Northern Biographies

Kw'ahtidee Jimmy Bruneau

Knowing Two Ways
A time of great change for the Tłįchǫ







Acknowledgements

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Chief Jimmy Bruneau

Jimmy Bruneau lived from 1881 to 1975. He was an important and respected leader during a time of great change for the Tłąchǫ.



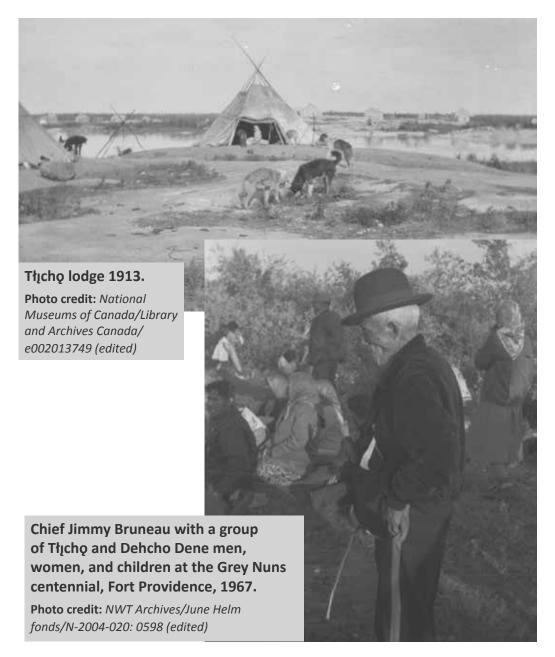
Hand games Fort Rae 1962—Jimmy Bruneau centre front.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/June Helm fonds/N-2004-020: 0356 (edited)

Front cover photo credit: NWT Archives/Richard Finnie

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Contents

Tłįchǫ Words	5
The Story Begins	7
Marriage and Family	21
Treaty 11	23
Bruneau Becomes Chief	25
A Tłįchǫ School	39
Final Days	47
Glossary	49
Discussion Questions	51
Information Sources	53



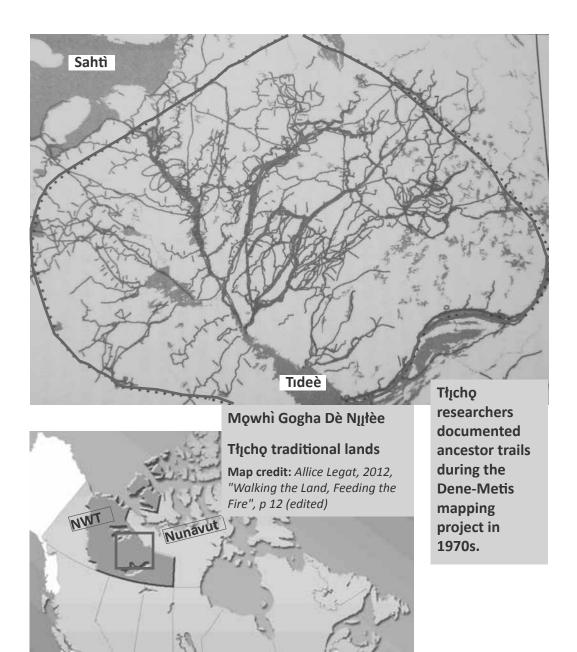
Photo credit: NWT Archives/Henry Busse

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Tłįcho Words

This book uses some Tł₁cho place names and other words. Tł₁cho spellings and English meanings are from Tł₁cho Yatıì Multimedia Dictionary.

Tłլcho (pronunciation)	English
Tłįchǫ (tlee-chon)	Dogrib
Behchokò (bay-cho-ko)	Fort Rae, Rae-Edzo
Gamètì (gam-ma-tea)	Rae Lakes
Wekweètì (wek-way-tea)	Snare Lake
Whatì (what-tea)	Lac La Martre
Tideè (tea-day)	Great Slave Lake
Sahtì (sah-tea)	Great Bear Lake
Mowhì (mon-fwee)	Monfwi, Murphy, Morphy
Kw'ahtıdeè (kwa-tea-day)	Chief or Grand Chief
kweèt'ıį (kwe-tea)	white people
k'àowo (ka-woo)	traditional leader
k'aàwı (ka-we)	trading boss or middle person between Tłįchǫ and traders



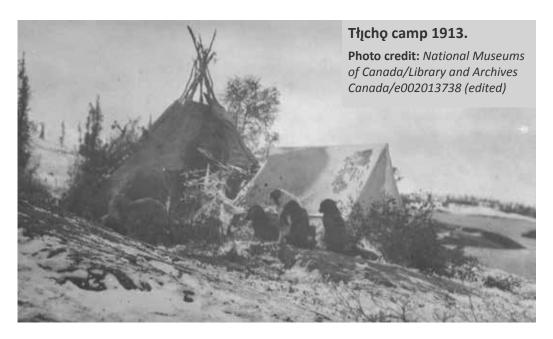
The Story Begins

Jimmy Bruneau was born on December 12, 1881. His parents were Tłıcho Dene. Tłıcho traditional lands—Mowhi Gogha Dè Nıılèe—cover a large area between Sahti (Great Bear Lake) and Tıdeè (Great Slave Lake).

Tłįchǫ ancestor trails link thousands of places and stories that carry Tłįchǫ knowledge. Tłįchǫ language and culture is tied directly to this land.

When Bruneau was young, the Tłıcho followed an annual round of hunting, fishing, and trapping. They mainly lived in the bush and made regular visits to trading posts for gatherings and supplies.

Women did most of the work to raise children and maintain the household. Men hunted and women processed the harvest.



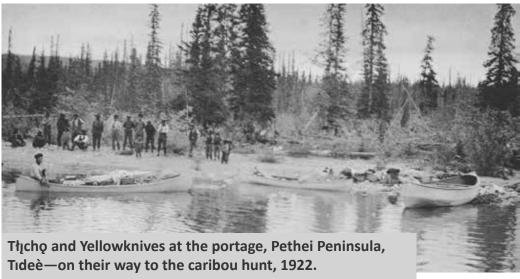


Photo credit: NWT Archives/John Russell fonds/N-1979-073: 0642 (edited)

Every day people gathered firewood, fetched water, checked nets and snares, and fed dogs. Other activities changed with the seasons.

For example, during break-up (May-June) people hunted small game and birds, collected birch bark to make canoes, cut and peeled logs, and visited.

When the water and sun got warm (June-August) people tanned hides, hunted birds, gathered plants and berries, and travelled and traded.

When it got darker (August-September) people made dryfish, stick fish, and dry meat; hunted barrenground caribou; and prepared to move to winter camp.

When the winds got cold (September-October) people moved to winter camp, made winter gear and clothing, hunted ducks, and gathered berries.

During freeze-up (October-November) people trapped small and large game for furs and food, and made more winter gear and clothing.



Tłįcho camped on island 1913; with birchbark canoe and york boat. Photo credit: Tłįchohistory.com: Life on the Land; Mason, CMC 26010 (edited)



In a birchbark canoe, the whole family comes to Fort Rae for treaty, visiting, and trading July 1923.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/John Russell fonds/N-1979-073: 0551

When the days got short (November-February) people hunted caribou and ptarmigan, travelled by dog team and showshoe, went to spiritual gatherings, and trapped for furs and food.

When the days got longer (March-April) people hunted caribou and ptarmigan, trapped muskrats, and fished with hooks through the ice.

Tłıcho groups shared land and people. Within their traditional lands people moved from one group to another, following ties of blood or marriage.

Each group was loosely connected through hunting, fishing, trading, and family. People came together in larger or smaller groups, depending on their need for food and furs.



Three dog teams leaving Fort Rae, 1917-18.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Alma Guest fonds/N-1979-067: 0060



Photo credit: National Museums of Canada/Library and Archives Canada/e002013741 (edited)



Fish stage of frozen stick fish, Whatì 1959.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/June Helm fonds/N-2004-020: 0232

Jimmy Bruneau's father—Dzimi—was a k'àowo (traditional leader) among the Dechilaagot'ı (Edge of the Woods People)—one of six regional groups.

A k'àowo had authority because people respected his skills and knowledge—of hunting, trails, the land, bush life—and chose to follow him.

For many years before he died Dzimi was also the k'aàwı (trading boss or middle person between the people and traders). As k'aàwı he had knowledge of kweèt'ı (white people) and skills to negotiate a good deal for trading furs.

Dzimi died when Jimmy Bruneau was 16 years old. Mowhì—Jimmy's uncle—then became k'àowo.

How the Tłįcho

A young woman who did not have a husband lived with her two brothers. One day a handsome stranger came to their house. The brothers said to the sister, "This handsome man has come for you so you must marry him." So the couple wed.

On their wedding night the young woman woke to the sound of a dog gnawing on a bone. The woman's husband was no longer at her side. She jumped up, lit the fire, and searched the tent. But there was no dog in the tent. The woman went back to bed and fell asleep.

Once again she woke to the sound of a dog gnawing on a bone. The woman called out to one of her brothers. He threw a hatchet in the direction of the noise. There was a loud cry and then silence.

The woman and her brothers quickly lit the fire and found a large black dog lying dead. The woman's husband did not return.

Eventually the woman gave birth to six puppies. She loved the puppies and hid them in a sack.

Came To Be

One day upon returning to the camp, the woman noticed the footprints of children around the camp. The next day instead of checking her snares as she usually did, she hid behind a bush close to the tent.

After she left, the six puppies crawled out of the sack and

turned into three girls and three boys. The woman ran towards them. Before she could reach them, two of the girls and one of the boys jumped back into the sack.

The other three children grew up strong and healthy and

produced many children. We are descended from them and that is why we call ourselves the Tłıcho.









Nunavut

Life on the Land is Changing

Tłįchǫ traditional life on the land changed a lot during Bruneau's time. Starting with the fur trade, the Tłįchǫ were more and more in contact with kweèt'ıì (white people) and their values, goods, and institutions.

Before they had face-to-face contact, the Tłıcho were aware of kweèt'ıı and their trade goods.

In 1852—29 years before Jimmy Bruneau was born—the Hudson's Bay Company set up Old Fort Rae in the North Arm of Great Slave Lake. It was a central Tłįchǫ trading post until 1906, when Jimmy Bruneau was 25 years old.

At different times, Tłıcho groups also traded at other forts in the NWT such as Simpson, Franklin, Norman, and Resolution.

Trading stopped at Old Fort Rae when the Catholic mission and Hudson's Bay Company moved to Fort Rae.



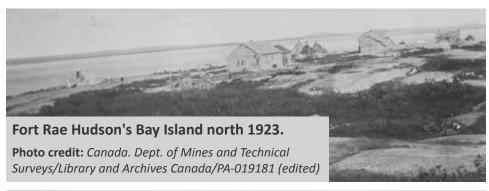




Fort Rae

Fort Rae is located on Marian Lake, on two islands and the mainland. It is a good area for fish. Tłącho no longer needed to travel on the big lake to reach their main trading post.

During Bruneau's time, more Tłıcho moved from the bush into town. Fort Rae became the main community.







Marriage and Family

Jimmy and Anne Bruneau married. Over the years they had 12 children. Their son Susie is the only child who lived to be an adult.

Jimmy and Anne spent most of their days in the bush.

In 1973 when Anne was 83 years old, she talked about the times before Jimmy Bruneau became chief.

"... we spent most of our days in the bush. We didn't have a hard time in the bush like the young people have nowadays."

"We bought everything in cases like tea, sugar, and etc. So we had no worries about food. Jimmy was a very good hunter."

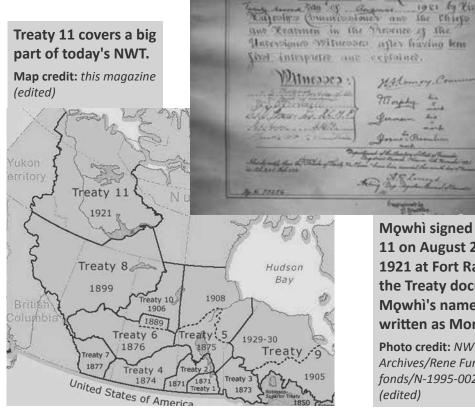
"Those days I sure had to tan a lot of moose hides."



When Mowhi signed Treaty 11 he said, "This sun that rises, if it does not go back on itself, this Great River that flows, if it does not flow back on itself, on this land, we will not be restricted from our way of life."

"For as long as this land shall last, it will be exactly as I have said."

Photo credit: Tłycho.ca (edited)



Mowhì signed Treaty 11 on August 22, 1921 at Fort Rae. On the Treaty document Mowhi's name was written as Morphy.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Rene Fumoleau fonds/N-1995-002: 9694 (edited)

Treaty 11

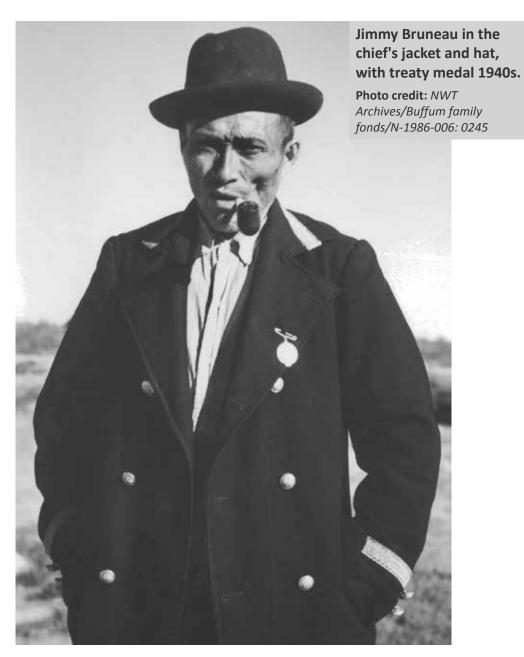
Jimmy Bruneau was 40 years old when the Tłįcho signed Treaty 11 in 1921. Mowhì was k'àowo. People followed him because of his knowledge of two ways: Tłįcho and kweèt'ıì.

At first Mowhi walked away from negotiations. He did not agree with the government's terms. When he returned, he described the Tłıcho terms. He signed when he believed that the government accepted the Tłıcho terms.

Treaty 11 promised annual payments and services such as medical care and education. That the Tłįchǫ would always have the right to hunt, fish, and trap.

In exchange, the federal government assumed the right to manage activities on Tłıcho traditional land. For example, mineral and gas exploration.

The Tłıcho understood the treaty as a common understanding of peace and friendship—not as a promise to give up title to their traditional lands.



Bruneau Becomes Chief

When Mowhi died in 1936, Jimmy Bruneau became chief. He was 55 years old. As with his father and Mowhi before him, people chose to follow Jimmy because they respected his skills and knowledge.

Anne Bruneau remembers.

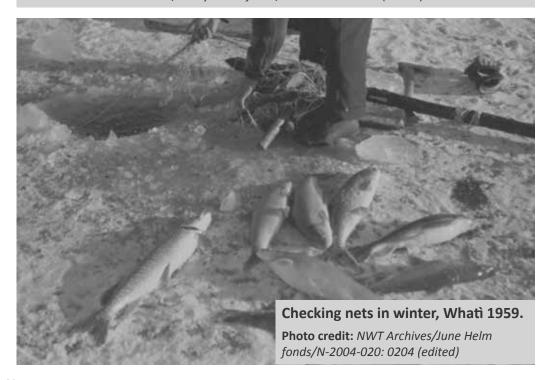
"Jimmy always talked about everything like school for the children and wanted to help his people."

"When he first became chief, I sure had to do a lot of work. We would plan the feasts and organized activities, help the people as much as we can. But I enjoyed every minute of it."





Family by wall tent, caribou parts in a pile of spruce boughs, Fort Rae 1949. Photo credit: NWT Archives/Henry Busse fonds/N-1979-052: 1716 (edited)



More Change for the Tłįchǫ

Besides Treaty 11, other government laws and policies changed the Tłıcho way of life during Bruneau's time.

The *Northwest Game Act* (1917) imposed a closed season for caribou. From October to November and April to July the Tłįchǫ could hunt only to prevent starvation.

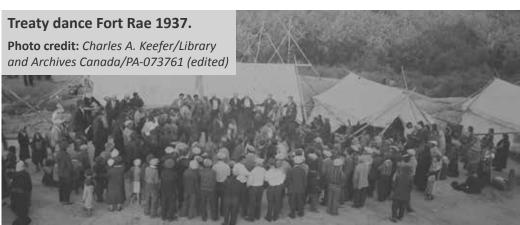
The *Migratory Birds Convention Act* (1917) said it was against the law to hunt game birds during the spring and fall. Tłįchǫ depended on these for food.

There was widespread mineral exploration on Tłıcho lands. From 1931 to 1947 twenty mines started up.

Until the 1960s, children went to residential schools. Government medical and education services, social assistance, and housing aimed to bring the Tłıcho to communities and away from the bush.

In 1961 the Mackenzie highway reached Yellowknife. This increased Tłıcho connections with people, places, things, and ideas from the south and the north.





Treaty Time

Since the Tłıcho signed Treaty 11 they have treaty time once a year at Fort Rae. This is a time for visiting, feasting, dancing, and hand games.

Each person receives their treaty payment. As 'head chief' Jimmy Bruneau got \$25. Each 'lesser chief' got \$15. Every other man, woman, and child each got \$5.

The Indian Agent represented the government and handed out the money. If the agent was also a medical person, they did checkups and immunization shots.



Jimmy Bruneau welcomes Dr. Riopel, Indian Agent and medical officer, 1939.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Richard Finnie fonds/N-1979-063: 0052 (edited)





Tłįchǫ get ready to leave Fort Rae after treaty days, in scow and canoes, to return to hunting grounds around Martin Lake, 1937.

Photo credit: Charles A. Keefer/Library and Archives Canada/PA-074005 (edited)

Protest at Treaty Time

In 1967—when he is 86 years old—Chief Jimmy Bruneau led the Tłįchǫ in a protest against the government.

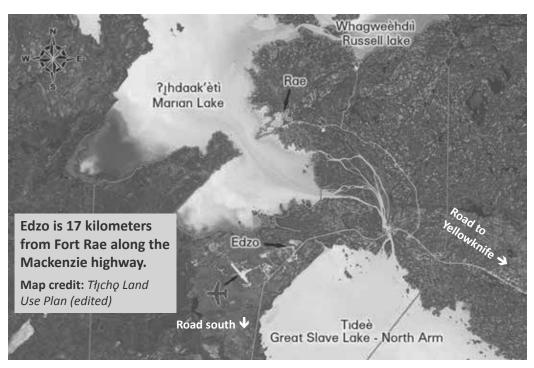
Everyone refused to accept their treaty money. The protest was against government efforts to slowly and steadily take away their treaty rights.

Chief Bruneau said that the treaty money did not buy the land or the rights of the people who lived there.



Dealing out treaty stores and provisions 1925.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/John Russell fonds/N-1979-073: 0153 (edited)





Aerial view Fort Rae 1959.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/June Helm fonds/N-2003-037: 0310 (edited)

Edzo

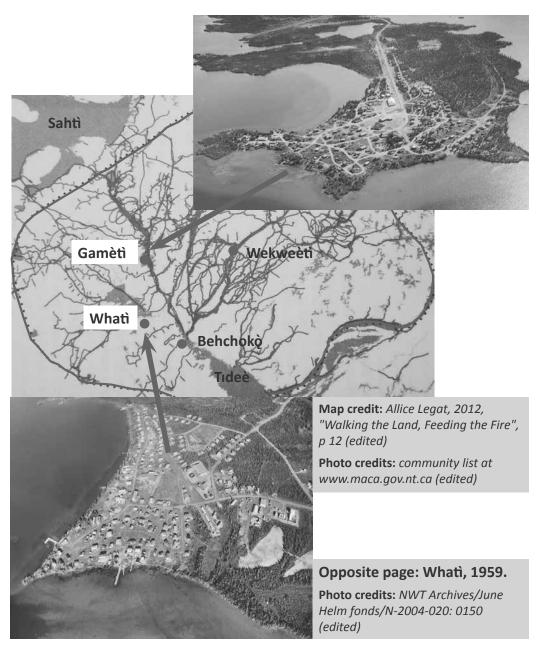
In the 1960s, the government decided to build a new place for the Tłıcho—Edzo. They wanted to move the Tłıcho away from Fort Rae. People needed housing. Fort Rae had drainage problems and poor sanitation.

During community meetings, Chief Bruneau and the Tłįchǫ said they did not want to move. They needed to stay close to their fish nets. Fort Rae is an important place for their culture.

Government people stressed the benefits of moving: closer to the highway, better drainage, a park for the children, row housing.

Chief Bruneau told the government people to build Edzo if they must. And that the Tłıcho would probably choose to stay in Fort Rae. And that is exactly what happened.

At first mainly kweèt'ı lived in Edzo. Today some Tłıcho also live there. Many government services moved back to Fort Rae. People called the double community Rae-Edzo; today called Behchoko.



Tłįcho Communities

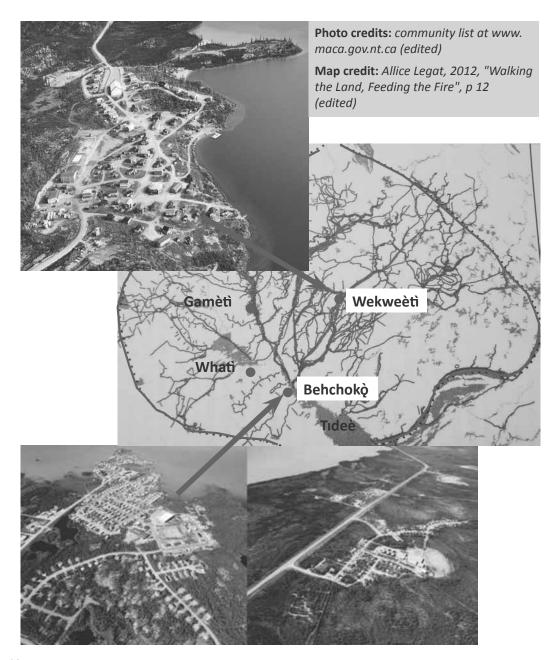
Over time the Tłıcho built more permanent communities away from Behchoko. They wanted to get away from kweèt'ı influence and have a more traditional Tłıcho lifestyle. They settled at sites that they had long used as temporary camps.

Then and now, people get to these communities by air, winter road, or along traditional land and water trails.

Gamètì is located along a chain of waterways that connect Tideè and Sahtì. It is an important place for caribou; a good place for trapping and fishing.

Whatì is located on Lac la Martre. It is a place where conflict occurred long ago between the Tł₁ch₂ and the Chipewyan. It is a good area for trapping.





Wekweètì is located along a common boat and sled route that the Tłįchǫ travelled every fall to the tundra to hunt migrating caribou. People saw Wekweètì as a perfect place for Tłįchǫ who wanted a life more connected to the land and the caribou.

Behchokò is Fort Rae and Edzo together. Behchokò is the largest Tłįcho community and the only one on an all-weather road.



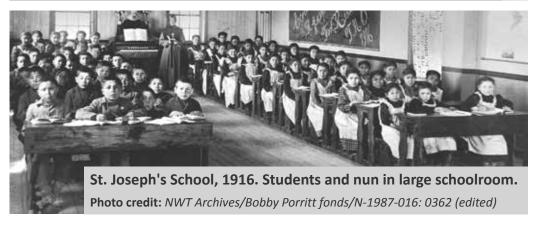
Caribou hides on drying rack, Wekweètì 1986.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Rene Fumoleau fonds/N-1998-051: 3186 (edited)





Photo credit: Canada. Dept. of Interior/Library and Archives Canada/PA-048021 (edited)



A Tłįcho School

Jimmy Bruneau had many experiences throughout his life that inspired him to work for a Tłącho school. He never spoke English and did not read or write.

He saw Tłıcho children sent to residential school across the lake to Fort Resolution, away from home. Three of his own children may have died there.



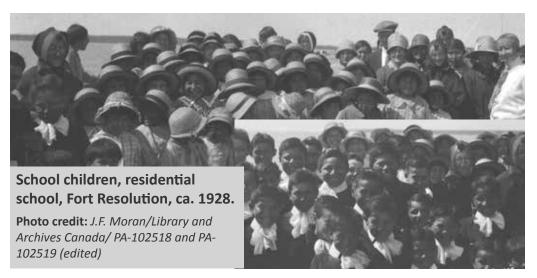




When Bruneau was 12, a kweèt'ı from the U.S.—Frank Russell—stayed at his father's winter camp. Jimmy saw him write in his journal and heard him speak English.

When Bruneau was about 30 he took another kweèt'ış from the U.S.—David Wheeler—to the edge of Wekweètì by dog team. He spent many days listening to English and watching him write. Over the years Bruneau made many other similar trips.

When he was 40 he watched his uncle sign Treaty 11. He saw people losing their language and way of life. He wanted Tłıcho children to keep their own ways, as they learned new ways.







Chief Jimmy Bruneau school drummers made a CD of their music during their first visit to the southwestern U.S.

Photo credit: wikipedia.

org (edited)

Photo credit: JB HI-FI NOW Music https://now.jbhifi.com.au/ Album/729337626027 (edited)

Chief Jimmy Bruneau School

Chief Jimmy Bruneau School opened in 1972. At the opening ceremony he said,

"I have listened to my elders; elders such as Mowhi. I have listened to the way they talked. I have listened to their ways and now I am speaking according to their ways."

"I have asked for this school to be built on my land; and that school will be run by my people; and my people will work at that school; and our children will learn both ways—our ways and the white men's ways."

And today the Old Chief's dream keeps growing. The other Tłįchǫ communities each have their own school. And they keep working to find ways for the students to maintain their Tłįchǫ ways in the modern world.



Pre-Easter caribou feast at the home of the old chief Jimmy Bruneau 1970. Photo credit: NWT Archives/Beryl Gillespie fonds/N-1999-052: 0080 (edited)

A New Chief

Jimmy Bruneau was chief until 1969. He was 88 years old. After much discussion, the Tłįchǫ agreed that Jimmy's son Susie become the next chief.

Two years later Susie Bruneau was replaced as head chief in the first formal election. The old ways of choosing a leader were changing.

During the 1970s, the Tłıcho elected three different men as head chief, one after the other.



Photo credit: NWT Archives/Northwest Territories. Department of Education, Culture and Employment fonds/G-1999-088: 0007 (edited)



Wake for Jimmy Bruneau, with Bishop Paul Piché and Father Jean Pochat. Photo credit top: NWT Archives/Rene Fumoleau fonds/N-1995-002: 4758 (edited)

Photo credit bottom: *NWT Archives/Rene Fumoleau fonds/N-1995-002: 4757 (edited)*



Final Days

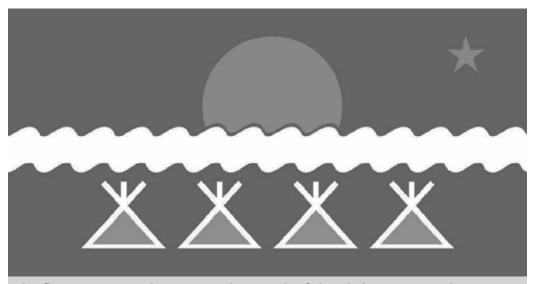
Jimmy Bruneau died at the hospital in Behchokò at 3:20 am on Thursday, January 16, 1975. He was 94 years old.

Hundreds of Tłįchǫ attended his wake and funeral to pay respect. Today he is well-remembered for his knowledge, wisdom, and skills.



Jimmy Bruneau funeral fire January 1975.

Photo credit: Native Communications Society (edited)



The flag represents the unity and strength of the Tłıcho. Imagine the colours: royal blue background, red tents, yellow sun and north star, white flowing river.

- Four red tents stand for the four communities: Behchokò, Whatì, Gamètì, and Wekweètì.
- Royal blue background stands for the broad northern Tłycho territory.
- Sunrise and flowing river stand for Mowhi's words, and capture Tłicho strength and endurance.
- North Star stands for a new era for the Tłįchǫ, moving united into the future and committed to protecting the Tłįchǫ language, culture, and way of life for future generations.

Photo credit: www.tlichohistory.com/images

Glossary

ancestor: A person from a long time ago who is related to you.

influence: To have an effect (good or bad) on someone or something.

negotiation: Discussions where people try to reach an agreement about something.

permanent: Lasting a long time; long-term; forever.

temporary: Lasting for a limited time; short-term.

terms (as in a treaty or land claims agreement): The details of an agreement and how they are carried out.

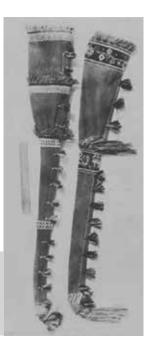
title: right, claim, ownership, entitlement.

traditional: long established; time honoured.



Gun covers and dog covers: examples of silk work done by students at residential school, Fort Resolution.

Photo credit: Canada. Dept. of the Interior collection/Library and Archives Canada/e011082776 (edited)





Discussion Questions

- 1. Chief Jimmy Bruneau wanted the Tłącho to know two ways. What does that mean to you?
- 2. The story mentions four forts that the Tłıcho used during the fur trade, besides Old Fort Rae. Can you name them and find them on a map?
- 3. The Tłıcho are part of Treaty 11. Is your community part of a treaty? If yes, which one? If no, what is the closest treaty to your community?
- 4. During Jimmy Bruneau's life, many things changed for the Tłıcho—some good; some not so good.

 Name one good thing and discuss why. Name one not so good thing and discuss why. What kinds of changes have you experienced?
- 5. During Bruneau's time, the Tłıcho held a protest. What did they want to achieve? Have you ever been in a protest? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- 6. Since Bruneau's time, the Tłıcho have negotiated and signed a land claims and self-government agreement. Go to http://tlichohistory.com/ to learn more about the Tłıcho Agreement.



Father Amoreaux and Chief Jimmy Bruneau at the microphone on the porch of the Roman Catholic Mission in Fort Rae, 1959.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Henry Busse fonds/N-1979-052: 2988 (edited)

Information Sources

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- Tłįchǫ Yatiì Multimedia Dictionary: http://tlicho.ling.uvic. ca/
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- "Strong Like Two People"—the development of a mission statement for the Dogrib schools, Dogrib Divisional Board of Education, Rae-Edzo, NWT, 1991
- "Chief Jimmy Bruneau", Native Press, January 20, 1975
- "Anne Bruneau—83 years young", Native Press, June 20, 1973
- Walking the Land, Feeding the Fire—Knowledge and Stewardship Among the Tłįcho Dene, Allice Legat, 2012, University of Arizona Press



Chief Jimmy Bruneau (second from right) during 100th Anniversary celebration of St. Michael's Roman Catholic mission church at Fort Rae 1959.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/Henry Busse fonds/N-1979-052: 3024

- Tłycho Land Use Plan, 2013
- The People of Denendeh—Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada's Northwest Territories, June Helm, 2000, University of Iowa Press
- "Dogrib Treaty", Natural History, June, 1940



Hand games 1962.

Photo credit: NWT Archives/June Helm fonds/N-2004-020: 0364 (edited)

