

Yukon Government Administration Building



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Construction History

In the fall of 1970, Public Works Canada (Pacific Region), at the request of the Yukon Government, began site and space program studies with the aim of consolidating all territorial departments in one building complex.

In February, 1973 the federal Treasury Board approved the project based on the preliminary design studies. Public Works Canada (Pacific Region) was subsequently contracted by the Yukon Government for preparation of final design and construction documents. In September, 1973, the Yukon Government approved the final design for the building and in December a pre-tender was let for steel for the building's superstructure.

In March, 1974, the contract for Phase I of construction (excavation and point footings for foundations) was tendered and awarded to Klondike Enterprises of Whitehorse. After that, tenders were called for Phase II (main contract) and awarded to General Enterprises Ltd. of Whitehorse.

The steel superstructure was erected and then from September to December, 1974 the base to the building and the exterior walls were put up so work could continue inside through the winter.

In January-February, 1976 the carpeting, interior finishing and kitchen equipment contracts were let and awarded and in May the first departments moved into the building.

On May 25, 1976 His Excellency Governor General Jules Leger and Commissioner James Smith jointly unveiled the commemorative plaque at the opening ceremony of the building. By July 1, the last department was moved into the building.



More than 1,000 Yukoners attended the official opening of the building on May 25, 1976.

Building Design

The design concept of the building is based on the premise that the purpose of government is to serve the people.

For this reason, the complex has a “low profile” which is in scale with the adjacent Whitehorse Public Library and other buildings in the city.

The interior is also designed with public access in mind. The major mall goes through three floors of open-landscaped office space, and information counters, central cashiers and elevators are close at hand.

The design allows for flexibility and change. The mall forms a spine complete with services adaptable for expansion north, south and to connect with future

additions. Office areas are open, with moveable screens instead of walls. Electrical and telephone outlets can be moved anywhere.

Externally, the building is finished in maintenance-free anodized aluminum and stained cedar which integrates with the adjacent library building. Underneath the anodized aluminum, rigid insulation reaches down as far as the foundations and up over the roof to form a protective cocoon. This assists in keeping the building at a stable temperature throughout the year.

The interior was designed to provide a warm, lived-in atmosphere. It is rich with wood, quarry tile, artworks, red carpets and mellow sodium lamps.



An aerial view.

Facilities

The Administration Building is the working area for approximately 400 Yukon Government employees. Only a few departments don't have their central headquarters in the building. In addition to departmental offices, the building has the Executive Committee offices and the Legislative Chambers.

Not counting the Library Services Branch headquarters and the Whitehorse Public Library, which are connected to the building by a corridor, the building is 97,999 square feet in area. The cost of construction was approximately \$10.8 million.

The building has 15 conference rooms, 21 washrooms and two elevators.

Guards are on duty 24 hours a day every day of the year. Fire prevention devices include a sprinkler (wet) system, smoke detectors and heat detectors. A fire and intrusion panel in the central Security Office shows up any fluctuation in water pressure in the sprinkler system and the heat and smoke detectors. All outside doors are connected to the intrusion panel, which notes when any door is opened after office hours. There are 22 check stations located in the building which have phone jacks the guards can use if necessary.

In the "Penthouse" on the fourth level are four oil-fired furnaces. Two 600,000 BTUH furnaces are generally used. As the temperature gets colder, two other 3,440,000 BTUH furnaces are brought into use. The first two furnaces are also used for the building's hot water. The oil used comes from a buried 10,000-gallon tank containing #2 furnace oil.

The building has emergency power in case of a general power outage. A diesel-fired generator located in

level 1 (basement) goes on automatically within eight seconds of power loss.

There is a centrifuge chiller for the cooling system. A two-inch fresh-air duct admits air into the building to ensure there is a slight positive pressure. If the outside temperature is low, the air can be pre-heated before being admitted to the system. The air circulating through the building is filtered twice and humidified.

Most of the wood in the building is pine. The wood band under the acrylic mural is stained cedar and the chamber doors are oak.

There is a touch of international flavour to the building: the quarry tile in the mall is from West Germany, the vestibule mural tiles from Italy and the extremely durable carpet in the chambers is from the United States.

The plants in the building include weeping fig, Yucca (Bayonet plants), Boston Ferns, Bamboo Palm, Umbrella plants, Grape Ivy and Philodendrons.

Yukon's attractive Legislative Chambers have modern technical facilities and at the same time maintain a sense of dignity.

This is where the 12-member Yukon Legislature does its business. There is provision in the design to allow for expanding the seating to hold 20 members if necessary.

There is public seating capacity for approximately 100 people on comfortable cushioned benches. The soundproof press room for news media representatives has closed circuit television and audio transmission of the proceedings, with facilities for typewriters and note-taking.

The pennants represent the various parts of the Yukon coat of arms and the giant tapestry is an artistic representation of Fireweed, Yukon's floral emblem.

Development Of Government

The development of government in Yukon has been a long and complicated process. It began in 1869 when the newly-formed government passed the Temporary Government Act.

Yukon was included in the North-Western Territory, which was administered under the terms of the Temporary Government Act.

Yukon remained part of the North-Western Territory until 1898 when Parliament passed the Yukon Act establishing it as a separate territory. This act provided for a Commissioner who was to take instructions from the Minister of the Interior or the Governor-in-Council. It also provided for an appointed Council. All six members were appointed because there was uncertainty about the political experience and the nationality of the territory's inhabitants.

In 1908, an act amending the Yukon Act was passed which provided a wholly-elected council of ten, sitting apart from the Commissioner and having annual sessions during a three-year term.

It didn't take long for this new council to become disenchanted with its status. One of the first things it did was to set up a Committee to press for a higher degree of self-government.

Territorial revenues which had amounted to more than \$400,000 in 1907 were down by 50% at the end of the decade, reaching an all time low of \$142,000 in 1921.

In an economy move, the federal government abolished the Office of the Commissioner. Although the Council remained, it was reduced to three members in 1919.

Government lay almost dormant until 1951, when the council was expanded from three to five members. The growing population and prosperity generated by the construction of the Alaska Highway and the Canol Pipeline Project were factors in a decision to increase the size of Council from three to five members in 1951.

In 1960, amendments were made to the Yukon Act which increased the size of council to seven elected members. Also an advisory committee on finance consisting of three councillors was established to review territorial estimates before their presentation to Council. The first committee was chosen by the council in 1961. Although its effectiveness as an executive instrument was limited, it broke new ground by establishing a closer working relationship between the members of Council and the Commissioner.

Council took another step toward fiscal responsibility in 1968 when the Budget Programming Committee was established. It included the three members of the Financial Advisory Committee and three senior members of the territorial administration. The Budget Programming Committee worked out the estimates for each department with the appropriate department heads. Previously, the Financial Advisory Committee had only reviewed these estimates after they had been

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prepared by the department heads and approved by the commissioner. Now the estimates were processed through the committee and the elected council members were involved in the actual preparation of the estimates. A parallel committee, the Legislative Programming Committee, was similarly constituted to review the government's legislative proposals prior to their presentation before Council.

One of the most significant developments took place in 1970. An Executive Committee was constituted to advise the Commissioner in the exercise of his responsibilities as chief executive officer of the territory. Two members of the elected seven-person Legislature were designated by the Legislature to sit on this Executive Committee along with three appointed members; the Commissioner as chairman and two Assistant Commissioners. The two elected members of the Executive Committee were given administrative responsibility for two departments of the territorial government, similar to that of a federal or provincial cabinet. The Budget Programming Committee and the Legislative Programming committee became sub-committees of the Executive Committee. The Yukon Act was also amended in 1970 to extend the term of the Legislature from three to four years.

In spring of 1974, the federal government introduced amendments to the Yukon Act which permitted expansion of the council to 12 members. It was also announced that the elected membership of the executive committee would be increased to three. These changes were first implemented in the fall of 1974.



Commissioner Art Pearson reads the opening address for the first Session of the Yukon Legislative Assembly in its new chambers.

Government Today

The Yukon system of government is based on two federal statutes—The Yukon Act and Government Organization Act of 1966.

The Yukon Act provides for a Commissioner as head of government and for a legislative body. By the Government Organization Act, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has responsibility, with the Governor-in-Council, for directing the Commissioner in the administration of the territory.

The executive level of the Yukon government consists of the Commissioner and an Executive Committee. The office of the Commissioner incorporates several functions. The Commissioner is head of the territorial government and the senior representative of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In addition, the Commissioner performs duties similar to those of Lieutenant Governor.

In administering the territorial government the Commissioner is assisted by the Executive Committee which is modelled on a cabinet structure. This committee is composed of the Commissioner as chairman, with two Assistant Commissioners and three members of the Legislature are recommended by motion of their colleagues. The Commissioner as chairman assigns each member of the Executive Committee a portfolio.

The Legislative Assembly is made up of 12 members who are elected to represent the territory's 12 constituencies.

The members are elected for a four-year term of office. The Legislature is presided over by one of its own

members who is chosen as speaker at the beginning of each four-year term.

There is a major difference between the legislative powers of the Legislature and the powers of the ten provincial legislatures.

The legislative powers of the council are derived from the Parliament of Canada. Unlike the powers of the provincial legislatures which are defined in the BNA Act, the powers of the Legislature may be changed from time to time as Parliament sees fit.

Legislative jurisdiction over the resources of the territory is an example. These remain the property of the Crown, not the property of the territory. As far as resources are concerned, the Yukon Legislature can only legislate on wildlife. All other resources are legislated by Parliament.

There is a large measure of interdependence between the executive and the Legislature. The Legislature is dependent upon the administrative arm under the direction of the Commissioner to ensure that legislation is supplied in a manner that is consistent with its original intention. Similarly, the Commissioner must have the support and assistance of the Legislature in order to generate local revenue and to appropriate funds to meet the cost of territorial administration. Additionally, the establishment of the Executive Committee in 1970, for the first time, enabled direct participation by members of the Legislative Assembly in the executive functions of government.

Yukon Symbols



COAT OF ARMS



FIREWEED



FLAG



MACE

Coat of Arms

The wavy white and blue vertical stripe represents the Yukon River. It refers also to the rivers and creeks where placer gold was discovered which sparked the Klondike Gold Rush. The red spire-like forms represent the mountainous country and the gold discs the mineral resources. The St. George's Cross is in reference to the early explorers and fur traders from England who were mainly responsible for the exploration and early development of the Yukon Territory. The roudel in the centre of the cross symbolizes the fur trade. Standing on a mount of snow on top is a Malamute dog, an animal which played an important part in the early history of Yukon and is noted for its loyalty, stamina and courage.

Fireweed

Fireweed (*Epilobium augustifolium*) — The floral emblem of the Yukon grows in abundance throughout the territory. Hardy as well as beautiful, it is usually the first flower to appear in burned-over areas (hence its name). It was adopted as Yukon's floral emblem by an Ordinance passed by council in 1957.

Mace

The Yukon's mace was designed by RCMP Corporal Jim Ballantyne in 1966 and presented to territorial council by Governor General Michener in 1971. The gilt-silver symbol of the Queen in the Territorial Council features three figurines — miner, trapper and Indian. It is also etched with Yukon scenes and armorial bearings.

Yukon Flag

The Yukon flag was designed by Haines Junction student Lynn Lambert for a flag-designing competition held by the Whitehorse branch of the Canadian Legion during Centennial year. His design was chosen by a committee made up of the seven councillors of the day. An ordinance to give effect to his choice was passed by Council and came into effect March 1, 1968.

The green represents Yukon forests, white represents the snow and blue represents the many rivers and lakes in the territory. The official Coat of Arms of Yukon is situated above two sprigs of the official Yukon flower.

Artwork

Mural

The acrylic resin mural located along the main floor mall adds colour and splendour to the exterior as well as the interior of the building. With a length of 120 feet, it is believed to be among the largest of its kind in the world.

Designed in a series of 24 panels each measuring four feet by five feet, the mural portrays the historical evolution of Yukon as researched, conceived and interpreted by West Vancouver artist David MacLagan.

MacLagan said he aimed to “create a mural that the people of the area could relate to.”

“An abstract statement would be meaningless, not because Yukoners are not ‘sophisticated’ enough to understand abstracts, but frankly because I think they are too honest to be sold something which doesn’t have meaning for them — this is a quality their southern brothers could perhaps learn from,” he said.

The mural is rendered in stabilized polyester resins cast onto a reinforced fibreglass backing between metal-impregnated “lead lines.” The medium offers all the qualities of its older brother “stained glass” with the additional benefits of being much more flexible in design possibilities. It has an unlimited colour palette and is virtually indestructible.

Panel A shows sponges of the Cambrian Age 500 million years ago forming into the rising mountains of the Palaeozoic era 150-400 million years back. Warm seas rise, giving birth to herring-like fish and giant reptiles of 100 million years ago.

In panel B, the seas subside and giant mammoths roam the land in pre-historic Yukon. In Panel C, the Yukon mountains of 10,000 years ago are shown as

the only Pacific Coast range to remain ice-free during the last ice age.

Yukon’s first man is represented by his art in panel D. A bird, dish and Kutchin bear are shown forming out of a grizzly. The first white explorers arrive at the Gulf of Alaska in panel E. Panel F illustrates the first explorer discovering part of what is now Yukon — Sir John Franklin arriving at Herschel Island in 1825. Throughout the mural, wild Yukon flowers, trees, animals and typical landscapes form into the flow of history such as the wild roses and birch in panel F.

Panel G concerns the Hudson’s Bay Company establishing Fort Yukon in 1847 — and the fur-trading begins. Behind snow-covered pine needles three stained glass windows of St. Paul’s church, built in 1897, symbolize the coming of the missionaries in panel H. The first discovery of gold by Rev. Robert McDonald in 1863 introduces the prospectors and their dog sleds in panels H and I with the Northern Lights in the background.

In panel J the Northern Lights sweep forward and turn to gold as the Klondike gold is discovered in 1896. The Northwest Mounted Police precede the 1898 rush of stampeders shown in panel K in the boats crossing Lake Bennett.

Behind the first White Pass and Yukon Route train to reach Bennett (July 6, 1899) the midnight sun dips towards the horizon to rise again without setting in panel L. In panel M prospecting evolves from the pan, pick and shovel to rocker box, steam boiler and hydraulic washing to the dredges. The Dall sheep, with the view from Quartz Dome as background, watch as the first

Royal Mail stages leave Whitehorse for Dawson in 1902 in panels N and O.

The wild asters and roses of panel P and Q blend into the current of the Yukon River and the smoke of the SS Tutshi in Q and R. Gold fever dies down and life stabilizes as symbolized by the Dawson public school in panel S and the coming of the automobile in panel T. World War I brings the stiffness of the Yukon infantrymen expressed in panel U while above is the first Yukon air service.

Panel V depicts, by the graves of the Klondikers, the end of an era and the birth of a new one, with the quonset huts and American Air Force insignia heralding the Alaska Highway. The top-of-the-world highway forms into the silhouette of a Caribou and the Arctic Grayling becomes fireweed behind the Yukon coat of arms in panel W.

Panel X represents the unknown, suggesting the future.

Beneath the mural is the plaque which was unveiled at the opening ceremony.

Council Chamber Tapestry

The giant tapestry in the council chamber titled "Fireweed" is an abstraction of the fireweed plant, Yukon's floral emblem.

The 18 feet by 12 feet tapestry by prominent Canadian artist Joanna Staniszkis required 1,400 hours of work and more than 200 pounds of wool. Most of the wool was hand spun. By dyeing the wool herself, the artist has achieved a variety of more than 100 different colour shades.

Yukon Women's Tapestry

Hundreds of Yukoners have been involved in the stitching of five tapestries which portray the role of women in the development of the territory.

There are five panels seven feet wide and 13 feet long hanging on a 40 foot by 25 foot wall in the Legislative library lounge where it forms a backdrop to the mezzanine floor containing the Commissioner's and Executive Committee offices.

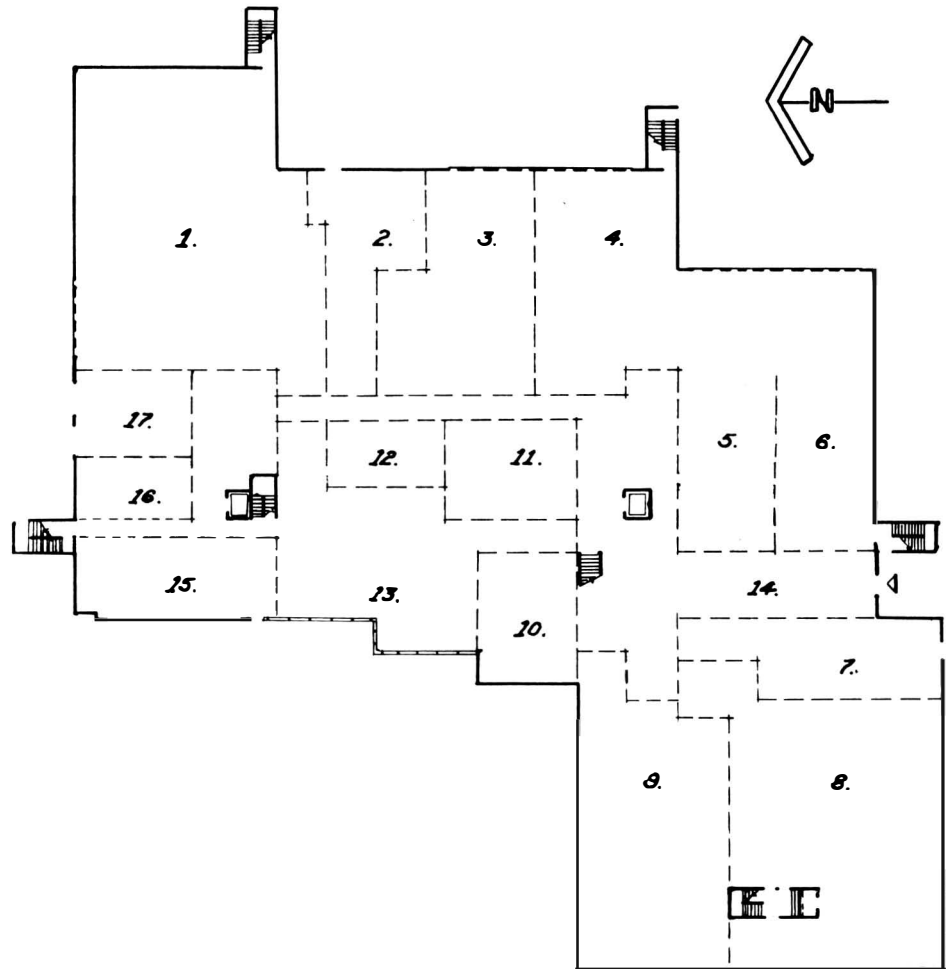
The hand-stitched tapestries are the largest ever made in Canada. They depict the five seasons of the north: Fall, Winter, Survival (the period March, April and part of May), Spring and Summer. Each panel in turn depicts women in a theme of work, sport, survival, family and culture. The figures are drawn from scenes in the Archives records and the dress is turn of the century.



A winter perspective.

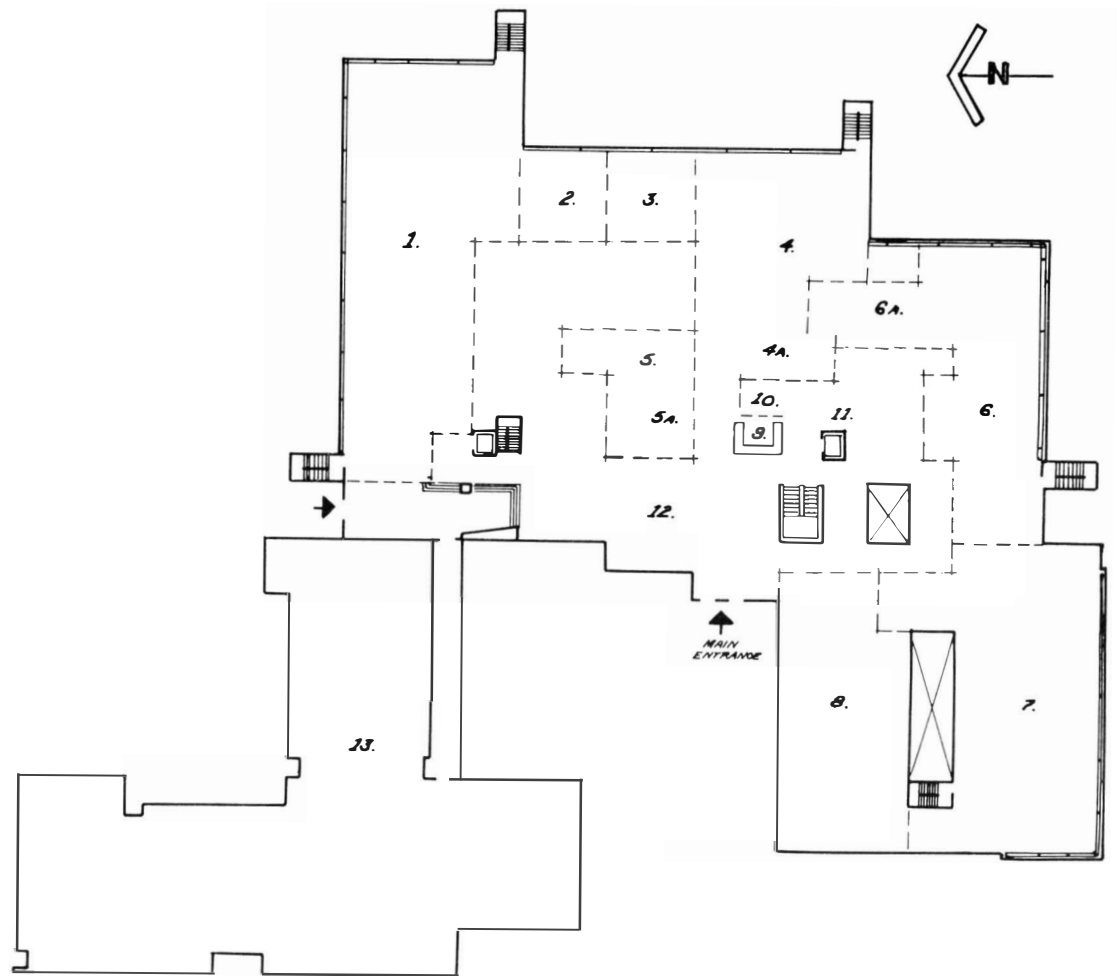
LEVEL 1

1. Central Records
2. Service Rooms
3. Corrections
4. Tourism, Parks & Information
5. Economic Research & Planning
6. Game
7. Service Room
8. Legislative Offices
9. Legislative Chamber
10. Conference Rooms 1A & 1B
11. Queen's Printers
12. Shipping & Receiving
13. Cafeteria
14. Mall
15. Stationery Supplies
16. Mail Room
17. Loading Bay



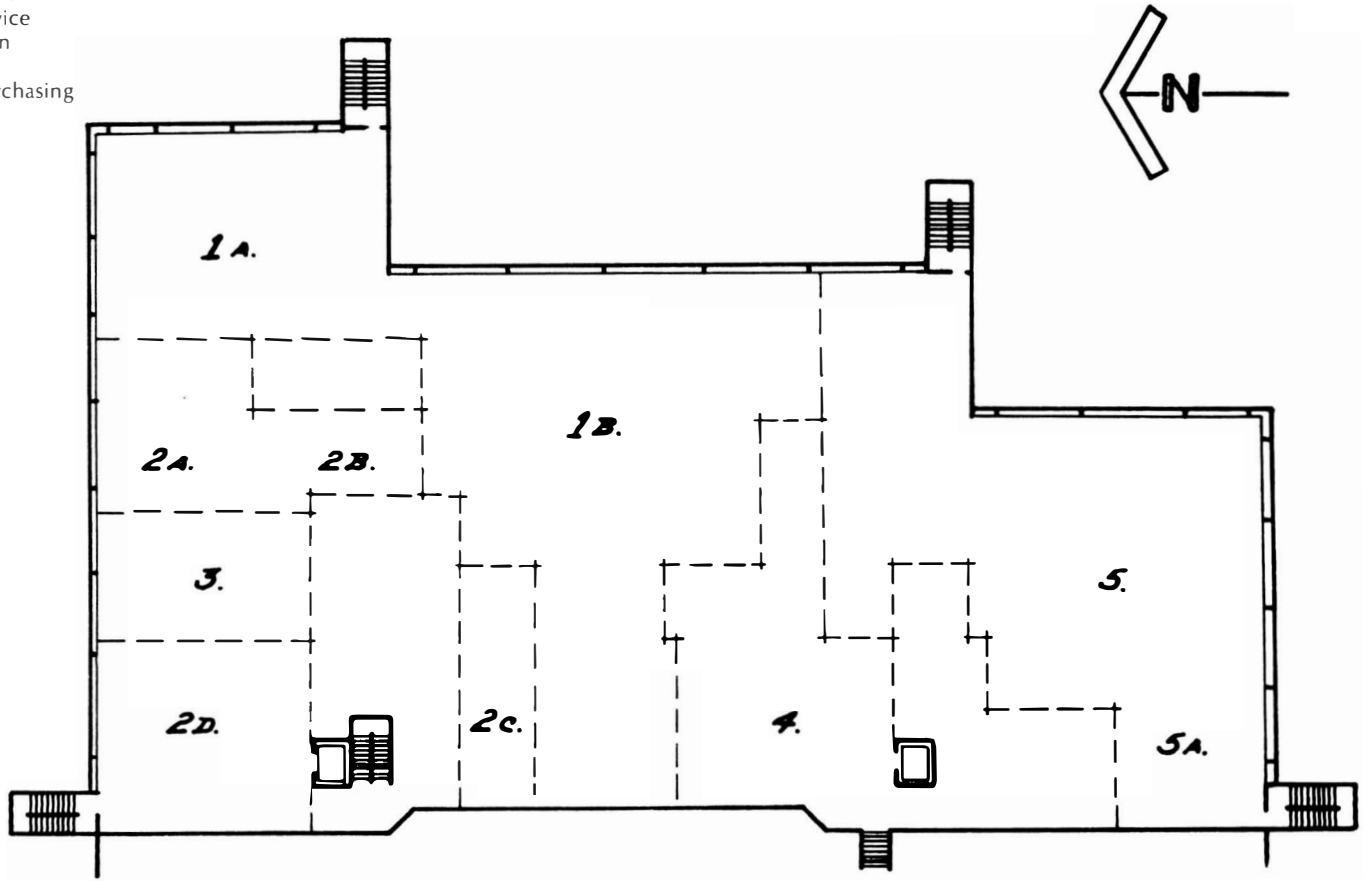
LEVEL 2

1. Social Welfare
2. Intergovernmental Affairs
3. Legal Affairs
4. Education
- 4A. Recreation
5. Health Services
- 5A. Alcohol & Drug Services
6. Territorial Secretary
- 6A. Workmen's Compensation
7. Executive Offices
8. Legislative Chamber
9. Inquiry Centre
10. Cashier
11. Security
12. Mall
13. Library Services Branch



LEVEL 3

- 1. Highways & Public Works
- 1A. Engineering
- 1B. Highways
- 2. Local Government
- 2A. Municipal Services
- 2B. Assessment
- 2C. Protective Services
- 2D. Territorial Lands
- 3. Federal Lands
- 4. Public Service Commission
- 5. Treasury
- 5A. Central Purchasing





A section of the acrylic mural depicting pre-historic Yukon.

