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June 20, 2018



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# 1 Acknowledgement

The City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee recognizes that the municipality is located within the traditional territory of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN). The Committee thanks the YKDFN for their continued partnership in the development of the Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan.

# 2 Introduction

The City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee recently developed a 5-Year Strategic Plan with the following vision: *The Heritage Committee provides stewardship of Yellowknife’s unique and diverse heritage through advice and actions focused on preserving heritage resources, celebrating inclusive histories, supporting heritage-related tourism and economic development, and identifying new ways of sharing our stories.*

The Strategic Plan consists of four strategic themes, one being “Sharing a more inclusive story of Yellowknife’s identity and heritage.” The Heritage Committee conducted a number of significant initiatives over the past few years including a bus tour focusing on Yellowknives Dene oral history, sponsoring an interactive moose hide tanning workshop in Somba K’e Park with Indigenous partner organizations (see Figure 1), and encouraging funding submissions for projects with a focus on Indigenous heritage and history. Additionally, Council has made changes to the structure of the Heritage Committee to include a designated seat for a representative from the YKDFN.

**Figure 1 – Dene Nahjo’s Moose Hide Tanning Workshop in Somba K’e Civic Plaza**



Building on these initiatives, the Heritage Committee has embarked upon an ambitious Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan to visibly recognize locations significant to the rich history of the Yellowknives Dene.

By engaging the YKDFN as a partner and adopting a collaborative approach to research and implementation, the Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan will support Council's Goals & Objectives, as well as the work of reconciliation more broadly. The Plan supports Council Goals of strong stakeholder engagement, supporting downtown revitalization, and strengthening the economy through place-based tourism opportunities.

### 3 What do we mean by 'Intercultural' and 'Placemaking'

The development of the Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan in Yellowknife involves collaboration with Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) in order to reflect the indigenous history and cultural values in our community.

The development of the Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan is one way to work toward reconciliation with the YKDFN and build a mutual relationship in the spirit of harmony. The term 'intercultural' for the purposes of this plan means more than recognizing the indigenous history of Yellowknife; it is about celebrating Dene culture and building relationships with one another through cross-cultural dialogue and interaction.

'Placemaking' is a tool used to connect people to places. The purpose of Placemaking is to reinvigorate public spaces by connecting people to their community through a collaborative process to discover significant cultural values and activities in a given place.

### 4 Signage & Plaque Design

The adoption of an Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan takes a collaborative approach to sharing the stories about Yellowknife's past. The planned signage will incorporate elements from both the City of Yellowknife branding as well as the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) cultural symbols. The design for signage will include the layout and text from recognizable sign formats, while incorporating traditional symbols, art work or other images from local Dene culture (See Figure 2). Similarly, where bronze plaques are installed, the City of Yellowknife's Heritage Committee logo will be accompanied side-by-side by elements of Dene design.

The historical content has been developed by experts in the history and traditions of local Dene people working in collaboration with Indigenous leaders and elders. By telling these stories in the manner that reflects their true meaning and living history, all residents and visitors to Yellowknife

have an opportunity to expand their knowledge and forge more authentic intercultural connections.

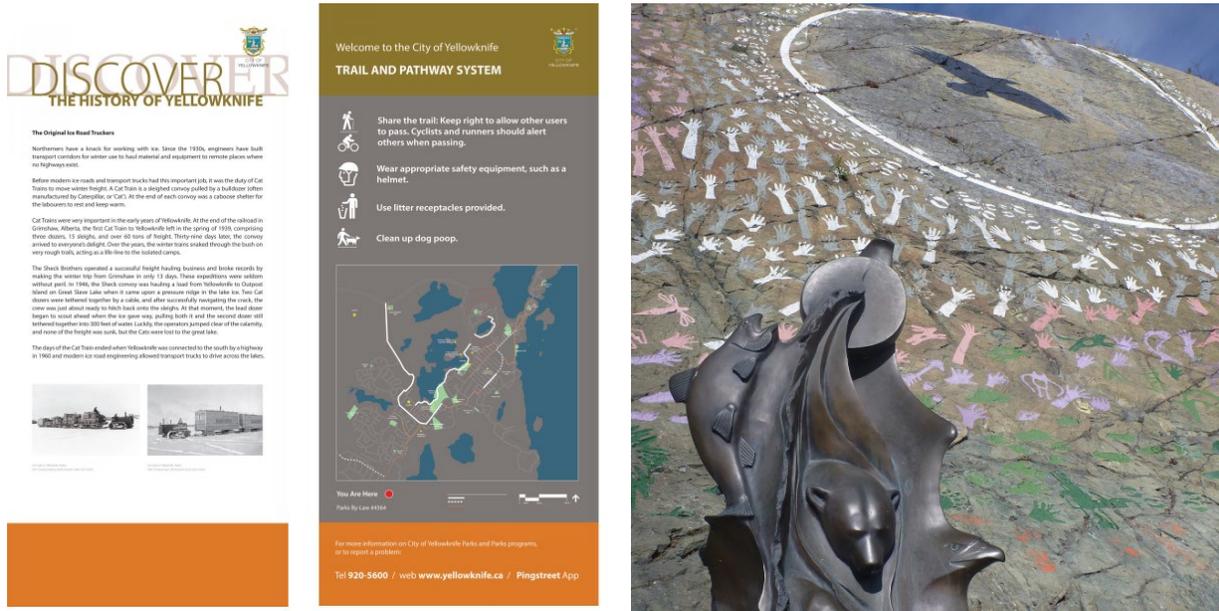


Figure 2 – A signature design blending recognizable City of Yellowknife graphics with iconic images from Indigenous traditions of the Yellowknife area

## 5 Featured Locations

The locations and projects described here have been developed through engagement with stakeholders from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN), various City Divisions, and the City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee. Final site plan and installation details will be determined by operational requirements.

## 5.1 Back Bay Cemetery

The Back Bay Cemetery, a Designated Heritage Resource, has archaeological, cultural, and spiritual significance to Dene peoples within the Akaitcho Territory. Oral histories tell of long-distance winter travel passing by this area from the nearby Indigenous communities, through Yellowknife Bay. Since then, this site became Yellowknife’s first cemetery, and the final resting place of many of its pioneering residents.



Figure 3 - Entrance to Back Bay Cemetery (Photo Credit: David Finch)

The cemetery is located on the land within a head lease subleased to the Yellowknife Ski Club, and is designated “Withdrawn Lands” under the Akaitcho Interim Land Withdrawal Agreement. Due to the solemn and sensitive nature of the site, the City will continue to consult with both the YKDFN and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to determine the significance of the area to the YKDFN and its importance as an archaeological site. Currently, only a small sign indicates “Back Bay Cemetery”, with no information on its historical significance.

Due to its cultural significance, low impact signage is proposed. The details of the signage will be confirmed through consultation with stakeholders, and will reflect equally the significance of the site to local Dene and to newcomers. Proposed signage will be located away from grave sites.

## 5.2 Sacred Tree



Figure 4 – Photo of the Sacred Tree

This area situated near the mouth of the Yellowknife River has exceptional value to the Yellowknives Dene. According to Dene oral history, this is a sacred site where Yamozhà, a legendary Dene medicine man, chased a giant beaver down the river, pushed aside a beaver dam and planted his snow shovel in the beaver lodge. This "snow shovel" is the sacred tree on the western banks of the river, and to this day the Yellowknives Dene pay their ancestors respect and wish for a safe journey up river at this tree.

Through ongoing collaboration, leaders from the YKDFN and the Heritage Committee have agreed to jointly support an initiative to honour this site. To ensure its identification and security, an interpretive plaque will be installed on the east bank of the Yellowknife River in the existing Yellowknife River day-use picnic area.

### 5.3 Hank Koenen Park

Located on historic Back Bay, Hank Koenen Park is Yellowknife's newest waterfront node park. Yellowknife's Back Bay is a literal and figurative meeting place of people and cultures. This is the traditional land of the Wìlìideh people, descendants of the Tsetsóqt'iné ("metal people") who, after the mid-1800s, intermarried with the Tłjchq̓ (Dogrib), their western neighbours. Back Bay connected important travel routes including Wìlìideh (Yellowknife River), Jackfish Draw, and Wìlìideh Cheh (Yellowknife Bay) and points within this heartland of Indigenous cultures before fur traders and prospectors began to arrive on its rocky shores.



Figure 5 - Back Bay (NWT Archives G-1995-001-5512)

More recently, Back Bay also served as one of the original floatplane landing and docking areas for early settlers to Yellowknife, and remains an active aerodrome to this day. Indeed, the namesake of Hank Koenen Park was a legendary aviator in his own right. An honored veteran of World War II, Koenen flew in excess of sixty flights across the north and south Atlantic ferrying aircraft to be used against the Axis powers in North Africa. After the war, Koenen came to Yellowknife where he flew for Eldorado Mining and for Max Ward before forming his own air charter company, Koenen's Air Service, which he operated until about 1980, when he retired.

The Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan recognizes the rich history that Back Bay has played as a hub for transportation. Through the intercultural interpretation at Hank Koenen Park, this living heritage will be made accessible for all to enjoy.

## 5.4 Weaver's Drive & Portage

Located at the foot of “the Rock”, Yellowknife’s original downtown, this narrow stretch of land served as a key link for winter travel between the Yellowknife River, Back Bay and destinations to the east of Yellowknife Bay. Before the construction of the McMeekan Causeway and installation of hydroelectric generation facilities in the Yellowknife River, winter water currents between Old Town and Latham Island made this narrow land bridge an ideal portage route and camp site. This portage location eventually became an important site for commerce with the opening of Weaver & Devore’s Trading Post, which remains in operation by descendants of its original proprietors to this day.

As a significant site in the pre- and post-settlement history of Yellowknife, and a popular destination for visitors, the history of Weaver’s Drive and Portage will be recognized through the installation of an interpretive sign.



Figure 6 – Yellowknife Corona Inn Weaver and Devore (N-2002-002-0585)

## 5.5 Downtown near 50<sup>th</sup> Street



Figure 7 - Downtown Yellowknife (1993) (NWT Archives N-2009-006: 0065)

Yellowknife's Downtown has long been a meeting place and place of productivity. Long before offices and shops brought people here to conduct the business of the NWT's capital city, the area located "up the hill" from seasonal Dene camps along the shore of Yellowknife Bay was known as an abundant place for hunting and gathering food. Blueberries were found between Franklin Avenue and School Draw Road, and moose would often be found in wetlands within the area.

As the centre of public life in Yellowknife, our downtown continues to be the central meeting place of cultures, businesses, and government. As busy Yellowknifers travel to and from workplaces, restaurants, and shops, the recognition of the original use of this area will remind residents of what downtown Yellowknife looked like before its current landscape of roads and buildings.

## **5.6 “Raven” Sculpture at Raccine Park**

Deleted by Heritage Committee motion February 18, 2021.

## 5.7 Map of Featured Locations



## 6 Appendix A: Implementation Action Plan

The Intercultural Heritage & Placemaking Plan will foster an ongoing partnership with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN). The Plan will incorporate an annual review to provide an opportunity to review accomplishments and expand on the initiatives listed herein. The featured locations were identified through the plan making process whereas the future locations were identified during the review stage of the plan and require further coordination with the YKDFN. Resources for the Plan implementation will be identified through the City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee Reserve Fund, pending Council approval. The expected timeframe for completing the initiatives is 2018-onwards, subject to Heritage Committee direction and staff timelines. This Appendix will be updated annually through the City's Heritage Committee and presented to Council through the appropriate Standing Committee.

**Table 1 – Implementation Framework**

Featured Locations		Suggested Time Frame		Partners	Financial
		2019*	2020		
1	Back Bay Cemetery	✓		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Yellowknife</li> <li>YKDFN</li> </ul>	City of Yellowknife Heritage Reserve Fund
2	Sacred Tree	✓			
3	Hank Koenen Park	✓			
4	Weaver's Drive & Portage	✓			
5	Downtown near 50 <sup>th</sup> Street	✓			
6	Raven Sculpture at Raccine Park	✓			
Future Locations		Suggested Time Frame		Partners	Financial
		2019	2020		
7	Pilots Monument		✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Yellowknife</li> <li>YKDFN</li> </ul>	Re-visit City of Yellowknife Heritage Budget and/or Reserve Fund
8	Caribou Migration routes (sand pits)		✓		
9	Willow Flats		✓		
10	Former Creek (location not yet identified)		✓		

\*Pending workload and staffing, efforts will be made to begin the project in 2018

