

# Nagwichoonjik

National Historic Site of Canada  
Gwich'in Settlement Area



Commemorative Integrity Statement  
January 6, 2004



**Nagwichoonjik  
National Historic Site of Canada  
Commemorative Integrity Statement**

Approved:

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Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site of Canada  
Gwich'in Settlement Area

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Date



# **Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site of Canada**

## **Commemorative Integrity Statement**

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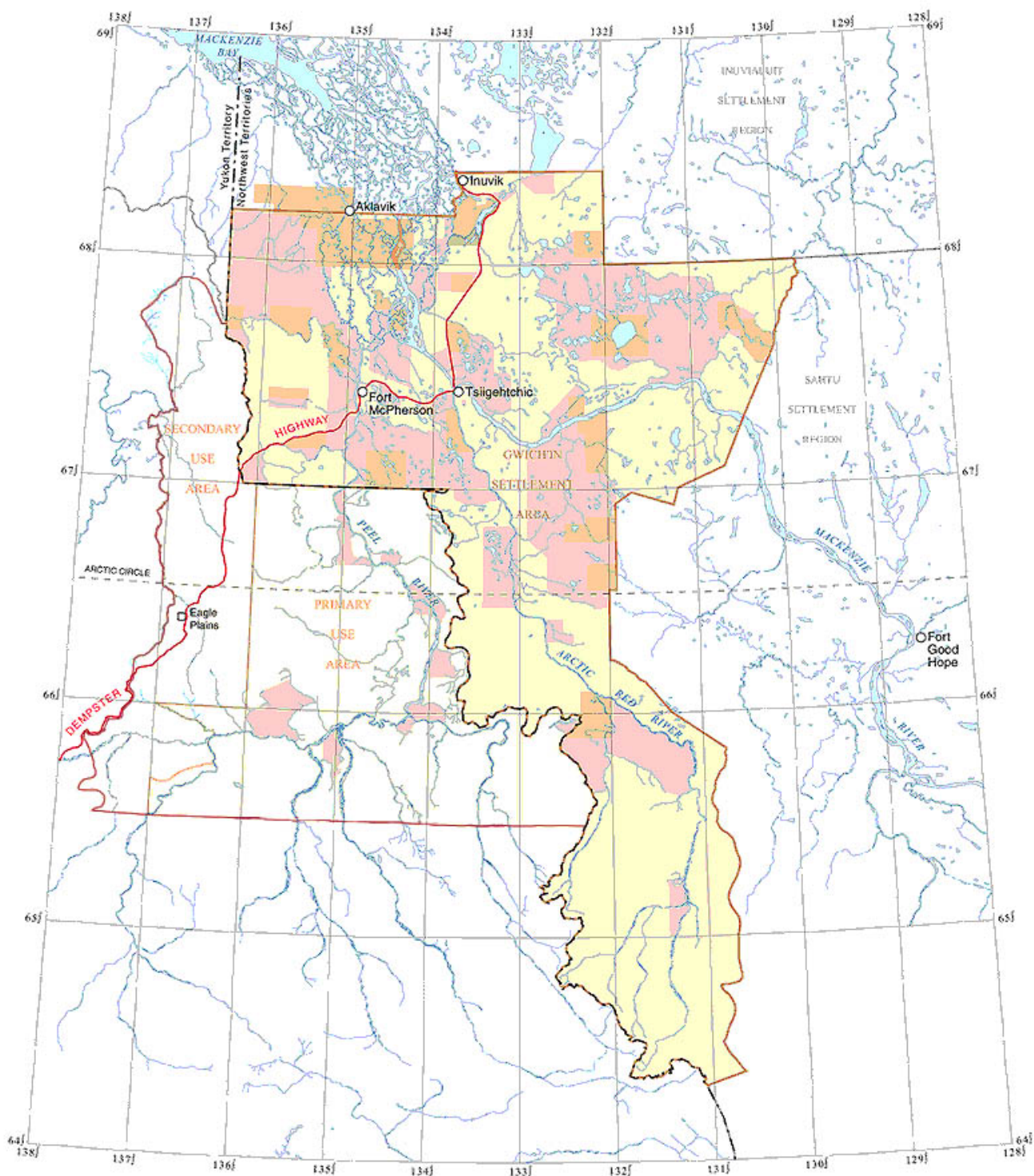
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## THE GWICH'IN SETTLEMENT REGION

Yukon and Northwest Territories, Canada

Scale: 1:3 Million

Lambert Conformal Conic Projection

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# Nagwichoonjik

## National Historic Site of Canada



### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Overview

To the Gwich'ya Gwich'in of Tsiigehtchic, NWT, *Nagwichoonjik*, "water flowing through a big country," is part of their cultural heritage. This river, also known as the Mackenzie River, flows directly in front of their community and through the heart of their traditional homeland. The river has played an important role in their everyday lives, in both practical and spiritual senses, for thousands of years. It serves as a trail to the many different resources in the rivershed. It also serves as a reminder of the oral tradition, the expression of Gwich'in culture and heritage.

Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site is a 175 kilometre long section of the river valley extending from the Thunder River confluence downstream to Point Separation, the beginning of the Mackenzie delta. Nominated by the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Nagwichoonjik was designated in June, 1997. Through the designation, the Gwich'ya Gwich'in were able to express to all Canadians their way of looking at their traditional lands as an aboriginal cultural landscape - with people, their culture and the land intimately intertwined. They feel the Nagwichoonjik commemoration will help to document Gwich'in culture and history and promote these to both their children and visitors. Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site is managed by the Gwich'in Tribal Council, a First Nation Government, working in co-operation with land management agencies of the federal and territorial governments.

*Angela Lennie stalking  
a seagull at Chii chyah  
tshik in Nagwichoonjik  
NHS.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*

### *1.2 National Historic Sites Program Objectives*

The National Historic Site Program Objectives are the objectives of the Government of Canada for the national historic sites program:

- to foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.
- To ensure the commemorative integrity of national historic sites by protecting and presenting them for the benefit, education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.
- To encourage and support owners of national historic sites in their efforts to ensure commemorative integrity.

### *1.3 Commemorative Integrity*

Commemorative integrity describes the health and wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when:

- the resources directly related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site are not impaired or under threat,
- the reasons for designation as a national historic site are effectively communicated to the public, and
- the site's heritage values (including those not related to designation as a national historic site) are respected in all decisions and actions affecting the site.

Resources directly related to the reasons for the site's designation are Level I resources as defined in Parks Canada's *Cultural Resource Management Policy*. Resources that are not related to the reasons for the site's designation but which have historic value are defined as Level II in the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.

A Commemorative Integrity Statement is a document which identifies what is meant by commemorative integrity at a particular national historic site. It provides a baseline for planning, managing, operating, reporting and taking remedial action.

The document is divided into six parts:

#### **1. Introduction**

#### **2. Designation and Context**

#### **3. Resources Directly Related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site**

This section of the Commemorative Integrity Statement identifies the resources that relate directly to the reasons for the site's designation. It also describes the historic values of these resources, which can be physical as well as associative or symbolic. These values must be safeguarded and communicated. The Commemorative Integrity Statement provides guidance, through objectives, about the meaning of "not impaired or under threat" in the context of the site.

#### **4. Reasons for National Historic Significance**

This section of the Commemorative Integrity Statement identifies the reasons for designation as a national historic site, as well as any additional, essential information required to ensure their understanding. It provides guidance, through objectives, on integrity in presentation and effective communication with audiences.



## 5. Resources, Values and Messages Not Related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site

This section of the Commemorative integrity statement covers resources, messages and values that are not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site. Objectives provide guidance on the management of these.

## 6. Appendices

A Commemorative Integrity Statement guides site management by:

- identifying what is most important about a site relative to the national historic designation and, for Parks Canada sites, ensuring that matters relating to national significance, including resources and messaging, are the highest management priority.
- ensuring that there is a focus on the “whole”, and not just the individual resources.
- providing the fundamental document to guide management planning and preparation of a conservation and presentation plan, which detail specific actions to be carried out.
- enunciating a set of heritage values and objectives which can be used in analyzing and evaluating the impact of development and adaptive re-use proposals on a site or nearby property.
- providing the basis for design guidelines for development which may take place within or nearby and which may have an impact on the national historic site.
- giving direction on heritage messages for marketing plans and programs.
- providing the foundation for reporting to Canadians on the state of national historic sites.

*Tsiigehtchic, home community of the Gwichya Gwich'in, overlooks the confluence of Tsiighnjik and Nagwichoonjik. (PC, D. Neufeld)*





*Stickfish hanging on stage near riverbank in Nagwichoonjik NHS. (PC, D. Neufeld)*

#### *1.4 Cultural Resource Management Policy*

Cultural resource management is an integrated and holistic approach to the management of cultural resources. It applies to all activities that affect cultural resources, including the care taken of these resources and the promotion of public understanding and enjoyment of them. The objective is to manage cultural resources in accordance with the principles of value, public benefit, understanding, respect and integrity.

Parks Canada's *Cultural Resource Management Policy* defines cultural resources as places or human works that have been determined to have historic value. Cultural resources include those directly related to the reasons for the site's national significance and those not related but which possess historic value.

The *Policy* is the basis for management of cultural resources by Parks Canada. Other owners of national historic sites are encouraged to apply the principles and practice from the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.

Effective cultural resource management practice is based on:

- an up-to-date inventory of resources;
- an evaluation of resources to determine which are to be considered as cultural resources and what it is that constitutes their historic value;

- consideration of historic value in actions affecting conservation and presentation. Most, if not all, operational activities have an impact on conservation or presentation;
- monitoring and review to ensure that conservation and presentation objectives continue to be met effectively.

A Commemorative Integrity Statement sets out the results of the first two points above in order to facilitate the third and fourth.

The objectives in a Commemorative Integrity Statement specify that the site should be managed in accordance with the principles and practice of the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*. In addition to the principles and practice noted above, management under the *Cultural Resource Management Policy* means:

- cultural resources and their values are inventoried and evaluated, and these records are kept up to date;
- there are no uses or threats that reduce the potential for long-term conservation and future understanding and appreciation of the cultural resources;
- any modification to the site or its cultural resources is based on sound knowledge and respect for the historic values of the resources and is preceded by adequate research, recording, and investigation;
- conservation measures are based on direct, rather than indirect evidence, follow the path of least intrusive action, and are clearly recorded;
- any new work at or adjacent to the site is sensitive in form and scale to the site and its associated resources;
- monitoring and review systems are in place to ensure the continued survival of the cultural resources with minimum deterioration;
- reproductions and reconstructions are marked in such a way as not to be confused with the originals they are intended to represent;
- the historic value of the resources is fully considered and integrated into the planning, conservation, presentation and operational programs.

## 2.0 Designation and Context

### 2.1 Designation

Designation refers to the establishment of a national historic site. It occurs when the Minister approves a recommendation for national historic significance from the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

The cultural and heritage values associated with Nagwicheonjik were identified by the Gwichya Gwich'in through the Agenda Paper *"That river, it's like a highway for us." The Mackenzie River through Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture* (M. Heine, April, 1997) and the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board [*Nanh' Geenjit Gwitr'it T'igwaa'ain Working for the Land - Gwich'in Land Use Plan* (August, 2003)]. The Gwichya Gwich'in of Tsiigehtchic, with the assistance of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), a branch of the Gwich'in Tribal Council government responsible for culture and heritage, nominated the site to the HSMBC for consideration as a National Historic Site of Canada.

Nagwicheonjik was recommended as a national historic site by the HSMBC at its meeting in June, 1997. The Site is managed by the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

### 2.2 Commemorative Intent

Commemorative intent refers to the reasons for a site's designation as a national historic site, as determined by the Ministerially-approved recommendations of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. A Commemorative Integrity Statement contains a *Statement of Commemorative Intent* which provides the answer to the question "When and for what reason was this site designated by the Minister responsible for the *Historic Sites and Monuments Act* as a national historic site?"

Nagwicheonjik was designated a national historic site in June, 1997. At that time the HSMBC recognized the Gwichya Gwich'in values, noting:

*To the Gwichya Gwich'in, this section of the river captures many themes representing the historical and cultural importance of the Mackenzie River. The area also provides an important perspective on the unity of the traditional culture in the precontact period and on the historical experience of the Gwichya Gwich'in after the arrival of European explorers.* (Minutes, HSMBC, June, 1997.)

The reasons for the designation of Nagwicheonjik, amended by the HSMBC in April, 2002, are:

- *it is prominent as a cultural landscape within the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional territory;*
- *it is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people; and,*
- *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.*

### 2.3 Designated Place

Designated place refers to the place designated by the Minister of Canadian Heritage on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Information on what constitutes the designated place for a particular historic site is drawn from the minutes of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

The Designated Place for Nagwicheonjik was defined by the HSMBC "as reaching 5 kilometres inland from the high water mark at the time of designation on each shore of the Mackenzie River between Point Separation and a point 1 km upstream from the confluence of the Mackenzie River and Thunder River" (Minutes, HSMBC, April, 2002). The designated place is illustrated on map 1.



The boundary of Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site includes the in-situ evidence of a Gwich'in community, a trading post, fish camps and graveyards along the banks of the river and at the confluence with side streams and creeks where families continue traditional fishing and wild plant harvesting activities. Trailheads to wintering areas broach the high river bluffs where remains of an old stone quarry and a historic Catholic mission station can be found. Many of the prominent landscape features within the site are identified mnemonics for the Gwich'in oral tradition. Finally, the site also includes a 175 kilometre long stretch of the river water course itself.

#### 2.4 Historic and Geographic Context

Nagwichoonjik in the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional lands creates a dramatic valley in the country. Even at low water the flow of water is enormous and the spring breakup flood raises water levels up to five metres. At the Lower Ramparts, just above Tsiigehtchic, and by Thunder River, high cliffs rise from the water's edge. Between these two points however more gentle slopes gradually fade back from the river. Below Tsiigehtchic, the land gradually flattens and by Point Separation, the cusp of the delta, the valley has broadened and elevation has retreated far from the river. The river banks through the length of Nagwichoonjik are frequently cut by the many creeks draining into the river, each major opening offering a place for a fishcamp or a trail head into the lakes and country beyond.

*Map 1 Designated Place  
for Nagwichoonjik NHS  
as approved by HSMBC,  
Spring, 2002.*



The Gwich'in claim a presence in this land since creation. The evidence is the cultural landscape of Nagwicheonjik itself - the oral tradition of the Gwichya Gwich'in describes the mythic hero figures and their activities that continue a vibrant presence through landscape features.

Nagwicheonjik was the route for connections with their neighbours, bringing them together for large summer gatherings. And it also brought the Gwich'in in contact with Euro-North American newcomers, explorers, missionaries and traders travelling down the river.

Finally, Nagwicheonjik NHS witnesses the continuing life of the Gwichya Gwich'in on their traditional lands. In summer, fish camps are located along both shores of the river, while in winter, the extensive trail network reaching back from Nagwicheonjik to hunting camps, connects people as they draw their sustenance from the river valley's bounty. Together, the continuing seasonal round of activities in Nagwicheonjik reinforces the deeply interwoven sets of family relationships connecting people to each other and this place.

The oral histories, Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices, in-situ cultural resources and the cultural landscape are all indicators of the long-time and continuing set of relationships between Gwichya Gwich'in and the designated place. The health of these integrated individual elements is the basis for the designation of this national historic site and are therefore given the highest value (Level 1).



*Gabe Andre,  
Tsiigehtchic Steering  
Committee member  
describes the river to  
Ingrid Kritsch of the  
Gwich'in Social and  
Cultural Institute, Sept.  
1998.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*





*The fuel cache at  
Gabe Andre's camp.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*

### **3.0 Resources directly related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site**

This section contains details on the resources - the whole and the parts of the whole - which are directly related to the reasons for designation. Historic value is a value or values assigned to a resource, whereby it is recognized as a cultural resource. These values can be physical and/or associative.

#### **3.1 Designated Place**

The Tsiigehtchic steering committee focused on the 175 kilometre long section of Nagwichoonjik, extending from Thunder River, south of the community of Tsiigehtchic, to Point Separation, north of the community. To the Gwichya Gwich'in, this section of the river captures many themes representing the historical and cultural importance of Nagwichoonjik. The area also provides an important perspective on the unity of the traditional culture in the precontact period and on the historical experience of the Gwichya Gwich'in after the arrival of European explorers.

Designated place thus represents the complex sets of relationships between the people, their traditional lands and their past. The oral histories, Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices, in-situ cultural resources, landscape are all indicators of the long-time and continuing set of relationships between Gwichya Gwich'in and the designated place. The health of these integrated individual elements is the basis for the designation of this national historic site and are therefore given the highest value (Level 1).

The Designated Place for Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site is valued as:

- Its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape as embodied in the intimate and integrated connection between the river and adjacent lands and all facets of Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices as expressed in their oral histories and place names.
- Its social significance as illustrated by the tightly knit web of family and cultural relationships and activities connecting people to landscape.
- Its spiritual significance as illustrated by the array of stories incorporating traditional knowledge giving social and moral guidance.
- Its cultural significance as witnessed by the long and continuing tradition of Gwich'in use and experience written into the landscape.
- The health and wholeness of the riparian ecosystem.
- The largely undisturbed character of the land and unimpeded views from the river.

#### **Objectives**

The designated place will not be under threat when:

- Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices are respected.
- The oral histories, place names and other elements of traditional knowledge are recorded and transmitted to both present and future generations of Gwich'in.
- A strategy for the effective understanding and communication of the values of the National Historic Site to local people and visitors is in place.
- A strategy for the protection, maintenance and monitoring of the health of the riparian ecosystem is in place. This should address water quality, quantity, rates of flow, bank slumping, sandbars and siltation, fish quality, health of birds, fish, animals and plant life.



- The presence and values of the landscape character of Nagwichoonjik are respected by future developments.
- The cultural and natural integrity of the Nagwichoonjik is respected and fostered by working with other stakeholders of Nagwichoonjik.

### *3.2 Gwich'in Traditional Beliefs and Practices*

The Gwich'ya Gwich'in resident in the National Historic Site area live by a set of traditional beliefs and practices that make up their culture. These traditional beliefs and practices are valued:

- For their importance in reflecting the values and knowledge of the Gwich'in ancestors and Elders.
- Because they provide understanding of many of the cultural resources and sites within the designated place.
- For their importance in the continuing vitality in Gwich'in culture, language, traditional knowledge and values.
- Because they contribute to the understanding and preservation of the health and wholeness of the Nagwichoonjik riparian eco-system.

#### *Objectives*

The Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices will not be under threat when:

- The wishes and wisdom of the Elders are respected in the treatment of Gwich'in traditional beliefs and practices.
- There is an active and ongoing program in place to document, preserve and promote Gwich'in traditional knowledge and practices.
- All research on the Gwich'in and the designated place is regularly made available to the community.

*Dachan choo gèhnjik  
(Tree River) entering  
the Mackenzie River.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*





*Hyacinth Andre family  
camp at Dachan choo  
gèhnjik (Tree River).  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*

### 3.3 Oral Histories

The Gwichya Gwich'in oral histories describe the cultural landscape and the stories which tie it together. They describe the earliest days when animals and humans were equal, the legendary heroes, relations with neighbouring groups and newcomers and explain Gwich'in use of the land.

These oral histories are valued for:

- Their role in explaining the Gwich'in place in and relationships to their traditional lands.
- The respect they foster for the land and its preservation.
- The reinforcement of familial relationships and associations to place.
- The shared heros and events which connect the Gwichya Gwich'in with the neighbouring Dene groups along the river.

### Objectives

The Gwich'in oral histories will not be under threat when:

- The wishes of the Elders are respected in the treatment of Gwich'in oral history.
- There is an active and ongoing program in place to document, preserve and promote Gwich'in oral history
- All research on Gwich'in oral history is regularly made available to the community.

### 3.4 Landscape

Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site is a prominent element of the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape. The seasonal camps, harvesting areas, settlements, burial places and connecting trails are among those elements of the cultural landscape while Gwich'in placenames commemorate both the meanings and values of the relationship between people and place. The fabric of family history is also interwoven with place re-inforcing the cultural values of the landscape.

The cultural landscape of Nagwichoonjik are valued for:

- The unimpeded views available along the valley from the river, the various camping spots, trail heads and burial places.

- The continuing knowledge of the camps, trails and place names and their purposes.
- The continued health of the fish, birds, animals and plants of the river and lands in the national historic site.
- The continued integrity of the ecological health of Nagwichoonjik.

The resources will be unimpaired and not be under threat when:

- There are no permanent structures compromising the traditional cultural viewscape in the historic site.
- Low impact land-use practices are used in the historic site.
- All camps and trails heads are marked and visible from the river and their purposes are recorded and made known to the community and visitors.
- Place names, their associated stories and oral histories are recorded and made known to the community and visitors.
- Cemeteries and burial places are marked and kept in an appropriate state of care and their locations marked and mapped for community and visitors.
- A strategy for the protection, maintenance and monitoring of the health of the river, the fish, birds, plants and animals and the various harvest products in the national historic site is in place.

*The Tsiigehtchic  
Steering Committee  
having lunch at Noel  
Andre's fish camp at  
Moonshine Bay on the  
shore of  
Nagwichoonjik.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*

### 3.5 In-Situ Cultural Resources

Nagwichoonjik is rich in physical remains speaking to the long time presence of the Gwich'in people and visitors and newcomers to their lands. These are physical expressions of the Gwichya Gwich'in oral histories and the peoples' survival through the centuries. These cultural resources include evidence of subsistence fisheries camps, trails and trail heads, stone quarries and related natural resource gathering sites.

These in-situ cultural resources are valued:

- As physical evidence of the long and continuing occupation of the area by the Gwich'in over time.
- As physical representations of Gwich'in traditional knowledge.
- As information sources about Gwich'in life in the past.

#### *Objectives*

The in-situ cultural resources will not be under threat when:

- The wishes and wisdom of the Elders are respected in the treatment of in-situ cultural resources.
- A cultural resource inventory and assessment has been completed.
- The in-situ cultural resources are protected from human disturbance unrelated to approved archaeological research.
- All research on in-situ cultural resources is regularly made available to the community.



#### **4.0 Effective Communication of the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site**

##### *4.1 Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site*

Protection is only one part of commemorative integrity. As the *National Historic Sites Policy* states (p.78), "Protection and presentation are fundamental to commemoration, since without protection there can be no historic site to be enjoyed, and without presentation there can be no understanding of why the site is important to our history, and hence, to all Canadians.

The reasons for designation as a national historic site express, in the form of messages, why this place was designated a national historic site.

##### *4.2 Context Messages*

Context messages are those messages that are essential to understanding the reasons for designation of the site. While context messages are essential to understanding the reasons for designation, they are not reasons for national significance.

##### **Statement of Commemorative Intent**

Nagwichoonjik holds a prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape. It is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people. 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.

*Nagwichoonjik is prominent as a cultural landscape within the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional territory*

Messages supporting this learning objective include:

- the dynamic character of the river as an element of the larger Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape.
- the network of camps, trails and resource use areas imprinted upon the land by Gwichya Gwich'in long term use.

*Nagwichoonjik is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the Gwichya Gwich'in.*

Messages supporting this learning objective include:

- the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional lifestyle shaped by a close and long time connection to the land and the river.
- the transportation role of the river as a social corridor bringing together extended families for large summer gatherings and allowing meetings with neighbours and newcomers.
- The role of the river and adjacent lands as a carrier of spiritual meanings through its association with stories of creation and the establishment of a moral order.



*Tsiigehtchice Steering  
Committee member  
Ruby Lennie at Dachan  
choo gèhnjik (Tree River).  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*



*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.*

Messages supporting this learning objective include:

- the set of Gwichya Gwich'in placenames tied to the landscape through stories.
- the concept of homeland and the associated traditional knowledge, as expressed through stories and tied to place names and family lineages explains Gwichya Gwich'in use of land over time.

#### 4.3 Objectives

The reasons for designation as a national historic site are effectively communicated to the public when:

- the overall heritage presentation experience conveys the reasons for designation as a national historic site;
- visitors, and non-visitors, who experience heritage presentation, and the site stewards understand the reasons for designation as a national historic site; and
- the effective communication of messages and their understanding is monitored.

*Wolf tracks at Vihtr'ii tshik (Thunder River).  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*





## **5.0 Resources, Values and Messages not related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site**

Some resources, values and messages are not related to the reasons for designation. This section contains information on these resources, as well as messages and other values which are important but not related to the reasons for designation.

In applying the first element of commemorative integrity, emphasis is clearly on those resources directly related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site and their values. However, the Cultural Resource Management Policy applies to all cultural resources, as well as significant ecosystem features.

A Commemorative Integrity Statement is developed to assist managers or owners in managing all the resources for which they have responsibility. The overall stewardship of a national historic site is called into question and commemorative integrity is threatened if resources not related to the reasons for designation are not managed in accordance with the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.

Nagwichoonjik NHS is a Gwichya Gwich'in heritage place, one part of a system of national and international heritage places in Canada. The natural and cultural heritage represented by these places is our legacy as Canadians and a significant element of Canadian identity.

Beyond the values of national historic significance, the heritage values associated with Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site also include the designation of Nagwichoonjik (Mackenzie River) as a part of the Trans-Canada Trail. The Dempster Highway, traversing the northwestern portion of the Gwich'in traditional territory providing road access to a number of Gwich'in sites, has also played an important role in transforming Gwich'in lifeways in the last third of the twentieth century.

The site also gains value by its integration into a network of regional Gwich'in heritage sites, including local regional parks such as the Gwich'in Territorial Park, Tsiigehnjik (Arctic Red River) as a Canadian Heritage River, Fort McPherson National Historic Site, the presentation and preservation of Gwich'in collections at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute in Tsiigehtchic and in Ottawa at the Canadian Museum of Civilization and other related institutions.

Other heritage values are the level 2 cultural resources within the Nagwichoonjik National Historic Site and collections of moveable resources, and messages relating to the history of this place beyond the themes of national commemoration. These resources and messages do not relate to the national designation, but are important to the documentation and communication of Nagwichoonjik's regional history and importance.



## 5.1 Resources not related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site

### 5.1.1 Buildings and Structures

The old church at Tsiigehtchic has been identified as a heritage resource of importance by the Gwichya Gwich'in.

### 5.1.2 In-Situ Resources

In-situ resources of importance include the surface and buried resources related to the trading post and settlement at Travaillant River confluence and the remains of the Oblate Mission at Teetshik goghaa (Old Arctic Red River).

## 5.2 Objectives for Resources and Values

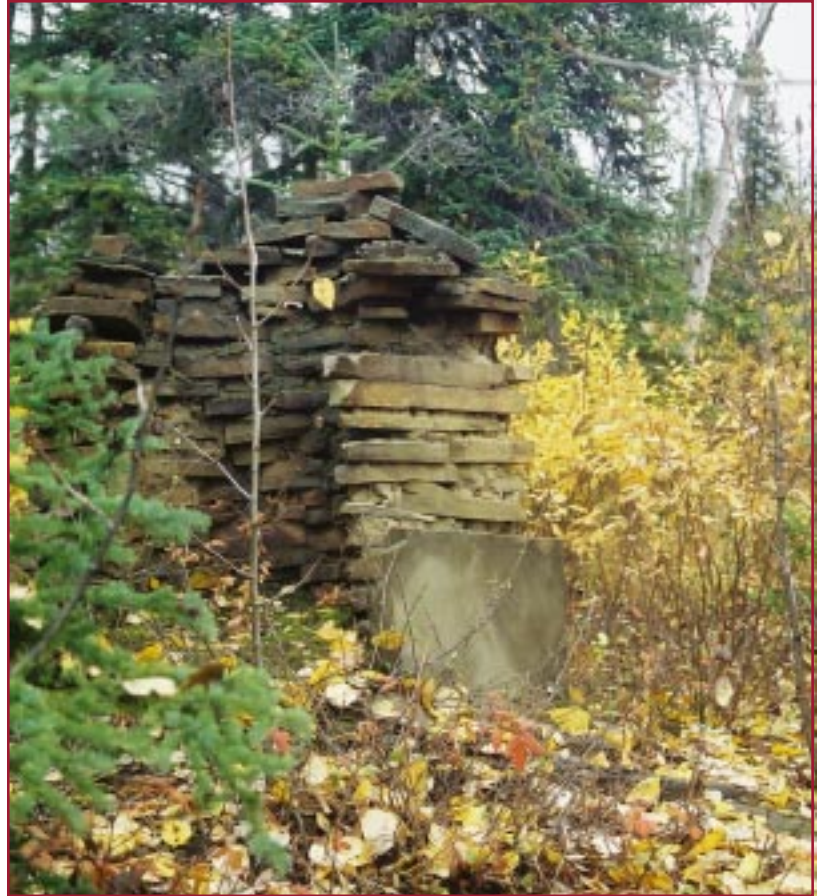
The resources (designated place, landscapes and landscape features, buildings and structures, in-situ resources, objects) will not be impaired or under threat when:

- the resources and their associated values are respected;
- management decisions are based on adequate and sound information and are made in accordance with the principles and practice of the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*;
- the resources and their associated values are not lost, impaired or threatened from natural processes, for example erosion and decay, within or outside of the site;
- the resources and their associated values are not lost, impaired or threatened from human actions within or outside of the site; and
- the historic values of the resources are communicated to visitors and stakeholders.

## 5.3 Heritage Values - Objectives

The site's heritage values will be respected and maintained when:

- Level 2 resources are managed according to the Cultural Resource Management Policy;
- the level 2 messages are communicated to the public;
- the membership of Nagwichoonjik in the larger national commemorative program of national historic sites and nationally designated persons, events and other aspects of Canadian history is communicated in site presentation programs;
- the thematic relationship of Nagwichoonjik with other Gwich'in cultural sites and values is effectively communicated;
- site programs acknowledge and respect the related communities in heritage presentation.



^ Remains of the old mission house stone chimney at Teetshik goghaa (Old Arctic Red River).  
(PC, D. Neufeld)

< The old church at Tsiigehtchic, built in the late 1920s.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)

#### *5.4 Messages Not Related to the Reasons for Designation as a National Historic Site*

Messages not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site include:

- the membership of Nagwichoonjik in the family of NHSC;
- the connections between Nagwichoonjik NHSC and related NHSC at Tr'ochëk in Dawson, Yukon and Edacho and Saoyue on Great Bear Lake, NWT. and Arctic Red River (Tsiigehnjik) Canadian Heritage River;
- the stories of other more recent visitors and inhabitants of Nagwichoonjik and their role in changing the face of this place.

#### *5.5 Objectives for Messages*

The messages not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site are effectively communicated to the public when:

- part of the heritage presentation experience conveys the messages not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site;
- the messages not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site and their presentation do not overwhelm or detract from the presentation and understanding of the site's national historic significance;
- visitors understand the messages not related to the reasons for designation as a national historic site; and
- management decisions are based on adequate and sound information and are made in accordance with the principles and practice of the *Cultural Resource Management Policy*.

*Pierre Norman's fish camp near the Fort McPherson ferry landing at the Tsiigehnjik confluence.  
(PC, D. Neufeld)*



## 6.0 Appendices

### 6.1 HSMBC Minutes and Plaque Text

#### **HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA Excerpt from the April, 1997 Meeting**

*The Gwichya Gwich'in express the importance of the river through their oral histories, which trace important events from the beginning of the land to the present. Gwichya Gwich'in history is told through names given along the river, stories associated with these areas, and the experience drawn from these stories. The river acted as a transportation route, allowing Gwichya Gwich'in to gather in large numbers to dance, feast, and play games during the summer. Archaeological evidence supports Gwichya Gwich'in oral histories concerning the importance of [Nagwichoonjik] the Mackenzie River. Sites along the river show extensive precontact fisheries and stone quarries, ensuring Gwichya Gwich'in survival through the centuries.*

#### **HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA Excerpt from the June, 1997 Meeting**

*At the Cultural Communities Committees June meeting, Dr. MacDonald began by welcoming Committee members and staff, including a special welcome to Ingrid Kritsch and Alestine Andre of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute and Gabe Andre of the Gwichya Gwich'in First Nation.*

*Dr. MacDonald then began discussion of those matters which had been tabled for review. The first item under discussion being: "That river, it's like a highway for us.": The Mackenzie River through Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture*

#### *Background*

*The Gwichya Gwich'in of Tsiigehtchic (formerly Arctic Red River, NWT) have requested the Boards consideration of the possible national significance of a section of the Mackenzie River that traverses their traditional homelands. This section extends from Thunder River on the southeastern boundary of their lands to Point Separation in the Mackenzie Delta. As far back as Gwichya Gwich'in can remember, their traditional life-style has been shaped by a close connection to the land and the river.*

*The Agenda Paper, prepared by consultant Michael Heine on behalf of the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute and the community of Tsiigehtchic, focuses on the cultural landscape and the stories which tie it together. These stories deal with five periods of time:*

- a) the earliest days when animals and humans were equal and animals could speak and assume any shape they wished;*
- b) the time of legendary travellers and heroes;*
- c) a time closer to the present when many encounters occurred with neighbouring Aboriginal groups;*
- d) the immediate past, including stories of hospitality and friendship extended to newcomers; and*
- e) a broad range of time illustrating Gwichya Gwich'in use of the land over time.*

*The importance of the Mackenzie River is central in many of these stories. The community has requested that the Board acknowledge the Mackenzie Rivers significance for the Gwichya Gwich'in, which they feel will constitute a recognition of the importance of Gwichya Gwich'in history within the development of Canada as a nation.*

#### *Discussion*

*The representatives of the Gwichya Gwich'in explained that, in collaboration with Parks Canada, they have developed a proposal for the commemoration of their history through a national historic site. To guide this process, a steering committee of community residents, that includes both Elders and youths, was set up. The committee oversaw the selection of sites to be considered for commemoration.*

*To demonstrate the historical significance of various sites, the oral history collection was reviewed for relevant information. The committee considered several suggestions of important sites, trails and other aspects of Gwichya Gwich'in culture and history that addressed a wide range of cultural and historical themes.*

*The steering committee decided to focus the proposed commemorative project on a 400 (actually 175) kilometre section of the Mackenzie River, extending from Thunder River, south of the community of Tsiigehtchic, to Point Separation, north of the community. To the Gwichya Gwich'in, this section of the river captures many themes representing the historical and cultural importance of the Mackenzie River. The area also provides an important perspective on the unity of the traditional culture in the precontact period and on the historical experience of the Gwichya Gwich'in after the arrival of European explorers.*

*The Cultural Communities Committee was advised that the community is concerned that this area be commemorated in a way that benefits its members. They feel that priority should be given to commemorative activities such as descriptive plaques, books and multi-media for use in schools, in addition to continued cultural resource mapping and research, and the marking of trails.*

*It was also noted that there are no land claim or protection issues at stake with this proposal since the Gwich'in claim has been settled. Their agreement does not include any list of heritage places to be protected. Their expressed interest in the development of the site is in the area of presentation.*

#### *Recommendation*

*The Committee and the full Board were unanimous in recommending that*

*Nagwichoonjik (the Mackenzie River) between Thunder River and Point Separation is of national historic significance due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape.*

*The Mackenzie River flows through Gwichya Gwich'in traditional homeland, and is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people. The Gwichya Gwich'in express the importance of the river through their oral histories, which trace important events from the beginning of the land to the present. Gwichya Gwich'in history is told through names given along the river, stories associated with these areas, and the experience drawn from these stories. The river acted as a transportation route, allowing Gwichya Gwich'in to gather in large numbers to dance, feast, and play games during the summer. Archaeological evidence supports Gwichya Gwich'in oral histories concerning the importance of the Mackenzie River. Sites along the river*



show extensive precontact fisheries and stone quarries, ensuring Gwichya Gwich'in survival through the centuries.

The Board recommended that this section of Nagwicheonjik be commemorated by means of a trilingual plaque at Tsiigehtchic and that the Program investigate opportunities for the placement of interpretive markers at important cultural nodes along the river.

The Board also recommended that further consultation be conducted with the community in regard to the nature and extent of possible additional commemorative activities.

Finally, the Board expressed its admiration for the important contribution that the community is making in the documentation of its history.

## HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA

### Excerpt from the June, 2002 Meeting

In Committee, Mr. Foster welcomed those present and invited the Committee to turn its attention to the first item on its agenda, Definition of Designated Place and Confirmation of Statement of Commemorative Intent for Nagwicheonjik National Historic Site of Canada (ref.: 2002-05, -05-A).

Nagwicheonjik was designated a national historic site in 1998. Preparation of the Commemorative Integrity Statement for this site requires clarification of designated place and confirmation of the Statement of Commemorative Intent. The Committee deferred its recommendations to its June meeting pending further information, and the record of its decisions is recorded later in these Minutes.

Nagwicheonjik NHSC Revised Statement of Commemorative Intent (ref.: OB 2002-04)

#### Background

At its meeting on April 13, 2002, the committee asked for further clarification of the Statement of Commemorative Intent for this national historic site, and it also asked for further information with respect to establishing a benchmark from which to measure the site's boundaries.

#### Recommendations

*Definition of Place:* The Committee, and the Board after it, clarified that

**the boundaries for Nagwicheonjik National Historic Site of Canada reach 5 km inland from the high water mark recorded at the time of designation on each shore of the Mackenzie River between Point Separation and a point 1 km upstream from the confluence of the Mackenzie River and Thunder River (See also Map, p. 155, Submission Report 2002-05) and,**

**that the benchmark for establishing the boundaries of Nagwicheonjik National Historic Site of Canada is measured from the high water mark recorded from the water reading gauge at Tsiigehtchic in May 1997 (at 16 metres above sea level) by Randy Wedel of Environment Canada, Water Survey of Canada.**

### Nagwicheonjik

Nagwicheonjik (the Mackenzie River) between Thunder River and Point Separation holds a preeminent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape. The oral histories of the people and the names that they gave to the geographical features of this transportation corridor reflect their spiritual and physical relationships with the river. The rich resources along Nagwicheonjik, the heart of the homeland of the Gwichya Gwich'in, include numerous fisheries and stone quarries. These ensured not only the survival but the flourishing of the people through the centuries.

Text approved by the  
HSMBC, December,  
2000.

*Commemorative Intent: The Committee, and the Board after it, recommended*

***that the reasons for the designation of Nagwichoonjik described in the 1997 Minutes of the Board be amended as follows.***

***Nagwichoonjik is of national historic significance because***

- it is prominent as a cultural landscape within the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional territory;***
- it is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people; and***
- 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.***

***At the meeting of the Status of Designations Committee, 13 April, 2002, members asked that the SOCI for Nagwichoonjik be reworked as follows to add reference to the river's valley and add a sentence from page 151 of the volume of Agenda Papers.***

***Nagwichoonjik NHSC***

***Statement of Commemorative Intent (Revised Proposal)***

***Nagwichoonjik was designated a national historic site in 1998. The reasons for designation are:***

***Nagwichoonjik (the Mackenzie River and its valley) between Thunder River and Point Separation, is of national historic significance due to its prominent position within the Gwichya Gwich'in cultural landscape. It is culturally, socially and spiritually significant to the people. 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.***



## *6.2 Preparation and Team for the Commemorative Integrity Statement*

Since 1995, the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI), an organization responsible to the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) for cultural and heritage matters, has worked in partnership with Parks Canada to nominate a national historic site in the Gwichya Gwich'in traditional land use area of the Gwich'in Settlement Area.

Beginning in Tsiigehtchic in October of 1996, the GSCI established a community steering committee of Elders and young adults. At the outset, the Elders were uncomfortable with the idea of identifying and commemorating only one place as a national historic site. The idea that one place on the land was more important than another was considered strange as was the idea that the commemoration of Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture could be represented by a single site. "All the land is important", they said. However, they agreed to participate as they perceived this as a unique opportunity to document and promote Gwich'in culture and history at both the local and the national level. They felt strongly that this commemoration would help to educate both visitors and the children in the local schools about their own history and culture.

As the committee's discussions proceeded, they decided to focus on places closer to the community. They did this so that they could share their culture and history with visitors, yet at the same time retain control and ensure that the community would benefit. Consequently, discussions focused on the Mackenzie River. To the Gwichya Gwich'in, the Mackenzie River is part of their home, as it flows directly in front of their community and through the heart of their traditional homeland. The river has played an important role in their everyday lives, in both a practical and a spiritual sense, for thousands of years. It has served as a trail to access the many different resources along the river, and to other areas in the interior. It has also served as an anchor for many of the stories that provide an insight into the culture and the history of Gwich'in.

Different sites along the Mackenzie River were discussed but committee members decided that their stories, culture, and history would be best understood by incorporating many of these sites into one nomination, encompassing the stretch of the Mackenzie River from Thunder River to Point Separation. By doing this, the Gwichya Gwich'in were able to satisfy their own way of looking at the land as a whole - with people, their cultures and the land intimately intertwined - with the National Historic Site theme of cultural landscapes. Once the committee decided on the Mackenzie River nomination, the paper for the HSMBC was written, weaving together information from oral history, archaeology and ethnohistory sources. The paper - "That river, it's like a highway for us:" The Mackenzie River through Gwichya Gwich'in history and culture - outlined the importance of the river to Gwich'in culture and history, to exploration and to the fur trade, both before and after Canada became a country.

This is in keeping with the recognition by Gwich'in that, although the river has been their home for thousands of years, they have shared it with Euro-Canadians for more than 200 years, beginning with Alexander Mackenzie's trip down the river in 1789. They feel that the history of the river, the longest river in Canada, and among the ten longest rivers in the world, is an important part of the history of Canada. Gwich'in, as one of the original peoples of Canada, have acted as ambassadors for Canada to all travellers who journeyed along this remarkable river. As the title of the board paper indicates, the Mackenzie River has been a "highway" throughout time for many people, crossing many different cultural and social boundaries.

This Commemorative Integrity Statement was prepared by the Tsiigehtchic Community Steering Committee through a community consultation process in Tsiigehtchic and supported by the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute (GSCI). Other participants included Joe Benoit and Tom Williams of the GTC, staff of the Gwich'in Land Use Planning Board and Parks Canada (Western Arctic Field Unit and Western Canada Service Centre).

Initial work on the statement began during the Steering Committee's meetings in September, 1999. To establish the values and messages the Steering Committee carefully considered the contributions from existing oral history material and the results of the continuing oral history project being run by the GSCI. Members of the committee also hosted an overnight trip through the site and brought these experiences back to the meeting rooms. The GSCI staff reviewed the evolution of the CIS and ensured continuing community participation in its development. A final meeting was held in February, 2003 to review the draft CIS, now incorporating the final boundaries of Nagwichoonjik NHSC.

On July 11, 2003 the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada visited the site and unveiled the commemorative plaque

The membership of the Tsiigehtchic Steering Committee has included the following people: Dan Andre, Noel Andre, Beverly Moore, John Norbert, Gabe Andre, Linda Blake, Nap Norbert, Ruby Lennie and Agnes Mitchell.

The Steering Committee Secretariat has included Ingrid Kritsch and Alestine Andre (GSCI) with support from Cathy Cockney (CRM Officer), Ed McLean (Eco-System Manager), David Neufeld (Historian) and John McCormack (Planner) all of Parks Canada.

Text prepared by David Neufeld and Ingrid Kritsch.