

. . . It bears practically the burden of their support. Its delicious steaks are their staple food. Its hide furnishes the best clothing and moccasin leather, or provides snowshoes that enable the hunter to kill more moose. Its back sinew is the sewing thread of the country, its horns and bones make tools, its hoofs can be converted into rattles, and its coarse bristly mane . . . furnishes raw material for embroidery . . .".

The pattern of life among the Indians of the Yukon is changing rapidly, although there are still some families who live entirely off the land. There is still a large seasonal movement as the men in larger communities go to fishing camps and organized hunting parties seek fresh meat in the summer.

The Loucheux Indians of Old Crow, Yukon's more northerly community, still practise many of the traditions of their forefathers. However, the introduction of modern technology with such innovations as the snowmobile and rifle have radically and permanently altered the Indian way of life.

The Yukon's population is spread thinly over a dozen communities. The largest city is its capital, Whitehorse, which contains well over half the population of the whole territory. Whitehorse, also Canada's largest city north of the 60th parallel, has approximately 13,300 inhabitants out of the Yukon's total of 22,200, and is its economic centre.

The next largest city is the lead-zinc mining town of Faro, with a population of 1,550. It is followed in size by Watson Lake, a vital transportation centre, and Dawson City, both with a population of about 850.

Dawson, once the raucous centre of the gold rush, is now a mere ghost of its former self. At the height of the 1898 gold fever it had a population of more than 40,000. It remains one of the Yukon's most important centres and tourist attractions, still retaining its Klondike charm.

History

The first white visitor ever to set foot in the Yukon was British explorer Sir John Franklin, who was sent overland by the British government to seek a sea passage to the Pacific.

After travelling through New York, the Great Lakes and the Mackenzie River, Franklin and his party arrived at Herschel Island, now part of the Yukon, in 1825. He discovered that the island was inhabited by about 50 Inuit who possessed metal arrows purchased from the Russians trading in Alaska.

On his return south, Franklin passed large herds of caribou and other fur-bearing animals and his reports spurred the Hudson's Bay Company to send an expedition to evaluate the potential of the area for trade.

The first expedition was launched under the command of John Bell, who founded Fort McPherson on the Mac-