

***Tłıchq Nàowoò
Whatì (Tsòtì) Deè
Gots'q Hàèłı Ts'q***



***Tłıchq Traditional Knowledge Reports
Series 2***



Dedats'eetsaa:
Tłıchq Research & Training Institute

Tł̥chq Nàowoò Whatì (Tsòtì) Deè Gots'q Hàèłł Ts'q¹



End of verification trip, Behchokq: Liza Smith, Aalice Legat, Richard Rabesca, Albertine Eyakfwo, Shelly Eyakfwo, and Elders Marie Adele Rabesca and Jimmy Rabesca

Tł̥chq Traditional Knowledge Reports Series 2



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¹ English translation: Tł̥chq Knowledge of the River that Flows from Whatì (Tsòtì) to Hàèłł

Tłıchq Nàowoò Whatì (Tsòtì) Deè Gots'q Hàèłı Ts'q

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-

Cover photos

- Main photo: T'ooheè
 - Albertine Eyakfwo, Shelly Eyakfwo, and Lisa Smith portaging at Sahk'eèdeè
 - ʔeneèkokw'q̄q̄whelaa (old grave site)
 - Corner of cabin remains at Jimmicho wekòk'è, ʔełèèdlı
 - ʔeneèkokw'q̄q̄whelaa (old man's grave site) upstream from Whq̄siwekq̄k'e
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Photo credits

- All photos courtesy of Alice Legat, except where otherwise noted. Other members of the verification team used her camera to take the photos with Alice in them.
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Tłıchq Traditional Knowledge Reports Series 2



Tłıchq Nàowoò Whatì (Tsòtì) Deè Gots'q Hàèłı Ts'q

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Tłichq Nàowoò Whatì (Tsòtì) Deè Gots'q Hàèłł Ts'q

*Our ancestors of the past, ... were
connected to the land by working [thriving] on it.
(Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, November 7, 2020)*

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Looking downstream from Nàłıı (Whatì falls).

Photo credit: from *Fisheries Management Plan for the Tłıchq Highway and Lac la Martre*, prepared for the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board, January 24, 2022

About the Research

This report considers Tłıchq knowledge of Tsòtìdeè, from Whatì to Hàèlł. This knowledge encompasses the activities and places that are and have always been culturally important to the Tłıchq people in this area.

Whatì was formerly called Tsòtì. In the past there were no houses, school, airport, etc. The people's main food source has always been fish from their lake.²

Hàèlł³ is the mouth of the river, where it enters ʔłhdaak'èti⁴ (Marian Lake). At ʔełèèdlł, three waterways meet: Tsòtìdeè, Hozìideè⁵ (Emile River), and Gòlotìdeè⁶ (Marian River). When travelling downstream from Whatì to Hàèlł, Whatì people use the name Tsòtìdeè or Whatìdeè, depending on their age, and when travelling upstream from Hàèlł to ʔełèèdlł or the falls at Nàlł, they use Gòlotìdeè. However, in all cases they are more likely to use specific names for the portion of the river they are referring to.

The research grew from concerns within the Whatì community about possible negative impacts from the Tłıchq Tłlì (Tłıchq Highway) as more non-Dene come into the area. They want to protect their lifestyle and relationships with animals, places, trails, and associated stories that allow them to know their past, while planning for the future — as they travel, work, and thrive within Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nłtlèè, the place where Tłıchq belong.

² On maps, the official name for Whatì was Lac la Martre. Literal translation: marten-lake. *Tłıchq Placenames – Indicators of Knowing Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nłtlèè*, Saxon et al, 2024.

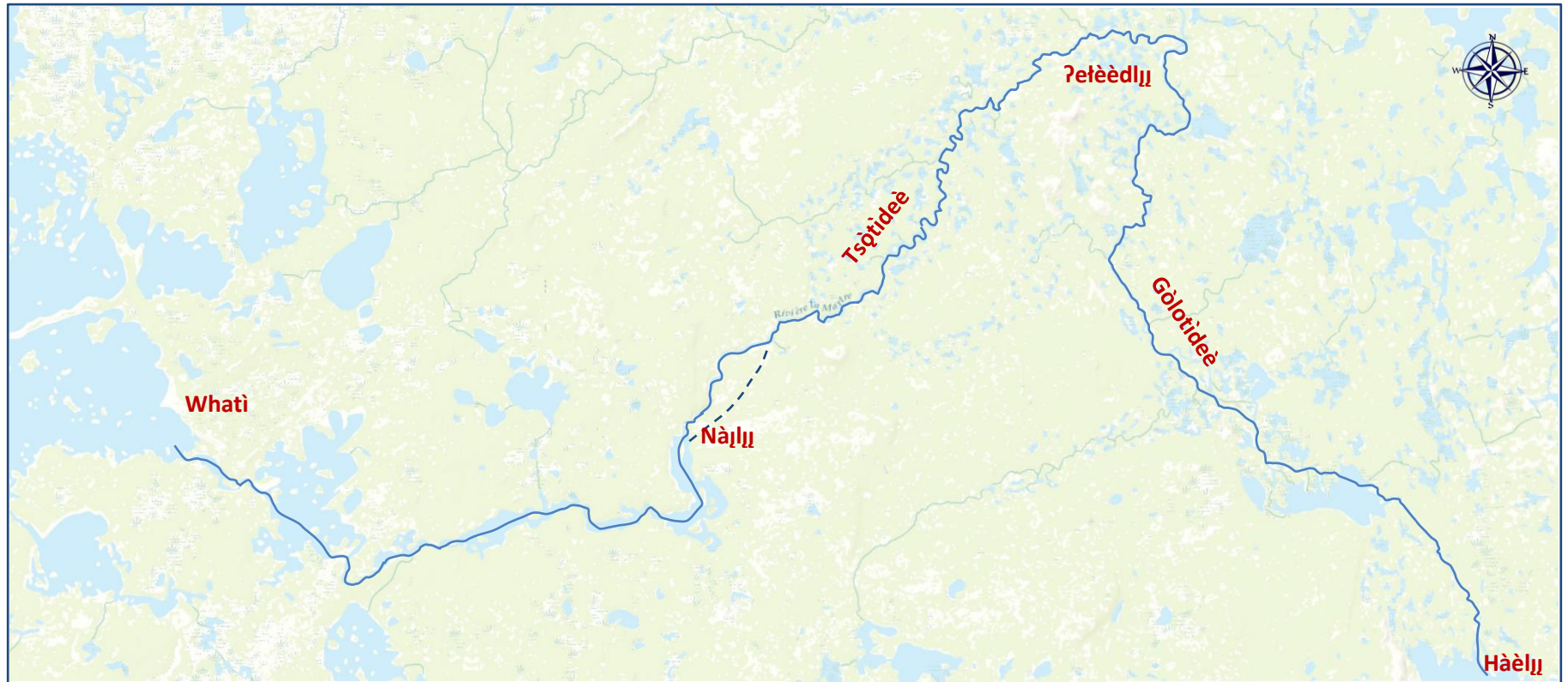
³ Also pronounced Hàèlł or Kàèlł. Literal translation: out-it flows. Ibid

⁴ Literal translation of ʔłhdaak'èti: jackfish-site-lake. There are lots of fish in this lake, not just jackfish. Ibid

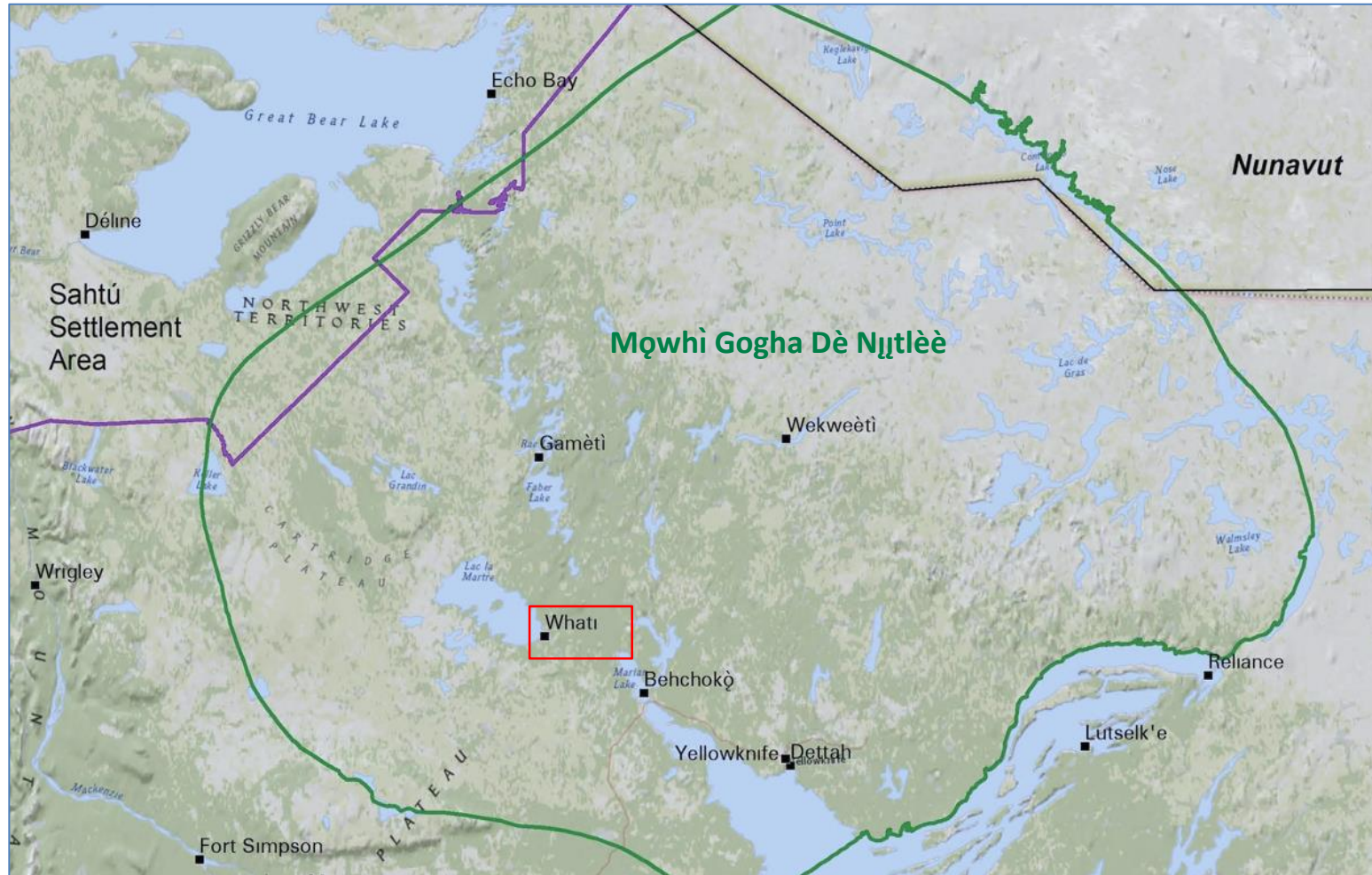
⁵ Literal translation of Hozìideè: barrenlands-river / tundra-river. Ibid

⁶ In the *Tłıchq Yatì* - an online Multimedia Dictionary this placename is spelled Gòlo Tì Deè. This report follows the principle that placenames in Tłıchq are compound words that express one mean, therefore are written with no spaces. Ibid

Map showing the full length of the river



Map showing river location within Mòwhì Gogha Dè Nı̀tlèè



As with any knowledge system, researchers must consider the epistemology and ontology of the knowledgeable and wise people — in this case Tłchq elders and harvesters from Whatì and Behchokò. When researchers document knowledge of an area and the concerns people have for the environment and resources, they have always depended on these knowledge holders and their lengthy, intimate relationships with their place within dè⁷. Researchers need to take their time, listen, and respect the oral narratives that are shared.

When possible and ideally, they must verify by experiencing the places where the stories — information — come from. Only then will people truly understand what the Tłchq elders and harvesters are saying about their concerns, values, and things essential to their overall health and wellbeing.

Background

The Tłchq Land Claim and Self-government Agreement states that Tłchq knowledge will be used, if available, to develop management plans for wildlife and habitat. This includes when any development occurs, such as Tłchq Tłlì (Tłchq Highway). The Tłchq Government has the authority to make laws on Tłchq lands and participate in co-management decisions with the territorial and federal governments within Wek'èezhì. Tłchq Tłlì is within the boundaries of both Wek'èezhì and Tłchq lands.

In the 1990s, the Tłchq elders associated with the Whaèhdqò Nàowo Kò⁸ recommended that the Tłchq do research on their relationship with fish and caribou along trails. Past elders and current harvesters know fish and caribou — as well as everything else — are intertwined when discussing how people use and manage their homeland. Elders who lived and worked in the bush provided realistic baseline information. These elders thought this necessary because of their observation that Canadian management styles only consider baseline as the moment a place is considered for

⁷ Dè is often translated as land, but it encompasses much more. Dè includes wind, water, animals, plants, people, rocks, and places as well as the sky, stars, sun, and more. Everything is interrelated.

⁸ From 1993 to 2002, Tłchq Elders oversaw the Tłchq Knowledge Elders' Program known as Whaèhdqò Nàowò Kò.

development. For Tł̥chq elders and harvesters who have and/or continue to spend a lot of time in the bush, the baseline must have more depth. They know that currently, developers and regulators do not insist on a long enough past timeline.

Since the arrival of Europeans to Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nł̥tlèè, Tł̥chq have had concerns for European management techniques of all animals and plants, and the impact this has on current and future generations of Tł̥chq people. Currently the people of Whatì fear the management will cause fish numbers to decrease and limit the community's ability to use the resources they have always depended on.

They often refer to what happened with the commercial fish plant, when peoples' respect for fish started to wane due to the rules and approaches associated with the plant's owners. When they observed fish becoming smaller and less frequent, the elders and Chief Louie Beaulieu wanted answers. A study was undertaken in 1972 by Fisheries Canada when it was decided certain areas of the lake were restricted from commercial fishing.⁹

The story of the fish plant was recorded during the 2017 Tracking Change project.¹⁰ In 1969-70, a man named Casey Jones built and opened a commercial fish plant on Whatì, the lake where the community of Whatì is located. Men set nets and fished with boats and motors, and women worked at the plant cleaning fish.

My brother Charlie and I went fishing with our boats and we both brough nets and used our motors. We set nets near Dicho¹¹. There were always lots of fish in that area. ... Once we brought the fish in, the women would clean the fish. ... All the fish were shipped to Hay River. The fish that were caught were mostly very large fish. (Elder Benny Jeremick'a, 07 September 2017)

⁹ Bond, W.A, 1972. "An Investigation of the Commercial Fishery at Lac La Martre, NWT". Fisheries and Marine, Environment Canada.

¹⁰ Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board, 2017

¹¹ Also called Ditso. Literal translation: island-big. *Tł̥chq Placenames – Indicators of Knowing Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nł̥tlèè*, Saxon et al, 2024.

I started working right away [when the plant opened]. The men would check the nets at 4:00 am and we women started work at 6:00 am. There were ł̥wezqò [trout], big ł̥h [whitefish]). The ł̥wezqò were so big we had a hard time cutting off the head. We work from 6:00am to 6:00pm. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, 07 September 2017)

At that time, fish were plentiful because Tł̥chq people showed respect for fish.

Many Elders were alive then and they used to say to us "Even though you get fish from the lake, you need to treat fish good by being respectful, and cleaning them in the proper way, otherwise the fish will disappear or there will not be as many as there are now." Elders always encouraged us about nature, so our parents wanted us to do everything right, always with respect and by monitoring - watching. (Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 07 September 2017)

All the men that were fishing were told not to throw the fish in the lake. Elders told us to keep the water clean and not to throw fish guts along the shore, not even fish heads. If we threw the dead fish in the water the water will get polluted and fish won't come to us as it always has. [If we aren't respectful] we will not get many fish in the future. So, we don't' throw away the fish. So, [when we're finished for the day] they picked up all the leftovers and the blood from the fish that was left in the containers and they took it all out to a small island. They would spill it on the land. We were always told that if we don't treat the water right, it will get polluted and we might not be able to catch fish. That is why we always have respect for the fish and water as well. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, 07 September 2017)

Using their respect for fish and local monitoring, Elders decided to close the plant, to help ensure the fish thrived.

Five years after (the commercial fishery opened) the fish went down. So late Jimmy Nitsiza Sr. and Johnny Nitsiza decided to talk about shutting the plant down for five years, to see if the fish will come back. But the building burnt down and the [plant owners] did not open it again. (Elder Benny Jeremick'a, 07 September 2017)

Joseph Moosenose talks about working at the fish plant as a young person and his present-day experiences of fishing.

I started working when the fish plant opened. I worked every day they brought fish in. There were so many fish, and they were all huge. I worked the same

time as others, I saw big łwezqò (trout), lots of other fish too. ... At least once a week a twin otter came to take fish away, it was flown to Hay River. ... two summers [later] there were less fish, and after three years there were hardly any. ... Elders gathered and talked about what should be done for the fish. They said if we continue fishing, like this, there won't be many fish, and they said it takes a long time for the fish to grow to full size after birth. They decided it couldn't be like that anymore. Elders decided to close the fishing plant and it's been closed since then. And what the elders said, happened. You may think [because] the lake is big [there will be big fish], but [now] when we go fishing, we catch mainly small fish. I set a net and I check my net every day and catch mostly small fish. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

Elders interviewed are very clear they do not want commercial fishing again. They want to ensure their people always have fish for sustenance.

Research Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to support the Tł̥chq government to protect the river, fish and their habitat, camps, grave sites, and other places, to ensure that non-Tł̥chq and Tł̥chq alike care about and show respect for the land. The goal of the elders, as always, is to think about the bigger picture, the future, and the young people who they want to know Tł̥chq history and have experiences that provide knowledge to individuals.

The research objectives were to document Elder's knowledge and stories of Tsòtìdeè and Gòlotìdeè, as they relate to:

- Fish and fisheries, including seasonal movement.
- Other animals harvested in relation to the river.
- Landscapes and places where people camped, fished, and harvested.
- Tł̥chq rules associated with fish, fisheries, water, and places.
- Nàłł¹² and its historic and cultural importance to the Tł̥chq.

¹² The name means 'waterfall'. This one is on Whatideè / Tsòtideè. Ibid

Research Methods and Team

Research methods follow how Tɬichɔ elders and harvesters wish to present their information. It is essential for Tɬichɔ to be involved at every step of the research process.

Tɬichɔ knowledge is usually shared through oral narratives of when an individual travelled in the area. These stories include information about how people live within their homeland, which is critical to the story of fish and fisheries, hunting, and trapping systems along the river, and Tɬichɔ relationships to the land and all that it contains.

Current oral narratives are built on a foundation of older stories. That is, Tɬichɔ continuously enhance their understanding of dè through the knowledge of their elders and experiential knowledge of themselves as they currently harvest and use their homeland.

More specifically, the research team followed these steps:

1. Contact those who know and are able to discuss the topic or region being researched.
2. Listen to and document the stories of the topic and places under discussion.
3. Visit places and verify with harvesters who know the places and stories.
4. Record GPS locations of cabins, graves, and other significant places and where nets were set.

To help prompt oral narratives, the research team used these research questions.

- Tell us stories of Tsòtìdèè from Whatì to Xàèlɿ¹³.
- Tell us about the fish: what kinds of fish are there; when do they come; have there always been a lot of fish or just sometimes? When and where do people set nets to catch fish; what do they do

¹³ Hàèlɿ is at the mouth of Gòlotìdèè (Marian River). Hàèlɿ literal translation: out-it flows. Ibid

with the fish; where do people camp when they are fishing?
What area(s) do they fish in the fall time and what type of fish were there? Who goes fishing?

- Tell us the story of Nàłł [the falls], how you show respect, and why it is important to the culture and history of Tł̥chq people.

The research team included the following people.

- Marie Adele Rabesca and Eva Beaverhoe documented most of the stories. The interviews took place in October and November 2020. All the interviews were recorded and done in the Tł̥chq language. Research trainees Janelle Nitsiza, Samantha Migwi, and April Alexis helped in the beginning. They worked in various combinations of one, two, or three for each interview.
- Following the interviews, Janelle Nitsiza and Elder Therese Zoe worked together to do some transcribing of recordings. Marie Adele Rabesca transcribed the majority of recordings into English, for quotes to use in the report.
- Dr. Allice Legat was principal investigator. She coordinated, oversaw, and participated in the research with Elders in Whatì, and did some on-the-job training. Allice wrote the draft report.
- Elder Marie Adele Rabesca was a research and language advisor throughout the project.
- Albertine Eyakfwo, Community Researcher. She has training on the job, with the commitment that Tł̥chq learn more than the principal investigator. She participated fully in clarifying information and writing much additional information gathered during the verification aspect of the report.
- Mary McCreadie, a plain language expert, did editing and layout for the report, to help ensure readability.

The research team heard oral narratives from 15 Tł̥chq elders in Whatì.

Alfonz Nitsiza	Jonas Nitsiza	Lucy Pomie
Charlie Jim Nitsiza	Joseph Moosenose	Madeline Champlain
Francis Simpson	Laiza Jeremick'a	Michel (Mike) Nitsiza
Jimmy Rabesca	Louis Wedawin	Narcisse Bishop
Joe Champlain	Lucy Nitsiza	Sophie Williah

Verification

In August–September 2022, Allice Legat and Albertine Eyakfwo travelled with six Behchokò harvesters and two Whatì elders, from Behchokò, upstream on Gòlotideè to Denèèt'oo — just downstream of the rapids at Nàłł.

This area was chosen to verify because Behchokò harvesters know this part of the river system intimately and their knowledge was not previously documented. They have extensive experience harvesting the river between Hàèłł and ?ełèèdlł and have lived between these places with their families. Elders Marie Adele and Jimmy Rabesca came along to help with similarities and differences to what had been said in Whatì.

Behchokò harvesters:	Whatì Elders: Jimmy and Marie Adele Rabesca
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jimmy P. Mantla, who acted as k'òowo	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joseph Mantla	Colby Grasco: bear monitor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jonathan Black	Lisa Smith: head cook
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Larry Rabesca	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Richard Rabesca	Shelly Eyakfwo: youth, assistant cook, and camp helper
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• William Drybones	

When the harvesters were asked to verify information, they focused on cabins and graves because, if people camped there, then they fished there. And people need to know where the graves are.

Challenges

Originally the research team had October and November to finish this research. During that time, we had to deal with certain challenges.

- Male and female harvesters and elders wanted more detailed maps to work with. In their opinion, the first maps they used (from the Tł̥chq Government GIS system) did not show the details of their mental maps, which include very specific, tiny, and important details of habitat and landscapes that certain animals need to survive. This problem was somewhat solved when Elder Marie Adele Rabesca and Aliche Legat worked more directly with Terrell Knapton-Pain to produce 'new' maps.
- The elders were frustrated that the research focused only on fish rather than other aspects of the landscape on which they depend and thrive.

*What about these things for example, like muskrats or beaver along the riverbank have they mention in any way just only fish okay? It could have been good if they talk also about pelts [fur bearing animals] too.
(Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 02 November 2020)*

This has been solved by not cutting off anyone who discussed other animals. And by adding some information on wildlife in the report. We did not ask specifically about these animals.

- Tł̥chq elders prefer working together to ensure all the information is documented. They like to hear each other and build on other people's experiences. And they like to lean onto the map with younger researchers. But with Covid19 restrictions — wearing masks and sitting three meters apart when sitting together — prevented this.
- December is always a difficult time as it leads up to Christmas.

Because of these and other challenges (Covid, wildfires), the research was not completed as planned. Researchers spent all of January understanding what the audio tapes shared in Tł̥cho. In December 2021 we were still hoping to have the information downstream of Nàłł clarified and verified before June 2022. But it was not completed until September 2022.

This part of the project was expanded — to use GPS to document Tł̥chq cabins and gravesites along the river. As harvesters explained, if we wanted to know where fish were harvested through time, it is important to document the traditional camp and burial sites.¹⁴



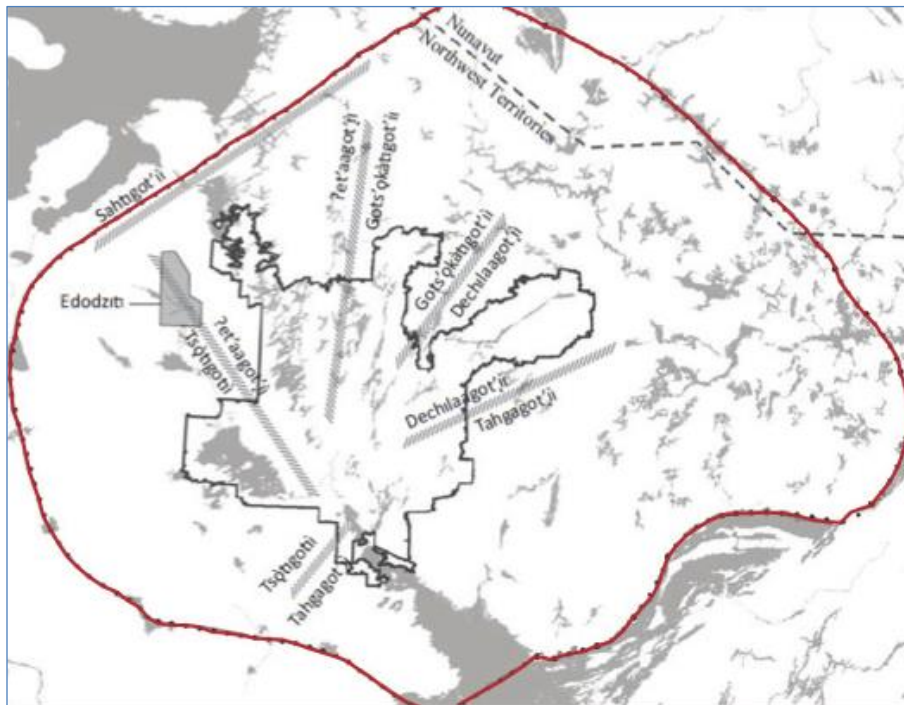
Leaving Behchokq̃ with Elders Marie Adele and Jimmy Rabesca from Whatì

¹⁴ Alice Legat's personal communication with Jimmy P. Mantla, Richard Rabesca, and Larry Rabesca, August 2022

Research Results

The research results reflect intimate knowledge of Tsòtìdeè and Gòlotìdeè, from Whatì to Xàèłł, and Tł̥chq perspectives of Nàìłł. The research focused on he (fish) and places associated with fish and fishing, including seasonal movements and harvesting.

The results also focus on the cultural and historic significance of the river within the socio-territorial region of Tsòtìgot'łł (now called Whatìgot'łł) and Tahgagot'łł within Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nìłłèè.



Map credit: from *Walking the Land, Feeding the Fire*, Allice Legat, 2012

As with other Tł̥chq oral narratives and knowledge projects, harvesters and elders rarely speak only of the species that is the focus of the research. They intertwine information of all resources and relationships in an area, as the environment encompasses them all.

The place names are usually told in travel stories¹⁵ to a person travelling for the first time down a river — in this case from Whatì to Hàèłı. Many of the stories that elders shared with us tended to jump from place to place, telling of occurrences and happenings associated with fishing along the river.

- When harvesters secured fish for themselves and their dogs to last the winter.
- When fish was harvested for a family when a man was going trapping or hunting for several weeks or months.
- When family members decided to harvest berries and medicine in a particular place.
- When they were snaring rabbits and/or hunting ptarmigan in the winter or spring.
- When children when to check nets.
- When people from the community were watching for lone harvesters to ensure they got back on time.






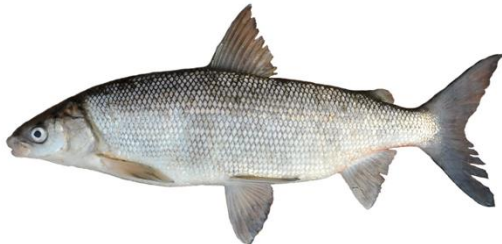




We provide the research results in these sections:

- The importance of fish
- Whatì Elders' and Behchokò Harvesters' knowledge of places along Tsòtìdeè
- Seasonal movement of fish and human activities
- Rules for respecting fish, fisheries, water, and other aspects of dè
- Stories of Nàłı and its importance to Tłıchq culture and history

¹⁵ Andrews, Thomas D., and John B. Zoe. "The *Idaà* Trail: Archaeology and the Dogrib Cultural Landscape, Northwest Territories, Canada." In *At a Crossroads: Archaeology and First Peoples in Canada*, edited by George P. Nicholas and Thomas D. Andrews, 1997, p. 160-77. Burnaby, Canada: Archaeology Press, Simon Fraser University.

The Importance of Fish

Along Tsòtìdeè there are many kinds of fish. These images¹⁶ include English translations of Tłıchq names and the average length in the NWT for the fish mentioned in this report.

	
Łıwezqò — Lake Trout (50 – 80 cm)	Įhdaa — Jackfish / Northern Pike (50 - 110 cm)
	
Ts'èt'łq — Arctic Grayling (35 - 50 cm)	Łıh — Round Whitefish (30 – 50) cm
	
Ehts'èq / Ehch'èq — Walleye / Pickerel (40 – 65 cm)	Łıh — Lake Whitefish (30 – 50) cm
	
Wıile — Inconnu / Coney (60 - 100 cm)	Nqkwèe — Loche / Burbot (50 – 70 cm)
	
Dehdoo — Longnose Sucker (40 – 55 cm)	Kwıezhıı — White Sucker (40 – 55 cm)

¹⁶ Images from *Common Fish in the Tłıchq Region*, Wek'èezhıı Renewable Resources Board and Tłıchq Government, 2016.

The people of Whatì, like other Tł̥chq citizens, have always depended on fish for food. The river has an abundance of fish. Although the Whatì people travelled throughout the land,¹⁷ they always returned to their lake and river for fish as a consistent food source.

... they used to live all winter long on Nìᓯᓐᓐ¹⁸, I remember, but I was very young that time and went along with my grandpa. Even late in the evening we would travel back from our trapline, from Nqđì [west side of Whatì] and couldn't hardly see when we came to the Bay area, and when they're coming into ᑭenèegoo¹⁹ they would be running ahead of the dog team. And then we head to Nìᓯᓐᓐ and stop to warm ourselves and then there be a trail to follow. That's when I'd get in the sled. That is how I have worked along the side of my grandpa. And I am still alive though he is gone, and I thank him so much for I learned a lot from him. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

Many say that the abundance of fish in the lake and river is why people built the Whatì community in its current location.

People had found good fish around here and they built houses, and it became a community. People had lived according to their traditional way of life from the past to this day. In the fall they catch many fish and in the early spring they catch a lot of fish. They make dry fish. They fish in early spring when the ice breaks up. They set nets just around the bay close to shore. (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

Regarding the fish, our ancestors survived mostly on the fish. About this time [frozen lake] fish would be their main food. They used dog teams then and would also set net to catch fish for their dogs. They harvested lots of fish and would keep them for the long winter. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)

From here to down the river there are dehdo [longnose sucker] and łìh [whitefish], and also at Nàłłłtì²⁰ there are kwiezhì [white sucker]. They would catch those too. ... As for these fish, we have been living on them since our

¹⁷ As noted in the report *Tqđzì (Boreal Caribou) and the State of the Habitat*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board, 2019

¹⁸ An old name for Nìᓯᓐᓐ is 'ᑭenèè, meaning '[beaver] dam', after the story of Yamqòᓐᓐ's beaver wife making a dam here. *Tł̥chq Placenames – Indicators of Knowing Mqwhì Gogha Dè Njłtèè*, Saxon et al, 2024.

¹⁹ Point on the end of Nìᓯᓐᓐ, which is a dam made in the time of Yamqòᓐᓐ. Ibid

²⁰ Literal translation of Nàłłłtì: 'down-it-flows'. The name of the lake above the falls – Nàłłł. Ibid

ancestors did, [and still do] today. When people find a good area for fish, they make a camp, and that is why the mark of a good fishing area is known by the campsite. The fish has been a gift to us, all around this lake, and we are thankful for it. (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

There are fish underneath the water and all along the river. Fish are always in the area swimming beneath the surface. The fish that we catch are ts'éł'q [Arctic Grayling] and łh [whitefish], łwezqò [trout] and nqkwè [loche] and dehdo [longnose sucker]. There are other kinds as well. We, ourselves, lived mostly on fish as food. (Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 02 November 2020)

We have always eaten fish; we survived on it year-round: we get a lot of fish in the spring; we get less fish in July. ... People worked hard to find food and to go fishing and harvest food. It's not only men who worked hard; women worked harder than men. (Elder Joe Champlain, 10 November 2020)

Fish was the main source of food throughout the entire year for people and dogs. They would make a big stage rack, where they would stack fish for themselves and the dogs to have enough food for the long winter. They would make lots of dry fish, too. The old word łtoogha means fish guts that were collected and saved for the dogs to eat. They would hang the fish guts on a rope to dry. After the fish guts and parts of fish were dried, they placed them in a big canvas bag to store it in. This is how the fish was used for food for the people and dogs throughout the year. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

We were told by our ancestors to have respect for fish. In the past when people lived a hard life, they would catch fish to survive so they handled them with care. Fish was a food for them and when they [Elders] spoke, they spoke from their heart, encouraging us to pass their teaching to our young people. ... When you work on the fish, it's a lot of work and fishing for the dogs is also a lot of work for the long winter. ... Whatì people take really good care of the fish, they have healthy big fish, they make good dry fish, and they had respect. (Elder Lucy Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

Sometimes when weather gets cold, they would go to Dicho²¹ and search for fish in that area. And when there are fish, they tell the others. They also leave a sign so the others know where they can fish. They taught one another about all the skills of how to live on the land and teach them how to hunt and have a good healthy life and to know how to survive. That is why I say the community

²¹ Literal translation: island-big. Also, Ditso. Ibid

has been in this place for a long time. ... We are now in the 21st century and it's been quite a while since the place became a community. Fish was the main food for the lives of all. Just across from here [Whatì] there is a river where we catch lot of dehdo [longnose sucker]. During the months of January and February, and in March when the weather gets warmer an island just across from here the people go out here and fish for nqhkweè [loche/burbot] by hook and catch them. That's what they did. Also, many fish around that area too (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)



Wile (inconnu) and łih (whitefish) together. Photo credit: from *Common Fish in the Tł̥chq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tł̥chq Government, 2016

... there's mostly łih (whitefish) at first along the river from Whatì. ... There are many types of fish, but mostly łih. There are wile [coney] below the falls. ... Yes, there many kinds of fish [along the river], there is dehdo [longnose sucker], and łhdaa [jackfish], and nqhkweè [loche], and kwiezhìi [white sucker], łih [whitefish], and ts'ét'iq [Arctic grayling]. Yes, there are six different kind all the way up to ʔebòts'itì²²,

²² Official name of ʔebòts'itì is Boyer Lake. *Tł̥chq Placenames – Indicators of Knowing Mqwhì Gogha Dè Njłtèè*, Saxon et al, 2024.

Whatì Elders and Behchokò Harvesters knowledge of places along Tsòtìdeè, from Hàèḷl to Whatì

Between Whatì and Hàèḷl there are many places where people camped, built cabins, fished, visited with others, trapped, hunted, picked berries and medicine, and were buried.

... all the land has the placenames. There are over 20 names and that is how they used to travel. How the land was, where there are detehḷl, where they going to camp out. And it seems like it was ready for them, that is how they used to travel. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)

There are many places with its names. Before when I used to travel with my husband, I would say to him this is the place and that is the place. The land has many names, and I say people of the past, they lived their life in the hand of God. Who would say to them, give names to the lands. And they give names to each place of the earth. They gave names to the places all the way to Behchokò. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

The results combine knowledge from the earlier research and the 2022 verification trip. The verification team travelled upstream from Behchokò to Denèèt'oo. Elders and Harvesters shared stories of their life along this portion of the river, which Albertine Eyakfwo captured. She listened to all the recorded tapes and added to this report by combining her experiences with the stories she heard.

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

We went by canoe on all the tahgà (the part of the river between the rapids and the mouth of the river): Tsòtìdeè, Hozìdeè gha, all the way from ʔhdaak'ètì towards Nàakaàtì. In the past, they (Elders and Harvesters) used to see a lot of other canoes around on lakes and rivers. They used to see people here and there. Nowadays you don't see anyone. For example, on this trip we haven't seen any other canoes or people. In the past you would see people here, there, everywhere with canoes, up to Hozì (barrenlands). Some people would use dog teams.

...

Sometimes Jimmy P. Mantla thinks about the tahgà. There are a lot of graves, graves that were there before they were born. Some people's graves they know, some they don't know. But Jimmy P. said he feels lucky because when they

camped beside graves or anywhere along the river, their ancestors must have had good hearts. They made trails for us to use. They didn't hear anything out of the ordinary, nothing went wrong, they were lucky getting a moose. Now they are all in their graves; the Creator has taken them back.

...

Joseph Mantla travelled the river so many times that he knows the boat routes from Hàèḥḥ to the falls. There are a lot of graves, some he knows and some he doesn't. Some they usually passed by because they didn't know about them, it was before their time, or the area was overgrown. Due to forest fires, it's hard to tell the boat routes; the water level is low and you can see a lot of rocks now. They went trapping and hunting on Nàakaàtì²³ and ḥhdaak'èatì²⁴ where there a lot of graves, even toward Gamètì.

...

Jimmy P. Mantla always trapped for muskrat with Joseph, they are a team for trapping. Others would go too, with their own canoes, their brother Harry would go with his in-law, Gabriel Gon. There were a lot of people back then, anywhere you stopped for a cookout on rocky areas or points. There were a lot of ducks at that time, now it's not like that. When he thinks about it, there are less animals, furbearers, and less waterflow. When they used to go trapping, it was exciting and fun, lots of det'q, (ducks) and sounds of nòhtà (grebes), an indicator of direction to a lake nearby. The grebe is just like a map, put your canoe in, go to the direction of the sound, it's sure thing there's a big lake and you'll hunt a furbearing animal.

We use five maps to discuss this knowledge, with each map showing a section of the river with placenames — presented in the upstream direction of the verification team, starting at Hàèḥḥ.

- Map 1: from Hàèḥḥ to Tḥchq Ndek'awo Wekò
- Map 2: from Sahk'eèdeè to ḥeneèkokw'qò Whetqò
- Map 3: from Dqkw'qò Whetqò to T'ok'ætqòdèa
- Map 4: from Behkok'atà to Denèèt'oohoteè
- Map 5: from Denèèt'oohoteè to Whatì

²³ Literal translation for Nàakaàtì: northern-lights- lake. A long lake along a boat trail. Ibid

²⁴ The name ḥhdaak'èatì translates as 'lake of the small site for jackfish'. There is a lot of fish here. This lake is on a boat trail. The sled trail is to the east. Ibid

Map 1: from Hàèłı to Tłıchq Ndek'awo Wekò



Hàèł̥²⁵

Hàèł̥ is at the mouth of the river, where it flows into ʔhdaak'ètì (Marion Lake). It also refers to the Old Village located on the east shore. There is lots of wìle (coney) in this area.

Elder Laiza Jeremick'a describes life there when she was younger.

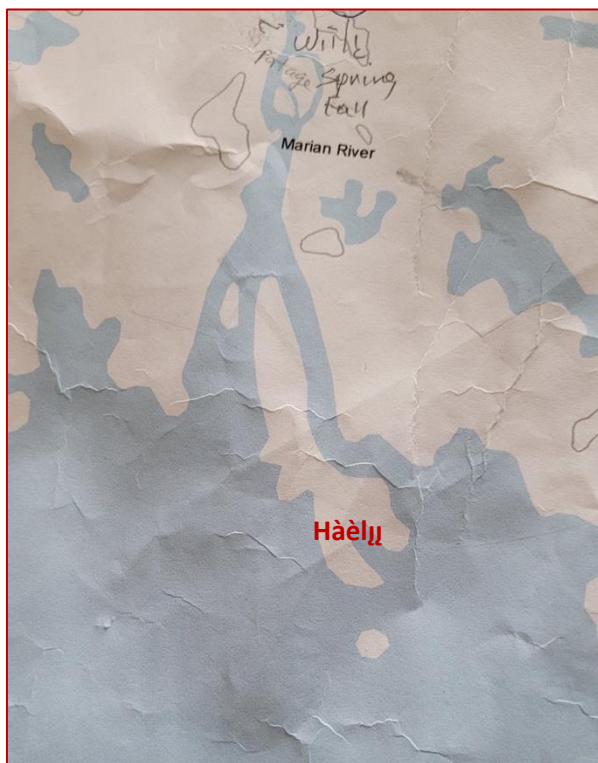
When we gather at Hàèł̥, that's when its ice breakup. We would go there to catch wìle [coney] and harvest them there. From Hàèł̥ to ʔht'ètideè (James River), along the way near the shoreline, we would set net and we would catch whitefish. Ever lots of white fish along there. ...

Living at Hàèł̥ there was always fish ... when it's time to move, where the river moves, that's where we catch tons of fish ... because there is always fish, so many people lived in the area.

They would stay in the winter until spring. Always trapping in the area, they never said there's no fish, there is always fish there, it's what the hunters said. That's all I know and lived on. In that area, nobody ever catches łwezqò (trout), many people say that. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, 31 October 2020)

Many others have experience there.

They would leave when it is getting warm. They would go up to the ʔhdaak'ètì [Marion Lake] and there would be tents set up in a row by the lake. From this place they would look for and harvest beaver and muskrats. They would live in tents set up in the rows, near each other during the spring. ...



²⁵ Literal translation of Hàèł̥: out-it-flows. Also pronounced as Xàèł̥ or Kàèł̥. Annie Black's mother is buried here. Ibid



Hdaak'etì (Marion Lake). Photo credit: from *Common Fish in the Tłıchq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tłıchq Government, 2016

There used to be houses in Hàèłı where you can see the cross standing on the rocks. ... There used to be lots of people and all the people from Whatì would gather there with canoes. ... There used to be lots of people who gathered to pray to the cross and it used to be crowded. ... There used to be ten log houses on the island and today there must be about three log houses, that is it. There is a cross still standing there today. (Elder Louis Wedawin, 18 October 2020)

People would travel to places like Xàèłı. From there they would go to Behk'òdeè. Sometimes people lived by the shores. They would make dry fish, make dry fish with suckers too. Sometimes in the fall time people would live there, to collect suckers and coney fish. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

When we arrive at Hàèłı you see the same thing, lots of stage cache with fish hanging. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

From there people were living at Hàèłı. People would come in from many places and gather there. They would set up tents, and then they would set the fish nets. From there people would go to the community for many reasons [sell furs, get supplies, etc.]. This would happen or we would all head to Behchokò together. ...

We would travel to Dihoèlaa²⁶ and then we would spend the night at Dikwits'ì²⁷. After staying there, we would head to Tawoòmìhk'è²⁸. Many people had already gathered there. As we approached the place, we called out to the k'òowo [boss of the camp]. They were called to help us. They would help set up tents, gather wood/spruce boughs. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

My father used to travel that way [to ɣhdaak'ètì] with us, he used to trap there. ... When he set the net into the water, I used to make dry fish for him. ... My father killed two woodland caribou on the trail leading to here [Whatì] from the ɣhdaak'ètì [Marian Lake], my father used to do that with us. It is beautiful on the land. (Elder Lucy Pomie, 18 October 2020)

And also, to Behk'òdeè and Sahk'eèdeè around there we paddle and paddle till we get to Hàèłł. Once we get there, it's not too much to catch, yet people would set nets and check their net too. And when there is a catch of fish, we would cook it over the fire. And if we have fresh muskrats or beaver, my grandfather would clean it well and use a drying board to dry the pelt. After all the work is complete, then we head to Behchokq. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

Hàèłł is a place for hunting, trapping, fishing, and harvesting medicinal plants. People stop to rest, camp out, and use the area all year round. There are seven houses but only two are used by people now. The rest of the houses are old. (Harvester Larry Rabesca, during verification trip, 2022)

²⁶ Dihoèlaa is the name of a group of islands in ɣhdaak'ètì (Marion Lake). Ibid

²⁷ Dikwits'ì is an island in ɣhdaak'ètì (Marion Lake) that looks like a comb. Ibid

²⁸ Literal translation of Tawoòmìhk'è: open-water-net-site. This place gets its name for the fact that there is water or soft ice here all winter. In springtime several kinds of fish can be caught here. A variety of trees and berry bushes are found here. It is a good area for beaver and muskrat hunting. Ibid



Larry Rabesca collecting wood for dinner at Xàèłł

During the verification process, harvesters noted the camp on the west side of Hàèłł that burned down years ago.



The old camp site just upstream from Hàèłł

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

Today is our travel day, returning from a five-day trip on the river to verify and clarify information about graves and old campsites. I remember back in 2019, canoeing back from Whatì on the Trails of Our Ancestors canoe trip. I learned I had an auntie who passed away when she was a child due to sickness. She is buried at Hàèl̥. Her name was Rosa Rabesca.

The family was travelling back from Hozìdeè (Emile River / barrenlands-river / tundra-river), hunting and trapping, when she got sick and passed away. Back then, when someone passed away, they would bury them where they camped. Rosa's burial site is at the right side of the river before canoeing into Hàèl̥, if you're travelling from Tsòtideè. Sharing the stories I've heard, some of the guys knew the grave we were talking about. They've been there and knew about it. Our boat driver knew about the area, so we stopped at the location and started walking the trail but couldn't find the grave. So, we kept on walking along. I said, I remember walking down and up again before the grave. I knew where it was, but we couldn't see the grave.

All this time a big, old tree had fallen on it and it was hard to see. The fencing of the grave didn't break, it was still in good condition. To see it from the river, the guys had to cut branches from the tree and make a trail leading up to it. Next time, people travelling the river will be able to see and visit the grave, or at least say a prayer.



The gravesite of Albertine's maternal auntie, her mother's sister Rosa Rabesca — the first grave upstream from Hàèl̥. She died when she was very young.

Memorial

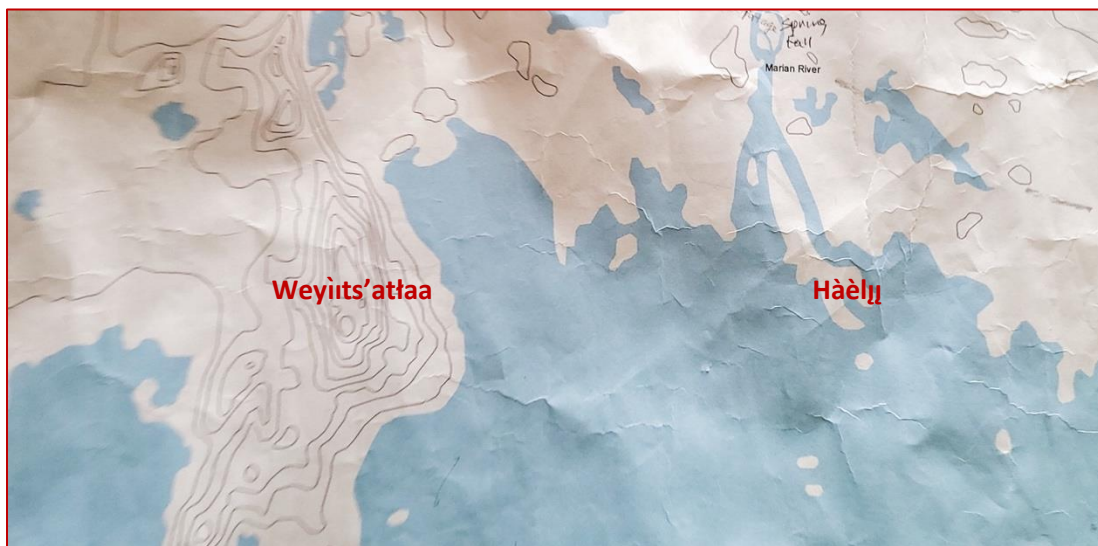


A memorial cross for Richard Apples who drowned in swift current.

Weyits'atłaa (the mountain)

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

Larry's grandma Marie Rabesca hiked up the mountain called Weyits'atłaa when she was over 70 years old. She hadn't been up there since she was a young lady. I asked Larry, "what did your grandma say about it?" He explained that she felt good to be up there again and see all around that area. Other young ladies tried but only made it halfway up. He doesn't know what year it was, but it was when Alfred Whane was on the fire tower monitoring the land. Larry mentions there was a rope up there to help them up, but it must be dried and old now.



...

We're at Behtsotì (Shotì Lake) at a TG cabin, sharing stories. Joseph Mantla is telling a story about when his oldest brother, Harry Mantla, was still alive. They went hunting for young ducks towards ʔeht'ètì (James Lake). At Bòlowì (Robert Mackenzie's) cabin area, they stayed overnight there because it's a long way to travel back to Behchokò. They were using a canvas boat.

Harry had all his children with him. Joseph was the boat driver. They packed up their tents early in the morning and went duck hunting towards the bay area, where the willows were five feet tall by the shore. They thought they heard a boat motor out on open water, but it was their own boat echoing because the lake is big.

By the shore, on the mountain they could see someone standing there. They said hello, talking to him in the Tł̓chq language, but got no response. He kept moving back and hid behind a big tree. They could only see his head from behind a tree,

looking at them and then disappearing behind a willow bush. He was wearing only white clothes. Harry said, "it is not a good sign," so they went back to Behchokq and they told an elder, Nick Apples, about what happened.

His answer was, "it's the people who went in Weyìts'atłaa, that's where they are coming from. Sometimes people see them, but they don't talk about it." Another elder, Francis Gon, said the same thing.

Joseph said, "If it's the people in the mountain, then the stories we've been hearing about Weyìts'atłaa are true. The couple who hid under the mountain from a jealous husband had children who are curious. They go out exploring but can't talk to people. They must have been watching us when we stayed overnight at Xàèḷl village." Marie Adele Rabesca said they must be watching people, whoever uses the area.

Jimmy P. Mantla said one time they went to Weyìts'atłaa, on the side where there were woods. They saw circle-shaped rocks of small, medium, and big sizes, which he heard are potatoes for people in the mountain.

Joseph said not to take any rocks from there. The rocks look nice and good, especially for fishnets, but you won't catch anything with them.

...

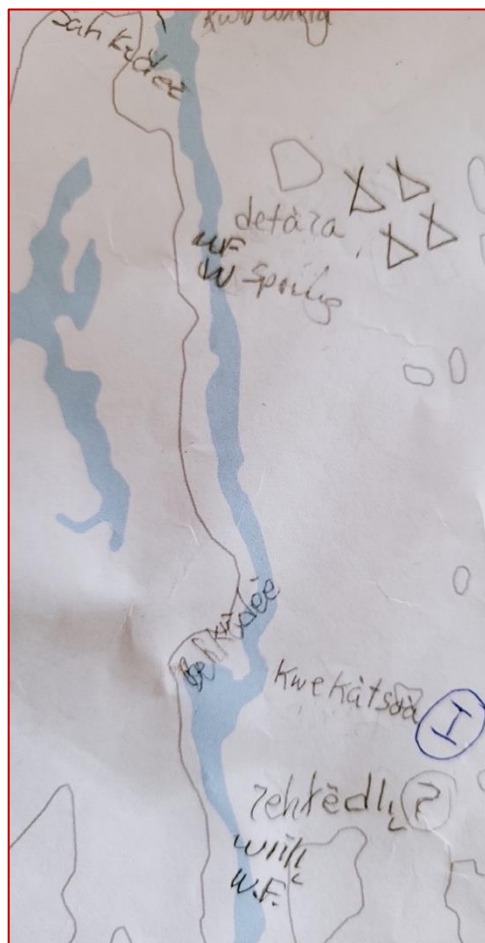
Last year Marie Adele went with the young children to Xàèḷl. They all went out to the small rock island across from Bòlowì (Robert Mackenzie's) cabin to look at the footprints on the rock made by people who went under the mountain. Marie Adele said she didn't see it because they stay behind at Xàèḷl Village. Jimmy P. Mantla, Joseph. and I agreed that it's there and we've all seen it. Joseph said it's young children's footprints. I mentioned that I've seen three prints of a child, an adult, and a dog. Jimmy P. said it's good to go to the site and tell stories of it. Marie Adele heard this story from Hagoyia's mom, an old lady. Only seven old ladies went up the Weyìts'atłaa (People who went in the mountain) mountain to go berry picking. Every once in a while, they would rest and talk. They got to the entrance and saw children's footprints.

Kwekàats'òà²⁹

Kwekàats'òà is a place of broken / split rock where there is good cold water.

... Kwekàats'òà. They have always called it by this name. This place has good land for camping and is a good site for wood. The old man who lost his grandchild had to bring his body back. He traveled by canoe. On his travel back he stopped at a place where an elderly man was buried. When people travel, they stay near where the old man was buried. It is said that the old man had a very kind heart. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Kwekàats'òà, that's where they said water from the split its cold and good. They share water among themselves and make fire and cook some food. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)



Behk'òdeè / Behk'òdeèhoteè³⁰

Behk'òdeèhoteè is the last portage before Hàèłł when traveling downstream — or the first after Hàèłł when traveling upstream from Țhdaak'ètì and Behchokò.

The portage that is there is called Behk'òdeèhoteè. ... At Behk'òdeè is a very short portage but a lot of work to bring the boats over. However, it is good, and the land is good. Working like that is very good. ...

A portage away from Hàèłł is Behk'òdeè they catch lots of wiile [coney] there too. They also catch fish at Behtsòtì. (Elder Joe Champlain, 10 November 2020)

²⁹ Literal translation for Kwekàats'òà: rock-flat-? A dehgà. This name will remain until the end of the earth. If you climb up on top you will see a river running through the rock. The rock looks sort of rotten. If you pay respect to it there will be lots of beaver. Ibid

³⁰ Literal translation: seagull-river / seagull-river portage. There is a burial site on the portage. Ibid

After Behk'òdeè there are no more portages [to Behchokò], it is just land and water. From there only Hàèłł is left, then we travel to Behchokò on the big water, they teach each other where the shallow areas are as there are many. People travelled back and forth like that. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)



Verification team at Behk'òdeèhoteè — the portage around the rapids at Behk'òdeè.

I remember seeing people live at Behk'òdeè, this is what happened. There is an old house, where that house is located, the river flows to Gamètì. People lived in that old house, lots of people lived around it in tents. People lived where the fish was plentiful. This is what I can remember. I remember travelling in the spring and fall to Behchokò to purchase supplies. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

Behk'òdeè when people set their nets there are so many fish. ...

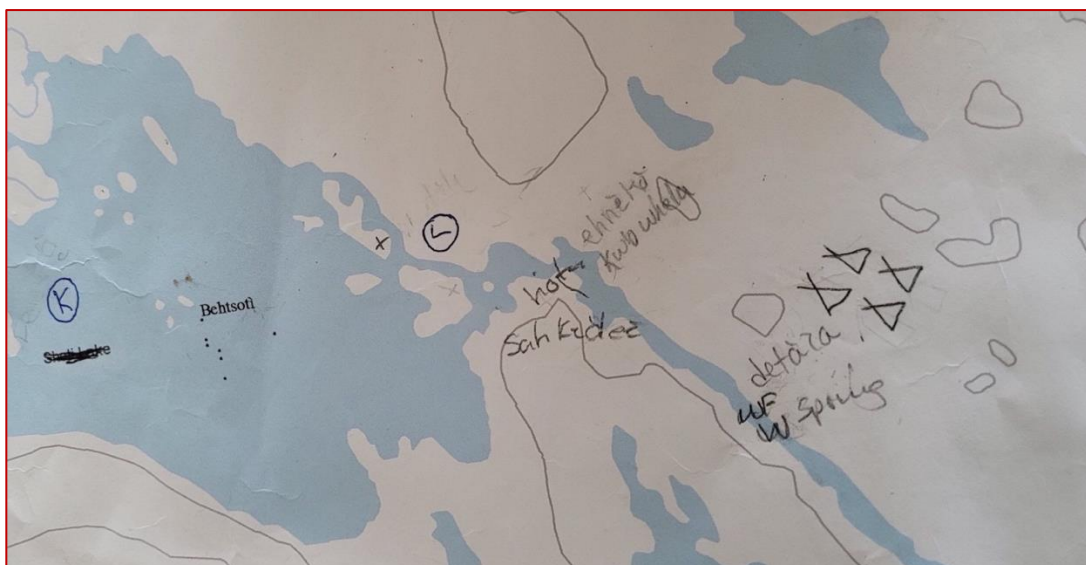
I mention Behk'òdeè where people used to live too. After being there they head out to the barren land. Men goes out to barren land for caribou while women are left behind at Behk'òdeè. At one time we happen to visit their camp. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)



Richard Rabesca catches wiile at Behk'òdeè rapids

Sahk'eèdeè³¹

Sahk'eèdeè is located where the river flows out of Behtsotì. It is known to have bears wandering around.



³¹ This river is named after a person called Sahk'eè. There is a burial site here. Ibid

... and around that place [Sahk'eèdeè] only kwìezhì [white sucker] that I know of. As for us when you travel around there, we just go to any of the islands to spend the night. Don't know too much about how people did things before. But as for now, when we travel out there, we sometimes rush and don't spend time doing things like setting net or fishing with fishing rod, for they are just young people. And elderly people they take time as they travel and be spending their time and where to spend the night. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)



Verification team at Sahk'eèdeèhoteè — portaging around the rapids.
Note the bear fishing at the rapids.

Tłıchq Ndek'awo Wekò

Albertine Eyakfwo shares her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

We're at Behtsotì (Shoti Lake) at a Tłıchq Government cabin, sharing stories. ...

Jimmy P Mantla was talking about tahgà (the part of the river between the rapids and the mouth of the river). He said there's a lot of empty camps that existed before they were born. I remember when he was telling the story he pointed at the place right across from where we were camping. I could see that it was all overgrown. He mentioned that we could go there but we would have to cut

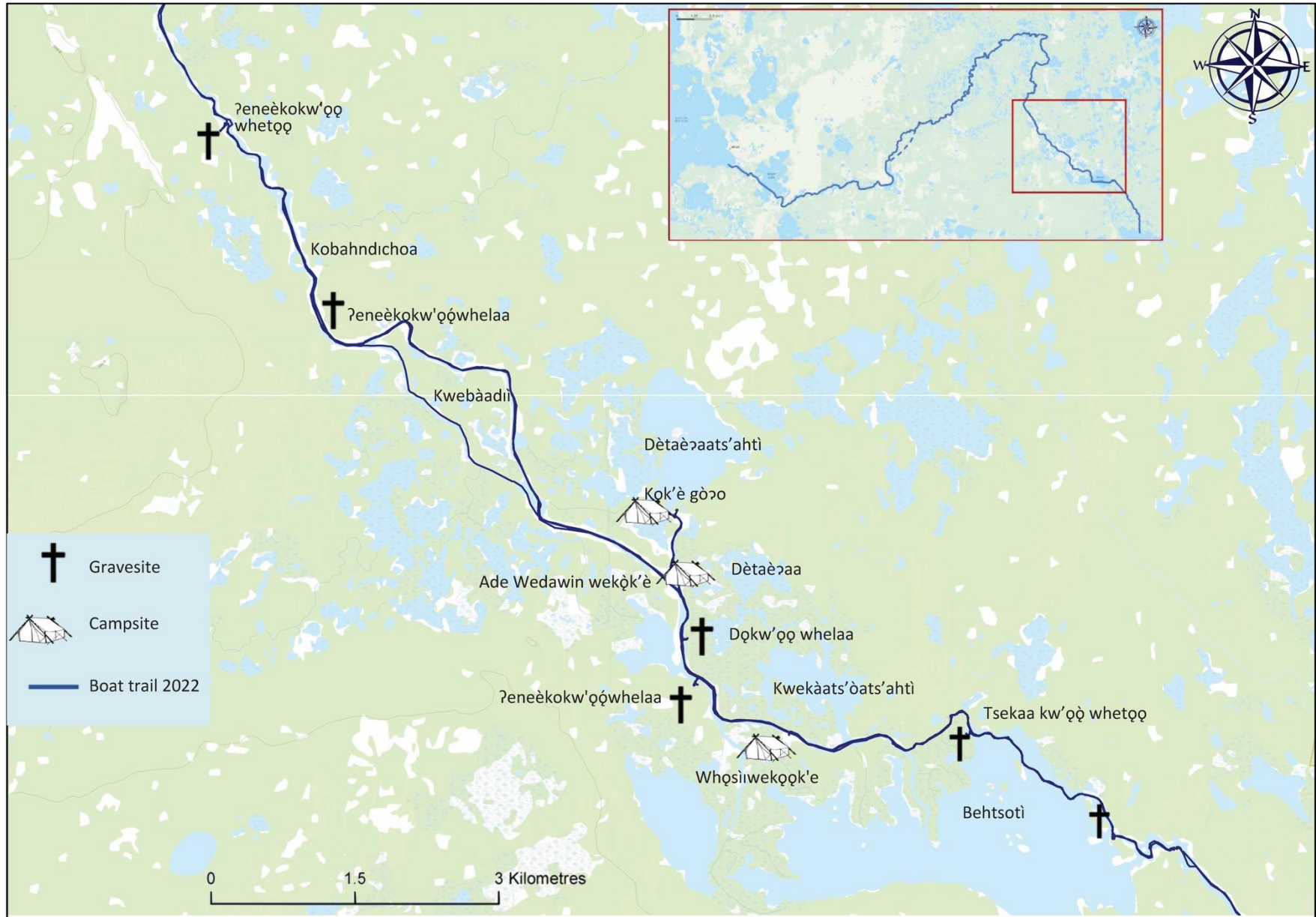
brush, and the weather was not good. It was raining but we could do it some other time, he said.

When he was young, he saw a lot of tents up, people living and camping along the area for muskrat hunting. People from Gamètì, like Phillip Zoe and his dad, the Gons, Qhdqzhì [I think this is Andrew Gon], all used that area. They had tents set up side by side, people were living there. It was like that in the past. Jimmy P. and his brother Joseph saw it when they were young, hunting for muskrats.



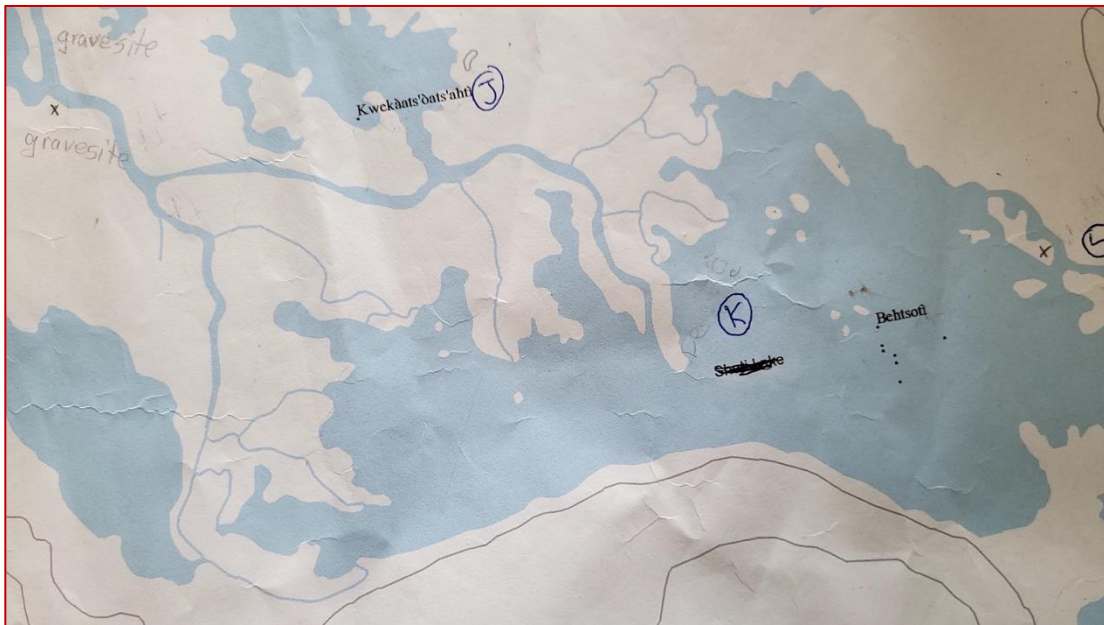
Joseph Mantla, Jimmy P. Mantla, Elders Jimmy and Marie Adele Rabesca, and Albertine Eyakfwo — morning coffee at Tł̥chq ndek'awo wekò

Map 2: from Behtsotì to ʔeneèkokw'q̓ whetq̓



Behtsotì / Behchotì³²

This lake is named after a person called Behcho who lived on a small island on this lake. This name means 'big knife'.



There are two burial sites on a small island on this lake. People camped in this location in spring and fall, meeting others and fishing. They may head out to the barren lands from here.

At Behtsotì [Shotì lake], there was an elderly couple living there [Homi Koyina]. When we got there, they were making lots of dry fish. They must have been preparing it to take with them in their travels. We overnighted there and that is where my dad set the net. The next day in the morning, after checking the nets my mom and my older sister would start making dry fish. If the fish dries a bit, then we would take off. We are also thinking about muskrat pelts, we would have to take off. In that area its mostly whitefish but sometimes they would catch one or two wiile [coney]. They would make dry fish from the coney. We were still very young so we didn't touch the fish. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

³² Official name of Behtsotì is Shotì Lake. Ibid

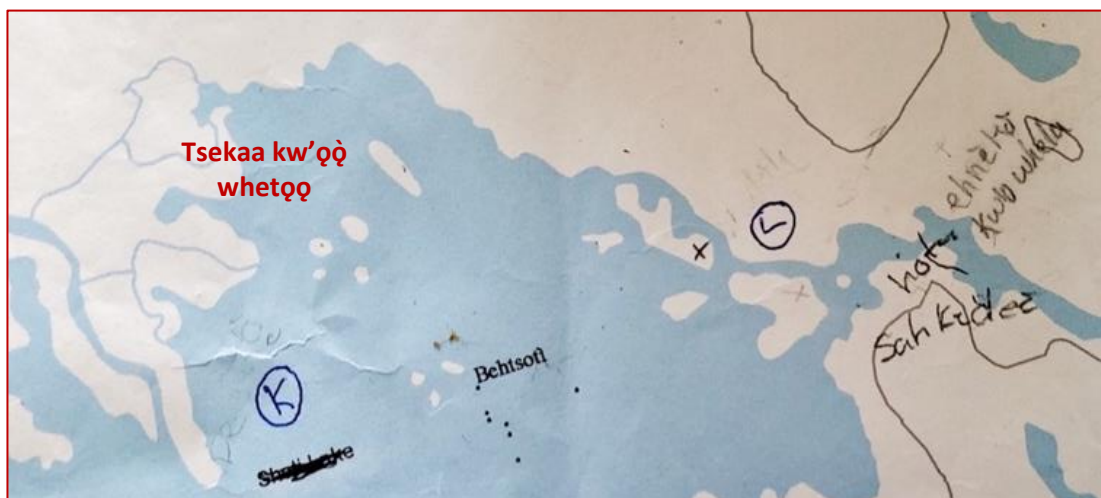


Alice Legat, Jonathan Black, and Larry Rabesca discussing research verification. Alice is showing them the maps marked by Whatì elders from the earlier stage of the project.



Further from that site [Dètaèᑦaa] is another place called Behtsotì. People stay here too, from there the river flows down and leads [to] a path. That is why people stay there, because it is a big island. There are two rivers flowing through there. People don't just pass through, they always overnight there or stop to rest. They say it is a good island, so they stay on it. The river flows a little way and then there is a portage. It is a short portage, and people work together, it is very good. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Tsekaa kw'òq whetq (baby's grave)



Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

The entrance to this area was extremely wet as you can see from cattails. Larry Rabesca and I went to document this grave site.



Entrance to Tsekaa kw'òq whetq (baby's grave)



Tsekaa kwo'qò whetqò (baby's grave)

Albertine continues ...

We're at Francis Gon's place and we see a scaffold cache and poles of tents that used to be set up. Elder Jimmy Rabesca said there were a lot of tents here before, this is where a lot of people spent their springtime. They canoed along the river to Xàèłł and back here. Francis Gon hunted and trapped for beaver, muskrat, and other fur-bearing animals here. People stopped here to rest or camp when travelling down the river.

The grasses are long and it is an open area. You can see empty camps when you go by boat. Jimmy P. Mantla mentions people who use that area, Francis, Edward and his brother Louie (Hagoyia). Jimmy P. Mantla could see from the boat a k'òò (willow) shaped in a circle, used for drying muskrat and beaver. Mary Adele mentioned that this camp had been here and used since the 1960s. The grass was overgrown, and the water was too shallow to go to the site.

Mary Adele asked Jimmy B. Rabesca (her husband) if he knew whose grave they were at. He said it must be from a family who used to stay here before they were born. Jimmy P. Mantla said it is Alphonse Wedawin's cabin.

Whq̣sìwekq̣q'è³³

Based on the structures, this campsite appears to have been used a lot.



Whq̣sìwekq̣q'è



Whq̣sìwekq̣q'è

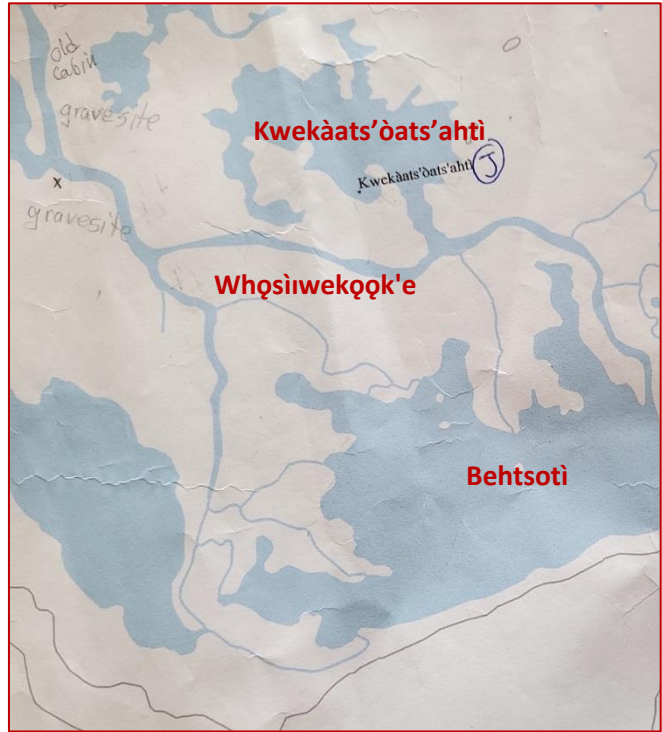
³³ Same Tł̥chq placename as Blackduck camp on Tìdee but very different setting.

Kwekàats'òats'ahti³⁴

Literal translation: rock-flat-?-side-lake.

ʔeneèkokw'q̄whelaa

An old camp where ʔeneèkokw'q̄whelaa (old man's grave) — upstream from Whq̄siwekq̄k'e. It does look like the original burial had only rocks on it, which may mean it was a burial before Catholicism.



Grave at ʔeneèkokw'q̄whelaa

³⁴ Ibid



ʔeneèkokw'q̄qwhelaa

Dqkw'qò whelaa

There are five or six graves at this site — upstream from ʔeneèkokw'qòwhelaa. One grave has a smaller rectangle inside. Perhaps a mother and child?



Dqkw'qò whelaa

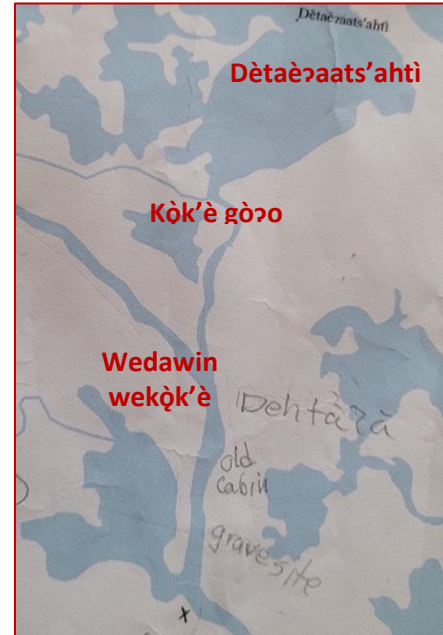
Dètaèṗaa

This is the name of a river that flows through rocks. Annie Black's son Joe, Yamàadi, was born here.³⁵

Wedawin Wekòk'è

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

Adele Wedawin lived here with her parents when she a young girl. They lived here because it was good fishing area. People often stopped as they passed on their way to one of the four communities. When discussing this area, the harvesters mentioned that Elizabeth and Phillip Chocolate also lived here.



Colby Grasco, Lisa Smith, and Richard Rabesca waiting to see staircase.

³⁵ Literal translation of Dètaèṗaa: land-amidst-it-extends. Ibid

Kòk'è gòᵛᵛ

An empty campsite with evidence of a building and artifacts.



Tobacco tin at Kòk'è gòᵛᵛ

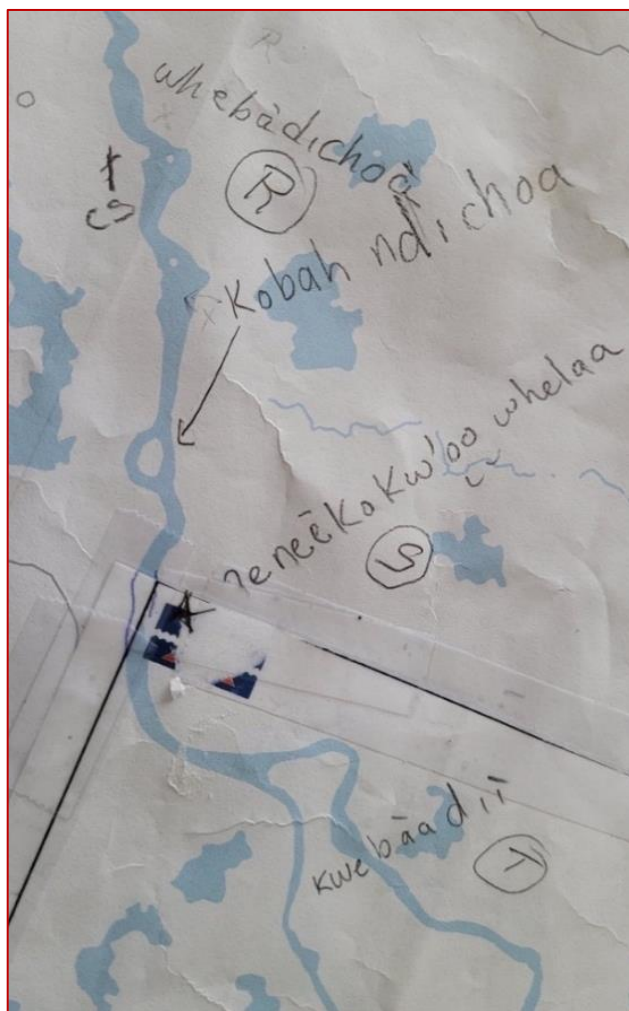
Dètaèᵛaats'ahti

ʔàl̥whqᵛtà wekò gòᵛᵛ. The house is on tahgà. There are over ten graves and once there were lots of houses here. Literal translation is land-amidst-it extends-side-lake.³⁶

³⁶ Ibid

Kwebàadii³⁷

This island is also pronounced Hobàadiì. The literal translation is rock-alongside-island.



³⁷ Ibid

ʔeneèkokw'q̣whelaa³⁸

Four elders are buried at this place.

Harry Mantla used to camp in this spot with his brother-in-law Gabriel Gon.

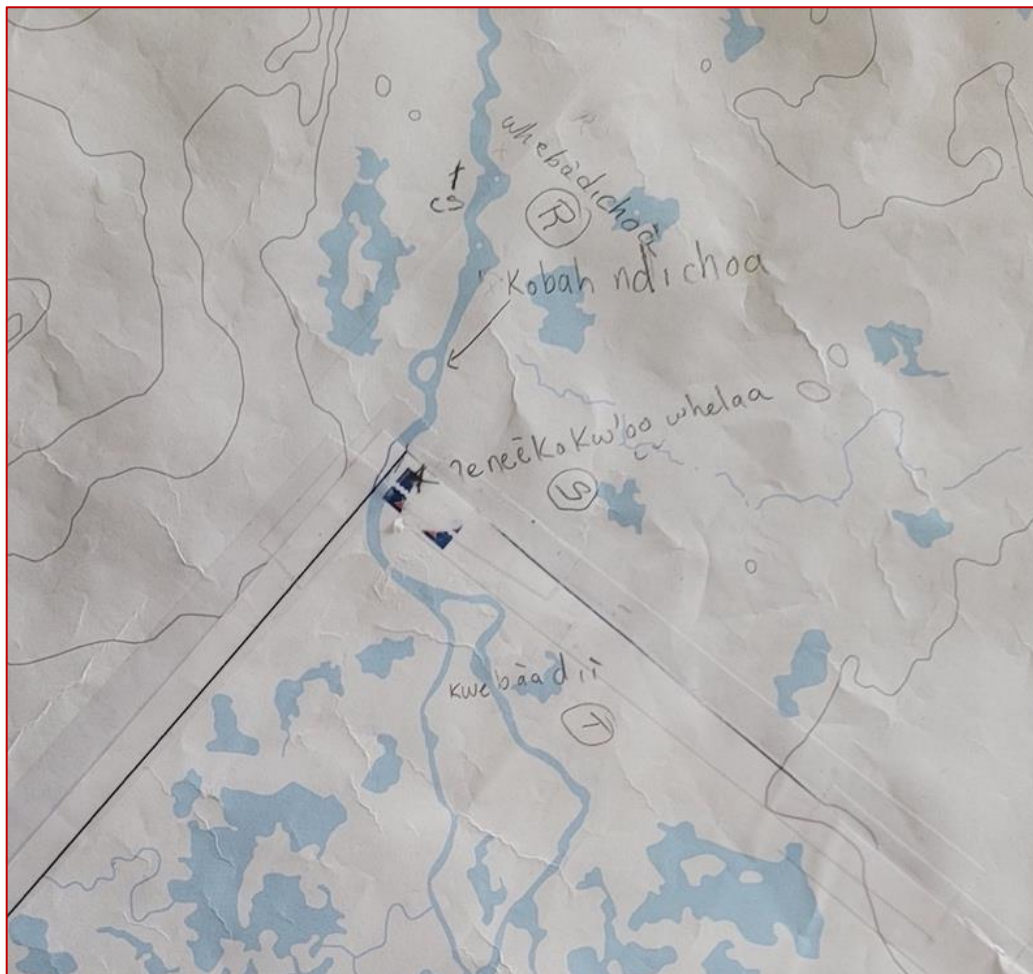


ʔeneèkokw'q̣whelaa

³⁸ Literal translation of ʔeneèkokw'q̣whelaa: old man-bones-there-are. Annie Black mentioned graves here. Ibid

Kobahndichoa (Hobahnditsoa)

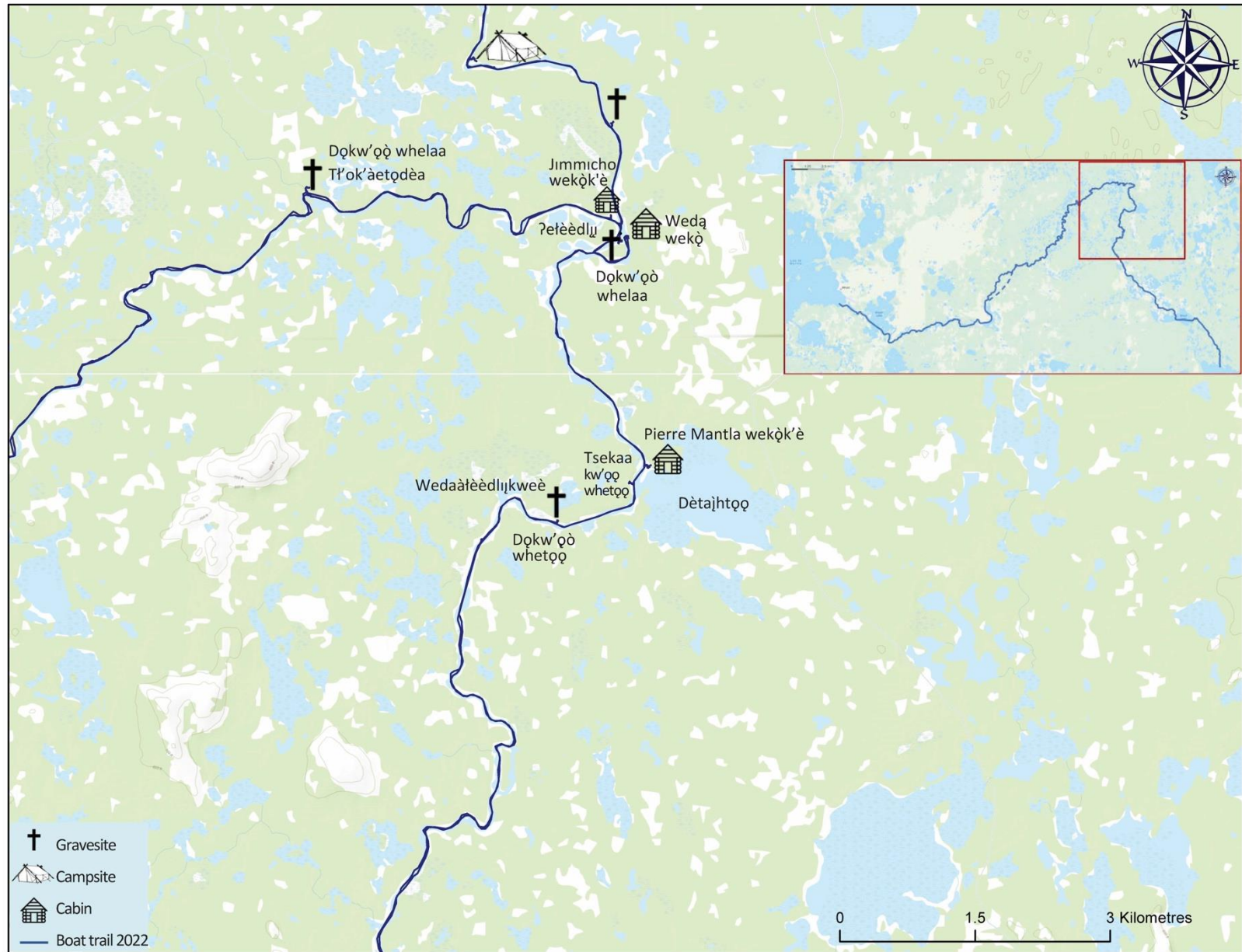
A small river runs from here to K'iwìhtitso³⁹ and Tsaekwootì⁴⁰.



³⁹ Literal translation of K'iwìhtitso: birch cluster-lake-big. Ibid

⁴⁰ Literal translation of Tsaekwootì: beaver-yellow-lake. Ibid

Map 3: from Dòkw'qò Whetqò to Tł'ok'àetqđèa



Dqkw'qò whetqò



In Detałhtqò area — Elders Jimmy and Mary Adele Rabesca and Jimmy P. Mantla praying at Tazho Wedawin's son's grave. First grave before cluster at Detałhtqò.



Albertine recording the prayer at Tazho Wedawin's son's grave.



Jonathon Black, William Drybones, and Joseph Mantla collecting spruce gum near Tazo Wedawin's son's grave

Wedaàlèèdl̥kweè⁴¹

A hill with nàhgq⁴² there.

⁴¹ Literal translation of Wedaàlèèdl̥kweè: it-?-each other-with-it-flows-rock. Ibid

⁴² Bushman

Tsekaakw'q̄ whetq̄

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

We're near Dètałhtq̄ (Tayonton Lake) at a child's grave. Jimmy P. and Joseph Mantla knew the location. It doesn't show from the river, but they knew from living at a cabin across from the gravesite. Jimmy P.'s dad and mom built that cabin. He doesn't know whose grave we're at, but his dad Pierre knew and hadn't told him.

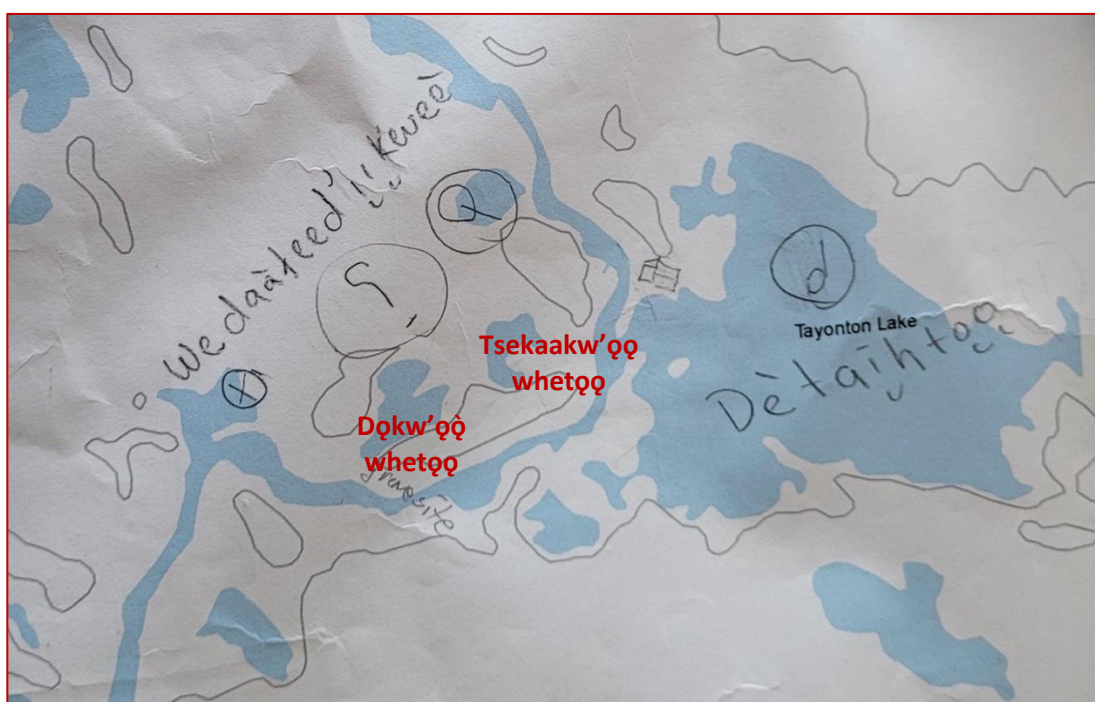
It is an overgrown area that hasn't been cleared for a long time. The fencing around the grave still looks good. It has been changed because you can see the old fencing beside the tree there. They cleared the way up to the grave, but people pass by because the grave doesn't show from the river. Standing at the site you can see the skidoo trail they used for trapping tehji (mink) and nòda (lynx). The trail led to the other side of the river, where we visit a grave.



Overgrown Tsekaakw'q̄ whetq̄ (child's grave)



Clearing graves is a sign of respect for the ancestors. Clearing Tsekaakw'q̄ whetq̄.
Jonathan Black (centre) and Larry Rabesca with chainsaw.



Dètałhtq⁴³

Dètałhtq is a lake off the east of the river and is a place where a lot of people camped, like a village. There were two houses; two old couples used to live there.

There are old burial sites here. Madòq said that his grandfather on his mother's side is buried near here. The river goes through the land, which gives the place its name.

At certain times of the year, people catch lots of wìle [coney] here. Marie Adele Rabesca's father and uncle went spring trapping with people from Dehcho while they left their family here.

For many years I have travel with grandfather during trapping season. That is how it was. Since then, way up along the riverbank and toward Dètałhtq, usually people lived around there. People also lived at Dètaèłaa⁴⁴ at times. We would stop and visit, if we have to spend the night with them then we do. People around there they do set net too. But as for the river channel, when it comes to late fall, which is September, they would catch wìle, ever lots of wìle [coney] there. During the fall when people travel along that area they said, couldn't keep the motor running because of so many coney, because of the numbers of coney the motor would kick it. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

When we leave ɤelèèdlł⁴⁵ and we go to Dètałhtq. Lots of people lived there too. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

The next area, further than that, it's kind of far, it is called Dètałhtq. There are cabins here. ... At Dètałhtq there are two houses. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

⁴³ Official name of Dètałhtq is Tayonton Lake. Literal translation: land amidst-(water) sits in a contained space. This is the name of a ɤets'ahtì / ɤech'ahtì, a side lake off another lake. Ibid

⁴⁴ Dètaèłaa is the name of a river that flows through rocks. Literal translation: land-amidst-it extends. Annie Blacks' son Joe, Yamàadłł, was born here. Ibid

⁴⁵ Literal translation of ɤelèèdlł: each other-with-it flows. At this place four waterways meet, going to Tsòtideè, K'eàgotì, Hozìideè, and Hàèłł. A fuller designation is Tsòtideè ɤelèèdlł. Three graves are on an island at this place: two babies and a son of Annie Black. Ibid

After that [living for some time at Whataèłł] we traveled past a gravesite, from there we made our way back through Dètałhtq̓. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

Louis Wedawin's mum's grave is here.



Louis Wedawin's mum's grave at Dètałhtq̓

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

The next morning (September 2, 2022) we visited several graves and camping places, starting with Louis Wedawin's mum's grave. It has been well cared for with a new fence and the old one leaning against the tree with a cross carved into it. Marie Adele and Jimmy Rabesca prayed over grave.

And within walking distance two more. Inside one is a small rectangle, indicating there may be another child's grave. The Mantla brothers thought that perhaps Narcisse Bishop might know who the two are that are buried.



Dqkw'qò whelaa (graves) at Dètajhtq

Pierre Mantla Wekòk'è

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

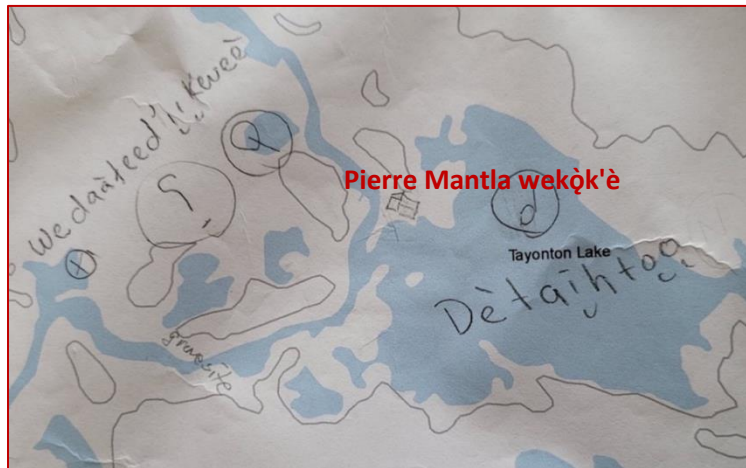
We visited Jimmy P. and Joseph Mantla's dad's cabin. Behind it, further up, there is an old cabin with three canoes in it. The roof is missing; an outhouse is still standing on the side of the cabin. A lot of families lived there and had tents up. Bruno Apple, Bòlowì (Robert Mackenzie), Marie Adele's auntie's grandma, Philip Apple, and Marie Adele Apple used to live there with her parents. There were seven tents up at that time.

There's a lot of thorn bushes. At one time there were raspberries. Marie Adele Rabesca mentions that they used to go berry picking for cranberries with the older ladies. Marie Adele sings a love song from when she was young and single, living at that place. She points to a spot where Bruno Apple's tent was. It looks grassier now. They used to set nets there too. The land across from the cabin used to look grassier, and the area was wider. Now it's narrower.

Jimmy P. Mantla said they used to live in a tent on the spot Marie Adele was talking about. There is a willow standing in the middle of the land below the point where they have their cabin now. Right across from there they harvested wood to build the cabin. It took twelve logs for each side to make the walls.

Jimmy P., his mom and dad, and his brothers Joseph and Harry canoed from Behchokò to Dètàìhtqò with a canvas boat. It was in October; they had dogs with them too. After visitors from Whatì came by and had some tea, they canoed toward Behchokò. In the evening they were in their tent and the dogs started barking, meaning something was happening around them. When it got dark the dogs started barking again, which meant something was getting closer.

From where their first cabin is to where they had their tent beside the willow, something was thrown at them, and they heard a big thud. The next morning, they looked behind the tent there was a big chunk of mud. Whatever threw that mud must have been big, to throw it that far. They went out



with their guns and started shooting in that direction. They heard willow (kò) branches breaking like something was running off, but they didn't see anything because it was dark. This incident only happened once with their family. Incidents like this happen in that area but people don't see it. Dogs know because they can smell and hear if there's danger from nàhgā (bushman) or dò (people from a different tribe).

Joseph Mantla said that the house we see with the roof caving in is the first cabin his dad built. They left three canoes in there before, so we all went up there to see if they were still there.

Jimmy P. Mantla sees the winter road and describes it leading to Behchokò.

Jimmy P. Mantla said his dad, Wehtseeta, Henry Gon's dad, Harry Simpson, and a lot of people used this area. It's overgrown now. One time Jimmy P. Mantla, Jason Koyina, and Joe Tinquì sat on the roof of the cabin using binoculars to look out for moose. They saw one and paddled to it. It was a wounded moose and swimming.



Pierre Mantla wekòk'è. Jimmy P. Mantla with his father's saw. Elder Marie Adele stayed in this house as a young woman when on holidays from hospital in Behchokò.



Albertine Eyakfwo, Allice Legat, Joseph Mantla, and William Drybones with canoes at Pierre Mantla wekòk'è.



Trapping equipment in Pierre Mantla's shed.



Joseph Mantla explaining muskrat trap to Alice, with Larry Rabesca and William Drybones looking on. Lisa Smith and Albertine Eyakfwo outside.



Many people from Whatì, Behchokq, and Gamètì camped in this field when Jimmy P. and Joseph Mantla were young. There were often over 50 dogs.

Tsòtìdeè ʔełèèdlł⁴⁶

This is a more complete name for ʔełèèdlł, where four waterways meet: Tsòtìdeè, K'eàgotì, Hozìideè, and Hàèłł (mouth of Gòlotìdeè). Three graves are on an island at this place: two babies and a son of Annie Black. There is an old cabin at this place.

On the winter road when you come to a little lake and there is an old cabin, that the place called ʔełèèdlł. Just coming up to the area can you see, that was Narcisse' dad's cabin which is call ʔełèèdlł. It's not showing on the map. That cabin and next to it is big Philip's dad's cabin Zerin and also the other person. Not too long from there, the old man's grave, where we came by to camp. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)

⁴⁶ Literal translation of ʔełèèdlł: each-other-with-it-flows. Ibid



Lots of people lived at ʔetèèdlł for the purpose of gathering fish. You would see the fish cache hanging on the stage cache everywhere, I remember seeing this. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

Further down is the trail to ʔetèèdlł. ... At ʔetèèdlł there is one old cabin still standing. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

We stop at K'iwitàèłł⁴⁷, the river that leads to Gamètì. We are on the rock; we see an old sled part of wood and the frame of a canvas boat. Jimmy P., Joseph, William, Johnathan, and Larry are walking around the site to see where empty camps are. Jimmy P. finds an old barrel that they use to make fire in. Wehtsèet'aa is Marie Rabesca's dad. Larry Rabesca's grandma, Nigola, Habeyia Gon, William Tatsia, and Charlie Tatsia's family lived here too. Larry remembers that one time they shot a caribou there. They lived in this area in 1976.

William Drybones remembers who lived here, Joe Zoe and his wife, himself (William), and Mary Adele Wetrade hunted for muskrat in this area. Wehtsèet'aa, Habeyia, and K'àlea they left alone. Dele and her husband, William, and the adopted kid from the Mackenzie family, he doesn't know his name. There were four tents of families here. They stayed here from May to June for the muskrat and beaver season.

⁴⁷ Literal translation of K'iwitàèłł: birch cluster-among-it-flows. Ibid

I mention to William that there's beautiful trees that are tall. He said it wasn't like that, it all grew. They used to keep the area clean, the brush cut. You can see the big rocks on the other side, across from the spot where they lived, and before you could see the shore by the river; now it's overgrown. The water level was high, not low like now. They used to go upriver toward the barren lands too.



Enjoying a break at K'iwitàèłł.

Dqkw'qò whelaa



A group of graves associated with the camp where William Drybones spent his childhood. Jimmy P. Mantla, Jonathan Black, and Allice Legat.

Wedà Wekò

The research team stayed for two nights at Wedà wekò (Victor Huskey cabin). Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

Elders and Harvesters shared stories of their life along Tsòtideè and Gòlotideè. Jimmy P. Mantla joked, “If I tell stories again it’s going to take all night. After William talks, I can finish the last story.” Joseph said, “We might not even sleep all night,” and everyone laughed.

Larry heard a story from Nigola. When Wedà’s dad canoed somewhere, he left him alone at the camp. Joseph interrupted and said it was on tia (small lake, pond, puddle). Wedà canoed somewhere, came back to where they camped and told his dad that he killed three nàhgà (bushman). He took his dad to the place it happened, and they had him taste their blood. If he didn’t do that, he was going to imitate them when he got older.

When Larry heard the story from Nigola, about Wedà’s dad canoeing somewhere and coming back, he said Wedà was at the camp alone, fixing beaver or muskrat. Two nàhgà (bushmen) approached him and he killed them, threw their bodies in the lake and threw spruce boughs on them. Nigola asked him if he drank their blood. Wedà said no, until today he kind of acts like them. Larry is not sure if the story goes that way but said to know the truth, we have to ask Nigola. He knows the story because he used to go out on Tsòtideè with Wedà and must have told him that story.

...

One time, Jimmy P., Joseph, Harry (Nàhgà) and their brother Harry Mantla went hunting. They were walking along the long lake carrying packsacks and a canoe. There were no trails to follow. Harry (Nàhgà) got lost on the way. Once they put their stuff down and noticed he was gone, they started yelling his name. They all got scared and started shooting their guns to let him know where they were. They heard his gunshot way at the end of lake, so they found each other. Harry (Nàhgà) looked scared and startled. They all carefully watched each other after that. They got back to the river and saw a lot of people around the lakes and river. People from Gamètì and Whatì stopped by people’s camps to have tea, coffee and to rest from their trips. They used to stop by Gahts’ia wekò, across Wedà (Victor Huskey’s) cabin to rest and have tea.



Colby Gascon watching for bears around Wedą wekò at ʔetèèdelł.

Jimmicho wekòk'è



Jimmy P. Mantla telling Aliche Legat about one of several structures at Jimmicho wekòk'è.

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

The next stop we made was at Jimmicho Tatsia's camp. You can see it from Weda (Victor Huskey's cabin). That place is called ʔełèèdlł, where four waterways meet. Anyone from Behchokò, Whatì, and Gamètì who passed by in the past would stop here to rest or eat. The cabin is caved in and has a small shack beside it with no roof. The grasses are long. It needs brush-cutting for anyone who wants to see the cabin or stop by. It's a beautiful place to have a cabin.

People from Whatì, Gamètì, and Behchokò all stopped at Jimmicho's place. The nails in the house are from Rayrock mine.

This place is across from Weda (Victor Huskey's) cabin, the third cabin we stayed at. Across from here you can see one grave and from there two more are within walking distance.

Joseph Mantla said it's a whaèhdqò grave (old timer; people long ago). He doesn't know whose, it's from before him. Even the elders with us don't know. There are two more graves walking distance from that one. Beside the whaèhdqò grave, there's a big tree that they take spruce gum from. It's shaped like a cross, showing people, go there to visit the graves and harvest spruce gum. We took pictures of it and noted the GPS location.

Johnathan Black said this grave is Suzan's dad Louie Wedawin's mother. That is the first grave we visited across from Victor Huskey's cabin. I remember Johnathan mentioned that when we were passing it going to the cabin.

Jimmy P. Mantla said that Tazho Wedawin (possible English name is Albert Wedawin), from Behchokò, is a family member too. They use the area up the Tsòtideè for hunting and trapping.

Maybe the two graves belong to the people who lived across from here, the Nigola ts'ia family. That's what Jimmy P. thinks. They used to live across from here when they were young. Nigola ts'ia's cabin was new and they lived close by the graves.

I asked, "what is Nigola ts'ia's last name?" and Larry Rabesca said he's from Whatì and lives at Meander River. His last name is Nitsiza.

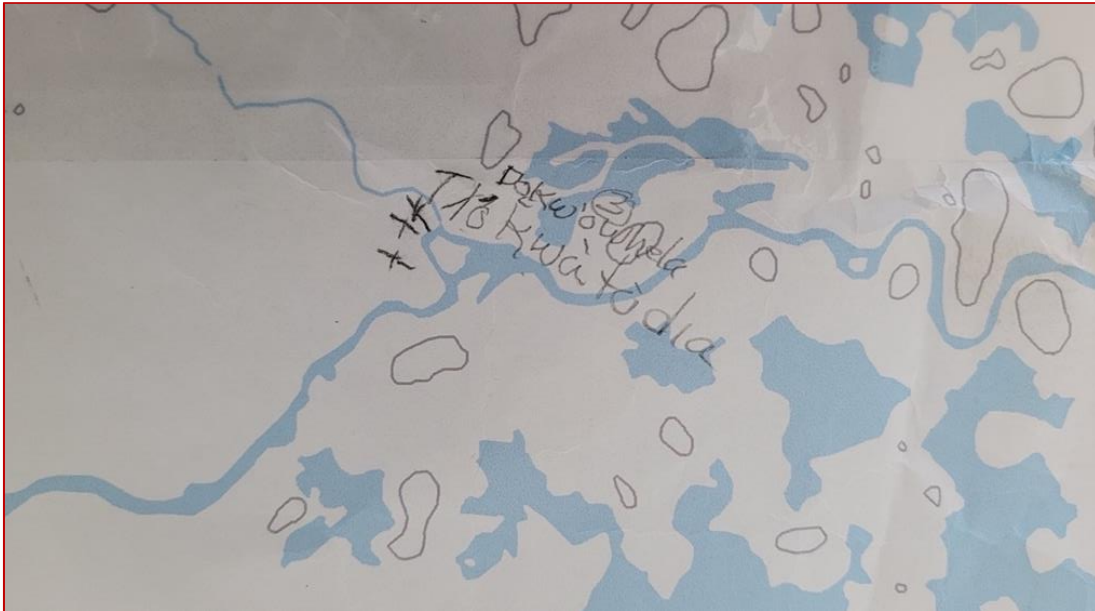
There's discussion between the three guys, Jimmy P., Joseph, and Larry. They are helping each other remember the parents' name in Whatì. Jimmy P. is saying, Dele's husband's father, he's seen him before but can't remember his name. Tatsia was his name, no it is Philia Nechà's (be big; be large) dad. William Taxi's (Tatzia) dad, Philia Nechà's (be big; be large) dad.

Tł'ok'àetqdèa⁴⁸

This waterway flows from Sahtì (Bear Lake area) into Tsòtìdeè.

The place called Tł'ok'àetqdèa, the rivers meet each other here. ... If it is a small group of people then they stay on the island, if they are travelling long or if they are out muskrat hunting, they would stay here. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

There is a gravesite of an elderly man at Tł'ok'àetqdèa. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)



⁴⁸ Literal translation of Tł'ok'àetqdèa: foxtail grass-trail river. *Tłchq Placenames – Indicators of Knowing Mqwhì Gogha Dè Nłłtłèè*, Saxon et al, 2024.

Map 4: from Behkok'atà to Denèèt'oohteeè



Bikoo Kwe (Dancing Rock)

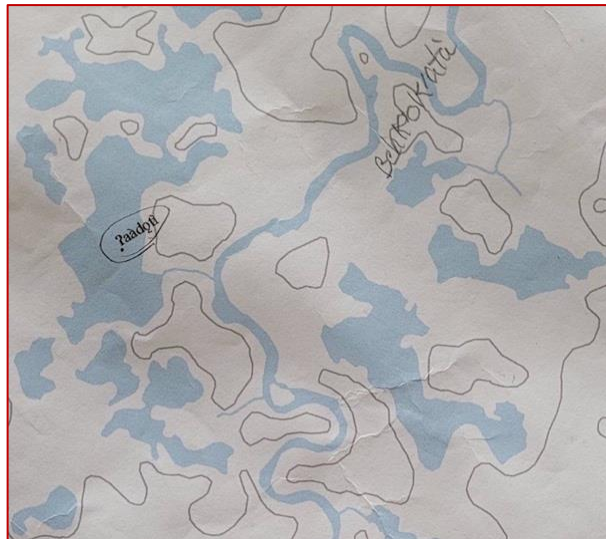
John B. Zoe said he heard from Elder Noel Drybones that it's called Bikoo Kwe after a man, from when that man came to the first real granite rock after leaving Whatì and he was so excited that he danced. It was a long time ago.⁴⁹



Lunch on Bikoo Kwe

ʔààdqtì

This is a small, grassy lake northwest of the river. The name is old and it is not known what it refers to. John B. Zoe suggested the older name for the area is ʔet'aàgot'ì.⁵⁰



⁴⁹ Personal communication, 2023.12.06

⁵⁰ Personal communication with Aalice Legat, 2022.

Whataèłł⁵¹

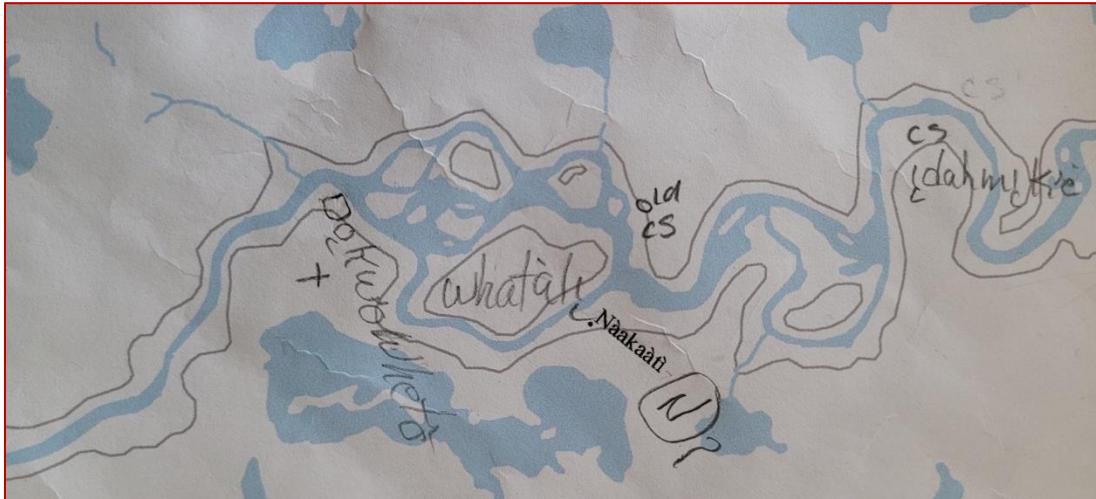
Whataèłł is an island on the lake Nàakaàtì⁵². This is a very good fishing place where the water flows through a lot of islands.

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

This is toward Hozìdeè. The side of Nàakaàtì is called Kwełnk'eè. They canoed all the river in that area for muskrat and beaver. They canoed a long distance for it.

Whataèłł is a place where a lot of people camped, especially in the fall. They made a village of tents and caught lots of wille (coney). They also caught ts'éł'łq (Arctic grayling) here, usually saving and drying them to feed to the dogs.

There are many graves and burial sites in this area. For example, this is the burial site of Bahgà, Philip Nitsiza's dad's younger brother.⁵³



Men often camp in association with the island for about a month to trap for muskrats and beaver.

⁵¹ Literal translation of Whataèłł: sand-amidst-it-flows. Ibid

⁵² Literal translation of Nàakaàtì: northern lights-lake. Official name of Nàakaàtì is Labrish Lake. This lake always has open water and a sled trail goes alongside it. Ibid

⁵³ Ibid

In the springtime, at Whataèłł that was where I was born. When I was capable to do things, I went twice with my dad trapping for muskrats towards Nàłłtì. We paddled as we sat in a canoe looking for muskrats. (Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

We would then set up camp at Whataèłł. Our family had a tent and Robert Mackenzie had a tent and his father too and my uncle too. In the morning he would check the nets. During that time at Whataèłł there was wìle [coney]. We would catch many fish, for us and the dogs. The men would go for spring hunt, they did this because of the cost of muskrat fur. After living there for some time my dad said we had to move on again. ...

Again, we go to Whataèłł like we do always. We live there in three tents, my parents, and Paul Mackenzie with his dad, and also Seṽcha, that a person's name. In the morning they would go to catch net without us. ... Whataèłł is a good place for fishing. There we catch wìle [coney] and many good fish out there. Because of muskrat season they leave us and go to do their chore. Whoever comes back from hunting muskrat will do, for they leave early in the morning and some return in the evening. Once we camp and live there for some time. My dad said we have to leave now, so we pack and leave. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

They would also set nets at Whataèłł, they would catch plenty of wìle [coney] when they set nets there. They would also catch ts'ét'jq [Arctic grayling]. Even if it wasn't big, they would still save it to feed the dogs. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

If you keep travelling down the river you will see that lots of people lived at Whataèłł. I remember living there too. I set a net close to the island and we caught lots of fish there. In the fall time when people go to town [Behchokq̃]. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

Over the waterfall portage is Whataèłł. After that there is a short portage, the current is very strong, the rapids are strong that flow against the rocks. They said we aren't going through a rough time travelling through the rapids so they would carry the canoes on the land. It is a short way, so we won't be spending, even if it was a short distance, we still worked on it, we won't be sleeping there. Travel is good. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Once me and my grandpa carry the boat on to the other side towards Whataèłł where the river runs and that's where we camp because we trap for muskrats and beaver. We live on the island for almost a month and have gone one island to the next by paddling. My grandfather had a short net with him. If

he wants fish, he would set a net, he catches whitefish, wìle [coney], dehdoò [longnose sucker] that what they catch, also kwìezhìi [white sucker]. As for ł̓wezqò (lake trout), there nothing. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

At Whataèłł we catch wìle [coney]. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

Dqkw'qò whelaa



Dqkw'qò whelaa (grave) above a bear den. The last grave documented before Denèè'too.

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

When Larry, his mom Elizabeth, and Narcisse Bishop stopped by this grave when they were travelling by boat to Behchokò, Larry remembers Narcisse saying that it was his family's or his brother's; he's not really sure but we should ask Narcisse. There are two graves at the location we stopped at.



Denèèt'oo / Denèèt'oohoteè

... when we head out, we go to Denèèt'oo. It is a short way on the land. After that there is a portage [Denèèt'oohoteè] that is five kilometres long. All the elders have walked through there, they loved being out on the land. They love to walk on the land, they were thankful, and they would thank God for another chance to walk / work on the land.

The portages were long, but they never seemed to mind the long distances. ... Over the waterfall portage is Whataèłł. After that there is a short portage. The current is very strong, the rapids are strong that flow against the rocks. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Finally, we gathered and that is where we camped at Denèèt'oo. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

As noted on Map 4, the verification team ended their trip at Denèèt'oo.



Denèèt'oo – a place where rapids begin, downstream of Nàłł (Whatì Falls)

Map 5: from Nàłłts'oa to Whatì



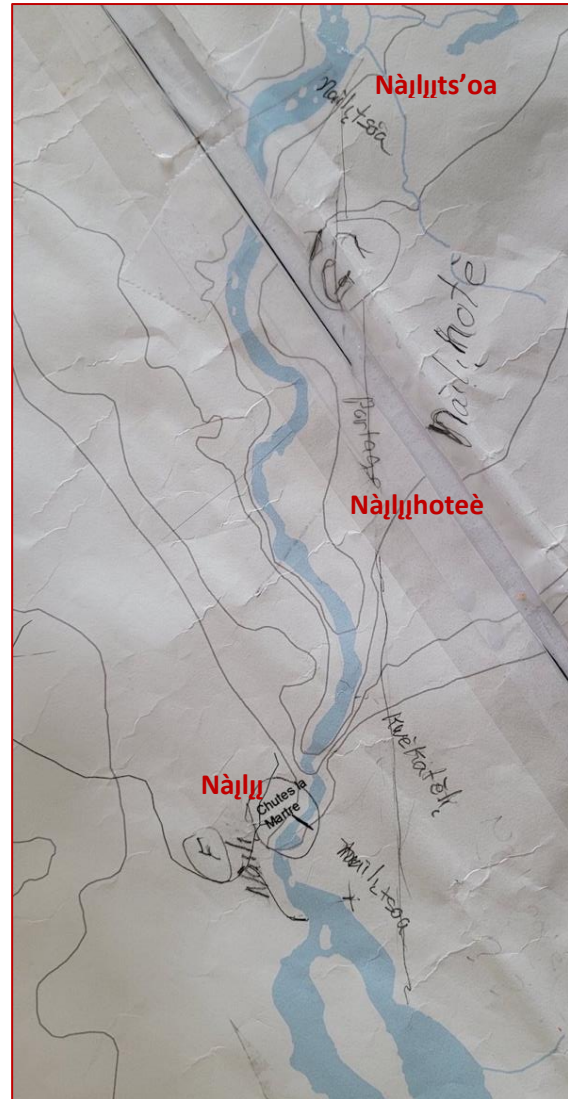
Nàłłhoteè⁵⁴

This is the portage around Nàłł. It is about four to five miles long. Nàłłts'oa is the downstream end of the portage.

Nàłł⁵⁵

Nàłł is a huge waterfalls on the river. Elder Jimmy Rabesca describes the falls.

The falls its very high, the falls will be about that high and you could hear the sound from falls, it sounded like this yeah, yeah. And there are two islands apart from one another and there is another island bigger and set between the two small islands. And just above that the water it's like this (waving hands) and the fish would swim into the water through the falls and when they dive toward the rough fall and it hit a rock they die, probably hitting against a rock hard and die. The waterfall makes a great noise almost like thundering yet the fish gets into it. Besides that, where there are ponds, there is fish. (Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 02 November 2020)



⁵⁴ Literal translation of Nàłłhoteè: down-it-flows portage. Ibid

⁵⁵ Literal translation of Nàłł: down-it-flows. Ibid



Tsòtideè downstream of Nàłıı. Credit Chloe Williams, Cabin Radio.



Nàłıı / Whatì falls. Credit Mark Poskitt, Cabin Radio



Tsòtìdeè just upstream of Nàłłtì. Credit Chloe Williams, Cabin Radio

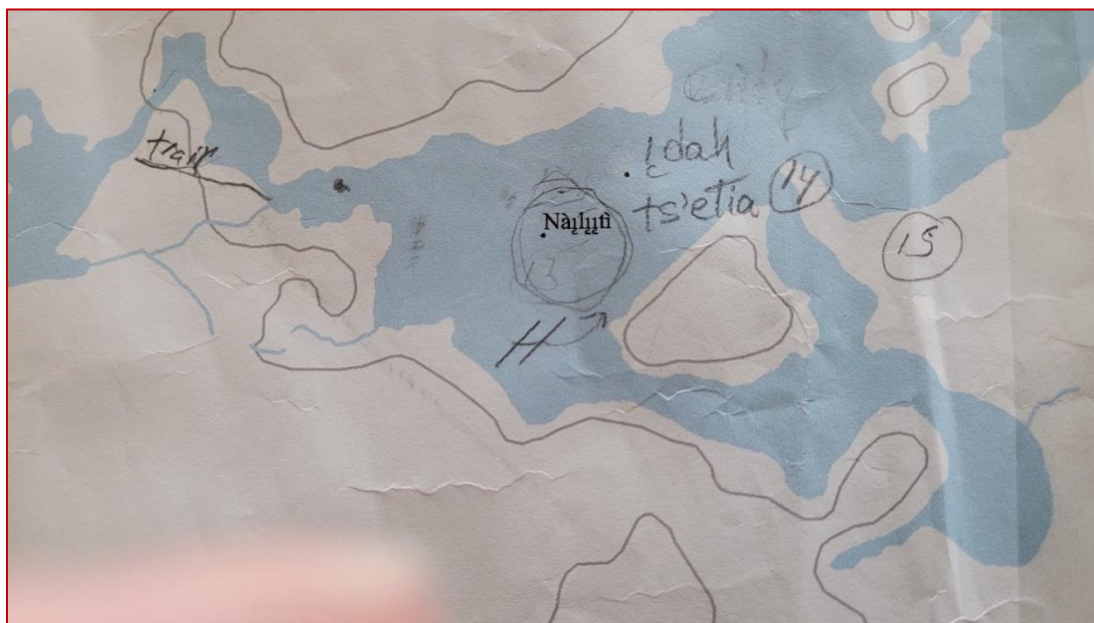
Nàłłtì⁵⁶

Around Nàłłtì — the lake upstream of the falls — people got dehdoò (longnose sucker, kwìezhì [white sucker]), łh (whitefish), but rarely łwezqò (trout).

So, from here to down the river there are dehdoò [longnose sucker] and łh, but around Nàłłtì there are kwìezhì [white sucker] and they catch those. (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza)

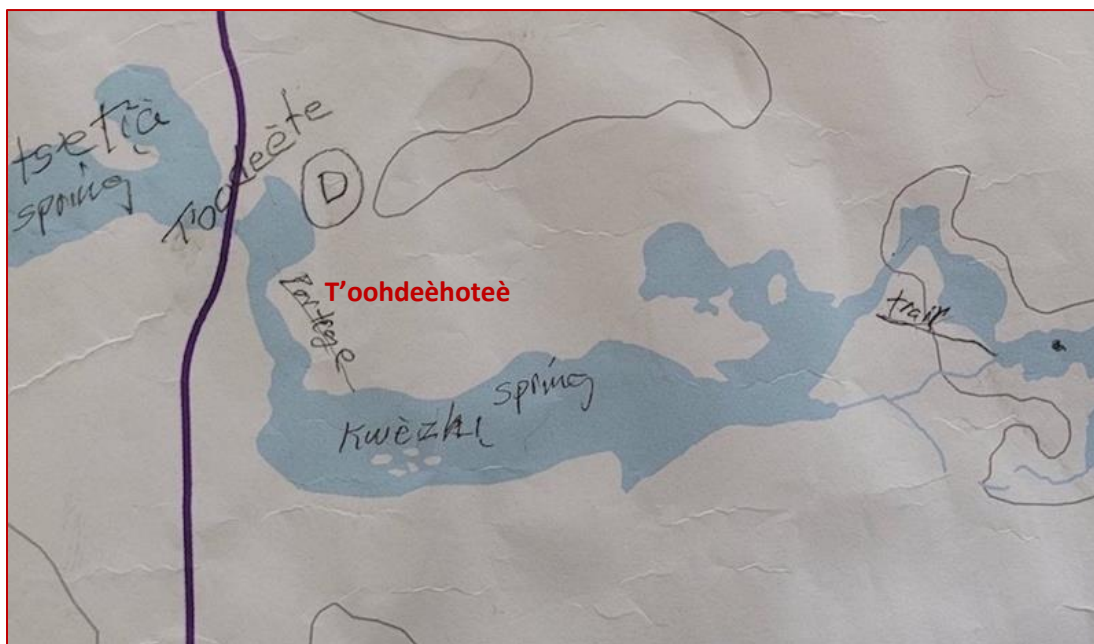
Further down people lived at Nàłłtì, when they set their net there, they get lots of fish, they catch dehdoò [longnose sucker], kwìezhì [white sucker], whitefish, all kinds of fish mixed, but you don't rarely see a łwezqò (lake trout) on the river. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

⁵⁶ Literal translation of Nàłłtì: down-it-flows lake. Ibid



T'ooheè / T'ooheèhoteè⁵⁷

T'ooheè is a good place to catch ts'et'ia (Arctic grayling). And just below the falls there is wile (coney) and dehdo (longnose sucker). Nets were set in the spring and fall. They also catch kwèzhì (white sucker) in spring.



⁵⁷ Literal translation of T'ooheè / T'ooheèhoteè: poplar river / poplar river portage. Ibid

T'ooheèhoteè, they catch ts'ét'jq [Arctic grayling]. I know sometimes people would set nets for that fish; I know this. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020).

... after catching so many fish [at ʔet'òtì] they would travel out. They would then travel to this specific curve just before T'ooheèhoteè this is where we would stay. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

This is what they did, the people would live there, and they would travel to T'ooheète, near that area is a good place to catch graylings [ts'ét'jq]. There is also wiile [coney], and they have big dehdoos [longnose sucker]. I remember we would set nets there. In the spring and fall months we would set nets there. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

And from Nàłł and T'ooheète, there are many ɬhdaa [jackfish] too. ... And past T'ooheète where the river runs through the rocks, there are ts'ét'jq [Arctic grayling]. There are lots of those fish. ... There are many ts'ét'jq. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

Some elders talk about pulling the canoes/boats along the rapids as the others walk the portages.

This is T'ooheè, way up to this end at times we would spend the night. Then we go on the portage and men would pull the canoe along the river by the rope. And we carry our bags on our back over the portage. Then when we come to where the water is not deep and there are rapids. That is why we walk on our feet to the other side. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)

... only by paddling they go to Behchokò and sometimes go through the rough water. At times they tie a rope to the canoe and let the canoe go through the rough water. And the upper of their moccasin would go under their feet. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

ʔet'ootì

While reviewing the placenames and information given in this report, Elder Marie Adele Rabesca discussed whether ʔet'ootì was called 'poplar lake' or 'nesting area lake' with her husband, Elder Jimmy Rabesca. Jimmy was adamant that it referred to the 'green birch' as in poplar.

ʔet'ootì is a lake in a river flowing into an almost-lake. There are poplars on both sides.⁵⁸

People used to camp at ʔet'ootì since when it is like this when it is springtime, the fish go down there until up to Nàłłtì when it is fall `time, people come this way again, the fish goes to the big lake when it gets warm during the summertime. The fish leaves when it gets cold like fall time, that is the situation of the fish. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)

My father would set a net at ʔet'ootì, my dad said around that time [time for muskrat] there would be fish in the area. From there they would set nets at ʔet'ootì. After catching a lot of fish, they would travel out. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

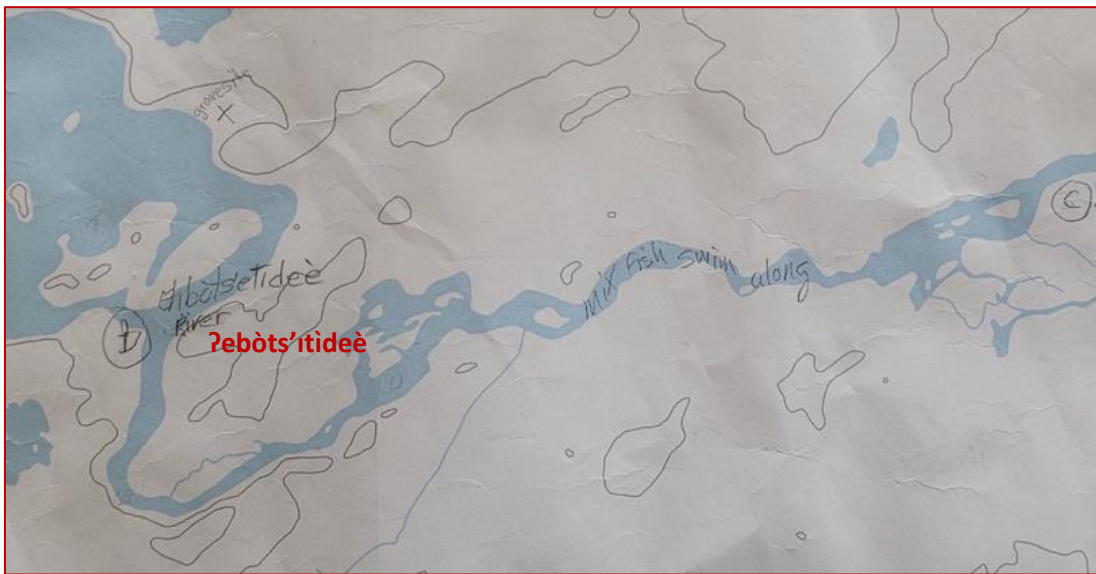


⁵⁸ Literal translation of ʔet'ootì: 'ʔ-poplar-lake'. Ibid

ʔebòts'itideè

This is the name of a curve in the river where there is a strong current just downstream of the outlet from ʔebòts'itì. There are łh (whitefish) in this area in the spring. People put up tents all along this lake-river because there were lots of łhdaa [jackfish]. Further downstream there is a mix of fish.

*... also during spring time Madeline Champlain would go out there to harvest the fish and also remember where we camp out there for dry fish making.
(Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)*



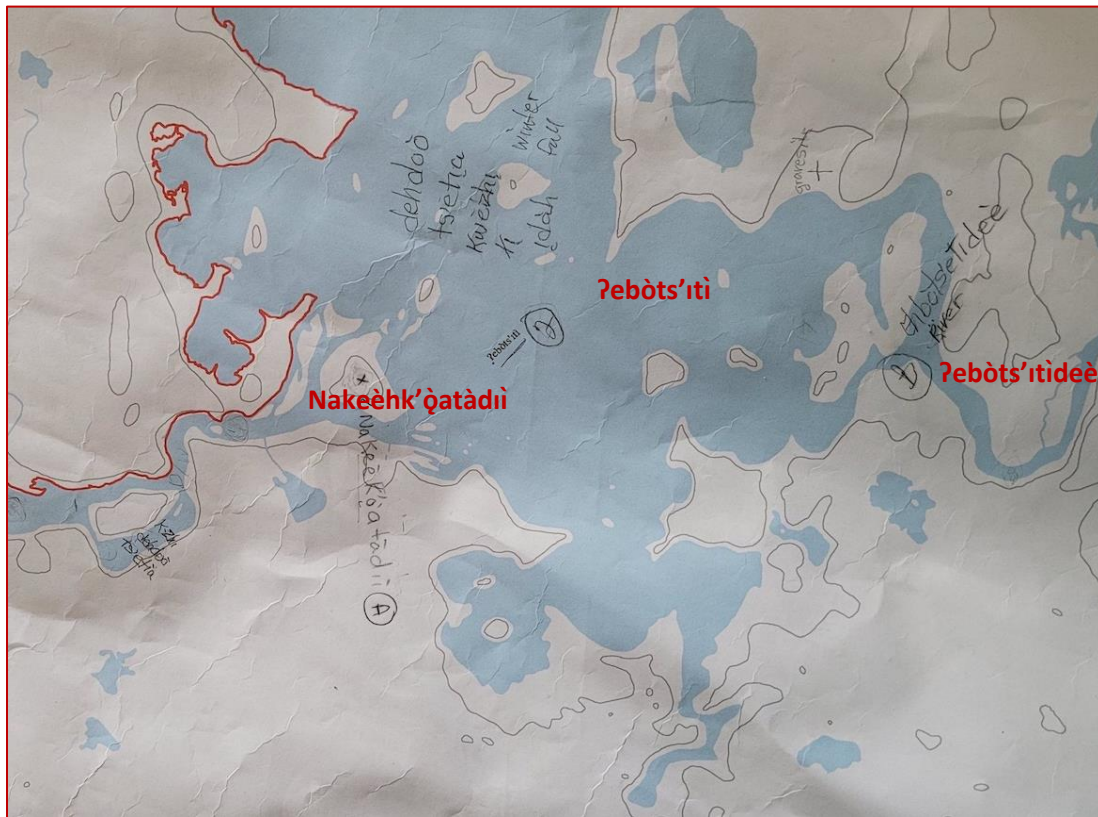
ʔebòts'itì⁵⁹

According to Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, ʔebòts'itì is the first place to open in the spring. It is where people would set their nets as soon as ice goes in the spring.

From Whatì, I remember living at ʔebòts'itì many times when I was young. People lived on fish, there was good łh [white fish], kwìezhìi [white sucker], nqhkweè [loche] there are all types of fish in that water. In the springtime people gather fish at ʔebòts'itì and they make dry fish. ... people lived all along there, so many tents set up everywhere. There were big łhdaa [jackfish] and

⁵⁹ Official name for ʔebòts'itì is Boyer Lake. Ibid

lots of it too, they would save this for the dogs, I saw all of this. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)



Two old women are buried at the southeast end of ʔebòts'itì: Mqwhì wemq and Elder Jimmy Rabesca's grandmother.⁶⁰

If it was time for muskrat, we would go here, we would go to ʔebòts'iti to set nets for fish. We would make about 10 dry fish and continue on. ... We would set nets where we knew fish would be. We set nets at ʔebòts'iti, finally that's when we would get fish. ... We caught jackfish, we would cut it just like dry fish and we would eat it in the morning. Then we would check our net again in the morning. In the morning we would return back to the community and bring our family fish. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

⁶⁰ Ibid

People always shared their food, including fish.

... from along the river to ʔebòts'itì in the fall, people would collect fish, because in the fall there are many fish. When we have dogs, we set couple of nets and after checking the nets and when we catch a lot, we bring the fish back with us to Whatì. After bringing in the fish by canoe, we put all the fish by the shore where there is a pole rack and make stick fish. This is what we do for our dogs for winter. ...



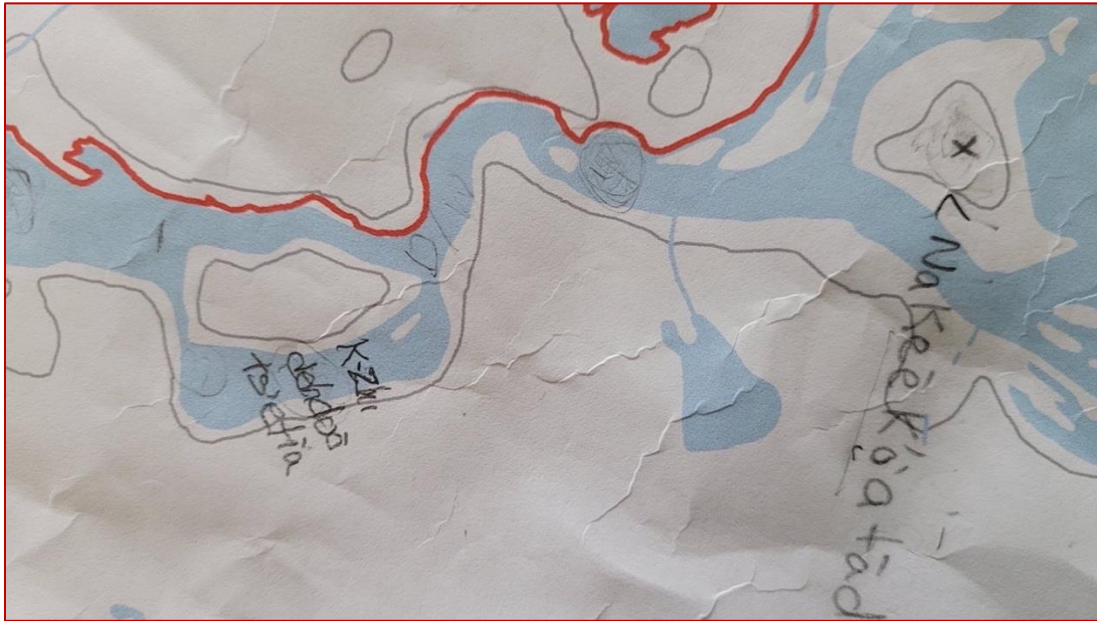
Stick fish. Photo credit: *Common Fish in the Tł̥chq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tł̥chq Government, 2016

... from Tł̥òtì the fish comes back this way [Whatì]. ʔeht'ètì⁶¹ is a big lake and looks like a riverbank and has a lot of dahdègahʔò [floating land] and that is where once the fish gather together, they would live there in the winter and when spring comes, they would return, that's when lot of fish comes around ʔebòts'itì. ... That is how my grandfather shared the story with me. (Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

⁶¹ Official name is James Lake. Literal translation: mud-lake. It is very shallow and there are lots of fish. Ibid

Nakeèhk'òatàdì

Nakeèhk'òatàdì is an island at the opening of the lake known as ʔebòts'itì. This lake has several islands and Nakeèhk'òatàdì is the biggest — and the main place where people stayed. The island is named after Nakeèhk'òà, who lived there. He was from Fort Simpson.⁶²



In winter and fall people camped there and fished for dehdoo (longnose sucker), ts'ét'ł̥q (Arctic grayling), kwìezhì (white sucker), ł̥h (whitefish), and ł̥hdaa (jackfish).

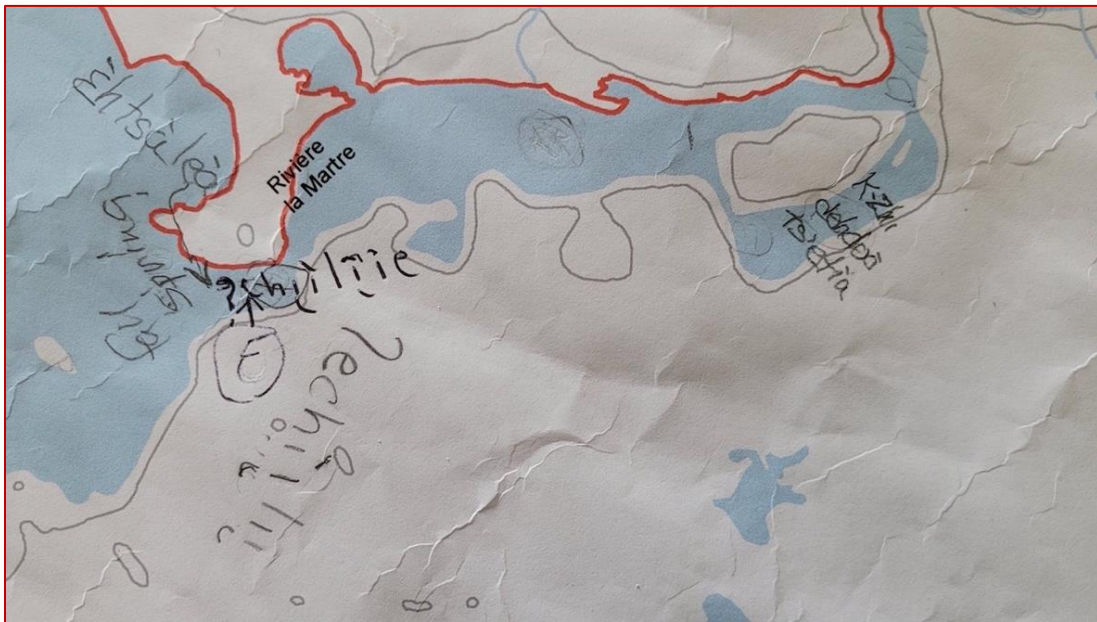
... can you see the area here is Nakeèhk'òatàdì and you come toward this place to get on the land. It has both ways for coming into the place. Once you get on the ground you run here and there towards the area where there is a lot of blueberries. Michel L. Moosenose said there are many berries almost any place even out at Xàdlàdì. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)

⁶² Literal translation of Nakeèhk'òatàdì: [name]-father-island. Ibid

ʔechìłł

ʔechìłł is where people set nets in the spring and fall, especially for dehdoò (longnose sucker). And in the spring nets are also set for łłh (whitefish).

The river runs through the curve. This place is called ʔechìłł. The boat comes out from ʔechìłł. After ʔechìłł is a river bend, it's on the side. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)



The place that they call ʔechìłł – people would live there in the spring and fall time, they would gather fish. There were plenty of dehdoò [longnose sucker], so people would set net for that fish. They would make it like dry fish. In the springtime people would set nets for whitefish so that they could make dry fish. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

The working map shows people fishing for kwìezhì (white sucker), ts'èt'ł̥ (Arctic grayling), and dehdoò (longnose sucker) about halfway between ʔechìłł and Nakeèhk'òatàdì.

Whatì

Joseph Moosenose talks about life in Whatì.

We people who are living here, are so connected to fish, because it was our main food and we have lived on it till today. And the fish is still our food and whoever wish to set nets they will do so. ...

So, from here to the open rivers, in the past, people used to live just across at the entrance of the river and it was around spring time. Also, during the winter, they always fish and collected them for the winter, for dogs and for themselves. ...

When my uncle Willy set the nets and goes to check his net, young women would be looking out for him [to return] from the nets. When he caught a few fish, he would give them fish. Sometimes it would be nqhkweè (loche). This how people help one another, sharing food. (Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)



Whatì 2022. Photo credit: NNSL, August 1, 2022



Southeast short Whatì. Photo credit: *Common Fish in the Tłıchq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tłıchq Government, 2016



Whatì 1991. Photo credit: NWT Archives/Joan Ryan/N-1991-073-008

Nìᓂaa

Nìᓂaa is the peninsula where Whatì residents set nets for very large fish. An old name for this place is ʔeᓂèè, meaning '[beaver] dam', after the story of Yamoozha's beaver wife making a dam here.⁶³

During the spring when ice is melting, they would set their nets way out to Nìᓂaa. Hey there is a huge whitefish they say and get excited about it. Then catching was a food for us people and also for the dogs. There when there is a big opening at the side [ice opening] they would drag the boat to the side of lake and get to the river. And they would set their nets, once they put the canoe in the water, they called this place ʔehts'àh'ìi.⁶⁴

Me and my sister Dora we would go way out with a packsack to Nìᓂaa, before Christmas, even though it was cold. We had four dogs with us. My sister traveled ahead of us and I followed with our dogs. I met up with my sister at Nìᓂaa. She asked me if I was cold, and I told her no. On our way back, we took a break at one tree standing. Before Christmas the days were long [for us], we would come back late, but we didn't know the time. It was very, very cold. As soon as we came in my mom would say my daughter it is very cold. She told my older sister to come out and take the fish, she told us to come in because it was cold outside. She said for one sister to bring in the fish and the other sister to unleash the dogs and tie them up. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)



⁶³ Literal translation of Nìᓂaa: it extends to a place. An old name for this place is ʔeᓂèè, meaning '[beaver] dam', after the story of Yamoozha's beaver wife making a dam here. Ibid

⁶⁴ No standardized spelling or literal translation for this placename. Nor was the exact place documented.

Stories of travelling with dogs

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

The first time Jimmy P. went trapping, it was with his dad, along the river during freeze-up. And, in the summer, when there was no room in the boat their dogs ran on the shore of the river. They very loud as they ran ahead of the boat. It wasn't only their family, there was Nigola and Gabriel (Habeyia). They had their own dog team and boats they traveled with, five to six boats on the river. When they portaged, the dogs would be barking – very loud. Some dogs were kept in the front of the boat, some attacked each other, misbehaved. Joseph agrees with Jimmy P.'s story.

...

Marie Adele agrees with Jimmy P. and Joseph's story about dogs travelling with canoes. She too experienced it when she was young, she doesn't know where. When you are young it's hard to remember everything and placenames were not mentioned in front of them. But she knows, when it was time to go out by canoe, a lot of other families travelled together. They left after tɔ deɔ̀ò (when ice flows downriver). When there was no room for the dogs in the canoe, they would run ahead along the side of the river. They made sounds li, li, li. Some of the dogs had names.

One time Marie Adele's family stopped to make a campfire and eat. Other canoes were approaching and they knew the dogs were going to get out first. They tried to pack up but it was too late, the dogs from the other canoes were already out and running around the campfire area, out of control around them. That's what happens when the dogs can't move or eat in the canoe, travelling long distances on the river.

...

Joseph said, "They used to take good care of dogs back then." Marie Adele agreed, they listened to the people, and when it was time to go, they knew they had to get back in the canoes. They're like people, they know what to do.

More from the verification trip

Albertine Eyakfwo shares stories and her experience from the 2022 verification trip ...

William Drybones only knew about some graves on Tsòtìdeè. He didn't know about the child's grave, or the three graves across from Weda (Victor Huskey's) cabin. There's more up the river that he didn't know about, and places where we stopped. He knows about ɬeneèkokw'qò whelaa (old man's grave) but other than that, it was his first visit to all the graves we stopped at.

Once he went trapping and hunting with his dad and Joe Mantla (cowboy Joe from Behchokò). "After so many years I went with Jimmy P. Mantla and Joseph Mantla too, hunting for muskrat, beaver, and ducks on the river and all the small lakes. We spent two days at a spot, then we would go back to Dètałhtq, Jimmy P.'s dad's cabin, where we would dry and fix furs so they didn't spoil." They trapped and hunted from May to June, then headed back to Behchokò when they were running out of supplies. It takes a day to get to Hàèlł — in summertime it is light all day. After they got home, they cashed in their fur and tended to forget each other. They had lots of money.

...

Colby Grasco [the bear monitor for the verification trip] learned a lot on the trip. He didn't know that a lot of people and families lived along the river in the past. He learned there are a lot of waterways, camps, and interesting old areas. At portages he thought, "Are we going to do this, how do we get over it with kicker boats?" He'd like to do this on his own now with his own boat. He wonders if people used to fight or bicker over areas for camps or permanent areas. He finds it cool to know how many Tłchq people lived along the river. It was his first time seeing a winch used for hauling motorboats, and he'd like to get one for himself. Next time he travels that way, he knows where to stop along the way and camp overnight.

Seasonal movements of fish and human activities

Whatì Elders and Behchokò harvesters emphasized the renewable resources along the river that are used and that deserve protection along with the fish. It is impossible to separate fish from other resources and activities that engage people throughout the seasons. They depended on all aspects of dè, not just fish.

They don't always go on the land for animals [fish] only, right now I'm talking about sleds, they also made sleds, just like when you buy a sled from the store. ... What we really need to work on the land, we make it, we do it ... like snowshoe we made them, snowshoe and also axe handle ... talk about caribou ... [and] ... pelt too. ... How to butcher and skin around the fur and how much would be the price, it won't be the same price, depends how well your work will be. ... All these things you touch on will give you more knowledge. (Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 02 November 2020)

I saw people gather things from the land. They would gather the right wood to make things like paddles or snowshoes. They would gather in the spring and work on it throughout the summer. I remember seeing lots of scrap carvings scattered on the ground. ...

I remember the men were cutting logs, they had no chainsaw, they used a hand saw and axe to do this. They were cutting logs to make a fish cache. They spent several days working on this. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

Depending on the season, people harvested other animals besides fish.

When it is wintertime like this and food is scarce then they would shoot moose, small game like rabbit, ptarmigan. If they would set snare and catch rabbit, they would use that to survive throughout the winter. If they shoot a moose, they share the meat with each other, that is the way people lived. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

People had to work hard to survive, for fish, not only that but for moose as well. People worked hard to gather muskrat, duck too. When the season is open for muskrat that is when people start setting traps for muskrats. There were lots of ducks and lots of little birds, even in small ponds there were lots of ducks, you could hear them all in the spring-time. We would go trapping for muskrat and we would see all this, we could hear nòhtà [grebe] singing from a distance. (Elder Joe Champlain, 10 November 2020)



Moose bed — evidence of golq / dedì

When it freezes up, they start hunting for small game animals, rabbit, ptarmigan. When springtime comes, they begin to hunt for ducks. They would fix all the ducks and gut them. They would then hang it in the smoke. If it dries slightly, they would save it and eat it throughout the year, this is how people worked. When the ice becomes thin, there are times where we don't catch fish, maybe one or two at a time. They would share the fish among each other, and this is how they survived. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

Part of preparing for winter was gathering wood and making dry fish. People made lots of dry fish to make sure they had enough to feed their dogs through the winter, when fewer fish are available.

... they would gather all the wood so they would put lots of wood beside their house. The boys or men would go trapping and the women would housesit their house and look after the small children. The women would not work on the wood therefore the men would gather a lot of wood beside her then the man can go trapping. The man would be gone until Christmas and the wife would look after the house to wait for him. Therefore, the woman would not bother with the wood. Therefore, before they leave, they gather all the wood for her. (Elder Louis Wedawin, 18 October 2020)

Throughout the year, if there is a time, we don't catch fish, it was very hard time. The fish cache that they made would be saved for the dogs to eat throughout the year. When it gets warm, and until it gets warm again, they watch the fish for the dogs, this is how people lived. My father said, when the ice is thin, when there is no fish, it means the fish are hiding in deep water. They come back out from hiding in the deep water, that is how they swim, we know this is how it will be. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

In July water gets warm and the fish move further out [in the lake], and that why can't catch fish then. And again, about mid or early of August, that's when the fish returns again. That's why even you set your net, just in the middle of this lake here you will get a huge catch of fish, catch many fish. In the fall too, people catch lots of fish, as many return to us. When we used dog team before, we set net and collect the fish because its fall, and lot of fish we made, fish stick for the dogs. (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

There is lots of work when it comes to dry fish, when we cut dry fish in July there is lots of work. Lots of people used to work on dry fish that time. In the fall time, the people that lived here would gather lots of fish because there was no caribou in this area. They would take really good care of the fish when they would work on it. When fall time begins people make fish cache (sticks), with some of the fish they would make dry fish. This is what they would do, this is what I saw. I saw it with my own eyes. (Elder Lucy Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

In the fall time like this, they gathered all the fish and they used to make daht'oh [cache]; they gather the fish and make it fish sticks [ł̥gotsè] which would be stacks. They dig a hole to put fish in and they used to make lots of fish sticks to put in there. In the wintertime, it gets very cold therefore there were hardly any fish caught during that time. They knew about that therefore they would make the nde sll [dug up a hole] to put the fish sticks in there. ... If there is no caribou or if the caribou does not go near them and in the wintertime, when it gets cold it is difficult to catch a fish. The dogs would eat them if there is no other food to eat. Therefore, they fish during the fall time and they gathered all the fish. (Elder Louis Wedawin, 18 October 2020)

In the fall time we gathered fish for fish cache. They would catch fish in the fall time for the purpose of making fish cache [to feed dogs in the winter months]. They would catch whitefish, dehdo [longnose sucker], jhdaa [jackfish], ł̥wezqò [lake trout]. They would make fish cache with all these fish. Some people would make dry fish, they would cut the fish for drying. Or they would make ts'eet'a [a fish cutting method]. They would do these things. They would gather enough wood/logs to make a daht'oh [stage cache]. And then when it begins to freeze

up and the lake is frozen, in the wintertime they set nets. People depend on the fish that they catch for their livelihood and the livelihood of their dogs. ...

Then when Christmas time approaches if their net is not catching fish anymore, they take the nets out and reset it in a new location that is a known fishing area. (Elder Sophie Williah, 5 November 2020)



Łlwezoq (lake trout). Photo credit: from *Common Fish in the Tł̓chq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tł̓chq Government, 2016

Because people were on the land in all seasons, year after year, there are gravesites along the river. Elders are concerned about recording gravesites and protecting them.

Year after year they do these in spring. Along the riverbank there are many gravesites. When people travel and those who die along the way they must be buried, the one that dies. That is why there are grave sites by the riverbank. ... Grave site where people had lived, these must be recorded through others. (Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

Maybe there were camps, where people have lived? Or the burial? Where the animals roam? What kind of berries? It would be nice if we all know that and I made a big fuss one time to do that but they never obeyed me. That is what I am talking about, maybe people have lived there? Maybe there is a burial? I told them that but it never happened. (Elder Louis Wedawin, 18 October 2020)

There is a gravesite of an elderly man at Tł'ok'àetqđèa. Not too far from this site ... is another burial site. I am not too sure exactly how many gravesites there are. Not too far from this site is an area where a young person drowned. It is said that a bushman did this to that person. People spoke about this. She

was travelling with her grandfather. The young person tried their best to survive, but in the end the bush man was stronger and she drowned. The grandfather knew medicine power, he tried his best to help his grandchild but he failed. He really did try but it was no help at all. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

Rules for respecting fish, fisheries, water, and other aspects of dè

In the past people were strict about how to handle the fish, when they catch a fish. Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza explains.

They were really careful of how they handled the fish, where they catch a fish. They would bring it inside and make the mouth of the fish touch with ashes, by using a stick this how people lived and did it with respect. Because people survive mostly by the fish and they were really careful about its blood, and its parts. ...

An animal like moose or caribou tracks can be walk on, but for fish it can not be this is what being said. The elderly always warn people to work well on the fish and to be careful. Here almost every year in the winter, fall, and cold season, and during the slush in the springtime, and they would know when to set net and when they set net, they catch many fish in the spring to make dry fish. (Elder Charlie Jim Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

Elder Sophie Williah describes how it was in her family.

Our family would encourage us to work respectfully when working on fish. Our family would tell us that we survive by the fish, make sure to never step over the ropes for nets, never step over the nets, if we don't watch out for these things then we will be unlucky. In that time when they would have nets set, our older sisters were the ones cleaning and fixing the fish. ...

They always told us to make sure we don't step over fish blood, that we be mindful of the fish blood. We were told we would not be lucky if we did. We have to take good care of our fish; we need to be mindful when working on fish. Our family spoke to us in this way so that we would have good luck with fish, this is how we were spoken to. ...

In the past we used to live by the caribou and the fish as well, our people gave us warnings about not stepping over the ropes, not to step over the net, they were teaching us about these things. ...

My late mother wanted us to be careful how we handle the fish, make sure that we don't walk over it and to watch out for it. If we step over fish blood it will be hard to catch fish. Even at night when you are bringing in the fish watch out for blood. She told us to bring in the fish with a pack sack, so that is what they did. Our ancestors were very careful about how they handled the fish, that is the reason we have to treat the fish very well. That is how our people taught us, we live according to their teachings. ...

Even before, before when caribou used to come to this area, even then, fish was our main food. When we would go to places our people always warn us and tell us to be careful (respect the fish). Watch you don't step over the net or tèhdlł [twine]. ... My mum said we depend on fish so handle it carefully, watch for fish blood, if we walk over fish blood you won't get fish, she said. So that is why we watch for fish blood even if it's dark and how you bring them in. ... That is why we need to care very much for fish, for fish is the only food we live on. ... It came from people of the past. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

There are many connections between respectful relationships with fish and other animals, and a successful harvest and survival.

The way we make dry fish, we were very careful, and we had to be very respectful. As for me when I work on fish, I separate the guts and once I am done my work, we use the skidoo and give it back to the land far from the community. When I do the dishes, I always make sure to wipe blood off the plates before I begin washing. We need to respect the animals and take good care of it, if we don't then the animals watch us from heaven the way we treat them. ...

My dad would tell us stories about everything, he said that the bones from big animals must be kept, the clothes that we made from the hides and everything that comes from the big animals should be respected. People would say that if we take good care of the bones of animals and show respect, we will have luck in our life. ...

We need to watch and take care of our fish. In the past they would make lots of dry fish, enough to last throughout the year, they would share with each other. They would never forget to make fish sticks too. They would collect lots of fish sticks, take the bones out and share among each other. This is how we survived. ...

We really need to take care of animal bones. Caribou bones, moose bones, we gather them together, we store it in a plastic bag, when it gets filled up your

uncle goes to a place people don't go and he throws it away. We do that with fish bones too, we take good care of everything we work on, we should never throw animal bones in the garbage, because they give us food to survive on. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

As we traveled, we could see that people were living along shores. They needed to stay close to the shore because they would be busy with fish, it was also good because they were living near good firewood. Sometimes they would get busy with other things like duck and beaver, therefore they lived there. Both Elders and young people would live together, work together, and teach each other. This is how I saw people live, they relied on each other, but they also respected each other and shared with each other. People took care of each other and because of that people lived a really good life. People would teach each other all the time. (Elder Mike Nitsiza, 12 November 2020)

At times we don't camp in some area for it's a place to show respect. (Elder Jimmy Rabesca, 02 November 2020)

My dad would tell us stories about everything. He said that the bones from big animals must be kept, the clothes that we made from the hides and everything that comes from the big animals should be respected. People would say that if we take good care of the bones of animals and show respect, we will have luck in our life. ... the road is coming to us, we need to watch and take care of our fish. In the past they would make lots of dry fish, enough to last throughout the year, they would share with each other. They would never forget to make fish sticks too. They would collect lots of fish sticks, take the bones out and share among each other. This is how we survived. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

... the access road that will lead to our community, it is the animal land. It is the animal land and I have mentioned it but they have never worked on it. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)

Elders also comment on lack of respect. Some see this as more prevalent now than in the past.

When we catch fish, we have to handle it well. Nowadays we are catching less fish, it has decreased because were not respecting the fish. A long time ago, when the fish would first come in, they were very big. Now it seems the big fish are gone, and we are left with only small fish, maybe it's because we are not caring for the fish as we should. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

There are animals on the ground and birds that fly in the sky. When people are careless of how they throw food away wolves or an eagle, raven they do come around and more garbage will be scattered and don't look good. They said keep your land clean. ...

So, it will be good if people could throw the waste food on the island where animals will get to it. People of the past they kept food and bones well by placing them in a storage that is placed upon a pole rack. That was how people did things by keeping their land clean and have work well on the food of an animal. ...

Today is not like that so we should talk to the youth and young female and male and teach them after it will be good. Even in the school these should be brought to their attention. They don't seem to understand these things so they just continue living it. (Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

For most Elders, proper respect is interconnected with survival, with continuing use of resources. Because of lack of respect and other changes, such as the road to Whatì, Elders see the need to protect dè and the resources they depend on.

All the fish in the water, our forefathers, grandfathers, uncles survived on it therefore hopefully nothing happens to it. It will be preserved very good because it is only right so there are lots of animals. ... There will be no killing near the road, there will be no killing for moose, caribou. ... There are different animals therefore it would be good if it is protected really good and look at it really well including handling it very well. We should continue to ask each other and talk about it, that would be only right. ... People from down south near Edmonton or far away, the white people come here with the vehicles or carry the boat with the kicker or motor along with the trailer. If you say they will not do that, they will abide the rules or the law. When we gather in Whatì they might think we can put our boat in the water that we are dragging along our vehicle, they can use the boat of the end of Whatì and cruise around with their boat. If you say that will not be done and if you make the document like that, it will be posted alongside of the road. It can be done therefore your children are here, you have the boat with you. Therefore, if you want to guide the white people to cruise around or your children to guide them for them to go fishing. Your children can make money for themselves so if you can discuss it that way and fix it yourself. ... There will be no boat to carry from people who are from long distance or no motor [kicker], just our children will guide them. (Elder Louis Wedawin, 18 October 2020)

Those of us that live in Whatì, our main food is fish, it would be good if others didn't fish here. We want the traditional names to stay the same, what we agreed upon during treaty is not how things are going. I don't want our words to be broken, the way I said the road should be, is how they should go about it. ... The animals that cross the road like woodland [caribou] and bison should be looked after, they may cross, but it would be good if they were protected. ...

I don't want people to be restricted from their way of life here. This is all I want to say, that our community be protected too, and we are looked after. ... The water I am talking about, I want the fish to be protected in the area. I don't want white people to control it, I don't want them to use their fishing rods there. (Elder Joe Champlain, 10 November 2020)

On this side of the land, the land is good, the fishing is great, the muskrat season is good too. We have lots of fish, we have lots of grayling in the area of the road, the white people might find out and use it. If other people start finding out about our road, they might start building cabins along our road if we don't say anything about it. ... They should put a strong law in that won't break, that will be enforced to protect our land and water, but no one seems to recognize this need. If we as Elders work with leadership and help them to create this protection law, then maybe something good will be created to protect our land and water. ... We are self-governing, if we say we don't want something coming we have the right to stop it from coming onto our land. ... we should really be protecting the land; we need people to watch over our land and work well on our land. ... We are saying that we don't want it to be disturbed or destructed; whatever they put on the road. If they really want to protect our land, we need to enforce a law that will allow everyone to listen. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

If we do not plan things for ourselves, they will plan for us. And to prevent this, we are saying we should prevent this. We are Elders and while we are still alive, if the road comes in, we might be forgotten therefore it should not be like that, that is why we are saying this. ... it would be good if there is a law in place so no one will be developing or no activity will be happening. It would be good if we make the law; that is why I was thinking about it. Regarding the fish, our ancestors for long time ago survived only on the fish. They survived only on fish therefore about this time they used to use dog team therefore they used to gather fish for their dogs. They used to gather lots of fish so they can use the fish for a year. All that has to be included. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)

it would be good if that [waterways] was protected. ... The area at T'ooohdeèhoteè, where the road crosses, that area has lots of grayling ... This

should be protected, that is why I think we should talk about it. This has already happened to us, I just don't want it to happen again, I just wanted to mention this. ... We need to figure out a way to do this without overfishing. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

All animals have to be protected, golq (moose), tqdzì (woodland caribou), ekwò (barren-ground caribou) and everything else, everything should be protected. If they aren't being watched, what will happen? Because of this I say, my niece, animals, fish, and things that swim in the water, all need to be protected. ... The game animals, the rabbit, if everything is protected then it will be good. We survive on wild meat; it would be good if they were taken care of well. ... Animals live on their own, they live their own life, all animals are like this. I am saying this because I think they should be protected. (Elder Madeline Champlain, 10 November 2020)

I think that also our animals should be protected, there are tqdzì. We were told nothing would be killed on the sides of the roads – ducks, muskrats, rabbits, there are things like that. In the future it needs to be protected, they can't just shoot anywhere. If they are going to eat it, then they should shoot it. If they don't need it then they don't need to shoot it. (Elder Michel Moosenose)

The animals like moose, woodland caribou, marten and if they create the road, they might get hit by the vehicle, like the buffalo, since they might go on the road. They go anywhere; therefore, if they are on the road, they might be crossing the road because we do not know the animals. They go roam anywhere. ... Just like the road leading to Yellowknife, there are signs up there. Every now and then there are signs and the first road that leads to this community, they will obey the signs. They will follow the signs when they are posted and there will be signs posted every now and then. (Elder Lucy Pomie, 18 October 2020)

Yes, our ancestors used to kill the ducks since they survive on the ducks. Near the shore in the springtime, the ducks have their duckling. Therefore, it has to count, it has to be protected. The ducks have their ducklings and near the shore there are berries. There used to be berries and long time ago, our ancestors survived on lots of things; our land needs to be protected. It has to be preserved, ... so many placenames since there will be no activities over there. That way it would be good since that way it looks good. Like I mention the ducks watch their ducklings grow up and even chq [bird] raised their babies. They used to pick berries because they used to pick them here therefore it will be protected. Any small animals like [prairie] chicken [ehtò] or rabbits when they travel to here, beaver [tsà], the people survived on those animals. It would be good if they are protected. (Elder Francis Simpson, 18 October 2020)



Tsàkìì (beaver lodge)

As part of respect and protecting dè, Elders also want to continue to share knowledge; for young people (and others) to learn from Elders.

Elders would say we have to try first to learn something. If we think they are right then, and if an elder spoke to us and gives us words and we use it we will survive. When we sit down and listen to an elder, they talk to us to teach us, they would share their life story and the way they worked on the land, and we listened. This is how they spoke to us, and we listened to them. We don't just learn by listening to the words we also have to practice what we learned. We see how they lived their life. We have to want to live the same life if we want to have a good future. (Elder Joe Champlain, 10 November 2020)

It will be good if young people search deeply on the teachings of the past and teachings in the school to continue will be useful to those young people and others too. Wherever we go we see waste throw around and they don't seem to care for the road site, it's not good. And not seems to know what you doing to the land. We need to talk to the young people often about the waste, if they do have waste in the vehicle so should take it to the dump not throw it out on

the land. Maybe this should be broadcast on the radio even for the new road site and also there will be camp site on the way too. ...

And the way we run our life and how we work it need to reflect on them most by teaching them. And the young people should talk and teach themselves to speak. We can't get others to teach our children our language. We parents are teachers towards our children, and we supposed to be their teacher, that's our duty. ... It will be good if we open up with good information again and teach them to the young people, they probably will listen to the teaching. (Chief Alfonz Nitsiza, 4 November 2020)

What I think is, I am this old now, I will never see what I saw in the past again. I thought it was our job to make sure things go well in the future. When the road comes, we will not know what will happen to our young people. I don't like talking about this, this road coming to us. I always wanted to say something at a meeting but I never did. I don't like how they went about this; I really don't like it. (Elder Moogoo Nitsiza, no date)

Wherever they travelled in the bush we went with them. When we go to the bush with our family, we watch the way they work. They would tell us to do things, we would do it. Our families were right; they spoke to us the truth. If we don't break the words given to us by our families then we will live a good life into the future. This is how they would talk to each other; they were right. We come from our family; we have to listen to them. When we see young people today, they are pitiful, but they are doing it to themselves, we want them to be good people, they should work towards this. (Elder Lucy Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)

I think that if they sent young people to me, I can teach them. I could teach them trails, names of landmarks, rivers and the names of lakes. I can teach them about rapids, about river bends. Sometimes at river bends there are small water falls that flow fast, I can teach them about that. We can teach them about where to travel, names of the place, our Elders use to tell us all this. The name of the land, if the lake has shallow areas, we teach each other about this. ... People would teach each other where are the trails are and the names of areas, they taught each other well. ... sometimes people only want to go on the land to hunt, not to learn and to teach each. (Elder Narcisse Bishop, 29 November 2020)

We have sons and daughters, grandchildren. It's like every day we are walking towards our tears. Every day we wait for a message or a call, all of a sudden tragic news comes sometimes. We are walking towards heartbreak. What the Elders have spoken about the road, they should really place it in their mind

when they talk about the road. This is what Johnny Nitsiza said to us. Words never die, people die, but our words will live even after we are gone. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)

... when I go to check net some young men will come along and I would tell them stories. I told them in the past, people like Philip Zoe and Isadore Nitsiza and his wife used to live in a tent, all winter. Isadore would set snare for rabbit and set a net just across from where he lived. While he was smoking cigarette, I told him people didn't really live here as long as I remember. Like Isidore Nitsiza the old men used to live at Bear Island where he would do men's work on land. And also, what is the name of the place, what do we called that place ?enèegoo where is a cabin for teaching kids. Ehts'e Pomie and Alexis Flunkie used to camp, when I was small, this I have seen. ...

Another story it's about trip around the lake with the youth. Because of my late grandfather teaching, I learn about gravesite and make a brush cut with the youth. And through that it seems like things are uncovering for each one. And way out at the fish camp, there is an old man gravesite where we spent two days for cleaning around the area. We pray. I started and after prayer, fed the fire, for we just couldn't resist it but do it. I told them this is how our grandfather had done and they taught us this good manner, and we young people are doing it together. And pray the whole rosary for them, even that I was very happy and thankful. That is all the story. (Elder Joseph Moosenose, 24 November 2020)

yes, it's true we have to say something about it or else things will fall apart or ruin. So even after we are going our written words will live on so that it will be useful for others. And it's true what they saying, even for this winter road and all-season road what a big change there will be. Because on winter so many are travelling and most of us are home and many empty houses. But when the all-season road opens it will really be empty place. In November 2021 it will open up. So, before this happens, we need to post up a sign with strong words saying to respect the places. ...

... year by year if we travel on it, we will know and talk about it well. Once or twice, we take that trip it won't help us to remember it well. Even someone tell us we still won't know unless we have it written down or see the view of it. If it is not written then it will be useless. Here we have the name of all fishes. At one time they were talking about all type of fish and they handle this booklet and gave them to us all. There are all kind of fish here nq̄kwèe [loche], dehdoō [longnose sucker], ɬhdaa [jackfish], kwìezhì [white sucker], ɬwèzqò, ɬh [whitefish]), ehts'èq̄ [pickerel], ts'èt'iq̄ [Arctic grayling]. Some fish we don't see them here in our area. Harry Mantla was well known for his life on the land

and he must have known about these fish and wrote it down by the help of his wife. He always travels certain places for trapping and hunting. (Elder Laiza Jeremick'a, February 2021)



A school of łih (whitefish) moving over algae covered rocks. Photo credit: from *Common Fish in the Tłichq Region*, Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board and Tłichq Government, 2016

Stories of Nàłł and its importance to Tł̥chq culture and history

In their tourism information, the GNWT describes the Whatì waterfall like this.

... [it] features two thundering spillways with fine grayling fishing in the rapids below. It's accessible by road from Whatì.⁶⁵



Photo credit: CBC North

For the Tł̥chq of Whatì, Nàłł is a spiritual place that has history and sacred importance. There are several stories about the falls. At a meeting March 23-25, 2021 Tł̥chq of Whatì chose two stories to put on storyboards at that location, in Tł̥chq and English, to share the spiritual importance of the falls and to encourage people travelling there to show respect. This is important as more people, including more non-Tł̥chq, have access to the falls now that the Tł̥chq Tł̥lì (Tł̥chq Highway) and K'àgoòtł̥lì (road to Whatì) is open.

On 23 February 2021, Elder Marie Adele Rabesca⁶⁶ told this story about Nàłł.

⁶⁵ <https://spectacularnwt.com/attraction/whati-waterfall>

⁶⁶ Elder Jimmy Rabesca, Helen Rabesca's son, agreed to have this story on a story board in her memory.

My mother-in-law, Helen Rabesca, told me a story about from the time when lots of people were living on the land. [This is a story from a time before Tł̥chq Yabhatì Edzo and Chipewyan Yabhatì Akaitcho made peace.] ...

They lived on the land just across from here [Whatì]. And one day a man wanted to collect white birch and to make something from it. So, he was paddling his birch bark canoe; he was paddling downriver towards the site, and then suddenly there was a little sign of danger. He kept going till he reached the place he wanted to go, and after he collect the birch. He then was coming back to his camp, where the people were. ...

When he was going back, he felt this strange feeling that somebody was spying on him. He looked. He knew the places where the islands are. He noticed two islands close together, and he looked at them really good and they were moving. Right away he knew it was other people [Chipewyan], and as soon as they spotted him, they started paddling towards him. ...

So, he turned [his canoe] around and he started paddling; he paddling really fast. Then he took a little rest and then he started paddling again. He paddled all the way down to the falls [Nàłł]; he had a plan; if I am going to survive, I have to grab a tree or something, a willow or something so my canoe will go down and they will probably chase me to the falls. He was thinking like that; he did that to survive even though his canoe went down there, but him he grabbed on to the tree. ...

When he held onto the tree, and those people [Chipewyan] came after him but then didn't go to the side [of the river]. They just kept going and their two canoes went down with them. She [Elder Helen Rabesca] didn't say how many people went over the falls, but some Elders say there were six people. Those people [Chipewyan] hit the rocks when they went down there. They all died. That is the reason why there is one place on the rock, there is still blood showing; it's still red today. ...

And she [Elder Helen Rabesca] says, people when they go there, maybe in the future they will be so curious they will want to take picture and try to collect something from that. And, she said I hope people don't start bothering the place too much because those people died down there and their spirits are still in that area. ...

She added that I am sure when visitors come around there, they are going to do everything around there and she said, that she doesn't know if they will do things the wrong way, it will maybe corrupt [the place]. That is what she said.

So that is what my late mother-in-law was telling me. She told me a lot of stories, but this is what she said about Nàłł. (Elder Marie Adele Rabesca)



Looking upstream at the falls. Photo credit: Whatì Adventures, youtube

On 11 February 2014 Jimmy Nitsiza told the following story, he heard from his father, so people will know only to go to Nàłł to pay respect for help.⁶⁷

My father, who lived to be an old man, said that the people in the past used to be very capable with ɔłk'qò [medicine power]. One man was very sick, nobody could help him to get better. Do you know about the traditional character Dzèhkw'ł? They tried to heal that sick man with this mythical man, but they couldn't heal him. They also tried ɔłk'qò, but they could not heal him with that either. ...

So, they said, let's bring the man to the waterfalls by the boat. There is one portage to get to the falls, so six people carried him to the falls in a canvas blanket. They spent a night at the water falls on the island. The next day they carried him to the waterfalls. There is a white stick there, about this big as we used to offer something to it for the sick people. ...

They placed the sick man beside the stick, and they pitch up a mosquito net for the sick man and they told him to lie there under it and they would make an

⁶⁷ Elder Margaret Nitsiza, Jimmy's wife, was pleased that his story would be on a story board as a memory of him.

offering to the waterfalls of cigarettes, matches, and bullets, which they threw in the water. ...

The waterfall made a sign for the person, blue and yellow and a coloured [rainbow] would go on the sick man. After that, the mist and the steam of the waterfalls kept going over him while the rest of the men made camp a short distance from him. They made him stay there for about one hour. Then they carried him back and brought him to [Whatì] by boat. After they brought him back by boat he got better, there was nothing wrong with him. ...

That is the story about the waterfalls. That is why my father said, if there is nothing wrong with us, no sickness, we should not ever disturb the waterfalls. If we have a problem, we go and see it and make an offering to it. Only go there and pay respect for help, otherwise don't bother going there. (Elder Jimmy Nitsiza)



Looking downstream at the falls. Photo credit: Whatì Adventures, youtube

Sophie Williah shared a story about the falls from when she was very young.

When I was very young, after overnighting there our family said that we would travel to the water falls. We walked there to look for a sign. We would walk along on mother's side. We were still young that's why. We went there to look for a sign. When we make an offering, sometimes we see a big beautiful rainbow. Granny K'iwa [the woman that raised Dora Nitsiza] made an offering. After her offering the rainbow appeared dark grey. She cried. That year when it was winter [January 1] Francis Simpson's father passed away. People like to go there because of the signs we are given, but they don't go there all the time. (Elder Sophie Williah, 05 November 2020)



Photo credit: WhatiMom, flickr.com

Jonas Nitsiza also has a story.

They were saying that one person from here went to look for birch bark with a canoe. This elderly person noted that lots of people lived in that area at Dqkw'qòdiit'à.⁶⁸ From the other side, there were lots of people coming in and they were the Chipewyan. They traveled with two big canoes. They came across from the ground towards the shore with their canoe. That one person came across the peninsula; he was seen by the Chipewyan. He was approaching ?ebòts'itì when they spotted him. ...

From there he went towards the land for the purpose of collecting the birch. He was ripping it down. Then all of a sudden, he saw the strangers coming towards him. From there he was being chased back towards the peninsula. When he went back, he thought to himself, why is there two islands, that was there before. Those people that were in the other birch canoe, but one was standing and holding his paddle up, but it wasn't an island. That is the reason once he knew that it was a stranger he paddled and turned around. He was being chased. ...

He dropped off the birch he collected and he started paddling as fast as he could. From Nàłłjtì going towards the falls, when he was paddling around

⁶⁸ Literal translation: Person-bones-island. Big bay north of the long peninsula. Ibid

there, he was pretending that he was paddling slowly. He was pretending, when he was doing that, the people were chasing him and almost catching up. That little island there, that is where they lost track of him. They couldn't see him. The other two boats were practically touching each other as they were chasing him. ...

They were catching up to him. As soon as he knew it was time, he grabbed willows to save himself and made a curve turn to save him and the canoe. Those people fell into the river. So as long as the river flows those people's spirit will always be in the water. When it makes a sign for us, they always make a sign for us. (Elder Jonas Nitsiza, 02 November 2020)



Looking upstream at Nàłł (Whatì falls).

Photo credit: from *Fisheries Management Plan for the Tł̥chq Highway and Lac la Martre*, prepared for the Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board, January 24, 2022

Conclusions and Recommendations

Elders are very focused on protecting their relationships with animals and place, and their trails and associated stories. They want Tłchq people to be able to cut wood, hunt, and fish, and have access to and harvest all the resources they need and depend on, as is their right. They want to protect gravesites (ancestors). They want to occupy their lands without 'others' interfering with or limiting their access in any way. They want people to respect the dè. They want to continue to spend time on the land and share their knowledge with youth; they want to keep track of how healthy is dè and how and why things change.

Tłchq Elders that were interviewed strongly recommended that the Tłchq government put bylaws in place, to protect fish and fish habitat, the water and all other beings. They want to ensure there are rules in place to manage human behaviour, as outsiders travel the Tłchq Tłldeè (Tłchq Hwy.) to Whatì. They want to ensure that non-Tłchq can only fish or spend time on the lake and river if they go with a local guide and in the guide's boat or canoe along with a local guide.

No one proposed fencing off any area, as others have suggested. Together with bylaws, they prefer to raise awareness and educate outsiders that want to spend time on Tłchq lands, about respecting the land (including the people) — with signs, story boards, and other media materials; and with local guides and interpreters; and perhaps even spending time with Elders and harvesters.