

300-Year-Old Chinese Coin Found in North of Canada

By [Joan Delaney](#) On October 30, 2011 @ 9:36 pm In [North America](#) | [No Comments](#)



This coin found in Yukon on the historic Dyea to Fort Selkirk trade route was minted between 1667 and 1671 during China's Qing Dynasty. (James Mooney/Ecofor Consulting Ltd)

A Chinese coin more than 300 years old has been found near a proposed mine site in Yukon in north of Canada.

James Mooney, a cultural resource specialist with Ecofor Consulting Limited, spotted the coin while doing heritage impact assessment work for Western Copper and Gold Corporation.

“I was less than a metre from our archaeologist Kirby Booker when she turned over the first shovel of topsoil and I caught sight of something dangling from the turf. It was the coin—the neatest discovery I’ve ever been part

of,” says Mooney.

Minted between 1667 and 1671, the coin was found within the Selkirk First Nation traditional territory on the historic Dyea to Fort Selkirk trade route.

The coin adds to the body of evidence that the Chinese connected with Yukon First Nations through Russian and coastal Tlingit traders during the late 17th and 18th centuries and possibly as early as the 15th century, according to a release from Western Copper and Gold.

Although common along the northwest coast of present-day North America, only three Chinese coins have been found in Yukon to date. The coins are round with a square hole in the centre, but the one found by Ecofor has four additional small holes above each corner of the central square.

“The extra holes could have been made in China; coins were sometimes nailed to a gate, door, or ridgepole for good luck,” says Mooney.

“Alternatively, First Nations might have made the extra holes to attach them to clothing. They used the coins as decoration or sewed them in layers like roofing

shingles onto hide shirts to protect warriors from arrow impacts.”

The Russians traded items such as tobacco, tea, beads, firearms, iron implements, kettles, needles, clothing, and flour directly with the Tlingit in exchange for a variety of furs, which they traded to the Chinese in exchange for goods.

Mooney says the location of the find, on a promontory overlooking a river and creek tributary, is a likely place for a traveller to have rested or camped between Dyea, Alaska, and Fort Selkirk in Yukon.

Although the coin was discovered in July, he says fact-checking had to be done and information gathered before the find was announced publicly.

The history of the coin is special in that it was number six in a series of “poem coins” that were used as good luck charms during the reign of Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty.

Kangxi was renowned for his poetry. He was also associated with peace, prosperity, and longevity, so people gradually developed the custom of collecting a coin cast from each of 20 mints, putting them on a string and carrying them for good luck. The coins were placed in a certain order to create the poem.

Of the other two Chinese coins found in Yukon, one was minted 1724-1735, and the other, discovered back in 1993, is from between 1403 and 1424.

The coin found in 1993 was discovered in a travel corridor near an overland gold rush trail by Beaver Creek.

However, because it was found in an archaeological setting, it was likely

brought into the interior before the Klondike Gold Rush.

“So far I believe each of these three coins was found only with prehistoric materials and no other historic materials, making them likely traded into the interior,” says Mooney.

Related Articles

- [A Move to Add Fingerprints to Chinese ID Cards](#)

