

RICHARD MARTIN

🕶️ MAIN MESSAGES 🕶️

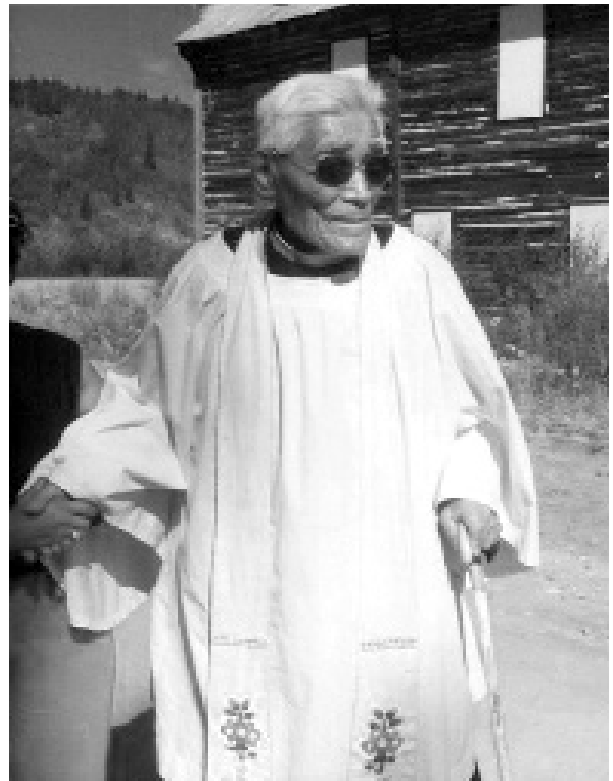
- Reverend Richard Martin used his knowledge of traditional skills and values to assist the two new institutions, the Anglican Church and the Mounted Police.
- Richard Martin was one of the first aboriginal men to guide Mounted Police Patrols between Dawson City and Fort McPherson.
- Martin was one of the dedicated First Nations church workers who taught his people the Anglican faith.
- Despite being completely blinded in January 1927, just months after he was ordained an Anglican Church deacon, Reverend Martin ministered at Moosehide for 35 years.
- To honour his memory, in the 1970s the Anglican Church named its new chapel behind St. Paul's Church in Dawson City the Reverend Richard Martin Chapel.

I live at my home at the head of Peel and Porcupine Rivers. My Missionary work – I begin Sunday morning at 11 o'clock, and at 2 o'clock in the afternoon I have school and Bible class, and at 7 in the evening I have service again. Sometimes I go down to Eagle and do all the same there . . .

– Richard Martin, Synod Report, ca. 1920

Another faithful worker to whom we owe much is the Rev. Richard Martin. Richard, a Tukudh or Louceau [sic] Indian, was born near the head of the Peel River on June 1st, 1879, and was ordained Deacon by Bishop Stringer in St. Paul's Cathedral, Dawson City, on August 22nd, 1926. For some time he itinerated in the region of his birth but a gun accident caused him to go blind and he has latterly lived in Moosehide. Although 78 years of age and on the retired list, Richard and his wife Mary keep the work at St. Barnabas going. No one could have been more faithful or hold greater respect than this fine servant of God. We trust God will grant him good health and strength for some time to come.

– Northern Lights, May 1957



Richard Martin on Church Street in Dawson City wearing a stole made by Sara Simon (from Fort McPherson) belonging to Rev. Ken Snider and lent to Richard Martin. *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, Ken Snider coll., 2004.6.10. Image retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.*

THE STORY

The life of Reverend Richard Martin is an inspiring story about a man of many talents. In addition to being an excellent hunter, trapper and guide, Martin became an important leader in the Anglican Church and of his people. When blinded in the prime of his life, Martin's spiritual strength allowed him to lead a long and productive life. The many changes that took place in Martin's lifetime mirror the experiences of First Nations people from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century.

Gwich'in Hunter and Guide

Martin's family were T kudh (also spelled Takudh or Dagoo), a Gwich'in speaking group of people who lived and travelled in an area that included the upper Porcupine River down into the headwaters of the Ogilvie River and the western portions of the upper Peel River basin. Born at the head of the Peel River on June 1, 1879 or 1882, Martin spent his childhood travelling this extensive area, gaining an intimate knowledge of this country and its resources. He was one of the group of Gwich'in hunters and traders who first visited Dawson in 1901 and became renowned for their annual winter trips to sell fresh caribou meat they had hunted along the way. The "Dawson Boys" stayed with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in at Moosehide then returned to their families loaded with goods from Dawson stores.

From 1904 on, the Royal Northwest Mounted Police (today the RCMP) began making annual winter patrols between Dawson City and Fort McPherson – a distance of approximately 475 miles one way (765 km) – and a few years later, over the sea ice to Herschel Island. The purpose was to deliver mail and orders to the remote detachments, check on local inhabitants along the way and, generally, to show the flag and assert the Canadian government sovereignty in the north. This arduous trip over tundra, mountains and numerous rivers and creeks would not have been possible without help from First Nations guides and hunters. As a young man, Martin guided two of these early police

patrols travelling along First Nations routes and making use of traditional camps and his own cabin on the Hart River.

Deacon Richard Martin

Martin learned to read and write from his uncle Amos Njootli, a First Nations catechist trained by Anglican missionary Robert McDonald who first put the Takudh language into writing. Both Richard and his brother John Martin joined the dedicated native church workers who were essential to the success of the Anglican Church amongst the Yukon's First Nations people. As well as presiding over services in remote locations, Martin also took on sadder duties. When an influenza epidemic swept the Blackstone Uplands, Martin buried scores of his people.



Richard Martin & granddaughter, Alice at St. Barnabas Church, Moosehide, 1961. *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, A. Laursen coll. Retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.*

On August 22, 1926, at a very special service, Martin was ordained as a deacon by Bishop Isaac Stringer at St. Barnabas Church in Moosehide. An Anglican Church magazine reported that "Before the close of the service the new Deacon spoke to the people, asking for their prayers that he might be kept humble and be used in God's work among his people as he travelled from place to place." (*Northern Light*, Nov. 1926)

Martin continued to travel with and minister to the Tukudh in their traditional territory.

The following Christmas, a party of hunters from the Peel and Porcupine area visited Dawson but Richard Martin did not join them. He remained in the area to hold services for the people who were left behind.

A month later, an accident occurred that changed his life forever. During his youth, Martin had lost the sight of one eye when patching a snowshoe and a branch whipped back and hit his eye. In January 1927, Martin was blinded when his rifle backfired and exploded while he was hunting caribou. His son Joe and Joe Henry transported him to Dawson by dogsled, a

four day trip. Martin was sent out to a hospital in Vancouver but his eyesight could not be restored.

Martin subsequently moved to Moosehide where he lived for most of his life. In the early 1930s, his relatives from the Peel River area built him a house behind the church. Reverend Martin played an active role in church affairs in Moosehide and the Yukon. He ministered to the spiritual needs of the community during the many intervals between missionaries or when missionaries were away on leave. He interpreted for the ministers who were unable to speak or understand Hän. He travelled the territory to attend Synods, the annual gatherings of church leaders.

Martin remained in Moosehide long after most residents had moved to Dawson and continued to hold services. He was considered a pillar of the church in Yukon and his visitors included bishops and visiting missionaries. He finally left the community for good to move to Dawson in 1962. When he died in 1975 at the age of 95, his friends and relatives in Fort McPherson chartered an airplane to attend his funeral.



Reverend and Mrs. Martin attending the Synod in Whitehorse, ca. mid 1950s. Bishop Greenwood in centre. Note: Rev. Allen Haldenby was rector in charge of Dawson at the time. Mrs. Gosbee, the Moosehide teacher is standing at top centre. *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, K. Janus coll. Image retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.*

Richard Martin's Legacy

In the late 1970s, the Anglican Church obtained a building from Cassiar Asbestos when the Clinton Creek mine closed in the late 1970s. This structure was set up behind St. Paul's Anglican Church in Dawson City and was named the Reverend Richard Martin Chapel. It became the main home of Anglican services as St. Paul's Church was in poor repair and difficult to heat. This building was renovated, chiefly by volunteers, in the early and mid 1990s.

On August 1, 2004, the life of Deacon Richard Martin was celebrated at a crowded service at St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Moosehide. The choir sang Gwich'in hymns and participants used the formal language of the Book of Common Prayer of 1918, the book that Martin had used and memorized. That same summer, Martin's life was celebrated in a special display at Dänòja Zho Cultural Centre. Today Richard Martin is remembered by both the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the Anglican Church as an important leader. As a young man, he was an outstanding hunter, trapper, musher and trail guide. In later years, his work on behalf of his Church inspired his native congregation and other church leaders.



Milestones in Richard Martin's life (1879-1975)

- Martin was born on June 1, 1879 or 1882
- Richard Martin's parents were Martin Sha-un-Nakhya (Old Martin) and Jane Chiljulthoo.
- Richard's brothers and sisters were John Martin, Thomas, Annie G. Robert (oldest sibling), Bella Alexie, Adeline Billips and Charlotte Vehus (youngest sibling).
- Richard was married four times: to Enna, Rachel, Martha Roderick and Mary Tetlich (Alfred Charlie's sister).
- Richard and Mary had seven children together. From oldest to youngest, they were: Jane, Alice Lydia and a twin sister who died at an early age, Benjamin, Talitha, Charlotte and Annabella or Ann. Joe was Richard's son from his second wife.
- In 1924, Richard's daughter, Talitha, died from an accidental knife wound while the family was hunting in the Blackstone area.
- On 22 August 1926, Richard was ordained a Deacon in the Anglican Church by Bishop Isaac Stringer.
- Richard and Mary Martin were among the last fulltime residents of Moosehide, finally moving to Dawson in 1962.
- Reverend Richard Martin died on April 3, 1975.

RELATED STORIES

- Black City
- Gatherings
- Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Leadership
- Travel & Transportation
- Twelve Mile

WAYS TO TELL THE STORY

- Use a map to show the country where Richard Martin spent his early life, the routes that the Takudh people took to travel to Dawson and how this same route was used by early Mounted Police patrols.
- Find copies of the 1904-1907 Royal Northwest Mounted Police Annual Report and check the accounts of early Dawson-Fort McPherson patrols. These detailed reports give a good picture of life on the trail, the importance of First Nation guides and hunters, and many landmarks that can be traced on topographic maps.
- Copy a few pages from the 1918 Book of Common Prayer to give an idea of the language he memorized.
- Ask people to imagine what it was like to not only survive but thrive in a frontier community without sight.

OTHER RESOURCES

Photographs

There are many photos of Richard Martin in the Anglican Church/Diocese of Yukon Records. The online searchable finding aid to this extensive collection can be found at http://www.btc.gov.yk.ca/pdf/Anglican_Church.pdf.

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives has photos of Rev. Martin and his family in the Kris Janus collection.

Publications & Reports

Canada.

Royal Northwest Mounted Police Annual Reports: 1904-1907.

Davidson, Dan

1996 "The Long Road to Restoration," in *Klondike Sun*, October 4.

2004 "Richard Martin Remembered as Spiritual and Cultural Leader," in *Klondike Sun*, 27 August.

Dobrowolsky, Helene

2005 *Tombstone Territorial Park Interpreter's Manual*. Prepared for Holland America Lines Inc., Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Environment Yukon (Parks).

2003 *Hammerstones: A History of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in*. Published by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in.

1995 *Law of the Yukon*. Whitehorse, Lost Moose Publishing.

1990 "The Church in Yukon – A Thematic Study." Report prepared for Heritage Branch, Dept. of Tourism, Government of Yukon.

McLeod, Georgette

2004 "Biographical Notes: Reverend Richard Martin, 1879-1975," draft notes prepared 5 June 2004.

Richard Slobodin

1963 "The Dawson Boys': Peel River Indians and the Klondike Gold Rush," in *Polar Notes*, No. 5, 1963, pp. 24-36.

Yukon College, Dawson Campus

1994 *Moosehide (Édhä Dădhëchan K ek'èt): An Oral History*. Prepared by the Developmental Studies students of the Dawson Campus of Yukon College.

Oral History

Joe and Annie Henry Interviews.





Richard Martin in Fort McPherson in front of Alexie's house visiting with people of the Ft. McPherson, 1964. According to his granddaughter, "It was like this daily where we were there." *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, A. Laursen coll. Retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.*



Four generations at St. Paul's Cathedral, Dawson City, April 1967. L-R: Jane (Martin) Haydon, Kris Janus, Markus Janus, Bishop Marsh, Irene Whitehouse. *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, K. Janus collection. Image retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.*



At Fort McPherson L to R. Bella Alexie (Richard's sister), Richard Martin, Andrew Koe, Annie G. Robert, (Richard's sister).
Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Archives, A. Laursen coll. Image retouched by Rob Ingram, Midnight Arts.