



Contacts

Tsiigehtchic

So much more than dryfish!

Community name

Prior to 1994 Tsiigehtchic was known as Arctic Red River on official maps. In 1994, the community changed its name to its traditional name which means 'At the mouth of Iron River.'

Economy

Although only a few community members still make their living from hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting, Tsiigehtchic is a thriving community and almost all people are working fulltime, part-time, casual or seasonal labour within the community. The Gwichya Gwich'in Band/Tsiigehtchic Charter Community provides Municipal Services and hires a number of people, The Designated Gwich'in Organization (DGO) and it's economic arm, The Red River Incorporated Band, runs the fuel depot and also hires construction workers and heavy equipment operators for various seasonal projects and contracts. There are also jobs with The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, The Government of the Northwest Territories, The Regional Health Authority, The Beaufort Delta Education Council and Aurora College.

Ferry and road information

Tsiigehtchic is located on the Mackenzie River and is accessible by the MV Louis Cardinal ferry in the summer and by ice road in the winter. The community experiences temporary isolation for a couple of weeks each spring and fall during break-up and freeze-up of the Mackenzie River and Arctic Red River during which time access is primarily by helicopter. The ferry access to Tsiigehtchic is located off the Dempster Highway and the ferry is in operation from late May to late October. During this time it runs generally from 9:30 am until 12:30 midnight. The ice road is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For highway and ferry reports, you can call 1-800-661-0750 or click on the 'Road/Ferry' button at <http://www.gov.nt.ca>.

Tsiigehtchic is located:

- 125 km > from Inuvik
- 59 km > from Fort McPherson
- 144 km > from the NWT border
- 1,100 km > from Whitehorse, Yukon

The Band Office (867) 953-3201

At this number you can contact:

- The Chief/Mayor of Tsiigehtchic
- The Tsiigehtchic Charter Community Office
- The President of the Elder's Committee, and

The Government Services Office (867) 953-3706

- Can help with most Federal and Territorial Services

The DGO Office (867) 953-3011

- At this number you can contact the President of the DGO. It is also the number you contact for gas. (see below)

Gas (867) 953-3011

- Gas Station hours are 9-12am and 1-6pm M-F, and 10am – 3pm Sat. Gas may be available after hours for a call-out fee of \$20

Northern Store (867) 953-3060

- Groceries and some dry goods, ATM, Open 10am – 6pm M-F Noon – 6pm Sat. Occasionally Open Sunday PM

Canada Post (located in Northern Store) (867) 953-3060

- Open Noon – 4pm M-F

Health Services

- Please note that Tsiigehtchic does not have a resident doctor or nurse, if needed contact the Health Station in

Fort McPherson (867) 952-2586

or Inuvik Regional Hospital (867) 777-8000

Tsiigehtchic Health Centre (867) 953-3361

- A Nurse is there every Thursday from 10 am to 5pm.

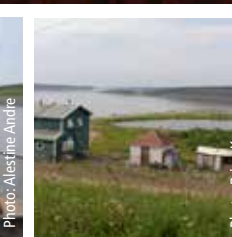
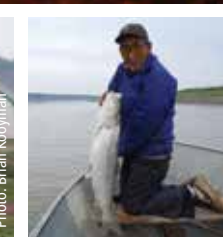
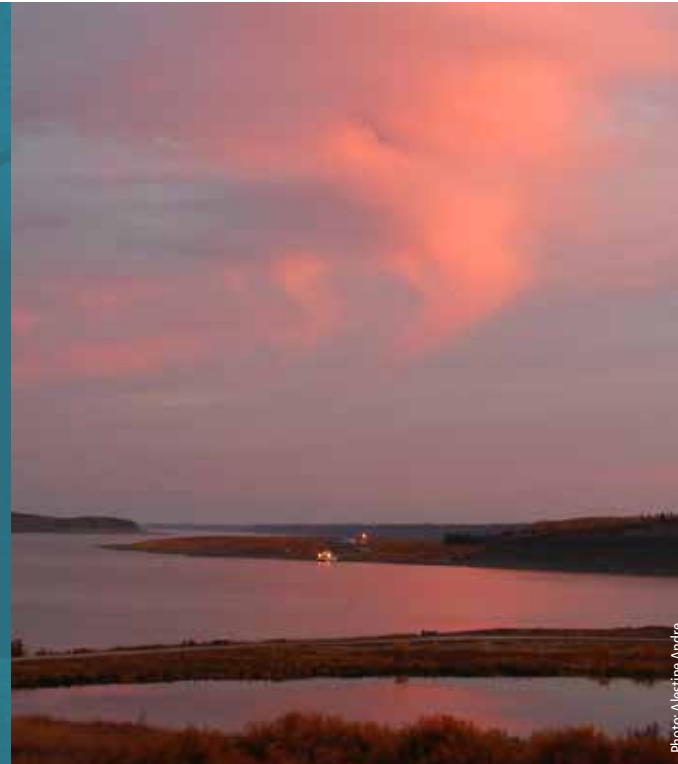
Police – RCMP Fort McPherson (867) 952-1111

- Tsiigehtchic does not have a resident police officer

Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (867) 953-3613

Tsiigehtchic Tourism Society (867) 953-3136

- Open seasonally for June, July and August. At other time contact The Band Office



Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute



Northwest Territories Industry, Tourism and Investment

Tsiigehtchic

The name of Tsiigehtchic means 'At the mouth of Iron River', referring to the outflow of Tsiighnjik or the Arctic Red River. The population of the community is about 150 people.

Tsiigehtchic is located at the confluence of the Mackenzie River and the Arctic Red River, on NTS topographic mapsheet 106N, at Latitude 67°27'N, Longitude 133°44'W.

Day and night

June 21st – 24 hours of sunlight (from approx. mid-May to mid-July)

December 21st – 0 hours of sunlight (from approx. early December to late December)

In the Mackenzie Delta, including Tsiigehtchic, there are 57 days a year during which the sun does not set and 30 days a year during which the sun does not rise.

The winter months, which we call the Dark Days, provide many good opportunities for star-gazing and viewing the Aurora Borealis.

Government structure

Tsiigehtchic is governed by the Gwichya Gwich'in Band Council, Tsiigehtchic Charter Community Council, and Gwichya Gwich'in Designated Gwich'in Organization Council. The elected Chief of the Gwichya Gwich'in Band also sits as Mayor.

Event listing

- March/April** – Arctic Red River / Mackenzie Jamboree
- April 22** – Gwich'in Day
- June 21** – Aboriginal Day
- July 1** – Canada Day
- August** – Canoe Days

Culture

Even today, life in Tsiigehtchic remains fairly traditional. Families still go to summer fish camps along the Mackenzie River and community members frequently go out on the land throughout the seasons. Tsiigehtchic is well known for its excellent dryfish and strips. In the early fall time, hunters hunt for moose along the river and caribou in the mountains. In late fall, many people from Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson set their nets under the ice for their winter supply of fish. In the winter months, hunters may get caribou and moose, and recently, muskox. A few people also set snares for rabbits. In the spring, hunters skidoo to Jim Nagle Island or the Mackenzie Islands for geese and duck hunting. Sewing and beadwork is undertaken by many community members for artistic, personal and economic purposes. Cookouts and feasts are held throughout the year.

Places to see in Tsiigehtchic

Visitors are invited to see the following landmarks in Tsiigehtchic:



Photo: Alesline Andre

» **Tsiigehtchic Band & Charter Office** – where you can find information about the community and see a 19th century replica of a Gwich'in man's five piece summer outfit made of white caribou skins and decorated with porcupine quills, beads, silverberry seeds and fringes. The original outfit is in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

- » **Tsiigehtchic sign on the hill** – referred to locally as the 'Hollywood' sign.
- » **Fish camps** - where you can see fish being processed and buy local dryfish and fish strips.



Photo: Alesline Andre

- » **Water Lake** – a scenic walk takes you to this lake which is the community's water source.
- » **The Flats** – an historic part of the community where events are often held today.
- » **Church Hill** – with amazing views of both the Mackenzie River and Arctic Red River.
- » **Tsiigehtchic Cemetery** – Located next to Church Hill
- » **Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute office** – for cultural, historical and linguistic information about the Gwich'in. GSCI was established by the Gwich'in Tribal Council in 1992 and began operation in 1993 with the mandate

“to document, preserve and promote Gwich'in culture, language, traditional knowledge and values.”

- » **Tsiigehtchic Tourist Centre** – located in the centre of the community with a panoramic view of the town and its surroundings, the Tourist Centre offers kitchen facilities, a toilet and shower, camping sites, WiFi, displays of local Arts and Crafts for sale, local pictures and information. Walking tours of the community can be arranged. Come and see our rustic log building and quaint viewing platform and cupola.



Photo: Eileen Cardinal



Photo: Lawrence Norbert

History

For many generations, the Gwichya Gwich'in established camps on the Flats below the community for summer fishing. Indeed, archaeological excavations show that this area was used for at least 1,200 years. According to the oral history, the Flats was well known as a summer gathering place where people fished, traded, participated in drum dances and tea dances, stick gambling, foot races, football and visiting.

In 1868-1869, the Roman Catholic Church established its first mission in the Gwich'in area near the present day community but because of flooding, moved the mission seven miles downriver to the Old Arctic Red site in 1883. The mission was moved to its present location in the community in 1896. The Catholic Church seen today on Vik'ooyendik (Church Hill) was built in 1921 and renovated in early 2000. Fur traders followed the Roman Catholic missionaries and by 1901, Hislop and Nagle built a trading post on the Flats, soon to be followed by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1902.

In 1926, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) established a post at Arctic Red River. This post remained in operation until 1976. Although there were many changes that took place in the community, life for the Gwichya Gwich'in remained centered around the land and seasonal activities. It was not until the 1940s and the introduction of government schooling and later government housing in the late 1970s that the Gwichya Gwich'in began to settle permanently at the present site.

In 1992, the Gwichya Gwich'in along with the Gwich'in living in Aklavik, Inuvik and Fort McPherson, signed the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The community of Tsiigehtchic now sits within the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

This land claim gives the Gwich'in ownership and jurisdiction over parcels of land in the Mackenzie Delta and other areas of their traditional lands. The Gwich'in are currently negotiating a self-government agreement.

Historical sites and traditional Gwich'in place names

Roman Catholic Church and Holy Name of Mary Mission house. Missionaries first visited Arctic Red River in 1868. The oldest of the two churches located on Church Hill was built in 1921. The material was barged down the river from Hay River.

Nagwichoonyik ('big country river') is the Gwich'in name for the Mackenzie River. The river has played an important role throughout Gwich'in history and holds physical, cultural and spiritual significance for the Gwichya Gwich'in. In 1997, a 175 km stretch of the river (from Thunder River to Point Separation) was designated a National Historic Site by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. It is one of the largest such sites in Canada. A plaque has been placed in the community near the Band Office to recognize the significance of this stretch of the river.

Łeth T'urh Kak ('on the mud flats' – a.k.a The Flats) refers to the large flats located below the community of Tsiigehtchic where the Mackenzie River ferry, M.V. Louis Cardinal, lands. This area was used for centuries for fish camps and a meeting place between the Gwichya Gwich'in, the Slavey, and the Eneekaii (later called the Inuvialuit). Today, the flats are still used for fishing and recreational purposes.

Vik'ooyendik (unknown meaning – a.k.a. Church Hill) is the Gwichya Gwich'in name for the high hill that stands at the mouth of the Arctic Red River on top of which is sited the Roman Catholic Church, the first building that is visible as you approach the community by road or river. People in the community often sit here in the spring to enjoy the sunny warm weather and to keep an eye on the ice conditions of the Arctic Red and Mackenzie rivers during break up. In the summer people sit here to admire the view along the rivers and monitor road and river traffic.

Deetrin' Ehch K'it ('raven's bed') is located below the Church and is the site of the raven's camp and the old time story about Raven losing his beak, tricking the people to get it back and why his beak appears crooked today.

The Arctic Red River called Tsiigehnjik ('iron river') in Gwich'in, was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1994. The river has a rich cultural history with many named places along its course as it was used as a trail into the Mackenzie Mountains where people made their living in the winter. The river is navigable between late May and early October.



Photo: MACA