

**DONUTS AND SILVER DOLLARS
THE LIFE OF CAPTAIN FRANK SLIM**

by

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B.A. Simon Fraser University, 1994

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the life story of Captain Frank Slim, a Yukon First Nations person of Southern Tutchone, Tagish and Tlingit ancestry who lived between 1898 and 1973. Frank Slim was my grandfather. He not only played an important role in my family's life, but he played a significant and largely untold role in the history of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon in general. Born in the era of the Klondike Gold Rush, his life mirrors the changes experienced by Yukon people during the first half of the twentieth century, but also shows the way our people continued to live on the land as part of a mixed economy. Significantly, in order to earn his captain's papers as a pilot of Yukon River sternwheelers, Frank Slim had to surrender his Indian status, a circumstance that shaped his legal and personal identity. My description of Frank Slim's life is based on my own memories, interviews with relatives, in particular my mother, Virginia Lindsay, and written records. Besides throwing light on events in the life of Frank Slim, I see this thesis as contributing to our understanding of the role of men in twentieth century Yukon history, and an anthropological approach to the construction of "life stories" as opposed to "life histories" of individuals, given my own connection to Frank Slim and Yukon First Nations.

Keywords: Yukon First Nations, life history



Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom, Virginia Lindsay and to my grandfather, Captain Frank Slim. I would like to thank my dad Richard Joseph (Joe) Lindsay for remembering his stories about Frank Slim. My grandfather was the dearest man I ever met in my entire life. I loved him unconditionally, and I know he felt the same way about me. He may have had a different relationship with other family members, but this thesis is about how I saw him and what I remember about the man I called grandpa.

I also dedicate this to my brothers and sisters, Owen Campbell Lindsay and his family, Joanne Ruth McDougall and her family; to Gordon Mark Lindsay and his family; and lastly to Maxine Diane Lindsay and her family. I also dedicate this to all those family members and elders who have since passed on, especially Sophie and Don Miller. I leave this story as a legacy of Frank Slim for his great-grand children who unfortunately did not know him personally. I dedicate this to all First Nation Yukoners who have stood proud in the face of adversity and discrimination and who still make the Yukon what it is today. I also want to leave this thesis as a record of my own genealogy for my two beautiful girls Ashley Lindsay Dillman and Nicole Patricia Dillman so they can continue to be proud of their heritage.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my husband Randy Dillman and my daughters Ashley and Nicole for their encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my family, especially my mother Virginia Lindsay, for letting me record her memories of her life at Lake Laberge. I would like to thank my dear cousins Anne Bach and Margaret Anderson of Coquitlam B.C. who let me stay with them while I took my graduate courses at Simon Fraser University. I would like to thank Uncle Tony Lindsay and his wife Auntie Corene Lindsay for being an inspiration to me during my university schooling years.

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PROLOGUE



Figure 1: Captain Frank Slim

During my high school days in the early 1970's my grandfather Frank Slim was a resident at McCauley Lodge, a home for seniors, and I would visit him during my lunch break. He would tell me stories; he would tell me about his work and what his plans were. I am not sure how it came up, but one day I asked him if he would ever leave me. He promised me he would not. He passed away on September 6, 1973, which made me question the truth of his promise.

On September 24, 1975 my brother and I were in an automobile accident on the Alaska Highway at Crestview. I remember seeing the truck coming for me, and then I remember waking up and frantically asking where my brother was. He

was not in the front passenger side where he had been. I was informed by someone that he was alright. He was lying outside in the ditch and the newspapers I had been delivering were strewn all over the place. I did not feel that anything was wrong to begin with, until I heard someone say "look, her leg is almost off". I felt down and then realized that my leg was badly broken. It was then that I felt pain. I realized quite quickly that I was pinned in the car because the engine was on my lap. I remember feeling raw bone, thinking that this must be very serious. By this point there were several people around, and the police and ambulance had just arrived. I am not sure who was there but I do remember being very apprehensive about the authorities informing my dad that I was in this accident. I knew my car insurance was in his name and I thought he would be very upset. I think I remember the policeman asking me who I was and what my phone number was and me saying not to call my parents because I thought I would be fine. I was unaware at the time, that the police and ambulance attendants thought I might die and that was why they wanted to call my parents. They wanted pertinent information while I was still coherent. I'm not sure what went on from the time the police and ambulance attendants arrived until I heard my mom and dad beside the car talking to me. I remember hearing my mom outside crying and a jack haul was put in the front driver side of the car to lift the engine so I could be freed. The jack haul latch was broken, so each time they latched it on it would fall and I would howl with pain. Sitting there, I remembered that when my grandfather had passed away, his face felt very waxy when I went to kiss him goodbye. My own face was beginning to feel waxy and I knew then

that I might die. I wanted to shut my eyes, but the ambulance driver had told my dad not to let me go to sleep. My dad was asking me these ridiculous questions like "What's your name? When is your birthday?" and his questions make me very mad. This, I learned later, was what they wanted. They wanted to make me mad so that I would initiate a fight from within me to live and so I would not go to sleep. I did, however, manage to shut my eyes for a couple of minutes and when I did, a wonderful warm feeling came over me--almost like being hugged with one of those warm blankets that the hospital keeps in the warming oven. I felt so warm and wonderful and I was beginning to relax when I heard a voice say "You are going to be fine, just fine, and remember I said I would never leave you". My grandfather was the only person who had ever said that to me. I opened my eyes after this "spiritual connection", as one might call it. I was told by who I thought was the spirit of my grandfather that I would be fine. I began to feel I would get better and was very eager now go get out of the car and get to the hospital. Before this encounter I had been very tired and uncooperative and now I was yelling at the fire department and ambulance drivers to get me out of there because I was going to be alright. I knew then that my grandfather had never really left me. I knew then that although my grandfather had left the physical world, his spirit would always be with me.



Figure 2: Frank Slim in Vancouver in the late 1950s

Although I was born in Edmonton, I have always felt a deep and strong connection to the Yukon. My mother was single when she had me, and in those days women were looked on with disdain if they became pregnant out of wedlock. She had originally gone to Edmonton to put me up for adoption, but in the end she could not do it. My mother returned with me to the Yukon, and I lived with my mom's parents at Lake Laberge for two years before my mom's mother passed away from cancer. I do not remember the time I spent with my grandparents but do know that they cared for me a lot. I was told that I broke my arm when I was two and my grandfather and grandmother rushed me to Whitehorse from Pelly Crossing where my grandfather was running the ferry

boat. This was a considerable drive for them but they were more concerned for me than about the distance from Whitehorse to Pelly. I also stayed with other family members because my mother was working.



Figure 3: Grandma Aggie Slim

I became very attached to my grandfather Frank Slim. We seemed to have a spiritual connection in a way that was hard to explain. He was a part of some of my most cherished memories. He would call me his money, which is “a-donna” the word for “my money” in Tlingit. We lived in an area in Whitehorse called the shipyards until we moved to Porter Creek, which is a subdivision of Whitehorse. We lived in the shipyards for six years, in the small house my grandfather had once owned. The shipyards were where the huge sternwheelers were maintained and were stored off season. My grandfather had given his house to my mom when she got married. A couple of years ago, this house, which was supposed to be saved when all the other houses were torn down in the shipyards was also torn down because of a lack of communication between

the City and the demolition workers. After my mom married she went on to have four more children two boys and two girls. We did not celebrate Christmas but I remember my grandfather buying me gifts. When I was about five or six he bought me a doll from the Hudson's Bay Company department store that was as big as I was. I attended Whitehorse Elementary until grade 5.

I moved from the shipyards to Porter Creek when I was eight. Porter Creek is a subdivision within Whitehorse about three to four miles from downtown Whitehorse. I was the oldest of five children and my youngest sister was a newborn when we moved. I continued to attend Whitehorse Elementary because the school in Porter Creek had burnt down. The elementary school reopened in Porter Creek in 1968 when I was in grade 6. My grandfather would sometimes visit us in Porter Creek and spend the night. He had a cot down stairs. I think it was hard for him to visit regularly because Porter Creek was about three miles from downtown and he did not own a vehicle at the time. When I was in the eighth grade, all the students were bussed to F.H. Collins High School, one of the two high schools in the Whitehorse area. I attended that school until I graduated grade twelve. I could hardly wait to get out of school and leave home. I was at that age where teenagers think they know everything and seem to be invincible.

My grandfather passed away when I was in grade ten and the loss was very devastating for me. He was the one person who loved me unconditionally. He sided with me during disputes with my mom and was always happy to see me. I had graduated from school in June of 1975 and my car accident happened

that September. At this point all my dreams and aspirations of leaving home vanished. It took me several years to come to terms with my injury, which I am still dealing with today. In January of 2007 I had my left leg removed below the knee.

When I was in high school I still loved to visit my grandfather. By this time he was drinking on a regular basis. His drinking did not bother me in any way. Most of my family has been affected by alcohol in some way, but my mom and dad sheltered me and my brothers and sisters from it. My mother never drank and my dad had the occasional beer. I only have a vague recollection of my uncle drinking but he had been sober for so long now that I do not know exactly when he quit.

We were very close to my mother's side of the family. On weekends we would go to the lake (Lake Laberge) to visit my grandmother's sisters and brothers who in the Tlingit and Southern Tutchone way were also my grandparents.

When my biological grandmother was alive she lived across the lake from the highway in the summer and on the highway side of the lake in the winter. The name of the community on the Klondike Highway was called Horse Creek, and there was always something happening down there. They were cutting or smoking fish all the time it seemed. My mother's, aunts, Grandma Celia and Grandma Alice, were kind gentle ladies who always had tea ready on the stove. They were always trying to feed us. They would offer us dried meat and fish or whatever they were cooking that might have been caught or snared that morning.

My mom, I think, had a special relationship with her aunts because she was nine years younger than the next youngest sibling, and was considered the baby of the family.

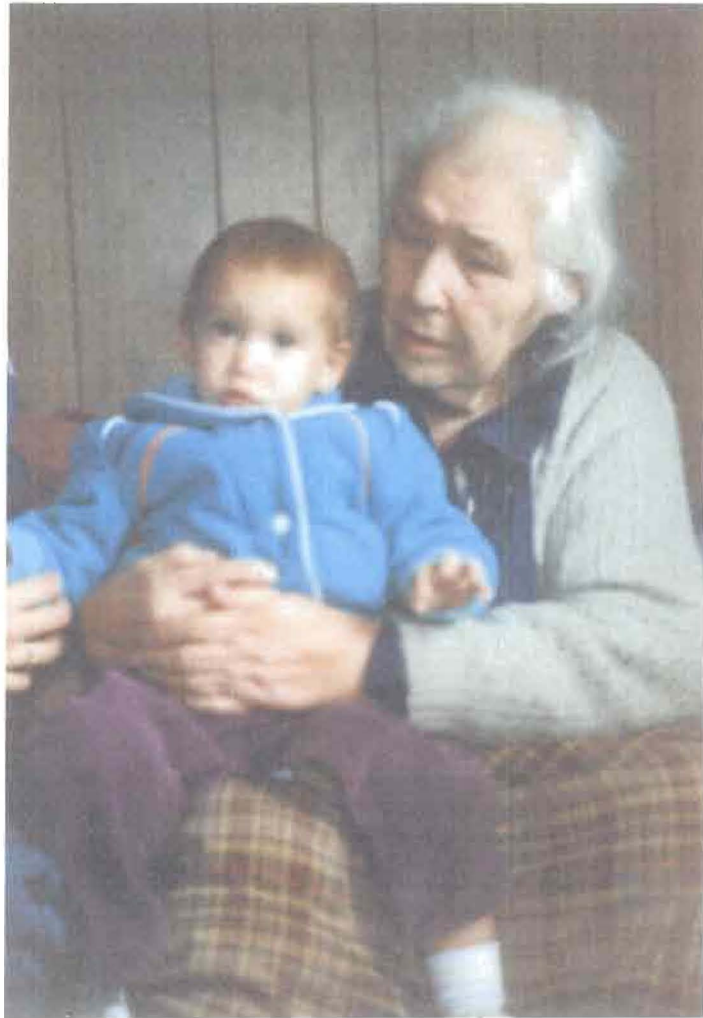


Figure 4: Grandma Celia and Ashley



Figure 5: Grandma Alice and Nikki

At the lake we used to go trapping for gophers, which was one of the main sources of food for my grandparents. Gophers were snared then put in the fire so all the hair singed off. They were delicious. They tasted like chicken, and all parts of the gopher were consumed. We would also go berry picking for low bush cranberries, wild strawberries, and soapberries. With the soapberries, we would then make soapberry ice-cream and it was delicious. Out of a willow tree, we would hand make a tool that we would use to whip the berries. I would also stay at the lake with my Auntie Sophie, my mom's sister.



Figure 6: Auntie Sophie and Donna

Her children were my age and she had a cabin which was about a half mile from Horse Creek. She also would stay at a cabin at Russian Town on Lake Laberge, which had belonged to my grandparents. My mother's aunt, Grandma Alice and her family are the ones who stay there primarily and some of their family still live there today. Today, my cousin Glen Grady lives in my grandparent's old cabin (see figure 10: Map drawn by Virginia Lindsay the cabin is in Russian Town). When I stayed with my mom's sister, Auntie Sophie, we would fish for grayling in the small creek that ran through her property. Grayling are a small northern fish that are very tasty and very easy to catch. All you needed was a long straight willow for the rod, some line, and a black fly. I remember when it would rain we would have to stay in the house. I liked to lie on the bed and listen to the rain falling on the tin roof.



Figure 7: Ashley, Auntie Sophie, Alexander, Donna and Nicole

My family and extended family treated me like I was very special. I sometimes think it is because I stayed with my grandparents. I know that I had a very special place in the hearts of both my maternal grandmother and grandfather. My favourite times were when we would go to Horse Creek or Russian Town and they would be drying and smoking fish. I love dried smoked fish. I also remember when we would go see my grandfather when he was trapping on his trap line.



Figure 8: Grandpa Frank Slim with Campbell, Joanne and Donna

He would set up camp at a place called Police Post. Police Post, which was where the RCMP had once had a small detachment. It could be forty degrees below and my grandfather would have only a white wall tent, a cook stove, a bed and bows of fir trees for the ground cover. He would always make tea and we always had pilot bread. Pilot bread is a large, hard cracker that was good when dipped in tea. He would usually have an outside fire blazing to keep company and himself warm. I remember he would be out there in really cold weather. I would love to visit him because he was always so gentle, kind and

loving towards me. We connected with each other and spending time with him was so enjoyable that I looked forward to seeing him daily.

The next chapter is the introduction which explains how and why this research is significant. Little has been written on First Nations men in the north. Julie Cruikshank has completed work with three Yukon women elders but there is still a gap, an incomplete picture of sorts regarding men. What Frank Slim accomplished in his life is very significant because he survived and thrived in a job dominated by white men. He was asked to pilot riverboats in various areas in the Yukon because of his knowledge of the land, his navigation skills, and his high work ethic. I want to pay tribute to the man who I believe saved my life in that tragic car accident. His life was shaped by events beyond his control. Most history books are not written with a focus on the lives of ordinary people and to date there is no published historical record of Frank Slim. He is part of who I am. My past and present views of myself have been guided by Frank Slim the man, the Captain, the Pilot, the grandfather and the other important roles he played through his life. Through him I feel a connection to the Yukon, our traditional territory, and to the First Nations people of the Yukon. His story can be used as an example for those young people seeking a job, especially in the river industry. His legacy has continued to his grandchildren and great grandchildren as they run their canoe company. Lastly, I am from the Yukon, come from several generations of Yukoners and I have a connection to the Yukon and the Yukon people that others do not have. I leave you with a picture of my sister and her

family who continue the business of plying the rivers of the Yukon like our Grandfather Captain Frank Slim once did.

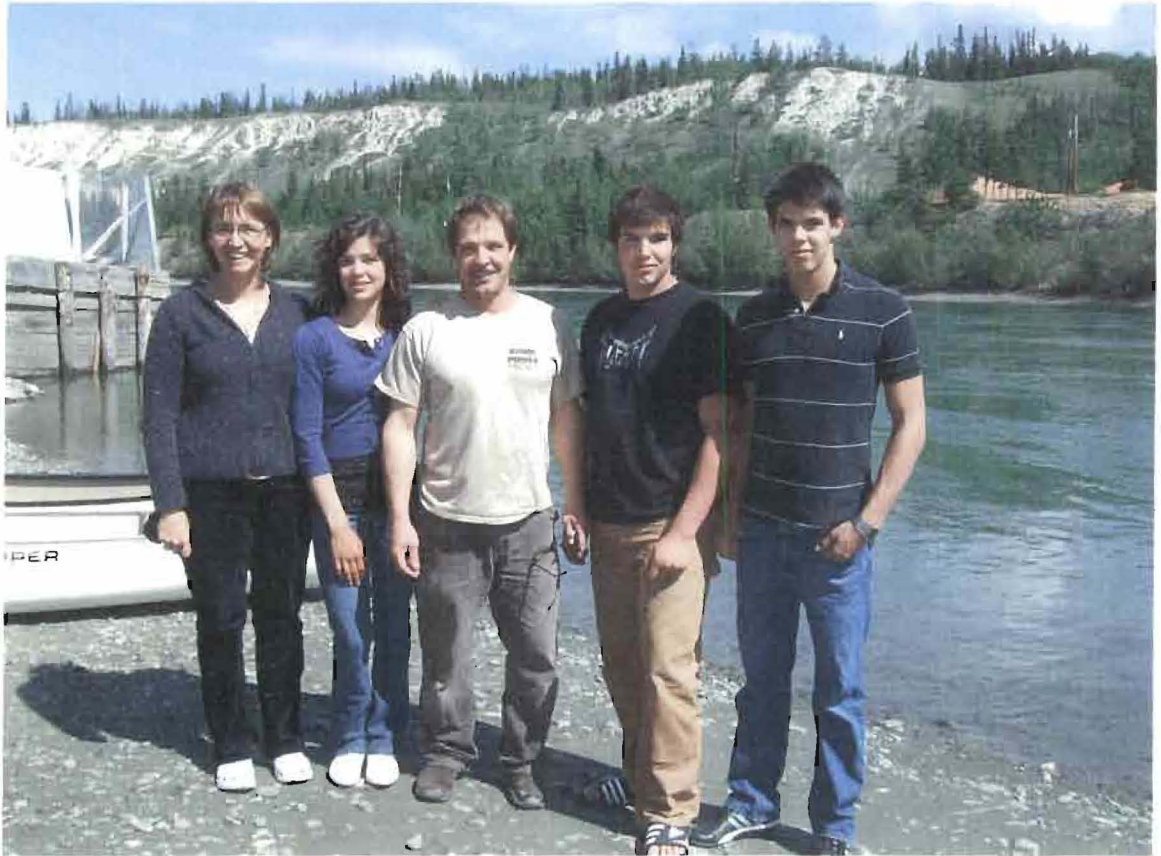


Figure 9: Joanne, Emily, Scott, Alex and Luke owners of Kanoe People

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the life story of Mr. Frank Slim, my grandfather. I see this research as contributing to our understanding of life-history, autoethnography and reflexivity within social and cultural anthropology. In addition, it will add to our knowledge of Aboriginal peoples in the Yukon between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. My research question is: “to what extent did the life of Frank Slim exemplify the changes that occurred in the Yukon from the 1890s to 1973, and how was his life affected by the Indian policies and settler colonialism of this time”?

For over twenty years I have been keenly interested in, and committed to, studying the cultural, social, and historical changes that have affected the Native people of the Yukon. It is through researching the life story of one man, Captain Frank Slim that my interest has intensified. I would like to reconstruct his life story based on the recollections of others as well as published materials about him. Born in 1898, Captain Slim’s life story mirrors the changes that occurred in the Yukon as a result of the Klondike Gold Rush, the settlement of the Territory by non-Natives, the construction of the Alaska Highway, and the impact of Department of Indian Affairs policies on the Native population especially the Indian Act policies that dealt with Indian Status and enfranchisement. It was these historic events that shaped Frank Slim’s life.

Frank Slim was a Southern Tutchone, Tagish, and Tlingit riverboat captain whose life began in the year the Klondike Gold Rush started. It was during this time that non-Native people began to populate the north. With this population increase came a need for reliable transportation to sustain frequent travellers. Slim went from a traditional lifestyle of hunting and trapping to a cash economy-based lifestyle of prospecting. He later worked his way from deckhand to riverboat captain. In 1937, Frank Slim enfranchised to ensure himself a job on the mighty sternwheelers. At the time according to the Indian Act, it was illegal for Indians to obtain an education (including Captain's papers), thus forcing a proud man to make a decision between legal identity and employment. One of his accomplishments was to be the only native man to obtain captain's papers for all navigable rivers in the Yukon, and for Northern British Columbia and the McKenzie River. However, in order to achieve this, he was told he had to give up his Indian status, an issue that deeply affected him.

Despite his role in the history of the Yukon, little has been written about this man. He is known to all First Nations people in the Yukon. He was a well-known achiever, and he is regarded as an individual who shaped the lives of Yukon Native people. Written information on the north is sparse and limited. My personal reason for completing this research is to keep the legacy of Frank Slim alive, for present and future generations of his family, as well as other Yukoners. His children are getting old and some have passed on, and I want to preserve what they have told me about him before the collective memory of him is eroded by time. I also found that this research has allowed me to get to know my own

culture. As Morgan states in her 2005 MA Thesis, "I found out that the significance of this research lies in the heart of my relationship to my people, and their relationship to me." As with Morgan's research regarding the impact of residential schools on Secwepemc family structure, I found that this thesis research both illuminated my relationship with my people, and transformed it in the process of myself finding out.

I have found no writings about Native riverboat captains or pilots. When searching for documented records about the North, and in particular about Native people, I found that, with the exception of a few anthropologists like Julie Cruikshank, Catherine McClellan and Frederica de Laguna, not many academics have written exclusively about Southern Tutchone, Tagish and Tlingit peoples. The aboriginal people of Southern Yukon have tended to get lumped into the Western Subarctic culture area of the north. Being raised in the Yukon, I recognize that there are major differences with regards to language, traditions, and general ways of life between separate First Nations groups. I know first-hand customs and traditions others cannot know unless they are from the Yukon or are Native. The significance of this work is that it comes from my own perspective as Native insider something that other works and publications on the Yukon in the past have been lacking. I used anthropology, as a conceptual framework that assists me to explain my position as far as Mr. Slim's customs, traditions and values were concerned.

Theoretical Perspective

Although I have not found one particular theory that suits my topic, there are several different theories that, when combined, might act as my own theoretical perspective. My conceptual framework focuses on the construction of social interaction and the writing of oral and social histories, as well as on the relationship between anthropology and history. I am especially drawn to the aspects of including history and anthropology, which Renato Rosaldo (1980), used when he completed his work on the Ilongots. He finds that by looking at the Ilongots history he finds out more about the people themselves. I will discuss Rosaldo further in this section. Along with my academic background in anthropology, my own perspectives are based on personal social interaction with Mr. Slim's family and friends.

Narrating our Pasts, The Social Construction of Oral History, by Elizabeth Tonkin examines the "interconnection between memory, cognition and history, and shows how they help to shape our individual selves (1992:1)".

The author says

Individuals are also social beings, formed in interaction, reproducing, and also altering the societies of which they are members. I argue that 'the past' is not only a resource to deploy, to support a case or assert a social claim, it also enters memory in different ways and helps structure it (1992:1).

This book will guide me in understanding how oral histories are constructed, as well as how they are interpreted. Tonkin explains that oral accounts from the past will also be a guide to the future. This applies to the legacy that Frank Slim left

behind in his children and his grandchildren. His stories and life are my family foundation. He represents who we are, where we came from and where we are going. Like a house, the “foundation” of a group’s memories represents the positive aspects of one’s social group’s qualities.

In his book, *How Societies Remember*, (1989) Paul Connerton explores memory as a cultural faculty as opposed to an individual faculty. He deals with the question of how the memory of groups is conveyed and sustained (1989:1). The subjects of his research range from members of clubs and villages to nation-states and world religion. When addressing the question of how societies remember the author states that the way we remember the past affects the way we see and do things today. He also says that the way we are today is a result of the past. Our memories are organized according to three different types of codes: one like a library code in hierarchical order and in topics; the second allows us information to prepare us for verbal presentation; and the third code is visual which allows us to verbally explain a vision (1989:22). Because of their strong traditions of oral histories, most native people are experts in these processes, as they have known no other. When Native people tell stories, they often use settings and locations familiar to the listener as a way of starting out the story on a personal level. The moral significance of the story is reinforced through repeated orations. How my ancestors lived directly affects how I live today as well as how I see my self in the future. I have the obligation of passing on my culture to my family and how I perceived it will affect how it is transmitted.

In his article, "Doing Oral History" (1980), Renato Rosaldo looks at why oral history is important to anthropological research. He begins with his own research on the Ilongots in the Philippines, where he found very little "culture" and therefore he turned to history (1980:89/90). It was in the history of the Ilongots that he found the culture. Rosaldo states that the way the Ilongots told their history and past was part of the story itself. He says that each individual will see matters differently depending on their age, point of view and even where they were when certain events happened. He suggests that by asking questions of several people you are more inclined to get the whole picture. He explained that "...ethnographic history involves a double vision that attends both to analytical narrative and stories in which people describe their own past lives" (1980:92). He also suggests that the way people conceive of the past and the connection they have to the past affects the way they remember the past (1980:90/91). Rosaldo's findings suggest that Frank Slim's children will see things differently from one another because they are all individuals and they are different ages. They have gone on to lead different lives from one another. For example my mom lived with her mother until she was in her early twenties but my aunt who was fifteen years older had been married with four children. My mom lived a traditional life at Lake Laberge, my aunt lived in town. Both women have different views and recollections of the same family event.

Also of relevance to this project is Julie Cruikshank's *Life Lived Like a Story* (1990), and several other of her books and articles about Native people in the Yukon (*Reading Voices*, 1991, *The Social Life of Story*, 1998, *Do Glaciers*

Listen, 2005). She has written these works using ethnographies and life histories. She writes that renewed anthropological interest in life histories and the remembered and handed down oral histories that inform life histories coincides with increased attention to the analysis of symbolism, meaning and text (1990:1). The outcome, she says, seems less that such accounts will clarify social structure but more that such oral history/life history accounts show how individuals use what Edward Sapir called the “scaffolding of culture” to talk about their lives. Her book is based on the premise that life history investigations provide a model for research. Instead of working from the conventional formula whereby an outsider investigator initiates and controls the research, this life history model depends on on-going collaboration between the interviewer and interviewee. She indicates that the interviewer must begin the model by taking what people say about their lives seriously rather than treating their words as an illustration of some of the process. She states that by looking at ways people use traditional dimensions of culture as a resource to talk about the past, we may be able to see life history as contributing to explanations of cultural process rather than as simply illustrating or supplementing ethnographic description” (1990:1-2). Cruikshank’s oral accounts have focused primarily on women, leaving a gap with regards to life histories of men.

I also make use of the relatively recent ethnographic approaches that focus on autoethnography (Denzin 2006) and reflexivity (Segal 1990). Autoethnography, in particular reflexive autoethnography, incorporates the researcher as a member of a group that is the subject of ethnographic study. It

recognizes the qualitative research method where a researcher uses participant observation and interviews in order to gain a deeper understanding of a group's culture. It helps to understand and theorize modes of human behaviour within a group and different groups. The researcher is often a member of the group in question rather than the traditional outsider. This concept can be used by a member of a group like myself—a member of a First Nations community—to explain stories collected and written to maintain the history of individuals within that group. Reflexivity is another modern theory that allows the writer to use self-reference. In the case of this thesis I looked at Frank Slim's life by reflecting upon my own past contact with him, as well as with his family and friends, to reconstruct aspects of his life. In social science this adds to how I see myself in my community and family. I moved out of the Yukon years ago but I still feel like part of the daily life and activity of my family there. Although I have been reluctant to admit it I can also say that this story is an autobiography. I guess I see it more about the culture and how he lived rather than a broad overview of his life.

I am well suited to write this life history not only because Frank Slim was my grandfather, but also because I am a Native woman raised in the Yukon. I descend from several generations of Yukoners.

In some ways, the study of one's society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork, finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have pre-existing experience absorb analytical categories that rename and reframe what is already known (Narayan 1995:678).

Some Native groups tend to favour individuals in their family above non-family members; this favouritism is not talked about or bragged about but is understood amongst the members of the group. Both my mother and I have been fortunate enough to have experienced a special bond with my maternal family members. I have been blessed to have such a relationship with Frank Slim. Having lived in a small close-knit community in the Yukon for twenty-five years, and being related to most Native people who live there, allows me access to topics and information not available to others, including non-Native anthropologists, and other researchers, as well as, the general public. If you are not inside a group you may not be privileged to all types of information. As land claims are settled, Native people are questioning who is writing about them, why outsiders, are writing about them, and most importantly who owns the information. These concerns have been included in recent land claim agreements in the Yukon and in Northern British Columbia.

In the North, particularly in the Yukon, anthropological, sociological and historical research to date has been undertaken primarily by non-Native researchers like Dr. Ken Coates, Dr. Catharine McClellan and Dr. Julie Cruikshank. While this work has contributed to the Yukon and Yukon people, something has been lacking. I believe there is need for another perspective, an insider perspective. I come from six generations of Yukoners and know first hand the need for more Native input. I have the unique opportunity to contribute both personal and academic literature, that the Yukon First Nations people can call their own. In the past there has been reluctance by Native informants and elders

to completely share their stories and experiences with non-Native researchers. As a Native individual, I feel that I have been able to obtain information that community members would not otherwise disclose to non-Native researchers. In his doctoral thesis (2008) Ron Ignace, states what is a familiar belief amongst those of us Native people in our 50's:

As I fast become an elder myself, I am aware of my responsibility to pass stories and history of the past, so that we can better understand the present, and give us guidance for who we as Secwepemc [or in this case Southern Tutchone] want to be in the future (Ignace 2008:14).

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

The work that has been done with regards to anthropology and history in the Yukon has been commendable but somewhat sparse. Ethnographer Catharine McClellan has written extensively on the cultural history of Southern Yukon Natives. She demonstrates this in her two volume series *My Old People Say* (McClellan 1987) and her book *A History of Yukon Indians, Part Of The Land, Part Of The Water* (McClellan 1975). In these books she explores the kinship patterns and, more generally, the traditional lives of several Yukon families. Her work concentrates solely on what appears to be "Status Indians," leaving out those individuals who had enfranchised for various reasons. I say this because a lot of her interviews were with people who I know did not enfranchise, including several members of my own family. McClellan's work documented Yukon Indians at a time when those living in rural communities led a semi-traditional life style. She also mentions several of Mr. Slim's relatives and what they were doing when she interviewed them. She combines historical past with

present day events of the 1950s and 1960s. Although extensive, McClellan's research seems to have omitted enfranchised Natives.

Julie Cruikshank, a non-native researcher, has made a significant contribution to anthropology through her works, including *Life Lived Like A Story, The Life History of Three Yukon Elders* (Cruikshank 1998). Cruikshank's groundbreaking work combining cultural anthropology and history has changed the stereotypical views of anthropology. She not only looks at culture as a whole like most anthropologists, but she chooses to do so through the life histories of three Yukon elders. Cruikshank explains " that by looking at ways people use the traditional dimension of culture as a resource to talk to them about the past, we may be able to see life history as contributing to explanations of cultural process rather than simply illustrating or supplementing ethnographic description" (Cruikshank 1991:2). Julie Cruikshank has worked primarily with Yukon women. She indicated that she could not write about men because ethically and traditionally an outside woman could not write about a native man. As a Native family member, I have access to Frank Slim's stories and past despite the fact that I am a woman.

Ken Coates, a historian, has depicted the historical development of the Yukon. He gained recognition for his work entitled, *Best Left As Indians, Native-White Relations in the Yukon Territory, 1840-1973*, (Coates 1991) which shows the impact that the Klondike Gold Rush (1896-1898) and the building of the Alaska Highway had on Native people. Coates has since gone on to write several other books about the North. His work on archival research will be an asset for

others doing research on the North. The aforementioned scholars have commendably documented their works in the area of cultural anthropology, sociology, and history. His work has allowed me to verify my own knowledge of the Yukon. Living in the Yukon you grow up learning and knowing certain fact, but seeing it in print verifies this knowledge.

Pierre Berton was born in Dawson City, Yukon, and wrote extensively about the history of Canada, specifically railway history, and the history of the Klondike goldrush (see Berton 2001, 2005 etc.). However, as extensive and well researched as his writings are, they address settler history rather than First Nations history, let alone a First Nations perspective, which to this day is missing from most writings about the Yukon.

METHODOLOGY

When I first started this thesis I thought and expected that being an “insider” I would have an advantage, but found it much more difficult than I expected. Except for my mother, my family were happy to talk to me only off the record, and once I said I was going to record or take notes, they stopped talking. They wanted to know why I should share some of this information and could not understand my reasons for wanting to write about my grandfather. I was even told if I was writing about someone it should be my grandmother because we are a matrilineal society. This means I descend from my mother’s lineage.

The problem of indigenous “insider” research has been addressed by various indigenous researchers, including North American indigenous people. A

pioneer among female indigenous scholars who researched their own elders and communities was Ella Deloria (1888-1971) who used her linguistic abilities to record her own elders' knowledge by respectfully listening to them. As Rice commented, "Working without a tape recorder or shorthand notes, Deloria simply listened to stories without direct notation of any kind" (Rice 5:1992), reconstructing their knowledge in her narratives. A generation later Beatrice Medicine trained as an anthropologist to study her own indigenous community. Throughout her life, she was keenly aware of the problems of insider research stating, "as a student of my own culture how much could I write that would pass my own people's scrutiny without casting me (in their eyes) as an 'informant' to anthropologists" (Medicine and Jacob 2001: xxv:2001)?" Likewise, Wendat (Huron) historian Georges Sioui addressed the problem of indigenous research, in this case with his own nation, told by outside historians that his ancestors were "savages," and struggling with how to carry out indigenous "autohistory" where no elders exist who personally remember the past of the Huron people. In reinterpreting the Huron past from a perspective of indigenous consciousness and values, Sioui stated that his work allowed him to record his history and to use his education to clarify some of the untruths that had been written about the Huron/Wendat. All First Nations writers have what Sioui calls "an abiding and fraternal solidarity, to all the indigenous peoples of the world" (Sioui 1999, *Dedication*).

The complex issue of insider and outsider research is also raised by Kirin Narayan in her article, 'How Native is a Native Anthropologist (1995), who states,

In some ways, the study of one's own society involves an inverse process from the study of an alien one. Instead of learning conceptual categories and then, through fieldwork finding the contexts in which to apply them, those of us who study societies in which we have pre-existing experience absorb analytics categories that rename and reframe what is already known. The reframing essentially involves locating vivid particulars within larger cultural patterns, sociological relations, and historical shifts. At one further remove, anthropological categories also rephrase these particulars as evidence of theoretical issues that cross cultures and are the special province of trained academics (Narayan 1995:678).

There are several ways in which I conducted my research. A preliminary review of past literature-- including books and journals, newspapers, interviews, archival research, as well as oral histories will be included. Oral histories are an excellent avenue for documenting not only the cultural changes but also the ways of life of individuals within a social group. Oral histories have always been a method for collecting data, in anthropology, especially after 1925. Edward Sapir, Paul Radin and Franz Boas are only a few of the anthropologists that helped ensure that this method of recording information would be entrenched in the discipline forever. I have read several biographies and autobiographies, including *Stoney Creek Women* (Moran 1988), *During My Time Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Women* (Blackman 1982) and *Nisa, The Life and Words of a Kung Woman* (Shostak 1981) and have compared the methods used in each. Autobiographies are personal reconstructions of one's own life, whereas biographies are an author's reconstruction of someone else's life. I always thought it would be interesting to combine ethnography with history, and then I discovered autoethnography. This is a variation of ethnography which allows the

writer to give an insider's perspective. Reflexivity is another method I used, since much of my information comes from reflecting upon my own life.

The article "Memories and Moments, Conversations and Re-collections", by Margaret Seguin Anderson and Tammy Anderson Blumhagen (1994) is about narrating a First Nations history, including an insider's perspective growing up in a small Tsimshian community. The article states that,

It was designed to re-collect vignettes that highlight the relationships that are made, valued, and transmitted in everyday conversations in the community of Hartley Bay, and to convey the flavour of the community to people from elsewhere (Anderson and Blumhagen 1994:87).

Like Hartley Bay, Whitehorse was a small town when I grew up and, I understand the relationships and dynamics within small communities.

Several summers in a row during the mid 1980s, my two young daughters and I travelled home to the Yukon from Kamloops. We travelled by car, which was the only way I could afford. I would make a little bed in the back seat of the car (there were no seatbelt restrictions in those days), we would put our favourite tunes on and would set off on the long drive north. My kids still remember the eight-tracks and tapes we played on our journey. We would leave Kamloops at eight o'clock in the morning and would arrive at my mom and dad's house two days later. We would drive to Fort Nelson the first day, and then be in Whitehorse the next evening around midnight. In the Yukon summertime, there is daylight from early in the morning until late in the evening so we could travel long days. I was adamant that my children would know their Yukon roots, especially their grandparents who were getting on in age. During these visits I became more

interested in my own heritage and began to ask my mom to write down her own story. The more trips we made to the Yukon, the more my memory of my grandfather began to surface in my mind. I was able to look at old pictures and visit with many different family members which also triggered my memory. I found myself hunting down my auntie Irene, who has a fish camp close to Whitehorse, and was fortunate enough to have her tell me stories about Frank. Irene had been traditionally adopted by my maternal grandmother's sister. I brought my mom with me to visit Irene and her conversation with her sister helped find and remember answers to questions that my mom could not answer alone. It was during one of these visits that I learned my grandmother called me "Ashea." and my grandfather called me "Athua". I had thought about honouring my grandfather by writing a book about him but I did not know how to begin. I slowly began to write notes to myself, making sure to include pertinent information that I did not want to forget.

After Bill C-31 was passed into legislation, I was talking to my cousin and told her of my plans to go back to school, and she encouraged me to do so. I applied and within a few months I became a full time student. I was in a class with Dr. Jean Barman who encouraged me to write about my memories of my grandfather for one of her classes. Over the next couple of years I discovered anthropology and the rest, as they say, is history. Anthropology opened a channel for me to get to know my own cultural background and I loved it. I could not imagine that my mom had lived the traditional life that some anthropologists studied. I saw this thesis as a way to combine my interest in writing about my

grandfather and anthropology.

With some of Frank's family and friends, I conducted loosely structured, open-ended interviews, which allowed the informants to relay their own views and interpretations of interactions they had with Mr. Slim. I took notes and I primarily used conversation and interaction with close friends and family to obtain most of the information. I had lived with or visited most of my informants on a regular basis and they would tell me stories about my grandfather that I then verified with my mother. When I was young I had an incredible memory. Luckily over the last thirty years I had written down pertinent information about myself and members of my family so I would not forget. I was fortunate that I kept these notes, because my memory has diminished over the years. These conversations and preserved personal notes complemented the literature and archival research that I did.

Frank Slim was predeceased by his wife and two sons and most recently his eldest daughter Sophie Miller. Frank Slim has one living sister and two daughters. These women range in age from 74 and over 98 years old. Lilly Kane was Frank's only living sister and I was fortunate to spend some one-on-one time with her while I worked on the Heritage chapter of the Yukon Land Claim agreement in 1994. Mrs Lilly Kane passed away in November 2008. Through personal conversations, she told me many different stories about her brother. Mrs. Sophie Miller, Frank's eldest daughter died in March of 2006 and Mrs. Irene Adamson is in an extended care home and her health is not good. Virginia Lindsay, my mom is the youngest of Frank Slim's daughters and was an

invaluable asset to my research. She remembers the boats and how they affected her dad's life and the impact this had on her own life. Mrs. Virginia Lindsay is nine years younger than her sister Mrs. Irene Adamson is, and fifteen years younger than Mrs. Sophie Miller.

Earlier on in my research I went through the ethics review process and found this very discouraging. I came up with a consent of information template for Frank's relatives and friends to sign. This proved to be a stumbling block because I was told by an elder if an elder wishes to talk to you, they may feel intimidated when they have to sign a paper of consent form. I know that for elders they are automatically suspicious when anyone wants them to sign forms. This goes back to the colonial regime that plagued Canada since before confederation.

I used my mom Virginia as my primary resource and will allow her to express her personal perspective. Her perspective includes how Frank Slim's life and career ultimately affected her life. Although I used personal conversation from my two other aunts I did not use any formal interview sessions. My aunties are very old and out of respect I did not want to impose upon them with formalities of structured interviews, such as signing a waiver of disclosure. Once they agree to talk it is somewhat of an insult to then ask them to sign a piece of paper giving permission to use the information. Also, by the time I wanted to talk to them, they had been bombarded with interviews from band members to preserve their knowledge and they were tired of being asked for interviews. I

tried to relay the importance of this project, and for that reason they granted me permission to interview them, but without formal interview techniques.

Difficulties such as personal biases can arise when asking others to remember someone who was close to them. They may remember only the positive aspects of the person's life. The three sisters are very different from one another and will undoubtedly remember different things. There is a fifteen-year gap between the oldest and the youngest; the oldest had been married and living on her own, when the youngest was still living a somewhat traditional lifestyle at the Village, a small family community thirty miles down river from Whitehorse on the eastside of Lake Laberge. The Village is where Mr. Slim lived with his family.

Most documents recording historic events in the North have been preserved in various archives, such as the 1896-98 Klondike Gold Rush, and the building of the Alaska Highway. The college in Whitehorse has a small archive, where most of the churches keep their pertinent information, such as records of births and deaths of the early days. Locals have also given their stories and pictures to the archives which was where I found pictures taken by Louis Irvine when he worked with Mr. Slim.

I also used other published oral histories and biographies to get an idea on how others collected their interviews. Besides Cruikshank's book and articles, I was inspired by Greg Sarris's *Keeping Slug Women Alive (1991)*, as well as Bridget Moran's *Stoney Creek Woman (1988)*, and Margaret Blackman's *During My Time: Florence Edenshaw Davidson, A Haida Women (1982)*, already mentioned above. Over the years I have read several biographies not related to

this thesis that have contributed to my knowledge of the several ways authors construct and conduct their own methods of collecting and remembering information.

Over the past several years, there have been a number of publications on the internet about life history and conducting life histories within the discipline of anthropology. The internet has several websites dedicated to life and oral histories. The University of Utah is known for its work, which concentrates primarily on recording genealogical backgrounds. An article entitled "How to Collect Oral Histories" by David Sidwell of the University of Utah, gives a brief and concise summary of what should be included when recording an oral history, and discussion that can be followed when taping an oral history (http://www.usu.edu/~oralhist/oh_how_to.html). Although this research is not academic in publication the University of Utah is known for life and family history knowledge. The McBride museum and the Museum Society in Whitehorse produce two publications titled *Recording Memories Getting Started on Oral History* and *Stories to Make Your Mind Strong, Oral History Recording Guidelines* on how to conduct interviews which I found helpful in keeping my mother talking about her years growing up at Lake Laberge.

There are several problems that may occur when conducting an interview. How do you get over a subject's reluctance to talk? How do you get information on subjects that are taboo? How do you resolve contradictions in information provided by different sources? Other concerns include relying on the memories of the elderly. The person I am writing about has been dead for more that thirty

years. Another obstacle to overcome is that very little has been written on this man before, other than newspaper articles and journal entries. However, I have the privilege of accessing relatives who remember him.



Figure 10: Auntie Irene Adamson and Virginia Lindsay

In conclusion, as the granddaughter of Frank Slim I knew him intimately. We had a very close relationship that can best be described as a spiritual bond. Although this can be seen as a challenge to accurately portraying him I feel in this case my relationship will only strengthen this thesis. This bond, along with the interest in my own culture, allows me to have a unique perspective. This perspective includes acquiring and understanding the impact of cultural, social and historical change on an individual and a group. It is through the life story of Captain Frank Slim that I can blend the intimate with the academic. One of the most important parts of a life history is how an individual lived their daily life. You will see how Frank Slim's daughter Virginia Lindsay lived and learned from her

parents. The next chapter deals with First Nations people in the Yukon and particularly the Southern Yukon.

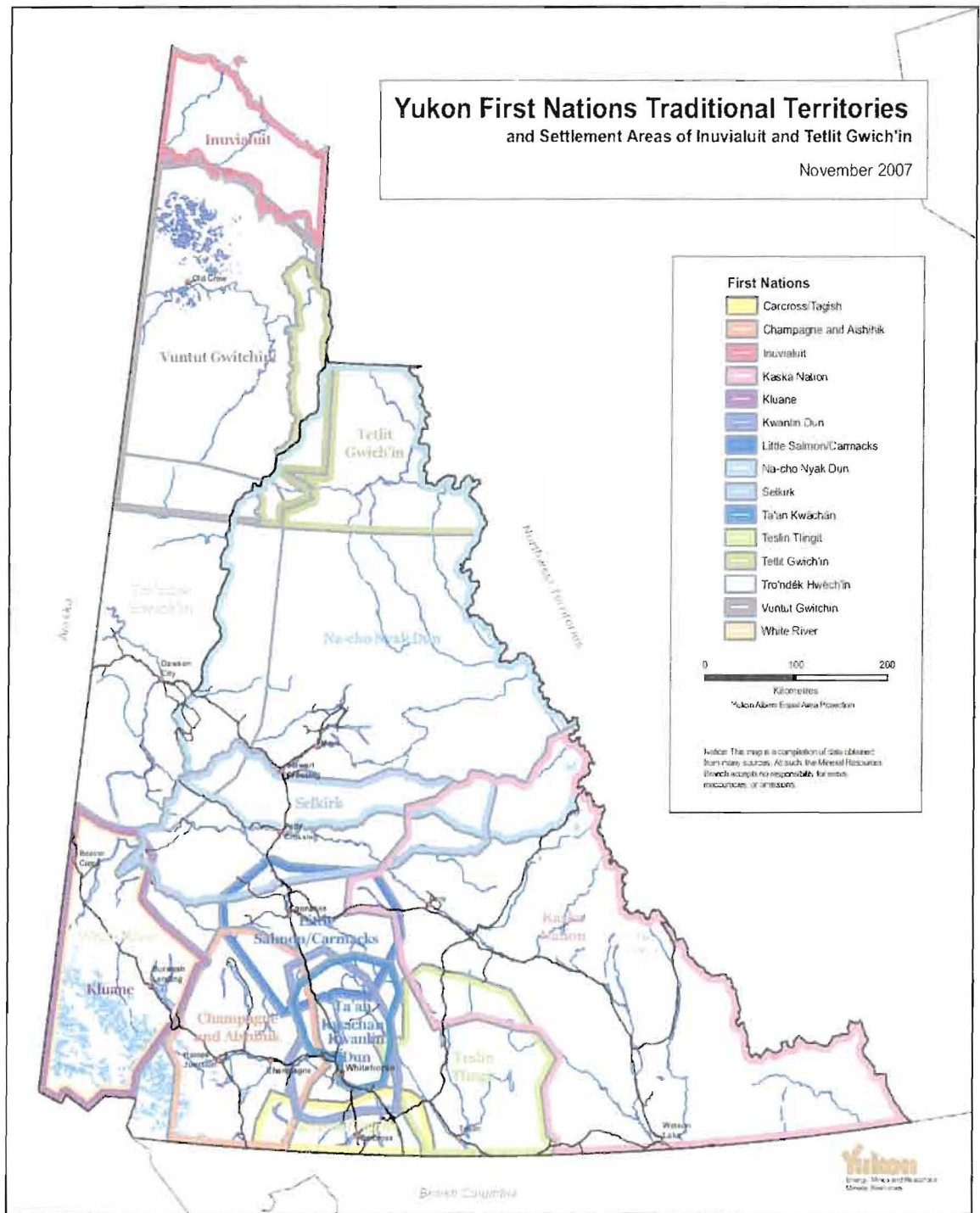


Figure 11: Language map of Yukon First Nations

CHAPTER 2: FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE OF THE YUKON

“From the earliest times the people have defined themselves by the environment and the animals. This basic principle is at the core, right at the very essence of all that is important to us. Our laws, our spiritual beliefs, our clan system are based on our tremendous dependence on the environment. We have legends and stories that tell us how we originated, how the world started, how everything came to be as it is. These legends have persisted through the test of time and are still told today by our elders and also by young people who are committed to learning this ancient tradition so that it will carry on. We have been taught by our Grandmothers that Crow was the one who started up the world. He brought fish to the lakes; he brought the first light into the world by letting the sun, moon and the stars escape from a wealthy man, who owned them, into the sky so that they belonged to no one but to everyone”

*(CYI Council for Yukon Indians website)
(www.cyfn.ca/dyncat.cfm?catid=92).*

There are fourteen First Nations bands in the Yukon. Archaeological information shows that the life of First Nations people in the Yukon dates back more than 12,000 years. Among them, two language families are represented; Athapaskan and Inuktitut, as well as Tlingit, which is considered a linguistic isolate by some, and a member of the Na-Dene phylum, which also includes Athapaskan, by others. The majority of Yukon First Nations people thus spoke Athapaskan languages. Within the Athapaskan language family there are eight separate but related languages: Southern and Northern Tutchone, Han, Gwich'in, Kaska, Upper Tanana, Tahltan and Tagish (www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/languages.html). Each language also has a number of dialects connected to particular First Nations communities. Indeed, dialects identify

people as belonging to particular communities, or even portions of communities. Because of the vastness of the north, and the extent of intermarriage and trade, most people spoke more than one First Nations language, and then learned English when Europeans came into the country. Being a Riverboat Captain Frank Slim spoke English, Tlingit, as well as most of all of the other Yukon Athapaskan languages. As a result of residential schools and the dominance of English in the workplace, education and all areas of public life, the Yukon First Nations languages have gone into serious decline since the mid twentieth century, and some only have a small number of elderly speakers left. Tagish recently lost its last speaker.

The Gwich'in people live in the Old Crow region which is in the Northern Yukon. Their traditional territory extends to the Northwest Territories and Alaska, where the climate is extremely harsh. The Han people are in the Dawson City area which was the hub of the Yukon until the middle of the 1900's. Winters in this region of the Yukon can be harsh but summers are also warmer than any other area in the Yukon. The Yukon Upper Tanana people are from Beaver Creek, which is on the western border to Alaska. Beaver Creek is twelve hundred and two miles from Dawson Creek on the Alaska Highway. They are influenced by the Alaskans as their traditional territory straddles the border. The Northern Tutchone people are from Mayo, Carmacks, Fort Selkirk, Faro and Pelly Crossing. This area is a prime mining area in the Yukon and some communities have survived and continue to flourish because of this natural resource.

The Southern Tutchone people are from Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, and Champagne Aishihik. This region is also the location of

Lake Laberge and Marsh Lake where Frank Slim and his family lived most of their lives. Geographically this is a large area. I remember my great uncle Frankie Jim, who I called grandpa, telling me that when he was courting Grandma Celia, my grandmother's sister, he would walk from Champagne to Lake Laberge (about 50 miles each way) to see her. He also told me that he walked the distance one time just to ask her dad for her hand in marriage. Kaska people are from Ross River, Watson Lake, and the Liard River. They reside in the southern Yukon and northern British Columbia, between the coastal mountains and the Rocky Mountains. The Tagish people live at Tagish Lake and Marsh Lake. Most Tagish people today live in Carcross and many have intermarried with the coastal Tlingit people. The culture of these people, who were from Tagish, has declined so significantly that there are no original Tagish speakers left. Sometimes called Inland Tlingit, these people are from Carcross, Teslin and Atlin in British Columbia. They have combined their coastal Tlingit roots with the inland southern Yukon environment.

Each community is comprised of a number of family units. Most academics tend to view language families and/or cultural areas as the important units of Yukon First Nations culture. As a member of a cross-section of such groups, however, I believe that they have under-estimated the significance of extended family and clan units within and across local communities. Each community, characterized by the place(s) they are affiliated with and a distinct dialect of their First Nations language, consists of a network of extended families, usually one or two prominent families that have lived in the area for generations.

The members of these family units form social and political units, and also hunt, gather and fish together, and pool their resources. In addition, they jointly own songs, and share particular beliefs, traditions and ways of doing day-to-day tasks. As relatively autonomous groups, they do not like to be grouped into one big society as they believe their way of living is the best way for them. Some families have moved from their traditional territories to more central locations to be near family or work, but they still associate closely with their traditional territory.

Julie Cruikshank, Catherine McClellan and Frederica De Laguna have all written extensively on the culture of First Nations people in the Yukon and Alaska. In her book *The Social Life of Stories Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon* (1998), Cruikshank explains that

In Northern Canada, storytellers of the Yukon First Nations ancestry continue to tell stories that make meaningful connections and provide order and continuity in a rapidly changing world. An enduring value of informal storytelling is its power to subvert official orthodoxies and to challenge conventional ways of thinking's (1998:xiii)

She goes on to explain that

Such systems of knowledge, as both Greg Sarris and Angela Sidney point out ... can be understood as having the power to inform and enlarge other forms of explanation rather than as data for analysis using conventional scholarly paradigms (Cruikshank 1998: xiii).

Dr. Frederica De Laguna's extensive work in Alaska looked at combined approaches to Archaeology, History and Ethnography and the problems they

entail. In her book *Under Mt. Elias* (1972) she provides a detailed look at the history and culture of the Yukon Tlingit. Her work has helped to preserve the culture and history of those Alaskan First Nations who have since been inundated with settlers and visitors from the south.

McClellan carried out her ethnographic field study of the Southern Tutchone, Tagish and Inland Tlingit in the early 1960s and mid 1970s. She documented how the inland Tlingit crossed from the upper Taku drainage into the upper Yukon basin, also during the nineteenth century and noted while they speak Tlingit, it is possible that their ancestors too once spoke an Athabascan dialect (McClellan 1975: xix). McClellan also notes that “matrilineal moieties are ubiquitous in the area, and some of the Southern Tutchone and all of the Tagish and Inland Tlingit also have Tlingit-named sibs” (McClellan 1975: xix). McClellan’s book also focuses on the nature of social relations, and the relationship between individuals and society, including life cycle, social organization, trading patterns, warfare, and religion.

First Nations people were very spiritual people and most have converted from a traditional spiritual practice to the more common religions of today. Most Yukon First Nations are matrilineal and trace their heritage through their mother. They also are divided into two moieties Wolf and Crow.

Athapaskan social organization has been called “flexible” because of this demonstrated ability to disperse and regroup as seasons and resources required. In the Southern Yukon, however social organization was profoundly influenced by two matrilineal kinship divisions, Wolf (Agunda) and Crow (Kajit). Anthropologists use the term “moiety” (from the French “half”) to describe this organizational principle: everyone was born into one of these two groups and inherited the same affiliation as his or her mother.

Rules of exogamy were strictly enforced a Crow could marry only a Wolf and a member of the Wolf division had to marry a Crow. Disobedience of this rule was considered incestuous and was punishable by death or banishment. Every family group, then, was composed of members of both moieties: alliances were repeatedly forged between moieties through marriage, partnerships, and trade linking people from widely dispersed areas in networks of family responsibility. (Cruikshank 1990:9)

When the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs first came to the Yukon in the early 1900s, they gave a \$5.00 registration payment to each First Nation person who registered with them. This was the first step to establishing Indian Status and band membership. People who were from out of town needed an address to receive the money. They gave a Whitehorse address and thus became Whitehorse band members. Elders will sometimes say that an individual is not really from Whitehorse. This is another confirmation that that individual is different because they were originally not from the community. On paper, this gave a distorted view of who were original band members and who were individuals in town for just the day. Locals were able to distinguish who the original band members were and who should be on other band lists because of their ancestral origin. They were familiar with well-known and established families who had resided in the same area for generations.

In what follows, I will provide information about how most First Nation bands lived their daily lives in the Southern Tutchone areas where Frank Slim resided most of his life. I will draw on life history information from my mother Virginia Lindsay as an example of the way Yukon First Nations people lived during the mid-twentieth century. She lived a very traditional life until her late

teens when she went to residential school. She only attended residential school for a short time because; being in her late teenage years already, she was considered too old.



Figure 12: Virginia Lindsay

Throughout my upbringing she had told me what she used to do during the year as she and her family trapped, hunted, gathered and fished seasonally. During my thesis research, I sat down with her and she gave me an in-depth formal over view of her younger days living at Russian town and at the Village.

All First Nations people from the Yukon were similar in their subsistence mode which consisted of hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering. Their subsistence centered mainly on gathering enough food to last all year round especially during the cold winter months when food was scarce. Large groups congregated on the Yukon River and its tributaries in summer to catch migrating salmon. In the fall family groups joined together to hunt migrating caribou, moose and mountain sheep. In the winter and spring they dispersed into small family groups to hunt, trap and fish. Life in the northern boreal forest required mobility, so some materials and food were made and cached at traditional campsites along well-established trails.

All members of the tribe contributed in some form to the never ending quest for survival. The main role of the men was to provide food and shelter, and to look after the general safety and welfare of their tribe. The women also had a vital economic role to play in this society. They hunted small game; learned the location of berry grounds; fished; preserved the meat brought by the men; made clothing from the skins; help build shelter; made cooking utensils and other equipment; looked after the camp; cared for and raised the children and more! Their work was steady and unrelenting, but it was shared with other women in the camp, unlike the more solitary work of the men. Young children were encouraged to copy parents and by the age of seven or eight a little girl were helping her mother, learning to sew, carry wood and water and other chores. A young boy accompanied his father to learn the methods of the hunt and the habitant of animals. To the Indian, a strong family unit was very important. The families lived and travelled together and the children were not only taught and raised by their parents, but by aunts, uncles and grandparents as well. In the old way, when a man married a women he moved in with her people. They spent the first few years living with her parents, brothers and sisters. The new husband was expected to hunt with this family and to help their group for the first few years. When a baby was born, that baby became a part of his mother's family. Although the Indian way of life was comprised of daily hard work and never ending travel in search of food, the people enjoyed their leisure times and social get-togethers. Early summer was a time of comparative ease

after the long and varied hardships of the winter. It was in the spring that various Indian groups gathered to hold celebrations and trade. After a long season trapping the Inland tribes would meet the Coastal Indians who would make trading expeditions into the Interior in the spring months.

It was during the winter season when the members of the tribe would gather for long storytelling sessions, which were a combination of practical instruction and entertainment. As well significant events such as a boy's first kill, a successful hunt or a couple's marriage was marked by celebration.(Yukon Indian News, Summer 1984 page 3).

In most First Nations communities every person had important tasks and responsibilities. Everyone in the camp was responsible for caring for and training young people. Parents as well as close relatives played a special role when it came to caring and training their children. Children were scolded but never hit. Youngsters were loved and cared for by siblings, grandparents and other relatives when their mother was busy. Children from the age of four to five were expected to help out at camp. Boys would cut wood and pack water. Girls would sew and cook. All the children would help with berry picking and setting snares. Food was gathered year round. Fishing was one of the most important ways of surviving year round because various species of fish could be caught and preserved.

During my regular summer visits home to Whitehorse from 2000-2005, Virginia Lindsay shared her own memories of her own traditional life during her childhood and adolescence. The experiences that she had living on the land reflect the life-style that her own parents, including her father, Frank Slim, would have lived and experienced in his younger years, and thus sheds light on the life

of Yukon First Nations people, and especially Southern Tutchone people during the first half of the twentieth century.

"The time we would go fishing was in July & August.
We would set nets in Shallow Bay.
That is south west end of Lake Laberge,
for white fish which is really good eating.
Just fry it in fry pan with butter,
cooked for about 5 to 10 minutes on each side
with salt and pepper or cooked the way you like it.
The reason we go there for white fish is that there,
are weeds that grow in the water.
And on the weeds are snails by the thousands eating on weeds.
The white fish is there to eat on the snails.
You could taste the snails in the fish.
We just loved that taste, it was very very good!
We also would catch white fish for the eggs.
My mom would also cut the fish into fillets, and
dry them for the winter snacks.
My family has been going fishing there for hundreds of years.
White fish we catch them with fish net, two inch net.
Grandmother, your grandma, used to make fish nets from
scratch with linen thread.
I remember it being about 150 ft or 200 ft long and about 5 ft
wide.
We used to fish for white fish in the winter and over in Shallow
Bay.
When fish come in to Shallow Bay they feed on snails.
The snails were there already feeding on green weeds that grow
in the Bay.
It's like seaweed.
Another thing is that whitefish are full of eggs, which is a
'delicacy'
and the fish is really good eating too.
It has a taste of snails!"

Another place where we would go fishing was Russian town.
I don't know where they got that name from.
Anyway our family would go to Russian town to go fishing.
That is on south west end of Lake Laberge,
right next to shallow bay.
At Russian town,
we would go fishing under the telegraph line
that's between Shallow Bay and Lake Laberge (look at map to
the left).
There we would fish for white fish, jack fish, suckers, and
grayling.
There again mom would cut and dry fish for the winter.
And in winter my family would go ice fishing for trout, lingcod
or catfish, white fish.
We would set net under the ice.
Also we would cut holes in the ice and set hooks with bait,
with line and sinker, we would catch trout, catfish, with hook
and bait, and with net.
We would catch all the fish like trout, lingcod or catfish, white
fish.
In the spring we would go around the lake
and then in spring we would go around the lake with dog teams.
We would go on the ice, on the shore of the Lake.
We would camp on the shore, there was no problem with snow
because its spring.
The snow all melted away by this time.
We would do a little fishing like ice fishing with hook and bait.
We go out $\frac{1}{2}$ mile or $\frac{1}{4}$ mile something like that, northwest from
the village.
We would set our net there for all winter, till spring.
We would run our net every day, some times every other day.
Hooks we have to run every day.
There is another fish, we call them catfish or lingcod or
bourbot.
You could catch them with hook and bait, in winter, not too
often in summer.
Hook for catching and bad for clubbing the fish.
Mom used to cook them in a fry pan, with little bit of oil or oil

from moose fat,
and with salt and pepper.
You would fry it for 10 to 15 minutes
and then put a lid on top of fry pan,
then it would cook in its own juice.
And mom would put some squirky in it.
(squirky is made from rendered down moose fat.)
cook it for another 10-15min,
cook until you think it's done.
You could deep fry it too with batter."

"Trout are deep water fish you caught them with nets and
hooks.
Lake trout are really good eating you could fry them,
boil with onions, bake or roast.
King Salmon come up the Yukon River.
The King Salmon reach Whitehorse
around end of July or August.
We cook them fresh by frying, bake, or boil.
My mom used to dry them and ate it in winter,
dried fish were really good eating.
In the fall we get dog salmon, they are good for drying.
Grayling is fresh water fish and it's a sport fish and
related to the trout.
Grayling are caught
with only fly-hook in spring and summer."

"Also there's Jack fish,
fillet the jack and take the skin off dry
and get all the bones out
then put in egg wash
then dip in flour then fry in medium heated fry pan with oil.
Brown on both sides,
cook until done salt & pepper to taste.
Sucker, another name for jack fish
mom used to dry them for winter.
Suckers are very bony,
we only ate the tail end because,

and the body end had too many bones.
There's another fish its call Shea fish,
its big fish,
it looks like a white fish with square mouth.
This fish is really big,
about one meter long and
maybe about 20 lbs - 40 lbs."

Hunting and snaring were another important means of collecting food.

Hunting large animals was done only at certain times of the year because this is when the meat would be prime. If you hunted too late in the season the meat was tougher and could smell from the animal being in rut. Moose and caribou hunting was done in the fall. Some elders still remember when snares were set for moose. Angela Sidney, Frank Slim's cousin tells stories of her moose snaring trips in the book *Live Lived like a Story*. Sheep hunting was usually done in August and my mom would say that sheep was somewhat of a delicacy because of its taste and because of how far you might have to go to get one. Gophers were caught in the spring, summer and fall. Ducks, geese, swans and grouse were also hunted at various times of the year.

As Virginia Lindsay remembers

I remember when I was about 12-13 years.
My uncle Willie, shot a moose over in Black Lakes area
it is east of Lake Laberge east of the village,
and over a mountain.
About 15--20 miles.
I went there with dog teams in maybe February.
That was long time ago.
I can't remember too much of it.
I brought home a load of moose meat for my family.

We would also hunt gophers,
we would set traps for them
or set snares for them,
and my mom would set leather and
sinew snares
with a bow to hold the snare in place.
She would also use leather and string snares
with a bow to hold the snare in one place.
You set the snare right down in the gopher hole.
They are also good eating.
We do the hunting while we are at Shallow Bay.
When we come over to Shallow Bay to do fishing
at the same time we would hunt for gophers too
which is good eating.
You could skin them, or singe them.
You could cook them by roasting when you skin them,
and boil them when singed.
And some time when you are in the bush camping
you roast gophers by fire.
We also hunt for gophers, grouse, also Blue grouse.
Blue grouse is like spruce grouse, but bigger,
and you get Blue grouse high-up
like on top of hill or mountain.
Sam's McGee face was one of the mountain.
Right behind the Village,
remember seeing it down at Lake Laberge?
We would go around the Lake for about 7 days.
We, mom and me, would have our own dog team,
and aunt and uncle would have another dog team, and
cousin would have his or her own dog team.
My mom and I we would go squirrel hunting
in the fall and winter,
we go up the Grizzly Creek to Swan Lake
and up to Jim Boss Canyon,
also we would go over to "Cut Off" that's past Police Post.
Over toward Shallow Bay,
up to Mud Lake,
and up toward Hot Spring, cut off.

Sometimes we would stay in a tent,
and go with dog team,
when I would go squirrel hunting with my mom
we'd take lunch and make a fire and boil tea and
we also would have bannock.
Maybe some dry meat; with little fat (the fat was dry too).
When we set our tent,
we would put the branches down on the ground
so you are not on the dirt or in winter on the snow.
We would have little camp stove we use to cook and keep warm.
We would also hunt for fox, weasel, mink, and lynx.
Another thing is I used to go out by myself,
but, I would go out on day trip only.
I never camped by myself,
I also would go with someone always.
I would always go with my brother, my mom, or
maybe and aunt, uncle, in my life
I only trapped one lynx.

Plants and berries were used for food, medicine and other uses.

Gathering was done in the summer months, especially those months when berries flourished. Natives gathered roots, soapberries, strawberries, raspberries, cranberries and rosehips. Rosehip tea is very tasty. Berries, roots and fish eggs were preserved in animal (moose) grease. Fish eggs and cranberries were a favourite. Pitch was used for gum and the pitchy bark of balsam fur was boiled for chest colds. The poplar tree leaves and buds were boiled and chewed. Cariboo moss was used medicinally for tuberculosis and arthritis. Wild rhubarb and wild sage were used for pain and burns. Moss was used for disposable diapers. Skins from moose, sheep and caribou were used for pants, shirts, slippers and mucklucks (TA'AN KWACH'AN Cultural History Project 1989).

Virginia remembers

"We would go berry picking,
whenever the berries were ready.
Like for strawberries.
We go village side of the Lake north
about 1 or 2 miles, along the shore.
That was where we always go for strawberries
in July maybe the end of July.
We also got raspberries from the same place
and we would pick berries wherever we could find them.
Cranberries we would pick about 2 miles up the trail
from the village east of the village,
the trail going up to Little Cabin,
and beyond the trail goes to Black Lakes
the trail goes from village to grave yard hill
them to Height Bridge you go across the bridge up steep hill
maybe like 2 mile hill
a hill from downtown Whitehorse to the top of the terrace
then there's about 1/4 or one 1/2 of mossy area
that is where we pick cranberries.
My mom would put the cranberries in butter box (wood)
for the winter and keep them in cold place.

I remember us going up on the mountain
with our family like Uncle Willie, Aunt Helen,
mom, myself, and couple more families.
We would go up little cabin trail to little cabin
then we would go would go south like to Joe Mt. maybe to Mt.
Frank Slim.

I think we were up there for about 2 weeks.
We do this in August, maybe middle of August till Sept.
when we are up there on the mountains
we would trap gophers, dry moose meat, pick berries,
maybe some rabbits.
For this trip we would have dogs with packs,
people with packs too.
My mom and me we would have maybe 4 dogs with dog packs,
we take along blankets, pillows, clothes,
foods like flour, sugar, tea, dry milk and

it's called kiln, dry vegetables in can, salt, potatoes,
lard, onions, pilot bread, maybe jam & maybe butter.
For this trip my mom would make me a new pair of moccasins,
which was a treat for me.
My mom and I we were very close,
I love my mother very dearly.

Most families lived in wood or log homes and would take a tent or make a lean to when hunting and trapping. Family units usually consisted of a mother, a father, grandparents, aunts and uncles and their families. They had a chief who they considered their leader. Chief Jim Boss was one of the most influential men in the Yukon and he was the chief of the Lake Laberge Band until his death in 1950.

My great uncle Jim Boss was my mother's uncle.
He lived across Upper Lake Laberge from us.
On east side of the Lake, my mom, dad and
family lived, with my grandmother,
on my mom side, my aunts and uncles, cousins.
The other side of the Lake
my great uncle Jim Boss lived alone.
My great uncle Jim Boss,
used to come over to visit us at our house,
never go to visit other families,
he never visited his sister
I think that my mom was
Jim Boss's favourite niece.
My mom always cooked dinner or lunch for him.
After a good talk and visit, he would go home across the Lake.
My great uncle Jim Boss always came over
to visit with horse and sleigh, in the winter.
In the summer time,

He would come with horse and (buggy) or carriage.
In the summer,
when he come across Lake Laberge,
to visit he would come with a big new looking blue Boat.
What I remember about my great uncle Jim Boss,
was that he very clean, very kind, very nice.
But when I was a kid,
I used to be very frightened of him,
I don't know why!
But he would always give us candies.
When I was a kid, the other kids and
I would jump on to his horse and
flat deck that he would be driving,
when he going by Russian Town.



Figure 13: Uncle Jim Boss

The spiritual beliefs of Yukon First Nations people were deeply connected to ancestral stories that linked spiritual events to specific places. Although most have converted from traditional spiritual practices to the more common religions of today, beliefs and memories linger on what was passed from one generation to the next. What people did carry from place to place was knowledge, a profound understanding of the land and how to live on it. To this day, subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping are still carried on within the First Nations' traditional lands. There is a growing interest among First Nations people in recapturing the traditional ways of life, including language, songs and culture. One of the most significant traits of First Nations people is their relationship with the weather and their physical and natural environment. They knew the land and knew when things were amiss. They had what appears as an innate ability to determine how the weather might change because this could mean life and death and how animals foretold events. In fact, this ability was based on the experience and wisdom of many, many generations' accumulated knowledge.

Virginia Lindsay recollects stories about observing animal behaviour

"My mom used to tell me that when you hear a bird (woodpecker) make a sound like something different, they don't make this sound all the time, only when it is going to rain. I can describe the song, it sounds like: "rain' 'rain' 'rain' RaRaRa----in, RaRaRa----in." I remember when I was little in the evening I would hear an owl hooting in the bush, they would hoo, hoo, or hooo, hoo. My grandma would say "listen the owl will get you" or "the owl will come after you" or

or "the owl will come after you" or
"the owl is going to get you if you don't go to sleep"
or "the owl will get you if you're bad."
We know spring is here
when you hear the robin singing a song
which I love to listen to.
Spring time is my favourite season,
or when you see other birds in the garden or yard."

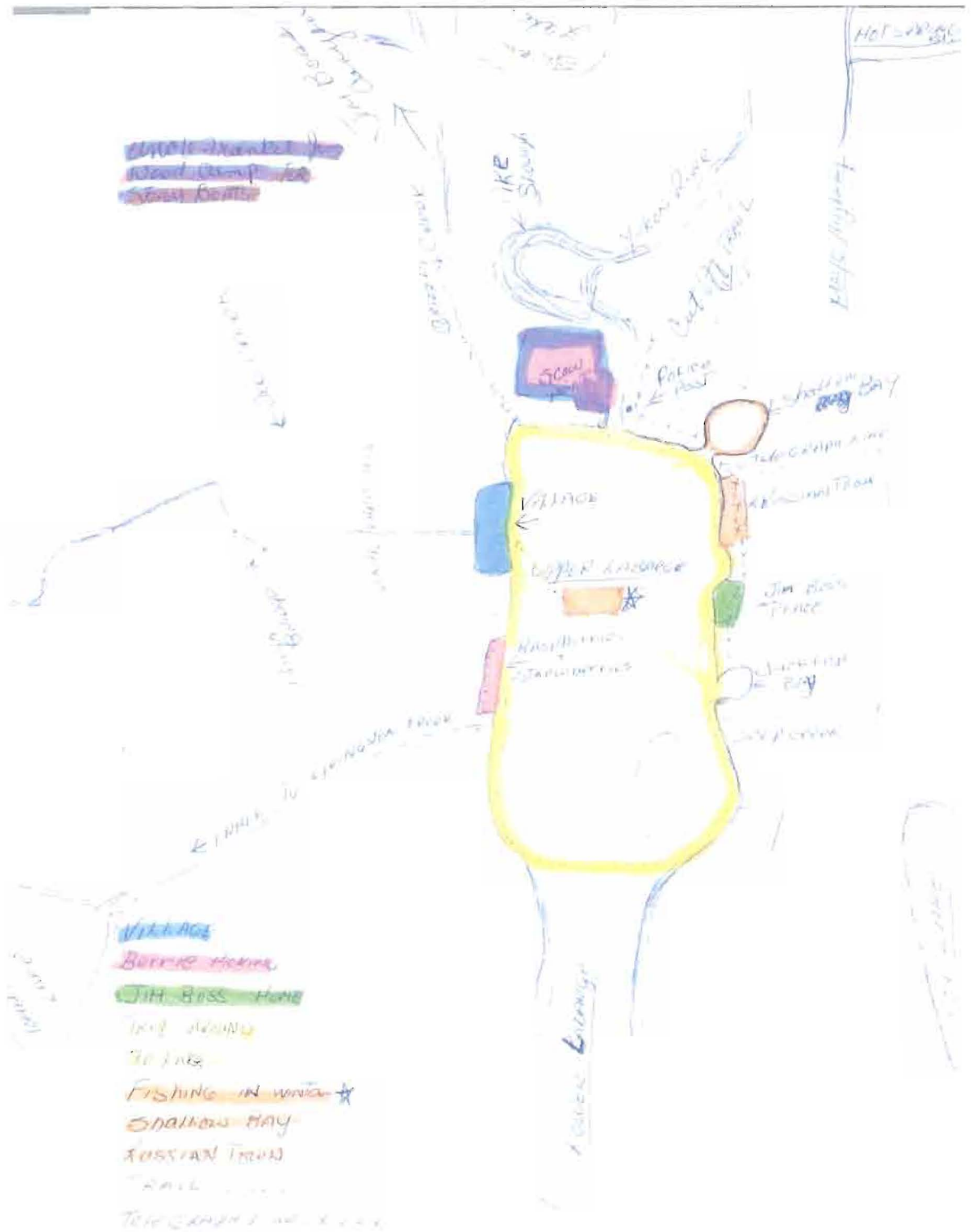


Figure 14: Map drawn by Virginia Lindsay of her hunting, fishing and gathering areas

During the era described by Virginia Lindsay, the First Nations People in the Yukon lived a very traditional life style that involved in good part a subsistence economy. Even today, most Yukon First Nations people still partially live off the land and continue to hunt, trap, fish and gather on a regular and seasonal basis. Outside of the major centres like Whitehorse, Dawson City, Mayo, Haines Junction and Watson Lake, there are a lot of small villages that have not changed much in the last fifty years. Virginia Lindsay (nee Slim) lived off the land until her early twenties. She learned how to sustain herself and her family. She knew how to adapt to the environment. I once asked her if she wanted to go camping, and she said she had camped most of her life and those days were over! Most importantly, my mother's memories give us an insight into daily activity in most native communities. This is also what the daily activity of Captain Frank Slim resembled, given that my mother learned many of her skills from him and from her mother and other older relatives, and carried out many activities with her parents and their relatives.

I will finish off this chapter with a quote from an elder from McClellan's book *My Old People Say* Part 2. His statement summarizes the close connection with the land that people in my grandfather's time had, and how the close connections that people shared through intermarriage and social relations maintained a network of communities and kept social harmony.

"Look at this—like willow and cottonwood, balsam and spruce and jack pine, or any tree in the country we join together. We had our living that way. We never had just one grandpa. All the people in the world are our grandpa. That is why we had no

trouble. Now look at that we have relatives in Pelly, some out at Atlin, some out at Hootalinqua, some out at Liard, some out at Taku, some out at Nakina, some down at Juneau, some out at Hootsnuwu at Chilkat. How many different people [yet] we are one....only crazy people start wars. And then good rich people wanted everyone to join in one nation. Now, after that we join—every one of the people" (McClellan 1975:578).

CHAPTER 3: OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE YUKON

The standard Archaeological belief has been that big-game hunters traversed Beringia and discovered the ice-free corridor by 12,000 years ago (McMillan and Yellowhorn 2007:29)

The history of the Yukon goes back thousands of years. Archaeology suggests that antiquity of the Yukon dates back to more than 12,000 years ago. This is based on stone tools and animal bones found at Bluefish Cave, and other archaeological sites in the northern Yukon “What might be the earliest traces of human activity in the Yukon Territory are some battered pieces of fossil bones, antler and teeth possible used as tools - and the cracked bones of animals that the tool makers may have eaten” (McClellan 1987:49). She says that the earliest sites are possible sites because “...it is often hard to tell naturally cracked stones of bones from one that a human has cut or cracked for a special purpose” (McClellan 1987:49). In the book *Part of The land Part of The water*, McClellan notes three of the latest cultural periods Taya Lake Culture 4500-1300 years ago, Aishihik Culture 1300-200 years ago and Bennett Lake Culture 200-100 years ago (see also McClellan 1987:53-67). Another perspective that is offered by Julie Cruikshank (1991:11) is that “the area known as the Yukon Territory has history as ancient as the earth itself”. In other words, Yukon elders think of their people’s life in their homelands as having started at the beginning of time itself, or what the courts have termed “since time immemorial”. Part of the reason for

the conflicting and tentative views on the past is due to the fact that archaeological research in the Yukon has been limited. Moreover, the First Nations People have their own version on the history of the Yukon. Frank Slim's daughter, Virginia Lindsay tells her own view of her people's history. The story she describes is the beginning of light and how the world was created.

There was a family of four in a house or maybe a tent. They had a daughter and grandson living with mom, dad, grandma and grandpa. Every day the grandson would say I want this, and the grandpa would give it to him what ever he wanted, this went on for a long time .This grandson was really spoiled. One day he said to his grandpa he wanted the light, which was like a round ball up on the ceiling to play with. First they said that he couldn't have it. He cried for days wanting to get the light ball to play with. Finally the grandpa gave him the light ball, and then he was really happy. He was playing with the ball when he saw an opening in the ceiling, and then he said "caw caw" like a bird call and flew out the opening in the ceiling. He was a Raven, not the grandson; yes all along the grandson was a Raven. Elders said that how the World got its daylight. They said the Raven flew around the World with the daylight, that is how the daylight come to be. (Personal communication with Virginia Lindsay in Whitehorse July/2006)

Long before non-Natives arrived in the Yukon, First Nations people gathered, hunted, traded and inter-married with other First Nations throughout the Yukon and Alaska.

Archaeological evidence shows that the Yukon Indians were a strong, healthy and highly intelligent people. They were carving out a living of this land before the white man. They learned how to survive the harsh climate conditions and to make the best use of what their mother earth had to offer them. The long ago Indians not only survived, they also developed and maintained thriving and symbolically rich cultures (Council for Yukon Indians, The Yukon Indian news Summer 1984).

Other than walking from destination to destination, people's main mode of transportation was by dog sled in the winter and river travel in the spring, summer and fall. Frank Slim said that he knew the rivers like the back of his hand.

History is usually written from the perspective of the writer and has distinct values, morals and beliefs. "Whatever their motives, many early visitors recorded their observations and impressions in journals, letters and reports that are valuable to historians but that usually tell us more about Victorian values than the indigenous peoples described" (Cruikshank 1998:5). As Cruikshank showed (1991,1998), Yukon First Nations elders' narrative about the past emphasize different facts and relationships than European accounts of Yukon history.

Changes that occurred during the 18th and 19th centuries dramatically and sometimes tragically affected the First Nations people of the Yukon. Contact that occurred before the gold rush shaped the history of the Yukon, especially the significance of riverboat travel. Mining, tourism and river travel played a significant role in the development of the Yukon.

Russians were the first explorers to visit the northwest Coast of Alaska. They eventually sent smaller vessels down the Yukon River from the Bering Sea. Russian influence can be seen all along the northwest Coast. The Russians were met by the Tlingits who traded goods for copper and furs. Tlingits also acted as middlemen for those trading excursions that took place inland. When visiting Alaska you can see Russian influences are still present in this area.

While the Russians had made contact by 1732, Europeans were slow in reaching the north, given their quest for furs (Coates 2005:17). After establishing posts in the south, the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company headed north. In 1821 North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company merged so they were no longer in competition with one another. The newly-merged company focused on establishing trading posts in the Yukon and North West Territory. Nearly all European explorers used the river systems to explore the north; rivers were the lifeline to accessing inland communities.

In 1826 Sir John Franklin and his crew searched for the North West Passage via the Arctic Ocean but the ice and northern climate conditions proved to be too great a challenge and the crew perished. Explorers such as John McLeod proceeded northwest from Fort Simpson "to get some information on the sources of the West Branch of the Liard River" (Coates 2005:19). In 1831 McLeod travelled the Liard River and explored the Dease River in 1843. By the 1840s it became clear to the European explorers that the north could supply a great deal of raw fur to the European market. Furs in the north were of high quality because the fur was thick to deal with the cold weather.

Robert Campbell established Fort Francis in 1840 and Fort Selkirk in 1841, followed by James McDougall and John Bell who opened Rampart House and Lapierre House in 1842, and 1846 (Coates 2005:23). Around the middle of the 1800s missionaries were moving north to convert the "heathen Indians" who were trading with the companies. In 1867 Canada officially became a nation and this meant that Canadian laws would be applied to all areas of Canada, including

the North. Indians were no longer allies, they were now an obstacle. In 1870, the Yukon, as part of the Northwest Territories, became a part of Canada and became a distinct Territory in 1898 when Dawson City became the capital of the territory.

In the early 1870s there were rumours of gold in the Yukon and First Nation People were still able to continue their traditional way of life although, this would soon change (Coates 2005). In 1876 the Indian Act was implemented. This legislation would define who was an *Indian* and who was not. Status was a term used by the Federal Government to identify Indians. Strict new legislation affected all Indians deemed to be "Status". Lieutenant Frank Schwatka conducted the first survey of the entire length of the Yukon River in 1883. In May of 1894 a resolution of the Privy-Council authorized the North West Mounted Police to enter the Yukon. In 1896 Skookum Jim, Frank Slim's great uncle, and his brother in-law Tagish Charlie, discovered gold on Rabbit Creek. The creek was later renamed Bonanza Creek. My grandfather Frank Slim was born in 1898. This was also the year that the Klondike Gold Rush turned Dawson City into the largest city north of San Francisco. Thousands of prospectors made their way to Dawson through Lake Laberge (Coates and Morrow 2005).

During this time of great change, "Mundessa" (Old Man Chief), my great-great grandfather was living at Lake Laberge. Mundessa also established the roots that I know as my family history in the Yukon. Mundessa had come to Lake Laberge from the Hutshi. His wife Lande came from Tagish. His son Jim Boss would become chief when his father passed and he would be known as the

person who started the first land claim agreement in the Yukon. Jim Boss, Kashx'oot, would eventually become an outspoken and well known chief. In 1902 he wrote to the King of England via the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and asked if the King could protect his land from the influx of people coming to the Gold Rush:

On January 13, 1902 a Whitehorse lawyer, T.W. Jackson wrote a letter on behalf of Chief Jim Boss to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. This is an excerpt from that letter: Jim Boss otherwise known as Hunde-aelth, hereditary chief of the Southern Yukon Indian tribes and recognized by the Southern remnants of tribes as head chief of all the bands southerly from the Stewart River, has requested me to communicate with the Department requesting the rights of the Yukon Indians to compensation because of the taking possession of their lands and hunting grounds by white people (Council for Yukon Indians, SHAKAT Summer Journal 1989).

The gold rush started in 1896 but was not officially on the map until 1898. Gold brought thousands of people to the Yukon to stake their claim but thousands were disappointed. Frank Slim's family lived at the mouth of the Yukon River, on Marsh Lake. This must have been a confusing and unsettling time for his family with the great influx of people, let alone white people. With the Gold Rush came jobs for First Nations men and women. Some men worked as guides and scouts as these new-comers really did not know where they were heading. The journey down the Yukon River was gentle except for the rapids just after Miles Canyon, as well as the Five Finger rapids (Coates and Morrow 2005).

The Gold Rush was an exciting time for the Yukon, however crime went up dramatically in the Klondike. Dance hall girls were exploited through prostitution, and gambling was rampant. I have been told of back room deals that

included people who had gambled homes. In 1901 a group of social elites called the Klondike society was formed to clean up the town. Gambling, however, moved into people's homes or the back rooms of hotels.

The early 1900s brought the stern wheelers and this allowed people to move and travel more quickly. Stern wheelers were the lifelines to small communities. Whitehorse was established around the gold rush area. It was located on a flat piece a land north of the rapids where the boats could dock and companies could set up shops. Whitehorse was originally named because the foam on the heads of the rapids looked like white horse heads. There had been a small community above the Yukon rapids called Canyon City but this was not a great area because people had to tram goods around the rapids which were at the foot of Miles Canyon. In later years, a man-made lake was created to establish a power dam to harness the fast running waters of what was called the Whitehorse Rapids.

Small businesses were quickly establishing their position in Whitehorse and one of the companies was a small grocery store owned by Mr. Isaac Taylor and Mr. Bill Drury. The store which was called Taylor and Drury's addressed the need to stock groceries in a central location to facilitate small communities along the inland rivers. They first used stern wheelers to carry groceries but then opted to use their own boat called the Yukon Rose in the 1930s. Frank Slim piloted this small vessel for Taylor and Drury's when he was not working on the stern wheelers. Stern wheelers were still bringing supplies to Dawson City (Knutson 1979).

In 1911 two Anglican residential schools opened in Carcross, one for status First Nations Children and the other for non-status or mixed race children. Girls were groomed for domestic services like cooking and cleaning, boys learned carpentry, hunting and gardening. The hope was to have children leave the school as missionaries so they could go home and convert their communities. This was the first time that many of the children were exposed to so many people and when diseases struck many children died. Children were quite often abused at residential school for speaking their own languages. Today residential school victims are receiving compensation from the Canadian Government.

In 1912, when Frank was fourteen years old he went to one of the last traditional potlatches, a memorial for Dawson Charlie, which was held at Carcross/Tagish. This was one of the last potlatches because they had been banned by the Federal Government and any person having one could go to jail. Angela Sydney remembered that

They had two potlatches when I was a kid, one was 1912, the other was 1914. That 1912 one was in Carcross; the other was in Whitehorse, though---Wolf people again. They were (given by) Wolf people again. They were both (given by) Wolf people. From there on they never had potlatches, no big potlatches anymore (Cruikshank 1990:91).

In 1919, when mining seemed to be waning in the Yukon the Keno Hill Mine opened (2005:191 Coates). This was a silver ore mine just outside the town of Keno, a short distance from Mayo. "The Yukon gold company and the Treadwell Yukon Company controlled the Keno field" (2005:192 Coates). This brought new life to mining and a geologist named Wernecke, who worked for

Treadwell Company, saw potential in the mine. He wanted to commit to the mine and make it productive. The stern wheeler the S.S. Klondike, was built to accommodate the ore and played an important part in transportation. The silver ore went from Keno to Mayo, down the Stuart River to the Yukon River, then to Whitehorse where it was sent by train to Skagway for export.

In the early 1920's Dawson City saw its population drop to a few thousand, half of what it was during its gold rush heyday. The late 1920s brought the Great Depression. This economic downfall, however, did not bother the First Nations people as they were used to living off the land. They helped to provide wild meat, to sustain communities when food, especially produce and meat were hard to come by. Natives were not really seen except in controlled areas like selected sites in Whitehorse and Dawson. These controlled sites were usually away from the main centres such as in Dawson where they resided at Moose Hide, an Indian village down river. The settlement for First Nations people in Whitehorse moved a few times but was always just outside the main town area. Natives usually worked selling meat, trapping, wood cutting and packing for the boats, which continued to be the primary means of transport for tourism, goods and supplies.

In 1922 the town of Keno was established and became a functioning mining community (Coates 2005:191). In 1927, Andy Cruickshank, who owned Northern Airways, made the first mail drop when his wife threw mail bags out of the plane window in Dawson and Mayo (Coates 2005:206). Shortly after that, in 1934, air travel began by Canadian Airways and Northern Airways (Coates

2005:206). Because the airlines only serviced larger communities, the stern wheelers were the main mode of transporting passengers between communities and larger settlements. Some people were contracted to deliver the mail by canoe or small boats. At the beginning of the economic depression in 1929 the mine was prosperous, but in 1930 silver ore prices declined and in 1932 the mine closed (Coates 2005:204). This left a town with a lot of miners and no work so some moved or turned to working on the boats, trapping or doing whatever work they could find to make ends meet. When hope for Keno was running out a new vein of rich silver ore was discovered. In 1937 it produced four million ounces of silver (Coates 2005:217). The government wanted to see the mine succeed, so roads and bridges to carry the silver ore for processing were built. In 1939 the mine at Keno again went out of production (Coates 2005:218).

Dawson City was still the capital of the Yukon in 1939 when the Second World War began in Europe. The population was still declining and most of the population worked on the dredge that still produced gold from the creeks. A lot of businesses had moved to Whitehorse which was quickly becoming the hub of the territory. The Americans could see the war escalating and wondered how they could get their troops to Alaska if needed. The Canadian Government also wanted a road north to protect their interests.

In 1935 the United States Government offered two million dollars to construct a highway. A High Commission began talks in 1937 (Coates 2005:226). In 1939 when the war began, the need for the highway was imperative. Russia entered the war in 1941 (Coates 2005:227). The war finally reached North

America when Japan bombed Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941 (Coates 2005:228).

In early 1942 the Canadian Government finally gave their approval for highway construction and the massive project began (Coates 2005:229). The highway construction was divided into two sections, one starting in northern British Columbia and the other north of Watson Lake in the Yukon. An airport was being constructed in Watson Lake to bring in equipment. At the same time equipment for the highway was being barged up the Stikine and Dease rivers. Amazingly, in November of 1942 the highway opened from Dawson Creek to Anchorage, Alaska (Coates 2005:230). This was an outstanding achievement considering 1500 miles were constructed in eleven months (Coates 2005:230).

The way some First Nations found out about the highway was when large bull dozers and other equipment ploughed through their communities. The highway not only displaced people, it also displaced animals and disrupted animal migrations. Natives say that when the highway came all the animals disappeared. Traditional hunting and gathering areas were disturbed, forcing more and more natives to move to larger communities for work. Some First Nations such as my uncle John Adamson had joined the war effort.

Unfortunately, they returned home only to face discrimination and ignorance. First Nations who joined the armed forces lost their Indian Status. Some people who lost their status and went to live in town could no longer get any financial assistance from the Department of Indian affairs. Others who left their communities began to drink alcohol as they felt displaced and ignored. Frank

Slim worked on a secret mission in Dease Lake to bring supplies by barge for the highway (Lindsay conversation 2005).



Figure 15: Frank working for US Government Dease Lake

In the late 1940's the mining property Keno amalgamated with other mining properties and became the United Keno Hill Mine. Workers from all areas of Canada moved to the Yukon to work for the mine. In 1948 it produced 2.4 million dollars worth of silver and lead. My Uncle Don Miller drove a truck hauling silver and lead to Whitehorse, where the minerals were sent by train to Skagway for export. My dad also worked for the mine in 1955.

In the late 1940s the Federal Government introduced the Yukon Game Ordinance. This prohibited First Nations men from selling their meat in Whitehorse. Some First Nations men had relied on this money to sustain their families. Legislation for trapping came next and all trappers had to pay a "\$10.00 annual fee to cover the cost of administration" (Coates 2005:270). This led to a

decline in trapping, but some people such as Frank Slim still managed to keep trapping. He would later transfer his trap line to his daughter Virginia Lindsay.

Whitehorse was, for all purposes, the main community for all federal and territorial affairs. Dawson was losing its popularity and only a few thousand people remained living there. There was now a highway from the south to Whitehorse but still no highway to Dawson. The government would later build a road to Mayo but Dawson City was considered out of the way. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police moved their head quarters to Whitehorse in 1943. In that same year the United States Army leased the train from Skagway to Whitehorse to transport troops and supplies, leaving the Canadian Government to maintain the Alaska Highway. During these times work was everywhere but most people tended to work for the Americans because they paid better. Those First Nations who were not working for the war effort, were still guiding, selling meat and trapping, with over \$650,000.00 worth of furs still being sold (Coates 2005:270).

In the early 1950's Dawson City got a long awaited highway which was called the Top of the World Highway. This highway went north and linked Dawson City to Alaska via Tok Junction. In 1950 the road to Mayo was completed which left Dawson City access to the Top of the World Highway restricted. With no direct highway from Whitehorse to Dawson City, in 1955 the road from Stewart Crossing to Dawson was completed. In 1952 a nickel deposit was located near Klauene Lake which revitalized the mining industry in the region (Coates 2005:272). With most Federal Government divisions moving to

Whitehorse, a new Federal Building began construction in 1952. With the new highways, the last sternwheeler stopped running in 1955. Those who worked on the boats had to find new jobs. Some survived this transition; others did not and left the territory. The Klondike became an historic site in Whitehorse and so did the Keno when she took her last voyage in 1960. Frank Slim was the pilot on this last voyage, which was filmed for a documentary. About 6,000 people lived in Whitehorse at the time and it is said that the whole town turned out to watch the Keno leave Whitehorse.

Whitehorse was quickly becoming the hub of the Yukon. Students from all over the Yukon were relocated to Whitehorse to attend high school. In 1960 the Yukon Hall which was a residential facility opened. Whitehorse grew with several new housing developments in Riverdale, Porter Creek, and Hill Crest. The government went on a hiring binge bringing people from all areas of Canada to work. The Yukon offered incentives such as free plane trips to Edmonton or Vancouver for each member of the family of a government employee. They also had an isolated posting allowance which gave each government employee a financial incentive to move to the Yukon.

The Alaska Highway was the only road to the north but most of it was still in a primitive condition. The highway had taken many lives and with tourism a priority the highway had to be repaired, replaced, and maintained. It seemed that the Alaska Highway was always being worked on. Twelve years later in 1964 the Federal Government passed the maintenance of the Alaska Highway from the Canadian Army to the Public Works Department but the department wanted to

“rebuild the highway rather than supervise the routine maintenance” (Coates 2005:267). In 1967, the Cassiar Asbestos Mine opened and the small town of Cassiar was established. Cassiar is located in Northern British Columbia but to get there most travellers had to come to the Yukon, by air to Whitehorse or up the highway through Watson Lake. Cassiar also brought life back to places like Watson Lake and Liard.

In 1973 gold went from \$35.00 an ounce to \$600.00 an ounce starting a mini gold rush throughout the Yukon (Coates 2005:274). Claims were being staked and prospectors were having a heyday. People came from as far away as California to the Dawson area to get their piece of land. Dawson started to become an active community each summer when the population doubled or tripled. Dawson, as well as other areas in the Yukon, began a tourism campaign which saw thousands of Americans heading to Alaska.

Land claims became a topic of conversation in the 1960s. In 1973 a tentative agreement between the Yukon First Nations, Council of Yukon Indians, Native Brotherhood, Yukon Association of Non-Status Indians and the Federal Government was drafted. Although this agreement was not accepted, a subsequent agreement finally passed in 1988. In the 1970s despite discrimination against Natives by Non-Natives, culture was being revitalized in the north. Most people began to accept Native culture and some saw that working with First Nations could only improve things. Government began hiring and training First Nations people. In 1977, the Yukon Native Language program started and each school began to offer First Nations language classes taught by

trained language teachers. Tourism was booming, and building and improvements on structures and roads were a priority. Many big name department stores and commercial franchises opened up outlets in Whitehorse. The highway was now in good condition and one could travel from Fort Nelson to Whitehorse in twelve hours. Whitehorse was quickly becoming a hub of the north.

Mining and tourism have always been the main industries of the Yukon. Getting around in the Yukon was first done by river then by road linking small First Nations communities to bigger centres like Dawson City, Mayo and Whitehorse. The history of the Yukon centres on these main industries which still play a significant role in shaping the Yukon today. The Riverboats have always been a part of our history. They have been described as water highways because for a long time they were. The next chapter looks at the Riverboats and their role in the development of the Yukon.

The general chronology of Yukon history provides us with a skeleton of events caused by outside factors (fur trade and exploration, confederation, the gold rush, implementation of Federal policies, the First and Second World Wars, transportation routes), all of which had big impacts on the lives of Yukon First Nations people. Through the thread of events that affected our people in general, we also get glimpses about the life of Frank Slim, as his life intersected through "converging lines of evidence" (Rosaldo 1982) with major events in Yukon, Canadian and world history. In the next chapter I will further explore the culture of the riverboats which so much affected his life.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURE OF THE RIVERBOATS



Figure 16: Family (Gracie, Tim, Errol and Max) in front of Klondike

If you have ever been to Whitehorse one of the structures that stands out is the steam ship S.S. Klondike. This steamship lies on the bank of the Yukon River and is perhaps the most famous of all of the sternwheelers. The S.S. Klondike is one of the two big sternwheelers that has been restored and preserved. In Dawson City, the S.S. Keno, another massive ship is moored in her final resting place beside the Yukon River. Both ships have since become Parks Canada National Historic Sites and museums. These are only two of the many sternwheelers that plied the rivers of the Yukon. The riverboats first started travelling the rivers of the Yukon around 1869. According to Dobrowolsky and Ingram (1994:21) "The Canadian Development Company owned the boats until

1901 when the British Yukon Navigational Company took over their assets”.

Born in 1898, Frank Slim worked on the sternwheelers from 1914 to 1960 when he piloted the S.S. Keno on her last voyage to Dawson City. My grandfather told me on many occasions of how he waved at my mom and me as the boat signalled by two long whistles that she was ready to leave.

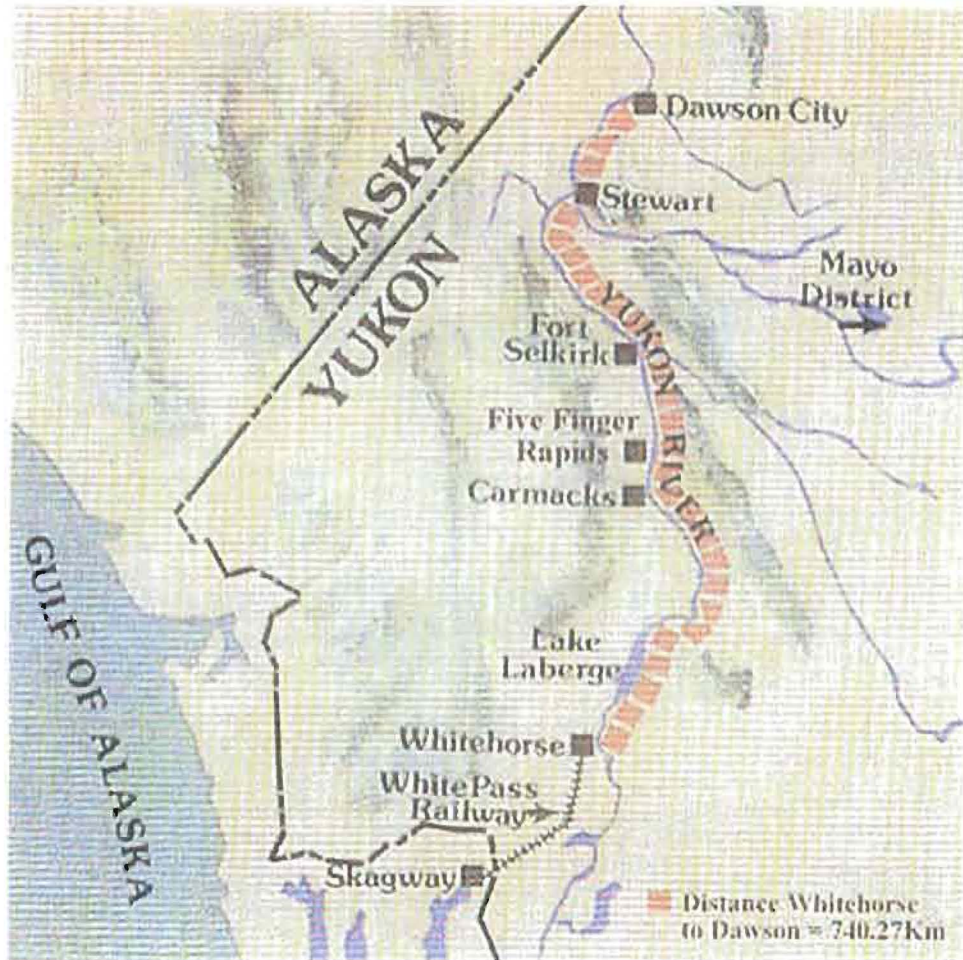


Figure 17: Yukon River Route Whitehorse to Dawson City

Steam powered river transportation was the central element in the development and connection of the Yukon to the outside world for almost a century after the first vessel reached Fort Selkirk in 1866. The character of the system that developed was shaped by the geography of the Yukon and the technology of the riverboats. Alternative transport options developed slowly (Parks Canada website www.pc.gc.ca find S.S. Klondike heritage site)

The mighty riverboats that worked the rivers of the north were large vessels that carried goods to all of the communities and settlements. "River highways" opened the doors to economic development in the north. These vessels also carried passengers who were first lured to the north by the fur trade and then by the Klondike Gold Rush. Between 1897 and 1898 over 20,000 people came to the north when gold was discovered in the Klondike. When 20,000 people descend on a location, goods and supplies must be available to sustain this increased population. The big boats were the work horses of the north.

Starting on July 21, 1898, some boats were brought in piece-by-piece from Skagway on a single gage railroad and assembled at the shipyards in Whitehorse. Other boats came inland via the Pacific Ocean through Alaska and down the Yukon River.

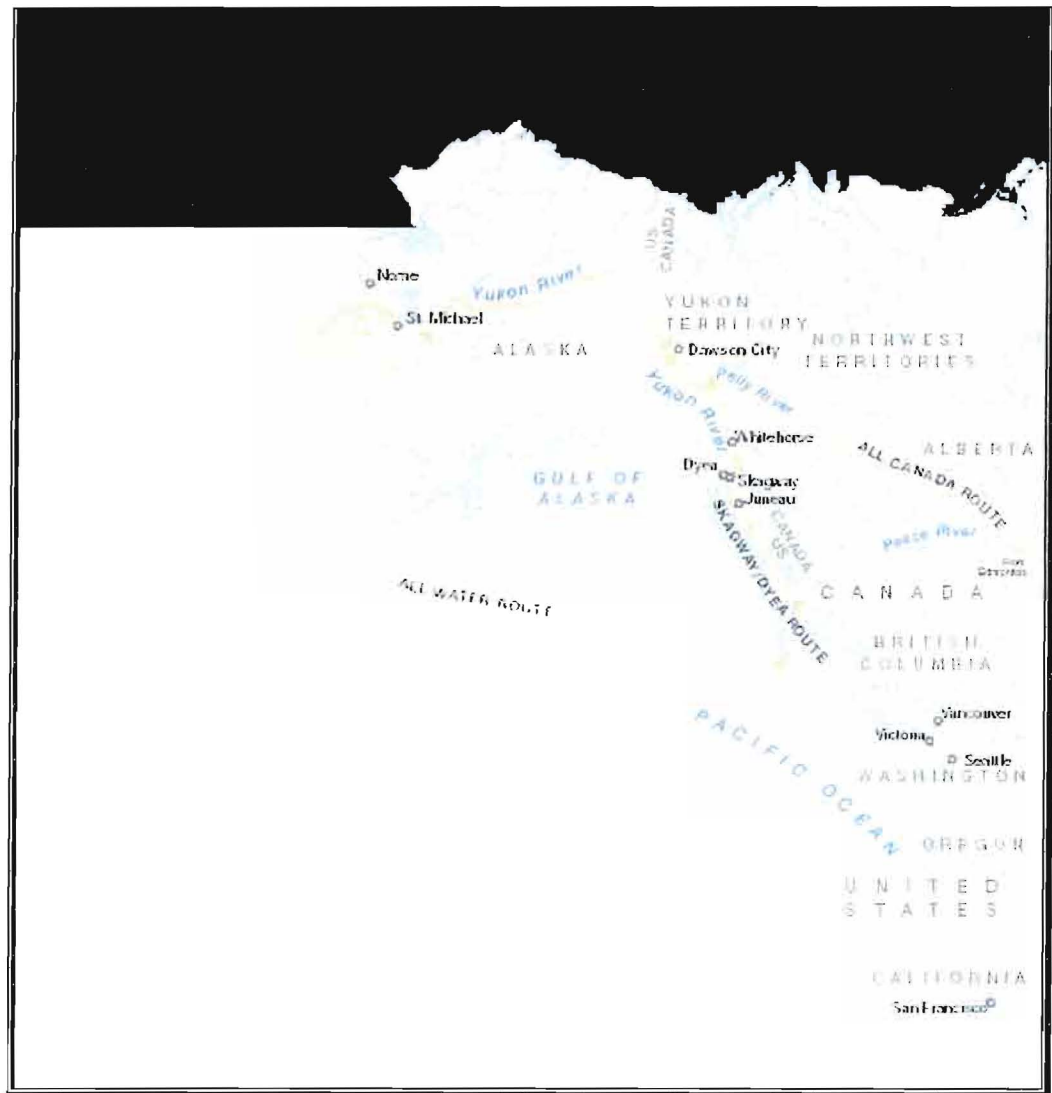


Figure 18: Entrance to Yukon River

The boating season was approximately five months long, running from the middle of May to the middle of September. By the end of September, ice could form on the river and create potential dangers. Boat workers watched the weather and boats were docked because the river could freeze overnight.

At the shipyards in Whitehorse, the boats were moored and assembled. When the boats first started out in the spring, there were many chores to do before they were operational. Several hundred workers, laboured in the

shipyards getting individual stern wheelers ready for the season. Each spring the boats were carefully overhauled to make sure that there were no leaks or weak spots where water could leak in. General maintenance, including painting and caulking was performed. Caulking between each plank on the under belly of the boat was replaced or secured. The boiler was cleaned, painted and greased. All of the toggles, levers, pumps, pipes and steering devices were maintained or replaced. The smoke stack was cleaned and painted. To get the boats in the water, thirty or more greased jacks were used to slowly inch and slide the boats towards the water. This took some time and a yard master would holler commands to the several men moving the boat.

Sternwheelers on the Yukon, Stewart and Pelly rivers varied in design. The S.S. Klondike and S.S. Keno were designed specifically for the Stewart and Pelly Rivers. This meant that the hull of the ship was flat and not too deep, resting only two to three feet in the water to suit the shallow rivers. The Klondike was originally designed to transport silver lead ore from Keno Hill mine up the Stewart River and Yukon River to Whitehorse. The ore was then transported by rail to Skagway and exported to smelters in the south. The Keno originally carried passengers, gold and supplies in and out of Dawson City to Whitehorse. The S.S. Tutshi, with a keel instead of a flat hull was designed for lake runs sometimes picking up passengers at Lake Bennett to take to Carcross.

The boats ranged in length and in weight. A typical vessel was about one hundred and seventy to two hundred and eleven feet long and about thirty five feet wide, and could carry cargo up to two hundred and fifty tons

(www.questconnect.org/ak_sternwheelers.htm). They were run by a type of boiler engine which burned one hundred and twenty cords of wood on a trip from Whitehorse to Dawson (www.questconnect.org/ak_sternwheelers.htm). The boats were moored in the shipyards, in an area where the boats were assembled, maintained and wintered. The river front was and continues to be a focal point for the people of Whitehorse.

Over the years there were several boats running on different rivers. The S.S. Yukon will serve as an example of a typical boat. "The crew consisted of three basic departments the deck force, the engineers, and the stewards" (Knutson 14:1979). The boats had an average crew of about thirty five workers. In the early days passengers were asked to help with duties on the boats like cutting wood. The sternwheelers had essential crew members who consisted of deck-hands, a chief engineer, a second engineer, three fire men, a chief steward, a chief cook, a second cook, a baker, a mess boy, a night pantry man, and a bell boy. Up to six stewards were needed depending on the number of passengers (Knutson 1979:14). The senior members of the crew were second mate, Captain, Pilot, purser, freight clerk and assistant purser. The average wage for workers ranged from \$75.00 a month for the deck hands, to \$150.00 for the second mate. Knutson writes "I earned one hundred and fifty dollars per month as second mate." Reports indicate that some crew members were paid 50 cents an hour for over time. Knutson further says that the first mate hired native deck hands and they were paid the same rate as other casual workers. Knutson also states that

“...different boats made up their crew to suit their individual needs” (Knutson 1979:17).

The sternwheelers varied in height but most had three levels and they were strategically laid out from bottom to top. The front of the boat was the bow, the back was the stern, the right hand side was the starboard and the left side was the port. The entrance level or cargo deck of the boat was where the boiler, the wood for the boiler, and cargo of all types was stored. Passengers, mainly First Nations people that did not pay the full fare, were on the first level where some cots were set up for overnight voyages. Cargo consisted of supplies, equipment, food and any other transportable goods that the boats could carry to the small communities along the river. Cargo, food and equipment delivery was essential to Dawson City during the Gold Rush. The boiler and several cords of wood were strategically located in the middle of the cargo level. The cargo and wood were centered and balanced around the boiler (Knutson 1979).



Figure 19: Engine Room

The controls and fire rooms were at the back, or stern, of the cargo deck. The extreme outer stern of the ship was where the paddlewheel was propelled by steam. The second floor consisted of the outer deck, sitting room and dining room, where the passengers socialized and ate. The kitchen and preparation areas were in the back of the second level. The main cook and his helper sometimes slept in small rooms which were in the aft of the kitchen.

First class passengers and some crew members, such as the Captain and Pilot always ate before all other passengers. The third level had an observation deck surrounding the boat where crew and passengers could see the sights of their journey.



Figure 20: Sitting Room



Figure 21: Formal Dining room

The third level was where all of the sleeping quarters were located. The third level was also where the Captain, Pilot, first mate and purser slept.

The top of the ship was the Wheelhouse where the Captain piloted the ship.



Figure 22: Captain's room



Figure 23: Wheelhouse

There were several stops on each boat's journey, where the boat would be tied up for the night and where fuel, in the form of cords of wood, was carried on. It was usually First Nations men who had contracts with the British Yukon Navigational Company to supply the vessels with the wood that fuelled the boats. In an article written in the 1989 summer journal of the SHAKAT which was a newspaper for tourists Frankie Jim my mom's uncle wrote

In those days too, I cut wood. Cut wood with an axe. Steamboat wood for two and a half (dollars) a cord. In January I cut three cords of wood a day with an axe. Later on, Swede saw come to the store. Oh that goes fast, but now, something comes better, the chainsaw, I would have ten cords a days if I had a chainsaw in those day (Shakat Summer Journal 1989:12).

These designated stops were usually small villages where mail, food and cargo was also delivered. Some villages ceased to exist after the boats stopped running while some have continued to survive where mainly First Nations people still live.

Frank Slim had a small two room home in the shipyards which made it easy to get to work. He lived there alone most of the boating season except when his family came to town for their routine shopping trips. Most of the non-native crew went south for the winter, while the native crew went home. Frank would go home to Lake Laberge where all of his wife's family lived. When the crew finally received their last pay cheques, some would go on a drinking binge. With more bars than churches, the Yukon had a wild reputation. This is still the way it is today. My grandfather would sometimes be caught up in this type of life, which put a strain on the family. My grandmother would walk to town to find him

and have Virginia, the youngest daughter, retrieve him from a party house. If my grandmother went into the house to get him, he would not listen to her but he would always listen to Virginia (Lindsay conversation 2004).

The boats started running when the rivers were free from ice. There was a tradition of betting as to when the ice would break on the rivers and this bet continues to the present. The boats were the life lines to all of the small communities. They brought friends, family, mail, groceries, and anything else needed to these small communities. People would line the shore when the boats rolled into town. Places such as Fort Yukon would become a ghost town when the boats stopped running in the early 1950's. Some people say that, at one point, the forts looked like people just got up and left town in a hurry. This makes me believe that in some small communities there was very little notice given for the last run of some boats.

Although there were many sternwheelers, I only remember the Klondike, Tutshi, Keno, Casca, Whitehorse, and Aksala. My grandfather had once told me that the Tutshi was his favourite.



Figure 24: S.S. Tutshi

When I was young, I lived in the shipyard area at my grandfather's old house and would walk by the boats daily as I would go to school or to go up town. The area of town that I grew up in was a very poor area of Whitehorse that was segregated by the railroad tracks that bordered the main part of town and the river.

I remember the day -June 20, 1974- when the Whitehorse and Casca burnt to the ground. My mom said she envisioned her father, my grandfather, sitting in the wheel house waving to all of us as the ship burnt. Most people like my mom and I, who knew the history and significance of the boats had tears in our eyes as we saw these mighty vessels disappeared. It was history that was being destroyed as we watched the boats burn. You never really miss something until it is not there any more and this is what most Yukoners thought about the boats when they were gone.



Figure 25: June 20, 1974 Whitehorse and Casca burn to the ground

My sister and her husband have a canoe and kayak business in Whitehorse and her office is a short distance from where the boats once rested. When I visit her office there is still a void, like something is missing by the river where the boats used to be. Each summer, when I return for my yearly visit I'd go for my annual tour of the Klondike. Much of the information that was written comes from the times I have visited the boat. The Tutshi burned down in 1980 in Carcross. Some say backpackers would spend the night in the boat to get out of the elements. Some think that perhaps they may have started a fire to keep themselves warm, which accidentally spread to a raging blaze that claimed the two stern-wheelers. I have only visited the Keno once since she was dry docked in Dawson City and she had not yet been restored. I did hear from a friend that there was a grand opening and information on Frank Slim was available for visitors to read.

The Sternwheelers in the Yukon were essential to the development of the territory. They linked communities that would have had little contact with the outside world during the earlier years in the Yukon. They maintained small river side villages so people could come and go as they wished. The boats brought mail, goods and supplies that were needed to sustain small villages. Their presence helped shape the Yukon to this day. The S.S. Klondike proudly acts as an ambassador to those thousands of tourists who still visit the Yukon every year. The boats are truly an important part of who I am today and what the Yukon has become.

Whenever anyone goes to the Yukon one of the most impressive sights are the two sternwheelers that are in Whitehorse and Dawson City. Frank Slim worked on both of these boats and now his grandchildren and great grandchildren continue his legacy. His life still inspires them as they learn about his life history. In its continuing symbols and marketing Yukon culture is centred around traditional and outdoor living, gold, and riverboats. By learning and understanding the function, design, routes and operation of the riverboats, we can come to understand more about Frank Slim's work on the boats. We can also learn more about how, as a riverboat captain, he was connected to the symbolic associations of Yukon history and culture. You will see how Frank Slim played an important role in this development. Now what makes it more fascinating is the fact that he was a First Nations man when racism was rampant in the north.

CHAPTER 5: THE LIFE OF FRANK SLIM



Figure 26: Captain Frank Slim

The famous Gold Rush, which started on August 17, 1898 in Dawson City, played a significant role in Yukon history. It was also the year that my grandfather Captain Frank Slim was born. He in turn would come to play an important role in the history of the Yukon, as it unfolded throughout the twentieth century. Frank's life mirrors changes such as Native-White relations and socio-economic changes precipitated by the gold rush, the construction of the Alaska Highway and in so far as First Nations peoples were concerned the policies imposed by the Canadian Federal Government.

Frank Slim was born on June 27, 1898 in the small Indian village located at the north end of Marsh Lake, which is located at the mouth of the Yukon River about 30 miles south of Whitehorse. Frank was the son of Slim Jim and Kitty. Slim Jim was Tlingit and was a member of the Wolf clan. Kitty Jim was Southern Tutchone and was of Crow ancestry. Each family grouping was composed of members of both moieties, Wolf and Crow. As I noted in Chapter 2, most Yukon Natives are matrilineal and thus their moiety affiliation comes from their mother's line. Frank thus carried his Tlingit mother's clan or moiety affiliation, and because he was a Crow, his future wife had to be a Wolf. Disregarding this rule was considered incestuous.



Figure 27: Slim Jim and Kitty Jim with their children

Frank Slim and his ancestors believed that they were descended from a society that was divided into two halves, and that everyone within that society could be assigned to one or the other of these two groups (McClellan 1987:184). In the Southern Yukon the two halves were divided into Wolf (Tlingit/Eagle) and Crow (Tlingit/Raven). Although Southern Tutchone social organization was distinct it was similar to Tlingit traditions, having adopted a matrilineal moiety organization.

Frank had three sisters: Mrs. Suzy Fred; Mrs. Lily Kane; and Anne Slim who died at a young age. He had one brother, Willy Slim, a twin to Suzy, who also died at an early age. Suzy was married and has two girls and two boys. Lilly Kane married Pardon Kane from Champagne and they have two boys and one girl. Anne Slim died when she was a young girl. Anne and her mother are buried on top of the hill that overlooks the Whitehorse General hospital and the Yukon River (maternal cousin Bev Miller personal communication summer 1998).

Frank had many aunts, uncles, and cousins. In her own life history published by Julie Cruickshank, his cousin Angela Sidney remembered visiting Frank's family at Marsh Lake. "...We stayed with my uncle Slim Jim there Slim Jim had a great big house. It's got bedroom, everything, People use to live together those days no trouble nothing...kids mixed up together. Slim Jim built that house himself. They use to stay in the bedroom and we'd stay in the front room - great big house (Cruickshank 1990:82)".

Frank Slim lived a very traditional life, learning to hunt, trap, fish and gather at an early age. Young men understood their role in providing food for

their families. He learned hunting and trapping from his father and uncles as they would take him on seasonal trips when they went. His mother and other family showed him how to fish, trap gophers, and where the best berries and roots could be found. He would be expected to trap small animals at the age of five or six and would have had his own trapping area by the age of seven. "As a boy he travelled to Whitehorse by paddling a dugout canoe to Canyon City then walked the trail to town" (Helen Dobrowolsky 2005 Biographical Notes: Frank Slim 1898-1973:1).



Figure 28: Frank bear hunting

He would learn to take his hides to town where he would sell them and contribute his earnings to what the family would buy for their supplies. In his early

teens he would hunt larger animals such as moose, sometimes taking the moose meat to town to sell to settlers there. Angela Sidney remembers:

We went on the mountain, back of Judas Creek. We killed some moose, dried some moose. Whitehorse Billy, my brother Johnny and Frank Slim went to Whitehorse to sell meat (Cruickshank 1990: 81).

Frank told me he learned to read and write by reading the labels on the Campbell's soup cans and other grocery labels. In the summer of 1995, Lilly Kane, Frank's sister, said she remembered her father paying a white man to teach Frank how to read and write. Living through the gold rush, seeing and experiencing rapid changes Slim Jim knew the importance of an education. Most Natives had some reading and writing knowledge as they seasonally sold furs and bought grocery staples such as sugar, tea and pilot bread. Frank Slim worked on the boats from an early age and had to know that learning how to read and write was imperative (Lilly Kane, personal communication, summer 1995).

From the age of approximately sixteen, Frank began working as a deck hand on the sternwheelers that plied the rivers of the Yukon. The boats mainly ran to and from Dawson City, which at the time was the capitol of the Yukon Territory. The boats also ran to other trading outposts scattered along the many other Yukon Rivers. John Scott, who owned the motor vessel Schwatka, told me about seeing Frank working as a deck hand and also at the shipyard. He commented on Frank's work ethic and ended up hiring him to work on his boat (John Scott, personal communication summer 1998).

Frank was married to Aggie Breoren around 1917. She was the niece of Heredity Chief Jim Boss (Kashx'oot) and great niece to Mundessa (old Man Chief) another prominent hereditary chief in the area. In May of 1919 Frank, at the age of 21, and Aggie at the age of 17, had their first of five children, Sophie. Sophie was born at Black Lake.

Sophie said she was born on May 1, 1919 at Black Lake east of Lake Laberge. My grandfather made us move there before I was born, in February or March of that year because of the flu epidemic. Our people were dying. There was nothing anyone could do so grandfather made us move so we could get away from it. We lived there until I was four. We come back by walking through the mountains right up to M'Clintock, head of M'Clintock. We came down to meet other people who were living at M'Clintock and I grew up at Lake Laberge. We lived on both sides of the lake. In the winter we lived on the east side. In the spring and part of the summer we lived on this side, the Whitehorse side of Lake Laberge around Shallow Bay. In the fall we went back across the lake and lived there. My father had a trapping area at Black Lake (Frances Woolsey and Violet Storer interview with Sophie is and Don Miller, Ta'an Kwachan Cultural History Project Tape Transcriptions, Whitehorse Yukon July 31, 1989).

They had three girls and two boys in all. Frank's wife Aggie died on October 3, 1959 of cancer (Virginia Lindsay, personal communication, 1998 and Vital Statistics document Whitehorse 2005). The girls are Mrs. Sophie Miller, Mrs. Irene Adamson and Mrs. Virginia Lindsay. Today Irene Adamson and Virginia Lindsay live in Whitehorse with families of their own.



Figure 29: Frank's wife and family

Sophie passed away on in March 9, of 2006 (Whitehorse Star Obituary March 2006). The two boys George and Owen passed away in the early 1950s. George died of a heart problem on August 15, 1950. Owen died of complications as a result of tuberculosis in 1952 in Edmonton. They are buried by their mother on the hill behind the Old Village site at Lake Laberge. When I first visited the graves after being away for several years I did not know where to look.



Figure 30: Village grave site

My sister and her husband were with me as we looked up several trails. I remember a baby eagle flying past and flying in the direction of a trail we weren't on yet, so we followed it. The graves were at the end of this trail and it was as if the baby eagle had led us to the graves. There was also another grave beside my grandmother's. When I asked my mother whose it was she said if there was a sled on the grave then it was the grave of my little cousin who had drowned when he was four. There was a sled on the grave.

Frank owned and operated a trapline that was four hundred square miles near Whitehorse since the late 1920's. The trapline was subdivided in 1953 but he still continued to make a living trapping a variety of furs with the portion of the trapline that remained. The trapline is still in the family today, owned by Frank's youngest daughter, my mother Virginia Lindsay (Slim). In an interview, Dick

North remembers Frank Slim saying, that in August and September of 1927, Frank, along with Drury Ma-Gundy, Paddy Smith, and Jimmy Smith staked claims 16 miles north of Ross River.



Figure 31: Frank working with Louie Irvine delivering mail

Captain Frank Slim was a hard worker, travelling to find work where he could. He worked on the Yukon Rose from 1929 through the 1930's, during which time he travelled the Teslin, Mayo and Ross Rivers. In the summers of 1933 to 1935 he worked on the mail service with Louie Irvine. During the winters of 1934 and 1935 Frank took his family to the Little Salmon River to Trap.



Figure 32: Yukon Rose

For several off-seasons Frank turned to trapping and placer mining, operating a hydraulic placer mining claim on Livingston Creek. Frank worked another creek near Livingston called Summit Creek around 1936. During the winter season, when the riverboats could not be operated, Frank worked on freighting supplies overland to communities. This was initially done by horse drawn sleighs, then later by motorized cat trains. He also worked on the Mackenzie River



Figure 33: Frank working with Mr. Irvine

After many years on the river boats, and with the experience he had acquired navigating the Yukon Rivers, Frank was encouraged to write an examination that would ultimately qualify him to pilot the great stern wheelers.

In 1937, Frank gave up his Indian Status because he had achieved his dream to get his Pilot's License. In order for any First Nations people to achieve any type of formal education above high school they had to relinquish their Indian Status. Frank wrote his examination in Vancouver, B.C. and received his accreditation as Captain. He could now pilot boats, to a maximum of fifteen hundred tons. Although I do not have a copy of his pilot's licence or captain certificate I was able to get a hold of his Master of Water Steamships Certificate

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
 BY THE HONOURABLE THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT



MINISTÈRE DES TRANSPORTS
 PAR L'HONORABLE LE MINISTRE DES TRANSPORTS

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY
 as
MASTER
 of a Minor Waters Steamship

CERTIFICAT DE CAPACITÉ
 de
CAPITAINE
 de navire à vapeur d'eaux secondaires

Frank Slim

WHEREAS it has been reported to me that you have been found duly qualified to fulfil the duties of Master of a Minor Waters Steamship, I do hereby in pursuance of the Canada Shipping Act, grant to you this Certificate of Competency.

VU le rapport attestant votre aptitude à exercer les fonctions de capitaine de navire à vapeur d'eaux secondaires, j'accorde par les présentes, en vertu de la Loi sur le Commerce maritime du Canada, ce certificat de compétence.

GIVEN under the SEAL OF THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT at OTTAWA.

DONNÉ sous le SCEAU DU MINISTRE DES TRANSPORTS à OTTAWA.

Registered - Enregistré

REPLACEMENT
REEMPLACEMENT

W. J. P. [Signature]
 Her Majesty's Minister of Transport - (pour le) Ministre des Transports

Date of issue - Date de délivrance 28.6.1898	Qualifying examination held at - Examen tenu à Carmacks Crossing	Certificate no. - Certificat n° 26614
Signature of holder - Signature de titulaire <i>Frank Slim</i>	Date of examination - Date de l'examen 11.6.51	Date of issue - Date de délivrance 30.5.68

61-13206
 5-64

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS
 APTITUDES SUPPLÉMENTAIRES

The certificate replaces
 numéro No **19022**
 issued at **Ottawa**
 on **27.5.51**

Le présent certificat
 remplace le certificat
 no **19022** qui a été
 délivré à **Ottawa**
 le **27.5.51**

CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCY

as
MASTER
 of a Minor Waters Steamship

CERTIFICAT DE CAPACITÉ
 de
CAPITAINE
 de navire à vapeur d'eaux secondaires

REPLACEMENT
REEMPLACEMENT

Figure 34: Frank Slim's Certificate of Competency as steamship master

In 1940, when Frank was working on Livingston Creek, he had to come home to get an airplane because his daughter Sophie had been poisoned by eating fish eggs. Other family members including Aunt Elsie and Uncle Charlie's wife Aunt Grace had died from eating poisoned eggs. In placer mining, cyanide is used to separate black sand from very fine gold flakes. A knife was used to stir the cyanide into the black sand and gold. It is believed that this knife was also used to cut fish and this is how the poison was spread (Sophie Miller, personal communication 1998).

FORM 1-A"

QUARTZ MINING REGULATIONS FOR A FULL CLAIM

Nelson Bernardi Kess
Supply Cont.

Whitehorse, Yukon District.

By *Frank Sims - Agent for* of *Whitehorse, Yukon* *Aug 27, 1922*

Whitehorse *Yukon* *Aug 26, 1922*

John *Discovery post, situated about 1200 ft* *Sept. 9, 1922*

of Ross River Pass, between and 2100 south of *Sept. 24, 1922*

1.1" S.W. 10, 20010

I hereby declare the location of the lode or vein of quartz in the above described claim to be as follows:

1. That I have placed location posts No. 1 and No. 2 and a discovery post of the legal dimensions on the said claim with the inscription on each post prescribed by the regulations now in force.

2. That I have marked on location post No. 1 the following words:— *Simon Harry*
Whitehorse, Yukon, 1500 ft S.W. 750 ft S. 750 ft E. Sept. 20, 1922

3. That I have marked on location post No. 2 the following words:— *Simon Harry*
Whitehorse, Yukon, 1500 ft S.W. 750 ft S. 750 ft E. Sept. 20, 1922

4. That I have inscribed on the discovery post the following:—

5. That I have written on each of the posts a description of the nature of the mineral.

6. That I have marked the line between post No. 1 and post No. 2 as required by Section 39 of these regulations.

7. That to the best of my knowledge and belief the ground comprised within the boundaries of the said claim is unencumbered and unoccupied by any other person as a mineral claim; that it is not covered by any building or any land falling within the scope of any dwelling house or other building and under cultivation, or any land reserved from entry under the Quartz Mining Regulations.

8. That I attach hereto a plan of the location as required by Section 33 of the Quartz Mining Regulations.

Figure 35: Certificate of quartz mining claim

Frank and his sons also participated in an historic construction of the Alaska Highway during the Second World War. Building the Alaska Highway was a project of mammoth proportions, undertaken by the United States Army. Frank contributed to the building of the Alaska Highway by freighting military construction supplies, which were routed to the construction sites by way of the Stikine and Dease rivers. The boat that he captained on Dease Lake was the largest boat in the fleet. Frank, along with his family, lived with the Asp family in a large house at Portage Landing, in 1940-1941 (Virginia Lindsay, Personal communication, 1998).



Figure 36: Frank and Family when he worked on the Dease River



Figure 37: Frank working on the Dease River

Throughout his years of employment on the riverboats, Frank worked for mainly one company, the British Yukon Navigation Company. It owned and operated a fleet of stern wheelers transporting goods and services to where they were needed. Huge amounts of supplies were required, mainly to support the Gold mining industry in the Klondike. Other employers included Taylor and Drury, a merchandising firm, which operated a small fleet of riverboats. They supplied a chain of trading posts, which the company owned and operated on several Yukon Rivers. In later years Frank worked as a Captain on a tourist industry motor vessel, the Schwatka. This was owned and operated by John Scott of Whitehorse, Yukon (John Scott, personal communication, summer 1998).

With the end of the of riverboat transportation era on Yukon River(s), Frank Slim turned to operating ferries. The ferry system connected the road that

replaced the riverboats. He remained with the ferry system until it was replaced by permanent bridges.

Possibly the most memorable event of Frank Slim's career as Captain, came when he was called upon to pilot the S.S. Keno, on this great stern wheeler's last journey to her final resting place in Dawson City, Yukon Territory, in 1960. Although he did not Captain the ship, he did pilot it to Dawson City. The National Film Board of Canada made a documentary about the Keno's last voyage, so a non-Aboriginal captain was brought up from Seattle to captain the ship. It has always been my own belief that someone competent like my grandfather was needed to actually run the boat, but they also wanted to have a captain who fit the description of what non-aboriginal documentary film audiences associated with the typical visual appearances of a captain – in other words, someone who did not look distinctly Aboriginal, as Frank Slim did. I asked him about this and the only thing he said to me was that the man had not been on the Keno before. He also would tell me that when the boat was ready to leave he could see my mom and I in the crowd which to him was a highlight in itself.



Figure 38: S.S. Keno

FRANK SLIM'S ENFRANCHISEMENT

My grandfather Captain Frank Slim was forced to give up his Indian status in 1937 when he was forced to enfranchise in order to become a River Boat Captain. Since the 1876 first Federal Indian Act, in Canada, Indian status has been a legal category employed by the government to register individuals descended from previous status Indians who were registered soon after the Act created this category. While throughout his life, the tangible benefits that registered Indians have/had through the Act (e.g. residence on reserve, taxation, wills and estates, voting for Band Council, etc.) did not matter much to him, given that there were no reserves in the Yukon and he and his family lived off the land, it was the connection between being a legally recognized status Indian and his identity that must have mattered to him. Until changes to the Indian Act In 1985,

enfranchisement was a term used to describe those Indians who were either forced to give up their Indian status by the government or who voluntarily gave up their status in order to gain the “franchise” or vote and become Canadian citizens. While I grew up with the sense that my grandfather had to give up his status in order to get his captain’s papers, a close reading of the Indian Act legislation that existed in the 1930s casts some doubt on whether he truly had to give up his status or was pressured into it.

According to Section 86 (1) of the Indian Act legislated in 1876,

Any Indian who may be admitted to the degree of Doctor of Medicine, or to any other degree by any University of Learning, or who may be admitted in any Province of the Dominion to practice law either as an Advocate or as a Barrister or Counsellor or Solicitor or Attorney or to be a Notary Public, or who may enter Holy Orders or who may be licensed by a denomination of Christians as a Minister of the Gospel shall *ipse facto* become and be enfranchised under this Act. (1876 Indian Act).

In 1920, during the tenure of Superintendent Duncan Campbell Scott, the Federal government also created an amendment to the Indian Act which provided ways of involuntarily enfranchising Indians:

The Superintendent General may appoint a Board to consist of two officers of the Department of Indian Affairs and a member of the Band to which the Indian or Indians under investigation belongs, to make enquiry and report to the fitness of any Indian or Indians to be enfranchised. The Indian member of the Board shall be nominated by the council of the Band, within thirty days after the date of notice having been given to the council, and in default of such nomination, the appointment shall be made by the Superintendent General (Status of Canada, 10-11Geo.V, cap.50, 1 July 1920, p. 309, sec. 107, cited in: Leslie and Maguire 1978:116)

As was the practice in the 1920s and 1930s, “if the Superintendent-General considered any Indian over twenty-one years old fit for enfranchisement,

the Governor-in Council could order that Indian to be enfranchised within two years. After that date, the Indian Act would no longer apply to him nor to his wife and minor, unmarried children” (Leslie and Maguire 1978:115).

While the above power of the government to force Indian people to enfranchise was struck from the Indian Act in 1951, forced enfranchisement as a result of education and certain professions existed until 1960. While Frank Slim did not go to University, or become a lawyer, doctor or minister, it appears that he, in order to get his riverboat captain papers, was either ordered enfranchised by the Department of Indian Affairs, or was pressured to surrender his status. For Frank Slim losing his status was a high price to pay for achieving his dream. When Frank Slim gave up his status this affected his family for generations and generations. He later resented the fact that he was no longer a status Indian. I suspect that his enfranchisement may have been partly what caused him to begin drinking.

Frank and his family spent most of their lives living at Lake Laberge (made famous by the Robert. W. Service poem The Cremation of Sam McGee). They lived on both sides of the lake but spent most of the time across the lake at the Village. Lake Laberge is about 20 miles down the Yukon River from Whitehorse. Lake Laberge was one of the many stops that the Riverboats made on their journey to Dawson City. Sophie Miller recalls her family life with her dad Frank Slim in an interview she did with Francis Woolsey and Violet Storer;

...Like I said we used to come to Shallow Bay, dry fish there, at this time of the year, like August and September. Dry fish up

for our dog food and ourselves, then put away for winter and then after in the fall, go back to Black Lake. I used to go with my mom and dad. Dad trapped there. He got lots of moose and everything. You don't have no game warden watching you and you don't need a permit (Ta'an Kwachan Cultural project Tape Transcriptions July, 7, 1989, Whitehorse, Yukon)



Figure 39: Frank Slim's house at Lake Laberge

During the construction and especially after the completion of the Alaska Highway in the Yukon during the Second World War, the big boats had less and less work to do. Frank worked on the Yukon Rose, a small freight boat that carried supplies to Ross River. He also worked at both Pelly and Stewart

Crossings, where he ran the ferry across the rivers. Later he worked as a deck hand on the Klondike, alongside his sons George and Owen Slim.

In 1965, he took the George Black ferry to Dawson, where she is still in use today. He once referred to himself as the “bush pilot of the [Yukon] Rivers”. Frank said he knew the Rivers like the back of his hand. Frank loved and respected the rivers in the Yukon, particularly the ones he worked on (Documentary, Last Voyage of the S.S. Keno).

My Uncle Don Miller who passed away on May 5, 2008 also told me about the time he met Grandpa fixing a flat tire on his old truck between Carmacks and Whitehorse and my Uncle Don stopped to help him. He was in a panic to get me to town as I had broken my arm and he was taking me to the doctor. Although the hospital was several hours away and involved travel on a very rough road I was his main concern, he had to get me to the hospital.



Figure 40: Frank's old truck

Part of my grandfather's job as Captain was to socialize with the passengers. Frank loved to drink and after his wife died in 1959, he began to

drink even more. I also believe that there is evidence that he did not start to drink until he was forced to relinquish his status in 1939. He often told me he enjoyed drinking. I was concerned about his drinking habit, but I could not do anything about it. I wanted him to be happy, and he said he was happy when he drank. I would often suggest that we go for lunch if I thought he had not eaten all day. I never knew him to be obnoxious when he was drinking. Frank had very little in the way of personal effects when he died. I have his social insurance card, my aunt had his Captains certificate and license.

As I have stated before, I am Frank Slim's granddaughter, and I was born in 1957. I lived with my grandparents for almost two years, until my grandmother died in 1959. My uncle once told me that when my grandfather first saw me, he said that I would always be his baby. Unlike Non-Native people, Native people have always showed their favouritism to members of their family or extended family that they have felt close to or spiritually connected too. Frank Slim and I had this bond.

I have wonderful memories of him. I remember him always bringing home doughnuts when he was the pilot of the small tourist boat, Schwatka. The boat ran a guided tour up the Yukon River and the boat supplied doughnuts and coffee for the tourists. After each daily voyage, he would bring me a box of sugar coated doughnuts and I would look forward to and count on his daily visit. He and I were close, we shared a bond of closeness that was never mentioned by anyone, but everyone knew I favoured him and he favoured me. I was like the

baby of the family and he treated me that way. I was the extension of his baby, my mother.

I would remind him about the times that my family would visit him while he was winter trapping near Shallow Bay. He was living in a small tent at the time, living off the land. He had a small fire boiling water for tea when we arrived on one particular day. That year was very cold and I remember him being so glad to see us. He was sitting by the fire dipping his pilot bread in his tea. There were boughs from trees on the floor and his tent was arranged like a small bedroom. His towel was hanging on his bed (an old steel frame with mattress) and the bed appeared messy as if the blankets had been thrown on in a rush. He seemed happy living off the land, and now that I recall this time I can't ever remember him drinking when he was out trapping.

He told me about his short visits to Seattle and Vancouver. My mother told me about the time he went with my grandmother to the Cancer Clinic in Vancouver in 1958 or 1959. He mentioned that he had enjoyed his trip but could never see himself living there. He showed me a picture that someone had taken of him on a street in Vancouver.

I would sometimes run into him downtown, where he always gave me all the change he had in his pockets. He would always give me silver dollars, one or two whenever he would see me or several for special occasions such as my birthday. He would get these silver dollars from the tourists on the boats, probably a tip. He was always talking and telling stories about the river boat years. He always tried to include my mother in his stories to me. He said that

when the boats used to leave town the whole community would come to the river and say good-bye. Grandpa would always mention that my mom was the prettiest girl in the crowd.

I think about him and remember his warm kind, disposition. He was very distinguished looking and took care of himself. His clothes were sometimes worn, but this gave him character. My mother once told me that he would die if he didn't quit smoking. I told him that and he put his cigarettes down and never smoked again. I also remember not feeling well one evening and my mother was bugging me to do the dishes. He reminded her that he was still her father and said to leave me alone. I got out of doing the dishes that night. I only remember him raising his voice once or twice when he was defending the "old ways". I believed the old ways to refer to the times when he lived off the land, hunting and trapping, following the game cycle, moving camp as the game moved.



Figure 41: Frank and family trapping martin

On his 75th birthday my cousin Beverly Miller won him a cake on "Birthday Greetings", which was a morning radio program. I saw him later that day and he thanked me for winning the cake, for I too had tried. I explained that it was Bev and not I that had won the cake, but he still said thank-you for trying. He must have listened to the Birthday Greeting program and heard my voice. When he was happy he seemed to always think of me.

My mother remembers her dad as a hard worker. Her thoughts of him are of a very kind and gentle man. She said she remembered him starting to drink around the time he lost his status. She recalled hunting and trapping expeditions he would go on and she said he would leave early in the morning and come home late at night. She remembers checking his backpack to see if he had been successful. He would allow her to skin the small animals. He did most of his trapping in the winter. He trapped around Mud Lake, Swan lake, Yukon River (down from Lake Laberge), Hot Springs road, Horse Creek , Frances Lake, Shallow Bay , and the hay ranch, which is down by Jack Fish Bay . He also trapped near Jim Boss canyon, which is by Swan Lake. All of these locations are within a thirty-mile radius of Whitehorse, where he would sell his furs to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Virginia remembers:

"I remember my dad, when I was little girl
He always got up early in the morning and
would cook mush for breakfast.
My dad was a good man and I loved very much
But when he would go to town, for grocery,
he would run into his friends who were having drinking party.

And my dad would forget to come home.
A lot of times my dad stayed away for a long time.
This happen many times.
One time my mom, dad and I were in the town of Dease Lake, B.C.
we stayed there for one whole summer.
Because my dad was working on the Dease River as Captain
on one of the boats called sternwheeler
taking supplies to Lower Post, B.C
and to Watson Lake, Y.T.
To build Watson Airport.
That was when my mom sent me in to get my dad out of a house
where he was drinking with friends
He never said anything
I hold his hand and he just came with me
I was only 5 or 6 years old then.
I know my dad really love me,
Our family, my dad and mom
my oldest sister Sophie,
brother George, sister Irene, brother Owen,
My sister Irene was adopted by my aunt
when she was little girl,
because my aunt could not have children.
and I came along nine years later.
Our family went trapping every winter
we travel from Upper Laberge
north about one hundred and fifty miles
to Little Salmon area to trap for furs.
Like for lynxes, martens, weasels, squirrels, foxes, etc:
My dad, when he was home he use to go hunting for moose
and never get any thing, once -in -awhile he would get a moose.
Some times he would just get a couple of spruce grouse,
or he would get couple rabbits.
I use to like to check out dad's pack-sac when he got home,
to see what he got
Its not an easy life, but we love it.
My mom and dad use to look after Donna when she was a little girl
because I had to work.
After I got married my dad would come and visit,

stay with us for a few days.
To hang out with his grandchildren.
My husband and my dad got along very well.
They went out hunting a few times.
My dad told him some old stories.
My mom and dad, they use to live on Hot Springs Road.
They use to do a little trapping there.
Another time back in the 1940's,
we use to cut wood for the sternwheeler Boats,
down by Whistle Bend on the Yukon River.
That is across the River from Mountain View Golf Course.

My mother recalls going to Livingston by boat. She said my grandfather used to hold her hand while walking down to the sluice box, and he would let her pick out the gold nuggets found within it. There he found a nugget approximately two inches long, and three quarters of an inch in width. He found it on the ground where an old shed had stood. He gave the nugget to his wife Aggie who in turn handed it down to Virginia. He often guided hunting parties with his brother's in-law, Frankie Jim and Johnny Broeren as well as Big Salmon Harry, who was the husband of Aggie's older sister, Elsie.

My mother remembers her father running the ferry from Dawson and Mayo during the time the road was being constructed. He had told Virginia that he had been down the Yukon River as far as St. Michael in Alaska. Frank's mother and sister Annie are all buried across the Yukon River on a small hill by the Hospital. She recalls him taking the George Black Ferry to Dawson City.



Figure 42: Frank on a hunting trip with family

Frank Slim died on September 6, 1973. I had just arrived home from school and my mom and dad told me that he died earlier that day. I remember hitchhiking down to the hospital to see for my self if the news was true. I went into the hospital to his room but there was no one there. I vaguely remember asking the nurse where he was, and what they had done with him, and demanding that they had better bring him back immediately. Once I recovered from the shock of his death I became very angry at him for leaving me. Passing on was never a topic talked about between us. I remember very little of the funeral service, which was held at the Baptist Church on 2nd Avenue. There were hundreds of family, friends and dignitaries there, as I recall people having to stand outside as there was no room left in the church. A potlatch was held down at Lake Laberge after the funeral was over

Frank Slim Goes to his Final Reward

by Archie Gillespie

His legion of friends in the Yukon were pleased to learn last week of the death in Whitehorse General Hospital of Frank Slim. He

died last Thursday at the age of 77.

With the death of Frankie Slim, one of the last links with the steamboat days of the Yukon has been severed.

He was born at Marsh Lake and, from a husky young youth to the evening of his life, the rivers of the Yukon were his life and joy. He was a self-taught man but, during his travels over the waterways of the north, he became known as one of the best pilots in the country. He held a pilot's certificate on all the rivers and lakes.

Funeral services were held from Whitehorse Baptist Church on Monday, Rev. Knapp performing the last

rites. Burial was made in the cemetery at Lake Laberge, a few yards above the waters of the lake which he knew so well.

After the end of river navigation on the Yukon, Frankie later worked as a pilot for John Scott, owner-operator of the M.V. Schwatka, on the voyage up the Yukon. Through Miles Canyon and beyond. During his years as a pilot on the Schwatka, Frank, in his quiet way, regaled hundreds of tourists who made this scenic voyage, with exciting tales of the past. He used to enjoy pointing out the wilderness trail from Anishpaik to Whitehorse, a trail which, in his youth, he had walked many times.

Frankie Slim, to his

dying day was an Indian man who was proud of his heritage and who travelled with dignity and a quiet reverence. He was an old-timer of the Yukon who was big in body, mind and soul.

For many years, he worked as a pilot on the Yukon Rose, owned and operated by Taylor and Drury, Ltd., which travelled to their onlying posts on the Pelly, Teslin and Stewart Rivers.

Frank's greatest thrill came about in 1960 when he piloted the S.S. Keno on her last voyage from Whitehorse to Dawson City where the ship is now a historic site. The arrival in Dawson was telecast and written up by a large delegation of reporters, and

hundreds of pictures were taken by private individuals of this historic event.

The late pioneer leaves to mourn his passing two sisters, L. Iler Kane and Susie Fred. Also three daughters, Signe Miller, Virginia and Wynne, and a son, Alvin. He is also survived by grandchildren and great grandchildren.

One of Frank Slim's long-time friends, and another expert riverman, is Alan Innes-Taylor, who held the highest respect for the veteran pilot. Alan is trying to obtain, post-humously, the Order of Canada, in tribute to his memory.

A postcard, attended by

dozens of Frank Slim's relatives and friends, was held at Skookum Jim Memorial Hall Monday night.

With the passing of Frank Slim, one of the last of the famous river pilots of the Yukon has gone to his last reward... and he will long be remembered, and his name associated with the old-time river pilots of the Yukon.

We would like to think that the white caps on the rivers and lakes of the Yukon will how their guests this week in loving memory of Frankie Slim, a truly grand old-timer of the Yukon.

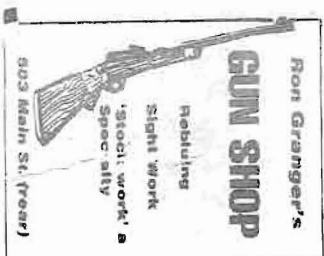


Figure 43: Yukon News obituary

The year Frank Slim died; he was nominated for the Order of Canada, which is a humanitarian award to those persons who have accomplished a high level of respect from their peers and community. He died before the decision was made and consequently he never received the award. Later a mountain was named in his honour. The mountain is situated behind Lake Laberge. The mountain, named Mount Slim, is the tallest peak visible from the highway side of Lake Laberge as you look across the lake. "...Enclosed with this letter is a certificate confirming a tangible way the naming of Mount Slim in Honour of Frank Slim". It is signed by J Smith, Commissioner of the Yukon, June 24, 1974.

The Certificate itself states

Yukon's finest resource is the character and quality of her peoples. It is appropriate that her geographical features perpetuate the names and honour the work of those prominent in development of the territory, and those who gave dedicated service to fellow citizens (Certified by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names).

An Article published in the Whitehorse Daily Star dated Wednesday August 5, 2008 read "Building may honour Frank Slim". The article went on to say

He was the only Yukon first nation person to earn the title of riverboat captain. Now, Frank Slim's memory could be honoured as [City] council considers naming the building in the Shipyards Park the Frank Slim Building (Whitehorse Daily Star August 5, 2008).

I later learned that Whitehorse City council did pass the vote to name the new building after Frank Slim.

Dick North, a well-known author, was writing a book about the Mad Trapper of Rat River. A few years ago, he heard that Frank might have taken some pictures of a man who was hanging around the small Indian Villages on Frank's boat route. Frank had mentioned having pictures of a white stranger who was hanging around villages along the Stewart and Pelly Rivers. North believed that the man might be Albert Johnson, the Mad Trapper of Rat River. North obtained the pictures with the assistance of my father, Joe Lindsay, and they are the only known pictures of the notorious Mad Trapper. North mentioned interviews with Frank and Frank's daughter, Virginia Lindsay, as well as Frank's son in-law, Joe Lindsay in his books, "*The Mad Trapper of Rat River*" and "*Trackdown; the search for the Mad Trapper*".

In an interview Dick North wrote that Frank Slim and his pals were staking claims in the fall of 1927 about 16 miles south of Ross River when "Slim told me that one evening Johnson walked into their camp. The stranger was invited to sit down and eat with them and he accepted. Slim recalled Johnson being an extremely nervous individual, always looking around. I later managed to uncover a map showing the exact location of the claims they staked. This certainly reinforced the accuracy of Frank Slim's recollections. I later came across a photo taken by Frank Slim in 1930. Frank Slim took several photos at Ross River that August after his trip up river from Fort Selkirk. Johnson appears in one of them" (The Yukon Indian News, summer 1984:17).

Several individuals have inquired about the history of Frank Slim and some, such as Don Sawatsky, have written short excerpts on the history of the Yukon that include brief references to, Frank Slim. Dick North the author mentioned above admired Frank for his "adventurous pioneering life style". I was in Dawson City one summer and went to see North in his office. He introduced

me as Frank Slim's granddaughter to the group of tourists that were there and insisted I autograph his book for those who had just purchased it.

Frank Slim was a kind, caring, hard working, traditional man who changed and evolved as quickly as his environment did. He was born during one of the most significant events that shaped the Yukon, the Klondike Gold Rush. He was directly affected by this historic event which eventually determined the economic future of the Yukon. He was forced to adapt to major technological changes a world apart from the somewhat simple society he knew.

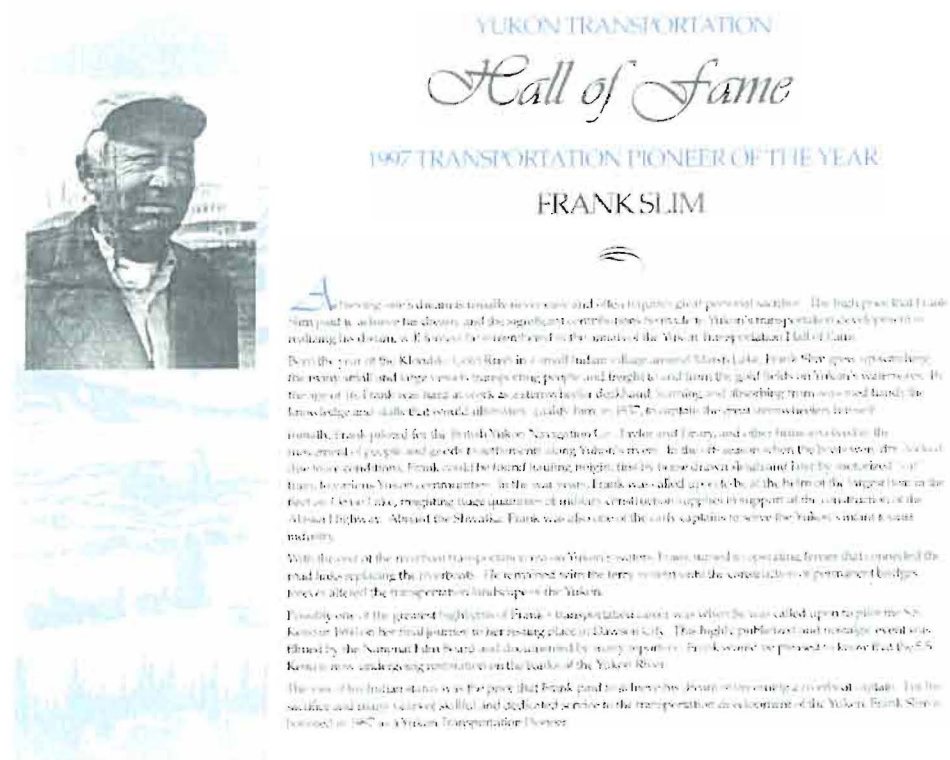


Figure 44: Yukon honours Frank Slim

Frank Slim played an important role in Yukon history. He dreamt of becoming a Riverboat Captain, a dream that he would pay a big price to achieve.

I, too, have a dream, of letting people know about the great and wonderful man I called "Grandpa". Indian Status has always been a topic of discussion for both Native and Non-Native people. Should those deceased individuals who lost or gave up their Indian Status get it back?



Figure 45: Frank working with Louie Irvine

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The prologue of this thesis explains segments of my life and my relationship to Frank Slim. I have stated that we had what I would call a “spiritual connection”. He was always with me and continues to be. He was the only person who loved and cared for me unconditionally. He would always visit my family to spend time with my brothers, sisters and myself. My mother said that her dad was a gentle, quiet, understanding man who treated her like gold. He was a man of wisdom but did not realize his life adventure would leave others inspired by him. He lived a very traditional life. By comparing his life to the history of the Yukon we can see the social, cultural, and historical development of the Yukon reflected in the life lived by Frank Slim.

I began my thesis with the observation that there is little written on First Nations people in the North. There may be more on the Inuit, but they have a totally different lifestyle than Southern Yukoners. Julie Cruickshank has written extensively on Yukon women who are an important half of the family picture. In the early 1960s Catherine McClellan completed her work on the Southern Yukon but she did her study on only status Indians. Her work had been part of a project of the Federal Government (National Museum of Man). Ken Coates is a historian who examined the history of the Yukon and how it has impacted groups such as the mining sector and the First Nations peoples. Although his work is an excellent source of reference, we still need First Nations people themselves

writing on their own culture and history. Representation of a First Nations perspective will put forth a more complete and rounded interpretation of the history, culture and people of the Yukon.

In the past, anthropology researchers tended to look at exotic societies, and at the cultures of “others.” However, I maintain that as First Nations peoples we can throw better light on our past than as the subjects of “otherness.” Moreover, I maintain that general theories about culture and change do no justice to the unique histories of Canadian Aboriginal peoples. They have experienced a number of government interferences, and have been the subjects of public policy for two and a half centuries. Relevant issues with the Royal Proclamation of 1763, several treaties and wars, Reserve policy and legislation, the 1839 Protection Act, the 1857 Gradual Civilization Act, the 1867 British North American Act, the Prairie Treaties, and the 1876 Peasant Farming Act. The 1876 Indian Act, banning the Potlatch between 1885 and 1951, the Amendments to the Indian Act in the 1920s that made Residential School compulsory, the 1927 amendment to the Act that made land claims illegal, the very fact that it took the government until 1960 to give us voting rights, and finally Bill C-31 in 1985 also posed significant barriers for people. I do not know any other society that we can compare ourselves to, given the aforementioned facts, and the unique geographical locations that have shaped our lives, but also shaped outside influences. Anthropology has changed since the 1960s, encouraging indigenous people to research their own culture, even co-authoring anthropological books and articles. Native people themselves are demanding more input and control of

what is said and who has ownership of such properties. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms has made countries such as Canada change discriminatory laws and public policy such as enfranchisement. I think that if you have any type of Indian ancestry and you wish to be addressed as so then that should be your right.

My chapters on the history of the Yukon, First Nations cultures, the culture of riverboats, and my mother's reminiscences illustrate what life was like during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century for most Yukoners. This is the social and cultural milieu Frank Slim accepted as his circumstances. Gold is still a luring factor for people coming to the Yukon. Transportation was another factor on daily life in the Yukon so much so that in 1997, a transportation Museum was opened in Whitehorse and Frank Slim was one of the first inductees. First Nations people have used Rivers, Lakes and Creeks as main transportation routes as well as a food source. Frank Slim once said he knew the Yukon River to Dawson City like the back of his hand.

Riverboats were an extremely important part of Yukon history. The riverboat job was a stable source of income for those who worked on the boats and those who ran the boats. They supplied goods to mining camps, mainly in Dawson City, and later brought building materials and supplies for the construction of the Alaska Highway. During the 1898 gold rush, the rivers were as good as roads, to those miners travelling to the Klondike. Frank Slim's life mirrored the cultural, social and historical changes that took place in the Yukon during this time period. His work on the boats chronicled Native history in the

logbooks of the big paddle wheelers forever. He was the only Native man to be licensed to Captain and pilot a boat on all navigable rivers in the Yukon, northern British Columbia, as well as the Mackenzie River.

As I set out to assemble details about my grandfather's life from his descendants, it was sometimes difficult to find information on Frank's life because he has been dead for more than 30 years. Time has a way of fading one's memory especially the older a person gets. Frank's daughter Virginia (my mother) helped me with this thesis but both Sophie and Irene gave me the impression that they had been bombarded by outside ethnographers and researchers from their own community wanting information on their lives as well as their family lives, and they let on that they did not want to discuss much with me, at least for the record, although informally and "off the record" they freely shared information. I also wanted to respect them as my elders by not hounding them for information my mother might know. My mother was a wealth of information. She is quite shy and had to be encouraged several times to record details of her life at the lake for me. I also think that she suffered a lot of discrimination in her early days and to forget that era was easier than rehashing old memories. Although she speaks her language she very seldom speaks Southern Tutchone because her mom told her that she would need to know English not her mother tongue to survive and thrive in today's world.

This project has been a difficult one for me. I have had to face many unknown family issues including alcohol and illness. When I grew up my parents did not drink but other family members had real drinking issues. Alcohol did not

bother me personally but I did see how this disease can rip apart and devastate families.

I also went through some medical issues myself. I had dozens of surgeries on my left ankle before having it amputated in January of 2007. I had also my second knee replacement of four when I began the thesis. This thesis has been the final chapter in my attempt to heal myself both culturally and physically after my amputation and to connect with my past through the life story of my grandfather.

Ta'an Kwäch'än Families

(from Hutschi) *Maudersoo* = *Lander* (from Tagrich)

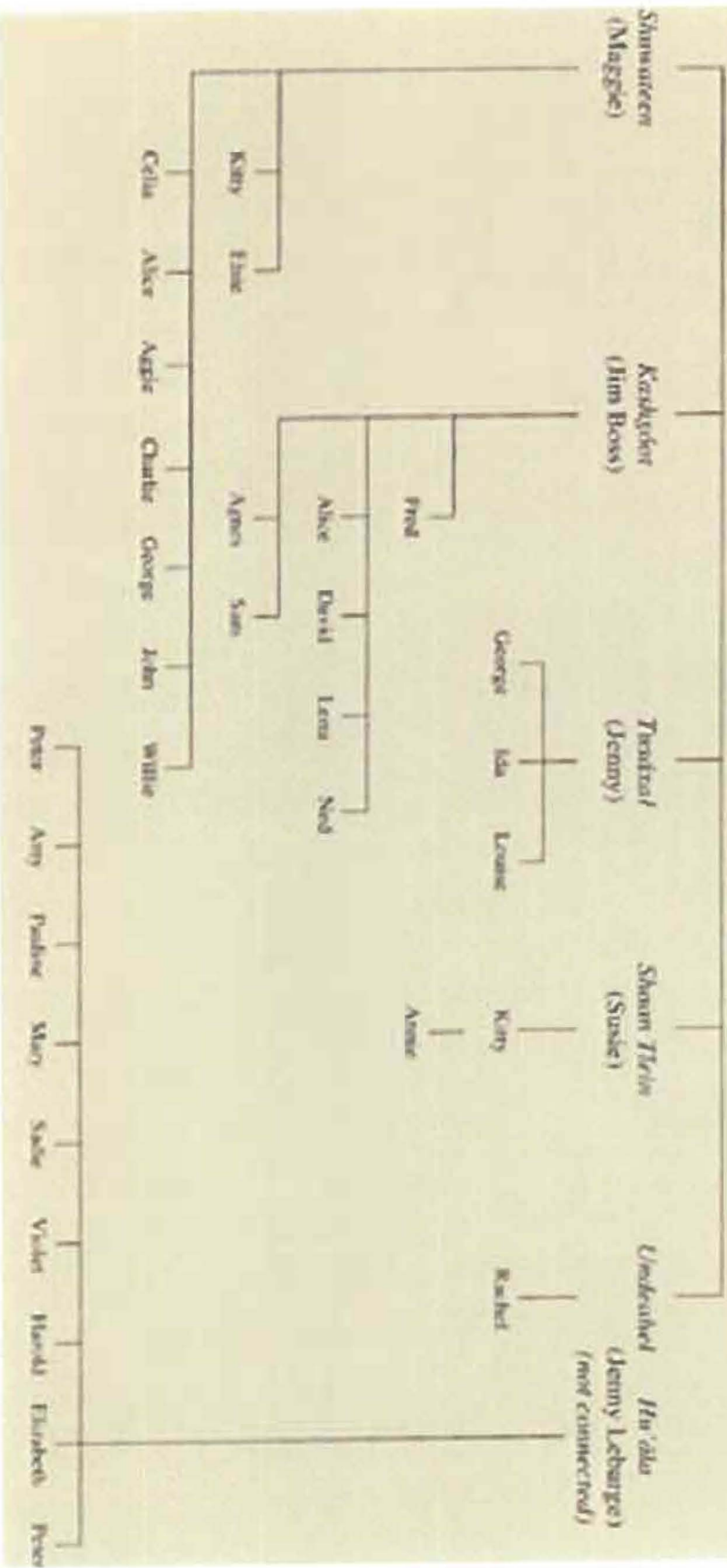


Figure 46: Genealogy Chart for Grandma Aggie Sliim

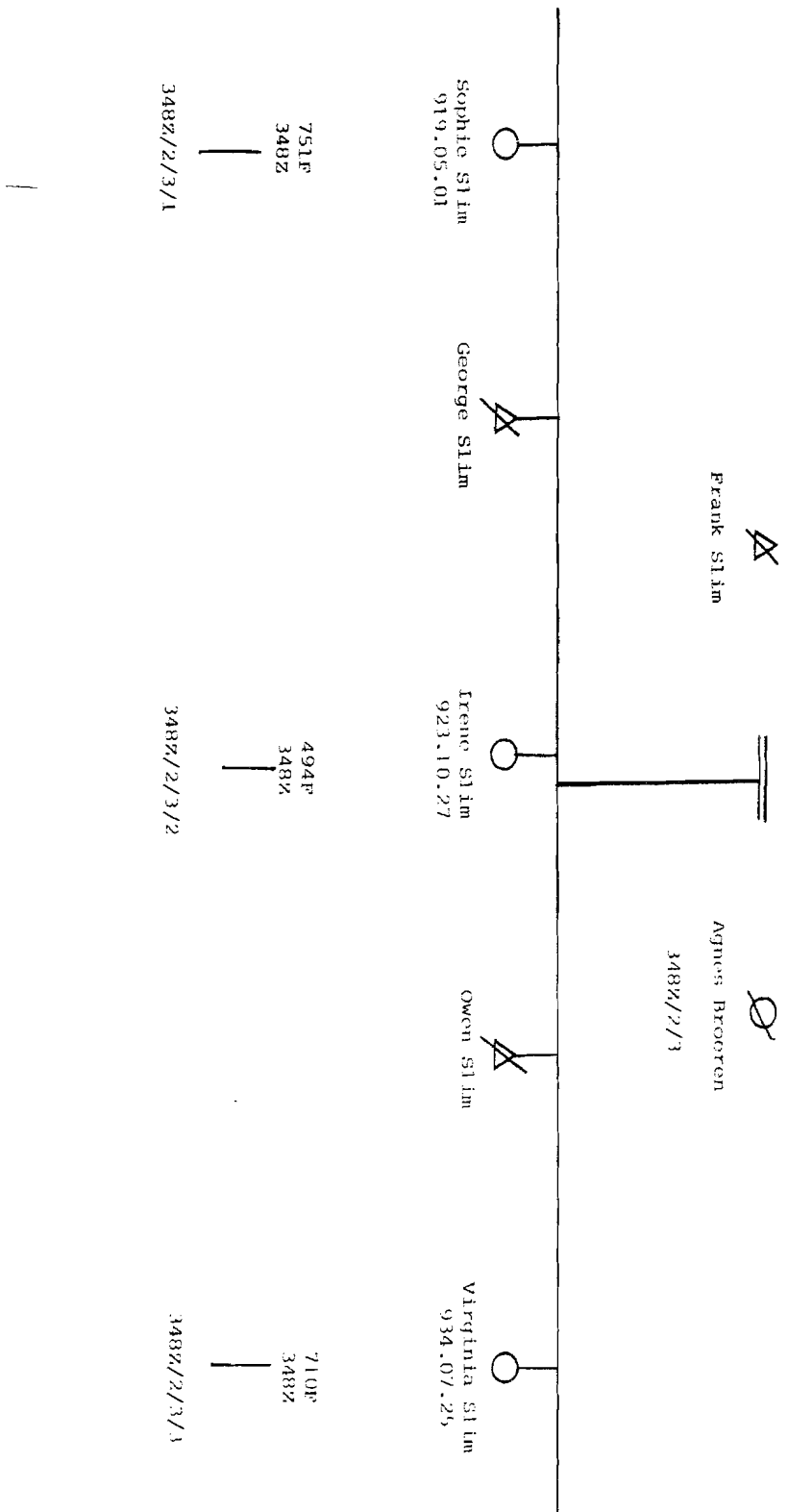


Figure 47: Genealogy charts for Virginia Lindsay (nee Slim)

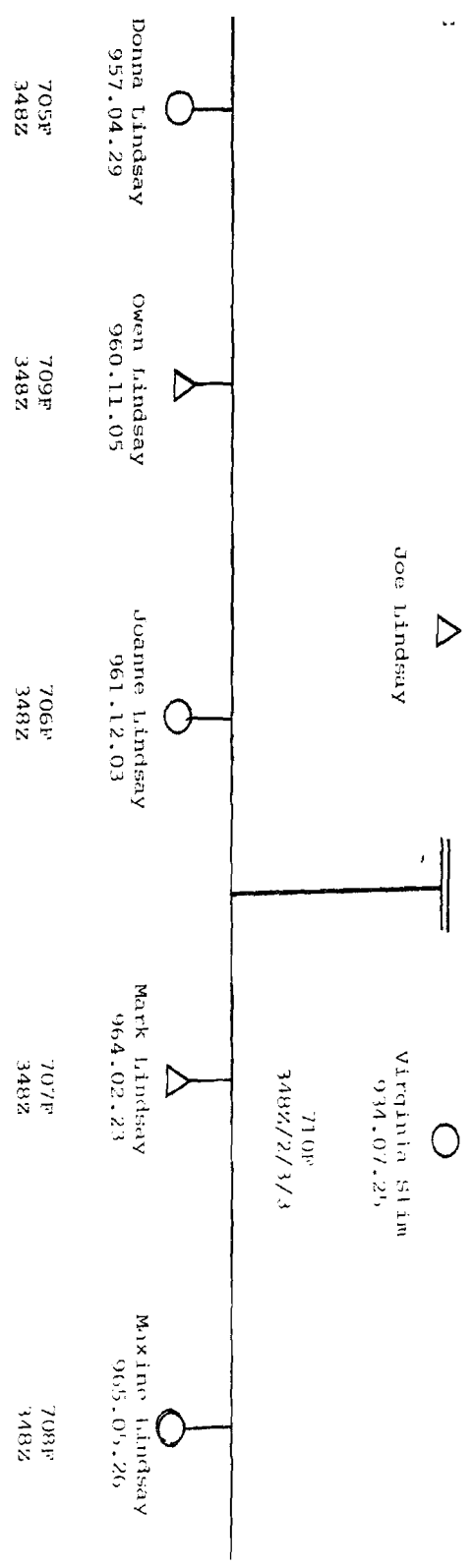


Figure 48: Genealogy chart for Donna Dillman (nee Lindsay)

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Their Own Yukon fond: Yukon Archives, Aggie Slim and Family at Lake Laberge
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Their Own Yukon fond: Yukon Archives, Unknown boy Slim Jim, Kitty Slim, Frank
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Phelps/Scott fond: Yukon Archives, Frank Slim at Wheelhouse 89/31 #23

L. Irvine fond: Yukon Archives, Frank working with Louie Irvine 1902

L. Irvine fond: Yukon Archives, Frank working with Louie Irvine 1913

L. Irvine fond: Yukon Archives, Frank working with Louie Irvine delivering mail
1900