

Tłıchọ Ewò Kòñhmbàa

**The Dogrib
Caribou Skin Lodge**



An Exhibit

**Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
June - September 1998**

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navigating Great Bear Lake in the fall and of the possibility of being stopped by ice. He said also that there are many portages on the route to the Coppermine but could not say how many. At the close of his talk he seemed to apologize for talking of so many difficulties. E.A. Preble, Diary, July 27, 1903

July 27, 1903 Had a conference with the Bear Lake Chief a man of a good deal of intelligence. He promised to try to get men to go with me and showed on the map the approximate route to the Coppermine and also from the river to Bear Lake where the rapids a chain of three lakes are passed through. He spoke of the lateness of the season and the difficulty of navigating Great Bear Lake in the fall and the possibility of being stopped by ice. He also said that there are many portages on the route to the Coppermine but could not say how many. At the close of his talk he seemed to apologize for talking of so many difficulties.

Dq Wìzì Łq A Man of Many Names

Tłıchq hazq K'aawidaa gıhdı, dene wegqo nāzede-dē k'ē wita. Yahtı t'a Francis Yambi eyıts'q Eyambi gıhdı lē. Hudson Bay gha k'aawı t'a Sahtı Kw'ahtı-dē gıhdı lē. Frank Russell wenıht'ē k'ē "Naohmby" yehdı t'a yızı lē. Godı get'ē dq lq eyıts'q k'aawıa haanı eyıts'q yahtı-kō enıht'ē eyıts'q Tłıchq godı hazq ładı gızı t'a Sahtı Kw'ahtı-dē gıhdı amē lē nezi wek'ēhōdzq ha dii.

To the Dogrib he was known as K'aawidaa, or 'highest trader', reflecting his status as a trading chief. The church knew him as Francis Yambi, or Eyambi. The Hudson Bay traders called him Bear Lake Chief. Frank Russell referred to him in his published works as "Naohmby, The Bear Lake Chief." The variety of names in the historical literature, trade and church records, and in Dogrib oral tradition makes Bear Lake Chief a difficult person to trace.

Toby Kochilea's Father	Grave marker at Lac Ste. Croix
Gochiatā	Elders in Rae Lakes
Francis Yambi	Grave marker; Rae Church records
Eyirape	Fort Norman Church records
Francis Eyambi	Fort Norman Church records
Bear Lake Chief	HBC records; Hislop and Nagle Account Book
K'aawidaa	Elders in Rae Lakes and Rae
Naohmby, The Bear Lake Chief	Frank Russell

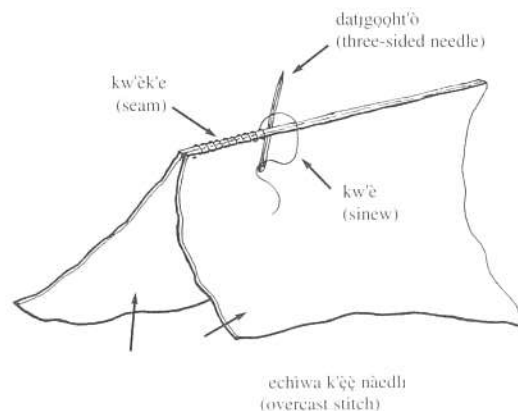
Ekwòwò Kònjhmbàa Hohle Making Caribou Skin Lodges

Ewò taino?ò t'à kònjhmbàa hohle hq't'e. Ehts'o-k'e-yatì-zà eyits'q Ezqdzè-zà k'è nidè ewò nezì t'a ekiye ewò gha nàgeze. Ts'èko hazq elexè kònjhmbàa k'e eghàlageda. Ekwichò t'à ewo gehwhe eyit'akq mqt'a dawhechì ageh?ì. Ewò hazq nezì elexè nàgeli, sadzè lq wets'q wek'ehowhì hq't'e.

Ts'èko kònjhmbàa ghq nqgìt'e dè, qhda jìle wha ehtsì gha hagiìhdi. Dene jìle kò gots'q detlà, nasì gha weghq shèts'eze naehdi. Kònjhmbàa goò hoòlì eyits'q ts'èko hòt'o eghàlajda gha nasì hohle. Elizabeth Mackenzie, Kaàwidaà wesa-dè.

Over thirty caribou hides were needed for a large lodge. Caribou were hunted in October and November when their hides are in the best condition. The women of a camp worked together to make a caribou skin lodge. The hides were tanned in a solution made from caribou brains, and were hung to be bleached by the sun. Sewing, using a very fine stitch, took many hours.

When they were finished the women would ask an older man in the camp to cut poles for the lodge. It was considered an honour to cut the poles. One of the men would travel to the trader's fort to get supplies. When he returned they would hold a feast and dance to celebrate the new lodge and the women's hard work. Elizabeth Mackenzie, Great Niece of Kaàwidaà



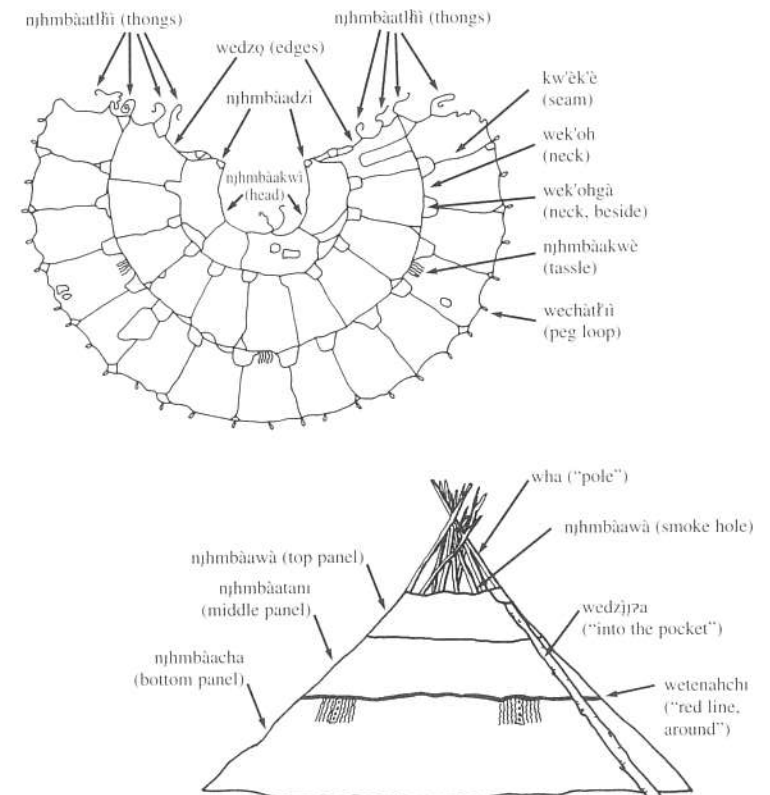
Edanì Kònjhmbàa Hohle Lodge Design

Taì ets'ahmq elexè nàgeli t'à kònjhmbàa hohle hq't'e. Ewò wek'è jìle nàjza dè, eyì ladì ageh?ì. Kònjhmbàa yì kò dek'q t'à ewò ejiedo lat'ì. Kònjhmbàa 5 - 8 xo gots'q wet'à ageh?ì jìle.

Wek'ohgà t'à njhmbàa chè elexè naehdli ageh?ì. Tìjchq k'è wek'ohgà gedì dè, wek'oh gha gots'q ewò agihdi.

The lodge was sewn in three semi-circular panels. Sections of the lodge were replaced when they became worn or damaged. Lodges would acquire their rich brown colours through use and would last an average of five to eight years before being replaced.

The scalloped inserts sewn at regular locations along the lower two panels compensate for the neck of the caribou. In Dogrib these are called wek'ohgà, meaning "beside the neck."



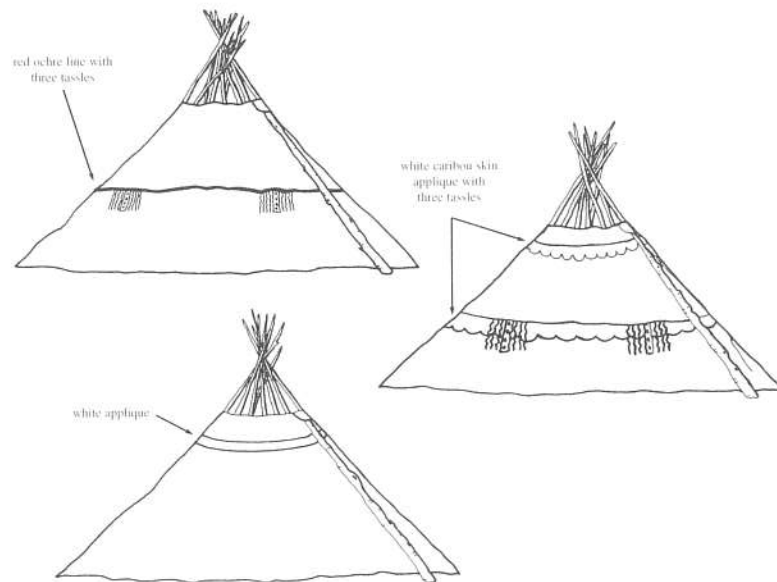
Kònhmbàa Wedat'ı Ats'eh?ı Decorating the Lodge

Sahtı Kw'ahı-dè wenjmbàa k'e et'èti dek'o wemoò dek'ehı'e eyıts'q lası tai wexet'ı hqı'e. Tjıchq qhda dı hagedı, dene wet'a?à zq wenjmbàa k'e lası wexet'ı ageh?ı gedi. Kwè, ochre wıyeh t'à et'èti dek'o gehtsı. Kwè nàgeède t'akq tı eyıts'q ek'a tıè weta ageh?ı. Delakw'q t'à njmbàa get'è jıè. Eyı kwè et'èti t'à t'ası lq get'è jıè, ?ah, elà eyıts'q mbehchı haanı k'e et'èti ageh?ı jıè.

Dene wet'a?à zq wenjmbàa k'e et'èti ageh?ı jıè. Edaanı et'èti t'à njmbàa k'e get'e, wek'achı lq kà?a goı jıè, eyı naàwo while agodza. Haanıko didze Tjıchq edaanı et'èti t'à aget'è jıè tai k'à?a zq wek'èhodzq hqıe.

On the Bear Lake Chief's lodge, three tassels were added to the painted red band around the middle of the lodge. According to Dogrib Elders, the tassels show the high status of the lodge owner. The red paint was made from ochre, a rock found in the region. The ochre was ground, mixed with water and melted fat, and painted on the tent with a person's finger. Ochre was traditionally used to decorate many objects, including snowshoes, canoes, and toboggans.

Only the lodges of the most important people were decorated. Many of these decorative patterns have been lost to time, but three Dogrib patterns have survived.



Kònhmbàa Goyıı Inside the Lodge

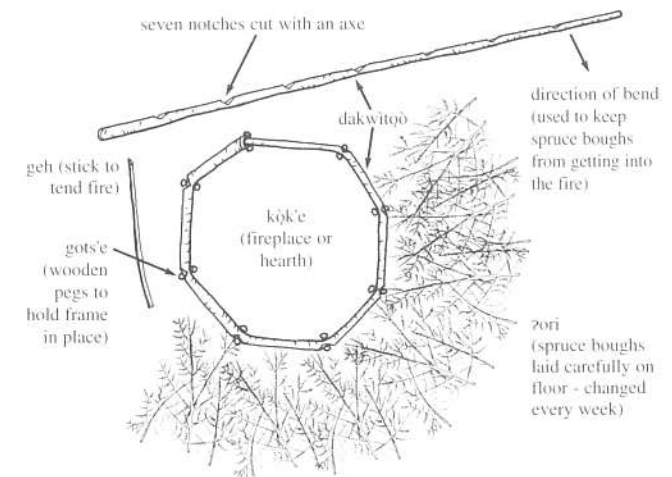
Tjıchq kònhmbàa goyıı gqcha jıè. Tanı kq dek'q orı wemq orı nı?a, eyı't'à goyıı goòkq. Kq dek'q ka jdoò whaà dexeht'ı. Whaà ts'q mbò nàèdlı t'à mbò hageht'e eyıts'q mbògq gehq eyıts'q wet'à sıı goht'q nagehdza jıè. Amq anet'e, edat'q neghò eyıts'q ası dene wet'a?à-dè anet'e ghà njmbàa yıı edı whenetı ha sıı wek'èhodzq jıè.

Edà nahk'è Tjıchq genjmbàa lq k'è hago?a nechà, eyı't'à goyıı lq while. Xo k'è nıè kònhmbàa goyıı nats'ede nezı dı.

David E. Wheeler, ca. 1912

Dogrib lodges had large and airy interiors. A central hearth, surrounded by a flooring of spruce boughs, made a warm and dry shelter. A framework of poles, hanging over the hearth, was used to dry meat and clothing. Sleeping positions were determined by gender, age, and status.

The [Dene] use in their lodges a much larger smoke hole than do the Plains Indians, or the Crees. Their dwellings were consequently airy, free from smell or smoke, and in winter the most comfortable habitations I know. David E. Wheeler, ca. 1912.

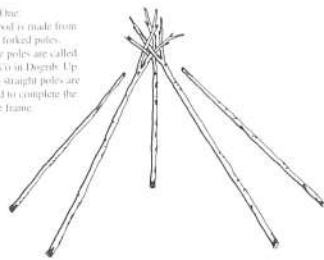


Kònhmbàa Nats'ehgè Raising the Lodge

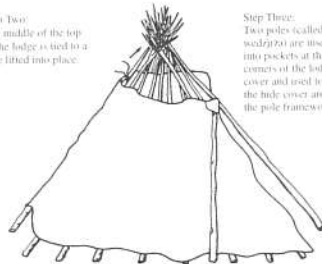
Whaà 14 - 22 t'à kònhmbàa naj'a hq't'e. Dakweq whaà hazq nagehge, eyit'akq whaà nàke t'à nìhmbàa weka agehɔɔ. Nìhts'ì nàtso dè whaà nedè nàke t'à lò k'è hagoza sìgehɔɔ.

The lodge was supported by fourteen to twenty spruce poles. The pole framework would be set up first, and the hide covering would be wrapped around them. Special poles were used to lift the covering into place. These poles were also used to adjust the smoke flaps on windy days.

Step One:
Ampod is made from three forked poles. These poles are called eyaak'o in Dogrib. Up to 15 straight poles are added to complete the lodge frame.

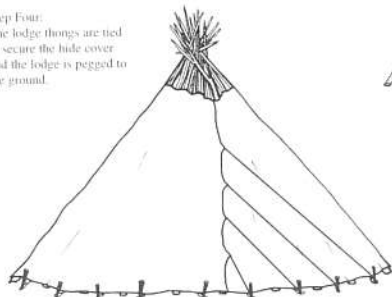


Step Two:
The middle of the top of the lodge is tied to a pole lifted into place.



Step Three:
Two poles (called wadziro) are inserted into pockets at the corners of the lodge cover and used to wrap the hide cover around the pole framework.

Step Four:
The lodge thongs are tied to secure the hide cover and the lodge is pegged to the ground.



Kònhmbàa Yì Mbò Hats'eh't'è Cooking in the Lodge

Tanì kòk'è ts'ì wemqò naweɔa, kòkwì orì k'è awode ch'à. Kò ka mbo daedli t'à mbo hageht'è jlè.

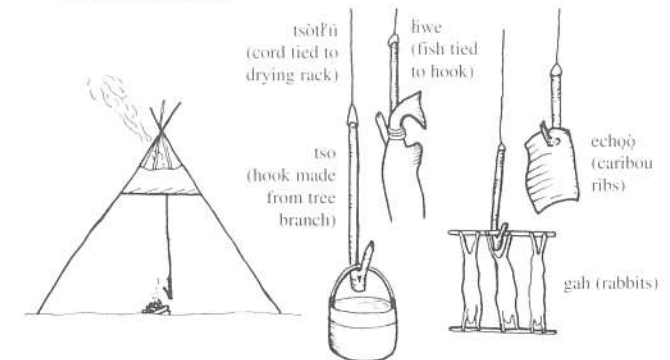
The central hearth was enclosed by a bent green spruce pole to prevent the spruce bough flooring from getting in the fire. Food was cooked by suspending it from a cord and hook over the fire.

Wenaàwo K'è Nats'edeɔle Agodza The End of an Era

1900 ekiyè libala t'à kònhmbàa hohle agodza. Ekiyè kò kònhmbàa wehda tanì ts'ò ewò eyits'q tanì ts'ò libala t'à hohle jlè.

Sometime during the early 1900s canvas began to replace caribou hides in the making of lodges. During a period of transition, hybrid lodges—part hide lodge and part canvas tent—were sometimes made.

Cooking in the Lodge



Iowa Kònhmbàa Gha Dzè-de Hòl The Gift Ceremony in Iowa City

Sadatlo-zà 1996, ekiyè kò Tìchò nẹ gots'ò – Elizabeth Mackenzie, Mary Siemens eyits'ò John B. Zoe eyits'ò Tom Andrew, Sòmbak'è Whaehdò Goh't'ò K'èhodi-kò gha eghàlaeda dọ, Iowa Behchonẹ nàgedè. Kònhmbàa, Edzanẹ k'è gots'ò nageza gha Iowa niht'èkò-dè wegħa dzè-dè hòl. June Helm, Dene Naàwo haehta dọ eyits'ò George Schrimper Whaehdò Godi K'èhodi-kò eghàlaeda dọ gots'agidi.

In April 1996, representatives of the Dogrib Nation—Elizabeth Mackenzie, Mary Siemens, and John B. Zoe—and Tom Andrews, for the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, travelled to Iowa City for the ceremony to officially accept the lodge on behalf of the Northwest Territories. The ceremony was held on the University of Iowa campus, assisted by anthropologist June Helm, and Natural History Museum director George Schrimper.

Eniht'èchì:

- Mary Siemens, Dene Naàwo Haehta Dọ Beryl Gillespie, Elizabeth Mackenzie
- John B. Zoe dene ts'ò gode.
- George Schrimper, Whaehdò Goh't'ò K'èhodi-kò eghàlaeda dọ, Dendwò Elà woòt'ò.
- Dene Naàwo Haehta Dọ June Helm, John B. Zoe, Tom Andrews
- Whaehdo-kò Gha K'awoh George Schrimper, Mary Siemens, Elizabeth Mackenzie
- Iowa Niht'èkò-dè dze-dè hòl.
- George Schrimper, Whaehdo-kò Gha K'awoh dene ts'ò gode.

Kònhmbàa Gha Dzè-de Hòl The Lodge is Welcomed Home

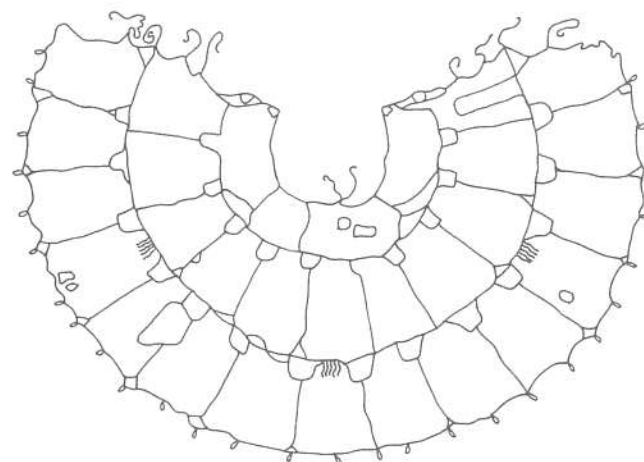
Liwedats'eh'tè-zà k'è Sòmbak'è Whaehdò Goh't'ò K'èhodi-kò kònhmbàa Edzanẹ noòchì t'à wegħa dze-dè hòl. Kònhmbàa ghàgeda gha Tìchonẹ gots'ò qħda eyits'ò dene, Sòmbak'è nàgedè.

In September, 1997 a brief ceremony was held at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to welcome the lodge back to the Northwest Territories. Attended by Elders and dignitaries from the Dogrib communities, the event provided an opportunity for many to have their first glimpse of the lodge.

Ekwòwò Ts'ehwè Tanning Caribou Hides

Ewò ts'ehwè la necha xè la deshù họt'e. Whaà gots'ò edaàni dene k'è ewò ts'ehwhe sù hoghàlegehtò t'à wek'èhodzò họt'e. Ewò nàts'ehdze t'akò edlatò eht'à sùzì t'akò ewò t'ahot'ì jìlè.

Tanning hides was a difficult job involving many hours of work. Using special tools and knowledge passed down through many generations, the hides are scraped and processed several times before they are ready to use.



Edanı Ewò Ts'ehwhè

(as described by Elizabeth Mackenzie in 1998)

- 1) Mbeh dèni t'à eghà hats'et'à. Godza k'è ts'eda t'à ekwòwò goila t'à nàts'itò hòt'e.
- 2) Mbò, ekwòlì hazò nàts'ehdze. K'eje t'à nàts'ehdze. K'ì t'à k'edzechjì hòlì k'è ewò nàts'ehdze.
- 3) Wek'eè weghatsjì hazò hats'ehdze.
- 4) Edoò while ade gha jìlè tò gots'ò tì t'à whehchì ats'ehjì. Eyì sù etqdoò gha làats'eègè wiyeh hòt'e.
- 5) Gogèhtsjì t'à ewò làats'eègè.
- 6) Yazea tì whekò t'à ekwìghò eyits'ò enqzhì ats'ehjì. Ewò etqzhatì t'ats'eza. Eyì sù etqzhatì wiyeh hòt'e.
- 7) K'achì ewò làats'eègè.
- 8) Jhk'è edlatì eht'à etqzhatì tanats'eza eyits'ò làats'eègè t'akò nìdè ewo nezì at'ì hòt'e.
- 9) Ewò hadza mòt'a whaà k'è dawhehchì ats'ehjì. Mòt'a nhìts'ì t'à degoò at'ì.
- 10) Eyits'ò k'achì jìlè tò gots'ò etqzhatì t'à whehchì anats'ehjì.
- 11) Jlaà etqzhatì tà whehchì ekiyè kwetè t'à ewò tenats'ewo. Kwetè t'à ewò tenats'ewo dè etqzhatì ewò yì at'ì eyits'ò wet'à ewò deshì-le at'ì. Eyì sù tenats'ewo wiyeh hòt'e.
- 12) K'achì ewò làats'eègè.
- 13) K'achì ewò mòt'a dawhehchì ats'ehjì.
- 14) Ewo nezì whego nìdè, wetqò ts'one yazea lò wek'e ats'ehjì. Lò t'à yazea dekwo lat'ì. Eyì sù wek'e lò ats'ehjì wiyeh hòt'e.
- 15) Nqdeè gots'ò k'achì ewo etqzhatì tàts'eza, wet'à kw'à k'enaetse datìlè jìlè libò eyits'ò wet'à mbò hats'ehte tlè weta ats'ehjì. Jìlè tò gots'ò ewò tèwhehchì ats'ehjì.
- 16) Ewo weghagojì hazò nats'eli.
- 17) Ewò whaà k'e dawhehchì ats'ehjì eyits'ò kwetè t'à tenats'ewo. Ewo nezì ts'eèt'ì at'ì nìdè hot'a nezì adade hòt'e. Ewo jla nezì ts'eèt'ì ha dui nìdè, k'achì jìlè tò gots'ò etqzhatì t'a whehchì ats'ehjì.
- 18) K'achì ewò làats'eègè.
- 19) Ewò deshì-le ade ts'ò kwetè t'à ewo tenats'ewo, ewo egò gots'ò hats'ehjì.
- 20) Ewò nezì wegò t'akò dè, weyì hots'ehkw'e ha asanile. Eyì sù weyì hots'ehkw'e wiyeh hòt'e. (kònjhmbàa gha ewo hohle dè weyì hogehkw'e-le.)

Steps to Tan a Caribou Hide

(as described by Elizabeth Mackenzie in 1998)

- 1) Cut off the hair with a sharp knife, called beh in Dogrib. The caribou hide is held by hand, and supported by a woman's legs while sitting.
- 2) Scrape off any flesh adhering to the hide. This is called nàhts'ehdze – "to scrape the meat off." A scraping tool, called k'eje is used. The hide is supported on a short birch pole called a K'edzechjì.
- 3) The hair stubble and outer layer of skin is removed next, using the same tools. This process is called woghatsjì hats'ehdze – "we scrape off the hair."
- 4) The hide is then soaked overnight in warm water to rinse out blood. This process is called etqdoò gha làats'eègè.
- 5) The hide is wrung out (làats'eègè), using a special stick called a gogèhtsjì.
- 6) The hide is then soaked in tanning solution made with warm water, caribou brains (ekwìghò), and spinal cord (enqzhì). The tanning solution is called etqzhatì.
- 7) The hide is wrung out again.
- 8) Depending on the quality of the hide repeat steps 6 and 7 as necessary.
- 9) The hide is then hung on a pole outside to dry and is bleached by the sun and wind.
- 10) Next it is put in the tanning solution again overnight.
- 11) While it is still in the tanning solution, the hide is scraped and stretched using a stone scraper (kwetè). This helps to work the tanning solution into the pores, and to soften the hide. This process is called tenats'ewo.
- 12) The hide is wrung out again...
- 13) ...and is hung to dry again.
- 14) When it is completely dry it is put over a smoking fire and lightly tanned on the flesh side (wetqò) of the hide. The hide acquires a very light yellow colour. This process is called wek'e lò ats'ehjì.
- 15) The hide is placed for a final soak in the tanning solution to which is added one cup of dishwashing liquid and one cup of cooking oil. The hide is soaked overnight.
- 16) Any small holes in the hide are carefully sewn closed.
- 17) The hide is hung on a pole and scraped with a stone scraper (kwetè). If it stretches easily then the process is nearly done. If not then go back to step #10 and repeat.
- 18) Wring the hide out again.
- 19) Scrape the hide all over with a kwetè, softening the hide, until it is dry.
- 20) When it is completely dry it may be smoked for colour. This process is called weyì hots'ehkw'e. (Hides used for making lodges were not smoked.)

Wek'èhodzq Gha Acknowledgments

Whaehdô Goh't'ô K'èhodi-kô dene hazô goxè eghâlagida sîi masî gîts'edi ha hq't'e. June Helm eyits'ô George Schrimper, Iowa Nîhtl'èkô-dè xè eghâlagida t'à kônjhmbâa Edzanê anadza sîi masî gîts'edi ha hq't'e. Eyits'ô Iowa kôta k'ets'ide kô nezî gok'ègîdî t'à sîi masî ts'jwq hq't'e. Eyits'ô qhda lq godî t'à gots'âgîdî sîi masî gîts'edi ha hq't'e. Eyits'ô Behchokô, Mary Siemens hotî nezî gogha etaâhtî t'à gogha eghâlagida t'à sîi masî ts'jwq hq't'e.

We would like to thank the staff of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre for their hard work. We would also like to thank Professors June Helm and George Schrimper of the University of Iowa for arranging the return of the lodge, and for treating our delegation so warmly while we were in Iowa City. To the many elders who helped with the development of the exhibit we say Mahsicho. Mary Siemens assisted with translation during interview sessions in Rae and we thank her for her patience and careful work.

Tom Andrews and Elizabeth Mackenzie.