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Phase II – Dene Nation Mapping Project – Gwich'in Materials (2006-2007)

The Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute met most of the goals (1-6) outlined in the Phase I – Repatriating Gwich'in Traditional Knowledge from the Dene Mapping Project Report. The tasks for Phase II were outlined as follows:

1. Request from the Dene Nation temporary custody of all materials from the Dene Mapping Project of interest to the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute so that the material can be conserved and duplicated.
2. Copy the contents of the nine file folders (an estimated 1000 pages) containing hunter/trapper biographies and related materials and copy the nine cassette tapes.
3. Consult with a qualified, reputable Conservation Consultant concerning the cost of stabilizing and conserving the map mosaics.
4. Repair damaged maps;
5. Place maps in acid-free folders, in flat storage in proper map cabinets.
6. Make a digital copy each of the individual annotated map sheets.
7. Digitize information directly from the map mosaic copies that is missing from the current Dene Nation database (post-1980 phase of Dene Mapping Project).

Randy Freeman, of DownNorth Consulting, was hired to supervise two main tasks of the Phase II Dene Nation Mapping Project which included the digitizing and photocopying task carried out by Nadira Begg. Nadira's wages were funded through the Gwich'in Tribal Council. Randy was responsible for introducing Nadira to the archives staff in order to digitize and photocopy. Randy Freeman also supervised the conservation of the maps (including equipment purchase) and assisted the conservator in purchasing materials required. Randy took the maps to be scanned and mailed the files to the GIS contractor. Randy arranged for the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre to provide space to accommodate the map cabinets.

The reports of Sue Cross – Conservator, Tracy Creighton – GIS Consultant, and Nadira Begg – sound technician are included below.

Dene Nation Mapping Project – Gwich'in Materials
Map Conservation Project Summary

Submitted by Susan Cross, Cross Art Conservation Services, May 8, 2007

In January of 2007, Cross Art Conservation Services was contracted to provide conservation services for the Phase II Dene Nation Mapping project – Gwich'in Materials (2006-2007). This report is a summary of the conservation efforts that were completed up to the end of March, 2007.

A total of 22 map sets were delivered to Cross Art Conservation Services in Calgary. The map sets were selected by Randy Freeman of DownNorth Consulting from those housed in the NWT Archives, as being the maps in most need of immediate conservation treatment. Each map set was comprised of a number of 1:250,000 topographic maps that had been cut and taped together into “mosaics” and on to which traditional knowledge information had been drawn with either coloured pencils, ink or coloured markers.

The map sets were examined initially to determine the scope of the work to be done. Included in the 22 sets delivered were 2 sets which were excluded from treatment: one set which was completely laminated, and one set which did not seem to have any information drawn on it. The remaining 20 sets included a total of 207 maps. The number of maps in any one set ranged from 2/set to 22/set.

A number of conservation problems were identified:

1) Adhesive Tapes

The individual maps within each “mosaic” have been attached to each other with tape which has deteriorated with time. The type of tape and the type of associated deterioration includes:

a) masking tape which has become discoloured, dried out and brittle. The tape has failed in some areas, has become ‘cemented’ to the paper in other areas and has caused minor staining;

b) transparent adhesive tape (cellophane, “scotch tape”) which has discoloured and become brittle. The adhesive has changed chemically over time resulting in heavy staining of the paper. All adhesive capacity has been lost so that the tape backing or carrier has become detached from the paper. Tape has been applied more recently to joints which have failed or to repair some of the torn or weakened areas. The newer adhesive tape has not deteriorated yet but will with time.

c) reinforced strapping tape which has discoloured and stained the paper. The adhesive has changed character so that it is extremely sticky.

All tapes where the adhesive was exposed along the joins have picked up dirt and debris including clothing lint, dirt and hairs.

2) Crease and Folds

Some of the map mosaics have been folded and refolded many, many times. The fibres in the paper at the folds have become weak and have failed, resulting in holes and tears. Some folds in the paper were made deliberately so that adjoining maps were properly aligned prior to taping.

3) Tears

In addition to the tears resulting from weakened fibres at the folds, many of the maps are torn along the edges. The extent of the tears range from small nicks to losses of large “chunks” of the map. Most of these tears are probably a result of handling these large and awkward map sets.

Work Completed

1) Dismantling of the Map Mosaics

Many of the maps, particularly the larger sets, were impossible to handle without causing further damage. After discussion with Randy Freeman, it was decided that the priority of the project was to dismantle all the mosaics. In some case, the joins between maps had already failed. The other joins were released either by removing the masking tape (in some areas it peeled away easily) or by cutting through the tape with a scalpel.

2) Removing the Tapes

The second priority was to remove all evidence of all types of tape from the maps. Virtually all types of commercially available adhesive tapes are unstable and will deteriorate with time so it was important to remove the tape and tape residue from the paper so that further staining and damage would be minimized. All of the tape was removed from the edges of all the maps. On the map sets completed by the end of the contract, all tape from old repairs and weakened areas was removed also.

3) Flattening of maps

Creases and folds in the paper were locally humidified or lightly moistened and placed under weights to flatten them. Since the majority of the information on the maps has been recorded with ink or markers which are reactive to water, the use of humidity or moisture has to be minimal and selectively applied only in areas where there are no annotations.

4) Tear repair

For the completed map sets, all tears and weakened areas in the paper were repaired with document repair tape applied to the reverse of the paper. The document repair tapes use an archival tissue with an acid-free adhesive, are more chemically inert, and are considered less potentially harmful for the paper. The use of wheat starch paste and Japanese tissue for mending (the best method in archival terms) was considered but was rejected for use because of the increased time needed for treatment.

5) Storage

Each completed map set was placed within an acid-free map folder (24" x 30") purchased from Carr McLean, an archival materials supplier. Individual maps within the set were interleaved with acid-free tissue. The folders were placed in acid-free drop-front archival boxes (24" x 30") purchased from Gaylord, an archival materials supplier.

Work still to be completed

By the time the 140 hours of time on the contract was completed, a total of 12 of the 20 map sets were completed up to the point where no further work is required. This represents 87 of the 207 maps delivered.

The remaining 8 sets, which includes a further 120 maps, have been conserved to the point where the mosaics have been dismantled and the tape has been removed. These sets still require flattening, tear repair and storage.

I am estimating that to complete the work on these map sets would require approximately 50 hours more work.

Dene Nation Mapping Project Data Clean-Up
GIS Phase 1
Submitted by Tracy Creighton

The mapsheet NTS 107B (Aklavik) was used as a starting point. The four scanned maps for NTS 107B were georeferenced to the 1:250,000 NTDB basedata for this mapsheet. Vectors representing Dene Trails that intersected this mapsheet were selected and saved to a new working file, and this working file was then subsetted into a new file for each participant for ease of editing, comparison, and versioning.

Topology was examined for each participant's trails. Broken lines that were part of what should be one continuous line were edited and snapped together. If attributes for all segments were identical, they were then merged to one line. Lines that met at an intersection were snapped at that intersection, and lines that intersected each other were split and snapped at that intersection. Similar lines with different attributes representing the same trail used by different participants were edited so that one consistent line was used, but duplicates of this consistent line were made for each unique participant and left in the database for now. Future work will require these redundancies to be dealt with. A new field was added to the attribute table for each participant in order to track the edits using a coding system.

After the initial vector editing process, the completeness of the data was examined as the precursor to the next step of removing redundancies from the data. At this point several problems were discovered. For example, trails exist in the database that are not drawn on any of the scanned maps, and can therefore not be edited without assumption. Additionally, trails drawn on some maps are missing from the database. As the attributes are stored in hardcopy interview and only two of the maps have accompanying legends, digitizing these trails would store them without attributes. It is recommended that these issues be rectified as much as is possible. However, these problems do not preclude further data cleaning, as edits to the topology and logical consistency will still constitute a major improvement on the data as it now stands.

Phase II Dene Nation Mapping Project - Gwich'in Materials (2006-2007)

Submitted by Nadria Begg

I would like to report that this project is now complete. I have completed the photocopying and I have digitized all nine tapes. As I had mentioned in my first report I had made one set of copies and then after reading the job offer realized GSCI had requested two sets. The second set of copies took considerably less time. I completed the second set of copies on February 3, 2007. The digitizing was completed on Friday March 2, 2007.

On February 2, 2007 I arrived at the archives and Randy Freeman was there to introduce me to Norm Glowach. The equipment was set up at a desk along with a laptop and Randy had pulled the tapes I would be using had placed them at the desk I would be using. After our introduction we quickly opened up the Launch Pro Tools application.

Norm asked me to look through the tapes and organize them into sets. Most of the tapes that had been pulled did belong to a set of tapes. I soon realized that there were significantly more tapes there than had been outlined in the project (nine cassette tapes). After counting the tapes there were a total of twenty five cassette tapes. Immediately I noticed that not all the tapes were related to the Gwich'in so I was able to eliminate 10 of the tapes and others were clearly belonging to the Gwich'in, all others would have to be reviewed to determine what they were.

As Norm explained to me, tapes are recorded on two separate levels so that in case it clips which essentially is when the level peaks too high then it can no longer be used. The first tape I worked on was numbered tape 66 and was titled "AMOS NIDITCHIE AND JULIENNE ANDRE – ARCTIC RED RIVER. The taped "clipped" three times, on the first recording and so the initial recording had to be discarded and the second one which was set at lower levels was saved.

Tape 66 "Amos Niditchie and Julian Andre - Arctic Red River"

The interviewer is Edward Nazon. Julian Andre was the first to be interviewed on the tape; he talks about the white people trying to buy our land for just a few dollars. He believed that not many people understood the treaty. He also stated that during the Treaty of 1921 fur was a good price and we did not need the five dollars that they offered the people. Later recorded on this tape is Amos Niditchie, he talked about how the development of the land by white man meant that the animals became scarce and the fish are poor.

Tape 71 "Neil Colin 1975 - General Info on Mackenzie Delta"

Neil Colin starts by talking about areas, he names a number of places that the Gwich'in people hunted and trapped. He tells of how the people followed the caribou and how in

the fall time the caribou would move and therefore so did the people. That meant that in the fall the people would move into the mountains. Neil also talked to elders who told him that there were many, many people buried out on the land and that there were many graves all over where people traveled and moved. He talked a great deal about how and where people would travel. The last thing he mentions is how the Gwich'in and the Eskimo people would fight and were at war with one another. The RCMP had a hard time keeping the Gwich'in and the Eskimo people from killing one another.

Tape 72 "Neil Colin - Peel River Alcohol Committee"

This tape is not long and covers nothing on Land Use or Mapping. The tape discusses a bit of Neil Colin's personal history but for the most part focuses on how he became involved in the Peel River Alcohol Committee and how this Committee started.

Tape 73 "Neil Colin - Fieldwork Delta Region Report August 1974"

Neil Colin talks to people who are out on the land both up and down the Peel River. He records John Niditchi at Arctic Red River on April 27, 1974 and he explains what he is doing and why he is interviewing people. He visits with Peter Thompson on August 3, 1974 and they talk about Thomas Berger. On August 4, 1974 he visits Mary Kaye and talks with her. Thomas Berger visited McPherson on August 5, 1974 and Neil Colin was in McPherson to meet with and to show Mr. Berger around. On August 7, 1974 he visits with Peter Thompson again at the mouth of the Peel. On August 13, 1974 Neil visits with Andrew and Agnes Neyando. August 26, 1974 is a busy day as today school starts and it is busy around Fort McPherson. Neil talks about the highway and the pipeline and how the people are concerned because they are hearing that the pipeline will be put in 4 miles below Fort McPherson.

Tape 67 "Neil Colin - Delta Report October 11, 1974"

This tape is approximately 14 minutes long and it was recorded on a 90 minute tape.

Tape 76 "Neil Colin"

This tape begins with an interview with Nellie Mitchell at 85 years of age. Nellie talks about her family history and describes how her family worked and moved. Neil Colin describes using the map, where her family travelled and moved as early as 1900. Nellie Mitchell and her family is color coded brown on the map. Neil then talks about William Neyando born 1932, his family is color coded blue on the map. Herbert Blake is next and he talks about his family history and how and where they moved, his family is colour coded red on the map.

Tape 70 "Amos Niditchi"

This tape is Amos Niditchi of Arctic Red River with Chief Tadit Francis present. Amos is speaking in Gwich'in. Treaty information by Jimmy Thompson of Fort McPherson.

Tape 78-79 "Jim Edwards"

This tape is a set and is followed by tape 79 and this recording is of Jim Edwards recording himself on his personal historical knowledge. His information is from his own life as well as what the elders have shared with him. He begins by talking about Arctic Red and how long ago it was a fishing camp and how people would come down from Snake River and would spend the summer fishing at this camp. He talks about the Gwich'in people and how they met the Slavey people (the story of the wood chip) by traveling the Mackenzie to Fort Good Hope. This meeting between the people was friendly. The Gwich'in had not yet met any white people but when they arrived in Fort Good Hope the white people were there and this was the first meeting of the Gwich'in and the white man. He talks about the missionaries and how the RC missionaries ended up in Arctic Red and how the Anglican missionaries ended up in Fort McPherson. He goes on to explain his maps and the markings he's made. He talks about the names of places, rivers, lakes and creeks. He knows many of the Gwich'in names for different places though some he has forgotten. He tells of how no Inuit were ever in these areas esp. not in the mountain area. Long ago the only people in the mountain areas were the Indian people. He continues on to talk in great detail about the old name places and historically the Gwich'in peoples hunting and fishing areas. He tells about how people long ago would corral the caribou at two places long ago and how one of these places was at Rat River. People would hunt Mountain Squirrel and it was valuable and good for clothing esp. for children's clothing later he mentions how all small animal pelts such as (fox, ground squirrel, muskrat ... etc were used for children's clothing). He talks about whaling and where whaling would occur. He talks about how there were 2 places that people could go for flint rock, somewhere along the Richardson Mountain and a spot up the Peel River. This flint rock was good for starting fire but it was also used for tools such as knives, axes and arrows. Bones and Horns of caribou and moose were used mostly for tools. Bear bones were the best for tools however because they tended to be less brittle than the bones and horns of caribou and moose. These two tapes seem to have a lot of history and are quite detailed.

This is the last of all the tapes to be digitized. As with all the tapes I could not write down everything I heard but I did try to give as much detail as I could.

The project itself was interesting and listening to the stories was enjoyable. I was hoping to hear more people (more elders) but I still appreciated what I took from this project. Hearing about our history, the land our people travelled on long ago and how our people would travel was very interesting.

Once again I would like to thank the Gwich'in Social and Cultural Institute for giving me this opportunity. Should you have further projects in Yellowknife that you would require hiring a contractor for, please keep me in mind.