

The Nechako Crossing

Historical Name: Nechako Crossing

Common Name: Cameron Street Bridge; Old Cameron Street Bridge; Old Nechako Bridge; Nechako Ferry

Address: Nechako River, 3.7 to 4.0 km upstream from the confluence with the Fraser River

Date of Construction: NA

Design, Style, Architecture, Architect: NA

Prince George Heritage Register Classification: Site

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

DESCRIPTION

The “Nechako Crossing” is a river-crossing site that has continuously served the community of Prince George, and housed various river-crossing infrastructures, since 1910. The site is located on the Nechako River, approximately 3.7 to 4.0 kilometres upstream from the Nechako’s confluence with the Fraser River. The Crossing spans approximately 150 metres of waterway between the Nechako’s north and south shores.

Over the years, the site has housed the following transportation infrastructure: a government reaction ferry (1910-1921), a wooden swing bridge (1921-1931), a wooden Howe truss bridge (1931-2005), and the current steel-girder bridge (2009-present). The south shore is also a culturally significant First Nations cremation site.

HERITAGE VALUE

Environmental: The Nechako Crossing is situated in a unique geographic location that ideally facilitates the transition between river and land travel. The south side of the crossing (around the junction of River Road and First Avenue) is part of a geographic “bowl” that allows easy access from all directions. The north side of the crossing (around the junction of North Nechako Road and Prince George Pulp Mill Road) sits west of both the steep 80-metre cut banks and the larger flood plains east of those cut banks, allowing good access to northern communities and services through valleys between the eskers. The Nechako waterway flows slower and lower than does the Fraser River, making the Nechako Crossing a safer river-crossing location.

Historical: The Crossing played an integral role in the development of early Prince George and surrounding communities. It connected the early community of Central Fort George, on the south shore, with important northern trading and freighting routes on the Crooked River, Parsnip River, Findlay River, Peace River Watershed, and Arctic and Pacific Watersheds.

With the coming of the railroad and demise of paddle wheelers, the Crossing became a vital link for transporting goods and services between the railroad hub in Prince George and outlying communities to the north and west. Later, the Crossing facilitated development of the “Hart” residential and commercial area north of the city.

The Crossing served as the main point of transportation over the Nechako River until the construction of the John Hart Bridge in 1961. The fact that three bridges now span the Nechako (at Foothills Blvd, John Hart Highway and Cameron Street) highlights the continued importance of north-south Nechako River crossings to the city of Prince George.

Over the years, the Crossing site has housed the following infrastructure, each of which was considered a landmark in its time:

1. The current steel-girder bridge, generally referred to as "The Cameron Street Bridge," which opened in 2009 and is expected to provide 75 years of service. This bridge is 187 metres long and is located approximately 225 metres northeast of survey marker 85H1197 on the Nechako's south shore, and 292 metres west of survey marker 86H1802 on the Nechako's north shore. It sits on the piers of the old Howe truss bridge (see below).
2. A wooden Howe truss bridge, generally referred to as the "Old Cameron Street Bridge," which operated from 1931 to 2005. This bridge was located at the site of the current Cameron Street Bridge. It was built on concrete piers and was decommissioned due to deterioration of its truss timbers. The wooden superstructure was demolished in 2008.
3. A wooden swing bridge, generally referred to as the "Old Nechako Bridge," which operated from 1921 to 1931. This bridge was located at the site of the current Cameron Street Bridge. It sat on wooden piers and had a swinging section to accommodate river boat traffic. It was destroyed by an ice jam in 1931.
4. A government reaction ferry, generally referred to as the "Nechako Ferry," which operated from 1910 to 1921 (approximate). The ferry crossing was located 300-400 metres west of the current Cameron Street Bridge. The ferry was the first documented transportation infrastructure on the Crossing site, although it is believed that the site was used as a river crossing prior to 1910 for the environmental reasons stated above.

Cultural: The area by the gully on the south side of the Cameron Street Bridge is a traditional Lheidli T'enneh First Nation cremation site known as *T'sun Dusai*. The Lheidli T'enneh people cremated the remains of their deceased at this site, and it was also the final resting place for bones left after cremation. *T'sun Dusai* translates as "bones up there."

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

- Unique geography and environmental features that ideally connect land travel routes at the north and south shores of the Nechako River.
- Continued use as a river crossing for over 100 years.
- Important community landmark.
- Culturally significant First Nations site (final resting place for cremated remains).

IMAGES



Current Cameron Street Bridge.
Photo taken from north bank, circa 2010.
Photo: City of Prince George



"Old Cameron Street Bridge."
Photo taken from southwest bank, 1959.
Photo: The Exploration Place, P991.9.2.17.1



"Old Nechako Bridge."
Photo taken from southwest bank, circa 1921.
Photo: The Exploration Place, P985.4.1



"Nechako Ferry" (government reaction ferry).
Photo taken from north bank, circa 1911.
Photo: The Exploration Place, P996.7.4.2