



Media Release

Canada submits new world heritage nomination for Tr'ondëk-Klondike

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DAWSON, YUKON— The Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site (TKWHS) Advisory Committee is pleased to announce the submission of a new UNESCO world heritage nomination for Tr'ondëk-Klondike. The nomination was submitted by Canada to the World Heritage Centre in Paris, France, in February 2021. In March, it was deemed complete and ready for evaluation by experts.

The TKWHS Advisory Committee developed the nomination over the past several years, with input from a membership composed of Dawson residents, members of community and mining industry organizations, and delegates from various governments. Included on the committee are representatives for the Dawson City Museum, Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, Klondike Visitors Association, Klondike Placer Miners Association, Yukon Chamber of Mines, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Government of Yukon, Parks Canada, and the City of Dawson.

The proposed Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage site focuses on the period of colonization that occurred in the Dawson region before and after the Klondike Gold Rush and the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The nomination involves a serial property comprising eight distinct heritage sites that together tell the story of the Tr'ondëk Hwëchin's experiences and responses to the development and expansion of colonialism in their homeland. The eight sites within Tr'ondëk-Klondike illustrate Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's presence in their homeland for thousands of years prior to the arrival of a colonial presence and the subsequent changes in land use, livelihoods, and patterns of settlement that arose as a response to the establishment and consolidation of colonial power. Tr'ondëk-Klondike testifies to the continuity of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in life on the land and the preservation of their cultural traditions, knowledge, and practices, in spite of colonial expansion and consolidation in their traditional territory.

The eight component heritage sites are Fort Reliance; *Ch'édähdëk* (Forty Mile); *Ch'édähdëk Tth'än K'et* (*Dënezhu* Graveyard); Fort Cudahy; Fort Constantine; Tr'ochëk; Dawson City; *Jëjik Dhä Dënezhu Kek'it* (Moosehide Village); and *Jëjik Dhä Tthe Zra,y Kek'it* (Black City). These sites collectively total 334 hectares of land and are located within the homeland of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. The lands and waters in between the component sites are not included in the nomination. All of the component sites of Tr'ondëk-Klondike have already had mineral staking rights withdrawn or are on Category A settlement land,

identified in the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement. There are no mining claims located within any of the component sites.

The World Heritage Committee's decision on the Tr'ondëk-Klondike nomination is expected in early 2022, following an 18-month evaluation process.

There is strong local and territorial support for this World Heritage nomination among heritage, tourism, and business sectors, as well as the City of Dawson, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Yukon, and federal governments. Funding for the project was provided by the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor), Parks Canada, and Yukon Government, with in-kind support and project management from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

QUOTE

"We are very excited about the Tr'ondëk-Klondike site's potential as a World Heritage Site", said Deb Nagano, Co-Chair of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site (TKWHS) Advisory Committee. "We feel confident the revised nomination, with its increased focus on the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in nation, underscores Tr'ondëk-Klondike's unique ability to tell the greater story of colonization and its impacts, as well as the resilience of Indigenous peoples."

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Related Information

Tr'ondëk-Klondike Frequently Asked Questions



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the current status of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage nomination?

In February 2021 Canada submitted a new nomination for Tr'ondëk-Klondike to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). This new nomination of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike heritage site has been accepted for evaluation. Over the next year experts will review the nomination. A decision by UNESCO's World Heritage Committee is expected in spring of 2022

Background

The idea for a Klondike World Heritage site has been around since the 1970s. The idea gained momentum in 2013 when UNESCO designation became a priority during regional economic planning. Over the following four years a community-based initiative led to a formal nomination that Canada submitted in 2017. In May 2018 Canada withdrew the nomination from consideration. This decision was made after the evaluation of the nomination found more work was required.

While the decision to withdraw the nomination was a setback, the local project team was committed to reworking the nomination. In October 2018, an independent world heritage expert was engaged to visit the site and review the nomination. The goal of the review was to help decide whether to revise the current nomination, develop a new nomination, or end the project. Through this review, the local project team and four levels of government continued working together. The local advisory committee suggested a new nomination should place the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in perspective at the center of the gold rush narrative.

Over the winter of 2019, the project team worked on a new idea for a UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination. The focus of the new concept is the long-standing presence of Indigenous people in the Klondike, before, during and after the establishment of colonial administration. The new nomination includes the many layers of settlement and interaction at Fort Reliance, Ch'ëdähdëk (Forty Mile), Ch'ëdähdëk Tth'än K'et (Dënezhu Graveyard), Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine, Tr'ochëk, Dawson City, Jëjik Dhä Dënezhu Kek'it (Moosehide Village) and Tthe Zra,y Kek'it (Black City).

Together, these sites tell a story of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experiences of colonialism within their homeland. This idea was shared with UNESCO's cultural heritage advisor,

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). After a rigorous five-month review, ICOMOS determined that a new nomination, focused on Indigenous experiences of colonialism, could be an important addition to the World Heritage List.

What and where is the proposed Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage site?

The new nomination is a serial property, which is a World Heritage site made up of different sites. The new nomination has eight parts: Fort Reliance; Ch'édähdëk (Forty Mile); Ch'édähdëk Tth'än K'et (Dënezhu Graveyard); Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine; Tr'ochëk; Dawson City; Jëjik Dhä Dënezhu Kek'it (Moosehide Village); and Tthe Zra,y Kek'it (Black City).

The eight component sites show the long-standing presence of Indigenous people in the area, and their interactions with newcomers between 1874 and 1908. Each part of the site tells the story of different phases of the relationship between Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the newcomers who began arriving in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in's traditional territory in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Together, these eight sites total 334 hectares of land. Each site is a separate and distinct area. The lands and waters in between the sites are not included in the nomination.

Most of the component sites are on Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Settlement Lands. Ch'édähdëk (Forty Mile) and Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine are co-managed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon. The sites in Dawson City that contribute to the nomination are all historic sites under the care of federal, territorial, and municipal governments.

There are five component sites that currently have management plans: Ch'édähdëk (Forty Mile), Fort Cudahy and Fort Constantine, Tr'ochëk, Dawson City, and Jëjik Dhä Dënezhu Kek'it (Moosehide Village). These sites will continue to be managed according to their plans with no additional constraints or changes. The sites that do not have management plans will continue to be managed according to existing legislation (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Act, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Lands and Resources Act, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Self-Government Agreement).

Will World Heritage status affect my livelihood?

World Heritage status will not affect Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in treaty and Aboriginal rights, resident interests, nor mining. Each of the component sites have previously had mineral staking rights withdrawn or are located within Category A Settlement Land, identified in Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final and Self-Government Agreements. There are no active mining claims in the component sites.

Why does this area deserve to be a World Heritage site?

There is no other place like Tr'ondëk-Klondike in the world.

The eight component sites of Tr'ondëk-Klondike have the most complete and exceptional archaeological and historic evidence that reflects an Indigenous peoples' experience of, and adaptation to, the global phenomenon known as European colonialism.

The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in experience vividly echoes the experiences of Indigenous people in North, Central, and South America; Oceania; Africa; and throughout many parts of Asia during this period. These experiences of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in started with the growing commercial activity of the fur trade and the western North American gold rushes and were intensified during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896 - 1898.

The evidence that relays the heritage values of Tr'ondëk-Klondike is in good condition and the component sites are protected and managed under appropriate legislation and policy. No component site is exposed to unplanned or unregulated development.

Are there any other heritage sites like ours?

Tr'ondëk-Klondike is an exceptional site that illustrates Indigenous peoples' experiences in the face of European colonialism. No other property on the World Heritage List or Tentative Lists currently demonstrates as well, an Indigenous peoples' experience of, and adaptation to, colonialism, nor the continuity of an Indigenous peoples' culture before, during, and after the initial contact period with colonizers.

Tr'ondëk-Klondike is a remarkable illustration of what Indigenous people all around the world experienced over a 500-year period, when European nations imposed their economic, political, military, social, and cultural power on all corners of the globe.

How are cultural sites different from natural sites?

Cultural heritage is ways of living that are passed down from generation to generation, and is demonstrated in places, objects, practices, and language. It represents our history and our identity; our bond to the past, to our present, and the future. Cultural heritage is not limited to material things that we can see and touch, it is also immaterial elements: traditions, oral history, performing arts, social practices, traditional craftsmanship, rituals, knowledge, and skills transmitted from generation to generation within a community.

Natural heritage includes physical, biological, or geological features that have scientific or aesthetic value. Natural World Heritage sites commemorate ecosystems, biodiversity, geological processes, natural beauty, and other natural values.

UNESCO World Heritage sites are nominated for their outstanding cultural and/or natural heritage values, and they are categorized as cultural sites, natural sites, or mixed sites. (Mixed sites must demonstrate both cultural and natural features.) If Tr'ondëk-Klondike is added to the World Heritage List, it will be a cultural site.

Who prepared the nomination?

The development of the Tr'ondëk-Klondike nomination was overseen by a community-based Advisory Committee and managed by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It was prepared by a team of heritage staff from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Government of Yukon, and heritage consultants, all of whom live, raise their families, and make their livelihoods in Yukon.

The World Heritage Advisory Committee consists of representatives from the Klondike Visitors Association, Dawson City Chamber of Commerce, Dawson City Museum, City of Dawson, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Government of Yukon, Klondike National Historic Sites, Klondike Placer Miners' Association, Yukon Chamber of Mines, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizenry, and community residents.

Who supports Tr'ondëk-Klondike?

There is strong local and territorial support for the World Heritage nomination among heritage, tourism, and business sectors, the City of Dawson, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Government of Yukon, and the federal government. The Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor), Parks Canada, and Yukon Government provided funding, with in-kind support and project management from Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

Who will have authority over the site?

If Trondek-Klondike is inscribed to the World Heritage List, a Stewardship Committee, made up of representatives from each government that manages component sites or heritage sites within the components, will be created. The Stewardship Committee will not have legislated decision-making powers. Each member of the Committee will retain the authority to make independent management decisions relative to land tenure within its jurisdiction.

The current local World Heritage Advisory Committee will provide information and collaborate with the Tr'ondëk-Klondike World Heritage Site Stewardship Committee to ensure that management decisions for Tr'ondëk-Klondike retain continuity and local support.

Proposed development within Tr'ondëk-Klondike will be subject to the legislation, regulations, assessment, and permitting processes of each government authority within their respective jurisdiction.

What are the benefits?

International recognition of Tr'ondëk-Klondike would enrich existing tourism opportunities. "Tr'ondëk - Klondike is a special place unlike any other," said Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief Roberta Joseph, "and we want to ensure that present and future generations, as well as visitors from near and far, hear our story."

World Heritage status will first and foremost, help strengthen our community through working together and respecting each other's stories.

It is expected that marketing through the international lens of the globally recognized UNESCO logo will attract more visitors to Dawson City and Yukon - including higher-spending international and winter visitors. World Heritage status will also likely encourage private-sector investment in expanded facilities and services we will all enjoy. As members of the community, your support for World Heritage status helps support our efforts to diversify our economy, stimulate business opportunities that create year-round jobs and incomes, open up access to new funds for improved community facilities and sustain the exceptional quality of life we enjoy here.

What about the impact of tourism?

The local Stewardship Committee will plan for sustainable increases to visitor numbers, ensuring that visitors have access to appropriate areas of Tr'ondëk -Klondike and can appreciate the site without impacting fragile heritage areas or community use. It is an opportunity to develop and enhance programs at places such as Tr'ochëk, Forty Mile, and Dawson City and leverage funding to increase the site's sustainability. Private areas like Moosehide, where there is no desire for tourism, will not be promoted or made accessible.

How long will it take for the site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List?

The Tr'ondëk -Klondike nomination was submitted by Canada in January 2021 on behalf of the local Advisory Committee, and a decision by the World Heritage Committee is expected in 2022.

What is the role of ICOMOS in World Heritage?

ICOMOS (the International Council on Monuments and Sites) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that gives recommendations to the World Heritage Committee on cultural and mixed World Heritage sites and new nominations with cultural heritage values.

During the evaluation process, each nomination proposal is assessed by up to 10 experts drawn from the ICOMOS network, who study the nomination and the proposed "Outstanding Universal Value" of the site.

As an international NGO, ICOMOS provides advice to the World Heritage Committee on cultural heritage and has no authority within Canada or any other country.

What is the role of the IUCN in World Heritage?

The IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) is an international NGO that gives recommendations to the World Heritage Committee on natural, mixed and cultural landscape World Heritage sites and new nominations with natural heritage values. As part of the evaluation process, IUCN will review the nomination for completeness. The Tr'ondëk-Klondike includes only cultural features and does not include cultural landscapes or natural resources. The component sites are protected from industrial development and it is not expected that IUCN will have any comments or further role in the evaluation.

Where can I get more information?

We would love to hear from you. Please let us know the best way to get in touch and follow Tr'ondëk-Klondike on Facebook for news and events.

Sharing information and hearing about your expectations and priorities are important to the Advisory Committee. If you're interested in more information or have questions, please contact us.

<https://tkwhstatus.ca>