

# TRAILS OF OUR ANCESTORS

*Building a Nation*



EDITED BY JOHN B. ZOE



## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to the memory of our Elder, Harry Simpson of Gamèti who worked tirelessly and faithfully to pass on the knowledge and ways of our Ancestors. We mourn each passing Elder and hold dear to their wisdom. Mahsi-cho.*

**FRONT COVER/MAIN PHOTO:** Tlicho encampment on Stoney Island in 1913. Photo by John Alden Mason/Canadian Museum of Civilization 26010.

**FRONT COVER/BOTTOM PHOTO:** Trails of our Ancestors canoe trip at Gamèti in 2004. Photo by Tessa Macintosh/Tlicho Government.

**WEAVING ON FRONT COVER:** Tlicho porcupine quill weaving pattern. Original weaving collected in the 1930s by Trader George Buffum Family. Original photo by Susan Irving/Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. 987.94.1



# PREFACE

## TRAILS OF OUR ANCESTORS: BUILDING A NATION

Our Tlicho history is embedded in the landscape in place names. It is interpreted by our Elders who have first hand experience of life on the land. The Elders talk about how people headed north to the barrens by canoe in the fall to harvest caribou for food and hides for clothing, equipment and shelter. They talk about travel back below the treeline, to live with the abundance of caribou in the winter. In the spring, the Elders tell of travel to familiar fishing grounds by birchbark canoe.

The Elders talk about the seasonal nomadic lifestyle; about the hardships, and the sorrows marked by burial sites. The land and place names also remind the Elders of renewal of spirit, abundance, and gatherings to renew kinship, revive stories and share knowledge. Canoes were significant in charting the history of who we are as Tlicho. We continue to keep this history alive by traveling the trails of our ancestors to our annual gatherings, today.

Let's celebrate the transfer of ancient knowledge of the Elders to the youth. Travelling by canoe, the youth honour their ancestors and experience the traditional spirit that will carry them beyond the many challenges of today.

It is our hope that this book shows how we continue to practice our traditions over the generations and that it plants the spirit in our future generations to strengthen and celebrate our language, culture and way of life.

*Massi Cho*

Chiefs' Executive Council | Tlicho Government

01. Frankie Nitsiza arrives at Behchokò all the stronger for the many portages behind him to celebrate the coming of the new Tłı̨chǫ Self-Government in 2005.



01. TESSA MACHINOSH / TŁĮCHŪ GOVERNMENT

02. John B. Zoe's canoe departs Gamètì in 2000.



02. MARGARET CHOCQUATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

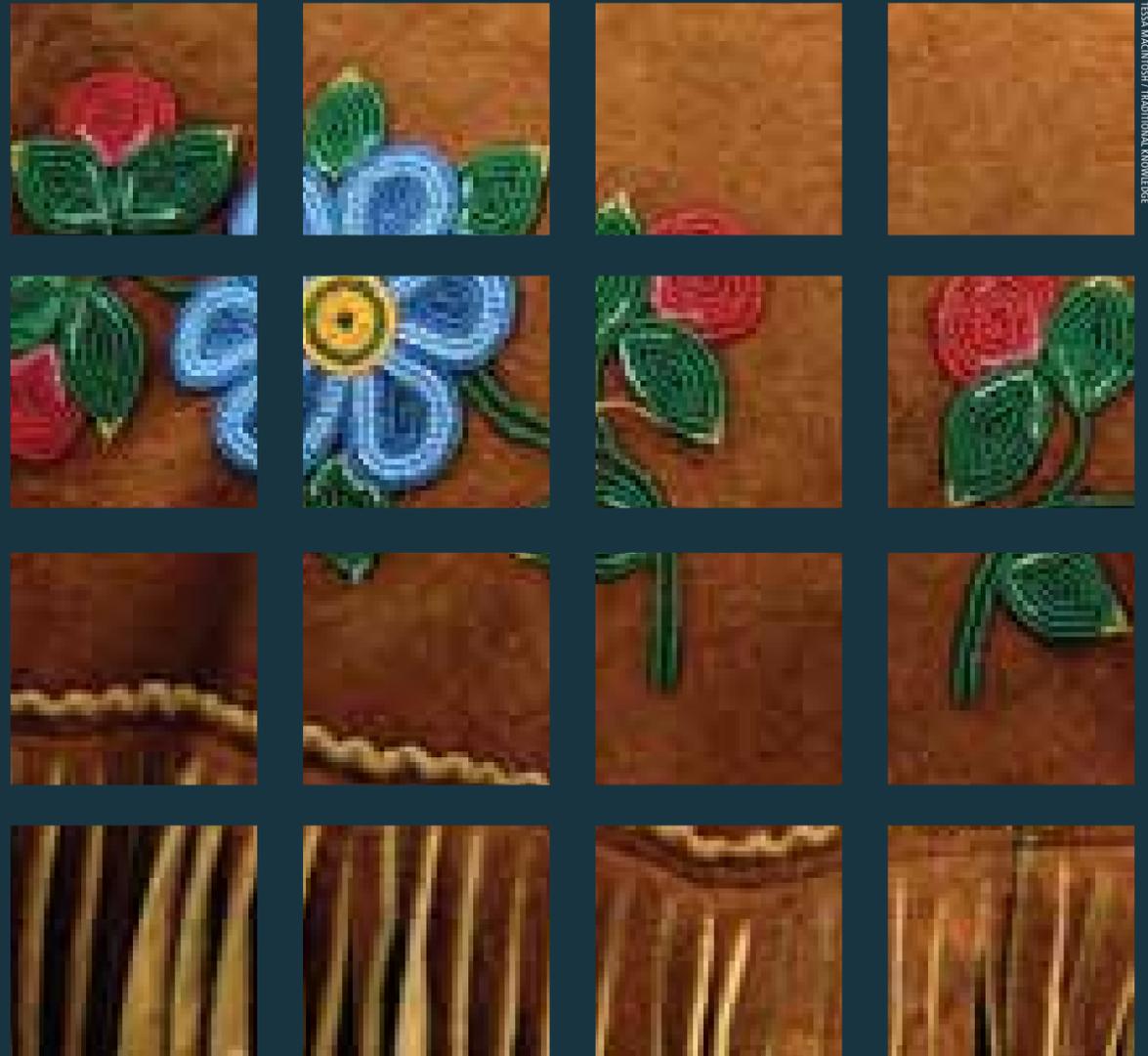
03. Even as in days gone by, the arrival of the canoes at a destination is always an exciting event attended by everyone in the community of Wekweètì near the barrenlands in 2002.



03. TESSA MACHINOSH / TŁĮCHŪ GOVERNMENT

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TESSA MACHINOSH / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

*Elder Marie Quitte's beadwork on traditional smoke-tanned moosehide.*

Tłı̨chǫ get into their handmade birch bark canoes with years of precision at Behchokǫ in 1913-14.



BEHCHOKO, N.W.T. / ARCHIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

01. Fireworks light up the sky on Aug 4, 2005, the day the Tłı̨chǫ effectively have self-government to manage their resources and protect their culture.



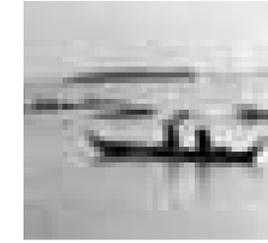
TESSA MACINTOSH / TŁĮCHǫ GOVERNMENT

02. Alphonse Quitte easily shoulders his small handmade birchbark canoe; a traditional one-man hunting canoe is light-weight to say the least.



TESSA MACINTOSH / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

03. Women in canoes at Behchokǫ in 1913.



JOHN ALDEN MASON/CAC

04. The symbolism of the new Tłı̨chǫ flag – The tents represent the four communities, the sunrise and the flowing river represent Chief Mǫnǫwǫ's words guaranteeing the Tłı̨chǫ way of life and the North Star represents the new era.



TESSA MACINTOSH / TŁĮCHǫ GOVERNMENT

JOHN B. ZOE

# TRAILS OF OUR ANCESTORS:

*Building a Nation*

For centuries the Tłı̨chǫ of the Northwest Territories have relied on an intimate knowledge of the land and its wildlife to survive. The Tłı̨chǫ lived in a yearly cycle of following traditional trails in birchbark canoes to the barren lands in the fall to harvest the caribou herd; and then heading below the tree-line for the long northern winter until the warmth and life of spring returns.

The skills required to survive this lifestyle were taught through the oral tradition, by elders to the youth, through hands on experience while living and traveling in the bush. With the Tłı̨chǫ language so intimately connected to the land, elders passed on place names, animal names, cultural and spiritual sites and the language of the land to the next generations.

However, this nomadic style of living began to decline as the influences of the modern 'western society' and government moved into the north. The government slowly began to take control of the lives of the Tłı̨chǫ and soon the people were reliant on funding and welfare to survive in the new society. Today, members of the Tłı̨chǫ Nation live mostly in the communities; have entered into a wage economy and classroom-based schooling. The traditional culture and teaching processes of the Tłı̨chǫ have been absent as people no longer travel together on the land. The culture and language of the Tłı̨chǫ people are now threatened.



01.

HERBERT A. MENAGUE / HUDSON BAY COMPANY 1879-53-3177

01. Tłı̨chǰ at Behchokǰ in 1910.



02.

MARLENE CHOCQUAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

02. Canoes ready to depart Gamèti in 2000.



03.

CHARLES KEEFER LIBRARY ARCHIVES CANADA N-60788

03. Tłı̨chǰ treaty dance till early morning at Fort Rae in 1937. Tłı̨chǰ dances are intended as a participatory recognition of the entire group. This particular dance was without drums. People all chanted together facing inward toward the centre and side-stepping in a sun-wise direction.

In 1990, a plan to implement a vision was developed: The vision of Chief Jimmy Bruneau to teach the youth of the Tłı̨chǰ Nation in two ways; the way of the new society being slowly imposed on the people and the traditional practices passed on for generations on the past. The idea of the *Trails of Ours Ancestors* program was initiated.

Around the same time the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, Government of Canada and the Northwest Territories were in the early stages of negotiating the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement. Meetings were being held in the communities, Yellowknife and in the South. The Agreement was the desire of the people to help protect language, culture and way of life.

In 1995, the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council in partnership with the Dogrib Community Services Board (at that time the Divisional Board of Education) managed to secure funding for the first *Trails of Ours Ancestors* canoe trip. The first group paddled the 15-day journey from Behchokǰ (Rae-Edzo) to Gamèti and arrived to a huge celebration as the festivities of the Annual Assembly got under way.

The second year a group of paddlers traveled the *Trails of Ours Ancestors* from Behchokǰ (Rae) to Wekweèti passing through the Barren lands.

Unfortunately in 1997 the program fell apart, due to communication problems with a sponsor. Faced with losing the tradition and intent of the trip, the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council, to keep the program alive, sent a small group with four canoes from Behchokǰ to Wekweèti. This did not, however, involve students, as only eight seats were available in total.

In 1998 the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund joined in partnership with the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council and Dogrib Community Services Board and provided significant funding that has allowed the trips to be revived and grow. The *Trails of Ours Ancestors* have now been paddled between all the Tłı̨chǰ communities, sometimes on trails that have not been traveled in close to half a century. Today hundreds of youth and elders have had the opportunity to travel the trails.

Funding continued from the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund in 1999 and 2000. Since 2001 the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council has been able to secure a more stable and continuous funding source that has allowed the *Trails of Ours Ancestors* program to continue to grow and develop.

In 2001 the Grand Chief of the Tłı̨chǰ Nation, who has spent many years of his life traveling the trails of his people, joined the *Trails of Our Ancestors* program and paddled from Behchokǰ to Wekweèti. His influence has helped provide the link and recognition of *Trails of Our Ancestors* as part of the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement and its part as a bridge to the traditions of the past.

In 2002 at a historic ceremony in Whatì, the Tłı̨chǰ people celebrated the initialing of the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement. After twelve years and many meetings and discussions, the Tłı̨chǰ people have now completed the negotiation of self-government and land claim agreement: An Agreement that will be the foundation for the future of a nation. Many people traveled by canoe to Whatì to attend this historic event.

In August 2003 the Prime Minister of Canada, Premier of the Northwest Territories and Grand Chief and Chiefs of the Tłı̨chǰ Nation signed the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement in Behchokǰ. Again many people traveled by canoe to attend this event in 2004. For the first time the *Trails of Our Ancestors* program saw over 200 delegates travel by boat from the communities of Whatì, Wekweèti and Behchokǰ to the Annual Gathering in Gamèti.

Many parallels can be made between the development of the *Trails of Our Ancestors* program and the journey the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council has made to reach the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement. But the most important is that the Tłı̨chǰ Agreement and the *Trails of Our Ancestors* program both encourage the preservation and revitalization of the Tłı̨chǰ language and culture and the *Building of a Nation*.



CHARLES KEESER LIBRARY ARCHIVES CANADA N-9790

ABOVE. Tłı̨chǫ feast for Fur Trade Commission at Fort Rae in 1937. Summer is always a time to gather and celebrate.



01. HENRI RUSSEL / PNMHC N-979-001-0817

01. Tłı̨chǫ Family paddle fully loaded canoe including four dogs.



02. DEPT OF INTERIOR / PNMHC 979-001-0164

02. Old Church at Behchokǫ in 1924.



03. JOHN RUSSELL / NWRT ARCHIVES N-979-073-0341

03. Treaty tent at Fort Rae in 1925. Every year since Treaty 11 was signed by Chief Monfwi in 1921, Tłı̨chǫ have gathered to honour their agreement with the crown and the Government of Canada. Since 2005, they gather to celebrate self-government.



04. JOHN RUSSELL / NWRT ARCHIVES N-979-073-0344

04. Large Gathering at Schooner Landing, Behchokǫ / Fort Rae in 1923.

*“Du sa ezaa sù k’èt’ à naèhdǫ-le ı̀dè du deh nı̨lyı̨ sù k’èt’ à naèhdly-le nı̀dè du dè nàgoèhdǫ-le nı̀dè, asù gogha wets’aet’ǫ hoı̨ly ha-le ...*

*As long as the sun shines and the river flows and the land does not change, we will not be restricted from our way of life.”*

(Chief Mǫnfwı̨ – 1921)



01. PHILIP MERRICK / NATIVE COMMUNICATION SOCIETY 74-02-204

01. Alexis Arrowmaker, left, playing handgames at Behchokò in 1971.



02. RENÉ FRIEDLAND / NWT ARCHIVES N-95-002-848

02. Grand Chief Joe Rabesca and the North Slave Delegation at a Dene Nation Assembly at Déljne in 1985.



03. JANE HEAL / NWT ARCHIVES N-2003-003-03-96

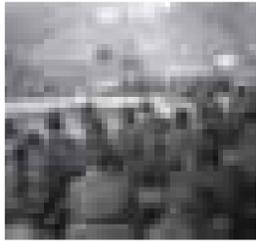
03. Two motorized canvas canoes loaded with people, dogs and gear at a portage between Behchokò and Whati.

**BELOW.** Like an armada, the incoming flotilla of canoes from the 'Trails of Our Ancestors' is a vision of pride for the Tłı̨chǫ, almost like an apparition of the Ancestors themselves. With many anxious to take their turn, the canoe trips are like a rite of passage for every Tłı̨chǫ citizen, and revitalizes everyone concerned.

TESSA MACINTOSH / TŁĮCHO GOVERNMENT



Traditional Tea Dance at Behchokò in 1976.



01. NATIVE COMMUNICATION SOCIETY/ADAM



02. JIM HEIN / PHOTIC 2003/09/28



03. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT



04. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

01. President of the Indian Brotherhood of the NWT, James Wah-Shee speaks at the first Dene Nation Assembly which took place at Behchokò in 1971.

02. Handgames with Chief Jimmy Bruneau ( in banded hat) at Behchokò in 1962.

03. August 4, 2005 is a day to remember, to commemorate with ceremony, tea dance, handgame, feeding the fire, heartfelt congratulations from dignitaries at all levels of government, and a drum prayer song.

04. The new Tilcho flag is unveiled by its designer James Wah-Shee and raised by Alexis Arrowmaker, two who dedicated their lives to making this memorable day a reality.

TAPWE CHRETIEN / NATIVE COMMUNICATION SOCIETY/6-616-124

The midnight sun casts a warm glow on the still waters along the "Trails of our Ancestors".

# STRONG

JOHN B. ZOE

## LIKE TWO PEOPLE

- The boat trips we have taken to date have always been considered to be a vision by the Tłı̨chǫ people to become "Strong like two people". To understand how and why that vision came about, we must look to the past and see it through the eyes of the Elders who were there. They remember young people being strong physically and spiritually; determined yet flexible; independent yet cautious; able to read the environment for survival, youth who recognize the limits of their capability, and work as part of a community. Our Elders of the past, like Chief Jimmy Bruneau, saw these things and realized that the future held challenges that would alter what they had known in their time.

TESSA MACINTOSH



ABOVE. Canoes come ashore in 1995.

ASAPEN HERRIN



01. Chief Jimmy Bruneau, who gave his name to the high school in Edzo.

RICHARD FINNE / PHOTIC 1979/03/04



02. Elizabeth Mackenzie, recipient of the Governor General's Award, in Behchokò in 2005.

JASMINBIBI OCHTEL / HSHANDORA YSELI

Imagine in 1893 when an American graduate, Frank Russell, from the University of Iowa, came to Tłı̨chǫ country in search of a muskox specimen he could take home with him. In his journal he talks about the trip he made to the edge of the woods on the shore of Courageous Lake/Ewaànit'ı̨ tı̨. There, he was in a Tłı̨chǫ encampment a few portages from Lac de Gras/Ekałı̨ in the late winter with a dogteam. It was the camp of Ek'awi Dzimi, the father of the late Chief Jimmy Bruneau. Chief Jimmy Bruneau was about six years old when he saw this man writing in his journal and heard the language he spoke. He probably didn't know what was going on at the time but it definitely left an impression on his mind. The camp probably talked about this strange man and reviewed his brief excursion with them through stories, and determined that there would likely be more encounters with strangers.

In 1913, when Bruneau was twenty-five years old, he accompanied another American, David Wheeler, to the edge of Snare Lake by dogteam. He spent many days with him listening and watching him write with pen and paper. This left another long lasting impression on his mind. There were many similar excursions over the years.

In 1921, his uncle Chief Mq̄nfwı̨ sat across from the Treaty Commissioner to talk about Treaty. He witnessed the power of the pen and paper and of the written word and realized the influence it would have on the Tłı̨chǫ.



JOHN B. NICHOLSON

**ABOVE.** After a good day on the trail, paddlers enjoy the evening by playing traditional handgames, a complicated guessing game accompanied by hand signals and rhythmic chanting. 1995.



AARON HEETER

**ABOVE.** Portages where at least two return trips are made by each individual are often seen as a good break from hours of paddling, even when the trail between the waterways is a long smokey muskeg hike.

**01.** Coming ashore for a break on the Marion River/Gòlooti deè in 1995.



JOHN B. NICHOLSON

**02.** Elder Harry Simpson speaks with attentive youths at Basler Lake/Tieqo ti in 1995.



JOHN B. NICHOLSON

**03.** A canoe apparently makes its way along a portage route on the edge of the barrenlands in 1996.



AARON HEETER

**04.** To appease the strong winds that kept the paddlers grounded one day in 1995, Nick Black made a small raft upon which a fire was lit and sent out ablaze onto the lake while everyone shouted together, "Break up the clouds! Yâzq etka!". Within an hour the canoes were on the water again, this time in calmer weather.



AARON HEETER

**05.** Students break camp every morning and set up again every night, help prepare the meals, and paddle all day. These are the rigors of the trail. 1995.



JOHN B. NICHOLSON

**06.** Another aid to faster travel is the fresh moose meat at LaBriche Lake in 1995.



JOHN B. NICHOLSON

When Chief Mq̄nfw̄ died in 1936, Jimmy Bruneau became the Chief. As Chief he witnessed Tł̄ch̄ children being shipped out to missionary schools for years to learn the foreign language and the skills of writing. He also saw the sorrow in the eyes of the people when their children left. He started to push the government for a school to be built on Tł̄ch̄ lands so that the young people could learn without having to give up who they were, yet still learn the new ways.

At the official school opening in 1972, Bruneau said: "Senèk'e enhtl'èkò hohlè-ha dèets'òk'àowo geehke, eyits'ò secheekè nhtl'èkò gitl'aà wherò ha, eyits'ò secheekè nhtl'èkò goyì eghàlagüde ha, eyits'ò chekoa nàowo nàke t'à hoghàgeetò ha, gonàowoò eyits'ò kwet'jì nàowoò k'èè... I have asked for a school to be built on my land and that school will be run by my people and my people will work at that school and children will learn both ways, our way and whiteman's way."

In 1991, when the Elders got together to reflect, Elizabeth Mackenzie spoke: "Chekoa, nàowo nàke t'à elèxèht'eè hoghàgeetò nùdè dò nàke làani nàgetso ha... If the children are taught in both cultures equally, they will be strong like two people."

In this spirit we share our experiences with pen and paper so others may be inspired to follow in the footsteps, so they may do the same.

Like skeletal remains, the framework of an old canvas canoe lies outstretched at Bea Lake/Bea ti. 1995.



AMON HENTER



01.

AMON HENTER

01. Grave restoration at Marion River/Gòlootì deè 1995.



02.

AMON HENTER

02. Elders Harry Simpson, Pierre T'loka and Jimmy Rabesca are comfortable sitting close to the ground on a few spruce boughs and telling stories in 1995.



03.

AMON HENTER

03. In 1996 the canoe trip went out to the Barrenlands at Grizzle Bear Lake/Diga ti where Rex Lamouelle contemplates the lay of the land high above camp.



04.

AMON HENTER

04. Paddlers were faced with the challenge of an ominous forest fire at Wheeler Lake/Tledi ti and through the traditional method of consensus, assessed the situation and all agreed to continue with the trip.

BELOW. Fat Fish Lake/Lıwetek'aa ti on the Emile River/Hoziideè north of old Marion Village/Xàèl̥l̥ k̥ò gola.



TOM ANDREWS / PINKA

THOMAS D. ANDREWS & JOHN B. ZOE

# TRAILS:

## Archeology and the Tłı̨ch̥o Cultural Landscape

*“Sezghdaà sexè gogedo jlè. Sedaà eghàlag̣yda, eyts'g̣ ḍi g̣ṭḷḥi k'è ts'adèe xè eghàlats'eda. Dudzèg̣ k'e cheeko gòet'j nàowoò deghà gik'èezg̣-le kò gonàowoò k'èts'edi ha ts'jẉg̣, hanì jdè amèe jdaà xàedaa sù git'àet'j ha. Eyit'à gits'ats'edi gha eghàlats'edaà ats'et'j.*

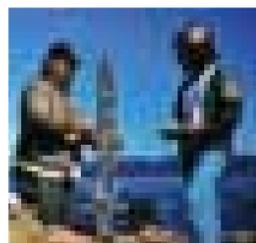


01. JOHN B. ZOE

01. Chased into Rock/Elet'sadzi on Beaver Lodge Lake/Kwoyetì in 1993.



02. JOHN B. ZOE



04. JOHN B. ZOE



03. TOM ANDREWS / PINKA

02. Animal Spirit Rock/Weyèedi on Brown Water Lake/Tikwo ti.  
03. Repair and contemplation of a child's gravesite at Hottah Lake. Travelers are reminded how the Ancestors met adversity with fortitude, of being in the flow of the Ancestors, the flow of the rivers, the flow of life.

04. In 1991, Archeologist Tom Andrews and an assistant examine an old 1925 Geological Survey of Canada marker erected by John Russell.

Pierre Judas, Johnny Eyakfwo, Johnny Bishop, Joseph Rabesca and John Louie Rabesca at Big Rock/Kwecho at Mesa Lake in 1994. Mesa Lake is the site of the Edzo/Akaiicho peace treaty.



JOHN B. ZOE

01. Remains of an old birchbark canoe/k'elää frame near Mesa Lake in 1994.

02. A fish cache/translation from the early 70s located at Bea Lake/Bea ti.

03. With a pleasant feeling of awe, in the calm of evening, paddlers become aware of their small place in an immense wilderness in 1995.

04. Gon Cabin at Labrish Lake/ Nääkaà ti in 1994.



TOM ANDREWS / FNMHC



TOM ANDREWS / FNMHC



JOHN B. ZOE



JOHN B. ZOE

*My elders used to tell me stories. I witnessed their work and now we are traveling and working along their trails. Though our young people of today do not really know the ways of our people, we want to retain our traditional ways so that whomever survives in the future will use them. So we are in effect, working to help them."*

(Harry Simpson – June 25, 1991)

This Tłı̨ch̨o landscape is known intimately to Tłı̨ch̨o Elders. Trails, which are used year-round, provide access to a vast harvesting region, and link thousands of place names, each with a narrative of some form, sometimes many, inextricably bound to the place. Names and narratives convey knowledge, and in this way Tłı̨ch̨o culture is tied directly to the landscape. Travel across the Tłı̨ch̨o landscape can be easily and clearly described by reference to these names, and indeed travel narratives often appear as no more than long lists of place names. While toponyms mark topographic features, the Tłı̨ch̨o also employ a separate naming system to distinguish the broader physiographic regions. Though there is some overlap with the physiographic units recognized by western geographers, the Tłı̨ch̨o system is more refined, and consequently more complex.

The Tłı̨ch̨o landscape is infused with the presence of innumerable entities, or "powers", both benevolent and malevolent. In traveling across the landscape, one must constantly mitigate the impact of personal actions by appeasing these entities with votive of erings, and by observing strict rules of behavior. For example, at each new water body encountered en route, of erings are left. In the Tłı̨ch̨o vernacular, it is said that these places, and the entities inhabiting them, are being "paid". The of erings may be anything of value (in modern times this had typically included tobacco, matches, coins, ammunition), or simply, a garland of birch branches. These are thrown into the water (or onto



JOHN B. ZOE



JOHN B. ZOE

01. Edzo's Wife's Island/Woke whali ti near Mesa Lake in 1994, so-called because this is where Edzo told his wife to hide while he went to attempt a peace with the Chipewyan Akaiicho.

02. Tent frames and drymeat/bògòò racks at Mesa Lake in the barrenlands in 1988.



LEFT. Paddler in the early morning mist in 1995, the first year of 'Trails of Our Ancestors'.

JOHN B. ZOE



ABOVE. Old cabin foundation and stone chimney at Dead Birch Narrows/Kia Kwa K'a, a site near Gamètì.

SHARON J. SIBBERSON PHOTO

BELOW. Grave site of the wife of Kwaji at Beaver Lodge Lake/Kwoyètì shows obvious signs of a passing forest fire with standing-dead trees watching over new-flowering fireweed.



SHARON J. SIBBERSON PHOTO

the ice in winter), and in return the votary may ask to be granted good weather, safe traveling conditions and abundant food resources. At all sacred sites, and indeed at many important cultural sites, of erings are also left. Places inhabited by malevolent entities (called weyèèdù or “animal-beings”) are regarded as dangerous, and consequently, always avoided. Through dreaming and the acquisition of ɪk'òò or “medicine”, sometimes “power,” “knowledge,” or “luck”, one prepares to deal with the world, and the powers inhabiting it. These traditional beliefs and practices have been syncretized with the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholicism.

The ɪdaà trail is central to the Tłı̨chǫ homeland. Two rivers, the Marian (Gòlooṭì deè) and the Camsell (Nǫḏihati), form the trail, and with a network of inter-connecting trails, provide access to a Tłı̨chǫ land use area encompassing some 295,000 square kilometres. In post contact times, the trail was used to access trading posts on Great Slave Lake (Tideè), Great Bear Lake (Sahtì), and the Mackenzie River (Dehcho) at the mouth of Bear River (Sahtideè).



01.

JOHN POIRIER / PWNHC

01. Elders and youth work together on the Traditional Birchbark Canoe Project of 1996 at Russell Lake/Sahgòò dawhetò tì.



02.

JOHN POIRIER / PWNHC

02. Paul Rabesca pulling up the long spruce roots which will be split and used to sew birch bark together. The seams are then sealed with spruce gum.



03.

JOHN POIRIER / PWNHC

03. Michael Nitsiza collects sacred red ochre for the Caribou Skin Lodge Project of 1999.



04.

TOM ANDERSON / PWNHC

04. Women apply sacred red ochre to the Caribou Skin Lodge. The colour is made of ground local ochre and grease.

BELOW. Hunters on the barrenlands pride themselves in being able to carry their own packs and caribou bundles at Grizzle Bear Lake/Diga tì in 1999.

JOHN POIRIER / PWNHC





ABOVE. Aerial view of Dreaming Mountain/Ts'o kwe near Gamètì in 2006.

TESA MACHINOSH / PHOTONIA YESTER

01. Tłı̨chų Flunky in a birchbark canoe at Marion Lake/Jhdaak'e ti. 1913-14.



JOHN ALDEN MASON / CMC

02. On the first night on the 'Trails of Our Ancestors' at Russell Lake/Sahgòò dawhetq ti, delicate noctilucent clouds and the camaraderie of a midnight campfire seem an encouraging sign from the land and assure high spirits on the part of the paddlers.



TESA MACHINOSH

03. Eddie Weyallon drums a morning prayer with students in 1992. The drum is the heartbeat of the nation.



TESA MACHINOSH / PHOTONIA YESTER

THOMAS D. ANDREWS, JOHN B. ZOE AND AARON HERTER

# YAMQÒZHA

## Sacred Sites and the Anthropology of Travel

The Tłı̨chų landscape is a mosaic of significant places, all with names and stories attached to them. Place and narrative transform a physical geography into a social geography, where culture and landscape are transformed into a semiotic whole. In Tłı̨chų cosmology, these places represent the physical embodiment of cultural process, which is realized through the combination of travel and story-telling. By travelling traditional trails, which link places like beads on a string, Tłı̨chų youth are told stories as each place is visited.

The stories provide all the knowledge necessary for living within the Tłı̨chų landscape, and in later life these places become mnemonics for recalling the narrative associated with them. In this way, narratives relevant to knowing, and living, in the Tłı̨chų landscape are passed from generation to generation. Travel is critical to learning, and understanding Tłı̨chų cosmology. Without the visual, mnemonic cue of place, stories could not be accurately recalled, preserving the rich detail and accuracy they are noted for. If we accept the premise of landscape as process, then it is realized through travel.

The triptych of travel, place, and narrative is embodied best in one of the legends of Yamqòzha, who is the most important of the Tłı̨chų culture-heros. Yamqòzha is noted for his creation of many components of the landscape, for assisting with the transformation of floating time into linear time, for establishing many of the laws and cultural rules important to Tłı̨chų existence, for mediating the enduring relationship between the Tłı̨chų and the animals with which they share the



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**ABOVE.** Grandfather's Head Rock/Kwөөdөө tells the story of Yamqòzha and his brother, when they were still young. They carve a hole in their grandfather's head while he is sleeping. They drop rocks into the crack and their grandfather turns into a rock. To this day when people go by this place, they drop rocks into the crack to foretell their future.

landscape, and from which they draw nourishment, and for making the landscape secure. For the sake of brevity, an abridged and paraphrased version of the story is presented here.

The story represents a single day in the life of Yamqòzha and recounts his exploits in making the land safe. However, in undertaking these activities Yamqòzha imparts power in the landscape and the places he visits are transformed into sacred sites. Most importantly Yamqòzha travels a portion of an important traditional trail. The trail, called Jdaà ("up this way"), is geographically central to the Tłı̨chų homeland and notably, nearly twenty sacred sites (not including 189 graves) are located along its length, a number not matched on any other trail in the Tłı̨chų region. The story metaphorically connects travel, place, and narrative, and provides a focus for grounding the foreground of everyday life in the background of history and religion. As Yamqòzha works and travels along the trail, he transforms the mythological into the real. However his foreground becomes the background of Tłı̨chų life, and consequently provides the potential of an ideal life. In other words, place and narrative provide the potential ideal for everyday life, while travel and "work" provide the mechanism of achieving it. The landscape provides the fabric for grounding the metaphor in cultural process, and experiencing it is realized through travel and ritual. It is significant that Yamqòzha, known as "the one who travels", is the most important of the Tłı̨chų culture-heros. Through his travels, Yamqòzha brings forth the laws governing Tłı̨chų identity and life, and through his actions, serves as a model for an ideal existence.



ALICE LEGGE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT ALE-4

**ABOVE.** In 1998, Joe Mantla takes to Sliding Hill/Hodoòdzoo on a sled of spruce boughs to find out if the land is pleased with him.



ILLUSTRATION BY PATER SAULE RETTORE IN ADOPTION BY THE TŁĮCHŪ NATION

**01.** Inside a Tłı̨chų Lodge. A traveling or nomadic culture requires everything to be light weight and easily transportable including the entertainment and educational resources, as it is also an oral culture.

## Yamqòzha and the Wolverine

*Yamqòzha woke one morning at lhti kika near Yahuttı̨ and cut down a birch tree to make a bow. After working on his bow for some time, he began to walk south. Eventually he reached Hodoòdzoo, a place where people slid for good luck. Here he found that Nogha (wolverine) had placed sharpened stakes at the bottom of the slide to entrap people. Yamqòzha decided that he would make Hodoòdzoo safe for people to slide at again, so he quietly approached the stakes and carefully slid his caribou skin shirt over one of them. Twisting his nose until it bled, he covered the top of the stake with blood, and then pretended to be dead. Soon Nogha came by and took Yamqòzha back to his camp. Yamqòzha, through the use of his power, freed himself and killed Nogha, though letting the wolverine's family escape unharmed. In this way Yamqòzha made Hodoòdzoo safe for people again.*

*Yamqòzha continued walking south on the trail. Eventually he reached the large hill known as Ts'okwe, where he sat down and continued making his bow. Tired after a long arduous day Yamqòzha slept. While he slept he had a dream. Ts'okwe forever after became a nate k'e (dreaming place).*

Paul Wetrade and Philip Zoe back on their old hunting grounds on barrenland trails used by migrating caribou herds for millennia at Point Lake/Deèzàa ti in 1999.



MABELINE CHOQUAAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT / INCA-20



01. MABELINE CHOQUAAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

01. Phillip Zoe pegs out a caribou skin to dry at Point Lake/Deèzàa ti on the barrenlands in 1999.



02. ALLICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

02. Visions of barrenland eskers are etched in the hearts and minds of anyone who has ever been there, especially the Elders who have traveled so close to this land since they were born. Courageous Lake/Ewaànit'ii ti, 2001. Dora Nitsiza of Whatì, Harry Mantla of Gamèti, Allice Legat, Romie Wetrade of Gamèti, Elizabeth Michel of Behchokò.



03. ALLICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

03. Making a video to record elders at a barrenland gravesite in 2001.

# TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

ALLICE LEGAT | FORMER RESEARCH DIRECTOR | TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROGRAM

*"Dè gogha t'asù k'èdì họt'e. Gokò họt'e. Gokò, gonèè ne t'à nezjì wek'èts'edì ha gogha wet'àazà họt'e. Tjìchq nèk'e hoyjì k'ets'edè njdè gokò agòht'e ne ts'jyq.*

*It's the land that keeps things for us. It is our home. Being our home it is important for us to take good care of our dwelling – our land. Wherever we travel in Tjìchq nèk'è is our home."*

(Rosalie Tailbone of Gamèti – May 1998)

The Tjìchq elders asked their Chiefs for the traditional knowledge program as they wished to document stories so their descendents could have them to 'think-with' as they travelled trails – both physical and mental. They also wanted to support their leadership in building a Nation in which future generations would remember to think about Tjìchq nèk'è (the place where Tjìchq belong).

Between 1992 and 2002, the elders along with the young people who worked with them set up spring, summer and fall camps along trails with elders telling stories to those who came to experience the place. Places such as Tsi'zehdaà along the Mqwhì Trail, and Njdzjkaà along the Jdaà Trail, where families were safe in the winter while men went trapping. Elders told stories while younger people documented place



ALICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL-G-27

ABOVE. The Elders conduct a 'Feeding the Fire' ceremony in 1998 at Faber Lake/Semj ti to honour the Ancestors.



ALICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL-G-29

ABOVE. Adele Wedawin and Pierre Mantla Sr re-visit an old cabin at Faber Lake/Semj ti in 1998.



01. ALICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL-G-24

01. Elizabeth Chocolate prepares medicinal rat root for drying as part of the plant use and habitat project in 2001.



02. ALICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL-A-15



03. ALICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL-G-28

02. PhoebeAnn Wetrade, Sally Ann Zoe, Elsie Mantla interview John D. Quitte in 1998 on-location at Faber Lake/Semj ti.

03. Madeline Drybone with grandson, Roger Drybone at Faber Lake/Semj ti in 1998.

names and stories so in the future their descendents can listen to their stories on tape and remember occurrences at places.

In Gamèti, the Chief and Council initiated the traditional governance project with the elders Jean Wetrade, Andrew Gon, Marie Zoe, Harry Simpson, and Madeline Drybone telling stories of Yamòzhah, Edzo, Mòwhì and Bruneau. Stories of these powerful leaders emphasized the social and cultural laws and agreements made in the past, and in so doing provided guidance to all Tìchq working to build a Nation based on the knowledge acquired from travelling the trails of their ancestors. As Romie Wetrade said in September 1994,

*"Mòwhì drew the map with his mind. He said as long as the sun rises, as long as the river flows, as long as this land shall last, and nothing will change for the people, that is what he [Mòwhì] said. That is an important agreement that he made for us and we can't let it go. He did big things for us and we came all this way and we raised our children and we have been raised on this dè (land). To this day, we still raise our children on it."* (Romie Wetrade / Translated by Celine Football)

At the Tìchq Assembly in 1999 the elders, with the support of Grand Chief Joe Rabesca and Chief Negotiator John B. Zoe, formed the Elders Regional Committee.

Mòwhì's grandson, Jimmy Martin, became k'òowo or 'boss' for the Regional Committee. One task the elders undertook was to draw Mòwhì's trail on a map and to document how Mòwhì travelled and taught his descendents. For them it represented the extent of his knowledge on which they could discuss Mòwhì Gogha dè Nìtlèe (traditional area of the Tìchq described by Chief Mòwhì during signing



AUCIE BEGAN / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18



MADÉLAINE CHOCOLATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18

ABOVE. Laisa Mantla has the ceremonial ride of her life at Sliding Hill/Hodoòdzoo, a sacred Yamòqzha site near Gamèti in 1998.

ABOVE. Baby moss/Bebia kw'ah is an extremely absorbent and light weight material; the original environmentally-friendly disposable diaper.



01. MADÉLAINE CHOCOLATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18

01. The drums, heartbeat of the Nation, fill the air with their pulse as the canoes complete their journey on another of the "Trails of the Ancestors".



02. MADÉLAINE CHOCOLATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18

02. Guns are fired by both parties to announce the arrival of canoes at Wekweèti in 2001.



03. SALLY ZOE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18

03. Madelaine Chocolate and Gabrielle Mackenzie-Scott at work on the plant use and habitat research in Behchokò in 2000.



04. TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT A.13.18

04. Georgina Chocolate interviews Elders Eddie Lafferty and Jimmy Martin as part of the Placenames research at Behchokò in 1999.

of Treaty 11, 1921), and the extent of the knowledge necessary for all Tłı̨ch̨o to care for the Nation. As Margaret Laf erty said on October 1995:

*"As long as we shall last and as long as our descendants shall last and as long as our children shall last, we want them to use this land as their father and mother, this is what we think about this land . . . We love this land. It's like a mother to us and a father to us."* (Margaret Laf erty / Translated by Celine Football).

The Elders' main focus was to share their stories and to travel, with those younger, to significant places. Georgina Chocolate, Bobby Gon, Madelaine Chocolate and Sally Anne Zoe worked consistently with the elders, while others, including high school students were invited to learn and 'experience' the stories while visiting places. The stories were woven together telling of the relationships between all that is part of the land with a focus on the relationships between caribou, plants, water and Tłı̨ch̨o ancestors.

*"Du godı sù gogh̨ while ade hojly ha-le. İtaà wet' à ts'et'y' h̨ot'e. Eyı godı làani du nèk'e nàts'edè. Eyı godı sù Ehtsy eyts'g Ehtseè gıgodù h̨ot'e. Ehtsy eyts'g Ehtseè gıgodù t' à gohde. Gıyatù sù wet' àazàa deè h̨ot'e, jdaà ts'eda gha gots' àdı ha t' à. Gıyatù t' à edegha nànts'edè gha h̨ot'e."*

*"The stories never die. We are still using the story. We live our lives like the stories. These stories are from my grandmothers, my grandfathers. I am talking with my grandparents' stories. Their words are very important because they will help you live in the future. Their words will help you to think for yourselves."*

(Madelaine Drybone – May, 1994)



01.

TESSA MACINTOSH / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

01. Adele Wedawin displays several braids of caribou sinew made from twisting thin strands of caribou back tendon. It is used for sewing hides.



02.

SALLY ANN ZOE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT S.A.Z.18

02. Elders recall the old ways and stories at TRANSLATION/ Kweekateelii near Russell Lake/Sahgòò dawhetò ti in 2001.



03.

MADLINE CHOCOLATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT M.C.17

03. Pierre Mantla and Madeline Arrowmaker explore the remains of an old fireplace at Faber Lake/Semj ti in 2000.



04.

MADLINE CHOCOLATE / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT M.C.17

04. Bella Zoe crosses the threshold of an old dwelling at Faber Lake/Semj ti in 1999.

**BELOW.** In 1998 Traditional Knowledge Elders re-visited Faber Lake/Semj ti one of the early fur trade, all-Tłı̨chǫ communities abandoned during the Flu Epidemic of 1928. L-R (Back): Romie Wetrade, Pierre Mantla, David Chocolate, Joe Mantla, Harry Simpson, Harry Mantla, Amen Tailbone, Phillip Zoe, Elsie Mantla, Paul Wetrade, Phoebe Ann Wetrade, Allice Legat, Mary Apple, and Rosalie Mantla. L-R (Front): Sally Ann Zoe, Elise Simpson, Laisa Mantla, Elizabeth Chocolate, John Quitte, Rosalie Tailbone, Marie Quitte, Bella Mantla, Anjelique Mantla, Bella Zoe, and Adele Wedawin.

ALLICE LEGAT / TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE PROJECT AL.CC.8



Into the early dawn, under dancing aurora, the storytelling continues with tales of days gone by, of the great heros and lessons from the land.



01. TESSA MACINTOSH / TLICHO GOVERNMENT



02. TESSA MACINTOSH / TLICHO GOVERNMENT



03. TESSA MACINTOSH / TLICHO GOVERNMENT

01. Having initiated the "Trails of the Ancestors" and been on every one since its inception in 1995, John B. Zoe, already a man of many campfires, says "It's about tranquility; to bring people back to silence, to revisit the self on the land, away from modern life."

02. To make up for windbound days, there follows a long day where paddlers cover some 50 kilometres by alternating segments of silent synchronized strokes, snacking, chatting among canoe mates, racing other canoes and back to quiet reflection –not to mention taking a shore break at the big tumbled rocks at Castor Lake/ Wek'ellets'aadzii ti.

03. After a long stretch of breaking in new muscles, it's good to raft-up the canoes, kick-back, and relax for a spell; an opportune time for Alex Williah to dry feet and moccasins after a wet portage.

TESSA MACINTOSH / TLICHO GOVERNMENT

TAMMY STEINWAND

# MEMORIES:

## Reflections of a Magical Journey

*I was born, raised and make my home in Behchokò, Northwest Territories and was a junior high teacher when I first started taking part in the annual canoe trips that were a partnership between Chief Jimmy Bruneau School (TCSA), and the Dogrib Treaty 11 Council (now Tłı̨chǫ Government).*



TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

*ABOVE.* Kirk Mantla and Francis Chinkon, two strong Tłı̨chǫ on a portage at the end of a fine day near their destination.



TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

*ABOVE.* To shouts of "Hoòrabah / Go Faster!", Lloyd Lamouille of Wekweèi uses a paddle stroke called the "cross-bow draw" to quickly round a point of land.



TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

*ABOVE.* By evening the wind subsides and adventurous youths set out to explore the Kwekajkaa Hills on the far side of the bay at Basler Lake/ Tiegǫ ti.

The four canoe trips that I was a part of have been very special to me. This was a time for me to connect not only with the land but also in a special way with the Elders, the culture and language of our people and most importantly, the students. I have many fond memories of our time out on the land.

Each 10-20 day trip was set up pretty much the same way. With 30 people in total, five canoes each carried six paddlers; an Elder, guide/boss, teacher and three students. Each day one of the canoes was in charge of breakfast for the whole group, another canoe would do lunch for the whole group and the third canoe would do supper. The next day, the duties rotated so if you did breakfast one morning, you would do lunch the following morning and supper the third day. This gave a canoe at least one whole day of break from preparing meals. These breaks were very much appreciated. When it was our group's turn to make a meal, we would discuss who in our

canoe would make the fire, start the tea, and do the other duties such as make bannock or peel potatoes. Everyone had a chore to do and everyone chipped in and helped out. The same with the clean up after supper; everyone helped to wash, dry and put the dishes and pots and pans away. It was a group effort and everyone worked well together.

Each day began with prayers for a good day, a safe journey and sometimes the request for food. I remember on one trip when we were running low on protein and we happened to camp by a grave, the morning prayer led by the group's Elder included a request that we be given a big animal in exchange for offerings we left at the burial site. It was a beautiful day; the sun was very bright and warm, not much wind, a few clouds, just a gorgeous day! That afternoon we had seen at least one moose. There was our food. The group was happy and very excited, especially the Elder whose prayers were

answered. The whole trip was like that. Sometimes things happened that were difficult to explain. I believe that it is the power of prayer and the spirits of the land that constantly guide us, protect us and lead us in the right direction. There have been many blessings like this on these trips and each was special in its own way.

Evenings, after supper were spent in different ways. Some tired canoers would take a dip after a day of hard work paddling and portaging, others would spend the time playing cards, Scrabble or reading in their tents, and others got some much needed rest. Each evening before bed people would gather around the fire to dry out their shoes and socks on racks above the fire. This time was also used to share stories and tell jokes, and this usually ended with prayers for a good sleep and thanks for the day.

One of my favorite memories of the canoe trip was listening to the Elders speak of the different areas where we disembarked. Many sites showed evidence of past use. Sometimes we would find tent circles

outlined by large rocks that were previously used to hold a caribou hide lodge in place. In the center of this area, underneath the moss and lichen, one would find a fire pit and if you were lucky, flint or tiny arrowheads. The Elders shared their knowledge as they explained how camps were set up, how our ancestors lived at different times of the year as they followed the animals and how they connected with and worked on the land. At times the conditions were harsh but the people's faith, courage and determination pulled them through. Other special areas included old villages, old camp sites, grave sites, Hodoòdzoo, Weyùts'atlaa, Wekwezhu, and many other sites. Our Tłı̨chǫ Territory is filled with special and sacred sites that we are blessed with. It is an honor to learn about our land and our ancestors from our Elders while actually being at these particular sites. It gave me such a special feeling and filled me with pride to be of Tłı̨chǫ ancestry.



TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT



01. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

01. The group some 90 strong, spend a day at a sandy beach on Basler Lake/Tiegò ti. Though windbound, it's sunny and proves a good time for laundry, card games, a refreshing swim, an air food drop and visiting with old friends.



02. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

02. Morning prayer provides an opportunity to contemplate the 10-day, 250 kilometre journey from Behchokò to Gamèti on trails that have been used by the Tłı̨chǫ for thousands of years. Alphonse Apples leads a gathering in prayer for continued safe passage and thankfulness, for the days have been as strenuous and fulfilling as in the times of the Ancestors.



03. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

03. With just the right water level, not too deep or too shallow, lining a canoe downstream can save time spent on portaging, though care must be taken with footing in the rapids.



04. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

04. In keeping with tradition, time is always given at a modest distance from the final destination to 'rendez-vous' and prepare for the final approach 'en masse'. This way the people arrive safe and whole.

ABOVE. To take advantage of a good wind, the party halts on a sandy beach at Big Spruce Lake/Ts'eèti to rig sails fashioned from tarps suspended between spruce poles, thus propelling canoes more swiftly than even the six paddlers on board.

*“Hęřę dōne ats'yt'e, edèahdi. Dōne aahłı̨ k'ęę edekak'eaht'ı̨. Dō nezı̨ eghàlageedaa sù gı̨xak'eaht'ı̨ eyıts'ō gı̨xèahı̨. Gı̨laà ghàdeahı̨. Hanı̨ ı̨dè dōne ts'ı̨ı̨ ha ts'ı̨ı̨wōō sù ts'ı̨ı̨hè ha. Dōne, Dōne sōđı̨ı̨ ts'ı̨ı̨hè ha.*

*“Arm that you are Dene. As a Dene you search for yourself. You seek those who are skilled and pattern yourself after them. Learn the skills that they have. You will become the Dene envisioned. The Real Person, the Dene.”*

(Elizabeth Mackenzie, Yellowknife – April 1990 / Dene Kede Education: A Dene Perspective)



Respect is paid to the water (Tì ts'áts'eedi), for its pure, clean abundance, as a mode of transportation, for sustaining the people and all life.

TESSA MACINTOSH / TLUCHO GOVERNMENT



TESSA MACINTOSH / TLUCHO GOVERNMENT

ABOVE. When the day is long with several portages, what keeps the trekkers going forward is a look around the next bend. An idyllic waterfall at Norris Lake/Jt'ò ti and the crystal clear waters of Castor Lake/Wek'ehets'aadzi ti are some of these rewards on the canoe trip from Behchokò to Gamètì.

Through these stories and the daily work we encountered, sometimes paddling through strong winds, or portaging through muskeg and bog, it was the Elders' words from their stories that helped to keep us going, to keep on paddling, one stroke at a time, or keep on trekking, one step at a time. This is where connections can be made to our personal lives in our communities. At times it is difficult, and some young people begin to lose their way. I believe the canoe trip has helped many young people appreciate our Elders more and get a glimpse of how our ancestors have lived and endured hardship. They learn that it will not always be smooth sailing and that you have to have faith, courage and determination, by beginning with believing in yourself... that you can accomplish whatever you set out to do.

The canoe trips were a lot of hard work but in the end, it was always worthwhile. Each trip ended with a special feeling of accomplishing something great and to share that special feeling with fellow paddlers and the rest of the group was just wonderful! The canoe trips will always hold a special place in my heart.

Tammy Steinwand, Vice-Principal  
Chief Jimmy Bruneau School, Edzo.

*Gocho tlu (Trails of Our Ancestors) is a course offered to a select number of Chief Jimmy Bruneau school students during the summer holidays. Students who take this course travel by canoe to the Tłı̨chǫ Assembly following the trails of their ancestors. The students are out on the land/water for a minimum of 10 days, spend time in the Assembly meetings, participate in the cultural events such as Drum Dances and Hand Games, visit and clean-up grave sites, camp at the traditional campsites, listen to the elders telling stories about the routes, and spend a lot of time paddling and portaging, cooking and learning wilderness survival. Every student is expected to fully participate in all activities in order to gain credit for the course. Elders teach the students during the trip the ways of the Tłı̨chǫ people.*

*The Dene Kede Curriculum, aims to ensure that the students develop respectful relationships with the land, the spiritual world, other people and themselves. These relationships are best developed with the aid of Tłı̨chǫ elders, experiences on the land, and use of the Tłı̨chǫ language.*



01. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

01. A map is like a magnet for travelers like these from Whati with stories of the land continuing well into the night at Slemon Lake/Hobàa tì. And the language of choice is the mother tongue – Tłı̨chǫ Yatı.



02. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

02. The two-man carry of the large, modern canoes is not a traditional activity as they were much lighter in the past, however, portaging a tumpine pack of 100 pounds is still typical for the seasoned traveler.



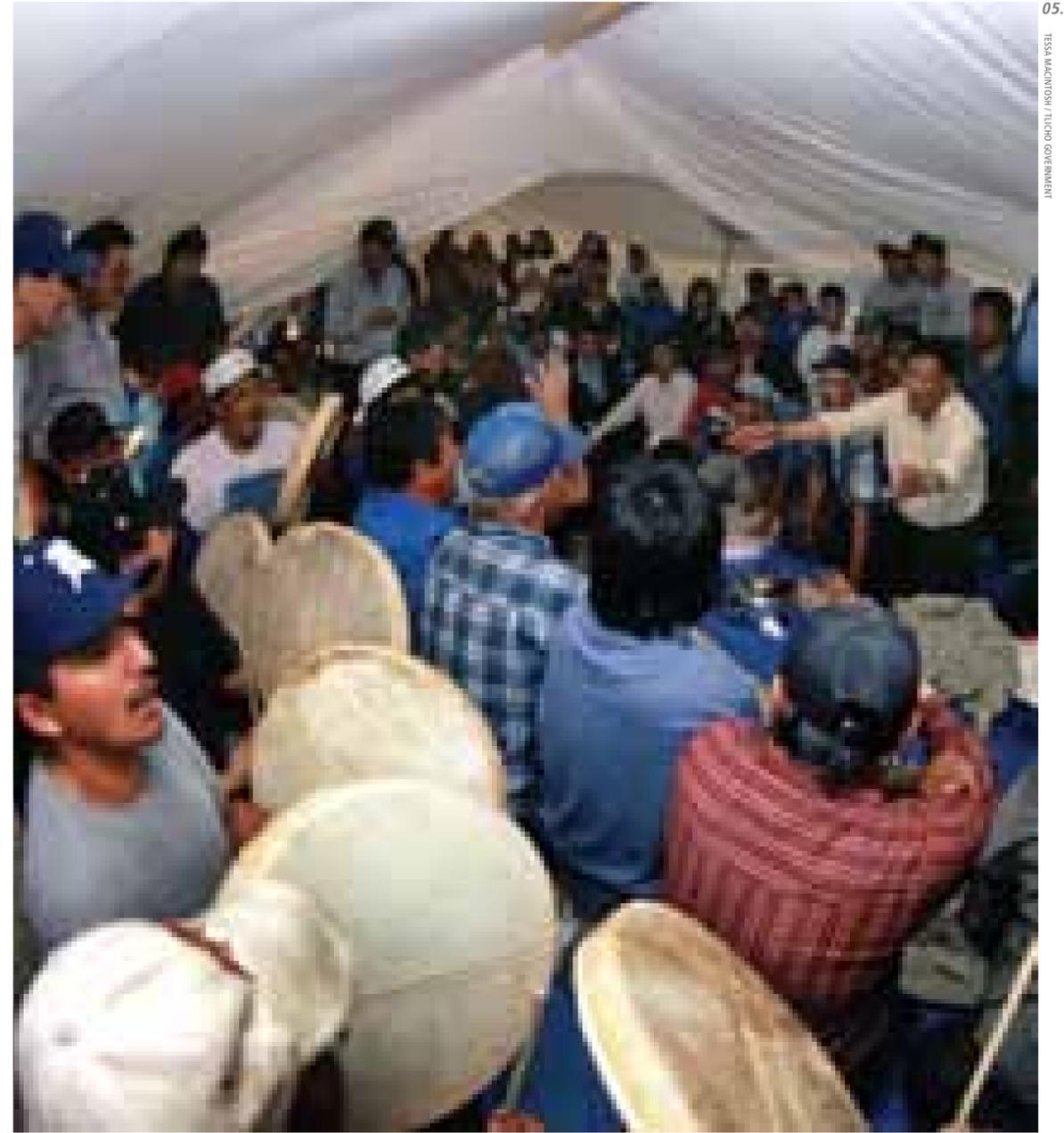
03. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

03. Young Missy Mantla "pays the water/Tı̨ ts'áts'eed" of the Emile River/Hozideè near Kwejinne Lake/Kweyǫ tı̨, giving a small token of value with prayers of gratitude for traveling on the land and for safe passage on the arrival of three canoes with kin from Wekweèti.



04. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

04. For Clarence Nasken and daughter Lela, the youngest on the trip, there is the incredibly unifying, unforgettably moving welcome of a thousand handshakes at Gamèti.



05. TESSA MACINTOSH / TILCHO GOVERNMENT

05. In 2004, the commencement of the Tłı̨chǫ Assembly in Gamèti is marked by the arrival of canoes from the 'Trails of our Ancestors' and continues with a week of meetings, drum dances/Eye t'à dagowo, handgames/Ets'ıdzı, weddings and camaraderie to reinforce the unified strength of the Tłı̨chǫ Nation.

# PLACENAMES

## Tłı̨chų names and terminology

<i>Idaa Trail</i> .....	<i>Jdaà tılı</i>	<i>Edzo's Wife's Island</i> .....	<i>Woke whali ti</i>
<i>Snare Lake</i> .....	<i>Wekweèti deè</i>	<i>Chased into Rock</i> .....	<i>Kwe yı ètets'adzii</i>
<i>Kwejinne Lake</i> .....	<i>Kweyji ti</i>	<i>Grandfather's Head Rock</i> .....	<i>Kweedoò</i>
<i>Basler Lake</i> .....	<i>Tiego ti</i>	<i>Animal Spirit Rock (whirlpool)</i> .....	<i>Weyeèdi</i>
<i>Mattberry Lake</i> .....	<i>Wekwit'ajlıj ti</i>	<i>Strong Like Two People</i> .....	<i>Dọ Nàake Laani Nàts'etso</i>
<i>Emile River (barrenland river)</i> .....	<i>Hozideè</i>	<i>Clouds Clearing Away!</i> .....	<i>Yàzọ etła</i>
<i>Norris Lake</i> .....	<i>Jt'ọ ti</i>	<i>Go Faster!</i> .....	<i>Hoòrabah</i>
<i>Boland Lake</i> .....	<i>Wets'ii ti</i>	<i>Traditional Knowledge Project</i> .....	<i>Whàèdọọ Nàowo Laa</i>
<i>Marion Lake (jackfish, lake)</i> .....	<i>Jhdaak'e ti</i>	<i>Caribou-skin Lodge</i> .....	<i>Ekwòwò t'òhbaa</i>
<i>Russell Lake (bear, arm, lake)</i> .....	<i>Sahgòọ dawhetọ ti</i>	<i>Birch-bark Canoe</i> .....	<i>K'ielaa</i>
<i>Slemon Lake</i> .....	<i>Hobaa ti</i>	<i>Drymeat</i> .....	<i>bògọọ</i>
<i>Big Spruce Lake</i> .....	<i>Ts'eèti</i>	<i>Dryfish</i> .....	<i>ehgwa</i>
<i>Castor Lake</i> .....	<i>Wek'etets'aadzii ti</i>	<i>Hand games</i> .....	<i>Ets'rdzi</i>
<i>Black Lichen Lake</i> .....	<i>Kwets'j ti</i>	<i>Drum dance</i> .....	<i>Eye t'à dagowo</i>
<i>De Vries Lake</i> .....	<i>Ghàatideè</i>	<i>Tea dance</i> .....	<i>Tadowheraa k'èè dagowo</i>
<i>Labrish Lake</i> .....	<i>Nàakaà ti</i>	<i>Whiteman</i> .....	<i>kwet'j</i>
<i>Beaverlodge Lake</i> .....	<i>Ts'ahiti</i>	<i>Bear Lake Chief</i> .....	<i>K'aawidaa</i>
<i>Boland Lake</i> .....	<i>Wets'ii ti</i>	<i>Father of Jimmy Bruneau</i> .....	<i>K'aawı Dzııj</i>
<i>Brown Water Lake</i> .....	<i>Tikwo ti</i>	<i>Chief Jimmy Bruneau</i> .....	<i>Kw'ahsideè Bjno</i>
<i>Point Lake</i> .....	<i>Dezaa ti</i>	<i>Chief Monfwi</i> .....	<i>Kw'ahsideè Monfwi</i>
<i>Grizzle Bear Lake</i> .....	<i>Dıga ti</i>	<i>Yamozha</i> .....	<i>Yamòòzha</i>
<i>Hottah Lake</i> .....	<i>Jts'èe ti</i>	<i>Medicine Power</i> .....	<i>Jk'ọọ</i>
<i>Lower Carp Lake</i> .....	<i>Dzimjti</i>	<i>Sacred red ochre</i> .....	<i>tsih</i>
<i>Wheeler Lake</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨dliti</i>	<i>Pay the land</i> .....	<i>dè ts'ats'eedi</i>
<i>Camsell River</i> .....	<i>Nòdihati</i>	<i>Pay the water</i> .....	<i>ti ts'ats'eedi</i>
<i>Marion River</i> .....	<i>Gòlooti deè</i>	<i>Feed the fire</i> .....	<i>kọ wàts'eedi</i>
<i>Great Slave Lake</i> .....	<i>Tideè</i>	<i>Dogrib</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų</i>
<i>Great Bear Lake</i> .....	<i>Sahiti</i>	<i>Tłı̨cho Nation</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų dọọ</i>
<i>Mackenzie River</i> .....	<i>Dehcho</i>	<i>Tłı̨cho Government</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų Dèts'ọ K'àowo</i>
<i>Bear River</i> .....	<i>Sahsideè</i>	<i>Tłı̨cho people</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų dọọ</i>
<i>Mesa Lake</i> .....	<i>Gots'okà ti</i>	<i>Tłı̨cho language</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų yatii</i>
<i>Rae Lake</i> .....	<i>Gamèti</i>	<i>Tłı̨chų culture</i> .....	<i>Tłı̨chų nàowo</i>
<i>Snare Lake</i> .....	<i>Wekweèti</i>	<i>Trails of Our Ancestors</i> .....	<i>Gocho tılı</i>
<i>LLM   Whati</i> .....	<i>Whati</i>	<i>Building a Nation</i> .....	<i>Amèè dọ ats'jt'e</i>
<i>Rae - Edzo</i> .....	<i>Behchokọ - Edzo</i>		<i>wek'ehoèdzọọ</i>
<i>Old Fort Rae</i> .....	<i>Njshii</i>		
<i>Old Marion Village</i> .....	<i>Xàèljı kọ gola</i>		
<i>Barrenlands</i> .....	<i>Hozii</i>		
<i>Hills, Basler Lake Narrows</i> .....	<i>Kwekajkaa</i>		
<i>Hills, Rae Lakes</i> .....	<i>Kwetaa</i>		
<i>Sliding Hill, Hoodoodzoo</i> .....	<i>Hodoòdzoo</i>		
<i>Went Inside Mountain, Marion Lake</i> .....	<i>Weyiits'at'aa</i>		
<i>Edzo's big rock</i> .....	<i>Kwecho</i>		

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TESSA MACINTOSH

# ENDNOTE

## History lays the pathway for Tłıchǫ future

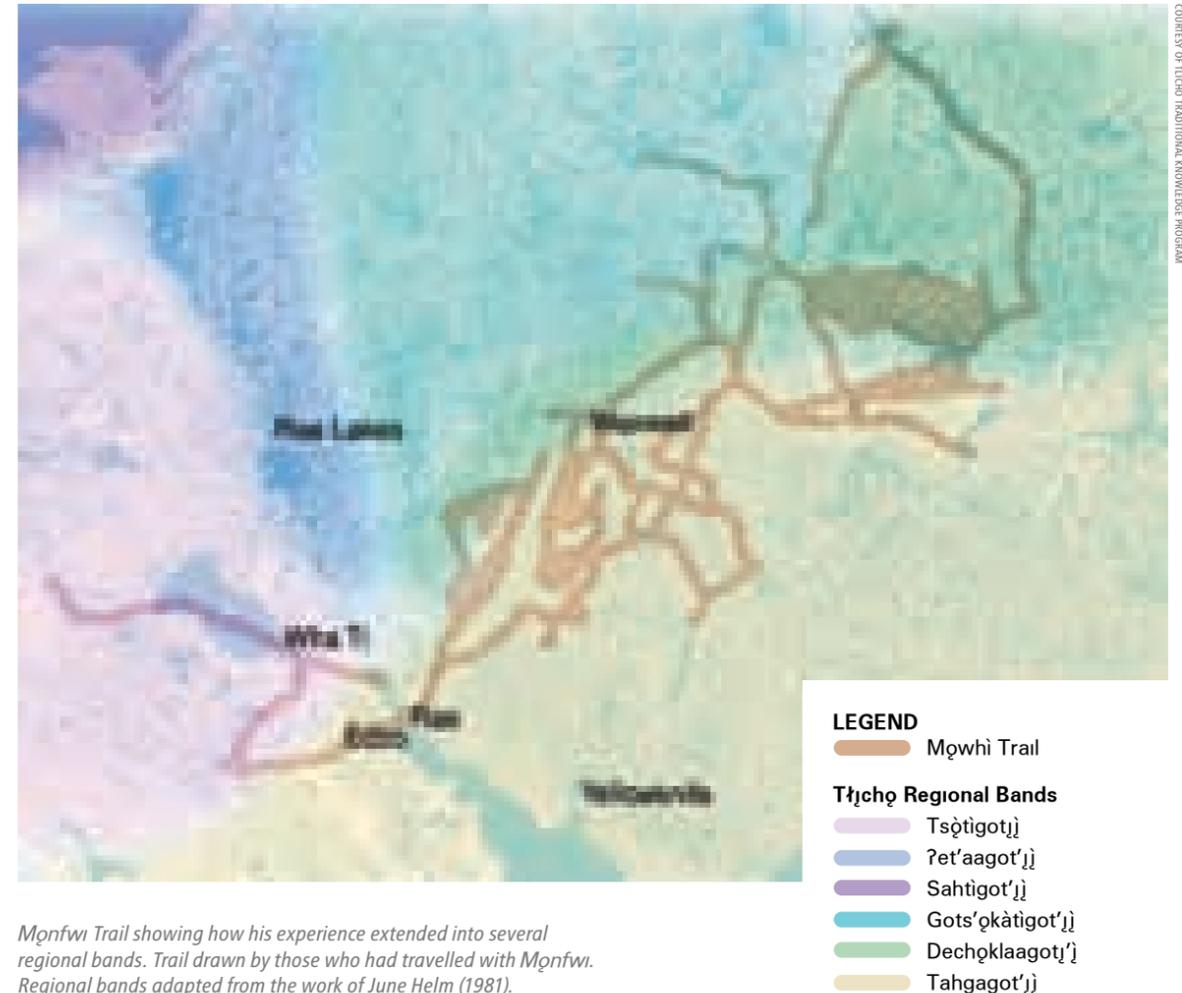
*"Your ability to communicate with the animals themselves, the ability to communicate with The Creator, your spiritual growth, is given to you by the land and animals, every time you go out. Sometimes those things will be replaced by modern spirituality. But the land, history and the spiritual growth that comes from the land never changes."* (John B. Zoe)

This book is a series of impressions and thoughts about the trails of the Tłıchǫ. From the earliest times, the Tłıchǫ have traveled this land, recording their discoveries and activities in a rich oral tradition that is their history and culture. Travel to the places of the stories is integral to the self-portrait of the Tłıchǫ people.

By the mid 20th century, the location of these sites, and the stories linked to them were in danger of being lost. Only the Elders, the last generation to have lived on the land, retained this knowledge. On a trip to document the trails in the early 1990s, John B. Zoe, Elder Harry Simpson, archeologist Tom Andrews and others were inspired to revive the tradition of travel on the land and to restore the oral legacy, which is connected so closely to the landscape. Recording the *Traditional Knowledge* of the Elders was a vital part of the over-all renaissance of the Tłıchǫ heritage. So now, many Tłıchǫ have experienced the exhilaration of being at these special places, learning the stories and feeling the emotional pull this unique land exerts on every person who travels in it.

It's been an honour helping to gather the stories and photographs of the Tłıchǫ over the years, in part because it is my children's own inheritance. I rejoice with them when their hard won self-government becomes reality. I've been privileged to travel the *Trails of Our Ancestors*, to experience something of this Tłıchǫ rite of passage. This book, like the canoe trips themselves, is another small part of what John B. Zoe calls *Nation Building*.

Tessa Macintosh  
Book Hunter/Gatherer – Somba K'e, 2007



*Mq̄nfwi Trail showing how his experience extended into several regional bands. Trail drawn by those who had travelled with Mq̄nfwi. Regional bands adapted from the work of June Helm (1981).*



*Trails of our Ancestors – Canoe Routes of Our Ancestors.*



