

FOR RELEASE  
November 21, 2006

#06-228

**ARCHAEOLOGY DIG UNEARTHS ORIGINAL FORT SELKIRK**

WHITEHORSE – An archaeological dig this summer near the confluence of the Pelly and Yukon rivers unearthed the remains of the original Fort Selkirk Hudson’s Bay Company post, Selkirk First Nation Chief Darin Isaac and Minister of Tourism and Culture Elaine Taylor announced today.

The project, organized by the Selkirk First Nation and the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture, was headed by archaeologist Victoria Castillo. Castillo is in her second year of PhD studies in Anthropology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

“My thesis is on interaction between Northern Tutchone people and the Hudson’s Bay Company at Fort Selkirk,” Castillo said. “Some historians actually believed that the original site was lost to flooding and erosion by the Pelly River. The fact that we actually found it is very exciting.”

The original Fort Selkirk was built on the banks of the Pelly River in 1848 by Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) trader and explorer Robert Campbell. The site was not well-chosen, and the post was damaged every spring by floodwaters. In early 1852, Campbell moved the post to a nearby site on the Yukon River – the location of today’s Fort Selkirk Historic Site.

The discovery of “*Fort Selkirk I*” goes back to 1988, when Yukon Archaeologist Ruth Gotthardt, along with archaeologists Greg Hare and Norman Easton, discovered a small, well-defined depression in the ground. It was the remains of a cellar, and Gotthardt guessed that it might be Robert Campbell’s original HBC post. The location was marked, but no further investigations were made.

Castillo was assisted on the dig by Morgan Ritchie, a recent Archaeology graduate from Simon Fraser University, and by Curtis Joe and Lauren McGinty from the Selkirk First Nation. The crew also included two *Student Training and Employment Program (STEP)* students, plus four Selkirk First Nation youths.

“This project is of great interest to Selkirk people,” said Chief Isaac. “By encouraging our young people to be involved in archaeology, we contribute to their understanding of our history. The results of this year’s work show promise for more exciting discoveries and we look forward to continuing the investigations.”

“We are very pleased to be a partner with Selkirk First Nation on the exploration of a very significant historic site,” said Taylor.

Funding for this project was provided by the Government of Canada’s Historic Places Initiative, a nation-wide program designed to conserve Canada’s historic places, and by the Government of Yukon Archaeology Program.

-30-

Contact:

Albert Petersen  
Cabinet Communications  
(867) 633-7961  
[albert.petersen@gov.yk.ca](mailto:albert.petersen@gov.yk.ca)

Michael Edwards  
Communications Officer  
Tourism & Culture  
(867) 667-8947  
[mike.edwards@gov.yk.ca](mailto:mike.edwards@gov.yk.ca)

Beverly Brown  
Lands & Resources Director  
Selkirk First Nation  
(867) 537-3331 ex 331  
[brownbj@selkirkfn.com](mailto:brownbj@selkirkfn.com)

Attached: photographs shot during excavation of site.  
*High-resolution versions of these photos, suitable for print media, are available on request by contacting Michael Edwards as listed on this release.*



Archaeologist Victoria Castillo stands in the excavated cellar of the original Fort Selkirk Hudson's Bay Company post.



Archaeologist Victoria Castillo and colleague at work on the site of the original Fort Selkirk Hudson's Bay Company post.