the Peel and Porcupine rivers as well as at Moosehide from 1926 until his death in 1975; even after retiring at age seventy-eight, Richard continued to carry on doing church work when

¹⁰² Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 52. Julius Kendi (an Indigenous reverend) replaced Totty when Totty was on holiday in England. *Northern Lights* No IV Vol VIII (Nov 1920).

¹⁰³ Richard Martin (DCMA).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

needed. While at Moosehide, Richard preached every second Sunday and he held school and Bible class in the morning with a second service at 7pm. He also acted as translator to the missionary in Moosehide. Occasionally he travelled to Eagle, Alaska to do service and school there.¹⁰⁵

In 1925 there were five Indigenous catechists in the Yukon Anglican Diocese, including Jonathan Wood and Johnny Semple in Moosehide. Neither Wood nor Semple was an ordained reverend, but Semple was a lay reader at Moosehide who was very involved in helping at St. Barnabas Church at Moosehide. Wood travelled between Moosehide, Forty Mile, and Selkirk to hold services and read the Bible to people in their own language.¹⁰⁶ In 1934 when the current reverend, Jenkins, left in July, Richard Martin took over the duties of the mission with the assistance of Johnny Semple until the arrival of a new reverend in September.¹⁰⁷

Indigenous catechists preached in the local language of the communities in which they worked. In Sunday School, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in children could read the Takudh Bible Macdonald had translated, as some of the Hwëch'in learned to read Takudh, and had a service in English once a month.¹⁰⁸ Indigenous catechists were often involved in religious celebrations at Moosehide as well. Chief Isaac and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in integrated Anglicanism with their older beliefs. At Christmas, the church provided a tree and had a Santa handed out gifts while a potlatch-style dance and feast carried on for weeks with Indigenous peoples from the Peel River and Blackstone regions visiting.¹⁰⁹ The Christmas

¹⁰⁵ Report of the Synod of the Diocese of Yukon held at St. Paul's Cathedral Dawson, Y.T., July 29th, 30th, and 31st, 1923 (THA Anglican Church File). YA, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, COR 300 series 1 Vol 3 Box 52 f. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Anglican Church File (THA).

¹⁰⁷ *Northern Lights* Vol XXII No IV (Nov 1934).

¹⁰⁸ Mishler and Simeon, 10.

¹⁰⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 74.

church service was frequently well attended by both Moosehide and Teetl'it Gwich'in people.¹¹⁰ They usually held at a potlatch at Easter as well, again with visitors from around the Yukon.

Like on the West Coast, the potlatch, the ceremonial and economic redistribution of personal effects as gifts, in the Yukon was banned under the *Indian Act* in 1884.¹¹¹

Potlatches were important events commemorating special events such as funerals, a successful hunt, or naming ceremonies. They were times of feasting, celebrating and visiting, and offered spiritual opportunities to its attendees. Potlatch was to gain and validate prestige and status in society, but it is also site of economic exchange and a way to publicly verify history and to commemorate special events. Among the Southern Tutchone, the potlatch acted like a legal system in which people would witness the transmission of ancestral names, property, and confirmation of a new status within the community.

Potlatch means "to give" and "a big party."¹¹²

The banning of the potlatch was a combined effort of church and state. Church officials believed that the potlatch and other Indigenous cultural practises were incompatible with Christianity and sought to eradicate these practises. Missionaries also disapproved of Indigenous peoples leaving their villages to travel to a potlatch, which meant children were absent from school during this time.¹¹³ The state disapproved of ceremonies such as the potlatch, as various officials believed that 'roaming' and gift-giving associated with the potlatch led Indigenous peoples to abandon efforts at settled,

¹¹⁰ *Northern Lights* NO. I VOL II (Feb 1914) 4.

¹¹¹ While the potlatch only occurred on the West Coast and in the Yukon, Indigenous ceremonies such as the sun dance were banned across the country.

¹¹² Mary Easterson, *Potlatch: The Southern Tutchone Way* (Burwash Landing: Kluane First Nation, 1992) 1.

¹¹³ Rutherford, *Women and the White Man's God*, 37-38.

agricultural life and to squander money in elaborate displays of wealth, so the state passed legislation outlawing songs, dances, and other ceremonies integral to Indigenous culture.¹¹⁴ In 1895 this prohibition was extended to include all festivals, dances, and ceremonies that involved giving away money or goods.¹¹⁵ Other reasons for banning Indigenous ceremonies included the belief that dancing kicked up dust and led to greater rise of tuberculosis; Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs Frank Pedley argued that dancing caused mental instability and physical deterioration. Some Indian Agents argued dancing was the primary cause of destitution and sickness and led Indigenous peoples to temptation. Furthermore, the practice of giving away food, horses, and material goods diverted potential workers from the wage labour market and impeded the private accumulation of wealth in the hands of individuals.¹¹⁶

The statute proclaimed it an indictable offence for Indigenous peoples or any other person to engage in, assist in celebrating, or encourage anyone else to celebrate either directly or indirectly in any "Indian festival, dance, or other ceremony of which the giving away or paying or giving back of money, goods or articles of any sort forms a part, or is a feature, whether such gift of money, goods or articles takes place before, at, or after the celebration of the same."¹¹⁷ Violations of this law included a prison sentence between two to six months. Organizers or onlookers could also be accused of encouraging the celebration of an illegal dance according to section 114 of the *Indian Act*. According to

¹¹⁴ J.R. Miller, "Glendower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy," in *Ethnohistory* 37,4 (Autumn, 1990): 386-415. James Frideres and Rene Gadacz, *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: Contemporary Conflicts*, sixth edition. (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 2001), 5.

¹¹⁵ Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1999), 63.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

section 112, the *Act* made it illegal to incite any Indian to commit an offence, and those who did could get a term on imprisonment up to five years.¹¹⁸

However, as Tina Loo points out in her article “Dan Cranmer’s Potlatch,” Indigenous peoples found ways to get around the ban in B.C. Indigenous Yukoners did this as well; in fact, according to Yukon historian Sally Robinson, potlatching expanded as a new supply of wealth came into the Yukon interior. This wealth occurred first through Indigenous middle men and later directly from white traders.¹¹⁹ During the Gold Rush there was a revival of potlatches and their occurrence increased between 1905 and 1917 in the Yukon.¹²⁰ To get around the ceremony laws, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in largely took their cultural practises underground. Ken Coates argued that in the Yukon, Indigenous communities’ strategies included disguising the ceremony as a Christmas event. Coates believed that the potlatch as a Christmas event was, “an irony which the missionaries and government officials appear to have missed.”¹²¹ Historians Jon Clapperton and Courtney Mason have each shown in their studies of the Banff Indian Days that Indigenous populations took advantage of the tourism industry to continue practising ceremonial activities.¹²² The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in took a similar approach and they integrated their

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Sally Robinson, "The Hän: A History of Change 1847-1910" (DCMA, First Nations - Hän), 8.

¹²⁰ Ibid. The *Dawson Daily News* reported on potlatches on December 24, 1903, “Big Christmas Potlach at Moosehide - Dances to Follow,” September 20, 1905, “Moosehide gives Big Pow Wow,” December 23, 1905, “Potlatch at Moosehide,” May 23, 1907 “Have a Big Time: Three Hundred Indians Attend A Grand Potlatch at Selkirk,” and a January 23rd 1913 article "Chief is Back with Eagle Feather in Cap" reported on a Potlatch in Alaska that Chief Isaac went to. These are only a few examples among others. Angela Sidney, a Yukon elder who worked with Julie Cruikshank, recalled two potlatches she attended in her youth - one in 1912 and the other in 1914. Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story*, 91.

¹²¹ Ken Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 191.

¹²² Jonathan Clapperton, “Naturalizing Race Relations: Conservation, Colonialism, and Spectacle at the Banff Indian Days,” in *The Canadian Historical Review* 94, 3 (September 2013): 349-379. Courtney Mason, *Spirits of the Rockies: Reasserting an Indigenous Presence in Banff National Park* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

banned songs, dances, and celebrations into other ceremonies, such as Empire Days in Dawson City, subverting their practise within non-Indigenous settings. The image below, 4.10, is one example of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in gathering together to dance behind the cover of some buildings during Empire Days celebrations.



Image 4.8. Indigenous Dance in A.C. Co. yard, May 21, 1901. Goetzman. University of Washington AWC1918.

However, in *Hunger, Horses, and Government Men*, Shelley Gavigan argued though the police and Indian Agents were active in the efforts to enforce the prohibitions of ceremonial practises, such as the potlatch, and to prosecute these offenses, there is also

evidence that these prohibitions were only occasionally and unevenly enforced on the ground. In fact, sometimes they were unenforceable.¹²³ This seems likely to be the case in the Yukon; though Northern Tutchone oral history indicates that John Hawksley made an effort to band potlatches in the Yukon once he became Indian Agent, it is likely it was difficult for one man to enforce this policy for the entire territory, especially as he spent little time among each group.¹²⁴ Katherine Pettipas's study of the prosecution of Indigenous religious ceremonies on the Plains further points to instances in which the NWMP themselves resisted federal Indigenous policy by ignoring orders to prevent ceremonies and even facilitating such events.¹²⁵



Image 4.9. Potlatch at Moosehide near Dawson, December 20, 1912. DCMA 1990.54.10.

¹²³ Shelley Gavigan, *Hunger, Horses, and Government Men: Criminal Law on the Aboriginal Plains* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2012), 20.

¹²⁴ Tagé Cho Hudän Interpretive Centre, *Carmacks, Yukon: A Northern Tutchone Homeland* (Carmacks: Tagé Cho Hudän Interpretive Centre, 2005).

¹²⁵ Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994), 110-111.

Indigenous peoples also sometimes ignored or resisted these prohibitions. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in held their Christmas potlatch at Moosehide inviting not only Indigenous groups from Alaska, the NWT, and other Yukon areas, but the non-Indigenous population of Dawson as well. In keeping with the attempts at accommodation within the Anglican church, perhaps missionaries preferred to allow potlatches to continue under their surveillance on the reserve. There are no police records of potlatch related arrests in Moosehide, though there are references to police attending dances and celebrations to maintain control over the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their guests. In some cases, it appears that the Hwëch'in did not hide the fact they continued to attend and host potlatches. In May of 1907 a *Dawson Daily News* article reported that a group from Moosehide went to Selkirk for a potlatch ceremony with an estimated 300 people in attendance. Another *DDN* article, in 1920, reported that Chief Isaac announced he was stepping down as 'head potlatch man' and passing the responsibility to the second-chief, Silas, and the newspaper also reported a potlatch in Eagle, Alaska in April of 1923.¹²⁶

Though Indigenous catechists did much to integrate Indigenous customs into their work, this did not prevent the church's efforts to monitor and control the behaviours and actions of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at Moosehide. The church and state often had similar goals when it came to Indigenous peoples, and missionaries in the Yukon worked quite closely with agents of the state to combine efforts at colonizing Indigenous peoples, though sometimes generating contentious relations. While the presence of the church was more pervasive at Moosehide, the state had more formal methods of implementing surveillance

¹²⁶ "Have a Big Time: Three Hundred Indians Attend A Grand Potlatch at Selkirk," *Dawson Daily News*, (May 23, 1907). "Back from Big Potlatch at Eagle City," *Dawson Daily News*, (April 21 1923).

which most often included Indigenous peoples as collaborators in this process. However, the state was also much more ambivalent in their responsibilities and desires for Indigenous peoples, signified in their frequent dismissal of requests and demands for government aid in times of sickness or hunger. More so than missionaries, the federal state appeared to favour leaving Indigenous Yukoners alone as long as they did not become a problem or a burden on non-Indigenous society. Therefore, state surveillance at Moosehide was carried out by special constables, appointed by the NWMP, and the Moosehide Council, created by the Indian Agent, John Hawksley. Both were intended to act as the state's eyes and ears in the absence of government officials. However, in both cases, this did not always go as planned when those appointed frequently strayed from their original intent.

NWMP, DIA, and State Surveillance in the Yukon

Though Bishop Bompas requested the Dominion government send a force of NWMP officers to the Upper Yukon River region to help stop liquor trafficking among the Indigenous population living near the international boundary as early as the 1880s, his requests went unanswered and he wrote again in 1892 and 1893, as discussed above.¹²⁷ The federal government took no administrative action until 1894 after geologist William Ogilvie (in 1893) recommended establishing authority over the Yukon goldfields in order to protect the region from Americans.

¹²⁷ YA, Anglican Church, Diocese of Yukon fonds, COR 299 Series 1 Vol 1 BOX 51 f.1. Letter from Bishop Bompas, August 26 1893. Bompas wrote to the lieutenant governor of the NWT and stated he had written twice to the Canadian Government, once in 1893 and once the previous year, about police presence in the Yukon with no reply either time. William Morrison also discussed Bompas' campaign to convince the federal government to send ten law enforcement officers to the Yukon. William Morrison, *Showing the Flag: The Mounted Police and Canadian Sovereignty in the North, 1894-1925* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1985), 15-16.

Concerned for Canada's sovereignty over the resources of the North, Ottawa conceded to the idea of a NWMP establishment in the Yukon. Aside from anxiety that an American mining populace might take over the region, the Dominion government was also interested in revenue from mining royalties and customs.¹²⁸ Even after the Gold Rush the government was reluctant to make expensive commitments to the local Indigenous inhabitants.¹²⁹ In 1894 the Minister of the Interior, T.M. Daly, dispatched Inspector Charles Constantine of the NWMP to act as Agent of the Dominion Government in Forty Mile. Constantine was accompanied to the Yukon by one non-commissioned officer and acted as the first official government representatives to the Yukon region. Constantine was a former military officer who was born in England and emigrated to Canada when he was a child. He was appointed deputy sheriff of Manitoba in 1873 until 1880 becoming Manitoba's chief of police. In 1885 with the outbreak of the Northwest Rebellion, Constantine re-entered military service and worked to break up the rebellion. With his military and police background, he entered the NWMP in 1886.¹³⁰

The NWMP was created in 1873 to extend the power of the state to the West, a process which included preparing hinterland areas for white farming and settlement, assisting with establishing treaties with First Nations, and demonstrating sovereignty.¹³¹

While its main purpose was to occupy land, NWMP officers were also given military

¹²⁸ Ibid., 16-18.

¹²⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 39-40. Morison reveals that the DIA had instructed Constantine, who had been assigned Indian Agent responsibilities for the Yukon, to keep his expenses at an absolute minimum. Morrison, *Showing the Flag*, 20-21. James Dashuk examines the Dominion government's avoidance of financial commitment to Indigenous peoples on the Plains from the mid-1860s to 1891 in his larger work on Indigenous health. Dashuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

¹³⁰ Glenn Wright, "CONSTANTINE, CHARLES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003.

¹³¹ Andrew Graybill, *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 3.

authority; they carried weapons, trained with military discipline, were directed by central officials and had the authority to apprehend lawbreakers as well as to act as prosecutor and judge and to pass sentences.¹³² In areas such as the Yukon where there were very few officers, this gave individuals a large amount of power over local areas. William Morrison stressed the authority that the NWMP held in the Yukon by indicating that in reaction to local conditions they often acted outside of the law. For example, in the winter of 1898 with a looming threat of food shortage, NWMP Superintendent Sam Steele issued a proclamation stating that anyone entering the Yukon must have either two months' provisions and \$500 in cash, or six months' provisions and \$200 in cash. Steel was soon notified by the Department of Justice that this ruling was illegal, though Steel continued to implement it until the fear of starvation subsided.¹³³

Constantine's duties were to take possession of Forty Mile and the Klondike areas, protect the Indigenous peoples from American liquor traders, and exercise the function of all government departments, with an emphasis on customs duties, liquor traffic, and land administration. Constantine stayed for four weeks to survey miners, traders, and the Indigenous situation. After surveying in the gold-bearing districts, Constantine recommended a force of forty NWMP officers to establish a post in the Yukon to fulfil the duties assigned him. In 1895, the Dominion government sent eighteen men and a customs collector to establish law in the Yukon.¹³⁴ Centered in Forty Mile, they began construction of Fort Constantine, the first NWMP post in the Yukon. In 1897 more men arrived in the

¹³² Ibid., 13-15. William Morrison, *Showing the Flag*, 3-4.

¹³³ William Morrison, "The North-West Mounted Police and the Klondike Gold Rush," in *Journal of Contemporary History* 9,2 (April 1974): 99-100.

¹³⁴ David Morrison, *The Politics of the Yukon Territory, 1898-1909* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), 9.

Yukon after news of the Gold Rush spread South, including Sam Steel, who replaced Constantine in 1898 until 1899.

When dispatched to the Yukon in 1894, Constantine was responsible for assessing the situation of Indigenous peoples; his report from 1894 showed no awareness of Indigenous self-sufficiency far from the trading or mining settlements. He did not see the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as people with culture and self-government. His report described Yukon Indigenous peoples as lazy and shiftless who hung around mining camps and were more prone to beg for money than look for work. He stated they were physically unhealthy, often suffering from chest troubles and dying young.¹³⁵ According to Liza Piper's work on chronic disease in the Yukon River basin, it was quite common for Indigenous peoples in this time period to experience higher tuberculosis-induced death tolls than non-Indigenous peoples, indicating Constantine's observation of Indigenous ill health was accurate.¹³⁶

His reports and correspondence from his years in the Yukon (1894-1898) make it clear that Constantine had a negative image of Indigenous people that remained unchanged throughout his time in the area. He believed they needed encouragement to enter the new economy and new social order the Gold Rush brought to the Klondike region, yet he felt that the federal government should not do anything to ease Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples into this new society. Until 1914, when the Yukon got its first Indian Agent, the NWMP acted as Indian Agent administering minimal rations, clothes, and blankets to needy Indigenous families and arranging for medical attention.¹³⁷ Official policy was to do nothing to support Indigenous peoples in the Yukon, and Constantine felt no need to go

¹³⁵ Morrison, *Showing the Flag*, 20. NWMP, *Report of Inspector Constantine* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1894), 70.

¹³⁶ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 136.

¹³⁷ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 41.

beyond his duty to protect or enhance Hwëch'in lives. In fact, he believed their lot had already been improved by opportunities brought by the Gold Rush. During this time of transition for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, his perspective and attitude fostered a less than positive relationship between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the federal government.¹³⁸



Image 4.10. North West Mounted Police Officers of B Division, Dawson, July 1900. DCMA 1998.22.657.

By the summer of 1897, the presence of the NWMP increased five times from its previous size, and the Canadian government was responsible for the administration of a distant land, and an influx of a transient, and largely foreign, population. Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, was responsible for making and overseeing the execution of

¹³⁸Ibid., 25.

policies for the Yukon. On June 13th 1898, the federal government proclaimed the *Yukon Act* recognizing the Yukon as a separate territory, governed by the commissioner and an appointed council. Even after this designation, the NWMP continued to be the most visible presence of the Canadian government in the Yukon and in charge of Indigenous administration until 1914 when an Indian Agent, former Anglican reverend John Hawksley, was appointed. After Hawksley's assignment as agent, Indigenous groups had less direct interaction with the NWMP as they dealt primarily with Hawksley for the nearly twenty years that he acted as Yukon Indian Agent.¹³⁹ However, in *Moosehide: An Oral History*, one Hwëch'in elder explained that the Indian Agent had only a small role in daily life at Moosehide. He said there was simply an office for the Indian Agent in Dawson and that the DIA provided very little handouts or relief to the Hwëch'in, other than in cases of destitution.¹⁴⁰ According to this elder, the Indian Agents role was "to kind of control the Indians, that's all I can see; in case Indians get out of control, or in case they're starting to make fools out of Indians."¹⁴¹

The NWMP, and the DIA later, often took different approaches in administering Indigenous policies in the Yukon than government agents in southern Canada did. Under federal *Indian Act* objectives, the ultimate goal of the federal government was to encourage self-sufficiency and eliminate its responsibility to provide relief and protection to Indigenous peoples by assimilating Indigenous peoples into white society. The Canadian

¹³⁹ NWMP, *Report of Superintendent Major Moodie* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1914).

¹⁴⁰ January 2, 1901 letter from Division B RCMP to Mr. Jas. Smart, Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. According to this letter Clifford Sifton granted authority to the RCMP granted authority to the RCMP to issue assistance for the relief of destitute Indians in the YT. LAC RG 10 4001 file 207418 C-10170.

¹⁴¹ Developmental Studies Program, *Moosehide: An Oral History* (Dawson: Yukon College, 1994), 25.



Image 4.11. John Hawksley and his family, along with an Indigenous woman, at Buxton Mission, 1901. Library and Archives Canada, PA-017052.

government vowed to intervene only in extreme cases requiring medical assistance and relief.¹⁴² A dominant ideology in Britain at this time was that the progression of uncivilized peoples into civilized could be hastened by creating sedentary settlements and encouraging agriculture. The Anglican Church helped in this objective in the West and made one of its missions to transform hunters to farmers, however the agricultural scheme met with little success across Canada. Sarah Carter's *Lost Harvests* studies the agricultural scheme in the Canadian Plains, exploring the contradictory nature of Canada's attitude toward its

¹⁴² James Dashuk and Maureen Lux both discuss this in the Western Canadian context. James Dashuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013); Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1800-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). However, as the medicine chest clause in Treaty 6 makes clear, these rules were not always strictly followed.

Indigenous populations. Carter argues the explanation for the scheme's failure lay within government policy that undermined Indigenous agriculture from the late 1880s to the mid-1890s.¹⁴³

However, as early as the 1870s, the DIA decided it would not approach northern Indigenous people in the same manner as those in the South opting for a general approach of leaving northern Indigenous peoples as hunters and harvesters. This plan fit both Indigenous desires and government parsimony.¹⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, the agricultural scheme met even less success in the North than elsewhere in Canada. Because of the climate of the Yukon and its poor soil quality, agriculture did not develop in the Yukon, and Indigenous groups continued with seasonal harvesting rounds.¹⁴⁵ However, garden patches were planted at those settlements with churches, schools, or a mission.¹⁴⁶ Moosehide, for example, had many different crops growing in its small school and church gardens. The geography of the Yukon with its scattered settlements, Indigenous seasonal mobility, and lack of agriculture made it difficult to follow the goals of the DIA as they were intended, and the federal government felt little need to follow through with the pronouncements of the *Indian Act* for civilization and assimilation of Indigenous peoples in the northern regions.¹⁴⁷ As the government had been applying *Indian Act* policies across southern Canada for two decades prior to attempting implementation in the North, the federal

¹⁴³ Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). The government confined Indigenous people to limited land on reserves and refused to provide them with modern farming technology.

¹⁴⁴ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 128.

¹⁴⁵ Liza Piper and John Sandlos, "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North" in *Environmental History* 12, 4 (2007): 759-95.

¹⁴⁶ Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 107. On April 23, 1907 Reverend Benjamin Totty wrote to an unnamed agent with the DIA regarding preparing land on Moosehide for the Hwëch'in to garden, in which the Hwëch'in would clear the land and prepare the ground for ploughing and fencing (DCMA, Moosehide).

¹⁴⁷ Coates, *Canada's Colonies*, 123.

government had developed a sense that attempts at civilization and assimilation in southern Canada were not as successful as anticipated and expected even less success in the North.¹⁴⁸

In *Best Left as Indians*, historian Ken Coates examined the regional application of Indigenous policy in Canada. Essentially, the realities of living in the Yukon Territory interfered with the desired application of federal policy and initiatives. Dispersed settlement, the lack of treaty and reserves, and seasonal mobility made administration of the Indigenous population difficult in comparison to southern Canada. Coates argued that Dominion government representatives in the Yukon initially favoured protection for Indigenous peoples over assimilation believing it was best to leave them as hunters and trappers until they were ready for integration into Canadian society.¹⁴⁹ Annual reports from the NWMP between 1900 and 1919 confirm this idea, recording that they generally believed the continuation of a hunting and gathering lifestyle was preferable for Indigenous Yukoners to integration into mainstream society and economy. There were few employment options for Indigenous peoples in the region until the start of the Klondike Gold Rush and even then, government authorities set curfews limiting Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in access to Dawson, preventing them from finding employment and easily interacting with non-Indigenous society.¹⁵⁰ Further, the vast majority of Indigenous peoples in the Yukon lived a fair distance from large settlements and a subsistence lifestyle helped ward off reliance on government funding. In 1899 NWMP Commissioner Aylesworth Bowen Perry reported that, in his view, the Indigenous peoples of the Yukon district were already a self-

¹⁴⁸ Kerry Abel and Ken Coates, *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 12.

¹⁴⁹ Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 165.

¹⁵⁰ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 39-40.

supporting people. He did not believe there was a need for much government involvement or encouraging integration into white society, stating, "There are only a few of them and they are in no way a menace to the peace of the territory."¹⁵¹

The NWMP, as administrators of the DIA in the Yukon until 1914, did not perceive integration as particularly helpful to Indigenous peoples at that time, believing that any opportunities for employment would disappear once the Gold Rush ended along with the settler population. In fact, some NWMP officers believed contact with non-Indigenous society had adverse effects on Indigenous Yukoners. Of particular concern to both the NWMP and missionaries was Indigenous access to alcohol, and interaction with non-Indigenous society was to blame. The NWMP invested much effort in pursuing people accused of distributing liquor to Indigenous peoples in the Dawson area. As discussed above, Bompas expressed this concern as early as 1892. In 1901, Inspector Cortlandt Starnes of the Dawson division reported several cases of intoxication and gambling among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from Moosehide while they were in Dawson.¹⁵² The *Indian Act* of 1876 made it illegal for Indigenous people to consume alcohol and for people to provide alcohol to them. In both Canada and the US colonial authorities and government regulated alcohol trade with Indigenous peoples, though this was unevenly enforced.¹⁵³

While the NWMP encouraged hunting, trapping, and fishing, there were times in which they had to step in to provide rations or relief. For example, in his 1902 annual report Assistant Commissioner Zachary Taylor Wood reported,

¹⁵¹NWMP, *Report of Commanding Superintendent A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November 30, 1899). Perry commanded the entire Yukon from 1900 to 1923.

¹⁵² NWMP, *Report of Inspector Starnes* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, December 1901).

¹⁵³ Mary Ehrlander, "The Historical Roots of a Frontier Alcohol Culture: Alaska and Northern Canada," in *The Northern Review* 32 (April 2010): 67.

The Indians in the Territory will sooner or later have to be taken charge of by the Dominion Government, as the game, their principle means of subsistence, is being driven further and further back every year, and it is becoming more difficult for them to obtain sustenance for food.

He also mentioned the importance of fish to their diet, and dried fish in the winter, and the decrease in catch the previous spring. Wood reported that over the winter, the NWMP supplied the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with provisions as required.¹⁵⁴

Not all federal representatives in the Yukon agreed with the “hands off” approach. In 1903 NWMP Inspector John Taylor, visited Moosehide to report on the conditions of the Hwëch'in there. He argued that they were in need of government assistance. Some were infected with tuberculosis, though most were healthy. However, Taylor reported that he instructed Chiefs Isaac and Silas to encourage their people to clean up and destroy any garbage around the houses, and to keep their homes clean. He argued that there were very few employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples in Dawson, though they did look for work, and the only opportunities to earn money primarily came from women's crafts sold in town. Because of this lack of opportunity, Taylor recommended the government supply the Hwëch'in with hunting and fishing supplies and flour, bacon, and tea.¹⁵⁵

Because northern Indigenous people could continue to hunt, fish, and trap, the government took this as a reason to reduce their claim on government funds, often reluctantly handing out relief payments whenever needed. Though the Yukon experience deviated significantly from the patterns suggested by federal legislation, this phenomenon was not unique to the Yukon and scholars of other areas have also identified deviation. In

¹⁵⁴ NWMP, *Report of Assistant Commissioner Wood, Dawson YT* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, December 1902).

¹⁵⁵ LAC, RG 10 4001 file 207418 C-10170, May 22 1903. John Taylor, inspector of NWMP to Commissioner.

A Fatherly Eye, Robin Jarvis Brownlie examined the impacts that the personalities and approaches of individual Indian Agents had on the actual application of Indian policy in Ontario. She argued that policy was often not administered on the ground in the way it was intended. Indian Agents' approaches to administering Indian policy was often dependant on their individual personalities, attitudes toward Indigenous peoples, and the relationships they formed with the Indigenous groups they worked among.¹⁵⁶ While the Yukon did not have an Indian Agent until 1914, and the same man served for nearly twenty years, Brownlie's analysis lends itself well to a study of the Yukon, as the administration of Indian Affairs, assimilation, and education altered depending on the attitudes and personalities of individual NWMP officers from 1896 to 1914, and of Indian Agent John Hawksley after 1914. Though all decisions regarding Indigenous peoples were meant to be referred to Ottawa, a reply via letter took so long getting back to the Yukon that NWMP officers often made the sole decisions for the Indigenous groups they served, often with little to no feedback or consultation with other officers or the DIA.¹⁵⁷ This lasted until 1914 when John Hawksley, a former Anglican reverend since 1886 who had worked at Moosehide from 1905-1906 and 1911-1912, took the position as Indian Agent for the territory. Therefore, as Coates argued, "the pattern of government programming in the Yukon [...] is suggestive of a much broader phenomena of the DIA deviating from broad policy goals because of financial constraints to the logic of local circumstances."¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Robin Jarvis Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario, 1918-1939* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁵⁷ Hawksley had worked nearly twenty-five years in the north, beginning in the Mackenzie River and later in Forty Mile, Carcross, Selkirk, Moosehide, and Dawson at the time he took this position as Indian Agent. He was a scholar of Takduh -the language spoken by Gwitchin peoples in the NWT and around the Peel area in the Yukon – and he spoke fluent Hän. *Northern Lights* No. I Vol. II (February, 1914). Rutherforddale, *Women and the White Man's God*, 125.

¹⁵⁸ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 160.

Though necessary for the NWMP, DIA, and Church to work together in administering to Yukon Indigenous peoples, there was much contention between the Anglican Church and these other organizations. Bishop Bompas and Constable Constantine had a vicious rivalry, well documented in the archival record. Each resented the other's authority and Bompas felt great animosity toward the Mounties and other whites, especially in the Dawson area, for the ways they treated the Hwëch'in peoples.¹⁵⁹ The feeling was mutual. Constantine referred to Bompas as an arrogant bishop, stating that, "Bompas has no use for any person unless he is an Indian."¹⁶⁰ Bompas organized a meeting between the Hwëch'in and Constantine near Forty Mile in the hopes of establishing good relations. At this meeting, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in expressed discontent with miners selling whiskey to their people and shooting their dogs. Constantine simply told them that they should tie up their dogs and avoid whiskey if they wish to prevent further trouble. This first encounter set the tone for tense relations between the NWMP and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and between Bompas and Constantine.¹⁶¹ During their relocation from Tr'ochëk, Constantine urged the government not to give land to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in; he believed that Bompas moved them to the government reserve initially to deliberately annoy Constantine.¹⁶²

Over time, the relationship between the Anglican church and the state did not much improve. In 1908 Bishop Stringer and reverend Arthur O'Meara invited A.W. Vowell, superintendent of Indian affairs in B.C., and Ashdown Green, inspector of Indian affairs in

¹⁵⁹ Spotswood, 9.

¹⁶⁰ Constantine to Commissioner Herchmer, January 5, 1896. LAC, RG 18, 2182, B-2.

¹⁶¹ Charlene Porsild, "Culture, Class, and Community: New Perspectives on the Klondike Gold Rush, 1896-1905" (PhD Dissertation, Carlton University, 1994), 49.

¹⁶² Spotswood, 9.

B.C., to tour the Yukon to investigate the conditions of Indigenous peoples and to encourage the government to extend responsibility to Yukon Indigenous people to protect their rights to fishing, hunting, and land.¹⁶³ However, this tour did not result in any movement toward the federal government intervening in Indigenous affairs in the Yukon. NWMP officers generally expressed contempt for the Indigenous peoples of the Yukon, finding them bothersome and wanting to discourage any reliance on government aid. Overall, there appears to have been limited interaction between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and government agents. Instead, missionaries had a much more congenial and intimate connection with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, much of this relationship formed through the constant presence of the Anglican church at the Moosehide reserve.

As the population of Dawson dwindled after 1900 so did the size of the NWMP detachment. The Mounties maintained law at Moosehide largely through reports from the missionaries living at the reserve (later aided by the Moosehide Council after 1921). The NWMP restricted Indigenous people from free access and entry into “white man’s domain” all over the Yukon. This was often articulated by both the NWMP and the Church as in Indigenous peoples’ best interests. In April 1929 Hawksley reported to JD McLean, assistant deputy of Indian Affairs, that the younger generation of Moosehide residents had begun staying in Dawson until midnight or later and that wives and parents of these perceived delinquents complained to Hawksley about this, worried their relatives might get into trouble. Some white residents in Dawson also complained. Hawksley asked McLean if a penalty could be imposed in the case that any Hwëch'in refused to return to the reserve

¹⁶³ “Call on Natives,” *Dawson Daily News*, (July 30, 1908).

after a police warning. He issued a notice to the reserve with unanimous consent of Chief and Council.¹⁶⁴

When authorities could not be present, they often appointed Indigenous watchmen, known as special constables, in their absence. The idea behind this - similar to that of training Indigenous children in white society and returning them home to Indigenous communities to reform their peers – was that Indigenous watchmen would act as a role model to his peers in upholding standards of white society. The NWMP hired the first local Indigenous special constable in the Yukon in 1898 around the Dalton Trail area; many special constables hired worked as guides or dog drivers for the NWMP, but they did whatever tasks were assigned to them. In Moosehide, this included acting as spy and informant.

Cole Harris argued that surveillance through the presence of special constables functioned not so much to create disciplined individuals, but to remake cultures perceived as deviant.¹⁶⁵ In 1908 Assistant Commissioner Wood reported that the NWMP had a great deal of trouble in 1907 with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people gaining access to alcohol. Across the Yukon Territory in the same year, fifteen white men were imprisoned for supplying liquor to Indigenous people and a number of Indigenous people were sentenced to hard labour for intoxication.¹⁶⁶ In fact, most infractions involving Indigenous peoples in the Yukon were alcohol related.¹⁶⁷ Courts punished both those Indigenous peoples they discovered under the influence of alcohol as well as those who supplied the liquor, if

¹⁶⁴ YA, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1/9 GOV 1619 f. 1490-J1.

¹⁶⁵ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 270.

¹⁶⁶ NMWP, *Report of Commissioner A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1908).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

known.¹⁶⁸ Moosehide was a dry community, but there was a no liquor restriction placed on white peoples entering the reserve. Indigenous people were not allowed to enter local liquor establishments unless they were enfranchised under the *Indian Act*.¹⁶⁹

Indigenous alcohol consumption was a common complaint among Indian Agents, police, and non-Indigenous society across Canada. As early as the mid-1870s the NWT was declared a dry territory.¹⁷⁰ In the North, alcohol had been a staple in the fur trade, but problems of violence and social dislocation around mining camps associated with alcohol consumption encouraged missionaries, such as Bishop Bompas, to express concern about Indigenous consumption.¹⁷¹ Government took these social problems seriously as well, making it illegal to supply Indigenous peoples with alcohol under the *Indian Act*.¹⁷² Undoubtedly, race played an element in the Yukon as well. NWMP records show that Indigenous peoples were arrested for intoxication or possession of alcohol more than anything else from 1894 to the 1910s.¹⁷³ However, in the Yukon there was a concern about Indigenous access to alcohol from within the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community as well, most clearly indicated in Chief's Isaac's decision to relocate his people away from negative influences of Dawson, including alcohol, and the Moosehide Council's focus on hearing cases related to intoxication. In 1993, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder Doris Adair argued that any violence in the Hwëch'in community started with alcohol and it seems reasonable to

¹⁶⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 84.

¹⁶⁹ Developmental Studies Program, *Moosehide: An Oral History* (Dawson: Yukon College, 1994) 36.

¹⁷⁰ Gavigan, *Hunger, Horses, and Government Men*, 131.

¹⁷¹ Backhouse, *Colour-Coded*, 24-26.

¹⁷² Gavigan, 132.

¹⁷³ NWMP, *Report of Commissioner A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1908); *Report of Commissioner A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November, 1911); *Report of Superintendent Major Moodie* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November, 1913).

suspect this belief had existed at the turn of the 20th century as well, causing community leaders to keep their people away from alcohol consumption.¹⁷⁴

Wood attempted to hire a special constable at Moosehide to catch where the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were getting alcohol, but Reverend Totty told him it was a pointless endeavour, as the Hwëch'in were unwilling to testify against each other, and they most



Image 4.12. Indigenous Policeman, Sam Smith. YA, AC Diocese of Yukon fonds, 89/41, #810.

often feigned ignorance or would describe an imaginary person whenever asked to give evidence on where Indigenous peoples got alcohol.¹⁷⁵

However, when the first special constable was hired in 1911, Dawson (and Moosehide) saw a decrease in intoxication among Indigenous peoples that year compared to the previous year, which NWMP Inspector Horrigan attributed to the employment of a Moosehide man, Henry

¹⁷⁴ Yukon First Nations Elders' Council, *Walking Together: Words of the Elders from the Elders' Council Assembly* (Whitehorse, 1993), 145.

¹⁷⁵ NWMP, *Report of Commissioner A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1908).

Harper, as special constable on the reserve.¹⁷⁶

Over a period of 12 years, the NWMP intermittently hired a special constable for Moosehide from within the community, Henry Harper being the first in 1911. In 1912 the NWMP hired a different special constable to enforce a measles quarantine at Moosehide.¹⁷⁷ Chief Isaac also served as a special constable in Moosehide, as did a Gwich'in man named Sam Smith from Fort Yukon for several years.¹⁷⁸ From 1917 to 1923, an unnamed Indigenous special constable ran a detachment at Moosehide.¹⁷⁹ Sometimes the NWMP hired the special constables for a specific task, but more often they hired them for general surveillance of the reserve. The special constable represented the NWMP at Moosehide, though it seems likely that he reported to the Moosehide Council as his main authority after its creation in 1921. Between 1917 and 1923 the special constable staffed the NWMP detachment in Moosehide. When the Moosehide Council (1921-1950) began, the special constable worked with the Council to help enforce its community regulations.¹⁸⁰ An unexpected benefit to having a special constable on the reserve was to increase trust between the missionaries and Hwëch'in. A 1918 *Northern Lights* bulletin pointed out that as the missionary no longer had to act as law enforcement at Moosehide, both he and the Hwëch'in were more comfortable with his involvement in community life, as they no longer suspected him as acting as an informant to the NWMP.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ NWMP, *Report of Commissioner A. Bowen Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November 1911).

¹⁷⁷ "Indian Cop is on the Job at Moosehide," *Dawson Daily News*, May 8, 1912.

¹⁷⁸ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 24. "Chief Wants Caribou says 'take my gold,'" *Dawson Daily News*, (November 5, 1915). According to this article, Isaac was given a symbolic badge and did effective work in maintaining discipline among Moosehide.

¹⁷⁹ Helene Dobrowolsky, *Law of the Yukon: A History of the Mounted Police in the Yukon*, 2nd ed. (Madeira Park, B.C.: Lost Moose Publishing, 2013), 107-109. There were only two special constables in 1917. The highest point was approximately thirty in 1906. They were paid \$1 a day plus rations.

¹⁸⁰ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 83.

¹⁸¹ *Northern Lights* No I Vol VI (Feb 1918), 4.

It is difficult to determine how successful the employment of special constables at Moosehide was, as they are only occasionally mentioned in the archival record. Overall, it seemed that aside from providing employment to individuals from time to time the role of the Indigenous special constable did not meet the desires of the NMWP or of DIA. In 1921, Hawksley persuaded the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to begin their own community council to maintain law and authority in their community. This council was called the Moosehide Council, and for many years the special constable sat on the board of the Moosehide Council, suggesting that his loyalties were rooted more deeply in the community in which he lived than in reporting for the NWMP. Furthermore, the Moosehide Council itself, while encouraged by the state, quickly morphed into an Indigenous organization where they decided the rules of their community and administered to the community's needs at more than arms' length of the state.

The Moosehide Council

By the late 1950s, upon encouragement from the DIA, most Yukon Indigenous groups had an elected Chief and Band Council. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in Moosehide were decades ahead of this trend electing the first Moosehide Council in March of 1921. Chief Isaac's grandson, Gerard Isaac, recalled that the Moosehide Council held elections based on what would later become the *Indian Act* requirements for elections as opposed to traditional leadership structures of hereditary chief.¹⁸² For example, section 62 of the *Act* stated that chiefs of a band shall be elected for three years and there would be one head chief and two second chiefs or councillors for every 200 Indigenous peoples in the band.

¹⁸² THA Traditional Knowledge Recordings, 93-16, [interview with Gerald Isaac by Norma Blanchard and Karen Dubois] October 20, 1993.

Any band of 30 Indians may have one chief. All hereditary chiefs currently living "shall continue as such until death or resignation, or until their removal by the Governor for dishonesty."¹⁸³

Historian Helene Dobrowolsky believed that the Moosehide Council was formed upon encouragement from Hawksley, though he wrote in an editorial to the *Northern Lights* Periodical in 1921 that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had thought of and initiated the idea on their own.¹⁸⁴ Documents providing information around the genesis of the Council are sparse. Though Hawksley stated the Hwëch'in came up with the idea themselves, it is difficult to imagine the DIA approving of an independent, Indigenous-run Council taking power and control away from the Indian Agent. However, because DIA surveillance in the Yukon was more limited due to Hawksley's need to travel frequently, he may have thought the idea of a Council (which included the special constable) would act as agent in his absence and control the behaviour and actions of their own community. Further, it seems very likely that Hawksley provided the idea, but stated in his *Northern Lights* piece that they devised the plan themselves to suggest progress and movement towards civilization and self-discipline among Indigenous Yukoners.

In fact, in his piece, Hawksley emphasised that the Council was based on an electoral system in which women at Moosehide "had the vote" – a progressive idea at a time when white women only recently gained the right to vote and Indigenous men and women were still barred from participating in national politics. Hawksley wrote,

¹⁸³ Douglas Harris, "The NLha7kapmx Meeting at Lytton, 1879, and the Rule of Law," in *B.C. Studies* 108,9 (Winter 1995-96): 12. Canada, *An Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians* (Ottawa 1876).

¹⁸⁴ *Northern Lights* No III Vol IX (August 1921). A *Dawson Daily News* article on April 11, 1921 also credited the Council to Chief Isaac stating that, "'The people of the tribe have taken upon themselves the task of solving their own problems. It is much better that they do this than surrender all self-reliance and become the mere wards.'"

Who says the Indians are not progressive? Too high a standard is expected from the Indian by his white brothers. It has taken us centuries to make us what we are, it should be kept in mind that these Northern Indians have only had about fifty years of contact with what may here be termed civilization.¹⁸⁵

However, in keeping with *Indian Act* rules, the council itself consisted entirely of men each assigned a certain role and specific positions of power in their community. While it seems likely that Hawksley initiated the Council, he discouraged the federal government from giving this body official status due to its untried nature in the Yukon.¹⁸⁶

The implementation of a band election system was not unique, or even new, in Canada when the Moosehide Council began. In 1879 in Lytton, B.C. the NLha7kapmx attempted to demonstrate that they were law-abiding subject of the Queen through creating a council following colonial rule. In doing so, as Douglas Harris suggested, they attempted to counter white dominance, to establish fair and equal treatment under the law.¹⁸⁷ Their council was meant to act as local government, consisted of an elected chief and thirteen elected councillors, the hereditary chief, and an Indian Agent. Similar to the Moosehide Council, the NLha7kapmx's council passed rules pertaining to school, medicine, fishing and hunting, and personal conduct such as drinking, gambling, and enforced the potlatch ban. Anyone found guilty of participating in potlatch could be disqualified forever from becoming chief, councillor, or constable.¹⁸⁸ As Cole Harris argued in *Making Native Space*, the central premise behind the NLha7kapmx council was to establish a mean of managing their local affairs in the midst of rapidly changing circumstances.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ *Northern Lights* No III Vol IX (August 1921).

¹⁸⁶ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 25.

¹⁸⁷ Douglas Harris, "The NLha7kapmx Meeting at Lytton, 1879, and the Rule of Law" *B.C. Studies* 108,9 (Winter 1995-96): 6.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

¹⁸⁹ Harris, *Making Native Space*, 158.

Historian Martha Walls examined the implementation of the triennial system of band elections among the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as early as 1899. The triennial system was a political form that featured a federally devised band council structure and election protocol. Every three years, male community members age twenty-one and older were obligated to assemble under supervision of an Indian Agent and nominate and elect a chief and a set number of councillors. According to Walls, the rationale behind the band council system was twofold: band councils would curtail authority of the chiefs and would strengthen Ottawa's ability to monitor and direct Indigenous political activity.¹⁹⁰ However, as Walls shows, these efforts failed largely because Mi'kmaq communities either accepted, rejected, ignored, or amended the legislation; even when Mi'kmaq did accept the new rules, they did so to achieve their own ends and they preserved aspects of their community autonomy.¹⁹¹

Though Hawksley was based in Dawson, only one Indian Agent working in the entire Yukon Territory from 1914 to 1939 meant that he spent a large amount of his time travelling and spent very little time in Moosehide. Therefore, the state tended to exert less control and surveillance over the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in Moosehide than Indigenous groups living in more populated areas, such as Western Canada, often experienced. Though the church had a firmer grasp on monitoring the actions and whereabouts of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, it seems that the DIA still wanted to exert government authority in the community. Archival sources do not provide enough information to get a clear sense of

¹⁹⁰ Martha Elizabeth Walls, *No Need of a Chief for This Band: The Maritime Mi'kmaq and Federal Electoral Legislation, 1899-1951* (Vancouver, U.B.C. Press, 2010), 63.

¹⁹¹ Some opposition to the system included avoiding elections, blending electoral protocol with existing political practises, using their own language at elections, holding a pow wow to end meetings, or excluding Indian Agents from elections, effectively barring federal surveillance. Walls, 90-91.

Hwëch'in peoples' motivations for participating in the Moosehide Council. Like the Mi'kmaq, it is possible that the Hwëch'in agreed to the council out of the belief that this system might bring forth material gains or that it might give the Hwëch'in more power or autonomy within a colonial setting from being associated with the state.¹⁹² Some of the Hwëch'in who served on the council, such as Jimmy Wood, had attended residential school, and may have believed that this type of system was the way of the future.¹⁹³ Much of what Walls analyzed for the Mi'kmaq applied to the Moosehide Council as well, especially in the hybridization, or accommodation, of DIA, church, and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in ideas for the Council. While the Hwëch'in made the council their own, they were influenced by the system set up by Hawksley. For example, they named leaders similarly to the way non-Indigenous communities did, through elections, and the organization of the council and most of the rules set in place in 1921 seem very much the influence of church and state.

Council members were elected for a one-year term. In its first year, the Council included eight councillors, including Chief Isaac. The number of officers fluctuated over the years, but there was always a Chairman who led council meetings and gave advice and punishments, if needed, whenever the council heard a case. In 1921 the council consisted of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Inside Guard, Children's Guard, House Inspector, and two Village Inspectors – one for the north end and one for the south end.¹⁹⁴ This number of councillors monitoring a community of around ninety people was excessive and speaks to the central role Hawksley hoped the council would serve; while missionaries were

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹³ Field Notes: Informal conversation in Dawson, August 2016.

¹⁹⁴ YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66 COR 129.

constantly present in the community, Hawksley no doubt hoped that setting up this system would lead to more self-, or internalized, surveillance among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in his absence. According to Hawksley, the Council met every two weeks; however, Council minutes suggest meetings were more sporadic than that.¹⁹⁵ One of the councillors recorded minutes and sent them back to Hawksley – or was supposed to at least. The mandate was intrusive over daily life focusing on keeping families together, limiting access into Dawson, and enforcing certain standards of behaviour.¹⁹⁶

At the first meeting, the members of council laid out and voted on Village Law (Appendix C includes a full transcript of Moosehide Village Law). The laws for the village focused on curfews, children's attendance at school and church, and cleanliness and sanitation. The rules set at the first Moosehide Council overlapped with many of the goals and preoccupations of both state agents and missionaries, indicating that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in did not come up with these rules on their own. The Council imposed an 8pm curfew on all Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in members in Dawson, though women's curfew was stricter requiring them to be home by 7pm if they were in town alone.¹⁹⁷ Men who went into town together were instructed to monitor each other and report any inappropriate behaviour to Council. These curfews were primarily intended to prevent easy interaction between Indigenous and white society. Specifically, a rule to keep Hwëch'in women away from white men seemed to reflect racist ideologies about interracial marriage. A May 1921 edition of *Northern Lights* expressed the church's disapproval of mixed marriages (even though many missionaries had Indigenous wives) through celebrating the marriage of

¹⁹⁵ *Northern Lights* No III Vol IX (August 1921).

¹⁹⁶ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 177.

¹⁹⁷ However, on Thursdays and Saturdays women were permitted to stay out until 8pm.

Jimmy Wood and a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in woman, Lucy James, writing, "We have seen so much evidence of the unsatisfactory result of mixed marriages, that we rejoice every time an Indian girl has the sense to marry a man of her own people."¹⁹⁸

As mentioned above, Hawksley had set a curfew as early as 1914 to limit Hwëch'in people spending time in Dawson. Concerns about gambling and alcohol were still high in 1921, and while the Indian Agent and missionaries could tell Hwëch'in not to partake in these activities it was difficult to enforce while the agent was frequently away. However, setting a curfew enforced from within the community was more likely to be a successful method of quelling undesirable behaviour. However, this is not to suggest that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in did not share any of the objectives set out in these rules. For example, one rule of the Council stated that non-Indigenous peoples were not permitted to come to Moosehide unless it was on business or at Christmastime. This was something that Chief Isaac mandated as early as 1897 when the Hwëch'in first moved to Moosehide due to his own concerns about negative influences non-Indigenous society might have on his people.

Many of the rules for children and cleanliness seemed likely to be an influence of the missionaries, who were also intimately involved with the Moosehide Council, usually sitting in at election meetings.¹⁹⁹ For example, rules ensured children went to school daily, were in bed by 9pm, and attended Sunday School each week. Some Council rules were particularly restrictive to Hwëch'in women, such as that which stated babies should be left at home during church. Not only did it create difficulty for women to attend church due to

¹⁹⁸ *Northern Lights* No II Vol IX (May 1921).

¹⁹⁹ YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66, COR 129.

the need to find child care, but this was also a cultural shift in mothering techniques as previously babies would have accompanied Hwëch'in mothers everywhere they went.²⁰⁰

Finally, rules around sanitation and cleanliness forbade passing chewing tobacco from person to person as they believed it spread illness, steam baths were forbidden, and men and women could not bath together.²⁰¹ These rules seem targeted at eliminating elements of Indigenous culture, such as curtailing practises like the sweat lodge, as well as to curb Indigenous healing practises. Regarding clean homes, the rules stated that everyone was required to throw water over the bank when finished bathing, everyone must have a slop pail in their house to discard dirty water, and, no dogs were forbidden in houses because they carried sickness.²⁰² These rules around cleanliness and sanitation seem to reflect not only Christian ideas of purity and cleanliness, but were also attempts at quelling any sickness or disease spreading in the community, forcing the DIA to contribute funds to Indigenous medicine or relief. There had been an outbreak of chicken pox at Moosehide in 1905, tonsillitis and diphtheria in 1907, and measles in 1912 – the diphtheria outbreak in 1907 led to the death of five children and two adults and both this incident and the measles outbreak in 1912 led to quarantines at Moosehide.²⁰³ It seems likely that some of these rules were set in place to avoid future outbreaks.

²⁰⁰ In Athapaskan society, infants were given constant attention; babies slept with their mothers at night and during the day mothers carried babies around with them until about age two. Arthur Hippler and John R. Wood, *The Subarctic Athabascans: A Selected Annotated Bibliography* (Fairbanks: University of Alaska Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research, 1974), 120.

²⁰¹ There was a \$5 fine if this rule was disobeyed.

²⁰² YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66 COR 129.

²⁰³ "Diphtheria outbreak in Circle, Alaska," *Dawson Daily News*, (January 25, 1905). "Moosehide Quarantined," *Dawson Daily News*, (January 31, 1905), reported that Chief Silas had chickenpox after a recent visit to Eagle. "Quarantine Lifted," *Dawson Daily News*, (February 23, 1905). "Will Use Anti-Toxin," *Dawson Daily News*, (November 5, 1907) reported that there was an outbreak of tonsillitis and diphtheria and the government sent a nurse to Moosehide with anti-toxins.

Though the rules set in place in 1921 were likely imposed from church and state, the council became an important structure for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to assert their dominance and authority over the reserve and determine how they wanted daily life in Moosehide to operate. The Hwëch'in dedicated most of their time with the Council to the general welfare of the reserve and its residents. The Moosehide Council was to look after community matters and minor legal matters where the NWMP handled more serious breaches of law. In the 1970s, Chief Isaac's daughter, Pat Lindgren, said that there was a clear distinction between which problems the Council could handle and which problems needed to be handled by the police and court system.²⁰⁴ In an interview in 2015, former Hwëch'in chief, Angie Joseph-Rear stated:

There was special constable [...] There was at least a couple, and if there was any trouble there was law from Dawson would go down there and he'd be the first house that policemen would go to. And if it's something that the Village Council can handle, then you'll see the police go - go and leave there. But, if it was really, really serious, you see the police leave the inspector's house, I guess, Village Inspector, then you know it's really serious. I was told this by an elder.²⁰⁵

Minor legal matters that the Council handled included matters of arguments between members of the community, theft, intoxication, and family disputes. It handed out fines and punishments for offenses, which could include cutting wood for a month or hauling water for village elders. According to council records, the most common consequence was a

²⁰⁴ Dobrowolsky, *The Nature of Leadership*, 25.

²⁰⁵ Angie Joseph-Rear, interview with author, Dawson, July 29, 2015.

promise to try harder.²⁰⁶ The citizens of Moosehide ensured that the offenders carried out their duties.²⁰⁷

In some cases, the Council used a hybrid approach of both Council and threat of DIA involvement. For example, in November 1921 a Moosehide man was brought to Council on charges of intoxication. He claimed that he was not drinking, but there were three witnesses from the community who saw him, so the Council recommended a \$5 fine, which he refused to pay. The council told the man that they wanted to help him before something happened, such as going to jail, as his father was sick in hospital. The special constable Sam Smith, who also served on Council, explained to the man that they did not want to punish him, but it was their duty and they would get in trouble as well if they did not do anything about his intoxication. Because the Council was meant to report back to Hawksley, and because Smith served as NWMP special constable, he likely felt a responsibility to report what were classified as serious offences.

Once the Council gave the accused man the option to pay the fine or to send the case to Hawksley in Dawson, he agreed to pay the fine.²⁰⁸ At the May 15th 1921 meeting two women appeared before the council over an issue of stolen clothes. The woman accused of stealing clothes claimed she was working for the other women who never paid her, and that the coat was not stolen but her boss gave her the coat as a gift and now

²⁰⁶ The Council heard cases of domestic disputes on March 14 and 21, December 12 of 1921. All three cases resulted in a recommendation to promise to return home together or promise to try harder in their marriages. This scolding may have been enough, as only one of the three appeared back in Council records a few months later. YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66. COR 129. In March of 1997, Ellen Bruce argued that, among the Vuntut Gwich'in, who shared similarities in social structure with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, "Not too long ago, when there was family trouble the people all gathered in one place. Then the woman and man, they were put out there in the middle. The elders talked to them. They talked to them, in the Lord's words and they made everything good again. No family trouble again." Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, 256.

²⁰⁷ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 21.

²⁰⁸ YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66 COR 129.

wanted it back. The council advised the woman to go with Sam Smith, who was special constable at the time and served on the Council, in the morning to see Hawksley. They all agreed that if she was not paid for her work she could keep the coat.²⁰⁹

Sometimes serious matters never went to Council at all. A letter from Reverend WD Young to Bishop Stringer on October 23 1926 detailed a case of domestic abuse at Moosehide which the Council did not deal with, but Dawson police became involved. Young reported that a man who recently returned from jail after serving a sentence for intoxication and domestic assault against his wife soon began abusing her again upon his return. The RCMP eventually arrived and took the man to Dawson where Hawksley arrived the following day to have a trial for him. After the police took the man, some Hwëch'in men and women told Young that this man had a long history of domestic abuse against his wife. However, Young said, when the police were in Moosehide the Hwëch'in would not tell them anything about this. Most likely, they perceived the NWMP as hostile and feared reporting one of their own. They felt more comfortable telling the missionary, though, as he lived in the community and worked closely with them. Hawksley fined him \$30 plus legal costs or two months in jail, however, in his letter Young wrote that "Hawksley says the brutal treatment of his wife does not come under the *Indian Act*" and so he would have to be tried by an RCMP trial if Young wanted to lay a complaint against him, and strongly advised that he do so, as he was witness to some of the act. Young told Stringer that he laid a charge against him on October as he believed this man was dangerous.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ YA, Anglican Church, Young, William Dobbs, COR 255 Series 1-1a Box 7 f.19. Letter to Bishop Stringer from WD Young (teacher at the Moosehide day school), October 23, 1926.

Apart from the above case, the Moosehide Council gave support to people who had to appear in court in Dawson, worked with Indian Affairs to take care of needy people in Moosehide, and negotiated with the federal government on behalf of the community. The Moosehide Council as a tool of enforcing expected and desired behaviour is questionable. Dobrowolsky argued that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had always found ways to monitor and regulate the behaviour of its members before the creation of Moosehide Council, therefore the only novel aspect to Council was its formally organized structure and recognition.²¹¹ Furthermore, while the Hwëch'in often determined how to handle matters, and whether they would report serious matters, such as intoxication, to the authorities, the Council also occasionally created rifts in the community as it encouraged people to monitor and snitch on others.

Some conflicts within the community occurred in 1922, only one year after its inauguration, as community members became disgruntled with how intrusive the Council became in daily life. Though Chief Isaac primarily acted as a spokesperson or representative of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in his leadership role, he sometimes disagreed with members of his band. The March 23, 1922 meeting minutes record Chief Isaac calling for a new election, bringing forth objections to the current structure of the council, arguing that instead of Council he preferred an Indigenous police man at Moosehide. Isaac did not elaborate (or his reasons were not recorded) on why he opposed council, but it is likely due to the aforementioned rifts created by snitching on each other to council, and council snitching to the state. He may also have simply tried to quell some of the bitterness created by the Council's invasion of privacy. Other Council members, including Esau Harper and

²¹¹ Dobrowolsky, *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in*, 28.

Tom Young, both argued to keep the Council claiming most people at Moosehide wanted this council as a means of dealing with problems within the community as opposed to including colonial forces. Reverend Young and special constable Sam Smith also agreed they should keep the Council. Chief Isaac was the only council member opposed to continuing Council, but he said since everyone else wanted it they should keep it but he believed they needed new men serving as members. All the same men served on the Council in 1922 from the previous year, except for two. Women did not serve on the Council, and the records indicate that women did not attend meetings regularly, as they specify on election days women were present because they were holding elections.²¹² Otherwise, women only seemed present when they were involved in a case the Council was hearing.

Moosehide Council minutes are only recorded between 1921 and 1936 and as time went on, the Council appeared to lessen its grip and lessen its intrusion into private matters. After 1926 the minutes of each Council meeting became much shorter and cases were no longer recorded. That could mean that the Council no longer dealt with issues, but it could also mean they simply stopped recording them. After this time, the council seemed much more focused on raising money and hosting community events. Each year they recorded collections brought in for Christmas and Easter, they chose the Christmas boss, a community member elected to be in charge of arranging their annual Christmas celebration, and assigned council members to various tasks associated with hosting Christmas and Easter celebrations. The Council also ensured that Moosehide was kept clean by picking up trash and keeping dogs tied up. In 1932 the Council meeting was based

²¹² In the minutes for April 8th 1926 there was an asterisk in the margins stating women were present at the meeting because it was an election day. YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66 COR 129.

around the election of a new chief, Charlie Isaac, and in 1935 when the new Indian Agent, Captain G. Binning, came to the council meeting to inform the village of complaints some of them made that Charlie Isaac was too young to be chief and that he was away too often in the summer working in Dawson, so he encouraged them to rethink their decision, but many members of the council spoke out in favor of Charlie. They were so adamant that he remain chief, that they re-elected him in that same meeting.²¹³

On all accounts, the Moosehide Council, paired with the occasional assignment of special constables, seemed to have been the dominant authority in Moosehide from its creation in 1921 into the late 1930s. Chief and Council was Moosehide law; if a Hwëch'in person did something deemed wrong in the village, they first went to Council. If the act was serious, and Council could not resolve it, they would go into town to court, but a member of the Moosehide Council normally accompanied the individual.²¹⁴ The Moosehide Council worked from within to foster a sense of community in Moosehide. Most of the laws the Council set out in 1921 were for the Hwëch'in to follow. However, the Moosehide Council also acted to assert authority over Moosehide against outsider intrusions. In setting up their community in this way, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in maintained a great deal of authority over the reserve, and because of this, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and others in Dawson, recognized Moosehide as an area of Indigenous space in which certain traditions and cultural activities had more security than on many other reserves in Canada.

Responses to Colonial Pressure at Moosehide

²¹³Ibid., Moosehide Council meeting December 21st, 1935.

²¹⁴ Developmental Studies Program, 24.

Although reserves were meant to be spaces for reform and surveillance, they also acted as safe havens where Indigenous culture was retained, family and community connections were strengthened, and people gathered together as a collective to oppose colonial forces. The state was aware that the reserve offered possibilities for resistance. In *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance*, Smith uses a case in B.C. to highlight the real threat of active resistance the state felt from Indigenous peoples. Surveillance by missionaries and others in B.C. indicated Indigenous dissatisfaction from 1867, and the potential for resistance resulting from insufficient lands and DIA agents worried that there could be negative consequences if Indigenous peoples were deprived of traditionally used lands.²¹⁵

Violence and upheaval was not the only form of resistance, but it existed in everyday forms as well including both evasion and defense.²¹⁶ Like the application of colonialism, resistance was local in nature and occurred in response to local conditions. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in engaged in such overt, defensive, and evasive forms of resistance in matters both on reserve and off, as well as other methods of challenging colonial authority. As outlined above, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in responded to colonial pressure with a variety of reactions, the most common being subversion, accommodation, and collaboration. Working as Indigenous catechists was a method to better integrate Indigenous meaning into Anglican church work and allowed Indigenous peoples to take leadership roles in their communities, which sometimes included teaching at the Moosehide day school when missionaries were away. Indigenous peoples sometimes worked as special constables in which they were expected to collaborate in monitoring the

²¹⁵ Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance*, 143.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

behaviour and actions of communities. However, as we can see at Moosehide, these positions did not always go as the DIA intended, where special constables reported to the Moosehide Council instead of directly to the NWMP. Finally, the Moosehide Council is another example of a subversive form of accommodation where those involved in the Council ran the council as a hybrid between community values and state implemented rules and used this forum to gain access to timber reserves, discussed in detail in chapter six.

The Hwëch'in made clear to outsiders that Council was the law of Moosehide. Indian agents and police who visited Moosehide had to direct their requests through the chief and Council.²¹⁷ Elder Mabel Henry noted one instance in the 1940s when a policeman came into Moosehide and the "chief told him he wasn't allowed down Moosehide because we don't have any problems or anything, no trouble."²¹⁸ When they did have trouble, the Council was the first source to deal with it. Angie Joseph-Rear also shared a memory which further solidifies Mable Henry's point. She recalled:

There was this person named Tom Young, he had his house right down when you come to Moosehide, right by the river, and his house is right down the lower bench, the first one, so if an RCMP or a law comes from town, for a certain person, and he has to stop and talk to this person [Tom] and he has to have real good reason as to why he wants to take whoever he's looking for. If that reason was really valid then he's allowed to go and get the person that he's looking for but only for serious offenses - serious things - that they let him go.²¹⁹

The RCMP was not the only group to whom the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in expressed their authority at Moosehide.

Though generally they had a congenial relationship with the church, there were certain missionaries the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in did not like, and there were certain incidents

²¹⁷ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 77.

²¹⁸ Developmental Studies Program, 10.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 42.

in the community that they would not stand for. They were outspoken when actions of the church displeased them. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in began a movement to get rid of Reverend Benjamin Totty in 1921. At a Moosehide Council meeting in May, the council voted to send Reverend Totty to Dawson and to replace him at Moosehide with Julius Kendi.

²²⁰ Less than a year later, in January of 1922, Reverend W.W. Williams, the reverend at St. Paul's Church in Dawson, wrote to Bishop Stringer to make him aware that there was trouble at Moosehide between the minister and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Three members of the Council laid complaints against Reverend Totty; these complaints were that 1) Totty did not distribute all the presents at Christmas that were sent to him by Dawson merchants. Council member Charlie Mason had gone to different stores and asked for a list of items they donated and it appeared that Reverend Totty had held some back as they were not distributed, along with a lot of candies; 2) Totty changed the time of the New Years service from 12pm to 9am at the very last minute after a feast was already planned and arranged. When several Hwëch'in people ask to keep the planned 12pm time he refused to change the time; 3) Totty refused to give Moosehide Indians Holy Communion on New Year's Day.²²¹

In response to the complaints laid against him, Totty told Reverend Williams that he did not withhold any gifts, but he kept some of the extra candies and he had been giving them to the school children each day, and that he gave the gifts the Hwëch'in believed to have disappeared to the Gwich'in who were visiting for Christmas. Finally, Totty

²²⁰ YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66 COR 129. Ian Getty also discussed a Blood petition the government to remove a missionary, Tims, as early as 1892 because he was too bossy and refused to acknowledge their customs. Getty, 30.

²²¹ Totty told Joseph Kunizzi from the Peel River band that if Gwich'in people wanted Holy Communion, they could go to Dawson, but people from Moosehide would not receive Communion at all. Joseph Kunizzi's wife was at Communion in Dawson the following day.

explained that he felt the people were upset with him about the New Years Eve time change, and so felt this negative feeling was not in the right spirit for Communion the next day.²²² However, the complaints continued and Williams went down to Moosehide a week later and gave them a "pretty straight talking to," accused them of lying, and telling them they would not receive Holy Communion until they were "better men and women and quit their lies." Williams told them that if Totty was taken away, as they wanted, they would likely not get another minister, like many other places in the Yukon did not have. After Williams' visit to Moosehide, Chief Isaac soon went to see Williams to express friendship with Totty and to express that he believed what his people did was wrong.²²³ Likely, Isaac was concerned that if Moosehide lost their missionary they would lose vital services such as the day school, help with gardening, and church distributed food rations. Isaac was also an early convert to Anglicanism and it was his role as chief to act as ambassador and diplomat for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with the Anglican church and the state.

Even so, Reverend Totty left Moosehide soon after these incidents occurred and Moosehide received a new reverend, Reverend Young. After three years of living at Moosehide, Young wrote to Bishop Stringer complaining of some of the Hwëch'in (Jimmy Wood, Esau Harper, and Jonas – all members of the Moosehide Council) reporting him to Hawksley for cutting timber on the Moosehide reserve. Apparently, he had been taking wood from that area for about a year with a Hwëch'in man acting as assistant. Young said they all knew he collected wood from that spot but no one said anything to him about it

²²² YA, Anglican Church, Williams, The Rev W.W, COR 225 255 Series 1-1a Box 7 f.15. Letter from Reverend Williams to Bishop Stringer, January 12 1922.

²²³ Ibid.

before this incident.²²⁴ Young had previous conflicts with some Moosehide men, particularly with Jimmy Wood, and Young told Bishop Stringer he believed Jimmy Wood was behind the complaints made to Hawksley about him, stating, “Jimmy Wood has been trying to work against me ever since I came here and I don't know why.”²²⁵ Young expressed frustration and antagonism with Hawksley in various letters, as he felt that Hawksley was interfering in Church business and that he should let Young settle matters at Moosehide himself.²²⁶

These examples show an overt way in which the Hwëch'in challenged colonial authority by speaking out against it. However, there were other ways that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in challenged colonial authority. For example, at Moosehide, Chief Isaac set a rule which banned non-Indigenous peoples from coming to the reserve unless they were specifically invited. Though separated by distance after the move to Moosehide, Chief Isaac maintained positive relations with Dawsonites until his death in 1932. He frequently requested comments be printed in the *Dawson Daily News*, which he used to further his aims, and he participated in community events and partook in celebrations in town such as Empire Days. Each year he invited Dawsonites to Moosehide for an annual Christmas celebration, and occasionally hosted them at potlatches, expressing a serious act of diplomacy. Chief Isaac and other Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in leaders were vocal about reminding

²²⁴ YA, Anglican Church, Young, William Dobbs, COR 255 Series 1-1a Box 7 f.19. Letter to Bishop Stringer from WD Young, December 13 1927.

²²⁵ In an earlier letter, Young tells of how they were going to hold service in the school house because the church was so cold and took more fuel to warm it. Jimmy Wood lit a fire in the church anyway, claiming that's where the natives wanted it without consulting Young, though the day before no one objected to the school house. They also complained to Hawksley that Young changed the service to the house. Hawksley condemned Young in front of them and stated he always held service at the church when he was in Moosehide. YA, Anglican Church, Young, William Dobbs, COR 255 Series 1-1a Box 7 f.19. Letter to Bishop Stringer from WD Young, March 14 1927.

²²⁶ YA, Anglican Church. Young, William Dobbs, COR 255 Series 1-1a Box 7 f.19. Letter to Bishop Stringer from WD Young, December 13 1927.

non-Indigenous people living in Dawson that they were there at the Hwëch'in's expense. Among many others, one example includes a speech, reported in the *Dawson Daily News*, that Isaac made after marching at the head of the Empire Day parade on May 25, 1902. He discussed the past when he argued Indigenous peoples had great numbers in the Yukon as non-Indigenous did currently, stating,

At the time the Indians were all rich, had plenty of meat and fish and otherwise were in the most prosperous condition. [...] Then the white man arrived and Indians were driven further away, lands were taken from them, and whites took possession of their country, taken their gold, their game was destroyed and driven away and nothing but a remnant is left and they are reduced to poverty and are without the means of sustenance.²²⁷

In this speech, and many others like it, Isaac showed the determination of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Yukon Indigenous peoples to persist in the face of radical transformation while appealing to the government and other colonial authorities to take responsibility for the hardships that the activities of mining and settlement brought to the Yukon.

The following year, during the Christmas holidays, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in organized a performance in the Dawson Auditorium to demonstrate cultural dances. They hired a translator and put on two shows with participants from Moosehide, Pelly, Forty Mile, and Stewart in the Yukon, and Tanana, Alaska.²²⁸ The shows were not only a way to gather with other Indigenous groups and express elements of their cultures, but it also expressed that, in the face of the environmental and socioeconomic shifts in the Yukon, Indigenous Yukoners were not a broken people.

²²⁷ "All Dawson Joins in a Fitting Celebration," *Dawson Daily News*, (May 25 1902).

²²⁸ "Indians to Give Big Show," *Dawson Daily News*, (Dec 30, 1903).

Further, a more subtle, crucial display of resistance on the Moosehide reserve was that of cultural persistence. While they were dislocated from much of their ancestral land and much of their culture was under attack from missionaries and state agents, using the Moosehide reserve as Indigenous space was an important approach for the Hwëch'in in maintaining and passing down elements of culture, especially those related to living off the land. Moosehide acted as Indigenous space in which the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in exerted much control over their daily lives. Indigenous gatherings that took place before sustained contact continued after the move to Moosehide. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in would travel to visit with other Indigenous groups around the Yukon, but other Indigenous groups more often came to Moosehide. The reserve served as a meeting place and waystation for bands from elsewhere in the Yukon, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories, who were attracted by cash potential from the Gold Rush.²²⁹ The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's closest connection was with the Teetl'it Gwich'in who arrived each summer to visit Moosehide to sell furs and foxes.²³⁰ When the Gwich'in were down, the church confirmed several of them, and held church services and school for them.²³¹ Another popular time for visiting with other Indigenous groups was during the summer salmon run. Usually these outside groups set up camp at Moosehide during their stay.²³²

As missionary influence grew in the Klondike region, Christmas and Easter became times for visiting other groups as well as religious holidays, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in combined elements of the potlatch gathering with the Anglican celebrations. Christmas at

²²⁹ Dawson Indian Band, *Hän Indians: People of the River* (Dawson: Dawson Indian Band, 1988), 9. (YA PAM 1988-0088 C.2).

²³⁰ *Northern Lights* No. III Vol IV (August 1916). *Northern Lights* Vol XX No III (August 1932). Various editions throughout this time span remarked on the Teetl'it Gwich'in coming from the Peel each summer, and usually at Christmas as well.

²³¹ *Northern Lights* No. IV, Vol IV (November 1916).

²³² Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 69.

Moosehide was an important event, including feasting and dancing that often lasted for weeks. Chief Isaac invited Dawson residents to come to Moosehide to celebrate with his people, always stating that all were welcomed if they did not bring liquor.²³³ Teetl'it Gwich'in from the Blackstone Uplands and the Peel travelled to Moosehide in winter to deliver fresh caribou meat to Dawson and to visit at Christmas time. They returned in spring or summer, usually spending a month or more in the Yukon River valley staying at Moosehide. Later, many of these people settled in the Moosehide or Dawson area.²³⁴ There was intermarriage between Hän and Gwich'in, and by the 1930s there were a number of families at Moosehide. Joe and Annie Henry were Gwich'in from Black City who moved with their children to Moosehide; other well established Moosehide families from the Blackstone Uplands were the Semples and the Martins.²³⁵ Julia Morberg described Christmas at Moosehide as a large celebration, saying,

Right between the house there is big dance hall, with logs, big one, and they got two stove in there, and they have dance right after Christmas. They dance every day until after New Year. You can see people coming up from town. At that time, all the trees are just shrubs eh? You can see all over. Now look how much it grow. People...people all over come down to Moosehide for dances!²³⁶

The church occasionally expressed discontent with the length and boisterousness of celebration among the various Indigenous groups at Christmas. 1917 was a particularly worrisome year for the missionary, as he complained that by February, the Christmas festivities at Moosehide were still ongoing and that, "the Indians are still busy spending their money on supplies for feasts, and their time in a profitless way."²³⁷

²³³ Ibid., 74.

²³⁴ Black City (THA) 1.

²³⁵ Black City (THA) 2-3.

²³⁶ Julia Morberg, interview with author, Moosehide, July 27, 2015.

²³⁷ *Northern Lights* No. I, Vol. V (February 1917).

The hybridization of celebrations and gatherings was one important method through which the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in retained some of their customs at Moosehide, the reserve was also a space in which Indigenous peoples could carry on traditional subsistence activities. As more miners moved into the Klondike region during the Gold Rush years, and as stricter regulations were imposed upon Indigenous hunting, trapping, and fishing in the 1920s to 1940s, the maintenance of a connection with the natural world was essential to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in culture and lifeways.

Moosehide was a good location for a settlement; not only was it an area the Hwëch'in had been using for generations, but it was above flood plains, it had a high, open view for spotting game, and Moosehide Creek provided fresh water. Nearby were readily accessible resources such as salmon, firewood, and trails inland to hunting areas.²³⁸ While the 160-acre allotment was large enough for a settlement, it was not large enough to be a self-supporting place for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.²³⁹ To remain self-sufficient, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had to travel elsewhere to fish, hunt, trap, and cut wood.²⁴⁰ When living in Moosehide, they did not trade much with other tribes, but they sold furs, meat, and fish in Dawson at reasonably good prices.²⁴¹ Percy Henry said when he was living in Moosehide the Hwëch'in had much pride in their work and in their self-reliance:

We had a lot of pride then because we don't go to nobody for help or ask for handouts... We go trap where we want and when we want and we go hunt. In those days, you could sell meat because you could get a commercial license. So, we could sell meat in town and we make pretty good living.²⁴²

²³⁸ Dobrowolsky, "A History of Moosehide Settlement," 1.

²³⁹ Dawson Indian Band, 9.

²⁴⁰ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 32.

²⁴¹ YA, Jim Robb Collection, SR6_1_A1 [Interview with Charlie Isaac by Jim Robb] c.1970.

²⁴² Developmental Studies Program, 23. Percy Henry was born in 1927 in Black City and lived in Moosehide since the early 1930s.

Moosehide also became an important cultural space and a safe haven, in a sense, as children began going to the Chooutla residential school in Carcross beginning in 1902 until its closure in 1969.²⁴³ Children's ability to learn traditional skills while attending the day school at Moosehide was important in maintaining cultural practises and subsistence activities as essential to survival on the reserve. Interviews with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders who grew up in Moosehide indicate the importance of schooling in Moosehide for cultural persistence. Elder Julia Morberg said they had a lot of fun at the Moosehide school. They had lots of free time and could pick blueberries in the fall with older ladies in the nearby hills, and in the summers when they were off school they would sometimes go with their parents to build a fish cache and camp while fishing all summer on one of the islands across the Yukon river. Julia's father and the other men caught fish and the kids and women cut, dried, and smoked them.²⁴⁴ Much of this cultural persistence diminished when children left Moosehide for Carcross. Elders interviewed in Dawson and Moosehide in 2015 stated when away for school they could only come home for the summer months. Being away from Moosehide and their families was difficult, and those who spoke of their time in school mentioned the tremendous culture loss they experienced. While attending the day school at Moosehide, Hwëch'in children had free time after school hours which was in stark contrast to living at the residential school, as they were not permitted to engage in "Indigenous activities." Being able to participate in cultural activities and to be immersed in their community and with their own language outside of school hours at

²⁴³ The Chooutla school was established in Carcross in 1902 by Bishop Bompas and taken over by Bishop Stringer after Bompas' death in 1906. The federal government took over the school in 1908, but Anglican church workers continued to run the school until 1910 when Indian Agent Hawksley took over running the school.

²⁴⁴ Julia Morberg interview with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.

Moosehide was an important cultural experience that was lost with attendance at residential school.

Even while attending school in Carcross, Indigenous children found subversive methods of resistance. In 2015, Julie Morberg remembered that during her time at school in Carcross she often craved wild foods, and sometimes she and other children would sneak away to catch and collect the things they craved. She explained:

In residential school I wish for wild food eh, and we sneak around while we're going to Carcross, and we sit, and we get a rope and use rope for snare, we snare rabbit and cook it in the bush down...down the bush there. [...] We make some kind of hook to get grayling too, and we go to bush there and make fire and cook that too. We sneak around, we always get one kid watching for us (Laughter) then we have good meal.²⁴⁵

The increase of children attending residential school in the 1930s and 1940s emphasized the importance of Moosehide as Indigenous space. While on the reserve, the Hwëch'in could continue subsistence activities, but they no longer moved with the seasons as frequently as they had done previously. They began spending more and more time in one location, and the reserve became a central location from which hunters went out to hunt and returned. Children attended day school and were often kept back from hunting and trapping.²⁴⁶ The Church began teaching the Hwëch'in how to garden, and they were enthusiastic gardeners - they raised vegetables and hay in Tr'ochëk before moving to Moosehide. After moving to Moosehide, gardening grew in popularity, and in summer they planted seeds for fall crops of cabbage, carrots, beets, turnip, hay, and potatoes.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Julia Morberg, interview with author, Moosehide, July 27, 2015.

²⁴⁶ Mishler and Simeone, 22.

²⁴⁷ *Northern Lights* No. III vol. IV (August 1916).

Over time, with a decrease in the amount of time spent on subsistence activities, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people remembered Moosehide as an important cultural space. Once they moved back to Dawson in the 1950s and 1960s, their time spent on traditional activities shrunk in comparison to living at Moosehide, as most people got jobs in town. Julia Morberg was born in 1944 and grew up in Moosehide until she went to the Carcross school in 1957 and later moved to Dawson. She recalled that life in Moosehide in her childhood was a happy time, and she remembered her parents and elders remarking that they loved living there, as it was a special place for them. She said it was a difficult time when families started moving out of Moosehide and into Dawson and losing a daily connection with a space that had been culturally and economically essential to their lifeways.²⁴⁸

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the Moosehide reserve acted as a space of both colonial control and Indigenous cultural space. The Moosehide reserve served multiple functions, with three main groups with their own agendas for the reserve. The Church and the government together viewed Moosehide as a tool of disciplinary surveillance where they could monitor and control the actions and progression of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people into white society. Anglican missionaries were in the Yukon from 1860 to convert Indigenous peoples, but they also spent time teaching, administering health care, and advocating. Bishops William Carpenter Bompas and Isaac O. Stringer were the two missionaries most closely involved with advocating for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, though

²⁴⁸ Julia Morberg, interview with author, Moosehide, July 27, 2015.

often speaking in their behalf without consulting with Hwëch'in people, between 1890 and 1940. Through a daily presence on the Moosehide reserve and the implementation of Indigenous catechists, the Anglican church hoped to grasp a firm hold over Indigenous spiritual and physical lives.

Missionary intervention on behalf of Indigenous Yukoners created conflict with state officials in the Yukon, especially members of the NWMP. Indian Agent John Hawksley, as a former reverend, believed in a combination of the “best left as Indians” approach and federal intervention when necessary. Although reserves were meant to be spaces for reform and surveillance, they also acted as safe havens where Indigenous culture was retained, family and community connections were strengthened, and people gathered together as a collective to oppose colonial forces. At Moosehide, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in took various approaches in dealing with colonial surveillance and pressure; even though the Hwëch'in faced increasing pressure from colonial agents to conform to non-Indigenous society, they challenged colonialism with a variety of responses including accommodation, resistance, and subverting colonial attempts at brining in Indigenous peoples as collaborators in colonization. While the small size of the reserve (in 1897 the reserve was only half a mile wide and four miles long) and its low population allowed the church to strictly observe all happenings at the village, various leaders in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in community not only ensured that they maintained a significant portion of control and power within the community, they also used that power to challenge the hierarchical structures of the church and state in place at Moosehide.

The Moosehide Council and Chief Isaac's use of Dawson newspapers to print matters of interest to him and his people are the most formalized examples of the Hwëch'in

speaking out against colonizers. Though the Council was established by colonizers to carry out their goals, the Hwëch'in quickly asserted elements of cultural justice and focused on issues of importance to their community. Aside from formal means of challenging colonial authority, Hwëch'in ability to use Moosehide as a place to celebrate their culture and customs, host Indigenous neighbours, and retain aspects of their subsistence lifestyle allowed the Hwëch'in to claim Moosehide as Indigenous space and to find ways to cope with the pressures of outside society.

Moosehide has remained a place of importance to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with some individuals continuing to live there seasonally today. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department holds their annual First Fish fish-camp at Moosehide for the children in Dawson each July, and biannually Moosehide is the home to the Moosehide Gathering, a multi-day cultural event which brings people from all over the Canadian North, Alaska, and southern Canada together to celebrate and feast.

Chapter 5: Gold Mining and Environmental Transformation

In the January 9th, 1909 issue of *Mining and Scientific Press*, the owner and editor, mining engineer T.A. Rickard, wrote the following about the construction of a 113-kilometer ditch that stretched across the Blackstone Uplands into the Klondike Valley delivering water to dredge operations:

The wilderness that has laid in shivering silence for untold ages, responsive only to the footfall of the moose and the cariboo [sic], hearing only the voice of the stream and crash of the tempest, has been invaded to the very threshold of the Arctic by insistent man, determined to use Nature to his purpose, to overcome her obstacles by turning her own energy and her own power to his good in the quest for gold.¹

Rickard's comments reflect the 20th century ideologies of colonial land use discussed in Chapter Three. In building the Yukon Ditch to maximize mining potential, miners, businessmen, and government officials in Dawson and beyond celebrated what they perceived as a conquering of the natural world. His comments also speak to the erasure of Indigenous peoples from the narrative of mining in the Yukon, as the same area where the ditch crossed, that Rickard described as laying in shivering silence and completely untouched by man, was frequented for tens of thousands of years by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Indigenous groups, such as the Teetl'it Gwich'in, living and harvesting in the Blackstone Valley.

Just as the church and state were major agents of colonization, so too were miners and mining companies in the Yukon, and the activities associated with mining had major impacts on the colonization of the local environment in the Klondike region. While the Gold Rush itself was a short-term event, it laid the way for a capitalized system of the exploitation of mineral resources in the Yukon. Further, colonial environmental

¹ TA Rickard, "The Yukon Ditch" in *Mining and Scientific Press* (San Francisco: January 16, 1909): 117.

management connected to resource extraction ensured that mining in the North often had a more serious effect on local Indigenous groups, as resource extraction gradually eroded much of their subsistence base through environmental transformation without replacing it with anything more permanent, creating unequal distribution of environmental benefits and harms.

As environmental historian Liza Piper explains in *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*, in the 20th century, Western societies around the globe used industry and technology to remake the natural world in order to more easily achieve specific objectives, such as the extraction of minerals and other resources. In Canada, these objectives were set within a framework of capitalism that defined the value of natural resources – this value was linked with colonial ideologies of land use, private property, and profit.² Kathryn Morse further elaborated on this idea in *The Nature of Gold* arguing that, “capitalist culture treated nature [...] as an instrument to be harvested and exploited to the point of destruction for maximum profit.”³ The act of consumption by definition is a destructive act. Extractive industries that fuel economies take away parts of the landscape, devouring whole sections of land and water.⁴ The subarctic ecosystems in which gold was located in the Klondike were diverse, like most ecosystems, and made up of rivers, creeks, banks, forests, soil, gravel, rock, permafrost, ice, water, vegetation, moose, salmon, caribou and many other living organisms, but gold seekers valued only one part of this ecosystem.⁵ The glistening yellow, malleable metal was the reason they came to the Yukon.

² Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2009).

³ Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 12.

⁴ Mona Domosh, "Consumption and Landscape" in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Cultural Geography*, ed. Nancy Johnson, Richard Schein, and Jamie Winders (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013): 203-204.

⁵ Morse, 90.

Gold, being nineteen times heavier than water, was either discovered along creeks, settled in nooks and eddies, or it lay deep underground, under layers of permafrost, and getting to it was miners primary concern, by any means necessary.⁶ As Morse explains, “the work of gold mining was the work of disassembly” and to procure gold, miners consumed the Klondike ecosystem, divided it into parts, and spit it out in piles of tailings, leaving the creeks and land in pieces.⁷ In the Klondike, mining reorganized both land and waterways. These acts of disassembly were promoted and encouraged by the federal government. The Dominion government’s primary concern was the revenue that miners would bring to the federal economy. Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, was sent to the Yukon in 1897 to assess the mining situation and to determine how much revenue miners should pay to Ottawa to generate profit for the federal treasury.⁸

With this goal in mind, more people mining was of benefit to the government, and it carried out a long-term policy of issuing Free Miner’s Certificates, opening the Yukon to thousands of prospectors who were given nearly unrestricted use of the area surrounding their mining claim, including timber and water resources.⁹ This privatization of land in the Klondike Valley overtook Hwëch’in land bases and resulted in the dislocation of the

⁶ Michael Gates, *Tr’ondëk–Klondike: The Ongoing Tradition of Klondike Placer Mining* (Dawson: Tr’ondëk–Klondike World Heritage Site Nomination Thematic Research, 2016), 1.

⁷ Morse, 91-92.

⁸ Bruce Willis, "The Environmental Effects of the Yukon Gold Rush 1896-1906: Alterations to Land, Destruction of Wildlife, and Disease," MA Thesis (University of Western Ontario, 1997), 33.

⁹ They were limited to land not already claimed or under ownership by another miner. Free miners had to right to enter, locate, prospect, and mine on any vacant Crown land. Karen Campbell discusses free entry laws as intricately linked with the belief that mining was the best use of land. She argues that the law of free entry is rooted in the British land system under the belief that the Crown has underlying title to all land. In North America, free entry was incorporated from the stream of gold rushes in the mid-1800s. This was largely based on the belief that mining was a way to create wealth as well as encourage settlement in North America. Ian Canada, the free entry system started in Western Canada, specifically B.C. in 1859 under the Goldfields Act of B.C. Further, mining’s contribution to resource development, especially in the North, meant that the Canadian government did not interfere with mining. Karen Campbell, “Undermining Our Future: How Mining’s Privileged Access to Land Harms People and the Environment,” in *Mining Watch Canada* (January 2004): 1-4.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from traditional use areas. Not only were they forced to relocate from Tr'ochëk, but as mining expanded and land became enclosed as claims, the Hwëch'in further lost access to previously used areas, and transformed the northern environment into a colonized space. In 1896 each miner holding a Free Miner's certificate was permitted to one claim up to 100 square feet.¹⁰ A year later the permitted size of a claim doubled in size to 200 square feet.¹¹ They were entitled to use as much water that naturally flowed through or past a claim as necessary and they were entitled to fish, hunt, and cut down as much timber as needed.¹² By 1919, a miner could own a claim running 500 feet along a creek with the same rights to hunting, fishing, and timber use as stated above.¹³

The consequences of this mining activity were contained within the land and water as miners cleared forests, disassembled the land, and rerouted waterways. These results of mining had immediate impacts on fish and wildlife populations in the Klondike and, in turn, shaped the Indigenous subsistence practises by requiring the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to travel further for hunting and to relocate to new fishing locations. Common to mining ventures in the North, the environmental legacies left behind from gold mining disproportionately affected the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as most miners left the region once the rush ended, and mining brought little benefit to the Hwëch'in - as detailed in Chapter Six, Hwëch'in rarely gained employment directly in the mining industry, instead they assert

¹⁰ Allen A. Wright, *Prelude to Bonanza: The Discovery and Exploration of the Yukon* (Sidney: Gray's Publishing, Ltd., 1976), 211.

¹¹ *Regulations Governing Placer Mining in the Yukon Territory* (Government Printing Bureau, 1899) (YA PAM 1899-47).

¹² Canada, *Regulations Governing Placer Mining Along the Yukon River and Its Tributaries in The Northwest Territories 1897* (Government Printing Bureau, 1897) (YA PAM 1897-26c). Canada, *Regulations for the disposal of Quartz Mining Claims on Dominion Lands in Manitoba and the NWT (including the Provisional District of the Yukon) 1898* (PAM 1898-0153). In terms of fishing and hunting, miners were subjected to any regulations that had been or would be passed for the protection of fish and game.

¹³ Canada, *Yukon Placer Mining Act 1919* (Ottawa: J de Labroquerie Tache, 1919) (YA PAM 1919-011).

themselves through tangential wage work and entrepreneurship. Further, the burden of the environmental risks of mining fell most heavily on the Hwëch'in – the population nearest to both mining developments and the bottom of the economic order - who, unlike the miner, could not easily leave the area after mining collapsed.¹⁴

This chapter questions how the development of mining in the Klondike Valley created long-term consequences on both the local ecosystem and on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's cultural engagement with that same ecosystem. It is clear that the post-1906 period of industrial mining techniques accelerated the scale of environmental transformation and created greater demand on local natural resources than that of placer mining; however, I believe that the decade from 1896 to 1906 had a greater influence on shifts in Hwëch'in's relationship with the natural world due to the rapidity and scale of socioeconomic transformation of the Klondike which created dramatic change within the lifetime of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens alive at this time. This chapter begins by examining the immediate impacts that placer mining techniques had on the Klondike ecosystem from 1896 to 1906. It then examines the environmental impacts of industrial mining techniques, with particular attention to dredging, that occurred after 1906 to 1940. This post-1906 period saw an expansion in mining activity in the Klondike and created greater and more long-term impacts on the local environment due to the industrialization of mining technologies and related infrastructure at a scale that stretched across, and beyond, the

¹⁴George Vrtis and JR McNeill, "Introduction: Of Mines, Minerals, and North American Environmental History" in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 10. Liza Piper, "Chronic Disease in the Yukon River Basin, 1890-1960" in *Locating Health*, ed. Erika Dyck and Christopher Fletcher (Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2010): 129-150.

Klondike Valley, encapsulating Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory outside of the goldfields.

Placer Mining in the Klondike Valley, 1887-1906

In the Yukon before 1906, placer mining was the most common method of gold mining. Miners usually worked alone or with a partner, traveling around creeks and tributaries panning for gold until they found an area that seemed promising where they would then stake a claim. According to the federal placer mining regulations for the Yukon, any person (male or female) over the age of 18 was entitled to purchasing a Free Miner's certificate for \$7.50 (\$10 by 1906) for an individual, or between \$50-\$100 for a joint stock company.¹⁵ The certificate was granted between one to five years and they were permitted to have any number of claims, so long as they were not on the same river, creek, or gulch (except a hill claim).¹⁶ Furthermore, the Yukon mining regulations permitted each miner, during the continuance of their miner's certificate, the right "to enter, locate, prospect and mine for gold and other minerals upon any lands in the Yukon Territory, whether vested in the Crown or otherwise" except those lands already classified as property, including government reservations for town sites, and occupied by a building, land already occupied by mining, or a reserve.¹⁷ Essentially, this left much of the land in the Klondike available for mining regardless of Indigenous use.

The rapidity of environmental effects of placer mining beginning in 1896 was remarkable. In his 1897 annual report from Dawson, NWMP Constable Constantine

¹⁵ Canada, *The Yukon Territory: Its History and Resources* (Ottawa, 1906), 68.

¹⁶ Canada, *Regulations Governing Placer Mining in the Yukon Territory* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1904), 9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

claimed that the conditions of the landscape in the area had changed dramatically from his previous visit in 1894, referring specifically to the influx of population (approximately 40,000 people) and the sprawl of mining activity, miners' tents, and related infrastructure in both Dawson and in the goldfields.¹⁸ Reverend Flewelling remarked in his diary, also in 1897, that after returning to the Dawson area after a month away in Forty Mile he could “hardly recognize the old place because of so many tents.”¹⁹ Images 5.1 and 5.2, one from 1898 and the other from 1900, illustrate the rapid growth of Dawson City. Missionaries and government officials were not the only people to remark on the rapid growth of Dawson. In a video produced for the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre in Dawson City, Percy Henry recalled hearing from his elders, referring to outsiders during the Gold Rush, that “they came in like mosquitoes, by the thousands.”²⁰ The 1898 mining statistics for the first half of the year recorded 9,134 placer claims in the Yukon. By September, there were 17,000 claims recorded.²¹ In the same year, over 483,000 ounces of gold was extracted from the 800 square feet of the Klondike goldfields (see Appendix A).²² The effects of mining in the Klondike from 1897 to 1940 are most visibly contained within the land. However, the mining process also had affects on the local water supply that were more difficult to see than those scars left on the land.

¹⁸ NWMP, *Annual Report of Commissioner L.W. Herchmer* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report 1897), 300.

¹⁹ This entry comes from Reverend Frederick Flewelling's diary on May 29th, 1897. YA, Flewelling Family fonds, 1896-1897, 82/176 MSS 013.

²⁰ *Njhè dähch'e shò tr'inläy – The Welcome film*, produced by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department (Dawson City: Red Snapper Productions, 2007), DVD. The title in Hän translates to “we are happy that you have come to visit” in English.

²¹ Willis, 51.

²² Arthur NC Treadgold, *An English Expert on the Klondike* (Toronto: George N. Morang & Company Ltd., 1899), 2.

The two most popular mining techniques in the Yukon during the 1896-1940 period were placer mining and dredging, both of which involved dismantling the local environment, harnessing water supply, and thawing permafrost. Placer mining was a simple, yet strenuous mining method that involved a process of separating loose gold particles from the surrounding ground or gravel. The easiest gold to find was that which settled in a circular pan filling it half full of water and swirling the pan to separate the gold from the rest.²³ If they uncovered promising coarse gold - large concentrations of easily-accessible gold – miners staked a claim on that area and began mining with more intricate techniques, though still on a small scale either as an individual, in a partnership, or as part of a group. Using picks to separate large gold deposits from rocks in the bed of rivers and creeks were the simplest methods of placer mining, and the technique most miners employed in the Yukon prior to the Gold Rush.

²³ Ibid., 84.



Image 5.1. Wall tents set up along present-day Front Street in Dawson City, 1898. DCMA 1962.6.4.

Before 1887-1888 the primary means of gold mining was working bars and banks of streams. The discovery of coarse gold in Forty Mile in 1887 generated interest in bedrock mining. Bedrock mining in a permafrost-bound ground required thawing a hole to bedrock and then miners followed the pay streak under frozen ground.²⁴ This new technique was more profitable and also led to more sedentary mining operations. Miners could find profit staying in one place for an extended period of time and it was possible to

²⁴ A pay streak is the zone in which mineral deposits are concentrated parallel to the walls of the vein. Usually the pay streak is a narrow streak of valuable ore found among less valuable material.

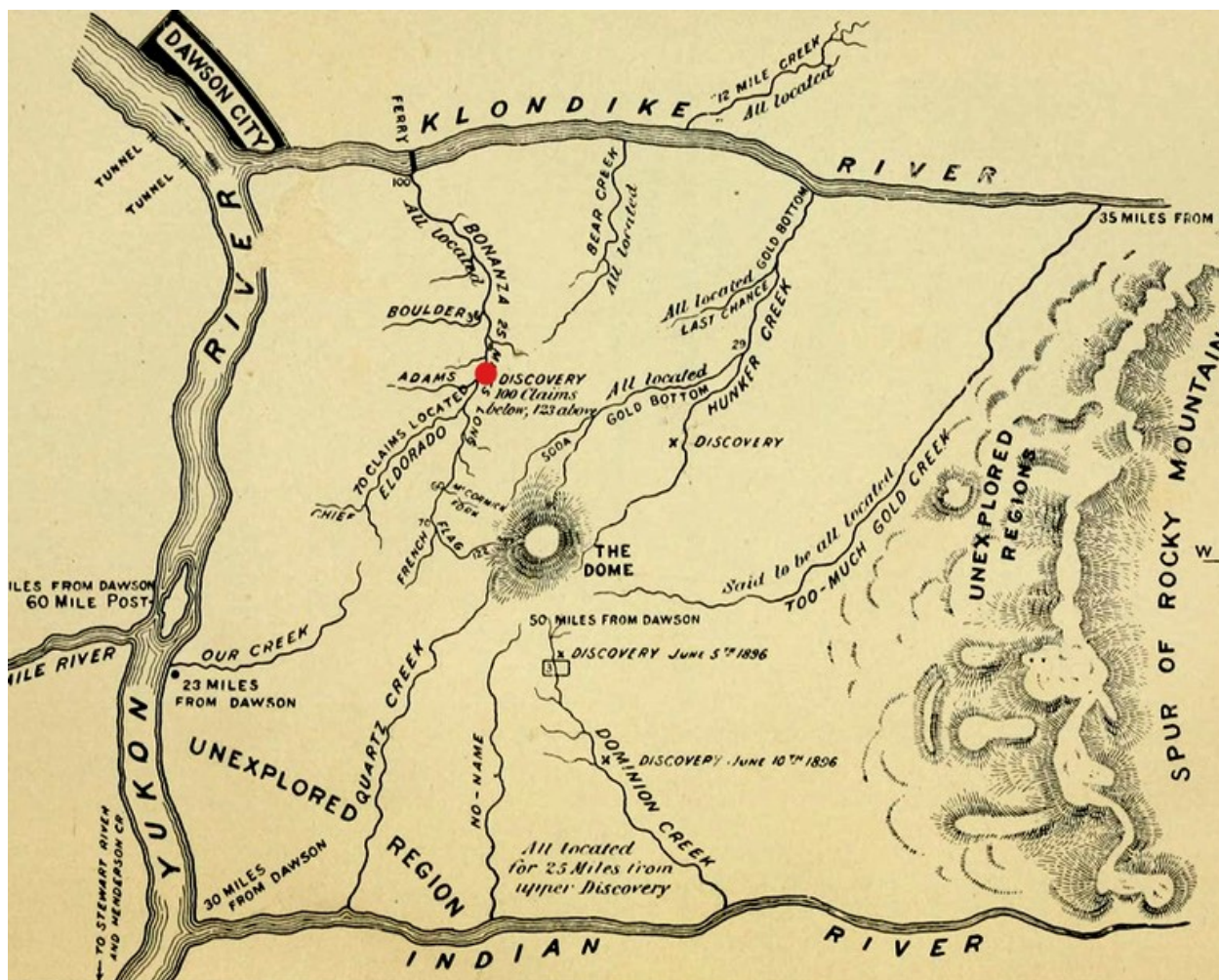


Image 5.2. Dawson City, 1900. DCMA 1997.298.22.

mine all year.²⁵ Between 1897 and 1900, the main creeks and tributaries mined in the Klondike were Bonanza, Eldorado, Hunker (including Last Chance and Gold Bottom tributaries), Dominion Creek (including Gold Run, Sulphur, Quartz), and Bear Creek (Map 5.1).²⁶ As more experienced miners came into the Klondike, the placer mining methods became more elaborate. Placer mining operated on a seasonal rotation, paralleling

²⁵ Thomas Stone, "Flux and Authority in a Subarctic Society: The Yukon Miners in the Nineteenth Century" in *Interpreting Canada's North: Selected Readings*, ed. Ken Coates and William Morrison (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1989): 121.

²⁶ NWMP, *Report of Superintendent Wood* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, December 1900), 7.



Map 5.1. Map of Klondike River and Gold Bearing Creeks. *Klondike: The Chicago Record Book for Gold Seekers* (Chicago: The Chicago Record Co., 1897), 19.

Indigenous seasonal activities. In winter, miners had to thaw between three to sixteen feet of permafrost by wood-fire before reaching the first gravel layer. Wood-fire burning for between five to six hours would thaw one foot of permafrost, so wood-fires would burn, on average, between fifteen to eighty hours per mining claim. This practise required clear-cutting forests from the hills of the Klondike Valley for firewood to thaw permafrost.²⁷ In 1898, a miner accidently discovered steam-thawing, a technique for thawing permafrost,

²⁷ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 30.

and many miners began using this method, in which they placed a metal pipe in the ground and blasted steam through it to thaw permafrost.²⁸ Steam-thawing the ground was faster than fires, taking between eight to twenty-eight hours to thaw a claim, but wood-fires remained the more widely used method for individual miners.²⁹ The federal government did not place restrictions on miners' use of timber until August of 1897 when the federal government drafted regulations for logging, so until then widespread use of timber led to deforestation in areas near the gold fields, creating a treeless space.³⁰ This treeless space disrupted moose pastures, clearing away their habitat of wooded areas near swamps and lakeshores and their food supply of primarily twigs, shrubs, leaves, grass, foliage and bark of saplings, as well as habitat and food for smaller animals such as hares.³¹

Forests became a highly valued resource to fuel steamers and sternwheelers running in the Dawson area. Between 1897 and 1900 there were approximately 137 steamers operating on the Yukon river, burning about eighty cords (with around 220-240 pieces of wood per cord) between Whitehorse and Dawson on the downstream run, while the return trip required 180 cords.³² Timber depletion was not restricted to the Dawson area; there were wood camps every twenty to forty miles upstream between Dawson and Whitehorse for refuelling, burning timber sources along the river. Timber was essential for mining

²⁸ Miner Clarence J. Berry noticed that the steam coming from a hoisting engine's exhaust hose had thawed the ground on which it was lying. M. H. Cysewski and Y. Shur, "Pre-Thawing: From Mining to Civil Engineering, a Historical Perspective," in *Cold Regions Engineering 2009: Cold Regions Impacts on Research, Design, and Construction*, ed. Howard Mooers and John Hinzmann, Jr. (Duluth: American Society of Civil Engineers, 2009): 21-31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰ Ken Spotswood, "The Rush for Souls: Missionaries, Mayhem and Memories on the 100th anniversary of St. Paul's Pro-Cathedral, Dawson City, and St. Barnabas Church, Moosehide" (Dawson City: St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, 2002), 27. In 1898 loggers had to obtain permits to cut timber and were limited to eight square kilometers. Once the regulations came into effect, the Dominion government replaced the authority of the NWMP to issue timber permits with a timber agent. Willis, 39.

³¹ Adrian Forsyth, *Mammals of the Canadian Wild* (Scarborough: Camden House, 1985), 12.

³² Willis, 40. They burned about two chords per hour.

camps as miners used timber to construct shacks, cabins, boats, underground mining supports, and dams and it was the primary source for heating and cooking fuel.³³ In 1898, NWMP Inspector F. Harper reported that between May and June of 1897 boats brought hundreds of people into Dawson each day, and many of these people camped on the government reserve near the police barracks in the south end of the town. By December of 1898, Harper wrote, “now at the present time there is hardly a stick standing, showing the number of tents and people who were there during the past summer.”³⁴ In his fire history of Canada, Stephen Pyne noted that prospectors were notorious for burning forests. In fact, he attributed them to contributing greatly to depletion in stating, “They came, they wrecked, they left.”³⁵ Sometimes forest fires resulted from careless miners, especially in winter while they fell asleep with a fire heating their cabins, which further contributed to habitat destruction and game depletion in the Klondike region.³⁶ In 1900 alone, an estimated 70,000 cords of timber were used for steamers, construction in Dawson and the goldfields, and mining.³⁷

As mining stripped the land of vegetation, game disappeared as they pushed further inland in search of food.³⁸ Earth torn up around the goldfields in the Klondike Valley also removed lichen, moss, grass, and sedge which were the staples of caribou diets.³⁹ Along with salmon, caribou was the most important food source for northern Indigenous peoples. Various studies have indicated that the expansion of human settlements and land

³³ Ibid., 34.

³⁴ NWMP, *Annual Report from Inspector F. Harper* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, December, 1898), 67.

³⁵ Stephen Pyne, *Awful Splendour: A Fire History of Canada* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2007), 105.

³⁶ Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers, Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1998), 58.

³⁷ Willis, 41.

³⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 18.

³⁹ Forsyth, 12-14.

developments have contributed to the decline of caribou populations across the North. Lara Webster with the Department of the Environment argued that a five-year scientific study in the early 1990s showed that ungulates tend to move away from areas of human activity, especially noisy areas such as active mining sites, which contributes to a significant decline in herd numbers in mining areas.⁴⁰ Though noise from mining was one factor that caused herds to migrate, human presence, and harassment, was another. According to Webster, studies from the Arctic showed similar patterns effecting caribou populations.⁴¹ Disturbances associated with mining, such as noise, dust, road development, and habitat degradation furthers the occurrence of avoidance behaviour among caribou in the North.⁴² Aside from mining activity creating habitat loss, the influx of outsiders into the region led to overharvesting of both caribou and moose.⁴³

Though Webster argued that it is difficult to determine the exact causes of caribou decline, others argue that science paired with traditional knowledge points to direct adverse impacts of resource development, especially mining, on caribou herds in the North.⁴⁴ Traditional knowledge, extending back thousands of years as it is passed down through generations, allows Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens to draw on a long cultural memory of the

⁴⁰ Lara Webster, *The Effects of Human Related Harassment on Caribou (Rangifer tarandus)* (Williams Lake: Minister of the Environment, 1997), 13-14. The five-year study focused on ungulates near mining activity in the Rocky Mountains.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴² Brenda Parlee, John Sandlos, and David Natcher, "Undermining subsistence: Barren-ground caribou in a "tragedy of open access," in *Science Advances* (2018): 2. J.L. Polfus, M. Hebblewhite, and K. Heinemeyer, "Identifying indirect habitat loss and avoidance of human infrastructure by northern mountain woodland caribou," in *Biological Conservation* 144 (2011): 2637-2646. This study, specifically looking at northern mountain woodland caribou in B.C., discusses the impact of indirect habitat loss from avoidance of human infrastructure.

⁴³ Dawson Regional Planning Commission, *Dawson Planning Region Resource Assessment Report* (Dawson City: 2013), 4-2.

⁴⁴ Brenda Parlee, John Sandlos, and David Natcher, "Undermining subsistence: Barren-ground caribou in a "tragedy of open access," *Science Advances* (2018): 1-14.

cycles of caribou populations and remark on periods when herds were scarce.⁴⁵ Oral tradition among the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in recalls that caribou populations declined in the Klondike Valley in the first few years of the Gold Rush.⁴⁶ In 1897, missionary Frederick Flewelling, who worked among the Hwëch'in, recorded in his personal diary that caribou were scarce that year and that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were forced to catch rabbits to make up for this loss.⁴⁷

In 1901 NWMP Superintendent Zachary Taylor Wood noted in his annual report that game had been driven far back into the mountains creating great difficulty for the Hwëch'in to obtain a living by hunting.⁴⁸ There are various references to the disappearance of game between 1897 and 1900. Writing in 1899, British entrepreneur Arthur Treadgold reported that "big game was, earlier, very abundant in the Klondike, but it is rapidly growing scarce."⁴⁹ *Harper's Weekly* journalist in the Klondike, Tappan Adney, wrote an article about a hunting trip he took with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in 1899. In his article, he wrote that they went hunting in the summer; it is worth pointing out that the Hwëch'in did not usually hunt in summer, but the increased pressure resulting from the Gold Rush prompted them to hunt in summertime as game animals no longer came into Dawson prompting them to hunt in further away areas which required longer travel times than previously.⁵⁰ Chief Isaac reported that after the influx of miners, Hwëch'in had to travel

⁴⁵ Shirley Roburn and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department, "Weathering Changes: Cultivating Local and Traditional Knowledge of Environmental Change in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Traditional Territory," in *Arctic* 65, 4 (December 2012): 449.

⁴⁶ Twelve Mile Oral History Project, February 2017.

⁴⁷ YA, Anglican Church, Rev. F.F. Flewelling fonds, COR 299 Series 1 Vol 1 Box 51 f.6.

⁴⁸ NWMP, *Report of Superintendent Wood* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, December 1901), 5.

⁴⁹ Treadgold, 18.

⁵⁰ Glenn Icceton, "Profits, Prophets, and Profiteers: Local and Global Economies of Wildlife in the Northern Yukon 1860-1910", (Mater's Thesis: University of Calgary, 2009), 75.

upwards of fifty kilometers further to hunt and trap.⁵¹ Elder Julia Morberg, born in 1944, stated that her father hunted for moose or caribou “way up to Indian River” whereas before Dawson City developed Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in used to hunt moose in the swampy marsh in the location that later became the town as well as at Tr’ochëk, before it became Lousetown.⁵² Map 5.2 below shows the location of Indian River in relation to Dawson. While Indian River is not remarkably distant from Dawson, the extra travel was significant enough for elders to recall the shift in location.

After thawing the permafrost, miners then dug horizontally following the gold vein, thawing ground as they went. The thawed overburden was hauled out manually by the bucketful (later by crane and bucket) and dumped in piles away from the claim to await spring thaw. Occasionally after thawing the permafrost, miners used dynamite to blow out the walls of a drift channel to reach deeper deposits along a stream.⁵³ In spring and summer, once miners started to “see color” (find gold deposits after thawing) they built rocker boxes or a larger sluice box to clean and process the gravel piles removed over the winter and larger amounts of gravel removed after the thaw. Sluice boxes were a wooden trough approximately two meters long, positioned at a slight angle. It was lined with riffles (small strips of wood) across the bottom of the sluice box, and miners shoveled the gravel into the upper end of the sluice and directed water over the gravel the sluice boxes so nuggets would settle in the riffles in the bottom of the box. The gold fell into the riffles at the bottom of the sluice with water and any gravel passing through and out the sluice. Sluicing was a simple, cheap process that one or two men could easily manage, however, it

⁵¹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 127.

⁵² Julia Morberg, Interview with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.

⁵³ Willis, 52.

was only profitable where gold was plentiful, as a considerable amount of gold escaped the sluice box.⁵⁴ On average, in spring, miners shovelled approximately six cubic yards of gravel and dirt into a sluice in a ten-hour day leaving behind small tailings piles around the Klondike Valley. Image 5.4 below shows the scale of annual tailings from one mining operation.

Historians Jim Lotz and Alan Innes-Taylor described water as the “lifeblood of placer mining” and the sluicing process required a large, constant water supply.⁵⁵ In 1896 miners were entitled to use water naturally flowing past their claim, but in the Klondike,



water was frequently in short supply, and the productivity of a claim depended on the right to access and use water.⁵⁶

Image 5.3. Miners and Sluice box, 1900. DCMA 1962.7.22.

⁵⁴ William Morrison, *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories, the Illustrated History of Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1998), 85-86.

⁵⁵ Jim Lotz and Alan Innes-Taylor, "The Yukon Ditch" in *Canadian Geographical Journal* LXXIV, 4 (April 1967): 126.

⁵⁶ David Neufeld, ““Running Water”: Supplying the Klondike Mines 1903 – 1906,” Parks Canada Report (Whitehorse: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2003), 1.

In 1898 new regulations passed for the right to divert water through constructing flumes or ditches from any stream or lake for mining.⁵⁷ The Mining Recorder or Gold Commissioner could grant this right for up to five years.⁵⁸ To meet the water demands for sluicing, miners constructed small dams during spring clean up by blocking off a section of a stream above the claim. They built small ditches by diverting water from creeks into a wooden flume fixed into the bank of the stream above the dam.⁵⁹ These dams were built without fishways and prevented the migration of salmon to annual spawning grounds. Salmon runs generally began in the spring when the river began to break up. Placer mining in general destroyed the natural stream channel as miners removed the overburden from banks and riparian zones adjacent to streams in many rivers and creeks, including the Klondike and its tributaries.⁶⁰ All of this activity resulted in the decline of fish species and the Hwëch'in salmon fishery suffered throughout the Gold Rush period.⁶¹

Contaminated water was another effect of placer mining activity. Liza Piper argued that compared to hard-rock gold mining, placer mining employed relatively few chemicals with the exception of mercury. The mercury would amalgamate the gold and miners would then boil off the mercury which helped speed along the process of separating gold from

⁵⁷ Canada, *Regulation for the Disposal of the Right to Divert and Use the Water 1898* (Government Printing Bureau, 1898) (YA PAM 1901-50).

⁵⁸ Canada, *Regulations Governing Placer Mining in the Yukon Territory, 1901* (Government Printing Bureau, 1901) (YA PAM 1901-50).

⁵⁹ Treadgold, 51. David Neufeld provides an example in 1899 when two miners built a small ditch, around three miles long, along Dominion Creek. Neufeld, "Running Water," 4.

⁶⁰ Dames and Moore, Inc., *A General Review of the Effects of Gold Placer Mining Including Site Specific Reviews on Selected Subarctic Alaskan River Basins* (Seattle: US Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, 1988). This was not unique to the Yukon. During the Fraser River gold rush in British Columbia in the late 1850s, miners disturbed important salmon spawning grounds resulting in failing salmon runs in 1858 and 1859. Lewis J. Swindle, *A Gold Rush Adventure: The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 "Was it a Humbug?," As Reported by the California Newspapers of 1858* (Victoria: Trafford Publishing, 2001).

⁶¹ Morse, 104. Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*, 117-118. YA, Anglican Church, Rev. F.F. Flewelling fonds, COR 299 Series 1 Vol 1 Box 51 f.6.



Image 5.4. Piles of pay dirt from a single mining operation by shafts in an unidentified mine, 1905. Visible in the image are flumes directing water to the mine site. DCMA 1962.9.21.

rock and ore.⁶² Mercury was placed in the riffles of sluice boxes, and water was continuously poured over the gravel. This mercury-contaminated water descended into the tailing piles and from there, into the ground and surrounding waters of the Klondike River and creeks.⁶³ Mercury can accumulate in the tissues of fish and in creatures that consume contaminated fish over long periods of time – most vulnerable in the Klondike region were bears and humans.⁶⁴ In humans, long-term exposure to and ingestion of mercury can cause neurological, kidney, and respiratory damage and can harm developing fetuses.⁶⁵ There has been no evidence of mercury poisoning during the Gold Rush era, however it is likely that fish which remained in the disturbed creeks of the goldfields remained contaminated in the

⁶² Liza Piper, "Chronic Disease," 133.

⁶³ Willis, 57.

⁶⁴ Fish take in mercury either directly from water or from consuming aquatic organisms.

⁶⁵ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 133. Willis, 68.

decades following the Gold Rush. Any area that was placer mined prior to 1925 still showed trace amounts of mercury in the water by the 1980s, and in gold samples recovered in an excavation in 1982 showed high levels of contamination.⁶⁶ In fact, the Bear Creek compound – which was taken over by Parks Canada in 1975 and designated a Historic Complex - closed down in the 1980s due to high levels of mercury contamination in the water.⁶⁷ Piper further argued that arsenic was another industrial contaminant present in the Klondike. Arsenic was natural to the environment of Dawson but was disturbed with placer mining and dredging exposing arsenic-containing rocks to surface water and eventually into the water supply.⁶⁸ Importantly, neither mercury or arsenic alter the taste or scent of water and the adverse health effects of low levels of exposure to these toxins are cumulative rather than acute, taking longer to detect contamination. Because of this, it was not until much later when contaminated water became a concern among locals.

Though the population in Dawson expanded between 1896 and 1899, sanitation services did not arrive with increased numbers of people, and Dawson was left with poor sanitation that created health hazards for both Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and outsiders.⁶⁹ This indirect mining-related activity led to the corruption of the Yukon river water supply and instances of dysentery and diarrhoea impacted peoples living in Moosehide in the early 1900s.⁷⁰ For example, even into the 1930s, dredge operations upstream from a water pumping station on the Klondike River emptied their outhouses into the Klondike resulting

⁶⁶ Willis, 67-68.

⁶⁷ Charles Stankieveh, *Dawson City: Mining the Interpretive Realm of Knowledge Over the Wire Series* (Dawson City: Yukon School of Visual Arts, 2011), 16.

⁶⁸ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 134.

⁶⁹ Though Piper notes in her article that the majority of deaths caused by industrial toxins and contaminants were of miners and prospectors, these unsanitary conditions impacted Indigenous locals as well. *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷⁰ Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*, 117-118.

in sewage in the water.⁷¹ Further, the Yukon River was used as a garbage disposal due to the lack of disposal facilities in Dawson, which ran downstream along Moosehide.⁷² Research on disease during the Gold Rush tends to focus on the Outside population living in Dawson between 1898 and 1904, with a specific focus on the spread of infectious diseases such as typhoid, which only one Indigenous Yukoner died from during this period.⁷³ However, Indigenous peoples have expressed concerns about cumulative health effects of mining activity. In 1993 at an Elders' Council Assembly, Hwëch'in elder Doris Adair indicated that there remained long-standing concern in Dawson to protect water because of contamination resulting from mining activity beginning with the Gold Rush into the 1960s with dredging.⁷⁴ Worrisome to Indigenous Yukoners into the 1990s was that heavily mined creeks, such as Bonanza and Hunker, flowed into the Klondike River, the source of Dawson City's water supply and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in residents worried about contaminated salmon in the Yukon and Klondike rivers.⁷⁵

Gold production declined by 1902 as the easily worked deposits depleted and the remaining gold lay deep under permafrost-bound overburden unreachable by placer methods, or on the benches above the creeks and slopes on valley sides.⁷⁶ By 1906, ideas of the Klondike as a place for miners to engage with nature and escape the modern world began to decline along with the amount of gold placer miners pulled from the land. Placer

⁷¹ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 133.

⁷² Megan J. Hight, "Gold Fever: Death and Disease During the Klondike Gold Rush, 1898-1904", MA Thesis (University of Manitoba, 2008), 129.

⁷³ Hight, 154.

⁷⁴ Yukon First Nations Elders' Council, *Walking Together: Words of the Elders from the Elders' Council Assembly* (Whitehorse, 1993), 51. By 1993, knowledge of contaminants had grown significantly, and people no longer relied solely on their own sensory information to assess the likelihood of contamination in water systems connected to mining activity.

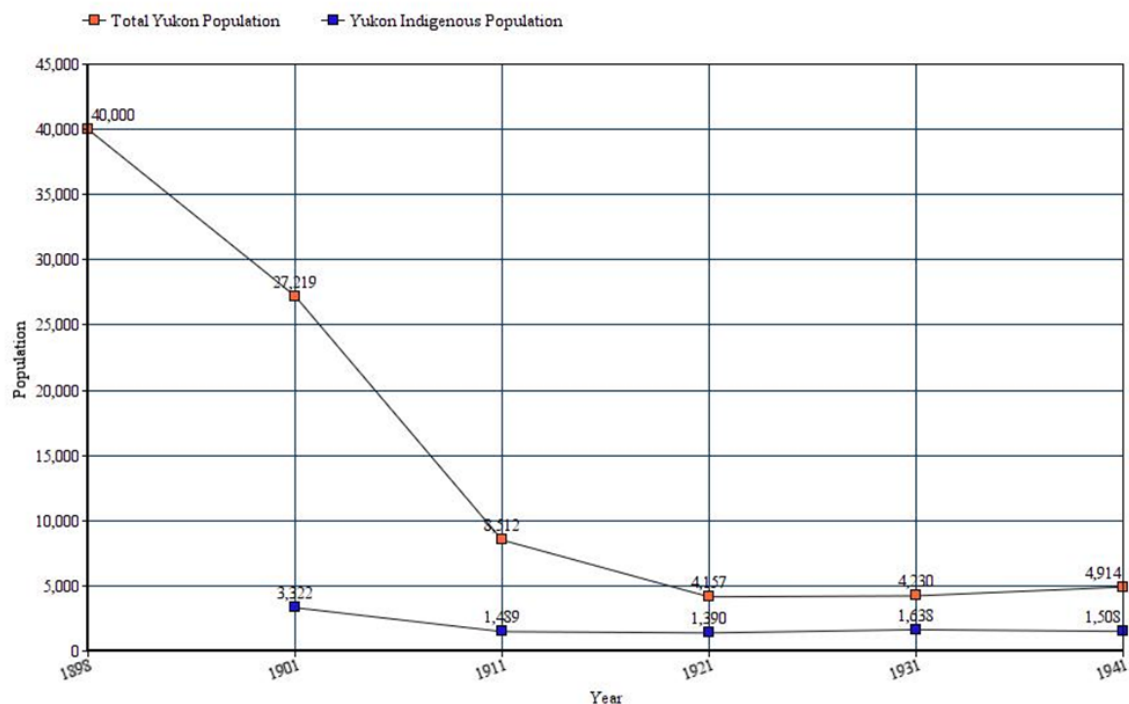
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁷⁶ David Neufeld, "Dredging the Goldfields Corporate Gold Mining in the Yukon Territory," in *JOW* 43,1 (Winter 2004): 31.

miners continued operating their small-scale mines, but by 1906 largely found themselves displaced from the goldfields by the formation of two large mining companies who bought out claims and consolidated the goldfields, expanding production through uses of industrial technology.

The scale of rapid and dramatic environmental change between 1897 and 1900, from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in perspectives, completely transformed the landscape of the Klondike Valley. Though they encountered environmental change prior to the Gold Rush, due to naturally occurring change like animal population, or engagement in European fur trade, and early encounters with small-scale mining in Forty Mile, the Klondike Gold Rush was the first instance where Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples encountered such dramatic and instantaneous change within a three-year period that altered their engagement with the natural world. Further, with the onset of the Gold Rush, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in for the first time, been vastly outnumbered by non-Indigenous peoples. Chart 5.1 compares the total Yukon population with the Yukon Indigenous population from 1898 to 1941.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ There is no population data for the Yukon prior to 1898. The NWMP completed the first Yukon Census in 1898, where they estimated a total population of 40,000 people in the Klondike region, 15, 203 of which were living in Dawson City. Charlene Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers: Women, Men, and Community in the Klondike* (Vancouver; U.B.C. Press, 1998), 203-205. According to the *Dawson Daily News*, citing NWMP data, there were 5,404 people living in Dawson as of May 1900. *Dawson Daily News*, (May 2, 1900). Population numbers for the Yukon from 1901 to 1951 found in Statistics Canada (formerly Dominion Bureau of Statistics), *Census of Canada, 1951*, vol. X, table 1. Indigenous population numbers 1901-1951 from Ken Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 74. 1898 population of Indigenous Yukoners is not recorded.



Graph 5.1. Comparative population figures for total Yukon population and Yukon Indigenous population, 1898-1941

Importantly, many of the environmental changes that had occurred throughout the decade between 1896 and 1906 continued with industrial mining though on a grander scale. The scale and geographic range of environmental change post-1906 led to increased production and expanded development, but by this time, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had experienced a decade of adaption to changing conditions in their homeland and were dispossessed of Tr'ochëk and relocated to Moosehide ten years earlier. Clear cutting and dismantling had destroyed habitat and driven away game populations, causing the Hwëch'in to travel further away for hunting, and to begin the hunting season earlier than pre-1896. These patterns of adaptation had been established by the time industrial interests took over the Klondike – what was new for this time period was the geographical reach industrial mining covered in comparison to placer mining.

Industrial Mining in the Klondike, 1906-1940

The Klondike followed a similar pattern to gold rushes elsewhere in that the industrialization of mining followed the Gold Rush years.⁷⁸ Like in California and Colorado, the easily worked deposits were exhausted and large corporations replaced individual and small-scale mining in the region as big money interests came to control mining in the Klondike. Environmental historian Andrew Isenberg argued that the first two years of the California Gold Rush had minimal environmental impacts, but technology progressed as gold was more difficult to reach and alongside this technological growth came increased power to transform the environment.⁷⁹ Placer mining in the Klondike had more than a minimal effect on the landscape and on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's subsistence practises – in fact, its environmental impacts on the Hwëch'in were significant. However, the loss of, and change to, habitat by clear cutting, fire, dams, and disassembly as a result of placer mining that led to a decline in forest stocks, fish, and wildlife populations had less impact on the local environment than did industrial mining techniques and its related infrastructure. Industrial mining technologies accelerated the range and scale of environmental change connected to placer mining, but it also initiated other forms of environmental transformation not present in placer mining – specifically the growth of infrastructure related to mining. Further, placer mining infringed upon Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory but was relatively contained to the goldfields and Dawson; with infrastructural growth in dredging the encroachment on Hwëch'in territory expanded beyond the

⁷⁸ George Vrtis, "A World of Mines and Mills: Precious-Metals Mining, Industrialization, and the Nature of the Colorado Front Range" in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 75.

⁷⁹ Andrew Isenberg, "Afterword: Mining, Memory, and History" in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 399.

goldfields into the Tombstone mountain range. These industrial mining techniques have had long-term environmental impacts that are still visible in the region today, evidence by the worm-like ridges of tailings that cover the Klondike Valley evoking a moonscape (see Image 5.5).⁸⁰



Image 5.5. Tailing Piles in Klondike River, c1946. DCMA 1979.6.2.

With the change in mining practises, there were fewer people in the region, but there was more landscape change due to the industrial and mechanized nature of mining after 1906. However, historians of the Gold Rush tend to overlook the scale of

⁸⁰ Historians have demonstrated that the environmental effects of mining persist long after mining has ceased. Antonio Avalos-Lozana and Miguel Anguilar-Robledo, "Reconstructing the Environmental History of Colonial Mining: The Real del Catorce Mining District, Northeastern New Spain/Mexico, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 47-72. John Sandlos and Arn Keeling, "The Giant Mine's Long Shadow: Arsenic Pollution and Native People in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories," *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 280-312.

environmental change resulting from dredging activity as they focus on the years between 1896 and 1900. Kathryn Morse's *The Nature of Gold* is particularly strong in her environmental analysis of gold mining in the Klondike, but her study is limited to the Gold Rush years. Further, her study of environmental impacts of mining is primarily concerned with the relationship that American miners formed with the industrial economy of the Klondike, overlooking the impacts the industry had on local Indigenous peoples.⁸¹ Perhaps historians focus on the Gold Rush period exclusively due to the grand narrative of the Klondike as a poor man's gold rush. Historical gold rush sources are much easier to locate than those after 1900 – between 1896 and 1900 stampedeers wrote letters home, kept diaries of their adventures in the North, many of which were published later, and newspapers around the world sent correspondents to report on the Klondike. As the population declined after the Rush (by 1901 there were 27,000 people and by 1911 8,500), there were far less people writing letters home from the Yukon and newspaper correspondents followed the stampedeers to Nome. However, gold mining in the Yukon has a much longer history than the four years of the Klondike Gold Rush, continuing as a primary industry in the Yukon still today. Extending the examination of gold mining to 1940 allows for historians to better grasp both the continuities and changes in the scale of environmental impacts of mining over time, discussed in detail below.

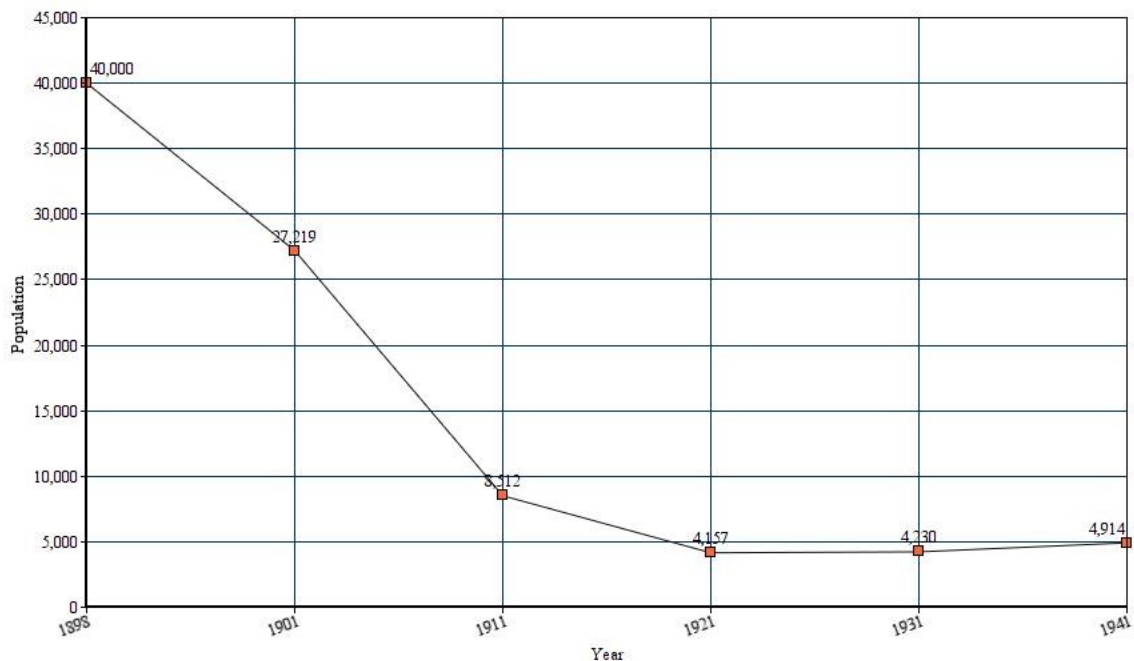
While most people did leave the region by 1910, mining production actually increased as companies worked to consolidate mining claims and mechanize their mining techniques (see Charts 5.2 and 5.3).⁸² Environmental degradation from hydraulic mining

⁸¹ Morse, *Nature of Gold*.

⁸² In 1929 placer gold, almost all of it from the Klondike, accounted for only 30% of Yukon mineral production with 70% from industrial operations such as hydraulicking and dredging. Ken Coates and William Morrison, *Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press,

and dredging outweighed the scale of environmental transformation resulting from placer mining.⁸³ The most heavily dredged areas in the Klondike Valley were along the Klondike River, Bonanza, Hunker, and Eldorado Creeks – the same creeks that were most popular for placer mining - with both Bonanza and Hunker creeks completely destroyed from dredging. Here the large-scale results of advanced mining techniques have had long-term environmental impacts that are visible in the Klondike today (see Images 5.6 to 5.9 below).

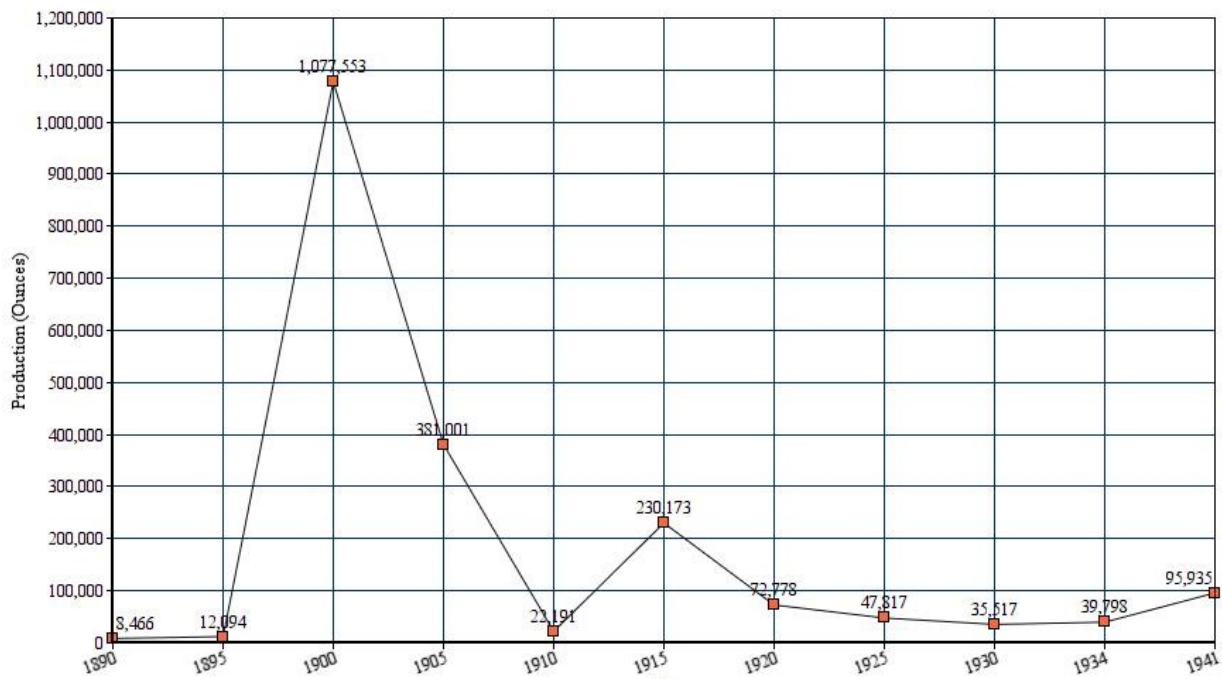
Graph 5.2. Yukon Population Fluctuations, 1898-1941.



1988), 185. Production statistics for 1886 to 1934 come from A.H.A Robinson, *Gold in Canada, 1935* (Ottawa: Mines Branch, 1935), 34. Statistics for 1941 come from Canada, *Yukon Mineral Industry, 1941 to 1959* (Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1983), 9.

⁸³ Morse, 110.

Graph 5.3. Yukon Gold Production, 1890-1935



*Data from A.H.A. Robinson, *Gold in Canada*, 1935 (Ottawa: Mines Branch, 1935), 34.



Image 5.6. Satellite image of mining tailings along the Klondike River. Google Earth, 2018.



Image 5.7. Dredge Tailings, Bonanza Creek, May 2015. Photo by author.

After 1900 the old method of placer mining was no longer profitable as the gold remaining in the region was more difficult to find. However, rather than retreating after this time, mining activity expanded not only in scale, but also in the ways that industrial mining contributed a complexity of environmental disruptions to the Klondike region. Along with industrial mining operations came greater demands on local resources than placer mining did, including water, hydroelectricity, and transportation networks. The government granted hydraulic mining concessions to individuals and companies beginning in 1898.⁸⁴ These concessions were usually eight kilometers in length and were issued along

⁸⁴ A concession is a group of mining claims.

the creeks. Between 1899 and 1902 an excess of 1000 kilometers of waterways was granted in concessions in total.⁸⁵



Image 5.8. Ariel satellite image of contemporary mining operations along Quartz Creek in the Klondike Goldfield. Mapbox, 2018.

Hydraulic mining involved mining and stripping gravel with high-pressure hoses which dissolved creek beds and made large scale sluicing possible. By this point, Dawson was stripped of timber and fires no longer worked to reach gold.⁸⁶ Where placer mining's sluicing required water, the scale of water required for hydraulicking increased and included the need to divert water courses and build dams to raise water levels.⁸⁷ Hydraulic concessions used water pressure to destroy vegetation along creek beds, destroying habitat for small land animals and many aquatic species. Hydraulic plants used pumping engines with the capacity of 3,000 gallons per minute drastically increasing water consumption in the Klondike.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Willis, 55.

⁸⁶ Morrison, *True North*, 106.

⁸⁷ Neufeld, "Running Water," 33.

⁸⁸ Willis, 56.

Hydraulic mining was not available to all miners, as it required some capital and equipment, but it was an option for many more miners than dredging was. Dredging operated in an industrial, capital-intensive manner. With more emphasis on capital and less on labour, the



Image 5.9. Hydraulicking, 1934. DCMA 1981.58.1.121.

corporate structure of dredging companies came to replace small-scale placer operations on creeks.⁸⁹ In the early 20th century, big money interests from the United States invested in the Klondike goldfields, but corporate capital needed a guarantee of profit before substantially committing to the region and in order to achieve profitability dredging operations required large tracts of land and tenure of mining property.⁹⁰ There were dredging regulations as early as 1898 where a single person could purchase a lease for five

⁸⁹ Ken Coates and William Morrison, *The Sinking of the Princess Sophia: Taking the North Down with Her*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 1.

⁹⁰ Neufeld, "Dredging the Goldfields," 33.

miles of a river up to a maximum of six leases and thirty miles. These leases were permitted for twenty years.⁹¹ Like with placer mining, there was a requirement to work the land to maintain one's lease. The lessee was required to have at least one dredge operating on the five miles of river leased to them within two seasons from the date of the lease. If a lessee or company had more than one lease, they were required to have one operating dredge for each fifteen miles.⁹² In 1911 dredge leases doubled to ten miles of river but reduced to fifteen-year terms with the requirement that they must be operating within three years of receiving the lease and dredging no less than 20,000 cubic yards of gravel per year.⁹³

With favourable regulations – the 1906 regulations eased up on regulations for diverting water and constructing ditches – mining companies began consolidating placer mining claims and by 1906 the Klondike Valley was controlled by two large dredging companies – the Canadian Klondike Mining Company (CKMC) and the Yukon Gold Company (YGC).⁹⁴ Joe Boyle, a Canadian adventurer and entrepreneur, formed the Canadian Klondike Mining Company in 1905. Boyle received a seven-mile-long mining concession, stretching along the Klondike River Valley, between Bonanza and Hunker Creeks, in 1900. In 1904-1905 he appealed to an investor group in Detroit who financially supported the formation of the CKMC and he imported his first dredge in 1905.⁹⁵ In 1908 he imported three more dredges from Ohio and had four dredges operating on his

⁹¹ The lease cost \$100 per year for each mile of river leased. Also pay a 10% royalty to the Crown per centum in excess of \$15,000. Canada, *Regulations Governing the issues of leases to dredge for minerals in the beds of rivers in the Yukon Territory* (Government Printing Bureau, 1898) (YA PAM 1899-47).

⁹² Ibid. Failing to meet the minimum requirements of operation resulted in the Minister of the Interior voiding the lease.

⁹³ Canada, *Dredging Regulations Yukon Territory 1911* (YA PAM 1911-17). One person or company could hold up to 5 leases.

⁹⁴ Canada, *An Act Governing Placer Mining in the Yukon Territory 1906* (YA PAM 1906-020).

⁹⁵ Neufeld, "Dredging the Goldfields," 35.

concessions. Boyle set up his headquarters in Bear Creek which quickly grew to become a large mining complex where his workers also lived. Dredges were expensive to maintain and they frequently sank, thus requiring towing machinery and repair shops to fix any problems that arose.⁹⁶ By 1906 Bear Creek held a large steam-electric plant to power electrically run dredges, machine shops, three warehouses, a stable, and a gold refining building where the company's gold was melted into gold bars.

In 1906 the New York Guggenheims came to the Klondike with their company, the Yukon Gold Company (YGC) and hired Arthur Treadgold, a British entrepreneur who was in the Klondike as a special correspondent for *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Mining Journal*, to manage the YGC and to carry out the business of consolidating mining concessions. Under Treadgold's management, the YGC bought out all the claims on Bonanza, Hunker, and Eldorado creeks.⁹⁷ Treadgold also set up headquarters at a mine camp known as Guggieville. Like Bear Creek, this camp also had supply shops to maintain dredges and other heavy equipment and a gold refining shop.⁹⁸ The YGC employed both dredging and hydraulic operations, though in a 1909 company report Treadgold stated that dredging was their primary occupation and they used hydraulic mining less often.⁹⁹ Even

⁹⁶ Clark Spence, "The Golden Age of Dredging: The Development of an Industry and its Environment," in *The Western Historical Quarterly* 2,4 (Oct. 1980): 407.

⁹⁷ Treadgold, *An English Expert*, 82. When the Guggenheim's pulled out of the Klondike in 1923, Treadgold helped developed the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation (YCGC), which was a consolidation of all mining companies in the Klondike gold fields, including another major company, the Canadian Klondike Mining Co. located eight miles up the Klondike river at the Bear Creek compound. The YGC/YCGC operated until 1966 and became the largest dredging company in Canada. By the late 1930s, the YGC had a fleet of 10 dredges in the goldfields and 700 employees at peak operation. The YCGC kept 200 employees year-round, and 700 men during the summer season.

⁹⁸ Guggieville itself was dredged after 1923 when the YCGC relocated its headquarters to Bear Creek. The YCGC remained in Bear Creek until the company closed in 1966. After it was abandoned in 1966, the Bear Creek complex was named a Klondike National Historic Site.

⁹⁹ Arthur Treadgold, "Yukon Gold Company Report," in *Mining and Scientific Press* (San Francisco: February 10, 1909).

so, Treadgold and the YGC erected a dam on Upper Bonanza Creek to hold the large water supply required in their hydraulic operations washing the gold from the hills above Bonanza.¹⁰⁰

Under these two companies, the industry boomed from 1908 to 1914. In 1913 alone, the YGC and CKMC together mined about nine tons of gold. According to historian William Hunt, of the \$250 million in gold produced in the Klondike, seventy-five percent was mined after 1900.¹⁰¹ Dredges required fewer men to operate than required for hand mining pushing individual miners out of the goldfields, many of whom sold their claims after 1900, because they could not keep up with wealthy men or companies.¹⁰² Between 1910-1923 (when the two companies, along with much smaller Dominion Mining and Big Creek Mining, amalgamated into the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation), the CKMC, the smaller of the two operations, hired about 150 men annually where the YGC hired a seasonal labor force of 700 men on average annually.¹⁰³ Until 1914, labourers for both companies came from the local population of former placer miners displaced by the large companies. However, once the First World War broke out, many men living in Dawson left for the front resulting in both the YGC and the CKMC importing their employees from outside.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Yukon Ditch (DCMA).

¹⁰¹ Sally Robinson, "The Home Front: The Yukon's Economy During the First World War," in *The Northern Review* 44 (2017): 32. William Hunt, *Golden Places: The History of Alaska-Yukon Mining with Particular Reference to Alaska's National Parks* (Anchorage: NPS, 1990), 85.

¹⁰² Hugh Samuel Bostock, *The Mining Industry of Yukon, 1933, and Notes on the Geology of Carmacks Map-Area* (Canada: Geological Survey Summary Report, 1934). Where a handful of women did own placer claims in the Klondike, sometimes working it themselves but often hiring them out, there is no archival evidence that there were any women who owned mining companies or who worked on dredges.

¹⁰³ Robinson, "The Home Front." 30. The Yukon Consolidated Gold Corp. (YCGC) was the largest mining company in the Yukon until 1966, owning 85% of the Klondike gold claims. O.S. Finnie, *The Yukon Territory 1926* (Ottawa, 1926), 34.

¹⁰⁴ Robinson, "The Home Front," 33.



Image 5.10. Power Plant at Bear Creek, October 29, 1915. DCMA 1990.43.194.

Industrial mining increased in scale, in production value, and in technological use in comparison to earlier placer mining. The finer gold buried deep in the permafrost was inaccessible with placer methods and dredging was a more efficient manner to reach low grade placer deposits. Between 1900 and 1966, dredges rerouted the Klondike River along the north side of the Klondike River Valley while mining most of the valley.¹⁰⁵ Dredges were factory-looking boats that floated in ponds of their own creation.¹⁰⁶ The dredge was anchored by a spade wedged into the gravel. It had a bucket line that dug up scoops of gravel as it moved, creating longer and wider ponds (see Images 5.10 and 5.11). The buckets dumped into a long sluice-box type line with riffles. Here, the gravel would move

¹⁰⁵ Yukon Territorial Government, "Tombstone Territorial Park Interpreters Manual" (Dawson City: Midnight Arts, n.d.), 3.

¹⁰⁶ Robinson, "The Home Front," 37.

through the sluice line and separate out dirt and gravel from gold. Any remaining gravel and rock was dumped out the back end of the dredge creating huge tailings piles around the pond.



Image 5.11. Yukon Gold Company Shops at Guggieville near the mouth of Bonanza Creek, c1914. DCMA 1990.78.10.

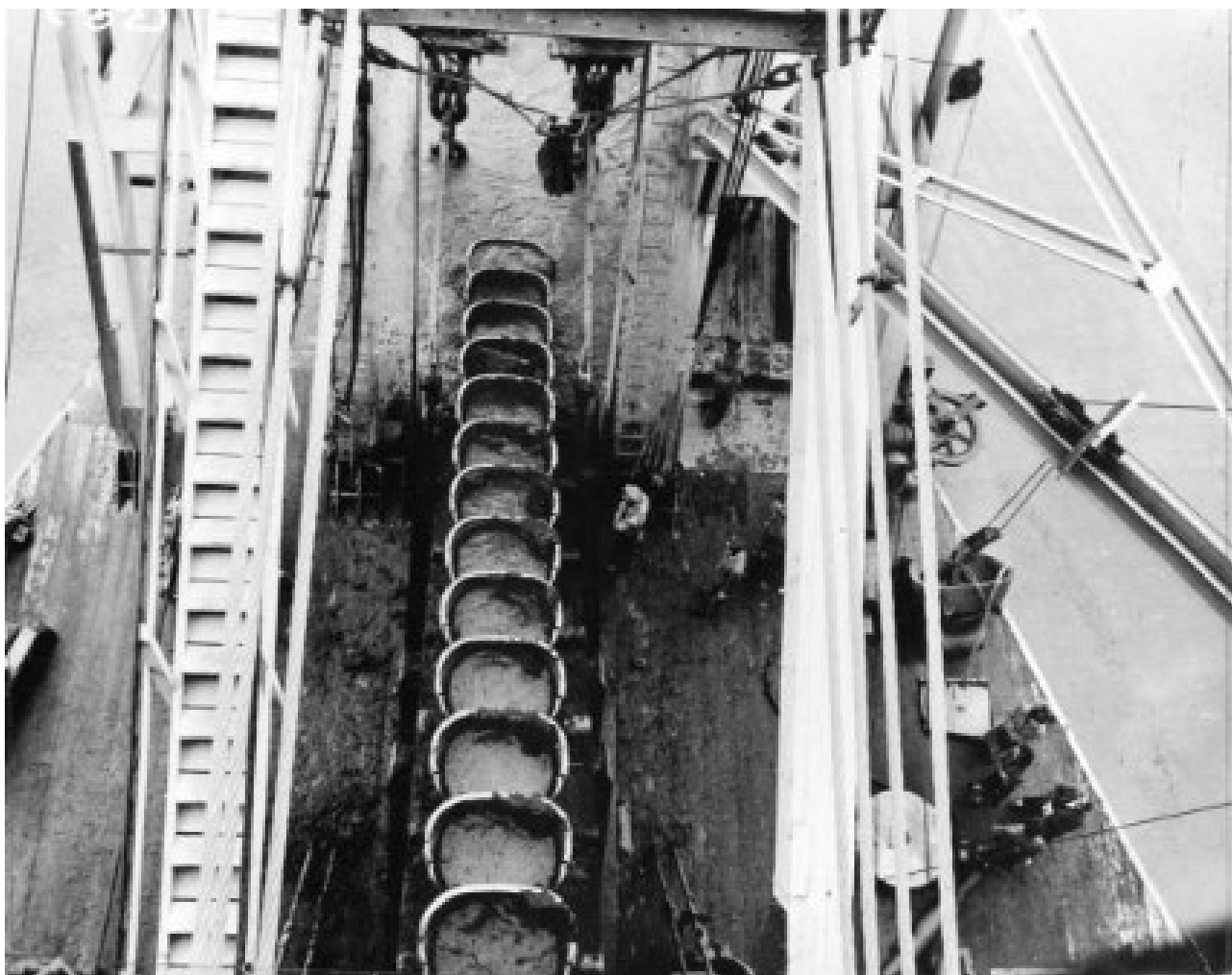


Image 5.12. Dredge Bucket Line. DCMA 1962.7.33.

Dredging was undoubtedly the most damaging method of mining; it had the biggest impact on both the environment and on mining efficiency levels in the Klondike region. Not only did dredging create noise pollution which worked to contribute to animal avoidance of these areas but dredging after 1906 marked the beginning of long-term flora and fauna destruction, as well as the largest environmental damage to the Klondike environment. In the 1930s Dawson City hired a medical officer, Allan Duncan, who expressed concern about the water supply in Dawson, primarily the lack of proper sanitation and sewage dumped into the Klondike river, but it seems reasonable to suggest

there was likely industrial run-off in the Klondike and Yukon rivers from dredge operations and mining camps as well.¹⁰⁷

Further, dredging created permanent change to the landscape of the Klondike Valley, leaving behind monstrous tailing piles and destroying creeks in its path. Rerouting existing waterways led to the destruction of creeks which had impacts on salmon populations, just as the creation of dams in placer mining did. Tailings piles left from dredging are essentially a sterile environment with little to no flora re-growing from the piles (though grass and shrubs do grow on the areas surrounding tailings piles, as demonstrated in image 5.7) leaving behind a barren landscape. Tailings piles are not only a visual reminder to the Klondike's mining past, but during dredging operations there was potential for contaminants contained within waste rock to be realised into the surrounding environment and spread as dredges moved between different bodies of water.¹⁰⁸ The disruption of arsenic-containing rocks discussed earlier in placer mining techniques expanded as dredges dug deeper into the ground and moved many more rocks in a shorter amount of time. Hwëch'in elder Doris Adair believed that at Bear Creek the CKMC used cyanide in their dredges, which poisoned the water.¹⁰⁹

There remains the potential for contamination in these tailings piles. As discussed above, mercury was used in placer mining and the use of mercury only increased with industrial mining. In 2005, a group of geologists examined tailings remaining from the California Gold Rush and discovered that it is possible mercury accumulation in these

¹⁰⁷ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 133.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Yukon First Nations Elders' Council, 127.

tailings and could potentially seep into groundwater.¹¹⁰ The placer and hydraulic mining methods miners used in the California rush were similar to those in the Yukon, with the exception of Klondike miners facing the further obstacle of permafrost. As mining progressed into deeper gravel deposits, miners constructed shafts and tunnels underground to facilitate water draining and to remove debris from mines and to enhance gold recovery from hydraulic mining and dredging, hundreds of pounds of liquid mercury were added to sluices and dredge buckets. Mercury used in the mining process was left behind along with tailings piles resulting in highly contaminated sediments at mine sites.¹¹¹ In examining thirty-year old abandoned gold mine tailings in Jack of Clubs Lake, B.C., a group of geologists and environmental researchers found that arsenic concentrations remain in the tailings materials and in lake sediments.¹¹² As discussed above, arsenic was a naturally occurring element in metal ore, and toxic compounds introduced during the mining process disturbed arsenic-containing rocks and exposed them to surface water.¹¹³ Like mercury, arsenic was abandoned in gold mine tailings and waste rock in many areas of British Columbia.¹¹⁴ This study indicated that arsenic was mobilized in areas of low pH and had impacted the northeast section of Jack of Clubs Lake through tailings deposited on the shore.¹¹⁵ While there have been no studies published on long-term impacts of arsenic in the

¹¹⁰ Charles N. Alpers, Michael P. Hunerlach, Jason T. May, and Roger L. Hothem, "Mercury Contamination from Historical Gold Mining in California," in *Publications of the US Geological Survey* 61 (2005): 2.

¹¹¹ The authors estimate that the loss of mercury during gold processing was estimated to be ten to thirty percent per season. *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹² J.M. Azcue, A. Mudroch, F. Rosa and G.E.M. Hall, "Effects of abandoned gold mine tailings on the arsenic concentrations in water and sediments of Jack of Clubs Lake, B.C.," in *Environmental Technology* 15,7 (1994): 669.

¹¹³ Piper, "Chronic Disease," 134.

¹¹⁴ In Jack of Clubs Lake and the Cariboo region more generally. Mobility and persistence of toxic effects of arsenic have been reported in gold mining areas around the world, including Canada, Montana in the United States, Ghana, Brazil, and South Africa. Azcue et al., 669.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 676.

Klondike region, it is not unreasonable to suspect that similar hazards may lay in the tailings piles there as well.

The environmental impacts of dredging included all those of placer mining plus much more as industrial techniques required a greater consumption of local resources. The miners of the YGC stripped the surrounding hills around their dredges of all trees, and they often stripped a mile ahead of the dredge with bulldozers each year to thaw the ground for



Image 5.13. Bonanza Basin Showing the Klondike River from the Workings of Dredge No. 3 To the Yukon River, June 14, 1914. DCMA 1962.7.34.

the next season.¹¹⁶ The regular thawing method had become too costly for dredges, so the YGC diverted a large part of the Klondike River and directed it over the ground via a canal in 1906. The company expected this to thaw the ground deep enough for the dredge to operate within two to three years.¹¹⁷ By 1908, the YGC and the CKMC had steam-generating plants with wood-burning boilers that produced steam to both thaw the permafrost ahead of the dredges and to power the dredges.¹¹⁸ Steam-thawing required a massive amount of cordwood and further led to forest depletion and habitat loss for animals.

Once gold was removed from creeks by dredges, the hillsides above the creeks were hydraulically mined using high pressure jets sprayed onto river banks and hills. While cutting down forests which covered hillsides and burning away moss during mining impacted drainage of the Klondike river, more intensive mining techniques also led to an increased water consumption and by 1903 Assistant Commissioner Wood reported that there was a scarcity of water in goldfields the previous year due to this mining activity, thus, miners had to transport water from further distances.¹¹⁹

The steam plants erected in both Bear Creek and Guggieville were insufficient to meet the power demands for dredges and instead the YGC looked to hydro-electric power instead. As discussed above, between 1896 and 1906 placer miners constructed small

¹¹⁶ T.I. Allen, C.J.R Hart and E.E. Marsh, "Placer Gold and Associated Heavy Minerals of the Clear Creek Drainage, Central Yukon: Past to Present," in *Yukon Exploration and Geology* (Whitehorse: Geological Services Division and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1998): 200.

¹¹⁷ Bostock, 645.

¹¹⁸ E.H. Beistline, "Placer Mining in Frozen Ground," in *Proceedings: Permafrost International Conference* (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 1963): 464-465.

¹¹⁹ NWMP, *Report of the Commissioner A. Bowen Wood* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1903). Bostock, *Yukon Territory, selected field reports of the Geological Survey of Canada 1898 to 1933*, Department of Mines and Technical Surveys (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957), 67.

ditches between five to eleven kilometres long to direct water to their claims. But by 1906,



Image 5.14. Completed Yukon Ditch System, 1909. DCMA 1993.67.1.85

the same year the YGC formed, there was not enough water reservoirs in the immediate goldfields vicinity to supply the large fleet of dredges. The YGC began construction of a ditch, that carried water 113 kilometers from Twelve Mile river, which they stated provided an inexhaustible

supply of water and power, over the Ogilvie Mountains, to service its dredging operations on Bonanza and Klondike creeks.¹²⁰ The Yukon Ditch was nearly one tenth the size of the

¹²⁰ NWMP, *Report of the Commissioner A. Bowen Wood* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, 1909), 207. The Yukon Territorial government considered constructing a ditch to supply hydraulic and sluicing

Panama Canal and required diverting a river and carrying that water over mountain tops, across ravines and valleys to deliver it to the goldfields.¹²¹ There were not enough people in the Yukon to complete the ditch in a timely manner so the YGC recruited workers from elsewhere. Between 1600 to 1700 men aged twenty-five to thirty worked on the ditch, many of whom had worked on the Panama Canal.¹²²



Image 5.15. Construction of the Yukon Ditch, 1908. DCMA 1993.67.1.64.

The ditch was made of thirty kilometers of flumes, twenty kilometers of steel, and sixty kilometers of ditch with materials used from consuming the local environment as well

workings in the goldfields after protests from miners. The head of the ditch would have been far up the main branch of the Klondike River and would have consisted of over 350 kilometers of canal, twenty-nine kilometers of metal, and five kilometers of tunnel. However, the estimated cost to build this ditch was six million with an annual operating cost of \$600,000. The high cost caused the government to abandoned plans for a government funded water delivery system. Neufeld, “Running Water,” 6.

¹²¹ Yukon Ditch (DCMA).

¹²² Rickard, 117.

as importing steel from Germany, steam trams from Pittsburgh, and redwood trees from California (when local timber reserves became too low). Flumes and steel pipelines bridged permafrost bound areas where digging was too difficult.¹²³ The process of building the ditch included stripping forest growth and removing moss from the ground at a width of twenty-two yards along the ditch. Throughout the construction of the ditch, between 1906 and 1909, workers cut seven million feet of forest along the Blackstone Uplands. The ditch was infrastructure constructed for the dredges, but the ditch itself also necessitated spin-off infrastructure. The YGC built a sawmill on the bank of the Twelve Mile River which was operated by steam power. The sawmill used the cut lumber to construct flumes on the ditch where the permafrost was too hard for pipelines.¹²⁴

The YGC also built a hydroelectric plant on the Twelve Mile River, about 40 kilometers northeast of Dawson near where the main water supply would cross the Klondike Valley in 1908. This hydro plant provided power for the YGC's seven operating dredges.¹²⁵ These developments required further consumption of water, with the power plant receiving sixty cubic feet of water per second and pumping 55,000 gallons of water per minute to produce electricity.¹²⁶ The ditch, constructed far from its site of use, caused the creation of new road construction across swamps and valleys.

The *Dawson Daily News* printed articles celebrating the construction of the ditch. On July 21st of 1909 the *News* printed a special edition reporting on the completion of the Yukon Ditch stating that the ditch would replace the work of tens of thousands of miners and would hopefully "restore the region to its pristine glory" by allowing dredges to

¹²³ Beistline, 464.

¹²⁴ Rickard, 119.

¹²⁵ Neufeld, "Dredging the Goldfields," 35.

¹²⁶ Rickard, 119.



Image 5.16. Klondike Syphon of the Yukon Ditch at the mouth of Bear Creek, 1908. DCMA 1993.67.108.

profit for previously unproductive areas of the Klondike Valley.¹²⁷ In another article titled “The Klondike’s Big Ditch” the author, Joseph Anderson Acklen, an American landscape gardener who came to the Klondike with the rush, wrote, “[The Yukon Ditch] is an instance of man’s twentieth century mastery of the indomitable elements; and one more triumph for humanity; another victory over seemingly unconquerable Nature.” Acklen further declared the ditch “has been brought to do the work of overturning the hills, ripping out the interiors, stripping bare of its gold the accumulated gravels of untold ages.”¹²⁸ What

¹²⁷ Joseph Anderson Acklen, “Klondike’s Big Ditch,” *Dawson Daily News*, (July 21 1909).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

Acklen described was the disassembly of mining and while the construction of the ditch certainly turned a profit for the YGC, its construction implanted itself in an important area of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory.

The ditch stretched across the Blackstone Uplands, an important fishing, hunting, and trapping area for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as discussed in Chapter Two, as well as the Tukudh Gwich'in and the Teetł'it Gwich'in, which archaeological evidence has shown was in continuous use for at least 10,000 years. The Blackstone Uplands was part of the wintering area of two different caribou herds.¹²⁹ Presumably, the activity, noise, and presence of humans in the region led to caribou avoiding the area. Aside from hunting caribou in the Uplands, the Hwëch'in also traveled there in late summer to pick berries. It further acted as meeting place, with the Teetł'it Gwich'in arriving from Fort McPherson, NWT to hunt and fish for salmon and trade with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Tukudh Gwich'in, who regularly used the Black City settlement in the Uplands, at the fork of the Blackstone and East Blackstone Rivers for a fish camp. By 1927, the Tukudh Gwich'in dispersed from the Black City settlement and relocated to areas such as Moosehide, Old Crow, and Fort McPherson. The reason for dispersal are not entirely clear, though oral tradition indicates that there had been changes in availability of game and fish beginning between 1905-1910.¹³⁰ It is not unreasonable to connect the large-scale landscape reorganization and water rerouting required to construct the ditch with some of these shifts in food availability. The Yukon Ditch operated until 1933 when the cost of running it became too high for the YCGC.¹³¹ The infrastructure was essentially abandoned and

¹²⁹ THA Black City, 2-3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹³¹ Yukon Ditch (DCMA).

sections of the now rusty pipeline are visible on the landscape today near the Bear Creek compound.

Dredges need to be productive in order to be profitable so mining companies ensured that their dredges handled as much gravel and gathered as much gold as possible. Dredging extended the length of the mining season from that of placer mining. Operating season for dredging began in either late April or early May and ran until November, with an approximate season of 200 days. Dredges were capable of removing gravel and vegetation from a depth from eighteen meters. They had a recovery rate of at least 90% and ran twenty-four hours a day, with a maximum output of fifteen cubic yards in a 10-hour shift. Some of the larger dredges in the Klondike goldfields increased production six-hundred-fold, in comparison to placer mining.¹³² In a 1900 annual report for McDonald's Bonanza Klondike Ltd., the manager wrote that in 1900, an eighty-two day operating period, 15,989 tons of gravel was removed from Bonanza, Skookum, and Winter's Dump concessions.¹³³ These monster machines removed plant cover, altered water ways and created new ones, and spit out tailings piles which obstructed water flow and destroyed fish habitat, and uncovered more gold in one season alone at a rate that placer mining never achieved.¹³⁴

It is difficult to understand the capacity of these dredges without seeing them first-hand. Dawson City maintained one dredge, Dredge No. 4, pictured below, as a Klondike National Historic Site. Dredge No. 4 is located on Claim No. 17, below Discovery claim on

¹³² Bird, "Dredging in the Dawson Area," in *Western Miner & Oil Review* (Feb 1954): 40. (YA PAM 1954-4)

¹³³ YA, Henderson Family Fonds, 82/204 MSS 28 f.12, 3.

¹³⁴ Willis, 50-51.

Bonanza Creek, and was the biggest wooden hull, bucket-line dredge in North America. It was built during the summer and winter of 1912, for the Canadian Klondike Mining Company on Claim 112. It began operation in May 1913 and operated until 1959. During its time in operation, it dug upstream along the Klondike Valley into the Boyle Concession and on to Hunker Creek (after a three-year hiatus between 1924-1927). While working Hunker Creek, the dredge produced as much as 800 ounces of gold per day. It operated on Hunker until 1940, when it was rebuilt on Bonanza Creek by the YCGC and worked from the Bonanza Valley up to Claim 17 (where it now rests) until 1959.¹³⁵ The dredge was electrically powered from a hydro plant on the Klondike River, requiring 920 continuous horsepower, between 1911 and 1966.¹³⁶ Dredge No. 4 could dig 57 feet below water level by using hydraulic monitors and washing down gravel banks. Dredge ponds could be 300 feet by up to 500 feet wide. Dredge No. 4, for example, had twenty-five sixteen- cubic-foot capacity buckets, with a dumping capacity of twenty-two buckets per minute. This made it possible for the dredge to dig and process 18,000 cubic yards per single day. The average was between 8,000 and 10,000 cubic yards per day.¹³⁷ In 1939 alone, while operating on Hunker Creek, Dredge No. 4 processed 2,000,000 cubic yards of gravel, recovering 35,000 ounces of gold (approx. 1 million dollars in 1939).¹³⁸ Along with Dredge No. 4, thirty-five other dredges operated in the Klondike between 1906 and 1966.

¹³⁵ The YGC was renamed YCGC in 1931.

¹³⁶ Parks Canada, "Gold Dredges" (Dawson: Parks Canada, 1980), 1. The first hydro-plant in the Yukon was the Twelvemile River plant developed to power dredges for the Yukon Gold Company.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.



Image 5.17. Dredge No. 4 on Bonanza Creek, 1910. DCMA 1962.7.32.

Along with the construction of the Yukon Ditch to transport large quantities of water, dredging operations required transportation for both workers and materials to and from the dredges. In 1898, Dawson businessmen Thomas O'Brien, John Mackenzie, and H. Stratton capitalized on this need and decided to build a railway. They began the construction in 1900, but the Klondike Mines Railway (KMR) was not operational until 1906. The development of the Klondike Mines Railway required large amounts of timber to build the track. As early as 1898 when the idea for a railway was conceived, William Ogilvie refused to grant O'Brien and a contractor, Hill Henning, special privileges to cut timber to build a tramway. Instead, Ogilvie advised the men to gain consent from the owners of claims over which the tramway would pass; only then could they cut timber according to government policies. Ogilvie granted the men a permit to cut timber from a

plot three miles north of the Klondike River valley.¹³⁹ By 1903, miners had cut an enormous amount of wood for heating purposes alone, leaving hillsides throughout the immediate area of the KMR stripped of trees, causing miners to haul wood up the creeks to their camps. O'Brien, Mackenzie, and Stratton used this cumbersome task to further promote the railway.¹⁴⁰ However, once the railway opened it appears it did not end up transporting wood for individual miners, but instead serviced dredges along Bonanza Creek and delivered passengers to and from work in the goldfields.

The KMR was a small, three-foot narrow-gauge train which ran for fifty-one kilometres between Dawson City and Sulphur Springs near the King Solomon Dome. Until 1911 it operated as a passenger train, for a \$2 fee, that ran between two to six times a week.¹⁴¹ The railway's Grand Central Station was on Front Street in Dawson and it ran along Front, across the bridge to Klondike City, and up into King Solomon Dome along the goldfields, dropping off passengers as it went. More frequently, it carried freight, like coal and other fuel, to the dredges on Bonanza and Eldorado twice a week.¹⁴² Though it carried passengers to and from the goldfields, the KMR's biggest customers were the dredge companies along Bonanza Creek, particularly the dredges under Boyle's CKMC.¹⁴³ In 1911 it ceased passenger operation and exclusively serviced the dredges with freight cars working twenty-four hours a day. Companies relied on the railway for a constant supply of cordwood required to operate their steam-thawing plants. Interestingly, the railway did not

¹³⁹ Eric L. Johnson, *The Bonanza Narrow Gauge Railway: The Story of the Klondike Mines Railway* (Vancouver: Rusty Spike Publishing, 1997), 6.

¹⁴⁰ Johnson, 25.

¹⁴¹ The *Dawson Daily News* published a schedule of KMR departures and arrivals. "Klondike Mines Railway," *Dawson Daily News*, (September 8, 1906).

¹⁴² In January of 1903, Chief Isaac asked the territorial government to have the KMR extended northward to Moosehide. Johnson, 25.

¹⁴³ Greg Skuce, *The Klondike Mines Railway: A History* (Dawson City: Dawson City Museum, 1993), 10.

engage in mineral transportation from the dredges. The railway ceased operation in 1913 when three dredges shut down, eliminating the demand for service.



Image 5.18. Dredge No. 1 and the Klondike Mines Railway, August 1908. DCMA 1962.7.39

After 1915 production rapidly declined from 230,173 ounces to 72,778 in 1920. It continued declining until the mid-1930s when production began to increase again (indicated in chart 5.3). Unlike elsewhere in North America, the Depression era saw an increase in mining activity in the Yukon. The price of gold doubled to \$35 an ounce in 1933. The YCGC expanded its fleet of dredges to ten in 1939 and enlarged the hydro plant

on the Klondike River. With this stimulation, gold production increased from 47,817 in 1925 to 72,000 ounces in 1938 and 88,000 ounces in 1939.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

The development of mining in the Klondike between 1896 and 1940 created lasting legacies on both the local ecosystem and on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's cultural engagement with that same ecosystem. Placer mining and industrial mining both required a massive consumption of natural resources. Mining disassembled the earth, thawed permafrost, cleared forests, destroyed animal habitat, released toxins like mercury and arsenic into the ecosystem, and harnessed water sources through rerouting existing waterways and creating new ones. Within only two years of the Gold Rush, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had to travel further away from the Dawson area to engage in hunting and they found themselves blocked from accessing previous fishing spots due to mining camps and Outside fishers. The rapid transformation that occurred in the Klondike region between 1896 and 1900 created monumental change within Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in society and their relationships with the natural world.

However, the scale of environmental change present in placer mining accelerated with dredging and hydraulic mining and expanded its geographical scope further into Indigenous traditional territory. Industrial techniques created larger and more permanent change to the Klondike ecosystem and spread its reach further afield than the Klondike valley. Placer mining was localized in one area, and the impacts of landscape disassembly, rerouting waterways and building small dams and ditches, thawing permafrost, clear-

¹⁴⁴ Neufeld, "Dredging the Goldfields," 35-36. Piper also discusses an increase in mining in the Northwest during the Depression. Piper, *The Industrial Transformation*.

cutting forests, destroying fish and animal habitat, and contamination water supplies were significant to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, though they occurred on a much smaller scale than the impacts of industrial mining.

The environmental impacts of industrial mining were similar to those of placer mining, though they happened on a much grander scale. Industrial mining technologies accelerated the range and scale of environmental change connected to placer mining, but it also initiated other forms of environmental transformation not present in placer mining – specifically the growth of infrastructure related to mining. As dredges, water ditches, and power plants replaced the pan, pick, and sluice box, mining companies required a higher volume of resource consumption and infrastructure to support industrial operations. To meet these demands, the YGC built the Yukon ditch and the Twelve Mile power plant vastly expanding the reach of mining beyond that of placer techniques. Dredging also required new transportation networks, resulting in the establishment of the Klondike Mines Railway. Large mining camps distributed more sewage and industrial run-off than placer mining did. Though the rate of environmental change expanded, the affects of this did not cause as much disruption to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in cultural and socioeconomic relations with the natural world as the 1896-1906 period did. However, industrial dredging has left permanent change to the Yukon Valley ecosystem, leaving rusty industrial machinery visible on the landscape, and created massive tailings piles that are potentially contamination still today.

The ebb and flow of gold production in the Yukon created long-term environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural change in the Klondike region. Beginning with placer mining and ending with dredging, this was the rate and scale of mining in the

Klondike valley for nearly half a century, and over this time the local environment was remade, forcing the Hwëch'in to travel further than previously for hunting and to find new fishing areas where salmon were not impacted by destroyed spawning beds or water contamination. Further, disruption to traditional land from mining activity were not limited to the goldfields alone; there was no mining in Dawson City itself, but the town developed as a supplier to the goldfields. Julia Morberg remarked on the expanse of appropriated land stating that when miners first arrived they took over Dawson, which used to be a swampy area and the Hwëch'in's moose hunting grounds.¹⁴⁵

Many of the patterns set in place that upset Hwëch'in subsistence practises prior to the Gold Rush were set in place by 1906. Typical to areas shaped by resource colonialism, most of the Outside population who contributed to the environmental transformation of the Klondike left the region once the rush ended, and so they did not experience the impacts of change long-term. In fact, where the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in either personally witnessed drastic environmental change in their lifetime or learned about it from the previous generation, outsiders who remained in the Klondike after 1900 had little knowledge of the area before the mining rush to which they could compare. Those few who did remain once the rush ended continued to colonize the land and Indigenous populations through recreating their previous economic structures into the region and implementing colonial policies of resource regulation (discussed further in the following chapter), unlike the Hwëch'in who experienced a significant amount of change to their subsistence lifestyle and economies resulting from gold mining activities. Therefore, Indigenous populations in

¹⁴⁵ Julia Morberg, Interview with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.

the North were disproportionately affected by colonial-driven environmental change most significantly between 1896 and 1906, with this pattern persisting into 1940.

As the Gold Rush ended and the population dropped from 40,000 to 27,000 in 1901 to a fraction of that in 1911 (8,500 and halving by 1921), it was the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in who dealt with the impacts of mining and environmental change more severely than anyone. The ripple effect of environmental transformation reorganized their economic and social lives. Declining game and fish had little impact on non-Indigenous people because most left soon after the rush ended, however the associated environmental transformation of mining was more serious for Indigenous locals. Further, there remains a concern among Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens in Dawson today that the legacy of industrial mining has left behind health hazards contained within tailings piles around the goldfields.

While the Klondike Gold Rush created widespread physical transformation of the local environment, there were also profound cultural impacts of environmental change which also had long-term impacts on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's relationship with the natural world. Accompanying the environmental changes outsiders brought with them to the Klondike was also a new capitalist economy, depleted wildlife populations disrupted Indigenous patterns of hunting and harvesting, and those outsiders who remained after 1906 competed with Indigenous locals for remaining resources.¹⁴⁶ These factors as well as the emergence of conflicts over Indigenous access to resources as mining potential surpassed Indigenous peoples need to maintain a subsistence lifestyle in the eyes of the federal and territorial governments, and further enforced the hybrid structure of resource and settler colonialism in the Yukon Territory.

¹⁴⁶ Morse, 160.

Chapter 6: Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Access to Resources in the Klondike Valley

In a 2015 interview in Dawson, Angie Joseph-Rear, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder and former chief, recalled what she has heard about the early days of the Gold Rush, stating,

Well, at the beginning, I think, when they [miners] first came here, they had some hungry times. New country to them, and like Chief Isaac said, [the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in] helped them get through that, they helped them get through starvation [...] Then, after that, I'm sure they started hunting again. That was his concern, because one of the things he was saying, you know, they started ...they started killing our game, you know, our animal. He was strong. He wasn't afraid to say.¹

Angie's reflections on the dynamics at play between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and miners in the early years of the Klondike Gold Rush not only points to the impacts that miners had on the local land and the alienation of the Hwëch'in from traditionally used resources, but it also indicates the actions that Chief Isaac and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people took to speak out against these impacts. From the beginning of the Klondike Gold Rush, Indigenous access to resources became a central concern in the Yukon for both Indigenous peoples as well as the Department of Indian Affairs. A new environmental order emerged in the Yukon post- Gold Rush that focused on a specific development and use of land and resources. Environmental and economic consequences of this new order in the Yukon had profound effects on the colonization of both the environment and local human inhabitants of the Klondike region. The material transformation of the Klondike environment, as discussed in the previous chapter, worked to distance Hwëch'in people from traditionally used hunting, fishing, and harvesting areas without replacing their subsistence base with anything more permanent. As conflicts over resources arose in this colonized space, one of the ways the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in responded was through asserting themselves in the new

¹ Angie Joseph-Rear, oral history interview with author, Dawson City, July 29 2015.

industrial economy. Another response was to challenge colonial authority and control over natural resource management and regulation.

As previously discussed, the physical changes to the Klondike environment led to habitat destruction which caused the Hwëch'in to travel further for a successful hunt, but competition for resources with outsiders intensified the effects of mining as well, especially between 1896 and 1905. At the turn of the century, pressure on resources dramatically increased in the Yukon.² Not only did a Free Miner's Certificate give miners the right to enter any 'unoccupied' land (by Western standards), it also gave them the privilege of fishing and hunting for their own use and cutting timber for mining and mining-related necessities, such as building shacks in the goldfields.³ Though historian Ken Spotswood argued that the Klondike was a "free-for-all" during the Gold Rush years with no restrictions for miners on hunting, fishing, trapping, or cutting trees, the Yukon mining regulations show that miners were subject to any regulations pertaining to the protection of game and fish, though there is no mention of timber protection.⁴

Resource industries did not only affect Indigenous relationships with the environment due to physical destruction, but that environmental change was also social, cultural, and economic for Indigenous peoples.⁵ In the Yukon, the socioeconomic and cultural changes had a more profound impact on Indigenous relations with environment than did physical changes to the land and water. While missionaries, miners, and the state

² E. Seigel and Hogwas and C. Hogwas, *A Historical Overview of Fishing in the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northern Biomes Ltd. Environmental Services, 1984), ii.

³ Canada, *Regulations Governing Placer Mining 1901*, 3-4.

⁴ Spotswood, *Rush for Souls*, 27. Canada, *Regulations for the disposal of Quartz Mining Claims on Dominion Lands in Manitoba and the NWT (including the Provisional District of the Yukon) 1898* (YA PAM 1898-0153).

⁵ Hans Carlson, "Watershed of Words: Litigating and Negotiating Nature in Eastern James Bay, 1971-75," in *The Canadian Historical Review* 85,1 (March 2004): 68. Carlson argues this in his study of James Bay hydro.

worked to manage Indigenous people and land they also worked to manage fish and wildlife. More so than any other Yukon Indigenous group, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experienced the greatest loss of resources as a direct result of the Gold Rush, but this loss continued after the rush had ended. As mining expanded and its related infrastructure spread further afield, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lost access to previously significant areas of land and water. Mining activity led to both a decline in resources as well as a loss of access to resources; regulations formalized and contributed to this loss of access to resources. But the implementation of federal and territorial legislation regulating the proscribed uses of fish and game impacted Indigenous groups across the entirety of the Yukon. By 1920, Indigenous groups who had previously been unaffected or marginally affected by mining activity in the Klondike region felt the constrictions of government as they were subjected to game regulations as well as fisheries regulations from 1899 onwards.

After the turn of the 20th century, mining, competition for resources, new technologies, and regulations complicated Indigenous peoples' ability to continue traditional subsistence practises across the Yukon and created conflicts between local Indigenous peoples and outsiders – both those who remained temporarily and those who remained permanently. This chapter examines the indirect impacts that extractive industries had on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in engagement with the natural world. First, it examines the ways Hwëch'in people engaged in the new industrial mining economy. Their options for paid wage labour were fairly limited between 1896 and 1906, after which time opportunities retracted even more as large mining corporations took over the mining industry. However, the Hwëch'in capitalized on the outside population through being entrepreneurial and selling aspects of their culture, skills, and knowledge to miners,

visitors, and Dawsonites. Next, the chapter examines the role of the state in implanting and enforcing resource regulations in the Yukon, focusing specifically on federal fisheries regulations and territorial game regulations. Fish and game regulations in the Yukon created hardships for Indigenous peoples, but the Indian Agents and NWMP officers tended to be lenient on Indigenous peoples and to encourage their continuance of subsistence fishing and hunting. Finally, the chapter ends with an examination of the ways in which local groups, including missionaries, government officials, and Indigenous populations, challenged colonial authority and management of natural resources in the Yukon. The history of resource regulation and enforcement in the Yukon is not a straightforward narrative – the historical record has large gaps and the materials that do exist indicate a hesitancy on behalf of local government authorities to subject Indigenous Yukoners to resource regulations. Though mining contributed to conflicts over resources, the unique blend of resource and settler colonialism in the Yukon, as well as Indigenous persistence, shaped the structure of Indigenous access to resources, hence shaping Indigenous participation in the industrial economy, in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in the Industrial Economy

The advent of the industrial age marked new relationships across North America among societies, minerals, and mines that remade those societies and the natural world in fundamental ways. As mining historians George Vrtis and John McNeill argued, mines and mining reordered whole economies and reshaped cultural and social patterns.⁶ As outsiders crowded the Klondike region and increased competition for resources, the Tr'ondëk

⁶ George Vrtis and J.R. McNeill, "Introduction: Of Mines, Minerals, and North American Environmental History," *Mining North America: An Environmental History since 1522*, ed. J.R. McNeill and George Vrtis. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017): 2.

Hwëch'in adapted to new shifts in the economy and society. Though very few Hwëch'in people gained direct employment in the goldfields, they did find short-term paid labour in positions auxiliary to mining. This paid labour combined with other engagement with the capital economy, such as entrepreneurship, and continued subsistence practises worked to shape a new hybrid economy in the Klondike. This hybrid economy had ebbs and flows of participation between 1896 and 1940; at times wage work was more profitable than subsistence practises, at other times subsistence was more reliable. Throughout this time period, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in asserted themselves as active participants in the industrial economy. While they continued to maintain aspects of their subsistence practises, engagement in the industrial economy also created changes to other aspects of subsistence activities.

Due to Dawson's distance from major cities, miners and other outsiders relied on local game and fish for fresh meat. They also adjusted to life in the Klondike by adopting other Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in harvesting activities, such as berry picking, and incorporating that into their diets. Miners further relied on Indigenous peoples' and their subsistence activities. In the first year of the Gold Rush, especially that winter, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in helped the miners survive in a new environment. Elder Peggy Kormenday described how knowledge passed down since the Gold Rush times recalled that Hwëch'in helped those miners who went hungry by bringing them moose, sheep, or other meat.⁷ Unfortunately for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the increased harvesting in the region created competition for, and led to the depletion of, natural resources. Though the mining economy created hardships for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, it also provided them with opportunities, though limited.

⁷ Peggy Kormandy, oral history interviews with author, Dawson City, July 30 2015.

In the Yukon, Indigenous peoples remained peripheral to gold mining. Though they sought work in mining, few secured such work as most miners refused to hire Indigenous workers due to discriminatory attitudes about Indigenous workers – ideas that they were lazy, that they could not commit to a schedule, and that they may disappear without notice – but also because placer mining was typically an individual or partner endeavour.⁸ Those few miners who did hire Indigenous peoples paid them lower wages than non-Indigenous workers.⁹ The few Indigenous miners recorded in Dawson were Tagish, not Hwëch'in. Though few Indigenous peoples worked as miners, some were able to secure mine claims in the goldfields. Chief Isaac owned four different placer claims between 1904 and 1919 though he did not mine his claims.¹⁰ Indigenous men frequently sold their claims to miners from Outside for a substantial profit.¹¹

Historian Charlene Porsild theorized that, aside from discrimination, Hwëch'in peoples were not involved in mining because Bishop Bompas discouraged contact between miners and the Hwëch'in, and that the distance of Moosehide to the goldfields discouraged direct involvement.¹² However, Hwëch'in people were involved in the industrial economy in other capacities, which included interaction with the non-Indigenous society and travel into Dawson from Moosehide, so it does not seem likely Porsild's theories best explain

⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 18. Mishler and Simeone, *Hän, People of the River*, 14.

⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 18.

¹⁰ His first application was for a claim in the Forty Mile district in September of 1904, the next was creek claim No. 16 below Discovery Creek in February of 1917, the third claim No. 27 on the south fork of Sixty Mile River in December 1911, and the final application was claim No. 15 on Moosehide Creek in October 1919 (DCMA, Chief Isaac 1 of 2). John Lutz writes of Indigenous peoples mining for gold along the Thompson River in B.C. John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2008), 174-198.

¹¹ Michael Gates, *Tr'ondëk-Klondike: The Ongoing Tradition of Klondike Placer Mining* (Dawson: Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site Nomination Thematic Research, 2016), 31. Gates explains that only Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley were known to have garnered more than short-term benefit from owning a mining claim.

¹² Porsild, *Gamblers and Dreamers*, 52.

Indigenous absence from mining. More likely reasons that Hwëch'in people were not very involved in gold mining are those mentioned by elders. Julia Morberg suggested that gold was not an important resource for the Hwëch'in. She explained when prospectors came into the area in the 1890s and began searching for gold the Indigenous population did not fully grasp what mining was. She said, “[The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in] don't know what they are looking for. Just 'shiny rocks' they called them, I guess.”¹³ Peggy Kormandy also offered an explanation, suggesting that, though she does not know for certain why more Hwëch'in people did not take much interest in mining, it was possible that they held beliefs about mining damaging the environment that discouraged them from mining.¹⁴ While there was little room for Indigenous peoples in the placer mining industry, there was even less space for Indigenous workers in dredging, as this new mechanized and highly capitalized method required less man-power and any demand for workers was directed at experienced miners who were often imported by the YGC and the CKMC.¹⁵

Mining was not the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's first exposure to extractive industries.¹⁶

In the Yukon, as elsewhere in Canada, the fur trade economy relied on Indigenous

¹³ Julia Morberg, oral history interviews with author, Moosehide, July 27 2015.

¹⁴ Peggy Kormandy, oral history interviews with author, Dawson City, July 30 2015.

¹⁵ This trend was not unique to the Yukon nor to the first half of the 20th century. Studying uranium mining in the NWT, environmental historians John Sandlos and Arn Keeling argue that Indigenous peoples were marginalized from the mining industry in the North post-1950 as well.¹⁵ Further, the authors argue that the environmental impacts of mining were unequally distributed, as those Indigenous peoples who did gain employment in mines were exposed to dangerous jobs such as transporting ore along transportation routes and loading burlap sacks of uranium ore onto barges. Sandlos and Keeling, “Environmental Justice Goes Underground?,” 117.

¹⁶ Scholars have examined the concept of extractive industries as colonial projects, specifically relating to Indigenous involvement in resource industries. Literature on the fur trade has given much attention to the role of Indigenous northerners in colonial economic systems, such as capitalism. A common theme in this literature is the implications of extractive industries on Indigenous populations, especially the extent of their integration into the industrial economy. Arthur Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); J.C. Yerbury, *The Subarctic Indians and the Fur Trade, 1680-1860* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1986); Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native Peoples and the*

expertise and allowed a degree of autonomy among Indigenous peoples in the central Yukon. As the economy of the Yukon transitioned from that of fur trade to that of mining, Indigenous peoples were largely excluded from mining. However, this does not mean they were outside of the capital economy. Even before outsiders made it to the Yukon they relied on Indigenous peoples to transport them and their supplies to the Klondike. Tlingit men worked as packers over the Chilkoot Pass.¹⁷ Indigenous peoples entered into wage work connected to mining activities on their own initiative, though when and where opportunities opened up was out of their control. For example, in the first couple of years of the Gold Rush there was a shortage of labour and employers reluctantly hired Hwëch'in men as casual labourers. However, by 1898 there were thousands of men who came late to the mining game, missed the opportunity to stake a claim, and found themselves without work – after this, employers generally replaced Hwëch'in labourers with non-Indigenous men.¹⁸ Throughout the period between 1896 and 1910, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in men occasionally gained employment on steamboats, cutting wood, or loading lumber.¹⁹ According to Yukon historian Sally Robinson, as Dawson replaced Fort McPherson as the trading centre of the Yukon, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Teetł'it Gwich'in, and Athabascans from Tetlin and Alaska often came to the Dawson area to find summer work as carpenters, mechanics, and cooks.²⁰ In a 1999 interview elder Ronald Johnston remembered that his

Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930 (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1996); Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

¹⁷ Morse, 81.

¹⁸ Kenneth Coates, "On the Outside of Their Homeland: Native People and the Evolution of the Yukon Economy," in *The Northern Review* 1 (Summer 1988): 77.

¹⁹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 30.

²⁰ Sally Robinson, "The Hän: A History of Change 1847-1910." (DCMA, First Nations - Hän), 42.

father took whatever labourer jobs were available in Dawson in the late 1930s and early 1940s.²¹

Indigenous workers usually received lower wages than non-Indigenous workers in these positions.²² However, that did not prevent the Hwëch'in from attempting to find casual wage labour. A *Klondike Nugget* news article from 1902 reported on a meeting that Isaac had with NWMP commissioner Wood where Isaac reportedly threatened to sell "his Yukon" if his people did not receive jobs in town. Isaac initiated this meeting with Wood to inform him that many of the Hwëch'in were angry because, even though there were many areas in the growing mining economy where they could work, they could not get any jobs in Dawson. This especially irritated them after they provided meat and clothing to the miners over their first few winters in the Klondike. Isaac was aware of payments happening elsewhere in Canada, likely in connection with treaties, as he asked Wood why the Hwëch'in do not receive jobs that other Indigenous groups get nor the \$50 payments chiefs received each month and \$25 payments for the second chief.²³

Ken Coates argued that levels of Indigenous involvement in the capitalist economy in and around Dawson was based on both Indigenous preference and discrimination. He further argued that what, at times, has been perceived as Indigenous marginalization in the capitalist economy was often preferred by Indigenous peoples as only occasional wage work permitted them more time to spend on subsistence activities and maintaining elements of their culture.²⁴ However, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in engaged in the capitalist economy in a number of ways, some of which included capitalizing on elements of their

²¹THA Traditional Knowledge Recordings 99-09, Ronald Johnson, July 18, 1999.

²² Coates, *Canada's Colonies*, 72.

²³ *Klondike Nugget*, "Chief Isaac in Politics," (December 9, 1902).

²⁴ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*.

culture and subsistence practises. Historical documents pertaining to Indigenous men working in the paid labour sector are scarce, but such sources are much easier to come by than any records of Indigenous women in paid labour in the Klondike between 1896 and 1940. Robin Brownlie argues that there was a colonial image of women as non-workers or non-participants in the capitalist economy that has translated directly to the lack of historical studies focusing on Indigenous women and paid labour.²⁵

However, in addition to paid labour, Indigenous people were entrepreneurs and quite often this included women. The Klondike Gold Rush allowed Indigenous women a new range of economic opportunity and more choice in participating in capitalism. Many of these changes, while confusing and difficult, also offered new opportunities and offered women considerable social and economic independence.²⁶ In his study of Indigenous labour in British Columbia, historian John Lutz emphasized that establishing small trading posts in villages to sell goods was particularly common for women and gave them more opportunity to engage with the cash market.²⁷ This was common amongst Indigenous women in the Klondike as well. Women in Moosehide sold moose-skin gloves, moccasins, and mukluks to miners, earning between \$20 to \$40 a day in 1897.²⁸ New commercial and tourist markets offered opportunities for Indigenous women to sell beadwork and other forms of art. Simultaneously, women began experimenting with different artforms; the anthropological record shows a distinct shift in beadwork and other art forms over time. Northern Tutchone artist and anthropologist Ukjese Van Kampen studied the changing art

²⁵ Robin Jarvis Brownlie, "'Living the Same as the White People': Mohawk and Anishinaabe Women's Labour in Southern Ontario, 1920-1940," in *Labour/Le Travail* 61 (Spring 2008): 42. Brownlie states that those historians who have published on Indigenous labour are overwhelmingly focused on B.C..

²⁶ Moosehide Slide (DCMA).

²⁷ Lutz, 191.

²⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 30.

styles among Yukon First Nations over time and argued that the Gold Rush brought changes in beadwork. Prior to the Gold Rush, beaded work was primarily for personal use or gifts, such as making items for family members. With the increasing population of outsiders during the Gold Rush, there became a market for beadwork and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in women in the Dawson area began taking orders to sell their craftwork. The style of beadwork shifted after 1897, evolving from complex beaded patterns to simpler ones, to better suit the preferences of their customers.²⁹ Decorated blankets were another popular tourist item in Dawson and Hwëch'in women made many for sale, while also taking advantage of a wider range of coloured fabric and textures available to them and increasingly incorporating floral designs into their work after 1900.³⁰

Selling products allowed Indigenous women to engage in the industrial economy through commodifying the skills of their cultural practises. The Hwëch'in masterfully engaged in a middle ground between wage employment and subsistence harvesting through the creation of a hybrid economy selling the products of their subsistence labour for cash. The influx of miners and other outsiders, especially after the Klondike Gold Rush, provided a market for local meat and fish which provided the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in an entrance into the capital economy.³¹ As miners engaged in hunting and fishing they contributed to declining wildlife and fish populations, but as consumers they created a market for Indigenous hunters and fishers to sell local food in Dawson and the Hwëch'in

²⁹ Ukjese Van Kampen, "History of Yukon First Nations Art," PhD dissertation (Universiteit Leiden, 2012), 21-22.

³⁰ Ibid., 149. Cruikshank, *Reading Voices*, 85.

³¹ Dobrowolsky states that Indigenous peoples in the central Yukon began selling meat and fish to prospectors and miners as early as the 1870s, though the market expanded drastically after 1896. Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 18.

took advantages of outsiders' need for country food.³² Some Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fishers sold chinook salmon to individuals in Dawson, and Chief Silas, the second chief at Moosehide, developed a business selling salmon to Dawson restaurants; however, local authorities ordered him to stop because non-Indigenous fisherman complained about his unlicensed activity.³³ One Indigenous woman, Martha Taylor, reported that as caribou numbers declined in the 1920s, her husband and she relied on fishing for their main source of income. Based in Moosehide, they sold fish to the Northern Commercial Company, to the RCMP for their dogs, and to restaurants in Dawson.³⁴

Canned goods and consignments of sheep and cattle were shipped into Dawson from British Columbia and Washington in the summer months, but in the winter the only supply of fresh meat was from local game animals.³⁵ While fish was an important food source for miners, meat was particularly profitable for the Hwëch'in. The influx of miners who came to the Yukon relied on their local environment for survival and while most of them were able to fish for their own use, many had a cultural preference for meat. Further, in the early years of the Gold Rush, many lacked knowledge of the region to hunt for themselves in their first year or so in the Klondike and so they relied on their Indigenous neighbours to provide the highly demanded meat.³⁶ American journalist Tappan Adney reported that, during his hunt in 1897 with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Chief Isaac told him

³² In her study of the Cariboo Gold Rush, Mica Jorgenson examined similar cases of Indigenous peoples at Barkerville working in a variety of occupations filling particular economic niches related to the gold rush economy. Specifically, Indigenous people made a lucrative profit selling fish in mining towns, especially to Chinese miners. Mica Jorgenson, "Into That Country to Work': Aboriginal Economic Activities during Barkerville's Gold Rush," in *B.C. Studies* 85 (Spring 2015): 110, 125.

³³ Mishler and Simone, 17.

³⁴ *Twelve Mile Oral History Project*, February 2017. Martha and David Taylor continued selling fish in Dawson until 1969.

³⁵ Frank Oliver, *The Yukon Territory, Its History and Resources* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907), 79-84.

³⁶ Tappan Adney, *The Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1899), 624.

that bull moose had tougher meat and cows were fatter, so they ate the cows and sold the tougher meat to the miners.³⁷ Hwëch'in hunters sold meat to individuals, restaurants, and butchers in Dawson. Moose meat sold for \$1.25-\$1.50 per pound in 1896 and 1897 compared to selling for ten cents a pound in 1887.³⁸ The meat market provided economic opportunities for other Indigenous groups as well. In 1901, according to elder Annie Henry, the Teetł'it Gwich'in from Black City near the Peel River made their first trip to Dawson because of the Gold Rush. Dawson offered more profitability in trade than Fort McPherson, an important fur trade centre where they went before the Gold Rush, and each December the Gwich'in hunters from the Peel area came to Dawson to sell moose and caribou meat and hides.³⁹ In fact, Dawson residents regarded the Teetł'it Gwich'in as such good hunters that whenever the Porcupine caribou herd was near the Peel they sent word to the Teetł'it Gwich'in to harvest meat and bring it to town.⁴⁰

Reports from various organizations show a fluctuating game population between 1899 and 1925. NWMP Superintendent Sam Steele reported in 1899 that large game had depleted in the area, causing Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to go twenty miles further inland than usual to have a successful hunt.⁴¹ According to Anglican church records, in 1915 there was still a caribou shortage, though fox and moose were plentiful, and by 1921 the Forty Mile caribou herd had returned to Dawson that summer.⁴² However, by 1923 caribou was again so scarce that some men from Moosehide found wood cutting jobs in Dawson to earn money in light of this scarcity of game and fish.⁴³ Wood cutting itself seemed to be a

³⁷ Ibid., 631.

³⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 30.

³⁹ Black City, (THA), 2.

⁴⁰ Field Notes, Informal Conversation, Dawson, August 2017.

⁴¹ Willis, 82.

⁴² *Northern Lights* No III Vol III (August 1915). *Northern Lights* No IV Vol IX (Oct 1921), 4.

⁴³ *Northern Lights* No I Vol XII (February 1924), 9.

complicated employment strategy for Indigenous Yukoners. In 1907, the Crown Timber and Land Agent instructed Reverend Benjamin Totty to warn and persuade the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in against cutting wood to sell because they did not have permission to sell timber for sale free of government dues.⁴⁴ In 1917, Chief Jim Boss in the southern Yukon cut thirty-six cords of wood near Lake Laberge for the British Yukon Navigation Company (BYNC) with a permit the Gold Commissioner issued to him. However, the Crown Timber Agent, R.G. Miller, told Boss that the timber reserve he cut from was set aside for the personal occupation and use of Indigenous people, and he was not permitted to sell the wood for profit. He instructed Boss to pay due on the wood that he sold. Boss protested that he only cut it at the request of the BYNC. It appears that Miller allowed Boss to forgo paying dues, as Miller reported to the Department of the Interior that Boss was "an unusually intelligent Indian" and that he is recognized as a "good Indian" because he frequently aided NWMP officers in bringing "criminals of his race to justice." Therefore, he felt hesitant to impose dues on Boss.⁴⁵

Anthropologist Craig Mishler stated that the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's ability to tap into both worlds gave them a certain amount of affluence. Mishler noted that Bishop Bompas stated that the Gold Rush brought material luxury to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in where thirty years earlier they were living in comparable poverty.⁴⁶ It is difficult to gage how accurate Bompas' comment is, though, as the differences in cultural backgrounds would mean that Bompas likely perceived poverty very differently than the Hwëch'in, and

⁴⁴ Letter from the Crown Timber and Land Agent to Reverend Benjamin Totty, September 15, 1907 (DCMA, Moosehide).

⁴⁵ Letter from the Crown Timber Agent, R.G. Miller to the Department of the Interior, February 6, 1917 (DCMA, Moosehide).

⁴⁶ Mishler and Simone, 15.

his idea of luxury was connected with Western ideologies focused on monetary value and material objects. In his study of Indigenous-state relations in the Yukon, Ken Coates has also argued that the Gold Rush provided Indigenous Yukoners with economic opportunities and more prosperity than the fur trade had brought previously, largely a result of the exceedingly high demand for meat in the first year of the rush and Indigenous people found good prices for the meat they sold.⁴⁷ According to Yukon historian Sally Robinson, by 1914 NWMP officers believed that Indigenous peoples near Dawson actually had an excess of cash which they identified as a problem, as they claimed it led to increased intoxication in the Indigenous community.⁴⁸

Though the Hwëch'in engaged with the industrial economy through paid labour and entrepreneurship they remained on the periphery of the mining economy. Between 1898 and 1911 the population of the Yukon declined by approximately 31,500 people. The population decrease meant a loss of the local food market and the Hwëch'in's ability to sell local food decreased, yet it also provided an opportunity for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people to take over jobs abandoned by the white population, particularly working on dredges and as general labourers.⁴⁹ Ronald Johnson recalled that his father worked for the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation on one of their dredges in the goldfields for a number of years to support his family.⁵⁰ However, the Depression era was particularly difficult for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in peoples as whites were given any available jobs and began hunting, trapping, and fishing for subsistence creating increased competition for resources once

⁴⁷ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 41.

⁴⁸ Sally Robinson, "The Home Front: The Yukon's Economy During the First World War," in *The Northern Review* 44 (2017): 35.

⁴⁹ Morse, *Nature of Gold*, 160. Don Sawatsky, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northbush Publications Ltd., 1975), 62.

⁵⁰ THA Traditional Knowledge Recordings 99-09, Ronald Johnson, July 18, 1999.

again.⁵¹ Even into the 1950s, many northern Indigenous groups regarded the cash economy as a supplement to the hunting and trapping economy.⁵²

The influx of miners into the region provided a market for Indigenous knowledge, skill, and goods; though wage work was less common than selling craftwork, fish, and game, all of these activities had unintended impacts on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in subsistence economy and associated cultural practises. Some scholars argue that a decline of subsistence practises was often a consequence of economic transition. Dryzek and Young provide the fur trade as an example of economic development leading to decline in subsistence practises.⁵³ The fur trade was an export economy controlled by Europeans, and later Americans and Canadians, which introduced a capital-intensive cash economy, taking attention away from subsistence harvesting to focus more time on fur harvesting for trade. Further, the establishment of trading posts that became focal points of permanent or semi-permanent settlements gradually undermined the semi-nomadic lifestyle of Indigenous groups.⁵⁴ According to Kathryn Morse, as a result of mining activity and the industrial economy, Indigenous peoples in the Yukon increased their harvest of fish and wildlife and reoriented their own annual cycles of subsistence activities to better suit the market.⁵⁵ Archival records suggest fish and game harvesting increased between 1897 and the early 1900s, especially hunting as there was incentive to hunt more meat to sell any surplus in town.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 92.

⁵² Abel, *Drum Songs*, 203.

⁵³ John Dryzek and Oran Young, "Internal Colonialism in the Circumpolar North: The Case of Alaska," in *Development and Change* 16 (1985): 126.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Morse, 154-55.

⁵⁶ Adney, 628.

To meet the demands of the fish and meat market, the Hwëch'in devoted more time to supplying meat and furs to outsiders and less time fishing and hunting for their own use.⁵⁷ Having more cash also altered their own patterns of consumption – instead of making objects by hand for their own use they more frequently purchased them. This became more common as transportation routes into the Klondike expanded to include railways, which provided cheaper and easier access to manufactured goods from the Outside. Ironically, the ability to buy food brought in from the South lessened miners' reliance on Hwëch'in fish and game. More food options pushed Indigenous populations to the periphery of the mining economy just as they were more fully engaging in the cash economy. At the same time, this ease of access to manufactured products led to Indigenous peoples consuming more of these goods as well.⁵⁸

After miners pushed them out of Tro'chëk, and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in moved downstream to Moosehide Village, Hwëch'in people spent more time in one location as opposed to their previous migratory lifestyle, though they did continue to rely primarily on the land – they hunted moose and caribou, they fished salmon, and harvested plants and berries. Traditional skills remained necessary, but the acquisition of new knowledge for the new socioeconomic order became increasingly important to survival. However, in acquiring this new knowledge there was a threat to their culture and traditions.⁵⁹

Indirectly, engagement in the industrial economy worked to alter the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's connection with the natural world. Before the Gold Rush, the fur trade economy and selling meat and fish to a small number of miners in the Hwëch'in's

⁵⁷ Porsild, 48.

⁵⁸ Iceton, 5.

⁵⁹ Dobrowolsky, *The Changing Nature of Leadership*, 5.

traditional territory range was well suited to subsistence life in that it allowed households to continue kinship-based economic units of production.⁶⁰ It also provided families the means "to purchase the productive inputs they required for subsistence through a land-based activity that was complimentary to it."⁶¹ However, with the onset of the Gold Rush, these conditions changed due to the establishment of a new economic order, and, over time, this new order undermined the basic conditions of traditional subsistence economy. While the wage economy offered some degree of flexibility for participation in harvesting activities through casual labour, it also introduced Indigenous peoples to a vertically organized, and hierarchical, mode of production where individuals had limited choice in determining the conditions of work, including when one could do these jobs. Wage labour opportunities required high time commitments to service sector jobs, like loading lumber or working on steamships, which were largely unrelated to subsistence production. Those who did work in the wage economy were less able to hunt and fish for their families, because they spent long hours at these jobs. This new set of economic relationships and conditions deeply impacted Indigenous subsistence practises by introducing a strict division of work between that which was employment-based and that of family-based.⁶² This was an unfamiliar structure for the Hwëch'in who had previously fished in family groups and hunted on a community scale with no differentiation between work and family.

Subsistence practises were important for the education and transference of knowledge to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in children to ensure the persistence of culture and social

⁶⁰ Tough discusses this concept in relation to Indigenous communities in northern Manitoba. Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail*.

⁶¹ Peter Usher and Lindsay Staples, *Subsistence in the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Economic Development Department, Council for Yukon Indians, 1988), 133.

⁶² Ibid.

values. Such strict division of work in the wage economy altered gender-role maintenance, sharing, gift giving, cooperation, and reciprocity with other humans and animals. While Indigenous peoples had to travel further to hunt after mining destroyed animal habitats, the introduction of the rifle replaced bow and arrows and made it easier to hunt. The rifle also brought notable change in hunting practises, as hunting became an individual or partnered rather than group activity, and it led to a decrease in reliance on the communal caribou corral hunt.⁶³ Elder Mary McLeod recalled that people from Forty Mile and Dawson areas used to get together to hunt during the fall migration, but after more Indigenous peoples began hunting more for the market sale than for subsistence use after 1900, the communal nature of hunting parties disappeared.⁶⁴ Other changes in technologies altered Indigenous cultural practises as well, such as store bought nets replacing fish traps and motor boats instead of birch bark canoes, which led to changes in skills, and it became increasingly difficult for those skilled in hunting, fishing, and craft work to pass on these skills to the next generation. Change in Indigenous cultural engagement with the natural environment resulting from participation in the industrial economy was furthered by the imposition and enforcement of resources regulations, especially of fisheries and game animals, between 1899 and 1940.

Enforcement of Resource Regulations in the Yukon, 1899-1940

Resource development and wildlife management in North America since the turn of the 20th century have been colonial in nature resulting in Indigenous dislocation, and alienation, from traditional lands and resources. Government regulations tended to

⁶³ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 63.

⁶⁴ Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department, *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Interpretive Manual* (Dawson: Midnight Arts, June 2003).

overlook both rural populations and Indigenous peoples' engagement with local, resource-based economies when designing wildlife management practises. Indigenous peoples relied on access to shared commons - resources and land governed by local custom - for their survival.⁶⁵ In the Yukon, where the climate limits agriculture and naturally growing vegetation is relatively sparse, Indigenous populations historically relied heavily on wildlife, both fish and animals, as discussed in Chapter Two. In his classic 1967 essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons," ecologist Garrett Hardin described common property regimes as spaces ungoverned in which individuals and groups tended to over-exploit resources and thereby endanger or lead those resources to decline.⁶⁶ However, this argument overlooks community-based management regimes. In response to Hardin, historian Irene Spry argued that Indigenous management regimes were sustained by local knowledge and generations of customary practises.

Indigenous North Americans depended on the commons for their way of life and prosperity depended on the size and richness of the areas in which they had access.⁶⁷ Historian Daniel Rueck has further shown that users of the commons around the world carefully regulated its use to ensure long-term sustainable use of land and resources.⁶⁸ In fact, Indigenous hunters tended to use the term 'respect' to describe their relationship with the environment and the animals they fished or hunted, as these populations offered both

⁶⁵ Irene Spry, "The Tragedy of the Loss of the Common in Western Canada" in *As Long as the Sun Shine and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies*, ed. Ian Getty and Antoine Lussier (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 1983): 212

⁶⁶ Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in *Science* 162, no. 3859 (December 1968): 1243-1248.

⁶⁷ Spry, 205-212. Spry's study focuses on bison in the Prairies.

⁶⁸ Daniel Rueck, "Commons, Enclosure, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory, 1850–1900," in *Canadian Historical Review* 95,3 (September 2014) 354.

economic benefit and cultural subsistence.⁶⁹ In his study of the Pacific coast fisheries, historian Doug Harris described the pre-19th century fishery as a commons, arguing that it was not unregulated because Indigenous populations followed a customary practise with limitations and sanctions that regulated fish populations.⁷⁰

However, such customary resource management was overlooked, and overturned, when colonizers transformed common lands and resources into, first, open access resources and then into private property.⁷¹ Indigenous customary regulation operated outside of the legal framework of the state, and to colonial eyes, Indigenous use of resources appeared as an absence of control and management.⁷² As discussed in Chapter Three, miners and others who came to the Yukon during the Gold Rush transformed the landscape of the Klondike through claiming land and minerals under the Western customary ideology of private property. That transformation included an overhaul of community-based management regimes.⁷³ The imposition of resource regulations indicated a transfer of control from Indigenous governance to state governance, and with that came the transformation of the commons into individual and commodified plots of land and ownership of resources.⁷⁴

Historians have argued that the development of institutions and practises of state wildlife management at the beginning of the 20th century was bound with the expansion of state power into the North in connection with colonial civilizing ideology. In *Hunters at the Margin*, environmental historian John Sandlos argued that in the Northwest Territories

⁶⁹ Jean Manore, "Contested Terrains of Space and Place: Hunting and the Landscape Known as Algonquin Park, 1890-1950," *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, ed. Jean L. Manore and Dale Miner (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2007): 121.

⁷⁰ Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism*, 27-28.

⁷¹ Spry, 204.

⁷² Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism*, 3.

⁷³ Rueck, 354.

⁷⁴ Rueck, 353.

between the mid-1890s into the 1970s, state authority extended its power over formerly remote areas setting regulations for animal conservation measures resulting in social discord among local Indigenous populations who were restricted from access to game and other resources, and as local knowledge was overlooked in preference to rising scientific expertise. Though Sandlos focuses on the various responses of the federal government to wildlife crisis in the NWT during his period of study, he connects wildlife conservation to wider colonial initiatives. In this sense, he argued, conservation in the Canadian North was equally a form of institutionalizing social control over Indigenous populations and a response to declining big game populations.⁷⁵ Regulations were instruments of colonization and conservation was not just a way of managing wildlife, but it was also a means in which the federal government could discipline Indigenous peoples on how to utilize resources in accordance with emerging and existing values.

The Yukon and the NWT did share certain similarities in the colonial aspects of wildlife management, including a simultaneous desire for wilderness protection and the exploitation of resources in the same environment, in both cases to generate profit.⁷⁶ Further, in both territories, managing the environment, including both land and animals, was a means to extend political sovereignty over the North, and to replace Indigenous social relations to the environment with an ideas of landscape as both wilderness and sites of production.⁷⁷ However, historical evidence suggests that fisheries and game laws in the Yukon were rarely enforced and often were lenient toward Indigenous peoples. Federal government programming for the Yukon was significantly different than the national

⁷⁵ Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin*.

⁷⁶ John Sandlos, "From the Outside Looking In: Aesthetics, Politics and Wildlife Conservation in the Canadian North" in *Environmental History* 6,1 (January 2001): 14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 6. Willis, 31.

priorities as outlined in the *Indian Act*.⁷⁸ Both the NWMP and DIA agents supported and encouraged continued subsistence lifestyles among Yukon Indigenous people. Local government officials lobbied for extended rights for Indigenous hunters and fishers or protection from loss of resources to avoid the cost of relief, as cash economy work was often scarce in the Yukon. Until 1920, Yukon Indigenous peoples were exempt from the laws of the *Yukon Game Act*. Federal Indian Agents and NWMP officers grew increasingly concerned about depletion of game populations and ability to sustain Indigenous livelihood.⁷⁹

Local government officials were hesitant in enforcing both federally imposed fisheries regulations as well as territorial imposed game regulations. As discussed in Chapter Four, in the Yukon, bureaucrats and administrators generally took a hands-off approach to Indigenous people; instead of encouraging Indigenous people to adopt Western economies they permitted, and encouraged, continued Indigenous harvesting. Again, government authorities believed harvesting was preferable as there were few employment options for Indigenous peoples in the region until the start of the Klondike Gold Rush and even then, these opportunities were limited, and often short-term. They further believed that encouraging continued subsistence would ward off financial reliance on the DIA. Even those government agents, like NWMP Inspector John Taylor (mentioned in Chapter Four) who were critical of the hands-off approach, recommended the government supply Indigenous Yukoners with hunting and fishing supplies.⁸⁰ The remainder of this section

⁷⁸ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 169.

⁷⁹ Liza Piper, "From Subsistence to Nutrition: The Canadian State's Involvement in Food and Diet in the North, 1900-1970," *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History*, ed. Stephen Bocking and Brad Martin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2016): 186.

⁸⁰ LAC, RG 10 4001 file 207418 C-10170, May 22 1903. John Taylor, inspector of NWMP to Commissioner.

will focus specifically on the enforcement (or lack of) of federal fisheries regulations and territorial game regulations between 1899 and 1940.

Fisheries

Salmon fishing, along with harvesting other fish such as whitefish and grayling, was one of the most important subsistence practises for the Hwëch'in before the arrival of gold seekers and into the 1930s. Though miners hunted for personal consumption in the early years of the Gold Rush, the archival record suggests that the biggest area of competition lay in the fishery. By 1897, miners destroyed Indigenous fish weirs and traps as they rafted logs down the Klondike River, forcing the Hwëch'in to fish elsewhere for salmon and making it difficult for the Hwëch'in to compete when they had to repair or build new gear. However, the biggest competition was not personal use but the commercial fishery. In her study of the British Columbia salmon fishery, Dianne Newell argued that there was a difference between subsistence competition for resources and commercialization and that it was not competition, but the regulation of the commercial fishery and the industrialization of fishing technology that marginalized Indigenous peoples from the fishery in B.C..⁸¹ Her argument is applicable to the fishery in the Yukon as well; depletion of fish stocks due to mining activity and the competition for fish for personal consumption made it difficult for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to maintain their catches. As early as 1898, missionary Frederick Flewelling recorded that salmon were very scarce in 1897 due to the existence of a growing commercial fishery in Alaska.⁸² Alaska had a cannery as early as 1868 and the U.S. Fisheries Commission made little attempt to

⁸¹ Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁸² YA, Anglican Church, Rev. F.F. Flewelling fonds, COR 299 Series 1 Vol 1 Box 51 f.6.

manage the fishery. At the turn of the century the commercial salmon fishery expanded widely – in 1898 there were fifty-nine canneries in Alaska and 160 by 1920. As the numbers of outsiders into the Yukon and Alaska between 1890 and 1910 increased the Alaskan commercial fishery expanded to sell fish not only for human consumption, but also dried salmon to feed a growing number of sled dogs.⁸³ Because of this increase in fishing in the Yukon, outsiders overtaking the best fish areas, and the impact of commercial fishing along the Yukon River in Alaska, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were unable to be competitive in selling fish in Dawson.

Federal fisheries regulations prevented Indigenous Yukoners from participating in a competitive manner and they also shaped methods of subsistence fishing. After the 1897 move to Moosehide, salmon was still an essential food source and income, but the methods and locations of the fishery changed. Birch bark canoes were replaced by pole boats, and then after 1910, to motorized boats. Even though new technologies altered the way people fished in the first decade of the 20th century, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and neighbouring groups continued gathering at camps along the Yukon in late June to prepare for the salmon run. With the advent of fishing regulations, though, Indigenous Yukoners were legally obligated to undertake changes in their fishing methods and the technologies they used.

Fish is one of the few natural resources not regulated by the provinces, but instead remained under the federal *Fisheries Act* with separate fisheries regulations for each province, including the Yukon Territory.⁸⁴ In the 1890s, fisheries regulations began to

⁸³ John Clark, Andrew McGregor, Robert Mecum, Paul Krasnowski, and Amy Carroll, "The Commercial Salmon Fishery in Alaska" in *Alaska Fishery Research Bulletin* 12,1 (2006): 1-146.

⁸⁴ YA, Fisheries Regulations 3/17, GOV 1904 f.28798 Letter from Comptroller GA Jeckell to an American Frank Bradford, August 12, 1935. The first Federal *Fisheries Act* was in 1868. Newell, 46.

prescribe when and how Indigenous peoples could participate in both commercial and subsistence economies. Miners took up fishing for personal consumption during the Klondike Gold Rush, but this fishing activity did not seem to concern the federal government as much as commercial fishing did, as they made no efforts to enforce fisheries regulations in the Yukon until receiving reports of commercial activity at the tail end of the Gold Rush.⁸⁵ The historical record of fishing in the Yukon in this period consists of passing references in government documents and the occasional fisheries report. The closest documented example of Indigenous peoples in the fishery to the Yukon is that of British Columbia. The *Fisheries Act* was introduced to B.C. in 1877, but Fisheries did little to enforce the laws.⁸⁶ At first, Indigenous peoples were exempt from the regulations. But by 1890 there was an increase in non-Indigenous settlement in B.C., greater numbers of people fishing for food, and a higher demand on commercial fishing and it appeared there was a need for regulations.⁸⁷ In *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada*, Liza Piper explained that in the large lakes region the first export-oriented commercial fishery began as early as the late 19th century.⁸⁸ In the Yukon, the commercial fishery was never an export-oriented market but instead was small and localized within the territory.

The first instance of commercial fishing in the Yukon that caught government attention was an entrepreneur, C.W. Gauthier, who established a commercial fishing operation in 1898 on Lake Laberge where he shipped his trout and whitefish to Dawson

⁸⁵ The first commercial fishery in the Yukon began in approximately 1885, though it was unregulated.

⁸⁶ Native control of fisheries was not challenged until the mid-1870s with a rising Anglo settler society and canning technology. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 189.

⁸⁷ As the canning industry grew, so did government intervention. *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸⁸ Piper, *Industrial Transformation*, 88.



Image 6.1. Young women and dog at fish drying racks, Moosehide 1898. YA, Tappan Adney fonds, 81/9, #45.

City through the Bennet Lake and Klondyke Navigation Company.⁸⁹ Two other men, Percy DeWolfe and Pete Anderson also began a fishing business in Dawson in 1898.⁹⁰ After receiving reports of increased commercial fishing activity in the Yukon, L.H. Davies, federal Minister of Marine and Fisheries, introduced the *Fisheries Act* to the territory in 1899 in response to the increased population of outsiders engaging in both subsistence and commercial fishing activities.⁹¹ 1898-99 was peak population in the Dawson area, and there was an increasing demand for food. To meet this need, non-Indigenous peoples in the

⁸⁹ E. Seigel and Hogwas and C. Hogwas, *A Historical Overview of Fishing in the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Northern Biomes Ltd. Environmental Services, 1984), 19.

⁹⁰ The business ended in 1910 when Percy DeWolfe got a contract to carry mail between Dawson and Eagle, Alaska.

⁹¹ YA, Fisheries Inspections Monthly Reports 3/1, GOV 1888 f.2019.

Yukon began fishing for their own consumption coming into conflict with Indigenous peoples who also relied on the local fishery for food. Presumably local officials worried about the possibility of overfishing, as there are examples of Fisheries Overseers denying non-Indigenous peoples who sought fishing licenses or commercial access to the fishery after 1899.⁹² The Department of Fisheries would have recalled fairly recent complaints in British Columbia from cannery owners about gold miners and Indigenous peoples overfishing along the Pacific coast.⁹³ The same year that Davies introduced fishery legislation to the Yukon he authorized the NWMP in April of 1899 to act as Fishery Overseer and enforce the newly implemented regulations.⁹⁴

Aside from the development of commercial fishing in the Yukon, government officials also expressed concern that the influx of outsiders fishing in the Klondike would create hardship for Indigenous peoples. While stationed at the south end of Dawson, before being denied settling there, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were located across from Tr'ochëk, and they requested to Bishop Bompas that they be granted exclusive access to the fishery at Tr'ochëk.⁹⁵ A white fisherman had applied for a license to fish from Tr'ochëk to take advantage of the "large and rich" Dawson market. According to a letter Bompas write to the Minister of the Interior in October of 1896, the Hwëch'in framed their plea for exclusive rights on traditional unrestricted use and past dependence on salmon.⁹⁶ Hearing about Bompas' efforts to secure Indigenous protection in the fishery, Constable Constantine also wrote to the Minister of the Interior in November vehemently opposing

⁹² Coates, *Best Left as Indians*. 155.

⁹³ Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 128.

⁹⁴ YA, Fisheries Regulations. 3/17 GOV 1904 f.28798. *Fisheries Act*.

⁹⁵ Harris argued that in B.C., Indigenous peoples also spoke out and insisted that the government protect their fishery. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 187.

⁹⁶LAC, DIAND file 801-30-01 Bompas to Minister of the Interior. October 28, 1896.

such protection, stating, "It would certainly be a gross injustice to debar the Whites from fishing and make them entirely dependant on a band of Indians who will never fish or hunt so long as they can buy food. The Whites are the providers and workers in this country, and should enjoy all the privileges."⁹⁷ There is no further correspondence from the Minister of the Interior or anyone in Ottawa responding directly to the fisheries issue, so it appears that this request was not given much consideration, perhaps indicating that they agreed with Constantine's opinion.

William Ogilvie, who was appointed Commissioner of Yukon in 1898, again requested the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in salmon fishery be protected. Non-Indigenous men applied for exclusive rights to fishing at some of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fish stands, but Ogilvie argued that giving exclusive rights to individuals would create hardship for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as salmon was a main staple of their diet.⁹⁸ Ogilvie claimed, "While the white man has nearly all the modes, and resources of the country at his convenience to make his living by: the Indian from his nature is confined to one or two, and it seems unfair to give any of the [sic] privilege of preventing him using them."⁹⁹ In this instance, appeals for the regulation of the fishery were heard, as the following year regulations were set in place. The federal government, after hearing of the Yukon Indigenous peoples' dependence on salmon, believed that Indigenous lack of access to this resource would create a reliance on relief from Indian Affairs. In 1899, Moosehide missionary Benjamin Totty urged the NWMP Superintendent, Sam Steele, to protect the traditional fishing camp of the Tr'ondëk

⁹⁷ YA, AC COR 260 Series 1-1c Box 12 f.2. Constantine to Deputy Minister of the Interior November 19 1896.

⁹⁸ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 22.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Hwëch'in. Steele did institute a fishing reserve for them, but there are no records indicating whether this arrangement was honoured beyond the 1899 season.¹⁰⁰

What is clear is that in the Yukon fishing regulations allowed Indigenous residents unlimited access to the fishery for personal use, where non-Indigenous fishers were subjected to laws regulating all uses of fisheries. In fact, as Harris pointed out in his study of B.C., Indigenous peoples were only mentioned once in the *Fisheries Act* since its creation in 1868 where it indicated that they may fish for their own use at the Department of Fisheries discretion.¹⁰¹ The federal fisheries regulations enforced within the Yukon included rules for when, where, and how people were permitted to fish. It included a licensing system and strict open and closed seasons. Licenses were divided into two classes, domestic and commercial.¹⁰² Domestic licenses cost five dollars, and commercial licenses cost ten to forty dollars and had to be renewed annually.¹⁰³ Indigenous peoples were exempt from the new licensing system, unless they were fishing with the intention to sell their fish or barter fish for other goods. The cost of commercial licenses applied to everyone, including Indigenous peoples.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰¹ Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 106-107.

¹⁰² Commercial licenses were further classified by a tug license or a small boat license. YA, Fisheries Regulations 3/17 GOV 1904 f.28798.

¹⁰³ YA, Fisheries Regulations 1/3 GOV 1896 f.12-17c.

The licensing system further acted to enforce individualism and Euro-Canadian ideas of property and ownership of resources as the license was permitted to only one person, and only the person whose name was on the license was permitted to fish.¹⁰⁴ Regulations also prescribed what types of gear fisher could use. In *The Tangled Webs of History*, historian Dianne Newell discussed how regulations have worked to marginalize Indigenous peoples from the salmon fishery on the Pacific Coast in British Columbia. Not only were their catches limited to what a license allowed, they were excluded completely from obtaining a license if they did not utilize the new tools of the fishery including trawlers, nets, and industrialized boats.¹⁰⁵ In B.C., subsistence fishing rights were limited between 1894 and 1911 in that federal fisheries regulations made it illegal for Indigenous



Image 6.2. Woman and Fishwheel, n.d. DCMA 1984.216.53.

peoples to catch fish in traps, weirs, and reef nets. They were also required to obtain a permit before they could fish

¹⁰⁴ Winton, “Łuk Cho Anay/Big Fish Come,” 25.

¹⁰⁵ Newell, 131.

for food, which stated what types of fish they could catch, which types of gear were permitted and the time and place they could fish.¹⁰⁶

In the Yukon, the regulation of fishing gear impacted Indigenous fishers in ways similar to that in B.C., though they were more lenient in not requiring Indigenous fishers have a permit for personal consumption nor did the Yukon fisheries regulations specify which species of fish Indigenous people were permitted to catch. Yukon fishing regulations banned any traps in rivers or streams that would cause an obstruction.¹⁰⁷ As discussed in Chapter Two, prior to the Gold Rush, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in used a variety of fishing methods to capture salmon including fish weirs, traps, spears, and hand woven dipnets. By 1897 non-Indigenous fishers used "150-foot drift nets in the Dawson area, while Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people continued to use their fish weirs and birch bark canoes."¹⁰⁸ Fish weirs and dipnets were both banned under regulations, forcing the Hwëch'in to change their fishing technologies to comply with those permitted under regulations. So, not only were commercial licenses expensive for Indigenous Yukoners, but they also had to purchase new gear that fit the new regulations. Fishwheels, such as the one shown in Image 6.2, were common around Dawson by 1917, but a license to own or operate a fishwheel cost \$30. Due to this fee and the cost of materials needed to build a fish wheel, many Indigenous fishers continued to use birch bark canoes, spears, and nets.¹⁰⁹

In British Columbia, after licensing regulations and required technologies, Indigenous people became dependent on hired work in canneries or fishing for

¹⁰⁶Newell, 50-51.

¹⁰⁷ YA, Fisheries Regulations 3/17 GOV 1904 f.28798.

¹⁰⁸ Winton, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 21.

canneries.¹¹⁰ There were no such opportunities for hired work in the fishery in the Klondike region, as there were no canneries nor a fishing industry as expansive as that along the Pacific coast. Instead, Indigenous Yukoners' only option to remain competitive was to enter the commercial fishery as fishers and sellers.¹¹¹ As discussed above, anyone engaging in fishing for sale was required to purchase an expensive license and corresponding gear. Some Indigenous Yukoners did purchase a license, but more frequently Indigenous people continued to sell or trade without a license – and local authorities often allowed this, even though they were not supposed to.

Fishery Overseers were appointed from within the NWMP to enforce the regulations, though enforcement was fairly inconsistent in the Yukon. Overseer duties included making seizures of illegal nets or other fishing apparatuses not approved by the regulations, setting fines, and convicting and punishing offenders. The Fishery Overseer could punish offenders either if they witnessed the offences themselves or if they were brought to their attention. This position gave the NWMP Fisheries Overseers a significant amount of power; for example, Fisheries Minister Davies wrote in 1899 that it was impossible for the Department of Marine and Fisheries in Ottawa to determine where in the Yukon commercial fishing should be permitted. Therefore, the Fisheries Overseers made such decisions on the spot and Davies gave them full authority to permit and issue commercial licenses wherever they thought could withstand fishing and to refuse whenever they believed the fish population could not be sustained.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Newell., 131.

¹¹¹ Lutz also argued that many Indigenous observers noted a connection between these regulations and an increased dependency on wage labour. Lutz, 222.

¹¹² Seigel and Hogwas, 17. The correspondence also made clear the lack of knowledge about Yukon fisheries, with respect to implementation of adequate harvest management regulations. Davies asked the NWMP to send information about spawning and harvest periods to Ottawa.

The NWMP were also in charge of limiting the number of commercial licenses allotted to prevent overfishing; Davies mentioned in his letter that the fewer commercial licenses issued in the Yukon the better, as they feared overfishing might become a problem with the frenzy of the Gold Rush population.¹¹³ NWMP officers were not experts in this area; the expectation that they could adequately determine the sustainability of fishing practises in the Yukon suggests that the application of scientific or biological management was not strictly applied to the fisheries, at least not in the North at this time. In May of 1900 a Fishery Inspector, Theophilus Stewart, was appointed to the Yukon by the Federal Department of Marine and Fisheries in Ottawa, hence relieving the NWMP of their fisheries duties. The Yukon had a constant Fishery Inspector from 1900 to 1918, along with local fish wardens, but after 1918 this there was no more Fisheries personnel in the Yukon until the 1950s.¹¹⁴

Even with regulations in place to monitor and control fishing in the Yukon, local government officials remained concerned that Indigenous peoples would be pushed out of the fishery. The presence of regulations and authorities to enforce them did not necessarily mean this policy played out as directed. On July 2nd, 1902 NWMP Commissioner Wood wrote to Fishery Inspector Stewart to report that two white men from Five Fingers had been fishing in Little Salmon Lake, an Indigenous fish camp, and bringing their fish to sell in Dawson. The Indigenous peoples from this area complained to the police that it is not right for these white men to come and fish there because, with competition, they worried they would not catch enough for survival. Though it appeared that the white men had a

¹¹³ Willis, 45.

¹¹⁴ Seigel and Hogwas, 2. The headquarters for the Fishery Inspector was in Dawson, and additional Fishery Guardians (members of the public) were seasonally engaged to aid monitoring fishing activities in areas remote to Dawson.

license to fish in this lake, Wood warned if Indigenous groups did not meet their fishing needs, they would become destitute and rely on government support. Therefore, he asked Stewart to intervene.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, there is no evidence that confirms whether or not Stewart ever replied to Wood's request nor investigated the matter. Such gaps are common in the archival record of the Yukon for both fisheries and hunting regulations. These silences suggest a number of significant themes regarding colonialism and resource use and regulation in the Yukon. First, such gaps indicate a conflict between federal authorities in Ottawa and those on the ground in the Yukon. Though employed to enforce these regulations in the Yukon, local authorities had significant amounts of power and because of this, they were able to pick and chose which aspects of regulations they enforced. Secondly, these silences suggest that issue of access to resources in the Yukon that were significant for locals barely garnered any attention in Ottawa. Finally, it further speaks to the ways in which colonialism differed depending on location. Those federal officials in the Yukon worked as colonizers on behalf of the Canadian state, but the way they implemented colonial policies in the Yukon was unique to other areas.

Though commercial regulations did apply to Indigenous peoples, local government officials frequently turned a blind eye to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in fishers selling their catch without a commercial license. Non-Indigenous fishermen complained about this practise, drawing government attention to the issue. On July 2, 1909, Chief Silas, the second chief at Moosehide, wrote to the NWMP asking:

We wish to know why the fisherman [sic] in Dawson will not allow the Indians to sell salmon in town. Some of our people went to Dawson on Saturday, but had to return with their fish not having been allowed to offer them for sale. We wish to

¹¹⁵YA, Fisheries Inspections Monthly Reports, 3/1 GOV 1888 f.2019.

know if we are at liberty to sell salmon and if so, to ask for protection when interfered with.¹¹⁶

After receiving this letter from Chief Silas, NWMP Detective Schoenbeck interviewed him about what spurred him to write the letter. Silas stated that a particular fisherman, Vincent Fabris, told Silas' son he could not sell salmon in Dawson. He further threatened Silas' son he would be arrested if he tried to sell salmon. Schoenbeck also interviewed the Fishery Inspector Horace McKay about Indigenous peoples selling fish in Dawson without a commercial license. McKay informed the detective that although it was contrary to the *Fisheries Act* for Indigenous fishers to sell fish without a commercial license, he "had never paid any attention to Indians selling fish, and did not intend to unless absolutely compelled to do so." Fabris complained to McKay that the Hwëch'in had been selling fish to the Third Avenue Meat Market and one of the local restaurants. Instead of enforcing the regulation against Indigenous fishers to sell fish, McKay left it up to buyers to follow the laws, telling the owners of these two establishments that if they continued to buy fish from Hwëch'in fishers they would be liable to be fined, and the owners stated they would no longer purchase fish from Indigenous fishers.¹¹⁷ Of course, it is impossible to know whether these buyers genuinely stopped purchasing from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in or if they simply agreed with McKay to satisfy him.

McKay did not go out of his way to enforce Indigenous fishing regulations, and it appears that those who followed him as Yukon Fishery Inspectors adopted his approach, as into 1923 Indigenous fishers continued to sell without a commercial license. Conflicts

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ YA, Fisheries Inspections Monthly Reports, 3/1 GOV 1888 f.2019. Interdepartmental mail: Corporal writes to the NWMP Commander in Dawson to inform him that a Detective Schoenbeck, July 17 1909.

between white fishers and Indigenous fishers were not uncommon.¹¹⁸ For instance, Dawsonite Jim Hughes, wrote to the Gold Commissioner in July of 1923 inquiring if Indigenous peoples were permitted to fish and dispose of fish in Dawson without licenses, writing, “If the Indians with out licence are allowed to sell fish about the camp as they have today. Then we who buy Federal licences for fishing in the Federal waters and for selling fish in the camp we are practically only jokes.”¹¹⁹

Overall demand for local fish decreased after the Gold Rush, but the NWMP need for fish remained steady as NWMP outposts throughout the Yukon still required fish, especially to feed their sled dogs. Further, by the 1930s there was an expansion of mink farming in the Yukon which provided a new market for fish.¹²⁰ Even into the 1930s government officials took issue with the licensing system. John Hawksley, Indian Agent for the Yukon, wrote to the DIA in 1933 on behalf of Indigenous fishers indicating that commercial licenses were too expensive for Indigenous peoples to purchase. He stated that in most cases, they did not sell enough of their catch to cover the cost of the license, hence, they were excluded from the commercial fishery and had no choice but to continue subsistence fishing only.¹²¹

While elsewhere in Canada provincial and federal governments attempted to quell Indigenous subsistence practises, there is much evidence that in the Yukon, local

¹¹⁸ There was also a sport fishery by the 1920s in the Yukon as well, though the evidence for this is extremely rare, primarily located as passing references contained within correspondence about big game hunting expeditions into the Yukon. Bill Parenteau discussed power dynamics between sportsmen and other resource users in his study of Indigenous peoples in the Atlantic salmon fishery. Bill Parenteau, "Care, Control, and Supervision: Native People in the Canadian Atlantic Salmon Fishery, 1867-1900," in *Canadian Historical Review* 79,1 (March 1998): 1-35.

¹¹⁹ YA, Fisheries Regulations, 3/17 GOV 1904 f.28798. Jim Hughes to the Gold Commissioner, July 2th 1923.

¹²⁰ YA, Fisheries Regulations, 3/17 GOV 1904 f.28798.

¹²¹ YA, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1/9 GOV 1619 f. 1490-J1.

government authorities encouraged the opposite. In July of 1932, Hawksley wrote to the Yukon Gold Commissioner, George Allan Jeckell, recommending Little Atlin Lake be set aside for the use of Indigenous peoples as a fishing and game preserve. A few days later, Jeckell replied there would be no game preserve, but he recommended that Hawksley suggest to the fisheries supervisor that he reject any commercial license applications to fish in Little Atlin Lake to prevent fish depletion.¹²² In June of 1939, the Yukon Southern Transport Company made an application to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for a commercial license to fish from Watson Lake. Because the supervisor of the Yukon fisheries regulations had the authority to issue license in the territory, the company's application was sent to Dawson, but supervisor Major Sandy Wunsch rejected the application for a commercial license stating that Watson Lake was a small lake, only about eight miles long, and the fish supply must be reserved for Indigenous consumption.¹²³

While regulations of the fishery, including licensing and fishing methods, had an impact on Hwëch'in ability to remain competitive in a commercial market, which was small and localized to Dawson until after 1940, many Indigenous Yukoners continued to sell their fish regardless. Further, for the most part, local government officials were lax in their approach to enforcing fisheries regulations, often turning a blind eye on illegal Indigenous commercial sales of fish. However, during the same period between 1900 and 1940, the Yukon government gave more of its attention to game regulation than to the fishery. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in also seemed to express more concern about the disappearance of game populations throughout the early decades of the 20th century than

¹²² Ibid. YA, Fisheries Regulations, 1/3 GOV 1893 f.12-11B.

¹²³ YA, Fisheries Regulations, 1/3 GOV 1896 f.12-17c, Letter from Jeckell in the Department of Mines and Resources to RA Gibson, director of the NWT and YT bureau of mines and resources, 1939.

they did for fish populations. After 1920, when the *Yukon Game Ordinance* was applied to Indigenous Yukoners as well as non-Indigenous settlers, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other Indigenous groups nearby felt much more limited by these regulations and took a more vocal stance against government regulations.

Hunting

On the eve of the Klondike Gold Rush, only about 1000 Euro-Americans and - Canadians lived scattered in the Yukon alongside Indigenous peoples. This population of outsiders took meat and fur without restriction by law, but their hunting activities did not create much impact on local populations. In 1887, geologist George Dawson recorded an abundance of game, particularly moose and caribou, in the region.¹²⁴ Within a decade and with an influx of 40,000 people into the Yukon reliance on game meat dramatically increased. By the winter of 1897 there was food shortage in Dawson, creating an insatiable demand for food, and the most accessible means of food was through consumption of local resources. This food shortage opened up opportunities for Indigenous hunters to supply the market with fresh local meat. Fish, as discussed above, was one important resource, but meat was soon in higher demand. With the introduction of rifles in the Yukon, it made the harvesting of wild meat much more accessible and the necessity of fish declined. In fact, the federal government formally sanctioned the sale of game meat in the Yukon starting in 1897.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ George M. Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, NWT and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia, 1887* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1888), 181-3.

¹²⁵ Donald Wetherell, *Wildlife, Land, and People: A Century of Change in Prairie Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 132.

Meat was in such high demand that the manager of the Fort Reliance Alaska Commercial Company trading post, Captain Hansen, who took over after Jack McQuesten, refused to trade pelts during the winter of 1897-1898 as he only wanted wild meat to help stave off the Dawson food shortage.¹²⁶ The shortage of food did not only effect outsiders, though, but the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as well. In response to Hansen's refusal to trade anything but meat, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in sent a delegation to discuss their own food shortage with him and to negotiate a trade agreement. Chief Isaac, a shaman (and former chief) named John, and Silas (who was later second chief) went to negotiate. Hansen stood by his decision and said he would only distribute food and trade items if they brought in moose meat. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in responded by arranging a hunting expedition to bring in moose meat for sale in Dawson.¹²⁷

Tappan Adney remarked on the competition for game during the Gold Rush stating that during the summer of 1898 the demand for fresh meat was so great that non-Indigenous men canoed to the upper Klondike River to hunt moose (likely they needed to travel as moose had been pushed out of the Klondike Valley due to mining).¹²⁸ Adney lamented that these men overhunted and often wasted meat. Though miners hunted for personal consumption and not for a market, the vast numbers of people hunting for personal use led to a dramatic rise in hunting. If they could not get large game, miners shot ptarmigan, grouse, and other fowl as well as small ground mammals for themselves.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁷ Ibid. After this meeting they arranged a hunting expedition up the Klondike River Valley – this is the trip in which Tappan Adney accompanied them and he published his account.

¹²⁸ Tappan Adney, *Klondike Stampede* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1899), 633.

¹²⁹ Canada, *The Yukon Territory: Its History and Resources* (Ottawa, 1916), 220.

By the time the Gold Rush population peaked, there were some Indigenous peoples who were considered professional commercial meat hunters. Initially, getting into this business did not require licenses, it was unregulated, and no records exist for the number of commercial hunters or their harvests.¹³⁰ Technically, the 1894 *Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act* (also referred to as the *Northwest Game Act*) applied to the Yukon district, but it was never enforced due to the difficulty of policing such a land mass as the entirety of the Canadian North. The *Northwest Game Act* was the first legislative attempt to control northern wildlife harvesting and was largely focused on regulating hunting activity of outsiders into the North, but both residents and commercial hunters frequently ignored the Act into the early 1900s.¹³¹

Increased hunting activity and declining game populations concerned the NWMP who knew from experiences on the Prairies that when Indigenous peoples were deprived of their traditional subsistence base they relied on the government for food, medicine, and clothing. NWMP Inspector Frank Harper noted in an 1899 report that there was a widespread decline in game and furbearing animals. He wrote that the *Northwest Game Act* was not enforced in the Yukon the previous year and that “if the quantity of moose that was brought in last summer is brought in every year very few will shortly exist in the country.”¹³² Despite Harper's report to Ottawa, the federal government failed to order the federal *Northwest Game Act* be enforced, and wiped its hands of responsibility to the Yukon by handing jurisdiction of hunting regulation to the new government of the Yukon

¹³⁰ Manfred Hoefs, *Yukon's Hunting History* (Whitehorse: AMBOCA Ecological Services, 2017), 133.

¹³¹ Donald Wetherell, *Wildlife, Land, and People: A Century of Change in Prairie Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 191. The *Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act* was based on hunting laws of Ontario.

¹³² Canada, “North West Mounted Police a Series,” *Sessional Papers* 15 (1899): 62.

Territory in a 1900 amendment under the 1898 *Yukon Act*, the legislation which created the Government of the Yukon Territory, making the Yukon the first Province or Territory in Canada to take responsibility for wildlife management.¹³³ The Yukon territorial government passed its own legislation to regulate hunting in the territory in July of 1901, which was quite similar to the previous *Northwest Game Act*. Responsibility to direct its own game regulations was unique in the North, as the NWT's wildlife laws were made in Ottawa and Alaska's were made in Washington.¹³⁴

The *Ordinance Respecting the Preservation of Game in the Yukon Territory*, or the *Yukon Game Ordinance*, was favourable to Indigenous hunters in its first two decades. The *Game Ordinance* did not apply to Indigenous Yukoners, with the exception of a ban on hunting bison, ensuring Indigenous peoples the right to hunt whereas everyone else was restricted. DIA representatives were very agreeable to these terms, as they argued that it was in the best interests of both Indigenous peoples and the federal government to allow them to hunt rather than create a "constant charge" on the government.¹³⁵ The *Ordinance* introduced bag limits and closed seasons on fur bearing and big game animals. It required all hunters to report all kills to the NWMP. A 1902 amendment to the *Game Ordinance* required market hunters and meat dealers to purchase a license (again this did not apply to Indigenous people).¹³⁶

¹³³ McCandless, 33.

¹³⁴ There were important differences between colonialism and wildlife use in the NWT and Yukon by 1900. The population of the Yukon was much higher than that of the NWT, including a higher population of non-Indigenous people, and the Yukon had more industrial development impacting the habitat of game. In 1901 the total population of the NWT was approximately 20,000 where the total Yukon population was only slightly higher with 27,000. However, census data for northern regions does not indicate ethnic background.

¹³⁵ Coates, "The Sinews," 151.

¹³⁶ Hoefs, 132-133

The 1902 *Ordinance* also created a new bureaucracy – the office of game wardens, or game guardians.¹³⁷ Just as they were assigned the duties of Indian Agent until 1914 and Fishery Inspector after 1918, the NWMP were assigned responsibility to act as game guardians in the Yukon, enforce regulations, and inspect all game caught in the territory. As of 1907, all members of the NWMP were game guardians, but the Gold Commissioner also had the authority to name other members of the public as game guardians as needed.¹³⁸ While the office of game warden fell under the Yukon game regulations and part of their responsibility was linked to conservation efforts, the NWMP focused more on collecting licensing fees than on conservation. Many NWMP officers spent much of their working time traveling throughout the territory, making it difficult to focus on monitoring hunting activity for extended periods of time.¹³⁹ Further, prospectors, surveyors and miners were exempted from these regulations when "in actual need of the beasts for food."¹⁴⁰

One indication that enforcement of the *Game Ordinance* was lax is that there are hardly any reports from game guardians in Dawson, and any that do exist are very brief and pertain exclusively to breaches in game laws. In 1908 the Yukon followed Alaska's lead and began requiring non-residents to purchase a license at \$100 each and there was an

¹³⁷ McCandless, 4. January 7th 1922 letter from the Territorial Treasurer states that according to the Game Ordinance, Indians cannot be licensed to act as Guides, "nor can they be employed to act as a guide." The reason provided is "the fact that all licensed guides are ipso facto Game Guardians during their term of licenses and an official Game Guardian would accompany all Non-Residential Hunters in order that the provisions of the Game Ordinance are observed. Section 36 of the Ordinance exempts Indians from certain provisions and the view is taken that they cannot act as Guides etc." YA, Game Regulations and Permits, 3/2 GOV 1889 f.12-4B.

¹³⁸ There are no records that indicate how many game guardians were in the Yukon at any one time between 1902 to 1940. Most likely this is because game guardian was an honorary position, not a paid position – another factor which may have influenced how well guardians carried out their duties.

¹³⁹ A.C. Harris, *Alaska and Klondike Goldfields* (Chicago: H.J. Smith Publishing Company, 1897), 6.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

extra export permit fee to ship trophies home if sport hunting.¹⁴¹ One aspect of colonization, specifically as it related to resource use in the Yukon, was the policing and reinforcement of new boundaries. As the Yukon took over responsibility for its hunting regulations, they ensured that their authority over prescribed use of game was visible by requiring Indigenous peoples from Alaska and the NWT who traditionally hunted and trapped in the Yukon to purchase a \$100 non-resident hunting license as well. According to a letter from Indian Agent John Hawksley to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Harper Reed, game guardians also watched for non-resident hunters and collected this licensing fee.¹⁴² It seemed that, when it was enforced, the motivation had more to do with securing revenue than with conservation of wildlife.

Game regulations in the Yukon did not develop in isolation, though they often differed from game laws elsewhere in Canada. While there was no wildlife crisis or species collapse reported in the Yukon between 1900 and 1940, game protection acts often arose from concern that game depletion may happen there as it did elsewhere.¹⁴³ Yukon game legislation shifted in reaction to public attitudes about game management from populations elsewhere in Canada as well as from the United States. Big game managers in other provinces, fur buyers, sport hunters, and conservation groups had influence on Yukon game laws. In *Wildlife, Land, and People*, historian Donald Wetherell explained that in the early 1900s, wild meat was sold in shops across Canada as meat hunted during open seasons was legal to sell. Bag limits frequently changed, but they were usually high and often hunters ignored bag limits or hunted in closed seasons where game legislation was

¹⁴¹ Canada, *The Yukon Territory: Its History and Resources* (Ottawa, 1908).

¹⁴² YA, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1/9 GOV 1619 f. 1490-J1. Letter from John Hawksley to Reed, Jan 24 1931.

¹⁴³ Wetherell, 125.

poorly enforced due to the size of the region, such as the Prairies or the North, and sold the meat. These transgressions generated criticism of the wild meat market and commercial hunting, both when legal and not, and created a fear that this practise was an ongoing threat to wildlife.¹⁴⁴

In *States of Nature*, Tina Loo demonstrated that 20th century conservation efforts promoted certain uses of wildlife over others, based on values that both state and non-state organization believed should govern human relationships with nature. These values included the perception that wildlife, trees, and fish were resources and commodities, and that there were appropriate uses of these resources. Wildlife management that emerged across the country in the early 20th century promoted the non-consumptive use of wildlife, instead conserving animals for sport hunting and viewing pleasure of the middle and upper classes.¹⁴⁵ Both federal and provincial game laws limited or banned the commercial sale of wild meat in Canada. This rule was meant to target what many conservationists thought was the root of wildlife decline, which was the market sale of game and fur-bearing animals for consumption. This belief was widely promoted across Canada and shaped the ways in which the Canadian government formulated regulations regarding the use of wild animals.¹⁴⁶

Loo argued market hunting was made illegal due to a belief that Canada had industrialized to a point in society where it was no longer necessary for Canadians to consume wild meat as they could purchase other food items; the act of consuming wild

¹⁴⁴ Wetherell, 178.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

meat signalled primitiveness as well as geographic and social marginality.¹⁴⁷ Wetherell offered a slightly different argument stating that banning market hunting did not mean it was wrong to eat wild meat, but that it was wrong to sell it. The belief was that wild meat was expensive, therefore, market hunters provided meat to people who did not need it because if they could afford wild meat they could certainly afford domesticated meat.¹⁴⁸ However, these perceptions did not apply well to the realities of the Yukon where climate limited agriculture and livestock raising, and wild meat was often the only option, aside from fish. However, concerns over market hunting did reach the Yukon. In Dawson alone before 1910, wild meat accounted for one-third of all meat consumed in the city.¹⁴⁹ There seemed to be a consensus among both federal and territorial civil servants present in Dawson between 1897 and 1905 that market hunting contributed to a decline in big game populations in Dawson as the high profits earned from the sale of wild meat resulted in overhunting. According to social historian Robert McCandless, killing moose and caribou for the Dawson meat market reached its zenith in the winter of 1903-1904 when 1,500 caribou were killed in the Klondike river basin alone.¹⁵⁰ This was not unique to the Yukon. Wildlife populations declined at the turn of the century across Canada as a result of agricultural expansion, settlement, railway development, industry, mining, and forestry leading to the purposeful destruction of wildlife habitat.¹⁵¹ However, in the Yukon, after the town's population rapidly declined after 1905, these concerns were not as severe.

¹⁴⁷ Loo, *States of Nature*, 23. Kathryn Hunter also argues that pot hunters (those who hunted for food, not sport) "smacked of primitivism and deprivation." Kathryn Hunter, "Colonial Hunting Cultures" in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*, James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O'Gorman eds. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015): 180.

¹⁴⁸ Wetherell, 180.

¹⁴⁹ McCandless, 37.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 49

¹⁵¹ Loo, *States of Nature*, 16.

Strongly connected with declining game populations was the rising popularity of sport hunting. In "Of Moose and Men," Tina Loo discussed the rise of hunting big game for sport in Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As Canada industrialized and urbanized, sport hunting was an opportunity to escape "the pressures and conventions of city life." With a growing middle class with more disposable income and advances in transportation, upper- and middle-class white men could more easily reach hunting grounds to reaffirm their masculinity.¹⁵² Those sport hunters who came to the Yukon were usually wealthy urban men from the South, with a large percentage coming from the United States.¹⁵³ As sport hunting grew in popularity, sport hunting lobbies pushed federal and provincial governments to play a more active role in conserving and managing big game populations. Often these regulations worked in favour of accommodating sport hunters.¹⁵⁴ In his study of Banff National Park, Courtney Mason argued that wildlife regulations in Western Canada focused on creating and sustaining the region as a sport hunting paradise. The Stoney-Nakoda were banned from hunting within the boundaries of the park as their subsistence way of life clashed with the sportsmen's code of ethics. George Colpitts noted that Europeans blamed Indigenous hunters for the lack of big game as early as the late 1700s, and these ideas were strong within 20th century Canada as well.¹⁵⁵ For example, John Sandlos argued that as the North became popular among sport hunters, government agents and trophy hunters brought up arguments that Indigenous

¹⁵² Tina Loo, "Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in B.C., 1880-1939," in *Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Autumn 2001): 298-300.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.

¹⁵⁵ George Colpitts, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2002).

northerners “needlessly slaughtered” animals.¹⁵⁶ However, those blaming Indigenous hunting tended to ignore the pressures on wildlife populations from settlement, mining and timber exploitation, market hunting, and hunting for sport.¹⁵⁷

According to Yukon wildlife management biologist Manfred Hoefs, non-resident trophy hunters began to show up at around the same time as the Gold Rush, but sport hunting did not become really popular in the Yukon until around 1920.¹⁵⁸ Big game hunters from southern Canada and the United States increasingly travelled to the Yukon for sport hunting beginning in the early 1900s and sometimes complained that market hunters took away desired game from sport hunting.¹⁵⁹ However, there were also reports that trophy hunters were careless with local populations. In October of 1912 the *Whitehorse Star* reported on a massive slaughter of big game after trophy hunters came into the White River area for several weeks. Both Indigenous peoples and miners in the southern Yukon expressed anger over the slaughter with one miner stating, “these people, slaughtering merely for pleasure in killing [...] reduced the herds and drove back the sheep. They also killed many moose and caribou when not needed.” He further argued the meat was left to rot as they shot too many to eat.¹⁶⁰

While locals complained about sport hunting, the 1916 edition of the *Yukon Guidebook*, an annual publication for sport hunting that reported on the richest big game

¹⁵⁶ John Sandlos, "From the Outside Looking In," 11. Colonialism through conservation was rooted in romantic notions of preserving sport hunting opportunities and effective resource management; and concerns about the apparent wastefulness of Indigenous hunters. Bocking, "Indigenous Knowledge and the History of Science, Race, and Colonial Authority in Northern Canada," in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada*, ed. Andrew Badlwin, Laura Cameron, and Audry Kobayashi (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2011): 44.

¹⁵⁷ Mason, *Spirit of the Rockies*, 55.

¹⁵⁸ Hoefs, 139.

¹⁵⁹ Willis, "The Environmental Effects of the Yukon Gold Rush 1896-1906: Alterations to Land, Destruction of Wildlife, and Disease," 83.

¹⁶⁰ *Whitehorse Star*, "Much Game Killed," (October 4 1912).

areas, stated that game had grown scarce in some localities of the Yukon due to extensive market hunting to supply mining camps. McCandless suggested that the guide book attempted to embarrass the Yukon into changing its laws to better align with those in the South.¹⁶¹ It is hard to determine whether the Yukon Guidebook made any impact on the Yukon territorial government, but this was around the same time frame that the territorial government began focusing on expanding the business that big game hunting brought to the region.

Market hunting stood in opposition to sport hunting. In 1918 the Canadian Commission of Conservation argued that market hunting was the biggest contributor to wildlife destruction in Canada. Sport hunters and fish and game associations also demonized market hunting.¹⁶² In a popular publication in 1921, Dominion government entomologist and conservationist Gordon Hewitt argued that market hunting was a serious, and avoidable, cause of game depletion.¹⁶³ In 1921, meat dealers in Dawson purchased 7100 lbs of moose and 3600 lbs of caribou, and this was in addition to game harvested by individuals for private sale.¹⁶⁴ Many conservationists concerned about the North believed that Indigenous peoples were the primary threat to wildlife populations as they provisioned Canadian mining, logging, and construction camps with wild meat, and engaged in the destruction of wildlife in pursuit of their own subsistence.¹⁶⁵ It seems that those speaking

¹⁶¹ McCandless, 53.

¹⁶² Wetherell, 179.

¹⁶³ Gordon Hewitt, *The Conservation of the Wild Life of Canada* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921).

¹⁶⁴ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 67.

¹⁶⁵ Sportsmen and fish and game clubs also condemn Indigenous hunting. Saskatchewan's chief game guardian, Fred Bradshaw, expressed concern that overhunting for consumption would tarnish the province's reputation as a big game hunting destination. Loo, *States of Nature*, 40; Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin*, 11.



Image 6.3. Interior view of the Commissioner's Residence in Dawson showing the hall with a moose head and two caribou heads decorating the walls, 1914. DCMA 1984.208.3.

out against market hunting in favour of sport hunting neglected to see the wider, infrastructural impact that sport hunting had on local game populations. While the number of animals sport hunters were permitted to kill annually were minimal, the practise of trophy hunting itself had wider consequences. For example, hunters needed access to rich areas which encouraged developing roadways and increased transportation networks that contributed to habitat destruction. In the Yukon particularly, hunters coming into the region contributed to increased air traffic, and the noise disturbances likely influenced game populations to move further away from developing air bases.

In the Prairies, the biggest debate about hunting rights in the first decades of the 20th century arose over setting priorities between sport hunting and Indigenous use of wildlife. According to Wetherell, because the government encouraged agriculture and provided rations to Indigenous groups they argued Indigenous peoples no longer needed to hunt, favouring the conservation of wildlife species for sport hunting.¹⁶⁶ Indigenous peoples were not the only ones engaging in market hunting in the Yukon. As early as 1904, NWMP officer Ross Cuthbert reported that Indigenous peoples in the Klondike region found it more difficult each year to make a living from hunting as game had become scarcer due to an increase of white market hunters.¹⁶⁷ Chief Isaac complained about market hunting leading to a decline in big game populations in both 1911 and 1915, arguing that non-Indigenous hunters were responsible for much of the over-hunting in the Klondike.¹⁶⁸ However, though selling wild meat was not banned in the Yukon, in 1916, the Minister of the Interior, W.J. Roche blamed Indigenous market hunters for scarcity of game in the Yukon.¹⁶⁹

While these ideas of conservation were spreading across Canada, both federal and territorial administrators in the North reacted in ways different from those in the South as a direct result of the relationship with Indigenous northerners and the DIA's desire to ward off extra financial burden. In places like the Yukon where there were no treaties, there was no legal security in resource use or protection in maintaining Indigenous control of

¹⁶⁶ Wetherell, 305.

¹⁶⁷ NWMP, *Report of Commanding Superintendent Perry* (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November, 1904), 39.

¹⁶⁸ *Dawson Daily News*, "Montezuma of Moosehide Makes Fervent Appeal," (December 15, 1911). "Chief Wants Caribou - Says 'Take My Gold,'" *Dawson Daily News*, (November 4, 1915).

¹⁶⁹ WJ Roche, *The Yukon Territory, It's History and Resources* (Ottawa: Department of the Interior, 1916), 220.

resources in traditional areas of occupation and use.¹⁷⁰ Indian Agents worried that a restriction on hunting for food would lead to increased expenditures for the Department, especially in the North where subsistence hunting remained a crucial food source, not only for the Indigenous population but for non-Indigenous people as well. Market hunting had much looser regulations in the Yukon than elsewhere in the country, at least into the mid-20th century. The Yukon was the one exception to the general trend of restricting market hunting and the sale of wild meat where Yukoners were permitted to sell game meat unlicensed until 1920. In many places in the South, the DIA convinced provincial governments to allow Indian Agents to issue special permits to needy Indigenous people to hunt for personal consumption, but in the Yukon Indigenous peoples were exempted game laws completely. Game meat was widely available for sale from 1897 to 1947 in the Yukon, decades after the practice had become illegal elsewhere in the continent.¹⁷¹ Manitoba banned the purchase of wild meat from Indigenous peoples in 1915 and banned market hunting completely in 1917, as did Saskatchewan, and Alberta did as well in 1922.¹⁷² In a sense, the ban on selling wild meat in the South was a direct hit on Indigenous hunters to not only cut back on hunting, but it undermined their point of intersection in the capitalist economy. It also furthered the assimilative agenda of the DIA because with Indigenous peoples unable to sell their meat, leaving them without cash profit to buy provisions, it encouraged Indigenous peoples to seek out wage labour.

¹⁷⁰ Frances Abele, "Canadian Contradictions: Forty Years of Northern Political Development," in *Arctic* 40, no. 4 (December 1987) 311. Dianne Newell, 55.

¹⁷¹ McCandless, 46.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 180. Kathryn Hunter also discussed this, "Colonial Hunting Cultures," in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History*, ed. James Beattie, Edward Melillo, and Emily O'Gorman (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015): 187.

Like elsewhere in Canada, in the Yukon sport hunting was idealized over subsistence and market hunting. Social historian Robert McCandless argued that regulations in the Yukon tended to be responses to outside pressures rather than responses to local circumstances.¹⁷³ This seemed to be the case after 1920 especially as the Yukon regulations shifted to focus more on the developing sport hunting industry and restricting market hunting. By 1920 there were three factors that encouraged the Yukon Territorial Government to amend the legislation and require market hunters, including Indigenous ones, to purchase a license. The first was a fear among government officials and local residents that game was in decline. As discussed previously, NWMP officers, missionaries, and Indigenous peoples noted the disappearance of game populations in the Klondike region since 1896. Secondly, federal and territorial officials in the Yukon grew increasingly concerned over the decades of the early 20th century that a declining game population would create hardship for Indigenous people and increase their dependency on government relief. Restricting market hunting was hoped to prevent overhunting in general. Finally, the growing popularity of sport hunting and the recognition of the North as a sport hunters' paradise encouraged the territorial government to conserve big game species that were economically profitable to the territorial economy.¹⁷⁴

Together, these concerns led to an amendment to the *Yukon Game Ordinance* in 1920 requiring market hunters and game dealers to purchase a license, though there was no

¹⁷³ McCandless, 37.

¹⁷⁴ Territorial tax collector L. Higgins informed the gold commission in 1927 that the abundance of big game in the Yukon surprised hunters who arrived from the South and the Yukon had earned the title of "the Paradise of the Big Game Hunter." He argued hunters told him the Yukon had more trophies secured than anywhere in North America. Higgins suggested that the Yukon widely advertise itself for big game hunting as, an average, each hunter spent between \$3000-3500 in the Yukon per trip and he saw this industry as a financial draw to the territory. Letter from Territorial Agent L. Higgins to Gold Commissioner Percy Reid, October 17, 1926. YA, Game Regulations and Permits 3/4 GOV 1891 f. f.12-6A.

bag limit or seasonal restrictions on those holding a commercial hunting license.¹⁷⁵ Prior to the licensing requirement in 1920, Indigenous peoples were exempt from Yukon game laws, and commercial sales of meat to outsiders was an important source of income for many Indigenous men in the Yukon.¹⁷⁶ However, in 1920 an amendment to the *Game Ordinance* in 1920 subjected Indigenous Yukoners to game regulations. Indigenous Yukoners could hunt for themselves for food, but were required a license to sell meat.¹⁷⁷ A resident hunting license cost \$25 in 1920, but for many Indigenous peoples, similarly to the commercial fishery, they felt the cost of licensing outweighed the benefits and many Indigenous hunters were thus marginalized from market hunting.¹⁷⁸ Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy explained that, aside from loss of control over resource use, these new regulations imposed an entirely new system of hunting on Indigenous people.¹⁷⁹ Regulations that controlled when, how, and where Indigenous peoples could fish and hunt worked to limit their engagement in not only subsistence practises but also undermined their ability to be competitive in commercial markets.

Game regulations in the Yukon were created by the Territorial Council in Dawson, an area where local authorities for decades at that point has vocalized fear that marginalizing Indigenous Yukoners from fishing and hunting would foster starvation,

¹⁷⁵ Loo, *States of Nature*, 26.

¹⁷⁶ Dobrowolsky, *A History of Moosehide Settlement*, 9. 1931 prices: Caribou 10 cents a pound; Moose 15-10 cents a pound; grouse 75 cents each; ptarmigan 1.00 for 3; salmon 15 cents a pound; bear 20 cents a pound; mountain sheep 50 cents a pound. white fish/grayling 50 cents a pound.

¹⁷⁷ Yukon Territorial Government, *Yukon Game Ordinance 1920* (Dawson 1920), 14. Indigenous peoples were also subject to regulations prohibiting killing female animals, selling game caught in closed season, killing game other than for food, use of poison, exporting raw hides, and hunting bison, buffalo, and beaver.

¹⁷⁸ Loo, *States of Nature*, 47.

¹⁷⁹ Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, 39. John Sandlos and Stephen Bocking also discuss the extension of state power into the North. Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin*; Stephen Bocking, "Indigenous Knowledge and the History of Science, Race, and Colonial Authority in Northern Canada," in *Rethinking the Great White North: Race, Nature, and the Historical Geographies of Whiteness in Canada*, ed. Andrew Baldwin, Laura Cameron, and Audry Kobayashi (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2011) 39-61.

destitution, and reliance on the DIA. The fact regulations seemed to ignore these concerns after 1920 speaks to the influence of the settler population in the local area. The “hands-off” approach to regulating Indigenous resource use before this time did not work well for settlers who expected the state to regulate and work on their behalf. Much of this belief comes from previously living in areas outside of the North where most often state regulations did favour non-Indigenous populations. As discussed in Chapter Three, settlers in colonial areas founded the socioeconomic and political orders and carried their perceived sovereignty with them when they relocated to new areas. This also explains why the non-Indigenous population in Dawson objected to Indigenous people selling fish or meat to miners and businesses in the Klondike region – it was difficult for non-Indigenous Yukoners to understand why state authorities would turn a blind eye to Indigenous peoples causing inconveniences and competition for non-Indigenous society.

Even though 1920 regulations were influenced by outside pressure and limited Indigenous ability to compete in the commercial meat market these laws were usually not followed or enforced. As mentioned above, Indigenous Yukoners found the cost of a market license high, so they were largely excluded from *legally* participating in the commercial market; many Indigenous Yukoners simply ignored the laws and continued selling meat anyway at the risk of getting caught.¹⁸⁰ Historians have shown that elsewhere in the North, Indigenous peoples were vocal about their determination to protect their subsistence ways of life and ability to participate in the market economy through selling wild meat. In *Hunters at the Margin*, along with examining how the state attempted to regulate and limit Indigenous traditional hunting practises, Sandlos examined how

¹⁸⁰ Coates, “The Sinews,” 154.

Indigenous northerners resisted these limitations. Such resistance in the NWT included protests, boycotts, and letters to various forms of government. Like in the Yukon, the most common form of resistance was simply not following the regulations and continuing to hunt anyway.¹⁸¹ In *Kiumajut (Talking Back)*, Frank Tester and Peter Kulchyski also examined how regulations imposed in the Arctic led to many Inuit relying on state support as, similarly to the Yukon in the 1920s, they were denied independent economic livelihoods due to the regulations. Similarly to Sandlos, Tester and Kulchyski argued that under these regulations, Inuit people faced the decision to either go hungry or break the law, and in many cases, they broke wildlife and hunting laws for survival.¹⁸²

Such approaches to resistance were similar in the Yukon as well. Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder Victor Henry recalled that when they were out on trap lines they were permitted to hunt for personal use, but otherwise they often simply ignored game laws and snuck around to hunt.¹⁸³ There are letters in the archival record from Indigenous groups across the Yukon between 1900 and 1940 protesting, seeking help, or resisting changes to their subsistence lifestyles. In 1932, an Indigenous band in Carcross sent a letter to John Hawksley with a petition signed by twelve people to stop white hunters, trappers, and fishers in their area. Of particular concern was fishing and hunting activity along Little Atlin Lake. The correspondent, Patsy Henderson, wrote,

We do not think it right to fish from our doors and haul the fish away [to Tagish] and these people even shoot muskrats to feed minks all summer long, we depend on

¹⁸¹ Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margins*.

¹⁸² Peter Kulchyski and Frank Tester, *Kiumajut (Talking Back): Game Management and Inuit Rights, 1900-70* (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2008).

¹⁸³ Field Notes. Informal conversation with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder. February 2017.

these rats. [The Barretts] do more ham than any, shoot moose all year round. They will have us starved out if something is not done quick.¹⁸⁴

This plea from Carcross asked Hawksley to help create an Indigenous preserve; it was this letter that encouraged him to ask the Gold Commissioner to set aside Little Atlin Lake as an Indigenous fishing and game preserve mentioned above. The same year, Teslin Lake chief Joe Sqaum wrote to the DIA in Ottawa asking for recognition and permission to secure his traditional hunting and trapping area. He wrote:

I am sending you a sketch of my trapping and hunting ground. I am an Indian chief and have hunted and trapped over this ground since a child. I wish you could grant me the right to trap and hunt over this ground. I do not wish you to understand that I want to exclude anyone to the contrary I have taken other Indians with me several times when they had no other good trapping ground, but as I am getting older I would like to have some place to trap and make my home. Everyone around the Teslin Lake district recognizes my trapping ground, but outsiders may come in who will not do so.¹⁸⁵

This request was rejected as the *Yukon Game Ordinance* did not have provisions sanctioning granting special permission to trap or hunt over any specific area and no person, whether Indigenous or not, was permitted to hold exclusive right to any area.¹⁸⁶

Throughout his lifetime, Chief Isaac was vocal about his fight for his peoples' access to resources of their ancestral lands, and he often protested when outsiders made it harder for his people to earn a subsistence living – discussed in detail below. Indian Agent John Hawksley wrote a piece for the *Dawson Daily News* on April 12 1932 upon Chief Isaac's death. He stated that during the years that he had known Isaac, the chief was always

¹⁸⁴ The Barretts they refer to were brothers Ed and George Barret. Ed Barret was the government telegraph operator at Tagish and he and George ran a mink farm there. Letter from an Indigenous Band in Carcross to Indian Agent Hawksley, May 10, 1932. YA, Fisheries Regulations 1/3, GOV 1893 f.12-11B.

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Joe Sqaum to DIA, August 22, 1932. YA, Fisheries Regulations 1/3, GOV 1893 f.12-11B.

¹⁸⁶ Letter from Comptroller Jeckell to DIA, November 21, 1932. YA, Fisheries Regulations 1/3, GOV 1893 f.12-11B.

anxious about the protection and welfare of his people, especially regarding the influx of white people to the area engaging in trapping and hunting thereby causing difficulties for his people to carry out subsistence harvesting.¹⁸⁷

Most government officials in the Yukon appear to have agreed in practice with Chief Isaac, and, for the most part, the territorial administration seemed fairly lenient with Indigenous hunters. In May of 1920, Hayes Lloyd of the Advisory Board of Wildlife Protection wrote to Gold Commissioner George Mackenzie indicating that one of the Yukon Game Guardians, Tom Dickson, wrote an article that was published in *Outdoor Life* magazine in which he condemned Indigenous Yukoners for indiscriminately killing animals. Hayes reported that Dickson claimed that one Indigenous man shot twenty-six moose just for tallow and left the rest to rot. He also stated that Indigenous hunters slaughtered forty-three sheep and left the hides and hundreds of caribou were killed for reasons other than food.¹⁸⁸ In response, Mackenzie informed Lloyd that Dickson arrested many Indigenous hunters, who appeared in front of Judge Bell in Dawson. Bell told him that Indigenous peoples had a right to do whatever they pleased with game in the Yukon Territory and ordered that Dickson pay the costs of court as he exceeded his duty as Game Guardian.¹⁸⁹ Further, some RCMP officers tended to be lax about enforcing game laws in the Yukon as they feared losing whatever esteem they held in Indigenous communities and

¹⁸⁷ THA Chief Isaac 1 of 2.

¹⁸⁸ YA, Game Regulations and Permits June 1919-Nov 1920 3/2, GOV 1889 f.12-3B. Letter from Hayes Lloyd, to George P. Mackenzie, May 20 1920.

¹⁸⁹ YA, Game Regulations and Permits June 1919-Nov 1920 3/2, GOV 1889 f.12-3B. G.P. Mackenzie to Hayes Lloyd, June 14, 1920.

many bent the rules because they relied on Indigenous hunting to supply meat for themselves as well as meat and fish for their sled dogs.¹⁹⁰

Prosecutions were infrequent among Indigenous peoples and punishments were usually minor.¹⁹¹ In fact, the level of overall enforcement of the *Game Ordinance* actually seemed to decrease after 1920. After 1921 the reports that had been recorded quarterly diminished to only annually. As the 1920s wore on, the reporting stopped completely.¹⁹² Part of the decline in record keeping could be that by at least 1922 the office of the game warden assigned game guardian positions to members of the public.¹⁹³ In more isolated areas game guardians were near powerless to enforce regulations as they visited these areas infrequently.¹⁹⁴ In December 1921, an American sport hunter who had recently been in the Yukon wrote a letter of complaint to the Gold Commissioner about the enforcement of Yukon game laws. William Beach, from New York, was a member of the Conservation Committee of the Camp Fire Club of America and wrote on behalf of the committee arguing that the Yukon laws were not very strong for game conservation. He referred to two instances he disapproved of, involving the regulations themselves as well as their enforcement. The first complaint was that a bag limit of six caribou was much too high to remain sustainable, and his second complaint was that he knew of a case where American

¹⁹⁰ McCandless, 36. Field Notes, Informal conversations in Dawson, February 2017, suggested that marriages between NWMP and Indigenous women was another reason they sometimes bent the rules.

¹⁹¹ If Indigenous peoples were caught breaking game laws they were dealt with under the *Indian Act*.

¹⁹² McCandless, 37.

¹⁹³ Forty Mile RNWMP detachment reports to the Dawson RNWMP and Gold Commissioner that a Mr. John Fanning who lived 27 miles below Forty Mile desired to obtain the Game Warden appointment. According to the letter, Fanning had stated to the RCMP "the Indians have been in the habit in past seasons, coming from Eagle, and killing Moose out of season." He wished to be made Game Warden to have the authority to "protect the animals." In April, he was made Game Warden. YA Game Regulations and Permits 3/2, GOV 1889 f.12-4B.

¹⁹⁴ Coates, "The Sinews," 154.

hunters brought several sheep heads home from the Yukon but they only reported two and that the game guardians failed to inspect them.¹⁹⁵



Image 6.4. Two First Nations men and three non-Indigenous men pose behind the carcass of a dead moose along the Yukon River, c1915. DCMA 1995.345.1.125.

As discussed above, sport hunting was popular in the Yukon as early as 1910 and by 1920 the Yukon was recognized as one of the most abundant areas for big game sport hunting in the world.¹⁹⁶ Big game hunters were drawn to the Yukon because of the abundance of wildlife and the label of the Yukon as a big game hunter's paradise for sheep, moose, and caribou. While sport hunting in the territory was small and geographically

¹⁹⁵ YA, Game Regulations and Permits 3/2, GOV 1889 f.12-4B. David Calverley discussed a similar lack of enforcement of game laws in Ontario before 1898. Calverley, "When the Need for It No Longer Existed: Declining Wildlife and Native Hunting Rights in Ontario, 1791-1898," *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, ed. Jean L. Manore and Dale Miner (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2007): 105.

¹⁹⁶ Frank Oliver, *The Yukon Territory, It's History and Resources* (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1907), 107. The rise of sport hunting in the Yukon happened later than elsewhere in Canada. Greg Gillespie argued that in Canadian wilderness was constructed and sold as a hunting paradise and federal and provincial governments worked to protect animal species for sport hunting as early as the 19th century. Greg Gillespie, "The Empire's Eden: British Hunters, Travel Writing, and Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century Canada," *The Culture of Hunting in Canada*, ed. Jean L. Manore and Dale Miner (Vancouver: UB.C. Press, 2007): 42-55.

restricted, concentrated in the southern Yukon (Carcross and Kluane) with some minor activity in the Mayo-Pelly region, the growth of this tourism industry shaped game regulations in the Yukon Territory in ways that favoured this use of wildlife.¹⁹⁷ As sport hunting began more popular and profitable, conservation efforts ensured there was an ample supply of prized game for hunters when they arrived. Sport hunting should have been a profitable industry for Indigenous Yukoners acting as guides. However, under the 1920 *Game Ordinance* Indigenous peoples were not permitted to purchase a guide license until 1926, at which point it was only at the discretion of the Gold Commissioner.¹⁹⁸ Some local administrators in the Yukon were critical of sport hunting since its infancy as an industry. For example, in 1913 NWMP Inspector Moodie argued that sport hunting only allowed a few men or companies to earn high profit at the expense of Indigenous Yukoners by undercutting their subsistence and market game base causing them to rely on government relief.¹⁹⁹ Indigenous peoples as well as non-Indigenous people voiced concerns and opposition to these game regulations, specifically as they impacted Indigenous peoples' abilities to continue supporting themselves through subsistence activity and earning cash through market hunting and guiding.

By 1930, demands on Yukon game resources led to serious concerns about the viability of Indigenous subsistence lifestyle.²⁰⁰ John Hawksley wrote to Duncan Campbell

¹⁹⁷ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 55-56.

¹⁹⁸ The 1920 *Ordinance* added a new section stating any resident holding a hunting license was eligible to apply for a guide license as either chief guide, assistant guide, or camp helper. The cost of these licenses was \$20 for Chief Guide, \$10 for Assistant Guide, \$5 for Camp Helper. Yukon Territorial Government, *Yukon Game Ordinance 1920* (Dawson, 1920). Yukon Territorial Government, *Yukon Game Ordinance 1926* (Dawson, 1926).

¹⁹⁹ NWMP, *Report of Moodie*, (Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report, November, 1913), 278.

²⁰⁰ LAC, RG 10 6731 f. 420-I: "Conditions of Hunting Indians in Remote Districts, 1926" and "What Canada is Doing for the Hunting Indians, 1936."

Scott in August of 1931. In his lengthy letter, Hawksley appealed to the DIA to encourage the Yukon to amend its game laws to better aid Indigenous peoples in the Yukon. He argued that as Yukon Indigenous peoples were non-treaty they had to be more self-supporting than elsewhere, but they had difficulty providing for themselves since the market for wild meat vanished as the mining population decreased and paid work became scarce with white men preferred whenever opportunities for paid employment did arise. Agriculture was not an option in the Yukon as elsewhere in Canada as the climate was not cooperative. He reported that in the summer of 1930 furs became scarce and the price for furs dropped considerably and there were no Indigenous men working on steamboats since before 1930. He argued that as their only opportunity to support themselves was through hunting, trapping, and fishing the Yukon regulations should work to favour their hunting ability instead of inhibiting to follow the same regulations and pit them in competition with whites.²⁰¹

Conflict over how wildlife could legally be hunted had concrete impacts for Indigenous economic and social life in more ways than licensing after 1920. Regulations operated on irrational timelines of closed and open seasons instead of working with seasonal, or biological timelines. The systems of wildlife management and hunting patterns that Indigenous peoples followed prior to the implementation of regulations depended on an intimate knowledge about the movement and habits of local animals. However, game regulations tended to follow scientific knowledge about animal biology and natural systems, which usually ignoring or belittled Indigenous and traditional knowledge.²⁰² In April 1935 the Comptroller in Dawson, Lorne Turner, argued against Indigenous peoples

²⁰¹ YA Superintendent of Indian Affairs 1/9, GOV 1619 f. 1490-J2.

²⁰² Wetherell, 149.

following closed seasons. He wrote that after his thirty-three years' experience administering relief to Indigenous peoples in the Yukon he believed they should be permitted to hunt at any time of year for consumption.²⁰³ Where Indigenous hunting was responsive to changes in the herd, following hunting regulations meant breaking traditional and biological laws.

The international boundary between the Yukon and Alaska also created hardships for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in hunting, especially after 1930 when increased government supervision made it difficult for Indigenous peoples on either side of the border to evade detection. Game wardens began patrolling and preventing people from going across the border without licenses or paying export fees.²⁰⁴ As discussed in Chapter Two, the international border split Hwëch'in territory in half and forced them to either become citizens of Canada or of the United States. While these people had traditionally hunted together as a group, primarily between the Yukon and Porcupine Rivers, after 1900 each group was subjected to different game laws under the national, territorial, and state governments.²⁰⁵ As those Hwëch'in living in Alaska did not have rights to hunting in the Yukon, this upset both natural and customary hunting cycles. Alaskan Indigenous peoples, including those Hwëch'in people who previously hunted in the area now divided by the international border, were required to purchase a non-resident license, making hunting in the Yukon too expensive to continue.

²⁰³ YA, Game Regulations and Permits, 3/2 GOV 1889 f.12-4B.

²⁰⁴ Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and Shirleen Smith, *People of the Lakes: Stories of our Van Tut Gwich'in Elders/Googwandak Nakhwach'anjoo Van Tat Gwich'in* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009), 241-42.

²⁰⁵ Field Notes, Informal conversations with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elders, February 2017.

Even Yukon Indian Agent John Hawksley saw the arbitrariness of the national border between the Yukon and Alaska when it came to hunting. In May of 1931, Hawksley wrote to the Dawson Gold Commissioner arguing that “Canadian Indians” (referring to Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in people) living in Eagle should be permitted to hunt and trap in the Yukon without paying non-resident hunting license fees.²⁰⁶ Hawksley was clear that this privilege should apply only to Indigenous peoples in Eagle who were former residents of Forty Mile and Dawson.²⁰⁷ The Yukon Territorial government’s position remained that American-born Indigenous peoples who were residents of the Yukon received the same privileges as Indigenous peoples born in Canada and living in the Yukon. As it was residence and not nationality that determined hunting rights, many Canadian-born Indigenous peoples living in Alaska were also barred from hunting unlicensed in traditionally used areas.²⁰⁸

However, the government was more flexible with provincial and territorial boundaries. Administrators in the Yukon occasionally lobbied for more flexible game laws for Indigenous peoples outside of the Yukon. A 1927 crime report filed by Corporal Cronkhit in Dawson stated that some Peel River people from the NWT were charged for taking marten out of season according to a 1924 amendment to the *Game Ordinance* that imposed a closed season on martin across the Yukon Territory from 1924 to 1927. Cronkhit confiscated their pelts, but in his report, he stated that according to these men,

²⁰⁶ Though he believed that they should be required to pay the export tax on all furs caught in Canada unless the furs were sold in Canada, and they should report to the nearest Game Guardian when they were going to hunt and trap on the Canadian side of the boundary.

²⁰⁷ YA, Game Regulations and Permits, 3/6 GOV 1893 f.12-10A. Letter from John Hawksley to Yukon Gold Commissioner, May 14th 1931. Hawksley also wrote a similar letter to DIA Superintendent Harper Reed in January of 1931. There was no response in the archival record from Reed, so presumably the situation did not change. YA, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1/9 GOV 1619 f. 1490-J2, Letter from John Hawksley to Harper Reed, January 24 1931.

²⁰⁸ Coates, “The Sinews,” 157.

they had not been in Dawson in four years and therefore they should not be punished because they were unaware of this closed season. He urged the Gold Commissioner to issue a permit authorizing these men to sell their pelts. A. Ballard, Commanding Officer of the Yukon District, agreed with Cronkhit in issuing a permit to sell the skins, citing a former case in which a white man made the same mistake and was permitted to sell his skins and argued the Peel people should have the same courtesy. The Gold Commissioner, Percy Reid, agreed as well and issued the men a permit for sale.²⁰⁹

The Anglican church also complained to the government that requiring Indigenous peoples from the NWT to pay a non-resident licensing fee was unfair, as they had always hunted in these areas. O.S. Finnie of the Department of the Interior also argued that NWT Indigenous populations should be considered as Yukon residents under the regulations as they had obtained meat from the Yukon long before white men entered the territory.²¹⁰ In 1929, this was amended under the Yukon game regulations and Indigenous peoples of the Mackenzie Valley were exempted from this licensing fee further indicating local official's desire to allow the continuation of hunting for Northern Indigenous peoples.²¹¹

Clearly, local state authorities in the Yukon used their power to enforce only those regulations they deemed appropriate for the lived experience of the region. Over time, they continued to promote the protection of Indigenous access to resource vital to survival – though the primary impetus was cost saving more than genuine concern for Indigenous needs and desires. Missionaries and Indigenous Yukoners were also quite vocal about the loss of access to resources Indigenous peoples experienced during this time period. With

²⁰⁹ YA, Game Regulations and Permits 3/4, GOV 1891 f.12-6B.

²¹⁰ YA, Game Regulations and Permits 3/5, GOV 1892 f.12-8A, Letter from O.S. Finnie, Department of Interior to George MacLean, Gold Commissioner, March 11 1929.

²¹¹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 44.

the recognition of mining activity leading to the decline of game paired with the increase use of fish and game resources, Indigenous leaders in the Yukon carried out an active campaign of arguing for the maintenance of access to resources on their land.

Challenges to Colonial Control of Resources in the Yukon

With the flurry of transformation that came to the Klondike region with the Gold Rush, Indigenous leaders were mostly concerned with access to lands and resources. Indigenous peoples themselves were vocal about their loss of access to resources and against state-imposed regulations. Indigenous peoples across the Yukon responded to these regulations and attempted to counter their alienation from resources through vocalizing discontent, ignoring regulations, and pressing for treaty rights in the Yukon. Chief Isaac took every opportunity to remind the outsiders that they profited at the expense of his people. He spearheaded a continuous campaign between 1897 until his death in 1932 criticizing Outside imposed impacts on hunting – such as habitat destruction from mining, competition for resources, and limitations from regulations. Much of his public criticism was recorded in local newspapers, the *Dawson Daily News* and the *Yukon Sun* providing a fairly comprehensive account of his concerns and criticisms.

In *Rethinking Agency*, political theorist Sumi Madhok argued that action is not the only way of assessing agency and resistance, but speech and speech practises demonstrate agency as well. The ways in which speech is used in oppressive or colonial situations can articulate certain ways of relating to the self and to others.²¹² This is particularly clear in the years between 1897 and 1932 as Chief Isaac and other members of the Tr'ondëk

²¹² Sumi Madhok, *Rethinking Agency: Developmentalism, Gender and Rights* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2013), 62.

Hwëch'in continuously and publicly spoke about their awareness and displeasure at non-Indigenous overhunting and resource use in the Yukon. In most places in Canada, Indigenous peoples who have spoken about the struggle over Indigenous access to resources, and rights to recourse-based activities like fishing, hunting, and trapping, framed their arguments in terms of treaty rights and broken promises. But in the Yukon, without the presence of a treaty, Indigenous peoples did not formulate their responses in the same manner.²¹³ Instead, when defending their interests, Yukon Indigenous peoples based their appeals on inherent rights of long-term occupation and economic hardship. In her study of the Indian State creating a wildlife preserve for tourism in India, Madhok refers to this type of protest as 'entitlement of the prior,' meaning Indigenous peoples argue they have rights outside of the law, that existed before the state expanded control to a region, but they want the state to recognize these rights.²¹⁴

As more outsiders came into the region and resources began to diminish, the leadership roles of Yukon chiefs shifted, as they spent more time negotiating with newcomers to protect the interests of their people. Throughout his lifetime, Chief Isaac maintained good relations with the people of Dawson, and in his speeches he always welcomed newcomers to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in homeland, but he also frequently reminded them that they prospered at the expense of original inhabitants because they divorced his people from their land, drove away game, and pushed Hwëch'in into poverty.²¹⁵ As early as 1900, Chief Isaac protested outsiders' interference with Hwëch'in's way of life, arguing

²¹³ Ken Coates, "The Sinews," 148.

²¹⁴ Madhok.

²¹⁵ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 80.

that the Hwëch'in did not mine for gold and interfere with the miners therefore, he believed, miners should not harvest their game.²¹⁶

In January of 1901 chiefs Isaac and Silas arranged a public meeting in Dawson accompanied by nearly all the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in living in Moosehide. They stated that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the mistreatment Hwëch'in received regarding hard labour sentencing for intoxication. Apparently, they very briefly spoke about unequal and inconsistent sentencing they received from the NWMP for intoxication.²¹⁷ While the chiefs did address the initial purpose as to why they called the meeting, they then flipped the script and used the publicity to speak at length about their opposition to non-Indigenous resource use in the region. Chief Isaac was reported to have said that long before white men came,

Yukon Indian was happy. Indian had plenty game, no trouble, and was fat. White man come and Indian go out and kill meat to feed him. Indians give white man clothes to wear and warm him by Indian fire. By-an-by more white man come, million white man comes and cut down Indian's wood, kill Indian's game, take Indian's gold out of ground, give Indian nothing. Game all gone, wood all gone, Indian cold and hungry, white man no care.²¹⁸

Silas further stated that before government came into the Yukon everything was free, but they then had to pay to cut trees, catch fish, and hunt. Multiple others spoke at this meeting which lasted half an hour, according to the *Klondike Nugget*, including Isaac's uncle

²¹⁶ Mishler and Simone, 17.

²¹⁷ The previous week a man from Moosehide was sentenced forty-four days' imprisonment with hard labour for intoxication but as he revealed the name of the person who provided him with whiskey he was pardoned. On the day before this meeting, two other Moosehide men were also caught drunk, but even though they provided the name of their supplier, they were still sentenced to eleven days' imprisonment with hard labour. The Chiefs believed that this was a betrayal as providing a pardon to one man acted to trick those caught in future to provide names of suppliers while still sentencing the Hwëch'in.

²¹⁸ "Poor Lo, The Indian Tells His Trouble to Interested Assemblage of White Men," *Klondike Nugget*, (January 15, 1901).

Charley who stated, in Hän with Silas translating, that this was the land of his father and with all these impositions he felt “no more than a worm crawling on the ground.”²¹⁹

Chief Isaac repeated this message throughout his lifetime. In 1902, Isaac told the *Yukon Sun* that “While the coming of the white men killed our business, our trading, fishing, and hunting, yet we are glad to have him on the Yukon.” However, he said whites had driven moose and other game back into the mountains out of their reach, and that his people were dying off because of this.²²⁰ In 1911, he stated that laws were for white men, not for his people; Indigenous people did not go to jail for killing game because “This land – that’s my land. Injun lived here all time.”²²¹ He argued it was fine for the white men to dig for gold on the creeks because Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in cannot eat gold, but he did not want white men hunting on their traditional hunting grounds. Isaac repeated this message numerous times when the opportunity presented itself.²²²

In 1915 he protested the overhunting of caribou by Dawson residents claiming that non-Indigenous Dawsonites killed 3,000 caribou that year where the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in had killed seventy, which was all they needed for the winter. The *Dawson Daily News* reported that Chief Isaac wanted to remind the white men that “he owns all the Klondike, and that he owned it and all the gold long before they came here, and that when they go hunting and mining not to forget that they are on his concession and here by his good graces.”²²³ Though Chief Isaac’s ability to use local media for this own purposes may seem small, it appears this had an impact on local authorities, encouraging missionaries, NWMP

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ “Chief Isaac Due Today,” *Yukon Sun*, (July 23, 1902).

²²¹ *Dawson Daily News*, "Montezuma of Moosehide Makes Fervent Appeal," (December 15, 1911).

²²² Chief Wants Caribou - Says "Take My Gold,"" *Dawson Daily News*, (November 4, 1915).

²²³ *Dawson Daily News*, (April 30, 1915).

officers, and Indian Agents in Dawson to push for protection of Indigenous resources use throughout the first four decades of the 20th century. Chief Isaac's public engagement was also crucial in an area where Indigenous peoples did not receive any formal rights under treaty.

In most places in Canada, the federal government negotiated treaties when resources and resource development was attainable. However, in the Yukon the rapidity and scale of the Klondike Gold Rush combined with the hope that another rush might strike in the region resulted in the government unwilling to negotiate treaty as this would mean alienating potentially valuable land.²²⁴ The absence of treaty in the Yukon was a significant contribution to the loss of access to resources that Indigenous Yukoners underwent between 1896 to 1940. In jurisdictions under treaty, Indigenous peoples used the guarantees of treaties to push for protection of hunting rights, but without a treaty, Yukon Indigenous people were unable to do this.²²⁵ Though the federal government took measures to protect Indigenous access to the Yukon River fishery in the early years of the Gold Rush, it rejected requests for Indigenous land in the Klondike.

Bishop Bompas wrote to the DIA in 1899 complaining that Indigenous peoples in the Yukon were already deprived of resources, as miners occupied most of the land, overhunted and chased away animals, secured more fish than Indigenous peoples could procure, and overall undermined Indigenous people's ability to continue their subsistence economy. Knowing that the federal government granted protection and hunting rights to other First Nation groups, Bompas attempted to convince the federal government to accept

²²⁴ Ken Coates, "Asking for All Sorts of Favours: The Anglican church, the Federal government and the Natives of the Yukon Territory, 1891-1909" in *The Anglican Church and the World of Western Canada, 1820-1970*. Ed. Barry Ferguson (Regina: University of Regina, 1991): 130.

²²⁵ Coates, "The Sinews," 151.

an obligation to Yukon Indigenous peoples as well.²²⁶ However, Hayter Reed of the Department of Indian affairs responded to Bompas in March of 1897 stating that the federal government had no jurisdiction over Yukon Indians.²²⁷ In fact, before departing for the Yukon in 1884, Constable Constantine received orders to not give any encouragement to the idea of a treaty in the Yukon.²²⁸ In 1903 Bompas returned to the matter, arguing that Yukon Indigenous people were entitled to claim treaty rights and compensation, “for the injury done them for the lands with the minerals being possessed by whites, and the wild animals being greatly thinned by the white hunters till the Indians are reduced to making a living whether by hunting or trapping and they are likely before long to become wholly destitute.”²²⁹

In his study of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, René Fumoleau explained that in 1884, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald believed the government could delay negotiating a treaty in the Mackenzie district until it seemed likely that region would be useful for settlement.²³⁰ In 1897, Clifford Sifton and James Walker, a former Indian Agent and former NMWP officer, met to discuss the necessity of treaties with Indigenous peoples in the Athabasca and Yukon districts. According to Fumoleau, Walker wrote, “From all appearances there will be a rush of miners and others to the Yukon [...] in the face of this influx of settlers into that country, no time should be lost by the Government in making a treaty with these Indians for their rights over this territory.”²³¹ Walker was correct, and the

²²⁶ LAC, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10 3962 3962 f. 147, 654-1, pt. 2. Bompas to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, August 5, 1896.

²²⁷ YA, AC, COR 260 Series 1-1c Box 12 f.2.

²²⁸ LAC, Department of Indian Affairs, RG10 1115, Harper Reed to Constantine May 29 1894.

²²⁹ Coates, “Asking for All Sorts,” 129.

²³⁰ René Fumoleau, *As Long as This Land Shall Last: A History of Treaty 8 and Treaty 11, 1870-1939* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 19.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

rush into the Yukon was already underway at the time he met with Sifton. Fumoleau wrote that it was surprising that when the Yukon Territory was created the federal government did not initiate treaty negotiations with the Yukon First Nations during the Gold Rush due to the economic implications of gold in the Yukon.²³² However, Paul Nadasdy explained in *Hunters and Bureaucrats* that the possibility of another large gold deposit discovery in the Klondike district or elsewhere in the Yukon convinced government authorities not to expand or set aside lands for Indigenous use or initiate treaty negotiations. He further argued that though the federal government did not negotiate a land cession treaty in the Yukon, it claimed to control all lands in the territory and argued that Yukon Indigenous peoples did not have any legal entitlement to the land except that which the government provided.²³³

Though Indigenous Yukoners could not call on existing treaty rights to secure access to resources, at least one Yukon First Nation demanded treaty negotiations altogether. In 1902, Chief Jim Boss, hereditary chief of the Southern Tutchone Ta'an Kwäch'än near Lake Laberge, made the first Yukon land claim when he demanded the government enter treaty negotiations with Yukon First Nations to secure access to resources.²³⁴ Boss hired a Whitehorse lawyer, T.W. Jackson, and demanded compensation for non-Indigenous peoples taking possession of Yukon Indigenous lands and for overtaking hunting areas. He provided population figures for southern Yukon communities to show population decline due to disease and starvation and he argued that before the influx of white men into the Yukon Indigenous peoples had little difficulty procuring game

²³² Ibid., 40-41.

²³³ Nadasdy, 53

²³⁴ Jim Boss has the designation of National Historic Person for his efforts to secure land and resource rights for Yukon Indigenous peoples.

sufficient for their needs. But by 1902, because of white hunters, Indigenous peoples were no longer able to subsist as they were formerly able to.²³⁵ Boss's demand for treaty was immediately dismissed without consideration, but the push for Yukon treaty continued throughout the first decade of the 20th century.

While individual Indigenous Yukoners did not seem to push the matter further, the Anglican church, primarily Bishop Stringer and Reverend Arthur E. O'Meara (who was also a lawyer), continued to agitate for a Yukon treaty on behalf of Indigenous populations.²³⁶ Between 1907 and 1910, Stringer and O'Meara prepared a comprehensive treaty claim.²³⁷ Where Boss's demands focused on securing access to resources, the church was primarily concerned with developing day and residential schools, community-improvement projects, employing a full-time Indian Agent for the territory, and establishing Indigenous game preserves.²³⁸ Their concerns and opinions were not shared by federal government officials. On a visit to Ottawa, Stringer met with Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to discuss the possibility of a Yukon treaty. In a letter to O'Meara, Stringer mentioned his meeting with Frank Oliver did not go well. Oliver believed any treaty would destroy their independence, arguing they would come to rely on compensation, and that he would rather Indigenous Yukoners make

²³⁵ Boss argued that his peoples' population was reduced from several thousand to less than one thousand in eight years. YA, RE: Chief Jim Boss, 82/130, GOV 1313 f.3. Letter from T.W. Jackson to Superintendent of Indian Affairs, January 13, 1902.

²³⁶ It was not unique to the Yukon for missionaries to write to the federal government reporting on hardships among Indigenous peoples and pleading for government intervention. Fumoleau discussed Anglican and Catholic missionaries in Alberta suggesting the federal government look after Indigenous peoples. Fumoleau, 14.

²³⁷ O'Meara was a well-known defender of Indigenous rights and he often wrote and spoke in support for their causes. In 1909 Nass River Natives organized to protest non-Native intrusion on their lands and asked O'Meara to represent their interests. Mary Haig-Brown, "Arthur Eugene O'Meara: Servant, Advocate, Seeker of Justice," in *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada*, ed., Celia Haig-Brown and David Nock (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 2006): 276.

²³⁸ The claim also called for better medical care, and formal recognition of Indigenous marriages.

their living by hunting and fishing. Stringer wrote, "I pointed out that the advent of the white man had injured their prospects as hunters etc."²³⁹

In their written document, O'Meara argued due to the conditions in the Yukon brought on by the advances of white men and opening up the region to development such as mining and other extraction, a treaty was necessary with Yukon Indigenous peoples. Though he stated that setting aside reserves in the Yukon like in other places may not be feasible for the federal government, he argued instead Yukon Indigenous people would gain more benefit from setting aside large tracts of land for exclusive Indigenous hunting, fishing, and trapping purposes.²⁴⁰ Showing the federal government's concern for profit over protection, chief surveyor, S. Bray, argued that an Indigenous preserve would be unfair to all people who had business in the territory – primarily referring to miners and market hunters.²⁴¹

Local politicians occasionally supported the Anglican church in their treaty demands. In Dawson, Dr. W.E. Thompson, employed by the NWMP to work with Indigenous peoples, argued that a treaty would be beneficial in securing medical care as the current system was inadequate. The Gold Commissioner Robert Henderson was also in favor of an Indian superintendent for the Yukon to work alongside himself. He furthered Thompson's call for a medical doctor specifically for Indigenous Yukoners and the need for improved health care.²⁴² In 1909, O'Meara met with Frank Pedley (former Superintendent General Indian Affairs) and Frank Oliver to discuss a Yukon treaty. Oliver

²³⁹ B.C.A, Add. Mss. 1950 box 141, file 7. Stringer to O'Meara, 22 May, 1908.

²⁴⁰ YA, AC, COR 262 Series 1-1c Box 14 f.7. "Green and Vowell Interview with Rev. O'Meara Regarding Indians in the Yukon"

²⁴¹ Coats, "The Sinews," 152.

²⁴² YA, AC, COR 262 Series 1-1c Box 14 f.7. "Green and Vowell Interview with Rev. O'Meara Regarding Indians in the Yukon."

stated, "I do not recognize, and Government does not recognize, the same responsibility toward the Yukon Indians which we are obliged to recognize toward others. [...]"

Moreover, in my opinion the Indians of the Yukon have not been inured as the result of the occupation of the Territory by the white people." The rest of his response is worth including at length:

The main difference which I draw between the Yukon Indians and the Indians of other parts of Canada is that no treaty has been made with them. But there are other reasons. The conditions which have not been made to the prejudice of the Indians by the occupation of the white, but on the contrary, afford additional means of livelihood, influence my mind. Moreover, in my opinion the process of fathering and mothering the Indians under treaty has been most harmful to the Indians by accentuating their original communism, that is to say, the natural dependence of the Indian upon others. I would call the Indian a "communist" or "socialist."²⁴³

With this response, Oliver completely overlooked Stringer and O'Meara's goal in securing a treaty for Yukon First Nations, and he shut down the possibility for future consideration of a treaty. Aside from no treaty, the federal government maintained that they would not make a formal guarantee to secure Indigenous peoples access to resources in the Yukon.²⁴⁴ According to Coates, who has been the only historian to significantly investigate the push for treaty in the Yukon to date, "There is no indication in the official files that government officials ever reconsidered their basic opposition to a treaty for the Yukon First Nations."²⁴⁵

Aside from pushing for a Yukon treaty, O'Meara was also working with Indigenous groups in British Columbia who were appealing to the government for treaty negotiations. He was offered a position as lawyer with the Indian Rights Committee in Vancouver in

²⁴³ YA, AC, COR 262 Series 1-1c Box 14 f.8. Notes of Interview with Mr. Oliver and Mr. Pedley (with O'Meara), February 26, 1909.

²⁴⁴ Coates, "The Sinews," 152.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

1910 and he left the Yukon to work on securing treaty rights for non-treaty First Nations in British Columbia.²⁴⁶ After O'Meara left, Stringer essentially gave up on securing a treaty agreement in the Yukon and instead focused on persuading the government to support the development of a residential school in Carcross.²⁴⁷ As Coates argued, O'Meara's departure from the Yukon to work in B.C. ended "the coordinated and systematic approach to Native land claims and services in the territory."²⁴⁸ It is important to point out that though they advocated on Indigenous behalf, Stringer and O'Meara never consulted Indigenous peoples in these advocations.²⁴⁹

Though the demands from individuals like Jim Boss and the efforts of Stringer and O'Meara did not amount to securing access to resources in the Yukon, these efforts were important steps in the recognition that not only were Indigenous Yukoners impacted by industrial activity and demographic shifts, but that they also felt they had inherent rights to the use and access of resources connected with their long-standing occupancy and use of the land and its resources in the Yukon. In the years following Boss' initial demand for treaty rights, the non-Indigenous population of the Yukon decreased and the majority of Yukon First Nations continued hunting and other subsistence practises with little restrictions on how they used the land.²⁵⁰ However, between 1910 and 1920 they began losing opportunities to profit from hunting as the market hunting in the Yukon fell in light of emerging attitudes about the sale and consumption of wild meat in Canada.

²⁴⁶ E. Palmer Patterson II, "Arthur E. O'Meara, Friend of the Indians" in *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58,2 (April 1967): 90-99.

²⁴⁷ YA, AC, COR 262 Series 1-1c Box 14 f.7.

²⁴⁸ Coates, "Asking for All Sorts," 137.

²⁴⁹ In many cases – for things like relief, medical care, or land rights - Anglican missionaries often simply carried Indigenous requests forward. Coates, "Asking for All Sorts," 138.

²⁵⁰ Nadasdy, 53.

Another request that came from Indigenous communities was the creation of a game preserve for the use of Indigenous Yukoners. The Vuntut Gwitchin in Old Crow requested a game preserve in 1929 and, as mentioned above, the Carcross band requested a preserve in 1932.²⁵¹ Decades before this, though, colonial authorities in Dawson recommended the creation of a game preserve in the Yukon for Indigenous use. Stringer and O'Meara recommended a game preserve in their treaty claim, and a decade later in 1918 NWMP officers suggested the creation of a sanctuary in the southern Yukon, near present-day Kluane National Park, to James B. Harkin.²⁵² The federal Parks Branch did not see the value of a Yukon game sanctuary until much later in the 20th century, and even then, later discussions more directed at concern for animals and preserving landscape than for Indigenous harvesting.²⁵³

In 1924 the Yukon Council passed a new ordinance specifically for the creation of a game preserve for the exclusive use of Indigenous Yukoners. The *Ordinance to Create a Game Preserve in the Yukon Territory for Native Indians* stated that due to the threatened depletion of wildlife and fur resources in certain parts of the territory they made a request to the Department of the Interior to create a game preserve for Indigenous use in the Yukon.²⁵⁴ This Yukon preserve never materialized. There was a Peel River Preserve set

²⁵¹ LAC, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10 f. 801-30-10. Hawksley to J.D. McLean August 23 1929.

²⁵² LAC, Department of Indian Affairs RG 10 4084 file 196658 C-10185. J.B. Harkin to D.C. Scott, Deputy Superintendent General June 4, 1918. Harkin told Scott that he intended to bring up the topic at the next meeting of the wild Life Board but there are no further records that confirm he did so.

²⁵³ YA, Game Regulations and Permits 3/2, GOV 1893 f.12-14B, Gold commissioner to Harkin, Commissioner of National Parks, March 16 1922. Find Better source for the Kluane period.

²⁵⁴ Yukon Territorial Government, *Ordinance to Create a Game Preserve in the Yukon Territory for Native Indians* (Dawson, 1924), 1-2.

aside for the exclusive use of the Fort McPherson band in 1923, but this was 33,000 square miles contained on the NWT side of the boundary.²⁵⁵

The only other serious proposal for a preserve since 1924 emerged in 1935 when Indian Agent Harper Reed suggested the DIA take action to protect Indigenous hunting in the upper Liard district. However, just as in 1909 when Stringer proposed a preserve, the federal government viewed the Yukon as a natural resource base and so the government would not guarantee Indigenous access to game as they believed it would interfere with mineral exploration and because sport hunting was also favoured over Indigenous access to game, as sport hunting generated tourism income.²⁵⁶ Even a part-time Yukon Indian Agent, G. Binning, was against the idea of an Indigenous game preserve, arguing "the time has not yet come for the setting aside of this vast area as Game Preserve, doubtless it would be of great benefit to the Indians if it was one."²⁵⁷ The proposal for a game preserve was abandoned; the prospects for profitable industries like mineral development and sport hunting tourism took precedence over Indigenous access to game.²⁵⁸

Conclusion

Between 1896 and 1940, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experienced a loss of access to natural resources. Mining was one of the primary factors creating this loss through privatizing land as mining claims, destroying fish and game habitat, and drawing in an influx of outsiders who competed with local Indigenous people for resources. These

²⁵⁵ United States Department of Agriculture, *Farmers' Bulletin* No. 1445 (Washington: US Department of Agriculture, 1928), 4. The federal government set aside six preserves for the exclusive use of Indigenous peoples in the NWT in 1923.

²⁵⁶ Coates, *Best Left as Indians*, 168-169.

²⁵⁷ LAC, Department of Indian Affairs, RG 10 6761 file 420-12. A. Binning to George A. Jeckell, October 18, 1935.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

environmental impacts created monumental change for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, but the socioeconomic and cultural by-products of mining significantly impacted Indigenous relations with environment as well. Though faced with extreme environmental change in the Klondike region and displacement from required resources, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in asserted themselves into the new socioeconomic order of the Klondike through their involvement in the industrial economy and in vocalizing and challenging the colonial restrictions on resources use. As conflicts over resources arose in this colonized space, one of the ways the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in responded was through asserting themselves in the new industrial economy. Another response was to challenge colonial authority and control over natural resource management and regulation. These decisions, among many others, that Chief Isaac made during a time of rapid change are essential to understanding the colonial experience in the Klondike region. Though the Klondike region saw a massive influx of 40,000 people take over the land and impose colonial institutions on the Indigenous locals, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continued to negotiate a space for themselves in these new circumstances and speak out against oppressive forces.

Competition for resources was at its peak between 1896 and 1900 as the tens of thousands of outsiders fished for food. Hwëch'in peoples had been active in the capital economy since before the gold rush began, having tangentially engaged in the subarctic fur trade, but the gold rush itself provided increased opportunity for capital engagement. Alongside the environmental consequences of mining activity and shifts resulting from engagement in the capital economy, the extension of the role of the state in fish and wildlife management further contributed to change in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in lives between 1900 and 1940. The extension of the state was a further driver of change in Tr'ondëk

Hwëch'in lives in the early 20th century. Regulations pertaining to the management and use of resources was crucial to this new order, not only as it transformed public land into private property, but it also determined how, when, and where humans could make use of fish and animal populations.

These factors worked together to both formally and informally alienate Indigenous Yukoners from access to resources and created a new environmental order in the Klondike region. This new order was founded on a transformation from Indigenous community-based fish and wildlife management to state-controlled management based on open access and private property. The history of resource regulations in the Yukon is a messy one. Regulations drafted by both federal and territorial governments were meant to shape the ways humans engaged with natural resources, the implementation and enforcement of these regulations did not always go as intended – in the Yukon regarding the enforcement of fish and game regulations on Indigenous peoples, regulations more often than not went unenforced and local authorities tended to favour Indigenous peoples continuing subsistence harvesting practises despite regulations.

Federal regulation of Yukon fisheries after 1899 worked to marginalize Indigenous fishers from the market and commercial fisheries by requiring the purchase of a license and corresponding gear when selling fish. Similarly, the early years of territorial game regulation favoured Indigenous Yukoners as well. Though regulations were intended to manage human populations as well as fish and game populations, local government officials in the Yukon tended to lobby for increased access for Indigenous peoples to the resources on which they depended for subsistence. Further, Indigenous peoples throughout

the Yukon also protested new management regimes that prevented their access to fish and game.

In the Yukon from 1900 to 1940 fish and wild animals provided employment, food for personal consumption, and, in the case of big game, important revenue to the territorial government. Indigenous opportunities to benefit from these industries was limited due to regulations set forth by the federal and territorial governments. However, this examination of fish and game regulations in the Yukon demonstrates Harris's argument that in the efforts to colonize resources, the process and application of colonial agendas were not simple nor straightforward but were contested even among government departments.²⁵⁹ In the Yukon, more often than not, these regulations were not enforced and local government officials actually advocated for securing Indigenous Yukoners protected access to subsistence resources. Though the main concern for Indian Agents and NWMP officials was to prevent Indigenous peoples from becoming financially dependent on the state, in many ways, their goals aligned with that of Indigenous Yukoners themselves. This practise of overlooking regulations speaks to the ways in which local groups, including missionaries, government officials, and Indigenous populations, challenged colonial authority and management of natural resources in the Yukon and to the messiness of colonialism itself – even colonizers opposed certain colonial rules when they did not make sense in local settings.

As early as 1897 missionaries and many NWMP officers worried about overfishing, overhunting, and Indigenous loss of access to the fishery. Though the commercial fishery in the Yukon was small and localized when it was combined with the

²⁵⁹ Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism*, 5.

rise of fishing for personal consumption the concern over population decline led to the implantation of federal fisheries regulations in 1899. While Indigenous peoples had unlimited access to the fishery for personal consumption, new regulations restricted them from selling their catch without a license. While some did purchase licenses to continue selling their fish in Dawson, many other simply continued to sell without a license, to which local government officials turned a blind eye. Similarly, the *Yukon Game Ordinance* did not apply to Indigenous Yukoners until 1920, but even after 1920, when the rhetoric of non-consumptive uses of meat at work in southern Canada influenced Yukon regulations, both federal and territorial administrators in the North reacted in ways different from those in the South lobbying for Indigenous game preserves, protection of Indigenous access to resources through treaty negotiations, and continued subsistence and market hunting.

Indigenous peoples in the Yukon also reacted against these new management regimes through appeals for access to resources based on past occupation, use, and dependence on certain resources, like fish and game. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in requested exclusive access to the fishery, Chief Isaac continuously spoke out against economic hardship linked with non-Indigenous resources use, and Jim Boss was the first person to request treaty negotiations. Indigenous peoples across the Yukon also resisted fish and game regulations by simply ignoring them. However, the Dominion and territorial governments' refusal to grant security or protection in Indigenous access to resources reflected government priorities for the Yukon – the possibility of another large gold discovery and the desire to conserve big animals for tourism came above the protection of Indigenous subsistence.

Indigenous Yukoners' loss of access to resources that began informally with mining activity and competition for resources was formalized within both federal and territorial legislation through fishing and hunting regulations. While wildlife regulations worked to marginalize and alienate rural and Indigenous people by imposing and legitimating one kind of relationship with nature over others, both Indigenous peoples and government officials protested these regulations. Between 1900 and 1940 there were no permanent measures to ensure future access to those resources and conflicts over resource use continued to increase in the post-war period. However, though the demands from individuals like Jim Boss and the efforts of people like Stringer and O' Meara did not amount to securing access to resources in the Yukon, these efforts were important steps in the recognition that not only were Indigenous Yukoners impacted by industrial activity and demographic shifts, but that they also felt they had inherent rights to the use and access of resources connected with their long-standing occupancy and use of the land and its resources in the Yukon.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Klondike Gold Rush began pattern of a long-term systemic alienation of Yukon First Nations from traditionally used resources and areas. This alienation was partly caused by the direct, physical impacts that mining had on the environment of the central Yukon and was partly caused by the role of colonial bureaucracies and state extension into the Klondike. The colonial structure of the Yukon was complicated and contested, creating conflicts between colonizers over how best to administer to the realities of the Yukon; it was also shaped by the responses and contributions of Indigenous Yukoners who frequently challenged their loss of access to resources and the outside imposed changes mining brought to their lives. In examining the history of colonialism, mineral extraction, and resistance in the Yukon, this research contributes to literature examining the North as a region transformed by resource extraction and its accompanying environmental change; literatures on the ways in which industrial development and resource extraction has impacted local Indigenous communities; and literatures on how Indigenous peoples shaped resource and settler colonialism linked to mineral exploration and extraction.

Before the Gold Rush began, the Hwëch'in interacted and worked with outsiders, engaged in wage labour, they experienced change from outside forces, and faced conflict. The example of the Forty Mile Gold Rush suggests that it was not mining itself, but the scale and rapidity of the Klondike Gold Rush, including the material transformations and accompanying extension of southern institutions and values, that created remarkable change to the environment of the Klondike and it overshadowed fur trade relations and small-scale mining in the long-term ways in which it shaped and altered Indigenous

relations with the natural world. The consequences of this mining activity were contained within the land and water as miners cleared forests, disassembled the land, and rerouted waterways. These results of mining had immediate impacts on fish and wildlife populations in the Klondike and, in turn, shaped Indigenous subsistence practises by requiring the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to travel further for hunting and to relocate to new fishing locations. Chief Isaac reported that after the influx of miners, Hwëch'in had to travel upwards of fifty kilometers further to hunt and trap.¹

The post-1906 period saw an expansion in mining activity in the Klondike and created greater and more long-term impacts on the local environment due to the industrialization of mining technologies and related infrastructure at a scale that stretched across, and beyond, the Klondike Valley, encapsulating Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory outside of the goldfields. Though gold mining after 1906 intensified in terms of productivity and reach, the decade from 1896 to 1906 had the greatest influence on Hwëch'in peoples' engagement with the natural world. By this time, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had experienced a decade of adaption to changing conditions in their homeland. They had been dispossessed of Tr'ochëk and relocated to Moosehide ten years earlier. Clear cutting and dismantling had destroyed habitat and driven away game populations, causing the Hwëch'in to travel further away for hunting, and to begin the hunting season earlier than they did pre-1896. These patterns of adaptation had been established by the time industrial interests took over the Klondike – what was new for this time period was the geographical reach industrial mining covered in comparison to placer mining.

¹ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 127.

Along with environmental changes came a new industrial economy. The Hwëch'in found themselves on the margins of economic activity even with attempts to participate in the new industrial economy. This arose, in part, because placer mining was an independent task: very few miners hired second hands, and when they did, they usually did not hire Indigenous peoples due to discriminatory stereotypes of the "lazy Indian." Those few Hwëch'in whom found seasonal employment received less pay than non-Indigenous workers, and in taking wage-labour, Hwëch'in found themselves less able to hunt or fish for their families because they spent long hours working. However, instead of allowing newcomers to block them from participating in this industrial economy, the Hwëch'in negotiated with the opposing pressure they faced and found a way that allowed themselves to integrate into this new economic situation. With their knowledge of living off the land, and their past experience as savvy traders the Hwëch'in sold country foods, big game meat, and fish to outsiders at much higher prices than usual.² Women made moccasins, mittens, and coats and sold them to newcomers at higher prices as well.

While mining had the largest and most visibly recognizable impact on the ways that Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in people interacted with the natural world, the church and government played a more insidious role in the colonization of Yukon land and Indigenous peoples than did miners and mining companies. The church and state often had similar goals when it came to Indigenous peoples, and missionaries in the Yukon worked quite closely with agents of the state to combine efforts at colonizing Indigenous peoples, though sometimes generating contentious relations. While the presence of the church was more pervasive within Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in daily lives, the state had more formal methods of implementing

² Mishler and Simeone, 15. Peter Usher and Lindsay Staples, *Subsistence in the Yukon* (Ottawa and Whitehorse: Economic Development Department, Council for Yukon Indians, 1988), 133.

surveillance which occasionally included attempting to incorporate Indigenous peoples as collaborators in this process. However, the state was also much more ambivalent in their responsibilities and desires for Indigenous peoples, appearing to favour leaving Indigenous Yukoners “as Indians.” Not all federal representatives in the Yukon agreed with the “hands off” approach, with some recommending the DIA at least step in to provide supplies to prevent sickness and offer the Hwëch’in with hunting and fishing supplies. Local authorities opposed fish and game regulations that would undermine the ability of Indigenous Yukoners to sustain themselves and create a financial burden on government funds.

The environmental and socioeconomic transformation of the Yukon between 1896 and 1940 was initiated by outsiders, and the consequences of the Klondike Gold Rush for the Hwëch’in were overwhelmingly negative, but the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in and other Yukon Indigenous groups were not passive victims in this process. This study has shown that the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in carried out considerable cultural negotiation regarding their role as collaborators in the colonial context and often subverted these positions of expected compliance. When necessary, the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in acquiesced to demands of non-Indigenous society, but more often they accommodated, adapted, or resisted colonial authority. Though friendly with the newcomers, Chief Isaac was wary of this “great upheaval” creating drastic changes to his peoples’ way of life. Fearing that his people would lose much of their culture in this transitional time, Chief Isaac sent the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in traditional songs, drums, and *gänhāk* (sacred dancing stick) to their Hän relations in Tetlin, Alaska for safekeeping sometime shortly after their relocation to

Moosehide Village in 1897.³ They vocalized their discontent on local newspapers, by tattling on missionaries that displeased them, or evading and ignoring resource laws. A more subtle, crucial display of resistance on the Moosehide reserve was that of cultural persistence. While they were dislocated from much of their ancestral land and much of their culture was under attack from missionaries and state agents, using the Moosehide reserve as Indigenous space was an important approach for the Hwëch'in in maintaining and passing down elements of culture, especially those related to living off the land.

The high cost of environmental transformation and damage to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's subsistence lifestyle compared to the low benefit of mining activity to the Indigenous population is typical in northern mining communities. Part of historical trend of northern mining operations was for miners to reap as much minerals as possible from the land, score high profits, and then abandon the area once it was no longer profitable. By 1901 the population begun to shrink and by 1911 the entire population of the Yukon had reduced by nearly five times what it was at the peak of the Gold Rush. Those who remained in the Klondike primarily worked for mining companies dredging what was left of the goldfields. As outsiders left the region to move on to the next gold rush in Nome, Alaska or to return South the altered landscape was of little concern to them. On the other hand, the Hwëch'in were forced to readjust their economies and subsistence activities, and to contend with colonial agencies like the Anglican church, NWMP, and DIA.

The environmental impacts in the Klondike remain today, as mining has not ceased and continues industrializing into the present. Indigenous peoples have expressed concerns about cumulative health effects of mining activity, particularly the effects that industrial

³ Dobrowolsky, *Hammerstones*, 77.

chemicals may have on the water and land around the Klondike Valley. As mining companies continue to open mines across the North, studies that demonstrate the ways in which mining has been colonial in nature, on both the local ecosystem and on local populations, are important to weigh the costs and benefits of such developments. Lessons learned from historical mining ventures, such as gold mining in the Yukon between 1896 and 1940, indicate that while the environmental effects of large scale mining like that in the Klondike will be evident on the land for generations to come, including Indigenous peoples in consultation and the planning process can work to create more balance between costs and benefits.

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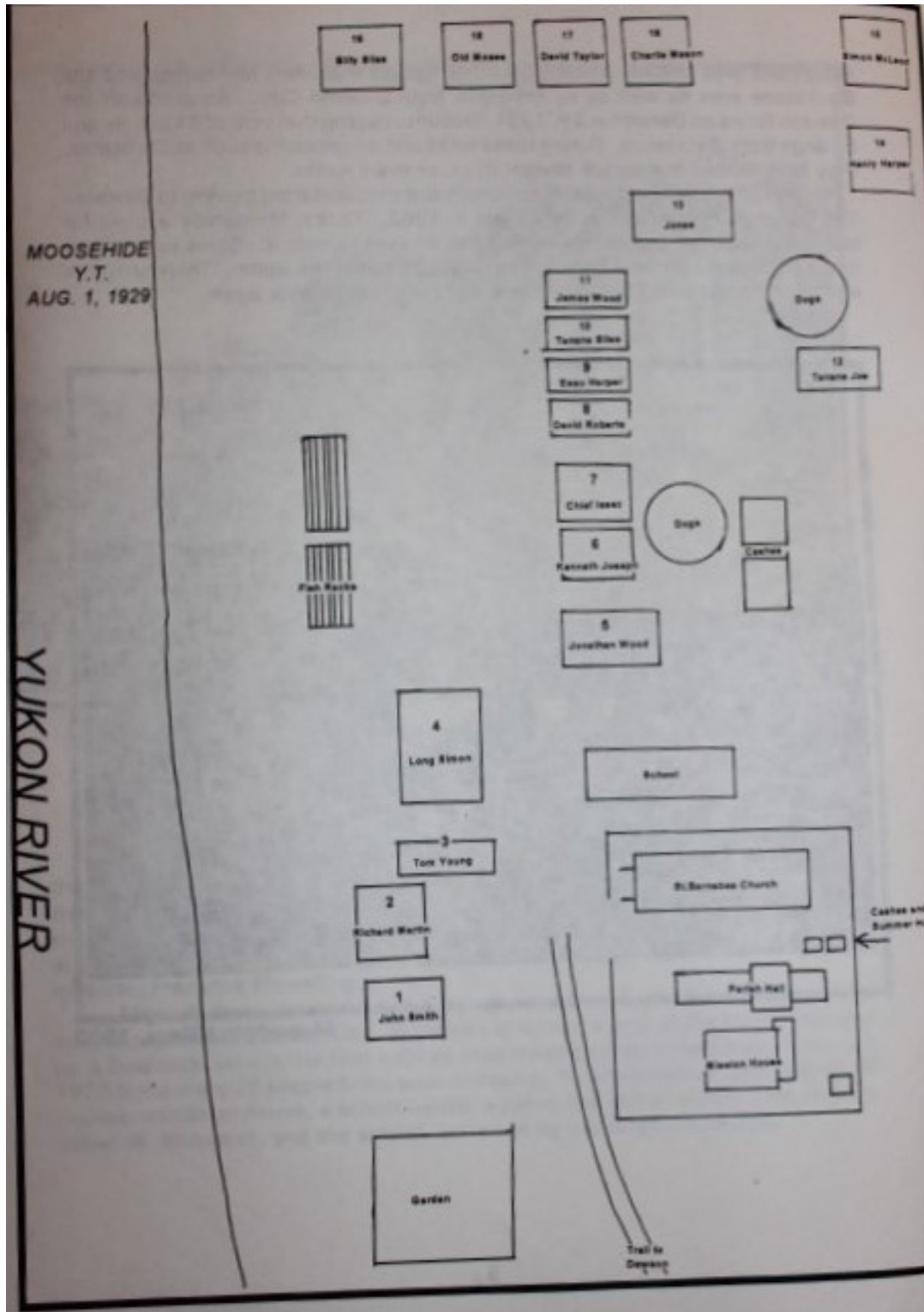
Appendix A: Total Annual Yukon Gold Production, 1886-1934

Year	Ounces
1886	4,837
1887	3,386
1888	1,935
1889	8,466
1890	8,466
1891	1,593
1892	4,223
1893	8,514
1894	6,047
1895	12,094
1896	14,513
1897	120,937
1898	483,750
1899	774,000
1900	1,077,553
1901	870,750
1902	701,437
1903	592,594
1904	507,938
1905	381,001
1906	270,000
1907	152,381
1908	174,150
1909	191, 565

1910	221, 091
1911	224, 197
1912	268, 447
1913	282, 838
1914	247, 940
1915	230, 173
1916	212, 700
1917	177, 667
1918	102, 474
1919	90, 705
1920	72, 778
1921	64, 994
1922	54,456
1923	60, 144
1924	34, 825
1925	47, 817
1926	25, 601
1927	30, 935
1928	34,364
1929	35, 892
1930	35,517
1931	44,310
1932	40,608
1933	39,408
1934	39,798

*Data from A.H.A. Robinson, *Gold in Canada*, 1935 (Ottawa: Mines Branch, 1935), 34.

Appendix B: Sketch of the Moosehide Reserve⁴



⁴ Moosehide (DCMA).

Appendix C: Village Laws of the Moosehide Council

March 1st, 1921 7:30pm to 10pm Law for the Village.

Carried – Stop all girls going with white people. White people not to come to village for nothing, but for business. Free at Xmas.

Carried by all.

Children to go to school clean every morning; to bed at 9pm. When in town, to stay not later than 8pm.

Carried by all.

Stop passing from person to person any chewing tobacco, that passing sickness.

Carried by all.

Single women not to stay in town not later than 7pm, unless going with a married woman.

Girls and women free at Thursday and Saturday.

Single women going to town with a married woman and run away from her guardian, must give reason why detained and give place where been.

Married women going with husband is free.

Carried by all.

Men not to stay in town for days has to have a comrade, and if they see that one of them do wring, for them to tell council.

Carried by all.

Children not to go to Church on Sunday, all go to Sunday school. Baby, if possible, to stay home either with father or mother.

Carried by all.

Steam bath not allowed, man or women not to go in with one another. The disobedient must pay fine \$5.00. When through with water must throw water over the bank.

Carried by all.

Dogs not to be in house, big dogs or small pups carrying sickness.

Carried by all.

Everybody to have slop pail in house not to throw dirty water, dish water, basin water in front door, including washing of spittoons, the water to be thrown over the bank. Everybody have time to make themselves pails, if can't furnish pail for them to ask one of the council men.

Carried by all.⁵

⁵ Meeting minutes from the first Moosehide Council meeting, March 1, 1921. YA, Moosehide Indian Council fonds, 79/66, COR 129.