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### On the quest for Calico Town

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*DEMPSTER HIGHWAY, Yukon* - First nations people are on the hunt for remains of old gathering places along the Dempster Highway. Hundreds of years ago, people in the northern Yukon, the McKenzie Delta and parts of Alaska set up camps in the Blackstone area.

Today, their ancestors are searching for remains of those days gone by.

Jackie Semple has been battling the notorious mosquitoes of the region during the hunt. Normally he hunts this area for moose or caribou. Now he's trying to find evidence of his ancestors.



"Down below here some place around the bend there's supposed to be a grave," Semple says.

"I'm just out here looking for it."

Semple lives two hours south in Dawson City. He's joined up with people from Fort McPherson to conduct the search.

The Han and Gwich'in peoples once set up camps along the Blackstone River. They're also looking for one of those settlements known as Calico Town.

Georgette McLeod, the heritage researcher for the Trondek Hwech'in in Dawson City, says elders from Dawson City and Fort McPherson have been trying to recall what they've heard about the settlement.

"It's been a long time since we've known anything about Calico Town so we're going to try a few different places and see what happens, McLeod says.

"We may never find the town. Although it would be quite interesting to find this place because there are so many stories about it. But no body knows the

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exact location of it because a lot of the older elders have passed on who could tell us the location or describe the location to us."

The search for Calico Town has so far been fruitless.

Tetlit Gwich'in elder Walter Alexie says his roots in the region go deep.

"My father, my mother, they grew up around here, and it's where I was born," Alexie says.

"They were living here for a long time before they moved into Fort McPherson."

This time the search pays off. A grave of one of Alexie's relatives was found further downriver. It will help his family and first nation piece together their history.

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