

History of The Yellowhead Highway



The highway near Blue River today and "road" conditions encountered by the first car over the route in 1922.

The Yellowhead Pass and Tête Jaune Cache (pronounced Tee-John Cash) were named after an Iroquois-Métis trapper, Pierre Bostonais. The French Voyageurs called him "Tête Jaune" (yellowhead), because of his blonde-streaked hair. Tête Jaune worked for the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1800's as a guide. As early as 1819 he provided guiding services to the Company and explored from the Fraser River to the current City of Prince George.

Given that the Yellowhead Route was a proven and natural transportation corridor and that the future laid in vehicular transportation, a group of Edmontonians were convinced that the entire Dominion of Canada should be informed about the urgent need and numerous advantages of the Yellowhead Route. They banded together and at the call of Mayor Ainlay of Edmonton and launched an energetic campaign. First they formed the Trans-Canada Highway Corridor Association (Yellowhead Route) to stimulate public opinion and garner support to initiate the construction and persuade various governments to form an over-all highway policy, administered by a highway commission, similar to the one in the USA.

In 1921, Everett T. Love; C.H. Grant; James A. Christensen; R.C. Marshall; V.A. Porter; A.L. MacDonald; R.V. MacCosham; and A.L. Burrows formed the Edmonton Committee and pushed for the construction of the Jasper Highway from Edmonton. With great tenacity and an undaunted spirit this group forged a determined and unified voice.

On April 25, 1947, a brief signed by over 100 communities from Manitoba to the Pacific Coast, organizations, and business leaders, was presented to the Federal Government, with copies to the western provincial governments. The brief stated the urgent need for a Trans-Canada Highway System for strategic and commercial reasons, and noted that any future planning of this System must include the Yellowhead.

Since the beginning the Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association (TCYHA) has represented, advocated for and realized significant progress in development and infrastructure enhancements from Winnipeg to Hope to Masset on the Queen Charlotte Islands. Our forefathers recognized the benefits of the Yellowhead and fought long and hard to achieve their goal of a Northern Trans Canada Highway. Working together, the Highway has grown from the original fur trader's route to a vital and efficient highway connecting urban and rural communities for commercial, recreation and community transportation.

The Trans Canada Yellowhead Highway Association continues to advocate for infrastructure improvements, passing lanes, twinning, highway patrols and necessary upgrades throughout the entire corridor to ensure the safe travel of all.

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