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# TR'ONDĚK-KLONDIKE WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION

## A REVIEW OF THEMES OF UNIVERSAL SIGNIFICANCE

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This report was prepared by Lisa Prosper for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government of behalf of the Project Management Committee in support of the nomination of Tr'ondëk-Klondike as a World Heritage Site. It follows from recommendations made in the Expert Review of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Nomination undertaken by Dr. Anita Smith in 2018 on behalf of Parks Canada.

The report has two objectives: first, to identify universally significant themes in the global Indigenous experience of Euro-American colonialism; and second, to connect Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in history and, more specifically, existing tangible heritage that constitutes evidence of this history, with the broader universally significant themes identified.

The first part of the report reviews academic literature on the interface between Indigenous peoples and colonialism and identifies recurring and overarching themes that speak to the universal nature of Indigenous experiences of colonialism. It identifies seven universally significant themes: Conflict and conquest; enslavement and indentured labour; dispossession and displacement (loss of traditional lands); missionization; resource extraction; administrative structures and assimilationist policies; and Indigenous agency and adaptation.

The second part of the report narrates the colonial history of Tr'ondëk-Klondike from a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in perspective and demonstrates how tangible heritage found in Tr'ondëk-Klondike today represents universal themes in the global Indigenous experience of colonialism. This analysis finds Tr'ondëk-Klondike to be representative of five of the universally significant themes identified above: Dispossession and displacement (loss of traditional lands); missionization; resource extraction; administrative structures and assimilationist policies; and Indigenous agency and adaptation.

The report concludes that the key strength of Tr'ondëk-Klondike is precisely its ability to demonstrate, through a variety of well documented sites, the Indigenous experience of a rapidly evolving colonial enterprise that fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in way of life. As such, the report advances ongoing efforts to frame a revised World Heritage nomination in relation to themes associated with the colonization of Indigenous peoples, a significant stage in human history.

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## CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

In 2017, the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage project management team completed a nomination to inscribe the Tr'ondëk-Klondike cultural landscape on the World Heritage list. This nomination focused on both Indigenous and gold mining heritage in the area and proposed the site as a “continuing landscape” co-produced by these two user groups. The nomination was reviewed by ICOMOS, which recommended against inscribing the site on the World Heritage List based on several concerns with how the nomination framed the cultural landscape and its Outstanding Universal Value. Foremost among these concerns was the dichotomous nature of the Indigenous and mining landscapes and the inclusion of continually evolving and changing resource extraction within a proposed World Heritage site.<sup>1</sup> Based on the ICOMOS evaluation, Canada withdrew the nomination from consideration by the World Heritage Committee.

In late 2018, an expert review of the nomination (Smith 2018) commissioned by Parks Canada presented the option to proceed with a new (as opposed to a revised) nomination for Tr'ondëk-Klondike focussed on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in responses to Euro-American colonization.<sup>2</sup> The expert concluded that, in her view:

The Yukon riverscape contains exceptional intact evidence of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in life and encounters with, and responses to, Euro-American colonization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century that has the potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

It was proposed that the new nomination could be put forward under criterion (iv) of the Operational Guidelines that calls for nominated properties to be “an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.” In order to lay the groundwork for a potential new nomination, the expert review further recommended work to examine the physical heritage associated with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in history from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century and connect it to broader themes associated with Indigenous responses to early phases of Euro-American colonization. This would form the starting point for articulating Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated site. In light of the context above, this report has two principle objectives. The first objective is to identify universally significant themes in the global Indigenous experience

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<sup>1</sup> See ICOMOS 2018 Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Nomination Evaluation Report.

<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of the report, “Tr'ondëk-Klondike” refers to the proposed new nomination - a serial cultural site that includes areas at Tr'ochëk, Dawson City, Moosehide, Fort Reliance, and Forty Mile, as shown in the accompanying maps.

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of Euro-American colonialism. The report does so by reviewing academic literature that addresses the history of colonialism as it relates to Indigenous peoples worldwide. The scope and focus of this literature review are discussed in greater detail below. The second objective of the report is to connect Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in history and, more specifically, existing physical heritage that constitutes evidence of this history, with the broader universally significant themes identified. This objective is met by narrating the colonial history of Tr'ondëk-Klondike from a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in perspective and demonstrating how physical heritage found in Tr'ondëk-Klondike today represents universal themes in the global Indigenous experience of colonialism. In pursuing these objectives, the overall purpose of the report is to advance ongoing efforts to frame a revised World Heritage nomination in relation to themes associated with the colonization of Indigenous peoples, a significant stage in human history.

## SCOPE

From the 1500s to the early 1900s most of the world was colonized by European powers (Aldrich & McKenzie 2014; Osterhammel 2014). European colonialism is one of the most significant and consequential phases in human history. It fundamentally changed economic, social and cultural contexts around the world and created the foundations for present day relationships between countries and peoples worldwide. At its core, European colonialism was driven by economic imperatives – a desire for resources that created wealth – but it was enabled and sustained by powerful military, political, administrative and, not least, socio-cultural structures and institutions. The vast temporal and spatial span of European colonialism, as well as the diversity of colonizing and colonized groups involved, means that it manifest itself differently in different contexts over time and space. However, there are also important lines of continuity in terms of the core themes and processes at play, associated, for example with the appropriation of land for resource extraction and settlement.

Scholars have identified settler colonialism as a distinct form of European colonialism. It refers to sites where imperial dominance was accompanied by widespread settlement and the creation of new societies controlled by Europeans and their descendants (Cavanagh & Veracini 2016; Muckle 2012; Belich 2009). As Mar & Edmonds (2010) write:

In the simplest terms, settler colonists went, and go, to new lands to appropriate them and to establish new and improved replicas of the societies they left. As a result indigenous peoples have found an ever-decreasing place for themselves in settler colonies as changing demographics enabled ever more extensive dispossession. Settlers, in the end, tended not to emigrate to assimilate into indigenous societies, but rather emigrated to replace them (2).

Settler colonization occurred primarily in North and South America, Southern Africa, and the Australian continent. Elsewhere, such as in central and west Africa and Asia, European colonization took the form of imperial control over resources and trade, without widespread,

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permanent settlement by European populations. This report focusses primarily on the Indigenous experience of European settler colonialism and highlights relevant themes of global significance that consistently transcend specific times and places without denying the particularities with which these themes played out regionally or locally. The term “European” is employed to mean direct colonization and settlement by Europeans as well as the expansion and consolidation of settler colonies driven by the descendants of Europeans that had already established themselves in a particular region.

Indigenous experiences of European settler colonialism constitute a globally significant phenomenon that resulted from the encounter between colonizers and Indigenous peoples around the world over 500 years of human history. The key themes associated with this experience cross-cut time and place and are therefore of global relevance. While aspects of the Indigenous experience of colonialism are specific to, or at least characteristic of, particular colonial contexts, the body of literature on the interface between Indigenous peoples and colonialism reveals recurring and overarching themes that speak to the commonality of the experience for Indigenous peoples and highlight its universal nature. These themes include: Conflict and conquest; enslavement and indentured labour; dispossession and displacement (loss of traditional lands); missionization; resource extraction; administrative structures and assimilationist policies; and Indigenous agency and adaptation. It is important to note that this list of themes is not exhaustive, nor are these themes mutually exclusive. Rather, they intertwine in various ways throughout the colonial encounter between Europeans and Indigenous peoples.

The economic and political ambitions associated with colonialism and the actions taken by European powers to advance these ambitions were closely linked to discourses of racial superiority that rationalised and legitimated interactions with Indigenous peoples. These discourses both shaped, and were shaped by, colonial relationships according to which Europeans constructed their own identities as distinct and superior to those of others. According to Robert Aldrich and Kirsten McKenzie (2014) “[a]lmost always, ideas about racial inferiority were used to justify political disenfranchisement: civilized Europeans had a racial right, often thought to be God-given in the very order of creation, to rule over those beneath them.” Expanding on this point, Erich W. Steinman (2016) observes that:

Indians were labeled as savages and as heathens who had no standing in the human family and thus were excluded from rights affirmed by Enlightenment ideals and settler notions of freedom, democracy, and sovereignty. Others are slightly more implicit, such as the notion of manifest destiny and the conception of indigenous people as static and belonging to the past, and the corresponding notion of settlers as being dynamic and defining the future. Other justifications were more deeply embedded in other discourses, such as the perception of empty land awaiting settlers’ cultivation and with it legitimate ownership claims (227).

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In short, although colonialism was largely motivated by economic imperatives, exploitation and appropriation were justified by powerful cultural discourses of superiority.

Having said the above, Cecilia Morgan (2017) notes that colonial relationships were “also mediated by factors such as colonists’ need for Indigenous peoples’ trading networks and knowledge of geography, climate, and topography” (xxiv). In other words, while the overarching paradigm of colonialism was one of racial superiority, in many instances Indigenous people were also relied upon to enable aspects of the colonial endeavour. In this regard they were often incorporated into the colonial apparatus and could not be dismissed as anachronistic obstacles to European ambitions. The colonial paradigm of racial superiority becomes further untenable if one considers the many ways Indigenous peoples exhibited agency in responding to colonialism and retaining their identity as distinct cultures (Russell 2001). As Calloway (2008) notes, “[t]ribal peoples developed strategies to deal with colonialism, to maximize their independence in an increasingly dependent relationship, and to manipulate colonial relationships to their own advantage” (14).

The time frame for the thematic review of Indigenous experiences of European settler colonialism in this report begins during the earliest period of settler colonization in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and concludes in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By this time, most settler colonies were well established and had matured into independent nations with government control asserted over most Indigenous populations. While global and regional contexts in which settler colonialism took place during this lengthy period changed over time, there were also significant lines of continuity in terms of the aforementioned themes in the Indigenous experience of colonialism. For instance, violence, displacement from traditional places, the establishment of resource economies, social marginalization, progressive imposition of institutional control by church and state, as well as adaptive responses, were common features of the Indigenous experience regardless of when and where the colonial encounter began. Having said this, the history of each Indigenous people during the colonial period will naturally emphasize certain themes over others and reflect the particular context in which colonialism occurred.

Lastly, for the purposes of setting the scope of this report, it is important to acknowledge that the term “Indigenous” is by no-means straightforward to define and can be used to describe a wide range of cultural groups across vast geographies and timeframes. Ken Coates (2004) acknowledges the heterogeneity of the term, while also seeking to describe broad historical and regional commonalities among Indigenous peoples:

Although indigenous societies, both over the centuries and in contemporary times, vary widely in social, economic, and cultural profile, certain key elements can be seen as integral to all of them. Indigenous societies have traditionally been built around a symbiotic relationship with their homelands. Harvesting patterns and land-use cycles reflected the movements of animals and fish, the changing of the seasons, and the specific characteristics of local or regional eco-systems. Several of

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the most cultural diverse areas in the world - the Top End of Australia, the Amazon basin and Papua New Guinea - each hosted dozens of distinct indigenous societies, each one well-adapted to the specific resources and harvesting opportunities of a relatively small eco-system. In arid and less ecologically rich areas, such as Siberia, the Canadian North or the Australian outback, small numbers of indigenous peoples inhabited vast tracts of territories, roaming widely over the land in a well-rehearsed and knowledge-rich pursuit of limited sources of food and water. The indigenous societies identified closely with their specific setting and developed cultural forms, habits, movements, and harvesting activities which permitted them to sustain life in a particular ecological niche (48).

Broadly speaking the understanding of the term offered by Coates above is employed for the purposes of the historical review conducted in this thematic study. However, it is important to highlight that the term Indigenous has additional connotations and meanings in the current post-colonial age in which Indigenous peoples around the world have sought and continue to seek autonomy and independence from colonialism and its multi-faceted legacy. With the present context in mind, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues<sup>3</sup> uses the term to describe the following:

- Self-identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member;
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies;
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;
- Distinct social, economic or political systems;
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs;
- Form non-dominant groups of society;
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.

This definition reflects the enduring presence and distinctiveness of Indigenous people as well as their rights to self-identification and self-determination.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/>



### KEY THEMES OF INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES OF COLONIALISM

#### THEME ONE: CONFLICT AND CONQUEST

Armed conflict and military conquest is a key theme in the Indigenous experience of European colonialism. This was a recurring aspect of interaction between Indigenous peoples and colonial powers from the 1500s to the 1900s. In some cases the outcome was colonial dominion of Indigenous lands and peoples and in others the result, and indeed objective, was wholesale genocide. In the fifty years following the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Caribbean, the estimated loss of life among Indigenous peoples due to violence and disease was approximately 12 million people (Samson & Gigoux 2016). In fact, “the loss of indigenous life was astounding, as colonization moved in all directions on the mainland American continent” (Samson & Gigoux 2016, 60).

Spanish and Portuguese conquest of Central and South America was equally characterized by violent conflict. “The outsiders came into new lands with specific objectives. Whether their goal was the pursuit of wealth, military/strategic advantage, or simply the assertion of political dominance, they often used violence as an initial means of establishing their place in the New World” (Coates 2004, 96). Later, during the 1800s, in newly formed republics like Argentina and Chile, governments dominated by settlers of European origin viewed:

...colonization of the southern regions as a means of state building. This was a violent process that cost the lives of thousands of Indians and eventually pushed the Tehuelches and the Mapuches off their territories to officially sanctioned *reducciones* as their lands were gradually occupied by settlers. Furthermore, as the colonization process kept pushing south towards the Archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, the genocidal consequences of this process took its dramatic toll over the lives of the Selk’nam, Yagan and Kawesqar peoples (Bengoa 2004 in Samson & Gigoux 2016, 66).

In this way, the colonial propensity of instigating war with Indigenous peoples in order to secure control over land and resources, as well as assert their political and moral claims to superiority, stretched southward to the farthest tip of the continent.

The colonization of North America by Europeans and, later, settlers of European descent, was characterized by dozens of armed conflicts with Indigenous peoples known collectively as the “Indian Wars” that began in the 1600s and only ended in the 1920s. These conflicts moved westward across the continent in tandem with the colonial frontier and continued until the last elements of Indigenous resistance were controlled by the American army. The levels of conflict

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and violence were particularly high in the American West with notorious massacres featuring prominently in the historical record (West 2009). The effectiveness of Indigenous resistance against colonial armies and militias varied considerably and in some instances Indigenous people achieved significant military victories and otherwise managed to hinder colonial expansion. However, the cost of armed conflict was invariably high on Indigenous peoples in terms of lives lost and wholesale disruption to their way of life. Combined with the impact of epidemic diseases like smallpox, measles and influenza, conflict weakened and eventually ended Indigenous capacity for large scale armed resistance (Cameron et al 2015).

Military conflict and organized violence was equally a feature of colonialism in the Pacific and throughout Africa. A series of armed conflicts known collectively in some literature as the Australian Frontier Wars (1800s to early 1900s) were a salient feature of the British and subsequently Australian colonization of Indigenous lands (Connor 2002). The superior military technology available to the British colonizers resulted in widespread loss of life among the Indigenous inhabitants, and the frequency of massacres has led to an understanding of many events as colonial genocide. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the mid 1800s were also characterized by a series of wars between the Maori and British colonists, the former mounting strong and sustained resistance to colonial rule (Coates 2004). Similarly,

[t]he larger, well-organized tribes of Africa, particularly in the southern part of the continent, represented a major threat to the newcomers. Several major tribal wars, including the famous battle with the Zulu at Isandhlwana, which demonstrated to a surprised western world both the scale of indigenous organization and their fury at the colonial intrusion, established a socio-military framework for subsequent relations on the continent (Coates 2004, 102).

This, however, was the exception on a continent where the extent of colonial violence toward Indigenous peoples was especially sustained and intense - underpinned, as it was, by racism and paternalism (Gadzekpo 2004).

## THEME TWO: ENSLAVEMENT AND INDENTURED LABOUR

Enslavement or coercion into situations of indentured labour or servitude were an extension of the conflict and conquest experienced by Indigenous peoples during colonialism. Slavery was a colonial practice from the outset as the Columbus expedition returned to Europe with 1600 Tainos from the Caribbean for sale in Europe. This practice was common place among Spanish and other European colonists in South America. The colonial trade in slaves reached its zenith in Africa where Europeans initiated a global exchange network in slaves drawn from African tribes. The sheer scale and duration of this economic system contributed to the wealth of European colonial powers and led a system of imperial domination underpinned by assumptions of racial difference (Konadu 2014). Elsewhere in Africa as well as in the Americas, Australia and the Pacific, Indigenous peoples were forced, coerced or offered few alternatives

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but to work as indentured labourers in plantations, farms, mines and other such enterprises. Later in the colonial period in countries such as Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand, Indigenous peoples took on roles as wage labourers at the bottom of the social and economic ladder (Evans et al 2003).

### THEME THREE: DISPOSSESSION AND DISPLACEMENT: LOSS OF TRADITIONAL LANDS

Recalling the description by Coates (2004) above, a defining characteristic of Indigenous peoples worldwide is a close relationship with their traditional lands that is fundamental to cultural identity. This relationship is expressed in subsistence activities, land stewardship practices, traditional ecological knowledge, language, and rich oral traditions, to name just a few. Dispossession and displacement from traditional lands is another key theme in the Indigenous experience of colonialism (Greer 2018; Samson & Gigoux 2016). Military conflict and violence were evidently key tactics in the colonial expropriation of Indigenous lands for the purposes of extracting resources or settlement. However, Indigenous peoples also experienced loss of traditional lands, or internal displacement within these lands, by other means including legal appropriation, environmental degradation, demographic colonization, confinement and changing livelihood strategies.

The acquisition of land was one of the driving forces behind colonialism. Despite Indigenous systems and practices of land tenure and land use being in place for generations, law was made or adapted to facilitate the acquisition of land by colonizers. For example, royal charters, treaties, and agreements were all deployed as a way of gaining colonial control and rights over Indigenous lands. Similarly, laws limiting the movements of pastoral peoples and grazing or harvesting by semi-nomadic Indigenous peoples made traditional land uses unviable as did widespread over-hunting of game species (e.g. buffalo, antelope, moose, fish) that Indigenous peoples relied upon for sustenance. Other forms of ecological change – logging, cultivation, introduction of exotic species – resulting from colonial activity equally affected subsistence livelihoods. The possibility of returning to traditional life-ways was, in most parts of the world, precluded by colonial settlement for the purposes of ranching and farming by the newcomers. This was accompanied by permanent changes in land tenure and land use in the form of title for settlers.

Dispossession from traditional lands was accompanied by the confinement of Indigenous peoples in reservations or villages where they could be controlled, exploited or simply pushed aside to make way for resource extraction or settlement by Europeans. In most cases, this was forced upon Indigenous peoples by laws or dictates created for this purpose, but in other cases Indigenous peoples voluntarily segregated themselves, albeit due to limited alternatives. In North America, settlement of Indigenous peoples at mission sites was an early example of this practice, but it was in the 1800s that settler governments in North America moved most Indigenous populations onto reservations created through treaties (e.g. the

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numbered treaties in Western Canada) and legislation (e.g. The 1851 Indians Appropriations Act). As Colin Samson and Carlos Gigoux (2016) explain,

“[t]he intention of the allotment process was not only to confine American Indians to smaller areas of land to make room for white settlement, recreation and industrialization, but to destroy the customary system of collective use and occupancy of land practised by almost all indigenous groups, transforming them into individual landowners, farmers and ranchers” (79).

In South America, Indigenous peoples were in some regions confined to *reducciones*, often densely populated religious missions where they worked as labourers. In other areas, they became indentured workers in *haciendas*, *estancias* or *fazendas* (all different words to describe large colonial landholdings). In Australia, according to Heather Goodall (2003), Aboriginal reservations were created partly out of attempts to reduce the conflict between settlers and Aborigines which had become intense during the first half of the nineteenth century. Some of these became successful agricultural settlements that were later revoked and deeded to soldiers returning from WWI. In Africa, reservation systems were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mostly in the southern part of the continent. According to Chris Youé (2004), the “[a]ppropriation of black land was, from the beginning, linked to the desire to control African labour” (794). He goes on to say that,

[i]n the South African Republic, the government endeavoured to control Africans by pass laws, disarmament decrees and setting up small reserves, under the charge of military personnel, which were meant to provide labor for the white farmers who had expropriated the best land. While the reserves were predominantly labor reservoirs, they were also [...] a way of preserving peace and security by “divide and rule” (794).

With estimates of 2.5 million Africans living on reserves at the turn of the century, reserves had become the cornerstone of segregation policies.

#### THEME FOUR: MISSIONIZATION

The Christian religion was a central part of most aspects of European life during the colonial period. It follows that the spread of Christianity and the influence of its institutions occurred in tandem with colonial expansion and consolidation. As Coates (2004) writes:

The sixteenth century saw the rapid expansion of missionary effort and the establishment of the churches as a major influence in both colonial affairs and the lives of indigenous peoples (146).

and

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By the early years of the nineteenth century, the missionary enterprise had enveloped much of the globe and had brought Christian values, traditions, assumptions, and teachings to hundreds of indigenous groups (148).

Elsewhere, Samson and Gigoux (2016) state that:

While Christian doctrine and missionary practices varied, the objective of most missionaries was to convert indigenous peoples, regulate activities with them and act as intermediaries to colonial authorities. As such, missionaries were important instigators of social change (49).

Indeed, western welfare approaches were introduced and implemented by Christian missionaries who "combined evangelism with Western education, health and other social services and were committed to caring paternalistically for the indigenous people among whom they settled. They also sought to protect native people from violence and abuse by slave traders, settlers and even the colonial authorities" (Midgely 44). The extent of social and cultural change among Indigenous peoples brought about by interaction with religious institutions was thus often fundamental and resulted in profound disruption of social and familial structures, loss of language and cultural traditions, and adoption of European or settler practices and ways of life. However, conversion to Christianity was rarely accompanied by complete adoption of a new religion and culture as Indigenous peoples often retained elements of their own belief systems and cultural world views (despite attempts by religious and colonial actors to prevent this). The spiritual and cultural syncretism that resulted led to new expressions of Indigenous identity and enabled retention of important lines of continuity in Indigenous culture that carry through to this day (e.g. connection to traditional lands, oral traditions, subsistence practices). In fact, the complex ways in which Indigenous peoples responded to the zeal and persistence of missionaries and religious institutions constitutes an important domain in which they exerted agency in the colonial context (a point elaborated on further below).

## THEME FIVE: RESOURCE EXTRACTION

The Indigenous experience of European colonialism worldwide is also characterized by a series of "contact zones" associated with the resource extraction practices of Europeans and their settler descendants. Three distinct examples of this can be drawn from the Indigenous experience of colonial era whaling, fur trapping and trading, and gold mining. Each case represents a context in which Indigenous-Colonial relations played out in ways that altered both parties.

Whaling was a traditional subsistence practice of Indigenous peoples in North America, Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific before the arrival of Europeans. When European whalers arrived, Indigenous peoples often became active participants in the

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enterprise given their local knowledge and experience with whaling. According to one scholarly interpretation, among the earliest examples of this was in Eastern North America where evidence at some sites dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century can be found of possible Indigenous involvement and participation in Basque whaling. As European whaling spread across the continent and to the Pacific, Indigenous peoples were recruited to work on whaling ships in both skilled and less skilled capacities (Staniforth 2008). They were an essential part of many crews and played key roles in processing the whales that were caught. They also shared seasonal whaling camps with whalers, who were in some contexts (such as parts of Aotearoa New Zealand) encouraged to marry natives and settle. Whalers were generally after the blubber and baleen, while Indigenous peoples needed the meat, so the arrangement could be mutually beneficial. That said, not all relations were of course harmonious. In some locations, such as Tasmania and elsewhere, Indigenous peoples were brutally exploited by whalers and the more violent hallmarks of colonialism were hardly absent from whaling contexts. At a very minimum, the toll commercial whaling took on whale populations changed Indigenous subsistence practices and caused them to adapt to new ecological and socio-economic realities.

The fur trade was another key contact zone between Indigenous peoples and colonists, particularly across the circumpolar North. In North America, Indigenous peoples played pivotal roles in the fur trade as trappers, traders, couriers and strategic allies for the purposes of controlling trade routes and trapping grounds (Innis & Ray 1999). Trading posts, forts and settlements sprung up across the Great Lakes, American west and sub-arctic regions. These were often mixed settlements and meeting places for Indigenous peoples and Europeans involved in the fur trade. Some Indigenous peoples settled in these places and others visited them seasonally for the purposes of trade or negotiation. Intermarriage became common and led to the growth and establishment of a Métis population. The fur trade brought economic opportunity for Indigenous peoples along with new technologies and cultural influences. It also brought disease, alcohol and sometimes conflict, as well as dependence on manufactured products and other goods that could only be obtained with the proceeds of fur. In Siberia and present day Alaska, the fur trade was characterized by extreme violence and genocide as rapacious European traders and hunters competed with each other to obtain some of the most valuable furs on the planet (Ford 1992). Violence was also part of the Canadian fur trade with the 'Beaver Wars' between the French and Haudenosaunee in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the 'Seven Oaks' incident between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1816, to cite two examples. The fur trading industry, however, also depended heavily on Indigenous skills, labour and collaboration, which could provide a starting point for Indigenous peoples to gain footing in the new world order that was developing.

Gold rushes were among the most intense colonial resource extraction scenarios experienced by Indigenous peoples. The quest for gold was a key motivation for the Spanish conquest of Central and South America beginning in present day Mexico and Peru in the 1500s and

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stretching through to the early twentieth century when a gold rush was sparked on Indigenous lands in Tierra del Fuego. In the nineteenth century there were a series of well documented gold rushes across the USA and Canada, in Australia and in Southern Africa, most of which brought a rapid influx of miners into direct contact with Indigenous peoples. Among the most famous of these worldwide – as much due to its intensity as to the rich body of cultural production that arose from it – was the Klondike gold rush in Canada’s Yukon Territory (Berton 2001; Morse 2003).

Although the geographies and colonial contexts for these gold rushes differed, there were common strands among them. Where Indigenous peoples stood or were seen to stand in the way of mining, they were usually driven swiftly off their traditional lands, often aggressively or through forceful occupation. Regardless, the rapid arrival of miners generally posed major challenges to traditional subsistence livelihoods through occupation of traditional sites (often the best places for settlement or infrastructure), pollution, logging, over-hunting and other byproducts of mining, and the spread of disease and vices associated with mining booms. Indigenous peoples adapted to this rapid change in circumstances however they could, by finding livelihoods as labourers or indeed miners within the new economic reality and by adapting the location and type of subsistence activity they carried out within their traditional lands. Some settled in the mining boom towns that sprung up to service the gold rushes, where they generally formed a social underclass. Characteristic of gold rushes was an equally rapid arrival of government authorities in mining areas who came with the intention of imposing law and order as well as establishing systems of governance and a presence on the colonial frontier. Missionaries and religious institutions also featured prominently. The speed, intensity and outcomes of the encounters between Indigenous peoples and colonists during gold rushes could be seen as a microcosm of colonialism writ large, albeit one in which the reaction times and adaptations of Indigenous peoples were conditioned by short time frames and limited forewarning.

#### THEME SIX: ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES AND ASSIMILATIONIST POLICIES

A core theme in the Indigenous experience of colonialism from initial contact onward is the progressive imposition of government control over almost every facet of daily life. This control was imposed in part through a series of administrative and policy structures (Wolfe 2006, 1999). In this manner,

Indigenous peoples came to be treated as legally and socially anomalous in their own lands. As such, self-consciously benign sounding policies of assimilation, merging, absorption or protection heralded a range of legally sanctioned practices whose goal of abolishing Indigenous peoples’ languages, histories and identities are increasingly identified as genocidal (Mar & Edmonds 2010, 2).

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According to Calloway (2008), such administrative and policy structures “involved constructing representations of the colonized peoples and separating them from their languages, their social relations, their ways of understanding the world, and their histories” (14). This colonial process established forms of hierarchical control and social inequality based partly on race that have carried forward for generations (Midgley & Piachaud 2011). The academic literature on the subject provides considerable analysis on how this theme manifested itself in North America,<sup>4</sup> Africa,<sup>5</sup> Aotearoa New Zealand,<sup>6</sup> and Australia.<sup>7</sup> The ability to impose these forms of control over Indigenous peoples around the world relied heavily on the rule of law – or at least the colonial vision thereof – which carried the overt or implied threat of violence for non-compliance with government dictates (Dunstall & Godfrey 2005). Government bureaucracies and institutions, therefore, were key mechanisms through which colonial power was established.

### THEME SEVEN: INDIGENOUS AGENCY AND ADAPTATION

For the purposes of this thematic study a final key theme in the Indigenous experience of colonialism relates to the manner in which Indigenous peoples shaped and adapted to the new colonial contexts that emerged, often from the ashes of violent conflict (Laidlaw & Lester 2015). As Coates (2004) states, “[t]he continuity of indigenous peoples, the manner in which they have lived, adapted, and responded to powerful, often devastating influences from outside their communities, is a critical element in world history” (24). Further to this point, Coates (2004) writes:

Adaptation, therefore, is a central theme in the history of indigenous response to the arrival, advance, and activities of newcomer populations. The responses ranged widely, from confrontation to retreat, from economic integration to maintenance of traditional harvesting ways. Indigenous societies learned from the outsiders, just as the outsiders learned many important lessons from the original peoples. This messy, often violent, occasionally mutually beneficial meeting of cultures, societies, and values shaped the human history of much of the globe and established the foundation for efforts by indigenous peoples to make their way in a complex, integrating and often aggressive world (119).

As Coates (2004) points out, the adaptations and responses took many different forms depending on local circumstances, but the common denominator is the perpetuation of group culture and identity.

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4 Ishiguro 2016; Miller 2009; Nettelbeck & Smandych 2010.

5 Oyebade 2002; Stilwell 2002.

6 Morgan 2017.

7 Reynolds 1996; Banner 2007.



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In some locations including the eastern seaboard of North America and New Zealand, Indigenous peoples used alliances with the newcomers to further long-standing power struggles with other Indigenous peoples in the region.

Newcomers represented an additional element within complex social, economic, and strategic indigenous relationships. It is hardly surprising that the indigenous peoples sought to use the outsiders to their advantage whenever possible. They tried, where they could, to align the newcomers within their political and territorial agendas. Many used alliances and treaties to solidify - or so they thought - these relationships (Coates 2004, 98).

In many colonies, they used their traditional skills, knowledge, relationships and networks to profit from new economic opportunities – as guides, traders, trappers, whalers, etc. – that provided supplements to subsistence livelihoods (Staniforth 2008). When possible, involvement in resource extractive industries (identified above) was selective and measured based on what was to be gained or lost. Invariably, Indigenous peoples appropriated and modified European technologies and methods that improved their standard of living and rejected those they deemed not useful or inferior. More generally, they also selectively adopted European cultural norms and blended these with their own cultural practices and beliefs to produce hybrid cultural forms that enabled them to resist complete assimilation. In this way, many Indigenous peoples were able to retain distinct identities and traditions that stretch back to far before European colonialism and have remained intact into the post-colonial period (Aldrich & McKenzie 2014). In these ways and others Indigenous peoples exerted their agency within a system that systematically sought to disenfranchise or remove them completely from traditional lands (Nettelbeck 2016).

The history of Tr'ondĕk-Klondike,<sup>8</sup> from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup>, century reflects a number of universally significant themes associated with global Indigenous experiences of colonialism identified in Section Two. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century settler colonies in North America, Southern Africa and the Australian sub-continent were expanding in two general ways. First, as a result of organized military action intended to subjugate Indigenous populations and secure land for settlement and production. Second, as a result of market forces driving an entrepreneurial search for resources that were highly valued in settler economies. Tr'ondĕk-Klondike is representative of the latter context in which Europeans and their descendants born in settler societies pushed territorial boundaries ever deeper into Indigenous lands in order to identify and exploit valuable sources of prized commodities such as fur, gold, silver and whale products. This was driven by social, demographic and economic conditions in settler societies that created the environment and impulse for outward expansion. It was further enabled by technological advancements in transportation and communication that facilitated the movements of people, goods and information between the core and periphery of settler societies.

The Tr'ondĕk Hwĕch'in first experienced sustained contact with Europeans and their descendants from settler colonies in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as their lands were colonized and progressively settled for the purpose of controlling access to furs and, subsequently, one of the world's richest deposits of placer gold. The events, processes and outcomes of this colonization, as well as the associated tangible and intangible heritage evident today, make Tr'ondĕk-Klondike representative of Indigenous experiences during the latter phases of resource driven territorial expansion in settler colonies. More specifically, it is representative of how Indigenous peoples lost self-determination and traditional lands through increasing settlement, the rapid imposition of resource based economies and the institutional forces of church and state. It is also representative of non-violent strategies adopted by Indigenous groups to both resist and influence the outcomes of colonial rule. This section demonstrates how the history of Tr'ondĕk-Klondike and the tangible evidence of this history found in the site today represent globally significant themes identified in Section Two of this report. However, it begins by describing Indigenous life and the archeological record thereof prior to European colonialism to illustrate the cultural system that was fundamentally disrupted by the arrival of Europeans.

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<sup>8</sup> The general historical information and facts presented in this section are drawn from the following sources: Berton 2001; Coates & Morrison 2017; Cody 2002; Dobrowolsky 2014, 2013, 2005, 1990; Morse 2003; Neufeld 2015; Thomas 2007; Tr'ondĕk Hwĕch'in Heritage/Yukon Historic Sites n.d.; Tr'ondĕk Hwĕch'in 2016, 2001. Given that these source documents are in accordance as to the basic historical information, an effort has been made not to overburden the narrative with references by only citing direct quotes or broader ideas or conclusions drawn by particular authors.

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## INDIGENOUS PRESENCE ON THE LAND AND ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeological evidence of Indigenous peoples is preserved at hundreds of sites across the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory in the form of tool and faunal assemblages. These record millennia long land use traditions and technological innovations associated with Indigenous peoples adaptation to stable, but ever-evolving seasonal ecosystems. The archaeological evidence is testimony of locations associated with traditional seasonal activities, tools associated with evolving or adaptive technological traditions, and fauna that characterizes the environment and Indigenous peoples relationship with the land.

The relationship of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their ancestors with their homeland was one of respect, knowledge and understanding. Traditional life in the subarctic was closely entwined with the patterns of the natural world and relied on traditional ecological knowledge built up over thousands of years. The seasonal round of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their ancestors centred on the Yukon River that flows through the heart of their traditional territory. In late summer and fall, they collected berries and hunted moose up the Klondike River valley (a tributary of the Yukon River). Dall sheep and caribou were also hunted in the high country on either side of the Yukon River valley. They continued to hunt, often in family groups, over the winter, while also trapping fur bearing animals and subsisting on cached food. In spring, migrating waterfowl provided new sources of food. However, their most important food source came from two annual summer salmon migrations: the chinook, or king salmon, migration and the chum, or dog salmon, migration. In preparation for the salmon migrations, people moved to traditional fishing sites along the Yukon River in late spring and early summer to set up camps, and build and repair fishing equipment.

Archaeological evidence of long standing pre-colonial Indigenous inhabitation of Tr'ondëk-Klondike has been found at the main traditional camps of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and their ancestors in the Yukon River valley including Ch'ëdähchëk kek'it (Forty Mile), Jëjik dhä dënezhu kek'it (Moosehide), and Tr'ochëk. The oldest evidence of Indigenous use of this part of the Yukon River valley has been found at Moosehide and has been dated as far back as 9000BP, with micro-blades found on the site dated to 5000BP. Archaeological remains of stone tools and a hearth feature with charcoal and burnt bone estimated at 2,900BP were found on the site of present day Dawson City. Winter house pits identified at the site of Fort Reliance are suspected to date to approximately 1,200BP and archeological evidence of seasonal caribou harvest and fishing dating as far back as 2,300BP have been documented at Forty Mile. Tr'ochëk – a heavily used site during the gold rush – has archeological evidence of cook pits dating to 230BP. Collectively, this archaeological evidence speaks to extensive Indigenous use of the Yukon River valley for the purpose of subsistence harvest (fishing and hunting) and seasonal dwelling. Like all cultures, Indigenous cultures in the area developed over time and the archeological record also shows the adoption of outside goods and technologies in the historic period before colonization. This is most notable at Moosehide where artefacts of this period found on location (ceramics, glass, window glass, nails, domestic wares, hundreds of

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pieces of bones) demonstrate how the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in used trade networks to obtain items in support of their subsistence economic livelihood.

## THEME FIVE: RESOURCE EXTRACTION

### THE FUR ECONOMY AND TRADING POSTS

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were part of an extensive trade network of Indigenous peoples throughout the region long before the arrival of Europeans and European goods. It was not unusual for trading parties to walk hundreds of kilometres to meet with other groups. They exchanged birch bark, red ochre, animal hides, and salmon for native copper and obsidian from the southwest, as well as dentalium shells from the Pacific coast. Later in the eighteenth century, before direct contact with Euro-American traders, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were acquiring European goods through their Indigenous trading partners who by this time were trading with British, Russian, and American traders in northern Yukon, on the Alaskan coast, and farther down the Yukon River. However, while trade was an important part of the local economy, it also resulted in the spread of European diseases. Even before Europeans themselves started arriving in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory, it is thought that thousands of Indigenous people in the Yukon interior died from smallpox spread by Indigenous traders (Coates & Morrison 2017).

While the fur trade had been a central feature of European colonialism in North America since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the Hudson's Bay Company and American fur traders began arriving in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory. Fort Reliance, the first permanent trading post in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory, was established in 1874, thirteen kilometres downriver of the confluence of the Yukon and Klondike rivers, believed to be near the Indigenous village of Nuklako. Established by three American traders, Fort Reliance provided a local source of outside goods freighted by a series of small steamboats from St. Michael, Alaska, at the mouth of the Yukon River. According to some accounts, Fort Reliance was established in response to a request made by Chief Gàh Ts'yàt. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in helped to select its location, were employed to cut logs and erect buildings and provided the post with dried meat. Its proximity to the traditional harvesting areas of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in meant a considerably shorter distance to travel for the purposes of trade and so they adjusted their seasonal rounds to spend more time trapping fur to exchange for kettles, tea, sugar, cloth, and rifles. By 1884, Fort Reliance was comprised of six buildings and was the centre of trade activity in the region. The structures themselves were dismantled after the site was abandoned circa 1886 due to a refocussing of economic activity around placer mining in the Forty Mile area. However, the location of Fort Reliance is still identifiable on the landscape and has footprints of log cabins built by traders and depressions associated with house pits inhabited by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in suggestion co-habitation of the site by both groups.

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## GOLD PROSPECTING AND THE GROWTH OF A SETTLER COMMUNITY AT FORTY MILE

An increasing number of explorers, prospectors and settlers began moving west and north during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century seeking adventure, opportunity and wealth. The purchase of Alaska by the United States in 1867 helped encourage this movement by opening a new frontier for exploration by North Americans. So too did the presence of steamboats on the Yukon River. By 1885, the focus of the new arrivals had shifted considerably from fur trading to gold prospecting and placer mining, a change that heavily impacted the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The fur economy had relied on the traditional skills of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who were therefore well positioned to benefit from trade. By contrast, the gold economy, for the most part, did not rely on Indigenous skills. In fact, gold prospecting in the region was largely incompatible with the traditional harvesting and commercial trapping activities of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in due to the type of work force required and impacts on the environment. As a result, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were increasingly marginalized within the new economic and social system that was being imposed on their traditional territory.

The discovery of coarse gold on the Fortymile River in 1886 prompted the traders from Fort Reliance to set up a large store and warehouse at the site of the traditional Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in camp of Ch'ëdähchëkkek'it located at the confluence of the Fortymile and Yukon rivers. This grew into the town of Forty Mile, which became Yukon's first permanent non-Indigenous settlement with a population of about 1000 by 1894. Forty Mile has substantial evidence of the community that developed to serve the prospecting and mining economy, which expanded rapidly in the vicinity during 1880s and peaked in the 1890s. A large warehouse (1895-1901), residence cabins, a general store (1900), a fish storehouse (1895-1901), a large graveyard (1896-1915) and the outline of a farm that served the town (c. 1898), as well as buildings used for administrative and religious purposes (referred to below) all date to the period and remain onsite today. Additional buildings associated with church and state are also present and referred to below. In 1893, a second trader set up infrastructure across the Fortymile River at Fort Cudahy which featured a complex of buildings that included a sawmill to cut lumber for commercial buildings. Although today, Fort Cudahy lies in ruins, it collapsed in place leaving a rich assortment of artifacts in situ that reflect its history. The archaeology, structures and historical records associated with Forty Mile and its surroundings represent how a traditional Indigenous harvesting site was appropriated as a colonial settlement in support of gold prospecting and became a contact zone between the local Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in population and the newcomers to the area.

The size of Forty Mile and surrounding settlements offered some new opportunities for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, who sold meat, fish and hide clothing to the residents. There was also a demand for Indigenous labour, which was required to help construct the settlements and to carry supplies out to placer mining sites. However, unlike Fort Reliance, Forty Mile was set up primarily to service miners and prospectors rather than Indigenous fur trappers. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in had to travel a greater distance to trade because of the abandonment of Fort

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Reliance in 1887. The increase in population affected game populations, causing them to move away from the Yukon River valley, and meant competition with the newcomers for the best fishing spots. Disease contracted from the newcomers led to fatal epidemics of small pox and tuberculosis. Alcohol – often toxic homebrew – became widely available with devastating consequences to an Indigenous population unprepared for its effects.

### THEME THREE: DISPOSSESSION AND DISPLACEMENT

#### THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH 1896-1898: DISPLACEMENT AND NEW SETTLEMENTS

On August 16, 1896, gold was discovered at Rabbit Creek, a tributary of the Klondike River about 125 kms south of Forty Mile. This marked a pivotal moment in the story of Tr'ondëk-Klondike. After staking their claims, the miners, who had made the initial discovery, set off for Fort Constantine near Forty Mile to register the claims. When the miners at Forty Mile saw the plentiful gold of an unfamiliar colour and texture, they raced upriver to stake claims of their own, thus beginning what would become one of the largest gold rushes in history. Indeed, “the Yukon, or Klondike, gold rush is one of the few events in Canadian history – perhaps the only one – that has entered into the collective memory of the entire world” (Coates & Morrison 2017, 77). The gold rush itself was characterized by the sheer number of men taking part in a relatively confined area over a short period of time. It has been estimated that approximately 30,000 people from all over the world reached Dawson City and the Klondike goldfields over the mountain passes during the winter of 1897 to 1898 after news of the discovery of gold made it to the outside world. Although the gold rush would only last another year, the unprecedented impact on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in would prove profound - not least of which because the decimation of habitat, fish stocks and moose and caribou populations impacted their ability to live off the land.

By autumn 1896, most people had left Forty Mile for the Klondike goldfields. Preliminary settlement in the Klondike goldfields was haphazard and overcrowded. Newcomers had overrun the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in camp at Tr'ochëk at the confluence of the Klondike and Yukon rivers, even staking claims amidst the caches and cabins. Some prospectors bought cabins from the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and before too long, the original inhabitants were displaced from their home. The new settlement that sprung up on the site of Tr'ochëk became known as Klondike City (or 'Lousetown' due to its squalid character). The historic remains of Klondike City are well documented (e.g. building depressions, rail track, boilers/equipment, etc), but there is no evidence of cohabitation by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in during this period, which supports the oral narratives and historical records that the seasonal Indigenous residents were quickly displaced by the large influx of miners.

Directly across the river from Tr'ochëk, a flat of land at the mouth of the Klondike River presented itself as the closest steamboat stop and an ideal supply point for the Klondike goldfields. A traditional moose hunting pasture of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, it was staked as a

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townsite by an enterprising prospector and quickly mushroomed into Dawson City - a community crammed with an eclectic assortment of hotels, stores, trading posts, and log cabins set along muddy, rutted streets, with hundreds of miner's tents blanketing the surrounding hills. The layout of Dawson City as a frontier mining town is still intact today and there are numerous buildings dating to the gold rush period. This includes buildings associated with church and state referenced below as well as banks, hotels, residences, stores, warehouses, etc.

Displaced from both their traditional fish camp at Tr'ochëk and their traditional moose hunting pasture, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in moved to the south end of the new Dawson City townsite hoping to stay close to the rich waters around Tr'ochëk and their primary food source, the salmon. However, the move proved to be controversial with the Federal Government based in Ottawa as the new land on which they were camped was part of a tract already earmarked by the North-West Mounted Police as a Government Reserve. By the spring of 1897, with Chief Isaac as their spokesperson, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in relocated downriver to another of their traditional sites, Jëjik dhä dënezhu kek'it (Moosehide). Located approximately five kilometres downriver from Dawson City, Moosehide had been in use for at least 8000 years. It proved an excellent site for settlement, located on a bench well above flood level with good views up and down river, excellent for spotting game. Just upriver, Moosehide Creek provided fresh, clear water. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in built cabins for themselves and cut logs for a mission house and church. Eventually, in 1900, the Department of the Interior created an Indian Reserve of 160 acres under the Indian Act (see below), enough land for the settlement but not enough to allow the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to be self-sufficient. They still had to travel elsewhere to obtain firewood, fish, meat, and fur. The move to Moosehide proved significant in the history of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It had the effect of insulating the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in from Dawson City and the thousands of newcomers flooding into the region, while allowing them to remain in their traditional territory with continued access to the Yukon River. This meant they could still practice traditional harvesting and subsistence activities, albeit based out of a permanent settlement and not at some of the traditional sites from which they had been displaced. However, the permanence of the settlement and the fact that the majority of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were now in one place also enabled the church and state to exert increasing control over their lives.

Moosehide today retains its original layout, which reflects an organically evolved community oriented toward the river that was used for travel and fishing. This stands in contrast to the surveyed grid pattern of Dawson City. At Moosehide, traditional trails continue to link the site to the Yukon River, Dawson City, Fort Reliance and other nearby features. Five historic log cabins (including the Isaac family cabin), old food caches and evidence of other former structures are all present on site. As discussed below, St Barnabas Church and the associated schoolhouse remain in place and speak to the influence of the church on traditional life at the site following its establishment as a permanent Indigenous community during the gold rush.

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Moosehide stands as a testament to the ability of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to adapt and endure when they were displaced from other traditional sites (such as Tr'ochëk and Forty Mile) and pushed to the socio-economic margins of the colonial system as gold extraction replaced fur trading as the primary economic driver.

#### THEME FOUR: MISSIONIZATION AND

#### THEME SIX: ADMINISTRATIVE AND ASSIMILATIONIST POLICIES

#### INCREASING CHURCH, POLICE AND GOVERNMENT PRESENCE

Church missionaries began arriving in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory with the initial influx of fur traders and miners. Bishop William Bompas, the first full-time missionary within Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory, arrived in 1892 and set up his mission on what became known as Mission Island just upstream of the settlement at Forty Mile. Today, Mission Island is an archaeological site with at least 19 mapped features that reflect its historical function. The Anglican Church exercised the most influence on the day-to-day lives of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Representatives of the church saw theirs as a 'civilizing' mission carried out via religion and education. They baptized and converted many people in the community, ran a day school at Moosehide and built and administered a residential school in Carcross, 600 km away, to which Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in children were eventually sent. The Moosehide day school had intermittent attendance as it was often necessary for children to accompany their families on the land to hunt and trap. To keep them in school required government subsidy, thereby establishing a dependent relationship between residents and the government. This became more entrenched with the establishment of the federal family allowance in 1944, which was administered by the church and only given to those mothers who sent their children to school. As a result, it became harder to sustain living on the land since families were effectively paid to remain in town where their children attended school. The Church also acted as the primary intermediaries between the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Canadian government, which only served to increase Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in dependence.

The North-West Mounted Police, formed in 1873, arrived in the area of Forty Mile in 1894. By the following year, a detachment of 21 men had built a large log compound, named Fort Constantine, across the river from Forty Mile next to Fort Cudahy, becoming the first official Canadian government presence in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in territory. In addition to policing, recording of mining claims and judicial duties, their prime mission was to assert Canadian sovereignty in the region. With an invisible border and so many American miners mining into the Yukon, but assuming they were in U.S. territory, there was a danger of the Canadian government losing this valuable land through neglect along with the potential income from customs charges and gold royalties. As a direct result of the Klondike Gold Rush, and as an expression of sovereignty in the area, the Canadian government proclaimed the new Yukon Territory on June 13, 1898, with Dawson City as its capital. It was to be administered by a federally appointed Commissioner and territorial council. The following year, a telegraph line



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was installed from Telegraph Creek to Dawson City and five substantial government buildings were erected within the next few years: the Court House, the Commissioner's Residence, the Territorial Administration building, the Post Office, and a school. Most of the North-West Mounted Police left Forty Mile and moved to Dawson in the fall of 1896 to set up their new compound. From 1898 to 1900, they were joined by the Yukon Field Force, a group of approximately 200 officers and men of the Permanent Force of the Canadian Militia who had been sent north to assist them. Together, they safeguarded the miners all along the journey from the mountain passes to Dawson City, controlled the criminal elements, and protected Canadian sovereignty in the face of an overwhelming influx of Americans who disregarded the Alaska/Yukon border.

As with other Indigenous peoples in Canada, the lives of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were dictated by the federal Indian Act, which emerged from the consolidation of earlier legislation titled the Gradual Civilization Act (1857) and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1869). Enacted in 1876, the Indian Act and its subsequent revisions gave the government control over most aspects of Indigenous life, such as the administration of treaties and reserves, rights to land, subsistence activities, education, and governance. It prohibited forms of Indigenous cultural expression, established legal requirements for Indigenous children to be educated at government schools and gave sweeping powers to "Indian Agents" (government representatives assigned to Indigenous reserves) to control most aspects of the day to day life of Indigenous peoples. The Report from the Royal Committee on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) foregrounded how the Indian Act served as a mechanism of colonial power, assimilation and cultural disenfranchisement. In 1914, Reverend John Hawksley was appointed the Yukon Territory's first Indian Agent, charged with implementing the provisions of the Indian Act. While the church and state had already imposed their authority over the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in by this point, the appointment formalized the government intent to further assert its control by applying the Indian Act to Indigenous people in the Yukon Territory from its seat of power in Dawson City.

Buildings associated with the missionary and government institutions that quickly followed the growing southern population into the region and imposed colonial order and values across the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in constitute some of the best preserved physical evidence reflecting the experience of colonialism by local Indigenous peoples. The financial resources of church and state meant that they had the power to physically imprint their presence on the landscape in a prominent way. An Anglican church (1895), an imposing Royal North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) station (1901), and a roadhouse (c. 1893-95) used variously as a police detachment, customs house and residence are all present and well preserved at Forty Mile. Dawson City, which rapidly became the colonial hub for the region during the Klondike gold rush, has a number of historic administrative and institutional buildings that speak to the establishment of church and state and the advent of a market economy: NWMP married quarters at Fort Herchmer (1898-99), Canadian Bank of Commerce (1898), Commissioner's Residence (1901), Courthouse (1901), Old Territorial Administration

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Building (1901), Post Office (1900), Telegraph Office (1899), St. Paul's Anglican Church (1902), St. Mary's Catholic Church (1897), and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church (1901). The planned townsite, formally surveyed and laid out in a grid pattern, indicates the intention of the state to impose its presence and particular vision of social order in the region. At Moosehide, St. Barnabas Anglican Church (1908) and schoolhouse (built 1899, operated as day school until 1957) represent the presence of church and state on this site as well. Given their association with colonialism, many of the aforementioned buildings have important symbolic values for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as markers of dispossession, authoritarianism and the imposition of outside cultural values and norms (see Crocus Bluff Consulting 2018).

## THEME SEVEN: INDIGENOUS AGENCY AND ADAPTATION

Like other Indigenous peoples who experienced settler colonialism world-wide, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were faced with the need to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances that were largely imposed on them by external forces beyond their control. The history of Tr'ondëk-Klondike is permeated with examples of how the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in adapted to colonialism in order to safeguard their distinct identity and culture, often in the face of exceptionally challenging events. At the start of the colonial period they became important players in the evolving fur economy within their traditional territory because they put their traditional skills to work trapping for the purposes of trade. Their contribution to the establishment of Fort Reliance described above indicates agency in shaping the focus of trade in the region for a short period. With the establishment of Forty Mile, Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine and the shift to a gold prospecting economy, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in were forced to adapt again, finding new, if less lucrative ways, of securing a livelihood by providing services to the community (i.e. meat, labour, traditional products such as clothing). Some turned to prospecting for gold themselves. Others settled in Mission Island, whether by choice or coercion, which was set up in part with the intention to offer sanctuary from the worst excesses and vices of a frontier prospecting town.

The best example of Indigenous adaptation to colonialism in Tr'ondëk-Klondike was the decision made by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to move their main settlement to Moosehide after they were displaced from the traditional site of Tr'ochëk by miners at the start of the gold rush. In doing so, they created a buffer between themselves and the intense social and environmental changes associated with the arrival of thirty thousand outsiders in just two years. However, they did so while remaining in the heart of their traditional territory where their culture was and continues to be firmly rooted. This decision had a significant impact on their ability to retain a measure of independence despite the increasing presence of church and state in their day to day lives. Living near Dawson City also allowed some Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to find work in the booming Klondike gold economy or in the sternwheeler boats transporting people and goods up and down the Yukon River. Additionally, the proximity to Dawson City meant that the local Indigenous population was exposed to new technologies and tools that they were able to adapt for their own purposes. This is perhaps most evident in

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the changing salmon fishing methods employed by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in who adapted European techniques to more effectively catch their staple food.

One Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in leader, Chief Isaac, represents the struggle of his people to adapt to the new colonial reality. Chief Issac "...acted as a bridge between the old ways and the new. He led the Hän people from before the gold rush until his death in 1932. He was an intermediary between his people and the newcomers, and later between his people and the Canadian government" (Dobrowolsky 2014, 79). For example, he represented the wishes of his people to the Canadian government during their move to Moosehide. He also anticipated that the culture of his people risked being overwhelmed by the miners and so arranged to "cache" some of their traditional songs with their Alaskan relatives. Nearly a century later, Alaskan elders who remembered the songs "returned" them to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in acting as a catalyst for cultural renewal. As a spokesperson for his people, he frequently reproached miners and officials, pointing out that, since his people did not mine or interfere with European methods of earning a living, they should not be overhunting the resources upon which his people depended. In this regard, Chief Isaac was emblematic of how the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in sought to retain their culture in the face of colonialism.

European colonialism, and settler colonialism in particular, constitutes a significant stage in world history whose legacy has shaped socio-cultural and economic life up to the present day. This report has identified a number of themes in the Indigenous experience of European colonialism that cross-cut time and place and are therefore globally relevant. These themes manifest themselves to varying degrees and in different ways depending on the colonial context, but, in general terms, they remain remarkably consistent regardless of when and where Indigenous peoples were first colonized by Europeans. Violent conflict, forced labour, displacement, control by church and state institutions, the imposition of resource economies and various forms of adaptation were all part of the Indigenous experience following colonization by Europeans. In this respect they have universal significance.

As demonstrated in Section Three of the report, Tr'ondëk-Klondike represents a number of these universally significant themes. Most notably it represents the Indigenous experience of expanding settler colonies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century where a rapid influx of European migrants led to displacement from traditional sites, the advent of new resource economies and progressive control by church and state over most aspects of day to day life. It also represents ways Indigenous peoples reacted to this period of intense change in an effort to protect their culture and remain within their homeland. Tr'ondëk-Klondike is an outstanding site to represent these universal themes for several reasons: First, it represents Indigenous experiences of both the fur trade and one of the most famous gold rushes in world history, two forms of resource extraction that drove the colonization of Indigenous lands. Second, both church and state were particularly active in this area, in part due to a desire to impose order on a place in rapid change and in part because the proximity to the Alaska border meant concerns over sovereignty that drove the establishment of government institutions. Lastly, the well documented move by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to Moosehide is a particularly strong example of how an Indigenous group survived the colonial experience by successfully adapting in place in order to retain their cultural identity and connection to place that stretches back many thousands of years.

A future comparative analysis is needed to show how the attributes of Tr'ondëk-Klondike in the form of tangible heritage and associative values constitute an outstanding representation of universally significant themes in the Indigenous experience of colonialism. This comparative analysis could focus on sites on the frontier of settler colonies where the search for gold and other resources brought Europeans into contact with Indigenous peoples whose traditional life had not previously been impacted by European colonialism. Comparable sites would need to be assessed based on their ability to represent the Indigenous experience from initial contact through to the consolidation of colonial power via the apparatus of church or state. A key strength of Tr'ondëk-Klondike is precisely its ability to demonstrate, through a variety of well

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documented sites, the Indigenous experience of a rapidly evolving colonial enterprise that fundamentally changed the trajectory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in way of life.

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