



In Sight of Sinkut Mountain

celebrating diversity in the Nechako Valley

**An initiative of the Good Neighbours Committee
Prepared by the College of New Caledonia**

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A year in the making, this book and companion DVD are the result of many people's vision and voice of what life was and is like in the Nechako Valley. The District of Vanderhoof, the geographical centre of British Columbia, and the Village of Saik'uz, are joined together by geography and history. The Dakelh First Nation people lived on this land of rolling hills, bountiful rivers and lakes, and vast forests for thousands of years. In the late 1700s the first explorers set foot in the Nechako Valley and were welcomed by the First Nations people. From then to the present day people immigrated into the beautiful Nechako Valley from all parts of the world. People of different faiths, lifestyles, abilities and languages have since come to this fertile valley in search of prosperity and a better life. A diversity of people can be seen during a stroll along the streets of Vanderhoof, and the opportunities for recreation, entertainment, work, or simply being in nature are vast.

Despite a past dotted with tension between First Nations and settlers on this land, Vanderhoof and Saik'uz are working toward a common future where the communities are welcoming and inclusive to all residents and new immigrants to the area.

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This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

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ISBN: 978-0-921087-52-6

College of New Caledonia Press: http://www.cnc.bc.ca/visiting/CNC_Press.htm

An initiative of the Good Neighbours Committee in partnership with the College of New Caledonia, Nechako Campus

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Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens, Altona, Manitoba

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book provides a visual and written snapshot of the Nechako Valley, its history and a glimpse of its future. Captions for each photograph are given in brown text, and are intended to provide additional information about our area and lifestyle. This book also provides the voice of the community through quotes. These quotes are located on the bottom of many of the pages in grey italics. They are intended to give a sense of what it is like to live here, why people came here, and why they stayed. These quotes are not intended as captions for photographs. A number of the quotes have been translated into some of the many languages heard in Vanderhoof today.

In the history (back chapter) of the book, we provide a timeline of significant events in our history. These events were either milestones for the community, or events that affected the entire community. We understand that many events are not captured in this timeline.

All efforts were made to accurately represent our history, diversity, and future vision of the communities and the people who reside here. We sincerely apologize for any errors or omissions that may be found in this book and DVD.

We hope that everyone, including current residents and new immigrants, will find this book and DVD a valuable resource.





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Spruce trees in winter are weighed down by a recent snowfall. On certain days in the winter, the landscape in Vanderhoof can turn into an almost black and white vista.





foreword

"If you can see Sinkut Mountain, you know you are home."

Sinkut Mountain, situated on the southern horizon of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz, is a major topographical feature of the area. The name Sinkut comes from the Dakelh (Carrier) name Tsink'ut meaning "Ochre peak." The Saik'uz First Nations people also have a nickname for the mountain. It is Dunulguicho meaning "the big round grey one." The other major landmark is the Nechako River (from Nichakoh meaning big river) and valley, which can be seen in almost its entirety from the top of Sinkut Mountain. The view from there shows how people have manipulated this landscape over the centuries to create homes and a living.

If you can see Sinkut Mountain you know you are home. This is a sentiment shared by everyone who calls the District of Vanderhoof or the Village of Saik'uz—meaning sandy bank, also known as Stoney Creek—their home. Newcomers to the area soon learn that Sinkut Mountain and the Nechako River are our landmarks, and that the geese overhead, the sturgeon in the river, and the moose in the forests are the signatures of this landscape.

People have travelled here from all parts of the world bringing their families, their dreams, and their diverse cultures and beliefs, yet united in the common goals of establishing homes and livelihoods. They immigrated and settled onto this land that has always been home to Dakelh First Nations people, and over the past 200 years this mix of people and cultures has struggled together to survive and grow.

In every direction—up, down, back, forward, through, around, on or in—is a scene, sensation, or story that is shared among the residents of this area. These common visions connect us and will lead us forward to an inclusive and welcoming future.



LEFT: There were several large influxes of Mennonite families into the Nechako Valley and Vanderhoof in the early 1900s. A significant proportion of people living in Vanderhoof today are of Mennonite background, and there are a number of churches and schools dedicated to this faith. RIGHT: Seen here is a reenactment of the Mormon trek across Canada to the west. Mormon families started coming to the Nechako Valley in large numbers in the early 1900s. The valley is seen in the background on this wet spring day. PHOTO BY CARL LARSON.



“Ich mag das ich den Horizont sehen kann.” German for “I like to be able to see the horizon.”





introduction

To many, it is an unknown land, a sea of trees, water and hills—a land as diverse as the people who live here—covering the Omineca Plateau at the centre of British Columbia, the western most province in Canada.

But to us, it is home, a simple place of beauty, struggle, and connectedness between the land and the people that attracted us and keeps us here.

Moose can be elusive animals, found most often in mosquito filled swamps in the farthest backwoods. A magnificent animal to see, moose are also regular visitors for some residents of the area. This particular moose makes regular trips to one home, helping himself to fresh garden greens in the summer.

Not particularly prominent as far as worldly vistas go perhaps, but to us this plateau is a landscape of mythological proportions. With the foothills of the Coast Mountain Range on its western horizon, on its east the great Rocky Mountains, and to the north and south, a vast expanse of rivers, lakes and forests, it is virtually an uninterrupted view of land and sky upon which the ebb and flow of life form the stories of the land and its inhabitants in time immemorial.

This is the Nechako River Valley, home to the municipality of Vanderhoof and the Village of Saik'uz (Stoney Creek). This is where kilometer high glaciers scoured the earth and the woolly mammoth once grazed. It is where the Dakelh (Carrier) First Nation people, part of the Yinka Dene or Athapaskan/Dene speaking group of First Nations, have lived upon the land since the time of the glaciers, and where traders, trappers, loggers, business owners, and farmers came with a dream—visions of salmon drying, furs and farmland, gold, trees and cattle, prosperity and building their homes in a land secure and bountiful.

A long and diverse history connects these two communities together on this shared landscape. In that history, there have been times of struggle and tension between First Nations and non-First Nations people. In 1999, the Good Neighbours Committee was formed to foster awareness, understanding and communication among residents of both Vanderhoof and Saik'uz.

Since its creation, the Good Neighbours Committee has implemented a number of projects and initiatives to achieve its mission, and has been successful in making positive changes in the community. These changes affect all members of the communities from long-time First Nation and non-First Nation residents to new immigrants (from within and outside of Canada).

NEXT PAGE IMAGES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: List of the major projects of the Good Neighbours Committee • Students give a presentation about the Respect Accept video project. • Earth Day celebration where members of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz planted trees in the community. • Section of a poster for the Community Dialogue project—The Diverse Faces of Vanderhoof. • Signing of the Community Accord by members of the community at the Olympic Torch celebration. • The grand opening of the Neighbourhood Space. BELOW: Good Neighbours Committee mission statement.

Good Neighbours Committee Mission Statement

*To have a society where racist behaviour
is unacceptable and mutual respect
between individuals is honoured.*



2000 – 2003

Diversity Initiative Projects: Relationship building between Saik'uz and Vanderhoof through a number of projects.

Mayor of Vanderhoof and Chief of Saik'uz proclaim support for March 21st International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



2004 – 2007

Building Collaborative Partnerships: BC Anti-Racism and Multiculturalism Program: Acceptance + Behaviour = Change (A+B=C) Youth Diversity Project. Phase three of this project included a youth video project called Respect Accept.

Vanderhoof and Saik'uz celebrated Earth Day and held tree-planting events in both communities.



2008

Community Dialogue on Diversity Project. This project went to the community to ask the question: What does a welcoming and inclusive community truly look like? The project included a call for photographs called The Diverse Faces of Vanderhoof.

Community Accord created and signed by all current Good Neighbours Committee member agencies, including District of Vanderhoof and Village of Saik'uz.



2009

Memorandum of Understanding signed by Good Neighbours Committee member agencies agreeing to work together to support the mission statement of the Good Neighbours Committee and to partner for the delivery of the WelcomeBC Spirit of Vanderhoof—Diversity Project.



2010 – 2011

Good Neighbours Committee facilitates delivery of WelcomeBC Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP) elements: Demonstration Project element, The Spirit of Vanderhoof Diversity Project; Knowledge Development and Exchange element, Asset Mapping; and the Public Education element, coffee table book *In Sight of Sinkut Mountain* and accompanying DVD 'Where we Belong.'



Recognizing the greater diversity of people and lifestyles that are now integrated into our communities, Vanderhoof and Saik'uz have signed the Community Accord; a declaration and promise to respect diversity and inclusiveness within our communities by individuals, businesses, and governments. Vanderhoof's declaration as an inclusive and welcoming community shows that the people here treasure and respect the diversity they share and will build upon that foundation.

This book is intended to present how immigration into the Nechako Valley, which was home to the Saik'uz First Nation people for thousands of years, has added to the greatness and richness of the area. Our history is rich with story and legend, and our landscape is diverse in shape, colour and texture. This has translated into the diversity of people and lifestyles that co-exist in this area. We feel the best way to present this story is through images and scenes that are shared by everyone who lives here—our common visions.

Since its beginning, the Good Neighbours Committee has completed a wide range of projects, workshops and community gatherings that reflected, discussed, and celebrated the richness in the history of the area, the diversity of people, and the influence of immigration and inclusion in our area. This book and companion DVD are visual celebrations of the two communities of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz. The striking photographs, discussion, music, and motion imagery presented in this book and DVD all come from residents of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz. These residents range from those whose families have lived in the area for centuries, to those who just recently moved here, and they each bring their own perspective to this project. We hope you enjoy leafing through this book, and watching the video.





back

A BRIEF HISTORY

Kelcuchek means river mouth, in particular where Stoney Creek joins the Nechako River. This junction of waters represents a long and diverse history between Dakelh First Nation people—who have lived in this land and fished these waters for thousands of years—and non-native explorers and pioneer families of the Nechako Valley.

This view of the Nechako River where Stoney Creek (Khelhkoh) joins it (at the top left) shows the location where for thousands of years First Nations people, and then together with immigrants from around the world, made their homes, traded their goods and fished for their food. Today, this spot is designated as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary, and is used mostly for recreation and sight seeing.



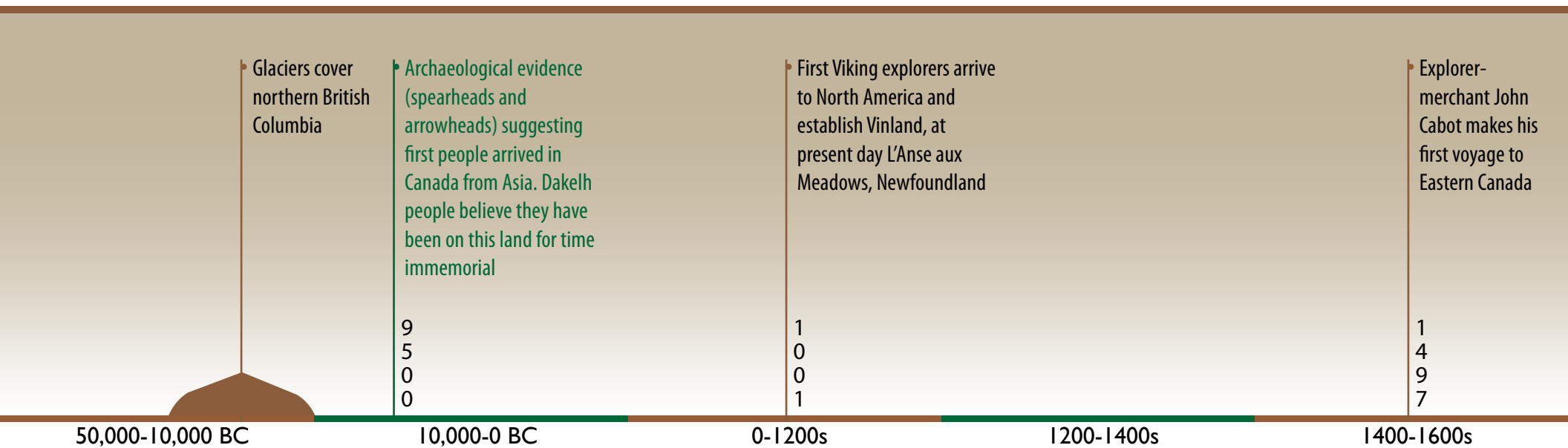


Ten to twenty thousand years ago the Nechako River Valley lay deep under huge glaciers, some as thick as a kilometer or more. The tremendous weight of the ice strained against the earth and pushed great mounds of debris, building high ridges, gouging pockets and valleys, shaping gravel, sand and clay deposits, and then randomly abandoning it all during a major climatic shift, receding to leave moraines, lakes and rivers strewn across the landscape to bear witness to their long cold journey.

Archaeologists believe the first people in this area came originally from Asia, however First Nation people believe they have always been on this continent. Here in the Nechako Valley with its fish filled streams and rivers, abundant berries and herbs, and forests filled with game is where the Dakelh (Carrier) people of Kelcuchek have lived at least since the glaciers receded more than 10,000 years ago. As evidence to their tenure on this land, a story that has been passed down through the generations tells of when the water ran backwards in the Stuart River. It was a time when the Stuart River ran northward instead of southward into the Nechako River as it does today. Archaeological evidence shows that the Stuart River did flow northward as the glaciers melted and receded.

PRECEDING PAGE: During the retreat of the glaciers, large boulders were left scattered randomly on the landscape. Here is a close-up of the surface of one such glacier carved boulder near Vanderhoof. THIS PAGE: Wild berries (TOP) and sockeye salmon (BOTTOM) are part of the First Nations culture. The Stuart River, a tributary to the Nechako River, has one of the largest runs of sockeye in British Columbia and thus salmon are a significant food source for Saik'uz people. Historically, when this run failed, Saik'uz people traded with neighbouring First Nation clan affiliates, in particular those along the Skeena River, for fish. PHOTO BY LOUISE BURGNER.

The ancestral territory of the Dakelh people here includes an area roughly 10,000 square kilometers. Once boundaries were decided between neighbouring First Nation groups, they settled into villages; however, life was dictated by the seasons, and families moved within the ancestral territory depending on the time of year and availability of resources. First Nations people also developed trails to the west coast to trade specifically for eulachon (an oily fish), so these routes were known as 'grease' trails. Other trade routes were established to trade for moose hide as moose were not present in the Nechako Valley until the early 1900s.

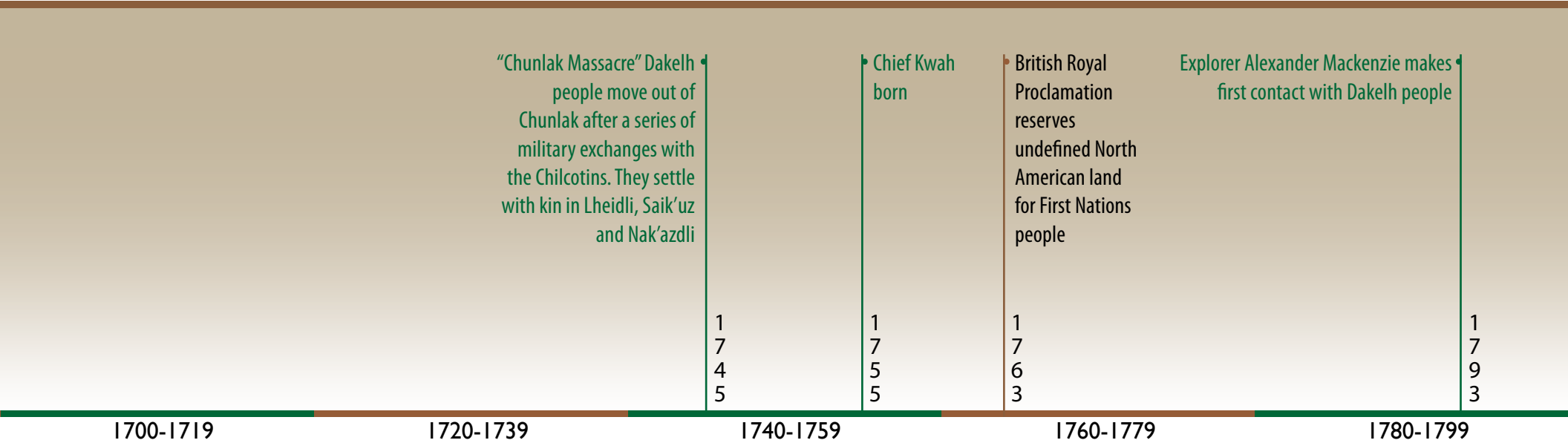


“Dakelh ts’ekoo hulhtus.” Dakelh for “The strength of Carrier women.”



Still spoken today by some, the First Nations people here spoke Dakelh within what is considered to be part of the Athapaskan/ Dene language group. The Dakelh people developed a culture rich in oral tradition telling the stories of their ancestors, their travels, their ways of survival, and their understanding of the world around them. They formed alliances and relationships with neighbouring First Nation peoples, and most villages were multilingual. As testament to their strong oral history tradition, a common precursor to any story told by a present day Saik’uz Elder is “My Dad told me about it.”

PRECEDING PAGE: Two First Nations women carry firewood and a baby on their backs, while a child follows in tow. First Nations people were known to travel days by foot carrying large loads of supplies. One Elder tells the story of how they would travel by foot to Fort St. James to get supplies, but if the price was not right, they would walk to Quesnel for a better deal—roughly a 14 day trip. Photo courtesy of Vanderhoof Public Library. LEFT: Youth from Saik’uz, along with other members of the community, make traditional drums. Selling handicrafts was a major source of income for First Nations people after the settlers came. BELOW: Timeline of major events of the local area from 50,000 BC to present (spread over a number of pages).





A major First Nations settlement in the Nechako area was that of Chunlak located on the Stuart River just upstream of the confluence of the Stuart and Nechako rivers. Its ideal location for fishing, trade and transportation made it the central location of the territory. However in 1745 the village of Chunlak suffered a brutal attack by Ts'ilquotin (Chilcotin) First Nations, an event dubbed 'The Chunlak Massacre.' The site of Chunlak was thereafter abandoned and many stories remain about the eerie vacant landscape left at the site. Archaeological digs done at Chunlak have produced many interesting items including a Chinese coin from the Sung Dynasty (960 to 1127). In 1961 Chunlak was designated as a Provincial Heritage Site.



PRECEDING PAGE: Present day view of Noolhk'ai (Nulki) Lake with Sinkut Mountain on the horizon. A view enjoyed for centuries by the Saik'uz First Nation people. TOP: This image of a pregnant woman and child is taken at Poison Bay. The girl is standing in her mother's shadow so the photographer won't see her. Poison Bay was also the traditional war ground between Saik'uz and the Chilcotin First Nations. PHOTO D-07823 COURTESY OF ROYAL MUSEUM OF BC, BC ARCHIVES. BOTTOM LEFT: Young First Nation women picking berries at Nulki Lake. PHOTO G-03734 COURTESY OF ROYAL MUSEUM OF BC, BC ARCHIVES. BOTTOM RIGHT: Axemen for a surveying crew staged this photograph; the men are looking as fierce as possible with their weapons. PHOTO G-03736 COURTESY OF ROYAL MUSEUM OF BC, BC ARCHIVES.



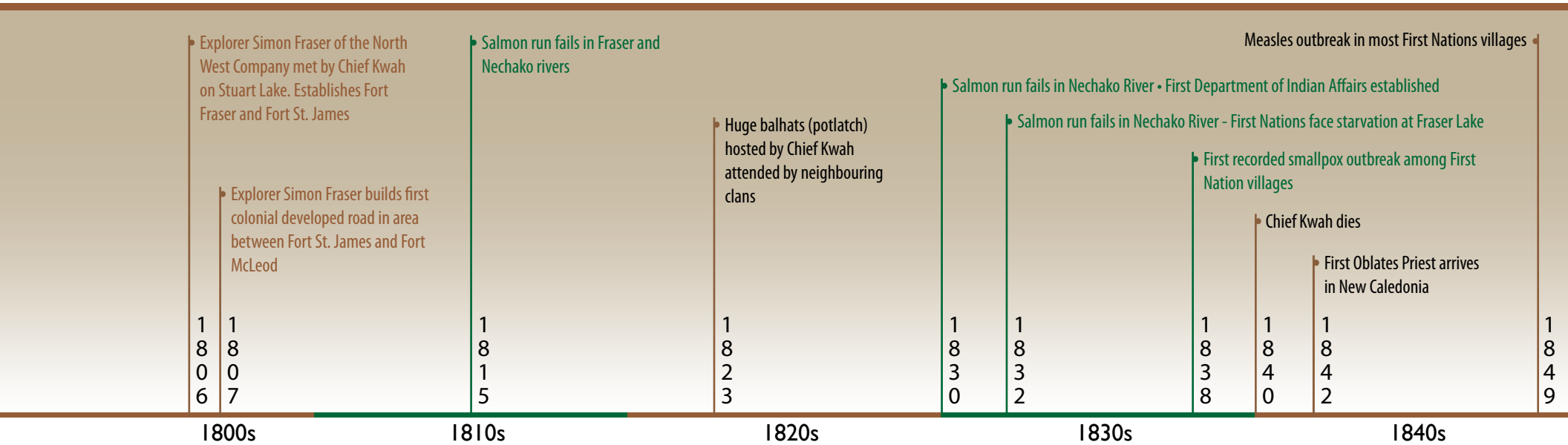
*"Ti ts'iyawh nekeyoh ts'uwheti. Neti 'ukoh 'unt'oh. 'Ukoh ts'iyawh Chunlak ts'uwheti."
Dakelh for "All roads lead home, and for us our roads were rivers, and all rivers lead to Chunlak."*

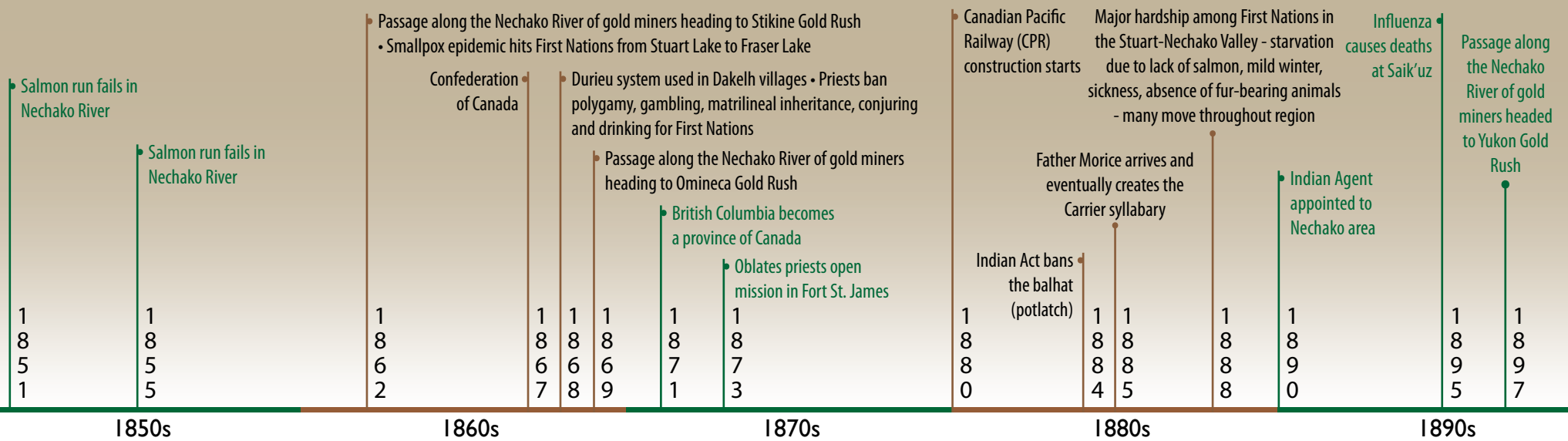
The first contact between Europeans and First Nations people is believed to be when Alexander Mackenzie arrived in the area in 1793. A story passed down by Dakelh Elders is that when the white men came a Duneza’ (male traditional leader) decided to spare their lives as he saw them as the ghosts of their ancestors.

Trade for the abundant furs of the region, such as beaver, muskrat, otter, wolf, lynx and even squirrel, between First Nations and the explorers soon began, and with it trading posts were established in Fort Fraser and Fort St. James by Simon Fraser of the North West Company.

The fur trade was the start to major change to First Nation culture and traditions. The timeline below illustrates how Canada’s great era of nation-building was often a dark time in First Nation history, with repeated epidemics and the introduction of policies and laws to assimilate First Nations. One example is in the First Nations form of governance. Traditionally villages were governed in a circular system where Elders and traditional leaders—Duneza’ (men) and Ts’েকেza’ (women)—sat together to make decisions. Once the fur trade began fur trade “chiefs” were designated to represent the community for trade with the newcomers. In the 1950s the elected Chief system was established by the Government of Canada.

NEXT PAGE LEFT: Portrayed here is Six Mile Mary, the great grandmother of Dr. Mary John Sr. The canoe is made from cottonwood. The short-cut style of her dress and her pipe shows her independence from the European customs of the time. PHOTO A-06069 COURTESY OF ROYAL MUSEUM OF BC, BC ARCHIVES. NEXT PAGE RIGHT: Salmon fed the Dakelh people for centuries, and for many villages it was the main staple food. The salmon run was often as short as 10 days, and in times when villages were affected by epidemics the people were not able to fish or travel to trade with other villages, and starvation often occurred. PHOTO BY COLLEEN ERICKSON.







The fur trade also enticed new immigrants from other parts of Canada, Europe and Asia to the area. With little knowledge of the cold winters or how to survive on this land, life during that time was harsh for new settlers. Settler women worked hard alongside men to clear land, build cabins, gather food and establish connections with other newcomers as well as First Nations people.

The Nechako River was an important transportation route for traders, trappers and later gold miners. Steamboats carried passengers and freight at high water. In the early 1900s Frank Swannell and crew surveyed the Nechako Valley and split the land into sections. Immigrants, mainly from Canada, Europe and the United States, eagerly set to clearing the land for agriculture. With the coming of the railway, other industries like logging and mining soon became established, followed by businesses such as barber shops, hardware supply stores, banks and attorneys at law.

Many of the early settlers and gold miners also came by foot to the Nechako Valley via the Telegraph Trail—the route of the Collin's Overland Telegraph and later called the Yukon Telegraph. Telegraph Trail is still used today as a recreational hiking trail.

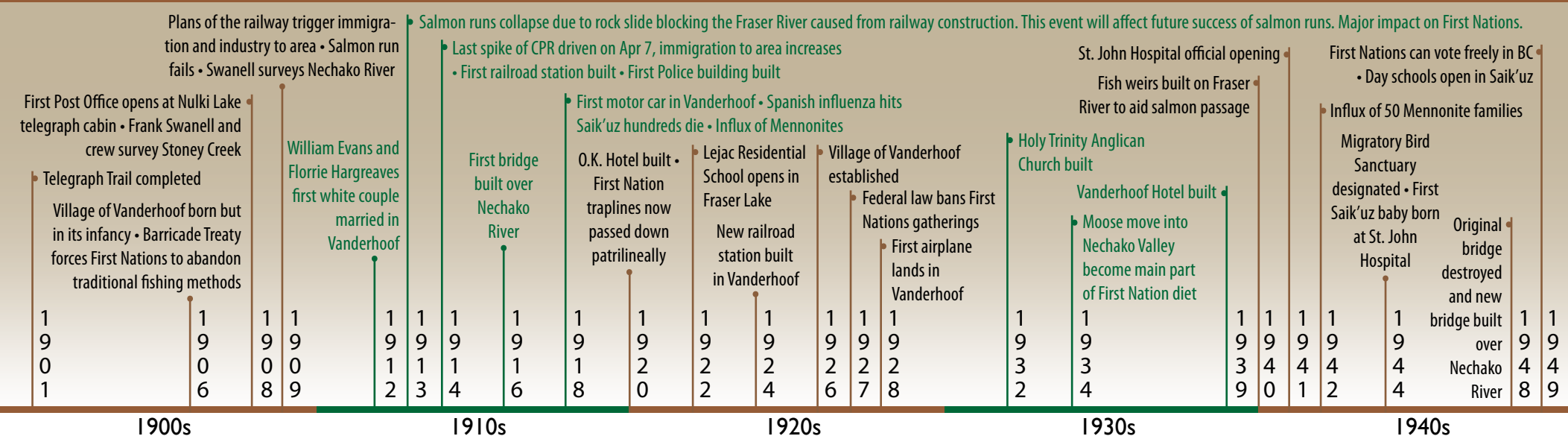


PRECEDING PAGE: A historic picture of Noonla, the traditional crossing of the Nechako River to Fort St. James. Boats sailed the Nechako River at high water for trade and commerce. A quote by a Saik'uz Elder when looking at this picture "*Noonla before the dam.*" Noonla was also a village and sometime in the late 1800s an ice jam gave way and destroyed the entire community, leaving only one survivor. PHOTO I-59730 COURTESY OF ROYAL MUSEUM OF BC, BC ARCHIVES. ABOVE: Frank Swannell and crew surveyed the Nechako Valley from 1908-1909. PHOTO COURTESY NECHAKO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

"The wildlife is incredible."

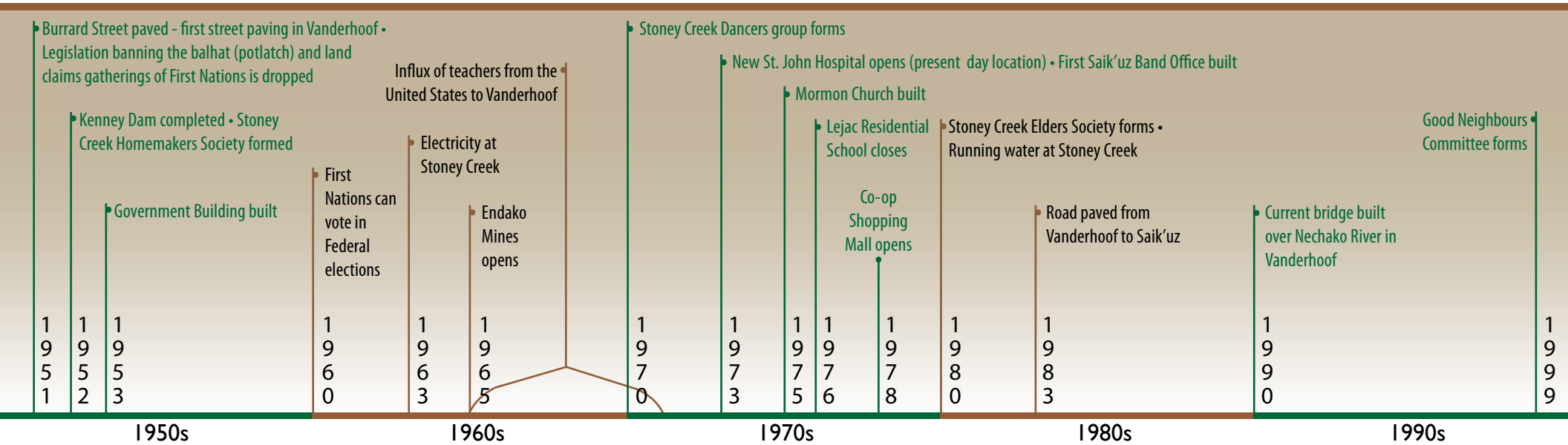


It was not until the last spike on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad line was hammered in at Fort Fraser on April 7, 1914, that immigrants came in droves to the area. After 1914 the town grew quickly. In 1920, Herbert Vanderhoof of the Canadian Grand Trunk Pacific Development Company was assigned to officially plan the town site. The plan—to develop an artists' community—laid the foundation for the settlers arriving daily by train, however the plan took little heed of the lay of the land. Settlement plots were placed in swamps, hillsides, and low land. Buildings built on low land flooded each spring forcing fed-up business owners to move north of the railroad tracks to drier land. In 1926, five years after Mr. Vanderhoof died, the Village of Vanderhoof was established taking his name, which means “of the farm” in Dutch.



During the rapid growth of Vanderhoof in the 1910s to 1920s, many of the current buildings along the main street in Vanderhoof, such as the Grand Reo Theatre and the Anglican Church, were built. Land clearing for new development, such as the airport and the railway right of way, employed many Saik'uz people.

FACING PAGE: In 1920, the Mayo Hotel (now the Reid Hotel) moved from the south side of the tracks to north of the tracks. PHOTO COURTESY OF NECHAKO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY. RIGHT: Pictured here are a number of Mennonite families that arrived in Vanderhoof in 1918. Most new immigrants to the Nechako Valley at that time came via the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. PHOTO COURTESY OF NECHAKO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.



The vast coniferous forests of spruce, pine and fir that surround Vanderhoof were vital in fostering the rapid growth of the community. Even during the World Wars, when men from both Vanderhoof and Saik'uz left to serve Canada, development in Vanderhoof continued. Mennonite families from across Canada moved to Vanderhoof during that time to work in the logging industry to support the war effort. By the early 1950s, as stated by a Saik'uz Elder, there were hundreds of small-scale sawmills in the region. Employment was easy to come by in the logging industry, which attracted a variety of newer immigrants to Vanderhoof who came from across Canada, and other countries such as Yugoslavia, South Asia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

In the early days of logging there was great demand for railroad ties to lay the foundation for the transcontinental railway. From the forests of the Nechako Valley thousands of ties were hacked, cut with hand saws and broad axes, and hoisted on shoulders to wagons or sleighs that hauled them to the rail yard. Tie-hacking began in around 1906 and ended in the 1950s once mills took over the work. Tie-hacking was a major form of employment for Saik'uz people, and was the impetus to move here for many of the new immigrants to the area during that time.





PRECEDING PAGE: View inside one of the present day mills in Vanderhoof. Logging is still the mainstay resource industry of the area. In winter, forestry companies from the communities of Saik'uz and Vanderhoof put their machines and crews into full tree harvest mode. 'Freeze-up' is the optimal time for logging. It is then that temperatures plummet rendering ground solid, allowing ease of access to the forests. TOP: Men loading hand cut railway ties circa 1925. Like today's logging industry, tie-hacking was more efficient in the winter "Ties hack the best when it is really cold," says Oscar Walstrom. Ties made in Vanderhoof were not only used for Canadian railways, they were also custom made for export to other countries such as Australia. PHOTO COURTESY OF OSCAR WALSTROM. RIGHT: The Vanderhoof Community Museum is open in the summer. Visitors are able to walk through historic buildings to learn about the rich history of this area as well as the people who have made us famous, such as Rich Hobson. Seen in the picture are the beautifully restored Smithers House, the old jail house and the OK Cafe.

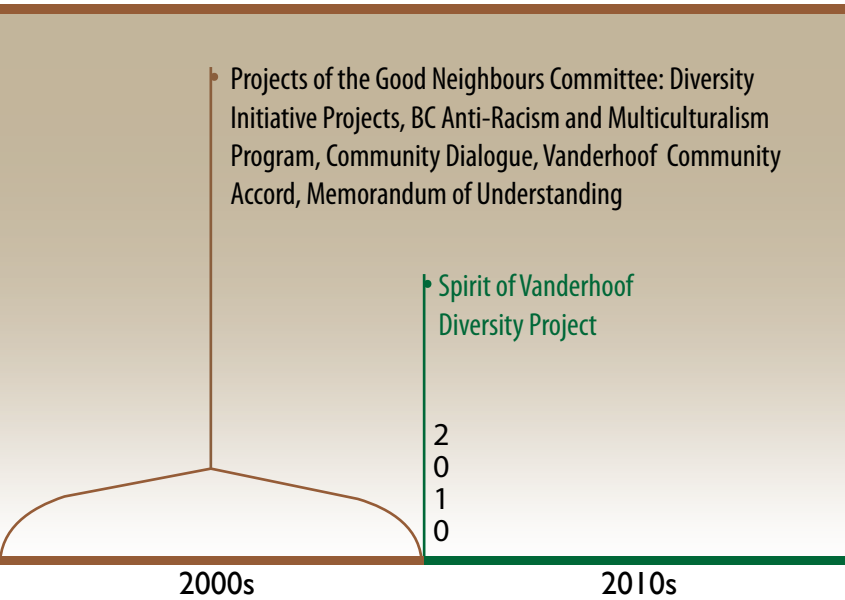


"I came here because of work."

While the fur trade and settlement grew steadily for the newcomers to the land, the First Nation village of Saik’uz began to diminish. The land within their ancestral territory was fast becoming taken up by others. Open hostility between the diverse cultural groups was seldom recorded, but sensitivity to Aboriginal title, cultural differences, and consideration of historical precedence were not given much thought. Though it is evident that the people of Saik’uz worked diligently to adapt to the rapid change that enveloped their land, they have not forgotten their past or their traditional way of life. The past is remembered in the words of Saik’uz (Stoney Creek) Hereditary Clan Chief Adanas Alexis, as recorded in a conversation with Sister Paul over tea in 1978, when Adanas was close to his 90th year:

“I know this place very well. When I was a teenager, 75 years ago, I hunted, fished, played and camped all around here. We called it Kelcuchek then. You know why? This is where our little river—Stoney Creek—runs into the big Nechako River. So that Kelcuchek means river-mouth. Nice name, I think! There was no bridge on the Nechako then, there were no stores, no white people; just the trees, the birds, the animals and us. We had lots of space to move around in...This tea, one change we sure enjoy! So many changes I have seen in my life! Now I have electricity, television and a telephone. But sometimes I think the old days were best.”¹

¹(Vanderhoof The Town That Wouldn’t Wait; Chapter One, Before the White Man Came, Nechako Valley Historical Society; 1979)



Today the two communities continue to grow with new people and businesses coming to the area every year. With immigration comes change; change that can be fought or embraced. Over our brief history together, both have happened. Now, our communities are embracing a new future, a welcoming and inclusive future, and a future filled with a greater respect for diversity.

NEXT PAGE TOP: Theodore Barfoot proudly carries the Olympic Torch during the celebration in Vanderhoof for the 2010 Olympics. The event marked not only the start of the Olympics, but also the start of the Spirit of Vanderhoof Diversity Project. NEXT PAGE BOTTOM: Children hold up the Spirit of Vanderhoof sign at the opening ceremonies of the project.







over

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OVERHEAD

Man-made or natural, the things we see when we look up can surprise us.

Each year, new banners are put up around the communities of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz. All members of the community are invited to participate in creating these colourful banners.



Colour—that is what you see when you look up in the Nechako Valley. Brilliant yellows and oranges on the deciduous trees in the fall; blue, gold and red sparks of light during the annual fireworks at Halloween; and the brown and white of the Canada Geese as they fly near the tree tops are just a few of the colour combinations seen overhead.

When you think of Vanderhoof you think of Canada Geese; the iconic bird is the symbol and mascot of Vanderhoof. The Nechako Valley is a major stopping ground for Canada Geese during their lengthy migration between breeding and wintering grounds. The sound of these birds, who descend in the thousands on the fields, lakes and rivers of this valley, can be heard everyday in the spring and fall. Children and adults alike delight in the sight of large V-formations of the birds flying overhead, and the story of the flight of the goose is used to teach children and adults alike about cooperation, trust and teamwork.

LEFT: A brilliant show of colours can be seen overhead each fall. NEXT PAGE: TOP: By the thousands, Canada Geese are seen flying overhead each spring and fall during their migration between winter and summer breeding grounds. BOTTOM LEFT: Construction crews work on new buildings even during the coldest days of winter. BOTTOM RIGHT: Fireworks fill the sky in Riverside Park each year on Halloween following the popular Pumpkin Walk. PHOTO BY SHEILA EVANS.



*“Ik kwam naar Vanderhoof omdat daar een meisje was... het resultaat was dat ik een baan kreeg.”
Dutch for “I came to Vanderhoof because of a girl... as it turned out, I got a job.”*





under

THE GROUND THAT SUSTAINS US

Under our feet is a rich soil and diverse flora that has sustained people here for thousands of years.

Kinnikinnick, the red berry plant, is an evergreen shrub that is native to this area. The entire plant is used for medicinal purposes as a 'women's medicine.' Used by Dakelh people for centuries, this plant is an important component of how people have been able to survive here for centuries. Important for the caribou and elk in the area is the reindeer lichen, the feathery white plant seen in this picture.



Looking down over 100 years ago, pioneers to this area realized the potential that this floodplain had to offer, and set to clearing vast expanses of land to plant forage and grain crops. Vanderhoof has become famous for its hay crop production, as the rural lands of the Nechako Valley produce a diversity of crops, including alfalfa, wheat, barley and canola. Although the growing season is relatively short, many people today plant backyard vegetable gardens and produce and store food to enjoy over the winter months.

The potential from the soil is also evident in the forests of the region. Understory plants, shrubs and trees are still used today for medicinal purposes and food. Sophie Thomas, a past Saik'uz Chief, respected Elder and passionate environmental activist, will always be known as The Healer. Her extensive Indigenous knowledge of local plants and traditional medicines is invaluable to future generations.

The soil produces beauty as well as bounty. A walk through any trail that surrounds the community will yield a show of beautiful and diverse wildflowers, shrubs and plants species that are native to this area.

“When the snow is off Sinkut Mountain, it is time to plant your garden.”

“When the snow is on Sinkut Mountain, it is time to pull your potatoes.”



PRECEDING PAGE: Tractors are used today to plow the vast productive fields in the Nechako Valley. Seen here, a disc is used to prepare the ground. ABOVE: Wild roses grow wild along roads and forest edges. RIGHT: Potatoes grow well in gardens in Vanderhoof and are a staple food for many cultures. Fresh, locally grown potatoes are available from the Farmers Market.







on

LIVING ON THE LANDSCAPE

Over the centuries, the rolling and forested landscape of this area has been transformed by both humans and natural causes time and time again. What we see today is a diverse landscape where people have learned to feed themselves and make a living, as well as enjoy the landscape for all it has to offer.

This landscape scene is a wonderful example of the power of nature as a consequence of the seasons. Just weeks after a devastating forest fire in the heat of summer, this burnt meadow is lush with new growth. Fireweed, a brilliant purple plant, is first to grow after a forest fire. Just like the rest of BC, forest fires are a reality in the Nechako Valley. Traditionally, First Nations people would strategically set forest fires to maintain the forests.

PHOTO BY ROD NELSON.



“Rain can ruin the whole day.” A common sentiment felt by farmers during the harvest.

We are continually changing the landscape, adding things and taking things away, as part of the way we live. For centuries, Dakelh people lived very closely to the land, changing it very little—taking food from the river and forests, and building shelters using materials found locally. Residents in Vanderhoof today still utilize local food and materials—harvesting the trees for lumber, cultivating fields for grain and forage, and clearing land for new building developments—but our lifestyles today have a more visible impact on the landscape.

LEFT: Hay fields abound in Vanderhoof. Round bales, square bales, loafs, all can be seen, most often with Sinkut Mountain in the background to remind us of where we are. To get a good yield, farmers wish for rain in the spring, and a couple weeks of clear skies during the harvest at the end of summer. BELOW: Trees and shrubs are quick to 'green up' after winter, as the growing season in Vanderhoof is relatively short. The trees and shrubs that line the main streets of Vanderhoof offer shade for pedestrians.



Vanderhoof and Saik'uz are surrounded by thousands of hectares of rolling and productive agricultural lands. Farm lands are used for crops or as range land for cattle, bison, sheep, rabbit, chickens, turkeys and other livestock. Numerous ranches and farms dot the landscape.

The cleared lands we see today were cleared by pioneers developing their land, but also by hired women and men from Saik'uz. Land clearing was a main source of employment for Saik'uz in the early to mid part of the 1900s. It took about a week to clear an acre of land by hand, less time if there were small trees. To remove the stumps, men would drill a charge in the stump, light the charge, then 'get out of there,' recalls a Saik'uz Elder. The debris was cleared using horses and then burned.

TOP: A moose wanders through Stoney Creek which borders the Village of Saik'uz. Photo by Sarah John. BOTTOM: The bridge over the Nechako River in Vanderhoof. There have been three bridges at this location over the past 100 years. The bridge allowed for expansion to the north side of the river. NEXT PAGE: Here, a family sets out to feed their herd of cattle in the winter. In the ranching community, neighbouring families work together to bring in the herd every May to brand, vaccinate, castrate and tag the calves. Ranchers help each other on different weekends, as it takes a team of people to bring the entire herd in, which can number up to 400 animals. PHOTO BY DEBRA MONTGOMERY.





“We like the open landscape and wildlife here because we don’t have that where we are from.” New immigrant to Vanderhoof.



LEFT: Situated directly on the original Grand Trunk Pacific route, the CN railway tracks run through the centre of Vanderhoof. The familiar hooting of the train is heard nearly every hour of the day. An overpass was built over the tracks in the 1980s so that vehicles can get across town when the train is rolling through. BELOW: For a time the rail carried immigrants to Vanderhoof every day. Now the rail hauls freight cars bound for Prince Rupert, and one passenger train stops in Vanderhoof about three times a week. NEXT PAGE: Aerial view of Kenney Dam. Kenney Dam holds back water to create the Nechako Reservoir, also known as Knewstubb and Ootsa lakes. Each year a fishing derby is held in the reservoir and residents of the area compete for the largest rainbow trout. PHOTO COURTESY OF RIO TINTO ALCAN.



A huge influence to the area was the building of the railway line through Vanderhoof. The CN railway is used today primarily for trade and commerce, with freight trains travelling through Vanderhoof nearly each hour of the day. In the early 1900s the train was used primarily to bring immigrants to Vanderhoof. Today, only one passenger train comes through a few times a week carrying tourists, business people, and local residents.

The Dakelh people have always known about the possibility of flood waters, as they have been watching the ways of the river for centuries. When Herbert Vanderhoof arrived in the area and staked out the Village of Vanderhoof, he placed the core of the community on the south side of the railway tracks, within a naturally low area of the floodplain of the Nechako River. It was not long before local businesses pulled up stakes south of the tracks and moved to higher ground on the north side of the tracks. However, even there, the town would flood during years when the spring run off was high. It was not until the building of Kenney Dam on the upper Nechako River in the 1950s, which diverted much of the river water west to Kemano, that housing and business development expanded further into the floodplain. Kenney Dam, when it was built, was the largest earth-filled dam in the world and employed over 1,500 people during its construction, many of whom came from different parts of the country and the world. Many workers remained in Vanderhoof after the completion of the dam. The dam not only changed the physical landscape above its high wall, it also changed the 'Mighty Nechako,' as it was once called.





“Er is altijd een blauwe hemel om U te verwelkomen in Vanderhoof.” Dutch for “In Vanderhoof, the sky is always here to welcome you.”



Our landscape is not only for working on, it is for playing on as well. Getting out of doors for recreation in this area is a year around pursuit by residents. In winter, residents take full of advantage of cross-country and downhill skiing, snowmobiling, ice skating, hockey, curling, snowshoeing, winter camping, ice fishing and making angels in the snow.

In summer, residents take to the water: fishing, swimming, kayaking, floating down the river, and canoeing are just some of the water activities people enjoy here. On land, residents partake in horse riding, running, football, soccer, tennis... the list goes on.



PRECEDING PAGE: Friends enjoy a sunny cool day on Sinkut Lake playing hockey and skating. The frozen landscape of winter allows residents to extend their yards to include lake tops. PHOTO BY MICHELLE ROBERGE. TOP: Horses wait their turn to compete during the annual Fall Fair in Vanderhoof. The equestrian culture is alive and well in Vanderhoof. Horses are seen across the landscape and are used for recreation and also to work the land and herd livestock. BOTTOM: In the summer, residents can be seen on the water in kayaks, canoes, boats or on rubber tubes. PHOTO BY ANN MONTEDERAMOS.





through

A VIEW THROUGH THE SEASONS

Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter each bring their own beauty to the land, and also bring new conversations between neighbours and a distinct change in the way we approach our days.

View from the Nechako Campus of the College of New Caledonia over the Nechako River in early fall. The college occupies the original St. John Hospital building.



Spring is always welcomed at the end of a long winter. Birds return from their winter getaways in the south to spend the spring and summer months building their nests and hatching a brood or two before leaving again in the fall. Every shade of green is present in the spring, seen on new shoots, budding leaves, awakening lawns, and emerging plants. In spring the days grow longer and longer, adding to the excitement of the coming arrival of summer and with it activities such as berry picking and swimming.

Summer months intensify the lush growth initiated by spring. The summer solstice on June 21st is when the communities of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz can experience sunlight for over 18 hours. Vegetation of all kinds surges forth, as if in a race to make up for lost time during the winter months.

People too, take advantage of the added hours of sunlight. Gardens are planted, fields seeded, cattle put out to graze with newly born calves at their side. School children get to play all day. The tourist centre, museum, parks, lakeside resorts, and campgrounds fling wide their gates in grand celebration of the cycle of the seasons. Every hour of summer is welcome, because the summer solstice not only ushers in the northern summer, it also signals the beginning of shorter days to come. People rejoice in the summer but know that the time for harvest and preparation for the winter months is just around the corner.



PRECEDING PAGE: A true sign of spring, the arrival of tree swallows back to Vanderhoof is welcomed by everyone. Farmers, students and wilderness clubs in the area build and put up nest boxes for wild birds such as mountain bluebirds, ducks and owls. LEFT: Rose hips covered in a fresh snowfall in winter.

“J’étais venu pour six semaines seulement, mais je suis resté.” French for “I just came for six weeks and didn’t get around to leaving.”



Fall brings crisp mornings, the smell of wood fires in the air, and the bright contrast of trees as the deciduous tree leaves stand out against the steady green of conifers. Fall is a time of harvest and preparation for winter. Canning supplies line the aisles of the grocery and hardware stores. Pickles, beets, peas and beans fill mason jars in many homes. Freshly made jams and jellies from locally picked berries are a sweet reminder of the bounty of the Nechako Valley.

Winter, speaking truthfully, can be cold in Vanderhoof. The temperature can plummet to -40°C for days in a row. On these days, like on the average winter day, life goes on as usual. Children go to school, adults go to work, and the community is business as usual. The only difference on those terribly cold days is that everyone looks the same—hidden by parkas and snow pants, and big, warm boots.

Winter can also be very romantic. The sparkle of ice crystals hanging from window shutters in the morning sun can take your breath away. The hoar frost covering the trees that stand still in the tight grasp of winter makes it seem as though we are living in a fantasy world ruled by snow queens and fairies. The big dry snow flakes that gently fall to the ground turn our community into a living snow globe. It is hard to believe that a whole valley can be transformed from the bright colours of fall to a striking black and white landscape in a matter of weeks.



PRECEDING PAGE: Hairy woodpeckers are one of roughly three dozen bird species that are year round residents in the Nechako Valley. ABOVE: The sports fields and track are ready for use as the spring blossoms come out. BELOW LEFT: Snowmobiling isn't just for the young, but also for the young at heart. As a way to celebrate her 88th birthday, Mary Brandes poses for her family before zooming off across the ice. The multitude of frozen lakes and snowmobile paths in the area make it easy to get around in the winter. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARY BRANDES. BELOW RIGHT: Colin Barnard holds a young Nechako white sturgeon, an endangered species unique to the Nechako River. Research is done on this fish each year. PHOTO COURTESY OF COLIN BARNARD.



“Vanderhoof is a great place to grow young.”





Seasons dictate the activities of the people and it is certain that the changes between the summer and winter solstice have influenced the lives of the people of the Nechako River Valley. We learn to flow with the seasons, to be a part of the greater reality with Nature. And though in any season it is business as usual in the offices, schools and all things urban that come with modern conveniences that tend to insulate people from the seasons, there remains an excitement in all of us for the coming of the next season.

PRECEDING PAGE: A mule deer inspects the onlooker as it searches for food in winter. TOP: The observation tower at Riverside Park lends a great view of the Migratory Bird Sanctuary where migratory birds abound in the spring and fall. BOTTOM: Each summer, children and adults congregate most nights of the week at the baseball diamonds to enjoy a fun game of softball. PHOTO BY DEBRA MONTGOMERY.



*“Ons geniet die verskeidenheid wat Vanderhoof aanbiet vir die buitelewe.”
Afrikaans for “We enjoy the variety of outdoor activities that Vanderhoof has to offer.”*

GRAND REO
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ANGELINA JOLIE
7:30

SALT
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in

THE STRUCTURES WE WORK AND LIVE IN

Vanderhoof is known as 'The Town That Wouldn't Wait' because of the rapid speed the buildings were put up once immigration of non-First Nations people to the area started. Many of the original structures of the early 1900s still stand today and make up the core of the community.

The Grand Reo Theatre building has been around since the 1920s. It was originally the pool hall and parlour. A landmark at the main intersection of downtown at Burrard and Stewart streets, patrons now enjoy the big screen in a small town atmosphere. PHOTO BY MICHELLE ROBERGE.

Pleasantly rural and small-town, the urban qualities of Vanderhoof are diverse. With nature as a backdrop, Vanderhoof boasts modern medical facilities, government service buildings, restaurants, shopping, theatre and public art. These urban amenities do not overshadow the simplicity of the community. Additionally, Vanderhoof is home to a myriad of community groups that provide area residents with a diversity of opportunities, from viewing foreign films to sky-diving, that are often only expected in major centres.

Scattered around the downtown core, Vanderhoof has a number of welcoming neighbourhoods. Those who choose to live in town enjoy the luxury of having amenities from shopping to community trails, all within walking distance of their homes. Chicken coops, greenhouses, canoes and campers, hot tubs and horse arenas—all these can be found in the backyards of Vanderhoof.

BELOW: Sisters work together to herd their new flock of turkeys in their backyard coop. PHOTO BY MICHELLE ROBERGE. NEXT PAGE: Residents enjoy a morning coffee and sweet treat at the local bakery—warm from the cold winter day outside. PHOTO BY MICHELLE ROBERGE.



“We have rush minute in Vanderhoof.”





The Nechako Valley is home to twenty churches of different denominations. Mormon, Mennonite, Jehovah's Witness, Catholic, and Anglican are just a few of the faith communities here. Religious creed, or lack thereof as it may be, is respected, and members of all faith communities work and exist together.

Privately run denominational preschools and grade schools are scattered around Vanderhoof. Social clubs, Bible study, Sunday school and other activities attract residents of all denominations.

TOP: The colourful stained glass window of the Anglican Church as seen from inside. NEXT PAGE TOP: The Co-op mall is another landmark building in Vanderhoof. The only mall in town, it boasts nearly a dozen shops. Most Fridays and Saturdays locals set up tables in the mall and sell goods such as baking, knitted hats, raffle tickets and art. NEXT PAGE BOTTOM: The Post Office in Vanderhoof is where most people get their mail, but as importantly it is a gathering place for locals to catch up on the latest gossip and read public announcements.

"Ndoho ts'iyanne t'êke lhuhuidut'i 'in'êz wheoonankê." Dakelh for "Everyone is close-knit and it is quiet."







around

ART, CULTURE AND DIVERSITY ALL AROUND US

Vanderhoof and Saik'uz are filled with creative and skilled community minded people. Their influence on the look, sound and shape of the communities is seen everywhere.

A quiet moment during the annual Pumpkin Walk. After dark, thousands of trick-or-treaters walk the path through Riverside Park Campground marvelling at the hundreds of jack-o-lanterns carved by school children and adults during the days leading up to Halloween.



“Vanderhoof is ‘n goeie plek om kinders groot te maak.” Afrikaans for “Vanderhoof is a great place to raise a family.”



The sights and sounds around us give a good perspective of the general way of life here. On the weekend, Saturday is the day when everyone is out and about. There are people coming into town to stock up on supplies; watch their kids play in a sports event; or work a busy day selling goods. One is hard pressed to walk through town on a Saturday and not see a familiar face. A quick hello often turns into a good conversation over coffee.

Sundays are noticeably quiet compared to Saturdays. On Sunday, the town slows to a relative snail's pace, as only a few stores remain open. Mondays, many of the shops are closed to allow for an adjusted two-day weekend. The main traffic on a Sunday is from those bustling off to church.

Newcomers quickly succumb to the peaceful Sunday lifestyle of getting together with friends, taking a walk in the park, or going for the quintessential Sunday drive through the forests, over the hills, around the lakes, and into the sunset.



PRECEDING PAGE: A typical weekend get together of family and friends. PHOTO BY SARAH JOHN.
TOP: Jason and Melissa Edmunds and family walk through town on their way to do some shopping.
BOTTOM: Evening view across the Nechako River. PHOTO BY WAYNE SALEWSKI.

Trades, industry, big and small, and home-based businesses all supply Vanderhoof and Saik'uz with a healthy and relatively stable economy. Within five minutes of standing at the intersection of Burrard and Stewart streets in downtown Vanderhoof, the on-looker will see a number of business logos displayed on vehicle windows and doors; at least one loaded logging truck on its way to one of the several mills in the area; a farm vehicle headed from one field to another; family vehicles on their way to the grocery stores; and business people walking from work to lunch or on their own errands around town.

ABOVE: The busiest part of a typical Saturday in Vanderhoof involves going to garage sales. A popular way to recycle basement clutter, garage sale signs scatter the urban landscape, and residents rush from sale to sale to find the best deal. Almost a religion of its own, garage sales are a big part of Vanderhoof's culture as seen by the hundreds of staples that adorn power poles around the community. BOTTOM: Yarn bombing, a pastime of displaying knitting projects around the community, is sometimes seen in Vanderhoof. Arts and crafts, such as knitting, quilting, jewelry making and scrapbooking are popular in the area, and tables teem with local wares at craft fairs held throughout the year. NEXT PAGE: Nearly every weekend there is a sports tournament in Vanderhoof. Students and adults alike partake in the full range of team sports. Only school teams have the luxury of cheerleaders.





*“Vanderhoof es un lugar muy especial que te hace sentir realmente bienvenido.”
Spanish for “Vanderhoof is a special place, it makes you feel welcome.”*





Communities seek ways to experience fun together, to laugh and play together, and to find mutual activities that blend the diverse cultures and beliefs. New immigrants are welcome and invited to share their customs and traditions at many of the community events held each year, such as the Canada Day celebrations. Other events celebrated in the communities include the Wild Goose Chase, the Stoney Creek Elders Fishing Derby, the Mary John Walk, and the Great Pumpkin Walk, to name just a few. At the annual Parade of Lights in December thousands of bright and colourful Christmas lights are displayed on anything that residents can drive, ride or pull through the streets of Vanderhoof. One of the largest parades of its kind in BC, the Parade of Lights heralds in the Christmas spirit with its music, lights and smiling faces.



PRECEDING PAGE: Residents discuss the topic of the day while resting next to a piece of antique farm equipment on display during the annual Nechako Valley Exhibition. Roughly 5,000 people attend the annual fair that is held in August. TOP: One of the hundreds of classic cars on display during the annual Hooterville Hoot. PHOTO BY MICHELLE ROBERGE. BOTTOM: The annual Parade of Lights is attended by hundreds of people standing along the snowy streets of Vanderhoof. Even when the temperature drops well below zero, children and adults wait patiently to see the passing floats. Those on floats huddle together and hug hot chocolate mugs to keep warm.

“Ich mag die Groesse der Stadt. Man kennt immer eine Person, aber nicht alle Leute.”
 German for “I like the size of the town. You’re bound to know someone, but not everyone.”

Vanderhoof was originally intended to be an artists' community. Although that plan failed in the early part of the 1900s, Vanderhoof today boasts a diverse arts community of musicians, artists, photographers, writers, dancers, poets, performers, and actors.

Country, folk, drumming, bluegrass, rock and gospel music are just some of the genres of music that can be heard performed live in Vanderhoof by local musicians. Many of the classical musicians of the Northern Orchestra are residents of Vanderhoof, and their performances in the community delight all who attend.

Vanderhoof is home to community theatre groups for both adults and children. Along with many of the schools, a diversity of plays are performed throughout the year.

Saik'uz Elders playfully recall a time when they held regular dances that the entire community would attend. Some dances would go on for days, where men and women would dance 'Strip the Willow' into the late hours.



TOP: Wyatt and Payton Mueller make notes as they read their parts for the *Saik'uz and Settlers* play (part of the Spirit of Vanderhoof Diversity Project). Both new to acting, their enthusiasm for participating in the play resonates with the rest of the cast of new and long-time residents of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz that includes people with a range of skills, abilities and ages. BOTTOM: Women from a diversity of cultures gather together to prepare a 'Taste of Culture' feast that was shared with the community at the *Saik'uz and Settlers* play. Sticky rice, bannock, fried plantain, empanadas and springrolls were just some of the foods prepared for the event. NEXT PAGE: Oscar Walstrom and son Tim Walstrom play a two-man show once a week at Riverside Place, a seniors' residence. They have been playing there, 10 months out of the year, for two decades. Oscar often plays his keyboard using his clean socked feet, while strumming on his guitar. PHOTO COURTESY OF OSCAR WALSTROM.



"We respect and celebrate our differences."







forward

INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING

Looking forward, Vanderhoof has embarked on a path toward being a welcoming and inclusive community, where everyone is able to live, work and practice their traditions without discrimination. It is this mosaic of people who make up our community that shape our present, and will direct our future.

Here a youth from Saik'uz adds to the mural on the side of the Neighbourhood Space building. A project of the Good Neighbours Committee, youth from Vanderhoof and Saik'uz were asked to design a mural based on their idea of diversity in the communities.



The communities of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz have come a long way from the early days of the 1900's. While old wounds are still being mended, new growth in communication and partnership is present between the communities. Residents of both communities live and work together and are building new relationships to create a common future of trust and cooperation.

Today, a greater diversity of people live and work in Vanderhoof compared to the days of the early pioneers. Walking down the streets of Vanderhoof, the faces of our newest immigrants are bright and hopeful. Alongside the long-time residents of the community, new immigrants to Vanderhoof are making their living, while still maintaining their own cultures and traditions. People from the Philippines, China, Mexico, Bulgaria, Germany, Holland, England, Africa, the United States and other countries are each bringing their culture and skills to this area.

LEFT: Elana Thomas and Sarah John, both residents of Saik'uz, pose for a picture on the main road through the community. RIGHT: New immigrants from the Philippines gather each year at Riverside Park to celebrate their culture. PHOTO BY ANN MONTEDERAMOS.



*“Ang pamaraan ng Pamumuhay dito ay masagana at simply lamang.”
Filipino for “The way of living here, you can feel comfortable. It is just simple.”*

One of the ways we move forward in society is to learn from our elders. Art, culture, trades, crafts and history are all components of community that traditionally were passed down through the generations by hands-on education and written and oral stories. The stories of Dakelh Elders go back centuries, and often provide a perspective of what life was like well before non-First Nations people came to the area.

As a community, we are sharing the stories of the Elders, of the pioneers, and of the newest residents. This education is leading toward a truly rich and inclusive future for our community.



LEFT: Saik'uz Elders share their stories with the Good Neighbours Committee during the creation of this book and DVD. RIGHT: Students take part in the Spirit of Vanderhoof—Diversity Project Cultural Stories for Children. Several adults read stories for the students, but first they shared their life experiences from their culture. Readers were all residents from Vanderhoof who were originally from Vietnam, Africa, Saik'uz, and Vanderhoof.





Technology seems the way of the future for our youngest generation, yet hands-on skills are important and practised by many members of the community. Quilting, scrapbooking, hooking, painting, beading and weaving are just some of the skills that are shared and taught in the community.

Children in our schools are being taught multiple languages, are learning to cooperate with each other through adversity and disabilities, and are encouraged to celebrate and respect personal heritage. This forward thinking in our schools is leading the way to a more welcoming and inclusive future.

LEFT: Rug hooking, like other handicrafts, is a craft that has been enjoyed for centuries and requires patience and dedication. The scene on this new project of Hilda's is of a long-time resident, John Campbell, using his draft horses to plow the fields, a farming technique that is seldom used today. NEXT PAGE: TOP LEFT: Kerry Raphael sketches the scene from the hill below the College of New Caledonia overlooking the Nechako River. TOP RIGHT: Ezekiel Bylsma has fun painting a life sized sturgeon during Rivers Day. BOTTOM LEFT: Youth use the computers at the Neighbourhood Space after school to surf the web. BOTTOM MIDDLE: Vanderhoof is home to a great number of artisans. BOTTOM RIGHT: Detail of a birch bark basket. Basket making is an important tradition of Saik'uz First Nation people. The skill continues to be passed down through the generations.





ABOVE: A part of our natural landscape, black bears are commonly seen along the gravel back roads that surround Vanderhoof. Black bears also can be seen in town along the Nechako River during the salmon run and berry season. NEXT PAGE: The Farmers Market takes over the park once a week during the summer. A great place to meet friends for lunch, and grab some fresh baking, vegetables and meat.

Vanderhoof's future is also looking greener. Recycling and healthy living initiatives are becoming the norm in Vanderhoof. Reusable grocery bags, idle-free zones, recycling facilities, locally produced foods, fitness centres, and a pedestrian friendly downtown are all clear signs of a healthy and green future.

"Creatures great and small also choose Vanderhoof as their home."





The path ahead promises to be smoother as we move forward as a community committed to being welcoming and inclusive.

We use the stories from the past, told to us by the Elders and pioneers of the area, to prepare our future. Acknowledging past events can lead to open dialogue among groups and cultures of people. The Good Neighbours Committee has been working over the past decade to facilitate this process to create a better future for our communities.

The process leading to change is as important as the change itself. To the future leaders of our community, be it our children or new immigrants yet to arrive, we present this vision of our communities as a snapshot within the process of change.

LEFT: Part of the Vanderhoof Community Trail network, this path leads around the Vanderhoof Community Museum and is only one of many trails in and around the community. RIGHT: The future champions of Vanderhoof. PHOTO BY KEVIN WALLACE—WALLACE STUDIOS.







thanks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No project can be completed as successfully as this one without an amazing team of creative and technical people, and the support of the community behind them.

Another symbol that you are in Vanderhoof,, Canada Geese and Tundra and Trumpeter swans (seen here) migrate through the Nechako Valley each spring and fall. These beautiful birds fill the skies in their V-shape formations, and fill the air with their distinctive honking call. They stop on the Nechako River, Stoney Creek, and in the farmers' fields around the community to rest and eat for the next long leg of their journey.

This project—a book and DVD that summarizes the essence of our community—was inspired by the diversity of people who live and work here. This project was conceived, created and completed by people from here, both new and long-time residents, each bringing to this project their own perspective and experiences. This diversity in method and experience has resulted in a product that we believe represents the diversity and inclusiveness of Vanderhoof.

Great change sometimes comes from great adversity. So was the case for the formation of the Good Neighbours Committee. The Good Neighbours Committee is first to thank those involved at the beginning of the process in 1998 who worked through the difficult issues faced in our communities, especially Elder Mary John Sr. (1913 – 2004), and all those who proudly wear their humanity in the face of great opposition.

The Good Neighbours Committee, formed in 1999 is represented by the District of Vanderhoof, Saik'uz First Nation, the College of New Caledonia Nechako Campus, School District No. 91, Regional District Bulkley Nechako Area F, the Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club of Vanderhoof. The mission statement of the Good Neighbours Committee is... "to promote a community where racist behaviour is unacceptable and mutual respect between individuals is honoured." We are not there yet but we are thankful for the many citizens of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz who have signed the Community Accord (see page 9) or have supported the efforts of this committee.

We acknowledge the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia, through the WelcomeBC Welcoming and Inclusive Communities and Workplaces Program (WICWP), for the funds to complete this project as well as the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development Program Manager, Tracy Wideman for her understanding of community, her insight and her support throughout our journey. Our goal with this project was to show a geographical, historical and current representation of community—community that reflects "Welcoming and Inclusive" as defined by WelcomeBC.

We thank members of the College of New Caledonia: Maureen Mallais, Regional Director, Nechako Region for her support; Sarah John, Aboriginal Liaison for her insight and knowledge; Reg Mueller, Diversity Coordinator for his support; Charlyne Smilinski, Project Coordinator for her leadership in this project; Marlene Erickson, Manager of the Aboriginal Resource Centre and Senior Policy Advisor for providing valuable insight into the book; and Kathy Plett, Library Director, for editing and indexing the book.

Throughout this project we called upon groups within the community for their insight, stories and ideas for this book and DVD. We had great support from the Saik'uz First Nation and the stories and experiences shared by the Saik'uz Elders. Helen Frederick, Manager, Riverside Place and the resident seniors who shared their stories have been valued contributors to this project. The youth who frequent the Neighbourhood Space helped direct the vision of the book through their comments and creativity. We were able to gain great insight into our community and this project through the eyes of a number of immigrants who made Vanderhoof their first home in Canada and were open to sharing their thoughts and experiences.

We thank the creative team of individuals who put this book and DVD together and have made it a truly valuable resource for the community and for individuals coming to this area. Writer and graphic designer Michelle Roberge of M. R. Concepts has taken individual stories and visions from around our area and has woven them into a common story that everyone in the community can identify with. Lead photographer for the book Annerose Georgeson, Artist in Residence, College of New Caledonia, has been an invaluable asset to the team with her creative vision through the camera lens and her dedication to the entire Diversity Project from the onset. Videographer Anna Pye, School District No. 91, has taken the vision of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz one step further and put together a video that truly epitomizes our area and the beauty and diversity within it. Cora McIntosh, Councillor, Saik'uz First Nation, has been an integral part of this project, helping bring the stories of the Saik'uz Elders to the pages of this book.

Our goal was to capture the spirit of our community through images, text, and captions, and we thank the many people who reviewed the text, translated quotes, and provided comments to help us achieve our goal. In particular, we thank Gary Blattner for starting the process and setting the creative vision, as well as Bill Poser and Shana Labatch for their expert knowledge of the Dakelh people and language.

And lastly, we sincerely thank the children and youth who have been so open to learning the value of diversity, inclusion and welcoming in a community. They will be part of a new generation that will work to eradicate racism and discrimination in our society. This project is just the start of a process that we hope will continue well into the future, and that will lead to a community where citizens embrace and learn from all cultures whose diversity and knowledge contribute so greatly to the richness of our community.

resources

new immigrant resources

in print

Newcomers Guide of Vanderhoof — Vanderhoof specific resource guide for new immigrants to the area. Available at the Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce and the Neighbourhood Space.

Community Resource Guide — List and contact information of current businesses, clubs, services, and other resources in Vanderhoof. Available in print or online from the Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce.

Community Accord — Accord pledging to respect diversity. Available at the District of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz Band Office.

Asset Mapping Project — Resources of the assets to the community. For more information contact the College of New Caledonia.

Plants and Medicines of Sophie Thomas — Provides a botanical guide to the forests surrounding Vanderhoof.

multi-media

Children's Cultural Stories — A collection of storytellers from Vanderhoof recite children's stories at the Vanderhoof Public Library to a group of children. The storytellers share their personal stories of coming to Vanderhoof. Available from the Vanderhoof Public Library.

Saik'uz and Settlers ~ A weave of local history — DVD of the historical play of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz. Available at College of New Caledonia, Nechako Campus, and the Vanderhoof Community Museum.

on the web

Diversity Blog — Highlights diversity, inclusiveness and welcoming in the community. www.goodneighbours.wordpress.com

Volunteer Vanderhoof — Quarterly newsletter and ambassador program to assist new immigrants and visitors to the area. www.vltrvanderhoof.wordpress.com

WelcomeBC — www.welcomebc.ca

District of Vanderhoof — www.vanderhoof.ca

Vanderhoof Chamber of Commerce — www.vanderhoofchamber.com

Carrier Sekani Tribal Council — Information on all First Nation communities in area. www.cstc.bc.ca/cstc

Yinka Dene Language Institute — Information about Dakh language and resources. www.ydli.org

First Voices — Website dedicated to teaching First Nation languages. www.firstvoices.com

Bill Silver Newspaper Archive — Archives of the Omineca Express newspaper. http://207.6.12.94/NCSearch_form.html

“Where we belong” DVD content

The enclosed DVD gives interviews by three recent immigrants to Vanderhoof: Eni Aigbomian, immigrant from Nigeria; Visal Ebbott, immigrant from Cambodia; and Mia Moutray, immigrant from Sweden. They talk about their experiences coming to Vanderhoof, how they were met by the community, and what the community means to them now.

Following the interviews, the video moves into a montage of video and still images from Vanderhoof and Saik’uz today. It shows people, animals and landscapes throughout the seasons. The video is set to music by Mark Pye—Conquest Design.

The title “Where we belong” is taken from a quote from Jean Vanier from the award winning film *Belonging, The Search for Acceptance*, L’Arche Canada: “When we make others know that they belong, then we all know we belong.”

The DVD runs a total of 25 minutes.

glossary of Dakelh words

Dakelh — Carrier people
Duneza’ — male traditional leader
Kelcuchek — river mouth
Khelhkoh — pack creek (Stoney Creek)
Nichakoh — big river (Nechako)
Noolhk’ai — island skewer (Nulki)
Saik’uz — sandy bank
Ts’ekeza’ — female traditional leader
Ts’ilquotin — Chilcotin
Tsink’ut — ochre peak (Sinkut)
Yinka Dene — people of the earth

references and further reading

BOOKS: **Visit the Vanderhoof Public Library for a complete list of works by local authors and poets.**

Apologetic, by Carla Funk. Turnstone Press, 2010.

Bannock and Beans: a cowboy's account of the Bedaux Expedition, by Bob White; edited, with foreword and afterword by Jay Sherwood. Victoria, BC: Royal BC Museum, 2009.

Beyond the Chilcotin: on the home ranch with Pan Phillips, by Diana Phillips. Harbour Publishing, 2008.

Nothing too Good for a Cowboy, by Richmond P. Hobson. McClelland & Stewart, 1979.

Plants and Medicines of Sophie Thomas: based on the traditional knowledge of Sophie Thomas, Sai' Kuz Elder and healer, prepared by Jane Young and Alex Hawley. [Prince George, BC: University of Northern British Columbia], 2002.

Return to Northern British Columbia: a photojournal of Frank Swannell, 1929-1939, by Jay Sherwood. Victoria, BC: Royal BC Museum, 2010.

Soft Geography, by Gillian Wigmore. Harbour Publishing, 2007.

Stoney Creek Woman: the story of Mary John, by Bridget Moran. Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2001, 1997.

Surveying Northern British Columbia: a photojournal of Frank Swannell, by Jay Sherwood. Prince George, BC: Caitlin Press, 2004.

Vanderhoof, the Town that Wouldn't Wait, by Nechako Valley Historical Society, 1979.

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Tragic Chinlac still shunned, by Nic Hume, *Vancouver Sun*, Nov. 20, 2006, pp. B2.

First Nation Timeline. Available from Marlene Erickson, College of New Caledonia, Prince George.

Carrier Sekani Tribal Council website: *First Nations Historical Timeline*. www.cstc.bc.ca/cstc

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The Process

The making of this book was a creative journey that lead the community through a process of growth and understanding of place, people and nature that make up the communities of Vanderhoof and Saik'uz in the Nechako Valley of British Columbia. Through this project, community collaboration, capacity and networking have been built around issues of immigration, settlement, multiculturalism, racism, workplace diversity, and building and sustaining welcoming and inclusive communities. Through community participation, individuals shared stories and images of the area and the way of life here, while at the same time providing the residents an opportunity to learn more about the place they live and the diversity of people that exist here.

The primary objective of this project was to involve community in the process. From the first version of the book to its last revision, the insight from the community was used to guide the project. Over the course of one year, the book was presented to the community through focus group forums and group presentations. These presentations invited youth, First Nations, new immigrants from outside of Canada, and local long-time residents of Vanderhoof to be a part of the process. They shared their stories, images and interpretation of diversity and what a welcoming and inclusive community means to them. Additionally, the many reviewers of the book added another level of involvement in the process. Each reviewer, having a different background and knowledge base, fine-tuned the book to this, its final version.

Although the book is printed and the DVD burned, the process is not over. The content and images in this book and DVD are a snap shot of our community and the resources that are currently available for those just coming here. The making of this book was just one part of the overall process of individual and community involvement in being a welcoming and inclusive community.



College of New Caledonia Press

Front and back cover photographs by Annerose Georgeson
Dust Jacket design by M. R. Concepts

ISBN 978-0-921087-52-6



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