



News release

For immediate release

Government of Canada announces support for the Canol Trail History Project

August 5, 2021 — Ottawa, Ontario — Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada

Documenting and sharing the history and contributions of Indigenous Peoples, including their participation in Canadian wartime history, is a key element of reconciliation.

Today, the Honourable Daniel Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs, announced \$25,000 in financial support for the Dene Nation to begin to the important task of documenting the Sahtu Dene's role during the Second World War in building the Canol Pipeline, then a critical wartime project.

Indigenous participation in Canadian wartime history has not typically been well documented. The Canol Trail History Project will gather stories about the critical role the Dene played in the pipeline project during the Second World War and communicate this important piece of history to Canadians and to visitors from around the world. This funding will help the Dene Nation to document the Sahtu Dene's contribution, in their own words, so that their history can become part of the Canol Trail experience.

Quote

"I am pleased to support the important work of the Dene Nation and congratulate Chief Yakeleya for his leadership on this project. This effort to document and share the history of the Canol Pipeline Project from an Indigenous perspective is a key part in reconciliation with Dene people. This community-driven project will create further economic development opportunities, enhance tourism and ensure that future generations of Canadians, and all those that visit the region, can learn about the important role the Dene played in the construction of the Canol Pipeline Project and the history of the Canol Trail."

The Honourable Daniel Vandal, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Northern Affairs

"The Dene Nation extends our highest respect to the Dene men and women who worked on the Canol Trail WWII efforts. The traditional knowledge of these brave Dene can finally be recognized through this partnership funding. The funding from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada will be used to honour and respect the Dene contributions to national security that corrects the true history of the Dene and

our nation's sovereignty. Dene men and women who provided knowledge of the land were critical to Canadian and US war efforts. There has been extraordinarily little written about the critical role of the Dene in all phases of its development and this funding is the seed to tell these Dene stories and develop a monument in their honour. We are honoured to correct the history books and elevate our Canol Elders living and in memorial. Our Dene Elders stand ready to provide the important, untold stories on the Dene participation in the construction of the Canol Pipeline and the \$25,000 fund is an important first step.

The Canol Trail multi-media project will reflect the important role of the Dene in the Canol project. I envision an important role for our youth in the project. Additionally, we aim to work with the people on commemorative monuments in Norman Wells and at the Canol Trail head across the Mackenzie River. These efforts serve as tangible evidence of your government's commitment to moving forward along a shared path of reconciliation."

Norman Yakeleya
Dene National Chief/Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief NWT

"With this investment, the Government of Canada is ensuring that the history of the Canol Trail is preserved, and the efforts of the Sahtu Dene during the Second World War will be appropriately recognized and honoured."

Michael McLeod
Member of Parliament for Northwest Territories

Quick facts

- During the Second World War, Canada and the United States worked together in a massive engineering endeavour called the Canol Pipeline Project.
- The project, which enlisted tens of thousands of construction workers, many local Indigenous workers, and included American military soldiers living in remote camps, was completed within 22 months. The pipeline and road were abandoned just 11 months after completion in 1944 as the war had ended and the pipeline was no longer required.
- The work in itself was an engineering feat that included the surveying, clearance, grading, hauling and construction of an oil pipeline across some of the most inhospitable terrain in the world.
- The Dene played a critical part in this project. While there is a well-documented history of the Canol Pipeline Project from a non-Indigenous perspective, there has been little written about the critical role that the Dene played in all phases of its development.

- The Canol trailhead starts in Norman Wells, Northwest Territories, which is within the Sahtu Settlement Area of the Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The trail extends to Whitehorse, Yukon, and has become a tourist attraction for hiking and nature enthusiasts.
- Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada is responsible for the remediation of the federal portion of the Canol Trail. The goal of the Canol Trail Remediation Project was to reduce environmental and human health risks from the former Canol Pipeline. The project concluded in 2019 and is currently undergoing biennial monitoring and surveillance to ensure effective risk-management.
- Since the establishment of the Canol Trail Remediation Working Group in 2007, Canada has invested approximately \$26 million to restore the land, with involvement from the Sahtu Dene and Métis, which benefitted the local economy and provided job opportunities in the Sahtu region.

Associated links

- [Northwest Territories Tourism: Canol Trail](#)
- [Norman Wells Historical Society: Canol Heritage Trail](#)
- [Canol Trail Remediation Project](#)

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