

The Development of Community-Based Cultural Research and Management Programs: The Canadian Parks Service (CPS) Experience in the Northwest

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Introduction

The lands claims process in the Canadian north has changed how National Parks and Historic Sites in the region are created and managed. In the western Arctic and Yukon Territory cultural research and management programs in the parks are evolving into a series of cooperative, community-based ventures, largely oral history projects, between regional First Nation organizations, the Canadian Parks Service (CPS), and other interested agencies. The broader ecosystem approach now applied to the planning and management of National Parks also requires the development of longterm, cooperative relationships with regional and community interests.

The objectives of CPS cultural research and management programs have changed to reflect these new demands. Fresh ways of thinking about cultural resources have broadened the cultural resources management sphere of activities for the CPS.

Cultural resources management responsibilities focusing on artefacts have expanded to include the recording of traditional knowledge (oral tradition and oral history). The attention to non-material culture has brought historians and archaeologists into dynamic relationships with living communities. The richness of personal knowledge of sites and artefacts can now be added to the comparative academic record. As community informants share their knowledge, so cultural resource managers have begun to share their responsibility for the protection and interpretation of these resources.

The collection and analysis of traditional knowledge with community informants also builds upon the National Parks' new role in the protection of First Nations' opportunities for the carrying on of traditional lifeways. Thus this information not only addresses CPS planning, interpretive, and management requirements but enhances the community's own ability to develop cultural and education programming for itself and for visitors. And as traditional knowledge becomes better understood, the CPS will be better placed to co-manage

the whole range of park resources with First Nation partners.

The cultural research and management staff work with other CPS professionals to integrate park operations with the host community's life. Collectively, cultural resource research and management programs expand and deepen the network of connections between the CPS and the host community. Research and management program design, implementation, and presentation must reflect this range of responsibilities and opportunities.

Program Methods and Objectives

New northern National Parks require the development of community-based cultural research programs to fulfill CPS cultural resource research and management responsibilities.

A great deal of cultural research has been undertaken in the Canadian northwest. With very few exceptions, the research projects have been designed and managed by professionals from outside the region. A major gap in the research has been the evaluation, collection, and analysis of traditional knowledge from the community. That is, there has been a failure to recognize and appreciate the cultural significance of the community's own perspective on their heritage.

CPS management of new northern parks includes a responsibility for the fostering and support of the sources and method of collecting of traditional knowledge. Park management plans provide for the continuation of traditional social and other community activities such as harvesting. CPS supported cultural research and management programs are based upon a similar recognition of the community's interests in its own heritage.

The cultural researcher's role in the new parks includes both traditional management and community development responsibilities. The identification and protection of cultural resources remains important. However, an effective program also seeks out and supports community cultural research initiatives.

Further, park staff can assist in the development of a community forum for the collection, analysis, debate, presentation, and use of traditional knowledge. These multiple objectives can best be met through a community-based and directed cultural research program.

The development of such a community-based program is not easy. In addition to the obvious challenges of implementing such programs, the CPS has had to change the way it does business. In the past National Park and Historic Site programs have been wholly funded and managed internally to meet CPS-identified objectives. This has meant that scheduling and operations are set to meet Department needs. However, over the last decade the CPS has become increasingly sensitive to community inputs.

Public participation in management planning, thorough-going negotiation in new park establishment, and continuing consultation with the community on regular operations have made the CPS aware of the existence of other interested groups. New programs, particularly in the cultural research area, are geared to take into account the needs of various client groups outside the CPS as well. Usually this means adjusting the scale and schedule of projects to the capacities and timetable of the host community. It also means that project initiation, direction, and presentation are dependent upon community involvement and support.

To meet these many objectives, a significantly different approach to project design and operation is required. Fortunately some excellent lead work has been done by a number of agencies to address these challenges. The Dene Cultural Institute produced their "Guidelines for the Conduct of Participatory Community Research to Document Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) for the purpose of Environmental Assessment and Environmental Management" for the Canadian Environmental Assessment Research Council in April 1991. Also, in the Northwest Territories, the Traditional Knowledge Working Group was established by the Government of the NWT to examine how traditional knowledge could be effectively integrated with government administration and operations. Their *Report of the Traditional Knowledge Working Group* was published in 1991. These works have shaped the following principles which I prepared to guide community-based cultural research and management work.

Principles of Community-based Cultural Research Work

1. Traditional knowledge of the new northern parks is knowledge rooted in the way of life of the aboriginal people. It is the accumulated knowledge and understanding of the human place in relation to the universe, encompassing spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the use of natural resources, and relationships between people. It is reflected in language, social organization, values, institutions, and laws.
2. Oral tradition/history is recognized as a reliable source of information and knowledge. Further, the CPS recognizes the urgency of preserving this traditional knowledge of the north.
3. Traditional knowledge bases must be recognized and actively supported by the CPS in order for them to flourish and endure.
4. Traditional knowledge is best preserved through use.
5. Traditional knowledge concepts depend upon the maintenance of aboriginal language. Traditional knowledge can best be preserved and promoted by aboriginal people.
6. Cultural research services must be delivered according to the manner, values, customs, and knowledge of the people of the community. This can best be assured by involving community members, especially holders of traditional knowledge, in the preparation of cultural research objectives, project design, and operation as well as the preparation of final products.
7. Traditional knowledge must be incorporated into the definition of cultural research work, recognizing that cultural groups are best able to identify holders of their own traditional knowledge.
8. The material culture resources of the National Park must be integrated with oral history in a way meaningful to the community in their recognition and promotion of traditional knowledge, useful to the CPS in their management of all forms of cultural resources, and meaningful to the public, so that they will understand the special character of these parks.
9. Community control of all cultural resource research materials and products must be recognized.
10. Obligations stemming from land claim agreements must be fulfilled.

Work Plan

The CPS has several requirements that must be addressed as its cultural research and management programs are implemented. These are outlined below.

1. The CPS researchers should recognize a community Elders Council or similar organization (or work towards the creation of one), whose members are people acknowledged within the community as holders of traditional knowledge, to provide advice on heritage research work, management, and policy. All research should be coordinated by the community and done in cooperation with other agencies interested in regional heritage. The Council can work with CPS researchers in the development of cultural research projects and products appropriate to the goals and objectives of both the community and the CPS. Partnerships with the community and other interested agencies are crucial elements in the successful implementation of a cultural research plan.
2. In cooperation with the Elders Council, the researchers should prepare joint objectives, identify specific requirements, and plan a research program to fulfil these needs. The project should remain under the direction and control of the community. The work would include such activities as the identification of sites of importance to community members, field survey work of archaeological resources, and the collection of traditional knowledge on natural resource harvesting and use. The final product must also recognize the privacy of the community's interests.
3. Researchers should undertake a literature review of previous cultural research and survey known archaeological and historic resources. Both records-based and field confirmation of sites is usually necessary.
4. Researchers should complete a survey of *noncommunity*-based archival resources, including iconographic, cartographic, oral history tapes, and government and private files.
5. The creation of an accessible community research collection consisting of oral history material, repatriated research data and photographs from outside institutions is essential. This collection becomes a valuable resource which supports future cultural research and provides material for community initiatives, such as language training and educational programmes.

Cultural research and management is central to the CPS entry into a northern community and such work supports the integration of the park operations into the community. The research data, and more importantly the community process in its collection, is the community's heritage. Heritage establishes a continuum between past and present, the living and the dead, and the community and its environment. The CPS operations in the new northern parks are a part of these relationships.

Project Descriptions

These ideas are based upon my four years' work with the Carcross-Tagish First Nation in southern Yukon and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation of the western Arctic. The CPS projects with these two groups are briefly summarized below.

Chilkoot Trail Native Oral History

The Canadian Parks Service, in cooperation with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, is funding a native oral history as part of the development of Chilkoot Trail National Historic Park. The objective of this project is the production of a popular and accessible history of the native use of the Park area.

The native oral history project has been divided into three parts:

- I Project Organization (November, 1990 – March, 1991). To establish an operational framework within the community to support the subsequent operation and direction of the project. Research directions were clarified, research methodologies established, and community field workers were selected and trained. (The dynamic character of community administration made this a particularly challenging job.)
- II Project Research (April, 1991 – March, 1993). To collect and study the rich oral traditions of the Chilkoot Trail region's native people, and to add to this material with documentary and photographic resources from both the community and archive/museum collections, and to produce a research collection.
- III Project Product (April, 1993 – March, 1994). To analyse research data and produce, with the community's input, a final product elaborating on the historic themes important to the native people of the region.

Project Operation

The project is co-directed by a professional team. Sheila Greer (anthropologist) covers the field research for the project, including staff training, theme development, liaison with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, and preparation of field reports. David Neufeld (historian) is responsible for the archival research for the project, liaison with the Canadian Parks Service, and preparation of research reports and a research collection.

Financial and staff resources have been committed to this project by the Canadian Parks Service to provide a basic research infrastructure in the community and undertake a program of field and archival research. The project has been designed to allow for expansion of the research component if additional funding from other groups becomes available.

Project Products to December 1992

- S. Greer, *Pre-Gold Rush Culture: History of the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Park* (Canadian Parks Service, MF 413, 1986). A literature survey and preliminary narrative of native history in the pre-gold rush period.
- 25 hours of interviews with community Elders (with transcripts).
- Collection and organization of some 500 historic photographs.
- Preparation of a detailed regional native history chronology 1870-1897.
- A series of public meetings have been held with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to discuss the project's findings.

Inuit History of the Yukon North Slope

A major component of Ivvavik National Park development is the recognition, understanding, and presentation of Inuvialuit lifeways and use of the park area. The CPS currently has a contract with the Inuvialuit Social Development Program (ISDP), a branch of the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, to undertake a Yukon North Slope Culture History. The contract is part of a larger project, the Yukon North Slope Cultural Resources Survey, operated by the ISDP. The objectives of this larger project are to obtain:

- the Inuvialuit history of the western Arctic
- insights into places and items of Inuvialuit significance
- Inuvialuit camp locations and activities in the region.

In 1988 the Aklavik Community Council prepared a Yukon North Slope cultural research proposal. This was developed and carried forward by the ISDP. The

project has focused on sites in Ivvavik National Park and Herschel Island Territorial Park. A three-phase project development process, similar to that used for the Chilkoot Trail Native History, was implemented, with funding and in-kind support from the CPS, Yukon Territorial Government, the Government of the Northwest Territories, DEWLine contractors, and Inuvialuit communities. A large research collection has been prepared. During 1992 the ISDP is undertaking the preparation of an Inuvialuit history of the Yukon North Slope, indexing of the transcripts, and preparation of a series of technical reports on the research collection.

Project Products to December 1992 ;

- Some 60 hours of interviews with Inuvialuit Elders in Inuktitut, Siglit, and English have been recorded, transcribed, and translated. Many of these interviews were recorded at old camp and hunting sites along the North Slope.
- Computerized index to 1200 pages of transcripts
- The Inuvialuit Communications Society has produced a half-hour television show on the 1990 boat trip along the coast with Elders which was broadcast on CBC North. Several public presentations have kept the host community aware of project progress.
- Nearly 1000 historic and contemporary illustrations of Inuit life, the project operations, and the present state of cultural resources on the Yukon North Slope have been collected from archives/museums and local private collections.
- Several meetings between the project managers and CPS park staff have suggested possibilities of using traditional knowledge in managing park operations.