

Tr'ochëk

At the Confluence of Two Rivers

You stand overlooking Tr'ochëk, where the Yukon and Klondike rivers meet. This traditional gathering site is at the heart of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in traditional territory and a designated National Historic Site of Canada.



View of Tr'ochëk. (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department)

For millennia, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in gathered at Tr'ochëk during the summer and fall to harvest salmon, gather berries, hunt moose and prepare for the winter.



Fish Camp at Tr'ochëk in 1898. (Yukon Archives, Robert Coutts fonds 82/358#2)



Klondike City at its heyday with a view of the Klondike Sawmill. (Yukon Archives, Margretta Gaundroue Collection 82/219#56)

In the 1890s, thousands of gold seekers descended upon the region, disrupting traditional life. A tent city spilled over into Tr'ochëk and displaced the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Chief Isaac, a respected leader, arranged to move his people downriver to Moosehide.

Tr'ochëk became known as Lousetown, Dawson's infamous red light district. It was eventually developed as a transportation and industrial hub and renamed Klondike City. Foot and wagon bridges and a railway connected Klondike City to Dawson City and the gold fields.

As the Gold Rush subsided, nature gradually reclaimed Klondike City. In the mid-1900s, a small group of First Nations families from the Fort Selkirk area repopulated Tr'ochëk.



Tr'ochëk continues to be an important gathering and fishing site. (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department)

Contentious placer claims and mining at the site during the 1980s led the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in to take legal action to protect their cultural homeland. In 1997, the Canadian government retired placer claims. The site is now owned and managed by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. It is a place for cultural education and renewal for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and visitors alike.



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Steamboat Slough

A Tale of Fire and Ice

The river has long been a primary mode of travel and connection for Yukon people. For countless generations, Yukon First Nations have navigated the river's currents, traveling to hunt and fish, and to gather and trade with their neighbours.

Birch bark and dug-out canoes near Dawson, 1895.

(Glimpses of Alaska, Veazie Wilson and Esther Lyon, Dawson City Museum Collection)



The Klondike Gold Rush heralded a golden age of riverboat travel. Sternwheelers plied Yukon's rivers, allowing the movement of people and goods to remote areas. Each spring, river breakup was followed by a flurry of activity, as shallow-bottom steamboats chugged up and down the rivers, rushing to transport gold seekers and supplies to the gold fields before the waters froze again. Altogether, 266 steamboats operated on the Yukon River in Canada and Alaska.



Steamboats winter at Steamboat Slough circa 1915.

(Dawson City Museum, 1991.51.49)

In October, as the waters began to freeze, sternwheelers needed a place to winter. From this lookout, you can see a protected slough, where the steamboats were protected from the crushing power of river ice. Today, Steamboat Slough is a calm channel in the meandering Yukon River.

Yet, beneath these waters there may lie old steamboats, waiting to be re-discovered.



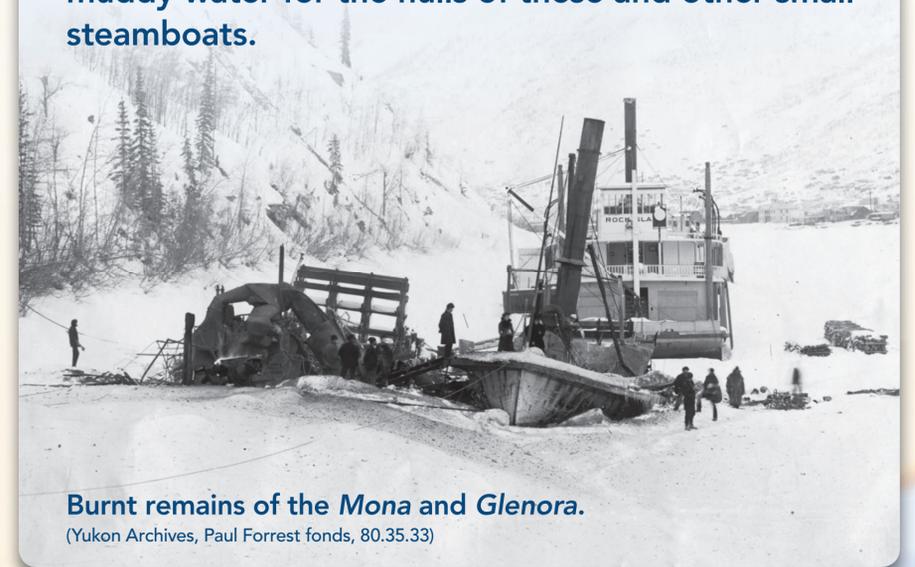
A crowd greets steamships arriving at the Dawson docks.

(Yukon Archives, Vancouver Public Library Collection, 2084)

THE SCIENCE OF SHIPWRECKS

The Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA) is an international organization working to locate, document, excavate, and preserve significant underwater and nautical archaeology sites. Since 2005, INA archaeologists, with support from Yukon Government, have searched for and documented 18 Gold Rush era vessels.

At Steamboat Slough, two small 1898 steamboats, the *Mona* and *Glenora* (below), were lost in a 1902 fire. Despite the challenges of limited visibility, INA archaeologists are examining the shallow, muddy water for the hulls of these and other small steamboats.



Burnt remains of the *Mona* and *Glenora*.

(Yukon Archives, Paul Forrest fonds, 80.35.33)



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