Gwich'in Tribal Council

Annual Report 2005 ~ 2006

~ *Ownership For Us All*

Land

Culture

And Economy...

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI) conducts cultural and language research, provides language and educational programs, and performs heritage management. Its mandate is to document, preserve, and promote Gwich'in language, culture, traditional knowledge and values.

In 2005-2006 the GSCI was involved in a number of initiatives based on its five-year plan for 2003-2008, *I'indo Khehloh Tr'eedah* (Moving Forward as One). While GSCI staff work together on some projects, projects are classified under the Gwich'in Language Plan; Gwich'in Language Centre; Heritage Research; and Administration, and reporting responsibilities reside with the respective program managers.

Gwich'in Language Plan:

Gwich'in Language Dictionary:

Work is well advanced on the Sixth Edition of the Dictionary, and we held at least two workshops in each GSA community, to deal with matters of verification, as well as many individual meetings with people fluent in our Gwich'in language.

Elders' Biographies:

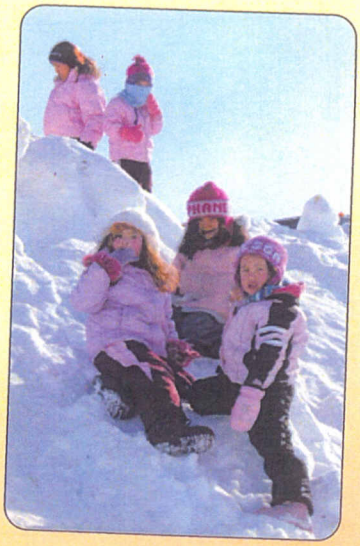
Interviews with elders from all four GSA communities continued this year, and we are currently placing elders' stories and recollections in a database for use in present and future scholarly activities.

Gwich'in Language Conference:

In March, we brought together Gwich'in elders, youth, and language teachers in Fort McPherson for the first Gwich'in Language Conference since 1999. Participants came from all four GSA communities as well as Yellowknife, Whitehorse, Old Crow, and Grimshaw, Alberta. Unlike past conferences, much of the discussion over the three days took place in our own Gwich'in language. We agreed upon more than forty recommendations which were incorporated in one sturdy Resolution, forwarded to our political leadership. Recommendations included future conferences, at least one a year, to continue promoting the preservation and use of our language.

Fall freeze up Tsiigehtchic

Mackenzie Valley Construction Crew



Kids at the Fort McPherson Carnival 2006

Gwich'in Language Centre:
For 2005-2006, the Language Centre was mandated to provide materials and assistance to language teachers and instructors in all four GSA communities, as well as furnishing material for pre-school students to the Aboriginal Headstart Program Gwich'in language instructor.

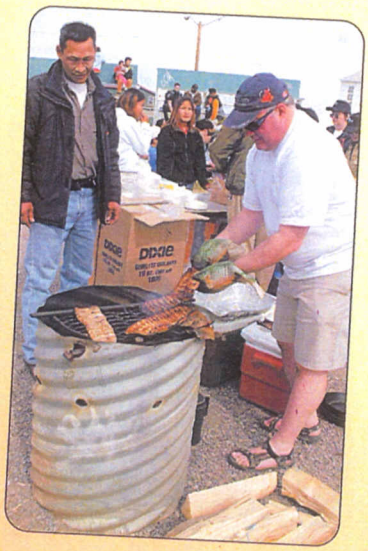
The GSCI received $115,000 in funding for the development of Gwich'in language materials. For this fiscal year, we allocated the funds required for the Resource Coordinator position to: translate curricular materials into the Tetlit and Gwichya Gwich'in dialects; purchase curricular materials; and hire casual staff, as required.

Funding originally allocated to a workshop for Aboriginal language instructors will be used to hire substitute teachers, when the Aboriginal language instructors are trained in the Gwich'in curriculum. The language curriculum will be "piloted" in the schools in September 2006.

GSCI Researcher Kristi Benson has transferred stories, legends, and other previously developed material from floppy disks to CDs, and made hard copies, one of which will be stored in the Gwich'in Language Centre and another of which will be stored in the archives of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. She has also developed a database of our resource materials.

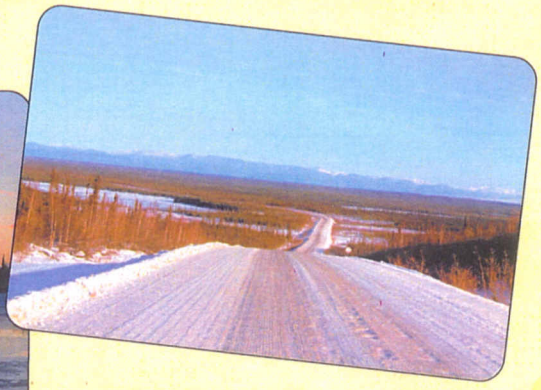
In the previous fiscal year we developed seventeen Animal Unit CDs in the Gwichya Gwich'in dialect, similar to those previously produced in the Tetlit Gwich'in dialect. We have also selected six legends in the Tetlit dialect, containing life lessons and morals, which have been transcribed and translated into English. These will be compiled in a booklet, with an interactive game produced for each legend.

Heritage Research:
Arctic Red River Headwaters Project:
Upon returning from education leave, GSCI Heritage Researcher Alestine Andre completed a report as part of Phase 1 of this project for the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board (GLUPB). It concluded that while oral history evidence indicates Gwich'in and Sahtu Dene use of the area, no detailed information is currently available and oral history research should be carried out in Tsiigehtchic and Fort Good Hope with families known to have used the area in the past.



Tom Williams cooking up a storm at Aboriginal Day 2005

Late fall on the east branch


Early winter past Deep Water Lake

The GSCI and GLUPB successfully developed a proposal under the Protected Areas Strategy as a follow-up to Phase I research. In early 2006, as part of Phase II, Alestine Andre, Kristi Benson, and Sharon Snowshoe of the GSCI interviewed elders and harvesters in Fort Good Hope and Tsiigehtchic about traditional use of this area. Camp, burial, and cabin sites, animal habitats and sensitive areas are marked on 1:250,000 and 1:50,000 scale maps.

Traditional Clothing Project:
Text and images for the exhibit on the clothing project were finalized in October 2005. Language Manager William George Firth provided the Gwich'in translation, and GSCI Research Director Ingrid Kritsch worked with the exhibit designer and staff at the Prince of Wales Centre and Canadian Museum of Civilization. The exhibit will be displayed at the Prince of Wales Centre in 2006 and the CMC in 2007.

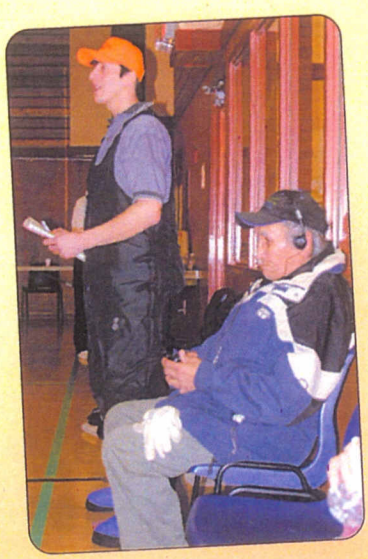
The display cases for the clothing displays in three of the GSA communities proved too small and the one for Inuvik was broken in transit. Four replacement cases were ordered in February 2006, with funding from the GNWT.

Yeenoo D'ai K'etr'ijilkh'ai Ganangwaand'ai (Long Ago Sewing We Will Remember): The Story of the Gwich'in Traditional Caribou Skin Clothing Project, co-authored by Judy Thompson and Ingrid Kritsch, was printed in October-November 2005, and is available as part of the Mercury Series, Ethnology Paper 143 of the CMC.

Dene Mapping Project:
Ingrid Kritsch, GIS Analyst Scott Higgins, and Sharon Snowshoe of the GSCI, along with Norman Snowshoe of the GTC, developed a proposal to locate, reassemble, and duplicate the Gwich'in material recorded for the Dene Nation Mapping Project in the 1970s and 1980s. This proposal was submitted to the Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program (CIMP) in October 2005. A consultant, Randy Freeman, has visited the NWT Archives at the Prince of Wales Centre and the Dene Nation Resource Centre in Yellowknife, cataloguing maps and tapes prepared with Gwich'in interviewees, and producing a database to store the information. The next stage of the project, now under consideration, will address the safe storage and duplication of this information.

Ferry crossing at Eight Miles

Early winter at Tsiigehtchic



Sonny Blake and Elder Gabe Andre at a board meeting

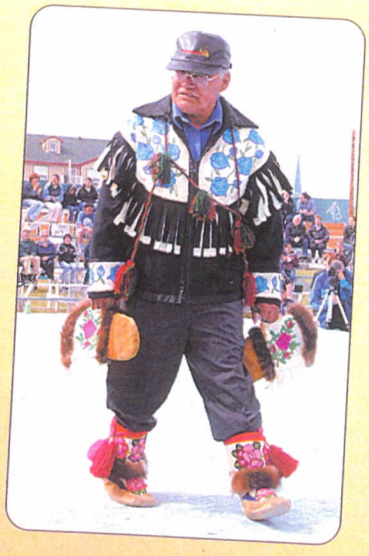
Ehditat Gwich'in Territorial Historic Site Nomination Project:
The GNWT's Department of Education, Culture, and Employment has approved our proposal to set up a Steering Committee to work with the GSCI to identify and research culturally significant Ehditat Gwich'in places and submit one or two of them to the NWT Historic Sites Register. The project has been postponed until the next fiscal year, giving the Ehditat Gwich'in Council time to select Steering Committee members.

Fort McPherson Ethno-Archaeology Booklet:
The booklet *Yeenoo D'ai Gwats'at Teetl'it Zheh Googwandak: The History and Archaeology of Fort McPherson*, co-authored by Melanie Fafard and Ingrid Kritsch, has been published and was nominated for the Canadian Archaeological Association's Public Writing Award by Carol Greer.

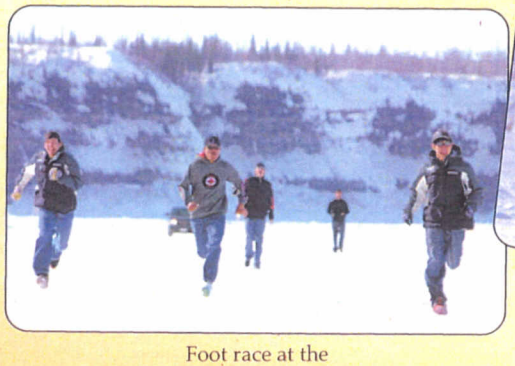
Fort McPherson National Historic Site Plaque Text:
The replacement text developed by the GSCI with Parks Canada and the Fort McPherson NHS Steering Committee in June 2005 was submitted to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) Inscriptions Committee, and reviewed at its October meeting. The Committee's favourable recommendation was approved by the full HSMBC at its December meeting. Following the approval of the Minister of the Environment, a new plaque can be created and installed.

Geographic Information System Tetlit Gwich'in Layer:
The GSCI's GIS Analyst, Scott Higgins, entered all available Tetlt Gwich'in heritage information on traditional land use and place names into the GIS database.

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada:
Ingrid Kritsch was appointed NWT Representative on the HSMBC in May 2005, succeeding Terry Foster, and has attended several Board and Committee meetings. She has also been appointed to the Board's Cultural Communities Committee. The HSMBC consists of representatives from each Province and Territory, Parks Canada, the National Archives, and CMC.



Winston Moses in traditional clothing ~ Aboriginal Day 2005



Foot race at the Mackenzie River Jamboree 2006

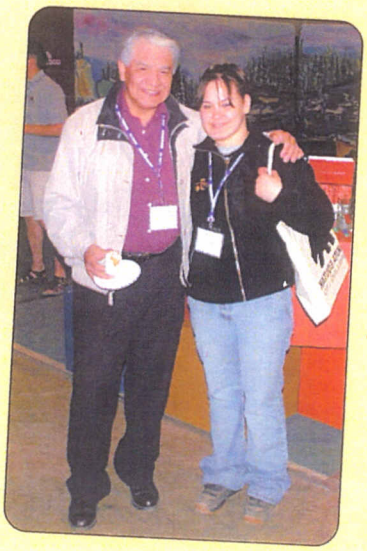
The need for speed at the Tsiigehtchic Grand Prix

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Archaeology:
The GSCI partnered with Dr. George Nicholas, Dr. Julie Hollowell, and other researchers in a proposal for a multi-disciplinary and international research project in IPR and archeology, submitted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This would entail GSCI participation in a case study exploring the use of Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge (TK) and archaeological knowledge in the identification, protection, and management of sites and heritage resources, as well as IPR issues related to access to, use, and interpretation of TK and archaeological data. This research will help the GSCI draft a Heritage Policy and contribute to the revision of Federal, GNWT, and Yukon heritage legislation and policies.

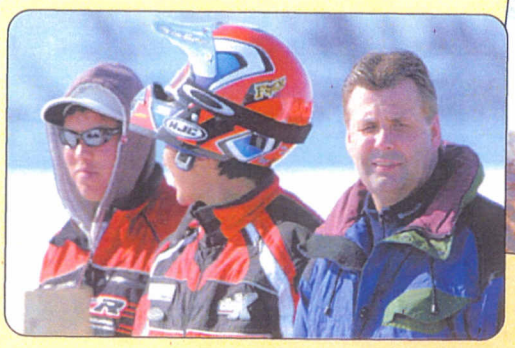
Land Use Permits:
Alestine Andre and Scott Higgins assisted in the review of land use applications forwarded by Kristi Benson.

Mackenzie River-Canadian Heritage River Nomination:
Ingrid Kritsch represents the GTC on the Technical Steering Committee for this initiative, along with representatives of the Federal Government, GNWT, Deh Cho, Metis, and Sahtu. In November, the GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism, and Investment accepted the Gwich'in Chapter, one of five cultural chapters provided by First Nations and Metis along the Mackenzie. The Gwich'in Chapter was written by Randy Freeman, with assistance from Ingrid Kritsch, Alestine Andre, and the Gwich'in Cultural Working Group, which includes representatives of all GSA communities (Neil Colin and Abraham Peterson, Fort McPherson; Douglas Kendo and Noel Andre, Tsiigehtchic; Eliza Greenland and Fanny Greenland, Aklavik; Fred B. Jerome and Willie Simon, Inuvik).

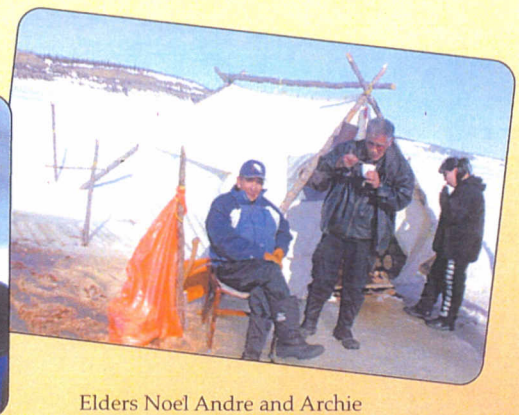
Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Traditional Knowledge Project:
Kristi Benson, TK Coordinator/Researcher for this project since April 2004, has completed the project report and maps, which have been forwarded to the relevant organizations and individuals. Copies of the report and maps in various formats, along with tapes and transcripts of interviews and CDs of photos, will be deposited with the GSCI and in the GSCI portion of the NWT Archives.



George John with his niece Rhonda



Skidoo racers with David Krutko



Elders Noel Andre and Archie Norbert taking a break at the Mackenzie River Jamboree 2006

Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site Project:
Under the direction of Alestine Andre and the Gwichya Gwich'in Council, a monument made of river cobbles and bearing the plaque for the site was erected in Tsiigehtchic last fall. Following minor additional landscaping this summer, the site will be completed.

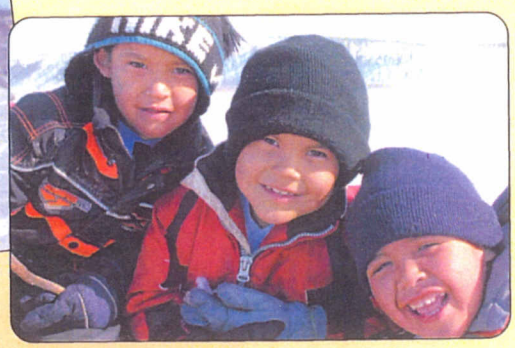
Northern Natural Pigments Project:
Ingrid Kritsch of the GSCI and Sharon Katz of the Aurora Research Institute drafted a proposal for a joint research project on plants and other materials traditionally used by the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit to produce dyes and paints. The proposal is still in its early stages and we are identifying possible funding sources. Dr. Nancy Turner, a University of Victoria ethno-botanist, has reviewed the proposal and expressed interest. She may also involve a student in the research if funding can be obtained.

Academic Research:
On March 24, 2006, Alestine Andre successfully defended her MA thesis at the University of Victoria, *"Nan T'aih Nakwits'in Ats'ih" (The Land Gives Us Strength): The Medicine Plants used by Gwich'in People of Canada's Western Arctic to Maintain Good Health and Well Being*. The thesis documents medicine plant teachings of Ruth Welsh, and the research material has been deposited with the GSCI and NWT Archives.

In October 2005, Ingrid Kritsch of the GSCI made final comments on Melanie Fafard's doctoral dissertation at the University of Alberta, *Canadian Heritage, Indigenous Heritage: Places, Meaning and Management: A Case Study with the Tetlit Gwch'in, Fort McPherson*. Melanie Fafard successfully defended the dissertation in March 2006.

Peter Loovers, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, contacted the GSCI in April 2005 regarding TK research in the GSA as part of the work for his dissertation. After discussions with GSCI staff, he decided to conduct an ethnographic study on Gwich'in harvesting, leadership, and kinship in Fort McPherson, drawing on comparative anthropological information from the 1930s and 1940s. This research will add to understanding of the bush economy's present role and its interaction with the wage economy, and may be useful in developing new harvesting policies that take account of Gwich'in knowledge and values. Peter Loovers arrived in Fort McPherson in December 2005 for a planned 14-month stay, during which he will conduct interviews in the community and accompany harvesters, based at the Gwich'in Language Centre. GSCI staff provided assistance in applying for NWT and Yukon Research Licenses, and negotiated a TK agreement under the Gwich'in TK Policy.

Women's snowshoe race



Kids at Mackenzie River Jamboree

Ruby Cardinal in the log sawing competition

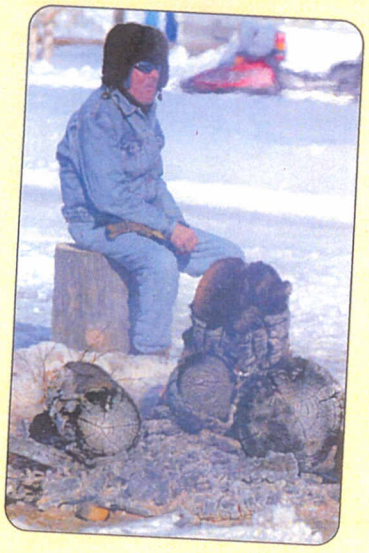
Public Presentations:
In September 2005, Alestine Andre and Ingrid Kritsch made presentations on GSCI work in Winnipeg, to Accord First Nations (who are interested in the GSCI's experience with the Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site as a model for a future World Heritage Site nomination), and the Parks and Protected Areas Research Forum (a consortium of the University of Manitoba, Brandon University, Manitoba Conservation and Parks Canada). In November Ingrid Kritsch made a presentation in Whitehorse to the Yukon First Nations Heritage Group, consisting of the Heritage Officers of Yukon First Nations with signed land claims.

Tetlit Gwich'in Googwandak:
In late September Ingrid Kritsch and Alestine Andre met with Winnipeg academic Dr. Michael Heine, and confirmed his interest in continued collaboration on this book. With the GSCI's support, he obtained a sabbatical from the University of Manitoba from May-September, 2006, and at time of writing plans to meet the Tetlit Gwich'in Steering Committee in April. The GSCI is at work on a letter of intent and three-year grant proposal from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Tetlit Gwich'in National Historic Site:
In June 2005, the Tetlit Gwich'in NHS Steering Committee made a presentation to the Peel Watershed Planning Commission in Fort McPherson, and in November Ingrid Kritsch had a follow-up meeting in Whitehorse with Commission staff. The Commission is currently finalizing an issues report drawing upon last summer's community consultations, and will report to us on future steps once internal review of the document is complete. In the meantime, the Commission is interested in reviewing Tetlit Gwich'in heritage data collected during traditional land use and place name research. The GSCI provided a list of projects and resource materials to Commission staff, who recently visited the GSCI Inuvik office to see what data are in our GIS database.

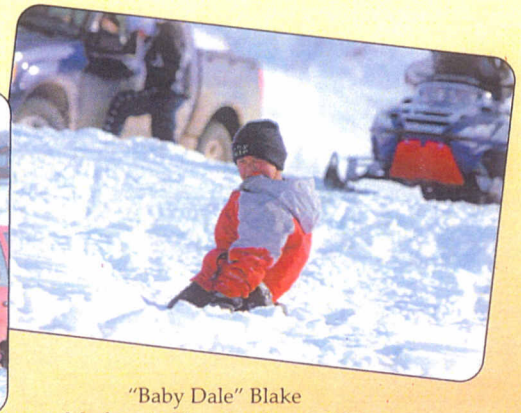
Viky'oonendik (Church Hill) Territorial Historic Site Nomination Project:
Funding has been received to pursue this nomination, but the project has been postponed until the next fiscal year.

Administration:
On March 6, 2006, GSCI staff met with the GTC in Fort McPherson to discuss changes in GSCI staff and office space locations for the new fiscal year. These changes were finalized at a March 10 GTC Board meeting in Tsiigehtchic.



Mervin Firth at Gwich'in Day 2006

Spectators watching a skidoo race
Mackenzie River Jamboree 2006



"Baby Dale" Blake
Mackenzie River Jamboree 2006

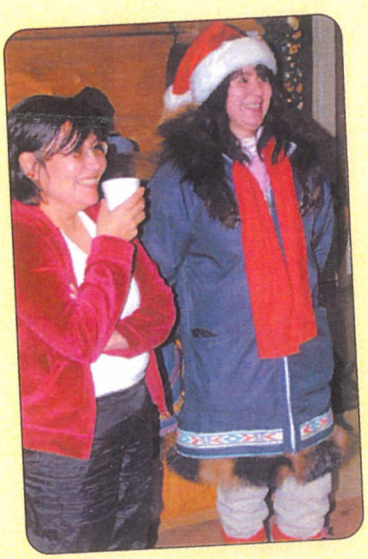
The Gwich'in Language Centre began the current fiscal year with both the Language Manager and Linguist Trainee positions filled. The Linguist Trainee position has been vacant since January, and at time of writing we hope to have it filled soon.

GSCI Staff:
Sharon Snowshoe, Executive Director
Ingrid Kritsch, Research Director
Alestine Andre, Heritage Researcher
Kristi Benson, Researcher
Mavis Clark, Administrative Assistant
William George Firth, Language Manager
Keith Kunnizzie, Linguist Trainee
Scott Higgins, GIS Analyst

GSCI Board:
Mary Ann Ross, Chair
Anna May McLeod, Tsiigehtchic
Walter Alexie, Fort McPherson
Annie Jane Modeste, Fort McPherson
Renie Stewart, Aklavik
Catherine Mitchell, Inuvik
Sarah McLeod-Firth, Inuvik

Dog races
Mackenzie River Jamboree 2006

Ashley Blake and Florissa Bain



Karen Mitchell and
Agnes Noksana (Firth)