

PEEL RIVER ETHNO-ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT 2000

In July 2000, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute initiated an ethno-archaeology project aimed at finding old camps in the Peel River drainage. The Peel River has long played an important role in the life of the Teetl'it Gwich'in. In order to find old camps, the team mainly used the information provided by Teetl'it Gwich'in elders about places that are named in the Peel River area and the stories associated with them. We travelled by boat, helicopter, and foot investigating information that the elders provided.

We recorded 11 new sites, and revisited 3 that had previously been located by other archaeologists

WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Archaeology is the study of the way people lived in the past by examining the places and the objects that they used and left behind.

WHY IS ARCHAEOLOGY IMPORTANT?

- **Reconstructing the past:** Information from archaeological sites together with oral history information helps us to build a story about the past.
- **Protecting Heritage Resources:** Knowing the location of archaeological sites is an important part of protecting them.
- **Learning on the Land:** Students participating in archaeological projects have a good opportunity to travel with elders and archaeologists to learn about places that their ancestors lived and about their history.
- **Heritage Awareness:** By working together, archaeologists, elders, students, and community representatives stimulate an interest in Teetl'it Gwich'in heritage.

What places did we visit?



View of the Peel Canyon from the helicopter looking downstream



Mélanie Fafard taking notes in the scow with Walter Alexie driving in the vicinity of Shoh diidhakhai tshik (Brown Bear Creek)



Walter Alexie and Mélanie Fafard surveying for archaeological sites along a ridge near the head of the Road River



Steven Charlie, Mélanie Fafard and Mary Rose Vittrekwa (l-r) examining Jack Andrew's cabin in the Caribou River area



View of Ok' chih (hill on the right) travelling from Walter and Robert Alexie Sr's camp in the Trail River area

What did we find?

During the project we recorded new archaeological sites
At these places we noted many interesting artifacts



At many of these old camps we found the remains of stone tools used by people in the past



A zhoh chik or wooden snow shovel was encountered near Vadzaih vàn tshik



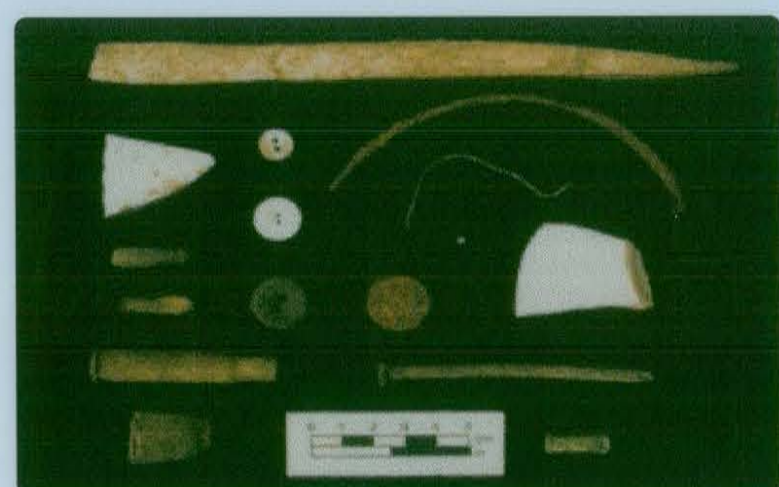
The archaeological crew working at the excavation in Fort McPherson. (l-r) Brent Blake, Gerald Tetlich, Ingrid Kritsch, Robert Greenland, Morgan Keevik



At T'oodih, a ninkahn (moss house) was recorded. (l-r) Vanessa Kaye, Steven Charlie, Ingrid Kritsch, Rita Carpenter, Walter Alexie and Richard Thompson stand around the perimeter of the house



Near the moss house at T'oodih some animal bones and objects such as bullets, beads, wire, etc., were found in the riverbank. (l-r) Ingrid Kritsch, Walter Alexie, Richard Thompson, Rita Carpenter, Vanessa Kaye



These are some examples of the things we recovered at Natainlai, Njuu ghätzrii, and T'oodih



An antler awl from the Fort McPherson site



Morgan Keevik and Gerald Tetlich screening for artifacts at the Fort McPherson site



Examples of the metal objects recovered from the site in Fort McPherson



Beads, glass and stone artifacts from the site in Fort McPherson



Some of the ceramics found at the Fort McPherson site



There was also one stump that was cut with a stone axe near Vadzaih vàn tshik

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Archaeological sites are a fragile and important part of Gwich'in Heritage — and are protected by law! Please do not disturb them. If you find an artifact or archaeological site please leave it where you found it and report the find to the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute. Mahsi' chool!

THE PROJECT PARTNERS

Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute
University of Alberta
Parks Canada
Yukon Protected Area Strategy
Teetl'it Gwich'in Council
Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

Teetl'it Gwich'in Renewable Resource Council
Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board
Gwich'in Tribal Council
Aurora Research Institute

THE PROJECT TEAM

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SPECIAL THANKS TO THE COMMUNITY OF FORT MCPHERSON, TL'OODIH, THE ANGLICAN CHURCH, THE FORT MCPHERSON HAMLET AND TO, ROBERT, GLADYS, HANNAH AND PETER ALEXIE AND ERNEST VITTEKWA.

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