



Da Kų Cultural Centre

HAINES JUNCTION WALKING TOUR

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A Brief History

The traditional Southern Tutchone name for this area is *Dakwäkäda*, which means “high cache place.” The name refers to the particular type of storage structure that First Nations people (*Dän*) traditionally built in this location. These high or elevated caches, known as *dakwäkäts*, were used to store and protect goods from scavengers. Goods might be furs that had been trapped the previous year, or provisions being put up for the upcoming winter, including foods such as dried moose meat (*äthän gän*), gophers (*tsäl*), rabbits (*ga*) and groundhogs (*denji*). These important foods were harvested during the late summer hunt in the local area.

The caches were also situated where several traditional trails (*tän*) intersected. These included the route connecting Klukshu village to the south with Kloo Lake to the northwest, and the major east-west foot trail connecting communities to the east (Hutchi, Champagne, Whitehorse) with points west such as Bear Creek village and the Kluane Lake area.

The first “road” through the *Dakwäkäda* area followed much of the route of the region’s major east-west foot trail. Following the discovery of gold in 1903, the Kluane Wagon Road was developed to serve mining properties near Kluane Lake. For the next four decades the well-used wagon road connected this area to the outside world. George Chambers of Champagne, operator of the Whitehorse-Kluane Stage Line, delivered mail via this route in the 1930s.

When the American army began building the Alaska Highway in 1942, it generally followed the route of the Kluane Wagon Road. Construction camps were established as needed along the route, including at Haines Junction.

After a year's operation, the section of the road going east from Dakwākāda to Marshall Creek was shifted north to the present routing by Pine Lake. Today the abandoned section of the original highway is referred to as the "Marshall Creek Road."

Haines Junction's first buildings, other than the Dän caches, were established in 1942-43 at the U.S. military highway construction camp. A community began to grow here as families started living at the highway maintenance camp. This was especially the case after 1946, when the Canadian military assumed responsibility for the maintenance of the Canadian sections of the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road. Private service stations, lodges and other businesses were soon established at the intersection of the two roads. Champagne and Aishihik people as well as newcomers established homes at the cross-roads to take advantage of the new opportunities that came with these improved connections to Whitehorse and Alaska.

Champagne and Aishihik families associated with the central and southern parts of what is now known as Champagne and Aishihik Traditional Territory (*dákeyi*) were the first to establish homes in the new community. Some built residences on lots located near the main village intersection, while others took up residence in the "Block 30" reserve area assigned for Dän, located on the east side of the village. In 1958, the Dän community grew further when families from the Aishihik (*Äshèyi*) area to the north were relocated here by the federal government.

Haines Junction became the administrative centre for the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) in 1971, when its first office opened in the village. Originally called the Champagne and Aishihik Indian Band, the First Nation takes its name from two of its traditional settlements. In 1993, the Champagne and Aishihik government successfully negotiated its Final and Self-Government Agreements. These agreements establish a fourth level of government in this region in addition to the Village of Haines Junction municipal government.

With the establishment of Kluane National Park and Reserve in 1972, over 22,000 km² of land adjacent to the village became a national park, with the village identified as the administrative centre for the park.

Da Kų Cultural Centre (“Our House”)



Begin your tour at the Da Kų Cultural Centre, located on the Alaska Highway on the north side of the Village of Haines Junction. Built by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the centre opened to the public in May 2012, with an official grand opening on June 21, 2013. The building houses the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Da Kų Cultural Centre, the Government of Yukon Visitor Information Centre and the Parks Canada Kluane National Park and Reserve Visitor Centre.

Da Kų Cultural Centre



Open year round, the Da Kų Cultural Centre celebrates the language, culture and traditions of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people. It features displays of traditional artwork, artifacts and a large floor map showing traditional villages, trails and Southern Tutchone place names. The centre offers guided tours, campfire talks and artist demonstrations. Local First Nations arts and crafts are available in the centre’s store (*nju*). Champagne and Aishihik First Nations are proud to share stories of their people (*dān*), their land (*dān kéyi*), their traditions (*dān ke*) and their Southern Tutchone language (*Dákwanjè*) with visitors.



The Government of Yukon Visitor Information Centre (VIC) is open May 1 to September 30. It provides visitors with information on the region and territory. Be sure to stop in and ask the friendly staff your travel-related questions.

A highlight of the VIC is the artwork on display. The centrepiece is a remarkable installation entitled *Ice and Flowers* created by Doug Smarch Jr., a Tlingit artist from Teslin. He created the sculpture to work in harmony with the features of the space, using the light from the large window and complementing the view of the mountains. For the artist, the piece symbolizes the power of people to work together for the wellbeing of the Kluane region. A large landscape painting entitled *The Way Home* by local artist Libby Dulac, hangs over the entrance. It captures the view of the Auriol Range when approaching Haines Junction from the east on the Alaska Highway. It conveys the moment when the returning sun first lights the range in February. As well, displays throughout the centre feature art and craft from around Yukon as well as selections from the Yukon Permanent Art Collection.



Kluane National Park and Reserve Visitor Centre



The Kluane National Park and Reserve Visitor Centre is open from May long weekend to Labour Day. Spend an hour or a day and let award-winning digital exhibits, engaging exhibit panels, cultural artifacts, hands-on activities and stunning high-definition video draw you into the fascinating world of Kluane National Park and Reserve. Watch historic footage of the first mountaineers to climb Mount Logan, listen to audio recordings of traditional stories told by First Nation Elders, and study a 3-D topographic model of the soaring peaks and vast icefields of the St. Elias Mountains. Discovery drawers and interactive games invite kids (and adults!) to dig in and learn about the park's plants, animals and seasons of life. The centre also offers a range of resources to help you plan your trip into the park.





CAFN Administration Building



With the implementation of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Self-Government Agreement in 1993, a new administrative building was built to meet the space requirements of the Indigenous government. The architectural design is based upon a traditional fish smokehouse. The chief's office is located here along with the staff responsible for implementing the Land Claim Agreement and fulfilling the mission of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations people.



Lucky Dragon Motel



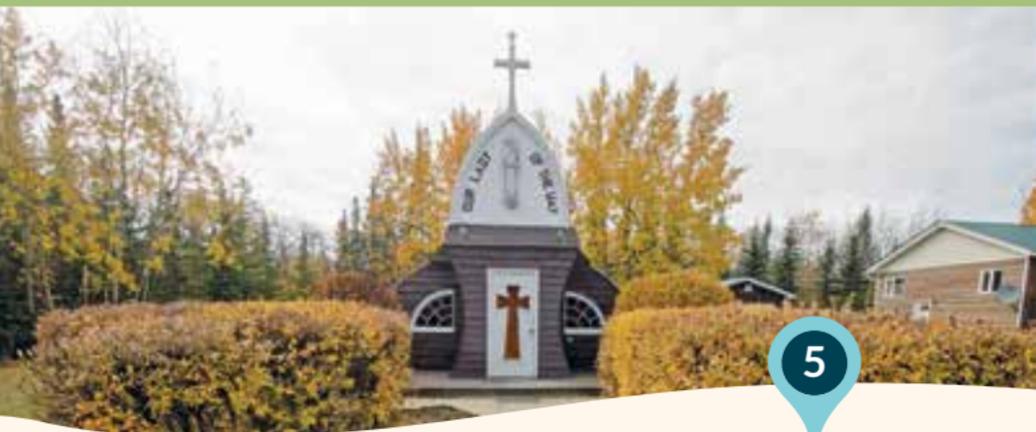
This motel is constructed from pieces of the original maintenance camp for the Haines Junction Department of Public Works that was formerly beside the Dezadeash River. The relocated structures—a modular residence and “assorted orange crates”—first formed and housed a general store and post office owned by Pete and Florence Shulmeister. In the years since, the business evolved into a restaurant and gas bar. Heinz and Katie Eckervogt purchased the complex in 1982 and developed the motel, which operated for many years as the Mountain View Restaurant and Motel. It has changed hands since, but remains a motel and restaurant.



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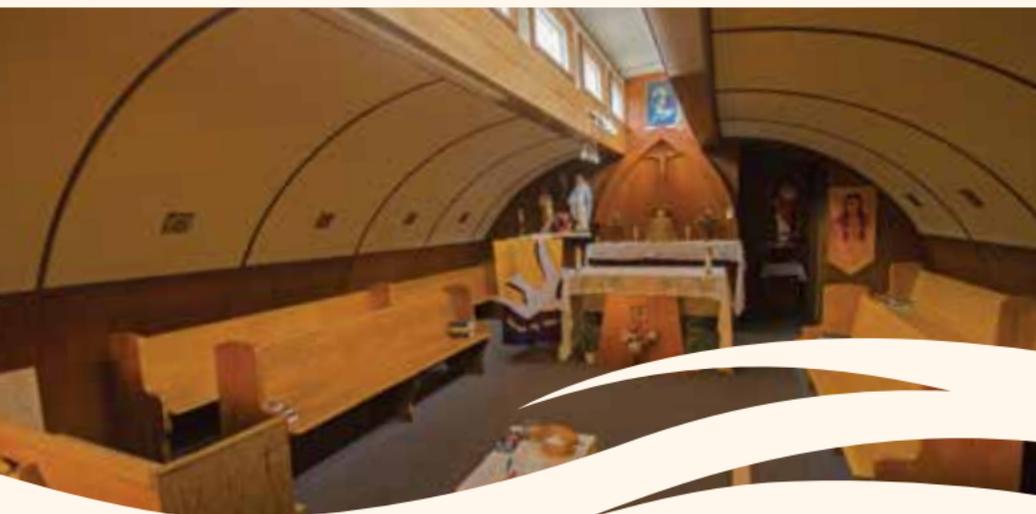
The Northwestel relay building houses equipment for the telephone and internet exchange. In 1997, the company contracted artists Catherine and Paul O'Toole to design and create an exterior finish for the building. They used paints and metals intended to weather in order to make an artistic statement about the changing landscape. Members of the St. Elias Community School band and their music teacher raised money for the band program by planting wildflowers, and placing rocks and wood chips around the building.

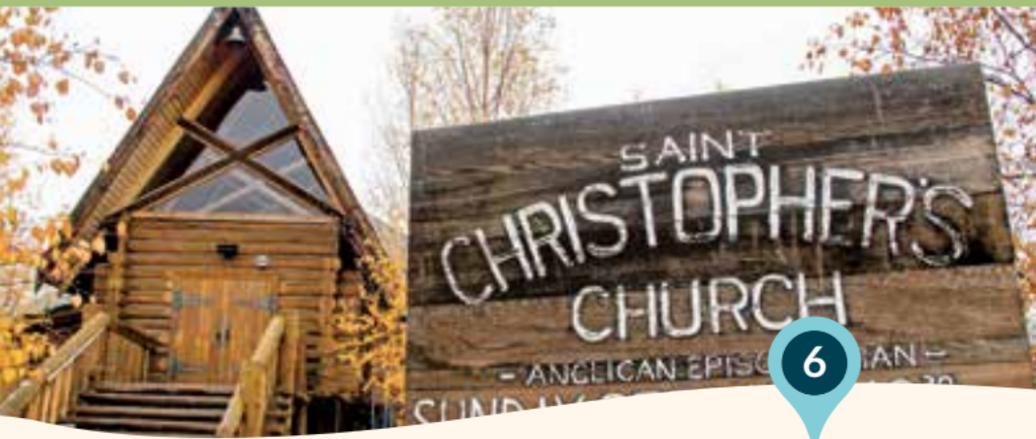




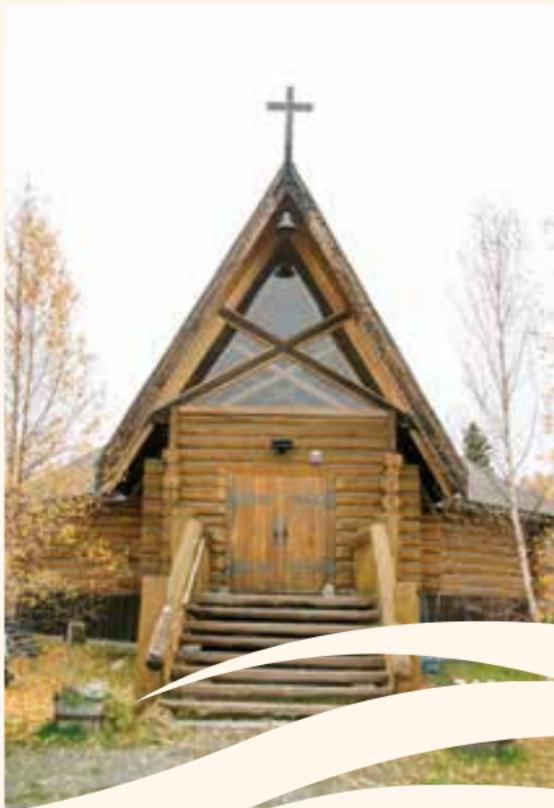
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Father Eusebe Morisset, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), travelled north in 1943 to serve as a missionary and auxiliary chaplain with the American army. He and Father Jean Paul Tanguay built Our Lady of the Way Church in 1954. They converted an American army Quonset hut into this unique and beautiful church. During the Second World War, Quonset huts were constructed for the U.S. navy at Quonset Point, Rhode Island and became a common sight at military camps. The steel arch-rib frame is covered with corrugated metal sheets. Father Morrisset originally wanted to add windows in the roof for light. Father Tanguay, concerned with snow load, suggested a clerestory arrangement, with the windows placed vertically above the roof line. Old bridge timbers were used for the beam that runs the length of the building. The steeple features a statue of the Madonna, one of four statues made for rural Yukon parishes. Bishop Jean Courdet, OMI had them cast in the 1950s in Belgium. Later, a rectory was built using a barracks building from a pipeline camp. In 1983, Haines Junction became the headquarters for Catholic missions along the Alaska Highway in western Yukon. Regular Sunday services are held here.





Eva Hasell and Iris Sayles operated an Anglican Sunday School Caravan along the Alaska Highway. Beginning in 1949, Hasell travelled from England every summer to participate in the program. In 1956, Reverend Watson and Peter Tizya, a lay minister from Old Crow, built the first Haines Junction Anglican Church on land donated by Hasell. By 1987, it was beyond repair and a local carpenter, Henry Henkel, persuaded the congregation it was time to start construction of a new church. Using local logs and following a plan of his own design, Henkel and a group of volunteers built St. Christopher's Anglican Church. Henkel's team received assistance from inmates of a local minimum-security prison who supplied labour for hauling logs and cement. As well, mission societies and foundations in southern Canada supplied money for plywood and milled lumber for the floor and roof.



✧ Dakwākāda Building ✧



This humble building has a long and varied history as a liquor store, the office of the territorial agent, a daycare, a craft shop, the office for the Southern Tutchone Tribal Council, and more recently, the Alsek Renewable Resources Council office. The land and property belong to the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. *Dakwākāda* is the Southern Tutchone name for Haines Junction.

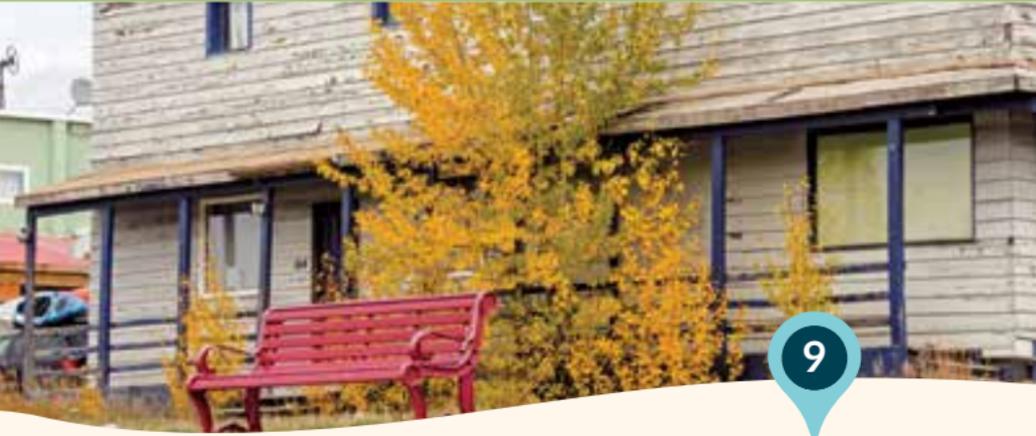
✧ Kluane Park Inn ✧



In 1946, John and Sally Backe, local business owners and agents for the O'Hara Bus Lines, started the Kuskanaw Store. A year later, the business was moved across the street where the Backes started a lodge called the Haines Junction Tavern. After the lodge was sold in 1973, the building was torn down and the remaining collection of pre-fabricated cabins became the Haines Junction Inn. In 1975, Neil and Sally Olson began construction of the building you see today and they named it the Kluane Park Inn in honour of the newly established national park. The basement contains a bowling alley that has never been opened.



Brewster House



Jack and Wilma Brewster owned this two-storey frame building in the early 1960s. The Brewsters came to Yukon in 1956 from Banff, Alberta, where Jack's family owned a large outfitting business. They operated a garage and gas station here and Brewster House offered lodging to highway travellers. The building came from a government maintenance camp on the Haines Road and, for many years, it was the largest and best-constructed building in town. The family home was situated behind Brewster House. The Quonset hut on the property operated as Ed and Betty Karman's Wayside Garage after the original garage burned down.



YG Photo



Village Square



10

The Village Square is home to one of Haines Junction's most photographed structures, the village monument. The sculpture, affectionately known as "The Muffin," has representations of the area's large mammals set into the mountain background of Kluane National Park and Reserve (KNPR). A time capsule was buried in the Village Square in 1992 for the 50th Anniversary of the Alaska Highway. It will be recovered and opened in 2042. The St. Elias Community School shop class and KNPR employees collaborated on constructing the gazebo shelter. A historic milepost sign and an interpretive panel tell the story of building the Haines Road.



Antler Street Sign



11

In 1986, Val and Dan Drummond hung antlers on the street signpost in front of their log home and business. A strong wind blew down the sign but the Village of Haines Junction set up a larger post onto which the Drummonds mounted horns and antlers of the animals of the region including wild sheep, caribou, elk, bison and moose.



Truck Planter Sculpture



12

Yukon artist Paul Baker designed and created this planter box sculpture to resemble the back of an old pick-up truck; it has three metal sculpted ravens attached. The Village of Haines Junction commissioned the sculpture in memory of Walter MacElheron, an avid volunteer at the High Cache Nursery. The nursery provides a supported work environment to employees who grow and sell bedding plants. The village erected the sculpture in 2012.



RCMP Residence



13

This two-storey frame residence was constructed in 1956 for Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and their families; at the time, two RCMP officers were stationed here. The building was designed with a gambrel roof to match the RCMP detachment building constructed around the same time.



Nurses' Residence



This bungalow, adjacent to the modern-looking Nurses' Station building, was the community's original nursing station. When it opened in the early 1950s, the community's one nurse had responsibility for a large area from the Alaska borders of the Alaska Highway and the Haines Road, stretching all the way to the outskirts of Whitehorse. The nurse worked alone, handling everything from medical emergencies to administrative work.

James Smith Administration Building



Constructed in 1975, this building was named to honour Commissioner James Smith, the chief executive officer of Yukon from 1966 to 1976. The building houses the liquor store, the territorial agent, the public library, the Employment Services office, Yukon College, and offices for Community Justice and for Yukon Housing. A sculpture, entitled *Homeward Bound*, is located outside the main entrance. It features a dogsled and musher, and was created by local resident Bob Braun.



16

The Weigh Scale building was constructed when the highway maintenance camp complex was rebuilt in 1958. During the 1950s and 1960s, an office at one end of the building was a checkpoint for people travelling the Haines Road in winter. There was a series of four Canadian checkpoints along the road and visitors were required to sign in at each one. The road maintenance crews used snow blowers to clear the road, creating high vertical banks of snow. Strong winds could fill the ditches and bury a stalled car. The weigh scale staff kept in contact with the other checkpoints to monitor travellers' progress. With improved maintenance and communication along the Haines Road, the Weigh Scale building was repurposed. It housed the Visitor Information Centre for a time, and later became home to the St. Elias Seniors' Society.





Swallow Haven



17

Close to the weigh station at the day-use area are swallow boxes that were built as a clever solution to a pesky problem. Before the creation of Swallow Haven, it was a yearly spring chore to “bird-proof” Haines Junction buildings in order to prevent cliff swallows from building mud-nests under the eaves. At the same time, the community struggled to control mosquito numbers. Each cliff swallow eats thousands of insects a day, providing a natural mosquito-control solution in a community that borders a large wetland.



Dezadeash River Trail



18

The 5.5 km Dezadeash River Trail begins at the day-use area north of the Dezadeash River Bridge. This easy, well-marked trail traverses wetlands, meadows and forests along the river. It is a good place for bird watching and spotting signs of other wildlife. The trail is maintained by Parks Canada and was developed through a partnership with Ducks Unlimited.



This building was constructed and located at Sheep Mountain in the early 1970s. Sally and Neil Olsen cut and peeled the logs by hand and the floor was made from decking salvaged from the old Dezadeash Bridge. The redwood door was crafted in Dawson City with wood salvaged from a mining-related water flume. When the Klauane Game Preserve became part of the national park, all of the private buildings were relocated and this house was moved to its current location. Local artist Al MacLean lived in this house and created the collection of carved driftwood animals around the fence. Al passed away in 2013 and new residents occupy the home.



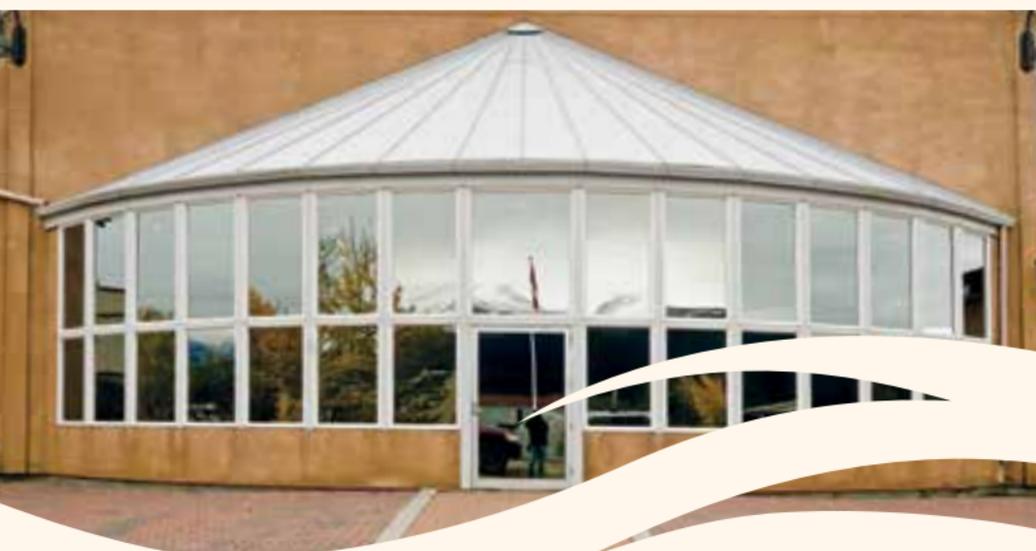


Two fires destroyed buildings in the budding downtown core of Haines Junction. In 1949, the O'Hara Bus Line building burned down. It had housed a store and the offices of an early transportation service between Whitehorse and Fairbanks, Alaska. In 1954, the first gas station and garage caught fire. The Shakwak Valley Community Club raised money to build a fire hall in 1967 and Al Tomlin, an experienced Whitehorse firefighter, instructed the first crew of volunteer firefighters. After the fire hall moved to the new James Smith Administrative Building, the village used this old fire hall as a public works shop and later sold it to Smokey Guttman, who has developed it into a Museum of Nostalgia.





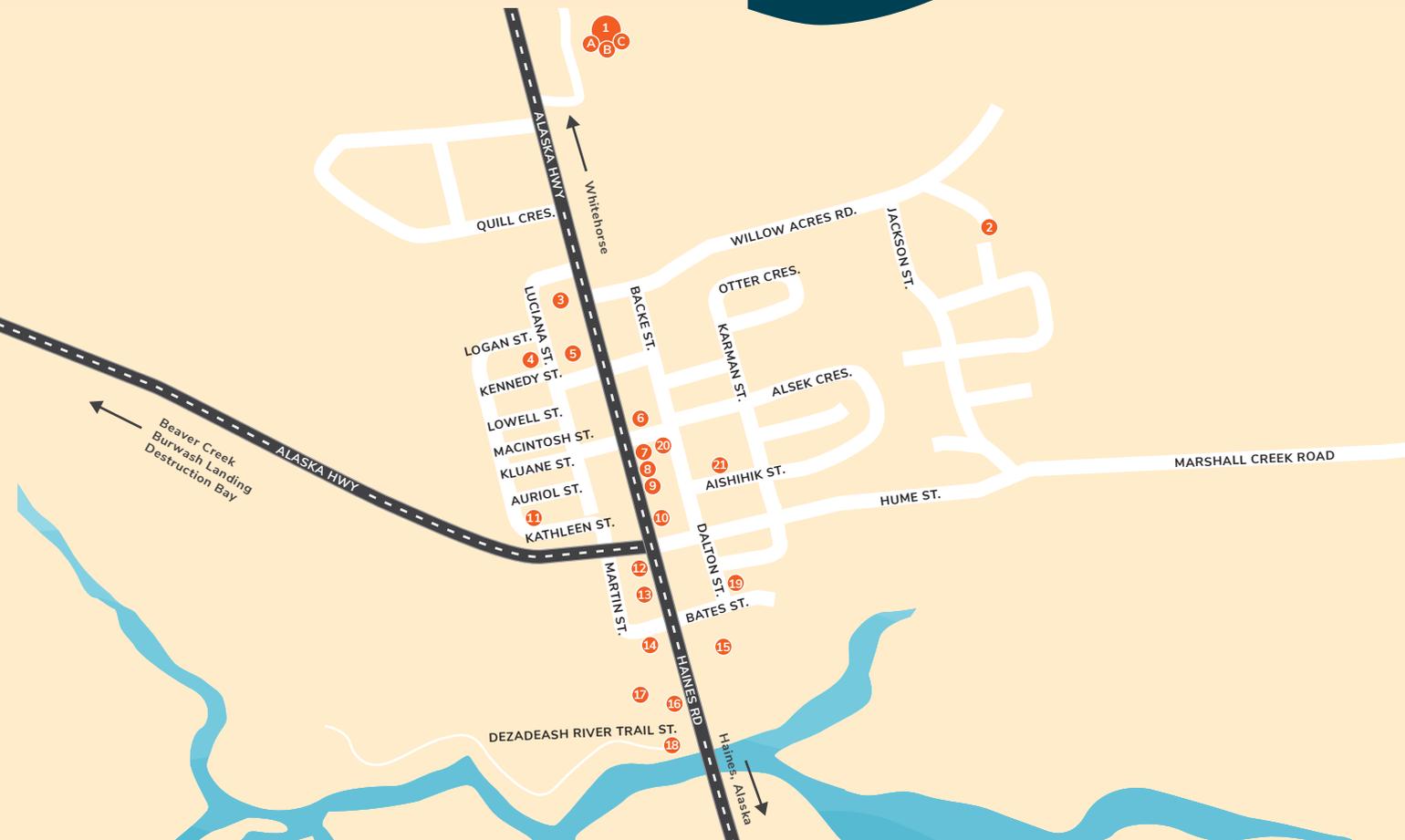
The St. Elias Convention Centre, completed in 1998, is located in the same block as the ice arena, swimming pool and community hall, and hosts year-round activities and community events. The centre has a variety of meeting rooms available for rent and also houses the municipal offices. The lower floor is home to the Cultural Landscape of Kluane, a local history exhibit depicting significant events in the region since 1890. A growing art collection highlights local artistic talent. In the mezzanine of the arena, next door to the St. Elias Convention Centre, the Trail of '42 exhibit depicts the construction of the Alaska Highway and the early days in Haines Junction in 42 photographs. Access to the exhibit is through the municipal office during working hours.



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We welcome you to experience our history. Please respect the privacy of the property owners.

- 1 Da Kų Cultural Centre Hall
- A Da Kų Cultural Centre
- B Visitor Information Centre
- C Kluane National Park and Reserve Visitor Centre
- 2 CAFN Administration Building
- 3 Lucky Dragon Motel
- 4 Northwestel Exchange
- 5 Our Lady of the Way Catholic Church
- 6 St. Christopher's Anglican Church
- 7 Dakwākāda Building
- 8 Kluane Park Inn
- 9 Brewster House
- 10 Village Square
- 11 Antler Street Sign
- 12 Truck Planter Sculpture
- 13 RCMP Residence
- 14 Nurses' Residence
- 15 James Smith Administration Building
- 16 Weigh Scale
- 17 Swallow Haven
- 18 Dezadeash River Trail
- 19 Al MacLean's Place
- 20 Old Fire Hall
- 21 St. Elias Convention Centre





We hope you enjoyed your tour of historic Haines Junction. Thank you to Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Visitor Information Centre, the Village of Haines Junction and Brigitte Geske for their contributions. If you have additional information, please contact the Yukon Government Cultural Services Branch at 867-667-3458.

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