

# Alaska Gold Rush Background

## Lesson Plan for "The Alaska Myth" Podcast, Episode 3

**Grade Level:** Adapt for 6th - 12th grades

**Subject:** Social Studies / Alaska Studies / History

**Topic:** Gold Rush

### Objectives & Goals:

Students will:

- Explain where and when the Klondike Gold Rush occurred
- Identify differences between water and land routes, identify traditional Tlingit territories
- Identify consequences related to gold rush routes

### Materials

- Blank paper trifolded or prepared graphic organizer: [color](#) | [symbol](#) | [image](#)
- Colored pencils or markers
- [Alaska Myth Podcast: Episode 3](#)
- Student handouts or slides of Adapted text from the National Parks Service: "[What Was the Gold Rush?](#)"

### Assessment

Introduce the thinking routine: Color, Symbol, Image. After this background lesson, students will complete the color section.

Color: Now that we've talked about the Gold Rush, when you think about the Gold Rush, what color is it? Color that in the color section. Please explain how/why you chose that color.

Can be small group/individual work/whole Class. (Approximately 5-10 minutes)

*Note: Symbol and Image will be completed in subsequent lessons.*

### Activities (adaptable, 10 min - 1 class)

*Teacher can provide a 5-10 minute mini lesson showing the maps and paraphrasing text OR can deliver a document based question/inquiry lesson over the length of one class period.*

*Lesson builds background knowledge of the Klondike Gold Rush before subsequent lessons.*

#### Opener:

Activate prior knowledge by asking/ discussing/ diagraming what the Alaska Gold Rush was, where it occurred, and who was involved. (5 minutes)

#### Main Lesson:

Read and analyze four documents: two maps and two text to understand the routes (Small Group/Individual Work/Whole Class) (Approximate 20-30 minutes)

Document A: Locate the Dawson City and Klondike Gold Field, the Chilkoot and White Pass Routes, and Dyea and Skagway on a map.

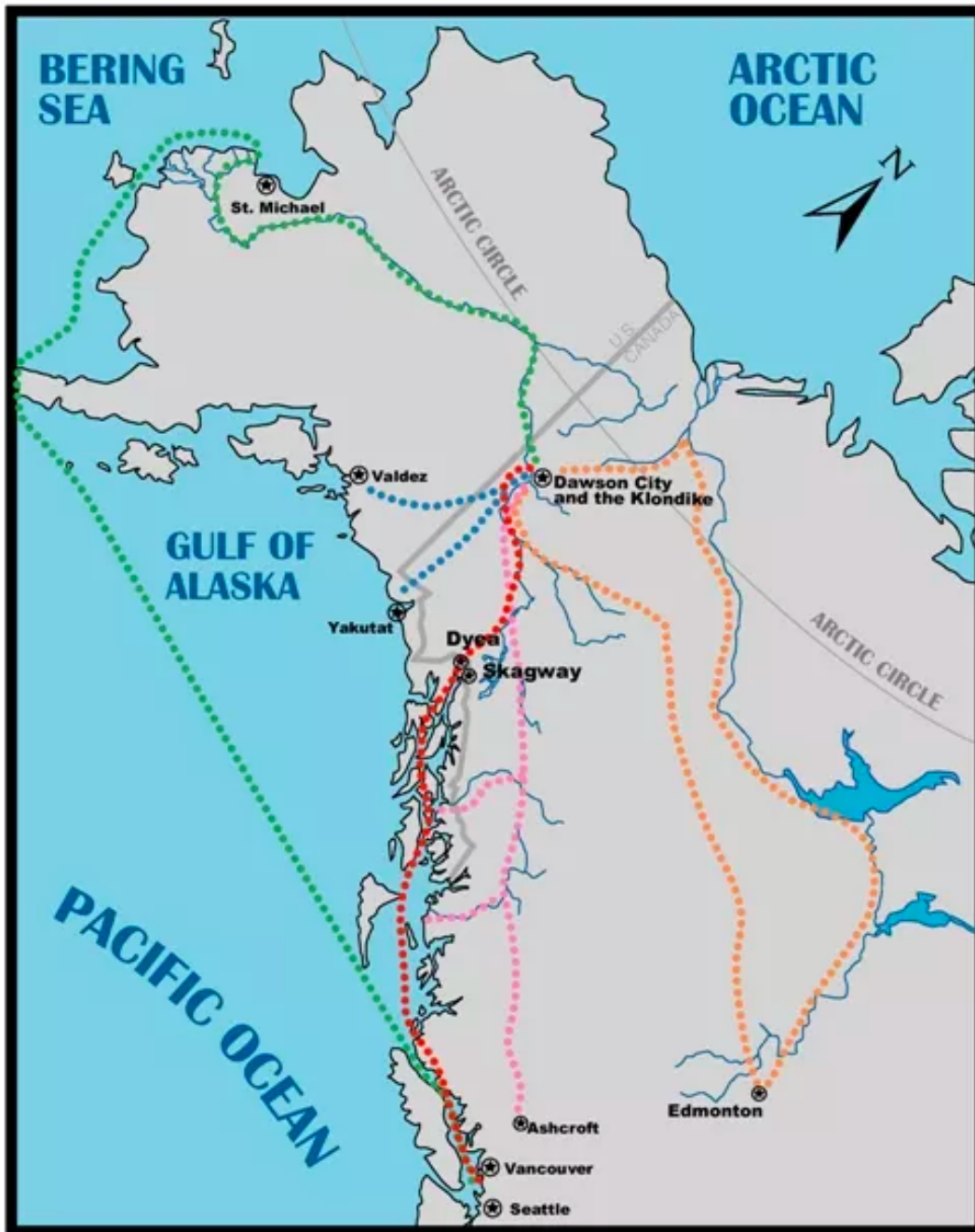
Document B: Identify traditional Tlingit communities. Discuss possible impacts/responses when explorers and gold miners entered traditional Tlingit territories.

Document C: Consider the differences between wealth from gold riches and wealth from culture, land, and ways of life

Document D: Identify positive and negative consequences associated with routes to gold fields. Discuss whether or not the Klondike Gold Rush was "The last grand adventure of the 19th century."

Optional: play Alaska Myth Podcast, episode 3. 33 min. May help students to listen to the whole podcast in this background lesson before re-listening to certain segments in subsequent lessons.

# Document A: Trails to the Klondike Gold Fields 1897-98



## Trails to the Klondike Gold Fields 1897-98

- ..... EDMONTON "BACKDOOR ROUTES"
- ..... ALL AMERICAN "GLACIER ROUTES"
- ..... ASHCROFT ROUTE
- ..... ALL WATER ROUTE "RICHMAN'S ROUTE"
- ..... CHILKOOT AND WHITE PASS ROUTES

- How is the Chilkoot and White Pass Route different from the other routes?
- What are the advantages of the Chilkoot and White Pass Route for explorers and gold miners?

from: <https://www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/goldrush.htm>

# Document B: Traditional Tlingit Country

"This list of Tlingit tribes, clans and clan houses was compiled and reconstructed by Andrew Hope, III. The list is by no means final. It is a work in progress." Alaska Native Knowledge Network, July 2003.

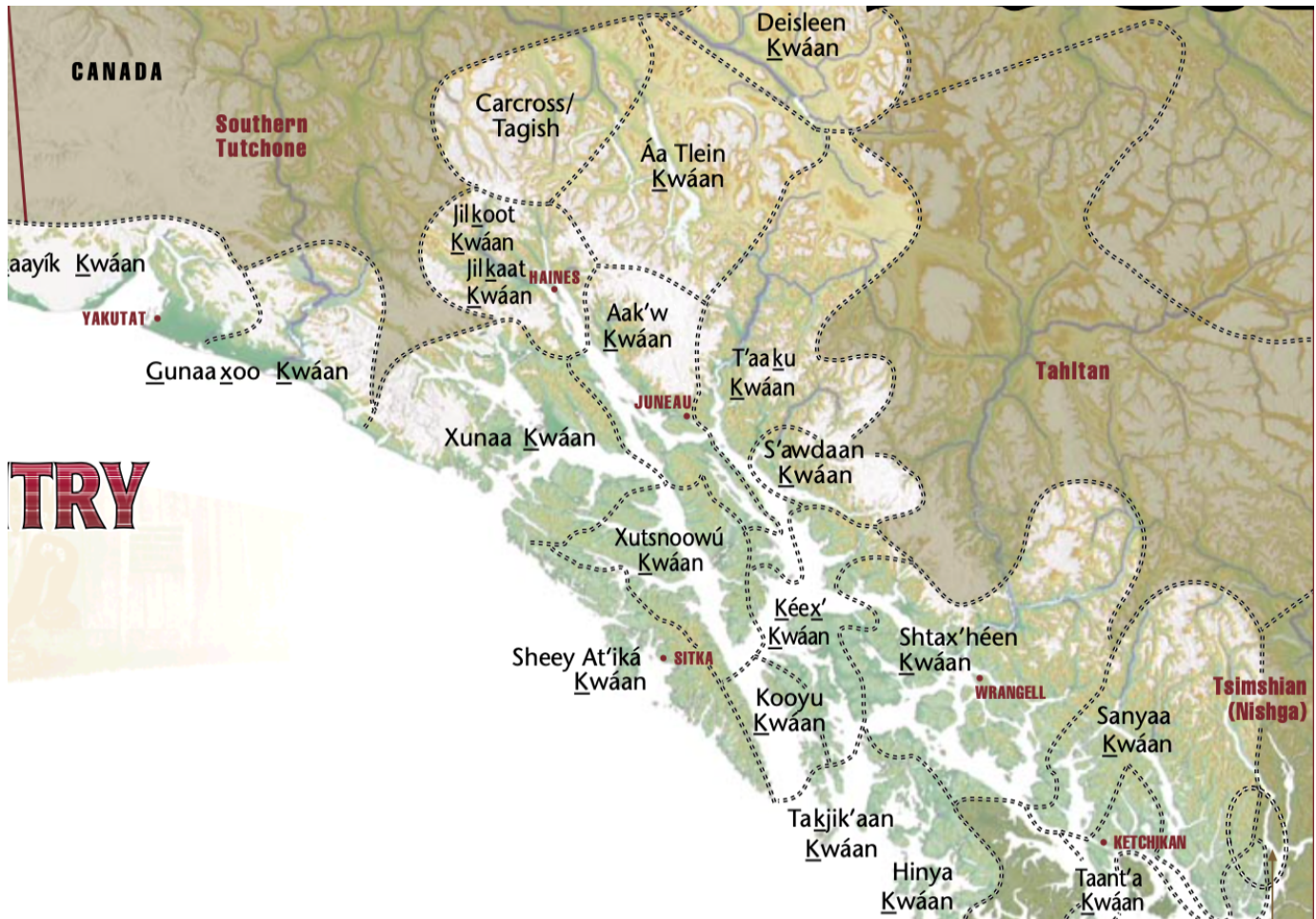


Figure 1: <http://ankn.uaf.edu/ANCR/Southeast/TlingitMap/> accessed Dec 23, 2023

- How many traditional communities do you see?
- Locate Jil kaat Kwaan (near Haines)
- Locate Carcross/Tagish (north of Haines)
- What do you think happened when explorers and gold miners entered traditional Tlingit country?

## Document C: The Last Grand Adventure

While many routes existed to the Klondike, most took the Chilkoot or White Pass routes. Cries of "Gold! Gold! Gold in the Klondike!" started a race. 100,000 hopeful miners sprinted toward Alaska and the Yukon with their eyes on riches. Alaska Native and First Nations communities adapted to hold onto another kind of wealth: their culture, land, and way of life.

In August, 1896, Skookum Jim and his family found gold near the Klondike River in Canada's Yukon Territory. Their discovery sparked one of the most frantic gold rushes in history. Nearby miners immediately flocked to the Klondike to stake the rest of the good claims. Almost a year later, news ignited the outside world. A wave of gold seekers bought supplies and boarded ships in Seattle and other west coast port cities. They headed north thinking they would strike it rich.

- How can culture, land, and way of life contribute to wealth?
- What is more valuable, riches from gold or culture, land, and ways of life?

## Document D: Which Route to Take?

Stampeders faced several routes to the Klondike. Some chose the all water or "rich man's route." Sailing around Alaska and up the Yukon river was easy, but expensive. Some stampeders tried walking the entire way with one of the overland routes. These were often tangled messes. Folks taking some of these routes arrived two years after everyone else. Other stampeders tried crossing the glaciers near Yakutat and Valdez. In a sea of icy towers, many of these people got lost or went snow blind.

Most stampeders opted for the cheapest, most direct routes - the White Pass and Chilkoot Trails. A stamper taking this "poor man's" route sailed up the Inside Passage. They disembarked, then hiked over the Coast Range mountains to reach the head of the Yukon River. On a homemade boat, stampeders traveled over 500 miles by river to reach the gold fields.

Through the fall and winter of 1897-98, ships delivered gold seekers to Skagway and nearby Dyea, Alaska. Both mushroomed from tents to towns in a matter of months. Merchants built a two-mile dock on beaches where Tlingit people traditionally fished.

- How did miners decide what route to take?
- What were two positive/negative consequences of their choices?

By midsummer of 1898 there were 18,000 people at Dawson. By August many of the stampeders had started for home, most of them broke. The next year saw a still larger exodus of miners when gold was discovered at Nome, Alaska. The great Klondike Gold Rush ended as suddenly as it had begun. Towns such as Dawson City and Skagway began to decline. Others, including Dyea, disappeared altogether, leaving only memories of what many consider to be the last grand adventure of the 19th century.

- Do you agree the Klondike Gold Rush was the "last grand adventure of the 19th century (1800s)"? Explain your reasons.

from: <https://www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/goldrush.htm>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

adapted from Harvard Graduate School of Education Project Zero

Color

Symbol

Image
