

TULITA CONSERVATION INITIATIVE

PHASE I CULTURAL EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2003 the Tulita Conservation Initiative (TCI) was started in the Tulita District of the Sahtu Region. The TCI aims to advance the protection of some of the District's special places by moving them through the NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS).

Step five of the PAS outlines the need to conduct detailed evaluations of the economic, ecological and cultural values present in the candidate protected areas. The cultural evaluation is conducted in three phases. The first phase involves the compilation and review of existing documentation and research, the results of which will inform subsequent phases of the cultural evaluation.

The areas of interest include:

- *Begádeh*—Nahanni River And Headwaters
- *Sgnaralj And Pewátué Déh*—Keele River And Headwaters And Mountain River Complex
- *Tłj Dehdele Djdłq*—Red Dog Mountain
- *Tatsʔkráá Njłjé And Tets'ehxe Tú*—Raven's Throat River, Redstone River And Drum Lake Complex
- *Kewetłnjʔah And Dek'óné*—Bear Rock And The Smokes
- *K'ááłq Tué*—Willow Lake
- *Łue Dek'alé Tué*—Kelly Lake Protected Area
- *Tuwí Tué*—Mahoney Lake Massacre Site

These sites are identified as significant for a number of reasons. The majority of sites hold a place in the traditional use and occupancy of the land by the Mountain Dene and Slavey people. Trails, harvesting, archaeological sites and traditional place names each attest to the Dene and Métis' long standing history in these areas and their importance in traditional culture. Some places such as Red Dog Mountain, Bear Rock, The Smokes and Drum Lake are also significant spiritually. They are symbols of the Mountain Dene's triumph over the challenges of travelling the Keele River; of Yamoria's travels across the landscape and the birth of the New World; and of the Dene's adaptation to a changing world post contact. Other places like Mahoney Lake hold a very different significance. Their value is in their place in post-contact history and the relationship between the Dene and Métis, the fur trade, and the Hudson's Bay Company employees.

While much cultural information has been documented for these sites, there are some data gaps that may need to be filled. For instance in the Mountain Areas there is a significant absence of documented occupation and burial sites. Places like the Nahanni River Headwaters have almost no documented information at all. In the Valley Areas there are almost no place names recorded. Specific sites like Kelly Lake may require additional data collection including oral history and use and occupancy information.

Recommendations for the second phase of the cultural evaluation are provided, as are some general recommendations for the TCI to consider as it begins making decisions on moving specific sites through the PAS. These recommendations range from conducting use and occupancy mapping interviews in the communities to fill some of the information gaps, to conducting sites visits to map a boundary and further document the area's oral history.

The movement of sites through the PAS is a long process that requires a large measure of time and dedicated human and financial commitments. The next steps the TCI takes should include prioritizing the areas of interest in order to focus its efforts. Further documentation will have to occur for some sites and efforts should be put toward planning this and coordinating it at the local level. Some sites may be able to go through different processes, and the proper authorities need to be contacted concerning the possibility, and the

necessary paper work begun immediately. Finally, the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board (SLUPB) should be made aware of this research and the information provided to them. Through the land use plan, the SLUPB could assist in the interim protection of these areas. This protection lasts for five years, which would allow the time necessary to complete the evaluations and obtain approvals.