

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Sahtugotine (Bear Lake People) believe that all the land is sacred. Sahyoue-Edacho are sacred places, fundamental to the transmission of Sahtugotine culture. For non-Dene Canadians, they are an opportunity to better understand the origins of Sahtu-Dene culture, spiritual values, life-style and land use. This view is not unique, indeed many Aboriginals, including those inhabitants of the Subarctic, believe that the land is alive with stories, which blend the natural with the supernatural worlds. These stories are essential in defining these inhabitants as people in relationship to the earth.<sup>1</sup> Sahyoue-Edacho were selected by the Sahtugotine for nomination as a national historic site and on February 22, 1998 were announced as a national historic site by Andy Mitchell, Secretary of State for Parks. The Sahtugotine speak the North Slavey language in which Sahyoue translates to 'Bear Clothing' and Edacho to 'Big Point'. This document recognizes and uses the North Slavey language in referring to these two place names.

Sahyoue-Edacho rise gradually from the surface of Great Bear Lake (156 m asl) to broad and reasonably flat summits of approximately 650 and 725 m asl respectively. Around the perimeters of both peninsulas, a series of raised beaches have been formed by the rebound of the land following the melting of the glaciers. These raised beaches contain the majority of the known human occupation of the National Historic Site<sup>2</sup> and confirm that ancestral Aboriginal peoples have frequented the shores of Great Bear Lake since time immemorial. Physical evidence of pre-contact occupation on the south shore of Keith Arm has proven to be more than 5000 years old. Several identifiable cultural groups came together around the lake, and by the early twentieth century a dialect of Slavey had become the common language of these Bear Lake People. In 1929 the anthropologist Cornelius Osgood recognized the emergence of a separate cultural group which identified itself as the Sahtugotine.

The agenda paper for Sahyoue-Edacho describes:

*An earlier time in history, when giant animals ruled the world. Dene elders state that animals such as lion, lived at a time when the land to the south was full of ice. A great medicine man named Yamoria came and made the world safe for the Dene. Sahtu-Dene narrative describes many locations where the land is formed around the bodies of the giant animals. Subsequently human shaman, ancestral to the modern Dene continue to battle with the spirits of these animals which remained in the land. Physical localities associated with the narratives from this era often form points of spiritual power on the landscape that require respect and veneration. Though these themes imply antiquity, the mediation between the spirits that inhabit the land and the Dene is an on-going task for the Sahtu-Dene Shaman.*

The community of Déline and Parks Canada have worked diligently in the establishment of these areas as a national historic site. This document brings together Parks Canada, the Sahtugotine and others to create a commemorative integrity statement that sets out objectives for the site in ways that are respectful of both Parks Canada cultural resource management principles and Sahtugotine values. In this way we will continue to work towards fulfilling the recommendations outlined by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada; determining and putting in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure the long term protection of these two cultural landscapes.

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<sup>1</sup> Agenda paper, (Nelson 1983: 227).

<sup>2</sup> Agenda Paper, 890.

## **1.2 NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OBJECTIVES**

Parks Canada's National Historic Sites Policy sets out the following objectives for national historic sites:<sup>3</sup>

- a) To foster knowledge and appreciation of Canada's past through a national program of historical commemoration.
- b) To ensure the commemorative integrity of national historic sites administered by Parks Canada by protecting and presenting them for the benefit, education and enjoyment of this and future generations, in a manner that respects the significant and irreplaceable legacy represented by these places and their associated resources.
- c) To encourage and support the protection and presentation by others of places of national historic significance that are not administered by Parks Canada.

## **1.3 COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY**

"Commemorative integrity" is a concept used to describe the health and wholeness of a national historic site, ensuring that the reasons for national designation are respected in all actions relating to the protection and presentation of such places. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when:

- a) the resources that symbolize or represent its importance are not impaired or under threat,
- b) the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public, and
- c) the sites' heritage values are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

This Commemorative Integrity Statement details what is required to ensure the goal of commemorative integrity of the Sahyoue-Edacho Site. In sections 2, 3 and 4, the three elements of commemorative integrity will be dealt with as they relate to these two distinct landscapes, and commemorative integrity objectives will be identified for each element.

## **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY STATEMENT**

A commemorative integrity statement is a site-specific elaboration of what is meant by commemorative integrity at a particular national historic site. Its purpose is:

- a) to focus management on what is most important;
- b) to ensure that there is a focus on the whole (the "site"), not just the parts (individual resources);
- c) it is the basis for reporting to Canadians on the state of national historic sites.

A commemorative integrity statement is a guide to help focus management of the site. It is a policy document prepared to assist in the protection and presentation of the significant resources and values. The commemorative integrity statement indicates an acknowledgment of the importance of these resources and values but does not in itself either commit to or prohibit specific actions. It defines what should be done in protection, presentation, or management of the site in order to ensure commemorative integrity. The commemorative integrity statement serves as a baseline reference of accepted values to be considered and

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<sup>3</sup> Canada, *Parks Canada Guiding Principles and Operational Policies*, (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1994) 71 ("*Parks Canada Policies*").

accounted for in the decisions and actions by any one person or organization that may affect the integrity of the site, in whole or in part.

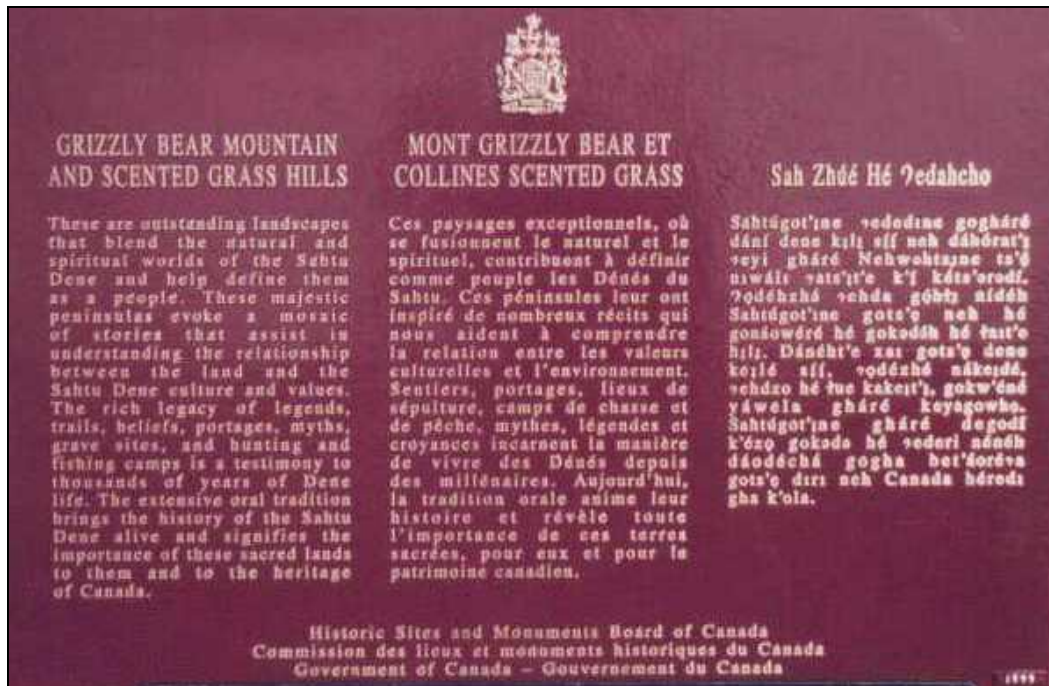
Sahyoue-Edacho are two sites listed as Sahtu heritage places and sites identified in the Sahtugotine and Metis Final Land Claim Agreement (1993) and are within the Sahtu Settlement Area. This planning document recognizes certain Sahtu rights and responsibilities within the Sahtu Settlement Area. Nothing in this document shall be interpreted or translated to invalidate or diminish any rights or benefits acceded to the Sahtugotine and Metis under the Sahtugotine and Metis Final Land Claim Agreement.

## 1.5 STATEMENT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTENT

Grizzly Bear Mountain and Scented Grass Hills were designated a national historic site in 1998.

The reason for national significance is :

- their cultural values -- expressed through the inter-relationship between the landscape, oral histories, graves and cultural resources, such as trails and cabins -- help to explain and contribute to an understanding of the origin, spiritual values, lifestyle and land-use of the Sahtugotine.<sup>4</sup>



Sahyoue (Grizzly Bear Mountain) / Edacho (Scented Grass Hills) Historic Sites and Monuments Plaque 1998

<sup>4</sup> For further information on the deliberations of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, see Appendix 2: *Excerpts from the November 1996 Minutes of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.*

## 1.6 DESIGNATED PLACE: DESCRIPTION OF SAHYOUE-EDACHO

The boundaries of the Sahyoue-Edacho Site are as set out in Map 2.<sup>5</sup> The Site comprises the entire land mass of both peninsulas as well as the necks of the peninsulas, as originally set out in the *Agenda Paper* presented to the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The boundaries of the Site extend to the low-water mark in Great Bear Lake.

## 1.7 GEOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Sahyoue-Edacho comprise two peninsulas which reach into Great Bear Lake from the west and south respectively. They are large peninsulas, of approximately 2500 and 3400 square kilometers respectively,<sup>6</sup> and together they constitute Canada's largest national historic site.

Sahyoue-Edacho rise gradually from the surface of Great Bear Lake (156 m asl) to broad and reasonably flat summits of approximately 650 and 725 m asl respectively. Both mountains are covered with open boreal forest. Around the perimeters of both peninsulas, a series of raised beaches has been formed by the rebound of the land following the melting of the glaciers. These raised beaches contain the majority of the known human occupation of the National Historic Site.

Pursuant to Chapter 19 of the *Sahtu Land Claim Agreement*, the Federal Crown owns the majority of the land (surface as well as mineral or sub-surface rights) of Sahyoue-Edacho. In contrast, the necks of both peninsulas are primarily Sahtu Settlement lands (Map 2). The D line Land Corporation holds these lands in fee simple, with the exception of the mineral rights, which remain with the Federal Crown.

The Sahyoue-Edacho Site is affected by the following regional factors:

- a) The Site sits within the larger setting of Great Bear Lake, a vast inland sea that is at once Canada's largest wholly-contained fresh-water lake and the ninth-largest lake in the world.<sup>7</sup> This lake has and continues to exert a profound influence over the history (land use patterns, travel routes ...), cultural development and ecology of the region.<sup>8</sup>
- b) The Sahyoue-Edacho Site is also within the bounds of the Sahtu Settlement Area (Map 3), as defined in the *Sahtugotine and Metis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement*. The Site is subject to the provisions of that *Agreement*.
- c) In terms of land classification, the Site is within the Sub-Arctic zone of Canada, in close proximity to the Arctic Circle (66 32' N), and just south of the tree line. It is also within Ecoregion 52,<sup>9</sup> the Great Bear Lake Plain, and Parks Canada's Northern Boreal Plains Ecoregion.

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<sup>5</sup> *Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada Agenda Paper*, 1996-6; Review Workshop Minutes, Proposed Saoyue and Ehdacho Park Boundaries, Deline Land Corporation, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> *Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada Agenda Paper*, 1996-61.

<sup>7</sup> *Agenda Paper*, 886.

<sup>8</sup> *Agenda Paper*, Appendix 1, pp. 916-952.

<sup>9</sup> Terrestrial Ecoregions of the Northwest Territories.

- d) The Site is part of a larger family of national historic sites commemorating the history and culture of the Sahtugotine, and their relationship with non-Dene peoples. The Déline Fishery/Franklin's Fort National Historic Site is located adjacent to the community of Déline, and to the south and west of Sahyoue-Edacho respectively (Maps 1 and 2).



Campsite Sahyoue (Grizzly Bear Mountain), 1999

## **2. THE FIRST ELEMENT OF COMMEMORATIVE INTEGRITY: NATIONALLY-SIGNIFICANT CULTURAL RESOURCES ARE NEITHER IMPAIRED NOR UNDER THREAT**

### **2.1 SAHYOUE-EDACHO AS A WHOLE**

The Sahtugotine have used Sahyoue-Edacho since time immemorial. These are two of the most sacred places in all of the Sahtu region. Moreover, it is through these types of places, and the stories associated with them, that the elders pass on the culture and "traditional knowledge" of the Sahtugotine -- its history, cosmology, spiritual values, law, ethics, land use, and traditional life-styles. The Sahyoue-Edacho Site is of national historic significance because it helps explain and contribute to an understanding -- in Dene and non-Dene peoples -- of the cultural heritage of the Sahtugotine. It thus contributes to a better understanding of the collective heritage of all Canadians, and indeed of all peoples.