

# Frog Lake

## Historic Site

### Concept Proposal

Prepared for *Alberta Culture  
and Community Spirit*

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This is a proposal to establish an outdoor interpretive exhibit at the site of a nationally significant historic event.

*Here is a place  
rich enough for all*

*a place to understand  
the seasons of the earth*

*a place of stories told  
and never told*

*a place that now urges truth  
and remembrance*



Current views of the Frog Lake site

## Contents

pages 4 and 5

pages 6 to 9

page 10 to 11

page 12 to 13

page 14 to 22

## Overview

### Interpretive Approach

Sensitivity (page 6)

Community Involvement (page 7)

Visitor Expectations (page 7)

Internet Access (page 7)

Site Components (page 8)

Storyline (page 9)

Panel Development (page 9)

### Site Installation Factors

Seasonal factors (page 10)

Habitat factors (page 10)

Landscape factors (page 10)

Rendering of Site Installation (page 11)

### Materials and Construction Methods

Trail (page 12)

Node points (page 12)

Seating (page 12)

Entry marker (page 12)

Markers (page 12 and 13)

1) Four roadside markers

2) Entry

3) Four interpretive site markers

4) Node markers

Interpretive panels (page 13)

Fencing (page 13)

### Preliminary Panel Concepts

1) Frog Lake – The Land and First People (page 14)

2) Treaties (page 15)

3) Settlement (page 16)

4) Mistahimaskwa Big Bear (page 17)

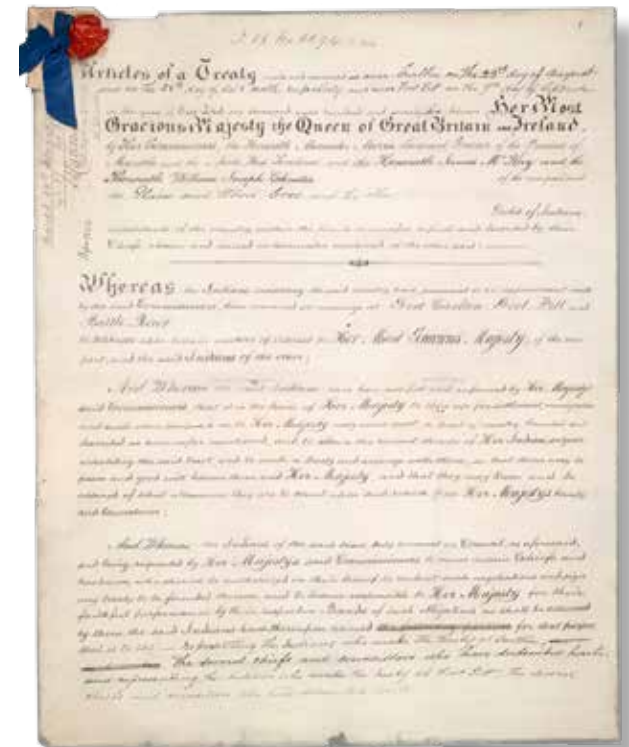
5) 1885 Resistance (page 18)

6) North-west Field Force (page 19)

7) Aftermath (page 20)

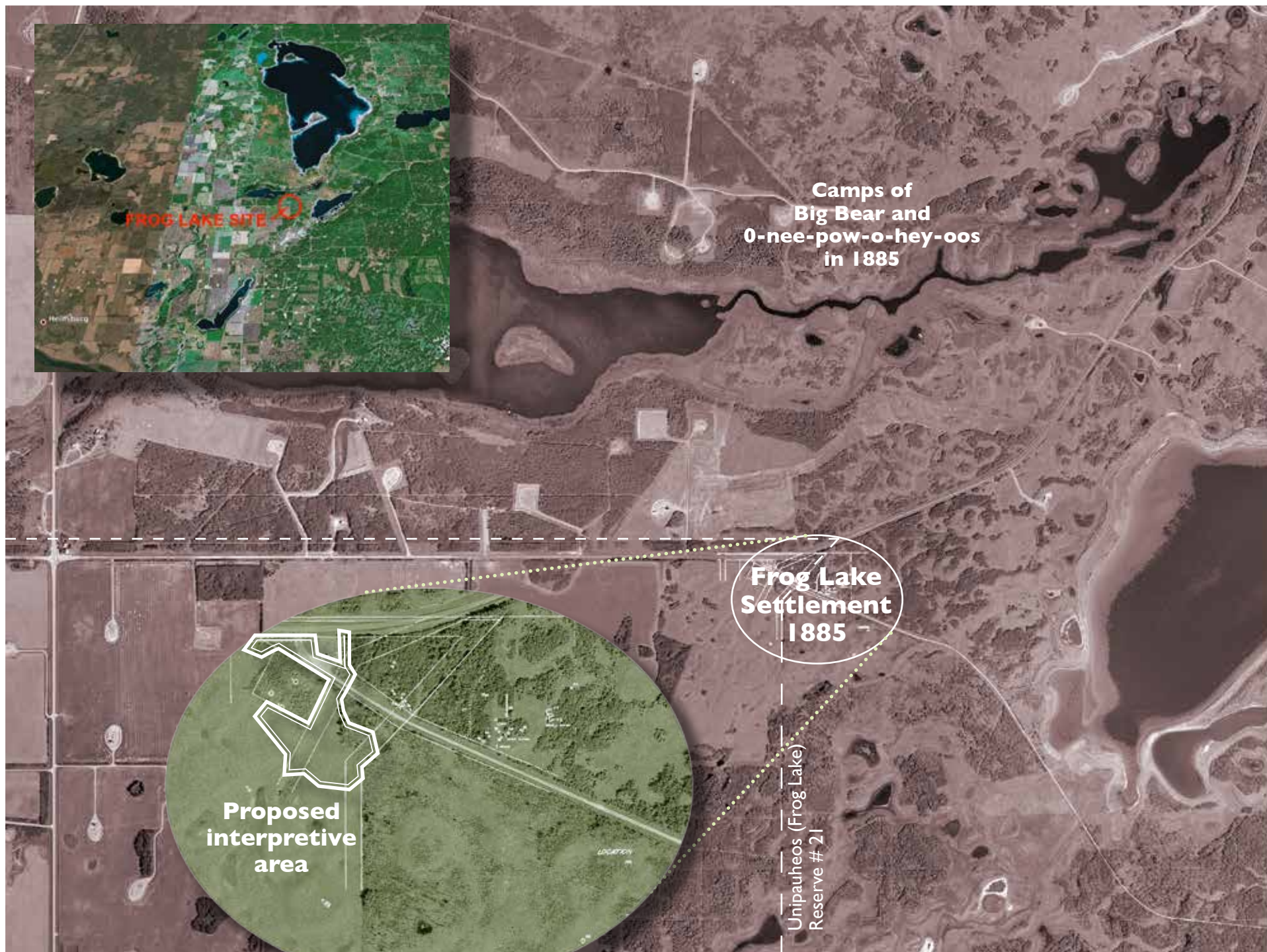
8) Commemoration (page 21)

9) Archeology Frog Lake (page 22)



The first page of Treaty Six







## Overview

Frog Lake Historic Site is situated on a height of land within a vast and attractive rural landscape. Its remoteness and silence reduces public awareness of the site, its dramatic past, its short life as a settlement, and its importance in Canadian history.

This concept proposal, for the installation of a provincially funded interpretive exhibit at the historic Frog Lake settlement, reviews the issues, visualizes site installations, and recommends a web component. Consideration of the adjacent lands and its communities is a major factor in this development plan.

This historic site has been recognized by National and Provincial initiatives. The most enduring to date is the cairn and siting of grave markers on a small plot of Parks Canada land (seen on right).

It is important to note that the First Nations communities are keen on developing plans for an interpretive centre on adjacent reservation lands. Therefore, this proposal will attempt to complement existing and future developments in a manner that is historically accurate and enticing for tourists. It should be a site that can be used and understood by all communities and visitors.

An important aspect to this proposal is the recommendation to develop a website dedicated to this historic place and its history.



*Nature of the land - view across the grave and cairn site (Parks Canada site) to the proposed interpretive area and beyond.*

## Interpretive Approach –

- Frog Lake as flash point for First Nations frustrations
- 12000 years of human presence in the Frog Lake region

The proposed interpretive approach will deal with Frog Lake both as flash point for First Nations frustrations, and the 12000 years of human presence in the region. The proposed land site and website will incorporate input from local residents, visitors and historic records to give it form and meaning, and encourage active dialogue and ongoing use.

Through the use of markers, interpretive panels, trails and landscape features, this approach addresses the following issues.

**Historical significance** – telling the story of Canadian Government land appropriation, Treaty Six, and the 1885 incident that brought a dramatic end to the fledgling settlement

**Spirit** – exposing the essence of a site that has captured the imagination of people for millennia; – creating respect for the land and the spirit of its special places.

**People** – providing a background to settlement by First Nations Peoples, traders, pioneers and others in the region.

**Survival** - access to game, fish, agriculture and local resources is essential for people to live on this land.

**Location** - For many generations, the Frog Lake area has provided water, sheltering hills, sunlight and access to game to native people. Its establishment as a reserve necessitated the development of a Government of Canada presence in the form of a NWMP station, a HBC post and a Roman Catholic church. The latter was situated on a high point of land and visible from miles around.

## Sensitivity

Though central to the continued importance of Frog Lake, interpretations of the historic incident must be told in a comprehensive, accurate and sensitive manner. There must be an acknowledgement of all people whose lives were affected by the incident.

Due to the varied interpretations of the Frog Lake event, and the fact that the adjacent Frog Lake First Nations Band was not responsible for the killings, it is important that the event is related with sensitivity and discretion.

*(Proposed) Roadside markers (as seen from the west) utilize wooden poles reminiscent of traditional building materials, as well as of sticks used to play drums and aboriginal handgames.*



## Community Involvement

An important aspect of this proposal is to develop long-term connections to the site by various local communities and interest groups. As this site has meaning to many, development of it may serve to establish connections amongst the people of the area and encourage them to actively use this rural significant place.

Local communities should be encouraged to participate in the development and installation stages of the site. This would ensure local engagement and acceptance.

## Visitor Expectations

It is important to portray this site in a way that speaks to diverse tourist interests and expectations. If a visitor's expectations are satisfied, then word of mouth, along with advertising and internet information, will communicate this experience to others, and encourage repeat visits.

## Internet Access

Development of a proposed website, with a linked blog for comment and discussion, will affect long-term individual and group connections to the site. It will serve to augment the information presented on the interpretive panels, provide for ongoing personal and historic content, allow for world-wide access and comment, refer the user to related links, and encourage travel to Frog Lake Historic Site.



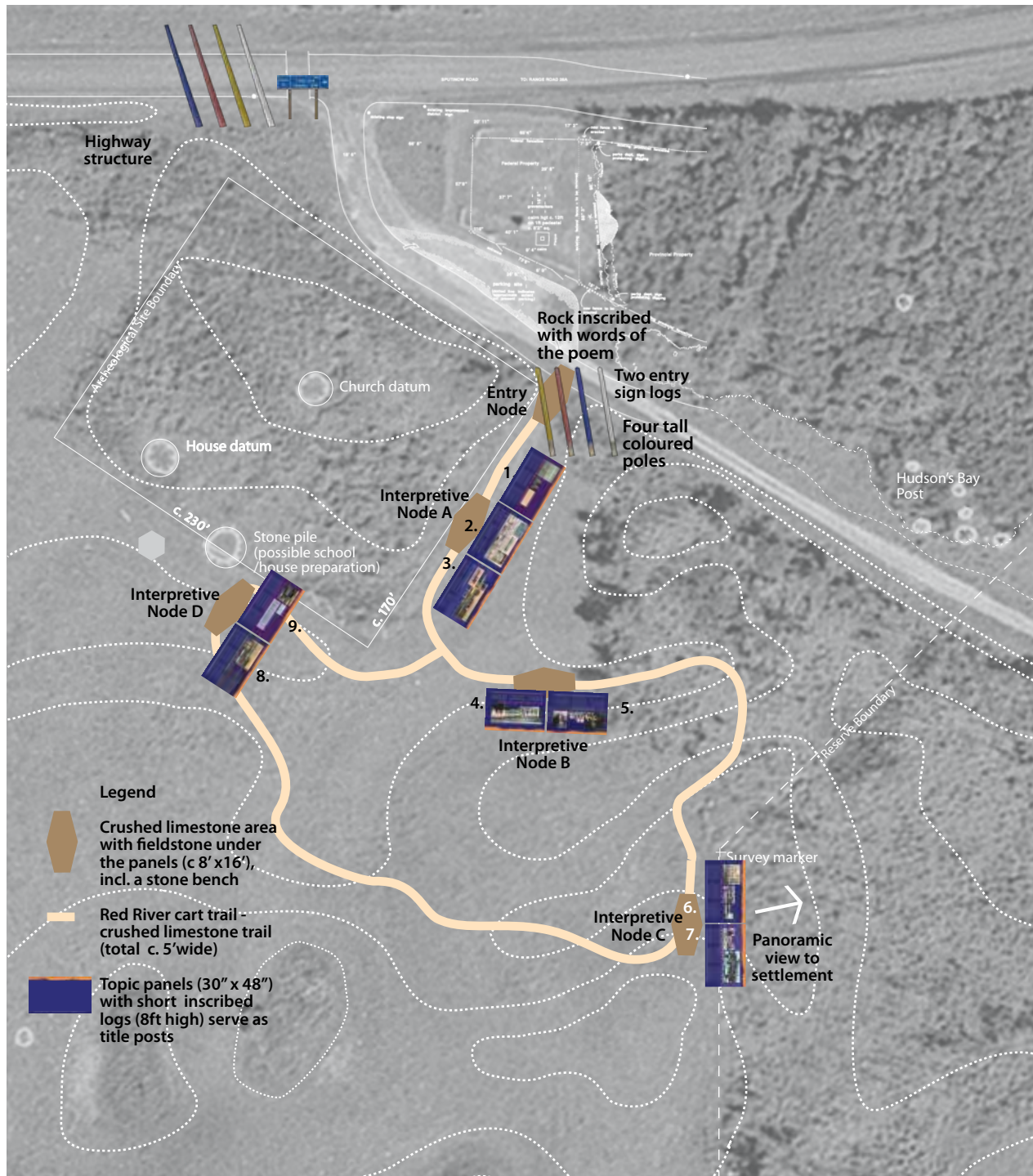
**Regional First Nations colours.**

*Variations of these are used throughout the proposal.*

**(Proposed) Roadside markers** - (at the turn-off) illustrate how effectively structure and colour can stand out in the landscape. The poles are painted with the regional First Nations colours shown above.







## Site Components

- **Roadside Marker** - four tall poles serve as the main roadside marker for the site. Words inscribed into two of the poles (see pg. 12) identify the Frog Lake site and introduce the visitor to the first stage of the interpretive concept.
- **Entry Node** - opposite the parking area two raised horizontal logs are placed on either side of the trail entrance. With the inscribed words 'Frog Lake' (left side) and the Alberta Logo followed by 'Historic Site' (right side) they also serve as the entry sign to the interpretive site. Four coloured poles provide a landmark with the inscribed words of a poem (see pg. 13). The trail is five foot wide and made of crushed limestone. A large boulder provides a natural focus and barrier to vehicle traffic.
- **Interpretive Node A** - is located along the trail and runs adjacent to the archeological site boundary. This node includes the panels:
  - 1. FROG LAKE – THE LAND AND FIRST PEOPLE
  - 2. TREATIES
  - 3. SETTLEMENT
- **Interpretive Node B** - is situated on the trail leading towards the woods and includes the panels:
  - 4. MISTAHIMASKWA BIG BEAR
  - 5. 1885 RESISTANCE
  - The trail continues into the woods and up to the panoramic viewpoint.
- **Interpretive Node C** - provides a panoramic view towards the former site of the Hudson's Bay Post and further towards the settlement. It includes the panels:
  - 6. NORTH-WEST FIELD FORCE
  - 7. AFTERMATH
  - The trail leads along the crest of a knoll and provides a peaceful view across fields towards the distant hills.
- **Interpretive Node D** - provides a view across the fields and into the adjacent archaeological site. It includes the panels:
  - 8. COMMEMORATION
  - 9. ARCHAEOLOGY FROG LAKE
  - **Return to main trail along archeological boundary.**



## Storyline

The storyline developed by Historic Sites and Museums for its proposed replacement panels was incorporated into this proposal. The original storyline was grouped into the following headings:

1 FROG LAKE – THE LAND AND FIRST PEOPLE

2 TREATIES

3 SETTLEMENT

4 MISTAHIMASKWA BIG BEAR

5 1885 RESISTANCE

6 NORTH-WEST FIELD FORCE

7 AFTERMATH

8 COMMEMORATION

9 ARCHAEOLOGY FROG LAKE.

The panels will accommodate text in three languages, and related image material. These panels should complement the proposed trail and interpretive nodes, use common materials, and align themselves to the natural lay of the land.

A more in-depth version of the historical text should be provided on the internet site, where it can be developed more fully over time, and allow for comment and the addition of individual stories.

The incident of the massacre in particular, represented on panels four through seven, will generate comment and interest, and should be supported by a website that invites discussion.

Engagement with the local community should serve to develop ongoing programs that integrate this site into the culture of the region.

a) This concept proposal makes it possible to review panel content and sequence in order to develop a final project outline for development.

b) Development of specific panels which focus upon the 1885 incident must involve the local community in order to ensure acceptance of the final text. It is important that the event is related accurately and sensitively on all visual material.

Below is a listing of the victims of Frog Lake:

*Nine people of the frog Lake settlement were killed:*

- **Thomas Quinn**, Government Indian agent
- **Charles Gouin**, worker
- **John Delaney**, farm instructor
- **Father Leon-Adelard Fafard**, Oblate missionary
- **Father Felix Marchand**, Oblate missionary
- **John Williscraft**, Oblate missionary assistant
- **John C. Gownalock**, mill operator
- **William G. Gilchrist**, mill operator assistant
- **George Dill**, independent trader

*Six of Big Bear's Cree convicted for the killings at Frog Lake were executed at the North West Mounted Police fort at Battleford.*

*They were:*

- **Wandering Spirit**
- **Miserable Man**
- **Manichoos**
- **Walking the Sky**
- **Napaise**
- **Apischiskoos/Little Bear**

*Others directly affected:*

- **Big Bear**, jailed, and died of sickness shortly after release
- **Theresa Delaney**, settler taken prisoner and later released
- **Theresa Gowanlock**, settler taken prisoner and later released

## Panel Development

## Site Installation Factors

### Seasonal factors

As the seasons are an important part of the historic, geologic and natural life cycles of this area, the site should encourage year-round usage.

Initially, there should be no seasonal removal of any interpretive components. However the situation will be monitored and adjustments made if required. All items should be installed in a manner that does not pose a safety hazard for people or animals.

### Habitat factors

Currently the main area of the interpretive site is an open field used for cattle grazing. Once this activity is curtailed (through arrangement with Alberta Historic Resources), indigenous plants will again start to cover the site to resume a more natural look. The areas immediately west of the archeological area provide an indication of what this may look like in the future. Though not immediately a concern, current planning should take this into account.

### Landscape factors

Large boulders from the area will be placed near node points to serve as visual accents and seating. These large boulders are a common sight along the edge of nearby fields and may be available for relocation to the site. Boulders located in the bush should not be used since they may be of cultural significance to local people.



**Local vegetation** - this image illustrates how bushes will spread into the open field. Some maintenance of the site will be required to limit the spread and height of vegetation



**Boulder with inscribed poem** (same as on the cover) - to be used at the entry of the interpretive trail.

**Roadside boulders** - these are located along the road leading to the Frog Lake Historic Site.





## Renderings of site installations



*Various prominent components lead visitors onto the interpretive site.  
Installation views showing new pathways connecting Interpretive Nodes A, B and C.*



## Materials and Construction Methods

**Trail** - crushed limestone compliments the natural soil colour and does not affect natural vegetation.

**Node points** - larger areas of crushed limestone and adjacent boulders should be used to define each set of exhibit panels.

**Seating** - large boulders would be placed at show points as well as at various locations along the trail for visual interest and seating.

**Markers:** ideally all wood markers or signs would be made from straight logs from which the bark has been removed and all branches cut flush to the trunk. All wood should be treated with a preservative that is insoluble and leach resistant. Alberta-sourced lodgepole pine or tamarack would be appropriate.

a) **Roadside markers** - 40ft peeled logs (32ft exposed) stained blue, red, yellow and white. The words would be sandblasted or carved into an elongated notch 10 in. wide extending from the 10ft. to the 25 ft. mark. The words would be painted white and the entire notched area varnished for visual contrast and durability. A log diameter of 14 inches is required 18 feet from the base.

B.) **Entry sign** (see page 11): two logs placed on either side of the entrance would be inscribed with the words *Frog Lake* (left log) and *Historic Site* (right log) sandblasted or carved into an elongated notch. The Province of Alberta logo would be included on the right log. The words would be painted black and the entire notched area varnished for visual contrast and durability.

c) **Entry markers** - four 30ft poles (22ft exposed) stained blue, red, yellow and white. One line of a poem would be sand blasted or carved into each pole and then filled with a white or dark blue epoxy paint;

d) **Node markers** - 16ft poles (10ft exposed) with titles of each panel topic sandblasted into an elongated notch that is stained blue, red, yellow and white. The words are painted dark blue and then the entire notched area is varnished for visual contrast and durability.

**Roadside markers** - four 32ft. poles inscribed with the words:

**Blue pole** - FROG LAKE HISTORIC SITE

**Yellow pole** - blank

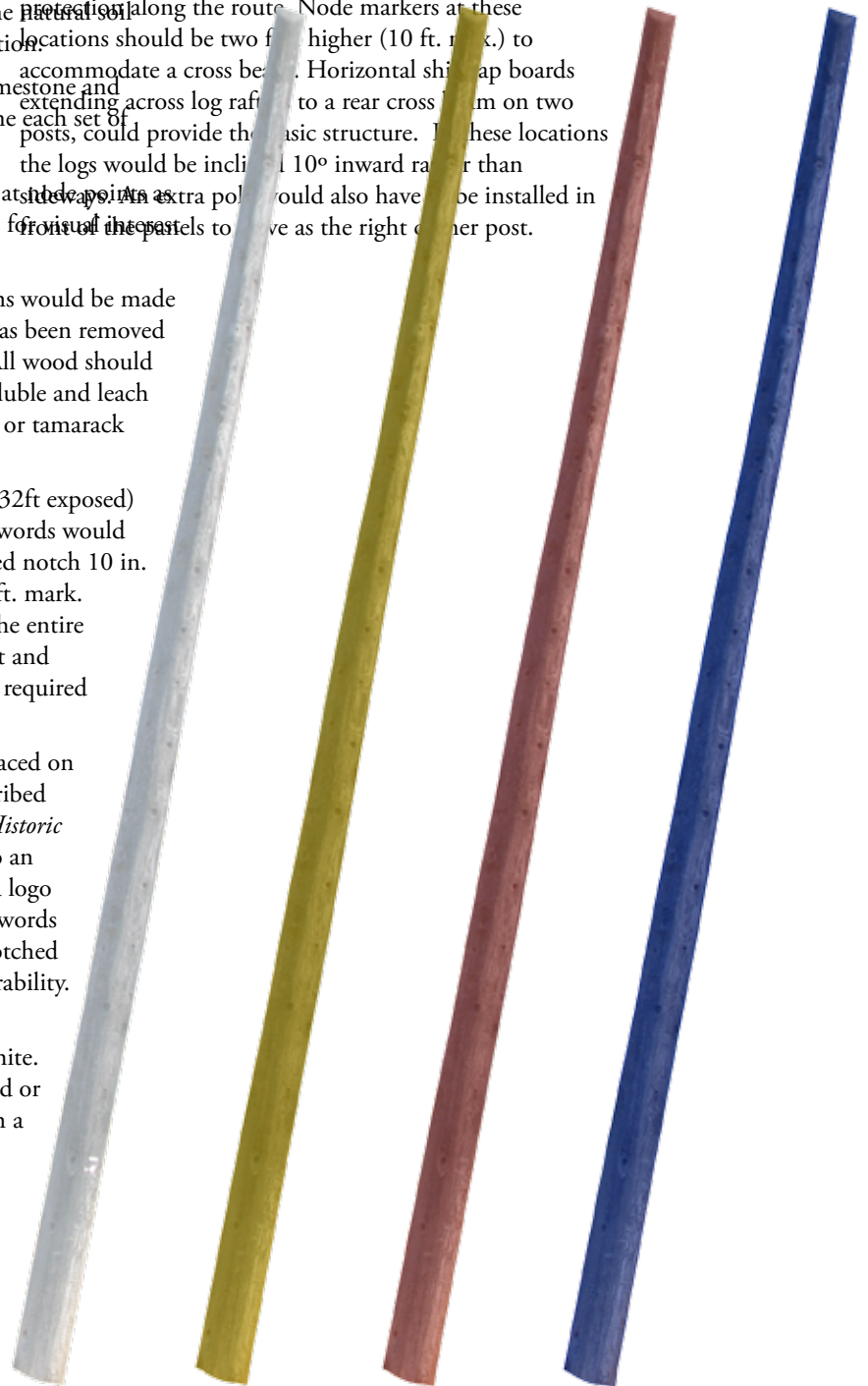
**Red pole** - blank

**White pole** - AS LONG AS THE RIVER RUNS

**Note:** a) while no dimensions are indicated, all markers are shown at a relative height to each other and to the figure;

b) all markers and poles are inclined to 10° from vertical.

of simple shelters. Due to the far ranging aspect of the interpretive trail, and the wide open field in which it is located, shelters at selected Nodes would provide protection along the route. Node markers at these locations should be two feet higher (10 ft. max.) to accommodate a cross beam. Horizontal ship lap boards extending across log rafters to a rear cross beam on two posts, could provide the basic structure. At these locations the logs would be inclined 10° inward rather than outward. An extra pole would also have to be installed in front of the post to serve as the right corner post.



Roadside markers



**Interpretive panels** - The panels are 1/2 inch thick hi-pressure laminate rectangular panels mounted directly on a metal framework supported by two steel posts.

**Fencing:** Local fencing methods should be used to surround the archaeological site as well as all borders of the interpretive area. This will restrict cattle or vehicles from entering the interpretive exhibit area. A maintenance gate should be located along the north side, adjacent to the roadway.



*Fence - example of a local fence structure.*

**Entry markers (left)** - four 24ft. poles would be inscribed as follows:

*White pole*

- HERE WAS A PLACE RICH ENOUGH FOR ALL

*Blue pole*

- A PLACE TO BELIEVE IN THE BOUNTIES OF THE EARTH

*Red pole*

- A PLACE OF STORIES TOLD AND NEVER TOLD

*Yellow pole*

- A PLACE THAT NOW URGES TRUTH AND REMEMBRANCE

**Node markers (below)** - nine 10ft. poles inscribed with the titles of each set of interpretive panels:

*Node A:*

- THE LAND & FIRST PEOPLE

- TREATIES

- SETTLEMENT

*Node B:*

- MISTAHIMASKWA

- 1885 RESISTANCE

*Node C:*

- NORTHWEST FIELD FORCE

- AFTERMATH

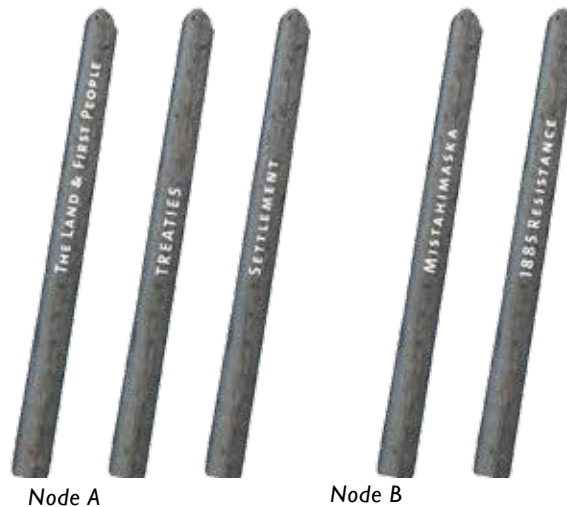
*Node D:*

- COMMEMORATION

- ARCHAEOLOGY

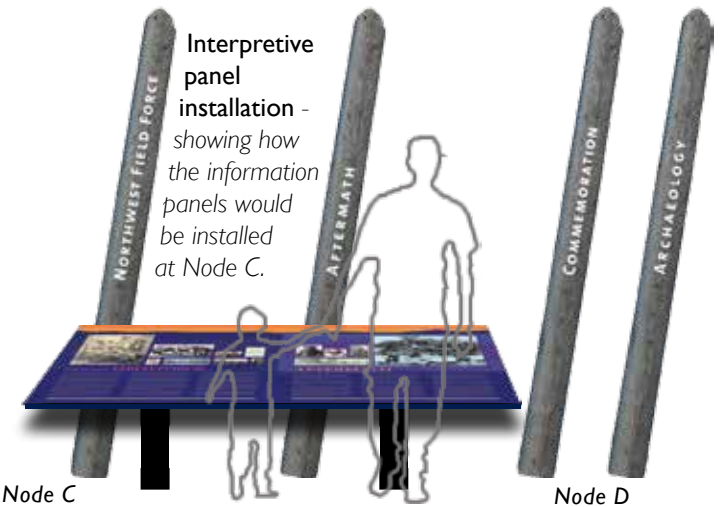


Entry markers



Node A

Node B



Node C

Node D

**Interpretive panel installation** - showing how the information panels would be installed at Node C.