



## Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre

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**Rakekée Gok'è Godi: Places we take care of**  
Report of the Sahtu Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group

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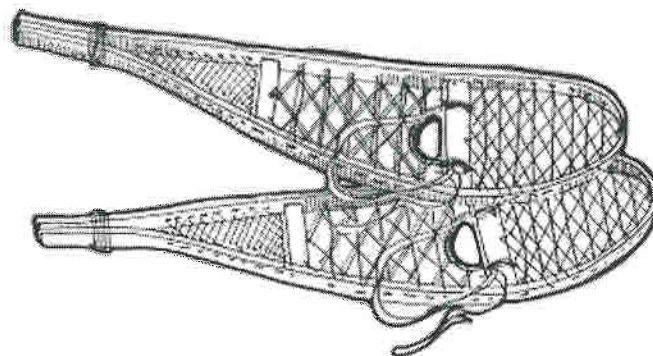
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# Shuht'a Got'ine Eht'ene / Mountain Dene Trail to the Mountains



## Map

The Mountain Dene trail starts on the Mackenzie River at Tulita, crosses the Mackenzie Lowlands to Stewart and Tate Lakes, crossing the Keele drainage and on to Drum Lake in the Mackenzie Mountains. From here it joins a network of trails reaching throughout the mountains, and into the Yukon. Used extensively as a walking trail in the fall and by dog team in the winter, the trail symbolizes the Mountain Dene's use of this rugged environment. In the fall, families would leave the Mackenzie River valley, and using dogs with packs, walk into the high mountain passes and valleys where they would camp over winter, hunting moose, caribou and sheep. In the springtime, the Mountain Dene would construct boats from moose skins acquired during the winter hunt, and travel with furs and dry meat to trade at the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Norman. They would spend the summer in the Mackenzie Valley fishing, attending treaty celebrations, and visiting with friends and extended family. In the fall the pattern would repeat, and the trail to the mountains would be used again. Many sites along the trail are important in Mountain Dene culture and history, and archaeological research has shown that the trail area has been used for centuries.

In 1993, a proposal to commemorate the trail as a National historic Site was prepared but negotiations were never completed (see Hanks 1993). We recommend that the proposal be revived, and that the trail be brought forward for commemoration as a National historic Site. Additional work will be required at the community level to document the location of the trail. As a result, we have indicated only the first few miles of the trail on the accompanying map.

## Recommendations For Protection

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**National Historic Site, with surface protection.**

**Revive the old National Historic Site proposal (Hanks 1993).**

**Undertake oral history and archaeological research to document and protect existing heritage resources and burials.**

**Surface of documented sites should be protected.**

**Identify the trail for special consideration in the land use planning process.**



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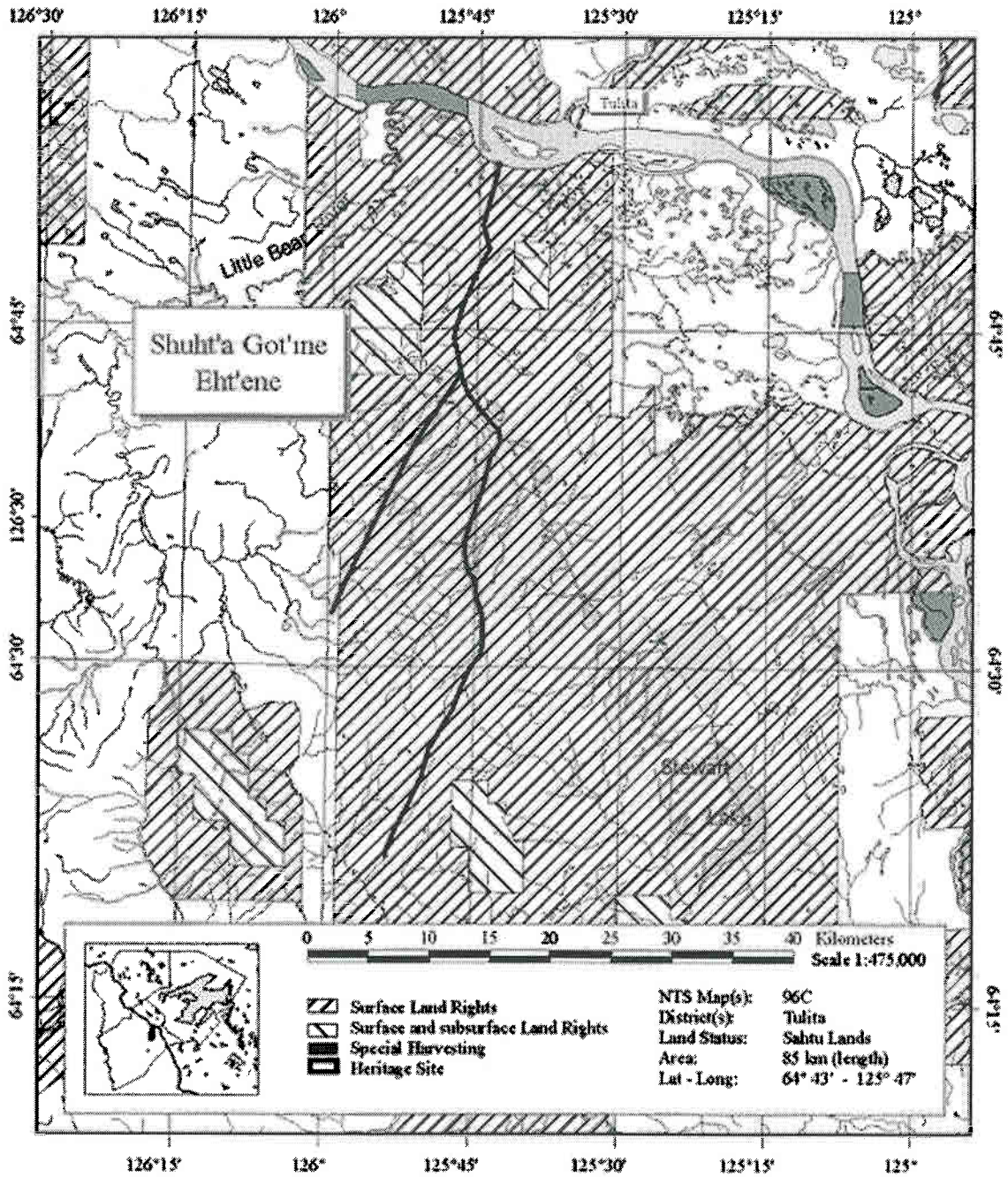
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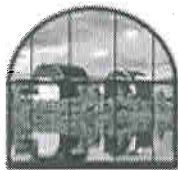
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### 3. Tâi Dehdele Dîdlô / Red Dog Mountain

#### Map



The site is a large mountain located on the Keele River, considered a sacred site by the Mountain Dene, and was the subject of an earlier proposal to commemorate Bear Rock, Red Dog Mountain, and the Windy Island to Sheldon Lake Trail (Hanks 1993). We recommend that this proposal be revived. As recorded in Hanks (1993:69-71) a Tulita elder relates the historical and cultural importance of the site:

*Long ago, when people went by Red Dog Mountain, they never passed the mountain on the river. They used to get out of the river and portage through the mountains and put in again below Red Dog Mountain. ... When they got to Red Dog Mountain, the men portaged because the Red Dog would take and eat them. That is why they always portaged. One time, when they were all gathered getting ready to portage when a man who had medicine and was a really good hunter said, "Give me all of your possessions." He took mitts, moccasins, weapons, and food. He gathered all of their possessions together and put them in his canoe. He then turned to the people and said I am going to go down the river past the Red Dog Mountain. He wanted to know why the mountain took people. As he started down the river a whirlpool opened before him. He started throwing all the goods into the water to pay. After he threw all the goods into the water the eddy subsided and let him go down the river. Up to that time they did not know what was living at Red Dog Mountain. When he went through the mountain he saw the Red Dog for the first time. He told the people that every time they pass Red Dog Mountain they must show respect. You must pay the Red Dog with something. So people started leaving matches and shot when they passed by on the river as an offering. One time long ago when people were passing by Red Dog Mountain, the spring that pours from the face of the mountain into the river whistled and spurted water like steam. They did not know what it*

*meant at the time, but that year the first tuberculosis epidemic occurred. The elders knew that it was a sign that something was wrong. A few years later it whistled ... and ... spit out water again before sickness again struck the people.*

## Recommendations for Protection

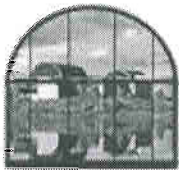
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**National Historic Site, with surface and subsurface protection.**

**Revive the National Historic Site proposal to commemorate Red Dog Mountain, and revise in consultation with the Mountain elders and other residents of Tulita.**



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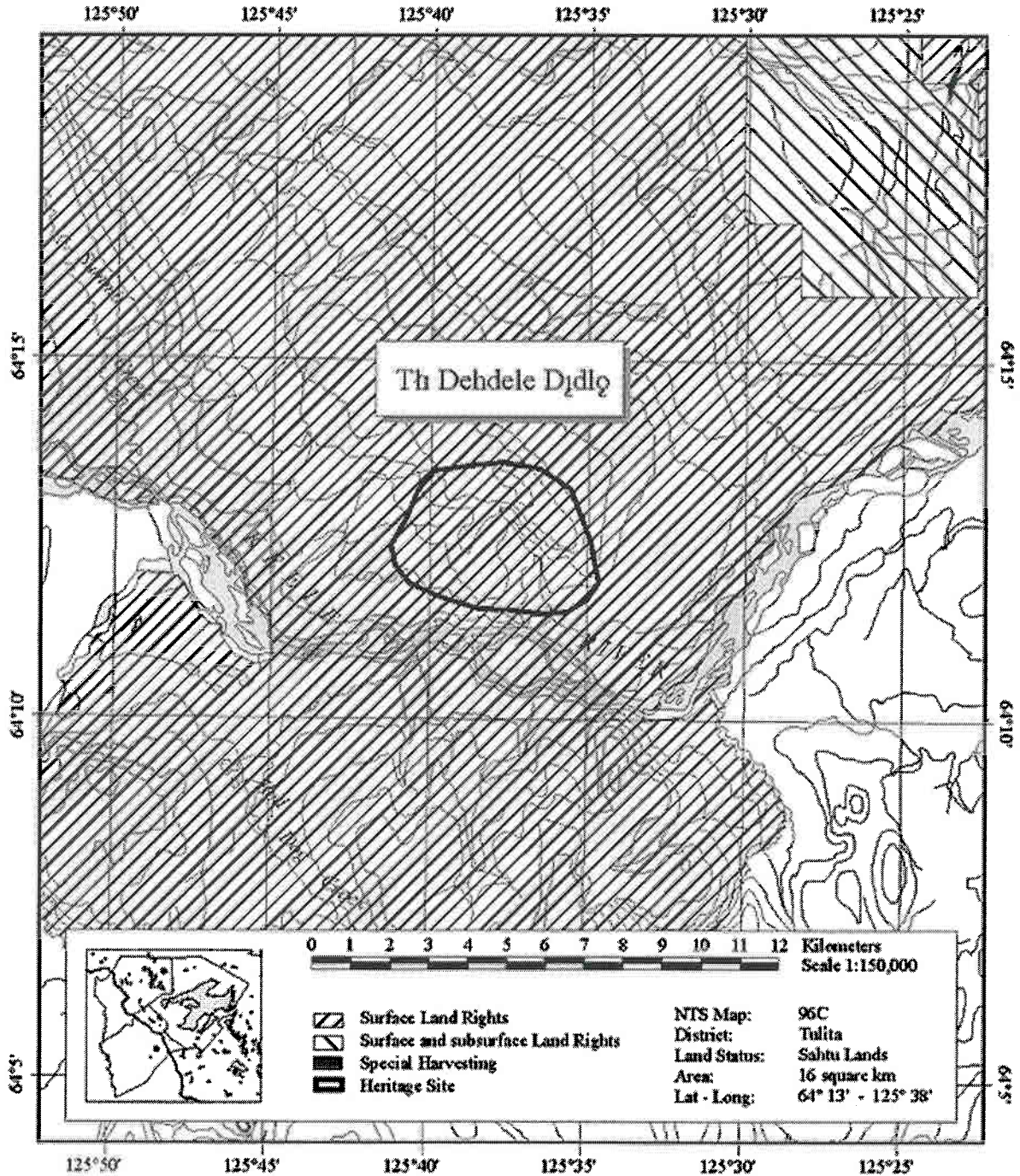
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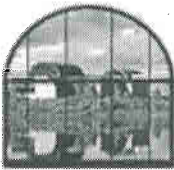
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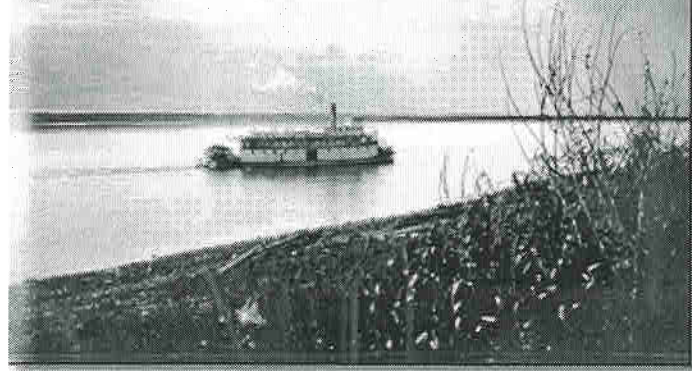
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# Deh Cho / Mackenzie River Map

*Hudson Bay Steamboat  
SS Mackenzie River, ca. 1920s*



The Mackenzie River, from Blackwater River in the south, to Thunder River in the north, has been a very important route for Sahtu Dene and Metis. Many of the sites listed above can be found on, or were accessed from, this stretch of river (see The Ramparts, Loon River and the Fort Anderson Trail, Bear Rock, Ramparts River, Colville Lake Trail, Trail to the Mountains, Mountain River, Manitou Island, Little Chicago, Thunder River Quarry, Great Bear River). In addition to these there are many other sacred, historical and cultural sites along this length of the river. For example the Sans Sault Rapids is a sacred site associated with an important Sahtu Dene culture-hero. The river itself, the longest in Canada, has been an important travel route for centuries, and has been the subject of exploration, study and analysis. As a traditional use area, the Mackenzie continues to provide critical domestic fisheries, moose and waterfowl hunting areas, travel access to many other locations. It is associated with numerous legends, including stories of Yamoria. Called Deh Cho or 'Big River', the river is a symbolic focal point of Sahtu Dene and Metis culture and history.

In 1998, in cooperation with the Gwich'in from Tsiigehtchic, the Mackenzie River (Nagwichoonyjik) from Thunder River, north to Point Separation was declared a National Historic Site (see Heine 1997). The Working Group applauds this designation and recommends that the designation be extended south to Blackwater River. This site extends from the boundary with the Deh Cho region in the south to the Thunder River in the north, which is within the Gwich'in settlement area. Consequently, both the Gwich'in and Deh Cho Tribal councils should be approached for support of the commemoration.

## Recommendations For Protection

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**National Historic Site and Heritage River.**

**Undertake oral history and archaeological research to document and protect extant heritage resources.**

**Surface of documented sites should be protected.**

■ **Identify for special consideration in the land use planning process.**





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