



Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute
Fort McPherson, NWT

Nomination Form for Territorial Historic Sites

Chigwaazraii, Sreih Nitsìk, Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han



Ehdiitat Gwich'in Cultural Landscape

**Black Mountain, Red Mountain, Rat River (Aklavik Range,
Richardson Mountains), and Husky Channel (Mackenzie
Delta) near Aklavik, NWT**

Photo: Black Mountain, courtesy of Catherine Lambert, GRRB

MANDATORY INFORMATION

What is the name of the site are you nominating?

Chigwaazraii, Sreih Nitsik, Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han - an Ehdiitat Gwich'in Cultural Landscape

Why are you nominating this site? Why is it important to the Northwest Territories?

This landscape, an area of about 1,810 square kilometres, is located to the southwest of Aklavik, NWT (see Map 1, below). It encompasses several important cultural features: two mountains in the Aklavik Range of the Richardson Mountains, the Rat River to the south of these mountains, and a channel of the adjacent Mackenzie Delta all of which have traditional Gwich'in names and stories associated with them. Numerous other sites, rivers, and channels have Gwich'in names and stories as well. This landscape plays an important role traditionally and mythologically for the Ehdiitat Gwich'in² and continues to be used for subsistence fishing and hunting and recreation by Aklavik residents today. Access to the area is by a network of trails— some pre-dating the establishment of Aklavik at the turn of the 20th century (ca. 1912), while some are recent additions used by skidoo to access prime hunting grounds. Walking paths to berry patches are also important.

Key named places

Gwich'in Name (translation or meaning¹); *alternate names*

Chigwaazraii (refers to black rocks); *Black Mountain, Mount Goodenough*

Sreih Nitsik (refers to red colour); *Red Mountain, Mount Gifford*

Ddhah Zhìt Han (River through the mountains); *Rat River*

Eneekaii Han (Inuit-river); *Husky Channel, Husky River*

Although there are more than 50 traditionally named geographic features within or crossing through this traditional landscape, this landscape has, for the purposes of this nomination, been named after the four most prevalent – see box “Key named places” on this page. The named places are discussed in greater detail below. For ease, “Chigwaazraii, Sreih Nitsik, Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han - an Ehdiitat Gwich'in Cultural Landscape” will be referred to as the *Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape* in this document.

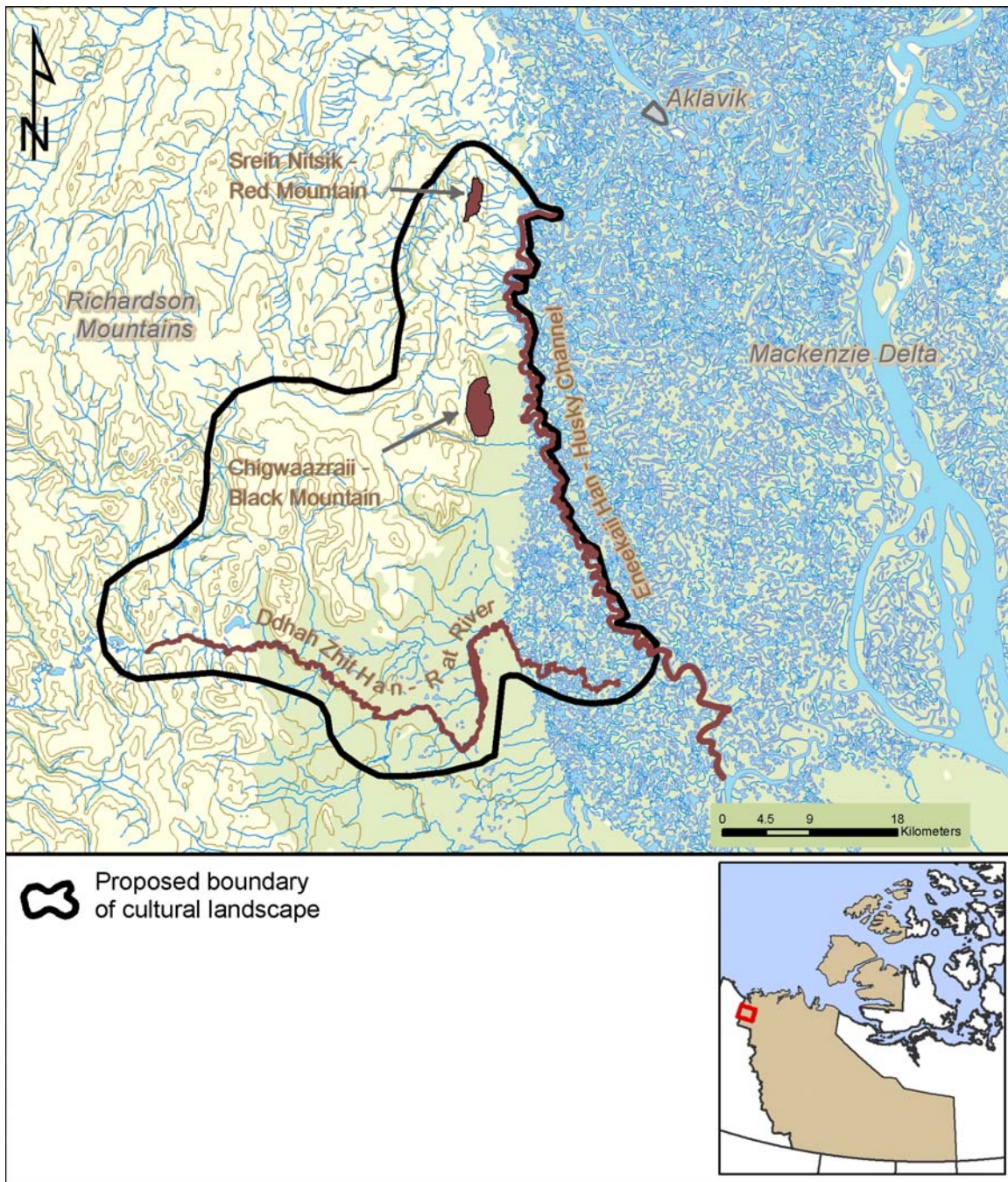
The modern and historic use of the area, tied together geographically with trails, is culturally bound in a collection of stories and legends. These stories are both historical and mythological. Some teach lessons, some are humorous, but all celebrate the unique relationship the Gwich'in have with this special landscape. The legends predate the establishment of Aklavik and confirm the relationship between the Ehdiitat Gwich'in and their neighbours in Fort McPherson, the Teetl'it Gwich'in.

¹ All translations, meanings, alternate names, and other information related to the place names are from the Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute's Place Names Database unless otherwise noted.

² Ehdiitat Gwich'in refers to the Gwich'in residents of Aklavik. It translates loosely as “people who live among the timbers” (Mackenzie Delta People).



The area is 66 kilometers in length, and at its widest point it is around 58 kilometers from east to west.



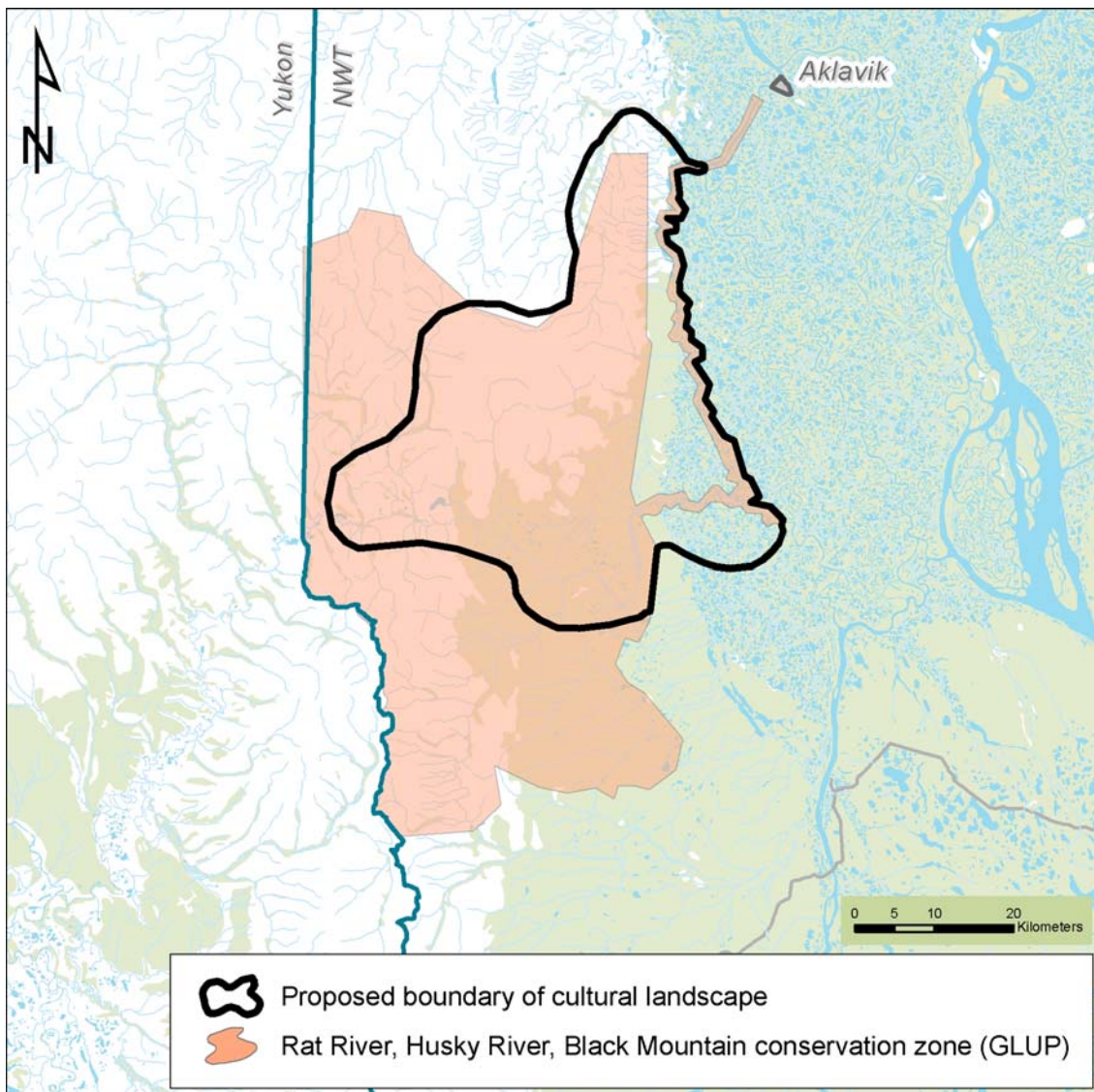
Map 1. Proposed boundary of the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape showing key named places.

The Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape boundary overlaps in geographic scope with one of the Gwich'in Conservation Zones in the Gwich'in Land Use Plan - Gwich'in Conservation Zone A: Rat, Husky, and Black Mountain in *Nanh' Geenjit*



Gwit'rit Tigwaa'in / Working For The Land, the Gwich'in Land Use Plan (see Map 2, below). The primary reasons for Conservation Zone status are:

- spawning and nursing, migration habitat for Dolly Varden char [locally known as char, Arctic char and trout];
- lambing and rutting habitat for Dall's sheep;
- Porcupine caribou migration corridor (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003: 93).



Map 2. Boundary of the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape and boundary of the Gwich'in conservation zone.

Gwich'in conservation zone boundary courtesy of Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board

Although traditional use and cultural significance were also reasons for designating this area as a conservation zone, the focus is more on the natural landscape including the entire watershed of the Rat River, the caribou migration corridor, and the large zone of Dall's sheep habitat. Consequently, the conservation zone is larger than the Aklavik



Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape currently nominated. The two zones however complement each other as the cultural landscape identifies and promotes the use by the Gwich'in of the more culturally accessible aspects of this diverse landscape, as recognized in the conservation zone. The Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape boundary follows Gwich'in use of the area as documented in place names and trails.

Migrating char, an important fish for the Gwich'in, come through Eneekaii Han to Ddhah Zhìt Han and its tributaries to spawn and overwinter in the mountains in spring-fed lakes. In the spring, they return to the ocean to feed, again passing through Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han. Although the numbers of char have dropped precipitously in the recent past and the Rat River char fishery is currently closed, they are still considered an important food fish for the Gwich'in and retain a cultural importance. Several studies are on-going to protect the char stocks in this area (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003, IMG-Golder 2008). The legends included below attest to the importance of caribou and char to the Gwich'in using this area.

The migrating Porcupine caribou herd passes through the area in the spring, winter, and fall (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003). Caribou continue to be a staple of the Gwich'in. The camps along some of the rivers would expand to large encampments with hundreds of people during prime caribou-hunting times. When word would spread that caribou were near, people would come from some distance to hunt in the mountains. For example, Gwichya Gwich'in Elder Annie Norbert (from Tsiigehtchic) remembered a time in the past when numerous people were staying along Ddhah Zhìt Han and hunting caribou.

After my father came back, there was a rumour around town that there's a lot of caribou around Rat River, by way of Sheep Creek. We went back to there and my brother John Niditchie went along with us to help us out with work. There was a lot of people from Fort McPherson; must have been about 100 tents set there. Lots of people; lots of caribou. People give us caribou all the time; every day someone put caribou in front of our tent. Whoever want to give us caribou, they do that. This is all for my mother they do that. People sure were kind to us; they're still like that. After we made a lot of dry meat, we started back down and went back to Arctic Red.³



Dall's Sheep on Chigwaazraii. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB

³ Annie Norbert, Tape 2, Tsiigehtchic, Interview August 3rd 1989.



Dall's sheep use portions of this area for rutting and lambing. In particular, the Rat River watershed and Black Mountain are key habitat for Dall's sheep (locally known as mountain sheep). Although they were not as important to the Gwich'in diet as caribou, sheep were hunted in the summer and added variety to people's diet (Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board and Gwich'in Elders 1997).

Aklavik Elder Alfred Semple remembered hearing his grandmother (who lived to be 116 years old) speak about gathering and processing the three important foods – char, caribou, and sheep – in the area in the past. Three or four sheep were caught using snares set across sheep trails, “they get sheep in the snare some way - they trick him.” The sheep would be killed using bow and arrows, and butchered. The meat was transported to Big Eddy by dog packs, where it was dried. Dolly Varden char was also dried at the same time, and caribou meat.⁴

The Husky Channel links the Mackenzie Delta to the mountainous areas of the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. As a part of the delta, it supports numerous important varieties of fish, waterfowl, furbearers, and other animals (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003). The delta's diminishing population of muskrats were once an important resource that drew the Gwich'in and their neighbours, the Inuvialuit, to the delta to trap. Numerous fish camps are located along the Husky Channel, where Gwich'in harvest and dry abundant whitefish in a seasonal pattern of great antiquity. Moose are also hunted in the delta. The delta is key migratory bird habitat and supports a population of numerous prey birds including the peregrine falcon.

Berry picking areas in the mountains represent an important reason people travelled and still travel to the area during the summer and fall, sometimes even setting tents to stay and pick berries. Nakal,⁵ blueberries, and cranberries are all harvested in the mountains. In the past, they were eaten or stored by freezing or dried for later use. The contributions of berries to the traditional Gwich'in diet of fish and large game cannot be overstated (Parlee *et al* 2005). Often Gwich'in women speak of gathering berries in the mountains, and snaring rabbits as well.

Does the site have a story? If so, what is it?

The Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape can be discussed as several parts: the named places, the stories or legends that tie the named places together, and the trails that allow access to these areas and structure Gwich'in cultural geography.

TRADITIONAL GWICH'IN NAMED PLACES

Traditional Gwich'in 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” of the Gwich'in (Kritsch and Andre 1997: 130). Traditional

⁴ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Workshop Tape 17, January 1999.

⁵ Nakal is a Gwich'in term for yellowberry (cloudberry) that is commonly used in the Delta. It is pronounced like “knuckle.”



Gwich'in place names can be categorized into several types including but not limited to names referring to a Gwich'in person, the type of geographic feature or a description of the feature, a legendary place, a story, a resource or an aspect of traditional economy related to a resource, or a white trapper or trader. Some names are so old that the meaning has been lost to time, and only the name remains. Also, some places have more than one name – a Gwich'in name fitting into a category above, and also the English name of a Gwich'in or non-Gwich'in person (Kritsch and Andre 1993).

The GSCI has recorded more than 50 named places in the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape – the following section identifies and describes most of these named places. Many of the places or geographic features have a traditional Gwich'in name, some have one or more English local name, and some also have a gazetted name that appears on official maps. The local name and gazetted name may be the same, such as for the Rat River (Ddhah Zhit Han). Generally, these places will be designated by their Gwich'in name in the text of this document, although interview quotations may include other versions of their names, in particular the local names.

Mountains

Two of the mountains, Chigwaazraii and Sreih Nitsik are key features in this area and help to define it culturally. They play a role in numerous legends and stories and are used as landscape markers when travelling. See the location of the three named mountains on Map 3 below.

Chigwaazraii

Chigwaazraii (local name: Black Mountain; gazetted name: a portion of Mount Goodenough) is a traditional Gwich'in place name that is difficult to translate but probably refers to the black colour of the rocks making up the mountain. The mountain is an important recreational destination in both summer and winter. It is a superb and unique example of resource harvesting, traditional importance, legendary significance, and modern use by the Ehdiitat Gwich'in.

Before the Delta assumed its important role in the twentieth century, people would spend much more time in the mountains hunting.⁶ Mary Kendi said that historically the Gwich'in would pass the winter in the mountains and only come to the river valleys for the spring, because it was dangerous to be in the mountains due to high water, “People used to live in the mountains... they come down in the spring. Pass spring in the river. Because ... you can't ... pass spring in the mountains, because there's danger[ous] water ... Rush, the water rush.”⁷

⁶ Some of this and later sections are excerpted from Benson, Kristi, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Heritage Sites: Potential Heritage Conservation Zones with Ehdiitat Gwich'in Elders: Annie B. Gordon, Mary Kendi, Richard Ross, Alfred Semple, Catherine Semple, and Tommy Wright. Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute, Fort McPherson. Submitted to Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board. 2007.

⁷ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Workshop January 1999, Tape 21.



Chigwaazraii is known as an excellent hunting location, for both its abundance of game and proximity to Aklavik.⁸ It is known to have Dall's sheep, unlike nearby Sreih Nitsik, about 20 kilometres to the north, where they are rarely seen. According to Elder Tommy Wright, "Black Mountain ... a lot of people hunt there in summer time, because it's close. They'd hunt sheep and that... You could hunt sheep real easy ... you can see them right from the river. With ... glasses [binoculars] you could see them from the river."⁹

The long-term use of the area is indicated by the presence of graves. According to Fort McPherson Elder Neil Colin, there are numerous graves in the area, "And Black Mountain area... that's graveyard. But, but some [Gwich'in in the past would] just mark them with wood and, there's lots of it that's unknown."¹⁰ In a later interview, Neil indicated that Black Mountain also serves as a landmark when travelling in the Mackenzie Delta "You could see Richardson Mountain and Black Mountain, you know which way is north."¹¹

Besides sheep, other animal resources were harvested on Chigwaazraii. Moose and caribou hunting trails cross the area, and Gwich'in women note that they used the region for snaring small game. Lucy Greenland mentioned that she would go to the mountain – "Just setting snares for rabbits."¹²

That's a good place for sheep. That's why the old people come here come from McPherson long ago. When there's no caribou [or] anything – they come down for Arctic char; they come down for sheep. That's how they [came to] Black Mountain. That's where they hunt their sheep. So they can get fresh meat.

That's right important, that Black Mountain – way back.

Alfred Semple, April 12, 2007

Sreih Nitsik

Sreih Nitsik (local name: Red Mountain; gazetted name: Mount Gifford) is an important berry picking area, and figures in numerous stories and legends. It displays a vibrant red colour to the residents of nearby Aklavik and is a well-used recreation and camping spot. The mountain is also an important berry picking area for the residents of Aklavik, due to its proximity to the community and excellent blueberry, nakal, and cranberry patches.

There are numerous trails leading from Aklavik and other places to Sreih Nitsik, many of which were used by dog teams in the days before skidoos. Some trails lead to berry patches and nearby camping areas.

⁸ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007 – Alfred Semple.

⁹ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones Project, April 13, 2007 – Tommy Wright.

¹⁰ Teet'it Gwich'in Place Names interviews 2008, Interview 8, February 29, 2008.

¹¹ Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge of the Mackenzie Gas Project Area interviews, Tape 43, November 18, 2004.

¹² Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Tape 3 Lucy Greenland February 26, 1999.

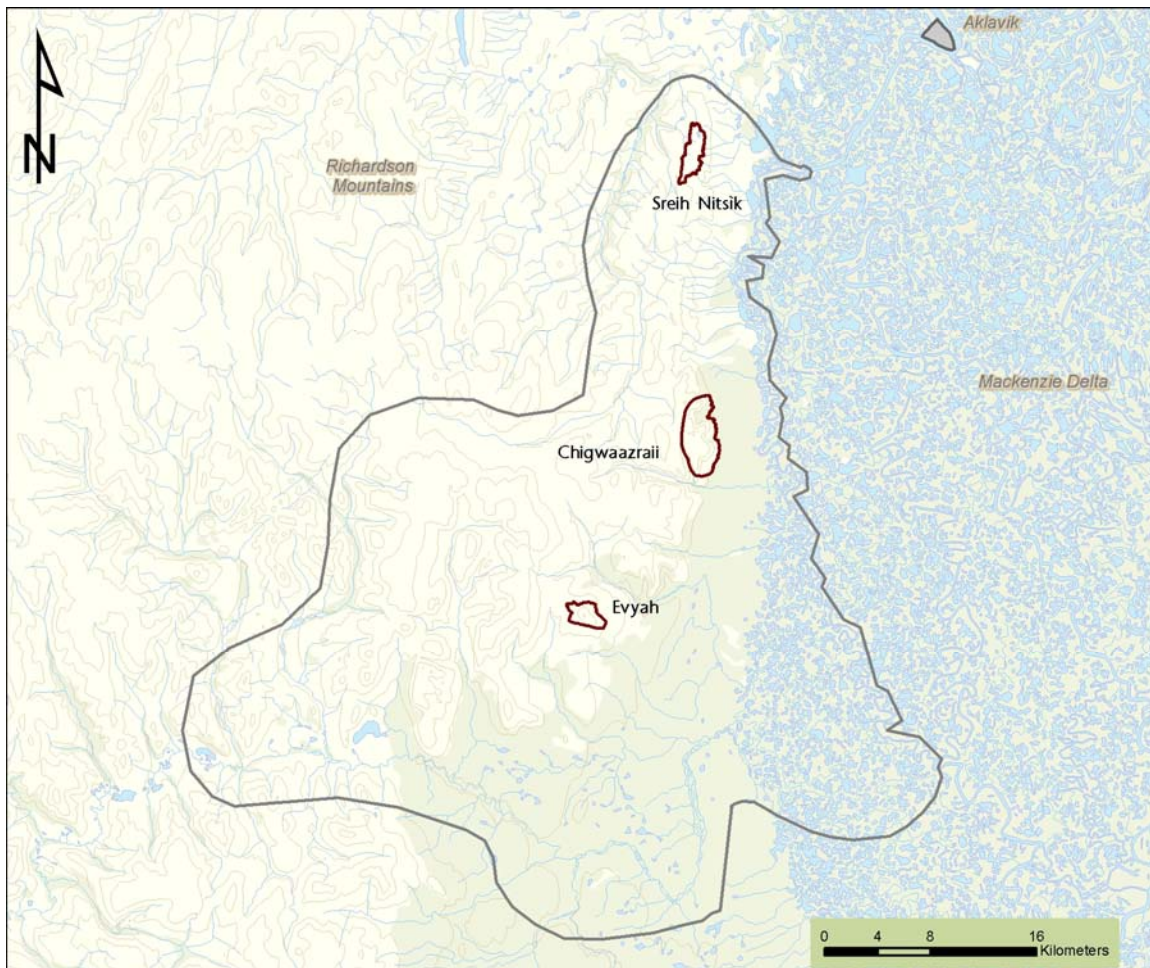


Sreih Nitsik is an important area for the Gwich'in women of Aklavik. Numerous Elders discussed picking berries there, camping there, taking their children there; and enjoying the experience. Red Mountain is also a destination for school outings for berry picking and recreation.

I used to go there every summer with my little kids. ... I was married still I take my kids along, go up there and stay up there alone. We could pick berries, and catch rabbits, and, have a good meal. Quiet.

Mary Kendi, April 12, 2007

There are several explanations why the mountain has the name Sreih Nitsik – which refers to a red colour - but generally there is agreement that it relates to the fall colour of the leaves of *shih jak* or bird's eye (bearberry plants) or rock which covers the ground surface there, and possibly the effect of the sun turning the mountain red. Mary Kendi said that Sreih Nitsik, “that’s the one when the sun hit it just makes it red.”



Map 3. Mountains.

Charlotte Vehus, a Teetl'it Gwich'in Elder, remembered camping on Sreih Nitsik,¹³

¹³ From a COPE interview by J. Semmler.



When I lived in Aklavik after I married my husband, ... Norris, they build us a skiff ... I used to find my stuff, throw everything out there, and I used to go up to Red Mountain. [My kids] were not too big at that time, I used to take them and camp alone by myself. ... All week I would set snares and nets there and nobody would come around – only once in a while. I never saw anybody when I was there like that. Sometimes I would take my kids and Mrs. Martin with me. ... When I was camping out there with these two kids all day, I would go up in the morning picking berries with them. Then after, I would go up and visit my snares and nets and we had something to eat all the time. I had a fire place for them and .. they just ate anything they wanted, at any time. There I would stay out all day with them picking berries. In the evening, I would come home with them.

Catherine Semple also remembered that Dolly MacLeod would camp up on Sreih Nitsik for berry picking. “There’s old trail to there where ... Dolly used to go to berry patch, set tent there? ... you go through that trees a little bit and then you hit the berry patch. That’s where they always have their camps. And pick berries.”¹⁴

Caribou, an important Gwich’in food staple, spend time on Sreih Nitsik as the summer winds provide them relief from mosquitoes.¹⁵ Alfred Semple remembered hunting caribou on Sreih Nitsik with Old Eddy MacLeod, Dolly MacLeod’s husband. They shot a caribou that was so large it took several trips to haul the meat. Alfred went up Sreih Nitsik to where the caribou was cached under the moss against the permafrost, and his wife Catherine went with him. Together they processed the caribou.

Annie B. Gordon remembered school children walking up the trail from Husky Channel to berry picking areas on Sreih Nitsik. She said, “They used to take kids ... out berry picking. And they take them up there but they just go to the flats. Even along the flats there you could find lots of yellowberries, blueberries, cranberries...” Annie said that it was well used as a recreational site by people in Aklavik. “Everybody go to Red Mountain for berry picking or just go for picnic even.”¹⁶

Before it was a recreational and hunting area easily accessible to Aklavik residents, Sreih Nitsik was used as a camping area and landmark when travelling through the Aklavik Range. In September, 1979, Fort McPherson Elder Neil Colin interviewed Nellie Mitchell about her travels and lifestyle when she was younger. He translated her words onto tape; a snapshot of the seasonal movements through the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape and further down towards the Arctic Coast:

And as you see on the map, from Black Mountain, from there, in 1900, that’s the time she was about six year old, she remember ... she move with her parents and other people, up Red Mountain, and towards Canoe Lake, past Canoe Lake, all way down the mountains and they camped there and there, and they hunt and took them about two months to

¹⁴ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007 – Catherine Semple.

¹⁵ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007 – Alfred Semple.

¹⁶ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 20, 2007.



return. They went far as Babbage River. Yeah, that's ah, way past Blue River. Where they stayed in the summer and, before fall, they come back the same way and, she moved back to ah, in the Delta, where they passed fall.¹⁷

Evyah

Evyah or Tthii Traii (gazetted name: Mount Lang) refers to a small mountain or hill near the middle of the area. Tthii Traii may mean that there are no trees on it. Evyah refers to the shape of the mountain, possibly looking like a whale.¹⁸

Jim Edwards, speaking in the 1970s, stressed that the landscape was used by the Teetl'it Gwich'in for years; "...you'll see on the map, Mount Lang, is called Evyah. It's another high mountain which is well known for many, many years."¹⁹

Rivers and Creeks

The following table summarizes the named creeks and rivers within the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. The gazetted names are followed by a (G) and the local names are followed by an (L). See Map 4 for locations of rivers.

Table 1. Rivers and Creeks

Name(s)	Further Information
<u>Ddhah Zhit Han</u> <i>Rat River (G,L)</i>	<p>Name translates as 'Mountains-in-river.' <u>Ddhah Zhit Han</u> has an important char fishery. The fish resources of the river have been used by the Gwich'in since before Aklavik was founded, and numerous cabins and old cabin sites are along its shores. People travelled through this area during the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. Gwich'in hunters guided miners through the passes and provided meat for sale.²⁰ The general area is known to be good for caribou. Sometimes camps would have many tents.</p> <p>Albert Johnson, the "Mad Trapper of Rat River" stayed and travelled through this area during the famous police search for him.</p> <p>People used to stay at <u>Ddhah Zhit Han</u> for Christmas.²¹</p>
<u>Eneekaii Han</u> <i>Husky Channel (G,L), Husky River (L)</i>	<p>Name translates as 'Inuit-River.' It is a channel of the Mackenzie Delta along the west side near the mountains. <u>Eneekaii Han</u> is a navigable channel, well used by the Gwich'in as part of their extensive trails network in both summer and winter.</p> <p>There used to be a trading post owned by Mr. Blake along the channel during the fur trader era.</p>

¹⁷ Dene Mapping Project Tape 76.

¹⁸ William George Firth, pers. comm., 2008

¹⁹ Dene Mapping Project Tape 78.

²⁰ Jim Edwards, COPE story, "Christmas Long Ago."

²¹ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project Tape 9, Julia Edwards. January 27, 1999.



<u>Chii Zhìt Gwìnjòò'</u>	Name translates loosely as 'creek inside the rock canyon.' A creek that flows east out of the Aklavik Range, just south of <u>Chigwaazraii</u> . This creek is associated with the story about the two men who fell asleep in the bear den for a winter.
<u>Dachan Njuu Njik</u> <i>Timber Creek (L), Longstick River (G)</i>	Name translates as 'timber-creek.' This area is a good food gathering area, and had a caribou corral near it.
<u>Tthał Njik</u>	Name refers to a caribou fence (a fence of rocks or wood used to corral caribou before the introduction of firearms). The creek is near <u>Ehji' Van</u> .
<u>Chii Ezhyah Njik</u>	A creek that empties into <u>Ddhah Zhìt Han</u> . A place where the rock formation is such that when you shout, it echoes.
<u>Chii Zhìt Khaiintin</u>	Name refers to the inside of the rock being burnt. There is coal up this creek.
<u>Chii Zraii Teetshik</u>	This shows as the main gap between Red Mountain and Black Mountain. There is a waterfall up near the head of it. This is a main route from <u>Eneekaii Han</u> , up into the mountains.
<u>Divii Daaghoo Njik</u> <i>Sheep Creek (L), Scho Creek/Bear Creek (G)</i>	Name translates as 'Sheep-making noise-creek.' This creek empties into <u>Ddhah Zhìt Han</u> and is a well-known caribou hunting area. Occasionally, people would meet up around <u>Divii Daaghoo Njik</u> if there were caribou in the area and camp together. The creek is also an important trail corridor. There are some cabins located along it. There may be geological features with warm water or springs in the valley of <u>Divii Daaghoo Njik</u> that may help to support the char populations over the winter. ²²
<u>K'ài Kàhnjik</u> <i>Willow River (L,G)</i>	Name probably translates as 'willow-small creek.' It is a hunting and camping area. The Gwich'in stayed in tents in an area with numerous willows, in the wide river channel bed. In the past, people stayed for extended periods of time at these camps – up to three weeks while they hunted caribou and dried the meat. Today, there is evidence of these camps in the form of old camp signs and axe-cut stumps. There was also a camp around the forks of the Willow River and Martin River, where up to 20 tents could be set up. ²³
<u>Luk Njik</u> <i>Fish Creek (L,G)</i>	Name translates as 'fish-creek.' The creek is associated with a medicine man legend. People used to fish for char in this creek; and the area was also a caribou-hunting area. Char spawn in this creek during the fall.
<u>Lyùh Ant'at Teetshik</u> <i>Muddy Creek (L)</i>	Name refers to sticky mud and a creek. This is a winding river with a waterfall, maybe 30-40 feet high, at the head of this creek.

²² Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones Project, April 13, 2007 – Tommy Wright.

²³ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project, Tape 8, Julia Edwards January 27, 1999.



<u>Millen Viteetshik</u>	This creek was named after RCMP Constable Edgar Millen who was shot by Albert Johnson, the Mad Trapper, in 1932.
<u>Shih Han</u> <i>Bear Creek and East Bear Creek (G)</i>	Bear Creek and East Bear Creek are both known by this name, which translates as ‘bear-river.’ The area was a ‘nice place’ for hunting and has numerous trails. People hunted caribou in this area in the winter, and stayed in large tent camps along the creek. ²⁴ There used to be a caribou corral between Bear Creek and Sheep Creek. ²⁵ The area was accessed by dog packs and dog teams. The men would hunt caribou that were visible in the mountains nearby while the women would stay at camp and make drymeat from the caribou.
<u>Sruh Niilii Gwachoo</u> and <u>Sruh Niilii Gwatsal</u>	Names refer to big and little coney ‘coming up.’ They are both channels of the Rat River. There were winter camps on these channels. ²⁶
<u>Trinzhoh Njik</u> <i>Barrier River (G)</i>	Name refers to ‘(caribou) excrement-snow-creek.’ Also called Wolf Creek.

²⁴ Teetl’it Gwich’in Place Names Project 2008, March 1, 2008, Interview 10 Joseph Kay

²⁵ Neil Colin, Delta Report, Dene Mapping Project, Tape 71.

²⁶ Eunice Mitchell, Long Story – Elder’s Biography Project, 2000.





Map 4. Rivers and Creeks.

Lakes

The following table summarizes the named lakes within the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape (see Map 5, below). The gazetted names are followed by a (G) and the local names are followed by an (L).

Table 2. Lakes

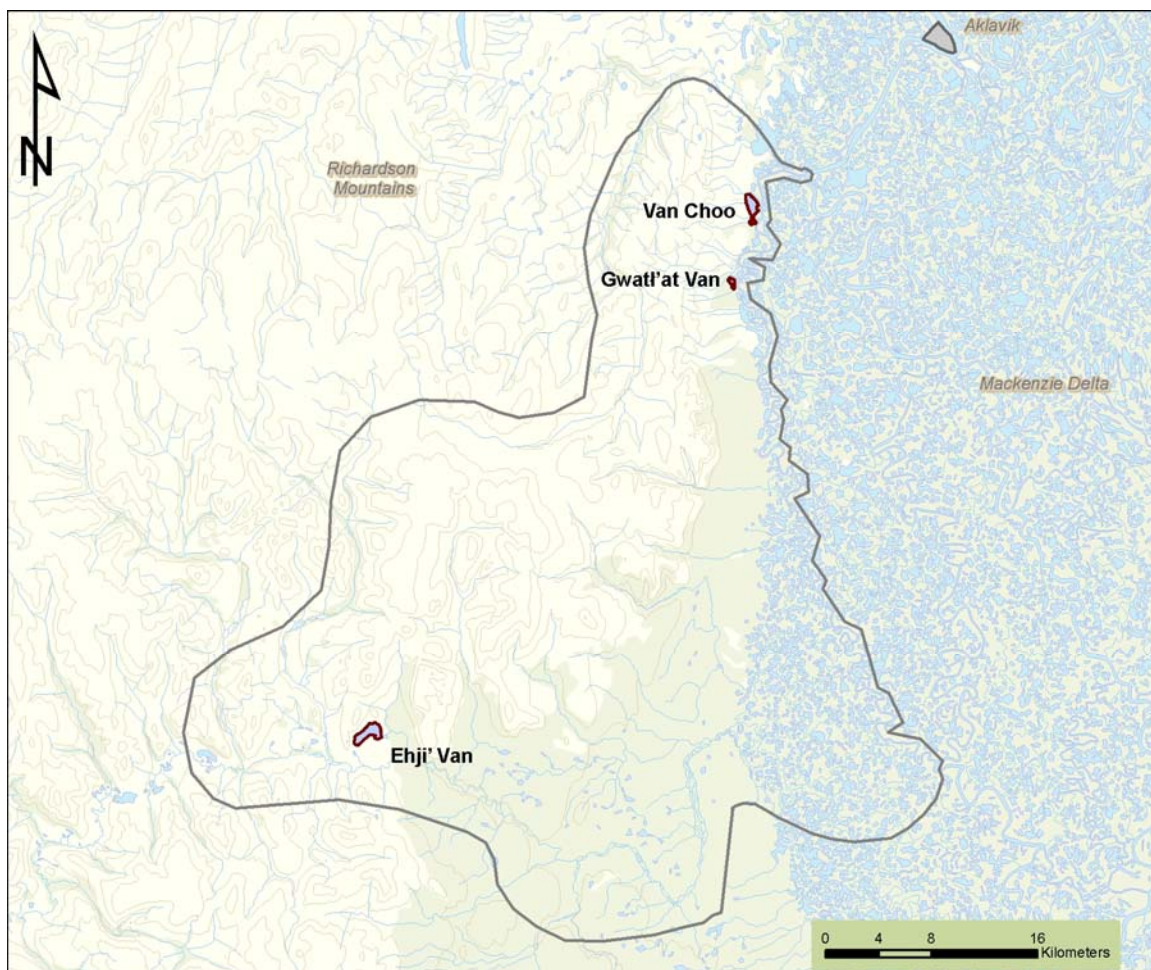
Name(s)	Further Information
<u>Ehji' Van</u> <i>Horn Lake (G,L)</i>	<p>Name translates as 'horn-lake.' One of several places where there were caribou fences, used before the introduction of firearms to herd and harvest numerous caribou. Right below <u>Ehji' Van</u> there's a flat area where they chased the caribou into the caribou fence. Fences were used in August or September when the caribou were migrating south. Alfred Semple said that Johnny Kay had told Alfred that the corral was built around 1700.²⁷</p> <p>This is a deep lake. Named Horn Lake after the caribou 'horns' that were left around after a successful hunt.²⁸</p>

²⁷ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007.

²⁸ Jim Edwards, Dene Mapping Project Tape 78.



<u>Van Choo</u> <i>Big Lake (L)</i>	Name translates as ‘big-lake.’ There is a trail to the mountains, used as a snare route, that runs north along a seismic line by <u>Van Choo</u> .
<u>Gwatl’at Van</u> <i>Bug Hunter (L), Bug Lake (G)</i>	<p>Name probably translates as ‘insect-lake.’ It was named after a research scientist from the 1960s who studied insects in the area and stayed at a camp on this lake for several years. A hill to the north of the lake is a berry-picking area.</p> <p>The lake has dried up.</p>



Map 5. Lakes.

Fishing places

There are several important named places that served as larger fishing areas. For a map of these places, see Map 6 below.



Ok Choo

Ok Choo (local name: Big Eddy, translates as ‘eddy-large’) is an important char fishing area. The trailhead to an old-time hunting trail heading into the mountains towards K’äii Kähnjik is located there. Ok Choo is near the base of Chigwaazraii and is the almost year-round home to Elder John Carmichael. Mary Kendi indicated that Ok Choo is known for caribou, fish, and sheep. The importance of this place predates the muskrat trapping days.²⁹

Alfred Semple remembers his grandmother speaking about Ok Choo in the days before firearms. Even then, it was a ‘favourite place’ because of the availability of Dolly Varden char and the access to the mountains for hunting.

Well, that’s a long story, that one. [My grandmother’s] name is Caroline *Tsiigii*. She live[d] 115 years. She ... come to McPherson, that time, 1945 she told me a story about this Big Eddy [in the] 1800s. My great-grandmother tell me they come down Husky River. There’s no trees! Just along the river, there’s a tree there and there, and willow. Their favourite place to go down – Big Eddy, ... only place they can get some trout. Or maybe they’re going to hunt sheep or something [at] Black Mountain.³⁰

Alfred heard a story about people travelling to Ok Choo and making char dryfish. These were days before the muskrat trade when people travelled extensively season by season, using canoes, moose skin boats, snowshoes, and pack dogs.

That’s what they put in their skin boat, after they got to Big Eddy they stay a few days and make trout dryfish ... No tent it’s just tee-pee. Well after [a] few days they got ... trout, you know - half dried, and they dig down to the permafrost, no shovel them days. ... they dig it and cover it up with moss ... to keep it cool.³¹

After staying at Ok Choo and harvesting char using natural fibre nets (such as willow), Alfred indicated that the Gwich’in would move to the mountains to hunt sheep. Catherine Semple remembers staying in the Delta near Ok Choo after her marriage. The delta provided a way of life for the times they did not live in town and have jobs.

Yeah and then I got married and we stayed around McPherson for a while ... Annie was [a] baby that time and we couldn’t make a living around McPherson so we moved to Black Mountain. And then my granddad was there and that’s where we start ratting and ratting; and we just mostly stay around there year round ... And then we stay there for summer and we fish and pick berries and then by August, [char, called ‘trout’] start running... that’s where we set net for trout and we stayed there one week and then we come back down again.³²

²⁹ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007

³⁰ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007.

³¹ Ehdiitat Gwich’in Place Names Workshop Tape 17, January 1999.

³² Ehdiitat Gwich’in Place Names Project, January 1999 – Tape 14.



Ne'edilee

Ne'edilee (local name: Fish Hole) is located on Luk Njik. The name Ne'edilee refers to a place to stay over the winter. Interviewees indicated that Ne'edilee is an important area for fishing char. Char also spawn in this area. It was mainly used by Fort McPherson people. Although in the last decades the char stocks have dropped significantly, the use of Ne'edilee historically is well documented.

There are several versions of a Gwich'in legend about a mountain blocking spawning char from reaching Ne'edilee. This legend can be found below in the Legends section.

Alfred Semple and Mary Kendi described the use of Ne'edilee for char fishing, and how people would store the fish in a natural 'deep freezer' in the ground. Alfred said, "They dig under, I didn't know how they did it. They make a hole there, then they pile flat rocks and everything over it. Years and years they kept that, they go in there [and] they put ice ... they use to have ice house." Mary also knew about the freezer in the ground, "In the fall they get their trout and they just put that trout in the ice and they close it in ... so the bear won't go in there and well, maybe they keep about three to four weeks." Alfred thought that there may be a caribou fence or corral at Ne'edilee as well, which was used long ago to herd caribou and kill them.³³

There may be geological features that affect the spawning char by keeping the water warm. The char need warmer water, or water that doesn't freeze in the winter, to stay alive.

[At] Fish Hole ... on the Fish River ... the water comes from under the ground! When you get to the end of it, ... there's pools – deep water, and then shallow, and then deep pool again, ... [a] bunch of them? And then pretty soon there's nothing. It's a big mountain there, just like the mountain slid into it ah. So it's still coming, and it's salt water. Salty water. ...But that's where, you know fish from the ocean go up there. Trout and dog salmon and all kinds.³⁴

Nich'it Kat Jàl K'it

Nich'it Kat Jàl K'it translates as 'girls' jigging place,' a place where historically women often stayed to fish, while the men went hunting in the mountains. It is located on Eneekaii Han.

Tr'ih Zhìt Tàgòhdii

Tr'ih Zhìt Tàgòhdii (local name: Destruction City or Canoe Landing). This location is a Heritage Conservation Zone in *Nanh' Geenjit Gwit'rit Tigwaa'in / Working For The Land, the Gwich'in Land Use Plan* (Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003).

³³Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project, January 1999, Tape 16.

³⁴Tommy Wright, Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge Study of the Mackenzie Gas Project Area, Tape 97.



This name refers to a large camp on the north side of Ddhah Zhìt Han. There is good timber in the area. Elders say that this spot is as far as it is possible to travel by boat - you can't go further due to rough waters. Mary Kendi said, "That's as far as you can get, and then you start climbing over the hill"³⁵ referring to the portage trail that leaves the river at this site, for hunting areas further in the mountains. The area was a summer camp for the Gwich'in, "I made it down to Destruction City where there was lots of loads of wood, trees and good water."³⁶ Jim Edwards, discussing Gwich'in named places in the 1970s, indicated that the name Destruction City is a much newer name, "Now this number one, is called Destruction City. Since 1898, that's only a few years back! But it's called, a Canoe Landing – Tr'ih Zhìt Tàgòhdii – for many, many years."³⁷

I'll tell you a little story about living out in the bush. Living out in the bush, I really enjoy it. All summer we work with fish. Making dry fish. Then we fish for trout [char] down at Rat River at Destruction City. We got fish house there... My husband set eight nets. Then we start making dry fish. Real lots of trout, looking at eight nets can bring lots of fish. Then we sent two of our boys up to McPherson with loads of trout to put into deep freeze. Then my two boys go hunting for caribou in the mountains too, during that time we pick blueberries and cranberries. For two summers the berry patch wasn't so good. My sons bring back load of caribou when they're lucky. For moose it's not so good. We get rabbits and we get ducks too. So we make good living.³⁸

The site was used during the Klondike Gold Rush (1897 and 1898); when Gwich'in guides were hired to take miners to Dawson City in the Yukon. They came from the Peel River and pass through this area. The name 'Destruction City' refers to the left-over remains from miners' boats – they would stop at this location to dismantle their large boats and build smaller boats from the pieces, leaving behind what they didn't need (Haszard and Shaw 2000).

There are also several legends that reference 'Canoe Landing Place' – these are included below, in the Legends section.

Sryuh Niinlii

Alfred Francis Vikaiik'it (Alfred Francis' Place), also known as Sryuh Niinlii (refers to coney 'coming up'), is a camp near the mouth of Ddhah Zhìt Han where it empties into Eneekaii Han. Bertha Frances stays there now, although the area has been used as a camp for many years. There is also a trail head here for a hunting trail heading westward into the mountains. There used to be a large settlement at the mouth of Ddhah Zhìt Han; it was an important site for char.

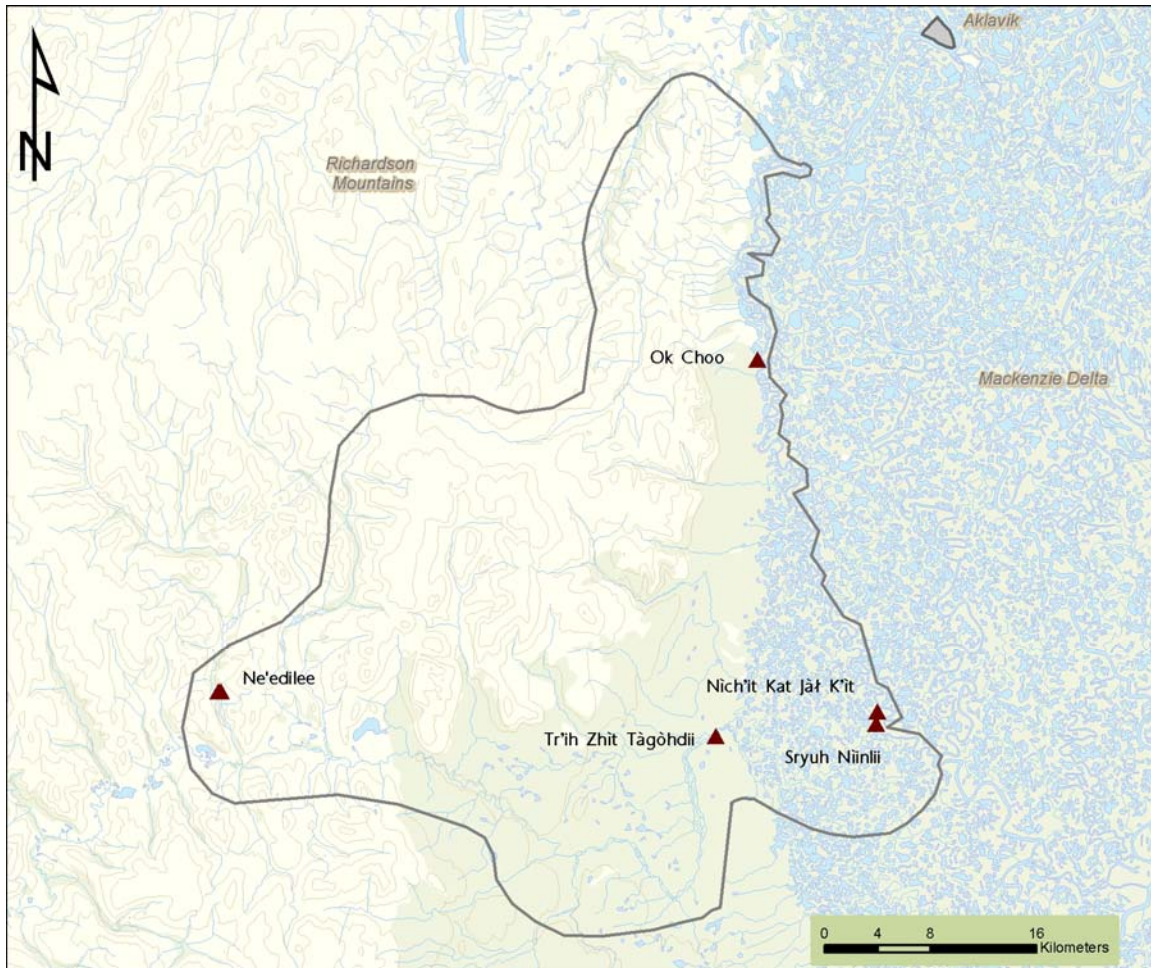
³⁵ Mary Kendi, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project, Tape 19, March 29, 1999.

³⁶ George Vittrekwa, Tape 68, February 27, 1974.

³⁷ Jim Edwards, Dene Mapping Project Tape 78.

³⁸ Caroline Kaye, Story of Living in the Bush. Tape 52. No date.





Map 6. Fishing places.

Camps

Many fish camps are located in the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape, attesting to the use of the landscape and resources within. Fish camps are used seasonally to harvest numerous types of fish and prepare them for future consumption, by drying, freezing, or other methods. Fish camps can be transferred between owners and tend to be called after the owner, or previous owner. Creeks are also named after the person who used them. Table 3 includes a selection of camps and creeks in the area.

Table 3. Camps and Creeks

Name(s)	Further Information
<u>Andrew Choo Vakaiik'it</u> <i>Big Andrew's Place (L)</i>	Where old Andrew Wilson stayed.
Dale Semple's Cabin	
Robert Semple's Camp	



<u>Alfred Semple Vizheh</u>	Also known as Alfred Semple. Name translates as Alfred Semple's House. Location of Alfred and Catherine Semple's old place. Trail head located here.
<u>John Robert Vakaiik'it</u>	Name translates as John Robert's Place. Location of an old cabin, possibly a game warden's cabin that was torn down after standing for 70 years.
Dolly McLeod's Place	Also known as Eddie McLeod Sr.'s camp.
<u>Lazarus Sittichinli Vizheh</u> <i>Lazarus Sittichinli's Place (L).</i>	Name translates as Lazarus Sittichinli's House.
Dean McLeod's Place	
Dale Semple's Place	Also known as Dale Semple.
<u>Jacob Viteetshik</u> <i>Jacob's Creek (L).</i>	Might refer to Jacob Drymeat. Name translates as Jacob's Creek.
<u>Jimmy Husky Viteetshik</u>	Name translates as Jimmy Husky's Creek.
Johnny Semple Creek	Used as a shortcut between Husky and Phillips/Neyuk Channels; also part of an old route from the mountains.
<u>Mrs. Martin Viteetshik</u>	Name translates as Mrs. Martin's Creek. Mrs. Martin was Renie Martin's mother; she stayed on Husky Channel. There is a story from Mrs. Bella Martin, of Aklavik, among those in the Dr. Cass collection; it's about a woman whose medicine was bear.
<u>Charlie Rat Viteetshik</u>	Name translates as 'Charlie-Rat-His Creek.' A creek named after a Gwich'in man named Charlie Rat.

LEGENDS

There are numerous legends associated with the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. In this first series of legends, an Old Man and Old Woman who were camped by [Chigwaazraii](#) got revenge on the Inuit who killed their son. The couple eventually killed the group with the use of sharpened sticks set around their camp for protection. The COPE stories below, including "The Real Old Couple", were recorded in Gwich'in and translated during the 1970s.³⁹

³⁹ COPE story by Roddy Peters. Originally entitled "Two real old couples", which was a poor translation of the title. The use of the wording 'two couples' has been edited throughout to preserve the original intention of the story about one couple.



The Real Old Couple

Another legend story about the old days. Long time ago there was a real old couple - a real old woman and real old man. They had one son living with them. This young man must have been about twenty to twenty-five-years old and he was doing the work for this old man and his mom, the real old couple. He made a living for them wherever they moved around in summer time and during the winter. So, one time the old couple moved down the Peel River, down into Husky River and they travelled down right under Black Mountain, around Big Eddy. They stopped around there and fished all summer. In September, when the Arctic Char start running they put up dry fish and mixed all different kinds of fish.

Sometimes, this young man tried to go hunt sheep up Black Mountain. One day this young man went hunting. He said he was going on top of Black Mountain towards Red Mountain. He left his grandparents and then disappeared for a few days. The couple couldn't do much about looking for him because they were too old to look far away. So the best way to find him - they got a birch bark canoe and paddled back up river, up Husky River, until they got to Rat River. I don't know how long it took them, maybe two days - one night, two days. They paddled a long ways to the mouth of Rat River so they went up the Rat River Canoe Landing place [Tr'ih Zhìt Tàgòhdii] - lots of people were staying there, too.

From there, after freeze-up, people had to move up towards the mountains through Rat River. Past people always moved there and got into the Yukon - they moved up there through the mountains. So, when they got there to Rat River, to the Canoe Landing place, they told the story to the people. A bunch of men went down with the canoe to find out what happened

to their young man. They got down to Black Mountain. Close to Red Mountain, right on top, they found this young man's body. He had been murdered by Eskimos. They got back down to these old people's camp and they brought all their things, dry fish, all their belongings. People divided up into their canoes so they brought it up to Rat River to the Canoe Landing place where everybody was staying.

So the people brought sad news to the old couple. And from that time, the old couple started crying every day, every night. They stayed with somebody with a big teepee. Some people had got caribou skin tents, homemade tents made out of caribou skin. After freeze-up, people started moving through the mountain. All winter they moved here and there looking for caribou. Killing a bunch of caribou, they would stay there and then keep moving. Pretty soon, travelling through there - then they would keep moving.

They travelled in the Yukon way up the other side of the mountain. Towards spring, they got into Peel River, near Rat River. They passed spring there. After there was open water, all the people moved down with skin boats. Those days, some people gathered at Old Fort - they called it. Now it's Old Fort McPherson since white man came to this country. People used that place for a fort so they called it Old Fort.

So, from up the Peel, here and there were fishing places, fish camps, wherever there were eddies. And all those places, people were living there so the old couple got to Old Fort with some people. All winter, wherever people moved, they picked bones, caribou bones, and they had two big caribou leg skin wrappers. They filled these two big wrappers up with bones, straight bones. When people were moving, they pulled that. While they did



that, the old lady was crying for her son. That old man cried, too, for his son. Every day and night they cried. They really missed their young boy that got killed - murdered.

All winter he had been saying that during the summer, finally about the end of August, sometime in the middle of September, they were both going to move down to that mountain again. Some people just let them do what they liked. They had got a big enough canoe; they loaded up their belongings, all those bones. They started paddling down the Peel River into Husky River, all the way down to Big Eddy where they stayed last summer and fall. They got to their camp, then they built a snow house with mud. They cut square house moss and made a house out of it, like a snow house, but made out of ground. There was a big room, on top of the house was a big hole where the smoke went out. They had a fire right in the middle of that house. They had a caribou skin for their door. All day that man [worked on] those bones, made them sharp on both ends. The bones he split up. He collect two thousand of these bones. About near end of September, he finished all the bones.

While doing that, he fished. Just him and his wife. Both were so old. It must have taken one whole day to stick these bones into the ground; half of them sticking out - all over his camp. The only time they took some bones out was when he got water at the river. The only time he put them back was on the way back. There was no place around where there were no bones - no safe place to stop. The ground was freezing, too, in the fall. It was about the end of September and these bones were sticking out of the ground all over just solid.

One day, a whole bunch of Eskimos travelling around were looking for people to kill. Wherever they saw strangers (all

different tribes of people travelled all over those days) they had a war together until whoever won carried the story to a different country and different tribe of people. (In those days they did that.) One day, I guess it was night time, the Eskimos were right on top of Black Mountain. All at once they saw a little light way down the river so they all went down the Black Mountain. They were close to that same old camp that man lived in. They all surrounded that old man's camp. They had to wait. Those days, different tribes of people started up war early in the morning with the daylight, that's when they started having war. So these Eskimos were waiting until morning.

So it was getting daylight and all was green. They all ran towards that old man's camp and they all stepped on the sharp bones and fell down. Wherever they fell down they got nailed by those sharp bones. They couldn't get up, they were half-winded. In the mean time, this old lady heard something when she woke up but she couldn't make out what it was. She called her husband to get up. "Wake up my husband," she kept saying. Finally, this old man woke up. She told her husband, "I hear something funny making noise outside. You should get up and check whatever it is." "Ah," he said, "go back to sleep - you are just dreaming. You think you are hearing something, you are just dreaming in your sleep. Go back to sleep and there is no use bothering about it." So this poor old lady went back to sleep. So they slept way after daylight.

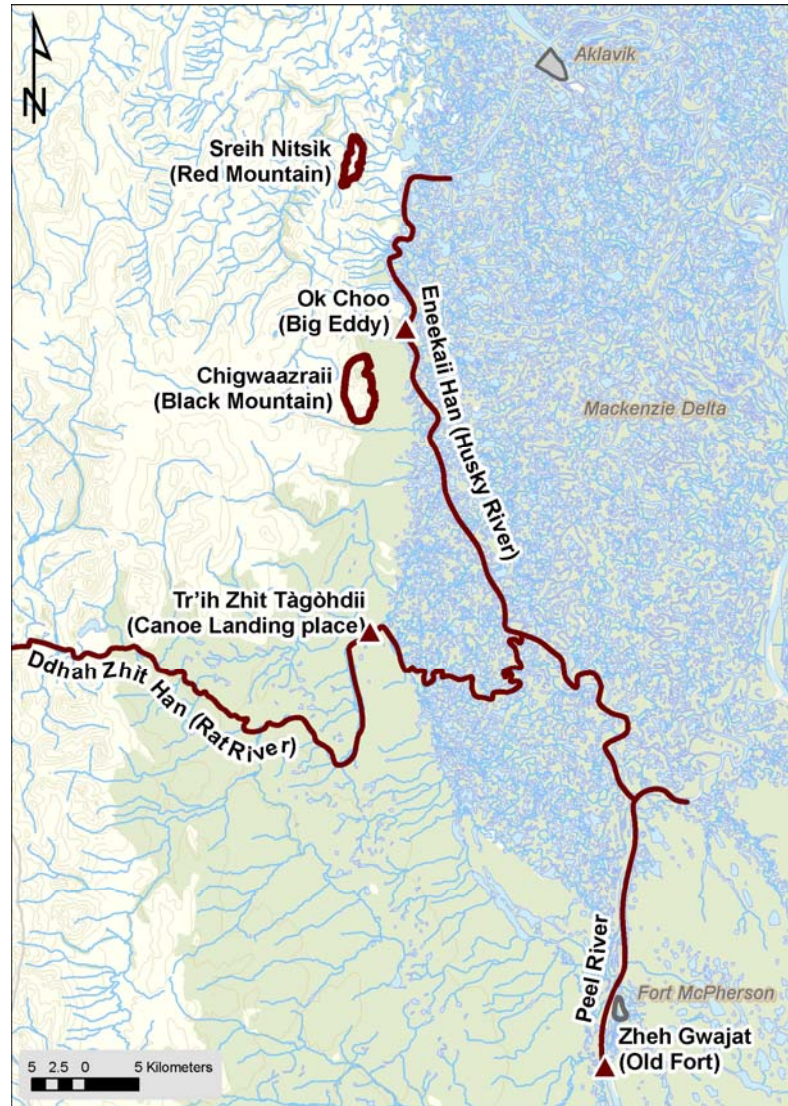
Finally this old man woke up and made a fire. The old lady got up, too. They had a caribou skin for the door and inside the house they covered that caribou skin with some wood and stones, some heavy things on top so nobody could come in while they were sleeping - an animal or something like that. They took all that away and this old man lifted that door up and he started to look outside.



All over outside, right around the cabin, were Eskimos laying all over, half-winded all making noises. He went back into the house and picked up his bow and arrows and he went outside and pulled all the bones wherever he was going to step a little ways from the door. He stood and there he started - he shot at them with those arrows. He made sure he killed every one of them right around his house, just cleaned them out. And even that, so many Eskimos ran back home, they didn't know what was going on so they all ran away, ran the way they came from. These Eskimos that were safe - they all went back to their country to take the news back.

The old couple, after they did this, loaded up all their belongings and they started paddling back up the Husky River. They travelled for maybe over two weeks back to old Fort McPherson. When they got back there, they told their story about what they did. The old man told his people, "From now on, I have done my share over my son. From now on, me and my wife are going to be happy because I did the same thing to those people who murdered my son. I am very happy for what I have done."

The news went around about the great story about the old couple and this story



Map 7. The Real Old Couple's travels

must have happened thousands of years ago. Five hundred years ago, but it's an old legend story. I learned it by some old people who tell legend stories. I picked this story out by the older people; I am not really telling this story right. There might be some mistakes but I try my best to tell what I learned from the older people.

So this is your translator, Roddy Peters, from Fort McPherson.



Mary Kendi of Aklavik heard another version of this story from Bella Ross' grandmother. In her version, two Inuit were left alive to go back to their families and recount the battle.⁴⁰

The next legend included is a parable about marriage. Several versions have been recorded. Two versions are included, although at least one more exists.⁴¹ The second version included below refers specifically to the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. For background, another version of this story is also excerpted although it does not

Wasting little time and material on hand, she was well on her way to survival... She set snares and caught rabbits by the dozens.

Bella Alexie, COPE story

specifically mention any place names. The first version (which is a portion of a longer COPE text entitled “*Marriages*”⁴²) includes more information about the set up of the story. In general, these stories outline how important industriousness and intelligence were to the Gwich'in and how respectful relationships were maintained between spouses. This story also supports the assertion that the Gwich'in placed strong emphasis on tidy and well-kept appearances, often using exquisite materials to decorate their clothing, as documented in anthropological sources (Slobodin 1981). The legend situates the mythological past in the cultural and natural geography of the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

⁴⁰ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project January 1999 Tape 25.

⁴¹ In a COPE story by Mary Vittrekwa, not included.

⁴² COPE story by Bella Alexie.



Excerpt from “Marriages”

Another old legend was about a newlywed couple. The temperature was very low in the middle of winter. People were moving through the mountains in search of food. The young wife jokingly said, "I will take a long time to sew the soles on to these boots." The foolish young groom became unhappy. He was so angry that he took her warm parka off her and left her to freeze in the cold. Word got around the camp like wildfire. Everyone was busy packing to move on. They all minded their own business. Fortunately for the young woman, she had a good friend in the camp. As the people moved on ignoring her, the friend stopped by her long enough to inform her of the hot coals she left under the brushes for her. She also left some sinews for her.

After she was sure everyone was well on their way, she went to her friend's place. Here under the brushes were hot coals and sinews - just as she was told. Happily she built herself a warm, crackling fire to warm herself by. She was also busy twisting the sinew into snares. The woman soon became aware of all the ravens around her. They were hunting the camp for food; a thought came to her. Quickly she took her snares and set them all around the deserted camp. In an hour or so, she was busy skinning ravens she caught in her snares. The skins provided her with a warm coat. The toes gave her small but usable sinews.

Wasting little time and material on hand, she was well on her way to survival. Days sped by and when it was warm enough, she travelled to a river nearby. Along the river banks, she found plenty of rabbits. She set snares and caught rabbits by the dozens. As spring came nearer she moved along the bank catching more and more rabbits. She had more than enough food. The skins she made into parkas and other clothing like pants and dresses. The

story says she even tanned the rabbit skins and did some quill work on them. She caught porcupines and dyed the quills different colours. She also built herself a tree house [lodge made from spruce poles] which kept her warm and dry.

After the ice moved out she kept on snaring rabbits and going after small game around her. One day as she was on her way home, she was walking on the shore of the river, she saw a canoe coming her way. Two men sat in the canoe. She became frightened and froze right on the spot she was at. She thought maybe she would go unnoticed if she didn't move but it was too late. The men had seen her. As they came closer they both greeted her and told her there was nothing to fear. After much talk she was convinced the men were harmless. Polygamy was practised among our people at that time so it was only natural when they both proposed to her. She agreed and took them to her home. She learned that the two men were looking for her. They knew she had been deserted by her people so they looked for her until they found her. They were happy to see that she had been doing well for herself.

Fall was coming on. The three moved to the mountains where they found plenty of food. As soon as they got some caribou, the woman went to work on the hides. She tanned them and then made herself some good outfits, dresses, and a parka for winter. These were her first good clothes since she was deserted. The next thing she did was make a tent. She cleaned and tanned all the hides. She made clothes for her husbands. As winter came they had all kinds of meat. They dug a hole into a small hill where much of the meat was stored. They also had an extra tent.

In the meantime, the people who had left her a year ago were wandering through the mountains in search of food. They



were pretty close to starving when word went around that someone smelled smoke as they were passing through a valley a few miles back. They were thinking of checking this out but before they did, one of the young men arrived. He told them of how they had looked for the deserted woman, found her and were now living with her. He invited the starving people to go back with him.

At home, the three prepared food for the people. The woman set up the extra tent by her own tent. Everything was ready when the people came to them. There was good food. Dry meat, roasted meat, fried meat, boiled meats, bone grease, fats and hot meat juice to eat and drink. The woman's friend moved with her family into the extra tent already set up for her. Her friend was more than willing to do just about anything for her in return for leaving the hot coals and sinews when

everyone else turned against her for making a silly little remark about sewing.

After everyone ate well and was strong enough to do some work, they set up their tents. The foolish ex-husband thought of some way he might reclaim his wife. Finally, he brought out his only tool. It was a little instrument used when making a snowshoe. It was an awl. At the door of his ex-wife's tent he held it out in his palm, saying to the two men, "Give me back the woman and I'll let you have this." Before either of the two said anything, the woman was beside him, grabbing the awl out of his hand. Without a word she threw the instrument into his face, it hit him in the nose and gave him a nose bleed. That was all; he knew what it meant so he turned and left quietly. He was sorry but it was too late to try taking his wife back.

The second version, told by Mary Kendi in a place names interview with the GSCI, specifically locates the story within the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. In this version, the two young men who find the wife were the same ones that fell asleep in the bear den for a whole winter season – which is a legend included below.

It was when a group were looking for caribou. They had to go back up the river and some of them go to Vittrekwa Creek, and Stony Creek, and up the Peel River – they all spread out. And that's how they went.

The next spring, in springtime, there was one man who was married. I don't know how come he was mean to his wife – she's a real smart woman too and I don't know why he doesn't like her. He was trying to make trouble for her. In those times, if you tell people *my wife is not doing what she's supposed to do and she's not doing anything*, or something like that... Well all these people will go against her. And they all went against her.

So, anyway, the wife had a girlfriend, her best friend. When everyone was going to move again and leave the wife, it was in the winter. Her husband told everyone – "that girl, we are going to leave her here, she's not coming with us." They took her clothes off too. In January! And they took her clothes away from her and they just left her there like that. There was branches on the ground from where a tent had been set, and that's all she was left, and you know it was cold. Her girlfriend just cried for her. She was scared too, because she thought that if she says anything or does something wrong they'll find out and do the same to her too.



And that girlfriend just whisper to her and she said “I’m going to leave caribou sinew in the snow bank there for you.” On the other side of the snow bank she made a little hole, into which she put coals, a little fire in there, and she tried to block it up so that nobody could see it. And everyone else rushed and left, leaving the wife there alone. She was so cold that she just sat there and cried. But after they had gone far enough that there was no more noise, she started digging. In the hole in the snow bank, that fire was still going, and she took it out. By then it was dark so she made a little fire.

By that fire she was sitting, and she took that sinew out and she make snare with it. People had tents all over the camp, and she just put one stick this way and she make snare all around where the camp had been. And then she tried to put wood together. Not to make a big fire, just a little one to keep herself warm. She was just moving around so she wouldn’t freeze to death. After she set all her snares, in the morning when it was daylight, she saw that all kinds of crows had got caught in the snares. And then she took a knife, that her friend had left for her there too, and she skinned them all. Her friend had also left her needle and thread too, and she made a coat out of crow skin. That was how she prevented herself from freezing. She made enough clothes for her hands and feet and everything, and then she turn back on the old trail where her people were travelling. And she went back and she followed that trail all the way.

Wherever she became tired she just made little camp – she kept doing that. Finally it was getting warmer in the spring and she went way up the river. Way up in the mountains. She happened to get to the Rat River. When she got into Rat River she saw a creek with lots of nice willow and rabbit tracks all over. She saw rabbits too so she made a snare. She set snares for rabbit, and she got lots of rabbit. So then she started cutting skins and she made a rabbit skin coat. Just like a suit for herself and then she’s just white. First she was black and then she’s just white.

She was staying around Rat River before spring, and she made it down it down to Sryuh Niinlii. She was right by the river there, but she never stayed right at the bank. She stayed way back in the trees where she had a place. With the snares she made, she kept catching rabbits and porcupine. She took the quills too, and you know with that dye red *tsaih* (ochre), she colored those porcupine quills. She was just on her own and she had lots of time in the spring too. And she even tanned that rabbit skin too. You see it in the store, how tanned rabbit skin is just white and soft. She sewed the quills on a caribou skin she had for a rug. She put trees together and she banked it up to be just like a tepee – she lived in there.

And those two boy that came from the bear den, they ran into her. She was really scared when she saw them, but she sneaked away. When they found her camp, they looked at everything. Inside it was just clean; all that nice work she was doing, the quill work, they just didn’t know what to think of that work she was doing. They said “I wonder who it is?” They tried to look, and they told one another, “You look at that side, I’ll look at this side.” And finally they saw her way back hiding in the trees. They talked to her, and said, “show yourself, because we won’t do anything to you.” So they worked with her for long time before she finally came to them.



They asked her questions and she said she was from that tribe from Ft. McPherson, and that her husband had left her to freeze to death but her partner had left fire and sinew, and things like that for her. She said “I saved my life and I came all this way; I followed the mountain and got to Rat River.” The boys were lost around that Black Mountain too. Well, they never got lost, but they went into a bear den and that’s where they woke up. Then, they ran into her. And then they married, both of them married her.

The three never went look for the people, the three of them were staying in Rat River. All summer they were around there, and during August they went into Rat River, around Sheep Creek, they stayed around the caribou fence. They caught caribou with the fence too. They had a long fence like that, and in between the posts they put snares. They caught caribou that way, they snared caribou and that way they had lots of food after that. They took the skins and she tanned the skins and started making clothes to them boys and herself. And she sewed quills on them too. Oh, she was really good woman, and they had left her to freeze and here she made her life like that. They lots of caribou after that. The two boys helped her and they were making lots of dry meat. And with the caribou skins she made two tents. One big tent, and another one maybe ten by twelve feet. A tepee too, a big teepee they made. They were nice skins, she had all the power to do all that, she knew how to do it. And then later, in the fall time, they went up to McPherson.⁴³



Black Mountain Creek and the Mackenzie Delta. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB

⁴³ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names project Tape 23 – March 30, 2000. This story has been edited for flow.



Mary Kendi remembered a story about a bear den on Chigwaazraii, with a moral! This story is from a time far in the past when people and animals could speak and were friends.⁴⁴

I'll tell an old time story. Two boys hunt caribou or look for caribou, and they go to Black Mountain. They don't see caribou and they can't go back, it's too late. So they camp around looking for a place to sleep. They find a bear den, and they went in there to rest. It was in the fall. They went in there to rest, and they fell asleep, and they never got up until springtime!

Just like bear, you know how bears sleep? They went like that, they slept all winter. Next springtime in April, when the snow started melting and dripping in front of that den, dripping at the doorway, they woke up. And then from there they went back home. The others thought they were dead or that an animal had killed them or something like that. But they had slept all winter. That's why they say they're not supposed to go into a bear den and have a rest! They slept for one year. Now you know how to catch up on your sleep.

Mary also tells of some markings left on Chigwaazraii, which some believe to be from the biblical flood that Noah weathered in an ark. When the water was dropping, it dropped in stages and left watermarks on the mountain.⁴⁵

And I tell them that, you see that Black Mountain? When you look at it, you could see one strip of land like this on it. Another one like that. At the bottom ... just barely see a little line that's all? ... Well someone told me that is when Noah had the flood. That's where the water went up past that, all that mountain was in the water. And after that it's just going down. That's where it stopped; that first line. It stayed there for a while, and then dropped some more and another line [formed] like that, before it drop again. And then further down – you [can] barely see it. And after that it, it went back to the earth.

A well-known Gwich'in legend describes how the raven was tricked and thrown over a cliff, where he fell into numerous pieces. Eventually the raven was put back together but he lost one of his toes. According to Mary Kendi, the raven was tossed over the cliffs right at Chigwaazraii.⁴⁶

Chigwaazraii even figures into the oral history of the treaty process in 1921, when Treaty 11 was signed. Johnny Kaye was recorded by the Committee on Original People's Entitlement in the 1970s speaking about a government agent and treaty commissioner Henry Anthony Conroy who came to Fort McPherson soon after the land claim was signed, and spoke to Chief Julius.⁴⁷ The inclusion of Chigwaazraii into the symbolic

⁴⁴ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Workshop January 1999, Tape 21. This story has been edited slightly for flow.

⁴⁵ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Workshop January 1999, Tape 21.

⁴⁶ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Tape 5 Mary Kendi, (also with Annie Benoit and Catherine Semple), April 26, 1999.

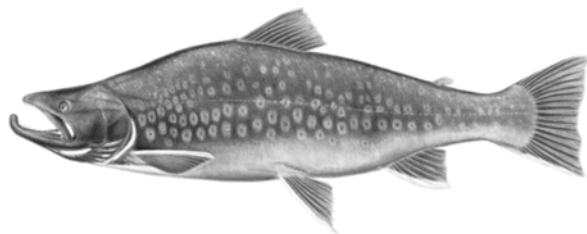
⁴⁷ COPE story, Johnny Kaye, "1921 Treaty." This conversation is repeated in the Berger transcripts as well.



narrative of the land claim negotiations between Canada and the Gwich'in is important: the mountain is identified with the permanence of Gwich'in rights in the area.

Mr. Conroy had said we could do our hunting and make our living any place and do what we like. By this, Mr. Conroy said, "Chief Julius, do you see that Black Mountain down there?" Chief Julius said, "Of course I can see it. It's my country and I can see it all the time". Mr. Conroy said, "I know and you know that nobody will ever move the mountain away. Just the same, Government is like that. You got your Treaty; as long as you are Treaty, no one will ever make you move away." These were the last words of Mr. Conroy.

The next legend is set around Ne'edilee (Fish Hole) located on Luk Njik (Fish Creek). It tells a story about two powerful medicine men – one helpful, one bad. It describes fishing for Dolly Varden char in the Rat River watershed, and demonstrates the importance of this resource to the Gwich'in – the story states "They had to have food for the coming winter which was near. They had to have fish."⁴⁸



Dolly Varden char

⁴⁸ COPE Story by Paul Bonnetplume. Dolly Varden char picture credit DFO.



Medicine Man of Fish Creek

A long time ago, a group of people were hunting and fishing near a place called Fish Hole. The people were living near what is known today as Fish Creek. Further upstream at Fish Hole, a medicine man lived by himself, and downstream a few miles was where the group of people lived.

The people living below Fish Hole were catching a fair amount of fish - nobody complained - but upstream the medicine man was beginning to think up some bad things. He wanted all the fish to himself and didn't want to share it with the people below.

One day, one of the men from the camp was out hunting when he spotted a strange thing happening. Up above him on the mountain ridge, quite near the Fish Hole, he saw the medicine man performing witchcraft. The medicine man was dancing back and forth over the ridge all by himself. The hunter knew the man above him was up to something evil. The hunter went back to the camp and told the people of what he had seen up on the ridge. Soon after, a big mountain came tumbling down toward the Fish Creek, causing a tremendous flowing noise and a dam stopped water from going down past the people. The fish stopped coming, too.

After a few days passed, the people began to get worried. They had to have food for the coming winter which was near. They had to have fish. No one dared to go near the Fish Hole as the medicine man disliked people to bother him. Things were getting desperate so, one day, the uncle of the medicine man, also a medicine man, decided to try his powers on him.

The uncle left the camp and walked up to the dam. There he picked up a small fish, the size of a sardine, and a piece of flint. He also had on him a piece of sinew. He tied one end of the sinew on to the fish tail and the other end of the sinew was tied to the flint. He aimed for the mountain or dam and let go of the flint and fish. The dam disappeared and, once again, the river flowed freely past the people below. The people were very happy now that the river was back to normal.

Up at Fish Hole, the medicine man finally noticed the dam had disappeared and was disappointed. He was very angry and knew his uncle was responsible for what had happened. He was thinking of getting rid of his uncle but the uncle was one step ahead of him. Before he could do anything, the uncle started his work. He took a dog and put a muzzle on its mouth. He then cut the throat and began to fill a dried caribou gut bag with the dog's blood. After the bag was filled, the uncle unfastened the muzzle and punched a small hole in the caribou gut bag. The blood started to drain slowly, drip by drip, until it was half gone. About the same time the uncle punched the hole in the bag and the blood began to seep out, the medicine man up at Fish Hole started having a nose bleed. When the blood in the bag was half gone, the uncle plugged the hole, giving the medicine man just enough time to straighten out. A few hours later, the uncle unplugged the bag and the blood proceeded to flow. And, up at Fish Hole, the medicine man was growing weaker now that his nose was bleeding again. The uncle did not bother to plug the bag again, and just before the medicine man died, he knew his uncle was doing this to him and he knew, too, why he was dying.

Fish Hole and Fish Creek, popular today for char, had always been plentiful of fish.



In another version of this legend, a different method is used to destroy the dam.⁴⁹ The story begins in a similar way with the mountain being moved by one brother or uncle, who danced upon the mountain for three days and three nights. The other brother or nephew – who is a kind-hearted, good person – breaks open the dam to allow the fish through again. What follows is the different ending of the story only. This legend also includes a description of how people lived during this time when they fished for Rat River char in this area.



*Scenic spot along Rat River, Richardson Range, west of Aklavik, 1954.
Photo credit Curtis Merrill, NWT Archives N-1992-192: 0037*

⁴⁹ Roddy Peters, COPE story.



How People Lived in the Old Days (Excerpt)

So this young man went home and got a caribou skin; summer caribou skin, one dried beaver skin; dried beaver skin for rug. He went down to the river walking alongside Fish Creek River and he caught one small fish. This sardine fish (the name is "Underneath the stone Fish"), he picked this up and put it in the water right beside the dam where that river came out of the dam. He put that little fish back into the river. So this young man, he had strong medicine, too. He slept and he put that caribou skin on the ground and put that beaver skin for his pillow and he went to sleep right on the ground right beside where that cave piled right across the river. Right beside there he went to sleep. He was doing medicine now. His people were staying below there in the camp. They all had teepees, a bunch of teepees all over. Oh, must have been hundreds of people living there. So he went to sleep all day. He was sleeping while he was doing medicine and that beaver, I guess he was digging into that stone trying to break the dam. Just when it was getting close to evening, I guess he just about broke through and water started running through, little fish swam through. So water broke through so the dam broke right through. Pretty soon it turned to big river again. They call that Fish Creek, that's where the Arctic Char gather and they spawn.

So that must be really a true story about the old days and the fish. The Arctic Char still go up there and spawn every fall.

And that mountain that caved across the river and the old days story must be true. So from there he went home, this young man, he went and told the people, "Go and take a look at the dam. See if it's any help to you." So all the men and women, whoever could fish, all went up there they

were so happy the dam broke through. They were yelling, jumping around, and dancing around. They were really happy. So some people made nets out of roots, you know along the cutbank along the river cutbank, you see roots hanging over along the cutbank.

Well, people used to get those long roots and put them in the water. They took the skins off and they made a whole bunch. They gathered and made nets out of it. They tied them together and it was just like nets. They were all white roots, they had them in the water all the time and they never dried up. They were strong, the people made nets out of them then they swept that net into where the trout gathered in that fish hole.

So by that time, it was about close to the end of August and lots of trout got up there to spawn. People killed lots of trout. Everybody got enough trout by the end of September, and they made dry fish. They made it all kinds of ways. They fixed the fish - dried, split, all kinds of ways they worked with fish so they had good food during the winter time for grub. So every family got enough Arctic Char for grub and after freeze-up in October, middle of October, they started moving away to where they could run into caribou and they killed caribou and made a living that way. They went through the winter working like that for their living those days. And the other chief, "Going Up the Hill Man" gave orders and people had to do it. And after a while, his brother, about sometime in the winter, his brother had asked him, "Why did you dam that river?" "Well," he said, "I don't like my people when they don't work right for me. And I want them to do whatever I tell them, they don't do it, so I thought I'll fix them, that's why I did that. They don't listen to me good. They do their own way and that's why I did that. I want to punish them but you had to fix it up and spoil things for me. His brother told him, "Well,



I don't want to see those kids starve and I love my people, that's why I had to try and help them break that dam open." So it was lucky thing his brother had stronger medicine than him and he helped the people.

He helped the people by breaking the dam open. This is how people used to work together in the old days and today still,

the mouths of Fish Creek, you go where the fish spawn you can see that dam piled up high, right across the river and for that reason, I think that old time story must be true, because the sign of it is right there yet today. So this is a short story about all I know about the people so that's why I'm telling this story and your translator is Roddy Peters from Fort McPherson.

Mary Kendi tells a story of a man, *Atachùukaii*, who appears in numerous Gwich'in legends. He came from an area to the south and got lost in the Mackenzie Delta, and ended up changing the behaviour of all the animals. Before this, animals would indiscriminately eat people. Mary also explains the meaning of his name, which relates to this story.⁵⁰

There was a man who came from the south, they call him *Atachùukaii*. When he passed Arctic Red River and he was coming to Mouth of the Peel, there were too many rivers to go in, and he didn't know which one to go in. So he just went which way he thought was good. But he could see Black Mountain, and Red Mountain there too... and he wants to get there too! Anyway he seen so many rivers, so he just followed one. He just got to the ocean. So he came back, and went to the mountains.



All around there, animals – like eagles, wolves, and all these animals, bear. They all, if they got a chance, they always kill humans. And he goes to them and tells them that it's not right for them to do that. He works with them; he straightened them out. And he told them what they're supposed to do. What they're supposed to live on. That's what he tell them. So they finally quit killing people.

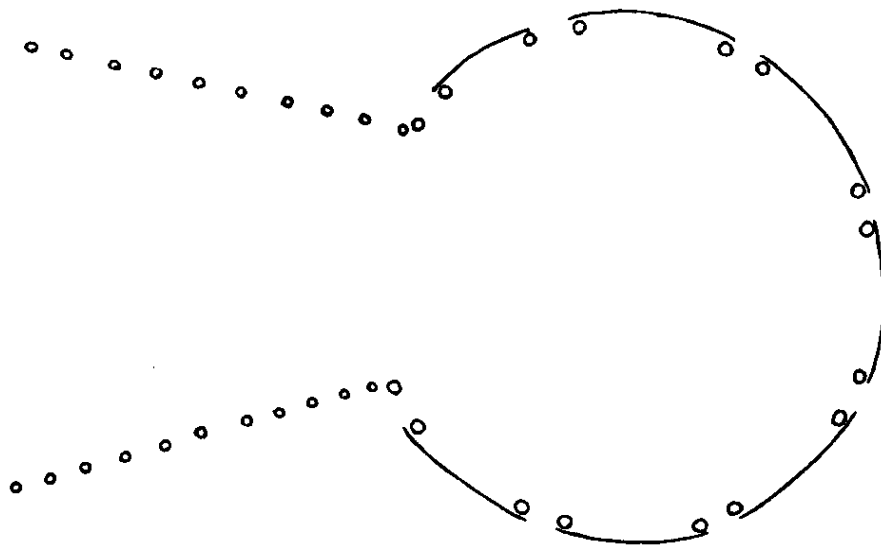
That's why that *Atachùukaii*... he didn't know which river to take. And he went down to the ocean and back again like that. So the people call him *Atachùukaii*. Which means 'he got lost in the river.' He didn't know which river to take, so he got lost. And he just kept on going until he hit the ocean. And from there he know he can't go – nothing to do in the ocean. So he came back up this way. He went to that Black Mountain. He work with animals.

⁵⁰ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Workshop March 30, 2000, Tape 24. This story has been edited slightly for flow. Photograph in story: "Husky Channel, 3 September 1961. View of Husky Channel with Richardson Mountains in background." Photo credit: NWT Archives N-1993-002: 0488



Caribou Fences

There are several locations in the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape where caribou corrals were constructed, including near Timber Creek, but also at Horn Lake. Corrals are an important reminder of the importance of the cooperative hunt in the past. Caribou fences were circular pens constructed out of wood, with two long arms extending out in one direction. The circular pen had snares set between the posts to catch the caribou as they tried to leave the pen. Caribou were herded into the pen and killed or snared. The following diagram shows a caribou fence (Osgood 1936:25, in Heine *et al* 2001).



Although it's been many years since caribou corrals have been used, Elders still remember how they work. Mary Kendi recalls "They just put them like this, long fence like that, and in between they put snare and they catch caribou that way, snare caribou and that way they had lots of food after that."⁵¹ Caribou corrals in the Richardson Mountains recorded in the Yukon tend to have longer 'arms' and be U-shaped. Another COPE story describes the corral in more detail.⁵² The account "Timber Creek" below describes the use of a caribou corral near Dachan Njuu Njik or Timber Creek.⁵³

Hunting caribou is done in the same manner as rounding up horses or cattle. A corral is made by trees and caribou hide ropes. The corrals were made in such a way so that a caribou could either be caught in a snare or by running into sharp poles which could be found directly below the hill. First of all, the corral is made on the path of the caribou heading north or south, or whichever way they were going. On one end of the corral, there is a gate to let in the caribou. At the other

⁵¹ Mary Kendi, Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names, Tape 23, March 30, 2000.

⁵² COPE Story, Paul Bonnetplume, 'Hunting and Fishing in the Fall.'

⁵³ COPE Story, Roddy Peters.



end, there is an opening, always on top of a steep hill so that the caribou had no choice but to go directly down this hill. At the bottom of the hill, hunters had sharp strong poles stuck into the ground. A caribou rushing on a terribly fast speed downhill is struck by one of these poles and it goes flying through the air to the bottom of the hill wounded. Some caribou are caught in the snares set inside the corral. Others are killed with bows and arrows. Sometimes, as many as 300 caribou are killed in this way.

Timber Creek

Another short story of Timber Creek. People used to move up to the head of Timber Creek in the fall time, September, and this is a story about how, in the legend days, the olden days, how people used to work to get food at the head of Timber Creek.

People that moved there about the middle of September and waited for caribou, big caribou, to move up from the north. They started building corrals. Right ahead of Timber Creek was a big high mountain down towards the north and they called it Curtain Mountain. Caribou travelled through the edge right on top the mountain and right through the middle of that mountain, they travelled down towards Timber Creek flat. The Timber Creek flat foothill crossed down right into Bear Creek, so the people knew caribou came through there. All the time caribou travelled that trail. So the people built corrals right around the caribou trail. Both sides, they built the corral with trees and birch - a wide corral, right against the mountain. The trail came down the flat and they made it narrow and they set snares alongside of that corral for caribou. And they made rope, real strong rope, out of caribou skin - and they braided it with the caribou skin rope. They set a whole bunch of snares right around that corral and in the end of that corral was kind of an open place for caribou to run through.

The trail was not very wide and it was kind of downhill there. They got a whole bunch of little trees and they cleaned it good and they made the end really sharp. They put them in the ground just like for pegs. They sharpened them and they put them towards the corral and they made a whole bunch sticking out of the ground. They left it like that and then, after they finished all that hard work, they fixed all the corral then they got ready making bone arrows.

Every day someone watched for caribou. And, all at once, about September the 10th to the 20th, they spotted caribou on top that mountain, Curtain Mountain.

Everybody told one another so everybody got ready to go up to that corral. A whole bunch of men and their arrows [went to] both sides of where that mountain came down to that flat, down towards the corral. Both sides of it people had hiding places right in a line on both sides way apart from each other. Towards afternoon and evening, the caribou started down the mountain, they got out on the flat, a big herd of caribou came down and across Timber Creek into Bear Creek Mountain.

So this big herd of caribou passed all these hunters that were hiding on both sides of that corral. Above the corral they all chased the caribou into the corral. They chased the caribou behind and they shot at them with their arrows (even with bone arrows they killed lots of caribou).



All the caribou ran into that big corral and they got caught in that caribou snare. The people set them and they caught a whole bunch of these caribou.

And then, right at the end of the corral, where it opened, caribou just jammed right into there, trying to get through. Whatever caribou got through, they just took off downhill and they ran into these sharp sticks. After all the caribou passed, they killed lots of caribou, must have been two to three hundred caribou at one time. And then everybody got enough, same amount of caribou and families, and all started packing meat back to camp. Everybody started working with the meat, everyone got a share, the same share of meat. Everybody started drying meat, working with caribou skin and everything they made was food for the winter to last them all winter until next spring.

After they finished all that hard work, they finished all that hard work during

the end of September and also October, then they moved further up towards wherever there was a camp where they expected caribou. They travelled around, moving here and there through the mountains, and that's how they got through the whole cold winter until the next spring came – that's how they pulled through another hard winter. That showed that people used to work for their food during the old days and, 'til today, it still shows.

Sometimes in the summer, some hunters go around there and they still find some of that old corral, those trees, rotten tree pieces of it laying around wherever they build it. It must be two to three hundred years ago, this happened.

This is how people used to make their living in the olden days. This is short story I know from the older people - the old ladies and old men. Your translator is Roddy Peters from Fort McPherson.

TRAILS

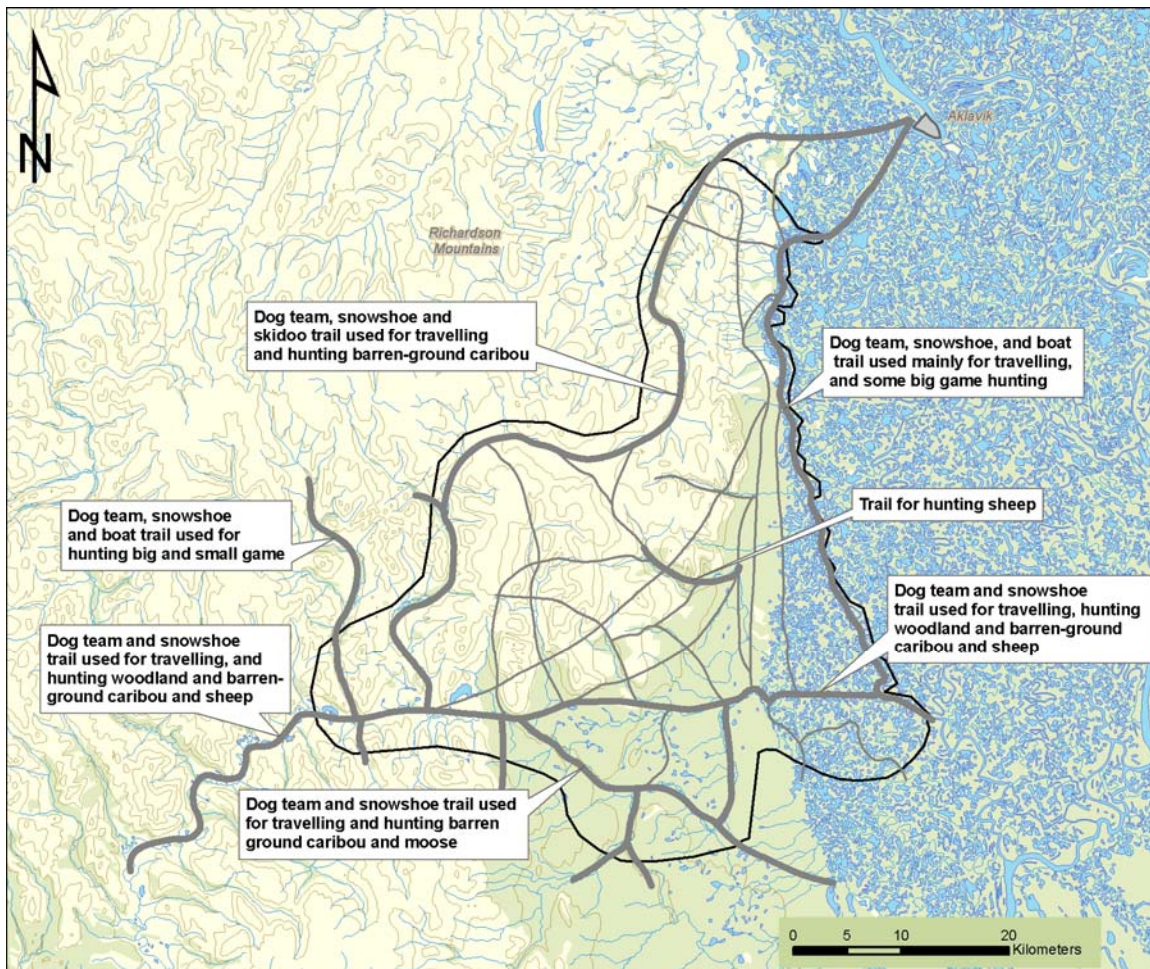
Trails structure Gwich'in understanding of the land - some trails are so old that they have worn a groove into the land that is a foot deep. There are trails that are all-season, and some that are only traversed in one season or another. They serve to join camps, communities, hunting areas, berry picking areas, and other features in the most efficient, safe route. Many Elders that have been living in Aklavik exclusively for years can still recite each name along a trail. Lists of important trail markers can be found in many oral history interviews. Junctures, cross-trails, and important markers can be easily recalled even if the trail was travelled decades ago. Ehdiitat Gwich'in Elder Alfred Semple, who has failing eyesight, reminisced fondly that “every dog trail, I remember, is still in my mind.”⁵⁴

The Dene Mapping Project, conducted in the 1970s by the National Indian Brotherhood (now Dene Nation) recorded a phenomenal number of trails and traditional land use information for the NWT, including Gwich'in use of the Richardson Mountains. The following map shows generalized trails that were used for hunting different big game

⁵⁴ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007.



animals (Dall's sheep, Barren-ground and Woodland caribou, and moose) and travelling in the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape. These trails were used variably from around the turn of the 19th Century until the mapping project was conducted. The original Dene Mapping Project trail map has so many trails through the Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape that the area is almost filled in with lines, so the lines on the map below represent a generalized view of the trails through the area. The trails continue outside of the area. Two main types of trail lines are on the map: one which represents major trail *corridors* where hundreds of trail lines converged and followed a similar path, and secondary trail routes where the number of trail lines may have been only 5 to 20. The trail corridors have a thick line with information added about the purpose of the trail.



Map 8. Generalized Dene Mapping Project Trails (to 1970s)

Thick grey lines are major trail corridors; thinner grey lines are trails.

During the Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project the GSCI conducted in 2007, Ehdiiat Gwich'in Elders identified dog team trails as a geographic feature worthy of protection (Benson 2007). Dog-team trails were important, in particular during the muskrat trapping days in the delta. Trails provide a mental map of a cultural landscape.



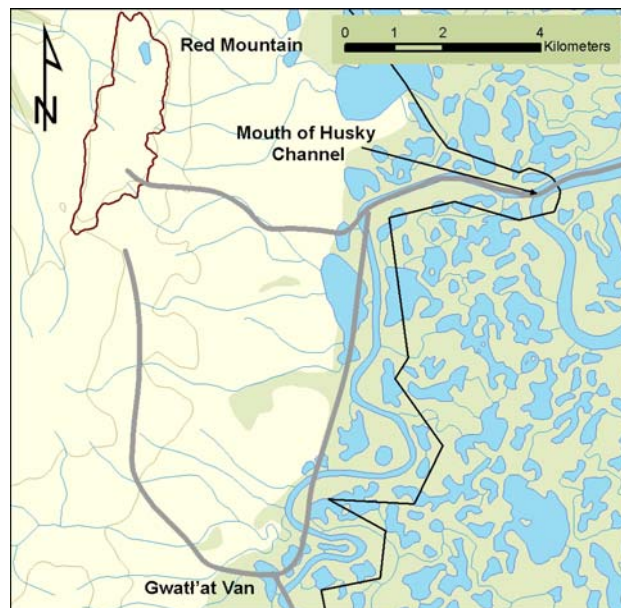
Mary Kendi remembered a time long ago when dogs were important to the survival of the Gwich'in.

I remember the days when I was growing up. Dogs were very important to people. When they came amongst the people the people taught their dogs very well, how to carry packs in the summer and how to pull their leg skin toboggans, or sleds, in the winter. You never had to tie your dogs. Everyone had two or three dogs. When you set up camp the dogs stayed by their masters' lodgings. They did not wander far. If they did wander amongst the camp they always went back and slept by their masters' lodge. The lodges were made tepee-style or else with moss. At that time in our history the dogs listened very well to its master. The people depended on using them and to carry their belongings from place to place so they looked after their dogs very well and they teach them very well. So the dogs were very obedient to their master and did what their master told them. You visited and there were dogs at the entrance of the lodge. Sometimes they look at you but they did not bark or did nothing. Today dogs are different as well as society, people. The dogs are animals and aware of the change. Because they are aware of the change they too have changed.⁵⁵

Travelling with dogs was vital to the success of the muskrat fur trade before the introduction of the skidoo. Many Elders fondly remember travelling with dogs. Annie Benoit indicated that dog travel is actually easier than with skidoos:

But now today traveling with ski-doo's, the machine would travel so fast, it's not easy to travel like traveling with dogteam, because ... you never had time to get cold too. If it was cold you wouldn't know it, because you're always on the move and keeping your body warm, with the ski-doo if you're sitting there and you're traveling fast, you're not doing nothing, you'll get cold right away. So that's the whole difference.⁵⁶

The trail from Husky River to the berry patch (Map 9) on Red Mountain was discussed as a good candidate for protection. This trail was used to access the berry patch by many people from Aklavik, and was even used by school kids. Alfred Semple remembered that the trail to berry



Map 9. Possible Routes: Trail to Red Mountain Berry Patch

⁵⁵ Elders Biography Project, Mary Kendi, Tape 12, July 17, 2000.

⁵⁶ Ehdiitat Gwich'in Place Names Project, January 1999, Tape 15.



picking on Red Mountain went from either the mouth of Husky River or through Bug Hunter (*Gwatł'at Van*).⁵⁷ Annie B. Gordon said that in the past, that trail was worn down as a groove into the ground by people walking along it single-file.

That's another good trail you know. We always used to try and say people should widen it and keep it open... because people go up there, and Elders go up there, because they know it's good berry patch way up. So they'd use that trail so much it's just worn right into the ground. And not only Elders and our native people, school kids used to go up there too. School, lots of school kids. When it's big they'd take them out to go berry picking.⁵⁸

Dog team trails commemorate the way people worked together in the past to survive and thrive. Annie B. Gordon remembers that when travelling by dogs, people travelled together and helped each other. "All the men take off with their dog teams. And they go right to Fish Hole. One time, it's hard travelling but they all would be together and help one another."⁵⁹

ALBERT JOHNSON, THE MAD TRAPPER OF RAT RIVER

The saga of the infamous Albert Johnson, the Mad Trapper of Rat River, is associated with this region. Johnson travelled through this area during his winter flee from the RCMP, that winter is now sometimes referred to as "the Albert Johnson winter" by Elders. Due to various popular accounts and movies of the event, it is a story that is well-known by many Canadians who live far from the region. Recent DNA typing and a movie have also featured a search for the real identity of Albert Johnson. According to GSCI researcher Leslie McCartney, the following summarizes most accounts – Gwich'in oral history and other historical literature – of the event (2005: 5-6).

A stranger arrived in Fort McPherson in the summer of 1931. He hardly spoke with people, bought a canoe and made his way to the Rat River where he built himself a cabin. On New Year's Eve the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at the Arctic Red River detachment received complaints from some Aboriginal men that a man by the name of Albert Johnson had been springing their traps. Once RCMP Constable and a Gwich'in Special Constable were dispatched from the Arctic Red River post to investigate. They arrived at his cabin and received no response to their knocks and requests for whoever was inside to open the door. They then decided to journey to the RCMP office in Aklavik to obtain a search warrant. Two RCMP officers and two Gwich'in Special Constables then returned to the cabin with the warrant. When one RCMP officer knocked on the cabin door and asked the man inside to open the door, a bullet was fired through the closed door. This bullet wounded the RCMP officer in the chest. The other RCMP officer and two Gwich'in Constables returned to Aklavik as quickly as they could with their wounded comrade. Once word of this incident was received back in Aklavik, a police posse comprised of RCMP officers, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, Gwich'in Special Constables and local trappers was

⁵⁷ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 12, 2007.

⁵⁸ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 20, 2007.

⁵⁹ Aklavik Heritage Conservation Zones project, April 20, 2007.



organized to find Albert Johnson. The Fugitive eluded police for a total of 53 days, killing one policeman along the way. On February 17th, 1932 the police posse caught up with the man they believed to be Albert Johnson on the Yukon's Eagle River. Before being killed himself, Johnson shot and wounded another man from the posse. Johnson was buried in Aklavik.

In 2007, Myth Merchant Films of Edmonton exhumed the body of Albert Johnson and undertook DNA and other testing to determine his real identity. Results have not yet been released.⁶⁰ As noted above, Millen Viteetshik (Millen Creek) was named after the RCMP officer that Albert Johnson killed during the long search for him in the Richardson Mountains.

REASONS FOR NOMINATION AS CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

The Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape exhibits several important characteristics to support the classification of it as a cohesive cultural landscape:

- The area is already identified and protected in the Gwich'in Land Use Plan for both biological and cultural reasons.
- Places within the area are related through the telling of several legends.
- Recorded historic trails (see Map 8 above) join the geographic features of cultural importance.
- The named places often have several names: a Gwich'in name of greater antiquity, and a locally used English name that emphasizes continued use and knowledge of the region.
- There are several key wildlife species that naturally bound the area and structure modern and historic use: migrating char, migrating caribou in the fall, and Dall's sheep.
- The decline of char, and possibly barren-ground caribou, has been of great concern to the Gwich'in, who are participating in management plans and other types of protection. This area commemorates the relationship between the Gwich'in and these species, even if designation as a Territorial Historic Site offers no protection.

Although some gravel extraction activities are on-going, and some seismic lines are present across the landscape, on the whole the landscape is whole and healthy – it could generally be considered pristine.

The use of the area for harvesting char ties Eneekaii Han to Ddhah Zhìt Han, and accounts for some of the numerous modern and historic camps in the east and south of the region. Caribou, migrating south in the fall, were captured by hunting or use of caribou corrals through the middle and southern portion of the area. People came together to hunt when the caribou were migrating through the area. In an overlapping

⁶⁰ www.mythmerchantfilms.com



area, the Gwich'in have always hunted Dall's sheep. Chigwaazraii and Sreih Nitsik are both used by Aklavik residents for hunting, recreation, and berry picking as well.

The proximity of the region to both Fort McPherson and Aklavik has helped to foster a continued dependence and use of the area for hunting, berry picking, fishing, and recreation. It is used by a broad group of people from either community, from young people on skidoos, to hunters and other harvesters, to Elders and school children.

In summary, the relationship between this area and the Gwich'in is historic and continuing. The Elders' stories and legends, and the Gwich'in place names, suggest a long association and an intimate knowledge of this area. This landscape brings together oral history, tangible cultural resources, and intangible cultural resources and knowledge. The area is bounded by trails and a diversity of wildlife and plant resources that continue to be harvested by the Gwich'in today.

Chigwaazraii, Sreih Nitsik, Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han - an Ehdiitat Gwich'in Cultural Landscape.

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A Name of the Site

<i>Type of Name</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Information on use of name</i>
Present name(s)	Chigwaazraii, Sreih Nitsik, Ddhah Zhìt Han and Eneekaii Han - an Ehdiiat Gwich'in Cultural Landscape	
Traditional name(s)	Numerous, see above.	
Original name	Numerous, see above.	
Other historic names(s)		
Official name	Numerous, see above.	
Other names		
<i>Please include any information about the name i.e. what language it is in, the period when it was used...</i>		

B Geographical Location of the Site.

Street address n/a	
Legal address Schedule 1, Parcel 5, Gwich'in Lands Schedule 2, Parcels A, E, D, and G, Gwich'in Lands Crown Land, NWT	
Latitude / Longitude	Northern point: 135°30'30"W, 68°12'23"N East: 135°1'3"W, 67°44'4"N South: 135°34'4"W, 67°36'51"N West: 136°22'44"W, 67°44'43"N Datum: WGS84
Other method	

Add any other information that would help us to find the site

C Description of the Site

Please clearly describe what the site looks like.

The landscape is diverse: a portion of the area is within the Mackenzie Delta, a flat area with numerous channels and lakes, with some spruce forests and muskeg. A larger portion is within the Richardson Mountains and is variably treeless with imposing peaks and large valleys, several chains of lakes, and numerous fast-moving rivers and creeks.





On Husky Channel looking towards Black Mountain. Photo credit: GTC Lands and Resources

Add further information to describe parts of the site (if appropriate).

What parts of the site must be preserved for it to keep its heritage value? For example, particular features of a building, views and vistas, space configurations, how the site is used, materials the site is made of, stories that go with the site...

Please estimate (roughly) the size of the site 1810 square kilometres

Please attach photos of the site if you can.

How many photos have you included? When were they taken? (rough date) Who took them?

Some of the photographs in the following table are included in Appendix 1 or in the text of the nomination form.

Photo # and description	Photographer	Date	Collection
NWT Archives N-2005-006-0003, description: Aklavik Spring Thaw. Looking to the southwest from the Anglican School. Seen is the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] compound which included the large white buildings. On the right edge is the hotel with Black Mountain behind it in the distance. When the sun came back (Jan 10) a spot of light hit the top of Black Mtn [Mountain] first. From http://www.pwnhc.ca/databases/archives/PhotoDisplay.asp?Accession_Number=N-2005-006&Item_Number=0003	Emily Stillwell (?)	1959?	NWT Archives
NWT Archives N-1992-192: 0027, description: Husky	Curtis Merrill	1954	NWT Archives



site - view towards Red Mountain, west. [The Husky site, which was located on the Husky Channel, was one of the three sites test drilled by surveyors as part of the preparations for a new government town to be built in the Mackenzie Delta]. http://www.pwnhc.ca/databases/archives/PhotoDisplay.asp?Accession_Number=N-1992-192&Item_Number=0027			
NWT Archives N-1993-002: 0489, description: Husky Channel, 3 September 1961. View of Husky Channel with the Richardson Mountains in background. http://www.pwnhc.ca/databases/archives/PhotoDisplay.asp?Accession_Number=N-1993-002&Item_Number=0489	Unknown.	1961	NWT Archives
NWT Archives N-1993-002: 0488, description: Husky Channel, 3 September 1961. View of Husky Channel with Richardson Mountains in background. http://www.pwnhc.ca/databases/archives/PhotoDisplay.asp?Accession_Number=N-1993-002&Item_Number=0488	Unknown.	1961	NWT Archives
NWT Archives N-1988-041: 0429, description: Richardson Mountains [as viewed] from Husky River. http://www.pwnhc.ca/databases/archives/PhotoDisplay.asp?Accession_Number=N-1988-041&Item_Number=0429	Unknown	193-	NWT Archives
Series of NWT Archives photos of a trip up Red Mountain, in N-1988-041 fonds. Shows group climbing Red Mountain, including Grey Nuns.	Unknown	193-	NWT Archives
“On Husky Channel looking towards Black Mountain.”	Unknown		GTC Lands and Resources
A series of pictures of the area, in particular of Black Mountain. Included in Appendix and in text of nomination form.	Catherine Lambert	2007	Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
NWT Archives N-2005-006-0003, description: Town of Aklavik with Black Mountain in the distance.	Unknown		NWT Archives
Red Mountain trail and berry picking during GSCI Science Camp in 1997.	Ingrid Kritsch, GSCI	1997	GSCI Yellowknife

Which of the following best describes the type of historic place you are nominating?
(Choose one or more)

a	a ruin (archaeological remnant)	X
b	a sacred site	X
c	a burial or grave site	X
d	a trail, river route, road route or pathway	X
e	a site traditionally used for a specific purpose or activity	X
f	a cultural landscape	X
g	a special place the natural landscape (intangible)	X
h	a special feature in the natural landscape (tangible)	X



i	a man-made feature in the natural landscape	X
j	a landscape that is part natural, part man-made	
k	a building	
l	a building and its property	
m	a structure (that is not a building)	
n	a complex of buildings & structures (one property)	X
o	a streetscape	
p	a historic district (streets and properties with buildings or structures)	
q	a man-made landscape that includes many features	
r	a place where early land occupation patterns can still be seen	X
s	another type of place (describe)	

D Use and Condition of the Site

How is this site used today?

This site is used by the Ehdiitat Gwich'in of Aklavik and other residents around the Mackenzie Delta. It is used for hunting, berry picking, and fishing. It is also used for recreation. This site is remembered by many Elders in various legends and stories which are kept alive by retelling them and by recording them in interviews.

Is this site currently under threat? If so, please describe the threat.

Chigwaazraii (Black Mountain) and Sreih Nitsik (Red Mountain) may soon be subject to further quarrying – some quarrying activities are already on-going. A test program may have been undertaken in the winter of 2007 to investigate the quarry potential of the lower portion and face of these mountains. Quarrying activities along the face of the mountain would irreparably damage the aesthetic and cultural value of the mountain, which is visible from the community of Aklavik and therefore by the Ehdiitat Gwich'in, cultural descendants to the men and women in the legends told above. An existing gravel pit higher in the mountains could instead be used which does not have the same potential to damage the face of the mountains. Additionally, there may be pressure in the future from other mining activities. Geotechnical studies of the Aklavik Range may be undertaken in the winter of 2008/2009.

Members of the Aklavik Territorial Historic Sites Nomination Steering Committee indicate that the main threat to the area is planes flying around during the summer months, sometimes with no one knowing what they are doing. Flying may be causing the caribou to be scarce in the area.⁶¹

John Carmichael, an Elder who lives almost year-round at Ok Choo (Big Eddy) did want to share that when he was travelling around the creeks past Alfred Semple's camp, he noticed one creek which looked like it was washed out and that a huge amount of driftwood was left in the creek. Annie B Gordon, another member of the Steering Committee, says that maybe a flash flood during one of the heavy rain falls caused the flooding. The steering committee indicated that this was a natural change, and indicated that in general, there are really no threats right now for the proposed area.

⁶¹ The Aklavik Renewable Resource Council and the Hunters and Trappers Council indicate that they are already dealing with this problem.



How would you describe the present condition of this place?

Condition	Yes/No	Comments
healthy	Yes	
whole	Yes	
good	Yes	
okay		
poor		
Overgrown		
falling apart		
being destroyed		

Who currently owns the site?

The Aklavik Range/Husky Channel cultural landscape is largely within surface and subsurface ownership parcels of the GTC, although a small area is Crown Land. The majority of the area is within Parcel 5 (Schedule 1 lands), although portions of Parcels A, E, D, and G (Schedule II lands) are within the boundary.

Are they aware and supportive of this nomination?

Letter of support to come.

Thank you for completing this nomination form.

Please tell us who you are, and where we can reach you

name	
organization (if any)	Gwich'in Social & Cultural Institute
mailing address	Box 30, Fort McPherson, NT X0E 0J0
telephone	867-952-2524
fax	867-952-2238
e-mail	gsciexecutivedirector@learnnet.nt.ca
other	

This nomination form can be submitted

by mail Cultural Places Officer

Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2L9

by fax Cultural Places Officer

Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
867-873-0205

by e-mail culturalplaces@gov.nt.ca



on-line It is also available to be downloaded on-line at www.pwnhc.ca/programs/nwthpp.html
Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre staff will be in touch with you to confirm they have received it.
A file number for further correspondence about the historic place will be attached to the reply.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Answers to the following questions are **not** required to nominate a Territorial historic site.

However, it will help us to process your nomination more quickly if you can provide **any** of the following information.

1) Do you have a personal attachment to this site? If so, please tell us about it.

The Ehdiitat Gwich'in of Aklavik, and the Teetl'it Gwich'in of Fort McPherson have an attachment to this site based on their long use and the legendary significance of the area. The area is mentioned repeatedly in legends told by Elders today, and recorded during the last 40 years from Elders who are no longer alive to tell these stories. The Ehdiitat Gwich'in community in Aklavik identified several constituents of this site as important to nominate as a heritage site due to their attachment and recognition of its importance.

2) Can you provide information to precisely identify the boundaries of the site?

A GIS file with the identified boundary can be forwarded upon request. See also the maps included in this nomination form.

3) Has this site already been recognized as a historic place by another government or agency? If so, by whom and as what type of site?

This area overlaps the Rat, Husky, Black Mountain Conservation Zone (Zone A) in the Gwich'in Land Use Plan (2003) based on both biological diversity and heritage values. See Map 2 and description in body of nomination form.

Additionally, although not recognized specifically for heritage values, the area has been identified as important habitat for animals, key to a traditional Gwich'in lifestyle:

- A portion of the area is within the WATDOC Site 26 Rat River and Big Fish River (WATDOC 1981, in IMG-Golder 2008). WATDOC sites were identified as “Sensitive Areas along the Mackenzie River Basin on the basis of physical, hydrological and biological characteristics” (10).
- A portion of the area is within a Wildlife Area of Special Interest to the Department of Renewable Resources (GNWT) for Dall’s Sheep (Ferguson 1987, in IMG-Golder 2008; Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board 2003).
- A portion of the area is within ‘Area 5 – South-west Edge of the Mackenzie Delta Ecoregion’ selected in IMG-Golder’s (2008) assessment of the Mackenzie Delta for the following rare land cover classes:
 - low shrub lichen;
 - dwarf shrub other;
 - mesic dry herbaceous; and
 - rock/gravel.

The entire study area was also within the ‘Southern Site’ suggested for evaluation for potential protection in this report. “With the creation of such a protected area, all the important, valuable and unique elements of the southern Mackenzie Delta Ecoregion would be accounted for” (2008:102).



4) Is this site presently occupied by someone who is not the owner? Please name (if known).

The Ehdiiitat Gwich'in and Teetl'it Gwich'in (and others) have established camps within this area, within their rights as beneficiaries of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement. The GSCI is not aware if there are other camps or residences in the area of non-beneficiaries.

Does the present occupant know the site has been nominated as a Territorial historic site?

The Ehdiiitat Gwich'in, through the steering committee and the approval of the Chief and Council, are aware of this nomination.

5) Has this site been maintained over the years by someone (who is not the owner or occupant)? Please name person and contact information (if known).

The steering committee members indicated that some trails are being used annually by harvesters for hunting trips, this is where they would cut the trail for passing through, up around Bug Hunters – people still use that area. Some trails only are used by hunters. They also said that since skidoos were introduced, people don't really use the Dog Team trails anymore, only trails that are easier for skidoos are used.

Does this caretaker know the site has been nominated as a Territorial historic site?

N/A

6) Do you know of a person, group or organization that has stories, papers or historic photographs of the site? If so, please tell us who they are, and how we can contact them.

As the geographic scope of this landscape is large, other documents pertaining to it probably exist in the NWT and other Archives, as well as in other books and collections – particularly about Albert Johnson, the “Mad Trapper.”

7) Do you know where we can obtain additional information about the site?
(Please list the names of any books, articles, tapes, videos, or similar materials.)

8) Have parts of this historic place been removed and relocated elsewhere. If so, what parts are they and how can we find them?

Not to the knowledge of the GSCI.

9) Is this historic place a building or structure that has been moved to its present location from an earlier site? If so, please tell us what you know about when it was moved and where it came from.

N/A.

10) Does your community support designation of this site?



The Ehdiitat Gwich'in Chief and Council will forward a letter demonstrating their support of this community-led nomination form.

If available, please attach letters of community support to this nomination. If such letters are not currently available, please submit them separately, using the file number Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre provides when it responds to the nomination.



Appendix 1: Photographs.



Chigwaazraii. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB



Richardson Mountains. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB



Chigwaazraii. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB





Chigwaazraii. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB



Chigwaazraii. Photo: Catherine Lambert, GRRB





Red Mountain trail and berry picking during GSCI Science Camp in 1997. Photo: Ingrid Kritsch, GSCI

