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INDIAN AND NON-NATIVE USE OF THE BULKLEY RIVER

AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Brendan O'Donnell

Native Affairs Division Issue 1
Policy and Program Planning

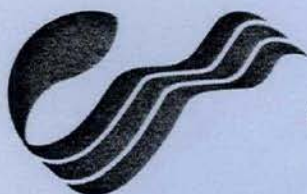
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INTRODUCTION

The following is one of a series of reports on the historical uses of waterways in New Brunswick and British Columbia. These reports are narrative outlines of how Indian and non-native populations have used these rivers, with emphasis on navigability, tidal influence, riparian interests, settlement patterns, commercial use and fishing rights.

These historical reports were requested by the Interdepartmental Reserve Boundary Review Committee, a body comprising representatives from Indian Affairs and Northern Development [DIAND], Justice, Energy, Mines and Resources [EMR], and chaired by Fisheries and Oceans. The committee is tasked with establishing a government position on reserve boundaries that can assist in determining the area of application of Indian Band fishing by-laws.

Although each report in this series is as different as the waterway it describes, there is a common structural approach to each paper. Each report describes the establishment of Indian reserves along the river; what Licences of Occupation were issued; what instructions were given to surveyors laying out these reserves; how each surveyor laid out each reserve based on his field notes and survey plan; what, if any, fishing rights were considered for the Indian Bands; and how the Indian and non-native populations have used the waterway over the past centuries for both commercial and recreational use.

Primary sources for this information are found in the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, the Harriet Irving Library of the University of New Brunswick, the British Columbia Provincial Archives, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the Indian Land Registry at DIAND, and in the Legal Surveys Division of EMR. Secondary sources are found in the National Library of Canada, DFO's departmental library, DIAND's departmental library, or are brought in from other libraries throughout Canada on inter-library loan.

Each report in the series is being distributed to the Reserve Boundary Review Committee members. It is hoped each will make this research available to other members of their department by depositing the reports in their departmental library.

BULKLEY RIVER: REPORT ON ITS HISTORICAL USE

BY BRENDAN O'DONNELL

The Bulkley River, from its mouth at Hazelton to its head at Rose Lake, runs a distance of 123 miles. Over the centuries, the river has been called several names. The Carrier Indians referred to the river as "Wet'sinkwha". Hudson's Bay Company employees referred to the Bulkley and the Skeena Rivers combined as "Simpson's River". Historical documents sometimes refer to the river as the "Hagwiget" or "Agwilget". It was finally named the "Bulkley" River after Colonel Charles S. Bulkley, the engineer in charge of the Collins Overland Telegraph which passed through the Bulkley Valley in the mid-1860's.

The Bulkley River runs the gamut of description. Depending on location and time of year, the river can be a slow, meandering stream or a turbulent, white-water torrent. The period May-June is the high-water period on the river, while July-October is reported to be the low-water period. The river ices over in the winter.

Based on historical documentation and published secondary sources, it would appear that the Bulkley River, at least between the Moricetown Canyon Falls and the confluence with the Skeena River, was not used as a mode of transportation by either pre-white contact Indians or early white traders and settlers. The Moricetown Falls, where the river narrows from several hundred feet in width to approximately eighty feet in width and then tumbles over a fifteen-foot drop, was the major natural navigability hindrance. Likewise, there are numerous rapids from the canyon to the Skeena River. As well, there were Indian barricades used for trapping salmon which probably hindered transportation on the river. Then, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a rock slide above Hagwiget Canyon blocked the river.

Knowledge of one pre-white contact barricade on the river is based on a Moricetown Indian legend. Reported by both Diamond Jenness (1943)¹ and Maureen and Frank Cassidy (1980)², the legend states that the Moricetown Band once lived at a village called Dizkle or Diztlegh. This place on the Bulkley River is believed to be the present site of Mosquito Flats, approximately twelve miles east of Hazelton. According to the legend, the Indians built a giant weir across the river at Diztlegh to catch salmon going up to spawn. Timber was cut on the hillside with stone axes and dragged to the water's edge. Strong men drove piles into the river bed with large stones. The logs were then laid in place, forming a barricade across the river with gaps in which to set fish traps.

Although one of their villages was supposedly at Diztlegh [Jenness' claimed he could find no evidence of such a place a Mosquito Flats in the 1920's], the Indians also had a summer village at Kyah Wiget, the present site of Moricetown. Again, a weir was built across the river to trap salmon. However, in the 1820s, the Indians were forced to abandon this traditional summer fishing site at Kyah Wiget, and their village at Diztlegh, because a rock slide above Hagwiget Canyon blocked the salmon from entering the Bulkley River. The Indians moved to the present site of Hagwiget and set up the village of Ise-kya or "Rock Foot."

¹ JENNESS, Diamond. "The Carrier Indians of the Bulkley River: Their Social and Religious Life," Smithsonian Institution. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 133. Anthropological Papers, No. 25 (1943) : 469-586.

² CASSIDY, Maureen and CASSIDY, Frank. Proud Past. A History of the Wet'Suwet'En of Moricetown, B.C. Moricetown : Moricetown Band, 1980

One contemporary account of the rock slide is in the April 1826 "Report of the Babine Country and Countries to the Westward" by Hudson's Bay Company Officer William Brown³. In his report, Brown wrote:

... Two years ago a large mass of rocks fell into the river about a days journey below the village, since that time they have wrought the salmon at that place, where I understand they killed last Fall about sufficient to serve them for the Winter.

The area around the rock slide referred to as Rochers Déboulés or Fallen Rocks, so named by the French-Canadian employees of the Hudson's Bay Company.

A second group of whites to explore the Bulkley River Valley was the 1833 expedition of Hudson's Bay Company employees under the command of Chief Trader Simon McGillivray Jr. In his report, titled "Voyage to Simpson's River [Bulkley River] by Land, Summer 1833"⁴, McGillivray described how he and his men walked overland by an Indian trail from Babine River for the first time on 19 June 1833. He wrote in his journal that day:

The river is bounded on each side by perpendicular precipices - which form frequent strong rapids, and in some parts impossible for a canoe to jump it, or even to let it down with a line. There is plenty of water. About 5 pm we reached a wooden bridge, which crossed the river. It [the river] is not wider than 60 yards.

³ BROWN, William. "Report of the Babine Country and Countries to the Westward, April 1826." Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. B.11/E/3.

⁴ MCGILLIVRAY Jr., Simon. "Voyage to Simpson's River By Land, Summer 1833." Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. B. 188/A/18.1833.

McGillivray and his men left the Bulkley River Valley to return to Babine Lake on 23 June 1833. At the point where the Indian trail met the Bulkley River, McGillivray wrote:

I have to remark from this place to the fallen rocks in Simpson's River, there is plenty of pasturage for horses; and although the road is in many parts hilly, still they could be avoided by making a road above the hills. The country appears to be level...

The conclusion one can draw from this last remark is that McGillivray intended a road and not the river to be the main means of transportation to the confluence of the Skeena River.

Finally, on 15 July 1833, McGillivray concluded his report with the following post-script:

The Rochérs Déboulés or Fallen Rocks in Simpson's River, is a remarkable place. Two immense large rocks have fallen from a precipice on the south side of the river, which have almost blocked up the passage, leaving a small channel open. When the water is low the salmon cannot go beyond this spot which accounts for the number of houses and inhabitants resorting here in summer and winter. It was in 1824 these rocks fell into the river. When the late Mr. Brown went on dervines [a term used by H.B.C. Officers to denote a trip or voyage] to visit the Babine Indians of Simpson's River, he found them about 20 miles above this spot. These rocks had not then fallen. From what I saw of Simpson's River above the fallen Rocks, I should pronounce it rather hazardous to navigate with boats and canoes owing to strong rapids jeddies.

Fifty-six years later, in September 1859, an English prospector, William Downie, ventured into the Skeena Valley with two other whitemen and two Indians, supposedly on a commission by Governor Douglas to search for a suitable valley for a proposed transcontinental railroad. Their trip up the Skeena was made

without serious incident, and the party arrived at the confluence of the Skeena and Bulkley Rivers in a little over two weeks. In his autobiography, published thirty-four years later⁵, Downie wrote:

Arrived at the forks of the Skeena (called by the Indians Kittabaks, afterwards changed to Hazelton) we left the river and, walking overland, made for the Indian village of Agullgateh [Hagwiget]. The country we traveled through was particularly pleasing, being especially well adapted for agricultural purposes. We dined at the village, having secured some fish from the natives in trade for tobacco and then crossed the [Bulkley] river on an Indian suspension bridge, continuing our journey along a well-beaten trail. The timber consisted principally of small hard-wood and some soft-wood trees, far easier to clear than the tall pines... In this locality, finding the surroundings advantageous I put up the following:

"Notice- September 22, 1859. - I have this day located and claimed this pass, as the route of the Great Canadian and Pacific Railroad. William Downie."

The fact that there existed "a well beaten trail" along the Bulkley River prior to white settlement indicates that this path, and not the River, was used by the Indians to ascend the valley, at least as far as Moricetown.

In May and June of 1866, two members of the Collins Overland Telegraph, the ill-fated attempt to bridge the distance which separates Europe, Asia, and North America by building an inter-continental telegraph line, scouted the Bulkley Valley.

⁵ DOWNIE, William. Hunting For Gold ... San Francisco : The California Publishing Co., 1893.

This route was adopted and the telegraph line was laid that summer. However, in 1867 a competing telegraph project, connecting North America with Europe by means of a cable across the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, was established and the over-land project was abandoned⁶. Most of the telegraph wire left in the Bulkley Valley by the Collins' project was used by the Indians to reinforce their suspension bridges at Moricetown and Hagwaget.

Eleven years later, in 1877, H.J. Cambie, a surveyor for the Canadian Pacific Railroad, entered the valley. Like William Downie, he too saw the advantage of running a railroad line up the edge of the Bulkley. However, he recognized there would be difficulties laying the line between the confluence of the Skeena River and Moricetown⁷.

The River Watsonquah [Bulkley], from its mouth at the forks [Hazelton] to the Indian Village of Kyaghwilgate, a distance of 27 miles, is rapid, and runs most of the way through a deep ravine, which at some place assumes the character of a canon [canyon]. The works would be generally heavy, but some exceedingly so with stiff gradients and sharp curves would be required occasionally.

From Kyaghwilgate upwards the valley is favourable for railway construction...

⁶ MACKAY, Corday. "The Collins Overland Telegraph," British Columbia Historical Quarterly Vol. X, No. 3 (July 1946): 187-215.

⁷ CAMBIE, H.J. "Exploration From Port Simpson via the River Skeena to Fort George, by H.J. Cambie, in the year 1877," in Reports and Documents in Reference to the Location of the Line and a Western Terminal harbour 1878. (Compiled by Sanford Fleming). Ottawa: MacLean, Roger and Co., 1878. pp. 38-40.

Two years later, in 1879, George M. Dawson of the Geological Survey of Canada travelled from Port Essington to Hazelton along the Skeena River, and then up the Bulkley Valley a short distance to the Suskwa River. He left Hazelton, which he called "The Forks", on 23 June 1879. He too refers to the Bulkley River by its Carrier Indian name, which he spells "Watsonkwa"⁸.

At about four miles from the Forks [Hazelton] the trail comes out on the sloping hillside on the right bank of the Watsonkwa [Bulkley], which it continues to follow for nearly seven miles, till the Sus-Kwa just above its junction with the Watsonkwa, is reached. In following the hillside the valleys of several small streams flowing in courses of greater or less depth are crossed. The valley of the Watsonkwa, between the bases of the mountains at its sides, is wide, but the immediate valley of the river is a steep-sided trough several hundred feet in depth, and the river itself flows onward between rocky bands with the speed and impetuosity of a torrent. The Indians in this part of the country construct bridges across streams too rapid to be crossed in canoes with safety, when not too wide for the means at disposal. These have been called suspension bridges, and are ingenious in plan. The Watsonkwa is spanned by one of these about five miles above the Forks. The river is here about fifty feet wide, rushing between rocky cliffs of about fifty feet in height.

In the 1880s, Oblate Missionary Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice persuaded some of the Indians living at Hagwiget Canyon to move back to Kyak Wiget, now re-named Moricetown. Salmon were now getting past the blockage at Hagwiget. By the 1890's the rock fall at Hagwiget Canyon had reportedly worn down sufficiently to allow salmon once again to come up the Bulkley River in great numbers.

⁸ DAWSON, George. "Report of an Exploration From Port Simpson on the Pacific Coast, To Edmonton on the Saskatchewan, Embracing a Portion of the Northern Part of British Columbia and the Peace River Country, 1879." Geological Survey of Canada, Report of Progress for 1879-1880. pp. 1B-177B.

In the 1890s the British Columbia Government decided to promote the colonization of the Skeena-Bulkley Valleys by sub-dividing the land into townships. Two surveyors, N.B. Gauvreau and A.L. Poudrier, were assigned this task. Gauvreau described the upper Bulkley River as follows⁹:

The river running in this valley has several local names amongst the Indians and the miners; the name of Bulkley, through, seems to be the most acknowledged. It is a river of some importance; it takes its source not far from the headwaters of the Endako, and runs into the Skeena River at Hazelton. After passing the height of land, the trail crosses a stream coming from a small lake called Izia-Kuz; it is the source of the Bulkley. The trail traverses a plateau six miles in width, but the river goes south-westerly for a distance of three miles, where it expands into a small lake, and then turns north-westerly and crosses the trail on the edge of the plateau, where it is locally known as Nil-tsin-a-kwa. From the little lake to the crossing the valley is fine and open. The soil here is rich and of good bottom land, and luxuriant grass of an infinite variety grows. After that, on the 13th mile from the height of land on the trail, a large swamp begins, timbered with spruce, on the north side of the trail. It has a width of eight miles. On the south, there are several small lakes, with patches of good land, partly open. At twenty-four miles, the telegraph trail, which follows the valley right along, passes over a high hill, at the foot of which the Bulkley runs at a speed of two and three-quarter miles an hour. The valley at this point is much wider-about eight miles. The trail takes to the heights, and leaves the valley on the left at about the 29-mile station. All the way to the 36-mile station, the valley is wide, with alternate patches of rich prairie and timber, where

⁹ GAUVREAU, N.B. "Report of N.B. Gauvreau. Exploration Survey of New Caledonia. Part II," British Columbia. Crown Lands Surveys for the Year Ending 31st December 1891. Victoria : Richard Wolfenden, 1892.

cottonwood and spruce predominate. At this point there is a low, basin-like valley to the S.W., in which the Bulkley passes. The snow-capped summits of the Cascades can be seen to the west. At thirty-nine miles a large stream, coming from a direction N. 36° W., falls into the Bulkley.

As he approached the Moricetown Indian Village, he wrote in his report:

The valley is wide and open, and keeps its same appearance of a fine prairie, with a few clumps of timber, well watered by several mountain streams, and well adapted for stock raising or dairy farming down to the 66-mile station. At this distance, the Bulkley is near [the Indian] trail. It is nearly 120 yards in width, shallow and swift.

The trail crosses over a mountain stream, twenty-five yards wide, on a bridge built by the Indians in their usual way, a combination of the cantilever and suspension systems. At seventy-seven and a half miles, the Indian village of Kya-wilgate is passed. The trail crosses to the west side of the river, which is bridged by another Indian construction of nearly 180 feet in length. The valley, before getting to the village, was more timbered; now there is a thick growth of cottonwood, spruce, birch, and balsam. It keeps this appearance to the 98 mile, where the Susquah River falls into it from the E.N.E. From there to the Skeena, the Bulkley is generally enclosed in rocky banks, and the valley thickly timbered, and sometimes burnt. The general length from the summit, between the watershed of the Endako to the Skeena, is 110 miles. The valley is wide all the way-as much as twelve miles in places. A very large portion is open prairie, with luxuriant grass, and, where it is timbered, it would be easy to clear. The soil is good, and, though may be exposed to summer frost, mostly all grain except wheat could be grown, and vegetables of all sorts. No doubt that the timber once removed, and danger of frost would be greatly reduced. As grazing land it cannot be surpassed, and where the timber has been burnt, the numerous varieties of grasses growing show that the area of pasture could be largely increased.

A.L. Poudrier concluded his report with the following recommendation.¹⁰

The opening of the Kitsilas Canyon on the Skeena will give an easy way to reach the good land of the interior, but, if nothing else is done besides that, it will be almost impossible for settlers to reach the best part of the land. If a waggon road were cut from Hazelton, following the telegraph trail along the valley of the Watsonkwa, a very large extent would be open for colonization. Only the first part of the trail would be costly; after reaching the partly open country, beyond Moricetown, very little would need to be done. This would open all the county to the Nechaco River.

The following year, 1892, Poudrier returned to the Bulkley Valley to lay out the townships south of Moricetown. In his report filed with the British Columbia Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works¹¹, he wrote:

Hazelton was at last reached on June 20th, and at once I began to procure horses for packing our provisions and outfit to reach the partly open country beyond Moricetown, where the best land for settlement lies. The trail being very bad and almost obstructed by the new growth and fallen trees, it was only on the 3rd of July that we could commence the regular work of the survey.

Before going into all the details of the country surveyed during the season, I consider it best to give a short description of the country lying between Hazelton, on the Skeena, and the point beyond Moricetown where the regular

¹⁰ POUDRIER, A.L. "Exploration of New Caledonia. Part III," British Columbia. Crown Lands Surveys for the Year Ending 31st December 1891. Victoria : Richard Wolfenden, 1982.

¹¹ POUDRIER, A.L. "Report of Bulkley Valley Survey" in British Columbia Sessional Papers 1893, Crown Land Surveys 1892, pp. 454-460.

survey was started. The distance is about 42 miles. From Ahgwilget Village, on the Bulkley, we built a waggon road to Moricetown, a distance of over 26 miles, or nearly 30 miles from Hazelton. Beyond Moricetown, all through the survey, the pack-trail continues, having been very much improved by the road party.

From Hazelton, for about ten miles, the valley is rather wide- from 10 to 12 miles, about. Some parts have been burnt and are now covered by a short growth of aspen poplar (*P. tremuloides*), balsam poplar (*P. balsamifera*), and dwarf birch (*B. glandulosa*). Hazel bushes (*Corylus Americana* Watt) also abound. Further on the forest is of more importance, though, generally, the growth is rather light. Canadian poplar (*P. monalifera*), aspen poplar, birch (*Betula papyracea*), Canadian balsam and small spruce are abundant.

The soil is generally good, of a rich sandy loam, with a clay subsoil, but here and there are several small pieces of wet land, on some of which small cedar (*Thuja gigantea*), alder (*A. rubra*, *A. viridis*), and numerous shrubs generally found in wet soil abound. On these the soil is of the richest black loam, but in some parts would require draining. This could well be done, as beaver dams seem to have been the origin of nearly all such wet land. Other small spots of less extent are regular swamps, covered with moss and thick beds of peat, where the only growth, besides the moss and shrubs, is the small black spruce (*A. nigra*). These beds are valueless now, but could be utilized in the distant future on account of their peat.

Four or five townships could be laid out in the part above described, containing about 90 per cent of good agricultural land. Above this the valley, though not getting much narrower, is cut by several spurs of hills almost at right angles, and numerous small streams, swollen into torrents in summer, come from the high range of mountains to the south, called the group of the "Rochers Déboulés."

This character of country continues for about 10 miles, and in that distance I would judge that about 50 per cent of the land would be suitable for agriculture. It is partly

covered by a growth of small poplar and birch, and the vegetation on the hills and on the spruce, and black pine. The Douglas fir is absent; cedar is of frequent occurrence near the streams, and grows to a good size.

From this point to Moricetown the quantity of good land increases, and would average from 65 to 70 per cent. Nearly all the land fit for cultivation lies south of the Bulkley River, and in some parts terraces are well marked. The climate here seems to become somewhat drier, judging from the vegetation, and it was noticed that the fire had done much greater damage than heretofore. The benches are generally bare of trees, and shrubs even are scarce, the most marked being the service berry. In approaching Moricetown, several fine open meadows were met with, but these were cut up by numerous small streams, with a fringe-like border of willow and alder.

At Moricetown, where there is an Indian village of importance, the Bulkley River enters a narrow and deep canon, worn into the rocks- a circumstance which the Indians have turned to their profit, by building a bridge on which pack-horses can cross easily. It is a combination of the cantilever and suspension system, and it answers its purpose very well. The old wire of the N.W. Telegraph line represents all the metal used in the bridge.

The Indians have a reserve set apart for them, though not yet surveyed. It is supposed to begin half a mile below the bridge, and extend about four miles above it. the ground is not very hilly on the reserve, and there are a number of good meadows. The chief feature of importance to the Indians respecting the situation of Moricetown is the extraordinary facility with which they can catch their supply of salmon. The fish are secured by means of dip-nets placed where the water rushes through the narrow canon. Large quantities of lampreys (*petromyzon amer*) are also caught here. They are of a very large size, nearly double in weight to the eastern or the European lamprey, and the Indians dry and smoke a large supply of them.

Several gardens are here cultivated by the Indians, furnishing potatoes, turnips and carrots, which could be bought in abundance. This fact shows plainly what the soil and climate could perform under good cultivation, the Indians paying hardly any attention to the gardens after the seeds are planted.

The natives possess over thirty horses, which have an excellent grazing locality, and generally winter out without having any hay cut for them. The abundance of berries of different kinds, and the proximity of the mountains, where cariboo, mountain goat and bears are plentiful, render this spot one of the most desirable homes for the Indians, and as a rule they live in abundance, are well dressed, and are very good customers for the merchants of Hazelton.

The clearing of the waggon road was carried on to the crossing of the Bulkley at Moricetown. Beyond this point, the river runs close to the foot-hills to the south-east of the valley, and all the good lands lie north-west of the river.

Prospecting was also beginning to develop in the region during this period. Mining recorder Jno. Flewin reported in his annual report for 1898 to the Minister of Mines¹² that:

On the Bulkley River, which is the main tributary of the Skeena, emptying into it near Hazelton, some prospecting has been done and a few locations made. The ore found here is copper-gold, the formation being diorite and slate, and the country being an unusually easy one to traverse. The valley of this river is well adapted for farming and stock-raising.

In 1899, Surveyor E.M. Skinner, P.L.S., laid out the Oschawwinna Indian Reserve No. 3, Coryatsagua Indian Reserve No. 2, and Moricetown Indian Reserve No. 1. At present his survey

¹² FLEWIN, JNO. "Skeena Mining Division" in Annual Report for the Minister of Mines for ... 1898. pp. 1152-1153.

instructions have not been located. However, according to his field notes¹³, which one would assume are a reflection of his instructions, the Bulkley River is excluded from Moricetown Indian Reserve No. 1.

A Protestant medical-missionary who followed the early white settlers into the region was Dr. Horace Cooper Wrinch. He established his headquarters in Hazelton in 1900 and included the Bulkley Valley as part of his district. A newspaper article, circa 1930, found in the United Church Archives in Toronto¹⁴, describes Dr. Wrinch's early career in the Skeena-Bulkley Valleys. Of the Bulkley River it is written:

The Bulkley river is not navigable and journeys in the Bulkley Valley were along pack-trails. When, with horses, the "Old Telegraph Trail" on the northeast side of the valley was followed, necessitating the fording of the Bear (Suskwa) River, frequently both difficult and dangerous. On foot or by dog team, the more usual route was by the Indian Trail through Hagwilget and Moricetown, crossing the canyons at those places on the rickety old Indian bridges.

A Catholic missionary in this region during this period was Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice, after whom both the Moricetown Indian Reserve and the Morice River are named. Aside from being a missionary, Morice was also an anthropologist and geographer of some note. In 1911 he published an article in the Swiss Journal,

¹³ SKINNER, E.M. "Hag Wil-Get Indian Reserves," Unpublished Manuscript, Surveys and Mapping Branch, Energy, Mines and Resources. B.C. 318.

¹⁴ MCGILL, L.S. Newspaper Clipping on Dr. Horace Cooper Wrinch, Circa 1930.

Bulletin de la Société neuchateloise de Géographie, titled: "Exploration de la Rivière Bulkley."¹⁵ The article is a dramatic, if not melodramatic, recount of a voyage he took with several Indian companions between 30 July 1904 and 19 August 1904 from Moricetown to Francis Lake. Morice's overall conclusion is that "(f)rom Spring to roughly the end of Summer, the Bulkley cannot be navigated."

The Morice expedition left the Indian village at Rocher-Déboulé and walked to Moricetown. It was only at that point where they put their canoes into the water. On the first day, 30 July 1904, Morice wrote that the river averages 100 metres in width. "For the most part, it is fast, and we had to pole our way up... The current can be up to about twelve miles an hour (nineteen km and hour)." On Monday, August 3rd, he wrote: "The current has become very violent..." The following day, the expedition reached the Morice River. He wrote that: "The river has become faster and faster... Moreover, it was often blocked by naturally-occurring dams, which made navigation quite difficult."

On August 5th, Morice wrote:

When going up a river as fast as the Bulkley, it is often necessary to tow the canoe. This means walking along the shore, which is difficult, tiring, and even dangerous, since sandy riverbanks are extremely rare in areas like this ... Walking was particularly difficult, and at the same time disastrous for footwear, because the men on shore had to tow with all their might to help those who were pushing the canoe with their long poles to bring it through the violent waves and dams I mentioned yesterday ... The river grew livelier and livelier, and hard to believe, became wider than it was yesterday. Suddenly, around four o'clock in the

¹⁵ MORICE, Le Rev. Père A.-G. "Exploration de la Rivière Bulkley (Colombie Britannique)," Bulletin de la Société Neuchateloise de Géographie. Vol. XXI (1911-12): 101-126.

afternoon, the river narrowed by more than half, its turbulent waters rushing between steep, narrow banks. Only through herculean efforts were we able to get past this obstacle, after we had carried our packs to a point above the rapids.

Immediately following these rapids, Morice wrote that there was a "long meander" where the Bulkley was calm and easy to navigate.

The next day, August 6th, Morice wrote that:

The Bulkley has begun to wind a great deal; the river bed has divided several times to form a multitude of little islands and sandbanks ... More than once we nearly capsized when we were thrown against dams formed by tree trunks that had piles up after being ripped from the shore by the violent current.

That evening, the expedition reached Lamprey River, which Morice wrote was "a smaller waterway considered to mark the end of the navigable section of the Bulkley. There the difficulties of the river's upper reaches were described to me in the most lurid of terms." However, he decided to press on, despite the objections of his Indian companions. The expedition in succession ran into a waterfall, dams formed of driftwood, and a violent current. Finally, they reached Loring Lake. From there, Morice walked to Lake Français.

In 1907 the British Columbia Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works had published a Map of the Northern Interior of British Columbia by A.G. Morice, O.M.I.¹⁶ A notation beside the stretch of the Bulkley River between Hagwigt and Moricetown reads: "River very rapid."

¹⁶ Map of the Northern Interior of British Columbia by A.G. Morice, O.M.I. Published by Direction of the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, Victoria, B.C. 1907. Copy available at National Library of Canada, National Map Collection No. 19 775.

In 1904, the Department of Marine and Fisheries, the Precursor of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, divided the province of British Columbia into two districts for fisheries management. The Bulkley River was included in District No. 2. John T. Williams was appointed Inspector of Fisheries for the District. In his annual report for that year, Williams appended an account of an inspection made by Fishery Officer Hans Helgesen which included the Bulkley River.¹⁷

Bulkley river -- From information received I found it necessary to make a journey to Morricetown [sic], 30 miles up the Bulkley river, and when the heavy rain that lasted for days had abated we left Hazelton on the 4th of October, and reached Morricetown, an Indian Village, situated on the west bank of the Bulkley river, on the 5th, this is a beautiful stream 140 miles long, fully as large as the Babine, one of its branches heads within a few miles of Babine lake, its other two branches run in a southerly direction and head towards the Oatsa country. It has numerous lakes, and was formerly one of the greatest propagation branches of the Skeena, but I found that the farmers of the valley told the truth, when they said that of late years the Indians were determined not to let a single salmon pass them. At Morricetown we found only half a dozen Indians, and about a score of old women, who evidently knew our purpose as they gave us Hail Columbia.

Canyon and Falls -- On examining the canyon I found it about 250 yards long, the narrowest part 1 foot wide (sic) and from the numerous paths, stagings, ladders, etc., I could judge that the canyon during the fishing season was lined with Indians hooking and catching salmon by every conceivable contrivance. They even shove out a long pole with a rope through the end of it, from one side to a crevice on the other side, bend on the trap or basket, haul it to the other side, lower it down, and when a sufficient

¹⁷ WILLIAMS, John T. "Fishery Inspectors' Reports - British Columbia" Sessional Papers 1906, Department of Marine and Fisheries, pp. 206-211.

quantity of salmon enter, they haul it back; every salmon that comes up that foaming boiling cauldron, goes into the little eddies for rest, and every eddy is filled with contrivances for his capture, but if indeed some of the fish are lucky enough to escape the multitude of hooks and traps in the canyon a worse fate awaits them at the falls immediately above, where they are in low water during fishing season by all accounts, 14 feet high. Behind the falls is an array of various kinds of traps and baskets, the salmon keeps on jumping incessantly to get up, and falls back into the baskets, thus only a very few fish get up the river to the lake, and I could see no other way to remedy the evil in that narrow place where the salmon is entirely at the mercy of the Indians, so by the authority of sub-section 16, clause 5, chap. 51, and others in the Fisheries Act, I placed a notice above the falls, and another at the lower end of the canyon, which strictly forbids fishing of any kind for a distance of 300 yards. I might have excluded surface fly fishing but there are no sportsmen in the vicinity.

On the 7th we left Morricetown and reached Hazelton on the 8th. I beg to draw your attention to the necessity of spending about \$500 to blast out two shelves of rocks, on the west side of the canyon, in the Bulkley river, the water would then form a more uniform grade so that the fish could get up and replenish this noble river and lake.

Despite the posting of the "NO FISHING" regulation, the order was never enforced. However, in 1907 a policy [but not a formal agreement] was reached between the Department of Marine and Fisheries and the Department of Indian Affairs to eliminate the use of barricades in the Babine Lake area, including the Bulkley River.

In 1910, another member of the Geological Survey of Canada, W.W. Leach, examined the Bulkley Valley.¹⁸ He described the topography of the district as follows:

¹⁸ LEACH, W.W. "Skeena River District," Summary Report of the Geological Survey Branch of the Department of Mines ... 1910, pp. 91-101.

The country is on the whole mountainous, although it is intersected by many comparatively wide and fertile valleys, such as those of the Bulkley, Kispiox River, and parts of the Skeena River and of Babine Lake. The greater part of the district examined is drained by the Bulkley River, the largest tributary to the Skeena, which occupies (sic) a wide valley with many open or slightly timbered areas, which are rapidly being settled. To the south and west, the watershed between the Bulkley and the Kitsequecla and Zymoetz Rivers consists of the Rochers Déboulés mountains and the Hudson Bay mountains respectively; both of these are large isolated blocks of mountains, reaching elevations from 7,500 to 8,000 feet, and are cut off on all sides by low valleys.

To the east and north, the Babine Range divides the waters of the Bulkley from those of Babine Lake. This Range reaches its greatest height to the northeast of Hazelton, the highest peaks attaining elevations of 8,000 feet. About 10 miles above Hazelton the Suskwa River enters from the east, taking its rise in a comparatively low pass (3,500 feet). Southeast of the Suskwa the Babine Range reaches heights of from (6,000 to 7,000 feet; until in the neighbourhood of Moricetown (30 miles from Hazelton), a region of much lower timbered ridges is met with, gradually rising again to culminate in a group of high, rugged peaks, in which Head Twobridge, Driftwood and Canyon Creeks - the chief tributaries of the Bulkley from the east-north of the Suskwa. From this point southeast the Range gradually diminishes both in height and width.

The valleys of the Skeena and the Bulkley, and of the lower portion of the Suskwa and Telkwa Rivers are, for the most part, terraced, and the rivers have in many cases cut through the ancient valley floors forming secondary, deep, canyon-like channels. This is particularly noticeable on the Bulkley, which flows in a canyon for nearly 30 miles from its mouth, with a total fall of about 1,000 feet in this distance [Hazelton to Moricetown].

Another topographical description, included in a 1961 British Columbia Department of Lands and Forests pamphlet,¹⁹ reads as follows:

¹⁹ Province of British Columbia Lands Service. The Prince Rupert - Smithers Bulletin Area (Bulletin Area No. 8). Victoria : Printed by A. Sutton, 1961.

The Bulkley Valley forms a fairly broad trough fringed by the steeply rising slopes of the Bulkley Ranges of Hazelton Mountains on the south and the Babine Range of Skeena Mountains on the north. The valley-floor is undulating to rolling in appearance, with cultivated land generally occupying patch-like pockets between the gentle ridges. Along most of its length the valley of the Bulkley River varies from 5 to 8 miles in width, but north of Moricetown the river passes through a rocky, steep-walled canyon, and the valley walls close to a width of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The elevation of the valley descends fairly uniformly from 2,195 feet at Topley to 1,340 feet at Moricetown.

From its head at Rose Lake to its mouth at the confluence of the Skeena River, the Bulkley River falls an average of eleven feet per mile.

In the winter of 1928-1929 a portion of the Moricetown Canyon Falls was blasted out to allow fish easier access to the top of the falls. It was found that in late summer and autumn the water in the canyon was usually fifteen to thirty feet lower than in spring and early summer. The side channels were becoming dry and the salmon were forced to fight their way up the main falls.

The 1928-29 modification saw the removal of 140 cubic yards of rock in the main eastern channel. This resulted in the creation of four steps (2' x 12' x 15') in a total drop of ten feet.²⁰

In the winter of 1950 and the spring of 1951, two new fish ladders were built on either side of the falls when it was again ascertained that the water level at Moricetown was not sufficient from June to October for the salmon to ascend.²¹

20 PRITCHARD, Dr. A.L. and Associates. "Major Obstruction - Moricetown Falls." Appendix IV of Interim Report. Skeena River Salmon Investigation, 1948. Copy available at Department of Fisheries and Oceans Library.

21 MILNE, D.J. Moricetown Falls as a Hazard to Salmon Migration. Bulletin No. 86. Ottawa: Fisheries Research Board of Canada, Department of Fisheries, 1950.

At Hagwilet Canyon, the remnants of the rock slide obstruction was blasted out in the winter of 1958-1959. This was a large rock, with an estimated volume of 900 cubic yards and which occupied about one-third of the river channel. The boulder had divided the river into two channels, with the right bank channel carrying eighty percent of the discharge at the lower flows.²²

In 1968, following the tragic death of a Moricetown child who slipped off the canyon wall and drowned, the Indian Band Council requested assistance of the Department of Indian Affairs in restricting fishermen and children under sixteen years of age. During the debate over the writing of a Band by-law, J.N. McFarlane, the Indian Superintendent at Babine Agency, reported that an elder of the Moricetown Band questioned the Band's jurisdiction of Moricetown Canyon. This elder believed the sixteen feet from high water was under the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada. However, McFarlane stated that this was the case in navigable water but the Moricetown Canyon could not be called navigable.²³

In recent years the Bulkley River has seen increasing use by recreational canoeists and kayakers. In a recent [April 10, 1987] letter from Jennifer Eastwood, Regional Recreation Coordinator of the British Columbia Ministry of Forests and Lands, Forest Service, Smithers, B.C., she reported that only two points on the river have been identified as "potentially non canoeable (at this time) by open canadian canoes". Ms. Eastwood then gave the following brief description of these two points:

²² Department of Fisheries, Vancouver B.C., Nov. 25, 1957. "Report on the Obstruction at Hagwilet Canyon - Bulkley River." Public Archives of Canada, R.G. 23, Vol. 553, File 31.

²³ Department of Indian Affairs, Public Archives Record Centre (PARC), Vol. 9 71/30-10.

A. Moricetown Canyon

Moricetown Canyon has been run by kayakers and rafters. To date no one to my knowledge has [run] it in open canadian canoe. However, with suitable water levels and very good accomplished paddling skills it may be navigable in open canadian canoes.

Moricetown canyon is easy to portage with canoes, therefore technically it is navigable.

B. Hagwilet Canyon

Within the Hagwilet Canyon just down stream of 4 Mile Creek, a recent slide (slide occurred after this [1981] report was written) has created a drop which makes canoeing navigability questionable. This drop has been run by canoe, yet it is advisable to portage as a large hole extends across most of the river. The portage around the drop is very short. The drop is run regularly by accomplished kayakers. The remainder of this section of river is runnable without having to portage.

The 1981 report which Ms. Eastwood included with her letter gives the following overall description of the Bulkley River:

BULKLEY RIVER CORRIDOR

The Bulkley River flows north between the Hazelton and Skeena Mountains until it empties into the Skeena River at Hazelton. The corridor lies within two Biogeoclimatic Zones. For the most part it is encompassed by the Cariboo Aspen - Lodgepole Pine - Douglas Fir Zone. Below Morice Town [sic] Canyon the river is enclosed by the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone. For most of its length, the Bulkley is closely followed by the Yellowhead Highway. It flows through a spectrum of landscapes from rolling pastureland to populated urban areas. Once the Suskwa River joins the Bulkley, the highway veers away and the river winds alone through a succession of canyons. These canyons are most notable for their frequency along the remaining section of river before the Skeena.

The colorful geological formations caused by the erosion of sedimentary rock in the canyon walls are a unique feature of the river. The numerous rapids which are also a result of these rock formations make the Bulkley an exciting and challenging river for accomplished paddlers and rafters. The rapids in the section from the Suskwa to the Skeena River are difficult and almost continuous rendering the river unsuitable for the inexperienced. There are, however, many back eddies throughout this section which provide ample opportunity for rest from the white water. The less powerful rapids in the section of the river south of Moricetown enable inexperienced paddlers to enjoy the Bulkley. The river here meanders through residential and pastureland and offers an easy, peaceful river recreation experience. The Bulkley is an exciting river. The diversity of the environments through which the river flows enables a similarly diverse variety of recreationists to enjoy it.

In a telephone conversation, Ms. Eastwood described the Moricetown Canyon as being approximately 200 to 300 metres in length. The waterfall is at the head of the canyon, followed by relatively calm pools of water throughout the remainder of the canyon. From the end of the canyon to Porphyry Creek, she graded as Class 1 to Class 3 in difficulty, that is, from easy to difficult for canoeists. From Porphyry Creek to Suskwa River, she described as Class 1 to Class 2, that is, from easy to medium difficult for canoeists. Suskwa River to Hagwigit Canyon she described as Class 1 to Class 3.

In the Fall 1983 edition of the Beautiful British Columbia magazine, an article on the Bulkley Valley gave the following information on canoeing activities on the river:

The rivers that lure fishermen to the Bulkley Valley are equally attractive to canoeists and kayakers, especially in autumn when low flows keep the paddling to a leisurely pace. One well-known voyage follows a route used for an annual canoe race on the Bulkley River, held as part of the Bulkley Valley Fall Fair. The journey, a total of 80 kilometers between Houston and Smithers, passes several townsites including Barrett Bridge, Walcott, Quick and Telkwa.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on historical documents found to date, it would appear that the Bulkley River, from the Moricetown Canyon to the confluence of the Skeena River, was not used as a transportation route by either pre-white contact Indians or by white traders or settlers. The Falls at Moricetown Canyon, the numerous rapids to the Skeena River, and the rock slide in the 1820s at Hagwiget Canyon acted as natural obstructions to navigability. As well, man-made barriers in the form of Indian weirs or barricades across the river also hindered navigability.

In the 1920s, but especially in the 1950s, several of the natural obstructions on the river were modified to allow salmon easier access to spawn in the river. Likewise, the use of barricades by native fishermen was discouraged by the federal government and have become obsolete. As a result, since the 1960s, the river has seen greater use by recreational canoeists and kayakers.

Only two points on the river are considered today to be "non canoeable" for open canadian canoes. These two points, at Moricetown Canyon and Hagwiget Canyon, are portagable. The remainder of the river can be canoed.

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