

"That river, it's like a highway for us."

The Mackenzie River through Gwich'ya Gwich'in history and culture

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page 28	National Archives, PA-102487
page 30	National Archives, PA-278355
page 31	Roman-Catholic Diocesan Archives, Yellowknife
Map 1, page 73	Osgood 1936:14
Map 2, page 74	Gwich'in Geographics Ltd., Inuvik
Map 3, page 75	Energy, Mines and Resources Canada, MCR 135 (basemap)
Map 4, page 76	M. Heine
Map 5, page 77	M. Heine
Map 6, page 77	M. Heine

"This river, it's like a highway for us."
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1 Introduction: The Commemoration Proposal

The Gwichya Gwich'in of Tsiigehtchic (formerly, Arctic Red River) propose the section of the Mackenzie River that traverses their traditional homelands as a site of national historic significance. This section extends from Thunder River on the southeastern boundary of their country to Point Separation in the Mackenzie Delta.

The Mackenzie River (Nagwichoonjik, the 'big-country river') has been of great importance since the earliest days of history, that is to say, since the earliest days of the land. As far back as Gwichya Gwich'in can remember, their traditional life-style has been shaped by their close connection to the land and the river. The people express the history of this close connection through their stories -- stories which describe lives lived on and experiences gained from the land. Nagwichoonjik has been an important element of this close connection between the people and the land throughout Gwichya Gwich'in history.

The history of life on the land and along the river is remembered through names that are given to a great number of places on the land and along the river. The meaning of these names is often explained through stories that describe a place's origin, its special qualities, or an important event which occurred there (Kritsch, Andre and Kreps 1994). Out of this multitude of stories and names emerges the world view of the Gwichya Gwich'in, the understanding of the unfolding of history, and the great importance of the Mackenzie River for their history and culture. The river is a principal repository of the stories that suffuse with meaning the history of the landscape as the Gwichya Gwich'in know it -- the river winds its way through the narrative of Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture along many paths. It is the understanding of history brought out by this rich narrative that the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board is asked to consider in this proposal.

I'd like the Heritage Sites and Monument Board to really think about how we as Gwichya Gwich'in think about the land ... We are talking here about the stories that are told to us

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from our ancestors, our grandfathers and our grandmothers. I think it is really important for the Board to know where we are coming from -- we are coming from stories and experiences from the land.

So when we think of our land as important, we think of the whole land as important, including the river. It's our land, and it's important because we know where all the resources are, where fish, ducks and berries are, where the moose are. We know all that, and it's all important: The total is important, as the river is important -- as the trails used to be important. (Alestine Andre 1997)

2 Community Consultation

The oral history research required for the completion of this paper is the continuation of a well-established pattern of community-based research that has been carried out in Tsiigehtchic over the last five years. In the summer of 1992, researchers with the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute initiated a traditional knowledge study with community elders. This initial study determined land use and occupancy patterns in the eastern regions of the traditional habitat. Traditional trails, camp sites and place names were recorded and mapped out. Historical stories and legends were collected explaining the meaning and importance of these names (Andre and Kritsch 1992). This work was continued in 1993 and 1994, dealing with the remaining regions of the traditional land use area (Kritsch and Andre 1993, 1994). Complementary archaeological research was carried out during the same period (Greer et al. 1995; Damkjar 1995). This research has generated a rich repository of stories that provide a detailed insight into Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture as it is remembered by the elders (Heine et al 1996).

Throughout these projects, strong emphasis was placed on close community involvement in the research. As principal informants, the elders were at the centre of the research process. Gwichya Gwich'in youths were involved throughout, assisting with the oral history work and the archaeological research in various capacities. The results of the research process were disseminated throughout the community and the settlement area by means of reports and community presentations.

This sustained research effort has created in the community a strong interest in the traditional culture. This has provided a strong basis for community involvement in the nomination process and the discussions that led to the site nomination presented in this paper. A steering committee was selected from among the

people of the community. Elders, youths and interested community members were evenly represented. At the committee meetings the proposals and suggestions put forward by community members were discussed. In consultation with the elders, the committee determined the scope and direction of the oral history research required for the completion of the nomination. Archival research for the completion of the narrative history overview was carried out concurrently. Historical documents located in the Public Archives of Canada, the Archives Deschâtelets (Ottawa), the Archives of the NWT, and the Roman-Catholic Diocesan Archives (Yellowknife) were reviewed. These have added to the knowledge of Gwichya Gwich'in history over the last hundred years.

The elders who contributed their stories and knowledge are concerned that the view of history expressed by their stories be considered in its fullness -- the Mackenzie River as a national historic site would commemorate a central site in Gwichya Gwich'in history. The Board has considered nominations acknowledging the significance of aboriginal narrative and history on several occasions before -- the Grizzly Bear Mountain proposal advanced by the Sahtu Dene of Deline (Hanks 1996) as well as the nomination of the Fall Caribou Crossing on the Kazan River speak to the same view of history as is at issue in the present paper. In considering the proposal put forward by the Gwichya Gwich'in, the Board would provide further confirmation of the importance of the history of an aboriginal people for the history of Canada.

2.1 Community Expectations

In nominating as a national historic site the section of the Mackenzie River that traverses their traditional homelands, the Gwichya Gwich'in are particularly concerned that this area of their country be commemorated in a way that benefits the members of the community. Discussions in the community on this point have emphasized that priority should be given to commemorative activities; several suggestions have been put forward. Descriptive plaques should be erected to mark and designate the important cultural resources along the river. The explanations on these plaques should be written in Gwich'in and translated into English. For use in the schools, media such as a book written in an appropriate style and a multi-media presentation based on a talking-map model are desired outcomes of the commemoration process. The community also hopes that the archaeological mapping and excavations that have shed considerable light on the history of human habitation of the area will be continued; a strong interest in continuing this work at the

site of the old mission station ('Old Arctic Red') at Teetshik goghaa has been expressed, in particular. This work should then be extended by marking out the trails that connect the river corridor to the other regions of the traditional habitat.

In order to share their history and culture with outsiders, the Gwichya Gwich'in suggest that appropriate information resources be developed. These resources should make it especially clear that in the world view of the Gwichya Gwich'in the Mackenzie River is an important representation of their culture and history as a whole. These information resources should be suitable for the development of tourism-related activities, but the community insists that such activities have to be developed in a non-threatening way and under close community supervision.

3 Background: The Gwichya Gwich'in

3.1 Traditional Land Use Area

The Gwichya Gwich'in are one of the regional groups of the Gwich'in (literally, 'inhabitants of [an area]'), one of the most northerly Aboriginal cultures on the American continent. Traditionally, the Gwich'in made their living in the subarctic boreal forest, a broad expanse of woodland stretching across most of Canada and Alaska, bounded by the temperate forest on the south, and on the north by the treeless tundra. The north-western part of this area is inhabited by a group of distinct Aboriginal cultures commonly referred to as Athapaskans. The Gwich'in belong to this group as do neighbouring peoples such as the Sahtu Dene, the Mountain people, the Slavey, Dogrib and Chipewyan, to the south (see the Maps in Appendix 2).

Gwich'in country extends from the Mackenzie Delta in the Northwest Territories west through northern Yukon Territory into interior Alaska, crossing a territorial and an international boundary. In pre-contact times, the Gwich'in were divided into eight regional groups (Osgood 1934; McKennan 1935). The groups, then as now, identify with a particular region of Gwich'in country, usually defined by a river or group of rivers. Strong kinship ties and a shared recognition of the culture's and language's distinctiveness serve to maintain close ties across the political boundaries that now intersect Gwich'in country.

The regional groups of the Gwich'in shared a traditional life-style based on large-scale fishing during the summer, and heavy reliance on caribou and moose during the remainder of the seasonal cycle. Regional

variations in this pattern assigned greater importance to fish as a source of food among the groups along the middle Yukon, whereas the caribou hunt was more important among groups inhabiting the more mountainous regions, such as the Neetsajj and Teetl'it Gwich'in. These differences in ways of making a living, the regional dialects of the language and a close connection to the traditional land use areas, identify a person as Gwichya Gwich'in, Vun Tut Gwich'in, and so forth.

The Gwichya Gwich'in are the most easterly of the Gwich'in regional groups. They are the 'inhabitants of the flat land.' This name refers to the Flats where the present-day community is located. An old-time story told by Nap Norbert explains that at one time a man climbed up into the mountains along Tsiiehnjik. Turning back to look down towards the river, he noticed that the confluence of Nagwichoonjik and Tsiiehnjik was a really flat area. He later met the people staying there, and called them 'inhabitants of the flat land,' Gwichya Gwich'in.

The traditional homeland extend from the headwaters of the Arctic Red River (Tsiiehnjik, 'the iron river') north to the river's confluence with the Mackenzie at Tsiiehtchic ('mouth of the iron river'). From there, the traditional land use area extends northwards into the Mackenzie Delta towards Point Separation (Srehtadhadlajj, 'water separates') which is a traditional landmark separating the homeland of the Gwichya Gwich'in from the territory of the Inuvialuit, a regional group of the Inuit. Srehtadhadlajj may have been a boundary marker in more ways than one. It is said that at some time in the past the ocean extended as far south as Point Separation. The Mackenzie Delta was submerged so that not even the tops of the hills could be seen above the water.

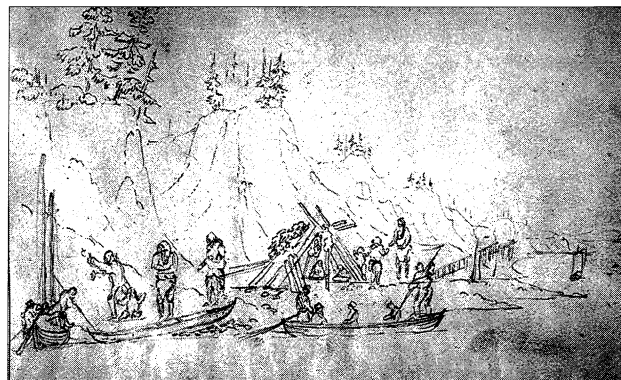
From the Peel River in the west, the traditional home land extends east to include the area around Travaillant Lake, Khaii luk ('winter fish,' that is, a place where fish can be caught even in winter), Thunder River (Vihtr'ii tshik) and Siveezhoo (a ts'ii dejj word whose meaning is no longer remembered). Thunder River marks the south-eastern boundary, separating Gwichya Gwich'in country from that of the 'up-the-river' people, the Sahtu Dene.

3.2 Overview of Contact History

The history of contacts between Gwichya Gwich'in and Europeans began indirectly with the influx of goods obtained by Inuit from Russian traders along the Bering Sea coast. From there, these goods were gradually

traded eastward. When Alexander Mackenzie, the first European to travel through Gwichya Gwich'in country, pulled his canoe ashore at a summer fish camp in the vicinity of Nagle Creek on July 9, 1789 (Mackenzie 1971:51), Russian trade goods were a rare but not unknown commodity among the Gwich'in (Ugarenko 1979).

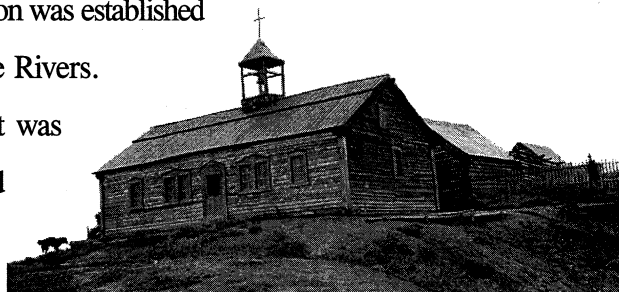
In 1806 the fur trading post of Fort Good Hope was established on the Mackenzie River at the mouth of Bluefish River, upstream of the traditional land use area of the Gwichya Gwich'in (Krech 1996:190). The post was moved downriver to a location on the Mackenzie across from the mouth of Thunder River, in 1823. John Franklin visited Fort Good Hope at this location, on his second expedition, in June and September 1826. The fort was later moved upstream again to its present



John Franklin passes a fish camp, July 2, 1826
"Sunday, 2nd ... In the passage down the river we were visited by several Loucheux, who, the instant we appeared, launched their canoes, and came off to welcome us. We landed, at their request"
 (Franklin 1971:92).

location, but it remained the centre of Gwichya Gwich'in involvement in the fur trade for several decades. In 1840, the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort McPherson on the Peel River west of Gwichya Gwich'in country (Krech 1976, 1990), in order to establish direct trade connections with the Inuvialuit living along the coast. In 1902, an outpost of Fort McPherson was established at the confluence of the Arctic Red and Mackenzie Rivers.

This post was named Arctic Red River. This post was soon visited by Inuvialuit, Gwichya Gwich'in and Sahtu Dene on a regular basis.



R.C. Mission in 1920

An Oblate mission station was built at the Flats some six years before the trading post. An even earlier mission station had been constructed seven miles downstream at Teetshik goghaa, in 1868. This site, however, proved to be too small for the number of people that began to assemble there each mid-June (Séguin 1860-1880). The construction of the new mission station at the confluence of Nagwichoonjik and Tsiigehnjik in 1896 marked the beginning of the development of Tsiigehchtchic, then called Arctic Red River.

The mission station, the fur trading post, and the RCMP post which opened in 1926 (RCMP 1925-1954) constituted the nucleus of the new community.

The involvement by Gwichya Gwich'in in the fur trade led to certain changes in the economy, although the values of the traditional way of life remained unchanged. Trapping began to gain greater importance, but the close connection with the land persisted. If anything, the arrival of fur traders and missionaries served to intensify the cycle of feasts, celebrations and trade gatherings, because the religious calendar introduced by the Oblate missionaries as well as the trade meets created new opportunities for gatherings and celebrations. Christmas, Easter, and Ascension Day gatherings were gradually added to, and enriched, the traditional gatherings of mid-summer. The gatherings were brought about by new occasions, but they were held at an old site: Leth t'urh kak ('on the mud flats') -- the Flats below the community -- had been one of two main summer meeting places of the old days, the other being at Teetshik goghaa ('a bundle of creeks').

The summer season, during which the new gatherings were held, was still spent at the fish camps along the river. The rest of the year was spent as before, travelling on the land. This life-style changed little until the 1940s. The decline of the fur trade in the 1940s and 1950s (Abel 1993:208ff) induced an increasing number of people to move permanently into the developing community. The present life-style is more village-centred, but it still expresses the traditional, close connection between Gwichya Gwich'in and the land. Hunting and fishing are important activities throughout the year, and many families still spend the summer at the traditional fish camps.

4 Commemorative Themes: Stories and Experiences from the Land

The Gwichya Gwich'in explain the importance of the Mackenzie River through their stories. These stories deal with the different time periods of the unfolding of the Land. Each of these periods can be recognized by its own unique circumstances (McGary 1984; McKennan 1965).

- * Stories of the earliest days of the land tell of a time when animals and humans were equal. Animals had the power of speech and could assume by and large any shape or outward form. Stories dealing with

the earliest times of history can often be recognized by the fact that many animals and humans had this power. In later days, this ability was considered to be the special power of the medicine person. This was a formative period of Gwichya Gwich'in history when many distinct features of Gwichya Gwich'in country as it is known today, came into existence. Raven was the most important culture hero to emerge from this age.

- * The subsequent epoch is the time of the legendary travellers and heroes of the old days. Stories dating from this period accompany the great traveller and medicine person Dinizhok on his journey beyond the bounds of the known world, and they witness the great battles between the Gwichya Gwich'in war leader Atachuukajj and his opponent Nagajj Tsal.
- * Still closer to the present is the period during which many friendly or hostile encounters with the Inuvialuit and Sahtu Dene occurred. The story of the woman Ahts'an veh's daring escape from her Inuvialuit captors brings to life the atmosphere of the era.
- * The stories of the immediate past deal with the hospitality and friendship extended to the newcomers arriving in the country in search of the riches of the fur trade or on their way to the gold fields of the Klondike.
- * A rich tapestry of stories, lastly, describes Gwichya Gwich'in use of the land. Often starting from a perspective of the present or the recent past, these stories detail important activities such as hunting and trapping, as well as the way of life along the river. These stories span a broad time range from distant memory to the present (see Hanks 1996:10). They are not limited to any one of the periods of history, but provide the background to all of them; they express the lasting importance of a way of life closely connected to the land since the earliest days. In many of these stories -- those of the distant past and those of recent events -- the Mackenzie River plays an important role.

The stories in the first three groups are referred to as ts'ii dejj stories, and the events they described date back to ts'ii dejj days. The exact meaning of the word, "ts'ii dejj" is no longer remembered with certainty. The word refers to the long and important phase of history which begins with the earliest days of the land and which ends probably during the days of Ahts'an veh.

That's all a long time back, that's why they call it ts'ii deji ... about five hundred years ago, I think -- five, six hundred years ago.

- Bob Norman (1992)

It's 500-years-ago words, that's what we are giving you ... You can't translate it. Us, we can't translate it. We don't know what it is. They meant something, but we don't know.

- Antoine Andre (1992)

Ts'ii deji Days

The following outline of the themes of historical narrative is based on the stories told by the elders of the Gwichya Gwich'in. These stories constitute the backbone of the present proposal. They illustrate the important themes brought out by Gwichya Gwich'in oral history as it relates to the Mackenzie River. Oral history has recently become a more frequently used tool of historical research, and a consideration of the importance of the Mackenzie River for the Gwichya Gwich'in will not be complete without an awareness of the understanding of history and culture expressed by their stories. In combination with archival research and the results of recent archaeological work (Nolin and Pilon 1994; Greer et al. 1995; Pokotylo 1994; Damkjar 1995; Pilon 1989, 1990), these stories provide an account which brings out the cultural and historical importance of the Mackenzie River for the Gwichya Gwich'in.

History of the Mackenzie River		
<i>Ts'ii Deji Days: The Earliest Days of the Land – When Animals and Humans were Equal</i>		
Deetrin' ehchii k'it: How	Raven lost and regained his beak	Antoine Andre (1993a); Edward Nazon (1976); Annie & Nap Norbert (1992); Annie Norbert (1993, 1997); John Paul Kendo (1993)
origin of animals:	the outward appearance of the grebes the outward appearance of Raven	
origin of landscape:	hollows at Tsiigehtchic are Raven's camp and bed	

Origin of Daylight Raven stole the sun from Bear and secured daylight.	Edward Nazon (1976)
Raven, Grizzly Bear and Fox at Chii ti'et origin of animals: Red Fox' outward appearance – why Red Fox walks with a slight limp.	Hyacinthe Andre (1997b); Noel Andre (1997b)
Raven and Diniizhok origin of animals: Raven's outward appearance – how Raven lost one of his toes.	Antoine Andre (1992); Eliza Andre (1974b)
<i>Ts'ii De'ii Days: Days of the Great Travellers and Heroes</i>	
Atachuukajii' and Ch'ii choo – Travelling up the Mackenzie River	
Atachuukajii' accidentally killed his brother. He left his family and began to travel. origin of landscape: Atachuukajii' created a stream. Atachuukajii' travelled with Ch'ii choo; they separated after Ch'ii choo predicted the death of the grandfather of Atachuukajii'. Ch'ii choo later killed the giant beavers at Fort Norman.	Hyacinthe Andre (1997a); Gabe Andre (1997b)
Atachuukajii' travelled from Alaska up the Mackenzie towards Fort Norman. He encountered Ch'ii choo. Atachuukajii' chased Ch'ii choo up a tree. Atachuukajii' killed Ch'ii choo with the help of all the animals in the country.	Gabe Andre (1997b)
Atachuukajii' chased the giant Ch'ii choo from Black Mountain up the Mackenzie. He starved him to death by asking his animals to steal Ch'ii choo's food. origin of culture: why people scoop up water using two hands.	Hyacinthe Andre (1997d)
Battles between Atachuukajii' (Kwan Ehdan) and Nagajii Tsal	
<i>Lete'tr'andyaa</i> Atachuukajii' and Nagajii Tsal fought several battles. The hostilities extended over several years. Depending on who had won the last fight, the woman Lete'tr'andyaa would live with either Nagajii Tsal or Atachuukajii'.	Eliza Andre (1971); Pascal Baptiste (1978); Slobodin (1975)
<i>Tseenjo kan – building Tseenjo's hill</i> origin of landscape: Atachuukajii's follower Tseenjo built a cave by hollowing out a hill. The hill is still visible. The earth removed from the hill forms an island.	Pascal Baptiste (1978); Nap Norbert (1997); Hyacinthe Andre (1997d)

<i>Kwan Ehdan ('Without Fire')</i> after surviving a winter by himself and without fire, Atachukajii' changed his name to Kwan Ehdan ('Without Fire')	Eliza Andre (1971); Nap Norbert (1997)
<i>Chitajii</i> A young orphan boy named Chitajii killed Nagajii Tsal. The wars came finally to an end.	Antoine Andre (1993b); Hyacinthe Andre (1992)
<i>Ts'ii Dejj Days: Friendly and Hostile Encounters with the Inuvialuit</i>	
<i>Ahts'an Veh – escape from captivity and return to Pierre's Creek</i> intercultural relations: the woman Ahts'an Veh was captured by a group of Inuvialuit, but she managed to escape and return to her family at Pierre's Creek	Edward Nazon (1970); Slobodin ([Edward Nazon] 1963); Eliza Andre (1974a)
<i>Diighe'tr'aaqil – a gambling match between Gwich'in and Inuvialuit</i> inter cultural relations: a gambling match between an Inuvialuk and a Gwichya Gwich'in occurred at this site.	Gabe Andre (1997a)
<i>Tr'injoo kat gijaaqii – the women's trail</i> intercultural relations: the women used this trail in order to be safe from a surprise attack by Inuvialuit.	Gabe Andre (1997a)
<i>Guudee diitr'iniizhit chi' – how two men were chased down a hill</i> intercultural relations: a hostile encounter between two Gwichya Gwich'in hunters and a group of Inuvialuit occurred here. One of the two hunters managed to escape by using his medicine.	Gabe Andre (1997a); Noel Andre (1992)
<i>Stories from the Recent Past</i>	
<i>Njoh njii'ee: the lobster at Pierre's Creek</i> an Inuvialuk planning an attack hid behind a lobster at this site	Pierre Benoit (1994); Hyacinthe Andre (1994)
<i>Nagle Creek – the first encounter with uunjiit</i> Alexander Mackenzie met a group of Gwich'in in this area in the summer of 1789	Hyacinthe Andre (1997d); Mackenzie (1971)
<i>Point Separation</i> John Franklin's pemmican cache	Franklin (1971)
<i>Gwichya Gwich'in and newcomers</i> Old Fort Good Hope	Krech (1996); Franklin (1971)

<i>A Celebration of Unity</i> the big gatherings of the old days were now also held during the fur trade meets	Bob Norman (1992); Nap Norbert (1997); Antoine Andre (1993a)
<i>Stories of Life on the Land</i>	
<i>The importance of Thunder River</i>	James Simon (1992); Gabe Andre (1997b)
<i>Life at the fish camps</i>	Noel Andre (1997a); Beverly Moore (1997); Linda Andre (1997)
<i>The Mackenzie River – a 'highway' of the Gwichya Gwich'in</i>	Gabe Andre (1997c)

4.1 Ts'ii deḡḡ days: The Earliest Days of the Land – When Humans and Animals were Equals

The earliest days of the land were a time when animals were the equals of humans. They not only possessed the power of speech, but they could assume by and large any form or shape, a capability which was often associated with medicine power. This was a time “... when it was believed that everyone was the same – animals, birds and humans. It was believed that a creature or human could change from animal to bird, human to animal, bird to human. It was also believed that with the change, animals and birds had the power to speak” (Edward Nazon 1976).

It was during these earliest days that a lone traveller made his way up the Mackenzie River. Passing Point Separation, he entered the land and the stories of the Gwichya Gwich'in; the traveller was Raven, and he travelled in the shape of a man.

(1) Deetrin' ehchî î k'it and Vik'ooyendik: Raven loses his beak

The adventures of Raven, Deetrin', occupy an important position in the cycle of stories from the oldest days. He alternates good acts with foul deeds, is mischievous or benevolent, trickster, thief or jester. Through his actions, Raven often causes transformations in the landscape, creating

distinct geographical or topographical features as they are known today. In addition, Raven is also instrumental in creating the outward appearance of several animals.

For example, the story of his encounters with the grebes (a loon-like swimming bird) is formative in a double sense. It explains the existence of characteristic geographical features in the vicinity of the Flats as well as the physical appearance of the grebe. This important story has been recounted in great detail by Edward Nazon (1976). These events would have occurred during the summer time as Raven was travelling on the River. The settlement referred to in the story would be the large summer gathering held at that location since ts'ii deḡ times.

This legend began one day when a man paddled in from Point Separation to Arctic Red River. As he came nearer the settlement, he cried out that the finest family of grebes up river had perished in an epidemic. The grebes heard the news and were shocked and sad, and all went into mourning for their very fine brothers.

Wood was gathered to set the scene for the grebes to go in mourning. By jumping in and out of the flames, the grebes showed their sorrow and believed that this practice would spare the spirits of the dead grebes.

The Raven watched as the family of grebes jumped in and out of the huge flames until their long golden hair had become singed and brown. This was just what the Raven wanted to happen for he was the man that paddled to the settlement to bring the news of the epidemic. The Raven jumped back into the canoe and cried out for all to hear, 'I don't really know if the news that I brought of the death of the finest grebe is true, for it may not be the truth.' Now the brown and singed grebes knew they had been tricked and became angry. They became so angry that they chased the Raven until they caught him. They grabbed him by the wings, head and feet and swung him over the flames, holding him there until all his feathers had burned from his body. The Raven became so baked that his beak fell off. The grebes took the beak and allowed the Raven to fly off in disgrace.

Raven was allowed to fly away, but he had by then become so weak that he was able to retreat only as far as his camp, Deetrin' ehchii k'it ('Raven's Bed'). It is still visible as a series of three shallow indentations south of the church in the community (John Paul Kendo 1993).

Raven recovered in time, but what was he to do without his beak? From his lookout on top of church hill, Vik'ooyendik (this is a ts'ii deḡ word), he watched the goings-on among the grebes

down on the Flats. He soon noticed that his beak was guarded by an old blind woman. In order to recover it, he had to play yet another trick on the grebes. Under cover of the night, Raven cautiously crept out of sight and travelled up the Arctic Red River just far enough to be hidden from view. Here he built a raft and manned it with travellers fashioned from moss, "some standing, others in the sitting position" (Edward Nazon 1976). Red berries used as eyes made Raven's trick even more convincing (Annie Norbert 1993). Having finished this work, he resumed his position atop Vik'ooyendik. The raft came in sight in due course. A young boy was the first to notice it.

The boy got up and ran down the hill to the village. When he got to the middle of the camp, he called out as loudly as he could, 'There is a raft with people coming down the river.' With this a great amount of excitement spread over the camp. Everyone ran to the river. The people or grebes thought that this raft might be bringing a family who had left a full six months before and had not been heard from since.

It was thought that the family had died while on a hunting trip, so it was more happiness for all if this should prove to be the family they had given up hope of ever seeing. In all the activity, the raven was completely forgotten and this was just what he wanted to happen. At last, he heard someone crying out, 'I must go to see the family. I must find a place to put this beak. Where can I leave it?' The old lady was so anxious to join the others she had handed the beak to the raven without thinking anything of it.

Once the raven had his beak in his hand, he put it in its place and flew into the air and perched on a tree. He was making all sorts of noise getting the attention of the people, who by now knew that they had been fooled again. The Raven had won again.... Raven was having a great time, crowing at the top of his voice from a tree that allowed him to be clearly heard but at a distance that he was safe. (Edward Nazon 1976)

In his haste, however, Raven did not put the beak quite in its proper position. He has had to wear his beak slightly crooked ever since those early days (Annie Norbert 1993).

The raft, needless to say, floated past without stopping. This annoyed the grebes even more. They realized that Raven had fooled them yet again. In their anger, they tore the sun out of the sky, causing total darkness over the land. The people soon found, however that it was too hard to live in total darkness, and they turned for help -- to Raven. He succeeded in stealing the

sun which Bear kept inside his house where he guarded it jealously. (The stories do not mention how Bear came to possess the sun after the people had torn it from the sky.) Raven released the sun into the sky, thus bringing daylight back to the people. -- It is of course well known that Raven cannot travel in the dark. He was as interested as the people in returning the sun to its rightful place in the sky. Raven always knew how to look out for himself (Edward Nazon 1976).

(2) Chii t'iet: Raven helps Red Fox regain his arm

When he helped Red Fox at Chii t'iet, however, Raven did not have his own advantage in mind at all. Chii t'iet is an old-time fish camp located across the Mackenzie within sight of the community. It was here that Grizzly Bear once caught Red Fox and tore out one of his arms. Red Fox howled with pain, robbing the people at the Flats of their sleep. Raven decided to paddle across the river, to attempt and recover the arm. He took with him Ah' ch'ee, a man resembling a small hawk. Ah' ch'ee was to keep the escape canoe at the ready. Raven planned to recover the arm, come straight back down from Grizzly's camp, jump into the canoe and get away.

Raven was sitting with Grizzly. He was telling Grizzly stories; he told him many stories. Eventually Grizzly fell asleep. While Grizzly slept, raven tied him up into a bundle. Grizzly opened his eyes at this, but Raven told him more stories. After a while, Grizzly fell asleep again.

Raven poked at Grizzly -- no movement! He grabbed Red Fox's arm and quickly rushed outside with it. Black Bear lived across from Grizzly. [Black Bear to Grizzly:] 'Mmmmmmy uncle, your [Red Fox'] arm!' he stuttered. Black Bear kicked at the burning fire in front of his tent. Grizzly went outside, but already Raven was paddling away; he was way out on the river.

Ah' ch'ee who was supposed to turn the canoe around, had not turned it around. Despite this, Raven paddled it that way -- they paddled across.

[Before he had set out] Raven had told the people, 'When I sing while I am paddling, have Red Fox face towards me.' The people were listening for Raven now. Finally he was paddling back; they could hear him sing from a little ways away. He was singing as he paddled, and before he got back, the people had Red Fox ready.

When Raven was still some ways away, he threw the arm towards Red Fox with his left hand. With a smacking sound, the arm landed in place on Red Fox. With his arm back in place, Red Fox ran off. That's the end of the story. (Hyacinthe Andre 1997b)

In helping Red Fox, Raven had also helped the people who could once again enjoy a quiet night's sleep. Red Fox was able to run again --although, when Raven threw the arm, it landed slightly out of joint. Red Fox has been walking with a slight limp ever since that day.

Raven's actions and their consequences are written into the landscape of Gwichya Gwich'in history to this day. In that they occur during the earliest days of the land and the river, they describe the beginnings of history as the Gwichya Gwich'in know it through their stories. Raven was indeed one of the most important personages of the earliest days of the land.

4.2 Ts'ii dęjį days: Days of the Great Travellers and Heroes

The subsequent period in the history of the land is dominated by the great travellers and heroes. Prominent among these ranks Atachuukąįį' ('[he] paddles into a bunch of people'), the great traveller who crosses Gwichya Gwich'in country along the Mackenzie River. The events of his life are shaped by his encounters with Ch'ii choo and with Nagąįį' Tsal. His adventures are formative in the sense that they explain the origin of certain features of the landscape along the Mackenzie River. However, the use of medicine power typical of the earliest days of the land is less evident. Atachuukąįį' relies more on his skills as a leader and warrior than on medicine power. This places him at a later time in Gwichya Gwich'in narrative history than Raven. One of the great personages of Gwichya Gwich'in historical narrative, he stands out as the hero of an extended cycle of stories bringing out several fundamental themes: intercultural relations, questions of war and peace, and the great importance of travelling.

Atachuukąįį' had to leave his family because he accidentally killed his brother. He then travelled from adventure to adventure, giving through his life-style expression to a fundamental aspect of the traditional way of life. He approached Gwichya Gwich'in territory out of the west, crossed it along the Mackenzie River where several important encounters occurred, and moved on into the country of the 'up-the-river' people.

(1) Atachuukajii and Ch'ii choo

Soon after Atachuukajii' had left his home, he encountered the powerful giant Ch'ii choo. Some of the stories told by the elders describe their encounter as friendly, other stories mention hostilities between the two. The stories agree, however, that their encounters occurred along the Mackenzie river. Atachuukajii' met Ch'ii choo during his travels up the Mackenzie River; together they travelled through the homeland of the Gwichya Gwich'in, heading towards the territory of the 'up-the-river' people. It was during this journey that the events of their encounter unfolded.

Ch'ii choo met up with him. Atachuukajii' came to a porcupine den, he crawled in there to get away from Ch'ii choo – he was so scared of him. 'I am going to block you in with a big rock,' he told Atachuukajii', so he blocked him in with a rock. Ch'ii choo told Atachuukajii', 'Okay, push the rock out.' He tried to push the rock out, but it did not budge. He said, 'Grandfather, I am coming out to you, take the rock away.' Ch'ii choo took the rock away and pulled him out, and that was that.

Ch'ii choo spoke very nicely to him, 'My grandchild, let us go.'

From there they left. They travelled and eventually went their separate ways. He broke a small piece of wood off his walking stick and put it in his pocket. 'When you are going to camp, don't camp on the ground, tie yourself to a big branch before you sleep at night. Long ago, my dogs left; they are still gone. They are bad, you know.' – Atachuukajii' was sleeping, and all at once he looked down and saw all the earth's animals: They all were his dogs. 'My grandfather,' he said southward, 'my grandfather, your dogs are bothering me.'

Then Ch'ii choo spoke to his dogs. The dogs heard him call and they ran south, leaving in a blaze of blowing snow ...

Before they separated, Ch'ii choo said to Atachuukajii': 'My grandchild, when you wake up and see the dawn skies to the south coloured red you will know that your grandfather has died, make sure you say, "Grandfather", and cry.' Later on he was camping somewhere; he woke up the next morning and saw the skies to the south coloured red.

Alone, he said, 'Grandfather!' and he cried. (Hyacinthe Andre 1997a)

Other parts of this long story describe Ch'ii choo's safe arrival in the country of the Sahtu Dene. Here he became known as Yamòria, who is one of the most important heroes of the stories of the Sahtu Dene (Hanks 1996:12; Hyacinthe Andre 1997e).

(2) Atachuukajii' and Nagajii' Tsal

One of the greatest enemies of Atachuukajii' was Nagajii' Tsal ('Little Beads'), the leader of the 'up-the-river' people. His name described a special quality of his jacket. It was made from small pebbles ('beads') which, inserted into a hardened mixture of gravel and spruce gum, were woven into an impenetrable battle jacket. No arrow, spear or dagger could penetrate it.

The war between Atachuukajii' and Nagajii' Tsal dragged on for a very long time, and Atachuukajii' finally grew tired of the fighting. He asked the man Tseenjo to hollow out a hill such that all the people would be able to hide in it. In this way, they would be able to avoid further fighting. Picking a sizeable hill, Tseenjo constructed such a big cave that Atachuukajii' and his people were able not only to hide in it for one year, but also to carry on with their lives (Edward Nazon 1996:220). Tseenjo kan ('Tseenjo's hill') can still be seen in the area east of Trout Lake. The earth that had to be removed to hollow out the hill forms an island in a near-by lake. This island is also still visible.

... one time the people got tired of fighting so they said they would build a hiding-place. Everybody went to work and the story says there were a lot of people those days. The whole tribe looked around for a place. They found a big hill about eighty miles east of Inuvik. While the older people and women were making the cave, the younger people, who were called warriors, went out hunting and fishing to get enough food for the winter.

They started early in the spring and continued until freeze-up. All the mud and rocks that were taken out were dumped into a lake nearby and there was so much mud taken out of the cave, that it became an island. That island can be seen to this day; also the cave. After freeze-up, everybody moved into the cave for the winter. The door of the cave was closed. Everything went fine all winter. Then came spring and the boys were getting restless so they asked the old people if they could get out and look around. The old people said to wait until the snow thawed out. That was because if anyone was around, they wouldn't be able to see their tracks.

(Pascal Baptiste 1978)

The people finally left their hide-out in the spring of the following year. In the fall of that year, however, the group led by Atachuukajii' was destroyed, and only Atachuukajii' himself escaped unharmed. Not only did he have to survive by himself, but he had to do so without having any fire whatsoever.

Before they left camp, Kwan Ehdan [Atachuukajii'] took a burning twig and with this they travelled on their way, wandering through the country. Wherever they went, he would kill rabbits ... Kwan Ehdan accidentally dropped the twig and it blew out instantly, and now he was really without fire. So, whenever he was hungry and he killed a rabbit, he would immediately remove the intestines and eat them while they were still warm. This was his only source of living. (Eliza Andre 1971)

It would have been extremely difficult for a single person to survive the winter all by himself, under the best of circumstances. Without fire, this must have been almost impossible. The fact that Atachuukajii' was able to endure under such difficult conditions shows that he truly was one of the great leaders of his age. To celebrate his survival, "he told the people of all the hardships he had endured, how he was without fire all winter, so from then on he wanted to be called 'Man without Fire' [Kwan Ehdan]" (Pascal Baptiste 1978).

The battles between Kwan Ehdan and Nagajii Tsal only came to an end when Nagajii Tsal was finally killed -- accidentally, and not by Kwan Ehdan or his warriors, but by a young orphan boy. It is said that this event occurred somewhere in the Tseenjo Kan area:

Nagajii tsal, he was finally killed by a little orphan boy. He [the boy] was fighting -- fighting! He had a strange kind of arrow. The arrow head was formed just like an ice chisel. Nagajii Tsal's coat was made from sand and gum. Nobody could kill him. But his coat had strings [shoulder straps] which held it together.

Now the orphan boy just shot his arrow in the air. It came down, hit the straps of Nagajii Tsal's jacket and cut them. Well, he just dropped! And that is why they say that the boy killed him. That's a hard story.

(Hyacinthe Andre 1992)

The adventures of Kwan Ehdan are closely linked to the importance of the Mackenzie River as one of the main arteries of travel through Gwichya Gwich'in history. His encounters with Ch'ii choo occur as he travels upriver towards the country of the Sahtu Dene. The long drawn-out battles with Nagajii Tsal occur within a space of the landscape that centres on the easterly section of the river and that is delimited by Thunder River, the traditional boundary line with the territory

of the Sahtu Dene. In addition, both the hide-out of Atachuukajii' at Tseenjo Kan, and his possible home in the Siveezhoo area are located at approximately the same distance from the river. The stories of Atachuukajii's (Kwan Ehdan's) adventures evoke a cultural landscape cantering on the river as it guides the traveller on his way through the country of the Gwichya Gwich'in and beyond.

4.3 Ts'ii dejj days: Friendly and Hostile Encounters with the Inuvialuit

The era following the adventures of the great heroes and travellers is the time of remarkable persons who show great ingenuity, but who do not seem to possess the powers wielded by leaders such as Nagajii Tsal or Atachuukajii'. Many of the stories from those days deal with relations between the different groups. They describe friendly or hostile encounters with the Inuvialuit living north of Gwichya Gwich'in country; and with the 'up-the-river' people, the Sahtu Dene. The remarkable story of Ahts'an Veh's daring escape from a group of Inuvialuit captures the atmosphere of the era.

(1) Ahts'an veh

This story expresses describes the potential dangers involved in encounters between groups where friendly and peaceful intentions could not always be guaranteed. The woman Ahts'an veh ('Grey Wings') was abducted by a group of Inuvialuit. She was forced to live with this group, and it was only several years later that she was able to escape from her captors and return to her parents camp at Pierre's Creek, Chii chyah tshik (Eliza Andre 1974a; Slobodin 1963). This theme resonates closely with historical data. The abduction of women was considered to be one of the major sources of conflict between groups (Slobodin 1960; Murray 1910:57-58).

Soon after her capture, Ahts'an Veh was married to two Inuvialuit men who one day brought back the bodies of enemies they had slain during a raid. These turned out to be Ahts'an Veh's brothers. She was barely able to hide her grief, but she decided to finally attempt and escape from her captors. She developed an ingenious escape plan:

She told them, 'When my people (Loucheux people) [Gwichya Gwich'in] make war and they win, they always make a big sports event. If you win a war, now you

have to celebrate that. If you do celebrate that means you will have good luck all the time. Now we are going to do all kinds of sports and keep it up all day and all night and then we will have a big dance.' Now she kept this up for two nights and two days. Nobody was allowed to sleep, not even the children.

The people were really tired but still she did not give up. The final sports event they had was a kayak race. So all the Eskimos took their kayaks and they had to go so far in the race. Some kayaks were very easy to paddle and were fast. (They had to be because they were used to hunting seals and whales.) She was standing on the bank watching the men and she watched to see which was the lightest and fastest kayak. She kept an eye on the kayaks until the end of the race. (Eliza Andre 1974a)

The events of the day had so tired out the Inuvialuit that everybody was soon fast asleep. Ahts'an veh was able to kill her two husbands in their sleep. She then damaged all the kayaks except one that she planned to use for her escape. Although this would delay her pursuers for some time, she knew that steady paddling alone would not be sufficient to ensure her escape:

Heading toward the Mackenzie to find her people, Atsunve [Ahts'an Veh] turned up a channel away from the coast, but she knew that in spite of all she had done, she could not keep ahead of the Eskimo for very long. Therefore, when she came to a place where a big driftwood log slanted down into the water, she got out onto the log, pulled the kayak up on it, and hid the boat and herself in the bush. This was to avoid any sign of having made a landing.

After a while, sure enough, there came into view many Eskimo in kayaks, all paddling fast. They hadn't taken long to repair the boats. For each boat that went by, Atsunve put a stick down beside her, keeping count. They all went on upriver, and Atsunve waited, not making a move. After a long time they began to pass her hiding-place on their way back. She took a stick away from the pile each time a kayak passed. Then she had only three sticks left. She waited and waited. Did she make a mistake? Maybe she had counted wrong. But she waited. Then another kayak went by. Two sticks left. Again she waited -- so long this time that she was almost sure she had lost count. She was about to put her kayak back into the water, but decided that she had better wait a while longer. And finally, two more kayaks came downstream. This time she knew they had all gone back. As soon as the last boat went around a bend, she slipped her kayak into the water and paddled upstream. (Slobodin 1963:36)

Ahts'an veh finally reached her parents' camp at the mouth of Pierre's Creek (Chii chyah tshik) on the Mackenzie River. It was not easy to convince her family that she had come home with good intentions, but during the subsequent year, she led a group of warriors back to the coast. They raided the camp of her abductors. Not a single enemy escaped alive.

(2) Fighting and Gambling

Encounters with the Inuvialuit also are the theme of the following stories which date back to the same time period. One of the story deals with a hostile encounter, while the other describes the existence of friendly relationships between the groups. The stories explain the names and historical importance of several sites along the Mackenzie.

Guudee diitr'iniizhit chi' ('a person was chased down the hill'): This is a high, steep hill overlooking the Mackenzie in the vicinity of Coney Bay, some six miles upstream from the Flats. It was here that two Gwichya Gwich'in hunters were chased downhill by a group of Inuvialuit. One of the two was killed, but the other escaped with the help of medicine power. He ran down the hill, threw himself into the river, and -- changing into a fish -- swam away underwater. He came up again at Nagle Creek, but the Inuvialuit had jumped into their boat and followed him. He dived again and came back up at Pierre's Creek. The Inuvialuit still did not abandoned the pursuit, but the hunter changed back into human form and made his escape into the bush. The site's name commemorates his narrow escape (Gabe Andre 1997a; Noel Andre 1992).

Diighe'tr'aajil ('they took everything from him'): It was often the custom in the old days that people who met on the trail would gamble right away. It was at *Diighe'tr'aajil* that a Gwichya Gwich'in once gambled and lost everything he owned to an Inuvialuk. The following story gives a characteristic impression of the atmosphere of these gambling games, although it is not certain that this encounter occurred at *Diighe'tr'aajil*: Once a Gwichya Gwich'in and an Inuvialuk met. They ate some loche together, then they started gambling. The Gwich'in bet that he could eat the loche bones (loche bones all point in the same direction). The Inuvialuk in return bet that he would be able to eat hot coals from their fire. The Gwich'in ate the bones without being any the worse off for it, but when the Inuvialuk ate the hot coals, he soon died -- and lost the bet (Gabe Andre 1997a).

Tr'injoo kat gijaṭaii ('the women's road to Chidaltaii'): This place name shows that proper guard against an enemy attack was an everyday concern. Tr'injoo kat gijaṭaii led from the Shoh k'adh (Fishing Bear Lake) area towards the Mackenzie. The trail head was located on the Mackenzie River, about 2 km upstream from Chidaltaii. When the group travelled towards the river, the men often travelled by themselves, following the direct trail from Shoh k'adh. In order to protect the women from a surprise attack by the Inuvialuit, the women followed a different trail. The advantage of the women's trail was that it reached the river atop a fairly rocky hill which provided a good view of the river bank down below; this made a surprise attack less likely (Gabe Andre 1997a). The trailhead was probably no more than two miles distant from Guudee diitr'iniizhit chi', and the concern for the women's safety may have been well justified.

4.4. Stories from the Recent Past

Stories from the recent past describe the epoch of history that is known through events which the storyteller may have experienced personally, or which have been told to him or her by someone who was personally involved (McGary 1984). The story of the lobster, Njoh nji'ee, at Pierre's Creek, may be mentioned as an example. It brings the theme of intercultural relations forward into the recent past. It describes the tensions which, as was related above, would often characterize the meetings between Inuvialuit and Gwichya Gwich'in.

(1) Njoh nji'ee ('a lobster stands'): 'The last fight they ever had'

A lobster was a tree whose branches had been cut off except those at the top. It was used to mark an important site such as a good fishing spot. On one occasion, an Inuvialuk used a lobster standing at Pierre's Creek, Chii chyah tshik, to spy on a camp of Gwichya Gwich'in. The lobster had bent over, and the Inuvialuk, sneaking up behind it and hidden from view, cut off some more branches at the top in order to get a better view of the camp. Hyacinthe Andre saw the cuttings made by the Inuvialuk before the lobster was destroyed in a forest fire (Hyacinthe Andre 1994).

In 1937, Pierre Benoit spoke to old Baazil's wife Naatchuu who was then in her nineties. She



Pierre's Creek-

Njoh nji'ee

told him about the last battle that occurred between the Gwichya Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit at Pierre's Creek, when she was a very young girl. During the month of September, when it was getting dark, an Inuvialuk had used a lobsterstick near Pierre's Creek as a lookout to see how many people were camped there. This may well have been the same lobsterstick seen by Hyacinthe Andre:

I have seen that tree ... I know where they cut some of the brush with a knife. The Eskimo climbed up there, and then he looked at the people staying across Pierre's Creek -- a lot of people, you know, they had two big smokehouses ...there was quite a bunch of them there. From there [the hideout behind the lobsterstick] the Eskimo watched them. And when they got a chance, well, they just went across. It was dark at night, but most of them [the Eskimo] were killed. That's the last fight they ever had. (Pierre Benoit 1994)

Much like the story of Ahts'an veh's adventures (which also ended at Pierre's Creek), this story is concerned with intercultural relations. Ahts'an Veh's adventures occurred in ts'ii deḡḡ days, but the story of the lobsterstick at Pierre's Creek dates to the recent past because the storytellers themselves have actually seen the lobsterstick.

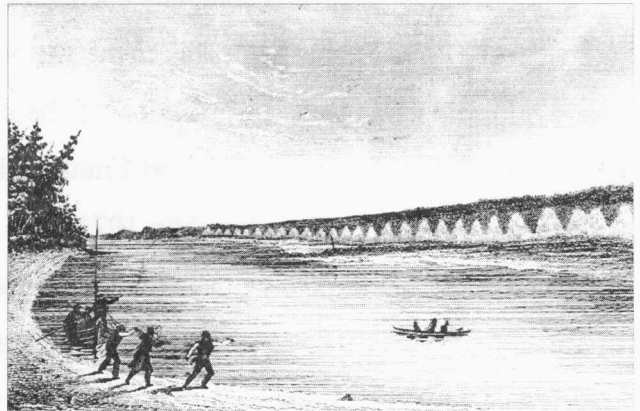
(2) Newcomers arrive in Gwichya Gwich'in country

Raven, the first traveller, had entered Gwichya Gwich'in country from the north by way of Point Separation. Passing the mouth of Thunder River in the summer of 1789, a group of newcomers arrived from the south whose impact on the most recent epoch of Gwichya Gwich'in history was

to be as great as Raven's had been during the earliest days of the land. "About four in the afternoon we perceived a smoke on the West shore, when we traversed and landed," Alexander Mackenzie (1971:51) noted on July 9, 1789, pulling his boat ashore at a summer fish camp in the vicinity of Nagle Creek. European explorers had arrived among the Gwich'ya Gwich'in.

When John Franklin arrived some 35 years later on his second Arctic expedition, the fur

trade had become firmly established among the Gwich'ya Gwich'in. Fort Good Hope had been moved into Gwich'ya Gwich'in country proper, where it was to remain for several years. It was located on the west side of the Mackenzie River, across the mouth from Thunder River. Franklin briefly stayed at the Fort in August 1825, and in July and September 1826 (Franklin 1971:23, 90,



The 'Cannonshot Reach,' August 1825
Franklin gave this name to a section of the Mackenzie River located some hours downriver from Thunder River and from 'Trading River' (possibly Tree River)

(Travaillant River?)



The community in about 1920

183). Returning to Point Separation after his exploration of the Beaufort Sea coast on September 4, 1826, he put up a cache containing a letter and a bag of pemmican, on the east bank of the river across from Point Separation. This cache was to be used by John Richardson on his return from the exploration of the eastern section of the coastal region (Franklin 1971:183). Richardson, however, had safely returned to Fort Franklin three weeks earlier than Franklin's party, and the cache remained unopened (Franklin 1971:184).

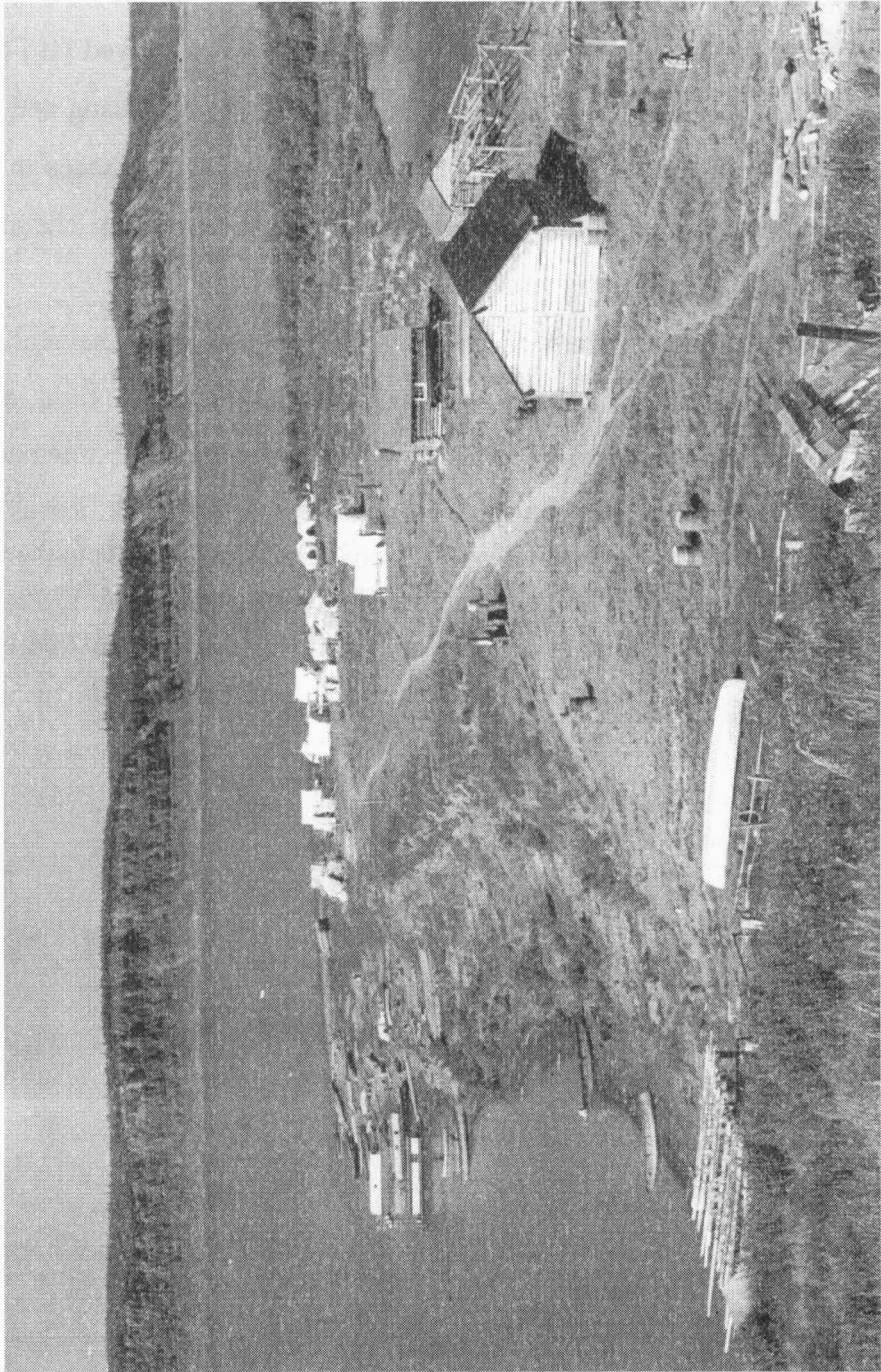
If it is true that the old woman Natchuu witnessed the last fight the Gwichya Gwich'in and the Inuvialuit ever had, then it was the fur trade which gradually led to an end of the old hostilities. The battles of the old days were replaced by the big celebrations and gatherings of summer. These gatherings had occurred since the earliest days of the land, but now Sahtu Dene from up the river and coastal Inuvialuit also travelled to the Flats in order to join the trade gatherings and feasts.

(3) Gatherings at the Flats: A Celebration of Unity

The big summer gatherings were held when the groups of families gathered at Teetshik goghaa or the Flats in early summer. Everybody had been separated from friends and relatives for many months, and their arrival was an occasion for great celebrations. Dances, games, and feasts would be carried on for days.

They would do that every summer, every summer they came. All winter they stayed out in the bush hunting and trapping, all winter! And then in the spring time, they'd come to Arctic Red. Everybody came about June, everybody came ...(Bob Norman 1992)

'Up-the-River' people, Sahtu Dene, and the Inuvialuit also travelled to the Flats. When the big Dene birch bark canoes came into sight, everybody began to shout and announce the guests' arrival. The visitors were so anxious to join the dancing that they hardly took the time to pull their canoes ashore. An old man from among the hosts who was known to like to dance, had begun to dance when the boats came into sight. An elder from among the visitors likewise began to dance when the boats had been pulled ashore. The two slowly moved towards each other. They met halfway between Church Hill and the Flats. When they met, everybody joined in. The dancing had begun, and it would last for days.



Summer gatherings at the Flats

The Sahtu Dene introduced drum dancing and stick gambling. These are not traditional customs of the Gwichya Gwich'in, but at the height of the annual gatherings at the Flats after 1910, they made them their own, playing and dancing with as much enthusiasm as the Sahtu Dene. The Gwichya Gwich'in, in turn, shared their own dances with the 'up-the-river' people. Franklin (1971:77-78) noted that on April 19, 1826 "... thirty Hare-Indians arrived [at Fort Franklin] ... The party consisted mostly of young lads, who, very good-naturedly, sang and danced for our amusement all the evening. They likewise gave us specimens of the dances in use among the Loucheux [Gwichya Gwich'in], which were more graceful than their own. The tune they sung to the Medicine-dance of the Loucheux, struck me as being soft and pretty."

The circle and drum dances at the Flats, meanwhile, would often last several days and nights without a break. People would join the circle, drop out when they were tired, and rejoin again when they had refreshed themselves. The dancers changed but the circle remained strong.

They had a great time all through the night -- for one whole week, it was just full of fun! In those days, there were over 800, something like 800 people there. Well, people from up the river -- up the Mackenzie and the Red -- all the Delta and Big Rock people. From Travaillant Lake, people came down. Antoine Andre 1993a)



Stick gambling during the summer gatherings on the Flats in the 1930s

In the course of the fur trade, Inuvialuit were also drawn to the Flats. In the summer of 1824 they arrived in a fleet numbering 60 boats (Franklin 1971:24, 29, 90) to trade goods that the Gwichya Gwich'in obtained at Fort Good Hope. This middleman position in the fur trade served the Gwichya Gwich'in well for several decades. Fort McPherson was built in 1840 in order to establish direct trade relations with the Inuvialuit and to sidestep the Gwichya Gwich'in as middlemen, but the gatherings at the Flats continued. When the post of Arctic Red River opened in 1902, the Inuvialuit resumed their customary summer visits to the Flats.

Passing the mouth of Tsiigehnjik on June 16, 1894, Frank Russell (1898:135) noticed an encampment of twelve tents at a site across from the Flats (the location of the modern-day ferry landing on the Inuvik side of the Mackenzie), as well as the tents of “a large band of Loucheux [Gwichya Gwich'in]” (ibid.) at the Flats. It may well have been that Russell observed one of the great summer gatherings. His observation indicates that the traditional gatherings continued even during a period of great changes. Russell describes the occurrence of large-scale gatherings at the Flats before either mission station or fur trading post had been built there. The gathering place of the fur trade period remained where it had been since time immemorial: Excavations at the Flats demonstrate “repeated, intensive summer to fall occupations for at least the last thirteen centuries” (Nolin and Pilon 1994:166; see also Nolin 1993).

4.5 Life along the River: Stories and Experiences from the Land

The Mackenzie River is not only an important part of the landscape of history evoked it through oral history. It has also been an important part of the way of life that connects the people closely with the land. It is the narratives dealing with stories and experiences from the land that bring the river's history forward to the present times. The river has been a provider for the Gwichya Gwich'in throughout their history, and to this day, many families still pass the long days of summer at one of the numerous old-time fish camps. It is during the summer that the people then as now make their life along the river. An extensive fishery is carried out, and the families put in large amounts of dry fish in order to prepare for the coming winter. But the Mackenzie was not

only the connecting link between the fish camps, it also made possible access to the quarry at the mouth of Thunder River.



Tracking canoes up the Mackenzie River with dog teams

(1) The Importance of Thunder River

In earlier days, the Gwichya Gwich'in would also use the Mackenzie to make an important journey upriver to the mouth of Thunder River, Vihtr'ii tshik. Sahtu Dene made use of this site, and even groups of Inuvialuit would venture on this trip, in spite of the dangers that might await them (Mackenzie 1971:78). It was there that they acquired the stones which were fashioned into indispensable items of daily life. Arrowheads, scrapers, and flint for making fire were the most important tools to be shaped from the stones collected at Vihtr'ii tshik (James Simon 1992). One need only recall the hardships endured by Kwan Ehdan when he lost his firestick in the middle of winter, in order to understand the importance of a reliable supply of flint: "... the site at the mouth of the Thunder River was a workshop. People had visited the place over the course of centuries, perhaps for thousands of years, to gather the distinctive stone that outcrops there" (Pilon 1989:41). According to a customary rule, Gwichya Gwich'in would acknowledge the importance of the site by leaving a small item as a token of gratitude in place of the flint that had been removed (Gabe Andre 1997b).

(2) *Life at the fish camps: 'All those little stops'*

The fish camps are situated along both sides of the river from Point Separation as far upstream as Tree River and beyond. The preferred location for a fish camp is at an eddy where the fishery is most efficient. Eddies can be found at points or at places where tributaries enter the Mackenzie River. "I passed several camps of Loucheux [Gwichya Gwich'in] Indians who were living in canvas tents or low lodges of loose skins, pitched at the mouths of tributary streams where the eddies supplied them with fish," the explorer Russell (1898:135) observed this pattern in 1894; Mackenzie (1971:76, 81) and Franklin (1971:25-27) encountered the same patterns on their respective voyages. Both made good use of these circumstances: The fish and meat which they traded from the Gwichya Gwich'in was an important part of their provisions. Without these, these the successful outcome of their expeditions would have been in doubt.



Making dryfish at a summer fish camp

The summer season spent along the river is a time of security. Whitefish, coney, herring, and crookedback are plentiful; rabbits, the occasional moose and berries in late summer are also part of the abundance that the land provides. The subsistence and manufacturing activities at the camps keep everybody busy most of the time, but they are interspersed with occasional visits between the camps. People travel up and down the river visiting with friends and relatives, and exchanging news.

When I was a kid, I used to travel up the Mackenzie to Tree River with my parents. My grandmother used to live up there. In summertime, we used to cook fish and stop by some places, cook fish and have some tea. All summer long I used to be there with my grandmother. You'd eat fish and rabbits, and whatever was killed around Tree River ... you just lived on the land. ... Sundays there was a big feast. Everything was fried or boiled.

You know -- for me, travelling up that Mackenzie, it's all those little stops where we cooked fish and picked berries, and got moose or beaver or rats ... nice and peaceful it was travelling around, travelling down the Mackenzie -- nice and green, and the water was clear. (Linda Andre 1997)

Recent archaeological investigations confirm the pre-contact importance of the Mackenzie River as a major seasonal habitat and corridor of travel. Nolin and Pilon (1994) examined the habitation patterns along the Mackenzie River corridor between Thunder River and Point Separation. Of the twenty-five test-sites examined, seven were "suggestive of pre-contact habitation" (1994:160), and at least seven additional sites appear to represent both pre-contact and contact habitat patterns (ibid.). Their analysis complements the understanding of history expressed by the Gwichya Gwich'in through their stories: The Mackenzie River has been a principal element of the traditional way of life for hundreds, if not thousands of years.

And we use that Mackenzie River -- it's like a highway for us! We go downriver, we camp that way. In wintertime, we use it by skidoo. And before that, we used it with dog teams. ...

I stayed out in the country ever since I remember. Today I am still out there. I never missed one year. People used to go out on the land. Say, if someone wanted to go up to Travaillant Lake or Siveezhoo, they would leave here in September and track the canoe up to Travaillant River. And from there, after freeze-up, they would move out to some fish lake, and live there all winter. (Gabe Andre 1997c)

5 Stories and Experiences from the Land

Stories and experiences from the land describe the place of the Mackenzie River throughout history as the Gwichya Gwich'in remember it through their stories. It is a holistic understanding of history, encompassing the whole of the land and assigning the river its meaningful place within it. This history reaches back to the earliest days of the land, accompanying Raven as he enters the country and the stories of the Gwichya Gwich'in. Moving through the ages, it follows the battles of Atachukaii' and Nagaii Tsal, and describes the adventures of Ahts'an Veh. It welcomes newcomers as they make their way down the river, and it feasts and celebrates with Inuvialuit and 'up-the-river' people who arrive at the Flats for the annual gatherings.

These remembered stories of the history of the land reach the present when they speak to experiences drawn from the land. It is important for the Board to understand that stories about, and experiences from, the land speak to the same view of history. The Gwichya Gwich'in relate to the land through the stories of their history *and* the experiences of their lives on the land. It is for this reason as important to commemorate the adventures of Raven on the western reaches of Gwichya Gwich'in country as it is to commemorate the importance of flint quarried on its eastern boundary. The significance of the Mackenzie River for the Gwichya Gwich'in can be fully appreciated only through the simultaneous consideration of these fundamental cultural themes.

Out of this holistic understanding of history emerges the important place the Mackenzie River occupies in Gwichya Gwich'in culture. The Board's acknowledgment of the river's significance for the Gwichya Gwich'in will constitute a recognition of the importance of Gwichya Gwich'in history within the development of Canada as a nation.

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Appendix I

The Elder's Stories

Nagajj Tsal and Kwan Ehdan

Eliza Andre

This particular story is mainly about two men and a woman. At the beginning of the story, they fought often between themselves because of her. It was said that Nagajj Tsull was from further down the river and Kwan Ehdan centred his life around the Delta. They were to decide which of the two were to marry the woman that was involved in both their lives, so they were to gather their tribes and go to war. The decision was that whoever won the war was to marry the woman. Now the story begins.

A long time ago there was a man by the name of Kwan Ehdan and there was another by the name of Nagajj Tsal. They both lived with the same woman and this caused many fights between the two men. Although they fought with bows and arrows and any available weapon, they never did kill each other. They finally made agreements to settle this matter. Nagajj Tsal gathered his tribe together; Kwan Ehdan gathered his and they were ready for a fight.

While they were going on with their plans, Kwan Ehdan gathered his people and moved to a different location. On the way, he held a feast for his people.

Now the woman had a habit of waking up early in the morning so as to allow herself to gather wood for the fire. One morning, after finishing her task, she took one side of her snowshoes and adjusted the laces so they could fit Kwan Ehdan's feet. After doing this, she carried the snowshoes in her hand to make them available should anything suddenly come up. Afterwards, she kept pacing back and forth toward the door. Suddenly she looked through the little hole above the door of the tent. Kwan Ehdan asked, "What is it you see?" He jumped up and went through the hole, ran and slipped his snowshoes on quickly. In his great rush, one side of the lace busted so the woman quickly threw the snowshoes she had prepared for him. He quickly put these on and ran down the trail. His two

younger brothers spotted him so they ran along after him. The three went off to the mountains.

Before they reached the mountains they had to cross a big river. Kwan Ehdan proceeded across the river first, running carefully from place to place to prevent from falling through. His other two brothers followed him in the same procedure. However, his youngest brother had the most trouble with his snowshoes. The ends kept catching the ice, which by now was loosened with the weight of his other brothers. Finally all three were safely across the river. They started up the side of the mountain. Kwan Ehdan spotted a place on the way up that looked like a good place to sit. He was up first so he sat down and waited for his brothers. His brother started up after him but by this time, Nagajj Tsal's tribe of people caught up with them. They started taking large willows and stuck them through the holes of the brother's snowshoes. Gradually, they managed to pull him down and they killed him. All this Kwan Ehdan witnessed. In the meanwhile, Kwan Ehdan's youngest brother apparently still had a lot of trouble with the ends of his snowshoes and he saw what happened so he immediately backed away and started on another trail. Nah Ghing Tsull's tribe spotted him so the group followed him down the road. Unfortunately, they must have killed him, too, as they were gone for a long time before returning to the place of the first killing. As they passed the carcass of Kwan Ehdan, they each by turn thrashed the body with a heavy stick until at the end there wasn't any form of a body but only blood stains left. At the very end of the line was a man named Gchee Gao (Big Rock). The others went on their way so he was left standing where the body used to be. Kwan Ehdan told him, "A long time ago when all tribes were friends and you used to have the smell of dead animal so why do you, too, throw your stick where you know there's nothing left of the body?" Gchee Gao answered, "We will deal with that later on." Kwan Ehdan replied, "If that's the way you feel, I will expect to see you in late fall when the throat of the caribou turns white and be sure to see me then on the big lake where we usually meet." Gchee Goa just said "Ho", and turned and went on his way.

After a length of time, Nagajj Tsal returned to the side of the mountain where Kwan Ehdan still remained. As Nagajj Tsal approached him, Kwan Ehdan asked, "My friend, you got me in a terrible situation, what are you going to do for me?" Nagajj Tsal replied, "When this fight started, all I had

was taken from me and here you ask me for help, in what way can I be of some help? I'll leave my beaver skin mitts with you." The mitts were three-quarter length. He placed them on the ground below where Kwan Ehdan was seated. At that time, whenever a tribe was at war with another, they usually built a big fire. Kwan Ehdan, in the Loucheux language, means "Without Fire". Kwan Ehdan explained to Nagajj Tsal, "Should anyone forget to extinguish a fire after a big gathering, I would like to put the fire out myself." This would enable Kwan Ehdan to carry a torch of fire with him whenever he travelled. He was also well known to travel and survive a long time without anything to eat. After a while, his friend Nagajj Tsal departed and he was once again left alone.

After a while Kwan Ehdan came down from the place and pulled the beaver mitts on and followed his friend. Nagajj Tsal had already reached his camp where his tribe was waiting. By this time, Kwan Ehdan reached their morning camp and from a distance he saw a person sitting by a huge fire. He drew in closer to camp and his brother's pup ran joyfully towards him. It was said that this little incident, when the pup came running towards him, that Kwan Ehdan felt a lump of sadness in his throat for his dead brother. By this time, he was very close to the camp and he was surprised to recognize his sister-in-law sitting by the fire. He was overjoyed and very happy to see her. He said, "Thank you, my sister-in-law, you are still alive." But she replied very weakly, "But I am badly hurt so don't expect me to live very long. When the enemy started fighting, I crawled away under a snow bank and was unseen by anyone. After the enemy killed everyone, they walked over the snow bank under which I laid and they busted the two main veins at the back of my ankles." As a result, Kwan Ehdan's sister-in-law was unable to walk. He tried his best to help her, putting her in a little sled and the pup pulled the sled. Before they left camp, Kwan Ehdan took a burning twig and with this they travelled on their way, wandering through the country. Wherever they went, he would kill rabbits and in this way he had managed to keep his dear sister-in-law alive. After some travelling, his sister-in-law said to him, "One of these days when the pup is pulling me far behind and if you hear the pup whimpering and howling, you will know that I have passed away. Do not bother to check on me, just keep on going." So after they camped three nights, Kwan Ehdan heard in the distance the howling of the pup. He did not bother to check as he was told, so instead he built a fire and after

a while the pup scrambled toward him and moved on. Kwan Ehdan accidentally dropped the twig and it blew out instantly in the snow and now he was really without fire. So, whenever he was hungry and he killed a rabbit, he would immediately remove the intestines and eat them while they were still warm. This was his only source of living.

One day he came upon an old trail made earlier in the winter. Faint was the trail but Kwan Ehdan and the pup travelled on until they came to a shore of a lake. From the shore, Kwan Ehdan spotted a wolverine running in their direction. Before the wolverine saw them, Kwan Ehdan ran on the trail a ways and grabbing the pup in one arm and a heavy stick in another, he huddled and played possum. They laid perfectly still as the wolverine approached and circled them. First he sniffed Kwan Ehdan's feet and then ran to his head and sniffed there. He again circled them. Just then, Kwan Ehdan clubbed the wolverine over the head with a big stick. This hard blow killed the wolverine and instantly Kwan Ehdan skinned the beast and left the carcass on the lake and travelled on. He did not stop once on his way as he did not have any means with which to build a camp fire. For a length of time, he walked and walked until he came to a fresh deserted camp made the same morning. As he neared the camp, he noticed that one of the camp fires was still lit. He immediately put more wood on the fire and built a huge fire, thus causing the smoke from the fire to curl high into the sky.

In the meanwhile, the people who had earlier camped there, had journeyed far. There was an old lady who was travelling at the end of the long line. The group had travelled up a hill and all the climbing had exhausted the old lady so she decided to sit down and rest for a while. While resting, she looked down and in the distance where their morning camp was situated, she saw the smoke curling high in the sky. Apparently, after making the fire Kwan Ehdan had fallen into a deep and heavy sleep.

Later on when he awoke, he was surrounded by the group of people that had earlier camped there. He suddenly leaped up and swiftly ran down the trail. The men from the group, however, were unable to catch up with him. So Kwan Ehdan stopped and turned, facing them. He said, "All my

people were killed and I'm alone. I have been travelling without food and had no possible way to build a camp fire. This is the first camp that I came upon that had any fire. So after travelling for a long time in the cold weather and without food or fire, the heat from the fire felt very comfortable. My friends, you must know me, it's Kwan Ehdan." With this, the people recognized him and shouted with glee, "It's Kwan Ehdan, it's Kwan Ehdan." He rejoined them at the fire place and he pulled out his wolverine skin. As he showed them the pelt, he asked them, "Are you all willing to fight with me?" To this matter, they all agreed. They then all returned to the rest of the group whom they left on the hillside. The members of the group explained to the rest who the person was and all about his misfortunes and how Nagajj Tsal had massacred all his people in the spring, so after joining the new people, he cut the wolverine skin into narrow strips and divided it equally among the people.

So Kwan Ehdan now had a group with which to avenge against Nagajj Tsal and his tribe. The group travelled on and on and the weather turned warmer. One day they came upon a recently abandoned camp. They followed the people and for many days they followed the trail of their enemies. Apparently, the woman was travelling with the enemy, but her love for Kwan Ehdan was greater than it was for Nagajj Tsal. Along the way, she would scratch a mark on all the willows to indicate the way they were going. Where there was no willow, she would take the orange colouring from driftwood ashes and smear it under her moccasins and mark the stones on the trail. The rest of the group did not notice this. Kwan Ehdan's people followed the marked trail for many months. Soon it was late fall and they were nearing the big lake where they held their usual meets. Here the group separated and little groups went different ways. An old man's three sons, on a different route, had not returned and it was believed they had been killed by the enemies. The men then decided to do away with the old man. The old man told the people, "Many times I have spoken to my sons and given the advice. Why can't we wait a little longer for them to return?" So within a couple of days the sons returned and had tales about sighting the enemy camp. Kwan Ehdan's tribe was happy to hear the news. The boys explained how they discovered the enemy's camp. They had been travelling for quite awhile and one foggy day they were on the banks of a lake and suddenly the fog

had lifted and they spotted the big encampment of their enemy. They did not know what to do so they dug large holes in the ground and lay there. They came up with an idea. They gathered some moss and started covering themselves with it. It took them a good day to do a good job of creating the image of grizzly bears. The next day, they set off for some hills near the camp and crawled around slowly. Suddenly, the people at the camp below spotted the bears.

No one bothered them as they did not know what to do, besides, they were from further down the river and they did not have grizzlies in their part of the country. The only person they could ask was the woman. So they asked her, "How do grizzly bears look in your part of the country?" She replied, "They look exactly like those." Actually, she lied to them for she did not care very much for the people with whom she was travelling. So the people believed her and they all settled down and ignored the bears.

Meanwhile, back on the hill, the three boys disguised as grizzlies were not sure whether they were seen or not so they went on the other side of the hill and remained there for a day just to make sure. Nothing happened so they removed all the moss and returned back to their camp. It was about then that Kwan Ehdan's people decided to do away with the old man. Soon afterwards, Kwan Ehdan's tribe packed and started for the enemy's camp by the big lake. This took many days and finally they reached the location and the enemy was still camped there. They had managed to move in without being seen.

Kwan Ehdan turned himself into a spider and during the evening went down to Nagaii Tsal's camp. The woman had expected Kwan Ehdan's tribe about this time of the year, so every evening she would go to the shore of the lake and sit there. Nagaii Tsal had the same feeling so he would leave the camp and not return for days sometimes. Kwan Ehdan went to the lakeshore and transferred into a man again and stood but a short distance away from the woman. As they dared not speak out loud for fear of getting caught, Kwan Ehdan motioned to her in sign language and asked her the shortest way around the lake to the camp. In answering, the woman filled her hand with some water and threw it in the directions as an indication. After getting the information, he turned into a spider

again and returned to his people.

Now Nagaij Tsal noticed the woman throwing the water so he approached her and asked, "You know that the water is cold this time of the year. What did you throw the water on?" She answered, "Well, there was a mosquito flying around me, so that's what I threw it on." In the meanwhile, Kwan Ehdan reported the shortest way to the enemy's camp. That's where they travelled next, they moved in very close.

Nagaij Tsal still had the expectant feeling that the time for war was very near and the time for his enemy's arrival was very close. He took his daily walk and watched very closely. The woman was also watched extremely close to prevent her from betraying them. Two men guarded her during the night. Still, she had a habit of gathering wood early in the morning. One morning while out doing her task, Kwan Ehdan came to her and said, "My people are very hungry. See what you can get for us and where is my friend?" "He was gone hunting," and with this she picked up her pile of wood and started back to camp. On her way she tore the undersoles of her moccasins and purposely made the hole larger. Nearing her tent, she threw her pile of wood carelessly outside the door and went into the tent. She went straight to her bed where she kept a ration of dry meat and took some and stuffed them in her clothing. After she mended her moccasins, she returned to Kwan Ehdan and gave him the dry meat. He then told her what to expect the next day. "About this time tomorrow, you will first hear the hooting of an owl and then the sound of a ptarmigan. After you hear the call you will walk outside of your tent." So after she returned to her tent, she asked the two men to look at the fish nets. They had a big catch and she cleaned all the fish and cut them in half and stuck an arrow through each one. During the night the fish had froze to the arrow. She took a knife to bed with her. She pretended to be very uncomfortable and she was continuously tossing and turning in bed. As she was tossing and turning, she was also cutting the blanket down the centre and sliced as far down as her feet and was listening at the same time. Finally, she heard an owl hooting and then she listened for a while and then heard the ptarmigan. She waited a while longer and suddenly jumped out of bed. As she was running through the door, the two men shot arrows at her but her

little trick with the frozen fish worked.

Just then, Kwan Ehdan's people attacked the camp and killed all the people. During the squabble, Kwan Ehdan noticed Gchee Gao sleeping and remembering the deal they made at the foot of the mountain earlier, he ruthlessly clubbed him over the head and killed him. Kwan Ehdan then turned on Nagajj Tsal's youngest brother who started running as soon as he spotted him. Kwan Ehdan chased him around the foothills of a mountain. The younger brother knew that his older brother, Nagajj Tsal, was in the area but Kwan Ehdan caught up with him and killed him. He then undid the dead man's hair and placed him sitting up on the trail. Soon Nagajj Tsal came along and saw the body. He muttered to himself, "I have an idea of who did this, it's Kwan Ehdan." He jumped over his dead brother's body and started hitting his arms. He clubbed his arm again and again until finally he broke it in half. He said, "If he was that tough and strong, how is it that Kwan Ehdan killed him?" While he was standing by the body, Kwan Ehdan came up behind him and together they walked back to the camp. There was not a live person around so they just sat down together for a while and then they both got up and went their separate ways.

Raven Story, Part 1

Eliza Andre

This is an old legend story. In the olden days, animals could talk like human beings. The crow, sometimes he was good and he would help the people, but most times, he was a real rascal. This one time he saw the people kill a bear so he told the people, "When my friends kill a bear they take its guts out and string it along so that it does not dry. But if you have lots of grease, you can start filling the bear's guts with grease." The people believed this. They had lots of grease. They started pouring the grease into the bear's guts but they could not fill it. The people became suspicious and, in the meantime, the crow would go in the bush and sit on the other end of the gut and was drinking up the grease. The people wondered where all the grease was going. They followed the crow and sure enough he was sitting on the end of the guts and drinking up the grease. One of the men said, "Throw some crushed bones into the grease and we will see what happens." All at once on the other end of the bear's guts the crow started screaming for he swallowed the bunch of dry bones and was choking. That is the kind of trick the crow plays.

After this happened with the bear's guts, he went on a little trip and met another bear and we all know that crows have only four toes on their feet. He started talking to the bear and told the bear, "I am glad to meet you. Let's greet one another with the best we have." He told the bear, "You cut off one of your feet and I will cut off one of my feet and we will roast it and we will have a little feast." We all know bear feet are fairly big and fat. The crow's feet are straight bones. Now there were two feet roasting in the fire. The bear cooked his own foot and after it was well done he gave half of it to the crow to eat. The bear's foot was full of grease and the crow's foot had nothing but dry bones. So the bear told the crow, "How come my foot has lots of grease and fat and yours does not?" The crow said, "My foot has not heated up yet and that is why there is nothing coming out of it." After they had eaten, the bear realized what he had done and all at once he was moaning in pain. The bear said, "Oh my foot!" and instead of the crow having sympathy on the bear, he just about killed himself laughing. This is the end of the story.

Raven Story, Part 2

Eliza Andre

It happened that an old woman had a very beautiful daughter. She was asked by many boys if they could marry her daughter and the old woman would say, "No, you are not good enough to marry my daughter". After the boys finally became fed up with her they told the crow all about it. They told the crow the story of the old woman, and the crow, as we said, was a very clever animal. The crow asked the boys where this old woman and her daughter were. They told the crow where she stayed. The crow said, "Dress me up the best you can. Then I will ask if I can marry the girl." So the boys dressed the crow up and they put him in the middle of the canoe and the two boys paddled the crow down the river. The old woman also had a son, just a boy, and the boy was standing outside and all at once he saw a canoe coming. He told his mother that there was somebody coming down. "I can see him and I sure would like to have him for a brother-in-law." The mother of the girl went out and sure enough, there was somebody sitting in the middle of the canoe - and all dressed up. The old woman gave in. Of course, there was lots of mud on the edge of the river so the old woman ran in the bush and got some birch bark and by the time she got back the canoe had landed. She ran down and she did not want this gentleman to walk in the mud so she put the birch bark down when he was ashore.

After the crow landed, the mother of the girl said, "Come right in, we are going to give you something to eat and then we will arrange for a wedding." All this time she did not know that it was a crow. The old woman had a little dog tied up in a corner. They all sat down to eat and it happened that the crow had no appetite. He told the woman, "I cannot eat when I see a dog like that. Take it outside." The old woman got so excited that she was going to have a son-in-law that she took the dog out and hung it. Then the crow felt a little better but still he did not eat too much at the meal. In those days, when a girl was just reaching her womanhood, they always had a place for them to sit alone so no one could see the girls. After the meal was over, the old woman told the crow, "The girl is in her own teepee over there. If you want to visit the girl you can do so." These crows, even

today, if they see any dead animals, they would always try and get at the animal's guts. So when he went over to see the girl, here he saw this little dog hanging up. Of course, the crow did not hesitate and tore the little dog's stomach open and really filled himself well.

In the meantime, the mother of the girl was waiting for the crow to come back. Just towards morning, instead of the crow going into the little teepee, he had so much of this little dog's stomach and he was so full, he had diarrhea. He leaped on top of the teepee and the girl was sleeping down below. The crow emptied everything that was in his stomach on the girl. In the morning, when the girl woke up she really was in a mess and instead of the girl going out, she waited for her mother. Her mother came and saw what had happened but then, it was too late, the crow had gone. The old woman felt very badly.

On her way to the teepee she found her little dog's stomach eaten and also his eyes, so she knew something was wrong. When she found her daughter in such a mess and looked closely and found that someone with four toes had been there. There were a few people around there and she ordered everybody in camp to take off their shoes and see if she could find out what person had done this. Everyone took their shoes off but they all had five toes. The crow was the last and she said, "You, too, must take your shoes off." The crow was sneaky and he just put a little of his feet out and she said, "Take your whole foot out." Finally he was caught and the old woman found out it was him and she grabbed him and threw him out of the camp. As soon as the crow was thrown out, he flew off and that is the end of the story.

Grey Wings (Ahts'an Veh)

Eliza Andre

This girl's parents happened to be staying alone and she was big enough to snare rabbits and any other small game. One day she told her parents she was going out to visit her rabbit snares. So she went out and did not return that day and also that night. The next morning her parents were very worried and they went out looking for her. They came to a place where they figured the Eskimo people had captured her, but still, they were not sure. They kept on searching for her until fall time and then they gave up.

In the meantime, she had been captured by the Eskimo people and they took her down to the coast with them. At a later date, they gave her two boys for her husbands. These boys were always going some place hunting and they were hardly ever home. So one day they went out again and it was during the summer. They came back home and told their wife go down and look at the canoe. She did not know what it was all about. Anyways, she went down and here in the canoe they had her brother's head. She could not cry because if she cried they would kill her, too. So her husbands asked her, "Is that any relation to you?" She told them, "No - it may be one of my people but I really do not know." She knew all this time that her husbands had killed her brother but she would not shed any tears because she knew that she would pay back her husbands for that. She told them, "When my people (Loucheux people) make war and they win, they always make a big sports event. If you win a war, now you have to celebrate that. If you do celebrate that means you will have good luck all the time. Now we are going to do all kinds of sports and keep it up all day and all night and then we will have a big dance. Now she kept this up for two nights and two days. Nobody was allowed to sleep, not even the children. The people were really tired but still she did not give up. The final sports event they had was a kayak race. So all the Eskimos took their kayaks and they had to go so far in the race. Some kayaks were very easy to paddle and were fast (They had to be because they were used to hunt seals and whales). She was standing on the bank watching the men and she watched to see which was the lightest and fastest kayak. She kept an eye on the kayaks until

the end of the race. At the end of the race, she told her husbands, "When my people have victory over their enemies they always visit their nets and they have a meal of dry fish and then they go to bed." There was one thing about this woman - her husbands obeyed whatever she told them.

Now the last thing she told her husbands again and this also meant for the whole Eskimo tribe, "That you have made a great victory over your enemies. They took driftwood and used it for their pillow to go to sleep but you have to lay on your back and have your head over the driftwood." She knew that she had played out the whole camp so she started making dry fish. She was planning on escaping from the Eskimo people. She made sure her husbands were snoring. She did not hurt anybody else. All she wanted was to get rid of her husbands. As far as the people were concerned, everybody in camp was sleeping and there was not a sound, not even from the children. Before she was going to start her action, she went down and cut holes in every kayak she saw except the one that she had figured as a really fast kayak. After she made sure this was done, she went back home and her husbands were still fast asleep, their heads over the driftwood. She took a knife and cut their throats. Then she took the kayak and made her escape. In the morning, when the people got up they could not find this woman; her name was Grey Wings. She was a very smart woman. They looked for her but she was not in camp and they found the two husbands dead with their throats cut. The Eskimo people wanted to pursue her to try and punish her. They started in their kayaks but every one of them were all cut on the bottom. Some of the people went in them and drowned. They never did catch her. They searched for her but never did find her.

In the meantime, her parents were still alive. She knew where her parents always made dry fish in the summer for the winter and that was a long ways but she made it back. Her old dad had set some nets in the creek and every day he would go up and visit his nets and all at once he heard a noise which sounded like half a human voice and half a bird voice. When she made a noise to her dad she said, "Grey Wings, Grey Wings, here am I, here am I." Her father could not make it out as she had been away from camp for quite a while. This kept on for about three days. Her dad came home this one time and told his wife, "I have been hearing this noise for the past three days when I visit my

nets. Maybe someone is hungry. Have you got some dry fish made? Let us take some dry fish and hang it in the bush and when I visit my nets we will see what happens in the night." Next morning, the old man went to his nets and went ashore and looked for the dry fish and sure enough it was gone. This happened twice. On the third morning, the old man went to the nets and here it was his own daughter, Grey Wings. The old man was so happy to see his daughter again, he told his daughter that her mother and himself "were very worried as we thought you were dead long ago. Tonight after dark I will come up here again and you will go home with me and see your mother, too."

So after dark the old man went up the creek again and Grey Wings was waiting. Her dad put her in the canoe and took her home. Those days, people had to be very careful because they could be sought by their enemies at any time. So instead of taking their daughter in public they had to hide her. They put her under their blankets so nobody would notice her. They had to feed her and it just happened one day a little boy came to the old man for a visit and they were cooking fish and they took part of this cooked fish and put it under the blanket but the little boy was watching. Of course, they gave the little boy some fish to eat and the little boy thanked them and out he went. He told some people what he saw and then the people became suspicious that there must be someone in the old man's camp. They asked him what was going on. He told them the truth. "A long time ago my little daughter disappeared and now she has come back," but the people did not trust him for saying this. They told him, "Bring her out for we are going to kill her." But, by this time, she was a grown up woman and very smart, especially for warfare. She told her parents, "Let me go and tell them the first one that catches me can marry me." They let her out and the people started chasing her but no one could catch her. As it happened, only two boys, and they were not even close behind her, they talked to her and told her, "Give up because we cannot catch you. If you do give up, we will make sure no harm comes to you and we will marry you." She told the two boys, "I will give myself up to you providing you make war with the Eskimos and I will be with you. Because I had a son and I am always thinking of him, I will go back and rescue my son from the Eskimos." They promised her all this.

About a year from that time, she told her husbands, "We will go now. I know exactly where the Eskimos are staying and we will get my son back." She did not go only with her husbands, but there were many other warriors with them. When they got back to the coast, these Eskimos were still in the same place where she had made her escape. Then she looked for her son, and this is hard to believe, she knew how old her son was, here they had hung her little boy after she had made her escape. Before her warriors were going to make an attack, she told the people you hold back while I go and see my father-in-law, (her father-in-law was an Eskimo) and at this time she could talk in Eskimo. She came to his camp and told him, "I was looking for my people but I cannot find them so I have come back to you." When he heard her voice, he took a knife and started sharpening the knife and told her, "Come in the house, you are still welcome." But when she was leaving the warriors, she told them, "Do not do anything. Just watch me and then you can make your attack." Because she was such a smart woman they listened to her. So her father-in-law invited her in the tent and when she walked into the tent she killed everybody in the tent. As soon as the warriors saw her running out of the tent, they made their attack and the Indian people made a big victory over the Eskimos. From there, they went back to where her dad was and this is the end of the story.

Man Without Fire (Kwan Ehdan)

Pascal Baptiste

A long time ago the people used to fight a lot. It happened that the Loucheux people and the Slavey people were fighting between each other. There were two men who were very smart in hunting and in fighting. They were also leaders of their people. Once in a while, they would get into a fight but they could never kill each other. They called each other "partner". Anyway, this one time the people from here got tired of fighting so they said they would build a hiding place. Everybody went to work and the story says there were a lot of people those days. The whole tribe looked around for a place. They found a big hill about 80 miles east of Inuvik. While the older people and women were making the cave, the younger people, who were called warriors, went out hunting and fishing to get enough food for the winter.

They started early in the spring and continued until freeze-up. All the mud and rocks that were taken out were dumped into a lake nearby and there was so much mud taken out of the cave, that it became an island. That island can be seen to this day; also the cave. After freeze-up, everybody moved into the cave for the winter. The door of the cave was closed. Everything went fine all winter. Then came spring and the boys were getting restless so they asked the old people if they could get out and look around. The old people said to wait until the snow thawed out. That was because if anyone was around, they wouldn't be able to see their tracks.

In the meantime, the Slavey people came back for another war but they couldn't find a trace or sign of the people. They travelled all over - to the mountains and the delta, also all down along the coast - but they couldn't find any sign of the people. Their leader, whose name was "Little Beads" said they would go back to their country as there was nobody here. After travelling for a distance - it was very warm during the day so their clothes would get wet. They decided to make camp for the night to dry their clothes. As they were looking for a suitable place, they came upon this hill. This was where the Loucheux cave was. They rested there for a while and left to another place to camp. It so happened that there was an old man who was travelling with his people and he could keep up with

them, so he had a dog travelling with him. He came to the hill where the people had rested. He sat down to rest and as he sat there, his dog kept listening and started scratching around. So the old man went after his people and told them about how the dog was acting. They figured the next day they were going to go back to the hill and make sure they searched the place.

In the meantime, the boys were still bothering the old man to get out of the cave. Finally, the old man said they could go out. They went out and saw people's tracks and came back into the cave and told the people. The warriors got ready and went after the Slavey people. They killed every one of them. Only the leader "Little Beads" escaped.

The following winter, the Slavey people came back to kill some of the people. In the meantime, the man without fire was out hunting. When he came back, he saw what happened, but his partner, the leader of the Slavey people, was waiting for him. The Loucheux leader was the first to talk and said, "Partner, you have repaid me for what I said. The only thing I request of you is to make a fire for me and then you can go." So his partner made a fire for him and also left him a pair of beaver mitts and they left one another. He had warned his partner to keep an eye open at the following fall. After his partner left, he was warming himself. He heard a voice calling him saying, "My brother-in-law, I am alive. I hid under the snow but I am hurt very bad as one of my feet is almost cut off. So, I won't live very long." They both started travelling; the man would break trail then go back and help her. After a few days, she told her brother-in-law, "I will be coming after you but if this dog catches up to you, don't look back, that is the sign that I will never see you again." So it happened from there on he travelled alone for many days without fire. He came to a big lake but before he went on the lake, he saw something moving. He looked at it again and it was a wolverine coming toward him. So he hid in the snow bank. As soon as it came close enough, he jumped up and killed the wolverine. He skinned it and cut it into small strips. In those days, wolverine hides were very valuable because if you wanted to make war, the warriors had to get paid after killing the wolverine.

He kept on travelling. Finally he came across an old trail. He followed it until he came to a fresh camp. He looked around and figured it was a very big camp and a lot of people. He also saw a little smoke where there happened to be a fire so he pushed the snow away and relit the fire. After the fire was good, and as he had not seen fire for a long time, he laid down beside it and fell asleep. In the meantime, two old women were taking their time following the people. But just before they were going over a hill, they looked back towards the camp and to their surprise they saw smoke. They said to one another that they surely had blown out the fire. How come there is big smoke? The two rushed to the people and told the story as all the warriors went back to the camp.

Sure enough, they saw this person lying near the fire. But before they attacked him, he ran off. Even the arrows couldn't catch up on him. He looked back and there was quite a distance between them so he turned around and told the people, in their language, what had happened to him and that he was the only survivor from the war. The people had pity on him and told him he could come with them to the camp. But before he told the people all the hardships he had endured, how he was without fire all winter, so from then he wanted to be called "Man Without Fire" (Kwan Ehdan). After settling down, he gave all the men a strip of wolverine skin so he hired the men to go to war with him. He also took a wife from the tribe who was as smart as he was because she went to war with her husband. Her Loucheux name was Lete'traandyaa which means "Living in Captivity". She was well known for her smartness. Sometimes the Slavey people would capture her but she always fought for her people and her beloved husband.

Now, not long before she was captured by the Slavey, she also knew her husband was going to come back. As the man said to his partner. Except the following fall, the time had come to the scene of the camp. Her husband had let her know he was back. All this was done in secret. The time had come so he told his wife, "Tomorrow morning, when it's just getting daylight, you will hear some kind of birds making noise. Then be ready. That is when we will attack." It happened that no one escaped the battle, except "Little Beads". He was out hunting when all this took place. He had to wait for his partner in case he needed help. He left a pair of mitts for his partner and after talking a while, they left one another and the Slaveys never came back down to this place or this part of the country again.

Ahts'an Veh

Edward Nazon

The story of Attseven or Grey Wing is of a battle between Eskimo and Loucheux Indians. The battle was won by the Eskimo and Attseven was captured. Just how long she lived in captivity is not told, but the story mentioned a child, so she must have lived in captivity roughly two or three years.

One day the Eskimo warriors returned from a battle; they brought back several heads. They ask Attseven if she could recognize any of the heads. She looked and saw the head of her brother and wept secretly. Someone noticed the tears in her eyes. She was asked why she had tears in her eyes. She only said, "I got smoked out while in the smokehouse." So they believed her. Attseven told the people how her people always celebrated after a victory by playing all kinds of games. The Eskimos readily agreed that this was a good idea so the event started one morning. There were so many games to play that they started very early in the morning. Attseven was the manager. There was a feast, foot races, dancing, fighting; the games went on all day. The canoe race was the final event. The idea of this was to get everyone exhausted. Sure enough, by late the next morning after a big meal, men, women, and children found themselves sleeping wherever they laid down. This is what Attseven wanted.

First of all she kept track of the canoe. She knew the fastest kayak and she knew exactly where it was. Everybody went to sleep as she had anticipated. Her two husbands went to sleep, their heads overhanging the bag that they went to sleep on. In this Attseven cut their throats wide open and shoved fresh fish eggs so as not to make any noise. Then she came back in her tent, her little boy was sleeping in the swing. She kissed him and laid a beaded necklace around his neck then she ran to the line of kayaks and cut holes under all of the kayaks except the one she was going to use. After she finished, she took off with this fast kayak. She paddled for quite a while, spotted a dead log, and

pulled up her kayak and hid in the bushes waiting, lest the warriors would take after her. Sure enough, not very long after she landed, the kayaks started to come. They knew where there was one kayak missing along with her. She sat there and put one twig aside for every kayak that passed until there were no more and then she waited for their return. After a long time, they started to come back and again she started piling the same twigs until there were only two left. These she nearly left and went but changed her mind every time. After a long while, sure enough, there was the last two kayaks on their way back. Even then she stayed there for a while before taking off again. When she got at the head of that river, she left the kayak there and took her flight on foot.

It was on this flight that she ran into an army of Eskimo warriors resting and eating berries. Being a smart woman, she tore a piece of her clothing and wrapped it around a bunch of dried stakes. This made it look like another man with arrows. No one didn't take any notice of her. She pretended eating berries until she got far enough away to run. This she did. Once again she was on her way, this time she never stopped until she got to her parents' camp.

One morning, her old dad was visiting his nets just below the camp and he heard what he thought was a bird saying, "Attsenveh - Attsenveh" or "Grey Wing - Grey Wing". The old man never said anything and went home. He told his old wife that he heard a bird saying, "Attsenveh - Attsenveh." This made his old woman cry and the people noticed that. They cry all the time since they lost their daughter. The next day, his wife told the old man to put a piece of dried fish which he did. When he went back later the dried fish was not there. Then he cried out loud saying, "I have lost my girl long ago - what does this mean?" Just then, from nowhere, someone embraced him from behind. He turned around and there was his long lost daughter, Attsenveh - Grey Wing.

But his daughter told him not to say anything but to go home and hide her from others. Since she had lived in captivity, the warriors could kill her for being a spy. So her father wrapped her up in grass, bound her. When he came back home he pulled up his canoe and turned it over with Attsenveh and all. Later in the evening after dark, he packed her up and hid her behind their blankets and they stopped crying. People around them noticed that they cried no more in those war

years. Things like this were noticed right away and investigated. For that reason, people close by sent a young stuttering boy over to the old people. It just so happened that they were eating when the boy came in at the same time. He saw the old lady give a plate to someone under the blanket. He also noticed that the hand that reached for this place was tattooed and decorated with beads. After lunch, the boy went home and he was asked if he noticed anything and he started to say, "I-I-I-I..." but before he said the second word, someone slapped him in the mouth and everybody rushed out and headed for the old people's tent. Attsevenh (Grey Wing) being a woman of war, she knew what was coming when she heard the noise. She asked her parents to release her. This they did and even before anyone got anywhere near the camp she was once again on her way with all the warriors behind her, but no one was fast enough to catch up with her. Two boys were not far behind her. They asked her to give herself up to them. To this she agreed if they would go on the warpath with her. This was agreed upon and the two boys married her right there. After the ceremony, all the men went on the warpath right to the coast from where Attsevenh took her flight. After a long journey they were close to the camp where Grey Wing had lived in captivity. The road leading to the camp was full of excitement, it was on this road that Attsevenh saw a boy hanging in between two trees, dead and dried up and she recognized her little boy. This made her very angry and she decided her army would clean up the camp. When the army got at the camp, she went straight to her parents-in-law's camp saying, "Attsevenh has returned." The old people replied, "Yes, sit down." He (her father-in-law) started to sharpen his knife when Attsevenh slashed the knife from him and slayed everyone in the tent before anyone was able to move. After she finished, she looked around - there was no one in sight - no one was left in the camp.

Raven Story

Edward Nazon

This is a legend of the raven. There are many such legends in the memories of the Loucheux. The raven holds a high place of respect for his great ability to do many things and get by. He is known for his magic powers, his ability to be a good judge, scientist, doctor, and for his keen sense of wit. He is also known as a great deceiver. With all this the raven is also known to be a vain creature.

This legend takes place at a time when it was believed that everyone was the same -animals, birds, and humans. It was believed that a creature or human could change from animal to bird, human to animal, bird to human. It was also believed that with the change, animals and birds had the power to speak.

The raven in his vanity one day went out to get rid of his rival, the grebe. The raven was jealous of the beauty of the grebes with their fine long golden hair on their heads.

This legend began one day when a man paddled in from Point Separation to Arctic Red River. As he came nearer the settlement, he cried out that the finest family of grebes up river had perished in an epidemic. The grebes heard the news and were shocked and sad, and all went into mourning for their very fine brothers.

Wood was gathered to set the scene for the grebes to go in mourning. By jumping in and out of the flames, the grebes showed their sorrow and believed that this practice would spare the spirits of the dead grebes.

The raven watched as the family of grebes jumped in and out of the huge flames until their long golden hair had become singed and brown. This was just what the raven wanted to happen for he was the man that paddled to the settlement to bring the news of the epidemic. The raven jumped back into the canoe and cried out for all to hear, "I don't really know if the news that I brought of

the death of the finest grebe is true, for it may not be the truth." Now the brown and singed grebes knew they had been tricked and became angry. They became so angry that they chased the raven until they caught him. They grabbed him by the wings, head and feet and swung him over the flames, holding him there until all his feathers had burned from his body. The raven became so baked that his beak fell off. The grebes took the beak and allowed the raven to fly off in disgrace.

A very old and wise woman was then given the responsibility of guarding the beak day and night. She was warned that she would have to be most careful as the raven was crafty and never gave up. Time went on and the raven who was a short way from the settlement thought and thought of ways that he could get his beak back. The raven went to the top of the bluff which is a landmark to this day at Arctic Red. The bluff is the place where the Roman Catholic Church now stands. To the south of the church, there are three deep round hollow places. These holes are known to this day to be the place where the crow bedded down to recover from his wounds. The people knew that the raven was suffering and this was taking all his energy. They did not think there would be much danger as long as the raven was in this poor condition, so consequently, they did not keep too close an eye on the raven's movements.

When the people were asleep, the raven took a short cut by land to the river's edge, just out of view from the settlement and there he began building a raft. Once he completed the raft, he gathered moss, with which he made forms of people, some standing, others in the sitting position. Once the raven finished his work it looked like a raft full of junk and lots of people. The raven then went back to the bluff and could see the people of the settlement and the people in turn could see him.

A young boy happened to pass by and the crow called out to him, "Pst, pst, boy, boy, my head is so very sore. Please come and sit with me." The boy did as he was asked and sat by the raven. The boy watched and was told by the raven that it was expected that some Red River people would come down the river any time. So the boy watched and finally said, "Ssh, there is a raft." The boy got up and ran down the hill to the village. When he got to the middle of the camp, he called out as loudly

as he could, "There is a raft with people coming down the river." With this a great amount of excitement spread over the camp. Everyone ran to the river. The people or grebes thought that this raft might be bringing a family who had left a full six months before and had not been heard from since.

It was thought that the family had died while on a hunting trip so it was more happiness for all if this should prove to be the family they had given up hope of ever seeing. In all the activity, the raven was completely forgotten and this was just what he wanted to happen. At last, he heard someone crying out, "I must go to see the family. I must find a place to put this beak. Where can I leave it?" The old lady was so anxious to join the others she had handed the beak to the raven without thinking anything of it. Once the raven had his beak in his hand, he put it in its place and flew into the air and perched on a tree. He was making all sorts of noise getting the attention of the people, who by now knew that they had been fooled again. The crow had won again. Everyone was so mad at the old woman for being so careless that they tied her to a tree and as punishment scratched her on both sides. Everyone went up to the old woman, taking her nose between their fingers and squeezing. This was done by the young as well as the older people. While this was going on, the crow was having a great time, crowing at the top of his voice from a tree that allowed him to be clearly heard but at a distance that he was safe.

After the raven got his beak back, the people were very angry that they took the sun from the sky and darkness set in. Once again the people had to go to the crow for help. They were still angry but had no choice. It so happened that the bear had a daughter who was expecting a child. A few days passed when she had her baby. This was a most unusual child for after it was born, the baby was walking and talking.

Among the weapons owned by the bear, he kept the sun. No one dared do anything about it for the bear was considered very dangerous. The baby was crying one day. He continued to cry and cry until the bear came to ask why it was that he carried on so. After a long talk, the baby asked the bear if he might play with the bright ball. The bear did not want the child to play with the sun as he

feared he would not be able to guard it properly. As it was, the child cried until the bear consented to let him play with the sun, only if the sun was kept inside the tent. The baby rolled the sun back and forth across the floor, with his grandfather watching closely. Finally, the bear felt the baby had understood the need for caution so he relaxed his watch over the sun. When the baby found this out, he quickly rolled the ball out of the house and it immediately shot into the air and back into its place. When the bear woke up, he saw that he had been tricked but by this time he had gotten over his anger, was glad to see the sun back in its place. Now it is said that the baby was really the raven and had once again tricked the bear to get what he wanted.

The raven could not fly in the dark and needed the light of the sun. Of course, once the anger of the people had died down, they also realized that the sun should be where it was most useful to everyone. The raven was indeed wise.

Chii t'iet: Red Fox, Grizzly and Raven Story

Hyacinthe Andre

I will tell a story about Red Fox

Grizzly was very angry with Red Fox,
so Grizzly tore his arm out
at Tsiigehtchic, people did not have a good sleep
because Red Fox was screaming with pain all night long.

Grizzly had Red Fox' arm at Chii ti'et

Deetrin' (Raven) wanted to paddle across to Chii ti'et,
Raven took one man with him,
the man was called Ah' ch'ee,
he looked like Echii drih (a small hawk), hew was so small
he took him

they landed below Grizzly, at Chii ti'et
"I will go up and visit him,
I will work to get that arm back
meanwhile, turn this canoe around so that it's facing outward," he told him
Raven intended to come straight back down
and jump right into the canoe.

Raven was sitting with Grizzly,
He was telling Grizzly stories;
he told him many stories
eventually Grizzly fell asleep
while Grizzly slept, Raven tied him up into a bundle
Grizzly opened his eyes to this
but Raven told him more stories
after a while, Grizzly fell asleep again.

Raven poked at Grizzly
no movement
so he grabbed Red Fox's arm
and quickly rushed outside with it.

Bear (Shoh) lived across from Grizzly (Sheh)

"mmmmmmmy uncle, your arm!' he stuttered
Bear kicked
at the burning fire in front of his tent
Grizzly went outside
already
Raven was paddling away; way out
Raven was in the canoe
Ah' ch'ee who was supposed to turn the canoe around
did not turn the canoe around
even that,
Raven paddled away with it that way
they paddled back across

Grizzly was viciously scratching out mounds of earth
he said, "I wish I could this to you"
Raven, too, took a sharp stick, a metal one they say
as he dipped it into the water
he too said
"I wish I could do this to you "

Meanwhile
Ah' ch'ee who was sitting at the back of the canoe
too was motioning with a mouse bone tied to a piece of wood
he too was motioning
they paddled back across

"When I sing while I am paddling
face Red Fox towards me," he had told them.

they listened for Raven

finally he was paddling back
from a little ways away
he was singing

he was singing
(chanting) as he paddled

so before he got there
they got Red Fox ready

he was still a ways away
Raven threw the arm towards Red Fox
with his left hand

the arm landed into place on Red Fox
with a smacking sound

with that, Red Fox ran off

That's the end of that story.

Atachuukajii'
Hyacinthe Andre

There were three children,
the parents went to get meat that was killed,
the children at home behind them
they were making arrows
the oldest was later to be known as Atachuukajii'
the arrow maker's younger brother put a muskrat's dried tail at the end of his arrow -
a sharp-pointed end
one of his brothers asked him, "Are you going to kill anything with that?"
He replied, "Why are you wondering what I am going to do with it?"
"Well then, poke me right here with it," he said, lifting up his right arm towards him
his older brother did not like this
he told his older brother again, "poke me right here"
the older brother said, "If I poke you there, I will kill you, you know"
"Ah, there is no way you can kill me with something like that," he told him
he poked him straight across the body, some of the arrow showing across the other side
he killed him

after that he ran away into the bush
while that, Chi'ii choo met up with him
Atachuukajii' came to a porcupine den, he crawled in there, to get away from him
he was scared of him
"I'm going to block you in with a big rock," he told him
so he blocked him in with a big rock
he told him, "okay, push that rock out"
Atachuukajii' tried to push the rock out
but it did not budge
he said, "Grandfather, I am coming out to you, take the rock away"
he took the rock away
and pulled him out
and that was that

he spoke very nicely to him
"My grandchild, let us go ..."

they went
he made a bed for himself under a tree, across from where he laid down

he could hear him make a noise with dried branches
while he slept

he was prepared to jump

"Look grandchild, rat houses," he meant big beaver houses on the lake
he kicked at this, beavers spilled out everywhere
he kicked them all
while the grandson slept, he cut off all their tails
after this, he took a crap, water spilled all over the place
he threw the tails into this
the boy gathered the tails from here
and washed them for a long time in water
he cleaned them all
then he cooked them to the fire
in the meantime, he slept
after he slept, he woke up
he placed one tail near him
he was eating cooked, roasted tail
as he was eating, he said, "this is tasty, can I have more"
"my grandfather, there is no more, you ate them all," he said

from there, they left
they travelled and
eventually they went their separate ways
he broke a small piece of wood off his walking stick
and put it in his pocket
"when you are going to camp, don't camp on the ground,
tie yourself to a big tree branch before you sleep at night,
long ago, my dogs left, they are still gone
they are bad, you know"
he was sleeping once
all at once, he looked down and saw all the earth's animals
they were all his dogs
"my grandfather," he said southward
"my grandfather, your dogs are 'bothering' me," he said

then he spoke to his dogs
the dogs heard him call and they ran south
leaving in a blaze of blowing snow ...

before they separated
Ch'ii choo said to Atachuukajii'

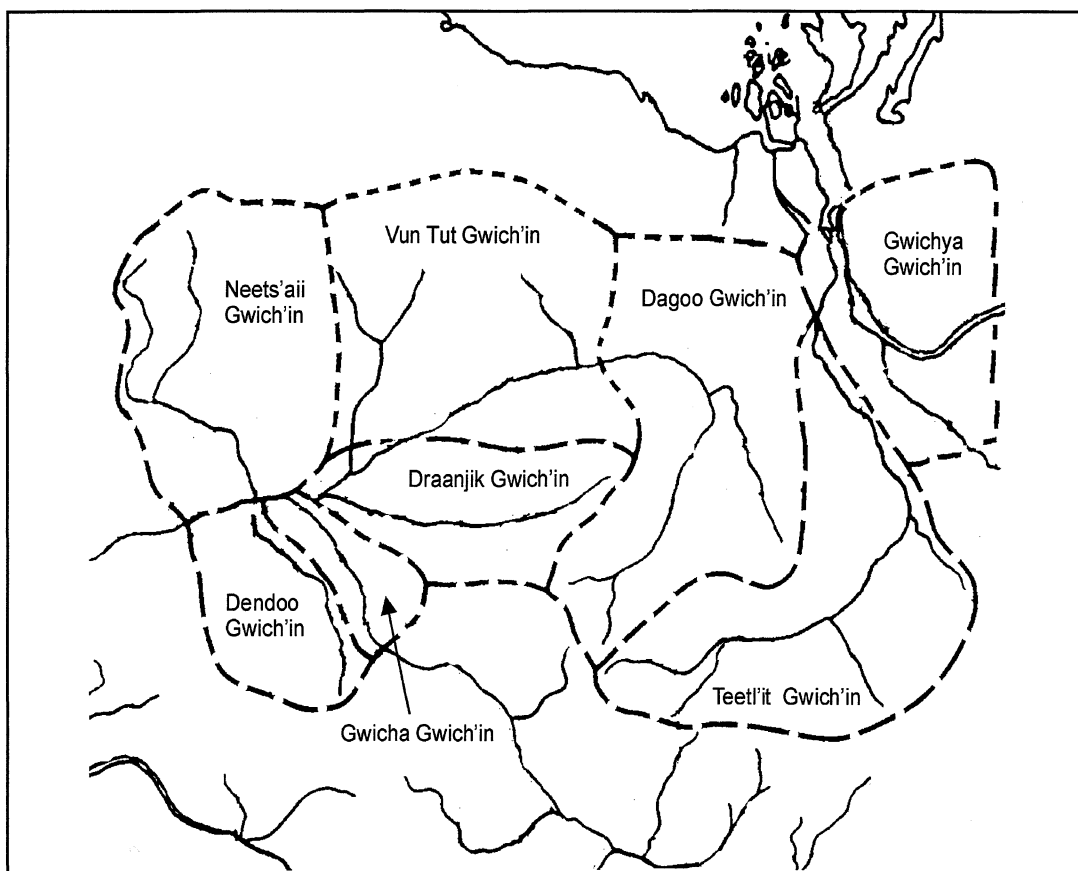
"My grandchild, when you wake up and
see the dawn skies to the south coloured red
you will know that your grandfataher has died,
make sure you say 'Grandfather' and cr,'
he told him

later on he was camping somewhere
he woke up the next morning
and saw the skies to the south coloured red
alone, he said, "Grandfather" and he cried.

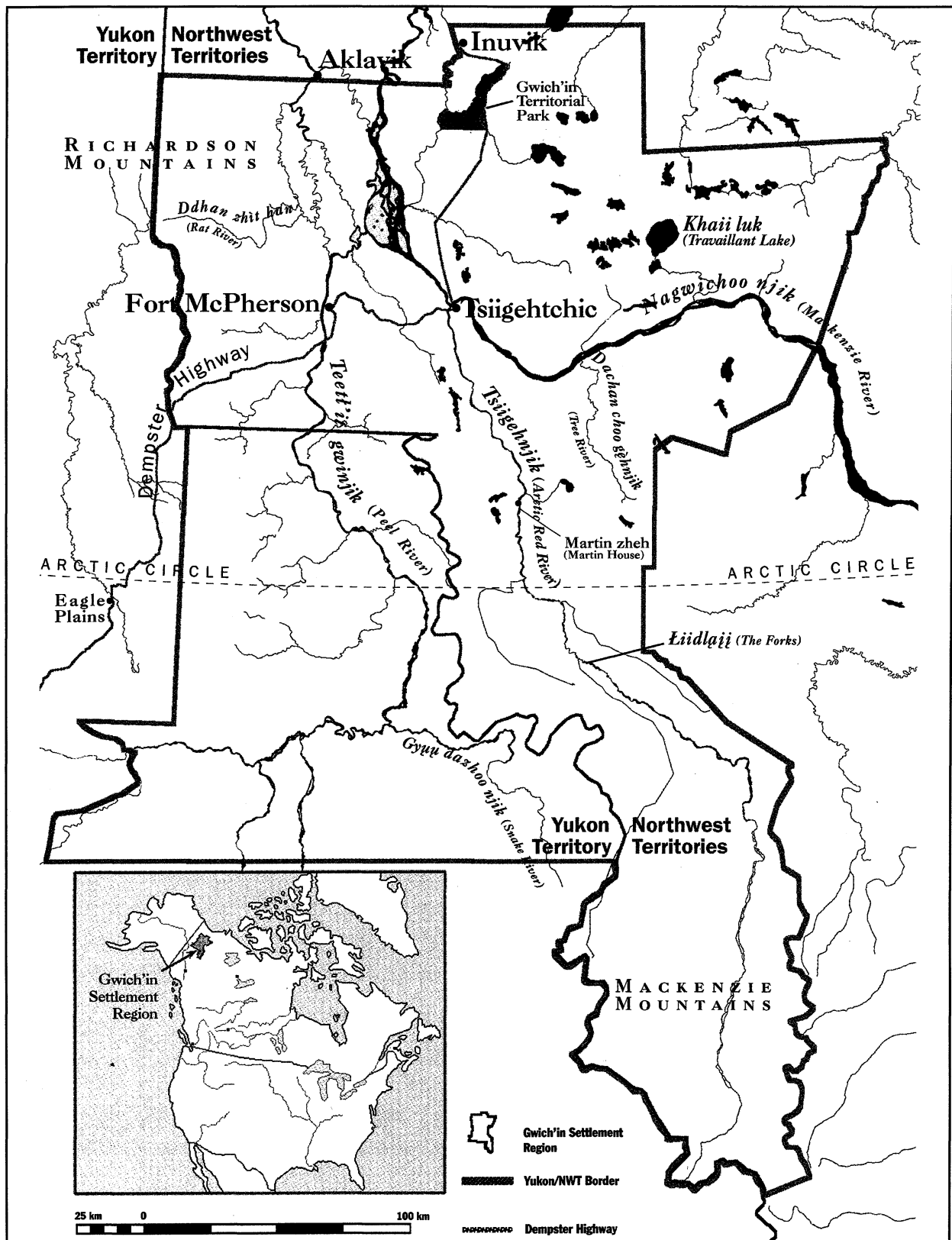
This is how this story ends.

Appendix II

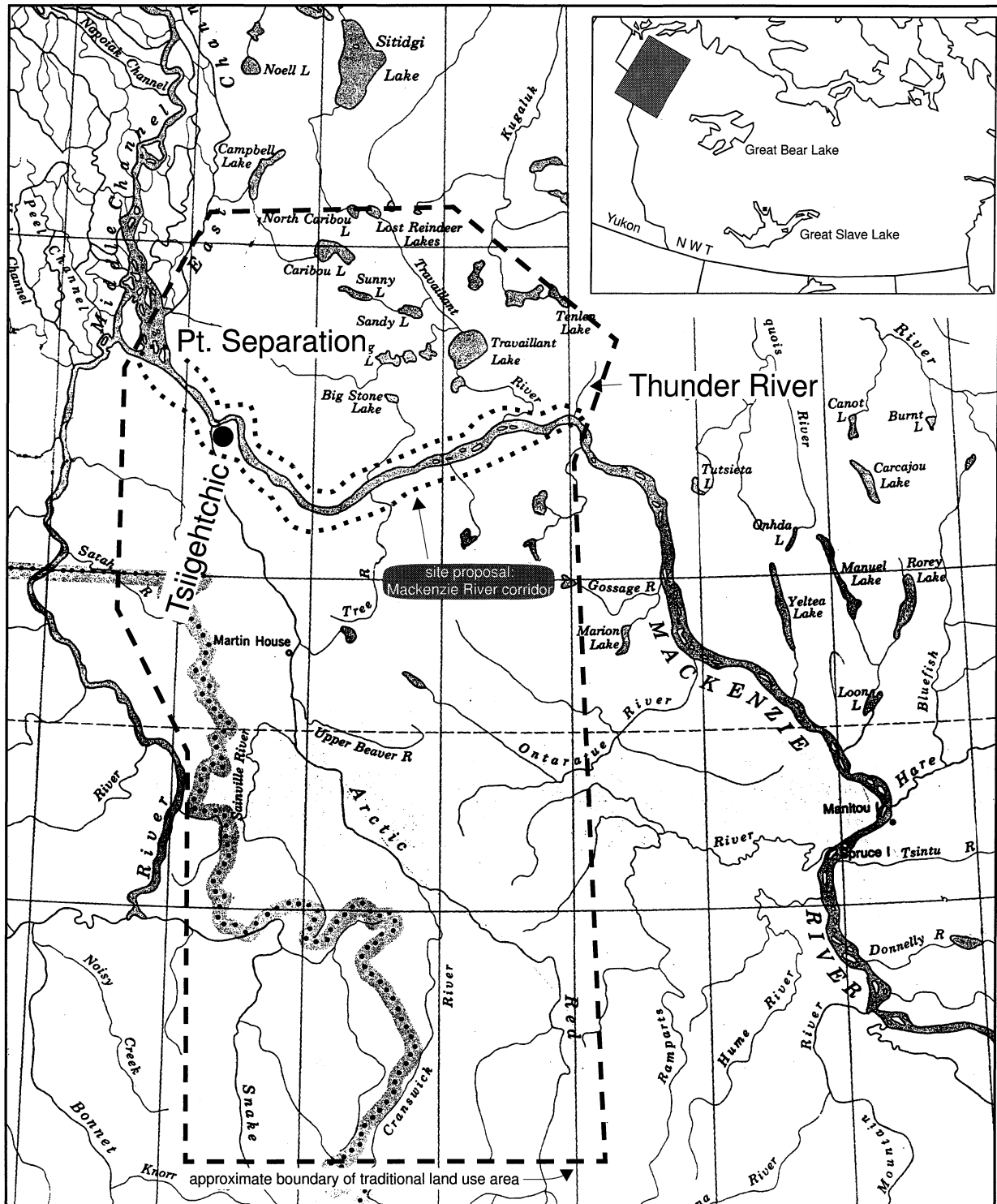
Maps



Gwich'in Regional Groups

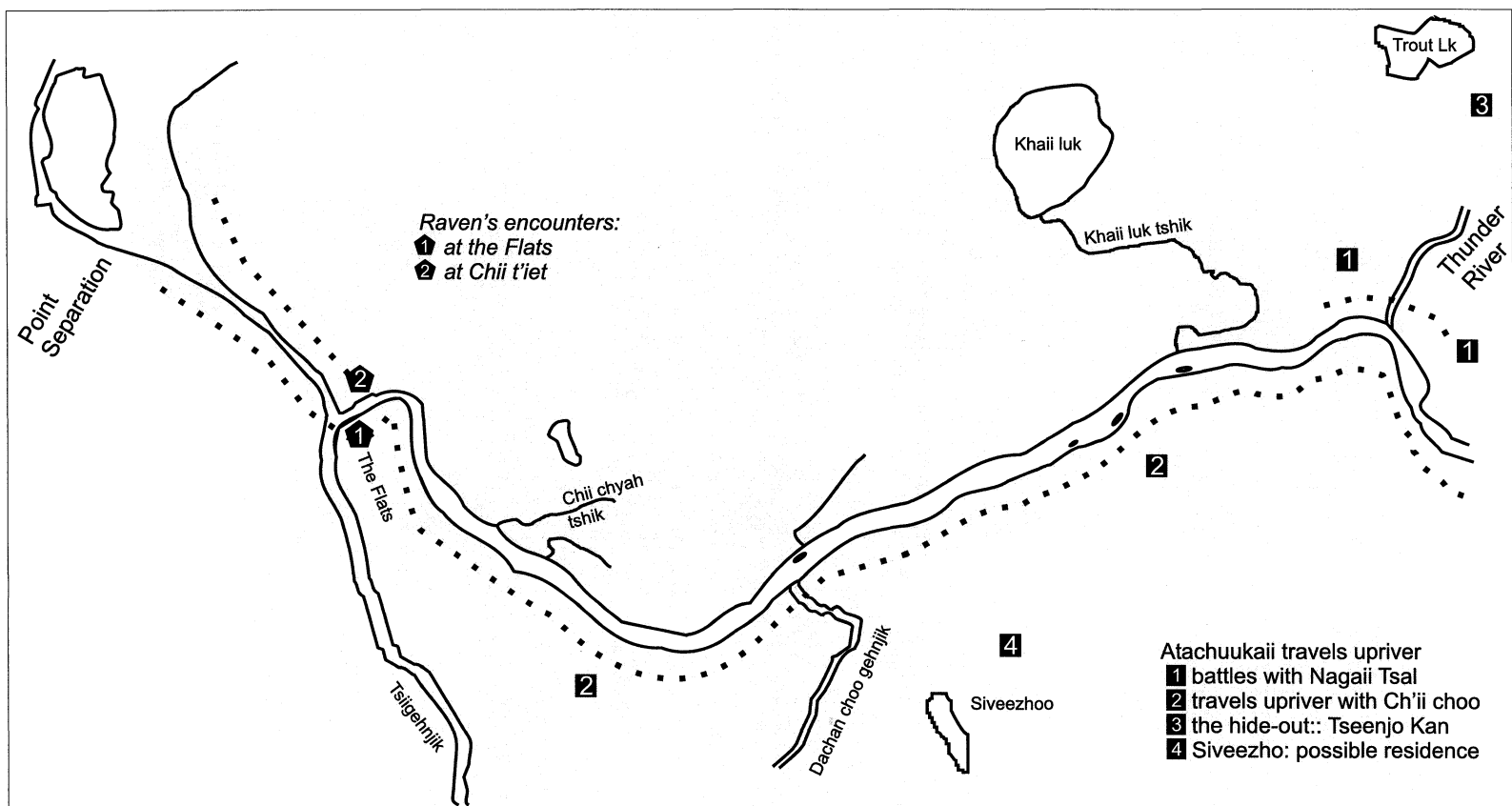


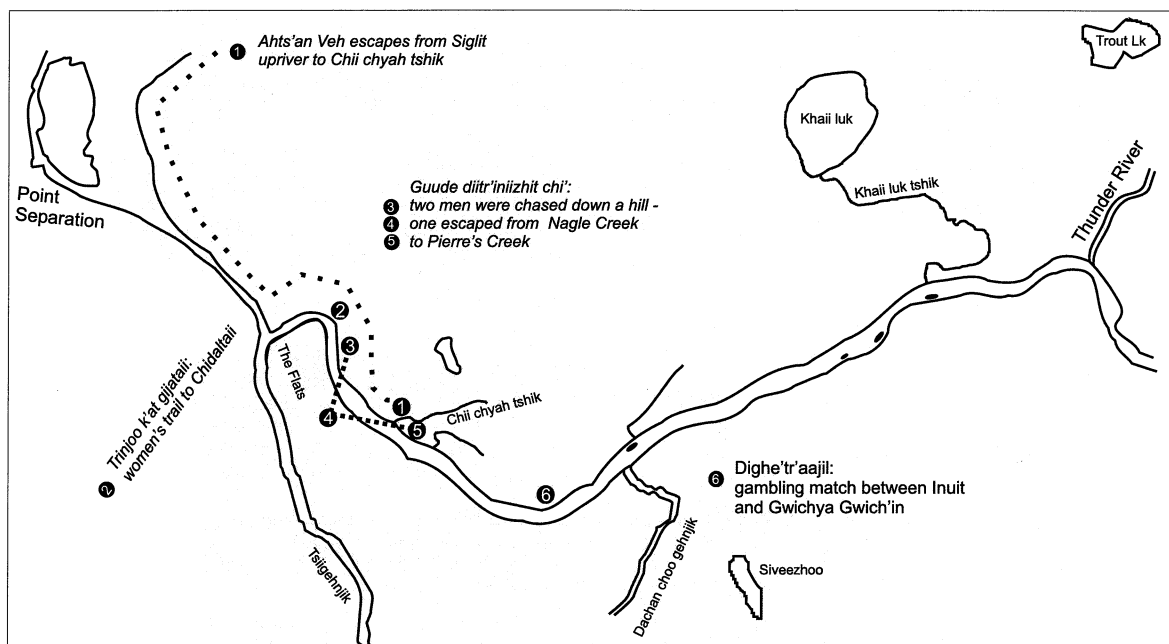
Gwich'in Traditional Land Use Area



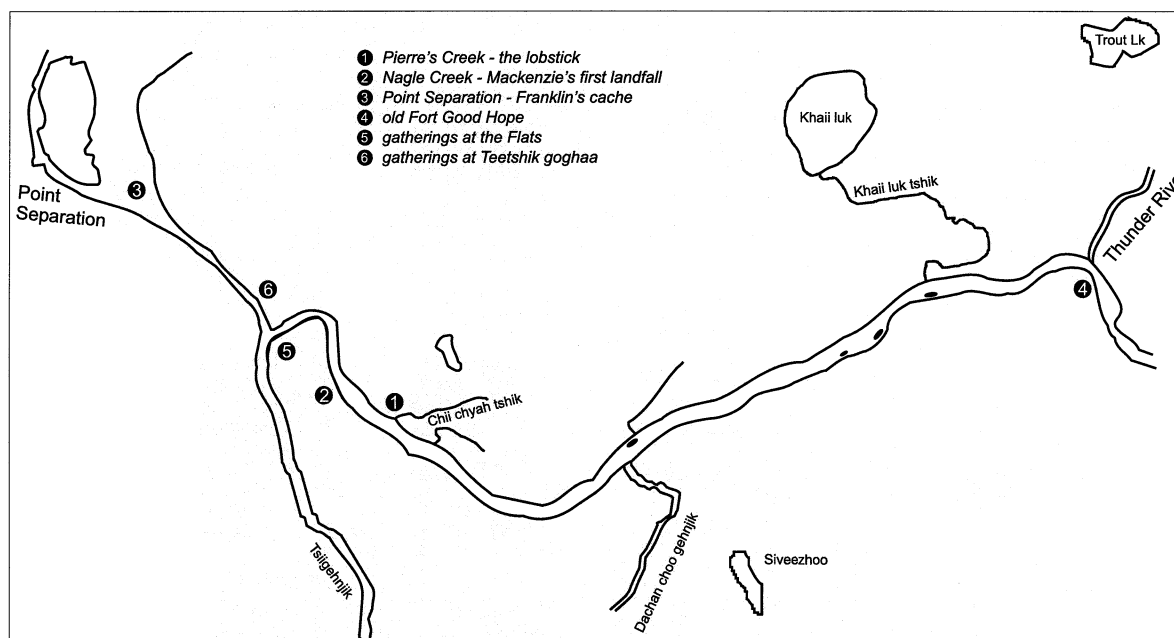
**Gwich'ya Gwich'in Traditional Land Use Area;
National Heritage Site Nomination Proposal**

The Oldest Days of the Land;
Age of the Great Travellers and Heroes





Intercultural Relations during Ts'ii dei Days



Historical Landscape of Recent Times

