



# Gwich'in Tribal Council

Annual Report 1997 ~ '98

Gwich'in land, culture and economy for a better future

# Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute

Ingrid Kritsch, Alestine Andre

## Research Projects and Ongoing Programs

### Gwich'in Ethnobotany Project

GSCI and Inuvik Research Centre staff worked with Gwich'in elders to complete the first phase of a project that is documenting Gwich'in knowledge about the traditional uses of plants, trees, roots and berries. Gwich'in elders and youth in Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik, and Tsiigehtchic have been interviewed both in the community and on the land. A report and displays of the plants will be finalized and will then sent out to the five schools in the Gwich'in Settlement Area in early September 1998.

### Gwich'in Language Dictionary Project

Gwichya Gwich'in and Teetl'it Gwich'in elders, GSCI staff, a linguist (Andre Bourcier) and Gwich'in Language Centre staff have completed the second edition of the Gwich'in noun dictionary which lists 600 of the 3,100 words documented in both the Gwichya Gwich'in and Teetl'it Gwich'in dialects. A computerized version of this dictionary was not possible this year, however this component will be developed in the next phase of the project. The dictionary will be sent to the five schools in Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic upon completion.

### Gwich'in Language Classes

Gwich'in language classes were offered in the communities of Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic for three months from September to December 1998. Instruction included basic Gwich'in words and phrases, conversational exercises and practice in writing the Gwich'in language using the standardized Gwich'in writing system as outlined in the 1990 GNWT Dene



Alestine Andre and Ron Cruikshank with students at the Knuté Lang Camp

Standardization Report. These classes were offered in the evening. The Gwich'in language instructors from each community attended two Gwich'in literacy classes which provided them with instruction and practice in reading, writing, and speaking the Gwich'in language. The Gwich'in literacy classes were held in November 1997 and March 1998.

### Gwich'in Science Camp

The GSCI offered its third annual on-the-land traditional knowledge and western science camp this past year for senior high school students. This year's camp was held at the Knut Lang Camp outside of Aklavik from September 9-17, 1997. Thirteen students from Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic worked with Gwich'in elders and scientists from the disciplines of anthropology, biology and geography who are currently on staff with Gwich'in organizations and co-management boards, and the GNWT.

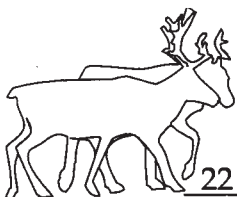
Instruction at the camp consists of a combination of lecture, discussion and practical exercises, with the emphasis placed on hands-on practical exercises. Instruction takes place both in the class-

room and on the land and is designed to promote a better understanding and appreciation of Gwich'in culture, knowledge, the land and its natural and cultural resources. The aim of this experience is also to motivate students to continue their education.

Students enrolled in the camp earn two credits towards their high school leaving diploma in two locally developed courses that GSCI completed recently in partnership with staff from the PWNHC. These two courses are called: "Exploring our Heritage, Culture and Traditional Knowledge" and "Land Claims and Co-Management Boards: An Introduction". Next year we are offering the camp either in late August or early September at the Rachel Reindeer Camp outside of Inuvik.

### Teetl'it Gwich'in Place Names Project

Traditional Gwich'in place names can tell us much about Gwich'in culture, how people lived, where they travelled and their in-depth knowledge of the land. This year's project, Phase Three, focused on inputting information from our 1996 project and extracting oral history information related to Teetl'it Gwich'in place names from the



# Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute

Gwich'in Language Centre. The project was carried out by GSCI staff, and research assistants from Fort McPherson in consultation with Teetl'it Gwich'in elders. The information was added to the existing database and a report will be drafted and reviewed with Teetl'it Gwich'in elders.

An eight-day snowmobile trip with elders and youth also took place in early March 1998 along a traditional trail from Fort McPherson to Mayo. The purpose of this trip is to revitalize the use of the trail, to re-establish the connections between the people living in Fort McPherson and Mayo, and to document the trail and the oral history of this area.

## Gwich'in Commemoration Project

*Nahwichoonjik (the Mackenzie River) between Thunder River and Point Separation is of national historic significance due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape.*

—Historic Sites and Monuments Board recommendation as approved by the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, January 1998

At present there are more than 775 National Historic Sites, most of which are in southern Canada. Within the past few years, the Canadian government has recognized that there are a number of gaps in their commemoration, among which are sites commemorating aboriginal people and their history. In January 1998 the Canadian government began to close this gap by officially recognizing a 100 mile stretch of the Mackenzie River (between Thunder River and Point Separation) as a National Historic Site "due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape." This designation will assist the community of Tsiigehtchic in developing a framework agreement between the community and Parks Canada. It will also assist in the development of a management plan. This plan will outline the type of development or inter-

pretation that will occur, and how tourist access to the site will be regulated.

## Publication

In late 1997, a paper written by GSCI staff Ingrid Kritsch and Alestine Andre called "Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge and Heritage Studies in the Gwich'in Settlement Area" was published in a book titled *At a Crossroads: Archaeology and First Peoples in Canada*.

This paper was one of 20 papers written by aboriginal and non-aboriginal authors and discusses the present status of the relationship between aboriginal people and archaeologists in Canada.

The GSCI paper presents the roles and responsibilities of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute and gives an overview of the traditional knowledge and archaeological students carried out in the Gwich'in Settlement Area from 1992 to 1995. Included is a discussion of how the traditional knowledge and archaeological research is being used to meet a number of needs which range from the identification of culturally significant sites for protection of land management purposes, to the development of more culturally relevant teaching materials for local schools.

## New Responsibilities Related to Implementation of the Claim

### Integrated Resource Management Plan

GSCI continued to work with the Gwich'in Land and Water Board (GLWB) in developing an integrated



Gwich'in grave on the Black Stone River

resource management plan for the Gwich'in Settlement Area along with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board, Gwich'in Interim Land Use Planning Board, and Gwich'in Lands Administration. The Institute in partnership with the GLWB is beginning to develop the heritage layer of the GIS so that it can advise the GLWB on land and water applications and their impact on heritage resources.

## Self Government: Culture, Language & Heritage Management Sub-Agreement

GSCI continued to advise the Beaufort-Delta Self-Government office on mat-



# Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute

ters related to the negotiation of a self-government agreement on Gwich'in culture, language and heritage management. GSCI is a member of the Working Group which consists of representatives from the Beaufort-Delta Self-Government office, GSCI, Inuvialuit Social Development Program, Federal Government and GNWT.

## Traditional Knowledge Policies and Guidelines

A draft paper, policies and guidelines which outline the use, access and ownership issues pertaining to traditional knowledge in the GSA is being developed in collaboration with the Gwich'in Land and Water Board.

## Gwich'in Land Use Plan

The GSCI has provided input (both written and oral) into the Protected Areas Strategy being developed in the GSA.

## Contracts

### Northern Athapaskan and Metis Collections Contract and Publication

There is great interest in the Mackenzie Valley with materials that were collected in earlier times and are now housed throughout the world in museums, archives and private collections. In order to prepare for repatriation requests from the Gwich'in and Sahtu, and potential requests from other Dene groups in the Mackenzie Valley as their land claims are settled, the GNWT developed a two-phase project to determine where Northern Athapaskan and Metis collections were housed outside of the NWT, and a description of these collections (including ethnographic, archaeological and historical objects and records).

GSCI, under the contract to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC), carried out both phases of this project from 1994-1997. In the ini-

tial phase, GSCI identified 160 museums and archives around the world that might have objects and records related to Athapaskan and Metis peoples of the NWT. A survey was then designed and sent out to these 160 institutions asking them if they indeed had such collections and if so, a description of these collections. In the second phase, GSCI compiled the responses to the survey and produced and report. This report was published in December 1997 by the PWNHC, and is now being distributed to the public. This publication will assist government, Athapaskan and Metis organizations in knowing where these collections are for research and repatriation purposes.

## Administration

### Re-organization of Positions within GSCI, Additional Staff and GSCI Policy and Operations Manual

We are in the process of reorganizing staff positions within the Institute and drafting new job descriptions. Effective April 1, 1998, Ingrid Kritsch, the Executive Director since 1993, will assume the position of Research Director, and Alestine Andre, the present cultural director, will assume the position of Executive Director. Ruby Lennie will be the Administrative Assistant Trainee. We are still working towards drafting a GSCI policy and operations manual currently used.

### 1998/1999 Projects

We are currently fund-raising for the following projects: Teetl'it Gwich'in



Students at the Knute Lang Camp

Place Names Project (Phase IV); Peel River Archaeology Project, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project; Gwich'in Language Dictionary; Gwich'in Ethnobotany Project; Tsiigehtchic Genealogy Project; Gwich'in Literacy Classes; and Gwich'in Science Camp.

### Board:

James Wilson, Chair  
Mary Kendi  
Catherine Mitchell  
Sarah McLeod-Firth  
Bertha Francis

### Staff:

Ingrid Kritsch, Executive Director  
Alestine Andre, Cultural Director  
Ruby Lennie, Administrative Assistant Trainee

