

Final Draft

Executive Summary

The cultural values and landscapes of the Sahtugot'ine are intimately interconnected and cannot be easily separated. Land use and culture form an integral part of who the Sahtugot'ine are, and wish to be in the future. Recognition of this fact throughout this document guides the compilation and review of existing cultural (and related) research and documentation relevant to Edaiila (Caribou Point).

The importance of Edaiila, to both the Sahtugot'ine and the Bluenose caribou, has been well articulated in *Rakekee Gok'e Godi: Places We Take Care Of* (Sahtu Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group 2001) and in the "*The Water Heart*": *A Management Plan for Great Bear Lake and its Watershed* (Great Bear Lake Working Groups 2005a). Yet, mineral exploration and development activities in and around Edaiila pose a threat to both.

With these considerations in mind, the various sections of this report begin to build a contextual frame of reference for the ecological, cultural and socioeconomic importance of Edaiila identified by the Sahtu Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group (2001) and the Great Bear Lake Working Group (2005a).

The environmental values of Edaiila and the roles that Edaiila's natural resources play in sustaining Sahtugot'ine culture and identity are first described. The importance of Edaiila to the Bluenose east caribou cannot be underestimated; this herd is the major resource that sustains the health and well-being, cultural identity, and social roles and responsibilities of the Sahtugot'ine.

The ecological richness of Edaiila is revealed in an examination of its archaeological sites and human history. Compared to the west side of Great Bear Lake, Edaiila appears to contain an abundant record of human use and occupation spanning 7000 years. A review of the archaeological work undertaken by Don Clark (1987) indicates a complex juxtaposition of Dene and Inuit occupations at Edaiila that continue up to the present. Archaeological "hotspots" can be found in several locations around Edaiila, including Caribou Point, Fort Confidence (T'echo cho deh t'a t'aa) and the mouths of Bunn and Cosmo Creeks.

Historic, non-Sahtugot'ine use of Edaiila by Inuit and western European explorers, traders and missionaries are described. Like Edaiila, the Fort Confidence area (T'echo cho deh t'a t'aa) at the mouth of the Dease River remains a significant component of the cultural landscape of the Sahtugot'ine. European observations about Sahtugot'ine and Dene use and occupation of Edaiila indicate a fascinating picture of use by the Caribou Point people (Eta-tchin-la-go-tini) and a rather complex origin for the contemporary inhabitants of Déline that involves the intermixing of Slavey, Dogrib and Yellowknife Dene elements. Place names collected by Petitot in the 1860s and Osgood in the 1930s hints at the richness of the connection between Edaiila and the Sahtugot'ine, but do not begin to capture all culturally important places at Edaiila.

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Documented Dene and Sahtugot'ine use of Edaiila is described, based on a review of a number of sources. From the Dene Nation Trail information we learn just how extensively Edaiila's south and north shores were used in the recent past. More recent land use information collected by the Sahtu GIS department for the Sahtu Dene and Metis Land Claims, reveal virtually identical patterns of land use, with the exception that the interior of Edaiila is not used as frequently today. Sahtugot'ine stories about Edaiila, although largely undocumented, apparently number in the hundreds.

Four areas of Edaiila stand out for their intensity of recent use by the people of Déline. These include: the Cape McDonnell/Caribou Point, Takaacho River, Hornby Bay, and the T'echo cho deh t'a t'aaa (Fort Confidence) areas. The nature of use and occupation of these locations are described, and are testament to the enduring role that Edaiila plays in sustaining the cultural landscape and cultural values of the Sahtugot'ine.

The value and importance of Edaiila's resources are clarified, described, and contrasted with current approaches to establishing the value of resources to Aboriginal peoples. The economic or exchange value of resources and resource use to the Sahtugot'ine pale in comparison with the nutritional, physical, social, cultural and other values derived from their ongoing connection to their lands and resources around Great Bear Lake.

These understandings, combined with the compilation and review of Edaiila's cultural values, facilitate the identification of knowledge gaps and the formulation of recommendations to guide the community through the next steps of the NWT PAS process. A specific and comprehensive program of activities is identified with respect to archaeological, cultural/ethnographic, land use, and literature research. A budget of \$350K over two years is a conservative estimate the cost for this work. Champions for the protection and preservation of Edaiila could be found in Ducks Unlimited and the Canadian Wildlife Service, to name a few. Perhaps, the best way to preserve and protect Edaiila and the "cultural landscape" of the Sahtugot'ine -- and all that that entails (narratives that bind people to place, ecological diversity and cultural integrity of specific places, valued ecological relationships, and so on) -- is to expand the mandate of the Sahoyué-Ehdacho Working Group to include all *Neh Katzila K'ets'Edi*.

Finally, some thoughts on the social values that Aboriginal peoples derive from land and resource use – a missing element or value in most protected areas processes -- and the concept of managing "cultural landscapes" are offered in Appendix I to assist the NWT PAS improve program delivery to the peoples and communities it was intended to serve.

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