

## Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge and Heritage Studies In the Gwich'in Settlement Area

Ingrid D. Kritsch  
Alestine M. Andre

### CROW STORY<sup>1</sup>

*Crow was no good you know.  
In the olden days, they say all the animals are human beings, men and women.  
And Crow likes to fool the people and cheat them too.  
He gets kick out of it, you know.  
Sometimes, he would scream and make all kinds of noise.  
Well, I guess he made everybody tired.  
They couldn't sleep because he made so much noise, especially at night.  
So, the men grabbed him and they took his beak so that he couldn't talk anymore.  
They hurt him.  
He was really suffering, his mouth was sore.  
He made a plan to get his beak back.  
He went up the Red [Arctic Red River], not very far from here and he made a raft with  
wood.  
Then he made people out of moss and placed them on top of it.  
He picked berries and he made their eyes too.  
Then when he was on top of Vik'ooyendik [no translation], he got a little boy to look in  
his hair for lice.  
He told that little boy, "Watch for raft."  
All of a sudden, that little boy said that a raft was coming.  
Crow told him that the people on the raft were coming from the mountains.  
But he fooled the little boy, he lied.  
They say, Crow is bad to make medicine.  
Crow told the little boy to go down to the Flats and tell everybody that people were com-  
ing from up the Red.  
Everybody ran to the bank to meet the people, except for a blind old woman who was  
looking after Crow's beak.  
She wanted to go down to the shore too, but didn't know where to put the beak.  
That old woman said, "Gee, I don't know where to put this beak?"  
That's when Crow lifted up a corner of the tent.  
"Give it to me!" he said. "Give it to me!"  
The old woman was blind so she couldn't see that Crow was speaking.  
She gave the beak to Crow.  
Crow put his beak back on so fast, that he put it on crooked!  
That's how Crow fooled the people so that he could get his beak back.*

*Tsiigehtchic*, which means "mouth of iron river" is a small Gwich'in<sup>2</sup> community of 160 people, located at the confluence of the Arctic Red and Mackenzie Rivers, in the Northwest Territories. The Crow Story told above takes place at the mouth of the Arctic Red River. It is here, below *Vik'ooyendik* (locally called Church Hill in reference to the Roman Catholic church and mission that sit prominently on this hill), that Crow formerly had his camp. Hollow depressions

<sup>1</sup> Extracted and edited from interviews in 1992 and 1993 with Annie Norbert of Tsiigehtchic.

<sup>2</sup> The Gwich'in have been referred to as Loucheux or Kutchin in the early exploration and anthropological literature.

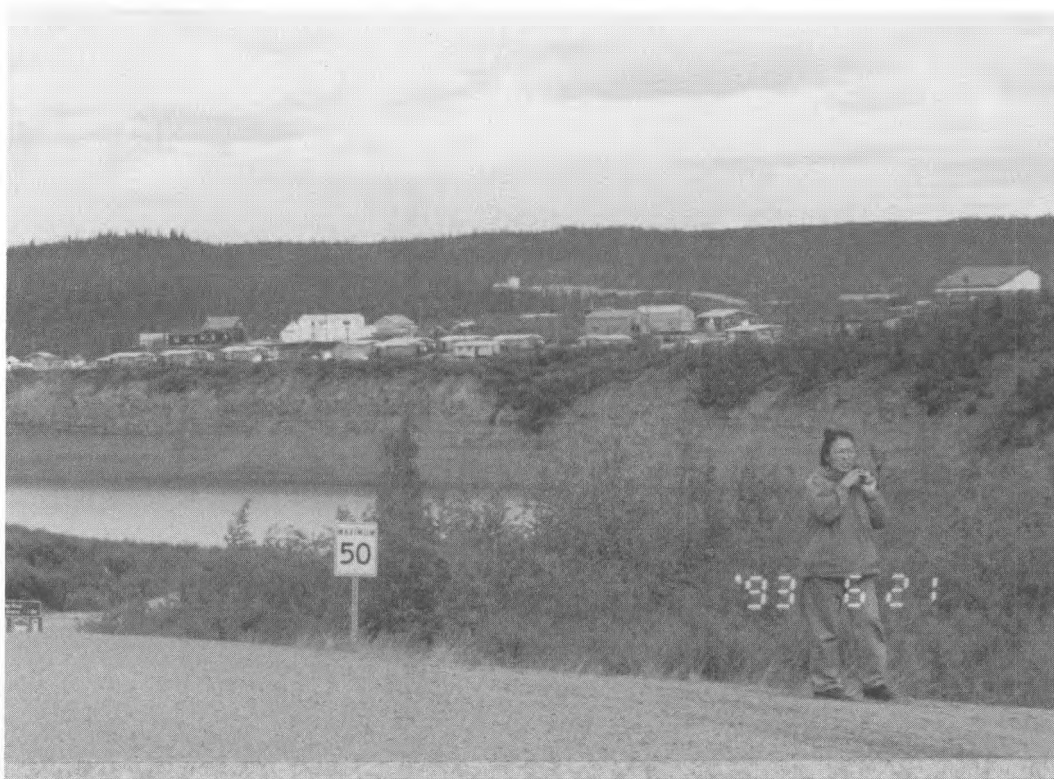


Figure 1. The community of Tsiigehtchic, located at the confluence of the Arctic Red mentions Vik'ooyendik [no translation—the hill with the Roman Catholic church and Flats" (shore in front of the community). Alestine Andre standing in foreground.

in this area, called *Deetrin' ehchì k'it* ["crow's-bed"], indicate that this is the place where he had his "bed" (Figure 1).

Until recently the community of Tsiigehtchic was officially called "Arctic Red River." The residents of the community are one of several regional groups who speak a dialect of Gwich'in, one of the Athapaskan languages. They refer to themselves as the Gwichya Gwich'in, or "people of the flat land." The lands traditionally occupied by the Gwich'in language group transcend two Canadian political jurisdictions (Yukon and Northwest Territories) and an international boundary (between Alaska and Yukon). In 1992, the Gwich'in residing in the Northwest Territories completed negotiation of a comprehensive land claim agreement with the government of Canada. Tsiigehtchic, along with three other Gwich'in communities (Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Inuvik), and a portion of Gwich'in lands traditionally used and occupied in the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, are now considered part of the Gwich'in Settlement Region (Figure 2). The area excluding Yukon lands is called the Gwich'in Settlement Area, which encompasses approximately 59,000 square kilometres. Gwichya Gwich'in traditional lands account for approximately 35,000 square kilometres of the present-day settlement area.

This chapter gives an overview of traditional knowledge and heritage studies carried out by the authors with Gwichya Gwich'in elders since 1992. We have seen this work evolve from a solitary oral history research contract between the Northern Oil and Gas Action Project (NOGAP)



(foreground) and Mackenzie Rivers (background). Location for the Crow Story, which and mission ), *Deetrin' ehchii k'it* ("Crow's bed") - hollows below the church, and "The (Photo: Ingrid Kritsch)

Archaeology Project<sup>3</sup> and the authors, to a larger and comprehensive plan developed by the Gwich'in to preserve, promote, and manage their own heritage—an important element in the process of nation-building. This plan is being carried out by a newly created organization, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI). The Institute is now taking the lead in conducting traditional knowledge, archaeological, and other heritage studies in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. This work, and the Institute's role in carrying out heritage resource issues outlined in the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement, is addressed below.

#### **GWICH'IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INSTITUTE AND HERITAGE PROGRAMS**

The simple fact is that people who control your heritage influence the way other people think about you and at times the way you think about yourself. Such control affects your cultural self-esteem and well-being (Dr. Amareswar Galla).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> NOGAP was an eight-year multi-disciplinary program of research in the Beaufort/Delta, Mackenzie River, and Lancaster Sound areas, in preparation for oil and gas exploration and transportation (Pilon 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Head of Museum Studies and Cultural Heritage Management Programs, Univ. of Canberra, Australia, during a keynote address at the Commonwealth Association of Museums Triennial Meeting in 1992.



Figure 2. Settlement regions of the Western Arctic.(Courtesy Gwich'in Geographics Ltd.)

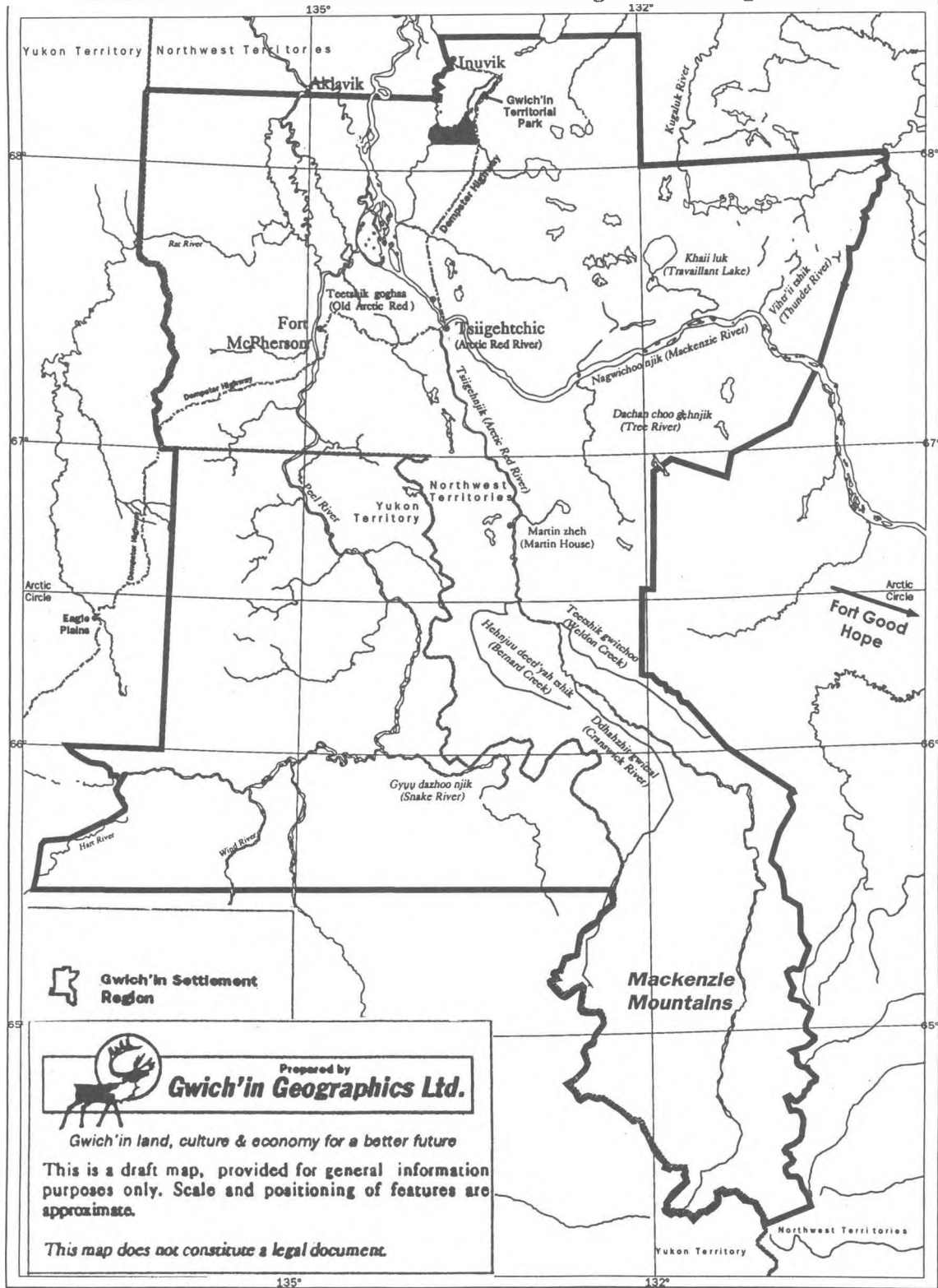


Figure 3. Gwich'in Settlement Area with traditional place names. (Map courtesy Gwich'in Geographics Ltd.)

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute is a nonprofit Society under the Gwich'in Tribal Council. It was established by the Gwich'in in August of 1992, following the signing of the land claim during an annual assembly held in Fort McPherson in response to people's concerns about their loss of culture and language.

The Institute was established to carry out many of the heritage responsibilities that flow out of the claim, as well as to document, preserve, and promote the practice of Gwich'in culture, language, traditional knowledge, and values. An important part of the Institute's mandate is to document Gwich'in heritage and traditional knowledge so that culturally appropriate educational material, training, and other programs and services can be developed and implemented by the Gwich'in, or in partnership with government or education institutions within the Gwich'in Settlement Area. It is believed that these types of initiatives will build a new awareness and pride in Gwich'in culture and ultimately contribute to the social well-being of all individuals within the Gwich'in Nation. These initiatives are considered essential in the processes of nation-building and empowerment (cf. Nicholas, Ch. 6). Elders are considered crucial to this process as they are the sources of traditional knowledge and can give guidance in terms of cultural matters and values.

In all of our projects, local people are being trained while engaged in the research; they also learn about their heritage from the elders while working with professional anthropologists and archaeologists. Our work takes place on the land as much as possible because this is where the traditional knowledge base, the culture, and language are rooted. By providing elders and youth with the opportunity of working together, we are nurturing the intergenerational fabric of Gwich'in society.

In the Gwich'in Settlement Area, as in other parts of the North, heritage is largely based on the oral history and traditional knowledge of the Aboriginal people. As a concept, heritage is wide-ranging and multi-dimensional and has as much relevance to curriculum development, language training, and tourism as it does to recording oral history and identifying archaeological sites. Research to date has focused on documenting Gwich'in traditional knowledge primarily by recording place names and oral history. This has helped us define archaeological research strategies based on traditional knowledge. In turn, the archaeological research has helped elaborate the place name and oral history research. Below, we present recently completed projects and introduce several others that are either ongoing or that we plan to undertake in the near future.

### **The Gwichya Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge Project**

Prior to the present study, no significant accessible body of recorded traditional knowledge existed for the Gwichya Gwich'in. According to Gwichya Gwich'in oral history, their traditional lands extended north of the Mackenzie River into the Mackenzie Delta and east as far as the Thunder River (i.e., the Travaillant Lake area). To the south of the Mackenzie River, their lands stretched throughout the Arctic Red, Cranswick, and Snake River drainages, incorporating much of the northern Mackenzie Mountains (Figure 3).

Since 1992, we have interviewed 24 Gwichya Gwich'in elders. They identified an extensive trail system on 1:50,000 scale maps of their traditional lands. Along these trails they located place names, harvesting locales, traditional camp sites, cabin sites, graves, and places where giant "creatures" reside. Several trails emerged as major routes. Some of these trails were described as being so old and well traveled that they were literally ground into the earth, leaving a road that was over a meter wide and a half meter in depth.

Over 350 Gwich'in and English place names have been recorded for trails, areas, and topographic features. These names tell us about how people lived, where they traveled, and their in-depth knowledge of the land. They are like windows into the traditional culture, history, and values. The majority of these names describes places in terms of their physical appearance, specific resources, or the type of technology used to capture the resource. For example, many names refer to the use of fish traps; a few refer to the use of nets or jigging. Other place names are associated with particular individuals, or with both legendary and historical events. In several cases, the names are so old that they have either lost all or part of their meaning over time. The elders refer to these place names as *ts'u deŋ* meaning "stone age," and indicated that these names are at



least 500 years old (Andre and Kritsch 1992; Kritsch and Andre 1993, 1994; Kritsch et al. 1994; Kritsch 1994). Stories and legends accompanied many of the place names. Indeed, the names appear to serve, as Andrews (1990), Basso (1984), Cruikshank (1990), Harwood (1976), Rosaldo (1980) and others have suggested, as "mnemonic devices" or "mnemonic pegs" on which to hang traditional narratives.

The Crow story told above is just one such narrative. It demonstrates that there is much cultural information woven into the oral history. Stories such as this give us a glimpse into a land that is alive and filled with stories from a time when humans and animals were able to communicate with each other. It imparts cultural information, such as the name for the high hill that the church in Tsiigehtchic now stands on, provides a cultural geography different from that of the present, and relates this hill to its use as a lookout for the area called "The Flats," where people have stayed for many generations. The story also informs us of Gwichya Gwich'in use of the Mackenzie Mountains, the Arctic Red River and "The Flats." Stories such as these can help guide archaeological work in the area.

As alluded to in the Crow story, "The Flats" (an area along the Mackenzie River foreshore, immediately below the community) was an important camping location, often "covered with tents," according to oral tradition. It is also noted as a location of contact between the Gwichya Gwich'in and the Slavey<sup>5</sup> of Fort Good Hope (a Mackenzie River community 290 km upstream from Tsiigehtchic) and the Inuvialuit<sup>6</sup> from the outer Mackenzie Delta and coastal areas. Gwichya Gwich'in narrative details the nature of these meetings and includes stories both of friendship and warfare.

The historic record supports the oral tradition, specifically with documentation of contact between the Gwichya Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit. Richardson has noted:

The Kutchin and Eskimos of the estuary of the Mackenzie meet often for purposes of trade, and make truces with each other, but they are mutually suspicious, and their intercourse often ends in bloodshed. The Kutchin have the advantage of fire-arms, but the Eskimos are brave and resolute, and come annually to Separation Point at the head of the delta, for purposes of barter. Most of the Kutchin speak the Eskimo language, and from them the latter people have become aware of the existence of a post on the Peel. It is probable, therefore, that the Eskimos had a purpose of opening a trade directly with the white people; but this, being so obviously contrary to the interest of the Kutchin, was likely to meet with all the opposition they could offer, and hence their firing on the Eskimos without parley (1851: 215, cited in Slobodin 1962: 23).

According to Slobodin (1962: 24), the "Kutchin" in this case are likely the Arctic Red River people (i.e., Gwichya Gwich'in), the same people that Alexander Mackenzie met in 1789 on his voyage down what is now called the Mackenzie River. Again, archaeological excavation has corroborated these narratives by demonstrating that "The Flats" has been used for generations; indeed the area has seen "repeated, intensive summer to fall occupations for at least the last thirteen centuries" (Nolin and Pilon 1994: 166). Furthermore, whalebone artifacts have been uncovered in excavations on "The Flats," which strongly suggests direct contact between the Inuvialuit and Gwichya Gwich'in (Nolin and Pilon 1994: 101).

The elders descriptions of how traditional houses were constructed, and in some instances where they were located, have already assisted NOGAP archaeologists in understanding and identifying such features during the course of archaeological work in the area. For example, the semi-subterranean houses described by the elders may be similar to features that Pilon (1987, 1988, 1992a, 1992b, 1993) and Nolin (1993) have excavated on the southwest Anderson Plain. A similar feature was examined during the course of a brief archaeological survey carried out near Inuvik, in the Gwich'in Territorial Park (Pilon 1993: 33-35). These areas are all within the tradi-

5 An Athapaskan language group south of the Gwich'in homeland.

6 An Inuit group north of the Gwich'in homeland.

tional land use area of the Gwichya Gwich'in.

Gwichya Gwich'in oral history has indicated many significant places on the land that are an important part of their history. This information is important in itself. In addition, the oral history has also helped to inform the archaeological record by identifying potential sites (see Greer, Ch. 9). Together, both avenues of research help build a more complete picture of Gwich'in history and the lives of people in pre-contact times.

#### **The Tsiigehnjik Ethnoarchaeology Project**

In the summers of 1994 and 1995, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute worked with the community of Tsiigehchtic on a community-based ethnoarchaeological project along *Tsiigehnjik* ["iron river"—the Arctic Red River]. *Tsiigehnjik* was designated a Canadian Heritage River in 1993, and the community and Institute were interested in using this designation to continue the inventory of heritage resources along the river for land management purposes to provide information for the local school curriculum, and to develop interpretive material for tourists. Traditional place names, data on harvesting areas, camp locations, graves, and trails were used in developing an archaeological fieldwork strategy for work along the Arctic Red River. This approach parallels an ethnoarchaeological study carried out by Hanks and Winter (1983: 49) that used Slavey place names to better understand the relationship between behaviour and archaeological remains along the Mackenzie River, and by Andrews and Zoe (Ch. 10) for the Dogrib area. Gwich'in elders participated as full partners in the research and Gwich'in youth were directly involved in documenting and visually recording their own heritage along with Institute staff and professional archaeologists.



Figure 4. Łııdłıı [also called "The Forks"], where the Cranswick River (right) and right side of the photo. (Photo: I. Kritsch)



In 1994, the archaeological field crew visited most of the traditional sites along the lower reaches of the river between *Tsiugehnjik* and *Hehnjuu deet'yah tshik* [no translation—locally also known as Bernard Creek]. *Tsiugehnjik* is a very dynamic river; its banks are constantly being eroded and new point bar deposits formed. At a number of traditional sites, there was no obvious signs of former occupation or use, nor little hope of finding any buried cultural material. A catastrophic flood in 1970 is reported to have washed away many old cabins and campsites in the Arctic Red River valley. However, with the assistance of the oral history, we recorded a total of 12 archaeological sites (Greer 1995; Greer et al. 1995).

Most attention was paid to those places named by the elders including the former village sites at *Martin zeh* ["Martin House"] and *Hehnjuu deet'yah tshik*. Both places were used traditionally as camp sites by the Gwichya Gwich'in during seasonal late summer and spring travel between the Mackenzie River and the Mackenzie Mountains (Kritsch and Andre 1993). Small "villages" developed at these locations in the early 1900s to take advantage of the fur trade. At *Martin zeh*, which was initially examined by David Morrison (1983), Greer (1995) noted buried pre-contact period cultural deposits over a distance of several kilometres along the river bank. Historic remains, including a grave site, cabin remains, a stage and more recent camps, were also present. A trapper's cabin is still in use on the opposite side of the river. At *Hehnjuu deet'yah tshik*, another locale that continues to be used, eroding hearths were noted that are likely pre-contact in age (Greer 1995; Greer et al. 1995).

In 1995, we carried out our second year of ethnoarchaeological work along the Arctic Red River with a ten-day archaeological survey based on oral history work conducted the previous winter with Tsiigehtchic elders, and a 14 day ethnoarchaeological field school at *Martin zeh*.



Tsiugehnjik [Arctic Red River (on left)] meet. The dog pack trail climbs the cliff on the

The survey, which was a partnership between the GSCI and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, concentrated on the middle reaches of the river, between *Hehnyuu deet'yah tshik* and *Ludlajj* ["where two rivers come together"—locally called "The Forks"]. The latter refers to the confluence of the Arctic Red River and Cranswick River.

One of the most significant sites recorded was a dog pack trail at *Ludlajj* which was used by the Gwichya Gwich'in to travel between the river and the Mackenzie Mountains to reach their hunting grounds (Andrews n.d.). This trail begins at the confluence and climbs approximately 223 meters up a 45° incline to the top of the plateau, at which point people traveled overland to the mountains (Figure 4). Without the oral history, we would not have known that this trail existed, as it has not been used for nearly a century, and was not visible from the shore. Indeed, the only signs that this had been a trail were two old blazed trees midway along the trail and a very faint indentation in the moss. One of the elders working with us reblazed the trail so that it will be easily recognizable in the future.

In 1995, the Institute also coordinated a 14-day ethnoarchaeological field school in the *Martin zheh* area. Twenty-four people participated in the field school including elders, high school students, archaeologists, GSCI staff, a cook, camp attendants, a camera-man, boat drivers, and two young children. This area proved to be an ideal location for a field school. The *Martin zheh* area has a rich oral history in that elders from the community of Tsiigehtchic used this area intensively until the mid-20th century. This area also has a rich visible history in that a number of sites ranging in age from possibly 400 years old to the present, extends over a two kilometer stretch along the left bank of the river.



Figure 5. Elders Annie and Nap Norbert visit with students during excavation of MeTp-4 at the *Martin zheh* Field School 1995. Students from left to right: Yvonne Andre, Celina Jerome, Brenda Kendo (sitting), and Jenny Andre (sitting with back towards camera). Photo: E. Damkjar)

A major focus of the field school was to introduce students to archaeological field research methods through the excavation of a small area at MeTp-4, one of the sites originally identified by David Morrison (Figure 5). Students also participated in flintknapping sessions as part of the hands-on focus of the field school (Figure 6). Field work in 1994 (Greer et al. 1995) and 1995 (Damkjar 1996) determined that this multi-component stratified site is more extensive and unique than previously thought, with five cultural levels spanning the last 200-250 years. It is one of the few early inland historic sites in the lower Mackenzie River basin (Jean-Luc Pilon, pers. comm. 1995, cited in Damkjar 1996: 63).

The cultural component of the field school included instruction by the elders on a variety of bush activities such as setting rabbit snares, checking fish nets, tanning beaver hides (Figure 7), butchering and smoking caribou, making snowshoes, and gathering and preparing traditional medicines. Elders also shared their experiences and stories about places and people who had lived along the river. The field school therefore provided students with the opportunity to learn more about their own heritage through a combination of archaeological excavation, interaction, and instruction by elders, and being on the land. The students learned "that they have the means to learn about and record Gwich'in history, and are a vital link in preserving that history for future generations" (Damkjar 1996: 6).

Extensive video footage of the oral history interviews, research on the named places along the river, and the archaeological investigations were taken in 1994 and 1995. This footage is being developed into interpretive videos for the local schools, visitor centres, and the general public. One recently completed video focuses on an interview conducted in Gwich'in in 1994 with Hyacinthe Andre of Tsiigehtchic about the traditional use of *Tsiigehnjik* (Figure 8). This video, which incorporates archival photos and footage of the river, is now available for use in the local schools. It begins to fill the void for Gwich'in curriculum materials and language programming, particularly for the Gwichya Gwich'in dialect of Gwich'in which has been overshadowed by the Teet'it Gwich'in dialect. This video is also being aired on the Television Northern Canada (TVNC) network.

The Tsiigehnjik Ethnoarchaeology Project has demonstrated the importance of the information shared by the Elders. Without their knowledge of traditional land use patterns, we would have little understanding of the river's human history. This knowledge will form part of the strategy to identify and understand heritage sites along the river (Greer 1995; Greer et al. 1995). The elders will be consulted about how these sites should be managed. This will be the first step in developing a heritage management plan for the whole of the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

### **Gwich'in Land Claim Agreement and Heritage Resources**

Included in the Gwich'in Land Claim Agreement is a chapter concerning heritage resources. This chapter recognizes the spiritual, cultural, religious, and educational significance of Gwich'in heritage resources and provides for Gwich'in input into the conservation and management of these resources, including archaeological sites, through the archaeological and land use permit systems. This chapter also provides the Gwich'in with the opportunity to submit to government a list of historic, archaeological, and burial sites in the Settlement Area that they wish to protect. The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute has been building an inventory of such sites within the context of its place name, oral history, and ethnoarchaeological projects, an example being the ethnoarchaeological research carried out along the Arctic Red River in the summers of 1994 and 1995. This work builds upon previous archaeological work carried out in other areas of the Gwichya Gwich'in homeland, such as along the Mackenzie River (Nolin 1994; Nolin and Pilon 1994; Pilon 1989), in the Travaillant Lake and southwest Anderson Plain area north of the Mackenzie River (Gordon and Savage 1973, 1974; Morrison 1984; Nolin 1991, 1992a, 1993; Pilon 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1992a, 1993, 1994), at Tsiigehtchic (Nolin 1992b, 1993, 1994), and in the Campbell Lake area within the Gwich'in Territorial Park (Pilon 1992b, 1993). The Institute plans to expand this inventory for the remaining Settlement Area in the years to come so that Gwich'in heritage resources will be protected and developed in a manner that is appropriate for the Gwich'in.

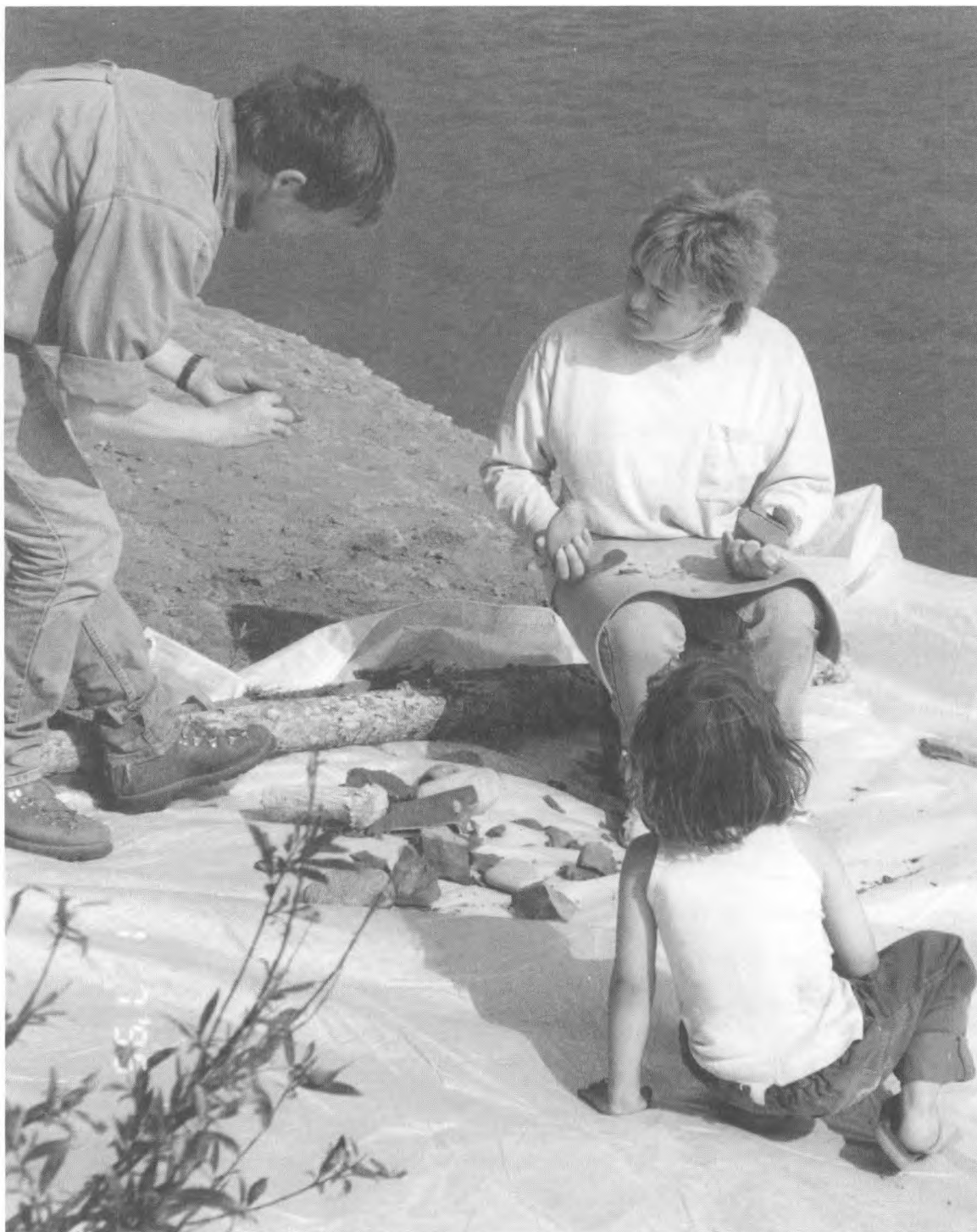


Figure 6. Eric Damkjar shows Yvonne Andre how to flintknap while Erika Kritsch looks on during the *Martin zeh* Field School 1995. (Photo: I. Kritsch)



Figure 7. Annie Norbert scraping a beaver skin using her *chu deedhoh* (stone scraper) during the *Martun zehh* Field School 1995. (Photo: T. Andrews)



The land claim agreement recognizes that traditional Gwich'in names are important, and the government has agreed to recognize officially such names. A first step in this direction is the official recognition of the Gwich'in name for the location of the community of Arctic Red River, at the mouth of the river. Arctic Red River became officially known as Tsiigehtchic on April 1st of 1994. Other Gwich'in names will be submitted for future official recognition.

The Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement also provided for the establishment of a territorial park near Campbell Lake, 15 km southeast of Inuvik, and directed the Gwich'in Tribal Council and the Government of the Northwest Territories to negotiate the terms and boundaries of the Park. An agreement was reached in November 1991, incorporating the following conditions: (a) that the Gwich'in Tribal Council would be included in the Gwich'in Territorial Park Management Committee, and thus fully involved in the development of a park management plan; and (b) that local Gwich'in would be employed where possible to develop and staff the park.

In keeping with the spirit of this agreement, the Gwich'in Tribal Council negotiated a contract with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Government of the Northwest Territories, in July 1993, to conduct, tape, transcribe, and where possible, verify the traditional knowledge of the elders on the traditional use of the Campbell Lake area. This oral history information would be used in the development of a master plan for the park.

This project was completed by personnel from the Institute (Kritsch 1994) with the assistance of local Gwich'in and Inuvialuit researchers. As a result of recommendations made in the report, Gwichya Gwich'in names are being used for many locations in the Park, trails are being marked, additional archaeological assessments have been carried out (Damkjar 1995), and an ethnobotany project has provided information about the traditional use of plants, trees, roots and berries that are encountered on one of the hiking trails being developed in the Park (Andre 1995).

In addition, the wishes of elders and other community members that the park be for local use, as well as for tourists, have been incorporated into the master plan. An "ethnotourism" approach is being considered for the park to introduce tourists to the Gwich'in and Inuvialuit cultures through hands-on participation in traditional activities. If Aboriginal youth are involved in this process alongside elders, it could have the added benefit of either reinforcing or in some cases introducing traditional culture, knowledge, and the oral history of the area to Gwich'in youth.

The Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (see Section 25.1.5) also requires the government to consult with the Gwich'in Tribal Council "in the formulation of government policy and legislation on Gwich'in heritage resources in the Mackenzie Valley." The Gwich'in Tribal Council has asked the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute to monitor and provide comments on currently proposed heritage legislation. The Institute outlined a number of concerns with the proposed legislation, called the *Heritage Resources Act*, to the Government of the Northwest Territories Standing Committee on Legislation. The Committee responded favourably to these comments, and the Tribal Council and Institute will continue to monitor the development of this important legislation.

### **Future Heritage Work**

The following are some of the projects that the Institute has initiated recently or intends to pursue in the near future:

*Ongoing and Future Gwich'in Place Name and Community History Projects and the Gwich'in Cultural Atlas.* The documentation of Gwichya Gwich'in place names and traditional use and occupancy of their homeland has now been completed. Also completed is a draft narrative history called *Gwichya Gwich'in Googwandak: The History of the Gwichya Gwich'in and of Tsiigehtchic* (Heine et al. 1996), based on our oral history work since 1992 and written from the community's perspective. Once finalized, this history, which was commissioned by the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board of Education, will be used in the school curriculum as a resource for both teachers and students. We are also exploring the possibility of featuring this history on the "SchoolNet" Internet site.

In 1995, we began a place names and traditional land use project with the Teetl'it Gwich'in elders in Fort McPherson, building upon information provided by William Nerysoo, Sr., to lingu





Figure 8. Hyacinthe Andre (left) and Noel Andre sitting on *Vik'ooyendik* during the filming of *Tsiigehnjik: Life along the Arctic Red River* in 1994. Ghost Lake, "The Flats," and the Mackenzie River are in the background. (Photo: I Kritsch)

ist John Ritter in the 1970s (see Ritter 1976), and on work carried out in the 1980s by Neil Colinand the Dene Mapping Project. Once this information has been recorded, we will work with elders from Aklavik and Inuvik, recording similar information. As in the Gwichya Gwich'in place names and traditional knowledge study, local people will be trained while the research is in progress so that they will learn valuable research, organizational and writing skills that can be applied to other work in the Settlement Area. The trainees will also have the opportunity to learn more about the history and geography of their area by working with their elders and traveling on the land. Ethnoarchaeological work will likely follow from this work.

Building on the various place name, community history, and ethnoarchaeology projects, we plan to develop a comprehensive Gwich'in Cultural Atlas for the Gwich'in Settlement Area in two volumes. Volume I will be map-based and include information on traditional trails, place names, harvesting location data, traditional camp sites, graves, and known archaeological sites. Volume II will be textual and include chapters on such subjects as Gwich'in Cosmology, Language, Stories, Social Organization, Subsistence, Technology, Medicine, Clothing, Dances, Songs, Games, and a History of the Gwich'in from pre-contact times to the present. We foresee this as a multi-year project working in partnership with scholars with expertise in anthropology and geography.

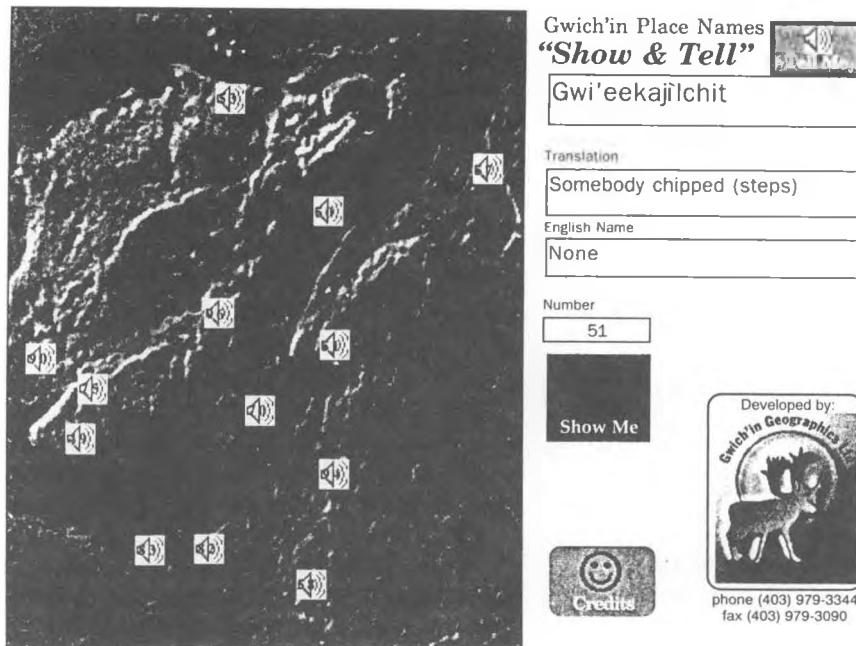


Figure 9. Talking Map: Satellite image of the Gwich'in Territorial Park area with place names indicated by numbers. (Map courtesy Gwich'in Geographics Ltd)

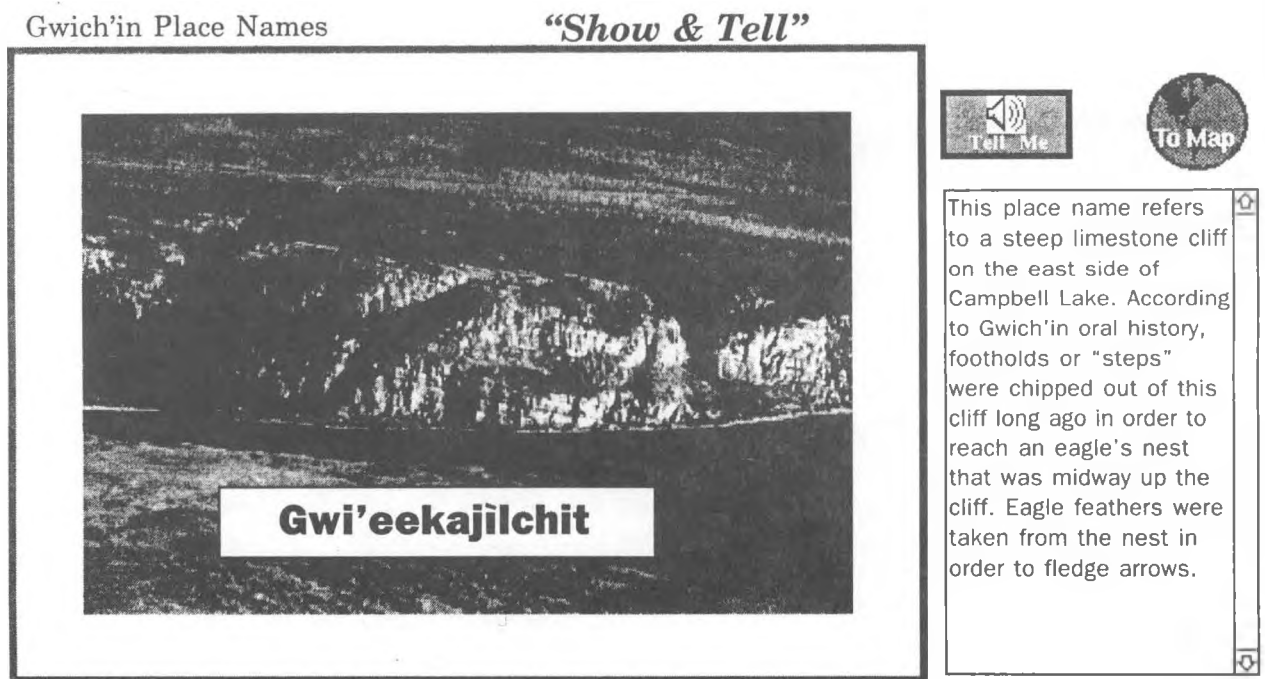


Figure 10. Talking Map: Photo and text for place name number 51. (Figure Courtesy Gwich'in Geographics Ltd.)

This two volume atlas will be accompanied by a computerized multi-media display on CD-ROM, which we refer to as a "talking map," that will be used in the local schools and for museum and tourism purposes. A copy may also be made available on the Internet.

The prototype for such a display was developed in 1993 by Gwich'in Geographics Ltd., a subsidiary company under the Gwich'in Tribal Council. This product uses maps or satellite images of the Gwich'in Settlement Area, with numbers representing place names in the foreground (Figures 9 and 10). We are also exploring the possibility of including spoken stories along with written text in Gwich'in and English.

*Delta Science Camp.* Building upon our experience with the 1995 "Martin zeh Field School," we are offering a nine day traditional knowledge and science camp for high school students in grades 10-12, near the confluence of the Mackenzie and Peel Rivers. The camp will provide an opportunity for Gwich'in and non-Gwich'in students to gain first-hand experience in both the traditional and Western scientific traditions through work with Gwich'in elders, a biologist, geographer and archaeologists, within the context of a traditional fish camp. We hope that this experience will encourage students to continue their education both on the land and in school, and to explore career opportunities in these fields. The high schools in the area have been very supportive of the camp and are offering up to three credits for this course.

*Educational Video Series.* The first video in this series, *Tsiugehjik: Life along the Arctic Red River* (described earlier in this chapter), was based on an interview with Hyacinthe Andre (85 years old in 1995) about traditional knowledge and traditional life along the Arctic Red River. As funding permits, we will continue to develop educational videos on a variety of topics. In cooperation with the Beaufort-Delta Divisional Board of Education, we are producing a video on the *Martin zeh* Field School which features Gwich'in youth learning about their heritage through work with elders, archaeologists, and anthropologists. We are also cooperating with southern producers who are preparing video projects for the Discovery Channel. These videos are intended to promote a greater awareness and appreciation of Gwich'in culture, traditional knowledge and history both within and outside of the Gwich'in Settlement Area. These will serve to increase the Gwich'in community's understanding and appreciation of the region's archaeology and heritage.

## CONCLUSIONS

Since the land claim was signed in 1992, many exciting things have happened in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The Gwich'in are regaining control over their lives and developing their land, culture, and economy in a way that reflects Gwich'in knowledge and values. The use of traditional knowledge and archaeology by the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute, as described in this paper, is a small but important part of this overall picture of nation-building. This type of work is serving a variety of needs:

- 1) raising an awareness and appreciation of Gwich'in knowledge about the land, culture, and language);
- 2) providing an opportunity for elders and youth to work and learn together on the land;
- 3) identifying culturally significant sites or areas for protection and land management purposes using the oral history as a foundation for this work;
- 4) training in archaeology and oral history research skills, alongside organizational, and writing skills;
- 5) developing more culturally relevant teaching materials and;
- 6) developing more accurate and relevant information for visitor interpretation centres.

The projects that we are undertaking today will have an impact on many generations to come. We hope that this work, including the appreciation of stories such as Crow Story, will ensure that future generations of Gwich'in children will continue to learn from and appreciate the old ways and that they will find strength in this knowledge and their culture as the world changes.

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