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Image created in Déline,
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Traditions Reflected in Sahtu

Semi-Finalist

The tipi reflected in the waters of Sahtu (Great Bear Lake) in Déline, NT, is positioned by the prophet house on the edge of the community. The site celebrates the four Dene prophets and Déline, NT's spiritual power and permanence – a strength contained not only by the community, but also by the immense lake that is a continuous source of sustenance and transportation. Déline has just signed a Self Government agreement with Canada. While the legal document is important, a significant part of self-determination has to do with how this community integrates its language and spirituality into lived experience, culture, and governance. I took this picture during ethnographic fieldwork in Déline for an anthropology MA that will sketch Dene perspectives on self-determination in light of the new legal agreement. My host family walked along the lakeside with me, telling their newest student-adoptee the place's history. Déline's image of itself reflects immense Dene resilience. In this photograph, we see a symbol of tradition held in the water and land that sustains it: a living, rippling reminder of the strength that Déline brings with it to each negotiation table and governance decision.