

# Gwich'in Tribal Council Annual Report 1996-1997



# Ingrid Kritsch, Alestine Andre

## Social & Cultural Institute

**T**siigehchic (Martin Zheh)  
**Ethnoarchaeology Project**  
In July 1996, we completed our archaeological work at Martin Zheh. The 15-day excavation at the site provided eight local people (an Elder, youths and adults) with an opportunity to work with a professional archaeologist. They learned archaeological field techniques, and gained a better understanding of the history of this site where people have camped for over 200 years. The final report is available through the Institute.

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

This year we started the second phase of the project as requested by Elders. We recorded the oral history that accompanies the place names, and marked the trails, burial sites and cabin sites along the Peel River between Fort McPherson and the Ogilvie River. Elders were interviewed both in Fort McPherson and on the land. In July Elders, young people and researchers took a 10-day river trip up the Peel River as far as the Wind River. A draft final report can be ordered through the Institute.

### **Delta Science Camp**

A 10-day traditional environmental knowledge and western scientific knowledge camp was held at the mouth of the Peel River in September 1996. Nine high school students from Aklavik, Fort McPherson and Inuvik learned about the oral history of the area, the traditional uses of plants, trees, roots and berries, and the many skills needed at a fish camp. The students also carried out exercises in the fields of biology and geography. Research techniques were also learned. The purpose of the camp



*Tsiigehchic Ethno-Archaeology Project, Martin Zheh Crew, July 1996*  
*Rear, left to right: Dorothy Wright, Julie Ann Andre, Janny (Jones) Andre, George Niditchie, Berna Natsie, Eric Damkjar, Alestine Andre*  
*Kneeling: Maureen Clark*

was to encourage students to further their education and to make them aware that they can gain valuable knowledge and skills both on the land and in school. A large poster of the camp can be ordered through the Institute.

### **Gwich'in Language Dictionary Project**

In partnership with the Gwich'in Language Centre in Fort McPherson, a draft Gwich'in Noun Dictionary was produced. This dictionary lists nouns, place names and other words in both the Gwichya Gwich'in and the Teetl'it Gwich'in dialects. The dictionary is structured as follows: Gwich'in-English in the first half, and English-Gwich'in in the second half. All words are listed in alphabetical order. The dictionary can be ordered through the Institute.

### **Gwich'in Commemoration Project**

In partnership with Parks Canada we began the process of nominating National Historic Sites for commemoration in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. The Gwichya Gwich'in have proposed the stretch of the Mackenzie River between Thunder River and Point Separation as a National Historic Site, and an agenda paper was written explaining the importance of this stretch of the river. The National Historic Sites and Monuments Board is now evaluating this nomination, and will make a decision in June. The Institute will work with the other communities nominating other National Historic Sites in the GSA as funding becomes available. This work will help promote Gwich'in culture and history at the national level. The agenda paper can be ordered through the Institute.







*Teetl'it Gwich'in Place Names Project (Up the Peel), July 1996*

*Left to right: Eunice Mitchell, Neil Colin, William Teya (sitting), Robert Alexie Sr, Walter Alexie*

### **Gwich'in Archival Training**

Two four-day workshops were offered by the Senior Archivist of the Territorial Archives and other staff from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre with four Gwich'in trainees from Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI) and the Gwich'in Language Centre. The trainees learned how to archive (handle, preserve, organize and manage) audiotapes, photographs, videos and maps in a series of hands-on exercises, so that the information stored at GSCI and the Language Centre will be available for use by future generations.

### **Gwich'in Revitalization**

Introductory Gwich'in literacy classes were held in Aklavik, Inuvik, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic during the winter. Hannah Alexie (the Gwich'in instructor) and her assistants, reviewed the Gwich'in alphabet chart and provided listening and conversational exercises in a series of night classes. Half of the fund-

ing for this project was given to the Aklavik Band Office so that Annie Semple could also carry out a buddy system of language instruction.

### **CONTRACTS**

#### **Northern Athapaskan & Métis Collections of the NWT**

A handbook was produced based on information provided during a survey of 160 heritage institutions about museum and archival collections of Gwich'in, Slavey, Dogrib, Chipewyan, Yellowknife and Métis materials from around the world. This handbook will help Aboriginal organizations and governments to repatriate important items or collections.

### **Genealogy Project**

In partnership with the Gwich'in Enrollment Board, we entered genealogical information from Tsiigehtchic into a computer program called *Reunion*.

### **Gwich'in Territorial Park**

We have been working with Gwich'in Geographics to develop the vision statement, interpretive messages, and poster for the park.

### **Gwich'in Environmental Knowledge Project**

We provided comments to the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board on the draft chapters for their book which describes Gwich'in knowledge about 20 species of animals, birds and fish.

### **Other Work**

Integrated Resource Management Plan  
We are working with the Gwich'in Land and Water Board to develop an integrated resource management plan for the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) along with the Gwich'in Tribal Council, (GRRB), Interim Land Use Planning Board, Re-

newable Resource Councils and Gwich'in Land Administration. The information that we have recorded will assist us in providing assessments to the Land and Water Board about how heritage resources may be impacted by development in the GSA.

### **Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board**

Alestine Andre is the Gwich'in representative on this four-member board. The board has met several times since June 1996 for training and setting up the infrastructure of the board. This is a three-year appointment. Training and meetings will continue until the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act (MVRMA) is in place. When this Act has been passed, the board will be in the position to review and make recommendations on major projects taking place in the Mackenzie Valley.

### **1997/98 Projects**

We are currently fund-raising for the following projects: Teetl'it Gwich'in Place Names Project (Phase III); Gwich'in Noun Dictionary (Phase II); Gwich'in Language Classes; Gwich'in Ethnobotany Project; Gwich'in Science Camp. Although many of these projects involve Elders and youth, we are also looking into developing a more formalized Elders and youth program.

### **Board of Directors**

Mary Kendi  
Gabe Andre  
Catherine Mitchell  
Sarah McLeod Firth  
Bertha Francis  
Walter Alexie  
James Wilson

### **Staff**

Ingrid Kritsch  
Alestine Andre

