Part of the Land, Part of the Water
Changing Ways of Yukon Hunter & Fishers p. 3-8

1) What were some of the dangers when hunting large game?
2) Name some of the animals they hunted that are now extinct.
3) Describe the land in the Yukon during the ice age 2500-1100 years ago.
4) How did the land in the Yukon look 1000 years ago?
5) Why was it so important to preserve meat in the summer?
6) Describe some of the jobs women did at fish camp?

p. 8-16

7) What are some of the furs that FN people traded?
8) Which fur did the Russian traders prefer?
9) Which FN group controlled most of the coastal trade?
10) List the pros/cons having white traders come into FN traditional territories.
11) What event broke the up the coastal Tlingit blockade?
12) Skidoos vs. Dogsleds. List the pros//cons of each.

Part of the Land, Part of the Water
Chapter 2 p. 17-27

13) Approx. how long have humans lived in the Yukon?
14) How do the Coast Mountains affect the interior of the Yukon compare to coastal places like Skagway & Haines?
15) What are the three good passes from the coast to the Yukon?
16) Name 5 mountains ranges in the Yukon. Which has the highest peaks?
17) What minerals can be found in the Yukon mountains?
18) Name the minerals or other objects that Yukon FN valued? What did they use each mineral/object for?
19) What are the 4 major river systems in the Yukon?
20) What are the names of the largest lakes in the Yukon?
21) What is the climate of the Yukon defined as? How many months average over 10? How many days are frost free?
22) Describe the temp. range in the Yukon from winter to summer?
23) Describe how much daylight is found in Yukon from summer to winter?

Part of the Land, Part of the Water
The People p. 40-43

24) Explain the difference between Status & non-status FN?
25) What does Kwanlin Dun mean?
26) What is an ethnographer & Linguist?
27) Why are there no Inuit in the Yukon today?

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The Changing Ways of Yukon Hunters and Fishers

AUTUMN ON THE EDGE OF OLD CROW FLATS, 25,000 YEARS AGO

The day is windy and raw. The low rays of the afternoon sun that touch only the tops of the bare brown hills on either side of the valley give little warmth. Six men crouch in the tall grass watching a herd of mammoths downwind from them move along the valley floor. For three days the men have followed the herd at a distance. Now they have closed in on the huge creatures whose thick woolly coats are matted with mud and whose large tusks curve outward and upward. One animal, a young male, lags behind the others, browsing contentedly on the coarse, high grass.

Suddenly the leader of the hunting party raises his left arm. All of the men jump up together to surround the straggler, and several men hurl their spears at his soft underbelly. Two of the spears drive home. Roaring with pain, the wounded mammoth wheels to charge his tormentors while the rest of the herd thunders away down the valley.

One of the hunters stands his ground, confident in his power because the sharp bone tip of his spear has been treated by a dream doctor. The man looks very small up close to his quarry, but the thrust of his spear into the mammoth's forequarters makes the animal stumble. This gives another man the chance to thrust with his spear. The animal stumbles again and falls. The other hunters move in at once to finish the kill.

Their luck has been good. They have followed the herd only a short time and have managed to corner a single animal instead of several, which might have made the kill much more difficult and risky.

As soon as the animal is dead, the hunters gather around the carcass to share a ritual taste of fresh blood and a morsel of fat from the tip of the heart. While the older men butcher the steaming hill of flesh, a boy of fifteen, just learning to hunt big game, starts back up the valley to tell the old people, women and children in camp of their good fortune.

The camp will move up to feast off the kill and will stay there beside it perhaps a month, since it is late enough in the season that meat will freeze quickly. For days the children have been sucking the last bones of a giant beaver, which is all the nourishment that re-

mains in the earlier camp. But the boy messenger never reaches his people. On the way he is killed by a short-faced bear, whom the boy surprises on the brow of a hill, where the bear has brought down a caribou. The boy's friends and relatives never learn what has become of him, but after a few days a woman from the camp finds the hunters and guides the people to the kill.

LATE WINTER ON A BRANCH OF THE PORCUPINE RIVER, 11,000 YEARS AGO

It is bitterly cold. Although the snow blows about on the arctic tundra, it is rarely deep enough, except for occasional big drifts, to cover the tallest of the stunted willows. Travel is not easy for the hunters. Their feet often break through the sharp crust and drop with a thud through the dry snow between hummocks of frozen grass. To keep a steady pace is impossible.

Six families are camped in the shelter of some small poplar and spruce that have managed to grow in a sunny, south-facing spot along a branch of a river which later will be called the Porcupine. Not far from here, men hunted mammoth 15,000 years earlier. Nowadays hunters hardly ever see mammoths; they seem, in fact, to be disappearing.

Again the people are hungry. The older ones look tired and very thin, and they do not talk much. The young children and babies cry easily. It is hard to keep warm, even though everybody wears shirts and pants made of caribou or elk hide. Some have parkas made of hare pelts which have been cut into strips and woven. Each adult has a heavy robe of bison hide too, but only a tiny willow-twig fire burns in the big brush-and-skin shelter where four of the families live. The two smaller shelters nearby are unheated, since so few trees grow in the country. Hands and feet ache with the cold. There is only a single tundra hare to feed everybody. The river and lakes are frozen too deep for spearing fish.

Suddenly a howl comes from one of the dogs that has been left in camp. Five hunters are approaching, who have been gone for almost a week. Each has on his back a net hunting bag full of dark, rich bison meat. The men have been lucky enough to creep close to a sleeping bison cow, and with their sharp, bone-pointed darts have been able to kill her.

Bison meat is rare at this season of the year. In summer, everybody in camp can help to drive a herd over a cliff or up a narrow canyon by setting fires in the grass and then running and shouting behind to scare the animals. The dogs help in the drive too. Bison that break their bones as they fall over the cliff, or bunch up at the head of a canyon, can be quite easily killed by the hunters. In winter it is not so easy. The hunters had to follow the herd on foot for many miles before they had a chance to make this kill, but it was a specially good one. Butchering the cow, the hunters found an unborn calf in her – just the kind of food to give to the two wise but nearly tooth-

less older men on whose knowledge the welfare of the group depends.

The old men and the women gather just enough dry willow twigs to set ablaze the few cakes of dried bison dung they have been hoarding for a cooking fire. One man puts meat, fat and snow into the bison's paunch, while one of the women brings out her store of dried berries to add to the mixture. Tying the bag-like paunch closed with rawhide, they hang it from a pole, so that it twists over the low flame. Ladles of musk-ox and bison horn are brought out: one for each person to eat the bison stew.

Later, as the ladles are filled, the old men caution the children to take just small sips of the broth. If they eat too much too quickly, they will be sick, for they have been without food for four days.

The women and young men build up the fire again with the last of the bison chips and a little willow brush so they can roast big chunks of juicy meat. The shelter warms with the sound of well-fed voices. When the meal has ended, the hunters recount just how they got the bison. Then the older men tell of earlier hunts in which they or their fathers took part. Darkness has long since fallen. Finally the oldest man begins a favorite story about a hero whose father-in-law sent him to get the sinews of a giant bison. It is a long and exciting adventure, but the younger children are soon fast asleep. After a while even the adults begin to doze, but two or three listen carefully, one of them silently repeating some of the old man's words. Eleven thousand years later, the story will still be told in the Yukon, passed down by word of mouth from one group of people to another through all those years.

When the story ends, the old man and his few listeners settle into their sleeping furs. No sound breaks the silence of the tundra except the distant howling of wolves.

SPRING AT KLO-KUT, 1000 YEARS AGO

Far away, in the eastern part of North America and Greenland, the first meetings between native Inuit and the European Norsemen are about to take place. But here in a village on the banks of the Porcupine River, the ancestors of the present-day Loucheux Indians are eagerly preparing for the northbound caribou migration. Almost 800 years will pass before *their* descendants first meet white men!

The Yukon country now looks quite different from the way it did 24,000 or 10,000 years earlier. Much of what was then glacial ice, arctic tundra, grass or shrubs is now covered with spruce, birch, cottonwood and willow. There is still tundra in the mountains, especially in the Brooks Range, and on the coastal plain beyond, and the huge herds of caribou that winter in the forests farther south move north each spring to the arctic slope for calving and summer browsing. At any hour now the villagers expect to see the first caribou arrive, even though the ice on the river broke up only last week.

The men have mended all the birchbark canoes and are ready to

launch them at the caribou ford as soon as the animals appear. Men, women and children wait along the bank to drive back into the water any caribou that succeed in crossing the river.

A doe appears on the opposite bank, then another, and another. Soon hundreds of caribou crowd the far shore and more press from behind. After some hesitation, the first arrivals start to swim toward the shore where the people are waiting. When the animals are well out in the river, the men emerge from hiding and launch their canoes into the midst of the swimming herd. They paddle their light craft right up onto the animals' backs. As the mass of caribou and canoes swirls about in the water, the hunters strike at the closely packed animals again and again with their antler-tipped spears. They kill many, and the water turns pink and rose with caribou blood. Some of the dying animals are carried downriver by the current, but in less than an hour the people have recovered hundreds of carcasses close to the camp, where all can enjoy the fresh meat. Most of the flesh will be dried, to last until summer fishing begins.

In late summer and early autumn, the people will kill even more caribou by driving them into huge corrals built where the low hills and flatlands meet. They will use spears, as they have today in the canoes, but they will also set snares in the brush fences of the corral to choke the animals, and will shoot others with arrows. Working with others, a family can store up enough dried meat to last most of the winter, both for themselves and their guests. During the darkest days of the year, they will not have to leave camp to hunt at all. Instead, they can play games and tell stories and think about the spring hunt, which today once again has been successful. The long days of summer are ahead, and no one is hungry.

JULY AT NESKATAHIN, 1825 AD

"It is already the moon of New Fur on the Game," the old woman tells her granddaughter, who is helping her to turn over the fish. More than a hundred fine sockeye salmon that have been split from head to tail cover the long poles of her fish rack. The fish have dried in the sun for several days, skin side up, and now it is time to turn them flesh side up for further drying.

The old woman's hands ache and her arms are tired from all her work. Early every morning for more than two weeks she has cleaned and split the fish her husband has gaffed out of the heart of the rectangular wooden fish trap. He is the boss of this trap, which is set beside two others; together they completely block the shallow stream that divides the large plank houses of Neskatahin village from the little cluster of tiny raised houses that hold the ashes of the dead. The salmon are swimming up to a small lake to spawn, but a brush fence diverts them into the fish traps.

"It's a beautiful knife, grandmother," says the girl, stroking the polished wooden handle and the blade shaped like a half moon. The old woman's husband hammered that blade from a copper nugget he

got from a White River Indian in exchange for a plug of trade tobacco.

"Even with such a good knife, the fish make a big job," says the old woman. After gutting, beheading and splitting each fish, she has made a special slash on one side. It looks like a crow's foot, with the three toes. Because she belongs to the Crow side of the local people, she has chosen this way to mark the fish she cuts. When the dried fish are folded together and baled, fifty to a bundle, for storage or trade, she will know which bundles are hers.

After cutting the fish, the grandmother washes her hands and knife in the cold stream. She cleans the roe that she has saved in a little side pool, so it too can be dried. The discarded heads and entrails she dumps into a bark basket full of water. Later she will heat the mixture by dropping several hot stones into it, and she will feed the soup to the hunting dogs. She has already thrown some of the offal back in the stream. The rest clings to the stalks and leaves of fireweed on which she has been cutting the fish. That too she now sends floating down the stream.

When all the fish are dry, the old woman will have enough to see her family through the worst of the winter and to feed any unexpected guests. It makes her happy to think that already she has filled half her storehouse.

With her granddaughter she rests now on the grassy bank near the fish rack. They can hear the murmuring of other women and girls working their fish nearby, the shrieks of the younger children launching toy rafts in a little slough, and the occasional chatter of men repairing their equipment for the late summer hunt. A tiny yellow warbler makes soft chirping sounds in the nearby brush, and several white gulls are screeching at each other over a morsel of fish-gut caught on the edge of the stream. The warm sun draws out the scent of the willows and cottonwoods, making the little girl sleepy. She drops her head onto her grandmother's lap and dreams that when the Tlingit traders next come to Neskatahin, a handsome young man will give her a big brass kettle for the skin of a single gopher that she has snared. Then she, in turn, will give the kettle to her grandmother, who has taken care of her since her mother died. Her grandmother could show the kettle off and use it to feast everybody in the village. After all, her grandfather is the headman and the best hunter in the group. By late summer, when people begin to tire of fish, he will be bringing in delicious, fat groundhogs, sheep and caribou meat. She knows two names for the next month – August in English. They are, When the Game Gets Fat, and When Its Fur Begins to Whiten.

Of course, the powerful Tlingit traders would never really sell a brass kettle so cheaply. Even her grandfather has not been able to afford such a luxury. But he is hoping to collect enough fox and beaver skins so he can pile them as high as a muzzle loader standing upright. That is what the Tlingit charge for such a gun.

The girl's grandmother, meanwhile, has been thinking of

whether it is too late in the day to start work on a big moose skin she has saved in its rawhide state since last fall. Her husband needs a new shirt and moccasins, as do some of the grandchildren. Her granddaughter sighs, waking and still thinking of the kettle.

"You've helped me a lot today, granddaughter," says the old woman. "Go find your younger sister and cousins. I'll tell you all about what happened when two sisters made a wish about some stars. Then we'll put that big skin to soak so we can have plenty of tanned hide. This summer I'll show you how to sew moccasins for your brother. You are old enough to do that now."

The girl smiles and jumps up. Nothing could be better than a good story from her grandmother. She runs to find the other children.

AUTUMN NEAR FRANCES LAKE, 1840 AD

The wind is cool today, and the highest peaks have been newly dusted with snow during the night. The noon sun brings out the deep reds of the buckbrush marching up the high slopes to meet the bare grey scree and snow. Golden patches of birch and cottonwood are scattered in the dark green spruce forest of the mountain flanks and valleys. Little lakes and a winding river glint far below.

The racks are heavy with singed and split groundhogs and strips of drying sheep meat, and the women have already stored much fully dried meat and many big bags of grease and berries on the tripod caches by the brush shelters of the mountain camp.

Katesta, the headman of the camp, is enjoying the sun as he braids a caribou snare. Autumn, he says, is the best time of the year. Soon more families will come together from all directions to hunt the woodland caribou that usually congregate nearby in late fall. If the caribou hunt is as successful as the groundhog and sheep hunt has been, everybody will have plenty of meat and skins for the winter.

Today nobody is hunting. When Katesta asked during his regular morning speech concerning the welfare of the camp, each family head announced that he had enough fresh and dried meat. There is no need to snare any more sheep or to set any more snares or dead-falls for groundhogs. The rest of the animals should be left for seed. If people take only what they can use, the animal spirit-owners will not be offended, and they will offer their bodies to be killed another time.

Coming upriver, Katesta and his people saw many signs of beaver, but they left the animals alone, so that next winter they might have prime pelts for their trading partners from Teslin Lake. Early every summer now, the Teslin Indians come over the divide to a place near Watson Lake. They bring valuable Russian goods – tea and tobacco, metal knives and glass beads – which they themselves get from Coast Tlingit relatives who come up the Taku River. Of course the Teslin people always want as many marten and fox skins as they can get, in addition to the beaver pelts. They know that the Frances River marten have choice fur and that the Russians like marten and fox best. Besides, beaver skins are heavy to carry.

But the Teslin people charge very dearly for the white men's goods, so some Frances River Indians have begun to take their furs south to Dease Lake instead. There they sell them to local Indians or to Indian traders from still farther south, who later barter them at a huge fair held on the upper Stikine River, across the divide. Every year many Coast Tlingit, and sometimes a few Russians, come there from salt water to dry salmon and to trade with the interior people. The Frances River and Dease Lake Indians themselves rarely go that far. It is a dangerous trip, and they have heard that the followers of the powerful Tlingit Chief Shakes, if angered, just take away the furs of the inland people and give nothing in return.

Other Frances River Indians prefer to trade with their relatives down the Liard River or with Mountain Indians of the Beaver River. These people can get trade goods at Fort Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Post miles to the east, where the Liard empties into the Mackenzie River. There is also a small outpost called Fort Halkett in the Sekani country, at the mouth of the Smith River, a branch of the Liard nearer to Watson Lake, but that outpost is usually not well supplied. Often nobody is there at all, and the Indians who wait for the trader run short of food because they neglect their hunting and fishing.

Suddenly a volley of musket fire shatters the still air and echoes back from the surrounding mountains. Everybody in Katesta's camp is startled, though not everyone is alarmed. Some know that the shots probably announce the arrival of another family whose campfire smoke one of the groundhog hunters saw a few days earlier. But others think a thunderbird may have landed near camp, and they are frightened. Some have never heard gunshots, and others have heard them only rarely. They may soon hear more, since it is becoming the custom of the country for friends to announce their arrival in this noisy way.

By late afternoon, not one but three new families have arrived. One large family, led by a man named Nokagah, has come up the Frances River and actually belongs to the same band as Katesta. The other two families have crossed the pass from the Pelly River. Katesta's oldest daughter is married to their headman, Tucumasta. The members of Tucumasta's band speak a little differently from Katesta's people, but they can understand each other well enough.

Everybody wants to hear how people have fared since they last met – who has been sick or has died, who has been married, who has new children. First, however, the arriving families must be helped with setting up their brush camps, and after the chores are done, they must be well fed. Only then do the adults settle down around the fire by the headman's brush house for a real exchange of news. The young children, who have been taking up old friendships or shyly making new ones, leave off their play and slowly drift into the group. They snuggle up to their parents and grandparents and soon fall asleep. The older children have helped with fetching water and firewood and feeding the pack dogs brought by the newcomers. Now they listen quietly as the adults talk.

The headman of each of the new groups has astounding things to

tell, for each has discovered that white traders are reaching more deeply into the country. According to Nokagah, one of these traders is a Hudson's Bay Company man by the name of Campbell, who has already been in various parts of the Liard River country during the past five or six years. Last winter, Nokagah himself saw Campbell at Fort Halkett, and all the Frances River Indians know that Campbell spent the winter before that at Dease Lake, after first going down to the Stikine River trade fair and meeting Shakes. Everybody says that Campbell is a brave man, but that he and his men would still have starved to death if some Mountain Indians had not brought them food. Even so, they say, the white men had to eat their snowshoe lacings and parchment window before they left. Campbell's interpreter, Francis Hoole, had told Katesta about it.

Nokagah says that this summer, shortly after Katesta and his people headed up the Frances River, Campbell followed, bringing seven men. Just like the Indians ahead of him, Campbell fished for trout on the way upstream, but he and his party also killed and ate some of the beaver and moose. They went far beyond Simpson Lake, which another white man visited a few years earlier. When they got to Frances Lake they built a strange-looking house on the island at the head of the west arm. Then they explored Finlayson's River and Finlayson's Lake and even went over to the headwaters of the Pelly River. Nokagah says he found their traces repeatedly as he and his family came up the Frances and crossed to their hunting grounds northwest of Finlayson Lake.

Tucumasta, the headman of the family from Pelly River, has strange stories too, about Russian traders pushing their way up the Yukon River. No one here in the mountain camp knows much about these Russians. Tucumasta has his news from Indians farther down the Pelly River. They had met White River Indians who had been trading with people from the Upper Tanana, and the Upper Tanana Indians had heard about the Russians from Loucheux who had been trading on the Yukon River. Another story has come from these Loucheux also, that the Hudson's Bay traders from the Mackenzie now have a trading post up the Peel River, near the Rat.

The elders in the mountain camp talk of these things for some time. What will it mean, they ask, if Campbell comes right into their own hunting grounds with guns and powder and tobacco and beads? If he came to Frances Lake again, everyone could trap enough to buy the guns without having to deal through other Indian intermediaries or to make long journeys to the white traders far away in hostile territory. And what would it mean if the Russians came up the Yukon River as far as the mouth of the Pelly? Or if the Hudson's Bay traders moved farther up the Peel? The people fall silent as they think about this. They are not sure whether it would be good to have the white strangers here in their own country. Perhaps they should drive the white men out. On the other hand, they are eager to have their guns, metal knives, tobacco and beads. The elders think that their people's way of life may soon change greatly.

WINTER ON THE FORT SELKIRK–AISHIHIK TRAIL, 1889 AD

It is nearly fifty years later, in the depth of February, near the head of Aishihik Lake. Four Aishihik families are returning on snowshoes to their winter trapping camp, after visiting the trader at Fort Selkirk. In exchange for red and silver fox, lynx and beaver furs, tanned caribou and moose hides, and some half-dried caribou meat, they received two rifles, some shells, some powder for their old flintlock, metal traps for fox and beaver, two iron files, a pair of scissors, lengths of calico, beads, a harmonica, tea, sugar, tobacco, and a little flour.

One young man and his partner are eager to test the power of the new rifles, and they borrow one from the headman, their uncle. Armed with the new rifle, an old flintlock musket, a bow and a quiver of arrows – in case the firearms should fail – they move off ahead of the others.

On their light snowshoes the young men run easily through the snowy spruce forest and across a more open valley where the willow twigs are just starting to turn deep red.

One of the hunters sees the splayed tracks of a big moose. He tests their freshness, probing the snow with a long stick. The tracks are still soft, and the young men decide that the moose probably passed by within the last hour. Before setting out to stalk it, they study the lay of the land in relation to the light northwest breeze that is blowing. Their fathers and uncles have been instructing them on such points since they first began to hunt.

The older men themselves had little instruction from their elders in the habits of moose. Fifty years ago these animals were rarely seen, and the people mostly hunted caribou and sheep. Now there are many moose, and caribou are becoming scarcer. Some say they have dropped in numbers because the white prospectors, who have recently come up the Yukon River as far as Fort Selkirk or over the passes from the coast, have caused many forest fires. The new growth that follows the fires makes good moose browse, but spoils the lichens for caribou. Others say the shift in numbers of moose and caribou began before the whites arrived and has something to do with the anger of Animal Mother. In any case, the white men are bringing other changes to the country. They are strange people, but some of them seem to be good fellows, like little Doctor Dawson, who is tireless on the trail in spite of his hunched back. He looks at rocks through his magnifying glass and tries to learn the Indian names for rivers and mountains wherever he goes.

There is a new trading post now at Fort Selkirk. Campbell, the first white man to come into the upper Yukon River country, had one there thirty or forty years ago, but Chilkat Tlingit traders destroyed his post a few years after he built it. Campbell never returned to the country after that – although his spirit came back to a baby at Tatlmain Lake, people say. After that there were no more stores along the upper Yukon River until a white man named McQuesten

built the one called Fort Reliance, near the mouth of the Klondike River. Forty Mile, built a little further down river, has now become a bigger place, but both are in Han Indian country. The Aishihik Indians were glad when McQuesten and another white man named Harper put a third store at Stewart River two or three years ago, but it did not last either. Now the Aishihik people hope that the new store Harper opened just a few months ago back at Fort Selkirk will do better. Nearby are the ruined chimneys from Campbell's old buildings.

The Aishihik Indians like Harper but are not quite sure about his Indian wife from way down the Yukon River. Her language sounds strange, and it is rumored that she has a lot of spirit power. It is convenient, though, not to have to travel far to get white men's trade goods. The Tlingit traders from the coast still bring up only what they want to, no matter what their trading partners ask for, and they never let any Yukon natives – even those who are their relatives by marriage and can speak Tlingit – buy goods directly from Healy's Store at Dyea on the coast, nor from the American ships that come to Haines.

But the young men have learned their hunting lessons well, in spite of such changes. Keeping downwind, they move quietly in a series of arcs that cut in at points on the straight line they believe the moose to be travelling. On the fourth inward turn the hunters are rewarded. They see the large animal just getting to its feet in the copse of willows where it has been resting. The older of the two raises the new rifle and fires, and the fatally wounded moose at once drops heavily.

Both partners run up to the fallen animal, astonished to find it already dead. First they punch out its eyeballs, as their fathers have taught them. This allows the moose's spirit to escape, and saves it from seeing what happens to its dead body. Next the young hunters slit the throat and chest to remove the windpipe and heart. They cut off the tip of the heart and hang up all these pieces for the camp robbers – the Canada jays who gather at the kill even more quickly than do the ravens. The young men tell each other there would no longer be any need to carry their bows and arrows or old muskets, if only they could both have new rifles. They hope they can trap enough furs during the rest of the winter so that each can buy such a rifle at Fort Selkirk in the spring. They forget that they will need to trade for bullets too.

Since they know that the rest of the party will soon be passing nearby, the young hunters go to intercept them. Although it means adjusting loads, they want one of the wooden toboggans on which to put the meat, and two or three dogs to pull it. This is much better than having to drag the meat along by hand on a drag made of caribou leg skins. That is what their parents did before the white traders brought wooden sleds and toboggans from the Mackenzie River posts and showed the Yukon Indians how to harness dogs to pull them.

Now everyone in the party is eager to get back to the snug winter trapping cabins on Isaac Creek. There is plenty of meat for everyone, and there will be time to enjoy the other treasures from the store. The headman has a new harmonica in his pocket. He is happy, thinking of all the singing and dancing that the next few weeks will bring while the people eat the moose meat and enjoy all the tobacco, tea and flour.

What more could he want? He does not know that within a few years gold will be discovered in such quantity near Fort Reliance that thousands of white men will come into his country. He does not know that in their crazy search for gold, the newcomers will break up the coastal Tlingit blockade forever as they scramble over the mountain passes or puff their way noisily up the Yukon River in sternwheelers. He does not know that within a few years, along with his dogs, he will own animals he has never yet seen, called horses – and that these, like the new rifles, will change his people's patterns of hunting. He does not know that he will be given a new name, Chief Isaac of Aishihik.

EARLY SPRING ON KLUANE LAKE, 1975 AD

It is late March and already the days are getting longer and the sun warmer. A man, his nephew, and the nephew's wife are heading out to spend the weekend at a trapping cabin across the lake from their village. They travel on a skidoo, pulling an old toboggan behind. The uncle thinks about how people used to cross the lake with good dog teams and toboggans. The dog teams did not break down as skidoos sometimes do, nor did people have to buy expensive oil and gas for them. But the man does not mention how much time he and his father and mother and brothers and sisters used to spend catching and drying fish for the dogs as well as for their own winter food. He only comments to the others that perhaps the noise of skidoo and trail bike motors is one reason that moose and other animals have become so hard to find in the bush. Not everybody agrees with this point of view. His nephew thinks that the game does not mind the sound of motors, even those of trucks and airplanes, so long as they are run steadily without too many stops and starts or changes in speed.

Very early the next morning the two men set out from the trapping cabin travelling silently, on snowshoes. About four miles from the cabin they find the tracks of a pack of nine wolves following a female moose. She seems to have made her way out of the deep snow of the valley and up onto the ridge. In the end, the wolves will probably get her, for she is heavy with calf and will need to come down to the valley again to browse on the willow shoots. The wolves do not give up easily. They can travel on top of the light snow crust, wear her out, corner and hamstring her, and then easily bring her down.

The men themselves succeed only in shooting two spruce hens. There is, however, a prime lynx in one of their traps. This is good

luck because the trapline is very short. Lynx now bring $100 a pelt, a much better price than in the 1960s.

During the course of the day, the silence of the bush is shattered several times by the noise of two low-flying helicopters taking supplies to an oil-pumping station. When the wind is right the men can also hear the faint sound of the heavy trucks shifting gears on the Alaska Highway, climbing the foothills along the opposite shore of the lake. The older man thinks again about how the animals must dislike the noise. The younger man thinks about how soon he will be able to buy a pickup truck of his own.

While the men are out hunting, the woman runs the fish net she and her husband set last fall under the ice near the cabin. It is a hard job to do alone. First she must chop out the ice around the upright poles to which the opposite ends of the net are anchored. Even though the lake ice has grown dark as it begins to soften under the spring sun, it takes about twenty minutes to chop through to open water at each end of the net. Daytime temperatures may still fall below freezing, and the nights are colder. About six centimeters of new ice have formed around the anchor poles since she ran the net two weeks ago. The woman must chop out this new ice very carefully so as not to damage the poles by mistake, and she must make the holes of open water around each of them large enough to work the net easily. When she has done this, she reaches into the water and releases an end of the net from one of the anchor poles, and ties a line to it.

The line is longer than the net itself, and she stretches it way out along the ice beyond the pole, since there will be nobody to hold it. Then she walks to the far anchor pole, unties that end of the net and begins to pull the net up through the hole, laying it in folds on the ice beside her where it begins to freeze almost at once in the open air. As she pulls the net, she reaches into the water and carefully removes the five whitefish and the single lake trout caught in the mesh by their gills.

In spite of the cold, she does this with her bare hands. When she was a tiny girl her mother rubbed both of her hands on a beaver skin and said a kind of spell, which she believed would help her daughter to have warm hands even in the coldest weather. The woman too thinks this magic must have helped, for she has been running fish nets this way ever since she was young. The white traders and prospectors taught her grandparents how to do it and sold them twine to make the nets. Before that the Yukon Indians had always speared lake fish under the ice in winter.

Before she began running the net, the woman had put a pail of water to heat on a small fire made of kindling that she had carried out onto the ice in her pack sack. Now she thaws out the frozen net piled up on the ice by pouring the warm water on it. This makes it easy to push the net back through the opening in the ice. Then she reties one end of the net to its anchor pole. Using the line she had earlier attached to the opposite end of the net, she pulls the entire

net taut again under the ice, retying the far end to the second anchor pole. She releases and coils up the haul line, for if she leaves it by the pole, it will freeze hard in the open air and become useless. Each time she runs the net she must bring out the line and take it home again.

Such a small catch of fish for all this work is disappointing. In the late fall after the net is first set, she often gets thirty or forty fish, but now the net has become slimy and it has a few holes in it. On these short weekend trips, she does not find time to wash and mend it often enough, for that can take all day and it involves resetting the net as well. She is too tired to start on the job now.

Later the woman chops down a little green spruce on the hill behind the cabin so she can put out some snares for rabbits. She hangs the wire snares from dry poles that she lays above the openings in the spruce boughs along the trails the rabbits have already made, and she adds more green spruce near the snares as bait. Then she goes further along the hillside and sets other wire loops on the ends of poles which she leans vertically against several big spruce trunks. These smaller snares are for tree squirrels, whose skins bring fifty cents apiece.

Next morning the woman finds two rabbits and six squirrels in the snares, but at this season the rabbits are poor, without much fat. Some already have a bluish tint to their flesh instead of a rich red.

Late on Sunday afternoon the group returns to the village. They want to go to evening mass, and the two men have jobs on the Alaska Highway for which they must be ready early Monday morning. The squirrel skins, lynx pelt and whitefish are the only things of material value that the party brings back to Burwash. They have eaten the two rabbits the woman caught, as well as the lake trout. But the chance to be in the bush has had value of a different kind. It has given all three of the adults renewed ties with their *keyi* – their country. The nephew and his wife talk about how they will take their oldest son and daughter with them next time instead of leaving them with their grandparents. The parents will make the children come, even if they protest that they would rather go to a curling tournament or a movie at Haines Junction. It will be good to have their help in running the nets, setting snares and getting firewood, and the boy and girl can learn more about how to live well in the bush. The older people agree that the young people ought to know that, as well as how to read, do arithmetic and play cards.

A CONFERENCE ROOM IN WHITEHORSE, WINTER 1980 AD

It is the morning of 12 December 1980. The place is a room in an office building in downtown Whitehorse. It is a plain room, containing a very large table encircled with chairs. This morning the chairs are occupied by negotiating teams representing the Government of Canada, the Yukon Territorial Government, and the Council for Yukon

Indians. For the past two weeks the Yukon Indians have been bargaining here on their land claims, and the session is now drawing to a close.

On many occasions the mood around the table has been tense, even angry, but today the atmosphere is notably different. There is a feeling of accomplishment, of satisfaction, circulating in the room. The chief federal negotiator has before him a document which he scans, then signs. The papers are passed to a Tutchone Indian elder, Elijah Smith, who began the Yukon land-claims movement several years earlier and who is vice-chairman of the Council for Yukon Indians. He also signs the document, witnessing the federal signature. Next it is signed and witnessed by representatives of the territorial government. Then it is passed along the table for the final signature. Dave Joe, lawyer, member of the Champagne/Aishihik Indian Band and chief negotiator for the Indians, signs his name as well. The process is now complete.

The document, which has now been casually dropped into a briefcase, ratifies four major land-claim agreements. The agreements have to do specifically with hunting, fishing, trapping, and land-use planning. When the final, overall land-claim settlement is achieved, these agreements will define and establish many of the legal rights, roles and responsibilities of Yukon Indians within the ancestral homeland in which they have hunted, trapped and fished for so long.

In a few minutes the room will be empty, but first, some unfinished business has to be dealt with. The three negotiators must agree on a time and place for their next session as well as the issues that will be discussed. With this done, the three negotiating teams gather their materials and leave. They have much work to do in preparation for the next round of negotiations. The special knowledge and skills needed by Yukon hunters so they can live good lives have changed still further. It is no longer just a matter of knowing animal behavior and having good weapons and cooperative friends and relatives. Now the headmen must know about territorial and national government behavior as well.

2

The Yukon as It is Now: Landscape, Animals, People

Perhaps none of the events recounted in Chapter One happened exactly as they have been described. We have eye-witness accounts only for the last one. Yet any one of them could have taken place, to judge from the traces of past human activity that have been found in the Yukon, and from historical documents, the stories Yukon Indian elders tell of how their grandparents lived, and from the way Yukon Indians live today. Taken all together, these different sources give us a good idea of the history of Yukon Indians, particularly in the last 200 years. Much must still be discovered, and some things will never be known, but we know enough to try to put much of the story together.

People have lived in what is now called the Yukon for perhaps 30,000 years. During that long period both the climate and the landscape have changed. The weather was sometimes much colder than it is now, sometimes warmer. For at least half of the last 30,000 years, instead of being covered by forests, most of the land was mossy or grassy tundra, surrounded on the east and south by glaciers and on the north by the frozen ocean. Trees grew only in sheltered river valleys, when they grew at all.

The lakes too have changed in number, location, and shape. Rivers once flowed in places where there are none today, and salmon once spawned where they do no longer. Many of the animals that the early peoples hunted were unlike those they hunt today; some were much larger and fiercer than modern grizzly bears. Some of the earlier people themselves may also have been different from those who now live in the Yukon. Some of the earlier groups probably moved on to other places long ago or disappeared without leaving any descendants in the Yukon.

Chapter Three will describe in more detail the major changes in the landscape of the past and discuss more fully what is known of the people who lived in the Yukon up until the first contact with whites in the late eighteenth century. Here in Chapter Two, our subject is the present: the main features of Yukon landscape, climate and vegetation; the more important animals; the different groups of Indians and non-Indians who live in the Yukon today.

*Topography**

The Yukon Territory covers about 200,000 square kilometers in the northwest corner of Canada. Most of the Yukon is high country separated from the Pacific coast by the still higher Coast Mountains. In fact, the Yukon is a part of the Canadian Cordillera, which is the huge complex of mountain and plateau country including the Rocky Mountains and the Coast Mountains. This cordillera runs north from the United States, through British Columbia and into the Yukon, then curves northwest into Alaska.

The Coast Mountains block much of the moisture and warmth that the Pacific Ocean currents and winds bring to southeastern Alaska. When the seawinds hit the south and west faces of the Coast Mountains, the moisture that the winds carry falls as rain or snow. So Skagway and Haines, on the Alaskan coast, are much wetter than Whitehorse or Dawson, on the inland side of the mountains.

Besides keeping the moist, warm air of the Pacific coast out of the Yukon, the Coast Mountains have in the past made it hard for Yukon and coast people to travel into one another's country. There are only three good passes from the coast into the Yukon—the Chilkat, the Chilkoot, and White Pass. For thousands of years, people have used one or another of these three routes to get from the tall, thick forests and beaches of the Pacific shore with its rich marine life into the high Yukon interior with its big game and fur-bearing animals. Two other passes at the head of the Taku River in British Columbia also lead into the Yukon by way of Atlin and Teslin lakes.

In addition to the Coast Mountains, the Yukon has other major mountain ranges. The Richardson and Selwyn ranges in the northeast and east are part of the Rocky Mountain system. Keele Peak at the head of the Hess River in the Selwyns reaches almost 3000 meters in height, but most other peaks in this area are around 2000 meters or less. The Ogilvie Mountains in the northwestern part of the territory are again not so high – generally under 2000 meters – but the North Fork Pass of the Ogilvies leads to an impressive mountain and plateau section of the northern Yukon.

In the south-central Yukon, the northern Cassiar and the Pelly mountains also have peaks over 2000 meters, but the Saint Elias Range, along the Yukon/Alaska border in the southwest, has the highest peaks of all. Fifteen of these peaks are over 5700 meters in height. Other lower mountain ranges also crisscross the territory.

Other prominent features of Yukon topography include the Shakwak and Tintina trenches. These are wide depressions between mountain ranges. The first runs northwest/southeast between the base of the St Elias and the Ruby ranges. Some of the Haines Highway and the Alaska Highway north of Haines Junction follow the Shakwak Trench. The wider and longer Tintina Trench runs more or less parallel to it but lies farther east, between the Pelly Mountains on the one side and the Selwyns and Ogilvies on the other. It is the

*The word *topography* is made from two Greek words – *topos*, which means place, and *graphein*, which means to draw or describe. Topography means the shape of the earth's surface, or a description of it. A topographical map is a map which shows not merely the names of places but the lay of the land – hills and valleys, forests and glaciers and gravel beds and the drainage patterns of rivers.

Ogilvie Mountains (Yukon Government photo)

valley through which the Pelly River runs, and it now also carries the western end of the Campbell Highway and northern end of the Klondike Highway. Yet another major feature of Yukon topography, at the extreme north of the territory, is the coastal plain that gradually slopes from the Richardson and British mountains down to the Arctic Ocean.

Many minerals, such as silver, gold, copper, lead and asbestos, have been found in the mountains of the Yukon, and much gold in the stream gravels. The Indians of earlier times were not interested in the gold nor in most of the other minerals that are mined today, but they did prize the copper nuggets from the White Mountains in the northern St Elias Range. They also valued the red and yellow ochres, or colored earths, from which they made paints, and the black, glass-like rock, called obsidian, as well as the smooth grey flint from which they made knives, arrow points and skin scrapers. Native placenames often tell of the presence of copper, ochres and other minerals traditionally valued in the Yukon. For example, the knob-like mountain at Pine Lake Campground, near Haines Junction, has a Southern Tutchone name meaning Red Paint Mountain, and to the west of the old Aishihik Road is Flint Mountain.

The topography of the Yukon also includes many rivers, and the canyons and valleys they form. Like mountain passes, valleys are

Peaks in the St Elias Range (Yukon Government photo)

routes by which animals and people can move from one area to another. But where the currents are swift, or when the ice is forming or breaking up, rivers can also be dangerous barriers to travel. The drainage basins of rivers, with their headwaters surrounded by mountains, often make naturally defined living areas for human groups.

The Yukon has four major river systems. The largest is that of the territory's largest river, the Yukon River, which flows over 3000 kilometers from Atlin, Teslin, Tagish and Bennett lakes in British Columbia and the southern Yukon, through the Yukon Territory to Alaska, where it finally drains into the Bering Sea. It has several major tributaries, including the Porcupine, White, Klondike, Stewart, Pelly, and Teslin rivers. Parts of these rivers, especially near their headwaters, flow swiftly through steep canyons, but other sections meander slowly through miles of flat, swampy country. For instance, Hoole Canyon on the upper Pelly River looks very different indeed from the low-lying Old Crow Flats with their many scattered lakes. The Old Crow River is a northern tributary of the Porcupine, which in its turn is a tributary of the Yukon River.

The Peel River, in the northeastern Yukon, is separated from the Yukon River drainage system by the Ogilvie and Selwyn mountains. Fed by its many branches in both the Yukon and Northwest Territo-

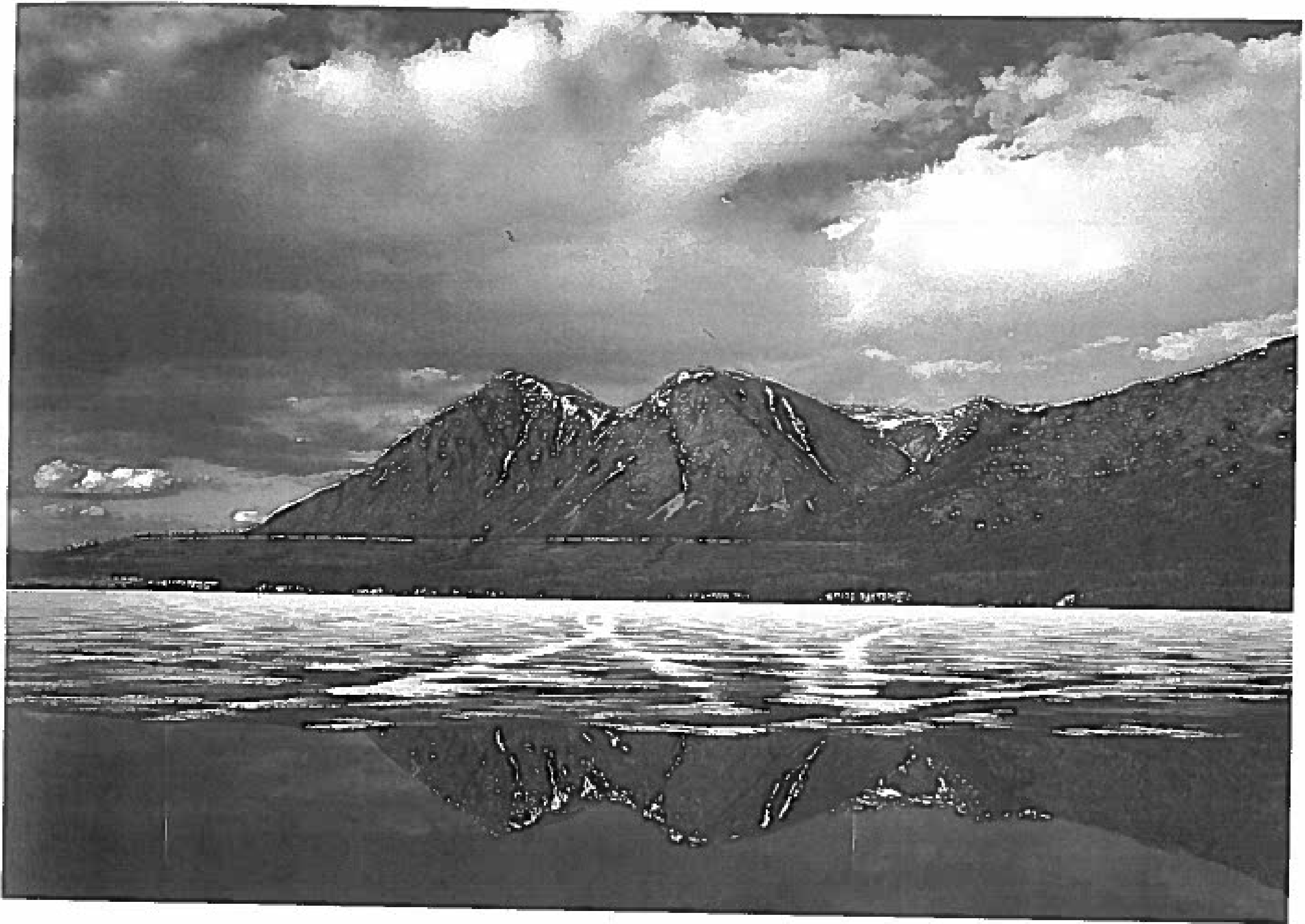
The North Slope (Yukon Government photo)

ries, the Peel flows northeastward into the Mackenzie River in the Northwest Territories, and the Mackenzie then empties into the Arctic Ocean.

Much of the southeastern Yukon Territory is drained by the Liard River system. The Liard in turn flows into the upper Mackenzie River, so that its waters eventually mingle with those of the Peel before entering the Arctic Ocean.

The fourth river system is in the southwestern portion of the Yukon. Here the Alsek River originates in the icefields of the St Elias Mountains, then cuts through the Coast Mountains directly to the Pacific Ocean.

Lakes are another noticeable feature of the Yukon landscape. In the southern Yukon are many large ones, such as Kluane, Aishihik, Dezadeash, Kusawa, Laberge, Bennett, Tagish, Marsh, and Teslin lakes. There are others of considerable size – including Little Salmon, Tatlmain, Big Kalsas, Ethel, Mayo, Frances, and Finlayson lakes – in the central Yukon, and countless smaller ones are scattered throughout the territory. The bigger lakes are often rough and can be dangerous for boat travel, but they can make for easy winter travel by snowshoe, toboggan, sled or skidoo.



Lake Kusawa

Climate

A very close relationship exists between landscape and climate. The climate of a place is affected both by the location of that place on the surface of the earth and by the local topography. There would not be many glaciers in the St Elias Mountains, nor any arctic tundra on the north slope, if the Yukon Territory were at the equator. But since it lies north of 60° N latitude and the Coast Mountains cut it off from the warm Pacific winds, most of the Yukon has what is called a sub-arctic climate. The temperatures average above 10° C for no more than four months of the year, and fewer than 120 days a year are frost-free. On the northernmost coastal strip of the Yukon, the climate is classified as arctic. There, temperatures even in the warmest months average less than 10° C.

Another feature of the Yukon's climate is that the temperatures run to extremes. Snag, near Beaver Creek at the western Yukon border, is famous for having the lowest official temperature ever recorded at a human settlement in North America, −64° C. Yet in the summer at the same place a thermometer may reach near +27° C. At Dawson it may drop well below −50° C in January but rise to +35° C in July. Simply put, Yukon summers are quite warm and Yukon winters are very cold.

The relative dryness of the Yukon, however, lasts all year around. There is more precipitation in winter than summer, but still the snow averages only 50 to 75 centimeters in depth. Much more snow than that falls in many parts of southern Canada. In the Yukon too, of course, more snow falls in some places than in others – much more in the St Elias Mountains, for example, than at Whitehorse or Dawson.

There is more daylight in some places than others as well, but this is easier to predict than the depth of the snow. North of the Arctic Circle, which is at 66°30′ – north of Dawson but south of Old Crow – the sun does not dip below the horizon at all on the summer solstice, June 21, and the days are very long just before and after that date. By December, however, the days become very short. North of the Arctic Circle on December 21, the winter solstice, even if it is a clear day, you cannot see the sun itself. Only its glow is visible on the southern horizon. Farther south in the Yukon, though the sun does not shine for a full 24 hours even on June 21, the days are still very long in June and July and the nights very short. South of the Arctic Circle, if the country is flat and the weather is clear, the sun can also be seen, for at least a few minutes, even on December 21. But in many places the mountains block out all direct sunlight at that time of year.

Vegetation

Trees, shrubs, low flowering plants, grasses, mosses and lichens make up the Yukon vegetation. Their growth is determined in part by all the factors we have been discussing – drainage, precipitation, temperature, amounts of darkness and daylight – and also by altitude. What grows well in a valley cannot always survive on a mountain top.

Most of the valleys, hills and lower mountain slopes of the Yukon are now covered by boreal* forest. The most common kinds of trees in boreal forests are evergreens – spruce, pine and fir. These trees have needle-like leaves that are green year round. Other common trees of the boreal forest are birch, poplar and aspen. These deciduous trees turn brilliant yellows and reds in autumn and then lose their leaves until the following spring. The many kinds of willows that grow on the river banks and other low-lying areas, the alders, and the dwarf birch shrubs or buckbrush of the mountain heights, are also deciduous. The tamaracks or larches found in parts of the northern and eastern Yukon look like evergreens in summer, but they turn gold in autumn and drop their needles. They are deciduous trees too.

**Boreal* comes from the Greek word for north, and boreal forests are the sort that grow in the north: open forests containing the kinds of trees that can live in the thin soil of subarctic climates.

All the principal Yukon evergreens – fir, larch, black spruce, white spruce and lodgepole pine – resemble one another in many ways and seem to have a common ancestry. Botanists express this relationship by saying that all these trees belong to the pine *family*. Poplar, aspen and the willows all resemble one another too; they are all members of the willow family. Birch and alder belong to the birch

Albert Isaac with goshawk caught in a snare, Aishihik, 1963

are thin and poor by the time they are caught by humans high up the Yukon River system. However, they are still fat and good along the lower Nisling and the Stewart, Pelly, Little Salmon and Big Salmon rivers. Yukon Indians used to have fish camps for salmon on the McClintock and Nisutlin Rivers too.

The salmon in the Alsek River have a much shorter trip from the ocean. Here there are four species of salmon: the king (chinook), the dog (chum), the sockeye, and the silver (coho) salmon. Sockeyes are the most numerous species in the Alsek drainage.

Salmon do not reach all of the upper limits of the Yukon and Alsek river systems. For example, they do not go beyond Fraser Falls on the Stewart River, nor do they reach Aishihik Lake.

Except for some chum salmon in the Peel River, no salmon come into the Yukon Territory through tributaries of the Mackenzie. But the Peel and Liard rivers do have heavy runs of whitefish, inconnu, river trout, cisco (often called freshwater herring) and loche (often called ling cod). Trout, whitefish and loche are also found in most other Yukon streams. Grayling, suckers and jackfish (northern pike) are common too. In many Yukon lakes, trout, whitefish, jackfish, grayling, inconnu and loche can be caught both summer and winter.

Trout are very close relatives of the salmon. Grayling is a more distant member of the same family. Whitefish, inconnu and cisco belong to a group called the coregonins, and they are members of the salmon family too. Loche, which spawn in midwinter under the ice, belong to the cod family. Pike and suckers both belong to families of their own.

THE PEOPLE

The Yukon Indians

In 1976 about 20,000 people were recorded living in the Yukon, and by 1981 the number had increased to more than 23,000. About 6000 of these were native people as counted by the Council for Yukon Indians. This includes what are called both status and non-status Indians. In the Yukon there are now roughly equal numbers of each.

The federal government, through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, makes a distinction between status and non-status Indians, and the difference between these two is discussed in this book in Chapter Five. Here it is enough to say simply that status Indians are those whom the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs includes on its official band lists. But in this book, generally no distinction is made between status and non-status Indians. This book is about the Yukon Indian heritage and culture, which are common to all.

Before 1839 the entire population of the Yukon was native Indian, except for a few Inuvialuit (Western Eskimo) along the Arctic coast. All the Inuvialuit settlements are now gone from the Yukon, and Inuvialuit culture is not discussed in this book except for a brief note at the end of this chapter. Thousands of white people have

come to the Yukon in the last 150 years, but since this is a book about the Yukon Indians, whites in the Yukon are discussed only in their relationship to the Indian people.

In 1980 the Department of Northern Affairs and the Council for Yukon Indians recognized twelve formal bands of Yukon Indians. These were: Old Crow, Dawson, Mayo, Carmacks, Fort Selkirk–Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Whitehorse, Kluane, Champagne-Aishihik, Carcross, Teslin, and Watson Lake–Liard. This list represents a slight reorganization of earlier lists of bands set up for administrative purposes by the Canadian government or by the Indians themselves. The number of bands recognized has varied from time to time, and the names have also sometimes changed. In 1984, there was a further change, when the Whitehorse Band altered its name to Kwänlin Dun (Southern Tutchone for "People of the Rapids").

The band names now in use all refer to the towns or areas where most of the band members live. But we know that the Yukon Indians were once hunters who moved from place to place with the seasons instead of living in these towns. Do all the Indians in each of these present-day towns live exactly the same way and speak the same language? It turns out they do not. They have a great deal in common, but different groups of present-day Yukon Indians do have different customs and languages, developed and enriched over centuries of traditional life on the land. For this reason modern scholars – ethnographers* and linguists – often use names for Yukon Indians which are different from the official band names used by the government and by Indian organizations.

* The word *ethnographer* comes from the Greek words *ethnos*, which means people, and *graphein*, which means to write or describe. Ethnographers are people who study and write about the ways of life of different people throughout the world. *Linguists* are those who study the languages used by different people and explore the similarities and differences between them.

Ethnographers and linguists have placed the Yukon Indians into seven groups on the basis of their languages and, to some extent, of their cultures. These seven groups are Loucheux (sometimes called Kutchin), Han, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Kaska, Tagish, and Tlingit. The native languages of members of the first five groups are slightly different from each other, but all belong to one great language family called Athapaskan. The original Tagish language too was Athapaskan, but present-day Tagish Indians speak a dialect of Tlingit, which does not belong to the Athapaskan language family. (Yukon Indian languages are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.)

The map on page 41 shows the location of these linguistic groups at about the time of the gold rush of 1898. If the map were drawn to show where the ancestors of these groups had been living a hundred years earlier, it would look a little different. The Kaska-speaking Indians would probably not be as far down the Pelly River, nor the Tlingit speakers as far up the Nisutlin.

A map drawn today to locate the descendants of those 1898 Indians would also look different. For example, modern Whitehorse is located in an area where there was formerly a Southern Tutchone settlement. The incoming whites built Whitehorse into an urban centre after 1898, and as the town has grown it has attracted Indians from all over the Yukon. In Whitehorse one now finds Indians who speak several different languages. People move about, and their cul-

tures and languages change, sometimes slowly, sometimes fast. This means that in order to understand the Yukon Indians and their cultures, we must look at their past as well as their present. In later chapters of this book, we will do just that.

What happened to the Yukon Inuvialuit?

At present there are no Inuvialuit – or western Arctic Inuit – settlements in the Yukon. Alaskan and Canadian Eskimo groups certainly passed back and forth along the Arctic coast of the Yukon for many centuries, and until recently some of them hunted on the north slope and along the Arctic shore. It seems, however, that the Inuvialuit population of the Yukon was always very small. In 1890, when white whalers began to use Herschel Island, off the coast of the Yukon, as a storage and wintering centre, about 400 or 500 Inuvialuit gathered there. Others lived on small islands along the coast, from Demarcation Point to Shingle Point. In the nineteenth century too, the great Porcupine caribou herd still visited the coast each summer, attracting Inuit from east and west. By about 1920, however, because of disease and other disruptions brought in by the white whalers and traders, many Inuvialuit had died and the rest had left the Yukon. All remaining Inuvialuit settlements are in the Northwest Territories.

THE TWELVE CURRENT YUKON INDIAN BANDS

Old Crow
Dawson
Mayo
Carmacks
Fort Selkirk–Pelly Crossing
Ross River
Kwänlin Dun
Kluane
Champagne-Aishihik
Carcross
Teslin
Watson Lake–Liard

THE SEVEN YUKON INDIAN LANGUAGES

Athapaskan family:
- Loucheux
- Han
- Northern Tutchone
- Southern Tutchone
- Kaska
- Tagish

Tlingit family:
- Tlingit