

GWICH'IN TRIBAL COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 1999 ~ 2000



GWICH'IN LAND, CULTURE AND ECONOMY FOR A BETTER FUTURE

— GWICH'IN SOCIAL & CULTURAL INSTITUTE REPORT —

The 1999/2000 year was an exciting one for the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), with many rewarding projects either completed, begun or continued.

GSCI, Inuvik Research Centre and Parks Canada staff continued to redraft a report on traditional Gwich'in use of plants for food, medicine, shelter and tools, under the Gwich'in Ethnobotany Project.

The GSCI sponsored several research projects over the summer of 1999. GSCI staff member Ingrid Kritsch and Fort McPherson elder Walter Alexie traveled to the Yukon to assist in the Tombstone Oral History Project. The GSCI worked in partnership with the Tri'ondek Hwech'in (Dawson First Nation) and the Yukon Government Heritage Branch to document Teetlit Gwich'in use and knowledge of the area. This information helped to understand the traditional land use of the area and to determine the boundaries of the Tombstone Territorial Park. We also hired a summer student to enter translated Roman Catholic Church records into the genealogical database on the software REUNION. Gwich'in names were sorted and cross-checked during this project, which the GSCI supported in conjunction with the Gwichya Gwich'in Council in Tsiigehtchic and the Gwich'in Education and Training Program.

In August, Woody Elias of Fort McPherson notified the GSCI office about the disturbance of an



"Gwich'in Family" — left to right, Annie (Niditchie) Norbert, Liza (Niditchie) Remy, Camilla Niditchie, Prosper Niditchie, Chief Paul Niditchie, John Niditchie, and Amos Niditchie,

Photo: R.C. Oblate Archdiocese, Yellowknife

archaeological site near the Anglican Church in Fort McPherson and the recovery of artefacts, including 4 bone projectile points. The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (PWNHC) was also informed and asked GSCI staff to locate and assess the site on their behalf. GSCI staff traveled to Fort McPherson in September to survey the site and collect any endangered artefacts lying on the surface. Staff prepared an archaeological report with recommendations for test excavations the following summer to determine the nature and extent of the site.

GSCI staff also drafted a chapter on the Gwich'in for the Western Arctic Handbook. This chapter contains information on Gwich'in history, culture and language, significant dates and individuals in the history of the Gwich'in, significant features of the area and the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The Handbook is intended as a resource for both tourists and locals.

In mid - September, GSCI staff met in Tsiigehtchic with the

Gwich'in Land Administration, Parks Canada and the Nagwichoonyik Steering Committee to discuss the Nagwichoonyik (Mackenzie River) National Historic Site Project. This was followed by a two - day river trip to orient people to the places along the river and a one - day workshop to prepare the draft Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS). David Neufeld of Parks Canada prepared a draft of the CIS for our review. The CIS lays the groundwork for how the Nagwichoonyik National Historic Site (declared in 1998) will be commemorated.

The GNWT provided the GSCI with funding to develop an implementation plan for the Gwich'in Language Plan. After the funds were received in November, 1999, Chris Douglas was hired to develop the plan and perform other language - related work. The implementation plan was completed by the end of March, 2000 and outlines research and programs for the next five years.

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In December, Michael Heine was hired to complete work on the community history book drafted in 1996, "Gwichya Gwich'in Googwandak: The History of the Gwichya Gwich'in and of Tsiigehtchic". A January, 2000 meeting with Elders and community members reviewed the draft and added information. The target publication date is December, 2000. This will be the first of a series of community and land use histories for the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

Shannon Ward, former GTC Implementation Coordinator, was hired to develop a traditional knowledge policy with input from all GSA communities during this fiscal year. A meeting with representatives of all four communities was held in Inuvik in January. Subsequent meetings with Gwich'in organizations, including the GTC, governments and co-management boards provided further input. A draft policy was finished at the end of March for review by the GTC.

In partnership with the PWNHC, the GSCI began the first phase of the Gwich'in Traditional Clothing Project, which will replicate Gwich'in clothing from museums outside of the NWT. In February, 2000 the GNWT supplied funds for Elders, seamstresses, GSCI and PWNHC staff to travel to the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. to examine traditional Gwich'in fur and caribou skin clothing from the 19th



Photo: R.C. Oblate Archives, Yellowknife

"Indian Summer Camp Area, Arctic Red River," NWT, circa 1945.

Century. A Yellowknife filmmaker, Dennis Allan, was hired to videotape the clothing and other Gwich'in items in these museums.

From March 17 - 26, 2000 the Gwich'in Science Camp was held at the Knut Lang Camp outside Aklavik. Nine students from Aklavik and Tsiigehtchic high schools and Aurora College in Inuvik attended. Elders from Aklavik and Fort McPherson gave instruction in Gwich'in history, culture and traditional plant use. Personnel from the GSCI; PWNHC; Gwich'in Lands Administration; Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board; Aurora College and GNWT's DRWED instructed the students in a variety of Western science disciplines and the Gwich'in Land Claim.

The GSCI also worked on several projects over the summer of 2000. Leslie McCartney, a Master's student from Trent University, interviewed seven Gwich'in Elders and prepared biographical sketches for publication, part of a biography project on which she has worked with the GSCI since the summer of 1999. The Institute also worked with Melanie Fafard, a Ph. D. student from the University of Alberta, on an archeological survey of the Peel River area and an excavation in Fort McPherson, which will be useful in the Protected Areas Strategy for the Peel Plateau Ecoregion.

ALESTINE ANDRE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INGRID KRITSCH
RESEARCH DIRECTOR

