

# MILLENNIUM WILDERNESS YOUTH PROGRAM



Muskwa-Kechika  
Year 2000



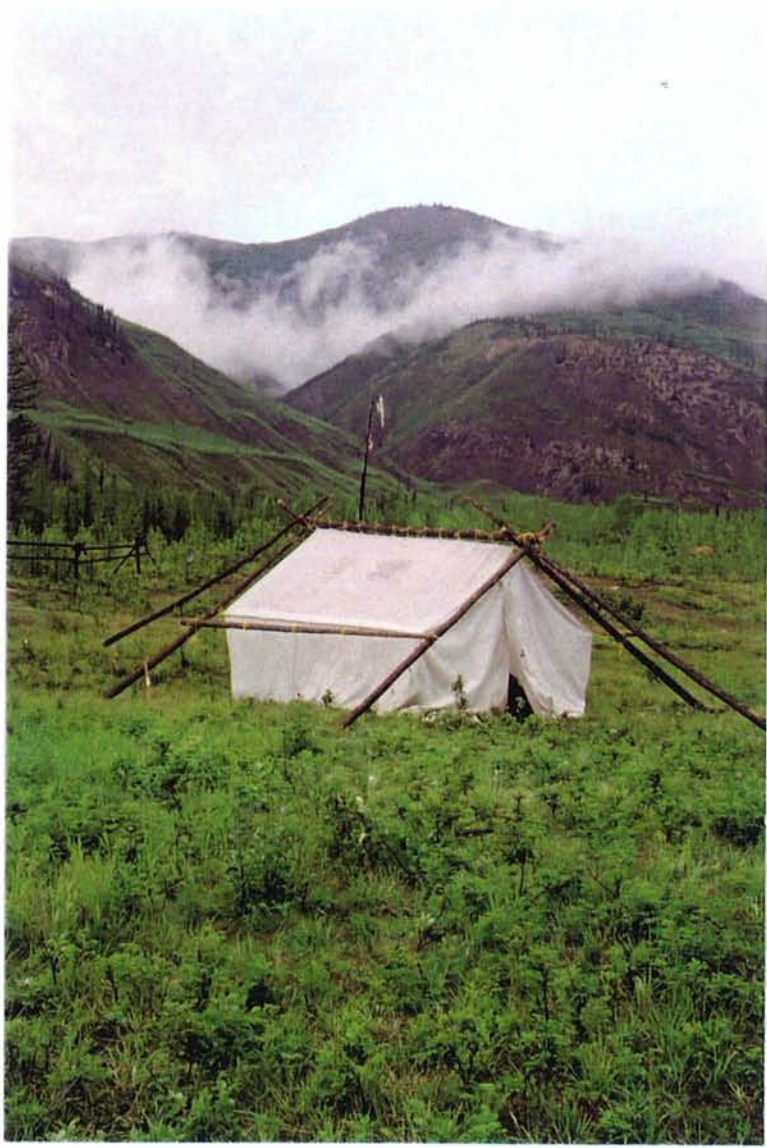
*Rediscovery  
International  
Foundation*



*Kaska Dena  
Council*



*Muskwa-Kechika  
Advisory Board*



*MUSKWA - KECHIKA*

*Millennium Wilderness Youth Program*

*Aug. 5-25, 2000*

*Prepared by:*

*Thom Henley & Mariuxi Zambrano*

*Sept. 12, 2000*



*“ For all life is a circle  
And we are all together  
Like stones dropped in the water  
We ripple on forever ”*

*-Heart song-  
David Lertzman*



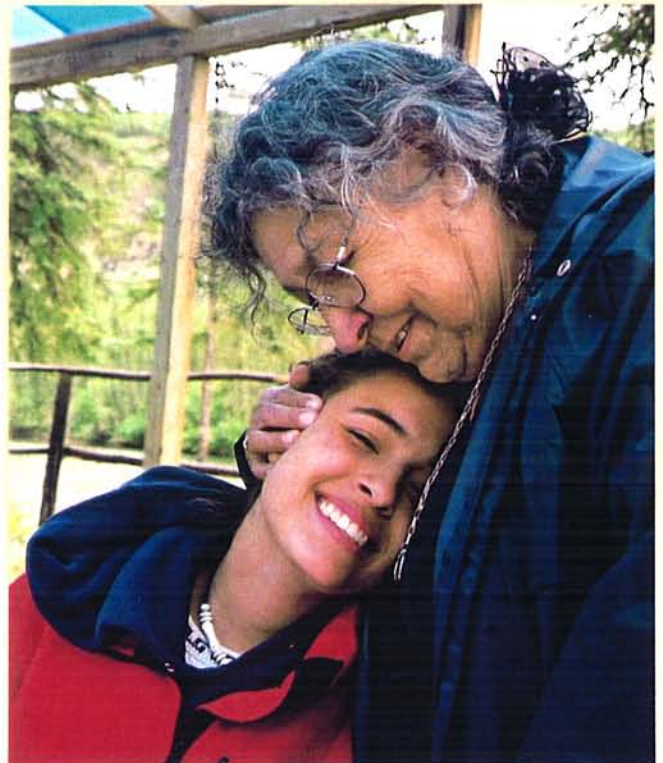
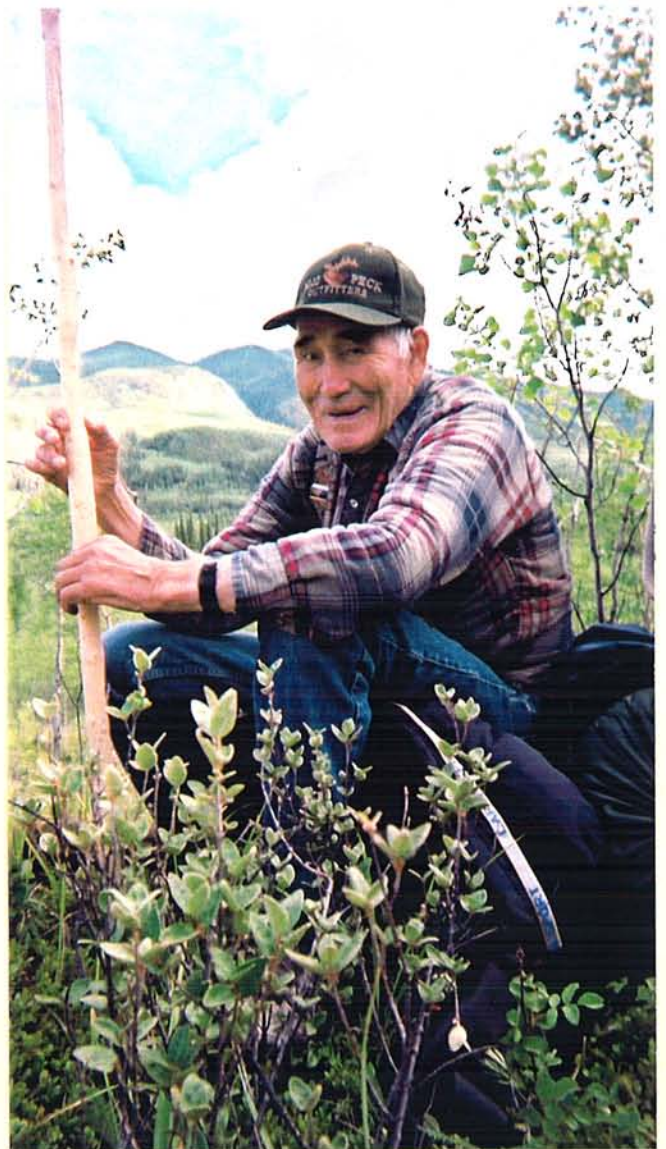


## INTRODUCTION

*From August 5<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>, 2000, youth from 7 foreign countries and 22 First Nations gathered together in the largest protected area south the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel in North America, the Mushkwa-Kechika Management Area.*

*Youth from Thailand, USA, Mexico, Guatemala, Germany, Ecuador and Malaysia joined together with Kaska Dena Elders and staff, and a host of participants of First Nation and mixed ancestry descent: Beaver, Blackfeet, Gitskan, Gwitchin, Haisla, Han, Heiltsuk, Inca, Inuvialuit, Interior Tlingit, Kaska Dena, Mayan, Metis, Kelabit, Mohawk, Navajo, Northern Cree, Northern Tutchone, Plains Cree, Southern Ute, Tahltan and Tuscarora.*

*This Millennium gathering was a program that was developed and run cooperatively by the Rediscovery International Foundation and Kaska Dena Council. Base funding for the program was provided from the Muskwa-Kechika Trust Fund; this was supplemented by donations from several corporate and agency sponsors. Camp staff from the Rediscovery International Foundation and Kaska Dena Council were assisted by resident Elders and a variety of guest speakers. We gratefully thank all the participants in this venture and provide more detail on their roles in an "Acknowledgements" section at the end of this report.*





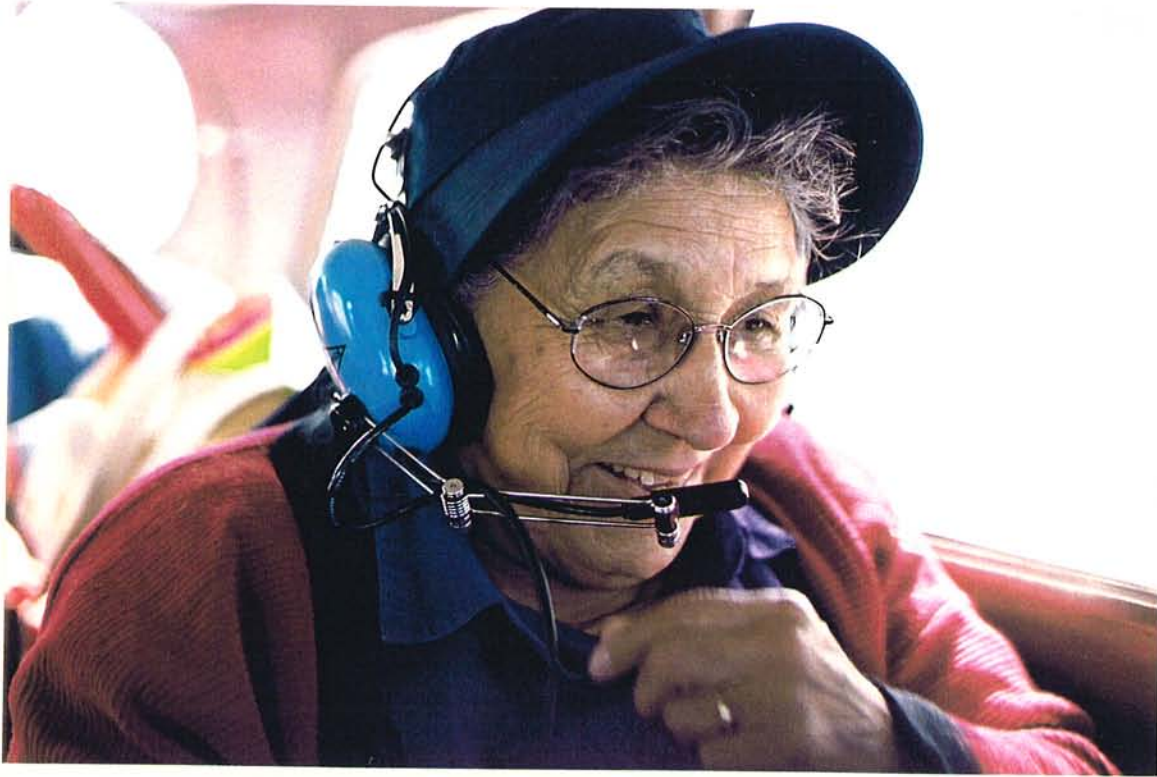




### TRANSPORT

*Once people from the four corners of the earth converged on Watson Lake it was then necessary to fly 4 to 5 people at a time deep into the Muskwa-Kechika wilderness... a vast unbroken expanse of rivers, forest, bog, meadows and jewel-like lakes.*





### BUSH STRIP

*Turning off the Kechika River and up into the Turnagain River Valley, the gravel landing strip soon comes into sight.*

*Excitement mounts as plane after plane circles for landing and the camp population grows to forty members.*









### ARRIVALS

*A warm welcome greets each arriving passenger. There is gear to haul, tents and cabins to assign occupants, chore groups to divide up into, and group bonding exercises-all before dinner.*

*The global family has arrived safe and sound at the fabulous Turnagain River Area.*





### FACILITIES

*A tarp covered shelter, built a month earlier for the Kaska Leadership meeting and Kaska treaty negotiations, serves as the perfect open-air dining hall where camp schedules and maps of participants' homelands are posted.*

*A few canvas wall tents are upgraded to wood floor and frame structures to house guest speakers.*





### BUSH TENTS

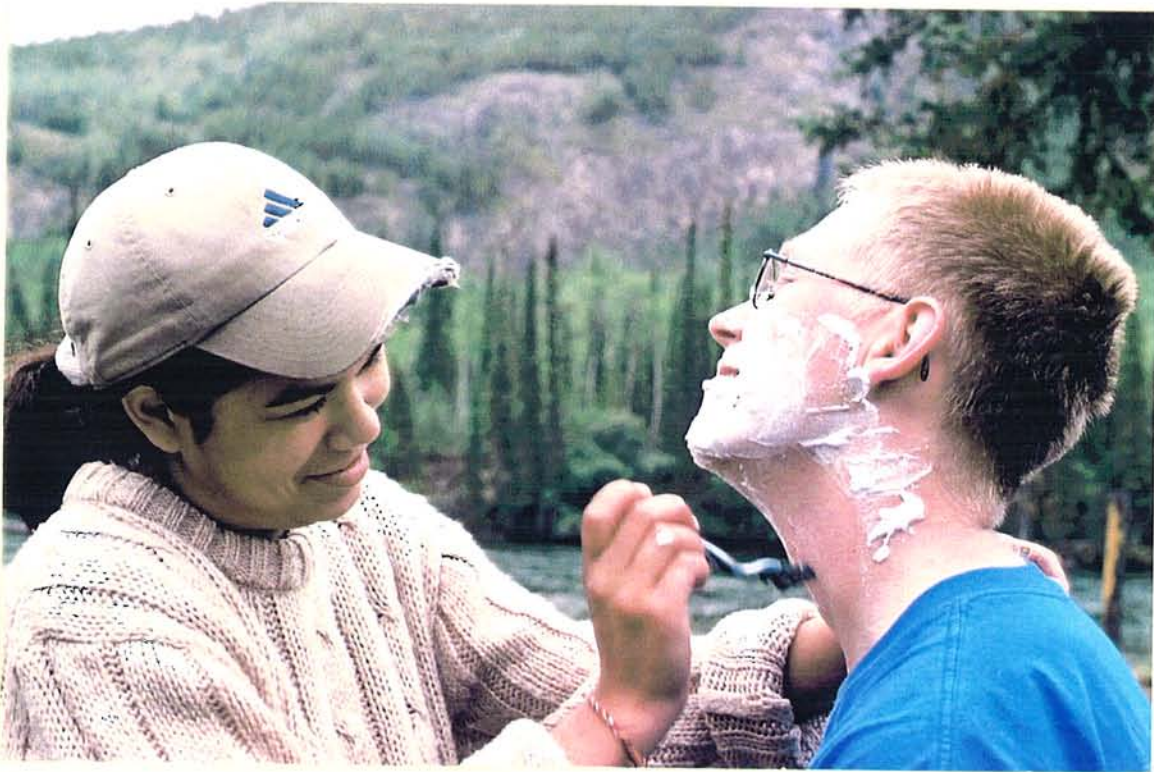
*Unseasonably cold, wet weather for August necessitated movement to wood heated cabins for some and upgrading of tents for others. Mida Donnessey instructs youth in the age-old Kaska tradition of creating a spruce bough bed to insulate sleepers from the cold ground.*











### HEALTHY LIVING

*Personal hygiene can require learning new skills in a wilderness camp. With no mirror for shaving, Tamira, a Kaska girl, helps Nils, a German boy, trim a few whiskers.*

*Hand washing clothes also brought out teamwork. A traditional can (with holes) on a stick plunger, built by an Elder, performs the primitive but efficient "wash cycle". Drying clothes in the all too frequent rain proved the bigger challenge.*



### HOME AWAY FROM HOME

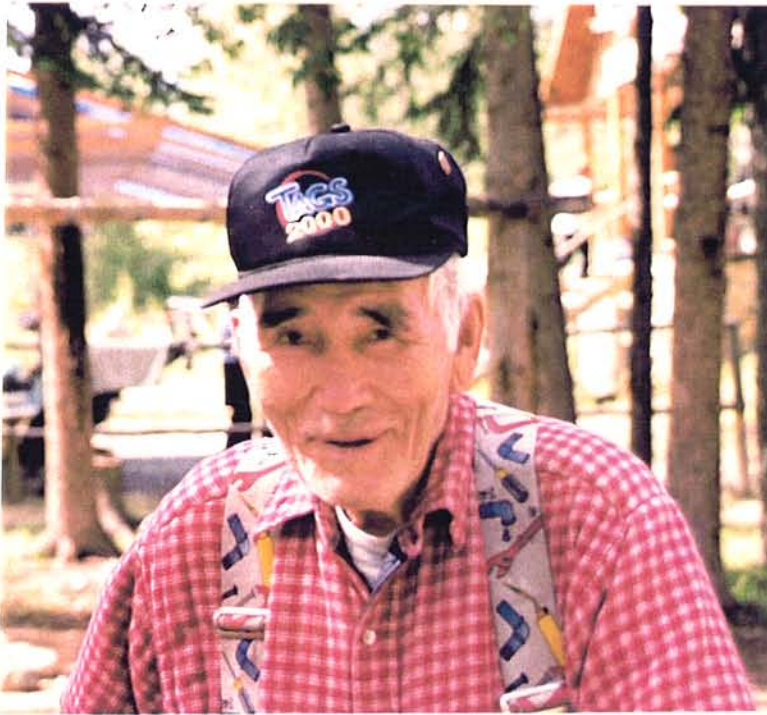
*Base camp along the beautiful Turnagain River made use of cozy log cabins and a cooking lodge built by a former big game outfitter. Water, drawn directly from the river for cooking and drinking, brought the message of our pristine environment home to everyone.*

*The often rainy weather and cold temperatures brought youth together around the wood stoves for music, songs, stories or special counseling with an Elder.*

*A break in the clouds brought everyone out for river baths, laundry, sports and Rediscovery Games.*







### ELDERS

*Elders are central to the Rediscovery experience and the M-K Millennium Youth Camp was blessed with some of the best. Mida Donnessey from Upper Liard, Yukon brought her considerable traditional knowledge and craft skills to the camp. Whether it was beading or sowing moccasins, hauling wood or cutting up moose meat, Mida was always busy.*

*Alfred Jakesta from French Creek, B.C. showed youth how to set snares, make snowshoe frames and also told wonderful tales.*

*Christine Joseph of Metis descent served as Elder Counselor and loving grandmother to all.*





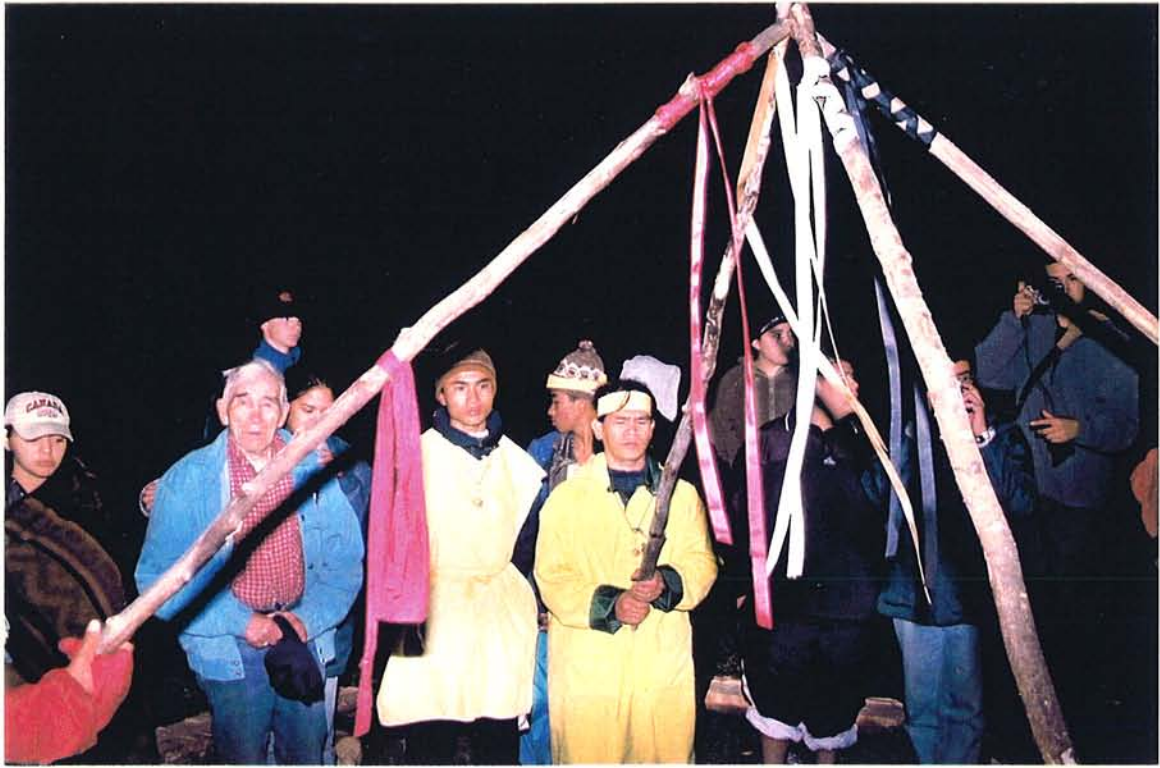
### FOUR FIRE CEREMONY

*As the ribbons representing the colors of the four sacred directions dance above the flames, the Elders bless the Council Fire on the first night of camp.*

*A four fire ceremony, whereby campers visit all four directions, learning the element, animals and peoples (First Nation, Asian, African and Caucasian) of each fire site precedes lighting the central Council Fire.*







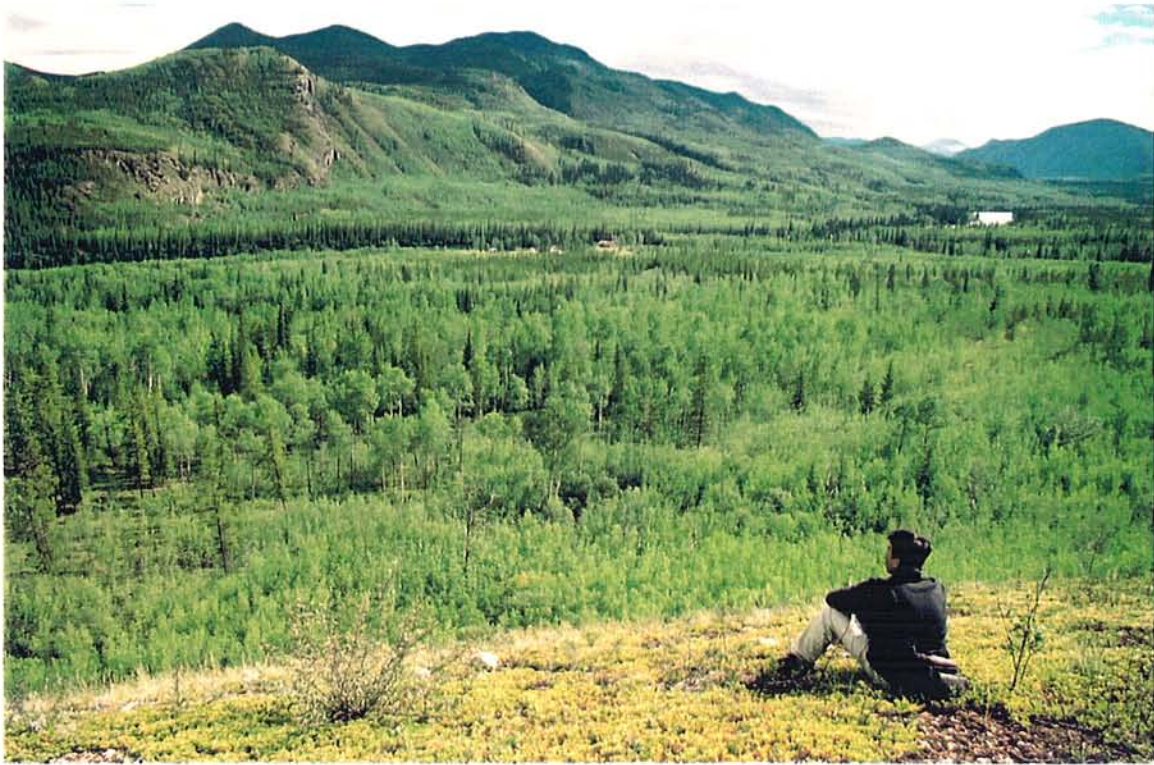


UNITY

*Just as the four direction colors intertwine in unity so too do the Elders and staff ask all to work towards unity and respect amongst each other in the M-K camp.*







### SEEKING THE SPIRIT

*It is easy to get caught up in the dynamics of 40 people in camp and lose perspective of the vastness and sacredness of the land.*

*Each evening (weather permitting) a 45-minute period was set aside for youth to find solitude at their own "Spirit Spot".*

*The camp generator would be turned off so that only the sound of the river, the songs of birds and the wind in the trees broke the great silence.*

*For many it was a highlight of their day*



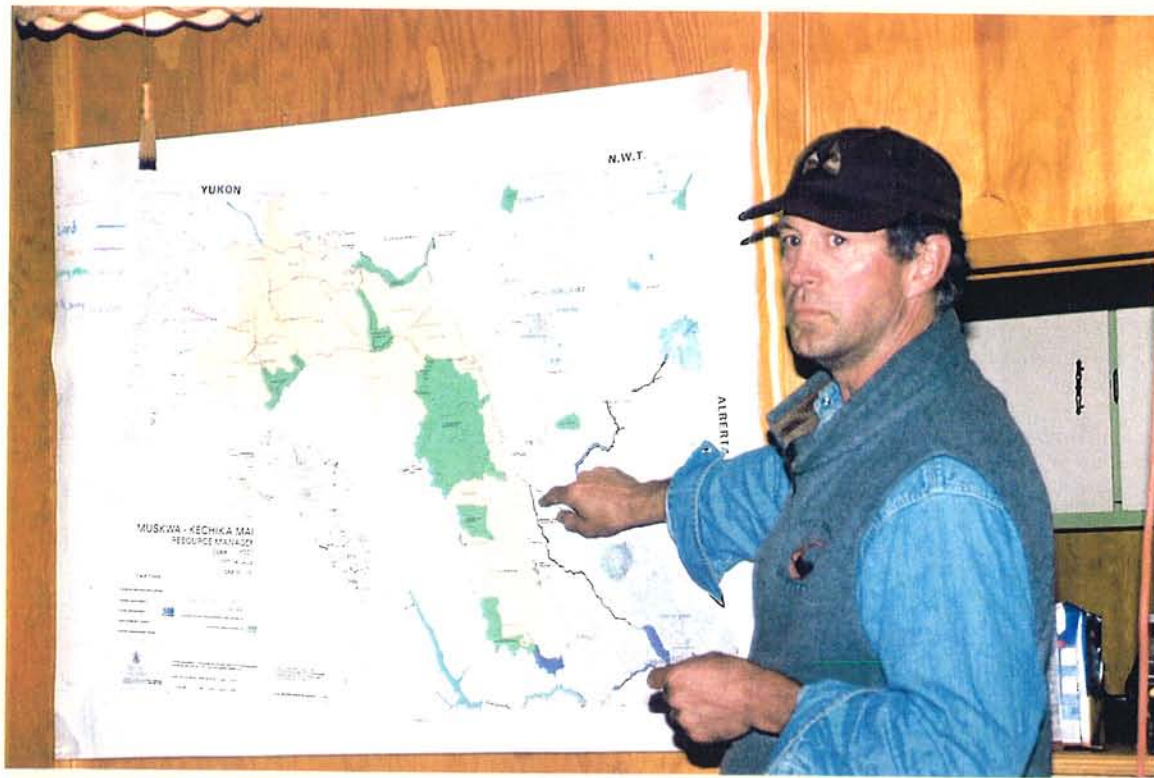
### SPEAKERS SEMINAR

*A series of outstanding speakers brought a wide range of views on the Muskwa-Kechika Management Area to the attention of camp participants and staff.*

*In week one, Brian Churchill, former Coordinator of the M-K Advisory Board, spoke on: the natural and human history of the M-K Area, what led to the area's special designation, the challenges of reaching consensus on land use decisions and what youth can do to ensure the M-K's future.*







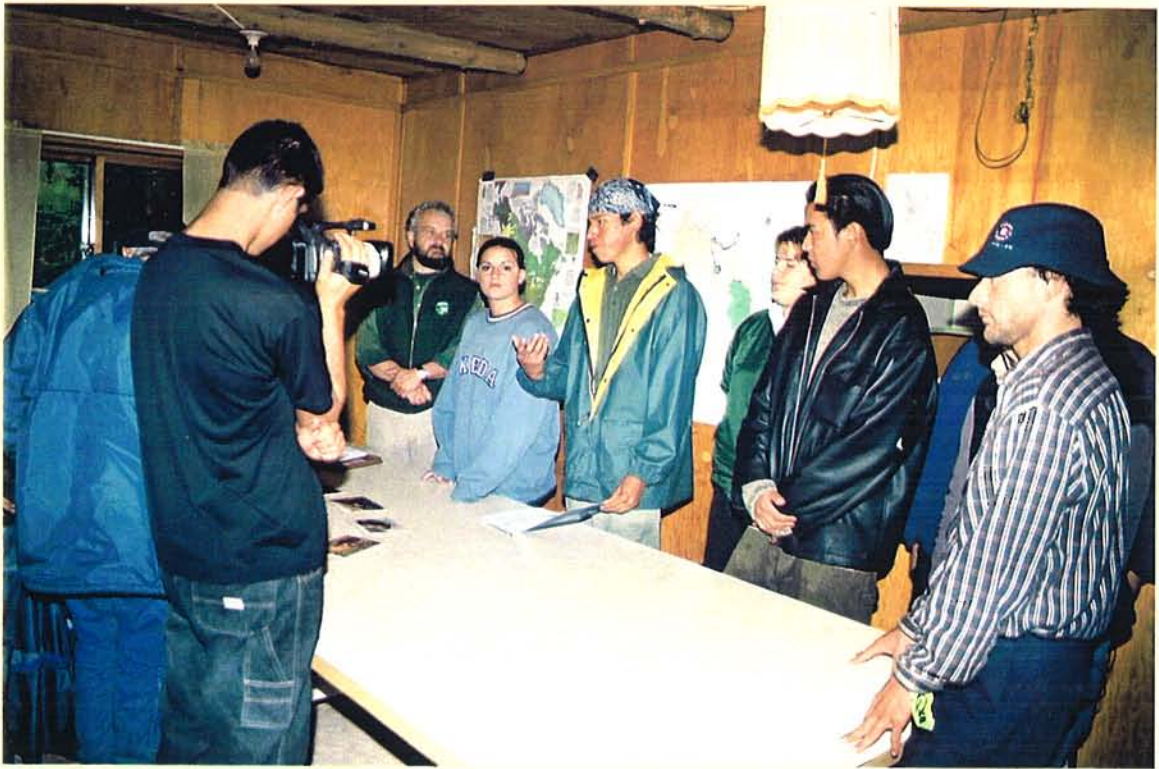
PRESENTING A RANGE OF VIEWS

*Ross Peck, Vice Chair of the M-K Advisory Board, spoke on behalf of the Guide Outfitters Assoc. and on the history of trophy hunting in the M-K area.*

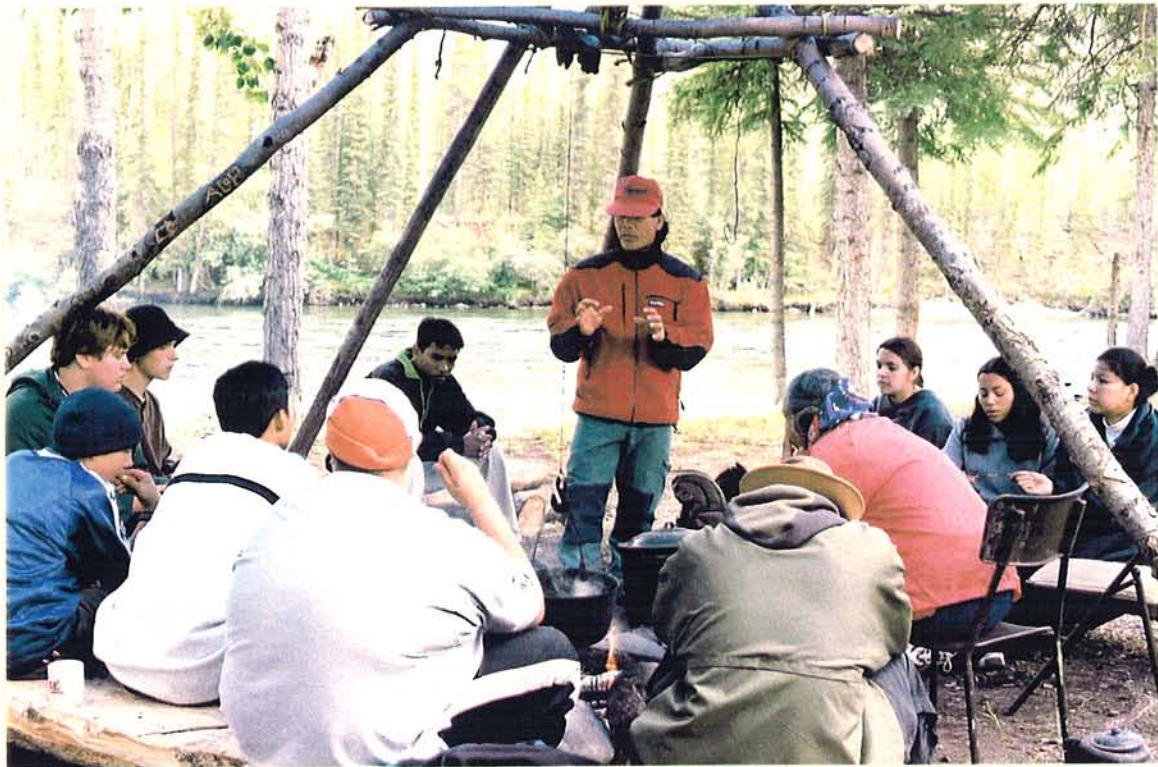
*Wally Eamer, Regional Director, BC Ministry of the Environment, discussed wildlife management in the M-K area, the Yellowstone to Yukon (Y to Y) concept, and engaged the youth in break-out sessions to debate the dilemma posed by large wolf populations.*











### LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOPS

*Mike Lickers of Mohawk/Tuscarora and German descent and Mutang Urud, a Kelabit tribes-person from Sarawak, Borneo are both part of Rediscovery International's Pearson College Training staff.*

*They combined their skills in the first week of camp to offer formal courses in: Emergency Wilderness First Aid, Cold Water Survival, Water Safety, Expedition Preparation, Camp Health and Safety Assessments, Map and Compass Reading and Orienteering.*

*Each two hour workshop was experiential, including immersion and floating downstream (feet first) in the frigid waters of the Turnagain River.*



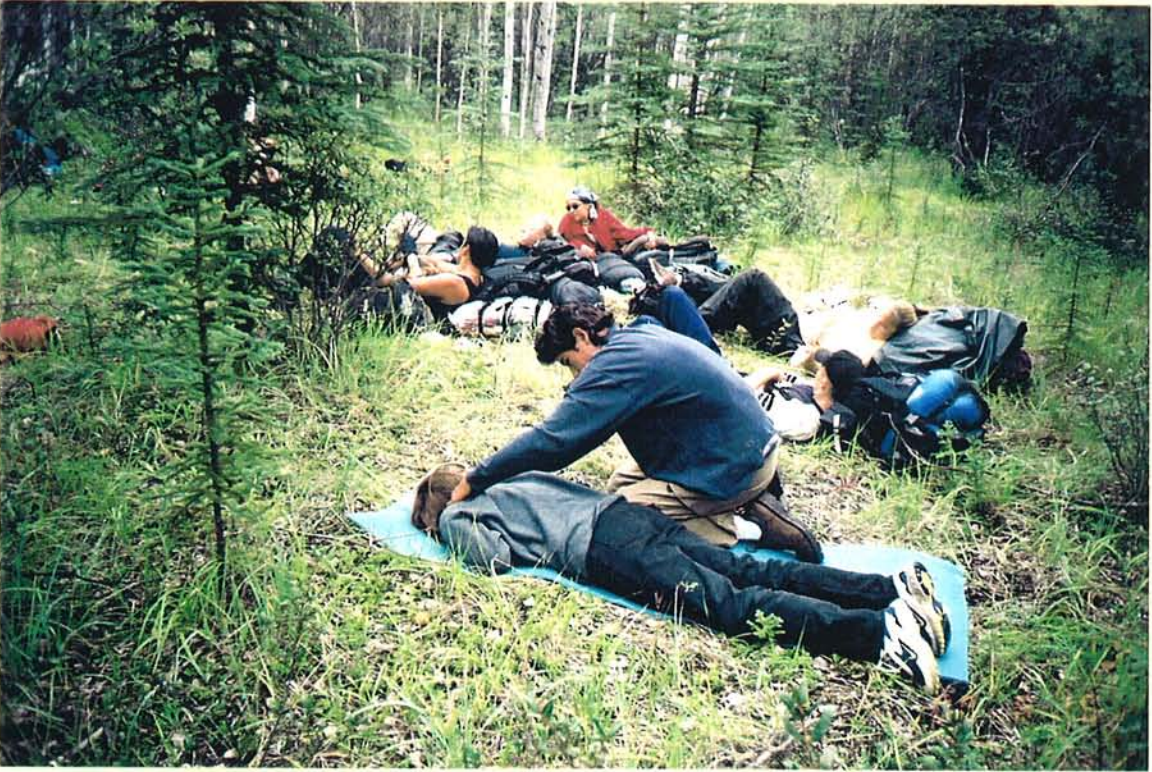
### EXPEDITION PREPARATION

*Several days before starting the backpacking expedition, Mike Lickers taught the team how to properly pack and adjust weight load. The participants then practiced by short hikes over varied terrains.*

*Compass use and emergency first aid procedures were part of the lesson. (Following page)*









### WOMEN'S CIRCLE AND MEN'S SWEAT LODGE

*While the Elders, Christine and Mida, with the company of Veronica Bob, gathered the young women together to discuss and offer guidance on women's issues, the men choose a more active approach to men's issues.*

*The confluence of Sandpile Creek with the Turnagain River was chosen by Elder Alfred Jakesta as the site to construct a traditional sweat lodge. Willows were cut for the framing, spruce boughs were placed as ground mats and the altar was formed from the soil of the rock pit.*

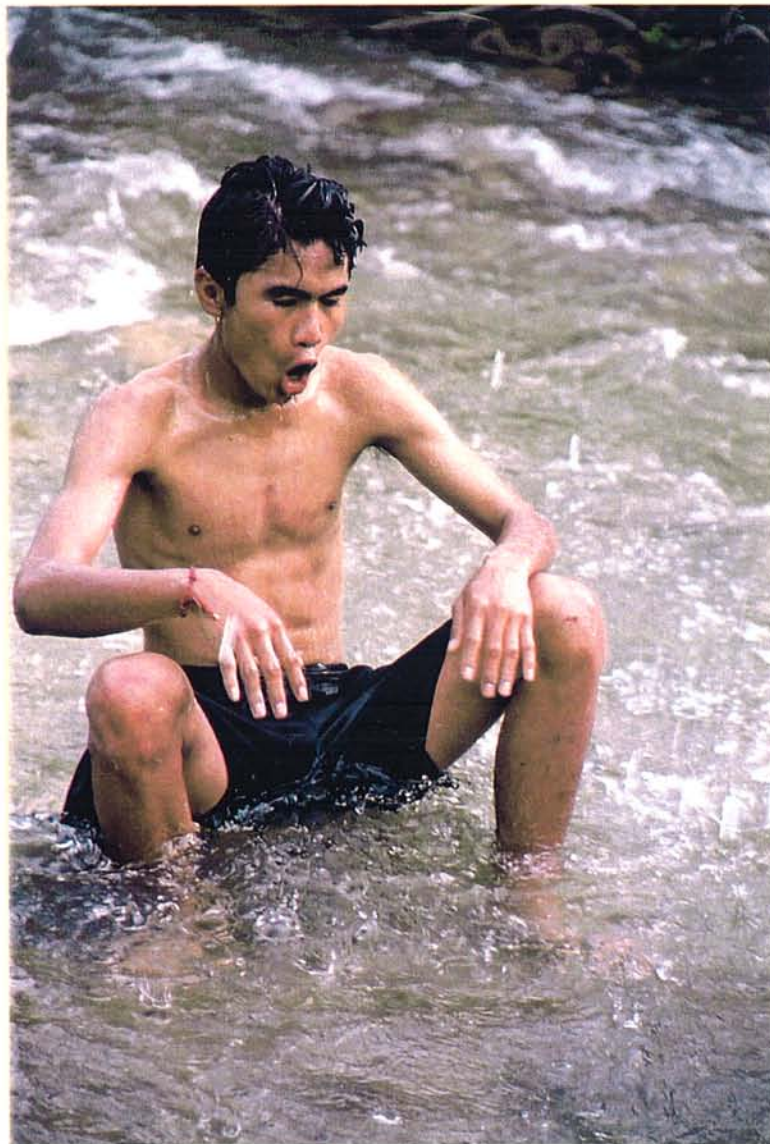
*Cutting driftwood along the river and hauling the rocks to the fire site brought all the men together in a sense of single, spiritual purpose. Frigid plunges in Sandpile Creek, after communal contemplation in the sweat lodge, brought new strength to all who took part.*













### COUNCIL FIRES

*A special Council Fire site on the east end of the camp became the gathering place for some memorable nights.*

*On one cold but magical night the stars shone and the Northern Lights danced across the sky with the same beauty and grace as colourfully attired Daisy Frost (Southern Ute) and Chris Cardinal (Plains Cree).*









### FEATHER SHARING

*In addition to dancing, songs and Rediscovery fireside games, the Council Fire was also the place for Feather Sharing; a ritual whereby an Eagle Feather designates the speaker and that person alone has the right to speak.*

*The love, bonding and deepest feelings of circle members were shared on those heartfelt nights.*





### THE M-K OLYMPICS

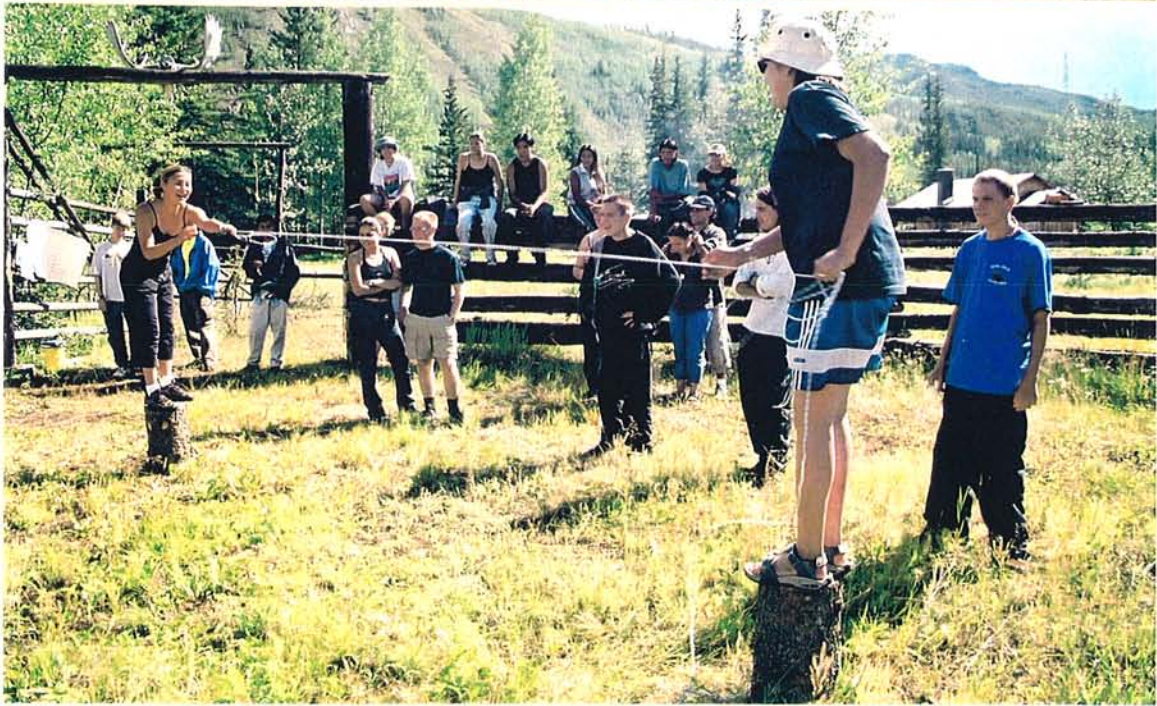
*"Let the games begin!"*

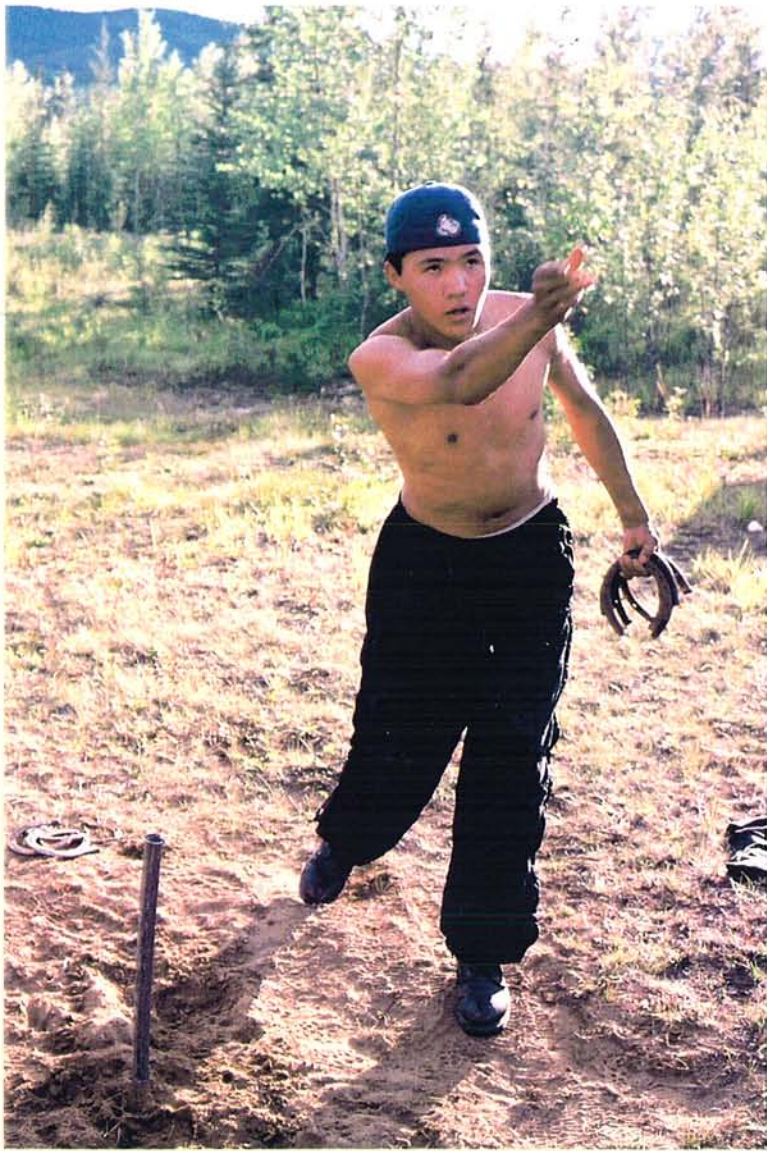
*For seven days the M-K Olympiad pitted four chore groups against one another in a fun-filled test of strength and skill.*

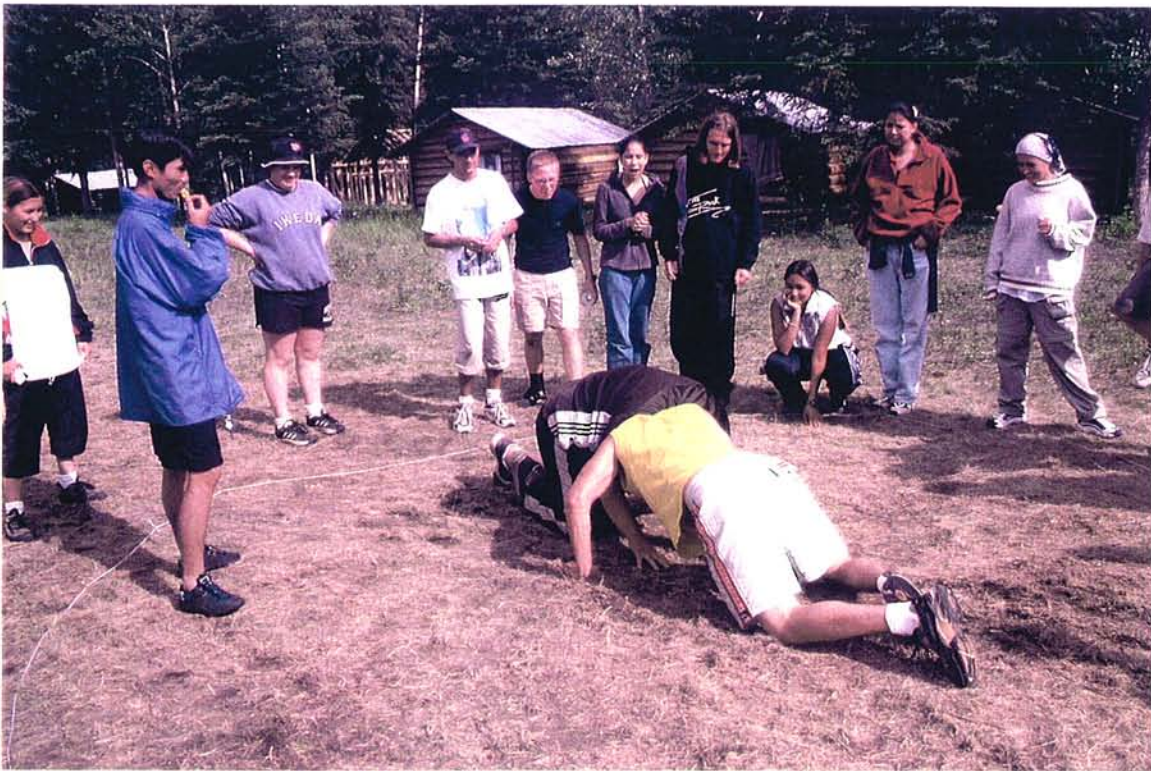
*Traditional native games like: "Stretch for the Stick", "One Arm Pull", "Leg Wrestling", "StumpPull", and "Muskox Sumo" were combined with World Cup Soccer, Volleyball tournaments, and the hilarious "Pai Tio Relay".*









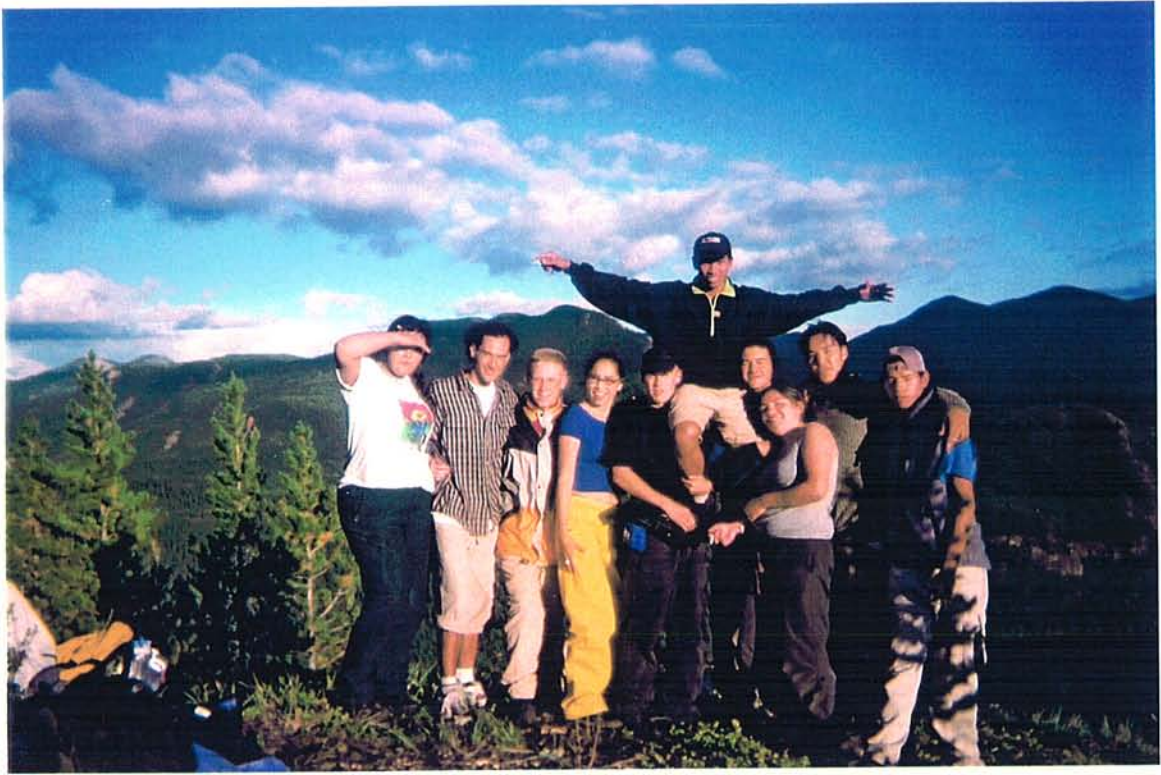


### BATTLES AT THE "O-K" CORRAL

*Like a rodeo setting, the old horse corral of the guide and outfitting lodge served as the opening ceremony site for the M-K Olympiad.*

*"Stump Pulling" requires more balance than strength, but "MuskoX Sumo" is all brawn.*

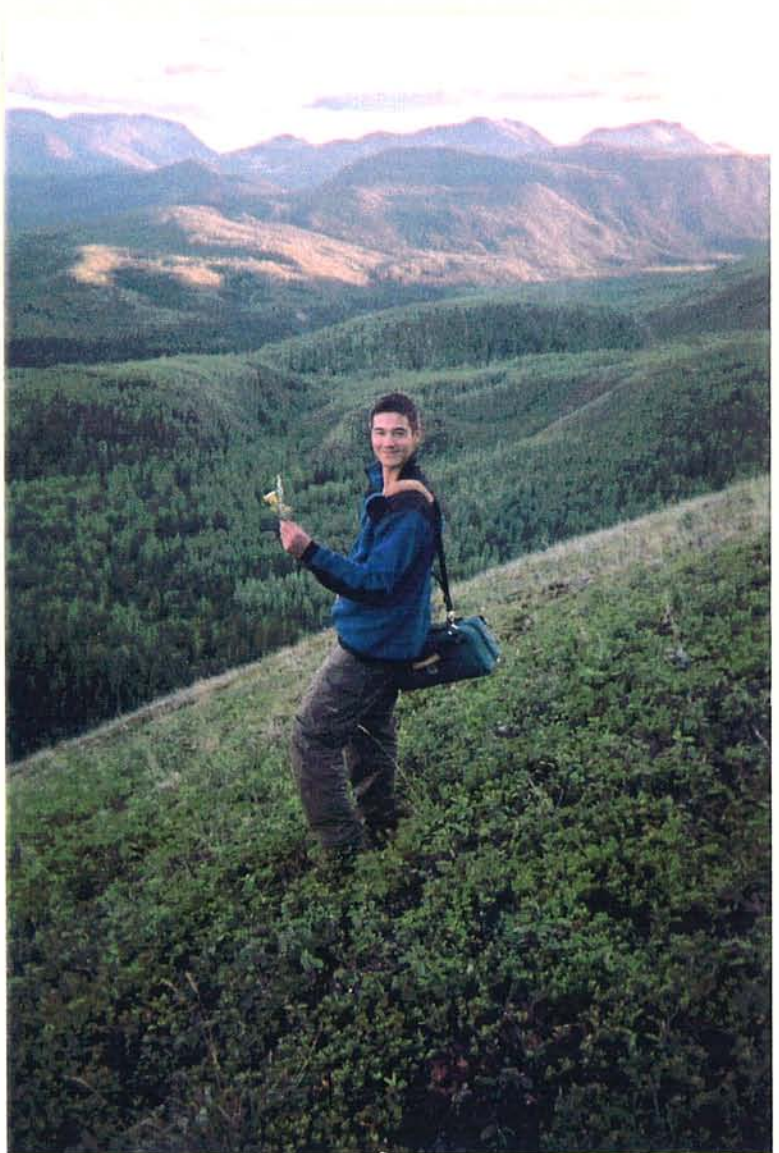




THE GREAT MOUNTAIN  
CHALLENGE

*As part of the M-K Olympics, each chore group (Wolves, Sheep, Grizzlies and Moose), were challenged to see how many team members they could put atop the nearest mountain before sunset.*

*The team building exercise paid off in many ways.... great vistas, berry picking opportunities and good grouse hunting.*



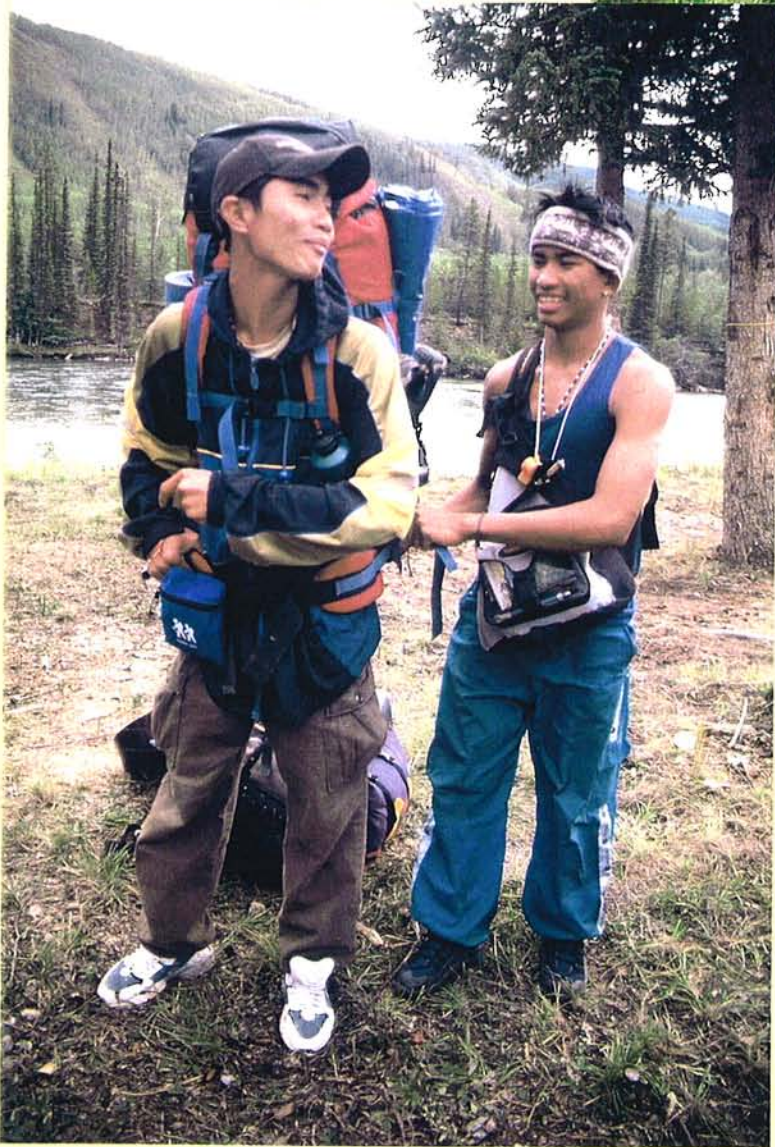
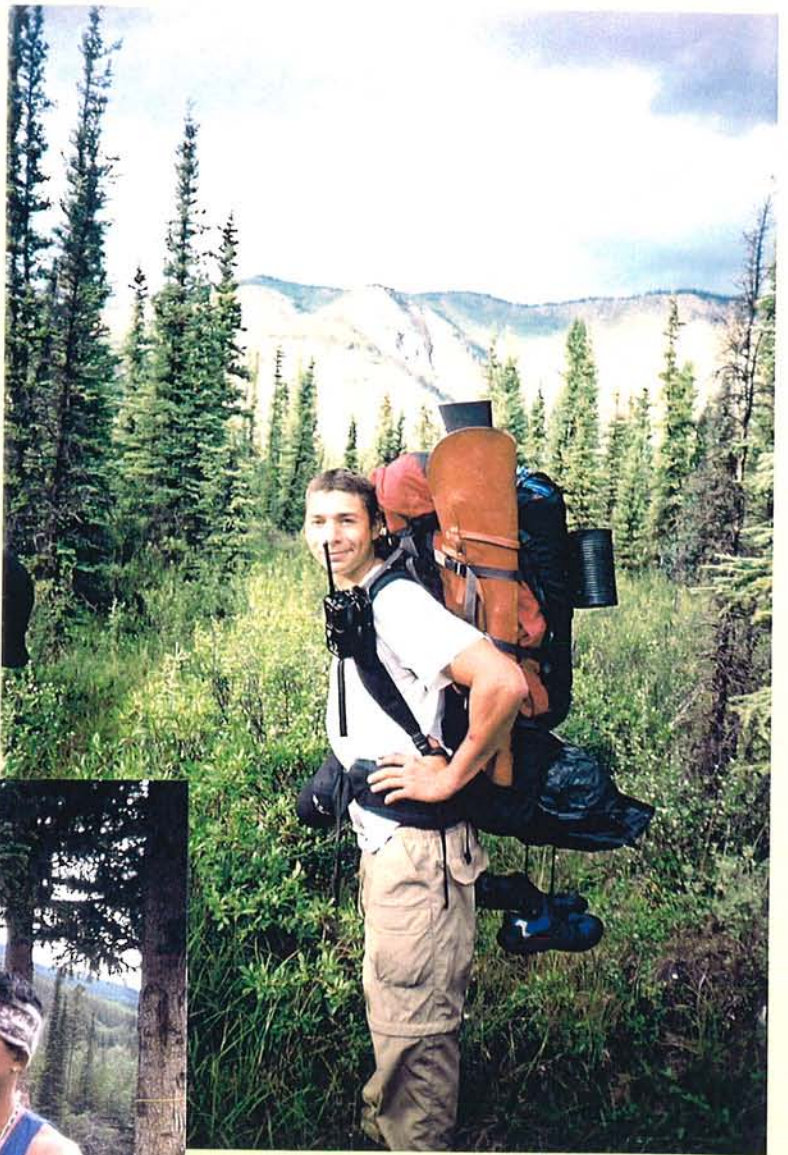




### STICK GAMBLING

*A few rainy nights during the camp were spent watching special slide presentations on the World's major mountain systems (the Alps, Andes, Sierra Madres and Himalayas).*

*At other times the group competed in "Stick Gambling" under a rain tarp. This ancient Kaska, Cree and Dene sport with its rhythmic drums and body movements held everyone in its mesmerizing grip for hours late into night.*







### BACKPACKING EXPEDITION

*The three days, two nights backpacking expedition to Hidden Valley and Burnt Rose Lake required a level of determination and cooperation between each group that went far beyond their chore duties and M-K Olympic competitions.*

*Cold raining weather, heavy packs, wet feet, and blisters really separated the women from girls and men from boys.*







### HIDDEN VALLEY

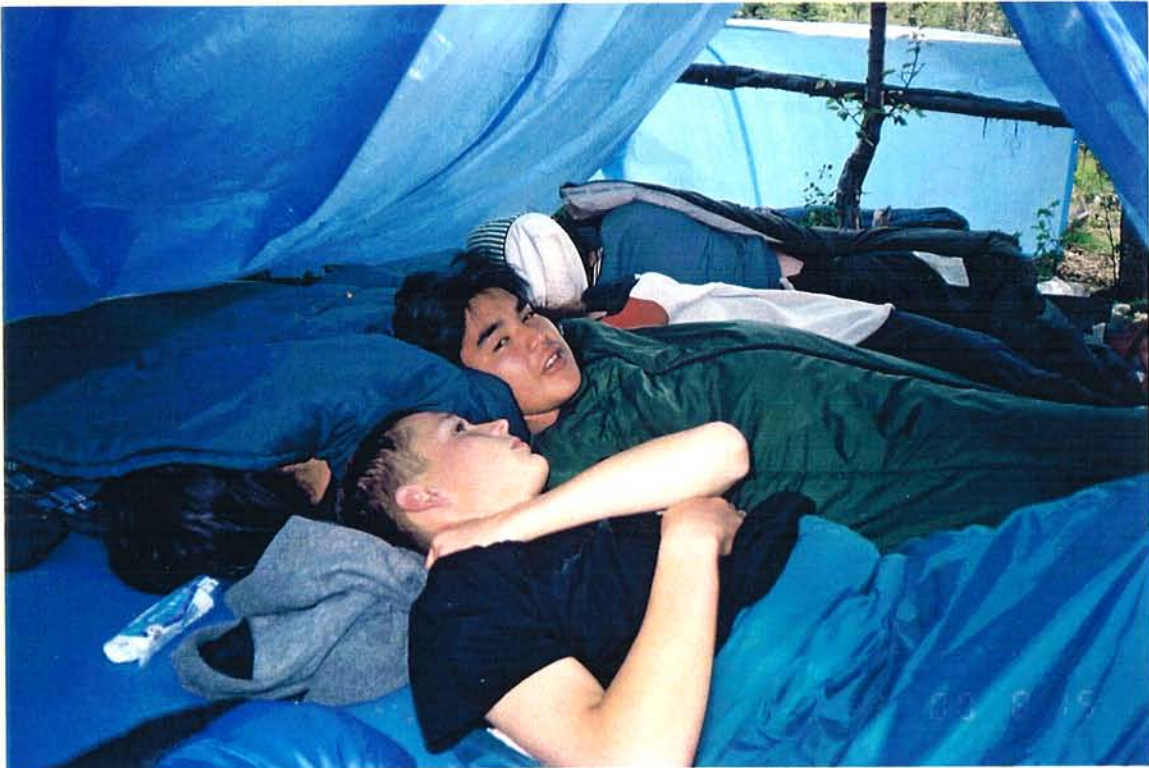
*A long day's hike to Hidden Valley brings a moment of rest, relaxation and group shoulder massage...but not for long. There were traps to erect, wood to gather, water to fetch and food to cook before dark. Everyone needed to lend a hand.*











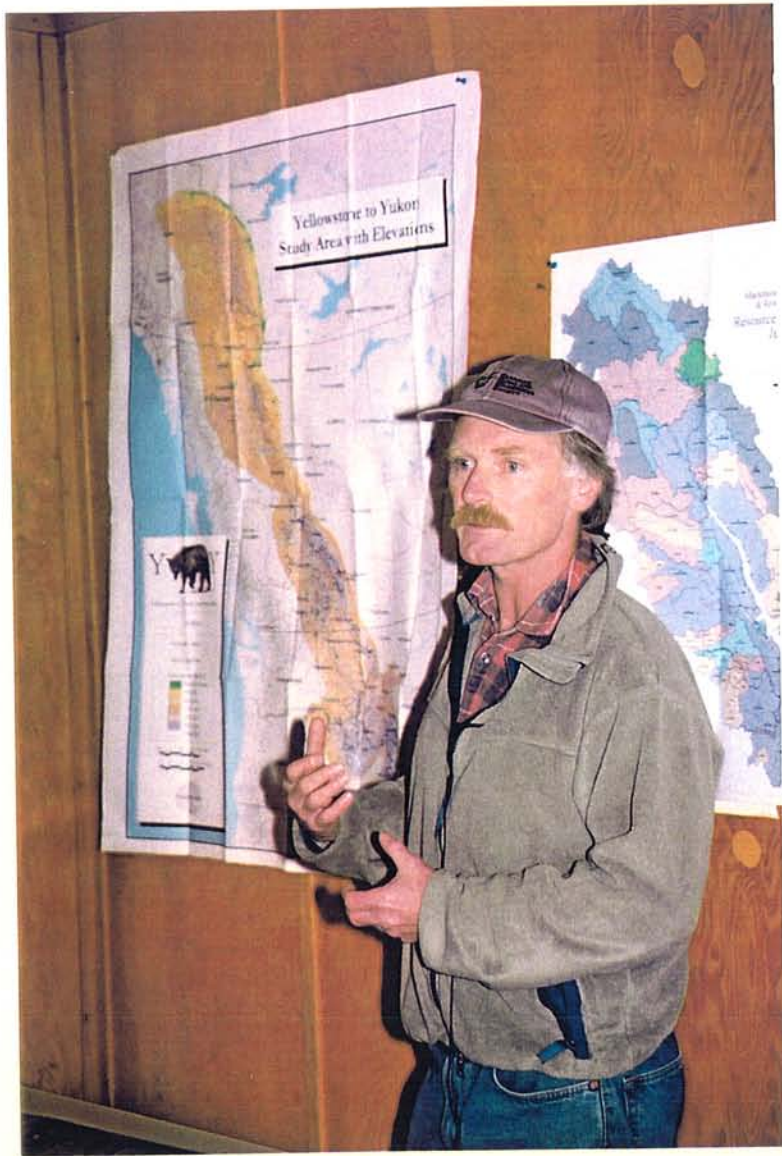


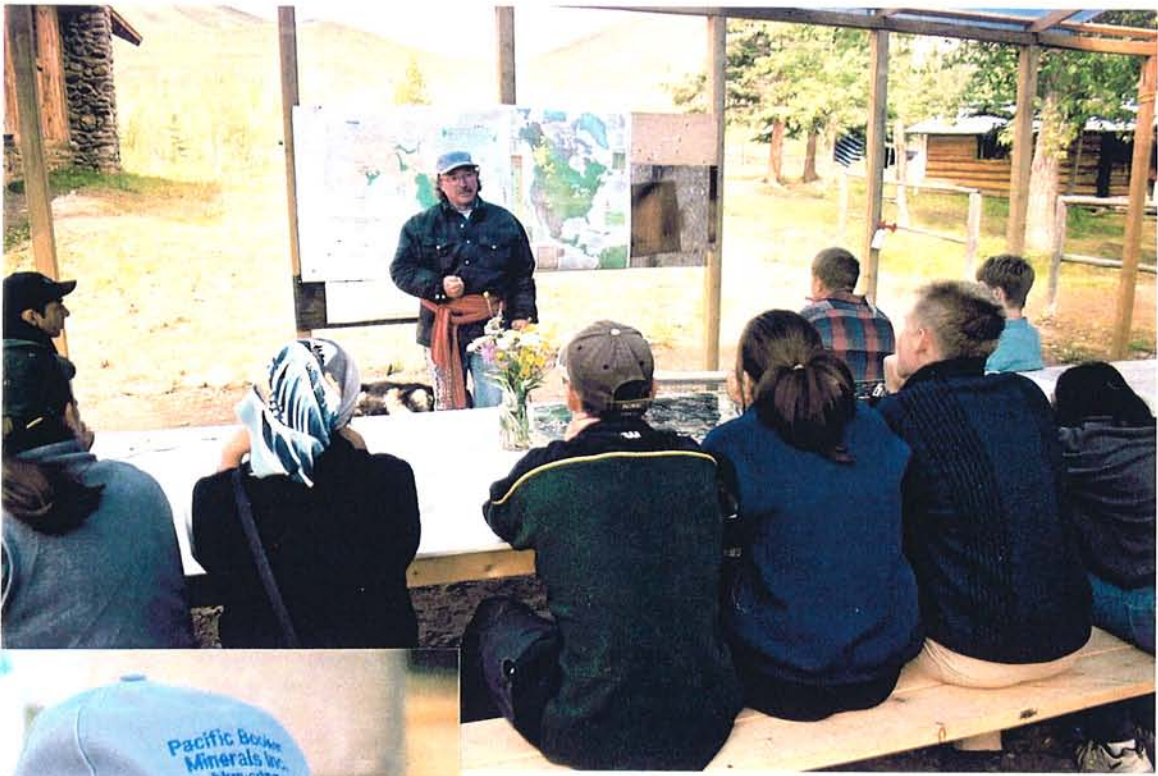
### SPEAKERS SEMINAR

*A host of new visitors and speakers arrived for the second phase of the Speakers Seminar. Kevin Kuhn, Planning Forester for Slocan Forest Products Ltd., Kathleen O'Neal, the new Coordinator of the M-K Advisory Board, George Smith, Executive Director of Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and Dixon Lutz, Hereditary Chief of the Kaska Dena were among the many speakers.*



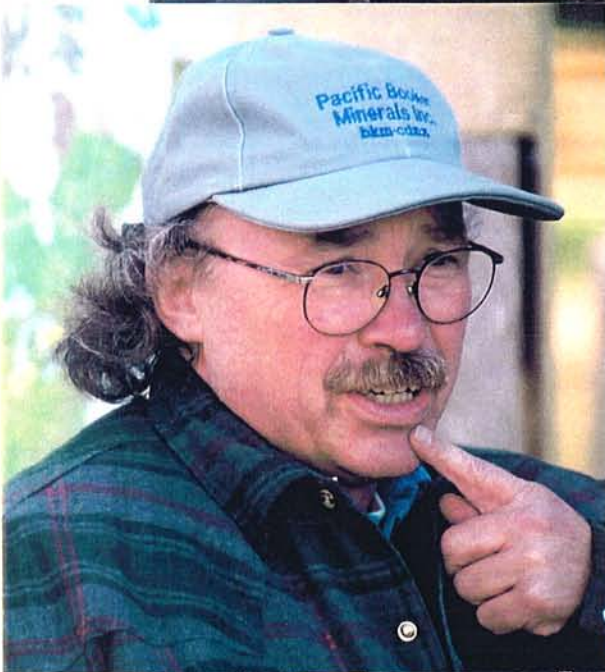






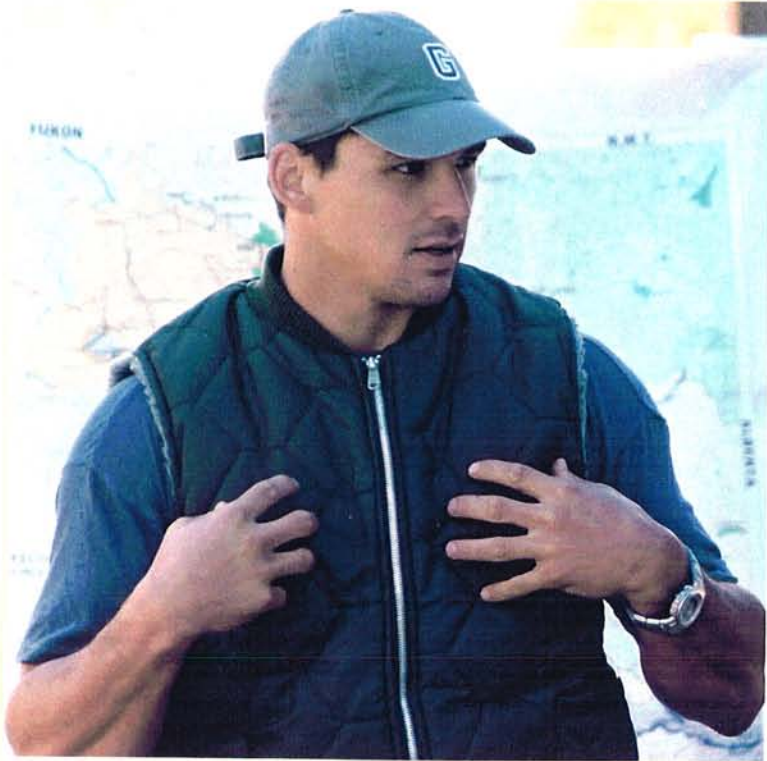
### INDUSTRY PERSPECTIVE

*"Recognizing First Nation rights and caring for the environment is good business. I'm making lots of money", says Paul Stevenson, CEO for Pacific Bookers Minerals Inc.*

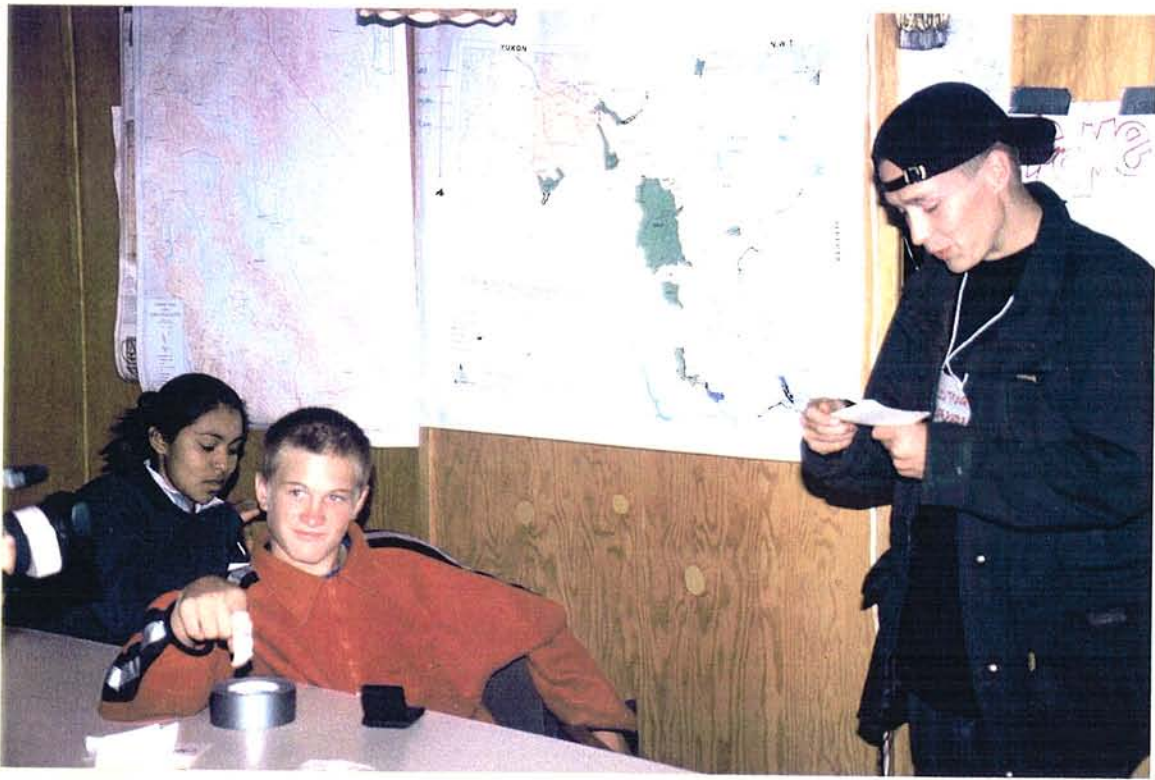


FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVE

*Lee Francouer, First Nation lawyer and Dave Porter, National Negotiator for the Kaska Dena Nation, spoke of the history of aboriginal settlements, the Kaska treaty process and the future of the Muskwa-Kechika.*





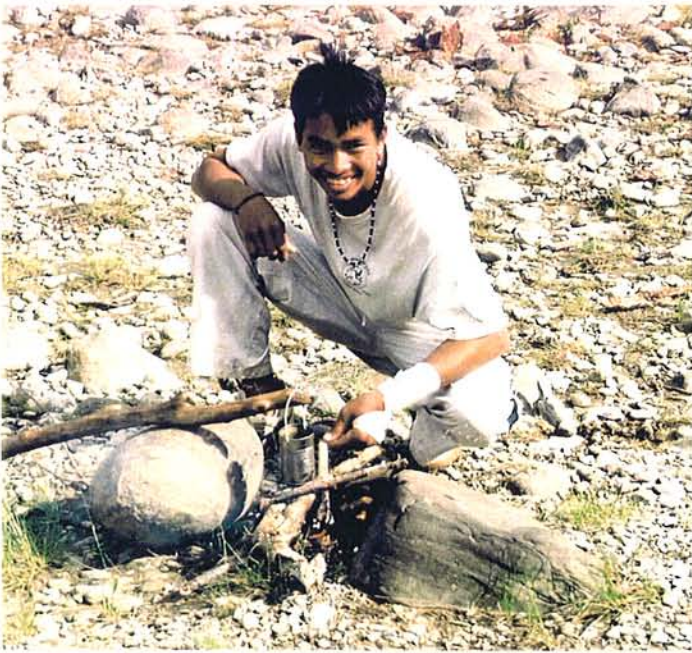


"TALK OF THE TOWN"—ROLE PLAY

*Fred Lutz Jr. plays the role of an Ecotourism Operator in making his submission to Josh Torrison, the pretend Chairman of the M-K Commission. In this day-long role-play exercise, Nils Beeber (below) makes an impassioned plea for mineral development while Victor Kisoun, reporter for BCTV, moves in to record the moment.*

*Everyone involved in this often hilarious exercise gained new insights into the complexity of M-K issues.*





### "GOOD WOMAN/GOOD MAN" CONTEST

*In a traditional Northern test of bush skills, participants compete against one another and the clock to: 1) light a fire with one match, 2) gather wild teas from the land, 3) boil water and make tea in a tin can, 4) serve tea to an Elder addressing her in her native language (Kaska or Cree), 5) mix bannock flour into a good dough to bake on a stick and serve to an Elder.*

*Bobby Capot-Blanc had a little problem with the consistency of his bannock mixture(right).*







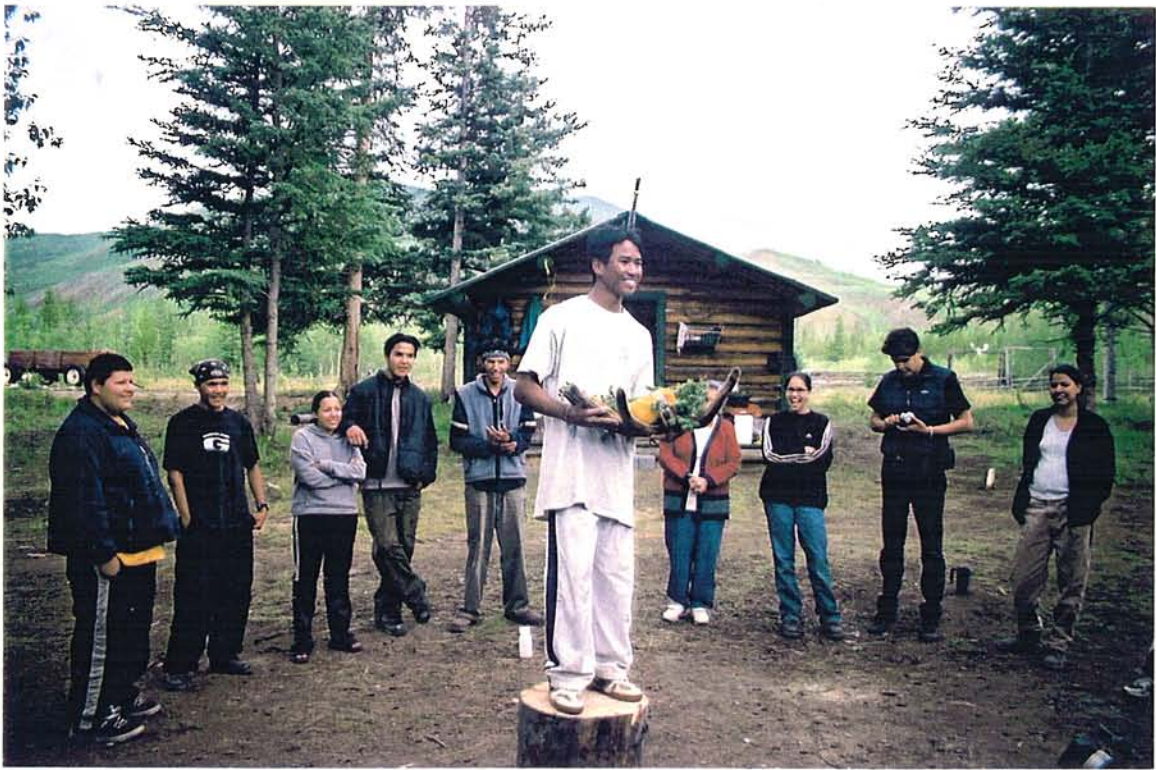


AND THE WINNER IS....

*The moment of truth is at hand. Everyone in the circle waits in anticipation as the "Good Woman" and the "Good Man" for M-K 2000 are about to be crowned. Moose antlers, spruce boughs, and a leather pouch are presented as fitting prizes to the winners*







### PUT ON A PEDESTAL

*Cindy Walter of Ft. St John has scored the highest bush skills points from the panel of judges and is crowned the M-K 2000 "Good Woman". "Good Man" honors were bestowed upon Mana Sarewong (Mr. A) from Udonthani, Thailand. Runners up in the competition (below) are Todd Thomas from Prophet River, BC, Suriyo Tookdee from Thailand and Cheryl Cardinal from Saddle Lake, Alberta.*





### CRAFTS COMPETITION

*Beadwork and moccasin making required more patience than most participants seemed to have. Elders Mida Donnessey and Christine Joseph were doing most of the beadwork until a craft competition was announced.*

*Christine Creyke of Tahltan/Gwichin descent (right) took top honors with her purple bell flower beaded moccasins. Painted drums, walking sticks, and dream catchers were other entries judged by Elder Christine Joseph (following pages).*











### HUNTING AND FOOD GATHERING

*Wild meat was slow in coming to the M-K camp until the final week when Derek's team, the "Grizzlies" returned with half a dozen spruce hens. Later, Unai from Mexico caught a rabbit in his snare and the hunters also got a moose for the table.*











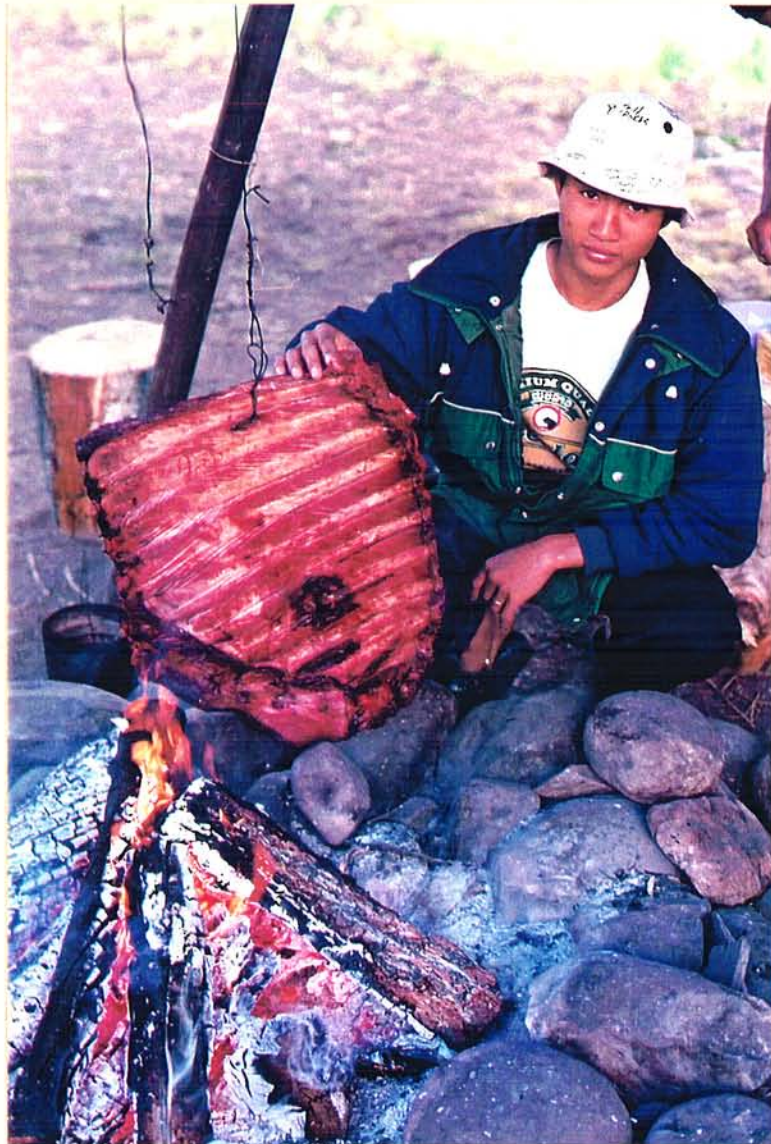
### MOOSE MEAT FOR DAYS

*"Where is my moose? Where is my moose?", Elder Mida Donnessey had been asking for two weeks. When it did arrive Mida had the entire carcass cut up and hung to dry in a single afternoon.*

*Master cook, Fanny Vance (following page) selects prime cuts for dinner roasts, and Suriyo Tookdee roasts ribs beside the fire.*





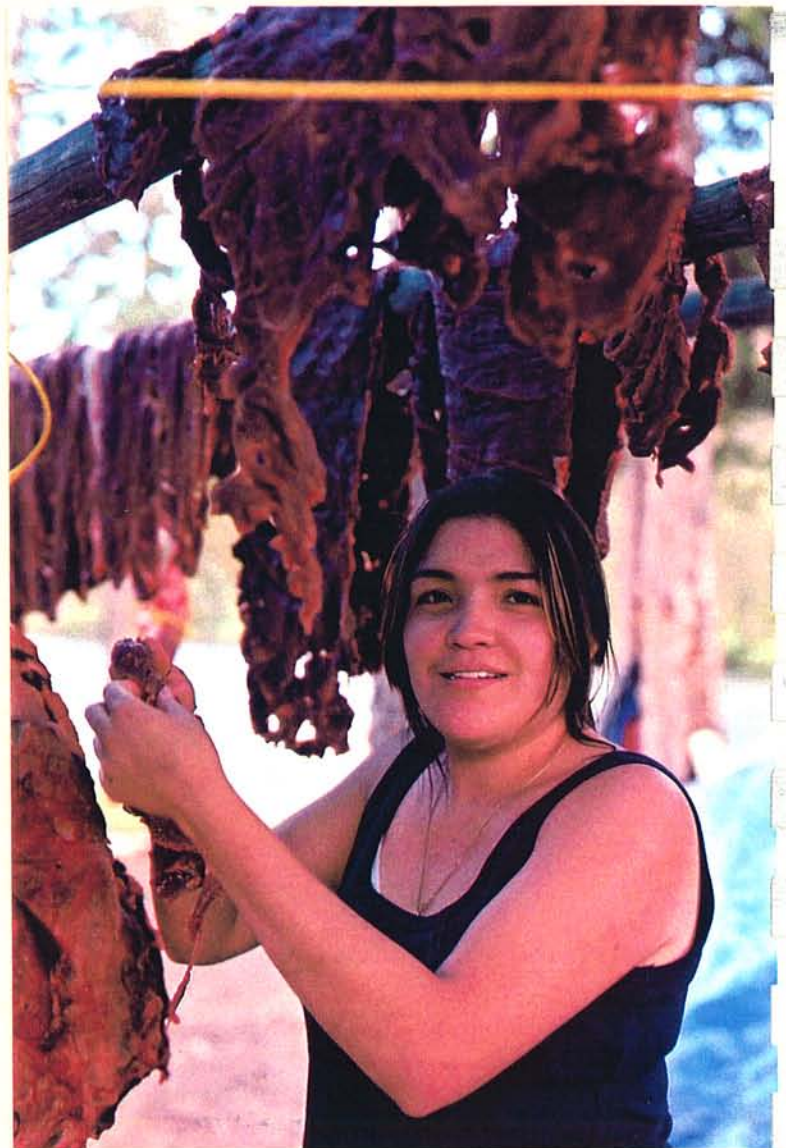




### WASTE NOT-WANT NOT

*Deb Starr of Gitskan/Heiltsuk descent helps hang great slabs of meat to dry above a smudge fire of poplars tended by Fred Lutz Jr. (right).*

*Mida ensures that every part of the animal is utilized. While the head is slowly roasting beside an open fire she begins fleshing the hide to make more moccasins.*







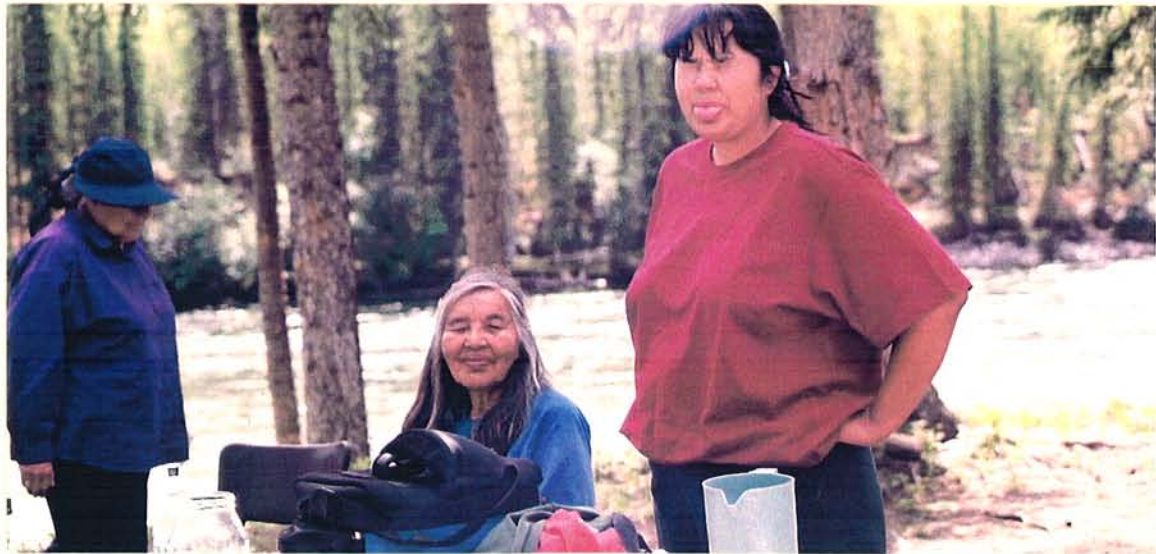
### GETTING BUSHED

*Though no one wanted to admit it, the crew was getting a little squirrely by week three. Cold, rainy weather for 18 out of our 21 days had kept everyone more confined to camp than we cared to be. On August 11<sup>th</sup> the water in our hand-washing basin was frozen solid.*

*Bobby Capot-Blanc (above) was changing his hairdo and his mood. The Thais were looking for music, Ria was making faces and Magnus Doherty, Watson Lake's wrestling champ, was having a gender identity crisis. It was time for a change.*

*The rafting expedition was just what the doctor ordered.*







### HEADING HOME

*Though delayed a day because of riverboat breakdowns, the rafting expedition couldn't have come at a better time.*

*Chilko River Expeditions arrived in camp with all the gear necessary to see the group safely down the Turnagain and the Kechika rivers by raft.*

*Inflating the rafts and packing them up the Turnagain for some test run paddling lessons met with the enthusiastic support of everyone.*

*Safety talks and rescue demonstrations (following page) also had the participants' avid attention.*



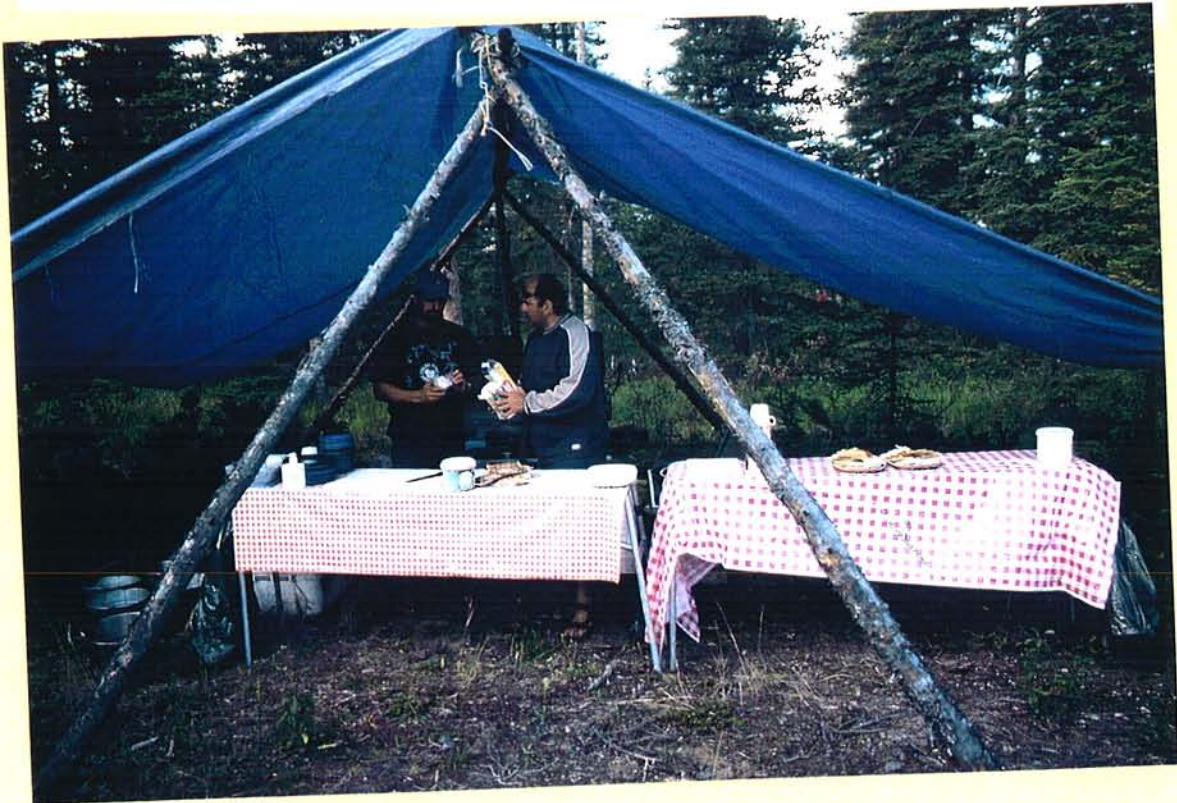




### ROLLING DOWN THE RIVER

*Three long days and two nights of camping on the river left indelible impressions on everyone. The power of the water, the vastness of the landscape and the almost complete absence of human presence were all profound.*

*We tented under tarps, ate chuck-wagon-style breakfast and dinner and nibbled our way down the long winding course of the rivers on lazy lunch breaks.*







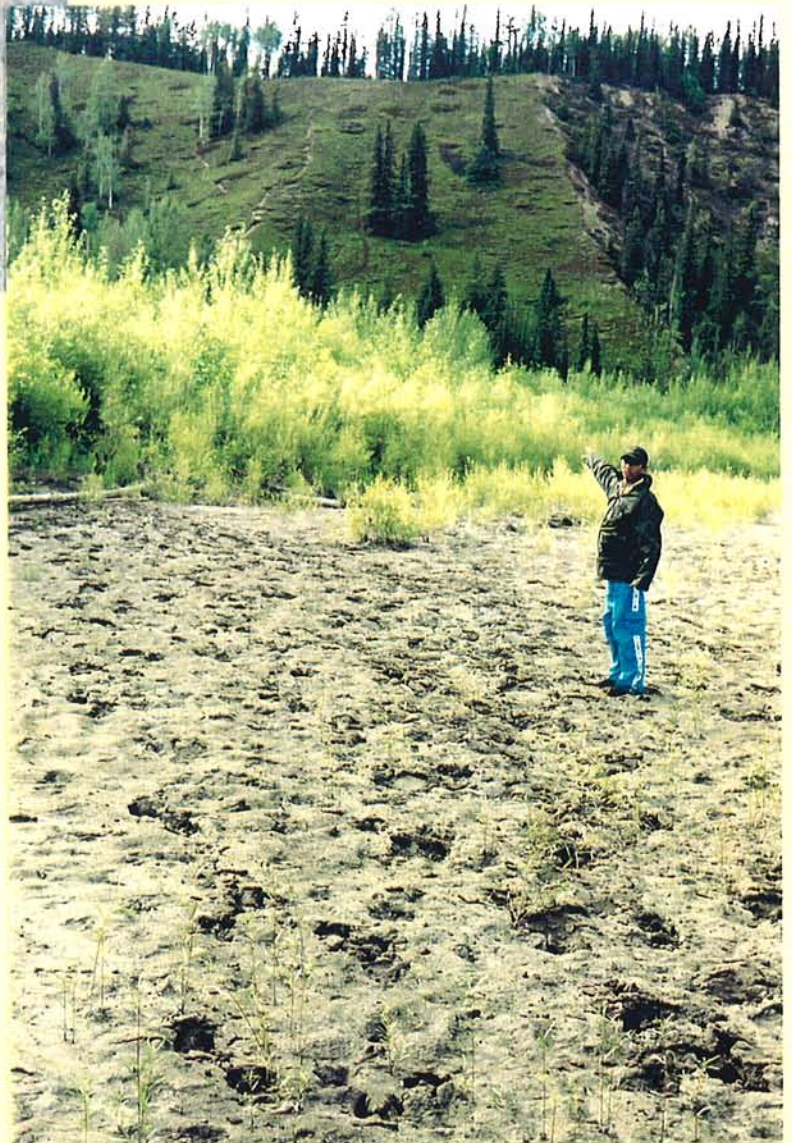


## WILDLIFE

Though wildlife encounters were few, wildlife sign was everywhere.

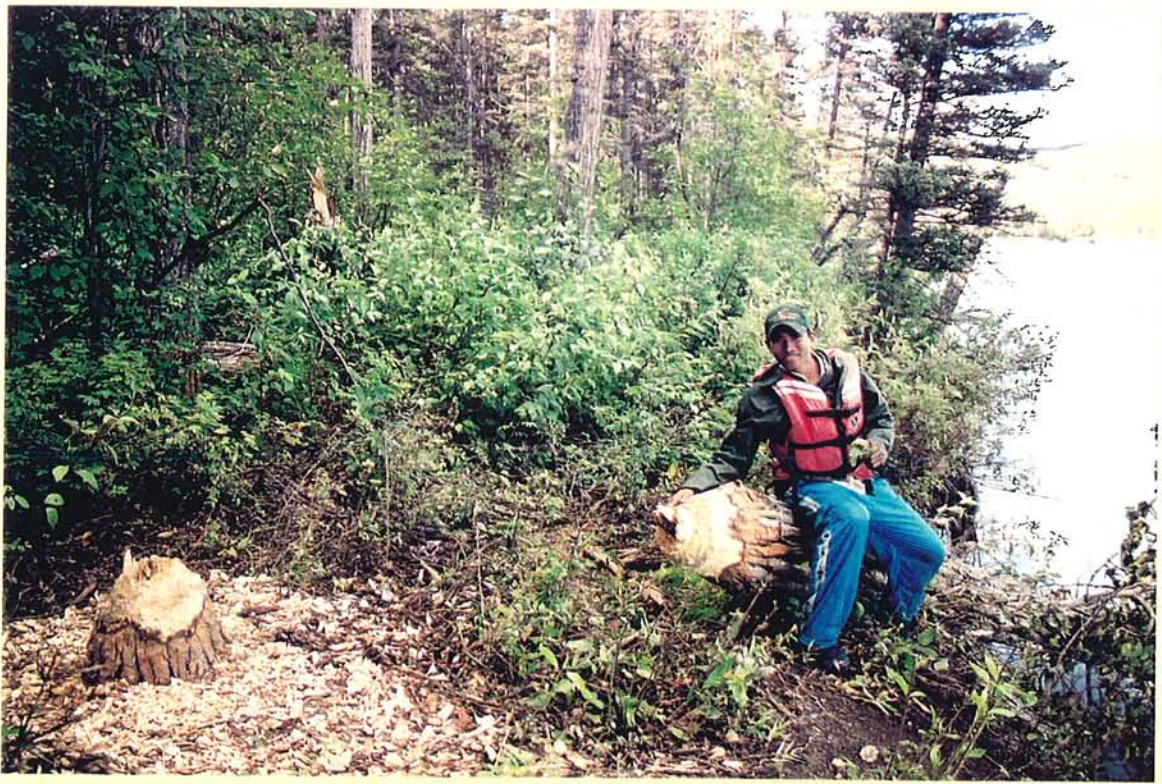
Our first night's camp near a mineral lick was a virtual highway of wildlife tracks: moose, elk, deer, wolves, coyote, black bear, grizzly and waterfowl. For many foreign youth the abundance of tracks was incredible.

Mana Sarewong from Thailand could not believe that a small beaver could topple such a huge cottonwood tree (following page).











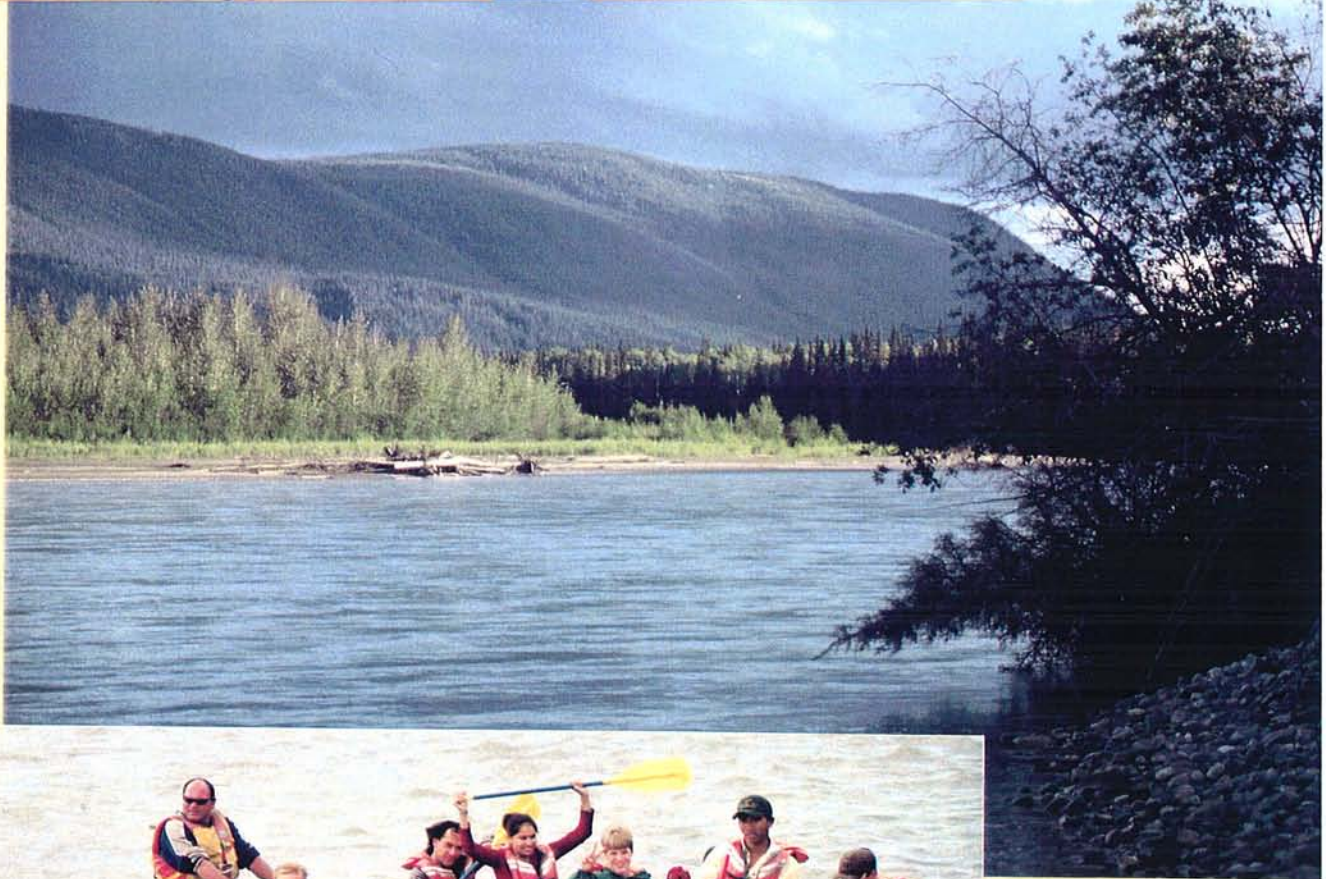
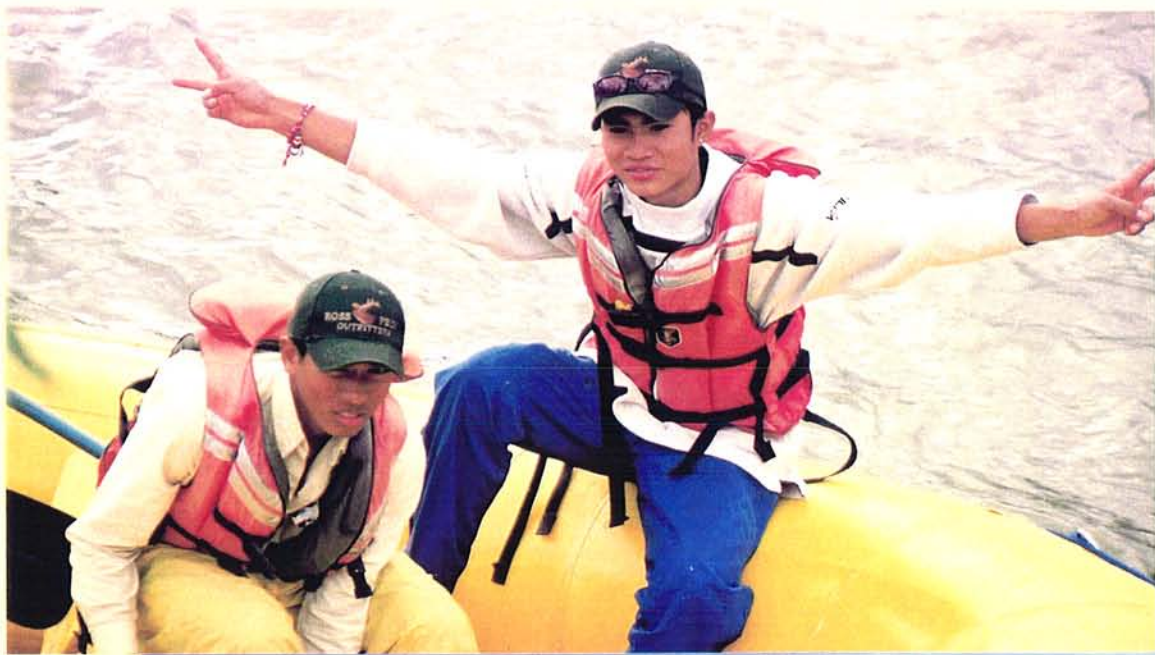


### JOURNEY'S END

*After three weeks in the bush a celebratory mood sweeps over the groups as they paddle the last rapids at the confluence of the Kechika and Liard rivers.*

*Disembarking at Fireside, it was then a long haul up the Alaska Highway to Watson Lake for hot showers, then on to Lower Post for a Community Feast and Closing Celebration.*







ALL LIFE IS A CIRCLE  
AND WE ARE ALL TOGETHER

*The power of the group and the culmination of their experiences were brought home to the Kaska community of Lower Post for all to share.*

*Kaska, Gitskan, Haida, Cree, Thaltan, Thai and Latino songs and dances were sung and celebrated as the participants shared in the great diversity of their representative cultures.*

*T-shirts and patches were presented to each participant as they were honored and invited to speak before the assembly. Mida Donnessey gave out hand-sewn moccasins to each of the international students and powerful words of gratitude were spoken by Kaska leaders.*

*For all that had embarked on this three week voyage of discovery the Closing Ceremony night marked not an end, but the beginning of a journey through life that had just begun.*

