

GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

# Traditional Knowledge Annual Report



2009-2010

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## Front Cover Photos

(Top left) An elder teaches a group of youth the art of the Dene hand games. *CNWT, ENR Public Education photo*  
(Bottom left) Karis Gruben demonstrates the swing kick at Canada's Northern House during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

*Ian Legaree, MACA photo*

(Right) Mary Ann Vital, a first year Teacher Education student, prepares a sucker fish for the smoking/drying rack during a Spring Culture Camp. *ECE photo*

# *Message from the Minister*



**I**n 1977, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) established a Traditional Knowledge (TK) Policy recognizing Aboriginal traditional knowledge as a valid and essential source of information about the natural environment and its resources, the use of those resources and the relationship of people to the land and one another. The TK Policy acknowledges the need to incorporate TK into government decisions and actions where appropriate.

Although traditional knowledge is already being incorporated into a wide range of GNWT Departmental initiatives, there is opportunity for further implementation. In 2009, a GNWT Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework was developed by the Interdepartmental TK Working Group, setting out direction for government wide implementation. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) also developed its own Departmental Traditional Knowledge Implementation plan.

Since then government departments have worked hard to include traditional knowledge into various programs and services. ENR, as the Department responsible for coordinating these initiatives, worked with the Interdepartmental TK Working

Group to compile all TK initiatives undertaken by the Government of the Northwest Territories. The Traditional Knowledge Annual Report 2009 – 2010 is the culmination of that work.

Elders are the holders of traditional knowledge and their contribution is vital in insuring traditional knowledge is preserved through continued use. It is my hope that the Annual Report will inform the people of the Northwest Territories of the GNWT's work to ensure that traditional knowledge is valued and incorporated into the programs and services that we deliver. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution the Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group has made in guiding the implementation of the TK Policy and producing the Annual Report.

## **J. Michael Miltenberger**

Minister of Environment  
and Natural Resources



Jennifer Bishop, a first year Teacher Education student, proudly displays her handiwork at the spring sucker run in May 2008. *ECE photo*

# Introduction

Whether it's listening to elders share traditional forest management practices, teaching Aboriginal languages and culture in schools or providing culturally relevant care in northern hospitals, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) is committed to incorporating traditional knowledge into its programs and services.

Traditional knowledge is the knowledge and values that have been acquired through experience and observation, from the land or spiritual teachings, and handed down from one generation to another.

The GNWT recognizes that Aboriginal traditional knowledge is a valid and essential source of information about the natural environment and its resources, the use of natural resources, and the relationship of people to the land and to each other.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) is responsible for coordinating government-wide traditional knowledge initiatives.

Working with the Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group, ENR compiled GNWT departments' traditional knowledge initiatives into the Traditional Knowledge Annual Report for 2009-2010. The GNWT recognizes the importance of considering traditional knowledge in its decisions and actions, and continues to build on its efforts to incorporate traditional knowledge into its programs and services.



(Top) An elder demonstrates how to pack a caribou during a Tundra Science Camp. *ENR Public Education, GNWT photo*

(Bottom) Cecilia Chocolate, a Teacher Education student, examines a beaded, smoke-tanned glove on display at a traditional knowledge and Dene/Métis lifestyle presentation. *ECE photo*

# Background

In 1997, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) established a Traditional Knowledge Policy.

The Traditional Knowledge Policy calls upon the GNWT to adhere to the following principles:

- the primary responsibility for the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge lies with Aboriginal people;
- government programs and services should be administered in a manner consistent with the beliefs, customs, knowledge, values and languages of the people being served;
- traditional knowledge should be considered in the design and delivery of government programs and services;
- the primary focus of traditional knowledge research should be the Aboriginal community;
- traditional knowledge is best preserved through continued use and practical application; and
- oral tradition is a reliable source of information about traditional knowledge.

To improve the use of Traditional Knowledge in government programming and service delivery, the GNWT has identified the following strategic initiatives, all of which are addressed in the Traditional Knowledge Policy Implementation Framework:

- better overall government coordination of traditional knowledge Policy implementation;
- more consistent orientation, awareness, and training opportunities relating to traditional knowledge;
- development of stronger and more effective collaborative relationships with the holders of traditional knowledge through their Aboriginal governments, cultural institutes, and resource management agencies;
- greater acknowledgement and promotion of successful traditional knowledge initiatives;
- ongoing departmental support and guidance to personnel when implementing traditional knowledge;

- clear commitment of the resources required to implement the Traditional Knowledge Policy; and
- measures to monitor and report on traditional knowledge implementation initiatives.

## Department Involvement

The GNWT seeks opportunities, whenever possible, that are in keeping with departmental mandates to incorporate traditional knowledge into their programs and services.

For this report, ten departments submitted details on traditional knowledge initiatives undertaken in their department in 2009-2010.

- Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations
- Education, Culture and Employment
- Environment and Natural Resources
- Health and Social Services
- Industry, Tourism and Investment
- Justice
- Municipal and Community Affairs
- Public Works Services
- Transportation
- Human Resources

The following departments and agencies have also participated fully in the Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group and in the development of the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework.

- Executive
- Housing Corporation
- Finance



Teepees on the shore of Great Bear Lake  
in Délı̨nę. *Tawna Brown, DAAIR Photo*

# Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations

The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations (DAAIR) plays a supporting role in implementing the Traditional Knowledge Policy. While DAAIR has limited opportunities to use Traditional Knowledge in its day to day business, the department facilitates and lays the basis for the GNWT and Aboriginal governments to use, preserve and promote Traditional Knowledge through the implementation of Aboriginal rights agreements.

During the negotiation of these agreements, Aboriginal parties submit proposals that are often influenced by Traditional Knowledge. In developing the GNWT's negotiating positions, DAAIR seeks to accommodate these proposals within its overall goal of achieving effective, affordable and workable systems of governance in the NWT.

## *Preserving and Promoting Culture and Tradition*

For example, at land, resources and self-government negotiations, DAAIR has been supportive of proposals by Aboriginal parties that empower them to preserve and promote their culture and traditions. In particular, Délı̨nę Self-Government negotiations have resulted in a proposed structure of government that includes an Elders' Council. The Elders' Council provides a mechanism for the

Délı̨nę government to consider the culture, traditions and Traditional Knowledge of Sahtu Dene Métis of Délı̨nę.

DAAIR, in collaboration with other departments, has developed a Consultation Framework to assist departments when consulting Aboriginal governments or organizations. The Consultation Framework guides departments in setting up consultation processes

that give Aboriginal governments and organizations an opportunity to provide input prior to the GNWT making decisions. The input received from Aboriginal governments in consultation processes can include Traditional Knowledge and important cultural information. The Consultation Framework encourages departments to consider this information when making decisions.



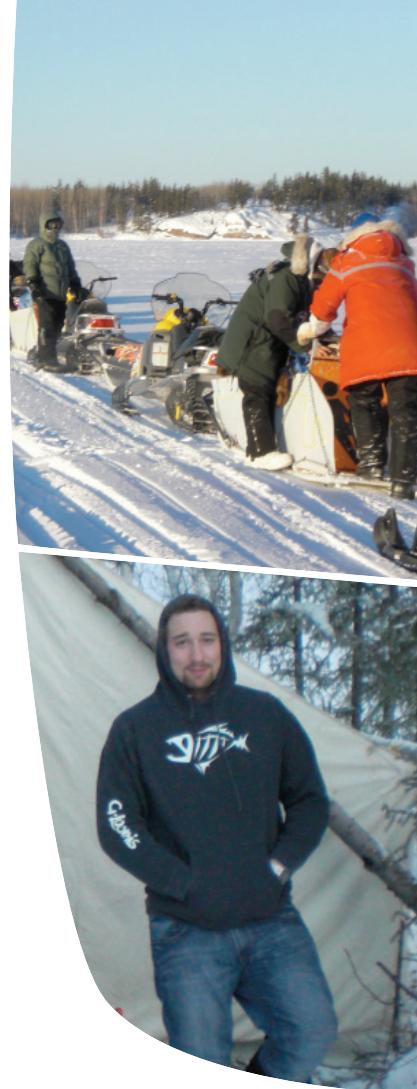
Students of the first year Aurora College Teacher Education Program prepare suckers for the smoking and drying racks at Archie and Emily Smith's camp on the Salt River Settlement during the May 2008 sucker run. *ECE photo*

# Education, Culture and Employment

**E**ducation, Culture and Employment (ECE) plays a vital role in traditional knowledge by ensuring the memories of the past are preserved for new generations to use in the future. traditional knowledge and practices are incorporated into programs and services in a variety of ways.

For example, ECE incorporates traditional methods of observation and research as well as scientific methods in its Adult Literacy and Basic Education program. As well, the NWT Teacher Education Strategy is founded on northern Aboriginal values, which Aurora College and other divisions of ECE use to build a collection and directory of culture-based resources. Through the strategy, funding support is available for a variety of traditional programs.

At the post-secondary level, Aurora College provides traditional knowledge training, promotes cultural understanding and awareness, and on-the-land experiences in programs, such as its Bachelor of Education, Environment and Natural Resources Technology, Aboriginal Language Cultural Instructor, Community Education Preparation, and Social Work programs. It also offers instruction in Aboriginal languages, drum making, mitt making and traditional knowledge camps in everything from trapping to wellness and marine ecosystems. Cultural awareness promotion and support activities, such as bannock and tea events, hand games tournaments, wellness and healing workshops are also an integral part of campus life. Aurora College's Aurora Research Institute was an active participant in traditional knowledge-based research during the International Polar Year, which sought to demonstrate the connections between traditional knowledge and scientific research.



(Top) Students take part in the ENR Technology Program.  
(Bottom) Alan Spencer took part in the Environment and Natural Resources Technology program. *ECE photos*

ECE demonstrates its commitment to traditional knowledge by fully supporting culture and language-based education in early childhood and in the school system. This is reflected in a number of initiatives such as Language Nests, an early childhood development strategy where Aboriginal languages are used for all learning activities for young children. Other programs, like Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit lessons guide the integration of language and culture into curriculum development. As well, NWT schools set aside two days at the beginning of each school year to orient new teachers to the culture of the community in which they are teaching.

By providing funding to regional Aboriginal organizations, ECE also acts upon its commitment to preserve, revitalize, maintain and protect Aboriginal languages. This in turn, preserves and revitalizes traditional knowledge.

The Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre works to preserve, promote and enhance the arts and the cultural heritage of the NWT. Programs are delivered directly, through partnerships with other agencies, and by funding individuals and organizations. These projects range from science camps and cultural projects, to developing, preserving and sharing its collections of photographs, artifacts, clothing and more from across the NWT. The NWT Archives was also active in preserving photographs from across the NWT and audio recordings from the Tłı̨chǫ, Chipewyan, Gwich'in, and North Slavey languages. It also preserved music from well-known South Slave Métis fiddler, Angus Beaulieu.

Museum education programs and activities involved developing travelling exhibits, edukits and delivering school and community programs using traditional Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives. Several exhibits were also opened, updated or hosted in 2009-10, including “Qilalukkat-Beluga Whales”, “Kuukpak: An Exhibition of Inuvialuit Artifacts” and “We were so far away... The Inuit Experience of Residential Schools.” ECE staff worked with traditional knowledge advisors on the museum’s new exhibits.

ECE also provides advice on protecting archaeological resources and manages the archaeological permit system, the Geographical Names Program and territorial historic sites.

Recently, a significant archaeological discovery by ECE archaeologists resulted in a rich partnership between high school students, Dene elders and scientists. It became known as “Hunters of the Alpine Ice: The NWT Ice Patch Study.”

# *Hunters of the Alpine Ice: The NWT Ice Patch Study*



Ricky Andrews studies a 1000 year old ground squirrel snare recovered from one of the ice patches.  
Tom Andrews, ECE Photo

In 1997, a group of sheep hunters in the mountains of the Yukon discovered a black band below a large patch of ice. Upon investigation, they discovered a strong compost smell of caribou dung. In the area, they discovered what turned out to be a 4,300 year-old dart shaft made from birch, with a sinew string. This discovery spawned a new field of archaeology, called Ice Patch Archeology.

For millennia, caribou have travelled to the ice patches on the north face of mountains for heat and insect relief. And where caribou go, the Shuhtaot'ine (Mountain Dene) followed to hunt.

In 2000, with no funding for exploration to find these sites in the NWT, archaeologists used existing satellite imagery and air photos to see if the same thing was occurring in the NWT. A promising site was found in the Tulita District. In 2005, with only four hours of helicopter time, scientists found the remains of a willow bow, which was dated to about 340 years ago. This important discovery led to International Polar Year (IPY) program funding.

ECE partnered with the Tulita Dene Band to conduct the research. In 2007 and 2008, the project sponsored science camps, bringing students, elders and scientists together to share their knowledge and experiences. This allowed scientists a unique opportunity to sit with skilled hunters to discuss how, 500 years ago, armed only with a bow and arrow or a spear thrower and darts, a hunter could successfully harvest caribou in the area.

There are now eight confirmed ice patch sites and another 12 that are being monitored for artifacts. Discoveries include well-preserved bow and arrow technology that is under 1,000 years old and spear throwing technology that dates back as far as 2,400 years ago. One such artifact is a foreshaft, a part of a spear thrower, made of Saskatoon berry wood. This is believed to be the first archaeological finding of Saskatoon berry wood in the NWT.

Science has provided a direct link to the oral tradition of Yamoria, who is famous for chasing the last of the giant beavers out of the NWT. In one story, an elder directed Yamoria to gather Saskatoon berry canes to make arrows.

The Ice Patch Study is of interest to other scientific and traditional knowledge disciplines as well (DNA studies of caribou, parasites, plant, pollen, insects, etc.) which could help assess caribou health over the millennia and hence, affect modern caribou management programs.

To commemorate the end of the IPY research funding, the book *Hunters of the Alpine Ice: The NWT Ice Patch Study* was produced as a special gift for the schools in Tulita and Norman Wells. This book by Tom Andrews, Glen Mackay and Leon Andrew (a respected Tulita elder) is a great example of the power of collaboration.



Robert Alexie Sr. (trapping instructor), Stanley Bonnetplume, Carl Koe and Roger Koe from Fort McPherson relax after skinning a moose during the Rat River/Bear Creek Trapper Training Program in the Richardson Mountains.  
*ENR Inuvik Region photo*

# Environment and Natural Resources

Traditional knowledge is used on a daily basis at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR). The forests, waters and wildlife have always been of great importance to Aboriginal people of the Northwest Territories. ENR actively seeks traditional knowledge from elders, experienced hunters and youth, and incorporates traditional ties to the land and the important connections among our forests, waters and wildlife in its programs, services and legislation.

ENR works with other governments on matters related to its lands, waters, forests and wildlife. "Northern Voices: Northern Waters, NWT Water Stewardship Strategy" highlights knowledge-based decision-making, using traditional knowledge and western science to understand ecosystems. ENR participates in monitoring initiatives designed to track changes in the environment and promotes monitoring programs that include biological indicators as well as physical or chemical indicators. This ensures that early signals of changes to traditionally valued ecosystem components, such as aquatic furbearers and their food are detected. Traditional knowledge helps define the indicators and how they should be monitored. ENR participates in a monitoring program in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, upstream from the important Slave River Delta, a monitoring program with First Nations involvement.

The GNWT is also a member of the Mackenzie River Basin Board (MRBB). The MMRB is completing the next State of the Aquatic Ecosystem Report. The report will include both science-based knowledge and traditional knowledge.



(Top) Jonathon Dillon of Paulatuk skins a fox during the Sitidgi Lake Trapper Training Program, near Inuvik. *ENR Inuvik Region photo*  
(Bottom) A student learns how to scrape hide during an ENR Tundra Science Camp. *ENR Public Education, GNWT photo*

The NWT Protected Areas Strategy (PAS) recognizes that traditional knowledge and conservation science can work together to protect the natural and cultural values of the land. In community meetings, PAS staff and members of the steering committee use translators to ensure the exchange of traditional and scientific knowledge is not lost to either party. Aboriginal communities use their traditional knowledge to identify areas they want to protect through the PAS process. Working groups also use traditional knowledge when making recommendations on boundaries, level of protection and monitoring and management options for the area.

Through the PAS, the GNWT has developed materials that incorporate traditional knowledge. This includes a new website with a section about how traditional knowledge is used in the PAS process. The PAS Grade 7 Lesson Plan and Experiential Science Teacher's Resource Manual interweaves traditional knowledge with western science.

Research projects offer ENR the opportunity to use traditional knowledge. In the North Slave Region, elders and community members help graduate students as they study vegetation and caribou habitat after a fire and during caribou and wolf studies. In the Dehcho, the Boreal Caribou Collaring Project relies heavily on traditional knowledge. Community members and leaders share information on historic caribou movements and how the people used caribou in the past. They also identify areas where they prefer no collaring activity.

ENR uses traditional knowledge in its forest management operations. Traditional harvesting of berries and other plants is incorporated into harvest assessments for some logging applications. Traditional knowledge is used in locating specific stands of trees, identifying the history of local vegetation and organizing logging activity.

As ENR makes fire management decisions, community members provide important information about fire history, trapping areas that were burned, and the subsequent

effects. During fire season, community members advise firefighters about forest conditions. Staff, including firefighters, use traditional knowledge to plan strategies, ensure safety and make tactical decisions about expected wind shifts. Traditional knowledge is used in researching fire history, identifying the effects fire has on the land and on wildlife, in regional planning and in public information sessions.

During site remediation, community members provide knowledge of possible contaminated sites, suggestions on traditional methods used to clean them up and information on traditional values that need to be protected or restored. Traditional knowledge is used to identify sites where contaminants and other environmental damage may not be visible, but exists in the soil.

Traditional knowledge is contributing to a broader understanding of the impacts of climate change. Information passed down through generations provides stark comparisons of a changing climate and how the land, water and wildlife are responding to these changes.

Traditional knowledge is gathered regularly during environmental assessments. During an assessment of a timber cutting application, community members are able to identify areas that are culturally sensitive or spiritually significant.

ENR's Wildlife Division held two workshops in October 2009 in Yellowknife to review information on the status of caribou and discuss options for recovery in the North Slave Region. Each workshop included a presentation on traditional knowledge of caribou cycles, in which community participants shared their Traditional Knowledge. A workshop report was provided to the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board as part of the information provided for the public hearing on the



(Top) ENR staff use traditional knowledge to fight forest fires like this one. *ENR photo*

(Bottom) Robert Alexie Sr. and Roger Koe skin a moose during the Rat River/Bear Creek Trapper Training Program in the Richardson Mountains. *ENR Inuvik Region photo*

joint ENR/Tł'cho Government proposal on management of caribou in Wek'eezhii.

The Wildlife Division also held its annual 10-day cross-cultural Tundra Science camp at the Daring Lake Research Station in late July and early August 2009. The camp provides 12 students and three teachers from across the NWT an opportunity to learn both traditional and scientific knowledge about wildlife, geology, ornithology, archaeology and human history. Respected elders also take part, sharing stories and skills to participants.

In the publication of the State of the Environment Report, traditional knowledge was considered and incorporated.

ENR provided \$25,000 to the Sahtú Renewable Resources Board for the final year of a three-year project to document traditional knowledge about caribou, both barren-ground and woodland. This included a review traditional laws related to respecting caribou.

The Wildlife Division held a workshop with elders from across the NWT in Inuvik in mid-October 2009 to obtain advice on traditional values and practices that should be included in the new *Wildlife Act*. The Act is being reviewed by a working group consisting of ENR, land claim groups, wildlife co-management boards and NWT Métis Nation.

Enforcement officers use education as a method of conservation, and rely on patrolmen and wildlife check station monitors hired from their communities. They work as liaisons between the communities and the region, sharing information on historical animal movements, mineral licks, good fishing spots and campsites to help officers with enforcement patrolling.

When the GNWT created a no hunting zone for Bathurst Caribou, ENR assisted communities to plan and implement hunts to help with resulting hardships. Elders

and hunters played a part in the planning process, reconnaissance surveys and the hunts themselves. In all regions, harvesters regularly report information on diseases, injured/nuisance wildlife and climate change-related events. Hunters discuss animal sightings, routes for access, disease observations, and animal health with ENR staff. Hunters provide personal experiences and stories from elders when sharing their traditional knowledge.

Hunters share their traditional knowledge about travelling on the land, sacred areas, thin ice and traditional use campsites. Traditional knowledge helps to identify which areas have abundant wildlife and game animals.

Trapping programs use traditional knowledge. Trappers provide insight about trapping conditions to ENR staff, both in the office and on the land. Harvesters and officers share their traditional knowledge in trapper training programs. In addition, ENR is an active participant in the Take a Kid Trapping Program with the Departments of Municipal and Community Affairs and Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Traditional knowledge is a major component of on-the-land school activities. At the Bliss Lake camp in the North Slave Region, ENR teaches youth basic emergency



(Left) Students learn traditional Aboriginal games during a Tundra Science Camp. *GNWT, ENR Public Education photo*  
(Right) Stanley Bonnetplume (from left), Robert Alexie Sr. and Roger Koe skin a moose. *ENR Inuvik Region photo*

survival skills, including how to build shelters, set snares, fishnets and traps and how to prepare pelts. Local elders attend the camps to help teach traditional methods. In the Dehcho, students participate in culture and ecology camps and learn about the traditional aspects of forest ecology, medicinal plants, traditional food preparation and wilderness survival. ENR staff, facilitators and elders ensure that traditional and scientific skills are represented in a balanced way.

In the South Slave Region, traditional knowledge is used in schools during on-the-land activities. Officers and elders work together to demonstrate camp set up, harvesting, preparing wildlife for food and storage (i.e. making dryfish and drymeat).

Traditional knowledge is also demonstrated in the South Slave Region at public activities such as Culture Week, where camps/tents are set up near the community for different activities including making dryfish and drymeat, tanning moose hides, setting up emergency shelters and tents, and cooking over a fire. Enforcement officers are active participants during these events.

ENR staff in the North Slave Region distribute harvest calendars to hunters to help collect traditional knowledge. Hunters record their harvests and observations during the year. After the season is over, the harvest numbers are collected in a door-to-door campaign.

# *Fort McPherson Education and Culture Program*



(Top) Tony Green and Joe Ruben make preparations to tie seal skins to racks during a seal skinning program in Paulatuk.  
(Bottom) Ernie Robert from Fort McPherson skins a fox.  
ENR Inuvik Region photos

In the Mackenzie Region, traditional knowledge has always been a part of all conservation education programs. The Hunter Education and Culture Program, developed by ENR's Inuvik Region in 1997, provides youth with an opportunity to learn and experience their culture and language while on the land. The goal of this program is to improve hunting practices among young Aboriginal hunters who harvest from the Porcupine, Bluenose-East, Bluenose-West and Cape Bathurst caribou herds.

With help from respected Fort McPherson hunters and community members, and in partnership with the Tetlit Gwich'in Renewable Resources Council, the Hunter Education and Culture Program was brought to Fort McPherson's youth in September 2008. Over three to five days of on-the-land training and hunting, students learn to hunt safely and responsibly.

The base camp is situated at the site of the Midway Music Festival, making use of the kitchen building, and several frame tents for sleeping. Over the course of the three-day harvest, seven students and several Fort McPherson community members participate in training sessions that incorporate western and traditional approaches. Students learn how to field dress and prepare caribou meat, bear safety, on-the-land survival skills, animal biology, and wildlife management practices. At the most recent program, eight caribou bulls were harvested. The camp was considered a great success and a meaningful learning experience for the students.



Elders from across the NWT learned how to keep active and fit during an Elders in Motion training gathering in Dettah. *HSS photo*

# Health and Social Services

The Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and the regional Health and Social Services Authorities have made great strides in weaving traditional knowledge with western medicine to create a stronger and better health care system.

Community health representatives (CHRs) are the link between a western medical system and traditional Aboriginal communities. Through CHRs, services are delivered in a culturally specific manner.

The Aboriginal wellness coordinator at the Stanton Territorial Health Authority coordinates the Aboriginal wellness program and language interpretation services. A committee of Aboriginal elders provides advice as necessary.

The DHSS official languages consultant regularly provides training and information sessions to DHSS and HSSA staff about Aboriginal languages and the obligations of the HSS system under the *NWT Official Languages Act*.

Funding was provided to the Arctic Health Research Network, now the Institute of Circumpolar Health Research, which was established to find health solutions for Northern communities through the combination of traditional knowledge and western medicine.

Culturally-relevant palliative care standards are also being developed for use in the NWT. The Dene Nation, working with DHSS home care and long term care health planners and authority representatives, is leading the project.

DHSS has approved the use of and begun implementing traditional healing practices in its hospitals and health centres. This includes hiring liaison workers in hospitals, providing cultural awareness training to staff and allowing traditional ceremonies. These initiatives are a result of a review completed in 2005 of how traditional healing practices could be provided in a hospital setting.

Over a number of years, legislation has been passed which incorporates traditional knowledge practices.

For instance, under the *NWT Midwifery Profession Act*, the Midwifery Practice Framework incorporates respect for traditional and cultural birth practices, contributions of traditional midwifery and elders' teachings as part of midwifery practice.

The *Child and Family Services Act* was developed after extensive input from Aboriginal governments and Aboriginal organizations. The act maintains that decisions concerning children should be made with the best interests of children, recognizing that differing cultural values and practices must be respected in those decisions. It recognizes that a child's extended family can often provide important support in meeting the needs of the child. It also provides alternative methods for dealing with child protection concerns outside of the courts. The act promotes direct community and family involvement in the decisions affecting children through various agreements and committees, all of which include traditional knowledge.

The *Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act* recognizes and supports Aboriginal adoption traditions and customs. Custom adoption is a privately arranged adoption between two aboriginal families. There are no social workers or lawyers involved in a custom adoption. Adoption commissioners are appointed in each region. Their role is to make sure the adoption follows aboriginal customs.

Materials have been produced which include traditional knowledge practices to guide health and social services care providers.

A Community Counselling Program Toolkit was developed to include standards, resources and ideas on incorporating traditional healing methods. "The Seasonal Circle of Northern Life: a Different Way of Living Guidelines and DVD" was created with help from Aboriginal groups. These tools are used for orientation and continuing development training for health care providers.



A home support worker provides foot care. HSS photo

## *Traditional Healing in the Dehcho*



A nurse draws some blood from a patient. HSS photo

The Dene Nation, the Dehcho Health and Social Services Authority and DHSS are working together to develop a service model to deliver traditional healing services within the Dehcho.

The Dene Nation secured funding from Health Canada and developed the partnership to develop this service.

One major part of the project is to provide western medical and social services practitioners with orientation, training and experiences in Dene culture and traditional medicinal practices.

This will help clients and western medical practitioners develop and experience an evolving working environment that will be more aware and sensitive to the culture of the majority of the population in the Dehcho. Outcomes of the project are expected to increase the health status of the region through greater cultural competence and safety.

One of the outcomes of the project will be an operations manual detailing policies, procedures and protocols. Copies will be made available to all health authorities in the NWT. Once they receive it, it will be for each region in the NWT to work with this model to make it culturally relevant for their respective regions.



Traditional beadwork.  
Aidan Cartwright, ITI photo

# Industry, Tourism and Investment

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) works in partnership with others to provide quality programs and services that promote and support Northwest Territories economic prosperity and community self-reliance. ITI aims to improve local traditional economies and provide residents with the opportunity to pursue traditional livelihoods.

The preservation of the culture and traditions of Aboriginal peoples in the NWT is important to ITI. By incorporating traditional knowledge into the department's various traditional economy, tourism and resource development programs and strategies, ITI is able to support the sharing of traditional practices and knowledge. Traditional knowledge holders have helped ITI support traditional lifestyles, promote the NWT's unique culture and foster a sustainable traditional economy.

ITI funds and supports a number of programs designed with traditional knowledge holders related to hunting, trapping, fishing and harvesting. Many of these programs support the continuation of traditional harvesting practices, and the promotion of the local arts and crafts trades. In many respects, with the help of traditional knowledge holders, these programs serve as a link between the traditional and modern economies. This is an important link to ensuring a sustainable future for Aboriginal peoples, who can continue to gain economic benefits from practicing their traditional lifestyles.



(Top) Birch-bark baskets by Karen Cumberland of Fort Liard.  
(Bottom) This doll created by Suzá Tsetso was showcased at the "Sewing Our Traditions" exhibition in Richmond, B.C. along with other northern dolls.  
*Aidan Cartwright, ITI photos*

ITI has provided funding and support to the following traditional economic initiatives:

- Genuine Mackenzie Valley Furs – ITI provides NWT trappers access to the international fur auction market for fur harvested in the NWT, and actively markets and promotes fur at international venues through partnerships with other harvesting jurisdictions and the private sector.
- Trapper Training Workshops - ITI provides trappers knowledge about NWT trapping regulations, trap standards, technology and pelt handling.
- Local Wildlife Committees - ITI provides funding to recognized local wildlife committees to help offset a portion of administrative costs and to assist in the delivery of related services and support to traditional harvesters.
- Community Harvesters Assistance Program - ITI provides annual funding to local wildlife committees to be distributed to harvesters to help with capital and operating costs.
- Western Harvesters Assistance Program – ITI provides one-time contributions to local and regional Aboriginal organizations to assist and promote renewable resource harvesting.
- Take a Kid Trapping Program - ITI leads the delivery of this program designed to introduce youth to the traditional harvesting practices of hunting, trapping, fishing and outdoor survival.
- Trapper Recognition Program - ITI administers an awards program to support and encourage the use of traditional skills and knowledge to provide economic benefits for residents of the NWT.

The following awards are given annually:

- The Top Producer Award
- The Lifetime Achievement Award
- The Youth Trapper Award
- The Top Youth Trapper NWT Award

A valued reflection of the culture and history of the NWT's Aboriginal peoples, the production of traditional arts and fine crafts is also an important element of the Northwest Territories' economy and one ITI supports.

ITI works through this vibrant cottage industry to promote economic activity in smaller communities and expand and diversify sectors like tourism and the traditional economy. Using skills learned over the centuries, Aboriginal craftspeople and artisans are supported to make and market unique northern items that reflect their culture and heritage.

In supporting NWT arts and crafts, ITI recognizes the importance of traditional knowledge and the economic potential of the NWT arts and fine crafts industry. ITI also supports marketing and promotional efforts, nationally and internationally, by raising awareness of the importance and value of traditional fine arts and crafts in the NWT. ITI also offers continued support for regional festivals and art displays.

Funding and support from ITI to local artisans is provided through the following initiatives:

- Arts and Crafts Database – ITI provides members of the NWT's arts community with the opportunity to showcase their made-in-the-NWT products to national and international markets.
- The NWT Branding Logo Program – ITI has created a distinctive NWT Arts logo that identifies made-in-the-NWT arts and fine craft products.
- The NWT Arts Strategy – ITI recognizes the important role that arts and fine crafts plays in both our society and our economy, and demonstrates the GNWT commitment to take action to address identified issues and opportunities in this sector.
- Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development – ITI provides funding for self-employment activities aimed at traditional economy, arts, film, etc.

Each regional office has funding available to promote cultural aspects of its local communities through ITI's Cultural Interpretation Initiative. In parks across the NWT, community members with traditional knowledge assist in the development of interpretive displays and trails. Parks often have interpretive signs that explain why a site is important, whom the site is named for and the history of the area and its people. All interpretive displays and trails are developed with the guidance of traditional knowledge holders from the respective community.

Recent improvements at the Twin Falls Territorial Park were developed with the help of the K'at'odeeche First Nation. Additions to the park include the Aunty Ann Medicine Walk Trail, from Escarpment Creek to Louise Falls, and interpretive displays on traditional plant use, Dene laws, Aboriginal sports, and the Legend of Twin Falls. Other work has started, with the help of the Ka'a'gee Tu First Nation, on a traditional historical trail from Great Slave Lake to Tathilina Lake, via Kakisa Lake.

Another example of traditional knowledge use at ITI is in the Diavik Socio-Economic Agreement (SEA). The Diavik Communities Advisory Board (DCAB) was set up under the SEA to ensure that all employment and training opportunities at the mine are balanced by preserving traditional lifestyle and culture. DCAB is made up of representatives from the GNWT, Diavik Diamond Mines, Behchokǫ̀, Gamètì, Whatì, Wekweètì, Detah, N'dilo, Łutselk'ę, the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and the North Slave Métis Alliance. Board members monitor, evaluate and report on the impacts of the mine on key areas such as traditional economy, cultural well-being and the use of traditional skills, languages, country foods and cultural activities. They also report on and discuss the cross-cultural training needs of employees and the cross-cultural training programs funded by Diavik Diamond Mine.

# *Take a Kid Trapping Program*



A student inspects a trap during the Take a Kid Trapping Program in Sahtu. *Guy Erasmus, ITI Photo*

The Take a Kid Trapping Program introduces youth to traditional harvesting practices and other skills. This ITI program is delivered through schools and Aboriginal organizations. The Departments of Municipal and Community Affairs and Environment and Natural Resources are contributing partners to the program. Aboriginal instructors share traditional knowledge while demonstrating and incorporating visits to traplines, hands-on experience setting traps, snares and fishnets, traditional life skills, conservation teaching; and best practices in preparing pelts for market.

Since 2007, almost 4,000 youth have participated in 95 projects. Six students from Charles Tetcho School in Trout Lake took part in one such camp at Black Duck Creek. There, students learned about the importance of listening on the land, different kinds of traps, and safety practices associated with responsible trapping. Students harvested rabbits and learned how to prepare the meat. On the last day of camp, students demonstrated their new skills by preparing rabbit stew for members of the community. The camp was taught with the assistance of trappers from the Sambaa K'e Dene Band, and in partnership with the Sambaa K'e Development Corporation.

The Take a Kid Trapping Program includes other traditional skills such as canoe building. The Liidlii Kue First Nation, in partnership with the Take a Kid Trapping Program, put on a traditional skills workshop in Fort Simpson in June and July 2009. Under the expert instruction of birch bark canoe builder Aaron York of Cold Lake, Alberta, youth built a traditional Slavey-style birch bark canoe from raw materials.

The Take a Kid Trapping program can be a precursor to more in-depth trapper training programs and is consistent with principles outlined in the NWT Wildlife Act, the NWT Trapping Regulations and the Agreement on International Humane Trap Standards. The delivery of this program is also consistent with the objectives of the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Marketing Strategy.



Two Justice staff members perform a smudging ceremony in the healing room of the North Slave Young Offenders in Yellowknife. *DOJ photo*

# Justice

**T**he justice system in the NWT has changed greatly over the years. The Department of Justice is mandated to provide policing and corrections services. These services are provided in a way that respects community and Aboriginal values and encourages communities to take an active role in preventing crime and re-offending.

All correctional facilities have a designated space for healing circles and other traditional activities that aid rehabilitation and healing. Elders were consulted in the design of both Yellowknife correctional centres. As well, traditional counsellors at the North Slave and South Mackenzie Correctional Centres provide one-on-one counselling, group counselling and support for various healing programs and initiatives. They also lead daily sweet grass ceremonies. Aboriginal Days are celebrated in each facility and annual harvesting of traditional healing plants can also be incorporated into correctional programs.

Wilderness camp programming also helps renew the offender's links with the land and cultural values, practices and traditions. Activities include canoeing, plant and animal identification, counselling on the land, fleshing and cleaning moose hides and trapping.

The Correctional Northern Recruitment Training Program, provided to all new correctional staff, includes a section on cultural awareness and diversity. The traditional liaison officers, or an elder from the community, will discuss traditional values and knowledge with recruits. New staff are oriented to the traditional programming used in their facility.



(Top) The North Slave Youth Offender Facility.  
(Bottom) The Justice Department offers wilderness camp experience to help offenders rehabilitate and reconnect with their culture. *DOJ photos*

At youth correctional facilities, weekly cultural information sessions, seasonal cultural camps, sharing circles, traditional cooking programs, igloo-building workshops, and Dene hand games are incorporated into programs and services provided at each facility.

A Reintegration Demonstration Project in the South Mackenzie region provides additional support to offenders to use Aboriginal traditions. This programming may take place entirely in an Aboriginal language. As part of the project, correctional staff in the South Mackenzie region draw on each offender's cultural traditions to provide additional community support. Community reintegration teams typically include community leaders, elders, justice committees and various community members identified by the offender. Traditional ceremonies are at times used with the offender and community members to further support reintegration. The case management team and community reintegration team meet monthly with the offender to discuss progress, identify concerns and develop release plans. Often, members of the Community Reintegration Team choose to talk with the offender in his or her own language.

Activities that encourage the use of traditional knowledge have also been incorporated into Community Corrections programs. Case plans can give offenders time on the land or the opportunity to engage in traditional activities like chopping wood for elders or assisting at feasts and traditional dances. New staff who are not from a northern community are encouraged to spend time with respected local elders to become familiar with the culture and the community they are working in. Regional staff meetings are also sometimes held on the land or in smaller communities. These on-the-land meetings allow staff to become more familiar with the community and its traditions. In Inuvik and Fort McPherson, Corrections staff participate in, launch and promote Gwich'in wellness programs.

Community justice committees are active in almost all communities. These committees promote developing an alternative justice system using a restorative approach. Communities may also choose to undertake healing or crime-prevention activities. Most include elders, and Aboriginal languages are used whenever appropriate and possible. Some cases can be dealt with outside the court system,

so that the offender does not have a criminal record. The offender will go before the committee, talk about the crime and find a way to make amends to the community. These "diversions", as they are known, may be done in Aboriginal languages.

Information for crime victims is available in all Aboriginal languages. Victim Services encourages clients to use traditional spiritual practices wherever appropriate. In 2006, the Yellowknife Victim Services Worker was honoured with a Wise Woman Award, in part for her use of traditional practices in counselling victims. A new program for men who use violence in intimate relationships is being developed. The interagency committee overseeing the program design has identified cultural considerations so that the program meets the needs of Aboriginal clients.

## *Wilderness Camps*



Once screened and approved, some offenders can spend part of their sentence at wilderness camps like this one near Fort Good Hope. Justice photo

Wilderness camps in the NWT Corrections system were first established more than 10 years ago as a way for offenders to reconnect with their Aboriginal heritage, reflect and hopefully heal. In some cases, after the initial observation and screening period, entire sentences are spent on the land.

A year-round camp was developed in Fort Smith. Traditional activities such as canoeing, hunting, trapping, preparing caribou and moose hides and setting nets for fishing are all part of activities that offenders learn. Contractors with extensive Traditional Knowledge, as well as mandatory first aid and other skills, operate the camp.

There's also a wilderness camp in the Sahtu region, on the Mackenzie River.

A Fort Good Hope elder, who is also an alcohol, drug and grief counselor, operates the camp. Since 2006, this six-week program targets two offenders at a time, offering a great deal of one-to-one time with the counsellor as offenders relearn life on the land. These camps offer a chance for the offenders to get reacquainted with Traditional Knowledge and living on the land.

One young man said attending the camp had given him a second chance to be Aboriginal again. He explained he was hesitant at first, feeling he would be judged because he had forgotten how to shoot a rifle, harvest a caribou – even drive a snowmobile. But, after being in the camp for several weeks, he reconnected once more to life on the land.



Fred Mandeville shows his son some trapping techniques. *Fred Mandeville photo*

# Municipal and Community Affairs

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' (MACA) vision is to support capable, accountable and self-directed community governments providing a safe, sustainable and healthy environment for community residents.

MACA's activities fall under the following functions: Land Administration, Office of the Fire Marshal, Emergency Management, Consumer Affairs, Licensing, Legislation, Community Governance support and advice, and Sport, Recreation, Youth and Volunteerism.

While MACA does not deliver any immediate traditional knowledge programs, traditional knowledge is considered in the delivery of a number of its programs and services. Traditional knowledge plays an integral role in MACA's involvement in sport, recreation and community government.

The School of Community Government offers a variety of courses in governance, management, lands and recreation that incorporate traditional knowledge. Many certificate programs offered through the school identify traditional knowledge as a competency. For example, the Northern Recreation Leadership, Northern Recreation Activities and Traditional Games, and Sports Coaching modules of the Community Recreation Leadership Program specifically include traditional knowledge components. In addition, training and development coordinators are available to help community governments plan and build capacity using traditional knowledge.



(Top) Inuvik region students build a snow cubby fox trapset during the Take a Kid Trapping Program. *ENR photo*

(Bottom) Cory Jumbo and Donavan Punch of Trout Lake stand in front of a beaver lodge during the Take a Kid Trapping Program. *Doug Villeneuve photo*

During community consultations or meetings on infrastructure and environmental planning, community members often share their traditional knowledge. MACA's Community Operations staff work to include and accommodate involvement of elders during consultations about new initiatives, programs, policies and legislation. Furthermore, charter communities may structure their council and their decision-making processes so that they follow traditional governance customs, models and approaches.

With the implementation of the New Deal, MACA's role and involvement in community infrastructure has changed. Now, municipal governments take the lead in planning for their infrastructure, so that traditional knowledge can continue to be woven into the fabric of the community.

MACA consults with Aboriginal organizations in unsettled land claim areas when considering leasing or selling Commissioner's Land. Interim Measures Agreements allow Aboriginal organizations to include and use traditional knowledge when bringing forward recommendations.

When proposing new policy initiatives, MACA takes steps to consult with Aboriginal organizations, and is respectful of recommendations put forward that are based on traditional knowledge.

Traditional knowledge also plays a role in land use planning. The use of traditional knowledge can result in the particular design of a community, using information based on family groupings and historical uses of the land. Traditional knowledge is used when naming and identifying areas in a community, explaining the importance of sites, encouraging or prohibiting certain activities in certain areas (for example areas for picking berries), or allowing for the traditional structures (teepees) on residential lots.

The use of traditional knowledge studies has become common practice for resource development projects. For example, the environmental assessment

of the Mackenzie Gas Project (MGP) was a public process and relied heavily on traditional knowledge. As a result, MACA and other GNWT departments were able to use traditional knowledge when responding to MGP-related issues. Access to traditional knowledge from community hearing transcripts was valuable in developing the Government's Response to the Joint Review Panel Report.

At the Sport, Recreation and Youth Division, Fun (with a capital "F") is injected into traditional knowledge. The division supports and encourages youth to step into leadership roles, try them on, and see how well they fit.

For example, the Youth Centres Initiative encourages and supports NWT youth activities that encourage positive lifestyle choices in their communities. MACA encourages and supports the development, promotion and delivery of traditional Aboriginal youth activities to help preserve and strengthen northern Aboriginal cultures and traditions. The Youth Contributions Program helps fund activities such as traditional Aboriginal cultural events, school-related extracurricular activities, trips, and the development of youth-related organizations.

Examples of projects funded under the Youth Contributions Program that include traditional knowledge elements include: Summer Language Camp (Paulatuk), Youth Drumming Workshop (Tsiigehtchic), Fish Harvesting Project (Fort Good Hope), Fish camp (Gamèti) or the Spring Fish Camp (Fort Smith).

The NWT Youth Corps Program helps organizations offer structural and varied programs providing outdoor, cultural, environmental, educational, work, life and personal growth experiences that challenge, engage, reward and recognize youth. Some examples of projects funded under the NWT Youth Corps are the Arctic Youth Leadership Program, Kole Crook Fiddle



(Top) Students at Kalemi Dene School take part in the Take a Kid Trapping Program. *Guy Erasmus, ITI photo*

(Bottom) Murphy Tinqui of Behchoko sets a lynx snare. during the Take a Kid Trapping Program. *Dave Frazer photo*

Camp, Northern Youth Abroad (co-funded by ECE), Science Camps, trips along traditional travel routes, the Youth Traditional Arts Program (Fort McPherson), the Ivavik Field Program (Inuvik), Walking in Both Worlds (Fort Liard), Naxehcho Youth and Elder Gathering (Fort Simpson), and the Tłı̨chǫ Traditional Caribou Conservation Program (Behchokǫ). Traditional knowledge is an integral aspect in all funded programs.

The Aboriginal Sport Circle of the NWT (ASC NWT) promotes and enhances community wellness and cultural awareness through sport and recreation. ASC NWT works with the National Aboriginal Sport Circle of Canada to promote and deliver courses using the Aboriginal Coaching Manual, North American Indigenous Games (NAIG), Tom Long Boat Awards, Aboriginal Coaching Awards, National Aboriginal Hockey Championship, and other Provincial/Territorial and National Sport Body Initiatives.

## *Inuit and Dene Games at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games*



Dene Hand Games at Canada's Northern House during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. *Ian Legaree, MACA photo*

Inuit and Dene Games demonstrate the strength of Aboriginal culture and show traditional ways people used to have fun on the land. Today, the games are an important vehicle for transmitting these traditional values to the younger generations. MACA sponsored Inuit and Dene Games athletes to demonstrate their traditional sports as part of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics and Paralympic Winter Games Traditional Games Program. This program was organized through MACA, in partnership with the Northern Games Society and the Aboriginal Sport Circle of the NWT.



(Top) Matthew Anikina demonstrates the two foot high kick at Canada's Northern House during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games

(Bottom) Dene Drummers perform at Canada's Northern House during the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games. *Ian Legaree, MACA photos*

Attending and performing at the Vancouver Olympic Games, like all ideas of greatness, began with a dream. In 2005, a delegation from MACA went to an annual meeting of all Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Ministers across Canada. One of the guest speakers was John Furlong, CEO of the Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC), who talked about the committee's desire to make the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics truly "Canada's Games." He spoke of a vision of an event where every province and territory would be an active participant. What could it mean for the NWT? How exciting would it be if a way could be found to somehow showcase traditional Dene and Inuit Games? And how great would it be to bring NWT youth as volunteers to Vancouver in 2010?

At that time, it seemed like an impossible dream, but over the next two years, MACA staff worked with their colleagues in Nunavut and the Yukon to promote pan-territorial participation at the 2007 Canada Winter Games in Whitehorse. The Youth Ambassadors program was born and traditional games took on a greater focus. In 2007, an agreement was signed with VANOC to promote pan-northern participation during the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Three more years of hard work and preparation made that dream a reality. In all, a delegation of 23 Dene and Inuit Games athletes and 34 Youth Ambassadors attended the Games. The idea behind the program was to provide selected NWT youth with an opportunity to build leadership skills through volunteer assignments at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, and in doing so act as youth ambassadors for the NWT at the Games.

Part of the traditional games demonstrations included "Street Teams."

These teams were made up of traditional games demonstrators and members of a marketing team. Their job was to promote Canada's Northern House and the North. They travelled to busy venues in downtown Vancouver and demonstrated a variety of traditional games to wow the crowd, bombard spectators with postcards about the North, and encourage people to try out the games. Dene Games included: finger pull, pole push, stick pull, and hand game. Inuit Games included: one-foot high kick, two-foot high kick, Alaskan high kick, knuckle hop, airplane, head pull, musk-ox Fight and the famous blanket toss.

Each day, an e-newsletter was published on "proud2bnwt.ca", a GNWT website for youth. Dene and Inuit games athletes, youth ambassadors and others shared their experiences.

One such entry, by Andy McKay, sums up why featuring the Inuit and Dene Games at the Olympics was such an important experience for our leaders of tomorrow:

*"Wow! What a week! I'd just like to share a couple of stories that have made my Olympic experience one to remember. The day we went to Grouse Mountain to demonstrate the Dene Games will stand out in my mind for a while. As we were demonstrating the pole push and were persuading the public to participate, a few people from Uganda, Africa, joined in to try the game. They managed to win the only push they participated in, and the joy in their faces made me feel proud to be Dene. They all seemed to enjoy themselves.*

*To see our Dene Games being enjoyed by so many children made me feel like it was all worthwhile."*



A look into the courtyard of the new Territorial Dementia Facility. *PWS photo*

# Public Works and Services

The Department of Public Works and Services has participated fully in the Interdepartmental Traditional Knowledge Working Group and in the development of the GNWT Traditional Knowledge Implementation Framework.

Traditional knowledge is always considered during the review and consultation process related to the

development of or access to any new or existing gravel pit or quarry. The regulatory board or agency will not issue a land use permit unless First Nation communities have reviewed and approved the request. This process was followed recently when PWS accessed existing granular sources near Nahanni Butte and Colville Lake and when it established a new granular site near Trout Lake.

While PWS does not have specific programs for the use of traditional knowledge, it incorporated traditional knowledge when developing and updating the 2009 edition of Good Building Practice (GBP) for Northern Facilities.

## *Good Building Practice for Northern Facilities*

The Good Building Practice (GBP) guidebook provides information on designing and constructing quality buildings for the NWT. Several sections emphasize the use of traditional knowledge.

For instance, community history, activities and priorities are important considerations when choosing a site and designing a new building.

The GBP emphasizes that the building must incorporate recognizable local symbols and its form and structure should

complement other traditional and community buildings. It also notes that the building should allow occupants to continue local traditions of access and use.

Using community knowledge on climate and geography is another important element in the GBP.

Community members will also recognize sites which are unsuitable for building on, due to wetness or instability.

Community members with traditional knowledge can point out

sites which are sacred sites, gathering places or favourites for fishing or hunting. Snow-drifting, spring thawing and flooding patterns are other important items for a builder to learn from the community.

The GBP also notes traditional knowledge in its emphasis on sustainability and energy efficiency.

Well-built and energy-efficient buildings that minimize the use of fossil fuels use less resources and therefore preserve the land and water for future generations.



Crews work on the Marion Lake ice road in the Tłı̨chǫ region. *DOT Photo*

# Transportation

Gathering traditional knowledge is a regulatory requirement for acquiring approvals in some regions of the NWT. When the Department of Transportation (DOT) needs to build highways, bridges or ice roads, it too must go through the regulatory process.

Reflecting traditional knowledge in permit and licence applications is only required in the settlement regions, such as the Sahtú and the Inuvialuit Settlement Region. However, the Department of Transportation strives to use traditional knowledge across the territory, wherever it can identify the appropriate traditional knowledge holders.

Traditional knowledge can provide DOT with valuable information during project/program planning and regulatory processes.

Local people and elders can identify seasonal trends and wildlife behaviour. They can provide information on freeze/thaw cycles, permafrost locations and even gravel sites. They can also provide insight into areas supporting traditional use, so that such activities are impacted as little as possible by DOT works.

DOT uses that information to characterize wildlife or fisheries habitat, which at times can be invaluable.

For instance, DOT was studying locations for a culvert. The department had ruled out one location as it initially appeared to be



(Top) Department of Transportation crews travel the ice road on Marion Lake during its construction phase. *DOT Photo*  
(Bottom) Department of Transportation staff consult with Wekweèti elders. *Cheryl Digness, DOT photo*

a good fish habitat. However, after meeting with a local elder, it turned out to be anything but. The elder told DOT personnel that there were no fish there, and that it would be a good site for a culvert. Upon further exploration, it turned out the river went underground about 5-6 km from the location, and thus not habitable by fish.

By talking with members of the community in meetings and one-on-one, DOT gathers information, transcribes it and submits it along with its permit and/or licence application. The Department also informs project and program personnel, in order that relevant information can be incorporated into design and operational decision-making.

# *Building the Mackenzie Valley Ice Road*



A plow puts the finishing touches to the ice road on Marion Lake. DOT photo

When preparing for the winter road season along the Mackenzie River, the Department of Transportation (DOT) engaged community leaders in Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake to identify traditional knowledge holders in the area.

DOT required water and land use permits for the winter roads. Interviews with elders and traditional knowledge holders proved invaluable in identifying appropriate sites along the winter road that could be used to extract water for flooding and spraying.

Through one-on-one interviews and group meetings, the traditional knowledge holders identified culturally sensitive areas, fish habitats, wildlife routes and even levels of water.

They provided information on when to start building the road and when to maintain it, and where the best locations for water extraction were. That information was used to ensure proper maintenance of the road throughout the season.

# Human Resources

**D**uring the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the GNWT released "20/20: A Brilliant North", the NWT Public Service strategic plan. The plan recognizes the importance of an inclusive public service that accurately reflects the diversity of the north and fosters understanding between cultures. A priority of the plan is the promotion of cross-cultural awareness opportunities for all employees.

A framework for a government-wide Cross Cultural Training Program was also approved. The framework sets out the GNWT's desire to increase Aboriginal cultural awareness and diversity awareness in the workforce. A Cross Cultural Awareness Program will be developed in 2010-2011 and will have a number of components including on-the-land traditional knowledge education opportunities for GNWT employees.



Dene drummers in Fort Smith. GNWT photo

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.

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contactez-nous.

Kīspin ki nitawihtin ē nīhiyawihk ōma  
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