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MENU

CENTURIES OF TRAVEL ON THE DAVIE TRAIL

June 6, 2016

Kaska Dena First Nations refer to their ancestral use of the **Davie Trail** as ‘**The Trail of The Ancient Ones**’. Its name honours David Braconnier, the founding chief of the Kaska community at Fort Ware.

The 330 km route from Fort Ware north to Lower Post in the Yukon links “two modern Kaska settlements and several ancient ones. The Davie Trail, lying withing the greater Rocky Mountain Trench, is **postulated as one of the southward migration corridors for settlement of North America in the vicinity of 10,000 – 14,000 years ago**... South of Fort Ware, the Davie Trail once extended to Fort Graham and connected to Hudson’s Hope. In all likelihood, it also extended down the Parsnip River.” [1]

“Numerous Aboriginal or ‘native walking’ trails ...laced through the valleys and passes of the northern Rockies. Archaeological evidence indicates that some of these trails may well be thousands of years old. These trails were a vital connection between families and communities, and between hunting and gathering areas for the original inhabitants of the land.” [2]

Many mineral prospectors have explored the region since 1861, when gold was discovered on the Parsnip, Finlay, and Peace Rivers. **When gold was found in paying quantities in the Yukon in 1897 and prospectors surged northward, the federal government commissioned the Northwest Mounted Police to find a passable trail from Edmonton to the Yukon, and to police the route.**

With First Nation guides identifying most of the route, Inspector J.D. Moodie of the NWMP led the trail-building initiative in 1897. “After another trail clearing venture undertaken in 1906 and 1907 by Superintendent Charles Constantine of the NWMP, the trail was used and patrolled by the NWMP for almost another 10 years. **Since that time, some sections of the trail have continued to be used** by First Nation communities for travel and subsistence; by adventurers, most notably Charles Bedaux, Mary Gibson Henry, and Fredrick Vreeland; by a famous geographical surveyor for the BC Lands Department, Frank Swannell; by trappers; by hunters; and, by members of the recreating public.” [2]

FURTHER READING

- [1] Gunderson, 2000. **Management plan continuation for the Southern Davie Trail with historical background** (Vol. II). Prepared by North West Environmental Group Ltd. for the Kaska Dena Council.
- [2] Mills, D. 2008. **Documenting and Interpreting the History and Significance of the North West Mounted Police Peace-Yukon Historic Trails**. Report prepared for the Northern Interior Region Inter-Agency Management Committee (NIR IAMC); North Peace Historical Society; and the Halfway River First Nation.

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ONE THOUGHT ON “CENTURIES OF TRAVEL ON THE DAVIE TRAIL”

BILL PIFER August 21, 2018 at 3:13 pm

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I worked with an outfitter on the west side of the Ketchika for 13 years. Had lots of travel by horse on some very old trails and explored old trails that were no longer in use, often wondering where they led.

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