

Tr'ondek Hwech'in First Nation Tombstone Territorial Park, Yukon

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Collaboration between the Parks Branch of the Yukon Department of Environment, the Yukon Public Service Commission and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation has successfully resulted in a First Nation employee becoming highly qualified to work within the Yukon Parks system. This is a positive example of how a First Nations-oriented training program in conjunction with effective inter-agency cooperation can increase Aboriginal representation within a government organization.

Background

Parks Branch

The Yukon Parks Branch (Department of Environment, Government of Yukon), manages many of Yukon's parks and protected areas. Branch responsibilities have been increasing as land claims are settled and protected areas are established as part of resulting Final Agreements. Creative ways are needed to find the resources to ensure visitor satisfaction and long term protection of these areas. One way is through cooperative relationships with First Nations, and the Tombstone Park experience is a good example of such cooperation.

CASE STUDY #7

Public Service Commission

The Representative Public Service Plan (RPSP) is a Yukon government initiative to increase Yukon First Nation representation in the public service according to Yukon First Nation land claim agreements. This is accomplished partly by promoting the use of underfills (hiring individuals who meet the fundamental requirements of a position and providing training to meet other requirements). The First Nations Training Corps (FNTC) is a Yukon government program that offers training and work opportunities to Yukon First Nation people. The Corporate Human Resource Services Branch of the Public Service Commission delivers the program through the Workplace Diversity Employment Office. *Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in* The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in of Dawson City, Yukon settled their land claim in 1998. As part of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Final Agreement (THFA), Tombstone Territorial Park was created, to be co-managed by the Yukon and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in governments. Through the THFA, provisions were also made to ensure that economic opportunities would be available to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens in the development, operation and management of Tombstone Park.

Initiative

Since its establishment, Tombstone Territorial Park has become increasingly popular. Growing numbers of visitors require adequate staffing to manage visitor impacts and ensure visitors have safe, positive experiences. In 2004, in an effort to increase staff while minimizing costs, the Klondike Regional Superintendent hired a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizen through the Yukon Public Service Commission First Nations Training Corps (FNTC) program. Through the FNTC, 100% of wages and benefits for this position were paid for by the Yukon Public Service Commission. (Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in paid 100% wages from November 2005–April 2006). Other expenses

including courses and workshops, travel, and equipment were the responsibility of the Parks Branch. The candidate was initially hired as a Tombstone Park Ranger under the FNTC for a five-month term which was extended for an additional month. After a satisfactory performance review, the same candidate was re-hired in 2005 for a two year term. Currently this temporary FNTC-funded position is being converted to a permanent seasonal position to be funded by Yukon Parks. In addition to on-the-job training, a variety of short courses and workshops were completed by the employee. As a requirement of the FNTC program, performance reviews were conducted every 3–4 months by the Klondike Regional Superintendent and Senior Park Ranger.

Best Practices

- Hiring a qualified, enthusiastic candidate. This process could not have proceeded if a suitable candidate had not been found.
- All parties must have the necessary resources to contribute to the process. In this case, the First Nation had the qualified individual, the Yukon PSC had the funding and the Yukon Department of Environment, Parks Branch had the job available as well as staff dedicated to providing the training and a quality work experience for the candidate.

Tombstone Territorial Park, student program, *photo copyright Yukon Parks*, Tombstone Territorial Park Yukon Territory Tombstone Territorial Park, Grizzly Lake,

- All parties must understand their roles and responsibilities. These should be identified and agreed upon at the start of the process.
- All parties must be committed to being involved through the entire process. In this case, the process would not have been as successful if one or more parties lost interest, or even opted out, part way through.
- Open, clear communication on a regular basis. This was accomplished, in part, by regular performance reviews.
- Hiring a local individual. In this case, the employee is working in a park within her Traditional Territory, which helps to foster a sense of stewardship that benefits work performance.

Conclusions

This staffing initiative has been a positive experience for all involved and shown a real commitment to success. Personal benefits have resulted for the employee in securing a permanent, seasonal job in a rewarding field. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have benefited in being represented in the park management of an area that is of special significance to them. And the Parks Branch has benefited from the development of a highly qualified, local member of staff that has both a strong connection to the park and the skills to make a strong management contribution. Tombstone Territorial Park, impact monitoring at Talus Lake, Creative ways are needed to find the resources to ensure visitor satisfaction and long term protection of these areas.