

Alaska Highway West & Haines Road Interpretive Plan



Yukon Department of Tourism
Heritage Branch
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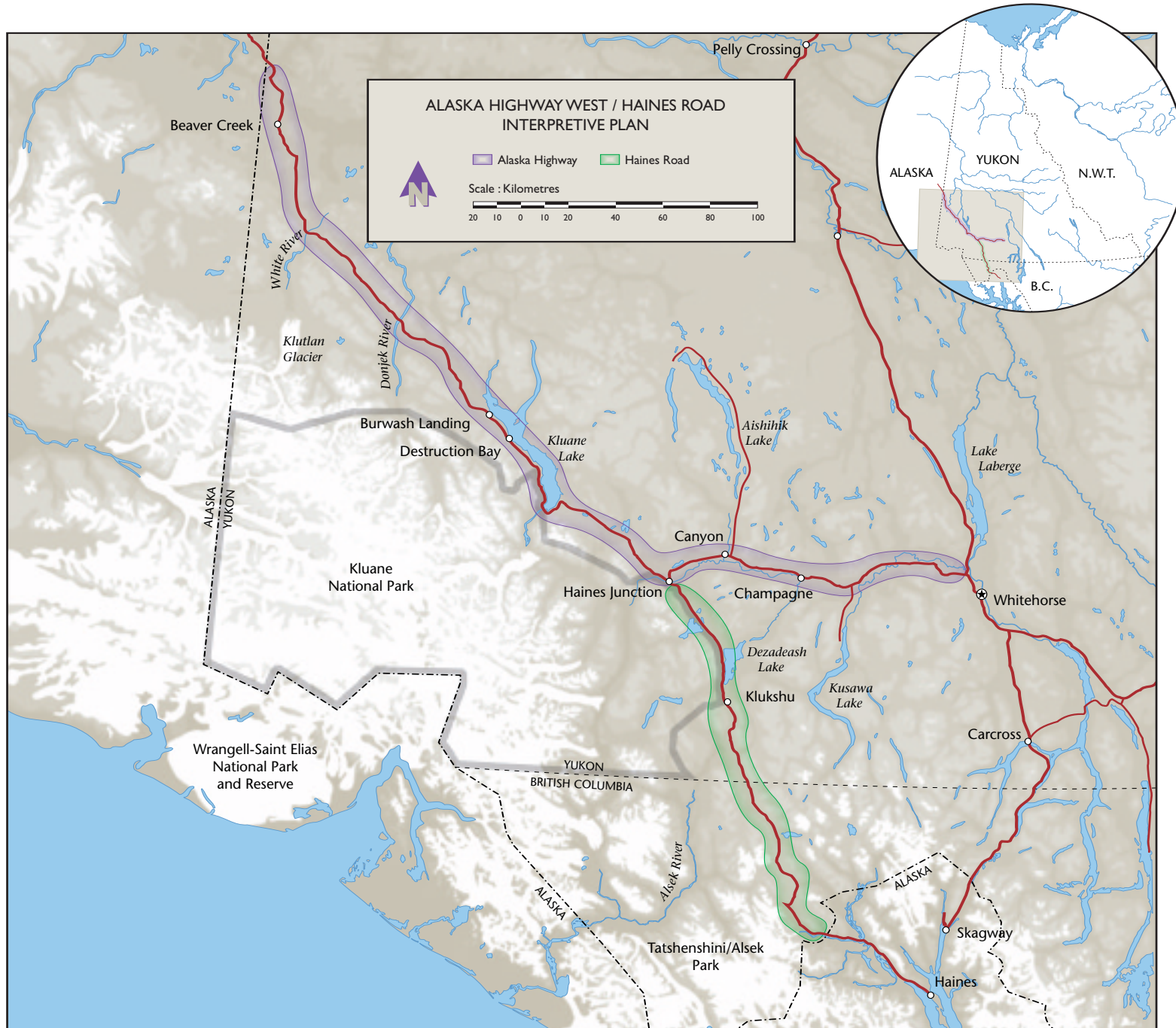
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Executive Summary

These recommendations cover the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and the Alaska/Yukon border north of Beaver Creek as well as the Haines Road south to the BC/Alaska border. In all cases, affected First Nations and local communities will continue to be consulted on the actual design and content of each sign before they are constructed. Wherever possible partnership opportunities will be pursued to achieve economies in program delivery and enhance the traveller’s experience.

Heritage Branch uses the plan recommendations in several ways. First, they indicate program priorities and provide a rationale for annual budget requests. Second, the plan provides a framework for Heritage Branch to work with others to deliver the program more effectively. For example, it makes good economic sense to coordinate the development of a new interpretive site with reconstruction of the Alaska Highway. Finally, the plans provide a way to assess how much work needs to be done and measure progress.

In the case of the BC portion of the Haines Road maintained by the Government of Yukon under contract, the recommendations in this plan are ideas put forward for consideration by the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board.

The implementation priorities shown in the chart below reflect the need to update and replace some signs, add new stories to make the traveller more aware of the region they are passing through, and take into account opportunities to coordinate and schedule changes with initiatives undertaken by others.

Sign Plan Implementation Priorities		
Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
Alaska Highway West		
Jct Alaska/Klondike Hwy	Takhini Crossing	Mendenhall Landing
Champagne Cutoff**	Marshall Creek—PC	Takhini Salt Flats
Canyon Creek		Kluane Lake
White River Bridge		
Dry Creek		
Haines Road		
Haines Summit***	Blanchard River***	Mansfield Creek***
Mule Creek***	Kathleen River—RR, PC	Klukshu Wetlands
Pringle Tower*		UNESCO site—PC
Seltat		Nadahani Creek***
Haines Jcnct. Overlook		Tatshenshini Overlook***—V
<i>NOTES: Implementation coordinated with each affected First Nation</i>		
<i>* work with CAFN</i>		<i>V—potential CHRS Tatshenshini Plaque site</i>
<i>** coordinate with road construction</i>		<i>PC—coordinate with Parks Canada</i>
<i>*** work with CAFN/BC Parks/ Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board</i>		<i>RR—coordinate with Renewable Resources</i>

1.0 Introduction

This plan covers two roads: the Alaska Highway West from Whitehorse (km 1487) to the Alaska/Yukon border north of Beaver Creek (km 1966) and the Haines Road between the Alaska/Yukon border at Pleasant Camp, BC (km 145) to Haines Junction (km 1635). In the case of the Alaska Highway, this document supports and complements the Interpretive Plan for the Alaska Highway East section (km 1008 to 1470) that was completed in March 1999. Together they form the Alaska Highway Plan.

The Alaska Highway was built in 1942 linking Dawson Creek, BC to Big Delta, Alaska 2300 km to the northwest. Built in just over 8 months and employing up to 30,000 people, the road dramatically changed the life and landscape of the Yukon. The Haines Road link was built the following year. In the intervening years, both roads have been significantly upgraded, widened and straightened. The Haines Road has been completely rebuilt and the remaining sections of the Alaska Highway will be completed over the next decade during the life of this plan. Some of the recommendations in this plan will influence the location of new pullouts and reconstruction of existing sites that will be built as part of the final stage of road reconstruction.

Interpretive signs have been erected at different locations along Yukon highways for over 25 years. They are intended to make the visitors drive more interesting, allowing them to learn more about the history, geography and culture of the area they are travelling through. The most significant interpretive initiative was the effort undertaken to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Alaska Highway construction in 1992. The governments of British

Columbia, Yukon and Alaska worked together to erect 183 milepost markers, 58 Northwest Highway Staging Route (NWHs) site identification signs and 38 interpretive panels. In the Alaska Highway West section, 10 interpretive panels, 14 NWHs site identification signs and 48 historic mileposts were erected. The simple milepost markers were important for two reasons. First, most locations were known by their milepost and second, with road reconstruction, distances have changed significantly making it difficult to find the old locations.

Visitor statistics confirm that a significant number of veterans, now in their late seventies and eighties, returned for a last visit in 1992. With reconstruction, the allure associated with having worked on or driven the old gravel Alaska Highway or Haines Road is no longer so evident. Many sites that were historically important in terms of highway construction have little significance for the current highway traveller. As a consequence, continuing the current emphasis on initial road construction themes is not productive. The story should not be lost, but greater attention needs to be paid to the interests of current visitors. One of the issues this plan discusses is how much of this commemoration signage should be maintained in the future.

The drive is no longer the main challenge and visitors now have the time to focus more on the surrounding scenery. Road improvements are also a double-edged sword. As noted in the Kluane Region Tourism Plans (1989, 2000), a better road means visitors can travel faster and cover more distance than before, or take more time to stop and enjoy the Yukon.

With Alaska the primary destination, the challenge is to encourage the traveller to stop more frequently and learn more about the region they are passing through.



This interpretive plan considers where highway travellers are from and headed to, their primary reason for travel and what their interests are. It considers future visitor trends and interests, advances in interpretive media and past maintenance history. The plan suggests themes and stories for pullout sites along the travel corridors. The signage program has several functions but it primarily educates the traveller, whether a visitor from afar or a Yukon resident, about the richness of the Yukon's natural and cultural history. Signage also provides an opportunity to influence visitors' behaviour, encouraging them to stay longer, visit key natural history features, make use of interpretive trails, or divert to points of interest. Finally, highway pullouts have a safety function, serving as "rest" areas given the considerable distance between communities.

Nine of the ten broad thematic categories identified in the 1995 Yukon wide Strategy are currently represented to some degree in this plan. These categories are: Historic-General, Historic-Settlement, Historic-

Exploration and Mining General, Historic-Transportation and Communication Alaska Highway, First Nations History, Natural History, and Regional Orientation. The 10th category, National Parks, is not covered by Yukon Tourism but is addressed by Parks Canada in a number of locations (e.g. Sheep Mountain VRC, Rock Glacier Trail etc.). The larger story of the international stature of protected areas in the Kluane region is also told by Parks Canada and not as part of this program.

1.1 Program Background and Plan Context

In the late 1980s, the Yukon Territorial Government (YTG) began to experiment with different sign construction materials, and created more sophisticated wayside exhibits at key features. Yukon interpretive signage has evolved from simple wood routed signs on vertical mounts to sophisticated designs on porcelain enamel and 3M Vinyl incorporating pictures, maps and written text.

Rather than conveying a single message, the signs now place a greater emphasis on interpretive stories. This approach makes the signage more interesting and the drive more memorable.

The new signs have a lower profile that intrude less on scenic views. They are also smaller, encouraging people to get out of their vehicles. Before a sign is replaced, the text and manner of presentation is reviewed by nearby communities and First Nations. The average lifespan of a sign is a decade or more. If left unchanged for too long, these signs become dated while the characteristics of visitors change.

Since 1994, the Department of Tourism's Heritage Branch has had the primary responsibility for developing interpretive signage within road right-of-ways, overseeing new sign creation and ensuring signs are maintained and replaced when required.

In 1995, the Heritage Branch commissioned a Yukon wide *Interpretive Signage Strategy*, which provides a comprehensive program framework. Interpretive plans, based on the overall strategy, have been completed for each highway corridor in the years since then. The corridor plans provide a reference text for day-to-day program planning and administration. This is the 6th in the series.

The 1995 Strategy provides guidance for new site selection, sign spacing distances, site rationalization, sign thematic logic and discusses construction and maintenance costs. As sites become more heavily used and signage more sophisticated, other issues arise particularly in the area of maintenance. Outhouse education and garbage collection costs are good examples of indirect but associated program costs that continue to rise reducing the resources available for sign replacement and/or new site development.



Communities, businesses and First Nations located along the highway corridors have an interest in seeing accurate sign content and ensuring visitors are well informed and educated about the areas they are passing through. Consultation done in the process of producing the interpretive plans ensures local viewpoints and concerns are represented. In the case of Haines, Alaska and Haines Junction, Yukon, both communities realize that interpretive signs can make the Haines Road drive more interesting.

First Nations are particularly concerned about balance, and the 1995 Yukon-wide Strategy pointed out how much of their history and geography had been overlooked. Yukon First Nations history is an essential component of the interpretive strategy. Furthermore, Land Claims Settlement Legislation provides for direct First Nations involvement in all matters related to the protection of their history and culture. Interpretive signage and site development falls within this definition. Today, as a matter of policy, site location and specific sign content is discussed with the affected First Nation before installation of a new sign is recommended.

1.1.1 How will this plan be used?

There are several audiences. Heritage Branch uses the interpretive plans to determine program priorities and support annual budget requests. The plans include specific recommendations on site and signage refurbishment, new site selection, thematic opportunities and potential stories. The plans also let the Branch know of other department interests, community concerns and First Nation interests – all factors that are considered in planning a new site or replacing an existing sign.

Three Yukon government departments use the interpretive plans to co-ordinate their activities in constructing pullouts and signing travel corridors. YTG Tourism, Renewable Resources and

Community & Transportation Services work together to ensure that the program runs efficiently and that a high level of maintenance and safety is ensured. This plan will also be of interest to Parks Canada, the Province of British Columbia and State of Alaska for the following reasons. Kluane National Park borders both roads, and park managers have similar visitor service and interpretive objectives. Between Blanchard River and the US border at Dalton Cache, the Haines Road passes through British Columbia running parallel to Tatshenshini-Elsek Provincial Park. Under the terms of park establishment, the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations will take the lead in developing a park interpretive strategy and suggesting the level of interpretation appropriate along this section of road. Similarly, the State of Alaska is looking at enhancing the level of interpretation along the Haines Road between Haines, Alaska and the BC border and has established a number of interpretive pullouts between the Canadian border and Tok, Alaska. By providing copies of this plan to the various agencies for reference, opportunities for collaboration may arise of mutual benefit and duplication of interpretive stories can be avoided.



This plan also provides a format and reference for communities and associations interested in undertaking their own, complementary interpretive signage initiatives.

1.2 Purpose & Objectives

Highway interpretive plans are an integral part of the Yukon's tourism strategy. The goal is to improve the visitors' driving experience by providing them with a window into the Yukon's natural and cultural history as viewed from the road.

The purpose of this interpretive plan is to describe themes, suggest appropriate locations and present guidelines for sign placement and site upgrading along the Alaska Highway from Whitehorse to the Alaska border and along the Yukon and BC portions of the Haines Road. The plan:

- seeks First Nations, community, and government agency input in defining corridor needs, suggesting changes, setting development priorities, locating new sites, evaluating message content, and corridor themes;
- identifies representative themes and messages for this section of the Alaska Highway and Haines Road;
- evaluates the effectiveness of existing signage;
- considers the appropriateness, redundancy, and currency of messages already out there;
- assesses thematic balance;
- determines the need for new sites for interpretive development; and
- formulates concepts for corridor motifs and key site priorities.



1.3 Planning Approach

The study approach included a review of the corridor history, the 2000 Kluane Region Tourism Plan, the latest draft of the Kluane National Park Management Plan, the 1994 and 1999 Visitor Exit Surveys, BC and Yukon Parks documents, and a literature review of the history of the area. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with key informants including area residents, scientists, highway foremen, government agencies, area communities, highway businesses and First Nations, to get input on issues, themes and stories.

First Nations were also provided with an opportunity to hire a representative from each First Nation to work with the consultants and liaise with their membership, Chief and Council. A highway tour was conducted to examine existing and future site possibilities directly.

After the draft plan was completed, a second tour was conducted to discuss the draft plan contents and recommendations with municipal councils, key interest groups, First Nation governments and Parks Canada.

The results of that feedback were used to finalize the plan for the two road corridors.

2.0 The Tourism Context

There are two “gateways” to the Yukon within this region. The first gateway, on the Alaska Highway at the Canada/United States border (Km 1965), is the gateway for southbound traffic predominantly headed for the “lower 48.” Three times as many visitors enter the Yukon at this point than at Pleasant Camp on the Haines Road. Apart from the border exhibit and Welcome to Yukon sign, the scenery is unchanged and the normal trappings of an international border are not evident. Canada Customs is located at Beaver Creek, 35 km to the south. Only then does the highway traveller have a real sense of crossing into a new country.

The Haines Road draws northbound ferry traffic that is generally Alaska bound. In this case, the custom facilities are within 1km of each other and the sense of arrival is reinforced by the climb out of the Chilkat Valley and over the pass. While travellers often think they are now in the Yukon, they are in fact in British Columbia until they reach Blanchard River (km 146) where they are greeted by the Welcome to Yukon sign. At both borders, the visitor’s first impressions apart from the scenery relate to the absence of human habitation.

There is a third gateway into the region at the intersection of the Alaska Highway and North Klondike Highway. At this point the visitor can either turn north towards Dawson City or head west towards Haines Junction. At Haines Junction the dominant traffic flow is northbound in part because a visitor bound for the Alaskan interior has to retrace their steps if they take a side trip to Haines.

Data compiled in the Kluane Region Tourism Plan provide some insight into travel trends and highway traveller characteristics. For example, we know

that over 98% of all visitors to the region stay within the highway corridor so their view of this region is the view from the road. Visitors don’t stay long and over a third of those that passed through the region during the 1994 and 1999 survey periods claimed they never stopped anywhere at all! We know that 70% of northbound travellers are headed to Alaska. Americans make up 75% of all travellers with Europeans now overtaking Canadians as the second dominant visitor group.

The introduction of direct charter flights from Frankfurt has increased the number of fly/drive

users who rent vehicles and recreational vehicles to travel about the Yukon and Alaska. In 1999 they comprised 15% of travellers on these roads.

Almost half of all visitors are travelling by car, truck or van while the motorhome/camper van traffic comprises a third of all travellers. Bus travellers still comprise a fifth of all visitors. Bus tours generally stop at fixed, predetermined locations and drivers stop at various scenic viewpoints and points of interest as time permits. Americans spend the least amount of time in the territory as Alaska is their destination.



The 1999 Visitor Exit Survey (VES) data and the Kluane Regional Tourism Plan confirm that visitors are not finding enough to “see or do” in the region. Many visitors cited “insufficient time” as the reason for not stopping or staying longer which confirms interview feedback that most travellers are still bound for Alaska or returning home. Well-spaced and developed interpretive sites clearly have a role to play in slowing travellers down and encouraging them to stop.

One other tourism trend is the increase in winter visitation. This creates unique maintenance problems since only a limited number of sites are ploughed out and the washrooms, garbage bins and interpretive signs are not generally accessible. In some situations, such as the Chilkat Summit (km102), winter recreational use poses unique maintenance problems only indirectly related to

the interpretive signage potential.

As winter visitor levels are still relatively low, it is difficult to justify a significant winter maintenance program. Whereas the development of a site is capital intensive, maintenance is labour intensive. As sites become more sophisticated and better used, their upkeep becomes more expensive. While aesthetics may suggest a less visible and more discrete placement of outhouses at a site, it is also more difficult for education vehicles to service. Similarly, viewing platforms with steps require minimal maintenance in summer but must be dug out in the winter by hand if they are to be used safely. This is costly and time consuming.

The Haines Road, like its counterpart from Skagway to Carcross, is one of the most scenic drives in North America. The attributes of the

Haines Road drive are still relatively unknown and interpretive signage can help raise public awareness.

Promoting awareness of what there is to see and do is an important part of the signage program. Regional orientation sites are located at, or as near as possible to, the intersection of the main highways or border points. In this case these sites would be located at Whitehorse (intersection Highway #2), Haines Junction (Alaska Highway/Haines Road), and near the international borders at Pleasant Camp and Beaver Creek.

From the visitor research it is clear such signage needs to convey ideas that there is a lot to see and do and taking the time to stop along the way will be worthwhile.



According to the Visitor Exit Surveys, the number of visitors who stopped in this region and did nothing increased from 18 to 30% between 1994 and 1999. Approximately 27% participated in some form of outdoor activity such as wildlife viewing, sightseeing and fishing, while 81% went on some form of hike. About 209 visited a museum or other built attraction such as the Kluane National Park visitor centres in Haines Junction (31,747) and Sheep Mountain (22,726). The visitor reception centres play an important information and orientation role that complements the interpretive signage program. Copies of the Wildlife Viewing Guide are available at the centres and information in the guide supplements the information on the interpretive panels.

Highway travellers have common characteristics. The largest group consists of older couples traveling on holiday. About two-fifths of the visitors to the Yukon are 55 or older. About half of the people arrive in the Yukon by car / truck camper, and about a fifth use recreational vehicles. These visitors have a good deal of autonomy, and can adjust their schedules if they wish. Understanding the audience is an important consideration in panel design and should be considered in choice of font, font size selection and use of colour contrast. Legibility and readability are key design considerations.

The effectiveness of “talking signs” is not well known. The government of Yukon discontinued the use of visitor radio broadcasts 6 years ago because visitors did not seem to be using the service. Travellers can still obtain weather advisory information by radio in the winter at Haines Junction.

The advantages of talking signs are that they can tell more of the story and can include translation or authentic narrative. They also work 24 hours a day.

Their limitations include range, the need for a power source and regular maintenance.

More research is needed to determine whether “talking signs” have a place in this program and on these roads specifically.

The main concern reported by tourism operators in this region is the number of rest areas and gravel pits that are used by RVs and others for overnight parking, especially when there is a commercial campground located nearby with vacant sites. Erection of prohibition signage has not been effective and sends the visitor a mixed signal of welcome but not welcome.

The solution may rest with the advance warning signage. Currently, the distance to the next rest area is given but there is no indication of proximity of services to the site. Closing sites would also be counterproductive. Without rigid, daily enforcement, this behaviour pattern will not change. This would be an expensive proposition and has significant policy implications. In the interim, a positive information approach may help.



3.0 The Existing Situation

In the following two sections, existing and potential sites and supporting interpretive signage is analyzed. A list of the factors considered is shown in the following table.

The interpretive program focuses on signage that can be placed within the road right-of-way. Opportunities to improve the overall visitor driving experience are identified, priorities set and partners suggested that could help implement the recommended improvements. One of the challenges the program faces is rising capital and maintenance costs. In this plan, BC Parks and Parks

Canada are key partners because of the large sections of road that parallel park boundaries. Parks Canada has already developed and maintains sites that complement program objectives. As an example, the YTG Soldiers Summit sign could be dropped from this program and the link to the trail-head strengthened from the Kluane Lake pullout, to the advantage of both agencies. Depending on how the Alaska Highway is reconstructed in this location, it may be possible to construct safer entrances and include a pedestrian connection.

One objective behind the interpretive program is to

provide order, image continuity, and effective messages to sustain visitor interest.

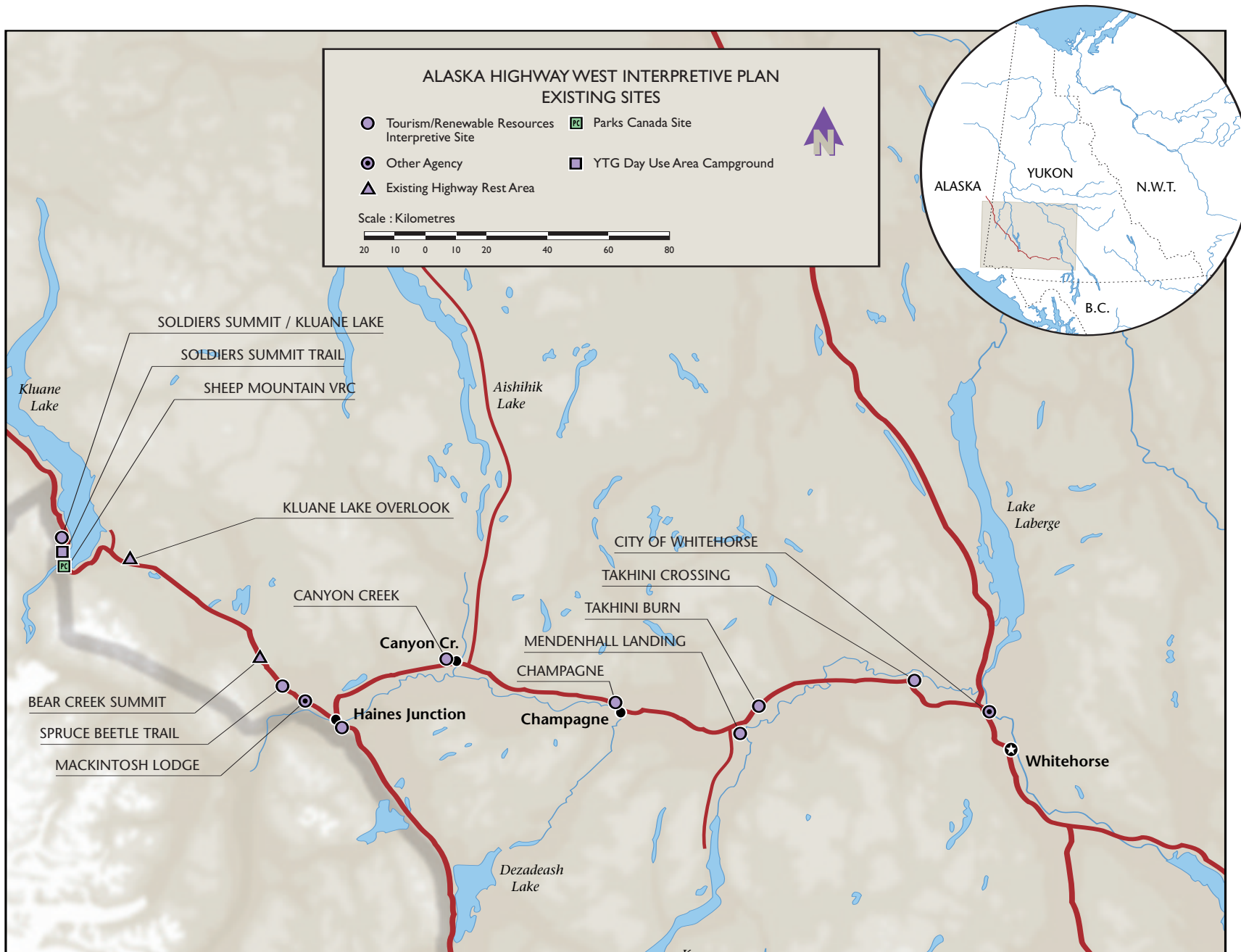
In the case of the Haines Road, little interpretive signage has been erected to date. BC Parks has not yet determined what roadside interpretation it wants to undertake and this plan will provide suggestions for the portion within their jurisdiction that will complement Yukon program activities. Parks Canada has expressed interest in working with the Government of Yukon and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to enhance interpretation, and the same sentiment has been expressed by Haines, Alaska and Haines Junction.

The Alaska Highway West section is evaluated in the context of the previous Alaska Highway East Plan because the intent is to have one contiguous strategy for the entire road within the Yukon.

Site Development Issues	Sign Content, Message and Design Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • location and spacing distance between sites • site identification and warning; safe access • site furnishings (condition and placement) • management/maintenance responsibility • site sensitivity • visitor capacity, size and suitability • potential to minimize duplication • potential for related uses • suitability for year-round use • site significance association • aesthetics (visual quality) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placement on site and orientation • size, age and condition of existing signs • theme and message relevance to location • connection to main corridor themes • type of sign erected (plaque, signboard, marker) • audience applicability • sign readability, legibility and visibility • sign accuracy, currency and completeness • suitability of presentation method • education and information value • translation potential







3.1 The Alaska Highway (km 1487 to 1965)

Cousins Airfield Road (km 1486.5) and City of Whitehorse Rest Area (km 1487)

There is an existing rest area on the west side of the highway near the Klondike Highway North intersection aimed at serving southbound travellers entering the city. The site contains outhouses, garbage containers, a site identification sign, a small city orientation display and a pay phone. Cousins Road is the nearest point to the intersection on the east side where a pullout for north and westbound traffic is possible. This is due to a combination of sightlines, proximity to private property and fill requirements. The small hill north of the Cousins intersection could be cut down to create a regional orientation site for this traffic.

The access points could also be constructed to tie in with the site across the road. Neither site has any particular scenic qualities. In the preceding 2km there is a mix of commercial and agency signage directing visitors to travel north or west reflecting the importance attached to this intersection. Consolidating such signage at one multi-use location would cut down on the visual clutter and improve safety.

The existing rest area has 2km and 500m advance warning signs in both directions on the Alaska Highway and also for southbound traffic on the North Klondike Highway. People leaving town should be directed to the new site.

The existing City of Whitehorse site should be reserved to interpreting the Whitehorse region for southbound travellers entering the city. Renewable Resources is working with the City to develop a series of interpretive panels showing wildlife viewing opportunities in the Whitehorse area.



Constructing a new regional orientation site at Cousins Airfield Road, across from the existing rest area to serve north and westbound travellers would be preferable from a long-term traffic safety perspective. Power and telephone lines would have to be relocated.

Conclusion – *Work with Parks Canada, the affected First Nations and the regional tourism associations to create a regional interpretation and information site.*

Takhini Crossing (km 1507)

Nàkhù Chù (Margaret Workman, Yukon Language Centre)

This minor site includes a wood routed vertical sign that discusses the Overland Trail, a historic milepost marker and a NWHS site identification sign. The latter sign is redundant and need not be replaced at the end of its useful life. Mail boxes have been installed at the west end of the site.

The site is located on a bend in the road at the

point where the Takhini River first becomes visible, when heading west. The most striking view is towards Lookout Mountain, to the northwest. The visitor looking north can see the draw where the Overland Trail descends to the river crossing, and toward the Takhini Hot Springs, which was the home of Chief Jim Boss (Kashxoot).

This large site is maintained year-round by C&TS and includes garbage containers. There are no formal entry or exit points. The site is well used and offers a panoramic view to the north. More can be done to define the edge of the parking area and keep people back from the bank's edge.

Conclusion – *Retain as a minor site but upgrade site layout to clearly define sign viewing area. Retain milepost marker but do not replace NWHS sign. When the existing wood routed sign is ready for replacement use a mounted tablet format. Expand the travel trade story with reference to Lookout Mountain and Ta'an Kwäch'an use of this area.*

Naalen Dhäl – Lookout Mountain (km 1513 or 1514)

Known as Naalen Dhäl by the Ta'an Kwäch'an people, or Lookout Mountain (possible interpretations also include Lone or Sharp mountain). During the period in which the Ta'an Kwäch'an people traded with the Tlingit First Nations, young men were sent up the mountain to watch for traders coming from the coast. A fire would be lit at the top of the mountain to signal that the traders could be seen. The smoke from these fires could be seen from as far away as Champagne, Lake Laberge, and Marsh Lake.¹

Conclusion – *Story is consistent with travel trade theme at Takhini Crossing site. Mountain is equally visible from that point so another site is not needed. Expand interpretation at existing Takhini Crossing site to incorporate this story.*

Takhini Salt Flats (km 1524)

This potential site is listed in the Wildlife Viewing Guide and is located one kilometer east of Takhini

River Bridge. It is home to rare plants, including the red-sea asparagus (*Salicornia europaea*).² The vegetation at this location thrives on salt, which rises to the surface because of underground springs. Due to the permafrost in the area, the salts cannot be washed back down below the surface and, thus, remain above the till.³ Thermokarst melting has created numerous small pot hole ponds that attract shore birds and ducks.

Construction of a pullout at this point would be difficult due to sightlines, soil conditions and drainage. The protected status of this site needs to be confirmed to allow trail development. Only the general site features are visible from the road. The site does not meet the sign spacing criteria but contains unique features worthy of interpretation.

Conclusion – *Consider as a future minor site because of unique geographical and ecological values once site protection measures are in place. Sight lines, drainage and soil conditions will need to be considered in selecting an appropriate pullout location. Work with Champagne & Aishihik First*

Nations and Renewable Resources on interpretive panel information and design.

La Prairie Farm (km 1537)

This potential site consists of a bison ranch with other forms of farming. Elk are usually visible along the road in this area and bison can sometimes be seen in fields to the south.

The best view is from a knoll by the survey monument on the north side of the road. Sightlines are a concern from the west. The site is also only 4km from the existing Takhini Burn site.

Conclusion – *Elk are discussed at the Takhini Burn site and bison interpretation is already provided at the public campground on the Aishihik Road and planned for other locations in the Yukon. Additional site not warranted.*

Takhini Burn (1541)

This major rest area is located on the south side of the road 2 km before the Kusawa Road cut-off. It is used year-round. The site has two washrooms, garbage cans, a site identification sign and six interpretive panels erected on a small wooden deck that acts as a viewing platform. Two of the six panels were produced by Heritage Branch and discuss the geography of the valley. The remaining four panels erected under the Wildlife Viewing Program focus on natural history themes. Several panels are damaged but are still readable. The viewing deck requires minor repairs and the large routed sign needs re-varnishing.



¹ Lori Graham, Ta'an Kwäch'an researcher interviews with Sophie Miller, Doreen Grady

² Yukon Wildlife Viewing Guide, Revised (April 2000) Government of Yukon

³ <http://www.themilepost.com>

The site was selected to interpret the 1958 fire that destroyed much of the area. The regeneration process has been slow and the evidence of the fires severity is only now disappearing. As the land regenerates into aspen parkland, it provides suitable habitat for elk, mule deer, and birds like the Upland Sandpiper.⁴ At the same time, the land is gradually being cleared and converted to rangeland. Within the next decade most of the burn history will be unapparent.

While most of the panels have a natural history theme, the Takhini Valley panel attempts to cover history, geography and provide an orientation to the recreational opportunities around Kusawa Lake and in the Takhini Valley. This panel needs to be rewritten when replaced and the accompanying map panel updated to show other rest areas and interpretive sites in the area. This panel also mentions CKYN Visitor Radio (96.1 on the FM dial), a discontinued service. No First Nation place names are used on the map. The Southern Tutchone refer to Kusawa lake as Năkhù Măn – “rafting across lake.”

As the fire history is no longer the dominant image, the site could be renamed Takhini Valley when the site identification sign requires replacement. The use of an interpretive deck as an exhibit platform does not add any particular value to the site. The platform constantly requires minor repairs as a result of vandalism.

This site should serve two purposes in future. First, it should continue to highlight the natural history themes related to the Takhini Valley. Second, it should serve as a regional orientation site to the Kusawa Lake area, which may become a territorial park.

Conclusion – *Maintain major site as is. Reorient panels as suggested above at time of replacement and consider adding First Nations place names. Rather than adding additional panels, rework existing panels at time of replacement. Examine individual panels in context of all the panels to minimize duplication.*

Mendenhall (Steamboat) Landing (km 1543)

Kusawa Lake Road 1km south of Alaska Highway

Mendenhall Landing was the head of navigation where goods were transferred from shallow draft steamers to wagons for transport to Silver City during the Klauane Gold Rush.⁵ No buildings remain at the site. The original sign erected in 1983 is still legible. The rest area is little more than a widening in the road and there are no support facilities. Recreational canoeists often use this as the pullout point for day trips starting from Kusawa Lake.

Conclusion – *Though a minor site, the theme is still valid. Leave sign standing as long as possible and replace with modern format when necessary. Coordinate replacement with road upgrading and establishment of new Territorial Park.*

Mendenhall River (km 1558)

Jojo or Dú Chù – Driftwood Creek

This is currently a highway maintenance divisional point and the start of the Champagne bypass. There is an informal pullout on the south side of the highway and a larger site on the north side that was developed in support of a logging operation. This was the location of one of the first highway lodges west of Whitehorse where gas could be purchased and some elders recall seeing their first cars at this location.⁶ No remains are visible. Taye

Lake, the source of the river and site of a 4500-year-old village is not visible but lies directly to the north.

Several years ago, scientists discovered that caribou had been seeking relief from bugs on snow patches that have remained through the summer for thousands of years. These sites became evident when the snow patches began to melt, revealing the tools and weapons of long ago hunters. The ice patches and Painted Mountain are visible from the highway near this location. A panel could be considered for the effect of global warming and migration of plants and animals in response to climatic change.

Conclusion – *Although this site shows some potential as a minor site it would be more advantageous to include this story at a new site on the Champagne bypass, particularly if the site selected can offer similar views. The general story of highway lodges is told elsewhere along the highway.*

⁴ Yukon Wildlife Viewing (2000), pg. 17
<http://www.themilepost.com>

⁵ Wonders, William C. (1994) *Alaska Highway Explorer: Place Names Along the Adventure Rd.*, Hordsal and Schubart Publishing, Canada

⁶ Champagne & Aishihik First Nations, *From Trail to Highway*, (1988), pg.19

Champagne (km 1568.5)

*Shadhäla – Little Sunny Mountain
(CAFN–From Trail to Highway (1988))*

Three signs were erected as part of the Alaska Highway 50th anniversary commemoration. They include an interpretive panel, milepost marker and NWHS site location sign. An original milepost marker can also be found across the road. There is no formal pullout area and no support facilities are provided. Highway upgrading will result in this site being bypassed in 2002.

The existing sign panel provides a good summary of the community's importance as a travel/trading centre. The panel also discusses the effects of changes that occurred as a result of the Klondike Gold Rush, then construction of the Wagon Road to Silver City, and finally from the impact of the Alaska Highway. This is one of the few locations remaining along the highway where the impact of highway construction on a First Nation community is still visible.

There appears to be one minor error in the text that suggests Champagne was the “first Euro-American trading post.” It is not clear whether the writer meant in this area or in the Yukon as the latter assertion would be incorrect.

The current signage is well located in the community where the impact of road construction is clearly visible. The signs are in good condition and will probably last for another decade. Maintaining the site will also help draw traffic to the Kwaday Dan Kenji First Nation commercial interpretive site that will also be bypassed.

Many visitors are interested in First Nation burial practices. Sadly, over the years the cemetery at Champagne, like many burial sites throughout the Yukon, has suffered from vandalism and looting to the point where visitors are discouraged. The story

is still important and it would be useful for travellers to know why visitation to these sites is not permitted.

With construction of the new bypass, the majority of travellers are not likely to backtrack to visit the community and will miss the opportunity to see first hand the impacts of the original highway construction and may not appreciate the community's travel/trade history. The ridge east of the community is actually a terminal moraine, the “snout” of the Kusawa Lake Valley Glacier. Travellers are also unlikely to be aware that the new road crosses the route of a number of historic trails that link the coast to the interior including the Dalton Trail. The story of Jack Dalton is covered adequately elsewhere but the role of the Krause brothers and “Shorty” Chambers is less well known.

Conclusion – *The existing interpretive signage at Champagne should be left in place. Consideration should be given to adding a new site on the bypass if there is support from the Champagne & Aishihik*

First Nations. The focus of the new site should include what can be seen by visiting Champagne and how the effects of climate change (e.g. snow patch discoveries) has expanded our knowledge of First Nation traditional use and occupancy of the landscape.

Cracker Creek (km 1590)

Màshe Chùa (Margaret Workman YLC)

There is a historic milepost marker at this point that has been painted over. It is located next to a private driveway. Cracker Creek was an important Southern Tutchone hunting area. The original village was obliterated when the highway was built and a highway lodge on the same site is also gone. Old Man Mountain is visible to the north and is called that because the mountain form looks like the face of a person lying down.

Conclusion – *Given the site's proximity to the existing and proposed interpretive sites at Champagne, development of another minor site at this location is not recommended.*



**Aishihik Road Turnoff (km 1602),
Otter Falls (km 30 Aishihik Road)**

Chu Nàdǎljì (Margaret Workman YLC)

An interpretive panel installed by Yukon Energy has replaced the wood routed sign at Otter Falls. The Otter Falls sign was important because a picture of the falls graced the back of the Canadian Five Dollar Bill for a number of years. Yukon Energy has also installed a sign visible from the Alaska Highway at the start of the Aishihik Road that shows the lake system, dam site and discusses the fish in the Aishihik Lake system. The advance warning signage is confusing as it is intended to indicate the presence of the YTG campground 42km up the Aishihik



Road. The commercial campground operator at the junction advises that travellers do not realize the distance to the campground and end up camping by the Yukon Energy sign across from his establishment or at the Canyon Creek rest area 2km further down the highway.

A transplanted bison herd now roams the area north of the Alaska Highway and an interpretive sign about the herd is planned for this area. The sign might be incorporated with other interpretive signage of the same type and size at the nearby existing Canyon Creek site.

Conclusion – *Work with C&TS to resolve the advance warning signage issue regarding the location of the government day use and campground sites along the Aishihik Road. Work with the Yukon Energy Corporation to determine if their sign at the junction should be replaced. Given the proximity to the existing Canyon Creek interpretive site, further development at this location is not recommended.*

Canyon Creek Bridge (km 1604)

*Tthe Yǎnlin – Water flowing through the rocks
Ashèyi Chù – Aishihik River*

*Ashèyi – At the head of the lake
(all three, Margaret Workman YLC)*

The main site feature is the Kluane Wagon Road Bridge constructed in 1904 by the legendary Sam McGee and Gilbert Skelly, rebuilt in the 1920's by the Jacquot brothers and then again in 1942 by the US Army. Major repairs to the bridge were undertaken in 1987. It is the only existing original bridge structure remaining from the initial highway construction. The bridge is generally in fair repair except for the supporting handrails that have been temporarily strengthened with 2x4s. The main issue that has arisen is that people have parked large vehicles on the bridge to take pictures.

The current wood routed sign is slated for replacement and draft text has been prepared for discussion purposes (see next section). There are also several other signs at this location including a "Please don't litter" sign erected by the CAFN and a Kluane Country regional orientation sign erected by the Kluane Country Visitors Association. This sign is in good repair. There is one garbage can located near the outhouses in the lower parking area. Only the upper area is ploughed out during the winter. This site is well used and requires maintenance three times a week during the summer months. Littering remains a concern.

There is a small cemetery on the hill overlooking the bridge. In the same area, archaeologists discovered a small bison hunting camp that dates back to the Little Arm culture that existed between 4000 and 8000 years ago. As this is the most ancient culture to inhabit the Kluane area and the site has continually been a traditional meeting and fishing place, this would be an appropriate location to introduce additional First Nation historic use and occupancy history to balance the information currently being presented.

Conclusion – *Replacing the existing bridge sign should be a priority. Access to the lower parking area should be blocked except for service vehicles. The revised sign text should be discussed with the CAFN and the question of adding an additional sign about the Little Arm culture considered.*

Near Marshal Creek (km 1622)

Dazhāw Chù (Margaret Workman YLC)

Parks Canada developed a site on one of the beach ridges in the 1970s but removed it about 15 years later due to safety concerns (e.g. poor sightlines) and site maintenance problems (e.g. littering). The original site development logic was sound. Looking westward through a small valley opening on a clear day, the visitor can catch a glimpse of the higher mountains of the St. Elias range in the interior including Mt. Kennedy (4233m) and Mt. Hubbard (4577m) as well as the surrounding ice fields.

For the westbound traveller, it is the high, snow covered mountains that draw the eye and the principal attraction is the first view of Kluane National Park. Parks Canada has expressed interest in reinstating the pullout. This site would provide Parks Canada an opportunity to introduce one of the national park's main interpretive themes: "an ever changing, dynamic environment." It is also an opportunity for them to explain where to find the visitor reception centre on arrival in Haines Junction.

This would also be a good alternative location for a regional orientation site since many visitors would stop here for a picture. The existing location, at the junction of the Haines Road in Haines Junction does not work well and is difficult to find.

The Village of Haines Junction has also expressed interest in seeing this site developed to include a community information kiosk.

Conclusion – *Reinstall the site when the road is reconstructed. The selected site should be as near to the beach ridge as possible in keeping with a "landscape in motion" theme. The site should be landscaped so a natural overlook is created on the edge of the beach ridge. It is strongly recommended that outhouses be installed at the site. The site*

would be developed and maintained by Parks Canada in partnership with the Government of Yukon and perhaps the Village of Haines Junction.

Haines Junction (km 1635)

Dākwākāda – "high cache place" (Margaret Workman YLC)

This site is located at the junction of the Haines Road tucked in behind the "Muffin" in a small park developed by the Village of Haines Junction.



Entry and exit points are confusing and difficult to find because of the large amount of commercial and directional signage in this stretch of road. Part of the problem lies with the configuration of the intersection itself. The natural tendency for the Alaska bound traveller is to drive right through rather than turning right. The majority of northbound visitors from Haines turn left to carry on to the Alaskan interior.

There are two sets of interpretive signs at this location. The highway commemoration signage is in the background and consists of the usual combination of historic milepost marker separating the vertical NWHS site identification sign on the left and an interpretive panel discussing the construction of the Haines Road on the right.

In the foreground the Village of Haines Junction has three large tablet panels that discuss the history of Haines Junction, and municipal and regional attractions. Both the municipal and regional panels need to be updated to include reference to the St. Elias Convention Centre and the Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park. Together with the Muffin sculpture, this pocket park is intended to serve as a regional orientation site.

Conclusion – *Maintain as is and encourage the Village of Haines Junction to update remaining sign panels. Contribute interpretive content as part of an overall community park redevelopment plan then consider dropping site from YTG program. Request C&TS assistance to improve site access and examine placement of advance warning signage to eliminate confusion.*

Haines Junction North Entrance Rest Stop (km 1639)

There is currently no interpretation at this rest stop. The site could be improved by thinning the trees to reveal a view of the mountains and wetland behind the site.

Conclusion – Maintain or improve as suggested.

Mackintosh Lodge (km 1646)

A historic milepost and NWHS site identification sign is located in front of the lodge facing the road. Established as the Bear Creek Roadhouse on the Whitehorse to Kluane Wagon Road in 1904, it was later named after Dorothy Mackintosh who ran the lodge for more than a decade before and during construction of the Alaska Highway. An old mining road near the lodge leads into Kluane National Park along the Dezadeash River. In 1996 a planned day use area on the park boundary was dropped, following completion of an environmental impact assessment, due to the potential for conflict with grizzly bear habitat.

Conclusion – Maintain milepost marker.

Spruce Beetle Trail (km 1653)

This existing Renewable Resource outdoor recreation site offers visitors the opportunity to view the effects of the Spruce Beetle infestation first hand.⁷ The site includes garbage and outhouse facilities at the trailhead. The site identification sign is only visible to northbound traffic and incorrect advance warning signage has been used. The picnic site symbol is not appropriate given the level of grizzly bear activity in this area. Most sign

surfaces are already showing signs of minor damage to the panel surfaces.

Conclusion – Site meets program major site criteria and provides the traveller with good information on the effects of the spruce beetle infestation. Work with C&TS and Renewable Resources to relocate site identification sign to improve visibility from both directions. Replace picnic symbol with point of interest sign.

Bear Creek Summit (km 1656)

Kwätüa (Margaret Workman YLC)

This is a favourite summer hiking and winter snowmobiling departure point. A new rest area has been built on the west side of the road. Given the proximity to the Spruce Beetle Trail 3kms to the south, additional signage in this area is not required.

Conclusion – Leave as is.

Sulphur Lake (km 1671)

Kwätäw Män (Margaret Workman YLC)

This is a popular waterfowl-viewing site especially during the spring and fall migration.⁸ A short access road leads to the lake from a pullout on the north side of the highway. Sulphur Lake is important as a traditional fish camp and fish trap location. The rock outcrop near Sulphur Lake provides a view into the Jarvis and Kaskawulsh river valleys. Mt. Decolai to the southwest is known as a “weather mountain” and residents still look towards the mountain to forecast current weather conditions. Jarvis Creek is also the last watershed that flows to the Pacific Ocean.

Conclusion – This location could be considered as a possible minor site because of its natural history values. It is approximately 20km from the two nearest major sites (Spruce Beetle Trail and Kluane Lake Overlook).



⁷ Yukon Wildlife Viewing Guide (2000), pg. 19

⁸ Ibid

Christmas Creek (km 1685.2)

Highway Maintenance personnel advise that there was a popular, informal winter truck stop here because of the steep hill at Christmas Creek. However, with highway reconstruction the need has been eliminated. The trails visible here lead to a small scenic lake and were used as part of a snowshoe hare research study. The potential for grizzly bear conflicts has been noted. With the Kluane Lake Overlook site less than 7km away another site is not needed.

Conclusion – *This location should not be developed as a site.*

Kluane Lake Overlook (km 1692)

Lù'àn Mǎn – Big Whitefish Lake (Kluane First Nation)

Yukon Tourism developed this major site with input on sign content from the Kluane First Nation. As part of the highway reconstruction this site has



been doubled in size. The site consists of a vertical “Kluane” identification sign that implies the site is within the national park, a horizontal site identification sign consistent with those found at all major sites and 4 interpretive panels erected on a small viewing platform oriented towards the panoramic view of the lake in the distance.

The interpretive panels discuss the following topics: Kluane Gold Rush in the early 1900’s, Southern Tutchone traditional land use, Kluane Lake and the complete reversal of the lake’s water flow due to the advancement of the Kaskawulsh Glacier, and includes a regional orientation map showing the Kluane Lake area. The Bostock theory that a surge of the Kaskawulsh Glacier caused a reversal in lake flow has been challenged. Dr. Peter Johnson, a geomorphologist, who has been studying this area for a number of years has been unable to verify the claim.⁹

This is a well-used site that is also maintained in the winter because it is the highway maintenance divisional point.

The Recent History panel has a bullet wound but is still readable while the site identification sign requires re-varnishing. Change the letter colour from blue to white to make sign more legible.

Conclusion – *The installation of outhouses is recommended for this heavily used site. Do not replace the redundant wooden “Kluane” sign and update the panels to include more information on First Nation travel routes and the geomorphology of this region. Remove the reference to Bostock’s theory.*

Silver City Turnoff (km 1693)

First Nation people used to live much of the year at the mouth of Silver Creek (Mǎn Shǐ’aya “where the lake branches off”) near the present site of the

Kluane Lake Research Station. The site was also a boat staging area for goods bound for Burwash Landing and the goldfields on the west side of Kluane Lake. A large camp was located here during construction of the Alaska Highway. Families gradually abandoned this site and moved to other locations including Kloo Lake and Burwash Landing.

A historic milepost marker, a NWHS sign and an interpretive panel were installed by the side of the access road into Silver City in 1992 as part of the 50th anniversary of highway construction. Only the historic milepost remains and it will be relocated to the right-of-way of the new highway alignment.

Conclusion – *Do not replace missing signs at this location or identify direction to Silver City site.*

Silver City (km 4 on Old Highway)

The original Silver City wood routed sign located near the site entrance was removed in 2001. Silver City presents a unique problem as it is privately owned. The site receives substantial visitation as it contains a good collection of buildings, from the turn-of-the-century through to WWII, in various stages of disrepair. A flood and neglect does not prevent the site from having an attractive “ghost town” feel. Visitors are not informed that the site is private property and there is no site supervision, so visitors enter at their own risk. The presence of a nearby interpretive sign may be construed as tacit approval that it is okay to visit the property, when no such arrangement is in place.

⁹ Personal Communication, Dr. Peter Johnson

The option of constructing a new Silver City site close to the lake was considered, but this would create another pullout within 10km of the Kluane Lake Overlook to the east and the Sheep Mountain Visitor's Centre to the west. The consultation process arrived at the solution of placing signage regarding Silver City, the Arctic Institute, and the Kluane Wagon Road at the Soldiers Summit/Kluane Lake site where the objects of these topics are in sight but out of reach.

Conclusion – *Do not replace the Silver City sign at the entrance to the Silver City site.*

Sheep Mountain Visitors Centre (km 1707)

Tachäl Dläi – Skin Scrapper Mountain (Kluane First Nation); Flat Face Mountain (Yukon Language Centre)

A'äy Chù – Slims River

Sheep Mountain is located within Kluane National Park. From mid-May to mid-September, interpretive programs and laser disc information videos are available at the interpretive centre.¹⁰ The centre is wheel chair accessible. A large rest area has been constructed, and the site is equipped with toilets. The site is not maintained in the off-season.

The Kluane First Nation noted that this could be a place to talk more about how the Southern Tutchone people used sheep for food and clothing, and the horns were carved into tools and utensils.

Conclusion – *Considered a major site. Current facilities and information are effective. No additional action required.*

Soldiers Summit (km 1708.3) – Parks Canada Site

The Alaska Highway was officially opened November 20, 1942 in a ribbon cutting ceremony held in -35°C weather. A pullout and 1.5km trail with supporting interpretive signage was constructed by Parks Canada for the 1992 50th anniversary. The trail winds its way to the meeting place where an official National Historic Monument plaque has been placed. The commemoration site offers good views out over the Slims River delta and Kluane Lake. Dall sheep may often be seen from short distances in this location. The NWHS site identification sign is located off by itself and is redundant.

The main weakness with this location is the sightline from the north as the pullout at the trailhead is on an inside corner. Reconstruction plans for this portion of road are still in the planning stage.

Conclusion – *This is one of the most important sites on the Alaska Highway and the construction theme is adequately covered. Remove NWHS sign at end of useful life. (See also Kluane Lake site recommendation.)*

Soldiers Summit/Kluane Lake (km 1708.5) – YTG Site

This popular stopping point is located on the outside bend adjacent to Kluane Lake. The site is maintained year round. There are two wood routed vertical signs, one referring to Soldiers Summit and the other to Kluane Lake. Erected in the mid 1980s, both are nearing the end of their useful lives. The Soldier's Summit sign is redundant. Access and egress points are not clearly defined, and there are no garbage cans at this site. The advance warning signage is confusing due to the sites' proximity to one another and the Parks Canada trailhead parking area less than 200 m away.

This is a very scenic location. The Kluane Lake sign panel discusses the lake's blue colour and there is plenty of evidence that visitors are clambering down over the rocks to the lake edge. Garbage cans are required but outhouses are not, given the proximity of the site to the Sheep Mountain VRC.

This site should be an exception to the spacing rule and should be redeveloped in conjunction with the Parks Canada Soldier's Summit trail across the road. Silver City, the Arctic Institute, the Kluane Wagon Road, Alex Fisher's cabin, Bullion City, Kluane Lake and the gold mines on the Slims River tributaries are appropriate topics for interpretation.



¹⁰ Yukon Wildlife Viewing Guide. (2000) pg. 19

Two key improvements should be considered in planning the highway reconstruction in this area. First, the Parks Canada Soldiers Summit Trail and this site should be linked and sightlines improved. It may be possible to install a culvert walk through between the two sites so north and southbound traffic does not have to make left turns and people can easily visit both sites. The second consideration would be to create a short trail down to the lake near the Kluane Lake sign. This would be an ideal Renewable Resources Y2C2 project requiring only a day or two for a crew to complete using materials already onsite.

Conclusion – Remove redundant Soldiers Summit sign and replace vertical wood routed Kluane Lake



sign with updated interpretive panels. Work with C&TS, Parks Canada, and Kluane First Nation to link two sites in highway reconstruction planning and consider adding small trail to edge of lake.

Kluane Lake Tower Site (km 1720.2)

There are very few safe pullout locations along the shore between Sheep Mountain and approximately km 1730, past Congdon Creek. Destruction Bay area business people note that visitors regularly camp overnight at every available opportunity along this stretch of road. They feel access should be better controlled. This concern is being addressed during reconstruction planning.

Visitors often ask about the purpose of the wooden

tower at km 1720.2 and this is a popular informal rest area because of the accessible beach. The tower was part of an outdoor shower used during the original highway construction. The structure has not been stabilized and there are no plans to do so. This concern plus the spacing criteria and resident feedback recommending against additional sites in this stretch of highway argue against adding an additional site at this location.

Conclusion – An additional site is not warranted at this location.

Congdon Creek (km 1725)

Klär Shän Nji – Big Roots Broken Down (Kluane First Nation)

Parks Canada has expressed interest in developing a park orientation site for southbound traffic in this location because this is the place where these travellers actually contact the park. Renewable Resources maintains an 81 site public campground here that includes a 500m lakeshore trail. There are five interpretive panels and a trailhead map. Topics include bear root (vegetation), ice trails (winter climatic effects), rain patterns (climate), old and new skylines (geomorphology) and early peoples (cultural history). The Kluane First Nation suggested the story of the effect of the Kluane Game Sanctuary and creation of Kluane National Park & Reserve on the Southern Tutchone needs to be told and this is one possible location. The campground across the road is subject to closure when bears are in the area.

Conclusion – Parks Canada should work with Kluane First Nation and Government of Yukon to examine the feasibility of constructing a minor pullout on the west side of the road opposite the campground entrance. Parks Canada would be responsible for the trailhead, bear warnings and park orientation signage.

Destruction Bay (km 1743)

Destruction Bay is one of several towns that evolved from highway construction. It earned its name as a result of a fierce storm that occurred in 1942. Three signs were installed for the 1992 commemoration. They include a milepost marker, NWHS site identification sign, and an interpretive panel discussing the relay stations that were constructed at 100-mile intervals. There is no formal parking area and the shrubbery is growing up around them. The community has constructed a sheltered interpretive display almost directly behind the existing highway signs.

Topics presented on the four interpretive panels include: community history, area birds, mammals and fish along with an orientation map showing place names and the lake's watershed.

Conclusion – Work with C&TS and Destruction Bay Community Association to develop a single parking area and integrate the two displays.

Copper Joe Creek (km 1752.3)

The Kluane First Nation suggested this as a possible site because of the panoramic view of Kluane Lake and the importance of the Copper Chief and his family. The First Nation also suggested the site might be suitable for a talking sign featuring songs of the area.

The site is located halfway between a minor site at Destruction Bay and the Kluane Museum of Natural History, a major site in Burwash Landing. Similar views of the lake are possible in either community. The idea of a talking sign has merit but it would be easier to install and maintain at the Burwash Landing location. The name attributed to this creek at the time of road construction was considered inappropriate and changed at the request of the Kluane First Nation to honour Copper Joe. A

picture of the chief is included in the signage at the Kluane River site and it is suggested as an alternative site to discuss the family's legacy.

Conclusion – Given spacing distance and options available, another site is not required.

Burwash Landing (km 1760)

T'ù'àn Män Keyi – Burwash Landing (D. Tlen Kluane Southern Tutchone Glossary)

The standard combination of the NWHS site identification, historic milepost and interpretive panel were grouped together as part of the outside interpretive display on the grounds of the Kluane Museum of Natural History. The signs were damaged and removed. The highway reconstruction will include a new parking area and approach to the museum. The refurbished milepost marker and interpretive panel will be replaced as part of the finished landscape.

Eugene and Louis Jacquot founded the community in 1904 and named it after the mining recorder Lachlin Burwash. A small brass cairn commemorating Lachlin Burwash is located near the existing highway signs.

There are also several wood routed signs by the Catholic Church that Father Morisset, an Oblate missionary, built.¹¹ The original church built by him is still used today.

The Kluane First Nation is planning a Cultural Centre extension to the existing museum. A feasibility study has been completed and an architectural design is in progress. First Nation history will be covered in the new cultural centre design and programming.

Conclusion – The Kluane Museum is the attraction. Treat as minor site and work with Museum Board, Kluane First Nation and C&TS to ensure highway

upgrading, site access and parking are integrated into an overall site development and interpretation plan. Coordinate improvements with museum expansion plans.

Burwash Creek (km 1776)

Tl'äw K'à Chù – Burwash Creek (D. Tlen Kluane Southern Tutchone Glossary)

There is an old mining road that provides access to the Burwash Uplands and Amphitheatre Mountain (Näsi). Gold was discovered here in 1904 and the creek is also named after the popular Silver City Mining Recorder Lachlin Burwash. The creek is still actively placer mined. It is possible to hike into the Burwash Uplands and north end of Kluane National Park using this route. The hiker can return to the highway via the former access road to the Wellgreen mine at Quill Creek. The Burwash Uplands have been described as the Denali of the Yukon. An interpretive sign did exist here for a number of years. The topic is now covered in one of the panels at the Kluane River site.

Conclusion – Suggest expanding Burwash Upland story at Kluane River site instead of developing additional site here. Discuss further with Kluane First Nation and if there is support for an additional site, coordinate with road reconstruction and treat as a minor site.

¹¹ <http://www.themilepost.com> Stone, Ted. (1997), pg. 183

Kluane River (km 1785)

Łù'àn Tágà – Kluane River (D. Tlen Kluane Southern Tutchone Glossary)

Łù'àn Män Keyi – “Fish Lake Country” (G. Dickson, Kluane First Nation)

This major site, known locally as Joe Jacquot’s Lookout, includes a viewing platform with six interpretive panels, a site identification sign, outhouses, and garbage bin. Wooden bollards define the parking area. This site will no longer be located immediately adjacent to the highway after reconstruction. A new driveway will be constructed to connect the site to the highway. This heavily visited site offers good views of the river valley.

The original two signs erected by YTG in 1993 include an orientation map on the Kluane region similar to the one found at the Kluane Lake site (km 1692) and a panel developed in conjunction with the Kluane First Nation entitled “Welcome to Ási Keyi - My Grandfather’s Land.” Four panels were added later; two cover the migration of chum salmon (Feast from the Ocean, Homecoming), and two cover Life of the River and the Burwash Uplands. Together the panels provide a good range of interpretive stories and a reasonable balance of First Nation content. Several signs need to be updated when replaced (e.g. remove reference to visitor radio on Kluane-Country panel and correct name on picture from “Art Joe” to “Benson Joe”).

Conclusion – *Maintain as is. Review and update sign text at time of replacement. Use boulders rather than wooden bollards to define parking area when site expanded. Change site identification sign lettering from blue to white to improve readability. Add missing 2km warning sign. Development should proceed in cooperation with the KFN.*

Lt. Small’s Memorial Site (km 1795)

The new highway bypasses the site completely. The southern section of the old road that meets the new highway near Kluane Wilderness Village has been retained which means travelers have to back-track to get to the site. The site includes an NWHS site identification sign, and an Alaska Highway Anniversary sign panel, which talks about the 18th US Corps of Engineers and Lt. Small’s accident. There is also a small memorial cairn erected by his battalion.

Conclusion – *Maintain as is including the NWHS site identification sign because of the continuing commitment by the engineers or relatives who visit the site. Do not add garbage can unless littering continues to be a concern.*

Kluane Wilderness Village (km 1797.2)

Commercial facilities are located on both sides of the road. The main attraction here are “Scully’s burls” and this creative individual’s ingenuity has created a thriving local industry in the area.

Conclusion – *There is no suitable site in the immediate area but the topic is one of great interest to visitors. Look for an opportunity to discuss this colourful story in the immediate area.*



1128/Canol Pump Station (Km 1808)

The buildings associated with the former pump station are approximately 200m north of the rebuilt highway. This would be a possible site for interpretation of the Haines to Fairbanks pipeline taking advantage of the former buildings that are still in relatively good shape. However, the site is also within the right-of-way of the proposed Alaska Highway Pipeline.

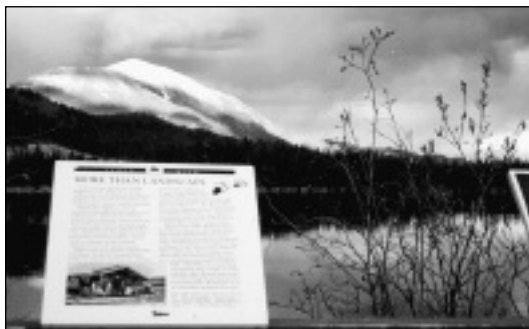
Conclusion – Drop from consideration. The new Icefields site is less than 8km away and the future of the pipeline right-of-way is uncertain.

Icefield Ranges (km 1816)

A major new, year-round site has been constructed at this location with outhouses and garbage cans. An existing sign panel has been reinstalled very close to the edge of bank with no separation between parking and pedestrian area. Use boulders to frame area.

On a good day visitors can see portions of the largest non-polar ice fields in North America, including views of Wallsted and Wood mountains. The visitor is also provided with information about glaciation, scientific study, and exploration in the St. Elias Mountains, and advised of the presence of Canada's highest mountain, Mount Logan.

Located between the Donjek River and Beaver Creek, a 3000km² natural environment park called



Ási Keyi has been proposed. It is intended to be a Special Management Area under the Kluane and White River First Nations Final Agreements.

The park boundaries would also encompass much of the range of the Chisana Caribou herd, protecting this 800 strong woodland caribou herd that ranges between Alaska and this area of the Yukon.

Conclusion – Treat as minor site. This would be a good place to discuss the efforts of both First Nations to expand the world's largest contiguous area of national parks and protected areas. Add panel on Donjek River and area.

Donjek River (km 1822)

Dän Zhür Chù – Silverberry River (Kluane First Nation)

There were three signs at this location from the 1992 Alaska Highway commemoration including a plaque about the construction, historic milepost, and NWHS site identification sign. These signs were destroyed during reconstruction.

An interpretive panel about the Donjek River and the area should be installed at the Icefield Ranges site. The Donjek Bridge was started in 1948 and completed in 1952. "It was the largest structure undertaken by the Canadian Army during peacetime and was built mostly by military labour."¹²

Conclusion – This area could be disturbed in the future during bridge construction and a pullout here is not recommended. Consider replacing the historic milepost marker in the right-of-way after bridge is rebuilt.

Confluence of Long's Creek and Koidern River (km 1859)

Kwät'āw – water lily (Southern Tutchone)

The merging of the Koidern River and Long's Creek

traditionally provided the Kluane River First Nation people an ample supply of whitefish. Archaeologists found remains of a cache on the banks of the Koidern River that have provided a good insight into subsistence life in this area.¹³

Conclusion – There are conflicts with desired spacing distance and themes can be communicated elsewhere.

Pickhandle Lakes (km 1864)

This site is located on the shore of the lake and is reached by a 100m road from the highway. Renewable Resources developed this site because of the wildlife viewing potential. The site contains a viewing deck with 6 interpretive panels, picnic table, garbage bin and pair of outhouses. The site is not maintained in the winter. The deck needs to be levelled and advance warning signage installed. The signs disappeared in the fall of 2001. There is also a First Nations cultural camp on the same point that receives intermittent, seasonal use.

Pickhandle Lake has a long tradition of First Nation occupation. The Upper Tanana and Southern Tutchone used this area as a trade and travel corridor. The 6 interpretive panels covered pond life, muskrats, geological features, bird migrations and traditional life with a map of travel routes. The panels will be updated when they are replaced.

Conclusion – Treat as a major site and maintain year-round. Add advanced warning signs. Repair/replace deck and signs. Renewable Resources should work with affected First Nations to update the signage and improve the site.

¹² K. Bisset & Assoc. *Research of Former Military Sites and Activities in the Yukon* AES and DIAND. (1995), pg.263

¹³ Fedirchuk McCullough and Associates Ltd. *Shakwak Project Environmental Assessment*, (1993), pg. 90-91

White River Bridge (km 1881)

Yukokun Heenah - (Tutchone)

Nasina /Erk-Heen – Copper River - (Tanana)

Å t'ayat Chù - White River (Tlen, 1993)

From the Koidern River to this location there are still historic milepost markers, from the 1992 anniversary in front of the three area lodges (km 1872.6, 1877.6 and 1880) that correspond with historic mileposts 1163, 1165 and 1167. Two of the lodges are located at telephone relay sites while Canol Camp “G” was located at Bear Flats Lodge.

A new bridge has been completed across the White River and there is a wide apron on the northeast side providing views out over the river valley. The area is large enough to develop a linear parking lot and sightlines are adequate if the entry and egress points are carefully located. A borrow pit is located within 1.5km and minimal site preparation work would be required.

There are a number of possible themes that could be discussed at this location. The logical story would relate to the river, the significance of the Klutlan Glacier and the volcanic eruption of Mt. Churchill 10km west of the Yukon-Alaska border. The Klutlan Glacier is thought to be unique not only because of the vegetation growing on it but also because that vegetation is sufficient to support large mammals. The glacier is not visible from the highway but can be accessed from a trail following the White River upstream.

The White River marks the boundary of the Ruby Ranges and the Klondike Plateau ecoregions. Mount Churchill erupted twice in the last 1900 years to spread ash over the Yukon, Northwest Territories and south central Alaska. The White River Ash, which gives the river its distinctive colour and texture, is the most distinctive of the numerous beds of ash deposited. Recent evidence has revealed that ash distributed to the east of the mountain fell in the late fall or early winter and this will be significant in scientist’s assessment of the effect of the eruption on Yukon’s First Nations.¹⁴ Oral history suggests these eruptions may have initiated mass migrations out of the region.¹⁵

The White River was an important source for native copper used in trade with the Chilkat Tlingit and knife production. Copper Chief, an Upper Tanana man, controlled the most significant copper deposit in this area. A community called “Canyon City” was established about 16km upriver at the head of

navigation around 1905. It served as a supply centre for prospectors looking for copper and again in 1913 during the brief Chisana Gold Rush. An old mining road and horse trail follows the south bank of the river west towards the Klutlan Glacier and north to Chisana, Alaska.

There is a strong connection between the Northern Tutchone, Han and Tanana people and a fair amount of traditional knowledge of this area has been documented in the 1997 White River First Nation Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study.

Conclusion – *Work with First Nations and C&TS to develop new site at bridge. Focus on Klutlan Glacier, Saint Elias Mountains volcanic activity and First Nation traditional use and occupancy.*



¹⁴ West K. D. and J. A. Donaldson. *Eruptive Timing of the White River Ash* in Occasional Papers in Earth Science No. 1. YTG Heritage Branch, (2001), pg. 67

¹⁵ Moodie, D. W and A. J. W. Catchpole. *Ethnohistory* 39.2 (Spring 1992)

Moose Lake (km 1890.5)

This area between Moose Lake and Sanpete Lakes is an important First Nation traditional hunting area. One of the Yukon's most important archaeological sites was discovered here during the highway reconstruction. The Beringia connection is an important theme and worth discussing somewhere in this stretch of road.

***Conclusion** – There is no visible evidence of the site's importance. The Moose Lake discovery and Beringia connection can be discussed elsewhere just as effectively.*

Sanpete Lakes (km 1897)

A prospector from Sanpete County, Utah, named these lakes at the turn of the century.¹⁶ Westour bus drivers report this is a good area to spot moose and swans. The horse trail up the backside of Sanpete Mountain is also visible at this point. These lakes have the same wildlife viewing values as Moose Lake and the related natural history stories are already adequately covered at the Pickhandle Lakes site. Sanpete Mountain offers commanding views of the surrounding area particularly north towards Beaver Creek and east towards Snag and Wellesley Lake.

***Conclusion** – Given proximity to Dry Creek site, another pullout is not required and themes can be communicated elsewhere.*

Dry Creek (km 1900)

A new rest area has been built on the hill above the creek using surplus material from reconstruction. The site includes a single outhouse and garbage

container and is maintained year round. A short trail leads to a view of a small lake and the remains of an old cabin are visible to the north. The James Trail goes from Dry Creek to Gates Ridge. A roadhouse was built at Dry Creek #1 in the late 1940's to service bus traffic. An interpretive sign discussing the Chisana Trail¹⁷ and 1913 gold rush existed by the informal pullout at the bottom of the hill next to the creek. Good traditional use information also exists for this area.

***Conclusion** – Consider a major site and high priority. Encourage C&TS to add additional outhouse. Work with Renewable Resources and White River First Nation to create interpretive signage covering a range of topics. Possible themes include the effects of glaciation and permafrost (e.g. the continuing effect of freeze/thaw movement on the underlying permafrost visible at the site, the "drunken forest" visible along the highway), the Moose Lake archaeological site discovery,*

Beringia, the Chisana Gold Rush and First Nation traditional use and occupancy.

Snag Junction Campground (km 1913)

Taltaljak or Hultaljek – Snag – "springtime the ice roll down the creek," "fast water," and "blow down the river" (White River First Nation).

The campground is located just past the junction of an un-maintained road that extends to the original First Nation village at Snag and an abandoned airstrip constructed during WW11 as part of the Northwest Staging Route. There is a historic milepost marker (1188) at the intersection.

The Snag Weather Station reported Canada's lowest recorded temperature at -63°C on February 3, 1947. The weather station operated between 1942 and 1966.



¹⁶ <http://www.themilepost.com>

¹⁷ <http://www.nps.gov/wrst/chisanamining.html>

From here to Beaver Creek, the natural adaptations that have occurred due to the effects of permafrost are clearly visible. Thermokarst activity has created numerous small, circular lakes that result from the settling or caving in of the ground surface as the permafrost melts and shifts. The poorly drained land supports stunted black spruce often leaning in various directions – hence the term “drunken forest.”

The Snag River is known for its salmon and grayling runs and is believed to be a traditional hunting and fishing site dating back to prehistoric times. The First Nation community included a mix of families with Upper Tanana and Northern Tutchone origin. Most of the prominent First Nation families now living in Beaver Creek can trace a connection to this site and have ancestors buried there. The White River First Nation has not decided how and to what extent it wishes to develop the area around Snag.

***Conclusion** – The permafrost story and aspects of the Snag story can be told at Dry Creek. Consider installing an interpretive panel on the story of the lowest recorded temperature in the campground.*

Enger Creek (km 1922)

This existing rest area contains a garbage can and is maintained year round by Highway Maintenance crews. The site has little visual interest but the permafrost ‘drunken forest’ story could be discussed here.

***Conclusion** – Maintain as is and tell the “drunken forest” story at Dry Creek.*

Beaver Creek (km 1934)

Takahing – or Tataning – “lots of rocks” (White River Elders Oral History 1998)

There is a historic milepost marker, NWS site identification sign and an interpretive panel that discusses the army’s experience with permafrost and the first meeting of bulldozers from the 97th and 18th engineers at Beaver Creek. Their meeting on October 28, 1942 linked Fairbanks, Alaska to Dawson Creek, BC¹⁸ forming one continuous road. The signs are located near the new Beaver Creek Visitor Centre. The community has created a nearby display as part of the 1998 Yukon Centennial. The panels discuss community history and life in the area.

***Conclusion** – No changes are currently required. When the signs are due for replacement, care should be taken to ensure any changes complement the efforts the community has taken to improve the appearance of this area.*

Mirror Creek (km 1947)

A small existing pullout with one garbage can has been built on the south side of the road overlooking a large wetland. It is a good spot to view waterfowl and some of the effects of permafrost such as slumping and a drunken forest. Many of the natural history themes that can be presented here are adequately represented elsewhere between Snag and the Tetlit National Wildlife Refuge Interpretive Centre in Alaska (km 1229.6). An old mining road runs northwest from this point across the border. The site is located near the Sourdough Hill (Nii’ii) archaeological site.

***Conclusion** – No improvements are recommended.*

Little Scottie Creek (km 1959.4)

Ts’oogot Gaay or Tahkut – “little spruce tree” (White River Elders Oral History 1998)

A well-used pullout existed at this point before highway reconstruction and there remains an informal access to the creek. Scottie Creek was named for a member of the USGS survey party and gold was found in the creek gravels in 1913, during the Chisana Gold Rush. The Scottie Creek drainage is considered to have regionally significant wildlife and migratory bird habitat values. A 20-foot wide path bisected a Scottie Creek village when the international boundary was surveyed.

***Conclusion** – No development is recommended. The Chisana Gold rush story can be covered at Dry Creek and the Scottie Creek village story is better told at the Alaska/Yukon Border site.*

Alaska/Yukon Border (km 1965)

The site is located in a large developed pullout on the 141st meridian, which constitutes the international border between Alaska and the Yukon. It is about 200m south of the US Customs Post. Developed jointly by Alaska and Yukon with support from the federal government, the site serves as a regional orientation site for both north and southbound travellers. Four interpretive plaques have been erected and placed in two shelters facing each other oriented to highlight the 6m-cleared borderline.

¹⁸ Wonders, William C. (1994), pg 56-58

On the Yukon side, one of the two interpretive panels includes a map and information on the Yukon and Kluane region (primarily Kluane National Park) while a second panel discusses Canada/US relations, surveying of the 141st meridian and information on local First Nations.

The two Alaska panels cover elements of highway construction and regional orientation. The Canadian and Yukon flags on one side and the US and Alaskan flags on the other also frame the site. The Alaskans have also erected two interpretive panels entitled

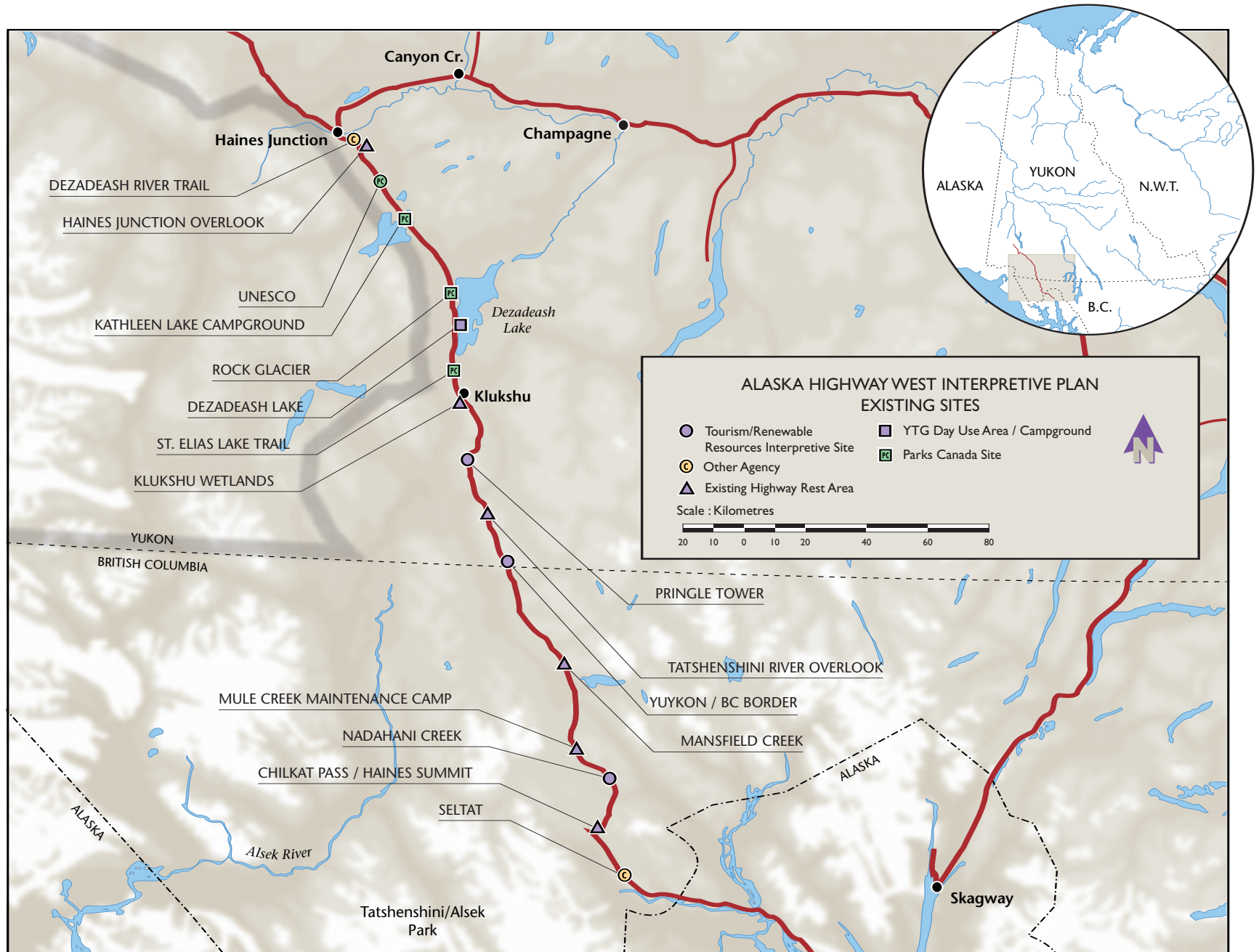
Frozen Earth, Seward's Icebox and Alaska and Roller Coaster Roads that deal with permafrost and modern road construction techniques. The roller coaster roads theme is particularly relevant since even the reconstructed road continues to face problems each year.

No garbage bins or outhouses are provided. The logical location for such facilities may be at the nearby US Customs post from a maintenance perspective. Both Alaska and Yukon have erected "welcome" identification signs. Signs were missing letters in the "Welcome to the Yukon" signage (an

"e" in the French sign word *Mysteré* and an "e" in "The Magic") at time of inspection.

Conclusion – *This site is an excellent example of joint co-operative effort. Work with Alaskan counterparts to resolve sanitation issues. Work with Upper Tanana and White River First Nation to tell the story of the International Boundary's effect on the Scottie Creek people. The number of different styles of signage and amount of text needs to be simplified. Any new signage should complement the existing site plan.*





Haines Road (Pleasant Camp, B.C. to Haines Junction, Yukon)

It is important to note that, from the Alaska/BC border to the BC/Yukon border, the Haines Road runs through British Columbia. The Government of Yukon maintains this section on behalf of the province. The situation is similar to the Skagway Road where a highway interpretive plan has already been completed. Along this section of road, the British Columbia government will determine what actual sites are constructed and who will be responsible for the subsequent capital and operating costs.

The highway also parallels the eastern border of Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park. As a class “A” wilderness park, the level of trailhead infrastructure including the construction of any roadside interpretive sites, will be considered during preparation of the park management plan. The suggestions put forward here are for “information only” for consideration during that process. The intent of the recommendations contained herein is to stimulate discussion and suggest how the corridor can be planned as an integrated whole driving experience. The Champagne & Aishihik First Nations have the lead on interpretation of First Nation history within the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park.

International Border Dalton Cache/ Pleasant Camp (km 71.3)

The two customs posts are separated by 1km with the actual border about 150m north of the US Customs Post at Dalton Cache. Just north of Canada Customs, the remains of an original Dalton Trail bridge are still visible in Granite Creek. Jack Dalton’s trading post is currently being restored and has been placed on the US National Register of

Historic Buildings. It is located on the southwest side of the road next to the international boundary. The border cut-line is visible and there is a boundary marker with another Kiwanis “friendship” cairn. Alaska has erected a wood routed sign talking about Jack Dalton. There is no formal pullout or facilities.

This site has good interpretive potential but several constraints. For southbound traffic the lane has been widened to create enough room for about 4 tractor-trailer units to park. From there to US Customs there is no reasonable parking spot on either side of the road. Border security is also a consideration.

There are several stories that can be told at this site. First there is the story of customs operations. Both the Canada Customs Superintendent, stationed at Pleasant Camp, and her counterpart at Dalton Cache have collected information and maintain records on the history of the two posts.¹⁹ The

customs story has not been told elsewhere and dates back to 1898 when Inspector Jarvis of the Northwest Mounted Police was sent from Calgary to establish the post. There is also an interesting border story concerning a bar that straddled the border. Both themes complement the existing history of the Dalton Trail and the trading post established here.

The customs story is worth telling and should not be lost. The idea of creating an interpretive pullout or trail between the two posts was considered and rejected for security reasons. Following the events of September 11th, 2001 security has become an even greater concern.

Conclusion – Consider telling the Canadian Customs story at Seltat and work with Canada Customs personnel at Pleasant Camp to develop the interpretive story.



¹⁹ Pers. Comms. Marinka Darling, Superintendent, Canada Customs and Judy Ewald, Station Manager US Customs

Tatshenshini-Alesek Park Identification Sign (km 76)

This sign is oriented towards northbound travellers. There is no pullout or particular scenic view at the location selected. However, both north and southbound travellers can catch glimpses of the Jarvis Glacier and Mt. McDonnell, which at 2,594m is the highest mountain that can easily be viewed from the highway.

Conclusion – Sign is responsibility of BC Parks, no action recommended.

Seltat (km 87)

The Seltat site consists of an historic milepost marker and an interpretive plaque. Both southbound advance warning signs are missing, as is the 500m northbound one. The interpretive plaque discusses early travel, maintenance and the use of five checkpoints when the road was first opened to winter travel.

The transition between coastal forest, sub-alpine and alpine landscapes occurs very quickly through this area and Seltat is near the limit of Sitka Spruce. A discussion of the transition between ecoregions could be an added theme at this point.

The site is not maintained in the winter and there are no support facilities such as outhouses or garbage bins. Sections of the old switchback are visible from here and the site is used as a staging area for downhill skiing on the old Haines Road to Rainy Hollow.

²⁰ Pers. Comms. Sam Dion, Highway Maintenance Foreman

²¹ Champagne–Aishihik Band *From Trail to Highway*, Morris Printing Company Ltd., BC (1988), pg 40-42

Conclusion – Current signage is in good condition. Consider adding additional natural history panel dealing with ecoregion boundaries and landscape transitions. Do not add support facilities. Work with Tatshenshini-Alesek Park Management Board who will address the issue of interpretive signage in the future.

Three Guardsmen (km 91)

There is an old mining road on the east side of the highway and trails lead to a bowl with good scenic views.

Conclusion – Given proximity to Chilkat Pass, no development is recommended.

Stonehouse Creek (km 95.8)

For southbound travellers the road descends steeply over the next 10km as it winds its way around the

base of Seltat Peak and by the three Guardsmen Mountain, which provide good picture-taking opportunities.

Conclusion – Given proximity to Chilkat Pass site, no development is recommended.

Chilkat Pass/Haines Summits (km 102-103)

There is no interpretive signage at either location. The pullout with the official summit identification sign is commonly called the “false” summit. It is opened at Easter. The second pullout is maintained year round and may be slightly higher.²⁰ The Chilkat Pass was one of three passes providing access to the interior of the Yukon. The Chilkat Tlingit jealously guarded their historic trading route. Trade and the bonds forged by intermarriage produced a strong relationship between the Tlingit and the Southern Tutchone.²¹



This is the highest point on the highway. There are no facilities. Both sites are difficult to maintain because of the elevation, high winds and amount of snowfall. The maintained site receives significant winter use by snow machine users and skiers.

Sanitation and garbage are a concern in the winter more than during the summer months. Maintenance personnel indicate the parking area is full most spring weekends.²² There has already been discussion with BC Parks regarding possible maintenance solutions. Since the winter is the time of greatest use and the most difficult and expensive time to service such facilities, an innovative solution is needed. One idea discussed included working with the major users to purchase a portable self-contained facility that could be parked onsite during the weekends and towed back to Haines or Haines Junction for disposal at the end of the weekend.

Conclusion – *The level of year-round use of these sites justifies developing an interpretive component at one location focused on outdoor recreation use, the significance of the pass, and the geography visible from this location. The design needs to consider issues such as high winds and snow loads, as well as the challenges of winter maintenance. Consult main user groups to determine a practical solution to maintenance, sanitation and safety concerns and determine which site will have the interpretive signage. Resolve summit elevation issue. Encourage Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board to consider the interpretive potential of this site.*

²² Pers. Comms. Sam Dion, Highway Maintenance Foreman

²³ Champagne–Aishihik Band *From Trail to Highway*, Morris Printing Company Ltd., BC (1988), pg 40

Chuck Creek Road (km 105.6) to Nadahini Creek (km 108)

There is an informal pullout here on the west side of the road at Chuck Creek. It is possible to follow an old mining road about 11.5km into the Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park at this point. The Samuel and Nadahini glaciers and Mt. Nadahini are visible along this stretch of road. The Nadahini Glacier is accessible from Nadahini Creek.

A number of research studies have been done on birds in this area (Mossop and Fuchs) while the Mossop cabin beside the highway is still used as an informal emergency shelter by cyclists and hikers.

The Southern Tutchone treat glaciers with great respect, and in the past observed certain taboos when in their presence. They believed glaciers

were the homes of giant animals that were easily angered by the smell of grease cooking and once annoyed, these animals could trigger ice flows and bad weather.²³

Conclusion – *There are a number of potential interpretive themes possible in this area that could be considered by the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board.*

Mule Creek Airstrip & YTG Maintenance Camp (km 113.5 to 116.7)

There is a historic milepost marker (75) at this point and Highway Maintenance crews have installed an outhouse and garbage can next to the maintenance garage because of past problems with littering and sanitation.



Highway maintenance personnel have found that if you don't place a garbage can close to an outhouse, the garbage ends up in the outhouse creating education problems. One of the issues here is that there is a considerable distance between facilities. The airstrip and maintenance building are prominent features and there are a variety of recreational opportunities located nearby (e.g. Nadahini Glacier, old road to Kelsall Lake).

While there are more scenic locations in the general area, this would be a good location to concentrate facilities and provide a general area orientation. There is sufficient room to develop a site next to, but separate from, the maintenance camp. Although early road maintenance is discussed at Seltat, this would be a good spot to discuss the evolution of trail

to road in more detail focusing more on the challenges of modern day road maintenance. There is also a need in this general area for an emergency shelter particularly for cyclists.

Additional interpretive themes could focus on alpine mammals, the research work of Mossop and Fuchs on bird life and First Nation use of this area.

Conclusion – Encourage BC Parks to work with C&TS Highway Maintenance and Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board to examine the feasibility of developing an area orientation site at this location with support facilities.

Mansfield Creek Rest Area (km 134)

This is an existing rest area that is maintained

seasonally. The Twin Lakes are the headwaters of the Tatshenshini River and there are extensive wetlands in this area. This is one of the few locations where otters have been found, and a variety of birds such as swans can be seen.

E.J. Glave and Jack Dalton first explored this area in 1890 returning the following year to see if pack-horses could make it across the summit. Glave named Stanley Creek after his friend Henry Stanley, the African explorer.

Conclusion – Encourage Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board to consider interpreting alpine birding opportunities along the Haines Highway. The Board might also consider this site for park orientation.

Blanchard River (km 145) to BC/Yukon Border (km 146)

Tàcha.àn-Shahîni

Northbound travellers are met by Welcome to Yukon border signage. The sign is generally in good condition with some cracking of the mountain forms. The site contains a garbage bin and campers advisory sign.

The Tatshenshini-Alsek Park boundary sign greets southbound visitors. There is a need for a regional orientation site in this area to serve traffic headed in both directions. A logical location for such a site would be at the Maintenance camp turn-off. The site would include an orientation to the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park for southbound visitors and the Kluane Game Sanctuary for visitors headed north. The site should also include a common map of the area and information on the availability of services and where backcountry access permits can be obtained. This is also a well-used put in spot for day raft trips to Shäwshe (Dalton Post).



Conclusion – Work with Champagne & Aishihik First Nations, Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board, C&TS and Renewable Resources to develop regional orientation site to serve traffic in both directions. Include bear safety message and story of the ecological transition from the coast to the interior. Retain existing Welcome to Yukon sign as photo opportunity only and relocate garbage bin and camper information to new regional site.

Tatshenshini River Overlook (km 152)

Shāwshe Chù (Dákeyi)

There is a small seasonal existing pullout at this point on the west side of the road where travellers can catch a glimpse of the confluence of the Blanchard and Tatshenshini rivers. This site has been identified as a possible location for a plaque commemorating inclusion of the Tatshenshini River as part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS).

Conclusion – Consider as possible Canadian Heritage River plaque location. Work with BC and Yukon Parks and Champagne & Aishihik First Nations to confirm suitability and sign accordingly. Do not include facilities.

Million Dollar Falls (km 160)

Tāgūyini (Marge Jackson)

There is Government of Yukon campground, interpretive trail and viewing platform overlooking the Million Dollar Falls on the Takhanne River. The campground is located on the south side of the river. A second trail, offering a similar view of the falls from the north side of the river, has been closed for safety reasons. There is also a popular salmon migration viewing spot below the falls.

Conclusion – No additional development is required. Make sure advance warning signage

includes reference to scenic overlook.

Pringle Tower (km 162)

A major rest area has been constructed on the west side of the highway offering commanding views into the St. Elias Mountains and Alsek Range. A variety of glacial features such as cirques and moraines can be observed.

The rest area has been chip sealed and a viewing platform, outhouses and garbage bin installed. Only half of the site is ploughed out in the winter making the viewing deck and outhouses inaccessible.

There are a number of possible stories that could be told at this location, related to First Nation traditional use and occupancy. Neskatahin (The T'at Chù – water inside the rocks) was considered the most important Southern Tutchone settlement and the border between Southern Tutchone and Tlingit people who resided at Nuquakwan 50km downstream. Neskatahin appears on the 1869 Koh-klux map and Glave noted the presence of Shāwshe

when he visited in 1890. Neskatahin was gradually abandoned around 1902 while some buildings still remain at Dalton Post. The Wolf clan owns traps at Village Creek and the Crow clan owns the traps at Klukshu. Management Plans for Shāwshe and the Yukon portion of the Tatshenshini River are being finalized.

Conclusion – Text panels have been prepared in draft form for this site. Work with Champagne & Aishihik First Nations to complete the panels and install them at the site.

Klukshu Wetlands / Swan Lakes (km 172)

L'ukshu – end of the Coho salmon run (Tlingit)

There is a small existing pullout on the west side of highway at this point where Trumpeter Swans can be seen on a small distant lake and in the wetlands below. Grizzly bears frequent this area and follow the Klukshu River both up and downstream from the highway crossing. The area west of the road is within the Klwane Game Sanctuary.



Conclusion – Treat as a minor site. Leave as is or work with Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and Renewable Resources to interpret Trumpeter Swans.

Klukshu Turnoff (km 183)

Łu Ghā– Klukshu “fishing place” (Yukon Language Centre)

There is a historic milepost (118) at this point. The Klukshu River forms the southern boundary of Kluane National Park, and the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations settlement at Klukshu is located just under a kilometer from the highway. The First Nations maintain a store and museum and have erected a series of interpretive panels on salmon fishing methods, grizzly bears, and trade and travel as part of the yearly round. The name Klukshu comes from the Tlingit name Ł’ukshu, which means “end of the Coho salmon run.”

The existing interpretive signs belong to the First Nation and are showing signs of “wear and tear.” Some signs are down and need to be erected again.

Parks Canada has expressed interest in working with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to develop a pre-park orientation site at the turnoff.

Conclusion – The existing First Nation signage adequately interprets the Klukshu area. No additional action is required.

²⁴ Pers. Comms. Brent Liddle, Parks Canada

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Milepost pg. 698

²⁷ Lindsey, C.C. et al., Glaciation and the Physical, Chemical and Biological Limnology of Yukon Lakes. DFO Technical report #966 (1981)

St Elias Lake Trailhead (km 187)

This is the first opportunity for northbound travellers to hike in the national park. The trail winds through sub-alpine meadows, and mountain goats may often be seen on the higher mountain slopes. There are no facilities at the trailhead. This would be a good location to orient northbound travellers to the national park and is within 2km of Gribbles Gulch. The Gribbles Gulch story is a funny one. Apparently Gribbles, while marking the original highway route, reached this creek in flood and concluded a major bridge would be required to bridge the torrent. When construction crews arrived later, the gulch was almost dry and was crossed with a relatively small culvert.²⁴

Conclusion – Treat as a major site and opportunity to partner with Parks Canada to standardize advance-warning signage. Trails into the park are used year-round. Parks Canada could provide park orientation here or at the Klukshu Turnoff.

Dezadeash Lodge (km 193)

One of the original Beloud Post buildings still remains behind the existing lodge, which has been closed for several years. There is an old four-wheel drive mining road here that provides access to Mush Lake. The trailhead is not well marked. In 1896 gold was discovered on Shorty Creek in the Last Chance Mining District. There is the story about the “Mysterious 36” and their gold mining adventures in this area.²⁵

Conclusion – Parks Canada plans to interpret Beloud Post and the Mush/Bates lakes area. Work with Parks to include interpretation on the early mining history of the area and the tale of the “Mysterious 36.”

Dezadeash Lake (km 195)

Titl’at Mǎn – Dezadeash Lake – “head of the lake” (Yukon Native Language Centre)

Daas’ediyaash – (Tlingit)

There is a large existing pullout with no facilities at this point. It is maintained year round. This is a very scenic spot with opportunities to view shorebirds in the spring, discuss the trail links between Dalton Post and Champagne, and a variety of geographic features.

The Dezadeash River is unusual in that it is the only river in this area that, contrary to expectations, drains into the mountains. The name Dezadeash is also thought to refer to the local native fishing methods. Birch bark was stripped from local trees and placed shiny side up in the water near shore. From floating rafts the natives would spear lake trout as they passed over the light area.²⁶ Dezadeash Lake also contains a unique population of Whitefish with a high gill raker count. They have been found in only 4 Yukon lakes (Squanga, Little Squanga, Teenah, and Little Teslin).²⁷

Conclusion – Leave as undeveloped pullout and enhance interpretation at nearby Rock Glacier site.



Rock Glacier Trail (km 202)

This site is maintained by Parks Canada. Visitors are provided with a 0.6km interpretive trail to the Kluane Rock Glacier.²⁸ Interpretive signage, in both French and English, is provided at the beginning of the trail. While the road actually leaves the Shakwak Trench at km 225, it would be possible to expand the interpretive signage here.

The Coast Mountains, of metamorphic origin, the St. Elias Mountains, of sedimentary origin, and the granite Yukon Plateau are all visible from this site. There are no outhouse or garbage bin facilities.

Conclusion – *Treat this panoramic viewpoint as a major site. Work with Parks Canada to expand signage and consider installation of tanked outhouses and garbage bins.*

Kathleen River (km 221)

Mät'atāna Man – something frozen inside the lake (Margaret Workman YLC)

There is no proper pullout at this location. A Welcome to Kluane sign similar to the one at Canyon Creek has been erected and there are several notices to fishers about catch limits. Kathleen River is a popular fishing, canoeing and bird watching spot. It contains a native rainbow trout population and First Nations historically trapped mink, beaver and otter.

There is an opportunity here to improve site management through interagency cooperation. Parks Canada, Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Yukon Renewable Resources and C&TS all have a vested interest in improving the situation at this location. Since the principal concern is protection of the fisheries resource, the lead should come from Renewable Resources.

Conclusion – *Treat as a minor site. Assist Renewable Resources with the interpretive signage component but leave responsibility for coordination of any site improvements and enlisting other agency cooperation to that department.*

UNESCO World Heritage Site (Km 226.5)

Parks Canada developed this site on the west side of the highway and erected a large commemorative brass plaque concerning the United Nations designation of Kluane National Park as a world heritage site. More could be done with this site to recognize the significance of the designation. As a minimum, the site should include a map showing the location and extent of transborder cooperation that makes Kluane National Park part of the world's largest protected area.

There are no facilities at this location.

Conclusion – *Treat as a major site. Work with Parks Canada to expand the interpretive potential of this location. Add consistent advance warning signage.*

Quill Creek Trailhead (Km 233.5)

An official pullout on the west side of the highway marks an old trail along Quill Creek that leads 11km into a steep-sided alpine valley. Quill Creek is a good spot to pick mossberries and the Southern Tutchone still return to sites like these during the berry season. A few old tent frames and a log structure mark an abandoned hunting camp.

Conclusion – *Encourage Parks Canada to add trailhead interpretation component and provide consistent advance warning signage. Improve site access.*



²⁸ http://www.out-there.com/hkg_yt01.htm

Auriol Trailhead (Km 239.1)

Located on the west side of the highway, this 9.2km trail was developed by Parks Canada. There are no facilities at the trailhead parking lot and no interpretation of the trail's attributes at this point. This trail is used year round.

Conclusion – Encourage Parks Canada to add trailhead interpretation component. Provide consistent advance warning signage.

Haines Junction Overlook (km 242)

This pullout is located on the east side of the highway for northbound traffic in a former borrow pit. The site includes a garbage bin and two outhouses but no interpretive signage. There is a good view of the Village of Haines Junction, Paint Mountain and Bear Creek Summit from this point.



Red ochre, such as that found on Paint Mountain, was a valuable trade item used in paints and dyes by most First Nation people in the Yukon.

This would be a good location for a regional orientation site because the traveller can visually appreciate the land use relationships in front of them as they descend to the community. There is a confusing mix of advance warning and commercial signage in this area.

This is one location where creating a regional orientation site would be in everyone's best interests. It would include a map of the community with features such as the highway intersection, VRC and St Elias Convention Centre and Dezadeash River Trail.

Conclusion – Consider using glacial Lake Alsek as a possible interpretive theme but check for story

duplication. Work with C&TS and the Village of Haines Junction to apply a "sign free" zone at, and just past, the approach to the site. Work with C&TS, the Village and local businesses to include an attractive community commercial sign kiosk at the site. Upgrade site landscaping and create a formal interpretive overlook. Work with Village of Haines Junction, Parks Canada and the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations to avoid duplication and create interpretive signage focusing on regional themes. Upgrade advance warning signage.

Dezadeash River Trail (km 245)

Shadhäl Chù (Margaret Workman YLC)

The Dezadeash Trail offers the visitor a 3.5 km interpretive trail, exploring the origins of the 150 million year old Dezadeash Mountains. The pullout and trailhead are about half a kilometer south of the Alaska Highway on the Haines Road next to the bridge. The entrance to this site needs to be better defined. There is a commemorative plaque at the trailhead that dedicates this section of the Alsek River as part of the Canadian Heritage River System. The trail follows the riverbank, through the wetland, and finally into the surrounding forest. A relatively easy walk, visitors may observe a variety of wildlife.

The groomed section of the trail is wheelchair accessible but a rougher trail continues to the old experimental farm site. Adjacent to the parking lot, there are some boxes for nesting swallows.

Conclusion – Encourage the Village of Haines Junction and Parks Canada to improve the site entrance and the appearance of the parking area. The Village and Renewable Resources could work to create signage about swallows and blue bird nesting habits.

3.2 Site Inventory Issue Summary

There needs to be more overall thematic diversity to give the traveller a balanced interpretive picture. A number of the existing vertical wood routed signs are nearing the end of their useful life, providing an opportunity for more creative interpretative panels. With recent signs, there has been more attention to this issue and more interest in including First Nation content. However, certain themes such as the profound changes on First Nation life brought about by construction of the highway are not well told. The opportunity to collect stories about these impacts is quickly disappearing as First Nation elders and people associated with the highway construction die. The highways pass through the traditional territories of Five Yukon First Nations. The land claims story has yet to be featured directly as an interpretive story.

Although the interpretive signage is generally erected within the road right-of-way, it is worth noting that, under existing and proposed land claim settlement legislation, First Nations must be formally consulted on matters such as signage that involve interpretation of their heritage. In effect this requirement makes explicit what has become common practice at both the corridor plan development stage and in designing specific interpretive panels.

A greater effort should be placed on naming culturally significant landmarks. There are several benefits to doing so. For one, applying First Nations names appeals to visitors, particularly those from overseas. For another, more use of these names demonstrates respect for the language and culture and reinforces aboriginal culture.

There is still room for improvements in agency coordination. While YTG departments have worked together to implement corridor sign plans, there is a need to recognize the opportunity to integrate

these efforts with the efforts of neighbouring agencies such as Parks Canada, and governments such as British Columbia and Alaska. The successful Yukon/Alaska border exhibit on the Alaska Highway (km 1965) is a good example of what can be done with intergovernmental cooperation. The need for a more coordinated approach is most evident at the community level in Beaver Creek, Haines Junction and Whitehorse. Both Haines Junction and Beaver Creek have erected interpretive signage using programs such as the Community Development Fund and funds available for the 1998 centennial.

There are policy differences between agencies in the provision of support facilities such as garbage bins and outhouses. The policy in the Yukon is to provide such facilities every 80km and as needed, while Parks Canada and BC Parks have taken the position that such facilities are not needed as justifiable investment because of the ongoing maintenance costs. Inspection of the existing signage and support facilities show costs will continue to rise. These costs include replacement of damaged sign panels, outhouse education and garbage removal, viewing deck repairs, winter site ploughing, and regular maintenance.



3.2.1 Alaska Highway West Summary

As was found with the *Alaska Highway East Interpretive Plan*, construction of the Alaska Highway continues as the dominant theme mainly because of the signage initiatives undertaken to support the 50th Anniversary in 1992. NWHs site identification signs now appear redundant or irrelevant. These plywood signs also show the most wear and tear. They have limited interpretive value and need not be replaced.

The main issues noted from the site inspection, relate to site planning, sign placement, maintenance and eventual refurbishment. For example, in Haines Junction the small park area around the “Muffin” needs to be rethought to make more effective use of the space and improve access. There are also conflicting sign initiatives with four “Kluane Country” signs, a motto not universally accepted throughout the region.

The newer signs have been erected near Champagne and at the BC/Yukon border while the older versions are located at Kluane Lake and Canyon Creek.

The situation in Whitehorse is a bit different. The existing rest area is well located for southbound traffic entering the city but the site has not been developed to the same degree as the city site at the top of Robert Service Way. For north and westbound traffic the site is not very effective and this is reflected in the mix of official directional signage and signage erected by commercial businesses and other agencies. The result is visual confusion and confirms the need for a regional orientation site to serve north and westbound travellers.

Other locations where improvements to regional orientation signage are required include the Kusawa Lake and Aishihik roads, and Haines Junction. The present Haines Junction site, by the “Muffin,” does not work very well for this purpose. First, the inter-

section layout tends to draw the westbound traveller naturally towards the Haines Road even though the majority of Alaska bound travellers need to turn north. While the “Muffin” certainly stands out, site access is not easy to find. It makes sense to leave the existing program signage at this location as it complements the community panels. However the regional orientation function should be relocated.

Better coordination is also important if the program is to take advantage of opportunities to create new sites or improve existing ones during highway reconstruction. Areas of major concern include the Champagne bypass and the area around Kluane Lake between the Slims River and Destruction Bay.

Location and spacing distance between sites is a major consideration. As with the *Alaska Highway East Interpretive Plan*, a spacing distance of every

80km for major sites, and about every 50km for minor interpretive sites is the target. Very few travellers stop at every site. In some situations less is actually more because each traveller has a natural saturation point. The challenge lies in finding the right balance.

There are 7 major existing sites in the program along the Alaska Highway between Whitehorse and the Alaska border. They are: Takhini Burn, Canyon Creek Bridge, Kluane Lake, Kluane River, Icefield Ranges and Alaska Border Exhibit. No major work is needed at 3 of the sites. The Kluane Lake site will have an expanded parking area as a result of road reconstruction. Integration of the Soldiers Summit Trail and the pullout overlooking Kluane Lake should be given careful consideration in road reconstruction plans for the Slims River and Kluane Lake section.



In considering major sites, it is important to add in sites developed by others to determine whether additional sites are needed. For example, the Spruce Beetle Trail and Pickhandle Lakes sites are major sites by virtue of their location and purpose. Similarly, Parks Canada's Sheep Mountain VRC and the Kluane Museum of Natural History function the same way because of their location next to the highway.

Multiple interpretive themes can be presented effectively at a major site provided they are related and the links logical. In some cases as will be discussed later, efforts to make the new signs more interesting have resulted in individual signs that try to cover too many topics, when multiple panels would have been more effective.

Five of the 20 signs are wood routed signs nearing the end of their useful life. These signs include: Takhini Crossing, Mendenhall Landing, Canyon Creek Bridge, Kluane Lake/Soldiers Summit. A new sign for the Canyon Creek Bridge is currently being developed.

More can be done with many of the existing sites. For example, in the case of Takhini Crossing, it is a question of recognizing another prominent feature (e.g. Lookout Mountain) and telling the First Nation story. At other sites such as Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing and Beaver Creek the issue is as much site integration as sign content. For example, in Destruction Bay the highway commemorative signage is not readily apparent or linked to the large interpretive exhibit less than 30m away behind a clump of trees.

While the sign at Mendenhall Landing is considered to be part of this corridor, it is really a program anomaly because it is located on a secondary road that requires the traveller to make a conscious detour decision. This does not mean the sign does not have program relevance. Mendenhall Landing was on Kluane Lake Wagon Road and the new highway follows much of that original alignment. Looking to the future, Kusawa Lake may be developed as a territorial park and this will draw more travellers from the main highway. At that point it would be worth re-examining what more could be done with this site in that context.

Champagne will be bypassed with a highway realignment. The NWHS sign at Champagne should be removed at the end of its useful life. The site has a photogenic backdrop of old buildings and this is one of the few places where the dramatic impact of new road construction is still visible. The road to Champagne will no longer be a through road, however, and new signage will be installed at a new site on the bypass. The new panels would interpret the trade and gold rush routes through that area, and could include photographs and maps on how the trails evolved into wagon road and then the Alaska Highway.

Signage referring to "Kluane Country" have been erected at various locations throughout the region and used in two instances on interpretive signs at Kluane Lake Overlook and Kluane River, coinciding with the perceived boundary of the Kluane Lake area by the Kluane First Nation. "Kluane Country" was developed as a marketing slogan to be applied to the entire region but this definition is not universally accepted. From an interpretive perspective, the term is artificial and does not facilitate visitor understanding of the natural and cultural history of the region. For this reason it should be avoided in future.



3.2.2 Haines Road Site Issue Summary

The Haines Road has no interpretive signage except for panels discussing road construction in Haines Junction and Seltat that were erected for the 50th anniversary in 1992. Both Parks Canada and Champagne & Aishihik First Nations have some signage while BC Parks has only erected boundary identification signage pending completion of a Park Management Plan and input from Champagne & Aishihik First Nations.

The Seltat site discusses Early Travel and Maintenance, and the checkpoints that were established along the Road for winter travellers. There is also a panel at the “Muffin” in Haines Junction that talks about construction of the road and pipeline.

Both Parks Canada and the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations provide some interpretive opportunities but the potential of this road has not been developed. The *2000 Kluane Region Tourism Plan* confirms the interpretive potential of this road and notes that a modest investment by the respective jurisdictions to publicize the driving experience is warranted. Interpretive signing has a key role to play.

Both the Village of Haines Junction and Haines, Alaska have come to see the possibilities for low impact tourism development that could link the two communities. Events like the Chilkat Bike Race and joint efforts to promote a “Circle Tour” show what can be done. Within the Yukon, coordination with Parks Canada is important to avoid duplication

and enhance existing interpretive opportunities. In the British Columbia section, coordination with CAFN and BC Parks is particularly important since Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park borders the highway to the west. BC Parks advises that there are no specific plans for interpretation along the highway pending discussions with the First Nations and completion of the park management plan. Thus, references to sites in this document should be considered “preliminary ideas.”

There are also particular problems associated with development of signage in the BC section that affect both site construction and maintenance especially in the winter. These include maintenance travel distances, snowfall levels and safety considerations.

Key partners are Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and Chilkat First Nation as the highway crosses their traditional territories. The current road follows portions of what is often called the Dalton Trail but is actually part of the traditional Chilkat “Grease Trail” into the interior that ties into the network of Southern Tutchone trails.

There are a variety of thematic opportunities relating to natural history, geography, traditional use and occupancy, and fish and wildlife along the BC/Yukon stretch of road.



3.3 Existing Sign Text & Comments

The message content of the existing Tourism Department signs has been analyzed. The analysis looks for shortcomings, redundancies and opportunities to present the particular sign themes more effectively. The actual text is presented in the left hand column while the right column contains notes on text

deficiencies and suggested improvements to improve thematic representation. As there are only 2 signs that relate to the Haines Road and they were both erected as part of the 1992 commemoration program, the Haines Road has not been separated out.

Only those signs that have interpretive content are discussed. The primary focus is on signage that

was erected as part of the Yukon Tourism Sign Program. Signs erected under the Renewable Resources Wildlife Viewing program are included where they have been installed at the same site or in the case of Pickhandle Lakes and Takhini Burn, the separate Wildlife Viewing program initiative meets an existing corridor need.

EXISTING SIGN TEXT

3.3.1 Alaska Highway West

Takhini Crossing (km 1507)

Theme: Historic-Settlement.

Erected: 1994

Sign #1 – TAKHINI CROSSING (YUKON TOURISM)

At the turn of the century the Yukon River provided the primary route north to the Klondike gold fields. While there was regular boat service during the summer months, winter travel on the river ice was unpredictable and often dangerous. In 1902 a winter road, known as the Overland Trail, was built to connect Dawson City with the terminus of the White Pass & Yukon Route railroad at Whitehorse. A small settlement with a Northwest Mounted Police post and roadhouse was built here, where the trail crossed the Takhini River. Both the police post and roadhouse closed in 1907.

Takhini Burn (Km 1541)

Themes: Natural History/Recreation/Wildlife

Year installed: 1993

Sign #1 – TAKHINI VALLEY (YUKON TOURISM)

Welcome to the Takhini valley, a region that has much to offer travellers. From large urban centres like Whitehorse to the pristine wilderness of Kluane Lake and the Takhini River itself, this is a popular and accessible recreation area. Enjoy yourself and, when you are near communities, tune into CKYN Visitor radio 96.1 on the FM dial.

COMMENT

- This wood routed sign with its upper case text can be read in about 30 seconds. While the content is accurate, most viewers would find it difficult to see what is being referred to since it is not readily visible from the sign location. A map should be added when sign is redone.
- This sign's main focus is a map of the area. Both the map and text are out of date. The text infers the Takhini Valley stretches from Whitehorse to Kluane Lake and also that visitor radio still exists. The theme of this panel is recreation and it needs to be reviewed in context with its sister panel. When this sign is redone, the map should be updated and text redone. The purpose of the panel should also be rethought. Drop reference to visitor radio.

Sign #2 - THE TAKHINI RIVER VALLEY (YUKON TOURISM)

This valley represents an area in transition. Here, the rugged coastal mountain range to the south gives way to the uplands of the central Yukon Plateau. Watersheds divide between the Alsek River which drains directly to the Pacific, and the Takhini which flows into the Yukon River and heads 2,000 miles north to the Bering Sea.

The region was also transitional in the movement of people and trade goods between the coast and interior. Coastal natives developed trails from locations such as present day Haines, Alaska through the Chilkat Pass and into this area to trade with interior natives. These trade routes were jealously guarded from European traders until the late 1800's.

When Jack Dalton developed the trail that bore his name in 1894, he followed the native trade routes from the coast, turning north at Champagne for Dawson City.

Today, the Takhini River and Kusawa Lake are among the most popular of wilderness recreation areas for Yukoners. Along the 24km (15 mile) access road to Kusawa Lake, travellers can view and experience the transition from uplands to the coastal range, with views of the river, lake and mountains from the high banks of the Takhini River.

The river is a favourite with paddlers. It offers the excitement of class 1 & 2 riffles for beginners in the first few kilometers, up to class 3 rapids affectionately known as the "jaws of death" (easily portaged on the east side) nearer the confluence of the Mendenhall. River travellers put in at the Kusawa Lake campground or make a steep hike down the bank at the beginning of the river. A beautiful half-day trip can be made from here to the Takhini River Campground. A full day will take trippers to the Mendenhall River, where the Takhini meets the access road.

The river has much to offer: clear clean water early in the season, good grayling fishing especially in May and June, spawning salmon in August and September, and sheep viewing on the surrounding mountains.

Kusawa Lake offers good camping, spectacular views, clean sandy beaches and good lake trout fishing, especially early and late in the season. Boaters must use great caution on this lake as it is subject to sudden, intense winds sweeping through the interconnecting valleys.

The scenic Takhini River, with its relatively easy water between Kusawa Lake and the Alaska Highway is ideally suited for one-day trips. Kusawa Lake is popular with many Yukoners for providing easy access to the wilderness. Good fishing, sandy beaches, clean water and mountain scenery await travellers at Kusawa Lake.

- For an interpretive panel, the text is far too long and muddled. This sign tries to cover too many themes and subjects. It violates basic rules of interpretive presentation for signage in terms of text length, focus and presentation. The difficulties stem from the panel's mixed purpose, as it is only partly an interpretive panel. For the most part, it functions as a "lure" piece, promoting the region as a recreational destination for travellers. The "sales pitch," as found in the last three paragraphs, is out of keeping with other interpretive panels in the overall program. This approach may have negative ramifications for certain travellers, especially those who have become jaded by inflated promotional claims.

Sign #3 – FIRE (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

This burn area north of the Takhini River is evidence of one of almost a hundred fires that swept through the Yukon in 1958. A total of 6 300 square kilometers (2 500 square miles) of forest was burnt. Regrowth in the Yukon is always slow, but this area is taking an exceptionally long time to grow back. The forest is only now showing signs of slow regeneration. Scientists still debate whether the dry climate of the valley and the intense heat of the fire are enough to explain this slow recovery. In warmer southern regions you would be observing a new forest here by now instead of this aspen parkland.

Often presumed to be a destructive force, fire is in fact essential to the continued life of the forest. All Yukon forests have burned at one time or another. Seedlings spring up soon after a fire because trees no longer block sunlight and charred members release nitrogen. Before long, wildlife that depends on fresh green shoots or leaves moves into these fire-scarred areas. Elk, moose, mule deer and snowshoe hare can all be seen in this open valley.

Sign #4 – ELK AND DEER (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Elk and mule deer are both relatively new to the Yukon. Elk were introduced in the early 1950s and moved to this area shortly after it burned. Mule deer also became more abundant following the 1958 fire. Meadows and light snowfall make this valley ideal habitat for both these animals.

Elk and deer are difficult to see during the summer when they browse on the succulent leaves of young willows and aspen between here and the Takhini River. The best chance to view them is early morning or evening when they are feeding or moving between sites.

During the rest of the year the animals can often be seen on open south-facing slopes, like those to the north. Because less snow accumulates on these slopes, forage is easily available all winter, even during the coldest months. For the same reason, "green-up" is earlier in the spring. Both elk and deer are hungry for this fresh growth after months of dry winter forage.

- This is the only sign that refers to the name of the site. The first paragraph is not entirely correct since this fire was manmade and that is the more interesting story from an interpretive perspective. Similarly, it leaves the reader wondering why scientists don't know why regeneration is taking so long – since few signs of the fire are still evident. What is more relevant today, and in the future, is the story of land use conversion. In effect this panel as written has become redundant. It would make sense to rename the site Takhini Valley and drop or revise the fire panel text when these signs are replaced.
- There is no mention that elk are often seen along the highway near this site and are still a protected species. Mule deer are still not common in the Yukon and it is not clear if they really were around before the 1958 fire. Bison are also an introduced species with the LaPrairie Game Farm visible nearby. However, reference to a specific operation should be used with care as a change in operation can make a sign quickly out of date. Review mule deer information and consider whether to focus on species reintroduction as the focus to make information more interesting.
- The story of the importance of snow patches to caribou could be added to this panel instead of referring to mule deer since there are other Yukon locations where they are more easily seen (e.g. near Ross River)

Sign #5 – CHANGING LANDSCAPE (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

You are looking over the valley of the Takhini River. An immense body of water, known as Glacial Lake Champagne, once submerged this valley. The lake formed at the end of the last ice age, about 12 500 years ago. As it drained, several thousand years later, it left a series of shorelines on the sides of the valley. You can see an example of one about halfway up the broad mountain on the south side of the valley.

After the lake retreated 7 000 – 10 000 years ago, the fertile valley floor developed into a vast grassland. Archaeological sites throughout this valley testify to the variety of grassland animal species that this environment supported. Large herds of bison moved into the area and were hunted by early human inhabitants. Trees slowly encroached as the climate warmed and forest-dwelling animals replaced the grassland species.

Sign #6 – VALLEY BIRDS (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

A variety of birds live in this aspen parkland. Some, like the mountain bluebird and upland sandpiper, are summer visitors.

The brilliant male bluebird is unmistakable. Watch for him hovering between aspen branches waiting for insects. The upland sandpiper often perches on the tops of stumps or trees. Look for its long neck, small head and prominent dark eyes.

Other birds, like the black-billed magpie, northern hawk owl and golden eagle, winter in the Yukon. The magpie is readily identified by its black and white markings and its long tail. The northern hawk owl is a day-hunting species and is attracted to burn sites. It perches on fire-killed trees, swooping down on small mammals with rapid wing beats. Look for eagles high in the sky.

The common raven is probably the most conspicuous Yukon bird. Watch for it wheeling and tumbling through the air with acrobatic finesse. Ravens produce a startling range of expressive calls and are extremely intelligent. The raven figures prominently in native legends in the role of creator, transformer, and trickster.

Mendenhall Landing (Km 1543)

Theme: Transportation, Year installed: 1983

Sign #1 – MENDENHALL LANDING (YUKON TOURISM)

In the early 1900s Mendenhall Landing was a transfer point on the Whitehorse-Kluane Wagon Road. Freight was transported from Whitehorse down the Yukon River to its confluence with the Takhini River. The boats then traveled up the Takhini to this site and transferred their freight to wagons. The wagon road originally serviced mining in the Kluane district and was eventually replaced by the Alaska Highway.

- This is an appropriate topic for this site. More careful editing and use of graphics to direct the eye towards the shoreline feature described in the text could improve the presentation.

- Again there is too much text and it is not clear what the primary message the writer wants to communicate to the reader is. If the focus is identification, then sketches or pictures of the birds referred to would make sense.

- If the existing wood-routed sign is replaced with an interpretive panel, the new sign should consider including a map showing the Wagon Road route and a picture of the landing area since there are no physical remains visible.

Champagne (km 1568.5)

Theme: First History, Year Erected: 1992

Sign #1 - SHADHALA-RA*/CHAMPAGNE (YUKON TOURISM)

When American army soldiers pushed the "pioneer road" for the Alaska Highway through the village of Champagne in 1942, they were crossing ground that had been occupied for over five thousand years. The indigenous population had seen enormous changes over the millennia. These included minor ice ages, the forming and draining of huge lakes, and the return of the forests. The highway was to cause another change.

Champagne had long been an important meeting and trading place for Yukon and Alaskan Indians. Coastal and Interior Tlingit and Tutchone came here from as far away as Neskatahin, Klukshu, and Klukwan to the south, and Hutshi, Aishihik, and Kloo Lake to the north. The first Euro-American trading post was established here in 1902.

In that same year, a wagon road was built from Whitehorse to Kluane, following an Indian trading trail. The trip to Whitehorse, for mail and supplies, took up to a week due to the mud holes and river crossings. The army pioneer road, in turn, followed the wagon road.

When the highway was being built, the soldiers set up camp among the buildings of the village. The settlement experienced an economic boom. The army purchased many supplies from the local store. All the able-bodied men in Champagne worked on the highway or in Whitehorse. Some men guided the road surveyors and handled their horses.

This time of fortune had its darker side. The illnesses that came north with the soldiers devastated the Indian population and almost wiped out Champagne entirely. In one family of twelve, only three members survived the epidemic.

After the war, most of the young people left to work in highway camps and larger centres. Despite the attractions of these other places, however, a few families stayed on to keep the ancient community alive.

Canyon Creek Bridge (km 1604)

Theme: Historic – Settlement Year Installed: 1988.

Sign #1 - CANYON CREEK BRIDGE (YUKON TOURISM)

In 1904, a year after the Kluane gold strike, roadhouse keepers Gilbert Skelly and Sam McGee built a log bridge across the Aishihik River or Canyon Creek as it was then known. It became an important link on the wagon road connecting Whitehorse and Silver City. During construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942, the bridge was rebuilt by the 18th Engineers regiment of the American Army only to be abandoned when the road was re-routed the next year. The Yukon Government reconstructed this bridge in 1987.

- This panel was erected for the 1992 Alaska Highway Anniversary and reflects that focus. When it is replaced, an explanation of the First Nation name would be appropriate, as would a map showing the travel trade routes and places referred to in the text. The last sentence in the second paragraph is not quite correct as it could be taken to imply that Champagne was the site of the first Euro-American trading post in the larger area referred to.
- This is one of the few locations where you can visibly see how the highway came through the community. This should be interpreted.
- This sign is due to be replaced shortly. The attraction here is the history of the log bridge so the sign needs to explain why the bridge is a significant feature and not just when it was constructed. The connection to Sam McGee is also relevant because of the Robert Service poem. Archaeologists have traced First Nation use of a site near this spot back as far as 7,000 years to the Little Arm culture. This is one of the oldest sites discovered in the Yukon to date and the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations may be interested in seeing this theme discussed as well. This is the site chosen for Bison interpretation.

Haines Junction (Km 1635)

Transportation - Haines Road Construction & Regional Orientation

Year erected: 1992

Sign #1 – THE HAINES ROAD (YUKON TOURISM)

The Haines Road is a 160-mile (257km) link connecting the Alaska Highway at Haines Junction with the seaport of Haines, Alaska. Today the road is well known as a scenic attraction and, with the coastal ferries, forms a major route to mainland Alaska.

In 1942, when enemy invasion seemed imminent, the road was planned as a key element in the defense of coastal Alaska. A road link between the panhandle and the Alaska Highway would provide an additional supply line and a back-up route should the railway between Skagway and Whitehorse be blocked. It was even thought that it could be used to evacuate mainland Alaska in the event of an invasion.

This route was a traditional travel and trade corridor of the Chilkat people, members of the coastal Tlingits. From the ancient village of Klukwan, they travelled inland to trade with the Athapaskan Indians. In the early 1890s, Jack Dalton established a wagon road along much of this trail. A few years later, he charged a toll to goldseekers taking this route to the Klondike goldfields.

Fittingly, when the U.S. Public Roads Administration reconnoitered and surveyed the route for the highway, they relied heavily on the advice and expertise of local Indians, particularly the guides Parton Kane and Dick Fraser. Each of these men led a horseback party south through the Chilkat Pass.

The contractors Foley Brothers Inc. and Rohl Connelly Company Engineers, at a cost of \$13,000,000, built the Haines Military Cut-off in 1943. Although the road saw limited wartime use, it became an important part of the post-war northern highway system.

- This sign provides a meaningful connection between trail, road and the role First Nation people played in route selection and construction. When the sign is replaced, the general term “Athapaskan” Indians should be replaced with a specific First Nation name to be consistent with other current signage.
- This sign fits well with the other site signage erected by the Village of Haines Junction. The community as we know it today, did not exist before the war. Any future text changes need to consider this sign’s relationship to the other signage clustered around it to avoid duplication.
- This site would work better as a regional orientation site if replacement of all panels was coordinated and done at the same time. While the panels are in good condition, thought should be given to reworking the site layout and updating the signage in cooperation with the village of Haines Junction and the CAFN.

Sign #2 – REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS (VILLAGE OF HAINES JUNCTION)

1. Kathleen Lake Campground and Day-Use Area

One of the world's most beautiful lakes, Kathleen's turquoise waters are surrounded by the majestic St. Elias Mountains. Kluane National Park's campground, hiking trail, picnic shelter, day-use area and boat launch provide excellent recreation opportunities. Fish species include lake trout, Arctic grayling, rainbow trout, and kokanee, a unique species of freshwater salmon.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 20 minutes.

2. Rock Glacier Self-Guided Trail

Kluane National Park offers a unique experience to discover a glacier of rock. A short interpretive trail explains this unusual landform feature of rock and ice

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 45 minutes.

3. Dezadeash Lake

Dezadeash Lake is located in the Shakwak Valley and provides excellent sport fishing opportunities. On the lake's western flank rise the spectacular peaks of the Dalton range. Campground facilities as well as boat launch are available.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 40 minutes.

4. Klukshu

Nestled on the shore of Klukshu Creak is an Indian settlement whose origins date back hundreds of years. This Southern Tutchone fishing village is a seasonal camp used during the annual salmon migration. It offers a fascinating look at traditional native lifestyles.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 50 minutes.

5. Million Dollar Falls Recreation Area

The picturesque Takhanne River tumbles 100 feet into a gorge forming Million Dollar Falls. A campground, playground and hiking trail offer a chance for travelers to relax and enjoy the spectacular views of the St. Elias Mountains.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 70 minutes.

6. Otter Falls/Aishihik Lake

Once pictured on the Canadian five-dollar bill, Otter Falls and Aishihik Lake are peaceful hideaways. Whether you want to fish or simply rest and relax, this is the place for you!

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 55 minutes.

- This regional panel provides the visitor with travel distances to attractions near Haines Junction. However, a text-based presentation has limitations in its appeal to the traveller and needs the accompanying map panel to be effective.

7. Pine Lake Recreation Area

The Yukon Government provides an excellent campground facility on the shores of Pine Lake. Campsites for recreational vehicles, tents, group camps, a playground, and the areas only sand beach awaits the highway traveller. Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 5 Minutes.

8. Silver City (Kluane)

Silver City was the operational centre for miners during the Kluane Gold Rush of 1904-06. A series of abandoned sod-roof log-buildings echo of by-gone days when gold fever swept the Kluane region.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 45 minutes.

9. Sheep Mountain

Kluane National Park provides an interpretive centre of the area's flora and fauna, as well as an excellent opportunity to see Dall Sheep in their natural environment.

Approximate travel time from Haines Junction: 55 minutes.

10. Kluane National Park Reserve

Kluane National Park Reserve is located in the southwest corner of the Yukon and covers a total area of approximately 22000 square kilometers. Kluane contains Canada's highest mountain peaks as well as the world's largest Icefields outside of the Polar Regions. Camping, hiking, boating, fishing, and mountain climbing are some of the recreational opportunities awaiting visitors to Kluane. For further information contact the Visitor Centre in Haines Junction.

Sign #3 – THE HISTORY OF HAINES JUNCTION, A TOWN BEGINS TO GROW (VILLAGE OF HAINES JUNCTION)

Kluane-Whitehorse Wagon Road, 1906

The Kluane Gold Rush of 1904-06 sparked a flood of 1200 miners to the area. A primitive Wagon Road was soon constructed to provide a link for supplies and services from Kluane to Whitehorse. Given good traveling conditions, the 145-mile trip took 3-6 days of arduous toil.

“Exchanging Wheels,” 1920

The advent of the automobile brought Kluane into the twentieth century. Early travelers bounced their way across makeshift bridges and corduroy roads to Bear Creek Roadhouse, where goods were transferred from automobile to horse and wagon for the last part of the journey to Kluane Lake. The Wagon Road was the only access to the area until 1941.

- This sign talks more about the area's history than the community. For example there is no mention of when the community was actually established. When read in the context of the adjacent panels, the text is still effective, however. Surprisingly, there is no mention of the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations yet they represent almost half of the community's population.

The Alaska Highway, 1942

The threat of an attack by the Japanese during World War II convinced Canada and the United States to construct the Alaska Highway or “Alcan” route, winding its way from Dawson Creek, BC to Fairbanks, Alaska, the 1520 mile road was constructed in an amazing eight months.

Almost overnight, the Yukon became permanently linked to the outside world. In later years, a pipeline was constructed from Haines, Alaska, across the Yukon to Fairbanks, to provide an oil supply line to the highway construction camps.

Mile “Ten-Sixteen”

One thousand and sixteen miles north of mile 0 Alaska Highway, a branch road was constructed to Haines, Alaska in 1941. The junction to Haines logically became known as Haines Junction or simply as mile 1016.

In the years that followed, services and facilities grew to serve the traveler bound “North to Alaska.” Eventually, tourism became an important part of the economy overseen by a “Local Improvement District,” which later evolved into a village council, with an elected mayor.

Haines Junction is developing into a destination point for many travelers thanks to the wide range of rest and relaxation activities available in the area.

Bear Creek Roadhouse

Bear Creek Roadhouse was established in 1904 to serve gold miners traveling on the Kluane-Whitehorse Wagon Road. In the early 1940s the property was purchased by an energetic woman named Dorothy Mackintosh, who built a new café from the logs of the original roadhouse. The business served the first adventurous travelers of the Alaska Highway.

Mile 1019 Agricultural Experimental Farm

Shortly after the construction of the Alaska Highway, the federal Department of Agriculture decided to establish an Experimental Farm at Mile 1019 where cereal grains, vegetables and ornamental plants could be grown. In 1965, as part of a proposed method of streamlining northern agricultural research, the Experimental Farm was re-classified as a substation of the agricultural facility at Beaver lodge. The Experimental Farm ended all operations in 1970.

Sign #4 & #5 – MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL ATTRACTIONS (VILLAGE OF HAINES JUNCTION)

1. Our Lady of the Way

This unique Catholic Church is a converted “Quonset” hut built during the 1940s. It is a classic example of making use of available materials, as necessity was often the mother of invention during the construction of the Alaska Highway.

2. Kluane National Park Visitor Reception Centre

Kluane National Park Reserve was established in 1972 and in 1979 this modern facility was opened to serve park visitors. The Visitor Reception Centre operates year round and provides information, exhibits, displays and a multi-image slide show of the park.

3. Haines Junction Recreation Complex

Haines Junction boasts a recreation complex equal to much larger communities. An indoor swimming pool, curling rink, hockey arena, community centre, baseball park, tennis court, and children’s playground are some of the facilities available to residents and visitors alike.

4. Dezadeash River Trail

Beneath the Aurial Range winds a leisurely one-hour loop trail offering visitors the opportunity to relax and enjoy the natural beauty of Kluane. The trail skirts the Dezadeash River, the park’s largest non-glacial river. It is excellent wetland habitat for waterfowl, muskrat, moose, and other wildlife species.

5. Canadian Heritage Rivers Plaque

Beside the Village of Haines Junction flows the Dezadeash River, a tributary to the Lower Alsek, a Canadian Heritage River of national significance. The Alsek River is an outstanding example of a wide, glacially fed river whose banks abound with rare plants and animals communities.

Kluane Lake (Km 1692)

Theme: Regional Orientation/First Nation & Recent History, Year installed: 1992

Sign #1 – KLUANE LAKE

Along the shore of this crystalline blue lake you can find subtle evidence of the recent and dramatic changes that glaciers have wrought on the local landscape. One of the most interesting effects was a complete reversal in the water flow of Kluane Lake itself.

This happened between 300 and 400 years ago when the Kaskawulsh Glacier advanced across the Slims River and closed the drainage outlet of Kluane Lake.

The water level rose more than ten metres (30 feet) and, at its new height, the lake’s drainage reversed.

- These two signs work together. The regional attractions map separates the Haines Road and Alaska Highway attractions. When the municipal attractions map is updated reference should be made to the new convention centre. Collectively, these three Village of Haines Junction panels provide a good overview of the community and region and complement the existing Yukon Tourism signage.

- This is an effective panel because it tells a complete story. The text could be shorter. Reference to former estuaries being visible above Christmas Creek and former beaches could be handled by a photograph that would give the reader a better idea of what to watch for.

Water that had flowed south to the Gulf of Alaska carved out a new channel at the northeast end of the lake to connect with the Yukon River system. Instead of travelling 225 kilometers (140 miles) south to the Pacific Ocean, Kluane Lake waters began a journey ten times longer: north to the Bering Sea.

When the waters receded to their present level, the lake's drainage had been permanently altered. The highway crosses what is left of the Slims River at the south end of the lake.

Looking across the lake from the highway, beaches from the former lake levels can be seen on grassy slopes up to 13 metres (40 feet) above the present shoreline. Former creek estuaries are also visible above Christmas Creek (km1688).

The map shows the drainage patterns of Kluane Lake presently flowing north through the Kluane and White rivers and previously flowing south through the Slims River, joining the Alsek River and emptying into the Gulf of Alaska.

Sign #2 – INDIAN HISTORY

Southern Tutchone people of the Kluane (big fish) Lake area, who belonged to the wolf and raven clans, have hunted, fished, trapped and gathered plants and berries in this region for countless years. Their traditional territory covered a huge geographical area, extending west into what is now Alaska.

Tutchone people travelled almost continually in a seasonal round, searching for a variety of fish and game such as salmon, trout, whitefish, caribou, sheep, ground squirrel and rabbit.

When food was plentiful, some of it was dried and stored in caches for winter. Animal skins were tanned for clothing, tents, "gopher skin" blankets and even boats. Elaborate feasts known as potlatches were held to commemorate good hunting and other special occasions, such as marriages, naming ceremonies and funerals.

Generally these people hunted and fished in small groups of two to four households. Many households gathered together during the short and very cold days of late November and December. The warm sun of early summer cleared the snow and ice from land and waterways. It was a time for visiting, feasting and trading.

Long before trading posts were established on the lake, the Tutchone people traded with their neighbours to the south, the Tlingit Indians. Goods such as skins, and sheep horn for making spoons, were traded for eulachon oil and other coastal items. Later, the Tutchone traded for Russian and American goods.

The building of the Alaska Highway in 1942-43 changed Tutchone lives dramatically. The completion of the highway meant a more community- based life. People moved from smaller seasonal communities such as Kloo (fish) Lake to more established settlements like Burwash or highway communities like Haines Junction. Traditional activities continue to play an important role in local Tutchone culture.

- The question of whether Kluane Lake ever reversed its flow as suggested by Bostock is now being questioned by more recent research completed by Johnson. Given the different findings it would be prudent to re-write the panels.

- “Indian” should be changed to “First Nation” when panel is redone.
- This site is also near the accepted traditional boundary between two southern Tutchone First Nations (Kluane, Champagne & Aishihik) so it may be timely to revisit this panel’s focus.
- Many of the points made in this panel are covered elsewhere such as Southern Tutchone trade with the Tlingit.
- Use of more than one photograph would also help make the panel more visually interesting and provide better balance.
- Obsidian and copper were important trade items from the interior and should be mentioned with skins and sheep horn.

Sign #3 – RECENT HISTORY (YUKON TOURISM)

The Kluane Lake area was the site of a short-lived gold rush in the early 1900s. Tagish Charlie, one of the discoverers of gold in the Klondike, staked the first claim on 4th of July Creek in the summer of 1903. By the end of that year 2,000 claims had been staked in the Kluane region.

The North West Mounted Police (NWMP) followed closely behind the prospectors, setting up summer detachments in canvas tents on Ruby Creek, Bullion Creek and Pine Creek in 1904. A permanent detachment was established at the outlet of Silver Creek where a small community, called Kluane or Silver City had sprung up. The NWMP barracks, a district mining office and a post office were among the buildings in the new community.

The Southern Tutchone Indian people, who were constant travellers, had a network of trails throughout the area. When roads began to be developed in the territory, these trails often provided the route to follow.

Silver City was the terminus of a trail between Whitehorse and Kluane Lake. The trail was upgraded to a wagon road in 1904 to serve area miners.

The first optimism about rich findings was deflated by low returns. By 1914, less than \$40,000 of gold had been taken from the creeks, while one hydraulic mining company alone had spent more than \$300,000 on buildings and equipment in hopes of striking it rich. Louis Jacquot is believed to have taken the largest single consignment of gold from the Burwash area: 220 ounces then valued at about \$4,000.

Jacquot had established a trading post in 1904 at Jacquot's (Burwash) Landing with his brother Eugene. Freight for the post, near the north end of the lake, was brought from Whitehorse by road as far as Silver City and then taken down Kluane Lake to Burwash Landing.

The Jacquots also worked as big game outfitters in the Kluane Lake area from the 1920s to the 1940s. The road between Whitehorse and Kluane Lake was improved again in 1923 to serve the new boom of tourists who spent \$2000 to \$3000 each for a 30-40 day hunt. In 1942, when the Alaska Highway was constructed, it followed much of the route of the original road.

Sign #4 – KLUANE COUNTRY (YUKON TOURISM)

Welcome to Kluane Country, a vast wilderness region of towering mountains, massive glaciers and clean, cold waters. Kluane is home to Canada's highest mountains and a rich variety of wildlife. Communities here are small but provide all essential services for travellers. Enjoy your stay and when you are near communities, tune into CKYN Visitor Radio, 96.1 FM.

- Signage referring to “Kluane Country” have been erected at various locations throughout the region and used in two instances on interpretive signs at Kluane Lake and Kluane River, coinciding with the perceived boundary of the Kluane Lake area by the Kluane First Nation. “Kluane Country” was developed as a marketing slogan to be applied to the entire region but this definition is not universally accepted. From an interpretive perspective, the term is artificial and does not facilitate visitor understanding of the natural and cultural history of the region. For this reason it should be avoided in future.
- The reference to visitor radio should be removed when the panel is replaced.

Soldier's Summit/Kluane Lake (Km 1708.5)

Theme: Natural History, Historic-Transportation & Communication

Year installed: 1986

Sign #1 – KLUANE LAKE (YUKON TOURISM)

Kluane Lake's spectacular colour is caused by the presence of suspended particles, called glacial flour, which reflect blue light waves. The name Kluane, which is taken from a southern Tutchone Indian word meaning "big whitefish lake," was first recorded as *Tloo army* in 1890 by explorers Jack Dalton and E.J. Glave. The lake lies within a wide, flat trench called the Shakwak Valley, and drains north through the Yukon River system to the Bering Sea. With an area of 478 square kilometers, Kluane is the largest lake in the Yukon.

Sign #2 - SOLDIERS' SUMMIT (YUKON TOURISM)

February, 1942 saw the beginnings of a military road that would cross 2253 kilometers of wilderness and provide a strategic link to Alaska. It was a massive project, with seven regiments of the army engineers and private contractors working day and night. As they punched a primitive trail through the country, the troops had to contend with muskeg, mosquitoes and mud, as well as weather so cold that it froze their supply of antifreeze. By October, the Ninety-seventh Engineers, working east, reached the Eighteenth Engineers, working west, and the pioneer road was complete. A formal ceremony was held here on November 20, 1942, to commemorate the incredible achievement of those ten months.

Congdon Creek Campground (Km 1722.7)

Theme: Natural History

Year installed: 1991

Sign #1 – CAMPGROUND TRAIL (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

This 500-metre (0.3 mile) trail follows the shoreline of Kluane Lake to an open meadow with a viewing deck. A variety of natural and historical features are interpreted.

Sign #2 – RAIN PATTERNS (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

The front range of peaks that dominate the skyline to the southwest are called the Kluane Range. This is the closest in a series of ranges that make up the St. Elias Mountains. These mountains capture most of the moisture coming inland from the Pacific Ocean. This moisture falls as snow in the mountains, becoming part of an immense ice field. As little as 220 millimetres (nine inches) falls on this side of the mountains, leaving this area in a dry rain shadow.

- This sign is effective because it captures three ideas of interest to the visitor including how the lake got its present name, the colour of the lake at this point, and its relative geographic importance. The themes should be retained when the sign is replaced and there should be a direct reference to the proper Southern Tutchone name Łu'án Män.
- The sign is now redundant as the content is covered in more detail at the Parks Canada site, which includes a trail to the actual ceremonial site. Remove when site is reconstructed.
- The stories told in the campground do not flow very well and there is repetition with sign content elsewhere.
- These signs are linked by a 500m trail and cover a variety of themes. They are discussed here for two reasons. First, there are a number of sites in the general vicinity and a program objective is to eliminate duplication and overlap. Some of the panel text either repeats directly or is similar to text on existing signs at other locations. This illustrates why better interagency coordination is still required.
- Second, this trail is located in the campground and would normally be considered an unrelated initiative. It serves to illustrate the point that each time a site is developed or a sign replaced, the agency involved needs to consider not only what might need to be updated but also what may have been done elsewhere by another agency in the interim.

It is the meltwater from the mountain glaciers that feeds the rivers of this valley. Kluane Lake, the largest lake in the Yukon, is fed by one such river, the Slims. At the height of the summer the Slims carries tons of glacial silt into the lake every day.

Although usually in a rain shadow, this area is subject to occasional heavy rains, as was the case in 1988. The dry and sandy ground cannot absorb the rains when they do come. The dry channels you see are outwash channels created when the rain-swelled Congdon Creek floods. The overflow floods the area with new sands. The willows here have adapted to this environment, making use of the sporadic but intense supply of water.

Sign #3 – BEAR ROOT (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

There may not appear to be an abundance of fresh greens in the vicinity but one common plant here is a favoured salad item for both bears and humans. It is commonly known as “Bear Root” or “Indian Sweet Potato.” Shown left, the *Hedysarum alpinum*, a member of the pea family, hosts a glorious display of pinky-purple blossoms in mid-summer.

Native people looked for this root in the spring when it was at its sweetest and most nutritious. They would wash and peel it, then eat it raw or roast it in the coals of the campfire. It is also an important source of energy for bears at a time when other food is not available.

Caution: The sweet Bear Root is almost identical to a related poisonous variety, *Hedysarum mackenzii*. Do not try to distinguish between the two.

Sign #4 – ICE TRAILS (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Winter is a time of transformation here at Kluane Lake. The lake’s size and depth mean that freeze-up is delayed until November, a month later than most other lakes in the southern Yukon. As winter sets in and the temperature plummets, ice forms and thickens on the lake. As the ice expands it buckles and rides up on shore, dragging and pushing the beach along with it. The resulting piles of gravel are called “ice push ridges” and are a prominent feature along the lakeshore at Congdon.

Frigid winds blowing off the ice delay the onset of spring. Shorelines are locked in winter’s grip until early June. Willow catkins come out in March or April when there is still ice on the lake and “greening-up” occurs very soon after break-up, when the first warm winds coax dormant buds of willow and aspen to leaf.

Sidebar: Kluane, a Southern Tutchone name, refers to the lake’s large number of Whitefish. Although Kluane Lake is home some of the territory’s largest Whitefish and Lake Trout, fish can take up to five times as long to grow in its cold waters as in southern Canada. Try catch-and-release fishing; once harvested, these fish elders are gone for good.

- More and better information is available if/when this sign is rewritten. The intent of the last sentence is unclear.

- This topic needs a picture illustrating the winter condition because the image can not be seen when visitors are there.

Sign #5 – OLD AND NEW SKYLINES (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Kluane Lake straddles one of the great fault lines of the earth's crust. The Shakwak Fault is part of a system of faults that extend for almost 4000km from Vancouver Island to the Bering Sea. Here it forms a visible trench, accentuated by the scouring forces of the great ice sheets that have covered the area several times.

The horizon across the lake is dominated by the rounded and weathered granites of the Ruby Range. Behind you to the south are the sharp jagged contours of the Kluane Ranger. The two skylines – old and new – draw attention to vastly different geological structures below. These two ranges were brought together by slow movements of the earth's crust.

Fifty million years ago, the rocks beneath you lay 300 kilometers (200 miles) southeast of here, near where Haines, Alaska is today. Since then, they have moved slowly northwest and have risen to form the Kluane Range. These mountains provide a striking contrast to the more eroded mountains of the Ruby Range across the lake.

Sign #6 – EARLY PEOPLES (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

North-central Yukon and Alaska was one of the first areas to be free of ice after the last ice age. By 12,000 years all human populations had moved into the region. Archaeological evidence suggests people of different cultures and traditions have occupied the valley continually since then.

Southern Tutchone elders recall a network of footpaths that connected people throughout the southwest Yukon. These age-worn trails, favoured hunting routes, converged at Kluane Lake and led off to copper country on the White River. Copper from the White River was exceptionally high quality and was highly valued. White River birch was also a valuable trade item. This straight-grained wood made excellent arrow shafts and snowshoes.

Aboriginal people did cross the lake, although they often walked great distances to find the shortest possible crossing and avoid its unpredictable winds. When the Southern Tutchone crossed any lake, they offered a special prayer, asking permission to travel and apologizing for any unintended disturbance that might be created.

- The information presented in this panel is out of date.
- The First Nation culture is presented as static. The panel should be re-written in conjunction with KFN.

Destruction Bay (Km 1743)

Theme: Historic-Transportation & Communication

Year installed: 1992.

Sign #1 – RELAY STATIONS (YUKON TOURISM)

Driving the early Alaska Highway was difficult and often dangerous, causing wear and tear on man and machine alike. The 1942 army pioneer road was a hastily cut track that had to be rebuilt by civilian contractors of the United States Public Roads Administration. In the meantime, it was essential to keep equipment and supplies moving non-stop to both highway construction camps and military bases in Alaska. In January 1943, the United States Army Quartermaster troops took over transport operations. They set up relay stations, spaced at 100-mile intervals, in order to spell off truck drivers and repair their hard-used vehicles.

Each relay station was a sizeable camp, housing a Quartermaster truck company. Maintenance services included a twenty-five-car garage, inspection sheds, and gas and oil dispensers. Hot meals were served around the clock to drivers and passengers traveling the highway.

The relay station at Destruction Bay opened in March 1943, but operated for less than two years. By the end of the war, the relay stations had closed down as the road improved and military traffic lessened. Many of their functions were taken over by the maintenance camps. Civilian employees, who were encouraged to bring their families north, ran these camps. Such a camp was the beginning of today's community of Destruction Bay

Burwash Landing (Km 1760)

Theme: Historic-Settlement

Year erected: 1992

Sign #1 – LU'AN MAN/BURWASH LANDING (YUKON TOURISM)

The United States Army and Burwash Landing

In August 1942, the American soldiers building the Alaska Highway tote road arrived at Burwash Landing. After four months of rough camp life this prosperous little settlement seemed like an oasis in the wilderness.

The soldiers were surprised and delighted by the fresh produce from the bountiful garden, the well-kept horses, and even a herd of cows, one of which was milked by a homesick soldier. Those lucky enough to buy a meal from the Jacquots never forgot the experience:

"To sit down to a table, eating from dishes, and passing around steaming ... platters of caribou steak and fresh garden vegetables, to drink good coffee and fresh milk was like an answer to a dream"

- The text could be shortened and a better choice of photographs used that relate to the operation of this specific relay camp. An explanation of the types of trucks used would be useful.

- The obvious story that begs to be told here is how the community got its name.

- This sign includes several elements that should be reviewed at the time of replacement. First the use of a large stylistic first letter at the start of a word (first paragraph) may be artistically appealing but violates a basic communication principle. Second, the highway construction theme is secondary to a discussion of the Jacquot family and Father Morisset. Third, explaining the community's English and First Nation name would make sense especially as the sign is situated next to a cairn about Lachlin Burwash. There is no reference to the fact this is the home community of the Kluane First Nation.

The founders of Burwash, Eugene and Louis Jacquot, came to the Kluane area during the short-lived gold rush of 1903. They stayed on to establish a trading post and successful big game guiding business. Many area natives worked here as guides, ranch hands, and woodcutters. Their experience later proved valuable to army surveyors in choosing the best route for the road.

Like many other local families, the Jacquots were generous with advice and assistance to the newcomers. They provided the army with horses, the use of their two launches and a steam-powered sawmill. They enthralled the soldiers with stories of hunting trips, the great glaciers, and a caribou herd that took two days to pass. Best of all, they gave the soldiers a touch of the home life that they sadly missed.

Father Eusebe Morisset, o.m.i.

The construction of the Alaska Highway brought a new resident to the Kluane area in August 1943. Father Eusebe Morisset, an Oblate missionary, served as an auxiliary chaplain with the American Army and visited army camps between Whitehorse and the American border.

When he met the Jacquot brothers at Burwash Landing, they invited him to start a church and school in their community. In 1944, Father Morisset moved to Burwash where the local native people helped him build a log church. During his 20 years in the region, this energetic priest regularly visited the Kluane settlements and constructed churches in Champagne, Aishihik, Haines Junction, Snag, and Beaver Creek.

Kluane River (Km 1785)

Theme: Regional Orientation

Year installed: 1993

Sign #1 – KLUANE COUNTRY (YUKON TOURISM)

Welcome to Kluane Country, a vast wilderness region of towering mountains, massive glaciers and clean, cold waters. Kluane is home to Canada's highest mountains and a rich variety of wildlife. Communities here are small but provide all essential services for travellers. Enjoy your stay and when you are near communities, tune into CKYN Visitor Radio, 96.1 FM.

Fourth, the sign talks about Father Morisset but does not discuss his relationship to the adjacent museum, and the information, to some degree, is repeated on a similar sign in front of the church 100m away. Finally, it would make sense to discuss with the community, church and museum how all the existing signage can be integrated more effectively.

- The spelling of First Nation place names needs to be checked carefully. A consistent use of diacritics is required.

- This sign is intended for southbound travellers and duplicates the panel at the Kluane Lake Overlook site. (See earlier comments)

Sign #2 – WELCOME TO *ÁSI KEYI* – MY GRANDFATHER’S LAND (YUKON TOURISM)

For countless generations the land and the water in the valley before you have provided their gifts of fish, birds, and big game to the people of the Kluane First Nation. It was a time idealized as natural with the harmonious co-existence of humankind and nature.

In the spring of the year at the quickening of life's yearly cycle our ancestors could see and hear the return of geese, ducks, and swans. After a summer of harvesting, drying, and storing the food that is common to the *Luan Man* (Lake of Big Fish - Kluane Lake) area, the Southern Tutchone "dan" (pronounced dun, meaning people) would travel in late summer through *Shar Ndu Chu* (Long Bear Creek - Duke River) down to *Cheghar Man* (Fat Whitefish Lake - Tincup Lake) and *Gyu Chu* (King Salmon Creek - Tincup Creek) gathering and storing berries along the way.

These mountain waterways provided passage for salmon returning from the ocean to spawn. At *Gyu Chu* salmon were caught, dried, and stored for winter. With the fall season fast approaching, the people would return to this region before you, to *The Ku* (Chum Salmon Place - Salmon Patch) where chum salmon were harvested.

In the short summer season the vast northern forest came alive to the sound of songbirds and the piercing call of sea gulls, hawks, and eagles. The woods provided shelter for the silent passage of moose, caribou, bear, and other animals.

In sheltered mountain valleys, small community settlements were built along important waterways. These settlements were the winter refuge of our nomadic ancestors.

They usually consisted of several log structures to house extended families over the cold winter months. These locations were near abundant sources of large game, fish, and waterfowl staging areas. Such were the times before the old gave way to the new.

The wide and sweeping changes of the use of the natural resources have caused the Kluane First Nation's people to adapt to the ways and development of the modern technologically advanced society. The only aspect remaining unchanged is that the Kluane First Nation's people continue to use this land and water around you for the necessities of life - food, water, shelter, and clothing.

We now work together to preserve our culture and heritage, and to ensure that our resources and environment remain in the pristine state our ancestors entrusted us with. We welcome you and wish you a safe passage through our traditional land.

– Kluane First Nation, 1993

- The Kluane First Nations panel “Welcome to my Grandfather’s Land” achieves two objectives. It welcomes visitors to the First Nation traditional territory and has an educational component introducing the aboriginal language and people living here. The text is quite long and could be edited to provide more room for an additional picture or two. The text should explain why the picture of Chief Copper Joe is important. The panel text was developed following extensive consultation with the First Nation. Review the original file before suggesting changes and discuss with Kluane First Nation. Add proper diacritics.
- The fifth paragraph is neither particularly interesting nor informative because it does not recognize the evolution of First Nation culture.
- Check names of people on panel and correct as necessary.

Sign #3 – LIFE OF THE RIVER (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

The Kluane River is geologically young. At one time, Kluane Lake drained out its other end south into the Pacific Ocean through the Slims River valley. About 400 years ago, the Kaskawulsh Glacier (below) dammed that outlet, forcing the lake to empty north past this point and creating the Kluane River. In July and August, when warm temperatures melt ice from the Kaskawulsh, water levels rise to their highest.

River valleys like the Kluane are biologically rich areas in the northern boreal forest. Moose (left) browse at the forest's edge, clipping twigs and leaves from willow. Meadows and sloughs offer summer feeding habitat. Woodland Caribou cross between ranges through the river valley. Listen for the flute-like song of the of the Swainson's Thrush.

The sloughs of the Kluane River are unique, being recharged by groundwater rather than overflow from the river. This means they have warmer water temperatures than the river in fall and winter, making them ideal habitat for salmon and their eggs.

Sign #4 – THE HOMECOMING (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Imagine a Chum Salmon beginning her journey home to Kluane River. It is mid-July and she is at the mouth of the Yukon River, about 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles) northwest of here. Her ascent from the ocean up the Yukon River takes her past commercial and subsistence gill nets and fish wheels. When she reaches a biologist's fish wheel she is tagged with a radio transmitter

South of Dawson City, she enters the sediment-laden waters of the White River, where a biologist overhead in a helicopter tracks her progress. She has slowed down to 18km (11 miles) per day, from 42km (26 miles) per day in the Yukon River.

She reaches the Kluane River by mid-September, having spent two months in freshwater to reach these special spawning areas. Ripe with eggs, she swims into one of the sloughs, drawn to the clear, flowing groundwater. The biologist receives her radio signal and marks her location on a map. After she has paired off with a male, she digs her first redd or nest and deposits her eggs. These are quickly fertilized by the male. The Kluane River area has one of the largest concentrations of Chum Salmon in the Yukon River system. Chum spawn in the Kluane River from mid-September to mid-November.

Sign #5 – FEAST FROM THE OCEAN (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Spawning Chum Salmon are a feast from the ocean for other inhabitants of the less productive interior.

Nowhere in the northern interior is such a concentrated food source so easily available as on salmon spawning grounds. Adult Chum Salmon that have grown fat from the riches of the sea return to spawn and die.

- The three-column layout of this panel is graphically awkward and difficult for the reader to follow. As this is an overlook, the choice of photos should have a stronger connection to the site. The Canada geese caption should either be placed under the photo or the description should be treated as text and the same reference format used as in the other two pictures.
- The Kluane River is a particularly rich wildlife corridor and this point could be expanded upon.

- This is a very creative panel but contains some confusing content and too much text that could have been simplified with more careful editing. For example replacing “beginning” with “returning” quickly clarifies the direction. Changing “to the Kluane River” to “from the Bering Sea” clarifies where the mouth of the Yukon River is. The text also seems to imply all fish are tagged. The meaning of the centre sketch is not clear or referred to in the text yet the statistics are important. In effect out of 2500 eggs the outcome, by the time the salmon return home, is only 2 spawning adults. Given that declining fish stocks are a growing global issue this aspect of the sign should be explained properly.

- This panel flows from the preceding panel. The message could be communicated in clearer language. In essence, “when the salmon return, large concentrations of wildlife arrive because nowhere else is there such a concentrated food

The Chum Salmon spawning season coincides with the autumn migration of Bald Eagles (left). Both adults and young perch on trees along the water's edge, swooping down for an easy feast of Chum Salmon.

Each fall, Grizzly bears (bottom left) converge at the Kluane River to fatten up on the spawning salmon. With winter imminent, bears must store food energy to sustain themselves through their five-month hibernation. Most Yukon bears rely on berries for their fall weight gain. Salmon-eating bears tend to be larger than bears whose diet doesn't include this rich food.

SIDEBAR: The spawning run of the Chum Salmon has traditionally marked a gathering for original peoples. In past generations when people travelled by dog team, the plentiful Chum or "dog" salmon served as a good energy source for the teams. Air-dried salmon was stored in caches and used throughout the winter. People still gather here each fall to harvest some fish for eating and, perhaps as important, to spend time with family and friends.

Sign #6 – DEER OF THE MOUNTAIN (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

The mountain plateaus around you are home to the Burwash caribou herd. These woodland caribou are bigger than barren-ground caribou and live in smaller herds. The Burwash herd is unusual for woodland caribou in that the animals spend not just summer but also winter in these sub-alpine plateaus. Caribou of the Burwash herd use the river valley to travel between the two plateaus. Today you may see caribou tracks (above) at Swede-Johnson or Quill Creek.

Native elders give insight into the history and origins of the local Burwash caribou herd. Elder Jessie Joe recalls that there weren't many caribou in the Burwash area before 1936. Caribou had to be hunted 70km (42 miles) west at Teepee Lake and hauled to Burwash Landing. Biologists speculate that some of the small Yukon herds, like the Burwash herd here, may be remnants of the once large barren-ground herds which may have ranged briefly but intensely in the area. This theory complements the oral histories of the elders. Elders Jessie Joe and Grace Johnson recall lots of caribou on the hills across Kluane Lake around 1936.

In a similar vein, Elder Jimmie Enoch recalls that at Snag, 110km (66 miles) northwest, caribou were so plentiful they stopped the river boats. These sightings may have been caribou of the great barren-ground herds – the origins of today's Burwash Herd?

supply available.”

Lieutenant Small Burial Site (Km 1795)

Theme: Historic-Transportation & Communication Year installed: 1992

Sign #1 – LIEUTENANT SMALL MEMORIAL SITE

The 18th Engineers

In April 1942, the residents of Whitehorse were startled to find that the White Pass and Yukon Railway was transporting a new payload. Train after train pulled into the station, crammed with the 1400 soldiers of the 18th Engineers Regiment. This was the first of several United States Army regiments that were sent to Whitehorse to build the pioneer road that would later become the Alaska Highway. Most of the soldiers were gone by January 1943, but in those nine months the Yukon had been changed forever.

The members of the 18th Regiment were responsible for the section of road from Whitehorse to the Alaskan border. They hopped westward in a series of tent camps, opening a supply line for the civilian workers responsible for the permanent road. During this time, they built over 300 miles of road, bridged four major rivers, constructed scores of smaller bridges, and installed hundreds of culverts. They marvelled at the spectacular scenery and cursed the arduous conditions. When they moved on to the Aleutians, they were seasoned workers, experienced in the rigors of northern life.

The presence of the Alaska Highway has had a lasting impact on the social, political and economic history of the territory. In later years, there has been much criticism of the highway construction and its impact on the land and its indigenous peoples. It is easy to forget the sense of wartime emergency in which rapid construction of a road to Alaska seemed to be a military necessity. The Yukon assignment was best summed up by Fred Rust in the regimental history: *“Perhaps the best thing of all was that we had shared a rich and comradely experience. They couldn’t take that away from us, however much they damned the road.”*

LIEUTENANT SMALL MEMORIAL (SAME PANEL)

The United States Army soldiers, working on the Alaska Highway, never came under enemy fire, nonetheless, many lost their lives during the Yukon posting. In the 18th Engineers Regiment, there were five fatalities due to accidents and natural causes. The men who lost their lives were George Wolters, John R. Morrison, Gene Wolford, George W. Biles, and Roland Small.

First Lieutenant Small was born in Canada in 1913. He earned a degree in civil engineering from New York City College. On August 9th, 1942, Roland Small died in a jeep accident near this site, leaving behind a wife and infant son. He was buried in Whitehorse and his passing was marked by an unusual memorial service. According to one report, this was a Jewish service in the Anglican Church led by a Lutheran chaplain. This monument was erected by the men of the second platoon of “F” Company in honour of the officer they had served.

- More could be presented here about the food chain relationship and the photo on the sidebar could show how First Nation practices (e.g. fish drying) continue today.
- The reference to the migration of bald eagles and chum salmon returning to spawn is confusing as the eagles follow the salmon.
- This is an interesting panel because it blends First Nation traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge. The title would be clearer if it said Caribou – “Deer of the Mountains.” The last sentence on the panel ends in a question mark and leaves the reader confused. This last sentence needs to be connected back to the biologists “speculation” to make sense.

j65

Icefield Ranges (Km 1816)

Theme: Natural History

Year Installed: 2000

Sign #1 - ICEFIELD RANGES (YUKON TOURISM)

The Icefield Ranges include the highest and youngest mountains in Canada. Between 29,500 and 12,500 years ago, the Kluane Glaciation covered all 22,015 sq km (8,550 sq mi) of Kluane National Park. The Icefields now extend over 80-90 percent of the mountains, sending long glacial fingers into the valleys between the peaks. This is the largest non-polar Icefields in North America. The ice is more than 700 metres (2200 ft.) thick in the heart of the ranges.

As the glaciers melted and retreated, wind-blown silt (called loess) blanketed the newly exposed rock. The soil supported grasses that fed bison, moose and caribou. Stone suitable for tool making was exposed for the interior First Nation hunters. The nearby Donjek River is known as *Dän Zhür Chù* in Southern Tutchone, a place where people, berries and water come together.

The Icefield Ranges form the main group of peaks in the St. Elias Mountains. They include Canada's highest mountain, Mt. Logan, at 5,959 metres (19,545 ft.) plus six other peaks over 5,000 metres (16,000 ft.).

Mountaineering and scientific exploration in the interior mountains began more than a century ago. In 1896 the Italian nobleman, the Duc d'Aruzzi, made the first successful ascent on Mount St. Elias. Between 1911 and 1913, the international boundary was surveyed through the Icefield Ranges. The Arctic Institute established the Icefield Ranges Research Station in 1961 to study the high mountains and associated ranges, and this work continues today.

Pickhandle Lakes (Km 1864)

Theme: Natural History.

Year installed: 1995

Sign #1 – PICKHANDLE LAKE (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Pickhandle Lake was a traditional trading place for original peoples. Coast Tlingit from the south brought coastal fish oils and, later, European goods. Upper Tanana, Northern Tutchone, and Han peoples from the northern interior brought furs. All traded for birch and copper from the White River people. Trade networks extended for hundreds of miles and predated present-day political boundaries.

- As this panel is located by the memorial to Lieutenant Small, it would be more logical to reverse the order of presentation in the text and discuss him first. The memorial is regularly visited by those with some connection to Small or the 18th engineers.

Sign #2 – MORE THAN LANDSCAPE (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Your journey along the Alaska Highway is far different from traditional travel patterns of original peoples. Travel has changed but the land remains vital to original peoples.

Before the highway, natives travelled throughout this region in a yearly cycle. They picked berries, fished, hunted sheep, moose and caribou, and snared arctic ground squirrels and snowshoe hare. Elders knew the land by what foods they found in valleys, mountains, or streams as the seasons changed. Survival meant travel.

Elder Jessie Joe and her family hunted sheep along the Donjek River valley in summer. During the fall they continued overland to Teepee Lake where they hunted caribou, dried the meat and cached it for winter use. Eventually they travelled on to the White River. After the trapping season, her family travelled by boat down the White, sometimes as far as the Yukon River, to trade their winter's catch of fur.

White River elder William Peters recalls travelling to the Pickhandle area before spring break-up. For a time, his family wintered at Wellesley Lake, 60 kilometers (36 miles) to the northeast. Late winter was a difficult time of the year. Food caches were often used up and hunting big game was not always successful.

Northern pike, whitefish, arctic grayling and sucker were caught in Pickhandle Lake. Beaver and muskrat were trapped and hunted for food and trade. Waterfowl were an abundant spring food source.

Sign #3 – THE EDGE EFFECT (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Wetlands of the northern boreal forest are a rich mosaic of life. Each habitat – black spruce forest, willows, plants at the water's edge, and plants below the surface contributes to the diversity of life. Nesting birds take advantage of the variety of habitats to raise their young in the brief northern summer.

Waterfowl are common residents of wetlands. Some, like the American Wigeon, use the drier forest for nesting. Others, like the Lesser Scaup, use the wet pond margin. All use the water area for feeding and raising their young.

The Bonaparte's Gull nests in the black spruce trees at the wetland' periphery. Watch for these pretty little black-headed gulls perched in a spruce tree or loafing on the water. They feed on freshwater shrimp and aquatic insect larvae. Willow bushes are prime habitat for songbirds, especially warblers. These bushes attract an abundance of insects: the food of these songsters. Watch for the Yellow Warbler, (the "Yukon Canary) or listen for the "witch-it-a" of the Common Yellowthroat.

The Lesser Yellow-legs, a long-legged shorebird, is also commonly seen here. "The watching bird," as it is known to the White River people, can be very vocal during the nesting season. If it isn't noisily scolding you from a perch on top of a spruce tree, watch for it wading at the water's edge.

- This sign could be improved by making more direct reference to the features actually visible from this location and that mounts Kennedy and Logan (referred to in the pictures) are not visible. This is also a case where too many similar pictures have been used. Text length and content are appropriate.
- One common approach to help the visitors orient themselves is to provide a profile of the mountains themselves with their names and heights.
- The map panel approach with text insert works well. The purpose of the arrows is unclear and would be easier to follow if used on a slightly larger inset map. The use of First Nation words is a nice touch. By their placement, the reader would not necessarily know the word means "welcome" rather than Pickhandle Lake. For consistency with other signage, translate the site name. The term "original peoples" is passé.

Sign #4 – POND LIFE (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Here in the sub arctic you see sedges and horsetails in place of the familiar cattails and bulrushes of southern wetlands. Grass-like sedges and feathery horsetails create a mass of green in the shallow waters. Showy northern flowers can also be found. At Pickhandle Lake, the white spiked flower of Wild Calla or Winter Arum graces the water's edge and yellow Marsh Fleabane crowds the pond margin. These plants at the shore and growing out of the water are clearly visible, but another plant world exists unseen below the water surface.

Pondweed forms the underwater forest of freshwater ponds. Stems and leaves make good resting or hunting sites for many aquatic insects and larvae. The pondweed forest also provides protection for the small water life from the jaws of marauding fish. If you look closely without disturbing the water, you may see some of this underwater activity.

Pondweed stores the carbohydrates that it manufactures from the sun's energy in its long white tuberous roots. These succulent morsels are sought after by muskrats and ducks.

Pondweed is also a prime source of sodium or salt for moose. Like most herbivores (plant eaters), moose crave sodium. Pondweed has sodium concentrations 10-400 times higher than the woody vegetation moose feed on during the winter.

Sign #5 – RATS! (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

Muskrats are a year-round resident of these sub arctic wetlands. In the short northern summer, these semi-aquatic rodents grow more slowly and are not as large as in the south. They also do not have the multiple litters that are common in the south. Rather than build houses of vegetation as is common elsewhere, northern muskrats live in bank dens connected to the water by an underwater entrance.

In winter they extend their foraging range with temporary feeding structures called "push-ups." These are a way for muskrats to avoid the chill of winter air and water. The muskrat starts in early winter by pushing aquatic vegetation up through holes in the thin ice. Snow collects around the piles and creates warm cavities. Push-ups provide sheltered platforms for muskrats, who prefer to feed out of the water.

Pickhandle Lake has traditionally been an important muskrat hunting area for original peoples. Muskrats were hunted as much for their sweet meat as for their fur. In 1942, the Kluane National Park Reserve was established and a year later the Kluane Game Sanctuary was created on adjacent lands. Original peoples could no longer hunt or trap in the region. Today aboriginal rights are recognized and harvesting can occur in the sanctuary and park.

- With the exception of the use of terms like "natives" and "original peoples," this panel tells a good story. The references to elders help bring the image alive. Shorten text and consider a picture showing seasonal travel.
- The second through fourth paragraphs essentially repeat the same story.

- This is a well-crafted panel that is effective and interesting
- Not sure what "edge effect" is especially as sign ends with "water's edge."

Sign #6 – SOUTHERN ARRIVALS (RENEWABLE RESOURCES)

You are standing in the Shakwak Trench. This broad valley is a natural migration corridor for thousands of birds, especially waterfowl. Ducks, geese, and swans leave their southern winter haunts, travel up the Pacific Coast, and fly inland to the Shakwak Trench. This wide straight valley leads them here and northwesterly towards wetlands in Alaska.

The Pickhandle area is a vast complex of wetlands along the Koidern River. Wetlands offer prime waterfowl breeding habitat in the northern boreal forest. The influence of the river ensures a rich supply of nutrients to the shallow ponds, supporting abundant plants and aquatic life. Dabbling ducks, like American wigeon, prefer shallow areas where they tip to reach their aquatic food. Even the few deep lakes, like Pickhandle, have shallow bay areas. In these stands of sedges and horsetails, a hen with young can hide from predators and find food easily.

Other common ducks breeding in the Pickhandle wetlands include mallard, green-winged teal, northern pintail, northern shoveler, Barrow's and common goldeneye and lesser scaup. Trumpeter swans nest in the area and Canada geese use the region during their spring migration.

Beaver Creek (Km 1932) Yukon Tourism)

Km 1932, Alaska Highway

Theme: Historic-Transportation & Communication

Year Installed: 1992

Sign #1 – BEAVER CREEK (YUKON TOURISM)

Permafrost

Of the 1600 miles of Alaska Highway built in 1942, the 40 miles between Pickhandle Lake and Beaver Creek may have presented the greatest challenge. This was one of the first sections where the American soldiers encountered extensive permafrost, the permanently frozen earth underlying much of the northern landscape. When the builders scraped off the insulating layer of overburden, they exposed the permafrost to sun. This melted the permafrost and formed an ice-bottomed mud bog. Fred Rust, historian of the U.S. Army 18th Engineers, quipped that "Yukon sunshine could produce as much mud as rain produces in other parts of the world."

Every vehicle that tried to drive through the quagmire churned it up a little more. Eventually, the only way through was to be hauled by a bulldozer. The road was passable after fall freeze-up, but the spring thaw once again forced the road builders to construct detour after detour. The great holes formed by the melting permafrost earned this stretch the title of "Grand Canyon of the Alcan."

- The contrast between plants found at the shore edge, emerging from the lake and secret world below the surface is effective. Like many similar signs, more attention to sentence structure and editing would improve the message delivered.

- The development of the Kluane Game Sanctuary and Kluane National Park Reserve had immediate and long-term consequences for the Kluane First Nation that need to be explained. For example, 3 options were considered: a national park, game sanctuary, or native game preserve.
- The boundary changed 6 times in response to mining, forestry and hunting interests.

The highway engineers learned that the best way to build a road over permafrost was to leave the insulating cover of dirt and vegetation in place, and even add to it, so that the ice would not melt. Corduroy, the system of laying a roadbed of logs covered with gravel, was often used to cross permafrost areas. The original timbers still underlie much of today's highway,

The road was finally drivable in all weather by October of 1943. Permafrost continues to plague highway maintenance crews by buckling certain sections of the highway every spring.

The Final Link

Near this point, on 28 October 1942, Corporal Refirie Slims of the 97th Engineers (heading South), and Sergeant Alfred Jalufka of the 18th Engineers (heading North), met blade to blade on their bulldozers. Thus the two sections of the Alaska Highway pioneer road were joined to form a continuous link between Dawson Creek, B.C. and Fairbanks, Alaska.

Alaska/Yukon Border Crossing (Km 1965)

Theme: Regional Orientation

Sign #1 – THE YUKON (YUKON TOURISM)

The first non-natives to explore the area that is now the Yukon came in search of furs. Later arrivals came looking for gold. In August 1896, George Carmack, Tagish Charlie and Skookum Jim found gold in the Klondike. In the next two years more than 40,000 miners, merchants and adventurers flooded into the territory. The Yukon was established as a separate political entity in June 1898 at the height of the gold rush.

Americans have played a major role in the two largest events in the Yukon's history: the Gold Rush and the Alaska Highway construction. Thousands of American soldiers slogged through muskeg and snow to carve out the first pioneer road across the north. Two crews, one working east from Alaska and the other working west through the Yukon, met at Soldier's Summit, on the shores of Kluane Lake.

Kluane

Kluane National Park lies in the heart of Kluane Country, a region of the Yukon that is rich in cultural history, spectacular scenery and abundant wildlife. Within the Park's 22,015 square kilometers (8,500 square miles) lie some of the most spectacular mountains and glaciers on the continent. Canada's highest mountain, Mount Logan, rises 5951 metres (19,525 feet) in the midst of the largest non-polar icefields in the world. Grizzly bears, mountain sheep and an extraordinary diversity of birds make their home in the area. Visitor information, services and activities are available throughout the region.

- This panel is effective because it relates directly to the site and provides a context the visitor can understand even as they travel this upgraded section of road.

- The subject of the panel is primarily about the difficulties of constructing the road over permafrost with only a brief mention of the role of the community as a meeting point of construction crews. When this panel is ready for replacement, it should be refocused. The permafrost story is still valid but it is also told at the Alaska/Yukon border site. To avoid duplication, the driving experience associated with the original road should be kept separate from today's experience. That theme could be covered at Dry Creek.
- The Final Link section of the text could be incorporated into a panel about the community's significance as Canada's most westerly community etc.
- As the community has installed a number of panels on its own, care should be taken to ensure the revisions complement community efforts.

Sign #2 – SURVEYING THE BORDER (YUKON TOURISM)

The line that now forms the border between the Yukon and Alaska was first described in an 1825 treaty between England and Russia. The two nations agreed to divide the northwest, giving Britain rights to all inland furs and Russia the rights to the sea otters' marine habitat.

The U.S. accepted the provisional boundary in 1867 when it purchased Alaska. But in 1896, when gold was found in the Klondike, a dispute arose between Canada and the U.S. with both claiming the seaports at the head of Lynn Canal. The question was settled in 1903 by an international tribunal, deciding in favour of the U.S.

Marking the border on the ground through the wilderness was a remarkable feat. It took more than 50 years and involved hundreds of American and Canadian surveyors. They travelled through the mountains, tundra and boreal forest by canoe, steamer, packhorse and on foot. Delicate instruments were carried across rugged country by hand-drawn sleds.

First Peoples

There are eleven linguistic families of native peoples in Canada. The Yukon is home to three of them: Athapaskan, Inuit and Tlingit. The Upper Tanana of Alaska and the Southern and Northern Tutchone of the Yukon all belong to the Athapaskan family.

The Tutchone and Tanana Indians were among the most isolated native people in North America. Until the construction of the Alaska Highway in 1942, they lived an independent subsistence life. Their traditional territories extended across what would later become the boundary and they travelled and traded throughout the area. Long before white men penetrated the interior, the Tutchone of the Kluane Lake area were trading copper, knives and tobacco with the Upper Tanana.

Neighbours

The boundary between Canada and the United States is known as the longest undefended border in the world. The Alaska-Yukon section of the border follows the 141st meridian of longitude from the Arctic coast to Mt. St. Elias.

The two countries can be justly proud of more than 150 years of peaceful coexistence. Canada, officially bilingual, is the world's second largest country but has one-tenth the population of the U.S. The Yukon, with an area of 483,450 square kilometers (186,000 square miles) is even more sparsely populated than other parts of Canada.

The Yukon, Canada's northwestern territory, and Alaska, the most remote of the 50 states, are northern neighbours in North America's last frontier.

- Two-thirds of this panel is a map of the Kluane area. The panel text is in both English and French making this one of the few Yukon sites where French is used. The presence of both official languages makes the text appear wordy and cluttered. The map legend includes a bold “Yukon, Canada” with “Canada’s Yukon” needlessly repeated below. Almost all the text is repeated on signage and literature displayed elsewhere in the Yukon. The sign does not have a clear focus. By contrast, the equivalent Alaska sign across the way is far more informative, providing an orientation to the state as a whole. Logically, this sign should complement that approach. This panel should also place the Yukon in the Canadian context showing the Yukon’s position relative to the other territories and provinces.

3.3.2 Haines Road

There are only two signs with text on the Haines Road, one located in Haines Junction, one at Seltat in British Columbia. Comments on the Haines Road, located in Haines Junction, have already been covered.

Seltat (Km 87 Northbound)

Theme: Historic-Transportation & Communication. Year installed: 1992.

Sign #1 – THE HAINES ROAD (YUKON TOURISM ON BEHALF OF BC)

Early Travel and Maintenance

The Haines Road, constructed by the U.S. Public Roads Administration in 1943, was a basic haul road. It was built in a hurry as an emergency supply line and project engineers chose the easiest route, ignoring local advice about trouble spots. According to one Haines resident, "They learned later that there are a number of places where experience is more important than science."

The road saw little maintenance over the next year. Fighting had ended in the Aleutians and the Haines road was no longer a military priority. The crews who re-opened the road in 1945 found several wash-outs, a large slide at mile 45, and collapsed bridges on the Klehini and Blanchard rivers. Maintenance work over the next few years required much re-routing around trouble spots.

Driving the road remained a challenge due to the narrow roadway, hairpin turns, and the steep ascent to the summit. In 1977, the United States and Canada signed an agreement, the Shakwak Project, to improve the highway corridor from the U.S. border to Beaver Creek, Yukon. The United States spent \$83,485,000 Canadian funds for the Haines Road reconstruction. Canada managed the project and Canadians and Americans did the work. Between 1978 and 1990, the Haines Road was relocated and surfaced creating a modern highway capable of bearing year-round heavy truck traffic.

Checkpoints

The Haines Road winds through a mountain pass infamous for severe storms. At times, the roadbed disappears under drifting snow, while blizzards or dense fog can reduce visibility to nothing.

Since 1963, when the road was first opened for winter travel, various measures have been taken to make the road safer for travellers. These include survival shelters and tall poles set along the edge of the road to mark the location of the roadway under deep snow. From 1963 to 1974, there were also five staffed checkpoints along the road. The driver checked in at each station, and word of his coming was radioed ahead to the next point. If the vehicle did not reach the next checkpoint in a reasonable amount of time, a search party was dispatched.

Today's traveller does not face the same hazards. During heavy snowstorms, drivers are stopped at either the US/Canada border at Pleasant Camp or at Haines Junction, until maintenance crews have cleared the road.

- This panel is really three panels in one. Surveying the border and the neighbours themes work well together. The section on First Nations seems out of place and should be covered in a panel of its own. To make that theme fit with the overall "border" theme, it would make sense to talk about the effect artificial international boundaries have had on First Nations particularly in the context of the Yukon/Alaska relationship.
- The use of black text on a dark blue background is inappropriate and violates a basic legibility rule regarding colour contrast.
- The last sentence in the section on neighbours is self-evident and redundant to anyone standing at this location
- The first paragraph in "First Peoples" is inaccurate and confusing. It should be updated to reflect the current First Nation political structure.

- This panel was erected as part of the 1992 commemoration and is the only one a northbound traveller encounters. The subject is appropriate but there is too much text. The centre photograph shows a road washout and it would be more appropriate to use a picture of the road being cleared of snow, given the location. The control station sign photo does not really add anything to the sign and another picture should be considered when the sign is due to be replaced.

3.4 Analysis of Thematic Representation

The 50th Anniversary commemoration signage is the dominant thematic category represented. In the commemoration program, site significance is determined by whether the site includes more than a simple milepost marker. More notable sites, such as construction camps, also have a NWHS site identification plaque, with interpretive panels reserved for the most important sites where key events or important stories are told.

Regional Orientation & Tourism

Regional orientation signage is generally weak especially at the important junction of the Alaska and Klondike Highways near Whitehorse. No such signage exists on the Haines Road except for the Welcome to Yukon sign at the BC/Yukon border. In Haines Junction, the regional orientation signage is generally good but the site is hidden behind the “Muffin” and is hard to find. The Alaska/Yukon border site, that was developed with the State of Alaska, is quite effective except for the Yukon interpretive panels.

The biggest problem with the tourism signage is the lack of coordination. As a general observation the tourism oriented maps provided are fine but the text is unfocused and out of date.

Cultural Theme Representation

Overall, attention to First Nations history including traditional use and occupancy is well represented but there are deficiencies. For example the two roads pass through the traditional territories of five Yukon First Nations but only the Kluane First Nation is reasonably represented. The traveller spends the most time within the traditional territory of the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations.

Reference to aboriginal people is made in general terms such as the linguistic association rather than on a First Nation specific basis, as is more common today.

Historical Theme Representation

Although the anniversary signage tends to focus on the highway construction story, the selection of topics covered is quite broad covering a variety of situations from bridges, memorials, permafrost and key events etc. Other signs combine historical events and natural history themes together.

Natural History/Geography Theme Representation

When Parks Canada and Renewable Resources initiatives are added in, natural history and geography themes are well represented. The main deficiency lies in representation of ecological regions.

3.4.1 Alaska Highway West

The Alaska Highway West and Alaska Highway East plans need to be considered together as one interpretive unit, although there are some major differences between the two sections. Highway construction is still taking place along the Alaska Highway West, creating opportunities to improve existing sites and develop new ones at suggested locations. There has been relatively more attention paid to First Nation history and culture in the western section, and there is more interpretive signage already in place provided by other agencies (e.g. Parks Canada) in the west.

Alaska Highway West/Haines Road Existing Interpretive Signage

Thematic Category	Whitehorse to Haines Junction	Haines Junction to Beaver Creek	Haines* Road
Historic – Settlement	1	3	0
Historic – Exploration & Mining	1	0	0
Historic – Klondike Gold Rush	1	0	0
Historic – Transportation Panel	1	7	1
NWHS Sign	2	9	1
Milepost Marker	12	24	10
Historic – General	0	0	0
First Nations History	4	2	4
Natural History	2	6	2
National Parks/Significance	0	2	2
Regional Orientation	0	4	1
Site Identification (non-interpretation)	1	2	0

* includes Parks Canada and Klukshu signage

When discussing First Nations cultural representation, two sets of questions need to be posed. The first set is: Who are the First Nations that live here? How many are there? Where are they located and where did they come from? The second set of questions asks: How do they (First Nations) live and interact with one another, and what changes occurred when they met the first Europeans?

The logical associated question is what impact did the construction of the Alaska Highway have and how has it influenced their lives today?

The 1999 Alaska Highway East Interpretive Plan suggests the parallel use of First Nations place names where possible, the discussion of traditional land use patterns, and inclusion of information about First Nation use and occupancy from both a historic and modern perspective. The objective is to make First Nation culture more visible and alive. In some cases, terms and language used on existing signs to describe First Nations people need to be updated.

There is a need for more balance. Signage erected in conjunction with the 1992 commemoration continues to be the dominant interpretive story.

Corridor Ecoregions	
HIGHWAY	ECOREGION
Haines Road	Coastal-Western Hemlock-Sitka Spruce Forest
	Yukon-Stikine Highlands
	Ruby Ranges
Alaska Highway	Yukon Southern Lakes
	Ruby Ranges
	St. Elias Mountains
	Klondike Plateau

The effort of Renewable Resources to add complementary wildlife viewing panels at existing sites is a step in the right direction.

There is one particular problem that can only partly be resolved through this program. That relates to the use of the “Kluane Country” identity. For the Kluane First Nation, this refers to the area around Kluane Lake not the region as a whole. This was raised during discussions on the regional tourism plan. As it currently stands, there are four Kluane Country border signs each erected at different times. Travelling west, the first sign erected through the Haines Junction Chamber of Commerce is encountered near Champagne or when northbound on the Haines Road at the Yukon/BC border. Two older, more substantial signs are located at Canyon Creek and Kathleen River. The now defunct Kluane Country Visitors Association put up these signs. In addition, the interpretive panels at Haines Junction, Kluane Lake Overlook, Kluane River and Yukon/Alaska border have text and maps of the region. These orientation maps also contain dated information such as references to visitor radio. This issue needs to be sorted out among the stakeholders and a consistent approach taken.

While natural history themes are generally well represented, there is one important deficiency. There is no mention of the ecoregions the visitor is travelling through, the differences between ecoregions and where the transition points are. This applies equally to the Alaska Highway and Haines Road.

As noted in the review of existing signage text, there are a number of instances where the writing style could be improved with more judicious editing. This would leave more room for photographs and illustrations and give the panel designer more layout flexibility. More attention needs to be paid to basic rules regarding text/background colour contrast, choice of type and point size recognizing

for example, the age of primary visitor groups. As a general rule of thumb, pictures and text should be tied to the location of the site and what a visitor can see from that point.

The 1999 Visitor Exit Survey shows that a surprising number of visitors who travel through this region never stop at all. This disturbing trend did not change between 1994 and 1999. This reinforces the need for creative interpretation and balanced thematic representation. Key informants on what works and what is needed include the Visitor Reception Centre staff and the highway maintenance foreman.

There are several reasons for thematic duplication. First, it appears in some cases that the duplication is simply a text variation around a core theme. First Nation travel and trade and discussion of Kluane Lake are two examples. In other cases the duplication is intentional such as the use of the same map at the Kluane River and Kluane Lake Overlook. Second, the duplication may be caused by one agency not consulting another or looking at what has been done elsewhere. For example, there are two panels on permafrost at the Yukon/Alaska border that don't show up on the sign inventory because they were done by the Alaskans and one panel in Beaver Creek that covers the same topic from the original highway construction perspective. Before adding additional panels on any subject, it makes sense to look at both the existing program inventory and consult related organizations.

As was noted in the site analysis, it also makes sense to consult the communities to ensure the signage content blends with local efforts. The key locations are Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Destruction Bay, Burwash Landing and Beaver Creek.

3.4.2 Haines Road

There are only two signs that relate to the Haines Road and both were erected as part of the 1992 commemoration. Both relate to construction of the road. Even with the addition of the Champagne & Aishihik signage at Klukshu and the Parks Canada signage (e.g. Dezadeash River Trail/CHRS plaque, UNESCO plaque, Rock Glacier Trail etc.), the interpretive potential of this highway has been largely overlooked. The interpretive potential is significant and acknowledged by the local governments in Haines Junction and Haines, Alaska. The 2000 Kluane Regional Tourism Plan recommends a concerted intergovernmental planning effort be undertaken to highlight this natural “parkway.” A cohesive, coordinated highway interpretive program would be the most productive, least costly and effective way to improve the quality of the driving experience. The Champagne & Aishihik First Nations are considering the parkway idea.

Significant thematic opportunities have been overlooked or are under-represented relating to First Nation travel and trade, natural history, climate, wildlife, and protected areas establishment. As the road borders a new Class A wilderness park in BC, the visitor management philosophy for that park will influence what sites are actually developed.

Aside from site selection, the area of most contention may lie with the level of support infrastructure provided (e.g. outhouses, garbage bins) and associated maintenance requirements. Parks Canada and BC Parks (to date, pending management plan preparation) have taken the position not to include garbage bins and outhouses at trailheads and points of interest.



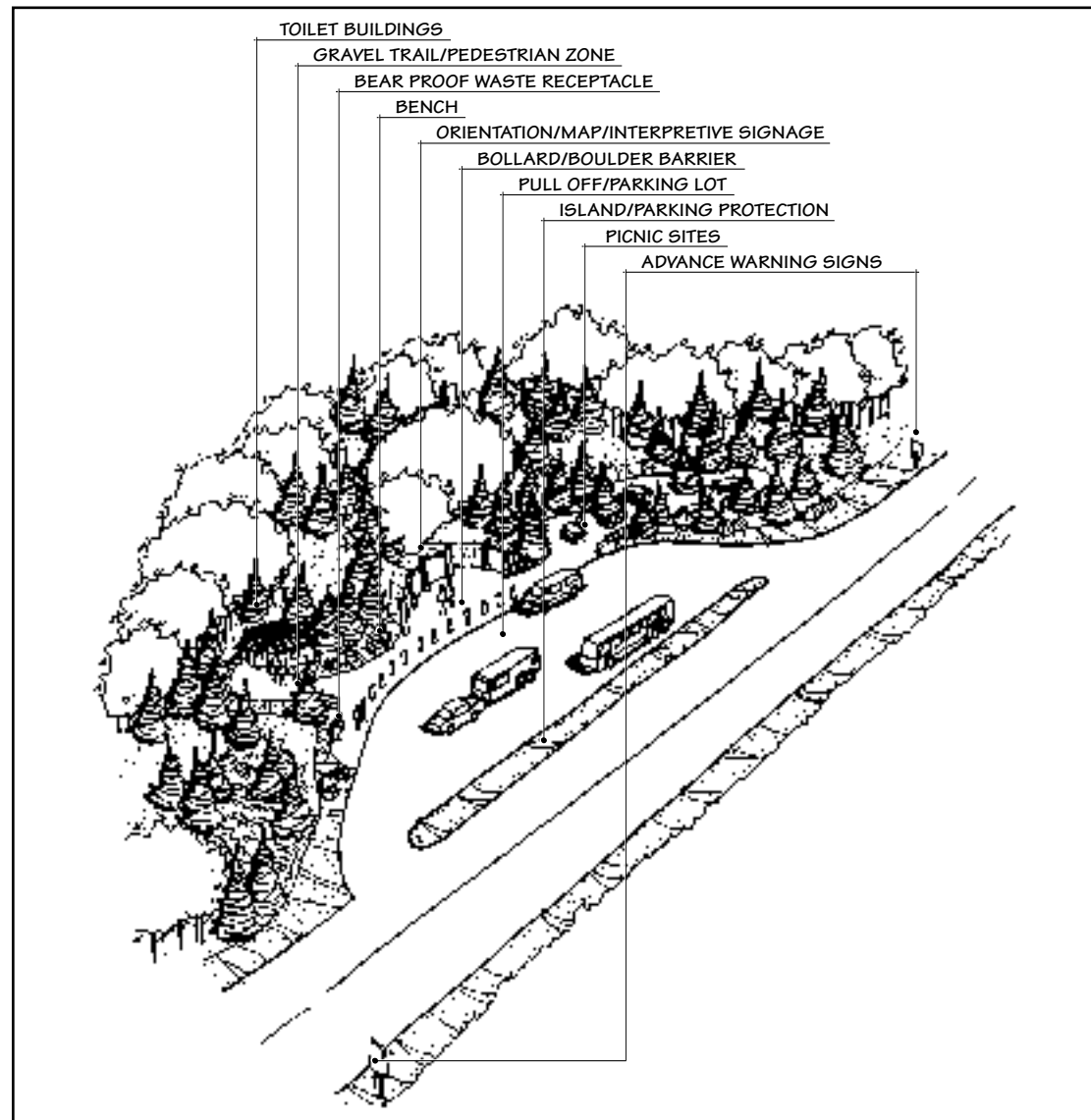
4.0 Alaska Highway West/Haines Road Interpretive Plan

4.1 Approach

In the eyes of many travellers, the Alaska Highway represents the main road to Alaska and the Haines Road, the shortcut option to the same destination. From the Yukon Tourism perspective, interpretive signage is one way to persuade visitors to spend more time here. From a highway safety perspective, interpretive sites help make the drive more interesting and provide a rest break opportunity. To communities and First Nations, these sites provide an opportunity for visitors to learn more about the landscape, history and people of the area the visitor is passing through.

This plan builds on what exists and places particular emphasis on opportunities for inter-governmental cooperation to reduce development and maintenance costs. Priorities are influenced by jurisdictional responsibility. For example, opportunities for cooperation with affected First Nations, Parks Canada and the Government of BC have been identified but the final say on what might be done rests with those agencies at sites within their jurisdiction.

The site hierarchy that follows is consistent with the guidelines set out in the Yukon wide Interpretive Sign Strategy approved in 1995. On the Alaska Highway, few additional sites have been added. Instead, the plan focuses more on existing site rationalization and taking advantage of opportunities to either upgrade existing sites or develop new ones as part of continuing highway reconstruction. The cost savings from such coordination can be significant. In some instances such as around Kluane Lake, strict adherence to the suggested spacing criteria is impractical so more attention has been made to coordination and avoiding message dupli-



Components of a typical Regional Site concept

cation.

In the case of the Haines Road very little signage exists. There is a real opportunity to use limited resources effectively. The Government of Yukon program coordinator can act as facilitator bringing the parties together. Key players include CAFN, Parks Canada, BC Parks and BC Ministry of Transportation because the Government of Yukon maintains this section of road on their behalf. Both the City of Haines and Village of Haines Junction have indicated support for a complete corridor interpretive plan and that would involve State of Alaska officials. This plan only covers the section of road from the Alaska/BC border to Haines Junction but copies of the draft have been sent to Alaska officials for information and comment.

In the Alaska Highway West section, there are two sets of priorities. The first priority is resolving the regional orientation signage at the intersection of the Alaska and Klondike highways for north and westbound traffic. This is the most critical intersection from a tourism perspective because travellers choose to either head north to Alaska via Dawson City or west via Haines Junction. There are two options here. Option #1 involves working with the existing City of Whitehorse site to make it more effective. The weakness here is that requires a left hand turn. Option #2 is to develop a new site across the road geared to north and westbound traffic.

Looking to the long-term, option #2 is the most desirable solution from the perspective of traffic safety and function. Visitor information needs for those leaving Whitehorse are different from those arriving.

In Haines Junction, the problem is access to the regional orientation site because of its location and the way the highway has been constructed. The

highway traveller is faced with conflicting visual clues including an array of signs competing for the driver's attention. The problem is most acute for travellers heading west on the Alaska Highway or north on the Haines Road. Southbound visitors meet the intersection at the "T" and the "Muffin" is directly in their line of sight. The layout of the site around the "Muffin" makes it difficult to find the entry points and the parking area is too small relative to the site's function.

The second set of priorities relate to highway reconstruction and ensuring the program takes advantage of all potential opportunities. For example, the Kluane Lake rest area is being enlarged this year as a result of highway re-construction while the new

Champagne Bypass offers an opportunity to add another site.

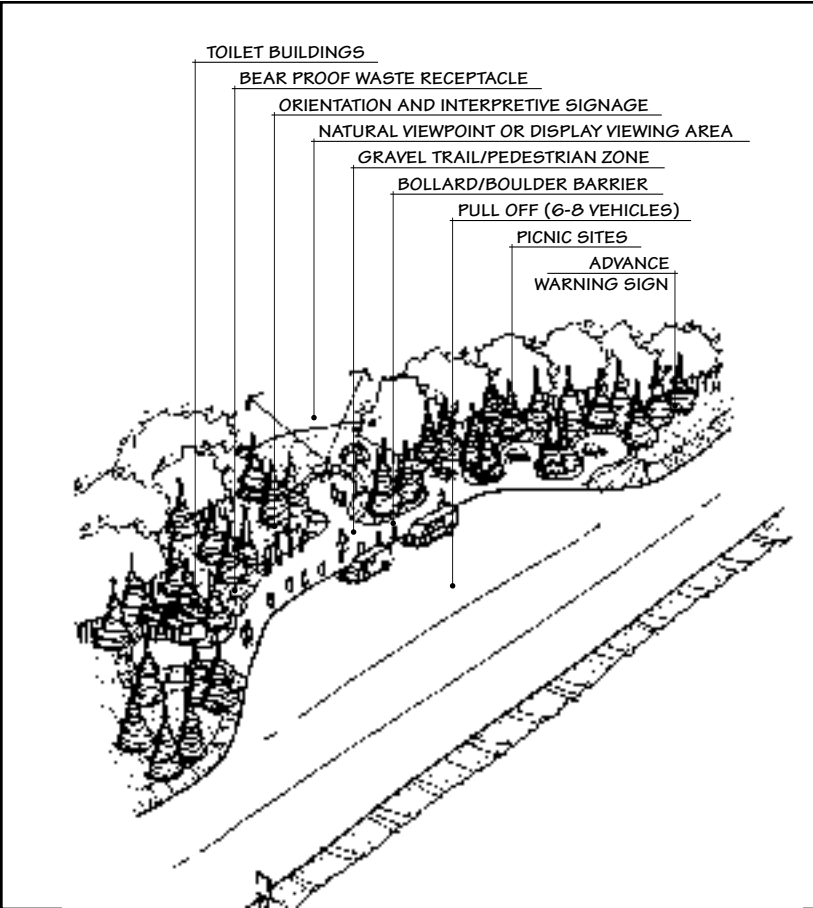
A conscious decision was made not to add additional sites between Beaver Creek and the US/Canada border. Because Canada Customs is at Beaver Creek rather than the border, a sort of "no-mans" land exists between. Problems were encountered with a previous site at Scottie Creek and a review of interpretive sites on the Alaska side of the border shows that many of the features that might be represented are already covered at this location in Alaska as a result of efforts of the Tetlin National Wildlife Sanctuary.



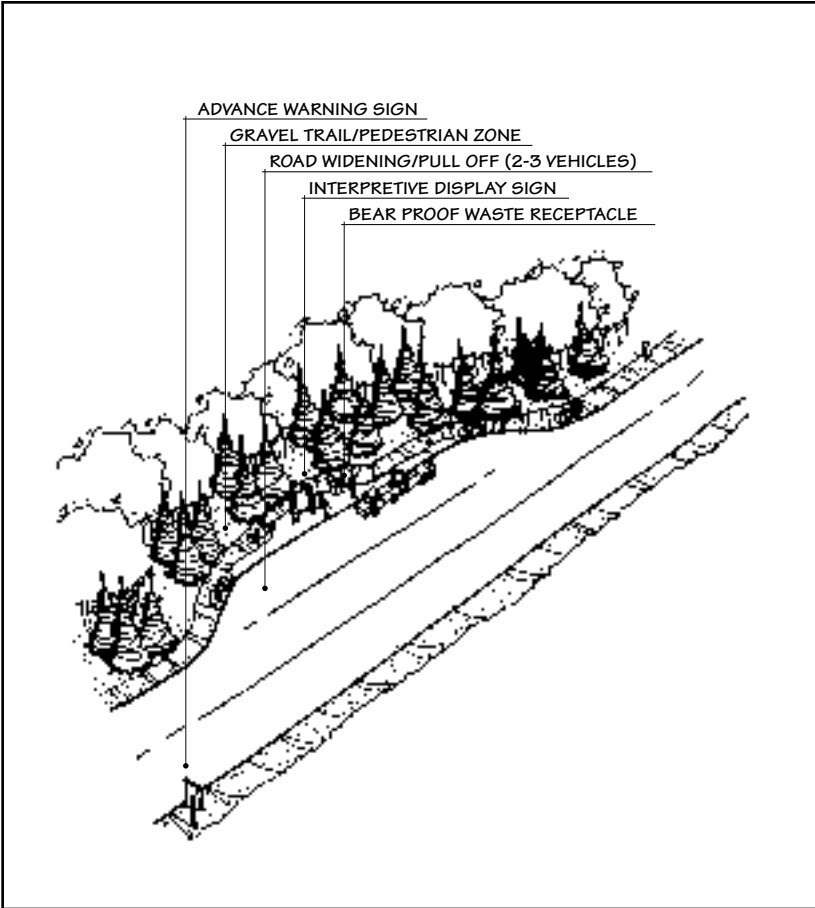
In general, it is anticipated that the facilities at major sites will be more elaborate and include a site identification sign; washrooms and bear proof garbage containers. In most cases they will receive at least a minimum level of winter maintenance. Whenever possible, major sites will be designed to accommodate highway transports to avoid site duplication. Minor sites are typically smaller with a smaller parking area, single sign and a garbage container.

While the installation of garbage bins and outhouses is accepted practice by the Government of Yukon, other agencies are less willing to embrace the concept of installing and maintaining this type of infrastructure. Two reasons are cited. First there is the cost and second the issue of appropriateness. For example, both Parks Canada and BC Parks promote “pack in, pack out” policies consistent with the types of parks they operate.

At the Haines Summit, winter recreational use by Yukon and Alaska residents creates a problem. Given the elevation and level of snowfall, site maintenance will be a bigger challenge than installing an interpretive display.



Typical components of a Major Site



Typical components of a Minor Site

One possible solution is to work with the outdoor community (skiers, snowmobilers etc.) to develop a transportable solution for those periods when use is at it's highest. This issue is discussed here only as an example of the types of related issues that affect program implementation and have a significant impact on costs.

On the Alaska Highway, one main new site is proposed near Marshall Creek. Parks Canada had a site at this location for a number of years but removed it because of maintenance and safety concerns. It is recommended that when this section of road is upgraded a new site be created in this area. The original location reasons remain valid as this is the first point when the traveller gets a close-up view of the Front Ranges and the higher mountains behind. It is also a good location to provide an orientation to Kluane National Park and explain where key facilities such as the Visitor Reception Centre and Alsek Convention Centre in Haines Junction are located. The traveller can also be prepared for the highway junction ahead and where to find the regional orientation site.

The inclusion of sites such as the existing Spruce Beetle Trail and Pickhandle Lakes eliminates duplication. Other new sites are recommended at Congdon Creek, White River and Dry Creek.

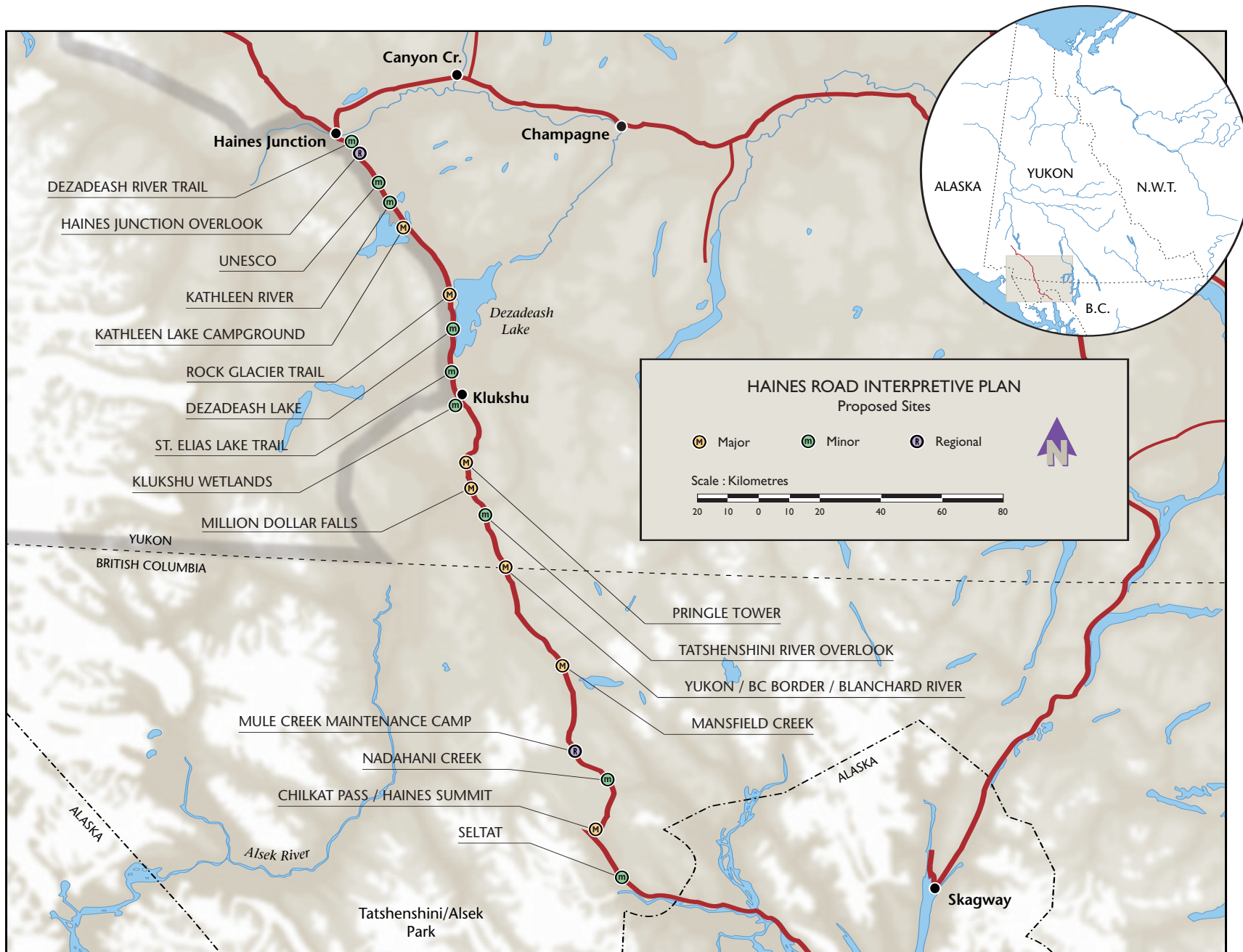
On the Haines Road, eight new sites are suggested for inclusion in this program. It should be noted that in 5 of the 8 cases, these sites take advantage of an existing pullout or site already developed by another agency (e.g. Parks Canada's - Rock Glacier Trail). Two major sites are proposed in the BC section. The level of development at the Haines Summit requires further study because of the maintenance issues. It is suggested that the only full-service site be located at Mule Creek in the vicinity of the maintenance camp and airstrip. This is already a developed service node and the impacts can be more closely controlled

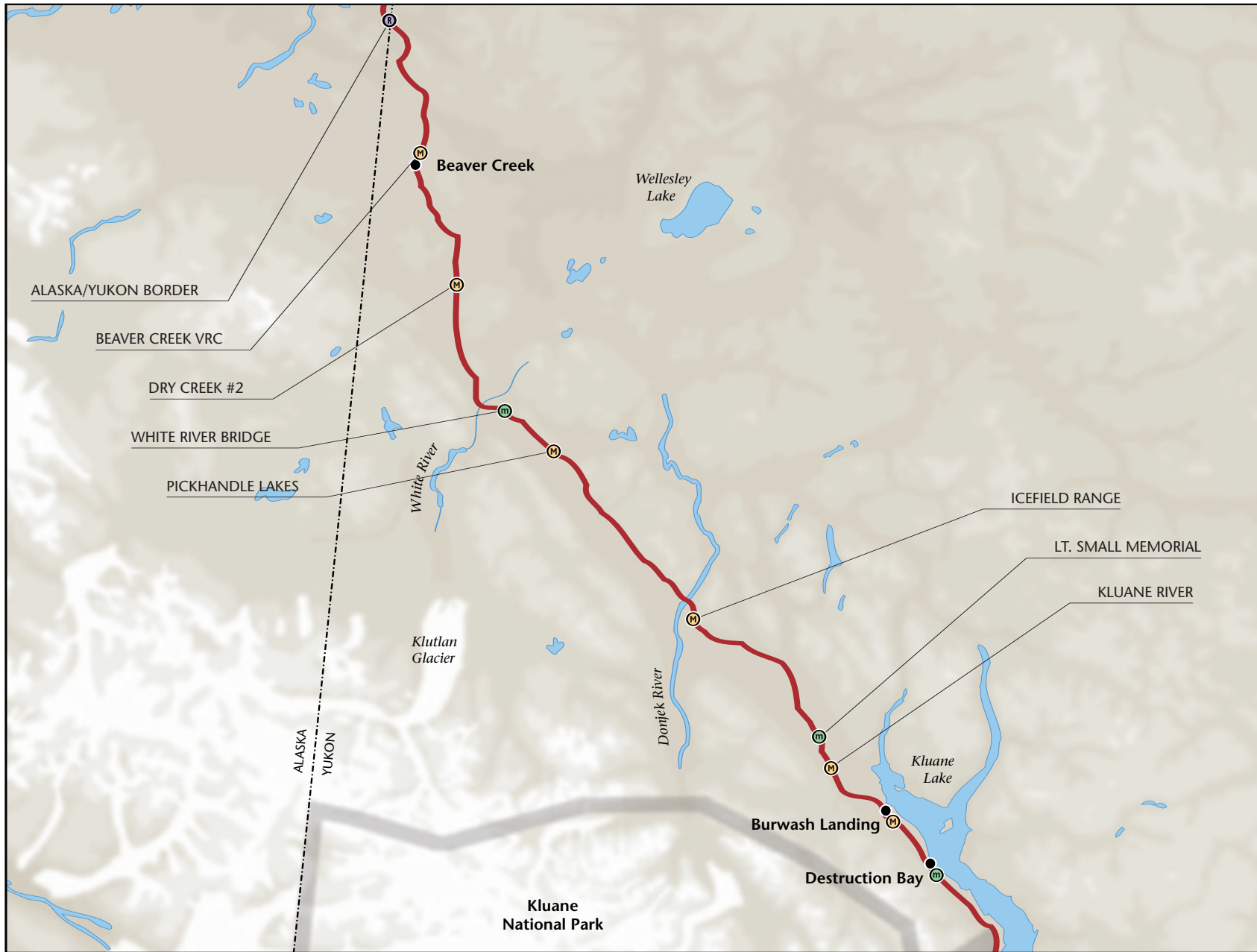
at this location. It is also a good location to provide an area orientation to the Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park, without encouraging development inconsistent with a Class A park. The final determination of whether the recommended sites in the BC section are adopted rests with the BC Government and the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board.

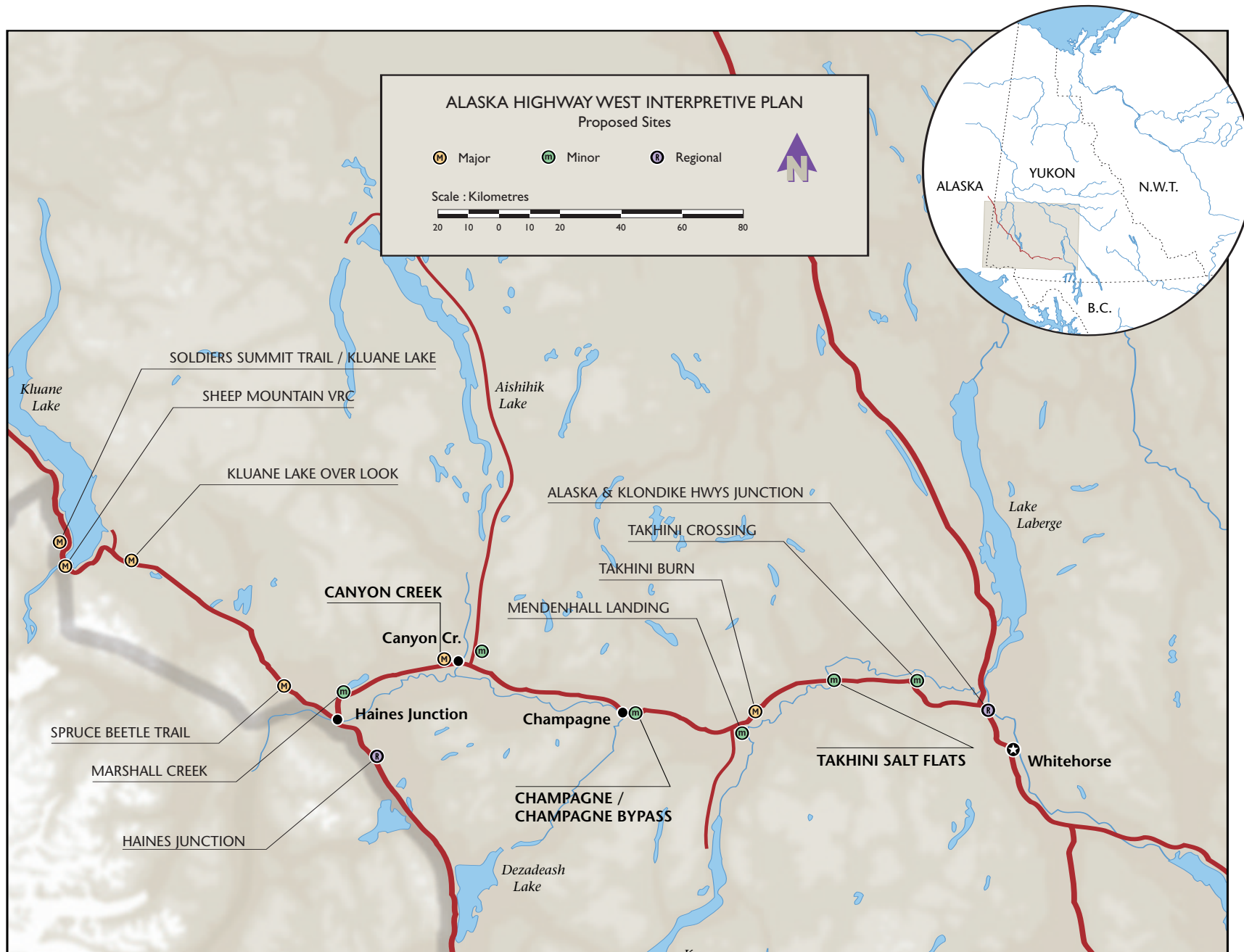
Improving the quality of the driving experience is a critical step to the long-term economic health of the region as is reducing the proportion of visitors who travel through this region without stopping.

The site development recommendations are reflected on the following maps.









4.2 Thematic Representation

Rationale

As the traveller drives west away from Whitehorse, south from Beaver Creek and north from Haines, Alaska, several themes become clear. From Haines it is the transition from coastal forest to alpine tundra to boreal forest and Chilkat control of a critical trade route to the interior. For the traveller heading west it is the transition from arable valley to the dominance of the mountain wall and ice fields of the St. Elias Mountains.

Heading south from Beaver Creek the driver leaves open valleys, muskeg, and stunted trees to enter the Shakwak Trench bordering the mountains to the west.

4.2.1 Historical Context and Road Construction Theme

The connection between World War II and Alaska Highway construction remains strong and is adequately represented. Many of the minor sites denoted by NWHS site signs and milepost markers can be phased out. The interpretative plaques at major sites should be retained and updated. With highway reconstruction, many of the features of the original road are no longer evident. The one site where the visitor can still see the road's impact on a community is at Champagne and this site will be bypassed within the next year.

The Kluane Wagon Road and the travel/trade routes from the coast to the interior are still important thematically, because in some cases they have evolved from trail to highway. The one element that does not come through as clearly as it might is the significant change that both the Alaska Highway and Haines Road has had on the landscape and people of the Kluane region.

There is also the potential to interpret the evolution of road construction practice as the Alaskans have done with their panel on permafrost at the Canada/US border display. Some of the reclamation and environmental stewardship practices that have been developed through the Shakwak reconstruction process are worth portraying.

Interpretive signage should relate to places that can either be viewed directly from the highway, or can be accessed from the highway (e.g. trailheads). Locations like Soldiers Summit that relate to significant events merit special attention at the location where they happened. In this case, the Yukon Tourism sign is redundant since Parks Canada has developed a trail to the actual location within 200m of the current sign.

4.2.2 First Nation Territories Theme

The highway traveller can potentially pass through five First Nation territories. Kwanlin Dun, Ta'an Kwäch'än and Champagne & Aishihik territories overlap in the Whitehorse area and this is difficult to explain. The boundary of the Kluane and White River First Nations is more distinct as is the relationship between the coastal Tlingit and Champagne & Aishihik First Nations.

There are many opportunities to discuss First Nations traditional land use, their trade and travel corridors, and interaction with Euro-Americans. As noted in the review of existing signage, topics such as travel/trade routes are often discussed whereas the legends and stories associated with places and events are often not. References to aboriginal people range from terms such as "first peoples" to linguistic associations such as "Southern Tutchone" or "Athapaskan" without explaining the context. Visitors may not realize that a person may belong to the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations and speak southern Tutchone, one of the "Athapaskan"

languages.

4.2.3 Ecoregions Theme

Both highways pass through three ecoregions and the Alaska Highway just touches the eastern boundary of the St. Elias Mountains near Kluane Lake at the White River. Some of the changes are dramatic such as the rapid transition from coastal forest to alpine on the Haines Road, while others require a more subtle appreciation of landform differences. In all cases, understanding ecological relationships enhances the visitor's knowledge of geographic and natural history relationships.

4.2.4 Distinctive Features Theme

The distinctive features theme complements the ecoregions connection. The features range from the major lakes (e.g. Dezadeash, Kluane), geological features (e.g. Shakwak Trench), and glacial features, such as former beach ridges, moraines and permafrost, to the stories associated with particular mountains or vegetation that extends beyond its normal range. A distinctive feature can also be a view or unusual condition, such as the White River ash, that can be viewed in different locations.

4.3 Media and Audience

Signs are one of the simplest and most cost effective ways to tell a story. Some of the earliest wood routed signs (e.g. Mendenhall Landing) remain standing and legible after 25 years despite minimal maintenance. They continue to function 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

As a communication tool, basic principles need to be respected to be effective. Various books have been written on this subject from an interpretive perspective²⁹ and are worth consulting to determine the approach appropriate for any given situation.

²⁹ Trapp, S. et al *Signs, Trails and Wayside Exhibits: Connecting People and Places* (2nd ed.) University of Wisconsin, 1994

Other factors to be considered include location and placement relative to the sign subject. For example, does the sign block the intended view. Yukon climatic conditions need to be considered as well as whether the signage is to be accessible during the winter.

The audience for interpretive signage is generally the highway traveller on an extended trip. Visitor profiles show that significant portions of site users are older folk, so issues such as font size and colour contrast are important considerations. The three main considerations are visibility, legibility and readability. Visibility in this case refers to the distance at which the sign can be read. Readability refers to the complexity of the text and presentation method, while legibility refers to items such as font selection, size and colour contrast. In the review of the existing signage, a number of instances were noted where improvements could be made in design, presentation and text length.

4.4 Highway Interpretive Units

As visitors travel the Haines Road and Alaska Highway they encounter a number of different visual images that reflect the changing landscape. Depending on the travel direction, some landscape perspectives may not be readily apparent. The challenge is to identify dominant themes that maintain the travellers interest and provide a unified impression of the corridor as a complete driving experience. The key is finding the right number of simple, logical connecting themes.

Between Whitehorse and the Yukon/Alaska border, four main themes have been identified. Two themes have been identified involving the Haines Road connecting the coast to the interior. A description of the thematic units follows.

Takhini Valley

Between Whitehorse and Canyon Creek, the traveller is conscious of the broad flat valley of glacial lake Champagne. The conversion of land to agriculture is most apparent between Whitehorse and the Takhini Burn where evidence of the former burn is gradually disappearing. The conversion of aspen parkland to agricultural rangeland is expected to continue. West of this point, the aspen poplar forest gradually gives way to coniferous vegetation as the valley narrows.

The break point occurs near Canyon Creek as the visitor's line of sight is drawn to the approaching range of snow covered mountains.

Landscape in Motion

The image of this area is different depending on travel direction. For the westbound visitor, the dominant image is of the snow-capped mountains barring the way. The visitor descending from Bear Creek Summit is conscious of the community in the valley below and the open stands of sub alpine forest. The northbound visitor on the Haines Road is more conscious of the transition to the interior, the size of Dezadeash Lake and the aspen poplar forest. During the last 3 kilometers as the highway descends to the valley floor, the u-shaped Marshall Creek Pass and Paint Mountain frame the bowl formed by glacial Lake Alsek.

The land is still subject to movement with the meeting of three mountain ranges of different geological origin. The Coast Mountains are metamorphic, the St. Elias sedimentary and the Yukon Plateau of granite origin.

On the Haines Road, the boundary is near Klukshu and the natural drainage divide between coast and interior.

Climb to the Top

The dominant visitor direction is northbound with the traveller ascending out of the dense coastal forest, through the sub alpine, over the Chilkat Pass into the alpine. The transition is quite dramatic for the northbound traveller because of the significant change in elevation over a short distance. Southbound travellers are more conscious of a gentler climb as the landscape opens up and tree cover gives way to alpine meadows. The visitor is conscious of their proximity to wind, water and ice.

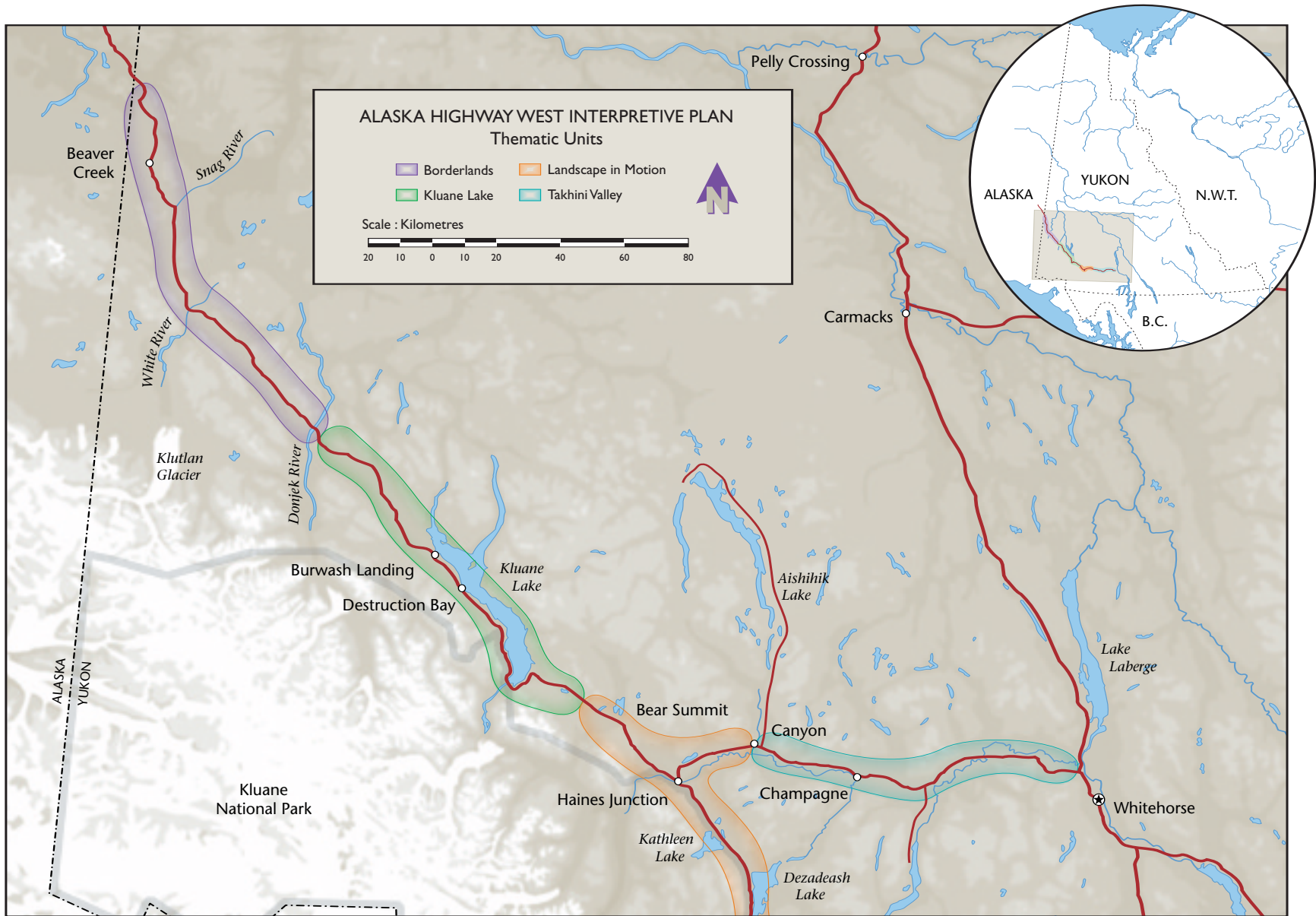
Kluane Lake

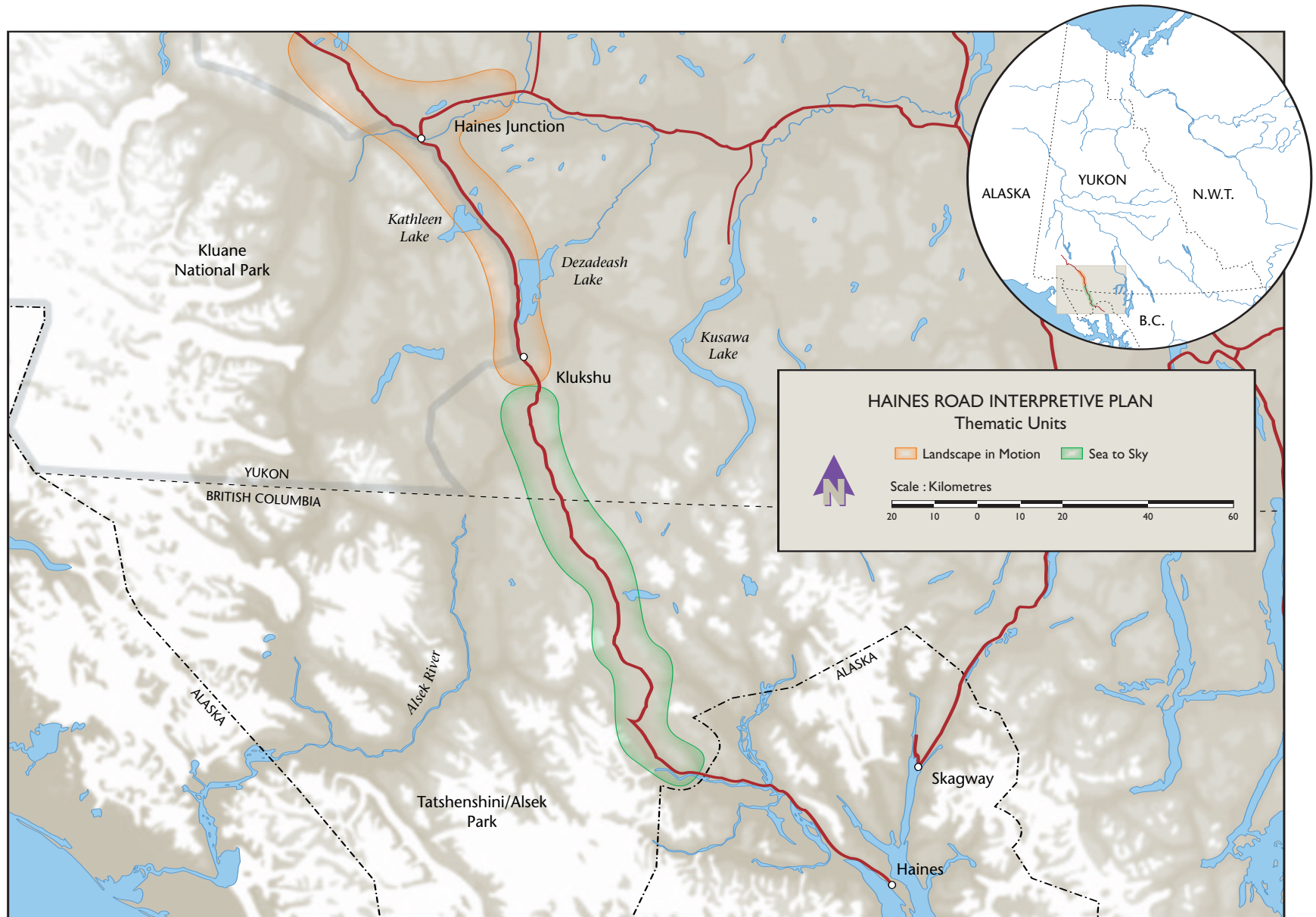
From Bear Summit to north of Burwash Landing, Kluane Lake is the dominant visual image as the highway winds its way around the west shoreline. The contrast, between the low rounded and dry hills of the Ruby Range and the sharp snow covered peaks of the St. Elias Mountains to the west, stands out. Approaching the Donjek River, the valley narrows again and the views become more confined. The rivers begin to parallel the road and wetlands and permafrost become more common images.

Borderlands

From the Donjek river north to the Yukon/Alaska border, the landscape gradually opens up into the Klondike Plateau that extends into the heart of Alaska. The effect of glaciation, extensive wetlands, low rounded hills and stunted stands of black spruce dominate the view in both directions. There is also an associated Beringia connection with plants at their southern and northern limits

At the White River, the highway also borders three ecoregions – the St. Elias Mountains, Ruby Range and Klondike Plateau.





4.5 Sign Types & Locations

The following chart contains a summary of sign and site development program recommendations for each site proposed for inclusion in the corridor plan. Signage themes are listed, along with the site's proposed function in the sign program hierarchy, and whether year round maintenance is anticipated. It is important to note that the program includes sites (both existing and proposed) that are

the responsibility of other governments and agencies. By implication this means Yukon Tourism will work with the agencies responsible to ensure the corresponding agency considers this plan's recommendations when making future development and site management decisions. The idea is to complement each other's initiatives and avoid duplication. As an example, this plan recommends Yukon Tourism not replace the Soldiers Summit

sign at Kluane Lake since it would duplicate Parks Canada's trail initiative across the road. Instead it suggests working with Parks Canada and C&TS to ensure that when the highway is reconstructed in this area, the two sites are linked together. This will improve safety and recognizes that the visitor taking the Soldiers Summit Trail is probably equally interested in getting down to the water's edge and learning more about Kluane Lake.

4.5.1 Signage Recommendations HAINES ROAD

Site	Location	Status	Themes	Recommended	Action
Seltat	km 87	◆	Road Construction and Maintenance / Landscape Transition	maintain, expand interpretation	◆
Haines Summit ¹	km 102/103		Chilkat Pass / Tlingit Travel Trade / Recreation	work with BC / outdoor community	★ ◆ ❄️
Nadahani Creek	km 108		Natural History / Glacier Access /	BC Parks / CAFN direction needed	★ ◆
Mule Creek	km 116.7		Modern Winter maintenance / Area and park Orientation	work with C&TS / BC Parks	★ ◆ ❄️
Mansfield Creek	km 134		Wetlands / Tatshenshini River Source / Ecoregion	work with BC Parks	★ ◆
Yukon / BC Border/ Blanchard River	km 145	◆	Welcome to the Yukon	leave border sign where it is & add a site	◆ ❄️
Tatshenshini River Overlook	km 152		Natural History / Geography	potential CHRS plaque location	◆
Pringle Tower	km 162	◆	Geography First Nation History Shāwshe	CAFN direction needed	◆ ❄️
Klukshu Wetlands	km 172		Wildlife Viewing	CAFN direction needed	★ ◆
St. Elias Trail	km 187	◆	Natural History / Gribbles Gulch Kluane NP Orientation	work with PC	◆
Dezadeash Lake	km 195	◆	Natural History	leave as is	◆ ❄️
Rock Glacier	km 202	◆	Natural History – Geology / Mtn Range Formation	work with PC	★ ◆
Kathleen River	km 221		Natural History – Rare Fish / Recreation Fisheries	work with RR	★ ◆
Unesco Plaque	km 226.5	◆	World Heritage / Natural Areas Protection	work with PC expand story	◆ ❄️
Haines Junction Overlook	km 242	◆	Area Orientation / Geography / Glaciation	work with Village / PC / CAFN	▲ ❄️
Dezadeash River Trail	km 244.5	◆	Natural History / CHRS Plaque	work with Village on access/maintenance	◆ ❄️

◆—Minor ◆—Major ▲—Regional ★—New ❖—Lapse ❄️—Winter maintenance required

¹ Winter maintenance will vary according to weather, snow load and equipment availability.

4.5.2 Signage Recommendations ALASKA HIGHWAY

Site	Location	Status	Themes	Recommended	Action	
Junction Alaska / Klondike Hwy	km 1487			Regional Orientation	design for north/west bound traffic with city of Whitehorse / C&TS	▲ ❄️
Takhini Crossing	km 1507	◆		Overland Trail / Overlook Mountain	expand interpretive content	◆ ❄️
Takhini Salt Flats	km 1524			Geomorphology / Vegetation / Natural History	develop once site protection measures in place	◆
Takhini Burn	km 1541	◆		Natural History / Geography / Fire	drop fire	◆ ❄️
Mendenhall Landing	km 1543	◆		Kluane Wagon Road	leave sign, upgrade pull-out	◆
Champagne	km 1568.5	◆		Highway Construction / Settlement	leave as is	◆
Champagne Bypass	km ?			Trails / Travel / Trade	work with CAFN to identify suitable site	★ ◆ ❄️
Canyon Creek	km 1604	◆		Bridge Construction / First Nation History / Bison	direction from CAFN on F.N. history	◆ ❄️
Marshall Creek	km 1622			Lake Alsek / Kluane National Park	build with highway reconstruction	★ ◆ ❄️
Haines Junction	km 1635	◆ ▲		Regional Orientation / Settlement	work with Village on access / site upgrades	▲ ◆ ❄️
Spruce Beetle Trail	km 1653	◆		Natural History	add warning signs, improve site ID sign	◆
Kluane Lake Overlook	km 1692	◆		History / Geography	drop ID sign	◆ ❄️
Sheep Mountain VRC	km 1707	◆ ▲		Park Orientation / Wildlife Viewing	maintain status quo	▲ ◆
Soldiers Summit Trail and Kluane Lake	km 1708.3	◆ ◆		Highway Construction / Geography / Silver City / Arctic Institute	plan both lakeside / trail access as part of road reconstruction	◆ ❄️
Destruction Bay	km 1743	◆		Highway Construction / Natural History	integrate with community signage	◆
Burwash Landing	km 1760	◆		Highway Construction / Settlement	integrate into museum outdoor display redevelopment	◆ ❄️
Kluane River	km 1785	◆		Natural & Cultural History / Wildlife Viewing	maintain as is	◆ ❄️
Lt. Small Memorial	km 1795	◆		Highway History	leave as is	◆
Icefield Ranges	km 1816	◆		Natural History / Geography / Donjek River		◆ ❄️
Pickhandle Lakes	km 1864	◆		Wildlife Viewing / Natural History / Traditional Land Use	review and maintain	◆
White River Bridge	km 1881			Geological History / First Nation Copper Trade	work with C&TS to build new site	★ ◆ ❄️
Dry Creek	km 1900			Chisana Gold Rush / First Nation Land Use / Reclamation / Permafrost	create day use area, add signage and infrastructure	◆ ❄️
Beaver Creek VRC	km 1934	◆		Highway Construction / Settlement	maintain as is	▲ ◆
Alaska / Yukon Border	km 1965	▲		Regional Orientation / Border Survey	redo Canadian panels	▲ ❄️

◆—Minor ◆—Major ▲—Regional ★—New ❄️—Lapse ❄️—Winter maintenance required

5.0 Implementation & Operations

5.1 Recommended Priorities

The recommended priorities consider deficiencies in the existing program, need for existing replacement, and in the case of the Alaska Highway, coordinating improvements with highway upgrades. Priorities are also influenced by outstanding projects identified in other completed plans, available program budgets and the potential for cost sharing.

In the case of those sites involving other jurisdictions, it is understood that the suggestions put forward in this plan do not imply a financial obligation on that jurisdiction to undertake the initiative proposed.

5.1.1 Alaska Highway West

The first priority is to develop a regional orientation site at the junction of the Alaska and Klondike highways because this is the major traffic divisional point. Also, both highways have a similar regional orientation need. At Champagne, the issue is determining whether a new site should be constructed as this stretch of road is reconstructed. Time is of the essence here and direction from the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations required. Replacing the Marshall Creek pullout also needs to be coordinated with highway reconstruction planning. Replacing the White River bridge site makes sense because of the range of potential interpretive topics that can be covered at this location. The development cost would be relatively modest as the site is very close to an existing gravel pit and little sub-base preparation would be required. The Donjek Bridge sign could also be re-created and moved to the nearby Icefield Ranges site. The Dry Creek site has already been developed and is just

missing the signage component. Given the size of the site, it is also worth discussing with Renewable Resources the possibility of developing a day-use site at this location. Second and third tier priorities reflect the complexity of the issue (e.g. junction Alaska/North Klondike highways), the amount of time left in the existing sign, the level of known use, or degree of co-operation required with other agencies.

5.1.2 Haines Road

The Haines Road situation is a bit more complicated because of the limited amount of existing signage and jurisdictional issues. The Haines Summit is a very important site and one with particular long-standing maintenance problems. Mule Creek is an opportunity to focus infrastructure support needs at one location and provide an overview of a larger area without taking away from the general wilderness objectives behind the establishment of Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park.

Sign Plan Implementation Priorities

Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3
Alaska Highway West		
Jct Alaska/Klondike Hwy	Takhini Crossing	Mendenhall Landing
Champagne Cutoff**	Marshall Creek—PC	Takhini Salt Flats
Canyon Creek		Kluane Lake
White River Bridge		
Dry Creek		
Haines Road		
Haines Summit***	Blanchard River***	Mansfield Creek***
Mule Creek***	Kathleen River—RR, PC	Klukshu Wetlands
Pringle Tower*		UNESCO site—PC
Seltat		Nadahani Creek***
Haines Jctn. Overlook		Tatshenshini Overlook***—V

NOTES: Implementation coordinated with each affected First Nation

* work with CAFN

** coordinate with road construction

*** work with CAFN/BC Parks/

Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Board

V—potential CHRS Tatshenshini Plaque site

PC—coordinate with Parks Canada

RR—coordinate with Renewable Resources

The Pringle Tower site infrastructure is in place and the task remaining is working out panel content with the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations. The Tatshenshini River overlook was identified as a suitable site for the Canadian Heritage Rivers plaque. Kathleen River offers an opportunity for several agencies to work together including Renewable Resources and Parks Canada. It is also an opportunity to improve site management since this is a very popular angling location. Sites such as Nadahani Creek and Mansfield Creek need to be considered in the context of the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park Management Plan. Between Klukshu and Haines Junction, where the highway borders the national park, a number of existing Parks Canada

sites and several existing pullouts can be incorporated into the program. Enhancing roadside interpretation at these sites reduces development costs, prevents duplication of interpretive messages and provides economies for all the agencies involved. Parks Canada has indicated interest in working with the Government of Yukon and Champagne & Aishihik First Nations to explore these possibilities.

The Haines Junction Overlook could supplement the existing regional orientation site by the “Muffin” and be developed with the Village of Haines Junction to meet local business needs as well.



5.2 Talking Signs

Visitor radio has been discontinued in the region with one exception at Haines Junction. In the winter, travellers can receive weather bulletins and information on Haines Road conditions. Placing a transmitter at a location such as Mule Creek might be an alternative to more formal site development.

There are two talking signs on the Alaska Highway East while Parks Canada has installed a “stop and listen” sign at the Soldiers Summit Trail commemoration site. The Kluane First Nation has expressed interest in seeing more types of “stop and listen” signs used, noting that the dialogue could be geared to younger listeners and is more in keeping with the oral history tradition of First Nations people.

It is not clear whether visitors see and recognize the talking sign symbol. The symbol used is based on a symbol commonly used in the United States, and should be familiar to many, but not all, highway travellers. To date, there is no tracking mechanism in place to determine the effectiveness of this form of signage. A question in the next Visitor’s Exit Survey could determine what percentage of visitors are seeing the symbol and/or hearing the broadcast. Until the effectiveness of this method of interpretive communication is confirmed, it would be premature to invest further in the use of this technology.

5.3 Directional Signage



Major site advance warning sign, 2km



6.0 Sign Design Concepts

The Government of Yukon has implemented a new advance warning signage program using standard signage formats and spacing intervals. Advance warning directional signage is provided at a 2km and 250 m interval to provide travellers with adequate time to slow down, identify the type of interpretive opportunity ahead and turn off the highway safely. A directional arrow tab is included on the 250 m sign to indicate which side of the road the site is on.

The use of standard symbols has been encouraged, with a camera indicating a point of interest and binoculars to indicate a wildlife viewing site. Until these symbols become universally recognized, it is useful to include a word bar as illustrated below at the first few sites when travellers enter the Yukon.

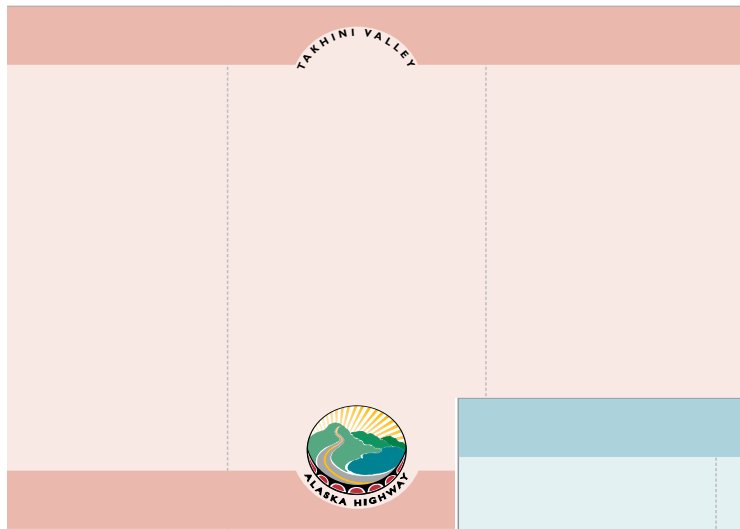
C&TS has adopted a standard rest area sign identification policy that applies to major rest area sites, which are spaced at approximately 80km intervals. These sites will be maintained year-round and may have multiple users including truckers. At such sites, the 250 m warning sign includes the distance

to the next rest area. Wherever possible, the standard rest area signage should be used.

In the case of those sites developed primarily for interpretive purposes, either the camera or binocular symbol should be used at 2km with the same symbol and a directional arrow tab at the 250m mark. Major sites will have a larger sign at the 2km point, which identifies the name of the site with services available indicated by symbol tabs.

It is suggested that both Parks Canada and the Government of British Columbia (BC Parks) adopt the same advance warning format for consistency.





6.1.4 Typical panel design elements

Motif copy text style: *Gill Sans Bold*

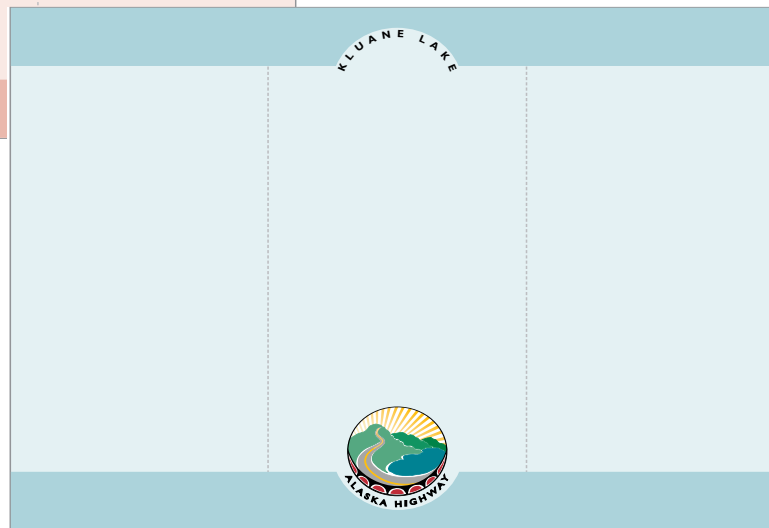
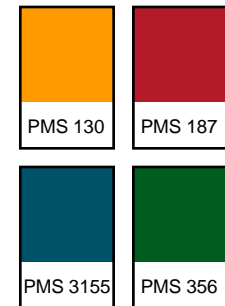
Motif Image size: 15 x 12 cm

Panel Colours: Backgrounds are 10% and top and bottom bars are 30% of pallet colours for all but PMS 130, which is 20% and 40% respectively. All colours bleed off all edges. Takhini panel bar prints PMS 187, Kluane Lake panel prints PMS 3155, Borderlands panel prints PMS 130.

Panel text sizes: Headlines range from 90-128 point; body size is 30-36 point.

Panel text colour: Designers must choose text colours that take into account the characteristics of their intended audience, ambient light conditions and good design sense in general. Black text is recommended.

Colour Pallet

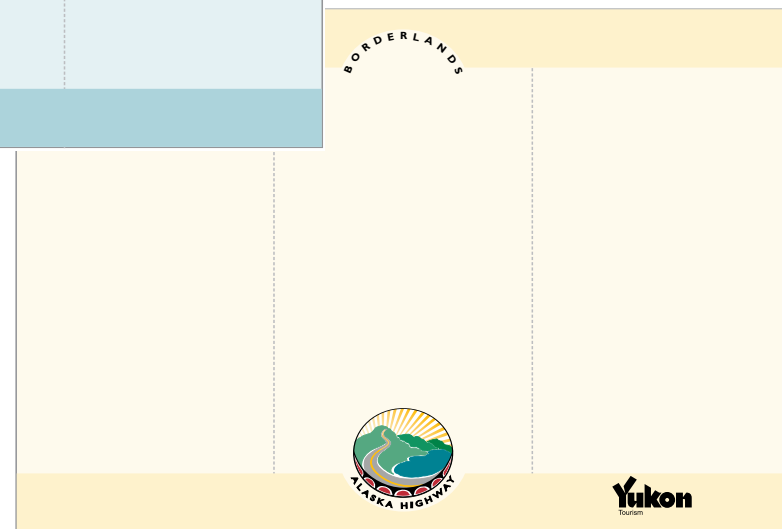


6.1.3 Materials and Uses

The corridor image together with a colour bar is intended to act as an anchor for individual panels, whether 3M vinyl, porcelain enamel or other forms that may be digitally created. A three-column format is proposed, with image placement, header and footer bars positioned as illustrated.

While the image would not change for each thematic unit, corresponding background colour washes do. In each case, the thematic unit name would appear in a curved “bump” that reflects the curve of the corridor image.

The Yukon Government wordmark with “Tourism” signature will be located on the substrate of the dominant panel within a grouping of panels. In the case of a lone panel, it may be centred at the bottom of the third column, as illustrated to the right.



At present, Parks Canada uses the standard “beaver” symbol which is ineffective in this situation because the traveller passes by the national park rather than through it.

6.1 Alaska Highway

The approach taken in developing a graphic image for the Alaska Highway, is to consolidate all thematic units into a cohesive whole. In previous highway interpretive plans, different icons have been proposed and developed for each thematic unit along a corridor. This proliferation of icons is beginning to hinder rather than enhance the program simply by their number. A traveller may become confused rather than enlightened.

6.1.1 Corridor Identity Image

The same graphic image adopted for the Alaska Highway East is recommended here. The only part that changes is the title line at the top of the icon, representing the specific section within the Highway corridor in which the icon is being used.

The image captures the main themes of water, mountains and First Nation history. The entire

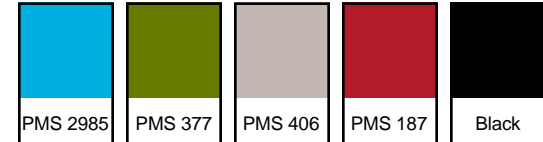
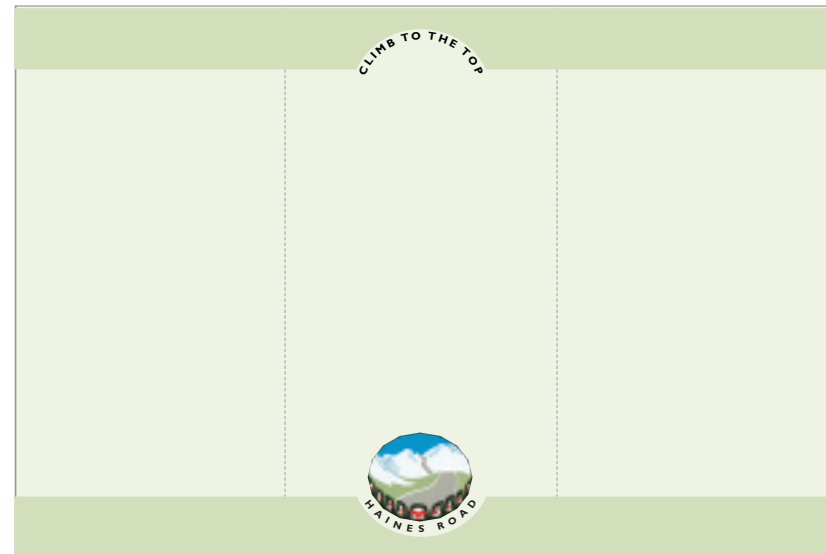


image is a self-contained oval shape, like a jewel or small window overlooking an idyllic scene. That the landscape is the homeland of First Nations is suggested by the stylized border device of traditional First Nations motifs. Thus, the land can be seen to be anchored within a First Nations context.

6.1.2 Colours



A colour pallet for the image, based on the Pantone Colour Matching System (PMS), consists of a bright yellow (PMS 130), green in three shades (PMS 356) earthy red (PMS 187), and a blue (PMS 3155). The greens and blue are representative of the water and forests of the corridor, the yellow of the historic search for gold and the red (and black) is representative of the First Nations along the corridor.

6.2 Haines Road

Two concepts for a Haines Road icon were prepared and circulated for comment. Both reflected a transportation theme, with one suggesting a modern highway and the other a historical trail. There was no clear consensus on which version was most suitable though there is general agreement that the icon used should be applicable to the whole corridor.

The image presented below and the rationale behind it is intended to facilitate further discussion and design of an icon that will capture the essence of the Haines Road reflecting the interests of all parties. The concept presented below encompasses the image of a modern highway climbing over glacial mountains. The image presents the viewer with a perspective of the highway as it appears near the summit. The highway climbs out of the vegetation towards the pass winding its way up through the mountains. The steepness of the road reinforces the title of this interpretive unit “Climb to the Top” giving the viewer a sense of the stark, dramatic alpine landscape. The perspective has resonance for both north-to south and south-to-north travellers although the climb is more dramatic for the northbound traveller because the climb is steeper and over a shorter distance. The presence of the Chilkat Tlingit and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations is represented by the patterns of an eagle’s wings and choice of red and black colours. The eagle is a common sight along the corridor and is a recognized symbol expressed in both First Nation cultures. Placing the First Nation component at the base of the icon evokes the relationship of First Nations to the land and their presence before the road existed.

In creating a final motif it is important to keep the image simple because the logo itself is quite small when placed on the sign. The logo stays the same

on all panels while the interpretive unit title in the header changes to reflect the section of highway in which the sign is located.

6.2.1 Colours

A colour pallet has been chosen for the image to reflect the natural colours found in the environment, plus the red & black First Nations motif. The pallet consists of sky blue (PMS 2985), soft green (PMS 377), pavement gray (PMS 406), earthy red (PMS 187), and black.

Colour Pallet

6.2.2 Typical panel design elements

Haines Road panels follow the same pattern as those for the Alaska Highway West. Background colours are 10% PMS 377 and top and bottom bars are 30% PMS 377. All colour elements bleed.