



# **Yukon Wilderness Tourism Best Management Practices for Heritage Resources**

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Edition 1

Note: This publication is no longer current. This copy has been made available for historical research purposes only.

**Yukon**  
Tourism and Culture

## DISCLAIMER

Nothing in the Yukon Government Wilderness Tourism Best Management Practices for Heritage Resources documents, references, etc., shall be construed as waiving compliance with regulatory requirements imposed by law. It remains the responsibility of commercial operators to satisfy themselves that the measures adopted in the specific instance are appropriate to the situation and satisfy all legal requirements within the jurisdiction.

Specific best management practices for specific problems cannot be given since solutions will, of necessity, be site and issue specific. Narrative BMPs are given indicating the type of measure which may be useful.

This guide is intended to provide users with up-to-date information about best management practices for heritage resources and wilderness tourism on the Yukon Landscape but these guidelines should not be considered as comprehensive. There are both known and unknown sources of data which have not yet been incorporated and topics which have not yet been treated or addressed. These topics and data will be incorporated and new versions of the documents uploaded as time and resources permit. By their very nature many specific BMPs soon become obsolete as “better” BMPs become available but the concept and the identified objectives behind the examples remain valid. Any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding the content of this document may be directed to:

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Tourism & Culture, Box 2703  
133A Industrial Road  
Government of Yukon  
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6  
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**All photos courtesy of Government of Yukon except as otherwise noted.**

## Table of Contents

1. Objectives.....	3
2. Context of Historic Resource Protection and Management.....	3
3. Legislative Context .....	4
4. Potential Impacts to Heritage Resources as a Result of Wilderness Tourism	
Activities .....	5
Increased Access.....	5
Brushing/Clearing.....	5
Subsurface and Ground Disturbance.....	5
5. Best Management Practices for Heritage Resource Protection for Yukon Wilderness Tourism .....	6
6. Definitions .....	9
7. Identification of Areas of High Heritage Potential.....	10
8. Obtaining Information about Archaeological, Palaeontological and Historic Sites for an Area .....	11
9. Recording and Reporting .....	12
10. References .....	13

## 1. Objectives

- To protect and manage historic sites and resources, and to protect burials outside of known cemeteries.
- To provide educational information to wilderness tourism operators and their clients about the protection of Yukon's heritage



Fence grave with personal belongings.



Collapsed stage cache with household goods.

## 2. Context of Historic Resource Protection and Management

Historic resources exist throughout the Yukon landscape in all terrains including mountain tops, and even under water. Remains of built heritage in many instances are fragile due to their age and composition, which is frequently wood or other organic materials.

Archaeological remains that date to the historic period or that are thousands of years old are often buried in only a few centimetres of soil. Even minor disturbance of the ground surface can impact on archaeological sites. All heritage resources are vulnerable to looting or unauthorized collection and increased activity in a previously isolated area may see the loss of irreplaceable objects that are part of Yukon's history.

Inventories of historic resources are lacking for many regions of the Yukon. Many remote areas have never been surveyed and the historic resources are not adequately documented. Backcountry activities and use may inadvertently impact on historic resources. Wilderness tourism operators can assist in heritage protection by becoming informed about heritage resource identification and by implementing low impact camping practices which respect and preserve the evidence of Yukon's history. Visitor education is also important to ensure that Yukon's heritage can be appreciated without loss or damage to fragile sites and objects.

By adopting historic resources "Best Management Practices" Yukon's Wilderness Tourism industry can assist in the protection and appreciation of Yukon's rich heritage.

### 3. Legislative Context for Wilderness Tourism Operators

Historic resources are protected from disturbance under the *Yukon Historic Resources Act* and Yukon Archaeological Sites Regulation. In the Yukon, the fossil remains of plants and animals are also protected under the *Historic Resources Act*. The Government of Yukon is responsible for managing historic sites on non-settlement land and outside of national parks. No one may search for, investigate, excavate, disturb or otherwise alter a historic site on Yukon lands except in accordance with a permit under the Yukon Archaeological Sites Regulation. No objects may be removed from a historic site without a permit under the Yukon Archaeological Sites Regulation. Permits are issued only to qualified researchers (usually professional archaeologists). All Wilderness Tourism operators licensed under the *Wilderness Tourism Licencing Act* are required by the Act to adhere to all other Acts and Regulations in force in the Yukon.

Wilderness tourism activities that require a Land Use Permit are reviewed under the *Yukon Environmental and Socioeconomic Assessment Act* (YESAA). For the review, the proponent is required to provide adequate information to allow the evaluation of the likelihood and significance of adverse effects of the project on heritage resources, and identify proposed mitigation measures. Contact the Government of Yukon - Heritage Resources Office for assistance in determining any heritage resources impact as a result of your project.



Clockwise from top left: collapsed log-cabin style of cache; stage cache; collapsed stage cache with notched log ladder.

## 4. Potential Impacts to Heritage Resources as a Result of Wilderness Tourism Activities

### Increased Access

Increased access to back country as a result of wilderness tourism can lead to the disturbance of heritage sites and features. Previously remote sites may become the focus of looting or may be disturbed or inadvertently damaged by human activities and 'souvenir hunting'. High latitude and alpine and sub-alpine areas where little or no soil development has occurred are particularly vulnerable. Traces of human activity may include stone tent rings, stone hunting blinds and meat caches, and remains of camps where stone tools and chips have remained on the ground surface for thousands of years. Disturbance of stone features and trampling of artefacts is a concern in these areas.



Old foot trail along stream valley in central Yukon.



Remains of a large brush camp.



Semi-circular hunting blind.



Buried sill-logs and flooring from a historic cabin  
(T.J. Hammer).

### Brushing/Clearing

Brushing or clearing of vegetation for camp sites or creation of ATV or snowmobile trails may impact surface or built heritage sites such as brush camps, traps, or burial sites, or other traces of historic human presence such as snares or marked trees.

### Subsurface and Ground Disturbance

These activities are most likely to impact buried archaeological sites, with impacts increasing proportionally to the area/extent of the ground disturbance. Development of substantial infrastructure (cabins for guests, for example) will likely result in subsurface ground disturbance. Even pit privies are a source of impact.

## 5. Best Management Practices for Heritage Resource Protection for Yukon Wilderness Tourism

### Potential Impacts on Heritage Resources

Activity and Potential Impacts	Activity and Potential Impacts
Back country hiking/travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain information on location heritage sites (historical, archaeological and palaeontological) and grave sites in area from Government of Yukon and First Nations.</li> <li>• Avoid grave sites and any other sensitive sites identified by First Nations</li> <li>• Educate and inform clients and visitors on laws protecting Yukon heritage resources – no disturbance is permitted of heritage sites and objects may not be removed from heritage sites.</li> <li>• Government of Yukon publication “Handbook for the Identification of Heritage Sites and Features” can assist in identifying heritage features and sites on the land, contributing to their preservation and protection (<a href="http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications_heritagehandbook.pdf">http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications_heritagehandbook.pdf</a>)</li> <li>• Report undocumented heritage sites and objects to Government of Yukon (or to the First Nation if found on settlement land) to help efforts to manage and protect Yukon’s heritage resources.</li> <li>• Human remains found outside of a recognized burial site must be reported first to the RCMP. Please refer to Guidelines Respecting the Discovery of Human Remains and First Nation Burial Sites in the Yukon for additional information (<a href="http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/respecting_guidelines.pdf">http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/respecting_guidelines.pdf</a>)</li> </ul>
Camp sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice ‘no-trace’ camping to protect heritage resources as well as the environment (<a href="http://www.environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/camping/leavenotrace.php">http://www.environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/camping/leavenotrace.php</a>)</li> <li>• If brushing or clearing activities are required for a camp site, sensitive above ground heritage features may be damaged – look for and avoid heritage features in camp area.</li> <li>• The “Handbook for the Identification of Heritage Sites and Features” can assist in heritage resources identification</li> </ul>

<b>Activity and Potential Impacts</b>	<b>Activity and Potential Impacts</b>
Trail development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use existing trails whenever possible.</li> <li>• Brushing or clearing activities may damage sensitive above ground heritage features – avoid trail development on high potential landscape features or zones such as the edges of terraces or ridges, or along riparian zones or waterbodies.</li> <li>• Plan to undertake a heritage resource impact assessment for areas where significant infrastructure development is proposed (projects that trigger a review under YESAA).</li> </ul>
Lodge or other tourism infrastructure development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where ground disturbing activities are unavoidable, these should be planned in areas of low heritage potential. For example, buffers of 60 – 100 m along terrace edges or bordering a water body will often avoid heritage resource impacts.</li> <li>• Plan to undertake a heritage resource impact assessment for areas where significant infrastructure development is proposed (projects that trigger a review under YESAA).</li> </ul>
Newly discovered heritage resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If heritage sites or resources are discovered during backcountry activities, Yukon Heritage Resources should be informed of the location and nature of the site. Report heritage sites to the First Nation if found on settlement land.</li> <li>• If human skeletal remains are found outside of a recognized burial site, the RCMP must be notified first.</li> </ul>
Public assistance in the emergency recovery of heritage resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where heritage objects or fossil heritage are found in precarious situations (for example, eroding out of river banks and in danger of being washed away) they should be recovered and set aside in a safe location or brought back for curation by the Government of Yukon or First Nation if recovered on settlement land.</li> <li>• Where emergency relocation/recovery is necessary, ensure the location is recorded and documented in as much detail is possible (GPS location, photographs).</li> </ul>

<b>Activity and Potential Impacts</b>	<b>Activity and Potential Impacts</b>
Found mummified palaeontological remains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If mummified remains are exposed, Yukon Palaeontology should be contacted immediately.</li> <li>• If necessary to protect the integrity of the remains, carefully move the remains together with intact surrounding sediments</li> <li>• Contact Yukon Palaeontology as soon as possible with location and documentary information.</li> </ul>



Birch bark baby carrier (E. Harp Jr.).



Hillside meat cache.

## 6. Definitions

Historic resources as defined in legislation include historical, archaeological and palaeontological sites and resources. Historic resources are abandoned sites and objects of greater than 45 years in antiquity. Cabins, caches, graves, brush camps, and other man-made structures, features or objects are the most readily recognized historic resources. Archaeological sites tend to date to before European contact and are found on or under the ground surface, and generally consist of the remains of ancient camps, hearths, stone tools and debris.

Palaeontological resources are fossil and other remains of extinct or prehistoric plants and animals. These include bones of mammoth, horse, bison and other ice age fauna as well as fossil remains and traces of plants, vertebrate and invertebrate fauna.



Bear deadfall trap.



Fossil mammoth bone recovered in a placer mine.



Left: dinosaur footprint in bedrock exposure.



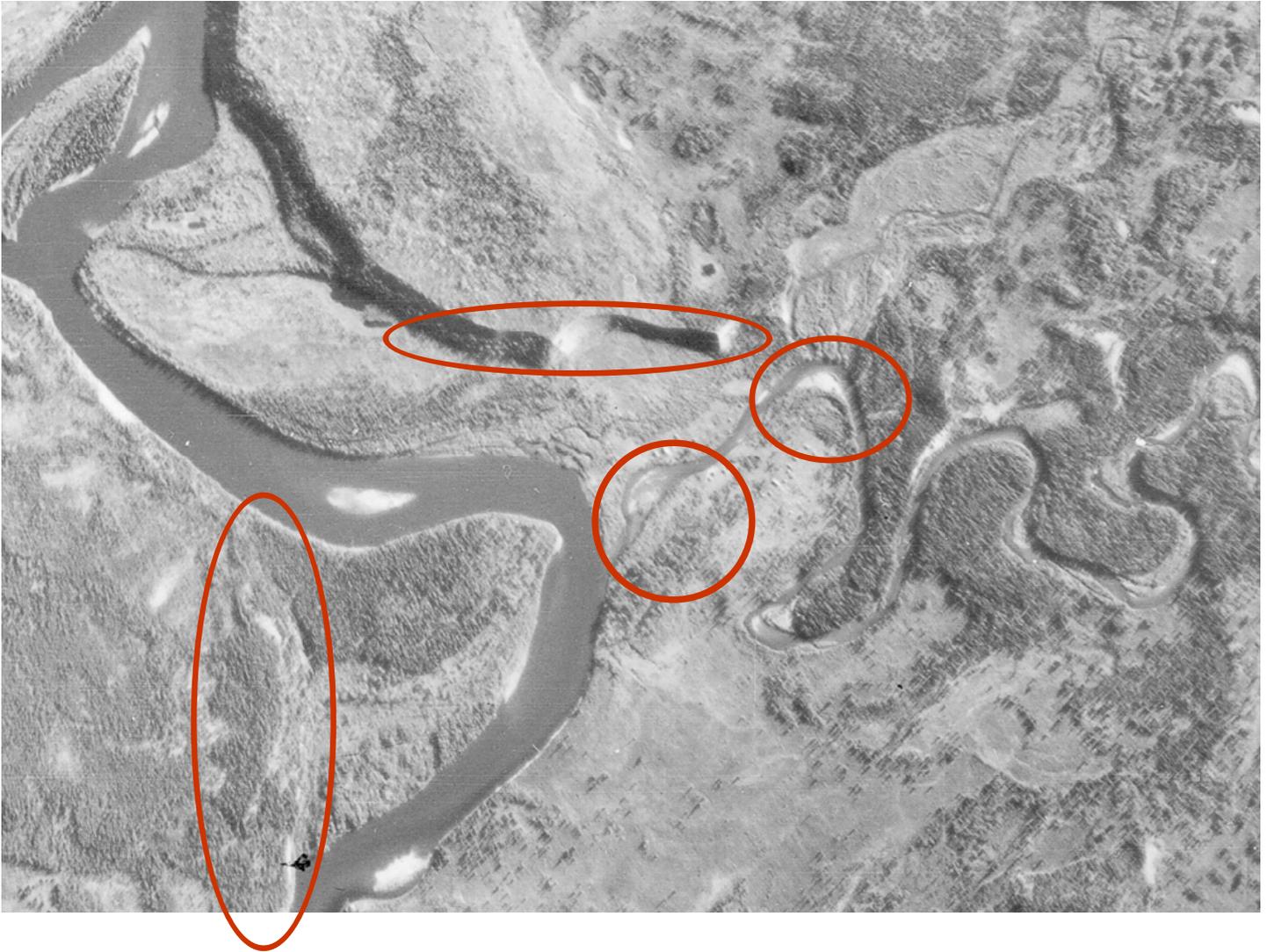
Above: old 'basket' style fish trap.

Right: dugout canoe.



## 7. Identifying Areas of High Heritage Potential

Based on known patterns of prehistoric and historic land use for a region, certain terrain types, localities and landscape features can be identified as likely locations for camps, travel routes or as strategic resource areas. Generally, areas in proximity to water bodies, stream courses and wetlands, prominent lookout situations on terraces, ridges and knolls and combinations of these landscape zones are considered to be of high heritage potential. Depending on the region, other high potential localities may include shorelines of pro-glacial and neo-glacial lakes, meltwater channels, ancient river terraces and abandoned drainages. In unglaciated northern Yukon, both ancient landscapes and possibly different prey species must be factored in to reconstruction of past land use patterns



Orthophoto showing areas of elevated heritage potential along water courses, at stream confluences and on ancient river terraces.

In areas known to contain rich palaeontological resources (for example, Old Crow River, Porcupine River, Eagle River, Peel River, Blackstone River, Klondike Gold Fields, Beaver Creek), fossils of ice age mammals may become exposed as a result of natural bank erosion. Fossils of invertebrate animals and plants may be discovered in bedrock outcrops throughout the Yukon.



The major drainage basins of unglaciated northern Yukon preserve exceptional evidence of Ice Age animals and environments. As modern rivers cut down through the sediments, the frozen silts containing bone and plant materials are exposed.



Fossil bones that wash out of the silt bluffs along the rivers of northern Yukon may be found redeposited on point bars on rivers.

## 8. Obtaining Information about Archaeological, Palaeontological and Historic Sites

Information on the location of known heritage sites can be obtained from the Government of Yukon Heritage Resources Unit. Coordinates provided for many sites may not be precise, however, as information may have been gathered over several decades and coordinates were obtained prior to precision GPS. Coordinates for any given site might vary by up to 200 metres. Site locations are provided as point data, usually marked at the centre of a site. Sites vary in extent and size however, and information regarding this is located in the site record. You should pay particular attention to this if you are planning any activities in the vicinity of an heritage site. Territorial and federal law prohibits development activities within 30 metres of a known or suspected heritage site.

Backcountry travellers and wilderness tourism operators can assist Government of Yukon Heritage Resources Unit in providing accurate GPS coordinates and current photographs of heritage sites.



Brush camp (E. Harp Jr.).



Cabin at Copper City.

## 9. Recording and Reporting

The following information should be recorded for heritage sites or features encountered in the field:

- GPS location: latitude/longitude or UTM coordinates and NAD (27 or 83).
- Current date and time.
- Estimate of site or feature extent (area)
- Brief description of setting and access to assist others in locating the site.
- Brief description of site features (e.g., cabin with collapsed cache and scatter of household goods).
- Photographs.

Please report heritage sites and features to:

Heritage Resources

Department of Tourism and Culture

Government of Yukon

Box 2703,

Whitehorse, Yukon

Y1A 2C6

Phone: (867) 667-5983 or toll-free 1-800-661-0408

Email: [HeritagePublications@gov.yk.ca](mailto:HeritagePublications@gov.yk.ca)



Recording the remains of an elevated four-post cache.



Collapsed building at Donjek City.

## 10. References: Legislation, Policy and Standards for Historic Site Conservation and Management

### Yukon Government Links

Heritage Resources Unit – Archaeology Program  
<http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/76.html>

Heritage Resources Unit – Palaeontology Program  
<http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/81.html>

Historic Sites Unit  
<http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/79.html>



Cabin remains with associated artifacts.

### Policy and Guidelines

Guidelines Respecting the Discovery of Human Remains and First Nation Burial Sites in the Yukon:  
[http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/respecting\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/respecting_guidelines.pdf)

Handbook for the identification of Heritage Sites and Features  
[http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications\\_heritagehandbook.pdf](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/publications_heritagehandbook.pdf)

Parks Canada - Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada [http://www.historicplaces.ca/nor-sta/pdf/sgnld\\_e.pdf](http://www.historicplaces.ca/nor-sta/pdf/sgnld_e.pdf)

Government of British Columbia Archaeological Impact Assessment Guidelines  
[http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/archaeology/docs/impact\\_assessment\\_guidelines/index.htm](http://www.tsa.gov.bc.ca/archaeology/docs/impact_assessment_guidelines/index.htm)

### Legislation

*Yukon Historic Resources Act*  
[http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/historic\\_resources\\_act.pdf](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/historic_resources_act.pdf)

*Yukon Archaeological Sites Regulation*  
[http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/oic2003\\_073.pdf](http://www.tc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/oic2003_073.pdf)

*Yukon Environment and Socioeconomic Assessment Act*  
<http://www.yesab.ca/>



WWII U.S. Army trucks on the North Canol Road are protected heritage resources.