



NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM RESEARCH EXPO

Coming Together for the Tłıchǫ Cultural Commons Archive

Tłıchǫ Cultural Commons Research Series—Volume 1



Dedats'eetsaa:
Tłıchǫ Research & Training Institute

The cover photo was taken by Tessa Macintosh (Tessa Macintosh Photography) of Archie Nitsiza's gauntlets and jacket, made by his wife Rita Nitsiza.

This booklet is produced in collaboration between the Tłıchǫ Government Department of Culture and Lands Protection and the University of Alberta Archiving Knowledge: Centering Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Community-Based Archives project

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This booklet is a living document that will change and grow according to feedback. This version is current as of June 2023.

We welcome any comments and/or inquiries. Please direct these to Rebecca Bourgeois at rbourgeo@ualberta.ca

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ENTRANCE TO THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM, BEHCHOKÒ. PHOTO BY KAREN GELDERMAN

INTRODUCTION

On December 6th and 7th, 2022, the Tłıchǫ Government Department of Culture and Lands Protection (DCLP) hosted a two day “Night at the Museum Research Expo.” This event was originally thought of as a way to introduce the Tłıchǫ Cultural Commons archival work to the public in Behchokò, but then grew into a larger event that showcased many aspects of Tłıchǫ research. Over two days, we gathered as researchers, Elders, and community members within the community museum space at Kò Gocho (Sportsplex) in Behchokò to celebrate, discuss, and present research being done with and for the Tłıchǫ people.

This booklet represents the first of a research series documenting the archival work being done. It was inspired by the example set by our first sharing circle (detailed in this booklet) and the emphasis that the Elders put on documenting their knowledge.

Suggestions for booklets as tools for documenting our research and other knowledge held within the archive were voiced by Mike Nitsiza (Whatì), who told us of how he made 55 booklets that share stories and traditional practices. Alphonse Apples (Gamètì) also spoke about booklets as an important method of documentation.

Schedule of Events

Both events were held at the Community Museum on the 2nd floor of Kò Gocho (Sportsplex) in Behchokò.

DECEMBER 6th,

Archival Sharing Circle

- Select Elders from all four Tłıchǫ communities were invited to hear about the archival work and share their initial thoughts on the work being done.

DECEMBER 7th,

Research Expo

- Public event open to all Tłıchǫ citizens and residents of Behchokò to engage with research booths hosted by researchers working on Tłıchǫ lands and studying language, culture, and way of life.

Join us for the

Night at the Museum Research Expo!

December 7th at 2–6:00pm

📍 The Community Museum on the 2nd floor of Kò Gocho (Sportsplex), Behchokò



Join us for an evening of food, crafting, and sharing about the research that has been going on in Tłıchǫ territory! **We are looking for your input on DCLP Research Initiatives** (such as the museum and archival work)!

Display of archival photos and videos (copies available) | Drop-in **traditional arts table** | **Food** | Research booths | Feedback survey

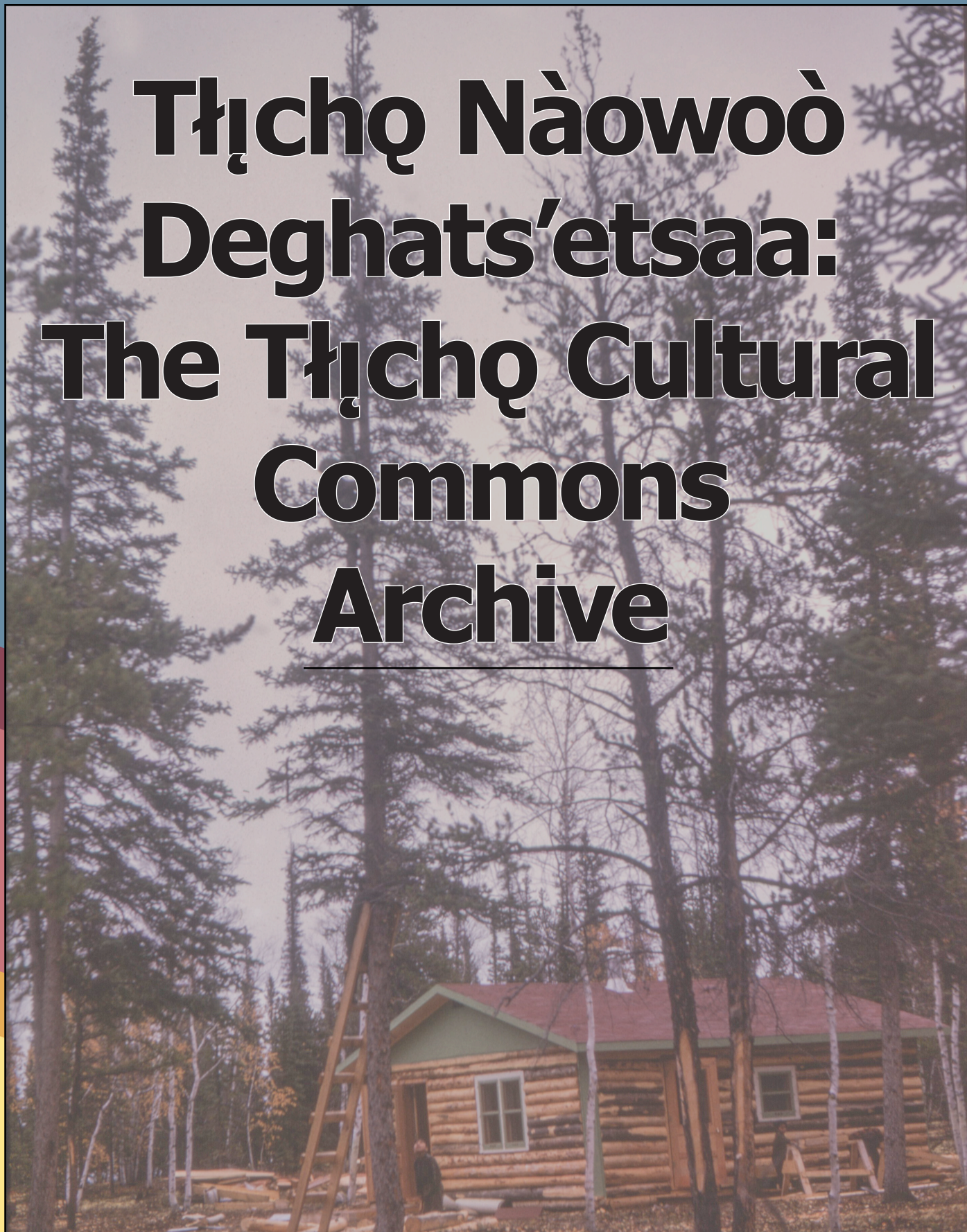
Hosted by the Tłıchǫ Government Department of Culture and Lands Protection

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Tłıchǫ Ndek'aowo
Tłıchǫ Government

Tłıchọ Nàowòò Deghats'etsaa: The Tłıchọ Cultural Commons Archive



BUILDING A CABIN, FORT RAE (BEHCOKO), 1966. PHOTO BY JEAN MORISSET. TAKEN FROM THE CULTURAL COMMONS ARCHIVE.

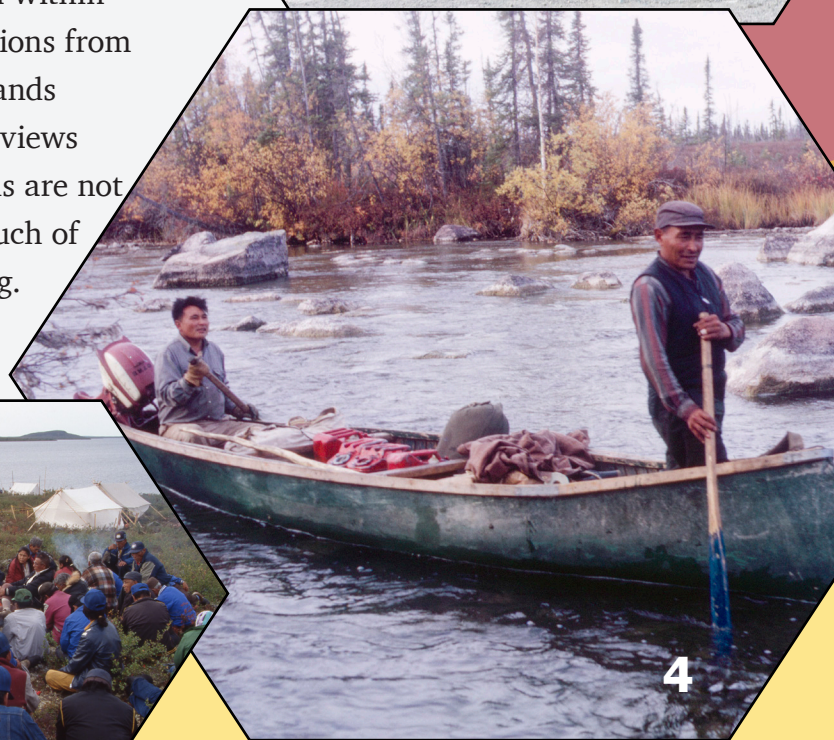


What is it?

Tłıchų Nàowò Deghats'etsaa: The Tłıchų Cultural Commons is an archive of digital items that is owned and controlled by the Tłıchų Government.

What is in it?

Hosted by the Dedats'eetsaa: Tłıchų Research & Training Institute, it is currently in the form of a shared folder housed on Tłıchų Government servers. Pictures, videos, documents, and recordings from past research and Tłıchų events are held within the archive. There are many collections from photographers who visited Tłıchų lands decades ago to footage of past interviews with Elders. Many of these materials are not yet catalogued or identified, and much of their detailed information is missing.



VARIOUS PHOTOS TAKEN FROM THE CULTURAL COMMONS ARCHIVE.



Upcoming Research

*T*his research aims to create a digital archive for all Tłıchǫ citizens that reflects Tłıchǫ values and is built on Tłıchǫ understandings of categorization, ownership, and stewardship.

WHAT?

We are looking to talk to Tłıchǫ citizens about Tłıchǫ values that should be reflected in the archive. Things like:

How do we care for knowledge/information?

How should cultural belongings be cared for?

What is ownership? Who should have ownership?

How do we organize knowledge?

Who should have access to the Tłıchǫ archive?



HOW?

We will be holding interviews and learning circles (like focus groups or group discussions) to gather information on how to proceed in the setting up of the archive.

WHEN?

Interviews will start in February to April 2023 and learning circles will be held in Spring 2023.

WHO?



The Department of Culture and Lands Protection is leading this research, with the help of UAlberta Ph.D. candidate Rebecca Bourgeois. Rebecca will be doing the interviews, so please get in touch with her if you are interested in participating or have any thoughts about this research.

Rebecca's contact info:

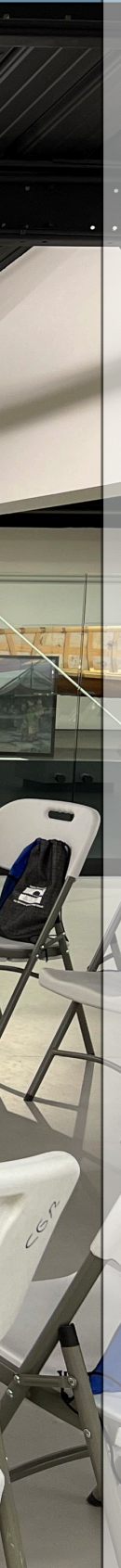
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December 6th, 2022 @ the Community Museum on the 2nd floor of Kò Gocho (Sportsplex) in Behchokò



SHARING CIRCLE SET UP IN THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM, BEHCHOKÒ. PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.



We invited a small group of Elders from Behchokò, Whatì, Gamètì, and Wekweètì to join the archival team before the Research Expo. The goal of this gathering was to share a meal together, for the new researchers to meet the Elders, and to give information about the upcoming archival research. A table with printed examples of pictures held within the archive was displayed with a screen showing some videos that are also held in the archive. Participants were invited to request copies of the materials, identify people, and explore the different kinds of materials that are held within the archive. Together, as researchers and Tłıchǫ citizens, we took the first step toward the archival work while surrounded by the Tłıchǫ Treaty 11 museum exhibit.

Once everyone had eaten and was seated, Michel Louis Rabesca opened the circle in prayer. We then began to share about the archival work. Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault explained the reasons why the DCLP sees this as a meaningful resource for Tłıchǫ citizens and how the working relationship with the University of Alberta came about. She introduced those involved in the work and asked the Elders to help guide this work forward in a good way. Following these opening words and introductions, each person around the circle was invited to share their thoughts.

Two of the main themes that came up repeatedly as we went around the circle, and to which most of the Elders spoke, were those of sharing and accessing knowledge.

Sharing Knowledge

Many of the Elders referred to items in the museum, such as the birch bark canoe and Chief Mǫnfwı's family tree, when speaking. Many of their stories were spurred by the presence of these belongings, relating what they were saying about Tłıchǫ knowledge to the practices or history associated with that item. Hosting this event surrounded by photos and cultural belongings really showed how having these belongings in place promotes the sharing of their teachings and how these belongings are part of the stories Elders have to share. Many also spoke to this point, telling how cultural materials carry stories with them and can be used as teaching tools.

“Our knowledge is huge. Our knowledge is endless. Stories are endless. In the past, as Elders, how they lived and how they survived, it’s just amazing even though they didn’t have much, they lived through their struggles, and they made it through. If you look on the land, if you travel the land, you will see their old campfires. You’ll see the places where they lived in the past, where they used old birch bark canoes that the land and grass grew over. So, it’s just like uncovering it from all that growth and bush and creating a museum where all the tools we used in the past are exposed. Everything that we worked with and how people worked together so well, how they listened well to each other. The people obeyed and respected each other. People respected individuals because the climate was so harsh they had to work together, they had to teach each other the skills and that’s how they survived.”

HENRY GON

(interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie)

Going forward in the archival and museum work, this relationship is something that should be kept at the forefront, to carry this natural way of teaching into the future.

Henry Gon (Gamètì) explained how the presence of features on the land act as a museum, carrying the experiences of their ancestors and providing information for the next generations who travel in that area. He also explained how in the past their ancestors modelled Tłıchǫ values of cooperation and respect, which was crucial to surviving in such harsh environmental conditions. Henry was one of many who emphasized the importance of traditional knowledge for survival, and the seasonality of this knowledge. During these teachings there was concern for how the young people live in an entirely different way than past generations and that they need to learn the Tłıchǫ language and way of life for their people to be strong. They spoke of how the sharing of knowledge is experiential and how activities and experiences on the land carry these teachings.

It's like you have to study what you're doing. You make it better if you study it. It's like that for all kinds of tools, clothing, stories. We really need to get this done together. Even us, we were young children, boys and girls at one time in our life. How our grandmothers talked to us, what they said to us. In those days I am talking about, it was when it got cold like today. Even if you are sitting in a vehicle, you can still be cold in weather like this, but, you know, they travelled during those times in a dog sled. It was so cold, but that's how they travelled. And so, to get the young people to become aware of the harsh times they need to know how our people struggled through.

Marie Adele Rabesca (interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie)

This conversation about survival in harsh conditions was especially important and at the front of many Elders' minds on the day we met because it was a day where temperatures dropped to around -50°C.

Marie Adele Rabesca (Whatì) compared the teaching of traditional skills to studying subjects in school. She touched on how not knowing these skills leaves people today more vulnerable to such low temperatures, even with vehicles and newer technology. The problem that many pointed out was that these teaching practices are being replaced (instead of supplemented) by white man's education, making it so that the youth do not know their traditional ways. Moise Rabesca (Behchokò) described how he and his father used to learn from Elders about the best places to hunt. Through this story he described how this information was traditionally passed along, the role of the Elders, and the role of gathering in teaching generations of Tłıchǫ people about best practices.

My late mom used to say that my dad used to travel to Hislop Lake, in the Gamètì area. He couldn't go back and forth so what he did was he went to the north shore of Great Slave Lake, a place called the Blackduck camp.

Over there they have a lot of wildlife around. There's some fur bearing animals such as muskrat, and a lot of fish around the north arm of Great Slave Lake. He was encouraged to move over there and I remember there used to be a lot of Elders. They used to gather around outside the Hudson's Bay area. They used to share stories of how they used to work. They used to talk about where the good trapping areas were. They used to share stories about those kinds of things.

MOISE RABESCA (interpreted by Jonas Lafferty)

Moise also told us of how when he was younger, he saved up to buy a gun. This gun turned out to be very helpful to him and his dad, and he expressed how thankful he was to have had it. He then explained how the other side of this story is that everything today is available easily for purchase, so their communities have lost much of their ability to make their own tools. Through this story, he demonstrated how there needs to be a balance between knowing the traditional ways and the ways of the white man to be "Strong like two people" (Elizabeth Mackenzie).



SHARING CIRCLE IN THE C

We still have to try to live the best way we can with our traditions and our values, which should be documented. Even though we pass on all the knowledge and all the stuff that we know, it should be documented so it will be among the Tłıchǫ people after we pass. What we share here, once we walk out the door of this room, we might not remember what has been said. But not if things are documented and recorded. Things about how people used to live and of how they used to work with the wildlife, how they used to make a campfire out on the land, and of how they used to travel. It should be documented and recorded. It's the only way we will know of how we used to live traditionally, sharing stories. I know it's hard and difficult at times to share the stories from the past.

ALPHONSE APPLES (interpreted by Jonas Lafferty)



COMMUNITY MUSEUM, BEHCHOKO. PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.

“As I walked in, I was thinking of all of us sitting here, there’s hardly any Elders amongst us. Even in our community of Wekweètì, there’s this and this Elder, but not many. If you do diligent work on the museum, our young children will understand how and where they come from. And when I think about this, there’s probably many more Elders. The researchers should go visit the Elders and record their stories and keep their stories for the future. And once the museum opens it could be available for the public. That’s how I’m thinking about it.”

JIMMY KODZIN (interpreted by Peter Huskey)



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JONAS LAFFERTY ENJOYING THE ARCHIVE BOOTH. PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.

In this sense, the museum and archival work was discussed as a modern tool to amplify the teachings of Elders and their ancestors. This is especially important because the natural cycle of these stories has been disrupted, with many of the attending Elders pointing out how the youth do not know their traditional ways. In the past, the natural cycle of Elders teaching youth would have sustained their knowledge, but this disruption means that these Elders are trying to teach multiple generations at the same time.

In many instances, the museum and archival work was discussed as an avenue by which to go about supporting the documentation of Tłıchǫ knowledge and provide a space for the youth to learn. Tools such as community museums and archives are ways that can help supplement the Elders' efforts and extend the reach of their teachings so that their knowledge will live on in a new way and be accessible to the Tłıchǫ people in whatever stage of life or learning they are in.

Access to Knowledge

Restoring the Tłıchǫ way of teaching and learning was one of the ways that the Elders felt the archive was useful, as this process has been disrupted. A big part of this is the problem of accessibility, especially considering how the Elders demonstrated the importance of cultural materials and belongings being in place as tools for teaching and learning. It is important to have this information available in both languages as much as possible.

These kinds of projects that you are working with, we need to bring back all the things that are kept in the museum [the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre] for us, and those in other places. Until we get a proper museum, they will hold it for us. Our great grandmothers, grandfathers, they really loved and took good care to teach us. They never hid anything from us. They always told the truth. And we can't always keep their knowledge inside like a secret because we need to share it. We need to share all the information that they have given us.

MIKE NITSIZA (interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie)

Like Mike Nitsiza (Whatì), many emphasized the need for their cultural belongings to be physically in the community and open to the public. Specific references were made to their items in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife. They spoke on how these things needed to be in Tłıchǫ communities so that their youth and citizens could learn from them. They also noted how the north does not have the same access to museums as the south, so there is not the same opportunity to learn.

This conversation on access brought up the role that community museums and archives play in repatriation. In the passage above by Mike Nitsiza, he mentions that “[u]ntil we get a proper museum they will hold it for us.” This statement highlights one of the major points that needs to be addressed in the development of repatriation processes. Presently, it is the museum institutions currently holding Indigenous cultural belongings that determine what a proper museum or facility is, with many repatriation policies and practices hinging on this definition. Although many Tłıchǫ stories and belongings are held at the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center in Yellowknife (just over 100 km away) they are separated from their community, and so, access to them by Tłıchǫ citizens and through Tłıchǫ programming is limited. Having these things in place in Tłıchǫ communities was a major point that the Elders stressed. To teach, they need to be able to fully access their materials. To revitalize their traditional crafting skills and survival practice, they need to be surrounded by those things made by their ancestors and family members.

Noella Kodzin (Wekweètì) talks about how their belongings in the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Center are only accessible at certain times. She then goes on to explain how having these materials in the community makes them more accessible to the children and would create a space where children could come to learn. Having to travel as far as Yellowknife (or in other cases much further) to access their cultural heritage materials is a major barrier. There are many children and youth who hang out at Kò Gocho (the Sportsplex) in Behchokò after school. Having the museum space as a place to hold educational programming or resources that they can drop in and explore would re-activate these traditional teachings and cultural belongings (currently held elsewhere) within younger generations.

It is good to have the museum in our community amongst our Tłı̨chọ for when children want to come in and look at the videos and listen to the stories. Just as the young lady spoke, we are strong like two people and at the same time too we have both parents. As for the museum like this, we would like to see artifacts from our ancestors. How they lived with caribou hide teepees and when there was no rope, they used to have caribou hide. They would make many artifacts. They never bought any items from the stores but now there are a lot of modern items. We have grandchildren. They think that we grew up in this manner, but it's not like that. When we have a museum like this, there's a lot of stories that can be shared with our grandchildren. There's a lot of videos or movies that are done in English. There's one Elder that spoke about wearing moccasins every day and when they get wet they would dry it, we would dry it. The stories they would tell are true. It would be good to see these kinds of items in the museum and the young children would understand these things.

NOELLA KODZIN (interpreted by Peter Huskey)



MICHEL LOUIS RABESCA OPENING THE EVENT WITH A PRAYER. PHOTO BY TYANNA STEINWAND.

“We, as in our past, we know how we got here. But from here to the future, the young peoples’ future, we don’t know. Everything is changing. Even with climate change, when the climate changes, our way of life changes, our language changes. Everything changes. So, in the future when things get worse, all the grandchildren, our future grandchildren, are they going to know what they are getting into? Are they going to know the history of their grandparents? We need more than just words. We need to use something.

Grandmother used to tell me stories. Long ago things were so hard but we still survived. I asked her questions: ‘Grandmother, you said you never had anything from the White man. What did you use for your footwear?’ ‘We used bone for needles.’ Do we still use needles? Is it evident now? The young people, do they know we used bone needles? We can look at this stuff in a museum. In the south they have all the museums, but we don’t have our own tools and things like that in our museum. So, I’m very happy to hear you’re building a museum. As Tł̓ch̓ people, we support one another. We start by telling stories and then we start building through those stories for future generations.”

MICHEL LOUIS RABESCA

(interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie)

More broadly, many of the Elders talked about how the north does not have the same resources and access to museums as in the south. This means that many of their belongings are far away, even if they are held in “nearby” museums.

This conversation on accessibility is paramount, both in consideration of repatriation and in terms of the community museum/archive. Even though the Treaty 11 exhibit has been in place since 2021, it was many participants’ first time being in that space and seeing the displays. Mary Adele Rabesca spoke of how the Elders from different communities are not able to get together often, which means that they do not have a lot of opportunities to share between them. Jimmy Kodzin (Wekweètì) exemplifies the accessibility problems between Tł̨ch̨q communities in telling us that this was the first time he had seen M̨nf̨w̨, even though his photo is displayed in both the community museum and the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre.

This is the first time I’ve heard about the museum. When we think about it, we are in agreement with it. We see all those photos of our chiefs. I’ve never seen M̨nf̨w̨ and all the other chiefs, but I’ve witnessed how they worked. Those pictures on the wall of past leaders, they worked very hard on the land. How they survived, how they went hunting, how they harvested. Everything that they harvested came from the land. But when we think about today, there are a lot of big changes that have taken place.

JIMMY KODZIN (interpreted by Peter Huskey)

Imagining the Archive

Throughout the day, the archive was discussed by Elders and attendees in partnership with the museum work. This really emphasized how the digital archival materials and the physical photos and belongings cannot be isolated from one another. This research needs to be done in a way that considers all Tł̨ch̨q collections and materials, as they do not exist independent of one another.



PICTURES FROM THE CULTURAL COMMONS DISPLAYED AT ARCHIVE BOOTH. PHOTO BY ARTLESS COLLECTIVE

For a long time, people have always wanted a museum. People would be talking about this kind of work and asking for the Elders' help. I was listening to Mary [Mary Rose Blackduck] talking on the radio and she was talking about a long time ago and how Christmas from past to now is so different. Even though I talk about the difference, they [the youth] don't really know what I am talking about because they can't visualize what I am talking about. If you visualize something, then you can have a good understanding of what you are talking about. For example, if our mom makes us moccasins, we put them on, we don't take them off, and because we never really take off our shoes, we always had our footwear covered without any holes... So these kinds of funny stories about clothes are available. We really want to make sure that we do it right and it's on you as Elders that if we do it right then the Tłı̨ch̨o nation's knowledge will be known around the world.

ROSA H. MANTLA (interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie)

As Rosa H. Mantla explains above, there has been a lot of interest by Tłchq citizens in the creation of their own museum. A main point that Rosa and others shared was that stories (whether of the past, of ways of survival, or ways of crafting) live in the belongings that could be held in their museum and that are currently away from the community in other collections. These are tools through which Elders share their knowledge and young people see and experience this knowledge. To achieve these goals, a Tłchq museum/archive needs to be centered around these teachings of sharing and accessing knowledge.

Joining the Elders were three young people who spoke on what they have heard and their thoughts: Hunter Mantla, Eileen Blackduck Mantla, and Albina Nitsiza. Although each of them was shy at first to speak amongst all the Elders, they each gave great insight into how to go about the archival and museum work, especially when it comes to what should be included and where some of the focus should be. Being told to “pretend you are 60” by Violet, Hunter shared with us how he would like to see his family represented in the museum and archives. He used this as a personal example as to why the Tłchq cultural heritage work being done needs to represent leaders and teachers within communities, not just those in leadership positions.

I think you guys should figure out how to get a building going. It would be great if you guys could do it [referencing the wall of the photos of the chiefs at the back of the museum] with all the communities, all the leaders, all the council members, to show all the council members back in the day to the present. It should also show Elder advisors, it should show knowledge keepers. You shouldn't just think about the chiefs. You have got to think about your parents, the people that you learned from. They need to be there too, not just leaders. Because everyone, in my eyes, is a leader. Not just one person. Everyone should be a leader.

HUNTER MANTLA

Hunter really emphasized how representation should be considered when creating museum exhibits and organizing the archive. Many Tłchq citizens will likely use the archive as a resource to explore their own heritage and look for their family members. This was the case with many of the participants and attendees looking at the sample archival photos and videos presented at the

events. Hunter's points are especially helpful when it comes to using the archive and museum as places that hold and share knowledge. Caring for this knowledge means acknowledging the people who shared it and recognizing them and their ancestors within the archive.

Later, Albina Nitsiza (Whatì) reflected on her position within the sharing circle, speaking on her experience learning and teaching as a daughter, mother, and grandmother. Using the example of the birchbark canoe that sat on display in the room with us, she spoke of how these objects carry stories and how they can teach people how to create such tools, better preparing them. She shared how these skills and artifacts are needed as resources to supplement education, suggesting this as a use for the museum and archive.


When we are talking about our traditional stories it is very important. But for people that live in Whatì... there aren't that many Elders in my community of Whatì as well and also even our way of life, I want to know about our past. Just like looking at this birchbark canoe I know there are a lot of stories, when I look at this display of the birchbark canoe, how it was made, where it was made from. When you look at it takes a lot of hard work just looking at it today. So today if you want a canoe or a boat you can just go to the store and buy it, but in the past, it had to be made. Everything that was made had come from the land. But today even though that it was pitiful in the past, so we do not know how to work, so if you weren't taught how to do a lot of traditional stuff, how can you survive? ... even though we send our kids to school, we have to teach them our way of life.

ALBINA NITSIZA (interpreted by Jonas Lafferty)

Hunter's sister Eileen Blackduck Mantla followed with expressing how she was there to learn and how she appreciated being able to do so among the Elders. Even though she did not speak for long, she demonstrated how important it is to have young people join in on sharing and learning circles with Elders. Each Elder stressed how this work is for the young people, and how the archive and work documenting their knowledge will help their youth live into the future. Having been joined by Hunter, Eileen, and Albina, this served as a great opportunity to hear their reflections on the Elders' teachings.

This was very influential in our research process, showing how powerful it can be to bring Elders and youth together during research activities, so that the knowledge and information can flow naturally, and ideas can be co-created. The Elders can teach us about the traditions and values that underly this research and then youth can help determine how to do it. This means that the people helping interpret what the Elders are saying are in fact the people who the Elders are doing this work for.

The Elders also had suggestions for the archive. Many spoke about how knowledge included in the archive (both presently and in the future) could be used to teach skills like those needed for survival. Moise Rabesca (Behchokò), like Hunter, referenced the photos of the chiefs on the back wall of the museum in telling the story of his father and the leadership of him and other councillors which should also be represented.



So, you know that it's like the pictures of all the chiefs [referencing the wall of the photos of the chiefs at the back of the museum], my dad was a councillor... all these people were councillors. So, they were very strong, very traditional. So, it would be nice to have these, to have these past councillors that were very strong, we should also have their pictures up as well. So, we would like to have... They were very strong-minded individuals who are genuine Elders. So, they were very strong leaders that we have had. So even though they are gone, we are here. I am very thankful that I am here. I live in Frank's Channel, so I have no chief or council. I live by myself.

MOISE RABESCA (interpreted by Jonas Lafferty)

Mike Nitsiza and Alphonse Apples emphasized the need for the documentation of Tłıchǫ knowledge, and both suggested the use of booklets (which inspired the creation of this series). The fostering of language and stories was a place where many of the Elders felt the museum could contribute. Many spoke of how having things in the museum would help teach traditional crafts and practices, while stimulating the sharing of stories. Bobby Pea'a talked about the ancestors' stories he learned from his grandmother, telling us:



*BIRCH BARK CANOE CONSTRUCTED BY ELDER NICK BLACK.
PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.*

“We have got to preserve our language. Just as the young man there might not be able to understand our language. How can the young people move forward into the future without our language? It seems like we are losing our language. Just as the young lady spoke about the... there are a lot of stories about the canoe, with making snowshoes, and sleds, and the drum. And we don’t have that in here. And if we have all these items in here, then we will see what our tradition is. And those things should be available...I know a lot of stories of our ancestors, and I used a dog team at one time. Some of the elders used caribou hide parka and all of us wore our traditional clothes. Even during the evenings and at night we would bring back caribou for our parents and just recently it is like we moved aside our traditions and started using modern equipment. That is where the difference is. It is very difficult to bring back our culture. If we have a museum like this and we have these traditional items in the museum, it would be good. There are a lot of stories that would be shared.”

BOBBY PEA’A (interpreted by Peter Huskey)



Joseph Whane also spoke about the need for everyday items that were used in the past to be present in the museum space so that the young people can know about them and learn from their stories.

People used dog teams and canoes in the past but today everything is simplified. Some of the stories I heard here, when you look at the canoe just as the young lady was speaking to, it's not made in one day. To make a canoe, you have to look for the right birch bark and look for wood. And it's not only that, the parka, caribou hide parka, moccasins, the snowshoes, even the caribou hide parka and caribou hide pants. They should be here within the museum. And also, the caribou hide teepee. Those items should be within the museum and the stories that would be contained within these items. The young people and the young people of the future will understand our culture.

JOSEPH WHANE (interpreted by Peter Huskey)

Within all the conversation surrounding the archive and museum, and among the ideas and teaching offered about how to go about the archival work, James Rabesca (Behchokò) spoke to remind the group about the past that led to the problems we are addressing. He stressed how it is important to keep this past and Tłıchǫ values at the forefront of this work and in all activities moving forward.

As we are talking about the museum, in the past it was very difficult to think about these things, but today as we are working on the museum and artifacts that we collected, there's a lot of political issues that we need to work through. The government didn't really encourage Dene people in the past, didn't make it easy for people to... so as Dene people we are kind of looking at white people a different way, just like they had things, we had none. God made everything for the world. Traditional knowledge is knowledge of Indigenous people. And then the white people they had their own ways to live, they have their own... when I compare our knowledge of our ancestors and knowledge today, white man's colonized knowledge, it all happened through the will of God, I believe.

JAMES RABESCA (interpreted by Peter Huskey and Violet Mary Mackenzie)

Key Learnings for Archival Research

A



Research activities moving forward should partner Elders and youth so they can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and include the youth in the creation of resources for future generations.

The physical presence of things is important to teaching and learning, especially in instances where there are no alternatives.

B



Tłıchǫ traditions of teaching and learning, as well as language, need to be at the forefront in preserving Tłıchǫ language and culture through the archive.

C



Families need to be represented in the archives, not just community leaders. We need to make a space for personal exploration while educating through exhibits.

D



A. FORT RAE, 1967. PHOTO BY NANCY O. LURIE, COURTESY OF THE MILWAUKEE PUBLIC MUSEUM; B. PHOTO BY DOROTHY CHOCOLATE; C. PHOTO BY DOROTHY CHOCOLATE; D. SNARE LAKE, 1966. PHOTO BY JEAN MORISSET; ALL PHOTOS TAKEN FROM THE CULTURAL COMMONS ARCHIVE.



PHOTO BY DOROTHY CHOCOLATE. TAKEN FROM THE CULTURAL COMMONS ARCHIVE.

Key Questions for Archival Research

- What do we keep?
- What do we not keep?
- How can language be kept alive through the archive and museum?
- How can stories be cared for and shared through the archive and museum?
- What are the priorities (which artifacts/stories)?
- How can we create a strategy that ensures that these priorities are addressed?

Participants

Rosa H. Mantla (Behchokò)
Henry Gon (Gamètì)
Marie Adele Rabesca (Whatì)
Mike Nitsiza (Whatì)
Hunter Mantla (Gamètì)
Michel Louis Rabesca (Behchokò)
Alphonse Apples (Gamètì)
Moise Rabesca (Behchokò)

Eileen Blackduck Mantla (Gamètì)
Albina Nitsiza (Whatì)
Bobby Pea'a (Wekweètì)
Noella Kodzin (Wekweètì)
Jimmy Kodzin (Wekweètì)
Joseph Whane (Wekweètì)
James Rabesca (Behchokò)

Discussions were had using a combination of English and Tłıchọ Yatì, interpreted by Violet Mary Mackenzie (Behchokò), Jonas Lafferty (Behchokò), Peter Huskey (Behchokò), and James Rabesca (Behchokò).



MICHEL LOUIS RABESCA AND ALPHONSE APPLES ENJOYING ARCHIVAL VIDEOS.
PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.



THE RESEARCH EXPO SET UP IN THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM BEHCHOKQ. PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.



December 7th, 2022

RESEARCH EXPO

@ the Community Museum on the 2nd floor of Kò Gocho
(Sportsplex), Behchokò

*T*he following day we held a public event in the museum space for all Tłıchų citizens. The archival table was joined by 12 other research booths held by graduate students and researchers working on Tłıchų lands. Following our archival learning circle, the Elders were again invited to tour the booths and the public was also welcomed to talk with researchers. Many of the research booths had promotional and information giveaways and provided the means for Tłıchų citizens to sign up to participate. In addition to bringing research back into the community, this made a welcoming space where researchers working with the Tłıchų came together, got to know each other, and shared with one another. Many laughs, ideas, and encouraging words were shared in this informal

networking opportunity, bringing together different aspects of Tłıchǫ research into the same room. It was a beautiful event that left many feeling great about this research moving forward.

The Cultural Commons Archive Booth

As the central booth of this event, the archival booth was again open to all participants to showcase some of the materials held within the archive. Like the previous day, attendees were invited to identify and write on photos, request copies of the photos or videos presented, and sign up for updates or interviews as the project progresses.



ELIZABETH (LIBBY) GOLDBERG AT THE CULTURAL COMMONS ARCHIVE BOOTH.

PHOTO BY REBECCA BOURGEOIS.

Attendees were also invited to take a survey to voice their opinions about the upcoming archival work. Questions included identifying information as well as:

- What do you see yourself using the archive for?
- How do you see yourself accessing the archive?
- Who is the archive for? Who would benefit from this archive?
- Do you have any suggestions for the archive? What should it include? How should it be organized?
- Do you have any comments or concerns about the archive that you would like to share with the archival team?

Examples of other Indigenous digital archives (The Inuvialuit Digital Library and the Blackfoot Digital Library) were also provided to give people a sense of how other Indigenous communities have approached the creation of their archives.

Interested people were also encouraged to sign up for updates on the ongoing archival work or indicate their interest in being a participant in future interviews or learning circles.

Tłı̄chų Nàowòò Deghats'etsaa: The Tłı̄chų Cultural Commons Digital Archive

The Department of Culture & Lands Protection is in the process of re-imagining the Tłı̄chų Cultural Commons into an online digital archive, available to all Tłı̄chų citizens.

We would love to hear from you!
Take our survey and tell us how
you see yourself using the
archive!

SCAN ME!



Or use the physical copies provided below!

If you have any questions or would like to chat about the ongoing archival work, please contact:

Department of Culture & Lands Protection OR Rebecca Bourgeois Student at UAlberta OR Karen Gelderman Arts and Heritage Facilitator
research@tlicho.ca rbourgeo@ualberta.ca karen.gelderman@tlicho.ca

We will also be doing interviews and learning circles in 2023. **If you are interested in participating more in this research, please contact Rebecca** (contact info above).

Our Archive, Our Story



Examples of Indigenous Digital Archives

The Inuvialuit Digital Library

Inuvialuit Pitqusiit Inuuniarutait: Inuvialuit Living History

Created and by the Inuvialuit Cultural Centre and the University of Alberta



Key Features

- Collections can be searched by place.
- A collection for language resources organized into lessons (for the three languages spoken in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region).
- Includes photos, videos, recordings, and documents.
- Photos etc. grouped into exhibits.
- Items can be added by community members.
- Files can be downloaded to personal devices for free.

Explore the Inuvialuit Digital Library here:



SCAN ME!

Or visit <https://inuvialuitdigitallibrary.ca>

The Blackfoot Digital Library

Created by the Blackfoot People, the University of Lethbridge, and Red Crow Community College



Key Features

- Includes a collection of 3D renderings of objects.
- Includes an interactive dictionary with pronunciations.
- Items can be added by community members.
- Files can be downloaded to personal devices for free.
- Collections can be searched by original location or by current location.

Explore the Blackfoot Digital Library here:



SCAN ME!

Or visit <https://www.blackfootdigitallibrary.com>

Local Research Booths

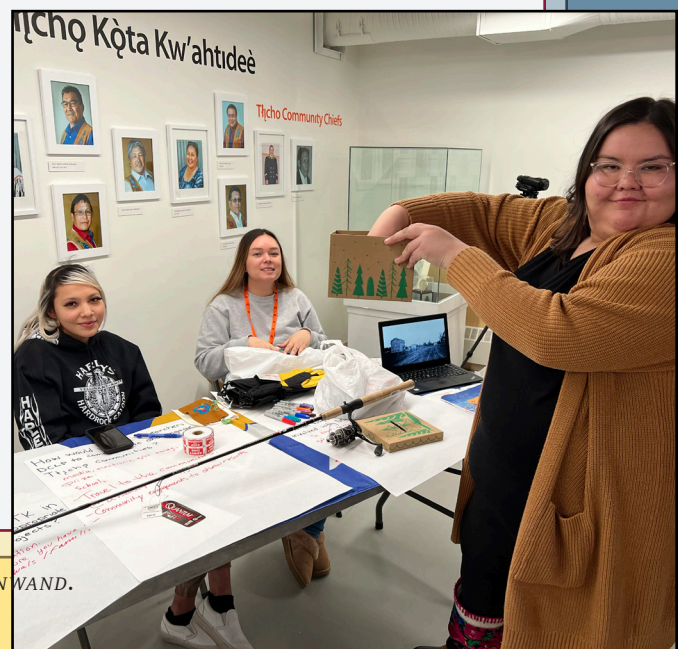
Mary Buckland (Curator, Heritage Education and Public Programming) joined us from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre to share some of their teaching collections and updates on the Tundra Science and Culture Camp. Drumming and laughter could be heard all the way from the mezzanine area!

“Among the highlights of the Night at the Museum event: one member of the public spent over half an hour interpreting the objects I had brought in Tłı̨chǫ, which another member of the public generously translated, including a braided caribou hide rope about which we knew very little – apparently, a rope of the size we would have traditionally been used for a baby hammock, while a thicker rope would be used for tying a dog to a sled. Also, specific to my job, representing the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and the event being held at the museum in Behchokǫ, I was able to speak informally with both Tłı̨chǫ Government staff as well as members of the community about their aspirations for arts and culture exchange between our institutions. These sorts of one-on-one interactions are always stimulating and productive and gives us opportunities to create dialogues with the public who don’t always have a representative voice in a formal meeting setting.”

MARY BUCKLAND



The Tłı̨chǫ Government’s DCLP (organized by Tyanna Steinwand, Janelle Nitsiza, and Tanisha Beaverho) hosted a table to chat with attendees about what they would like to see from their research and how they should go about handling the traditional knowledge they collect. Their booth even included a raffle for some great door prizes!



University of Alberta Ph.D. Student Libby Goldberg hosted a crafting and arts table where anyone was welcome to drop-in and learn/teach some beading and sewing skills. This booth was a hit with Elders and youth alike!

“The night at the museum event went very well. It was great both to see the interest in the archival photos, as well as the diversity of research done in partnership with the TG—many of which I did not know about. Most of all, it was heartwarming to see Elders and young people work together at the crafting table.”

LIBBY GOLDBERG



Karen Gelderman (Arts and Heritage Facilitator) from DCLP, who led the creation of the museum space the event was hosted in, continued her work with Tłıchǫ citizens to map out Mq̄nfwı’s family tree and share archival photos from a variety of sources.

“There was such a positive vibe talking to Tłıchǫ visitors and participants about their own family heritage. It’s exciting to think about preserving and sharing the stories, especially those not yet recorded or written down. Ultimately, this is what the archive and collection aims to do but from those I spoke to, I sensed an urgency to make sure this happens.”

KAREN GELDERMAN



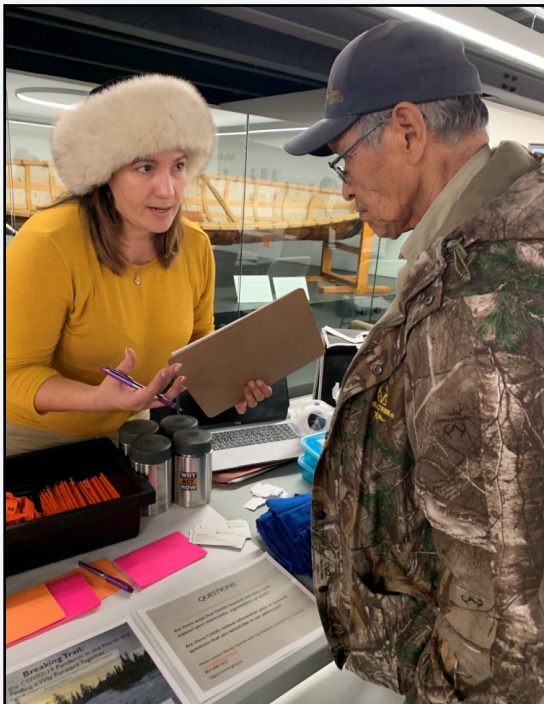


Aurora Research Institute displayed their research through posters with updates on their Celebrating Families project as well as one for their new Tłı̨cẖ inspired Xàgots'eèhk'ò Journal. Research expo attendees were invited to come up and read about where these two projects are and where they are going.

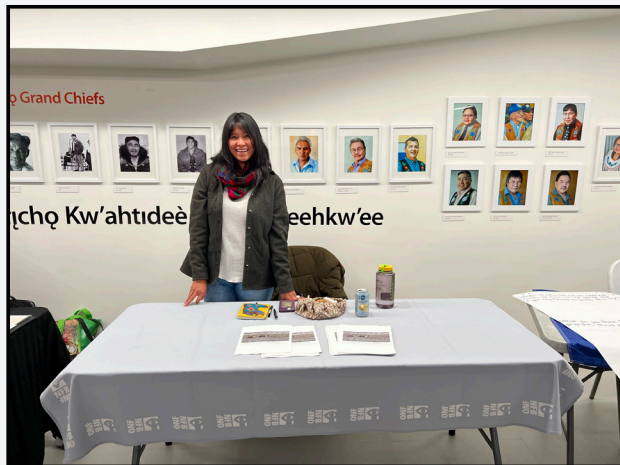
Hotiì ts'eeda was represented by their Research and Policy Advisor Camilia Zoe-Chocolate. Camilia showcased the breadth of programming and research offered through Hotiì ts'eeda, including their studentships and health research.



Rachel Oystrek joined us from the University of Alberta's Indigenous and Global Health Research Group to talk to Tłı̨cẖ citizens about vaccine hesitancy.



Ph.D. student Crystal Milligan from the University of Toronto Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation spoke with attendees about her doctoral research surrounding the development of culturally responsive learning healthcare systems through organizational learning. She also shared her work with the Tłıchǫ Government on the development of the Tłıchǫ Hotı̄ ts'eeda Edets'ats'edı̄ Etǫ/Tłıchǫ Healing Path.



Filmmaker Melaw Nakehk'ó shared her National Film Board of Canada documentary film K'I Tah Amongst the Birch, which details her COVID-19 pandemic experience on the land with her family.

Ph.D. Candidate Angeline Letourneau and Master's Student Lucas Schmaus from the University of Alberta joined to chat with attendees about their work on the future of mining in Tłıchǫ territory in the context of advancing climate change impacts.



“The event served as a valuable opportunity to check in with community members about our work. By engaging with the community at an early stage in our research process, we were able to shift our project based on feedback that we heard during the event. It also allowed us to have conversations with other researchers working with the Tłıchǫ, furthering our shared goals of serving the community.”

ANGELINE LETOURNEAU

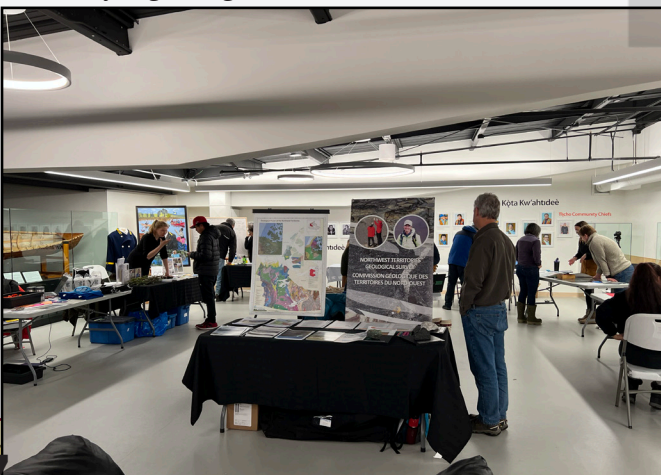


Elisabeth Pillchshammer from Laughing Lichen and Violet Mackenzie worked together to present the Tłıchǰ Ethnobotany Project. Their booth brought the land to the museum and featured dried plants as well as fresh spruce and other tree boughs.

Alice Legat and Albertine Eyakfwo from DCLP shared their fieldwork on Whatıdeè, between Xàelıı (Marion Lake Village) and below the falls. Here they documented cabins, old camp sites, grave sites, and traditional fishing areas. Research Expo attendees were invited to explore maps, pictures, and videos of these places they investigated out on the land.



The Northwest Territories Geological Survey was represented by Kumari Karunaratne and John Ketchum to share information on their research into the geological diversity within the Northwest Territories. They spent time chatting with Tłıchǰ citizens about their experiences with things such as permafrost and demonstrating the richness of the territory’s geological resources.



“I thought the trade-show style event was great. The space was inviting and small enough for more in-depth conversations. We weren’t ever overwhelmed with people but had a steady flow of people to talk to.”

KUMARI KARUNARATNE

Documenting the Event

We were joined by Pablo Saravanja and Jay Bulckaert from aRTLeSS Collective to document the event and get feedback from Elders and attendees about the work that is being done on Tłıchǫ lands and the importance of cultural heritage work. With the help of translator Harriet Paul, they interviewed Elders, researchers, and attendees to get to the heart of the event and discuss important topics in Tłıchǫ research, resilience, and traditions.

“It was great to see all of the different projects and people together in one place and recognize just how much important Tłıchǫ work is going on all at once.”

PABLO SARAVANJA



Words from the Elders...

Thank you so much to all the Elders who participated in this event. Many of them spoke with us multiple times and all of them were generous with their stories and thoughts on the work that is ahead of us. We appreciate your willingness to partner with us in this process and the teachings you shared with us along the way in the name of teaching the next generations. Whaèhdòò godı t'à hoghasàhtòò ması naxıewò.

Here is what they had to say about the Night at the Museum event:

“

This is the first time that we are trying to display all the Tłıchọ Elders' traditional tools here and create some kind of a museum. Here also we have some questions about how we should get involved. It's mostly by communication through video, radios, media, magazines, and books, particularly for the library. And also, we need to connect, connect with the rest of the world. We really need to teach our next generations about language and traditional ways of life. So, this is a good gathering for that in particular because we need to really connect with the next generations so they are the ones who can carry it on. Our legends, our stories, how we survived, how we got here. It is so so important.

MIKE NITSIZA

”



“

There is a story behind these objects. There is a story about the sled covers and decorative strings for dog sled harness. Talking about caribou clothing, caribou tents, this should happen. That would be good because this is what the ancestors used to do. But we can't always just talk about it, we want to put our hands on this stuff, to make things with our hands. We should see a lot of things in the museum. When you think about it, in the old days, we know people went through difficult times. We know this because people talked about it. This is what our grandparents told us and this is how we know. When we're talking about the museum, what are we saying is we want to see it.

MARIE ADELE RABESCA (translated by Corine Nitsiza)

”



PHOTO BY ARTLESS COLLECTIVE.

When I think about it, this museum is a good idea. It is good for our generations to teach themselves and know about it. For me, there is a boat hanging there. When I look at it, my relatives used those boats. For me, when thinking about the past, our relatives used to travel on the land, I am aware of that. But the boat that's here now, the boat was not made in front of me so I'm not aware of the boat, that's how I look at it. My relatives used to travel by boats on the water, that's how I look at it. Our children in the future, if there is an ancestors' clothing place [museum] and if they look at it, maybe they will think or wonder, and they can make our language strong and make our tradition strong. If they don't look at it, it's like they will be confused. So, to have an ancestors' clothing place [museum] and have these things [clothing] that will be good, that's what we think.

MICHEL LOUIS RABESCA (translated by Corine Nitsiza)



PHOTO BY ARTLESS COLLECTIVE.

“
Nowadays, what needs to be worked on, ancestors' clothing place [museum], people have been talking about it, some older people have expressed their thoughts. Today, we are living at, we are losing Elders. Now people like me are Elders, there's not many who are living. This is what's going to happen in our land. If this happens, if there are displays of ancestors clothing, people can look at it, children can look at it, not just for now, and for future generations. They [the next generation] will think this is what they did for them.
”

JIMMY KODZIN (translated by Corine Nitsiza)



PHOTO BY ARTLESS COLLECTIVE.

As Elders, we are on board, it belongs to the Elders. And you talking about ancestors' clothing place [museum], we should protect that. It belongs to the Tłıchǫ. They [Tłıchǫ] have worked with that, you don't get anything for free.

It's like winning, if you use ancestors' clothing, it will make you stronger because of their [Tłıchǫ] way of life, speaking your language, speaking in Tłıchǫ, makes us stronger. With clothing, if we use the clothing it makes us stronger... All of us to help one another, whoever. Not too long ago my father passed. At that age, we have collected language and have hung onto it, together, we are not going to say who is right. We have to help one another. We want our language to be around, all of us, all Tłıchǫ people, from Dettah and Enòòda area that far, as Tłıchǫ people we can help each other. We can hang onto our way of life; we can use our ancestors' clothing.. We don't know the ancestors' clothing nowadays. We can make it learn how to make it and then we can protect it.

MOISE RABESCA (translated by Corine Nitsiza)



PHOTO BY ARTLESS COLLECTIVE.



Participants

- Aurora Research Institute/Xàgots'eèhk'ò Journal
- Hotì ts'eeda NWT Spor Support Unit
- Laughing Lichen
- The National Film Board of Canada
- Northwest Territories Geological Survey
- Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre
- Tìchqò Government Department of Culture and Lands Protection
- University of Alberta Department of Anthropology
- University of Alberta Department of Medicine
- University of Alberta Department of Resource Economics and Environmental Sociology
- University of Toronto Health Services Research & Indigenous Health



A NOTE FROM DCLP

I am very pleased to see our Elders, researchers and DCLP staff come together these past two days. It is important to hear from our community members especially those that will be contributing to the archives and also from those that will be accessing the archive to conduct their own personal research. Hearing thoughts on research, the importance of documentation and what participants felt are important aspects for an archive, was significant. All comments shared will help to shape the archive as it is being developed.

Gathering in our mini museum to share and learn about the different types of research happening in our region created a beautiful energy! An energy of warmth, pride, joy and inspiration. Seeing researchers interacting with the youth and Elders representing our 4 Tłıchǫ communities was wonderful to see. Smiles from ear to ear on all the faces was clearly evident of a successful event as participants took it all in by looking at photos, smelling the medicines and touching some artifacts from years gone by. This moment in time as I glanced over the room, seeing various interactions filled my heart with gratitude. Needless to say that this gathering brought out many wonderful reflections of times past and an opportunity to witness these special moments as a learner and or observer. Very powerful.

It is our hope that these two days were just the beginning of many more research events to come. I thank all who came out and contributed and I look forward to our next event!

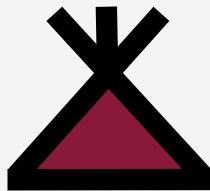
Masi cho,

Tammy Steinwand-Deschambeault

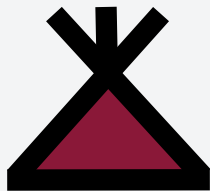
Director, Dept. of Culture and Lands Protection

NEXT STEPS

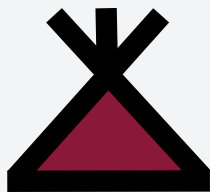
Carrying with us the key learnings and the experiences from this event, we look forward to progressing through the archival research. Our next steps include:



Send archive survey out to Tłıchǫ citizens more broadly.



Conduct archival research interviews.



Host archival learning circles.



Bring the sharing circle and Research Expo events into Whatì, Gamètì, and Wekweètì.

If you are a Tłıchǫ citizen and would like to get involved in this research or would simply like to learn more, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Department of Culture and Lands Protection
research@tlicheo.ca

or
Rebecca Bourgeois
rbourgeo@ualberta.ca

MASÌ CHO!

We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone who attended the 2 day event!



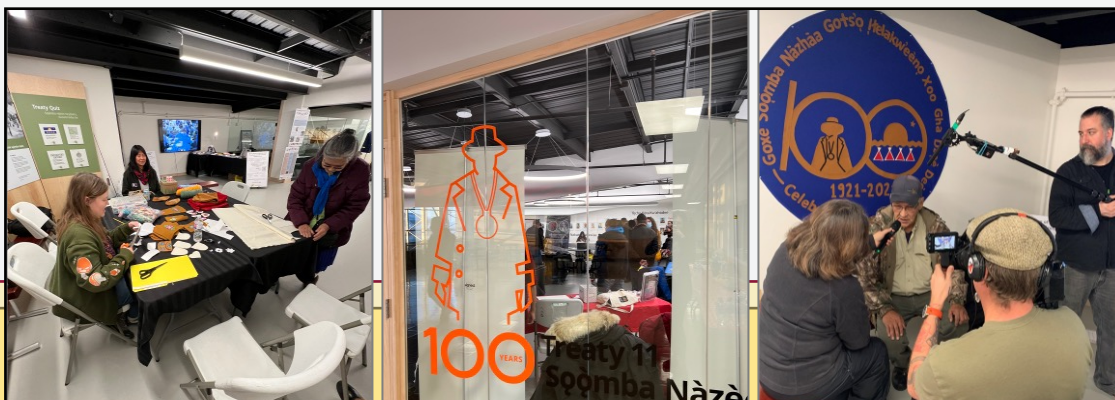
To the Elders, thank you for welcoming our research and sharing your stories. We hope to continue this research and strengthen these relationships through your teachings and guidance that you have entrusted us with.

To our other sharing circle attendees, thank you for your willingness to participate and share your thoughts and ideas.

To the translators and interpreters, thank you for being the link between the language groups and for making sure the Elders and everyone else was able to share, in whichever way they wanted.

To the researchers, thank you for your enthusiasm and the effort you put into hosting a research booth.

To all attendees of the Research Expo, thank you for coming out and engaging with us, especially on such a cold day.



PHOTOS BY REBECCA BOUTRIGEOIS.

Funding for these events was provided by the Tłı̨chǫ Government Department of Culture and Lands Protection and the Mitacs Accelerate Program. Food was provided by F.C. Services.



Dedats'eetsaa:
Tłı̨chǫ Research & Training Institute



This research is further supported by:

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The Institute for Circumpolar Health Research

UAlberta North

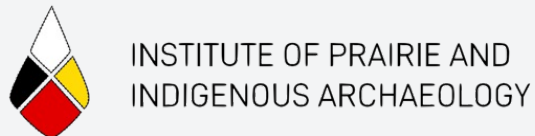
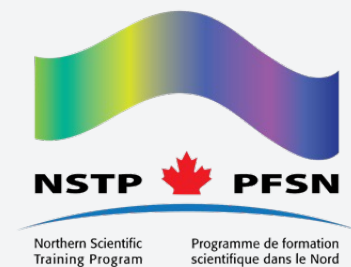
University of Alberta Kule Institute for Advanced Scholarship

Institute of Prairie and Indigenous Archaeology

The Northern Scientific Training Program (Polar Knowledge Canada)

University of Alberta Department of Anthropology

The Bryan-Gruhn Endowment Fund



Tłchọ Cultural Commons Research Series

This series was inspired by our conversations with Tłchọ Elders during the first sharing circle.

At this circle, Mike Nitsiza (Whatì), spoke of how he has begun to use booklets to share stories and teachings and how it is a great way to get people excited about these things. Alphonse Apples (Gamètì) also stressed the importance of documenting knowledge, and he too suggested the use of booklets to communicate our work and Tłchọ knowledge to the next generations.

With this series, we hope to showcase our research process and the stories that we are so lucky to hear from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and community members throughout the Tłchọ Cultural Commons Archival Research Project.

Whaèhdqò godı t'à hoghasàehtqò masì naxiewq!