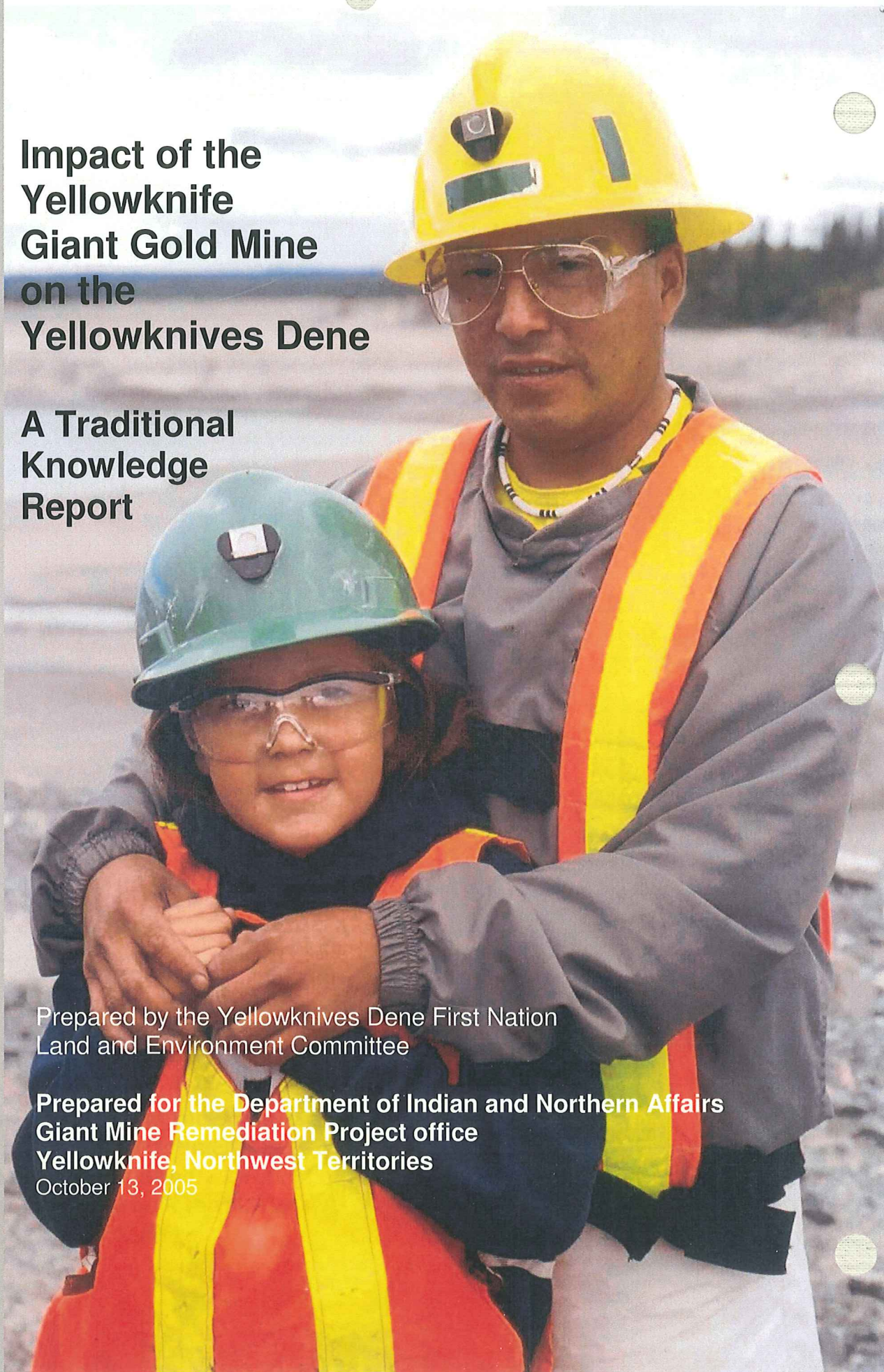


Impact of the Yellowknife Giant Gold Mine on the Yellowknives Dene

A Traditional Knowledge Report

Prepared by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation
Land and Environment Committee

Prepared for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
Giant Mine Remediation Project office
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories
October 13, 2005



For Review

Supporting Document A1

**The Giant Gold Mine – Our Story:
Impact of the Yellowknife Giant Gold Mine on the
Yellowknives Dene -
A Traditional Knowledge Report
(YKDFNLEC, 2005)**

Fred Sangris talks about Baker Creek on Pg 15.



Giant Mine Site Tour August 2004

Photos courtesy of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Giant Mine Remediation Office (1994).

TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IS INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

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NOTE

Traditional knowledge of the Yellowknives Dene in this report is not to be split up, placed in databases, or taken out of context; neither is it to be combined with the traditional knowledge of other indigenous peoples.

CITATION OR REFERENCE TO THIS REPORT

Yellowknives Dene (2005). Yellowknives Dene: Impact of the Giant Mine on the Yellowknives Dene. Dettah: Yellowknives Dene First Nation Council.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) Land and Environment Committee (L&EC) is pleased to provide the following Traditional Knowledge (TK) Report (TK Report) to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) in support of its Giant Mine closure and reclamation project. The Report was prepared by the YKDFN Land and Environment Committee with financial support from the INAC. It draws on the collective knowledge of our community.

This TK Report has the following objectives: 1) to facilitate peoples' understanding of the effects the Yellowknife Giant Mine (Giant Mine) had on the YKDFN. 2) To help people understand and appreciate the YKDFN sense of history and viewpoint about Giant Mine and its environment, and, 3) helping bring a satisfactory sense of closure to the YKDFN membership regarding the effects of the mine.

Ultimately, Giant Mine is a story of relationships between people and the environment, and between cultures learning to co-exist. This is the knowledge that the YKDFN want to communicate through this TK Report.

2 BACKGROUND

Land+Water Apps → The YKDFN L&EC is responsible for the management of YKDFN land and water interests. It undertakes its mandate by reviewing applications for land and water use, and participating in the environmental and socio-economic monitoring of mining projects. *Env. Mon. & Socio. Eco. Mon. } mines* The L&EC also assists in the development of Akatcho Treaty 8 Tribal Council and GNWT and Federal legislation and policy, as well as compile Traditional Knowledge and traditional knowledge mapping, and participating in environmental assessments.

The L&EC reviews land use applications, water license applications and other relevant regulatory applications respecting land and water from the City of Yellowknife, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Federal Government of Canada. The L&EC has also prepared a detailed land use and occupancy documents. Work on the mapping project includes the compilation of land use information on maps that are currently in the possession of the Treaty 8 YKDFN negotiations team. This information is invaluable to the long-term successful management of YKDFN lands and resources.

The L&EC also participates in environmental and socio-economic monitoring management of the BHP and Diavik Diamond mines through the respective monitoring and management boards. The Land and Environment Committee contribute to managing YKDFN land and waters using the knowledge of elders and the active involvement of young people in the community and their contributions to Traditional and contemporary knowledge.

The L&EC also contributes to the development and review of new legislation on behalf of the YKDFN, and is active in the closure plans for various mines around Yellowknife and Great Slave Lake. It also works with local agencies and the schools to facilitate on the land programs for the youth.

2.1 Objectives of the Traditional Knowledge Report

The L&EC met regularly with the INAC Giant Mine team to discuss the TK Report and to review the development proposal that would see the Giant mine closed, the area rehabilitated, where possible, and the arsenic managed. The L&EC also met with Mr. Richard Edjericon, INAC's liaison person for the Giant Mine Project and others interested in the TK project from any of the parties to facilitate the preparation of the Traditional Knowledge Report, and assist in INAC's regulatory and licencing efforts.

The L&EC has provided the following TK Report for use in INAC's regulatory and environmental assessment proceedings with the understanding that the property rights to the Traditional Knowledge Report belong to the YKDFN Land & Environment Committee.

The Objective of Restoring Relationship

The Giant Mine legacy is coming full circle. From the discovery of gold, to its extraction and refinement, to the mine's closure and reclamation. The Traditional Knowledge Report adds one last step; that of helping to restore relationship with the land and giving back to the lands its story, and sharing that story with Yellowknife. Part of the restorative process provides a chronological narrative of the significant events that shaped the Yellowknives Dene view of the Giant Mine. It is summarized in Appendix 1.

2.2 TK Report Components

The TK report covers several thematic areas for which the voices of the Yellowknives Dene are communicated through their stories and experiences. The thematic categories address specific areas of knowledge and concern within the YKDFN membership about mining in general and the Giant Mine. In particular:

Values and Priorities

Policy and planning Values

- The TK Report will provide a historical perspective on the policy and planning values that YKDFN applied to the Giant Mine area before there was ever a mine.

Legislation

- The TK Report will provide the YKDFN governance practices that existed and were used to manage the Giant Mine area.

Resources

- The TK Report will show how the Giant Mine affected the social and political resources of the YKDFN.

Risk Perception

- The TK Report will explain the impact of the Giant Mine in terms of the perceived health risks the YKDFN felt because of the mine.
 - The TK Report will report the YKDFN sense of risk as experienced over time (e.g., how the people changed their lifestyles to address their sense of risk resulting from the mine).
 - The TK Report discuss how YKDFN economic, physical environmental, political, and cultural factors changed in response to the mine and mining and general.
-

Impact Perception

- The TK Report will communicate the actual and perceived negative and positive effects resulting from the Giant Mine.
- The TK Report will provide an analysis from a YKDFN perspective, of the losses and gains (including economic gains) resulting from the Giant Mine.

Technical measures

- The TK Report will describe YKDFN local and regional land use and occupancy of the Giant Mine area.
- The TK Report will describe Dene control mechanisms for specific risks.

3 Yellowknives Dene

This section introduces the indigenous peoples who occupy and use their traditional territory from the northern Barrens to lands around the Yellowknife River and Bay (called Weledeh-Cheh). Yellowknives Dene are one of the peoples of the T'satsaot'ine (trans. metal or copper people). The peoples were known for the pots, knives, and other tools they made from copper collected in the northerly parts of their territory. Before trapping for the fur trade changed traditional occupancy and land-use patterns north of Tinde'e (Great Slave Lake), the traditional territory of the T'satsaot'ine consisted of lands around Great Slave Lake north to the Coppermine River, and east to the Thelon River.

Isadore Tsetta, July 11, 1995 Land and Environment Meeting in Dettah.

If you follow the Yellowknife River System, as you go you will hit all the portages leading to Mackay Lake. These portages that lead to MacKay Lake were used by our ancestors for generations. It has always been there and I have followed that route.

Since 1959, descendants of the T'satsaot'ine tribe have lived mostly at Denínu Kúé, Rocher River, Lutsel K'e, Reliance, Ndilo, Dettah, and Enodah. Today, the peoples call themselves and their territory after the great T'satsaot'ine leader Akeh-Cho: the Akaitcho Peoples and Akaitcho Territory. The 2005 AGM in Fort Smith saw the name 'Akaitcho territory' changed to 'Chief Sizeh Drygeese Territory'.

Yellowknives Dene call themselves after the river (the Weledeh) in the southerly parts of their territory, where they traditionally spent summer. The Weledeh (trans. Coney River) is otherwise known as the Yellowknife River. In the Weledeh Yellowknives dialect, wèleh in English means the fish known as coney (or inconnu) and deh means flowing water or river. Weledeh Yellowknives Elders tell a story in which Alexander Mackenzie decided to call the river "Yellowknife" after what the European explorer thought the people camped at the mouth were calling themselves. Elders today believe their ancestors and the interpreter were actually informing Mackenzie about the copper knives they held in their hands at the time.

The mouth of the Weledeh, where the ice breaks first, was a good place to stay. Ducks and geese migrating north could be relied on to drop down to the open water to rest, and fish could easily be caught at the mouth of the river. In spring, older fish are

healthy and fat, although fish spawned the previous fall are small, resembling eggs with large eyes and few visible bones. In spring, migrating fish move from open water into rivers where there is more light, warmth, and food. Weledeh Yellowknives land users have observed fish migrating up the Weledeh as far as the barrens, feeding on shoreline grasses. The people say that, when you eat fish in the spring, you can almost taste the grass; they prefer fatter fish that do not taste of grass. Bottom-feeding fish such as loche in Weleh-Cheh do not migrate and could always be found at the mouth of the Weledeh. Loche skin, scraped from the meat with a thin bone chisel, was used for windows in cabins. The people put fat or wax on loche skin to prevent cracking, although it is quite tough. Loche produce many more eggs than other fish. The people tell a story in which a young man wanted to count the number of eggs in a loche: when he finished counting, he was an old man.

For a better understanding and appreciation of how the Yellowknives Dene lived please refer to Section 4 and 5.

Judy Charlo, November 22, 1995 Land and Environment Meeting in Dettah. Before the visitors came to our land, the Weledeh (Yellowknives Dene) use to live right on the Yellowknife River, and that was the starting point for going into the barrenlands.

At the time of the making of Treaty 8 in 1900, Weledeh Yellowknives Elders say that their people's tents could easily be seen along the northern shores of Tinde'e (Great Slave Lake). It is usual for the people to continue staying in the same camp sites selected by their forefathers. The fish used to be so plentiful at the mouth of the Weledeh that up to ten large families could stay there. Families would stay in small groups, usually on islands or points near (but not in) hunting areas, as illustrated by the travel patterns on the map on the next page. This map, recorded in the mid-1970s, shows trails used by about twenty families at Weledeh Yellowknives traditional fish camps in much of Weledeh-Cheh. Traditional fish camps can be found from the mouth of the Weledeh along the shores south to Nècha Go Dò (Gros Cap), and west to Enodah as well as along the opposite shore from Whitebeach Point. Highly favoured sites were at Gros Cap, Moose Bay, Drybone Bay, Wool Bay, Akaitcho Bay, Burwash Point, the mouth of the Weledeh, Latham Island, Joliffe Island, Ptarmigan Point, Enodah, and Whitebeach Point.

Elders discouraged families from living where animals, especially moose, would come because the animals would stop coming there. Otter and mink, for instance, leave a river where people camp or settle on the banks; moose eventually leave an area where people stay. Thus, Weledeh Yellowknives families did not stay or build log homes in such places as the present-day Giant mine site, the townsite of Yellowknife, or recreation areas along the Ingraham Trail. In the past at these places, the people could find plentiful caribou (October to December, March and April), fur-bearing animals all winter, and moose, fish, berries, plants, and trees vital to survival year-round.



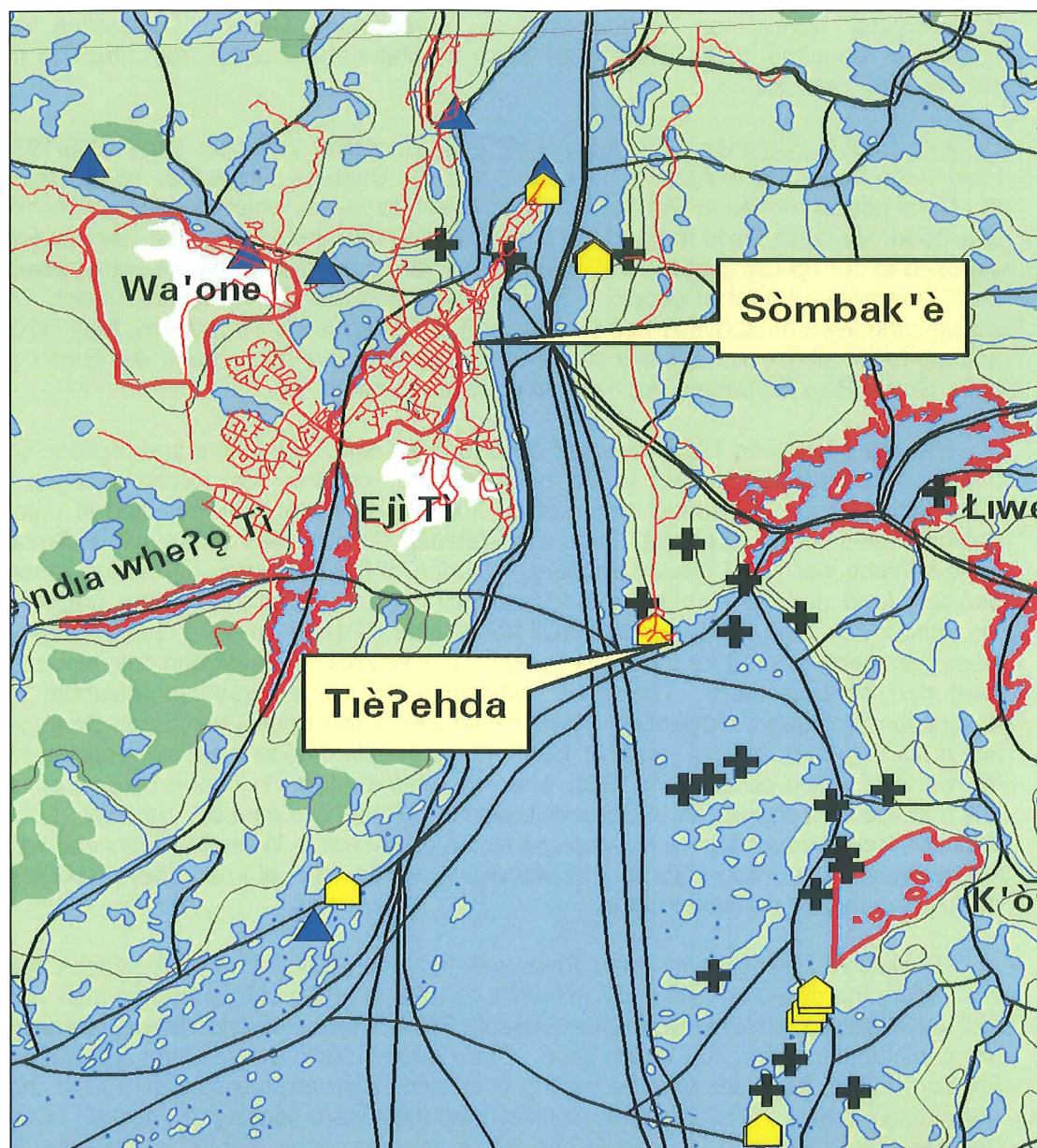


Figure 2 Yellowknives Dene Land Use and Occupancy Project. Select area provided in agreement with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation office of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.

Anthropologists often mistake Yellowknives Dene, for Tlì Chò Dene. Many Weledèh Yellowknives Elders speak their own as well as other Dene languages. In fact, the T'satsaot'ine and Denesúlinè languages are similar enough that one is likely a dialect of the other. It is likely that, if visiting anthropologists brought with them Tlì Chò Dene interpreters, Weledèh Yellowknives Elders would have used the language they spoke: perhaps their fluency in other Dene languages confused the anthropologists. Linguistic confusion remains to this day: modern Tlì Chò dictionaries translate "Tetsoòt'i" as

"Chipewyans" rather than "T'satsaot'ine" or "Yellowknives Dene". Denesúlinē who speak the language called Chipewyan (such as Matonabee) came from lands to the south of the T'satsaot'ine.

Mrs. Sophie Potfenger (Born around 1907-8). Transcript of Elders Tape 1968/1972. Held in the Dene Nation Archive. Transcript by Lena Drygees, December 1993. Before the Dene people moved to Dettah, they used to set up camps where hunting and fishing was good. My family used to go to the barrenlands to trap and hunt. In the summer time we used to set up camp at the Yellowknife River or sometimes at the site of Burwash Point. I remember a lot of people living in houses (log homes) at Burwash point. The people who lived at Burwash Point moved to the Dettah area. From there, they fished and hunted in all directions. Many families had homes all over the area, in the Gros Cap area, Goulet Bay, Drybones Bay. Too many places to name.

The years following 1925 were sad ones for the Dene. Surveyors and prospectors, eager to gain quicker access to the peoples' land, set fires that forced changes to migration patterns. Poisoned meat set out for fur-bearing animals resulted in untold deaths of sled dogs and people: an entire Weledeh Yellowknives community at Smoky Lake became victims of greedy trappers. Hearing of the pressures on the indigenous peoples' food and fur sources, the federal government established game preserves throughout the Dene, Inuit, and Inuvialuit homelands. The Yellowknife Game Preserve was presumably named for the Dene living on the Yellowknife River and bay, since the town did not exist then. The lands comprising this game preserve resemble the description Weledeh Yellowknives Elders remember of the lands Chief Sizeh Drygeese put in his map and revised Treaty in 1920. Many people died in a series of epidemics, the worst of which occurred in 1928, when an estimated ten to fifteen percent of the entire indigenous population of Denendeh died in six weeks during the summer. Some Weledeh Yellowknives survivors, fearing a return of disease in Weledeh-Cheh, stayed in the barrenlands year-round for four or five years. When they returned, they discovered newcomers in their traditional lands.

Yellowknives Dene recall encounters with the first prospectors in Weledeh-Cheh. Just before the disastrous influenza epidemic of 1928, a group of four strange men were met by Weledeh Yellowknives Chief Joseph Sizeh Drygeese and several travelling companions and warriors at Walsh Lake. One Weledeh Yellowknives man spoke some English through his work with the trading post, and he asked the strangers what they were doing there. The strangers replied that they were looking for rocks. Chief Drygeese told them that his people had never seen strangers before in this area; he informed them that they must leave the area and never come back. Although the four men packed and left, they were the same ones who later found mineral deposits at Burwash Point — much closer to the people's camps. By 1934, the first of many gold mines in that area was operating at Burwash Point.

Rachel Ann Crapeau, 2005. Most of the young people of the Yellowknives Dene of Dettah and Ndilo heard from their elders that this woman Liza Crookedhand was at her tent at Wiledeh (Yellowknife River) and she had this interesting rock by her stove in her tent. This K' we (rock) 'Ti (person) came along and saw this rock by her stove. He asked about that rock and wanted to trade something for the rock. Liza Crookedhand's answer was she needed stove-pipes and maybe a new stove to make this an okay trade.

Liza Crookedhand was an older women who always lived at the Wiledeh every year, just like her parents and grandparents had done over the years for fishing; to gather fish for drying, smoking fish to last for longer months of travel to the barrenlands and to have fish for immediate needs for the family and the dog teams.

Families of the Benaya, Crookedhand, Drybones, Crapeau, Fishbone, Drygeese, Noel, Tatsiehele, Keskorie, etc.; in the Chief Imii (Emile) Drygeese Territory including the Yellowknife River, Ndilo, Dettah, Enodah, Wool Bay, Drybones Bay and as far as Talthielie Narrows and north of MacLeod Bay into the barrenlands lived in their respective parts of Drygeese Territory. During this time when Liza Crookedhand gave up her rock in exchange for stove pipes for the gold the K'we'Ti.



Figure 3. Obtained from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation archive.

Isadore Sangris (Jeiko Kennelli - Sangris). Michael Sangris, the father of Isadore K. Sangris was a very reliable and important person, native and non-native looked up to him when they needed assistance. He helped people in hardship and through the winters; he made many Dene and non-native friends through his travels. In the 1930's prospecting began in the present Yellowknife area: Michael had a good idea of what was happening: though he could not read, write, or speak English. He got involved in prospecting with a non-Native person named Frank Moscher. Together, they staked claims to some areas which were around the present day Akaitcho Mine (North of Giant Mine). Later gold was found in these areas and they sold their claims in the fall of 1936.

1934 was the first time that Weledeh saw non-native people in the area; at first there were 4 non-native men; the Weledeh chief named Sizeh Drygeese (His english name was Joseph) and his Weledeh travelling companions and warriors met with the non-

native people at Walsh Lake. One of the Weledeh spoke some English through his work with the trading post. He asked the white men what they were looking for and they said they were looking for rocks. The chief told them that the Weledeh had never seen non-native people before in this area and the chief told them to leave the area and to never come back; so the white men packed and left. Gold deposits were also discovered across the bay from Burwash (at a place which later became Connegus mine); this gold was found by an elderly Weledeh woman named Liza Crookedhand. The Weledeh used to go to the area to pick berries and Liza had picked the rock off the surface of the ground; the prospector noticed the rock beside Liza's wood stove for which he asked to trade it in exchange for stove pipes for the wood stove. Liza agreed., The prospector tricked her, because he did not tell her that what she had was gold and was worth money. Soon after that another gold discovery was made on the north side of Yellowknife Bay, near an Island called Tloa the dee. On the east side of the island a 1km road was built (from Yellowknife to Ptarmigan Mine). The road crossed Gotzee Kweh (a special and forbidden place because a special animal called Gotzee lived there). A short time later gold was found around the present day Giant Mine and Akaitcho Mine.



Figure 4: Giant Mine Aerial Photography circa 1949-1950

The influenza epidemic in 1928 had a very bad effect on survivors in the Weledeh Yellowknives communities. Some fled Weledeh-Cheh and stayed in the barrens year-round for four or five years. When they returned to their southern fish camps, they found many prospectors there and cabins built at what became the Giant mine, the Con mine, and "Old Town" in Yellowknife. Elders remember many stories of rescuing incomers who became lost, cold, and hungry. Sometimes, prospectors struck uneven deals with Weledeh Yellowknives people, who helped them place stakes around claim blocks. By the mid-1930s, with poor economic conditions in southern Canada, strangers had

become common as far as Gordon Lake, where the Camlaren mine opened. The southern parts of the people's land were dotted with mining stakes and small, mostly gold, mines.

Weledeh Yellowknives Elders remember the names and relationships of at least four generations of many of their families who lived along the Weledeh. Chief Willie Crapeau and his very large family were born and brought up along the river. Many generations of the Kemelli, Drygeese, Sangris, Martin, Paper, Liske, and Crooked hand families grew up there. A male member of the Drygeese family was born in 1926 on the east bank where the present-day bridge is located. Although Crooked hands were the last family to live near the Weledeh mouth year-round, many families continued to use the area seasonally. Today, the people use their camping areas along the river banks when time allows.

Fred Sangris, (January 29, 1998). Presentation by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to the NWT Water Board. Before Giant Mine was built the Yellowknives Dene had traditinal camps where the mine is presently situated. In fact, "our people know about the gold and it was a Dene women who showed the prospectors where to locate it; it was of no value to us. What was important was the water, the fish, and game (moose, beaver, and muskrat). The YKDFN fished at the mouth of Baker creek (Jackfish River), as this was also a favorite berry picking area and firewood gathering site. We cannot hunt there, we cannot eat the fish from the lake, and we cannot drink the water. At times we cannot even breath, because of the aersnic."

"our elders remember when the mine was built. We were never consulted and we did not give our consent to have this mine (Giant Mine) built on our land. Because this is our home and we will always be here, we want to change the relationship of the past.

When Weledeh Yellowknives Elders speak of damage done to their lands by mining, they refer most often to their experience of impacts in Weledeh-Cheh.

Long before the mine was built in 1938, the Yellowknives Dene traditinal camps were located around the present Giant mine site, and the Yellowknives Dene knew about the gold, in fact it was a Dene women by the name of Liza Crookedhand that showed the prospectors where to locate it; but it was of no value to us. What was important was the water, fish, game (moose, beaver, and muskrat). Dene fished at the mouth of Baker Creek, and this area was a favoorite berry picking and firewood gathering site. Our elders remember when the mine was built. We never were consulted and we did not give our consent ot have this mine build on our land.

In the early 1930s, a small gold mine operated for only a year or two at Burwash Point just north of Dettah.

Joseph Charlo, Ndilo: CARC 1995. Ever since it started, I have never heard one good thing about mining: it destroys the land. We survive by the animals: all our ancestors lived by the animals on the land, and the animals were healthy. If we don't take care of the animals, if the mining starts up and the animals get contaminated, the people will also. They [ie, the mining companies] should be careful as to how they work with the Dene and how they should work to protect the environment. And my wife, she

remembers when she used to go berry picking in the Giant Mine area; she used to go there with her grandmother. Right now, you can't put anything in your mouth from that area: everything is contaminated. It's as if they've killed everything around here [ie, the Yellowknife area]. We need to make a statement that we don't want to destroy anything on this land: we should protect it before it gets contaminated. Everyone knows that the land around here is contaminated, no one can do anything about it any more because the mining has destroyed it. So we are here to help the land in the barrens from not being destroyed.

Yellowknives Dene have observed the impacts from development, both good and bad, on the Yellowknives Dene and surrounding lands since non-indigenous people began coming to the area in the 1930s and 1940s. Explosions of dynamite by prospectors, air traffic, the development of mines and towns, the building of commercial fish plants, a prison, and roads, and the use of the land and waters for recreation. These developments contributed to the gradual withdrawal of moose and other animals, and to caribou changing their migration route through the area. In spring, Yellowknives Dene used to wait for caribou returning north where the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre now sits on Frame Lake. Although now it is rare to see moose near the Weledeh, these animals used to be common and could be relied on by Weledeh Yellowknives for food and clothing.

Mrs. Marie Adele Sangris (Born May 1913 – Old Fort Rae). Transcript of Elders Tape 1968/1972. Prepared by IBNWT, held in the Dene Nation Archive. Transcript by Lena Drygees, December 1993. I remember the Weaver & Devore store, it was a small log house which is still standing today. When they first came here, they docked at Dettah. I was a young girl at the time and it was the first time I had ever seen or heard of oranges. The women would trade their caribou or moosehides for supplies like clothing. Before them, we saw few white men living in tents. I guess they were looking for rocks (gold, etc.). But we did not visit or speak with them. Some of our men use to cut wood for these white men at Burwash Point. They had built a small cabin there and a small mine was operating at the time.

Women use to pick berries in the area where uptown Yellowknife is now and in the Giant Mine area. The men use to portage to Long Lake to hunt for Caribou. We would set up camps to make drymeat and look for berries for the upcoming winter.

These developments also resulted in the steady erosion of the people's aboriginal and Treaty rights to hunt, trap, and fish unfettered and unrestricted by non-Dene. The building of a prison on the east bank of the Weledeh meant that no one could shoot there and hunters were no longer able to use that area. Worse, hunters could not even travel through the site as they once did to traditional hunting grounds beyond the prison site. After the prison was removed, the Dene were not told that they could again use the area unhindered. In the 1990s, a no-shooting corridor by the NWT Ministry of Renewable Resources — for the safety of permanent residents — further restricted Weledeh Yellowknives hunters.

Rachel Ann Crapeau, November 13, 1998. When Yellowknife was being built, and when the mines were being built and started up a lot changed. Sometimes when people knock on our door at midnight we do not open the door because we are afraid. We are

afraid because there are many people coming into Yellowknife from other communities...Today young people drink a lot and some people use drugs.

The development of the Giant mine before there were environmental regulations resulted in air-borne arsenic dissolving in the water and settling in sediment of nearby lakes, bays, and rivers, including the Weledeh. Further air-borne arsenic entered these water bodies through runoff of melting snow and ice. To this day, sediment and river banks of the Weledeh contain large amounts of arsenic. Any disturbance of the sediment — such as for bridge construction or repair of water intake pipes buried under the Weledeh — carries with it the risk of releasing arsenic into the water.

Before the Yellowknives Dene understood what arsenic was, they were aware of changes that made them wary of the water, fish, berries, and plants near the mine sites. When land users took their sled dogs through the tailings ponds that crossed their traditional trails, the dogs would lose the fur on their paws within a day or two. The Elders can recall people falling off their sled into the tailings ponds, which stayed open year-round, and becoming ill, losing their hair soon after. After many of their sled dogs died without obvious cause, dog owners stopped feeding them fish from Weledeh. People, too, started dying from cancer at a rate previously unknown to Yellowknives Dene.

Therese Sangris, Ndilo, with no date of recording. "The area from Giant mine, a lot of people have passed away because of the water around the area of Giant mine and I remember when the blasting started at the Giant Mine area and we did not know that chemicals were used for blasting. A lot of our people did not know anything about chemicals."

The people were never warned about impacts and risks from living near mines. In late December of 1949, a massive emission from the Giant mine dispersed huge amounts of arsenic into the air, settling into the ice and snow. Melting snow in the spring of the following two years was so toxic that notices were printed in Yellowknife newspapers warning people not to drink or use the melt water. Few Yellowknives Dene could read the notices. Anyone who washed their hair with arsenic-laden melt water in the next two springs went bald. A dairy herd, horses, chickens, and dogs were among the domesticated animals that died from drinking melt water in spring 1950. But the greatest tragedy occurred in spring 1951: four children in family camps in Ndilo died. The mine owners gave their parents some money, as if it could compensate for the loss. Women stopped picking medicine plants and berries, which used to grow thickly in the area of the Giant mine. The people moved away, avoiding the mine area for some years, although it had once been so important to them. To this day, they refuse to use water from Weledeh for soaking caribou hides or making dryfish.

Isadore K. Sangris, (March 8 & 9, 1999). "We see from the experience from the two mines that we have what can happen to our land. We see; there are not many fish around the lake, around Yellowknife. The mines work with arsenic, things that burn and pollute. They go on the land and it blows quite a way.

Prospectors started moving into Weledeh-Cheh in the 1930s. Yellowknives Dene often found rock with gold in it — particularly women picking blueberries where the Giant

mine was later established. There, three women one day found a very large gold-bearing rock, which they brought back to their camp beside the Weledah, where a visiting prospector saw it when having tea with one family. Without telling the people the value of the rock, he offered to trade it for a stovepipe. The woman who found it was puzzled, but accepted the stovepipe. The gold rush — and the negative impacts — started soon after this uneven trade. There are other, similar stories of uneven sharing between the indigenous people and the incomers. While Chief Sizeh Drygeese peoples agreed at Treaty in 1900 and 1921 to share their lands, the incomers have rarely shared with the people their profits earned from the people's land.

Michel Paper (1995). When the first mine was built here 1939 I was a young man and had no idea why anyone would want to mine...I worked at the Burwash mine then at the Giant mine and the Negus mine. Now look at Yellowknife bay, nobody can drink the water from the lake anymore, and 15 miles of the lake is permanatly damaged. People in the community are getting their health checked out with cancer being a big problem. The mines can do a lot of damage to people.

Michel Paper, July 11, 1995 Land and Environment Meeting in Dettah. "I am over 82 years old and when I was 23 I trapped with my father and he told me stories as we travelled... I remember what my father told me about. When non-native people started to mine near Yellowknife, they offered me the shovel operator job. It was a job nobody at the time wanted to do but we went through hardships there...Many of my great grandfathers' family over in this area (Yellowknife area), generations and generations have lived in this area. I know about the mining industry and in particular the Giant Mine. That mine has done a lot of damage over the years to the water system in Back Bay.

This mine and several later gold mines paid people to cut spruce trees for use in their mills before other power sources were available. As a result, spruce is now a rare tree species in Weledah-Cheh. This cutting with no regard for sustainability makes the sacred tree on the southwest side of the Weledah mouth even more noteworthy. More and more timber was cut in the decades following, as development proceeded at a very rapid pace. Today, the Weledah area seems sparsely treed: not so long ago, this was not the case. The traditional name of the camp site on Akaitcho Bay, before it was called Dettah, was "Spruce point".

Judith Charlo, (March 8 & 9, 1999).

"I used to live in residential school in Fort Resolution and I came back here things started to change. At that time in Burwash 8 white people came, and they never bothered to have meetings or inform aboriginal people about their activities."

"Even before the mines were here, there used to be caribou in this Great Slave Lake area. You could see many caribou and we did not waste meat. We dried it, even the bones. I think the last time I saw caribou out near the lake (current location of the City of Yellowknife) was in 1946, and today we do not see any caribou on this side of the lake. Now, if my children want caribou or go out hunting, they have to go maybe around to the Lutsel K'e area and further north; sometimes they go travelling by snowmobile to Gordon Lake and Discovery Mine."

"Even Giant Mine and Con Mine are on our land, how they ruined our land, we are worried about that to. We are worried about our children and our grand children, how they are going to survive on the land to."

Judy Charlo with no date of recording. Ever since this town Yellowknikfe existed in 1934, when the white people came to the burwash area, a lot of people would set up their camps at the Yellowknife River and go out fishing. It was at the Yellowknife River where this old lady had her camp and it was this old lady who gave the gold she found to a white man, and that is when everything started. This old lady told the white guy where she found the gold, and sure enough they went there and opened a mine shortly afterwards.

With the Giant and Con mines they did not tell us what the impact of the mines would be. "now look at the water, we cannot even drink the water from the lake, we cannot even eat the fish from this part of the lake." All these things have been destroyed for us.

Michel Paper (Born May 1913 at Gros Cap.) Transcript of Elders Tape 1968/1972. Prepared by IBNWT, held in the YKDFN Archive. Transcript by Lena Drygees, December 1993. I worked for Burwash Mine for \$2.00 a day. It was the first mine in this area. That was when we first saw white people, and we did not know what money meant or what it was. Our fathers used to trap to trade at the Hudson's Bay Store and they also took our money that the mine paid us. We never use to see any money at all. There was twelve of us young men working at the Burwash Mine. Several years later the Weaver and Devore store was built. They came here in a boat made with planks the first time. They traded a lot of supplies and then they went back to where they came from. They then returned to this area the second time with more supplies. The third time they returned is when they built their store.

Isadore Tsetta, (March 8 & 9, 1999). When Giant Mine started there were many native people working at the mine, and we know that it is a lot work working underground; work hard, work fast.

Trading furs and meat for manufactured goods such as cotton twine and shovels gradually made the people's lives easier, but did not change the people's values or basic economy. They went on sharing and using what they had, not keeping money or accumulating wealth. A present-day Elder observes: "Back then, when the people went trapping, they had hard times but they still brought their furs to the trading post. Traders thought it was easy to trap animals but the furs never made any of us rich. Trading furs just helped to feed and clothe our families. Traders took furs from our trappers, not giving much for them, and, when they sold those furs down south, they made a lot more money on them."

Michel Paper Transcript of Elders Tape 1968/1972. Prepared by IBNWT, held in the YKDFN Archive. Transcript by Lena Drygees, December 1993. I also worked at Giant Mine for three years when they started operating. Another three years at Con Mine. After that Negas Mine opened up and it was in operation for about one year. I also worked there until they closed. At that time the RCMP had opened up a detachment and I worked for them part-time. We sued dog-teams to visit camps all along the Great Slave

Lake Shore...At that time only the old town existed. I had a house in the Willow Flats area then. Later the new town was being built in the late 1940's. A lot of changes happened after that.

Judith Charlo, March 8 & 9, 1999 Diavik Related Meeting. Ever since 1934, when the non-aboriginal people arrived things have changed. I use to live in the residentail school in Fort Resolution before the non-aboriginal people arrived. When I returned back here things started to change. At that time about 8 white people lived at Burwash and they never explained to use what they were doing and they never met with use to discuss anything. They did not respect us as we were from the land. Now there are few elders left and we know why all the elders are gone, because of mining. We know, we see things about what happened to us...Before these mines were here there were caribou on Great Slave Lake. You could see them on the lake. I think the last time I saw caribou on the Lake was in 1946 and today we do not see any caribou on this side of the lake any more. You haved to go further out.

Giant Mine and Con Mine are on our land and we are worried about how they ruined our land. Even after they shut the mines down we have no idea what will happen or for how long the land and water will be monitored.

Isadore K. Sangris (Jeiko Kennelli) and the effect of mining no record date. As a result of the mines in the area, the land has been wasted, destroyed and contaminated. Mining has occurred for more than 50 years and a lot of damage has occurred. The water is contaminated; rabbits and grouse are contaminated; The Dene people have become very cautious of eating traditional foods because of the heavy contaminants in the water, land, and air. The contamination even destroys trees, marshes, habitat, and wild berries. All things that the Dene people want to use but cannot anymore. The land here cannot sustain them any more. The Weledeh do not fish in the bay anymore; instead, they go to Wool Bay, they have to go to communities far from the mines to get their fish and water fowl.

The people's land use changed again in the 1930s and 1940s, when mine, town, and dam developments changed hunting and trapping patterns. Weledeh Yellowknives families could no longer hunt caribou in Weledeh-Cheh, at Whitebeach Point, or with their T'satsaot'ine relatives at Rocher River. The parts of the Bathurst herd that migrated around Great Slave Lake before that time changed their routes. It also became more of a challenge to carry the tools and other manufactured goods the people obtained from stores in town that made their lives on the land easier: it took many more dogs to haul the extra weight, and that meant carrying more fish to feed the dogs. With declining prices, the people received less and less for their furs.

With relocation into town and children taken to school, families found it increasingly difficult to travel to the barrens as their ancestors had. In the 1960s to 1980s, there was a gradual decline in the number of hunters and trappers who used the land, the number of times the people went on the land, and the number of people in each group of land users. Thus, camp sites used for hundreds of generations of the people have gradually and reluctantly been abandoned only in the last twenty years. This generation has built rudimentary cabins on the land. Because the people cannot spend the time they used to on the land, they now travel by snow machine and airplane and must carry fuel to keep

travelling. The expense is borne because so many of the people in the communities continue to rely on wild meat, medicine plants, and animals pelts.



Figure 5 Giant Mine Aerial Photography Circa 1949-1950

4 Weledeh Yellowknives Stories about Animals

4.1 Traditional Raven Stories

Our ancestors used to tell people back then that raven was their leader. The people asked him about everything and he would tell them what the people did in the past. And the people would do what the raven told them. He had all the animals in the palm of his hands, although he was an animal himself. Raven would travel around and eat what he hunted, and then go back to the people. So one day the people asked him, "Why is it that you are healthy and we are starving?" And he said, "No, I am starving too." But he was lying to the people. And the next time when he returned to the camp, the children, who notice everything, noticed his bow and arrow bag hanging and in it was caribou intestine and fat. So when he left, the people watched where he went. He noticed the people were following him so raven circled around and said he was starving and asked for some bannock, and the people gave him some bannock. And the people watched him and noticed that raven had intestine and fat in his bag. They didn't know what to say to him. At that time some animals were without food, so raven chopped up some fat and left it at the entrance to their homes. And all the fox smelled the caribou meat and came out. Then fox rounded up the caribou and raven told the people to kill the caribou then. After they killed the caribou, they ate.

One time, raven decided to be a white foxes for a while, so he turned himself into white fox. The people saw raven doing this and decided to play a trick on raven by making him black. The people ground up some charcoal and dumped it on raven. Charcoal got in raven's eye and, when he tried to fly off, he landed in a mud puddle. When raven got out of the puddle, he was no longer a totally white fox: his head was grey.

And that's why there are grey fox today.

Our ancestors said that, back then, raven was leader of the animals. One day, a bear tore the arm off a fox. The people noticed the bear near the shoreline, so they went to raven and asked if he would go and see the bear. Raven went to find the bear; he went across the lake by a boat and sat in the boat and tricked the bear into thinking he was a bear by making the same kind of noise as a bear. Raven kept talking to the bear until the bear got close to the shoreline. Raven kept growling like a bear until the bear invited him into his den. In the den the raven kept growling like a bear. When raven said he had to pee, the bear followed him outside, so raven kept growling while he peed. This went on for a while, maybe for two or three days. Finally, when the bear was falling asleep, raven nudged the bear to see if he was asleep. The bear was growling in deep sleep, and raven grabbed the fox's arm and flew away. That evening raven went to the fox, who was lying near the fire with ashes on his wound. And raven took his arm and

put it back on the fox, but he put it back crooked. That's why the fox's arm is the way it is now.

4.2 Some Traditional Caribou Stories

The Creator told the caribou: "Do not be scared of the people — go near the people so that they can also survive". The Creator noticed that the caribou would not go near the people, so the Creator asked them what was happening to keep them away.

"The smoke from their fires is too strong for us and we are scared of the people, too", said one of the leaders.

"Because you are scared of their smoke. I will help you," replied the Creator. And the Creator took a piece of arm bone with some skin from one of the people and put it into the caribou leg. Since that time, the caribou has not been scared of people.

A long time ago, caribou used to be human. This story starts off when an old caribou heard a human child crying, so he went to check. The old caribou found a human baby boy by himself and brought the boy back to his herd. He carried the boy between his legs, with the boy on top of his feet, which is why the lower part of the caribou's legs are lighter than the rest. He told the other caribou: "When we come across some of the people, we will leave the boy on a trail for them."

At that time, the people would just take caribou when they came across them. They did not know how the caribou travelled, where the caribou went when the people did not see them.

Soon after the old caribou found the baby boy, an old man and his wife set up camp near the caribou trails. One day, the old man heard a child crying and, when he went to check, he saw caribou tracks near some wood. When he looked closer, he saw there was a baby boy there. He brought the baby back to his wife and they raised him. As the boy became a young man, the old man taught him to travel on the land and survive on his own. But the boy always thought about the time he spent with the caribou. When he had learned enough to travel alone, the old man who raised him told him that, if he happened to come across people, he should watch them. The old man told him, "If there is a young woman among them, watch her and see if she looks directly at you or if she avoids you. If she avoids looking directly at you, you should marry her one day."

The young man left the old couple and travelled on the land to survive by himself. Not too much time went by when he came across three people in a camp: an old couple with a young woman. The old man asked him to stay with them and to hunt for them. The young man saw that the young woman did not look directly at him. He remembered what the old man who raised him had told him, so he stayed with them and, eventually, married the young woman. Soon, a baby boy was born to the young couple and the

young father taught his son as the old man had raised him. When the couple's son was about ten years old, the whole family went to the barrens.

On the first night, the young father could not sleep. His wife asked him why he could not sleep, so he told her that he knew the caribou would migrate soon and he wanted to follow them. He told her that his mind was on the caribou all the time; he said "The caribou have spoken with me. They have asked me to live among them and travel with them for one year. I love my child but I think I should go with the caribou." They all told him to do what he thought was best, so he decided to go and follow the caribou for a year.

Before he left, he told his son what he was going to do: "I will be with the caribou for one year. You must return to this same spot next year. When the caribou start migrating next year, watch them and, if you see one caribou go off by itself, that will be me. You have to go to the caribou herd in a canoe with your mother, you in the front and your mother in the back of the canoe. I am going to teach you a song, and I want you to paddle slowly towards me to the shore singing this song. When you get close to shore, your mother is to stand a long ways back and you are to catch me."

One year later, the young man's wife and son were doing exactly what he had told them to do. The boy caught the caribou by its antlers and, together, they stood still for a while. Then the caribou became a man again. That is how the boy got his father back. The man was happy to be back, and he spoke to them, telling them what had happened to him during the year he was one of the caribou travelling with the herd. He said that the land the caribou migrate in is huge.

"Their leader is leading them all the way," he told his wife and son, "stopping only to eat and rest. When calves are born, they are protected by the whole herd. On their way towards the treeline, the calves are encouraged to travel at the same speed as the adult caribou: 'At the treeline, we will eat lots of lichen the calves are told. You have to hurry to keep away from bears and wolves'."

"When the caribou get close to people, they are shot at but the caribou never think about their relatives that are being killed; they have to keep on going. They look back once and keep going. All they say is 'brother' or 'sister' to each other and that's it. Their leader is always keeping an eye on all things happening, and he tells them when it is time to go back to the barrens. They travel over land and swim across lakes. When they see people, they stop for awhile so that the people can have some meat and survive also. The land that they travel is near Great Slave Lake and also near Rae Lakes.

"The caribou that is the leader takes the caribou to the ocean and in the summer, they come back to where the people are. The leader tells the caribou that the people need them to survive and that the people must miss them and are looking forward to seeing the caribou again. So the caribou head south."

"When the herd gets about halfway, around Ek'ati, the leaders tell them to split up and go in three directions. The leaders tells some of the caribou to go toward the people

around Lutsel K'e, and some to go to the people around Rae Lakes, and some to go to the people around Great Slave Lake. They were told to do this by their leader. So at this big lake, they would go in those directions, one to the east, one to the west, and one to the south. Then the caribou would meet the people, where they camp. And the caribou help the people to survive: they don't mind if they get killed for food.

"The caribou live with the people all winter and, in the middle of March, the leader calls to the cows and they start to walk very fast back to the ocean. The leader tells the cows that, if they have their calves below the treeline, it will get too warm for them to travel, so they have to go in March. The cows tell the yearlings that they are returning to the north to have their brothers and sisters, and that they are to travel with the rest of the herd later, after everything melts. 'We will meet you there', the cows tell the yearlings. And usually the rest of the herd follows the cows in late spring, when the snow melts. Sometimes, when the ice breaks early, part of the herd stays behind because they do not want to hurt their hooves on the sharp ice.

"When the caribou travel north, they go to the edge of the land where the ocean is, and they stay there for the spring while the cows have the new calves. At that time of the year, there are a lot of bears and wolves that try to kill the newborn calves, so the cows stay on land that is away from those animals. When the newborn calves are ready to walk, the herd gets ready to travel south again. The cows bring the new calves to where the rest of the herd is, and they travel together. That is the time of year when you see small calves travelling with their mothers. So that is how the caribou travel, from season to season."

And that is how the people found out how the caribou travel, where they go.

4.3 A Traditional Trout Story

Our ancestors knew a time when the people were near to starvation. They were hungry because their canoes and bone-axes were missing and the hunters could find no caribou or muskrat. The most powerful medicine people turned themselves into animals, flying as ravens, and searched everywhere to learn who had taken their tools and animals. Eventually, they discovered that the trout were responsible and took steps to get them back. Four bones in a trout's head represent what the trout had taken: a caribou leg, a muskrat swimming, a canoe, and an axe. Since these things were recovered by the medicine people, the head of a trout is eaten only by an Elder, who slowly removes the bones one at a time, identifying the missing tools and animals, as the story is told to young people.

APPENDIX 1

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE					
Nomadic & Treaty Making	1800		Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Trading Company				
	1823		Chief Akaitcho made with the Dogrib by Treaty making at Mesa Lake				
	1900	Original Treaty B signed	Yellowknives Dene 'B' Band included in Fort Resolution Treaty money is given (less now than before was \$12 now \$5)	Treaty rights promised that we could hunt, fish, and trap on our land Indian Agent called our leaders Chiefs & Headmen, which is now changed to Councillors	Travel between Ft. Resolution and Yellowknife was made by boat only	Our people did not know that the government wanted us to sign Treaty for our land and resources	Roman Catholics were influential with the Yellowknives (YK) Dene YK Dene elders never negotiated over land to anyone and further, we were promised our elders would be taken care of Use Metis people as translators
Broken Promises & Restrictions	1920		Treaty in Ft. Resolution was boycotted for three years				
	1921		Treaty 11 was made and the 'Commissioner' gave them YK Dene land				
Holocaust, Epidemic, Disease, Mourning & Reaffirmation	1922-23		A game reserve was established, something new to the YK Dene Mrs. Crookedhand found gold				
	1928		Influenza epidemic killed many of the YK Dene				

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE
of the Treaty	1933	Gold found
		Yellowknife established
	1934	Gold strike at the YK Giant Mine
		Mineral exploration on Dene Lands
	1935	Gold Mine was Built
Vulnerable, Brainwashing, Mining and Development	1936	Gold extraction started
		Traditional Chief Willie Crapeau recognized
	1943	The Treaty was boycotted
	1945	Uranium extracted from Dene lands for atomic bombs; Port Radium, Reynah Mines and Uranium Bay.
Pressure from Development, Breakdown of Families & Education		Dettah, Ndilo and Enodah establish community boundaries
	1947	Hospital build in Rae
	1950	Radio arrived and there was a wolf problem
	1951	Our children died of Arsenic poisoning - promises were made but not kept

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE
	1955	The Yellowknife's Game Reserve was abolished and the NWT Game ordinance came into effect Dene were moved into settlements near Yellowknife & off the land
Human Challenges	1956	The Drybones court case was important for the YK Dene
	1958	The North Slave Athamigan Fish Camp opened & operated for 10 years commercial fishing Bar established in the area known as the 'Old Town' Some Dene gave up Treaty to enter Bars Last Trip by the traditional canoe Route to the Barrenlands
	1959	Government built 10 homes for families in Ndilo Indian were allowed to vote & drink alcohol 1959-1963 Death of Dene on Latham Island, arsenic poisoning, and Back Bay contaminated
	1961	Tuberculosis epidemic
	1960	Sixty children taken from their families & shipped to hostels for school in the 1960s at the Hostels the Dene children were told not to speak their own language In the 1960s the Discovery Mine operated Women were allowed to enter bars

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE
	1962	Antoine Liske was charged for drinking and gambling & served three months Dettah received electricity Enodah children were sent to residential school and the community no longer existed
	1966-1967	Television arrived and had TV from 7-10pm Old Stope bar burned down
	1967	Government of the Northwest Territories established Last year of service for Indian Agents Territorial Council relocated to Yellowknife and the Commissioner lived here
	1969	Jean Chrétien White Paper to end the Indian Affairs Act
	1970	Ft. Providence to Inuvik canoe race The federal government built and painted houses of all different colours and that is how Ndilo got the name Rainbow Valley Throughout the 1970, there were serious health problems from Back Bay. There were arsenic traces in the water and food
Education & Consciousness of Dene: Recognition of the Dene Nation	1972-1973	Tree of Peace trip to Morley for a cultural revival Indian Brotherhood created

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE
Loss of Language, Customs, Traditions & now Working for \$ awareness of Dene Rights, Recognition of Dene Spirituality, Negotiation	1975	Young men working at mines with good jobs making and spending money
		Last use of Indian medicine in the community
	1980	Early 1980' Land Claims started, Arctic College established
	1981	Dog teams no longer used
	1984	Negotiations began for the Dene land claim
	1985	Indoor plumbing arrives
YK Dene Withdraw from the Treaty 11 Negotiations Table	1990	Dene Metis Land Claim Agreement in Principle failed Rainbow Valley also known as Lot 500 changes its name to Ndilo Diamond boom
	1990-1991	YK Dene split from the Dogrib Treaty 11 Oka crisis in Quebec Dene Nation splits up
	1992	Gwich'in Settlement Treaty 8 begins the Treaty entitlement process
	1993	Sahtu settlement

PERIOD DESCRIPTION	DATES	SIGNIFICANT EVENTS TO THE YELLOWKNIVES DENE
Everyone & Internal Political Change	1995	Ben Noel & Archie Sangris charged with hunting on the Ingraham Trail YK Dene declares its desire for its own land base Programs and services initiated between the territorial government and Treaty 8

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