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**Liard Highway Interpretive System - Deh Cho
Visitors Centre Interpretive Plan
Author: Avens Associates Ltd.
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Liard Highway Interpretive System

Deh Cho Visitor Centre Interpretive Plan



Prepared for: Government of the Northwest Territories
Economic Development & Tourism



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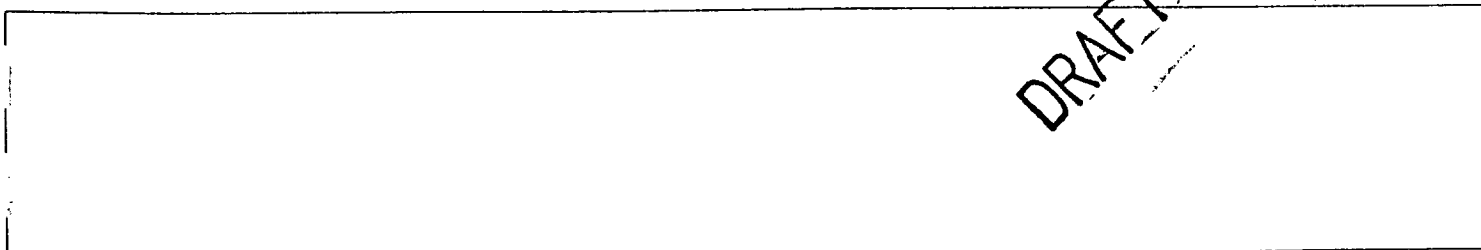


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1. INTRODUCTION

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The purpose of this study is to prepare an interpretive plan and design concept for the Deh Cho Visitor Centre and the Liard Highway interpretive system.

1.1. Project Goals

The primary goal of the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre is to promote tourism throughout the Northwest Territories and the Deh Cho region in particular. Tourists purchase goods and services during their stay, providing economic benefit to the communities. Also, as a result of being exposed to the way of life here, visitors can be more aware of the unique quality of life in the Northwest Territories. This awareness can hopefully foster an increased sensitivity to our aspirations for the future of the Northwest Territories. In support of this, the guiding principles relating to this project are:

1. The Fort Liard Service Complex is the first chance travellers will encounter for major services after crossing the N.W.T. border. This location is of strategic importance in influencing the quality of the visitor's experience in the Northwest Territories. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will provide an introduction to the Northwest Territories with a focus on the Deh Cho Region.
2. As the Liard Highway is part of a looped system, it plays an important role in encouraging travel to other areas. It is important that the experience developed along the Liard Highway and at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will relate in some way to developments along the rest of the highway network.
3. The relationship of the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre with other components of the Fort Liard Service Complex is an important consideration. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre should complement the other operations at the centre and also take advantage of the services they provide.

1.2. Project Objectives

The objectives of the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre meet the primary goal of promoting tourism in the Northwest Territories in three ways:

1. Attitude - Creating a positive attitude contributes to favourable overall impression the visitor will have of their experience in the Northwest Territories.

2. Orientation and Information - Providing useful information and orienting visitors to their surroundings enables visitors to make convenient and safe travel plans, adding to the enjoyment of their trip.
3. Awareness - Increasing the awareness of the characteristics of the region enriches the visitors experience of the Northwest Territories.

1.2.1. Primary Project Objectives

Attitude

1. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre and highway development will help develop an attitude in visitors that will encourage them to fully participate in the opportunities available here. By doing so, they are more likely to find increased enjoyment, making their trip a positive experience.
2. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will provide a sense of welcome and arrival after a long and tedious drive. Visitors need reassurance that they are indeed embarking on a journey that will be supported by good quality services and experiences. This will also be an opportunity for them to celebrate reaching the first milestone in their journey.

As this highway is part of a loop, some travellers will be leaving the Territories via the Liard. Therefore, it is important that the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre also provide a positive conclusion to their experiences in the Northwest Territories.

Information

The orientation component will provide information that will assist visitors in understanding where they are, where they are going, and where they can find the public and private services they need along the highway. There should be supply services explaining road conditions, bridges, weather, etc. This type of information will aid the visitor in forming more convenient travel plans. Where possible, orientation should combine with interpretation to set the context of local situations for example by providing an explanation for issues such as poor road conditions and narrow bridges due to frozen soils and seasonal floods. This will aid in fostering a more patient and accepting attitude of the unavoidable problems visitors may encounter.

Awareness

Interpretation at the Centre and along the highway will provide the visitor with information on the natural history and culture they will experience as the travel through the Western Northwest Territories. There will be an emphasis on the Deh Cho region

within the context of the Northwest Territories as a whole. This introduction is important in terms of preparing the visitor to participate in actively seeking out interesting and meaningful experiences. The interpretation should enable visitors to derive more pleasure from their trip by increasing their awareness and understanding of the sites and people encountered in the Northwest Territories.

1.2.2. Secondary Project Objectives

Information

The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will facilitate the use of local tourism operators both by encouraging visitors to participate in more experiences and providing information about services available and facilities to make the necessary arrangements and reservations.

Awareness

1. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will play a role in community education especially during the shoulder season of May-June and September-October. The exhibits at the centre will be available for use by schools and community groups as a focus for promoting cultural awareness and learning about the regional environment.
2. Through the use of exhibits, displays, and demonstrations at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre visitor awareness and appreciation of arts and crafts produced in the Northwest Territories will be increased. This promotion will encourage visitors to purchase the more costly, but higher quality goods available for sale throughout the Northwest Territories. It is anticipated that the Acho Dene Native Crafts will have a retail outlet at the adjacent complex which should directly benefit from this type of exposure.
3. Exhibits at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will alert visitors to points of interest at Fort Liard, encouraging them to spend some time in the community.
4. Travel along the narrow highway corridor is monotonous. However, there are many interesting sites and forms of recreation located near the highway, but not obvious to anyone driving along it. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will provide interpretation for these sites, for example Blackstone Park, encouraging visitors to be more adventurous.

1.2.3. Tertiary Project Objectives

Attitude

1. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre will provide opportunities for meeting other people, reinforcing the spirit of adventure and friendly atmosphere of travelling in the Northwest Territories.
2. Being close to the motel, the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre and site will provide a source of diversion and entertainment for guests, adding to the enjoyment of their trip.

Information and Awareness

Fatigue and a decrease in driver alertness due to boredom are safety problems associated with driving conditions along the highway. The Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre and highway development will contribute to increased road safety by providing a break from driving and stroll about the site and interior. Basic road conditions and safety information will assist in trip planning by developing a theme and introducing highlights to watch for will provide more interest, relieving the monotony of the drive.

1.3. Study Area Definition

There are two main components to this project. They are in order of importance:

1. Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre. This will be located at the Fort Liard Visitor Service Complex by the Liard Highway near Fort Liard. This project concerns both the Deh Cho Visitor Centre building and its site.
2. Liard Highway Interpretive System. This is to be developed for use along the highway. For the purposes of this contract GNWT identified five (5) sites along the highway to be used as examples of a variety of conditions that the interpretive system would be required to function in. The sites finally chosen were:
 - NWT Border Crossing
 - Muskeg River
 - Nahanni Butte Winter Road
 - Bison Viewpoint
 - Liard/Mackenzie Highways Junction

1.4. Project Requirements

 The project requirements as established in the Terms of Reference included the following:

"Interpretive Resource File

A resource file of cultural and natural history information and materials has been started under the Avens report. This will need to be updated and expanded.

Interpretive Master Plan for the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre

The master plan prepared by PRP addresses the highway interpretation, but does not specifically explore the opportunities at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre. An interpretive Master Plan for the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre is required which should show an integration with the highway interpretation. The master plan shall include overall direction for design construction, operation, and the administration of the centre.

Preliminary Theme and Story Development

Develop a central theme to be established at the centre and continued along the highway corridor that encourages travellers to get out and explore the northern environment and participate in experiences beyond the travel to their actual destination and organizes impressions of the north and the Deh Cho region into a meaningful whole. A regional theme of "On the Edge" has been identified in the Liard Highway Interpretive Plan that integrates the subjects of culture and natural history using the division of geographical features as an organizing principle. The consultant should adapt this proposed theme and develop other subthemes and stories that reflect the influence the land the people have on each other.

Preliminary Exhibit Design of the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre

The consultant will develop design concepts and preliminary siting of exhibits for the interior and the exterior site at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre. The preliminary design will make recommendations as to the types of photographs, illustrations, artifacts, craft items, and text that would be used. There will also be an indication of the use of design elements such as colour, materials, texture, and line. The exhibit design should follow these basic principles:

- Exhibits should have a greater emphasis on images with exciting impact rather than text. The message of the text should be meaningful to the average traveller, but presented in a light

and entertaining style.

- There should be a natural integration of the interior and exterior exhibits with the surrounding landscape and structures.
- A balanced use of intimate and large scale, reflective of the subtleties of many features in the north found within the context of a vast range of land.
- The character of the exhibits should be warm and inviting, with a high degree of visual interest, encouraging visitors to approach and use the facilities.

The exhibit design must meet the following requirements:

- Approximately 25% of the exhibits shall be interchangeable. A module for use with interchangeable exhibits will be developed for the GNWT for use in the final design phase.
- There will be some use of the Slavey language in the exhibit, particularly in major titles. The Slavey should not be a direct translation of the English, but should address the level of interest and interpretation that would be of interest to a local resident who is already familiar with the basic subject.
- Some part of the exhibit shall be amenable for resale as a souvenir. For example video tapes and posters.
- There will be a small audio-visual component to the exhibit with tapes available for purchase or loan. The consultant shall make recommendations as to the role of AV and supporting media and techniques which would enhance the project. The irregular voltage supply in this location, and lack of service people should be considerations when considering AV equipment.
- The centre will be a seasonal operation, open from June to September. During the winter, the centre will not be heated. Therefore, the exhibit must tolerate cold and possibly damp conditions.
- Exterior exhibits will provide orientation and interpretation when the centre is closed. The exterior exhibits should include as a minimum, the following information:
 - Map showing Liard Highway and connections with other parts of the looped highway system. This map will show points of interest and major settlements.
 - Information regarding emergency services, tourism related services, highway and travel conditions, and other information that would be useful to the travelling public.
 - Recommendations for signage and orientation supporting the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre at other sites on the Complex.

- Recommendations of written material such as pamphlets that should be available at the centre.
- Recommendations of the role of AV and supporting media and techniques which would enhance the project.

Highway Interpretive System

Develop a highway interpretive system using the central theme. This highway system will be used at sites along the highway and should relate to the interpretive techniques used at the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre. This will include a conceptual design framework for the use of a logo, exhibitory, signage, supporting structures, and siting considerations as an expression of the central theme. This concept will address elements such as the use of colour, material, line, massing, character development, etc. and how they will relate when used under the various conditions and sites identified. The consultant is to focus on the interpretive element of site improvements and is not required to address general site development.

Operational and Maintenance Guidelines

The consultant will set out guidelines for the operation and maintenance of the Deh Cho Visitor Information Centre and Highway interpretive system. In preparing the guidelines, the consultant should consider the need to maximize benefits for local residents. The consultant is also asked to address the question of the difference in costs and government staffing if operations and maintenance are handled by contract, performed internally by the GNWT or involving some combination of the two."

1.5. Study Process

Overall, the study proceeded in concert with the interpretation concept design studies for the 60th Parallel Visitor Centre and Highway 1, and the Dawson City Visitor Centre and Dempster Highway. A project start up meeting was held in Hay River in July, 1989 which was attended officially by representatives of the consultant teams for the other two projects. The Liard contract had not been awarded by that time. Fortunately, representatives of the Waskasoo Group, Avens Associates and Lombard North were at that start-up meeting because of their involvement with other projects (Waskasoo's involvement at that time was with the Highway 5 and 6 Corridor Study).

A period of familiarization with project documentation followed the contract award in early August. Consultant and client representatives toured the Liard Highway and inspected the visitor centre site in late August. Subsequently, team representatives for all the projects met with the client in Inuvik at the end of August

where general approaches to interpretation were presented and discussed.

Our team made another tour of the highway in late September, just prior to a gathering of all the project teams at Blackstone Territorial Park. There we presented the results of our interpretation planning and preliminary concepts for media at selected sites on the highway and in the visitor centre.

Through October, we refined the conceptual designs and in November at Prelude Lake just outside Yellowknife, we presented conceptual site designs and media designs for selected sites and the visitor centre to another gathering of all the project teams and the client.

During the period of research and design from August to December 1989, as we developed concepts for site and media designs, meetings were held in Yellowknife and Calgary with client representatives to discuss progress. In addition, the consultants met study area residents on two occasions to discuss concepts for the design of media for the centre and the roadside media. We met the project architect in Yellowknife on several occasions to try to achieve a melding of media design and building design ideas in the visitor centre. In January, 1990, we met with representatives of the Fort Liard Band, the Development Corporation and the Craft Shop in Fort Liard to present this plan.

This document represents the primary product of the conceptual design process. A set of presentation drawings was prepared of concepts for site development and media design. These are in the possession of Economic Development and Tourism in Yellowknife. Also in EDT's possession is a full-size rendering of a portion of the proposed exhibit wall for the Deh Cho Visitor Centre.

2. APPROACH TO INTERPRETATION

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2.1. Previous Message Assignments

Bruce Downie and John Laird took the most systematic approach to listing potential subject matter for interpretation along the Liard Highway in their corridor interpretive plan dated July 1989, devising some themes which revolved around an "On the Edge" notion (e.g., On the Edge of the River, On the Edge of the Plains, etc).

While these themes were elucidated in terms of what visitors could learn about the culture and nature of the region, nothing was said about how these themes could be used to interest people in these subjects nor how, in fact, the use of themes affects learning or the design of interpretive experiences generally. To be fair, we should point out that no one has ever established a link between the use of themes and effective interpretation so it's as well that Downie and Laird didn't suggest their proposed themes could be anything more than a way to organize subject matter.

Beyond organizing subject matter by broad themes, Downie and Laird also divided subjects up among the sites available along the highway. The following are the message assignments they made for the five sites we are working with. (Downie and Laird's work did not include the Deh Cho Visitor Centre).

Junction of Liard and Alaska Highways (just northwest of Fort Nelson on Alaska Highway about 150 km from BC-NWT border)

- general introduction to the NWT and the Liard region

Muskeg River Valley

- themes
 - on the edge of the plains
 - on the edge of the north
 - on the edge of the river
- messages
 - traditional lifestyles
 - the boreal forest
 - northern flora and fauna species
 - habitat for economically significant species (moose, beaver)
 - critical habitat for migratory bird populations (eg, the endangered tundra swan spends time here)
 - four types of loons
 - beaver trapping (introduction of trapping lifestyle, both native and white, creation of trap line and trapper's campsite in the bush)
 - banana belt of the north
 - climate of the north vs the south (ie wettest part of the NWT yet evidence of significant areas of permafrost)
 - well forested area (influence on lifestyle - log buildings, wooden boats, etc)

-world scale river system - tributary morphology, meanders

Bison Viewing Area

- theme: on the edge of the north
- messages:
 - northern flora and fauna species: bison characteristics, bison habitat, introduction of bison to the area

Nahanni Butte Winter Road

- theme: on the edge of the river
- messages
 - traditional lifestyles
 - early European contact - trading posts were operated near the confluence of the Liard and Netla rivers from the late 1920s to the mid-1950s - move from Netla River to Nahanni Butte
 - changes in transportation - history of Slavey transportation: birch and spruce canoes in summer, snowshoes with a toboggan in winter (toboggans were more suitable for heavily forested areas than were sleds with runners) - contemporary transportation of Dene people: snowmobiles and dog teams in winter, boats and motor vehicles in summer
 - impact of modern resources and activities on the region's population - mining and oil exploration - Nahanni National Park - Liard Highway

Mackenzie Highway Junction

- introductory signs to Liard Highway system
- create an interest and anticipation of the broad theme of "On the Edge"
- a sense of entering a new and different area is important

It's not within the scope of our contract to evaluate the message assignments made in the interpretive plan beyond looking at how to make them work for the sites selected for concept development in this round of development. For this purpose, we make the following general observations.

We had a look at the message assignments through the eyes of people who have to make interpretation work, that is who have to implement plans. Experiments with interpretation (ours and other's) have yielded up a couple of reliable maxims for good, engaging products. The first is: on site, talk about what you can experience there, what you can see, hear, feel, smell, touch.

An interpretive site is a big outdoor exhibit which uses the site itself and its features as exhibit objects. It's good practice not to manufacture objects to install on an interpretive site when you can work effectively with the real stuff the site has to offer. The corollary to this is that practically anything is possible off site although it's best to reserve the best about any feature for an exhibit where that feature can be experienced.

This means that such subjects as mountain uplift may not be right for such a site as Highlands Park or any site along the highway, for that matter. This is because:

- a) the mountains are too far away from the road to be of much use as exhibit objects, and
- b) you can't see or imagine what the product of uplift might have been because two-thirds to three-quarters of the material that was uplifted has been worn away. The mountains, even if they were close enough to be good exhibit objects are great for showing erosion, not uplift.

The point of this example is that if we think uplift is important enough to do on the Liard corridor, we'd best do it at the Deh Cho Centre or the Blackstone Centre. On the other hand, assigning boreal forest flora and fauna as a major message for the Deh Cho Visitor Centre when there's nearly 1000 km of it running from Fort Liard to Fort Smith for people to drive through, see, smell, touch, lie down in, get bitten in and experience in all its endless glory is wrong.

So, we have cut the messages Downie and Laird wanted to do outside that couldn't be experienced there and all the messages they wanted done inside that could be experienced much better outside.

The second maxim is it is not effective to interpret everything everywhere for everybody. The very best interpretation at any given site leaves visitors with just one new idea. We hope it's a bright, fresh, exciting idea, an idea visitors will turn over in their minds for weeks, perhaps years to come. We hope they will see connections between this new idea and the rest of the world around them. We hope a lot of things but we don't make the mistake of hoping we can cram as much disparate subject matter into one interpretive experience as we can.

Take Muskeg River as an example - we have the opportunity there to leave visitors with a very haunting notion of what it was like to live in the Liard Valley thousands of years ago. The idea will be haunting because a certain amount of it is speculative, and because it would be impossible for a modern person to really know what it was like. Nonetheless, we can lead people through the forest and down by the river and give them a look at what it might have been like. If we restrict ourselves to accomplishing only that at Muskeg River, then we have the chance to do it really well. If we toss in "banana belt of the north" and the "world scale river system" we clutter the experience (never mind the fact that both could be handled at sites more conducive to their interpretation).

2.2. Additional Messages

At a joint project meeting in Inuvik at the end of August, some additional messages for the Liard Corridor interpretive development were proposed. These were ranked as being of high, moderate or low priority (H,M,L) and are as follows:

Weather

- H - daily weather conditions
- M - "banana belt" - introduce - develop at Blackstone

Minerals

- H - early prospecting and present day placer mines

Soils

- M - boreal forest - introduce - develop at Blackstone and roadside

Flora

- M - large trees - introduce - develop at Blackstone and roadside

Fauna

- M - moose - major resource for area - relate to movement of camps, moose skin boats, etc

Wildlife Harvesting

- M - trapping and trappers - historic and present day - introduce at centre - develop at Blackstone
- H - Hudson's Bay Company, North West Company and the fur trade - development of trading posts
- M - fur-bearing animals - introduce - develop at Blackstone

Life of Northern People

- M - pre-European settlement
- H - frontier settlement - Dene and white
- H - contemporary - Dene and white - continuing frontier spirit in families such as Lindbergs and Turners

Building the Highway

- M - winter roads - introduce - develop at Nahanni Butte site
- H - road-building in the north

Heritage Conservation in the North

- H - territorial parks - orientation information such as location, fees, services, etc
- H - national parks - promote Nahanni National Park - introduce Wood Buffalo National Park

Towns and Settlements

- H - introduce cultural expectations
- H - Fort Liard as an example - give orientation about services,

hours, sites, etc
H - encourage visitation

Tourism Information Services

H - food, lodgings, fuel
H - road conditions, weather forecasts
H - police, emergency, medical
H - travel distances
H - Alberta, BC travel information
H - import regulations
H - regulations regarding finding of artifacts
H - hunting, fishing, firearm regulations
H - prohibition regulations?

Water

H - rivers flowing north - "Down North"
H - Big River Travel Region and Deh Cho / Mackenzie
H - mountains, Laird and Petitot rivers

Geology

H - convergence of mountains and plains
M - rock sculptured by water - introduce - develop at Blackstone and sites

Politics

M - land claims, consensus government, partition of NWT

Fishing

H - recreation and sport
H - food source for Dene

Arts and Crafts

H - relate to use of resources - birch bark baskets and moose hide

2.3. Receiver Analysis

We would like to look at receivers more deeply but there's no good material on them - the highway is new, few people have travelled it compared to the numbers who have travelled Highway 1, and the few who have disappeared down the Liard in a cloud of dust haven't been studied. However, we know they're driving vehicles, mostly of the recreational sort, they're tending to be adults without children travelling for the most part in couples. We also know there are few roadside recreational opportunities outside of Blackstone Territorial Park for them to stop for along the route.

This will change with the opening of the service centre at Fort Liard and the development of interpretive and recreational sites along the road as planned in this study and others. Working from present use statistics for the Highway and plans for future

development and promotion, Economic Development and Tourism estimates that peak simultaneous visitation to the Deh Cho Visitor Centre will be 30 persons, which is a small bus load. Assuming there will be tour buses operating on the Liard Highway in future, a 30 visitor minimum capacity should be planned for at all other sites along the road and space must be provided to park at least one bus at each site as well.

One thing all visitors to any of these sites will have in common will be a certain familiarity with the Liard Highway. As the road is dusty in fine weather and muddy in foul, many visitors will be in the middle of a driving experience they do not consider pleasant. They will welcome the opportunity to take a break from the road. They may also be wondering what purpose this ribbon of engineering through the wilderness might serve and if there's more to the driving experience than dust or mud. The visitor centre is an opportunity for road-weary visitors to get their first really comprehensive overview of the region the road travels through and the many things there are to see and do in the area which they have been unaware of. Each of the interpretive sites along the highway offers a similar opportunity to see the region from a different point of view than through the side window or over the steering wheel and the dashboard.

We believe visitors will respond very well to these opportunities to take a brief respite from their driving even if they have definite destinations in mind for that day. Making visitors aware of these opportunities and demonstrating that they are worth taking advantage of is therefore an important goal for orientation and interpretation media along the route.

2.4. General Objectives

In order to get our priorities straight and to be guided in concept development by some yardstick by which our eventual results will be measured, we need to establish some interpretation objectives for the project.

None of the objectives approved or proposed for the highway development and the centre has had components which can be measured in any specific way, let alone in terms of the impact such development should have on visitors and tourism. Furthermore, quantified measurements of the performance of visitor centres along major highway corridors in western and northern Canada have not been made. Into this stunning void we have bravely plunged, devising a set of 23 measurable interpretation objectives for the Liard Corridor development and the Deh Cho Visitor Centre.

Because so little work exists to guide us in this area, we have proposed objectives we feel are reasonable and which cover the major goals of NWT Economic Development and Tourism in the region.

The Liard Highway Corridor Interpretive Plan finished in July 1989 for EDT by Bruce K Downie and John Laird lays out the following interpretive goals:

- to create a meaningful and informative experience for visitors so that they will leave the highway with a better appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the Liard Valley and its surrounds;
- to provide opportunities for an enjoyable and restful experience that will be a welcome break from the long and difficult hours of highway travelling; and
- to encourage more travellers to drive the Liard Highway and to spend longer doing so, thus increasing the tourism benefits for the surrounding region.

We have been guided in our development of concepts for interpretation in the corridor by these goals. They are, however, very subjective for the most part. Measuring such attributes as meaningfulness, informativeness, enjoyability, restfulness and the like will be impossible. Downie and Laird's interpretive objectives for the corridor development unfortunately outline only what they thought EDT should create along the highway, not what the result of that effort should be. We found the three goals above at least more useful in pointing the way to what we should be hoping to achieve in the long run - that is, the impact we will have on visitors and tourism. What we have done, then, is to suggest some basic and precise performance levels we might hope to achieve with regard to these three goals. We have selected some specific areas of learning and assigned some numbers to them based upon our experience with other interpretation developments.

2.5. Measurable Interpretation Objectives

Our first purpose in devising interpretation objectives, then, is to provide a basis for evaluating the success of orientation and interpretation efforts in the corridor. Our second purpose is to help EDT obtain bench mark data with which to devise interpretation objectives for other centres, other developments and future changes to the Deh Cho centre and Liard corridor developments.

We have suggested performance levels we feel are worth shooting for and, at the same time, are attainable. Because of the lack of comparative data on which to base these levels, a failure to achieve these results might be as much a function of the objective setting process as it might be of media design. The current rush of interpretation corridor and visitor centre design gives EDT the chance to record some base data before completing development and to follow through by obtaining comparative data after completing the first round of development. With these sets of data in hand, setting new, better, more precise objectives should be possible before the second round of development.

Here, then, is a start toward that process. Each objective below is like litmus paper which indicates the presence of an acid but cannot indicate which one nor precisely how much nor how strong. These objectives will indicate if changes are occurring in the knowledge level, attitudes and behaviours of visitors to the region as a result of interpretation development. But they will not indicate the precise range nor intensity of that change. That data would have to be obtained by more extensive tests than those needed to measure your success in achieving the following interpretation objectives.

Cognitive Objectives (relating to knowledge gain)

1. 90% of visitors interviewed at any orientation or interpretation stop along the highway will know with a 10% margin of error how far they are from Fort Nelson and Fort Simpson.*
2. 75% of tourists who have visited the Deh Cho Centre will correctly identify the locations of Fort Liard, Fort Nelson and Fort Simpson up to 30 minutes after their visit on a map of the region from which the place names have been removed.*
3. 50% of tourists who have travelled the highway will know who the Dene are and recognize them as the founding people of the region.*
4. 50% of tourists who have travelled the highway will know the climate of the region is more mild and more moist than the rest of the Northwest Territories and that this fact accounts for the lush growth and agricultural potential of the region.*
5. 75% of tourists who have visited the centre will be aware that distinctive crafts are made in the area and that these are for sale at local establishments (can modify objective to call for the naming of certain establishments or their locations)*

* (The performance levels assigned to these objectives will be subject to change based upon the level of knowledge possessed by tourists not visiting the centre - a measurement which should be made before any interpretation in the corridor has been implemented.)

Affective Objectives (relating to attitude change, new feelings)

6. A majority of tourists who stop at interpretive developments along the highway will indicate, when asked, that they found these developments to be enjoyable and restful.
7. A majority of tourists who travel the highway will indicate, when asked, that they have a better appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the Liard Valley and its surrounds.
8. Visitors to the centre will feel Fort Liard, Blackstone Park, Nahanni National Park, Fort Simpson and the surrounding natural region are places they would like to visit if they were able.

9. 75% of tourists who have travelled the entire corridor will state, upon being asked, that they feel they have entered a different world - they will be able to name three significant similarities and three important differences between the Liard region and their own neighbourhoods.
10. Visitors will find the centre comfortable, inviting and appropriate to the natural and human environment of the region.
11. Visitors will feel a desire to learn more about the peoples and environment of the Northwest Territories.
12. A majority of tourists who have visited the centre will feel welcome to visit Fort Liard but will understand it is a small community which asks the consideration of visitors in respecting residents' privacy of person and property.

Behaviourial Objectives

13. Tourist traffic on the Liard Highway will increase after the implementation of interpretation at a rate 50 per cent greater than the rate of increase prior to implementation.
14. Tourism revenues in the region will increase after the implementation of interpretation at a rate 50 per cent greater than the rate of increase prior to implementation.
15. After interpretation along the highway has been implemented, the average time tourists take to drive between the Mackenzie Highway junction and the NWT border will increase by 1.5 hours.
16. 90% of tourists on the Liard Highway will stop at at least two interpretation sites other than the visitor centre.
17. 90% of tourists on the Liard Highway will visit the centre.
18. 50% of other highway users will visit the centre at least once every two years.
19. Visitors to the centre will spend, on average, at least 20 minutes in the centre and on the grounds, exclusive of time spent at the service centre.
20. Once the centre is complete, use of Blackstone Territorial Park will increase by 50% and such increase will be comprised of persons who have visited the centre (measurement includes day and overnight use both).
21. All grade school children in Fort Liard will visit the centre as part of their school activities at least once per year.
22. 50% of families residing between the NWT-BC border and Blackstone Territorial Park will visit the centre at least once every two years.
23. Sales of local crafts in Fort Liard will double after the centre opens. (A means to differentiate increases stimulated by the centre and those stimulated by the service centre and other concurrent factors must be found.)

2.6. The Approach to Interpretation

2.6.1. Point of View - The World of the Acho Dene

Giving a "point of view" is another of the important techniques of good interpretation we want to inject into the Liard Corridor. The point of view (or angle, or slant) we want to use for interpretation along the Liard Corridor is cultural. We want to emphasize that this is a land inhabited for 15,000 years or longer by a succession of peoples who have found ways to come to terms with the environment of the valley based upon the technologies they had available to them.

The Liard Corridor is not one of those untouched, impenetrable wildernesses so alien to human experience. It is, instead, a wild land people have adapted to and survived in for millennia. That experience can be shared. The relationships of persons to the landscape through time can be passed from one culture to another given the proper conditions. These conditions consist primarily of the right places in which the exchange can take place and a willingness to participate in the experience.

While we hope that each visitor will leave the Liard Corridor with

a very personal, unique impression, we want to stimulate the formation of that impression by helping visitors see the valley through the eyes of peoples who have lived here from prehistoric time to the near past.

This means, for example, that we want to provide the opportunity for visitors to see the forest as a source of food and shelter for people who employed stone point technologies here more than 10,000 years ago.

We want them to see the river as a means of transportation for people who lived here when whites first arrived in the valley.

We want them to see the mountains as a barrier to movement and trade.

We want them to see the mild climate as a chance to supplement a diet of game and gathered fruits with domesticated animals and crops.

We want them to be able to see Christian missionaries through the eyes of a highly spiritual people who adhere to a very different set of beliefs.

Most of all, we would like visitors to see the Liard River Valley through the eyes of the Acho Dene who live here and represent the aboriginal culture of the region.

This doesn't mean we have to switch our messages around

drastically, only that we maintain our cultural point of view fairly consistently throughout the corridor.

2.6.2. What to Do with the Old Themes

The super-theme developed in the interpretive plan - "On the Edge" - doesn't help us achieve this viewpoint. In fact, if we take a cultural approach to our subjects, it smacks of a rather Victorian concept of nature and man's relationship to it.

The themes were a convenient way to organize the subject matter during the planning process. Now we're not as concerned with organizing it as we are with trying to present it in an effective, interesting and imaginative way. If anything, we should try to get across the idea that visitors have stepped over the edge of their European - North American cultural tradition into a region which has supported a quite different cultural tradition for a much longer time. We cannot let visitors simply pass through the area marvelling at the wonders of nature unaware of the very powerful stories associated with how an entire people has come to terms with the demands made by this wilderness.

We should be careful, moreover, not to paint a picture of the Dene as a group of people living "on the edge" as we so often do when presenting information about cultural groups living in natural environments. Aside from being more than a little patronizing, it indicates our lack of understanding of the values of such a way of life - values we hope to interpret and which we won't be able to portray satisfactorily if we allow our cultural biases about what constitutes an edge to block clear communication.

Our recommendation, then, is to leave "On the Edge" in the interpretive plan but not allow the notions it connotes to sneak into our perceptions of life in the Liard Valley.

2.6.3. Tie-Ins with Other Corridors and Projects

Taking a cross-cultural approach to interpretation in the corridor allows us to tie in with things happening along highways outside the region as well.

There's a need to take a distinctive approach to each major route in the southern NWT to prevent an amount of subject matter overlap which would be tiresomely obvious to visitors. On the other hand, as we can't escape a certain amount of repetition, adopting differing approaches will at least ensure that recurring subjects are dealt with from different points of view.

If we look at moose as a source of food, shelter, tools and transportation at the Deh Cho Visitor Centre but look at moose along Highway 5 as an indicator species of a certain ecosystem found in the boreal forest, then we have helped visitors see the

same thing two very different ways. This approach is bound to have a salutary effect on the learning experience. If we did the life history of the moose in both places, we would be in danger of lessening the quality of the visitor experience and our ability to influence learning through interpretation. (Not to mention revealing our own lack of imagination.)

So far, it looks like interpretive planning for the corridors and related sites are shaping up this way:

- Liard Corridor - the world of the Acho Dene (a cultural interpretation of the boreal forest)
- Highway 1 - down north - the waterfall route
- 60th Parallel - the regions of the NWT
- Hay River - modern water transportation in the north
- Highway 5 - the Wood Buffalo Route - the boreal forest (a natural interpretation of the boreal forest)
- Fort Smith - river transportation and the CANOL project
- Fitzgerald - river transportation
- Highway 6 - the great Slave Route - an interpretation of the meeting of two cultures in the north
- Fort Resolution - the 19th Century in the north

This summary is so general that it may distort what's actually going on in these areas and we know that none of this is final. However, you can see how subject matter for interpretation will unavoidably overlap between regions and corridors but that we will take quite different points of view toward it in each region. By hewing close to a world of the Acho Dene theme, we will ensure the subjects we deal with along the Liard Corridor are presented in a different light than they will be in other areas.

2.6.4. Host Approach

Using the world of the Acho Dene as a point of view for interpretation in the Liard Corridor also lets us use the host approach proposed by Karen LeGresley and EDT for Highway 1 to good effect. We will be able to use actual living persons as models for our host figures in interpretation media where the subjects dealt with are modern or call for a modern outlook on some past circumstance. We will also be able to use the host approach in creating composite characters to represent peoples from the past.

2.7. Design Approach

2.7.1. Common Orientation Modules

We do feel a strong need to tie orientation media together throughout the southern route system. We propose developing a common orientation panel depicting a portion of highway on one face and the local visiting area on the reverse to be installed at visitor centres, major pull-offs and highway junctions. The

dimensions, design and support structure for these panels will remain the same throughout the system but colours and graphic style will change according to graphic standards adopted for each route. Road users will soon learn what these modules are and look for them at major sites to help them learn about what to experience in the local area and what to expect to see on adjacent stretches of highway (see Drawing 1).

A preliminary list of sites for these modules, which can be used in conjunction with other media on a site, includes the following:

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| Highway 7 | -Liard/Alaska Junction
-NWT/BC Border
-Fort Liard
-Bison Viewing Area
-Nahanni Butte Winter Road
-Blackstone River Territorial Park
-Birch River
-Mackenzie/Liard Junction
-Fort Simpson
-Jean Marie River Junction
-Trout Lake Junction
-Hwy 7/Hwy 3 Junction |
| Highway 1 | -60th Parallel
-Enterprise |
| Highway 2 | -Hwy 2/ Hwy 5 Junction
-Hay River |
| Highway 5 | -Polar Lake
-Hwy 5/Hwy 6 Junction
-Sandy Lake Road Junction
-Angus Fire Tower
-Nyarling River
-Whooping Crane Viewpoint
-Little Buffalo River Territorial Park
-Salt River
-Fort Smith
-Fitzgerald (Alberta) |
| Highway 6 | -Pine Point
-Paulette Bay
-Fort Resolution |
| Highway 3 | -Mackenzie River Ferry (Dory Point)
-Mackenzie Bison Sanctuary
-Rae Lakes Junction
-Edzo
-Rae
-Fred Henne Park
-Yellowknife |

Highway 4 -Hwy 3/Hwy 4 Junction
 -Prelude Lake

2.7.2. Slavey to be Used in Identification Media

Safety, regulatory and directional signs along Highway 7 should adhere to the territorial standard. We believe this provision should apply to all highways in the territory.

We do recommend a change to the territorial sign standards regarding identification signs. We propose that signs marking political and geographical places and features be produced bilingually in English and Slavey. We do not propose this change to directional signs, only to identification signs. For example, a sign saying Fort Liard is 25 km ahead would remain in English only but the sign on the highway indicating you have entered Fort Liard would also give the Slavey name for the settlement. We propose that all identification signs for creeks, rivers, lakes, mountains, parks, settlements, etc be handled in this way.

Our rationale for proposing this is to put an indigenous language prominently into the corridor and the minds of travellers without implying that it is required by the inhabitants for successful navigation of the highway. It is important to the point of view we hope to establish that visitors understand there are native names for places and features in their landscape. On the other hand, we don't want to use the language as an entertainment or some kind of novel graphic element in order to make a subliminal statement most visitors would not get anyway.

It should be clear that we want to identify places as having an existence in a linguistic tradition important to the region. Everyone, visitors and residents alike, would know that signs along a nature trail in English and Slavey would not be for the benefit of local people who read English as well as they read Slavey but would be for the benefit of tourists or, worse, would be present only to satisfy a perceived political purpose, so it shouldn't be done.

The use of Slavey on road signs will arouse curiosity among tourists. We will satisfy that curiosity in the orientation modules situated at interpretive sites along the highway, including the border crossing itself where the first bilingual identification sign appears. Not only will a message on the orientation panel say what the language is and why it is on the signs but all the maps on the orientation panels will show the English and Slavey names for all places and features marked.

This standard will be carried onto all media used along the Liard Highway. On highway maps, relief models, audio tapes, everywhere places and features are identified, English and Slavey names will

be shown. Not only that but the meaning of this usage will be briefly given wherever it makes sense to do so.

2.7.3. Common Design Elements for Corridor Media

As we mentioned in introducing our preference for the use of Slavey in identification media, we recommend that the territorial highway sign standards apply to highway signs in the corridor.

Off the roadside, however, we propose that a different standard be developed for orientation and interpretation media. We have already said common orientation module design should be adopted for the entire highway system in the southern territory.

This calls for common dimensions, common materials, common mounting techniques, common approaches to placement of modules at roadsides and even common design standards for the corridor orientation face of each panel. However, we see the need for a range of approaches to the design of the local area orientation faces of these modules to give them each a look distinctive to their locale. We also see the need for variation in colour on the corridor orientation faces. While the other graphic elements will emphasize the module's membership in a family of such devices throughout the territory, the colours employed should reflect colours chosen for other interpretive media used along each corridor.

We have selected a group of colours for the Liard Corridor which can be found in the landscape and the crafts of the region. We will use colours from this group in interpretation media along the corridor, generally in sub-groups of two or three at each location. Changes in the combinations of colours which make up the sub-groups will likely grade from one site to the next along the road and all of the colours will come together at the Deh Cho Visitor Centre in the interior and exterior exhibits. Orientation modules will adhere to this pattern, adopting the colour combination sub-group of the site or area they occupy.

Orientation modules along the Liard Corridor will bear strong resemblances to each other in several areas: colour, construction, size and other design elements. Other interpretive media will not be required to adhere so closely to an encompassing standard (see Drawing 7).

We feel that our attempts to emphasize the significance of an individual site would be somewhat diluted by a cookie-cutter approach to media design. There are a few very minor sites along the corridor which may be good locations for one or two viewpoint signs which could share many design elements, however, none of those sites was included in our study. The sites we have examined serve special functions and will receive a higher degree of development than a single viewpoint sign. In cases where a series

of panels for a self-guiding trail such as the one we have proposed for Muskeg River or an on-site exhibit such as the one we have proposed for Nahanni Butte Winter Road are involved, we need the freedom to design media to suit the site and the people who visit it. Round, square, big, small, short, tall, wood, metal - all these design decisions and more should be left to those who will deal most closely with the opportunities each site presents.

However, we do believe a common thread should run through all media along the corridor. The point of view will be a strong unifying force although we anticipate writers and designers will not be so heavy-handed as to come right out and use those same words over and over in every site. The unifying graphic element will be the colour group. Again, sub-groups of two or three of the corridor colours will be used in each site development so that even if shapes, sizes, placement and media differ considerably from site to site, the point of view and the recurring colours will hold the development together along the length of the highway.

We should point out in closing this aspect of the preliminary concept that studies conducted in museums and parks as well as in the advertising industry show that the use of strong common design elements enhances brand recognition for a product or service but has no measurable effect on learning or visitor satisfaction in interpretive settings. In fact, marketing studies show frequent variation in a few important design elements heightens consumer interest in their products (think of how often cereal, detergent and beer containers alter their designs - always retaining some elements while changing others). We have no proof these studies in marketing hold any lessons for interpretation but it should at least make us aware that too much regimentation in a corridor development may be like refusing to change the label on the pop can every so often just to keep the buyers interested.

3. DESIGN CONCEPTS

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The GNWT proposed that the following sites be used as examples for the development of a highway interpretive system:

- a. Liard/Alaska Highway Junction near Fort Nelson, British Columbia;
- b. Muskeg River;
- c. Nahanni Butte Winter Road;
- d. Tank site; (NOTE: following the field review by the study team it was determined that the tank site should be abandoned in favour of the site known as the Bison Viewpoint);
- e. Liard/Mackenzie Highways Junction.

The following briefly describes each of the above sites and provides an overview as to their opportunities and constraints. Conceptual site development plans, and interpretive messages and concepts are provided to help the reader visualize the program that is being proposed. The costs are given for each site. Costs are summarized for all the sites in the summary table in Section 4.

3.1. Liard and Alaska Highways Junction

3.1.1. Site Description

GNWT Highway 7 - BC Highway 77 intersects the Alaska Highway at the crest of a low hill some 37 km west of the town of Fort Nelson, British Columbia. The intersection is currently not well marked and makes only limited reference to the Northwest Territories. The site that has been selected for the interpretive display is located on the north east corner of the intersection on a slight knoll easily seen by Alaska Highway travellers. The area rises above the elevation of the highway some two to three metres within the right-of-way and levels out at the tree line. Tree cover is primarily a mixed forest of poplar and spruce with an understorey of native rose. Views from the site to the mountains to the south are quite spectacular and the area is apparently noted as being an excellent one for viewing moose.

3.1.2. Client Rationale for Site Selection

Major signage at the junction of the two highways is identified as being one of the areas for development at this site. Although there is the suggestion that there be a visitor centre at this site, it is unlikely that this will happen in the near future. Therefore, some form of interpretive signage becomes even more important. The message of this interpretive media should offer a welcome and thank you, providing an enticement for tourists to travel along the Liard Highway as well as a conclusion to their trip. The terrain and view are minor considerations here. The

primary objective will be to attract attention to the Liard Highway and encourage travellers to use it.

3.1.3. Purpose of Site Development

- to orient visitors to the Liard Highway
- to attract visitors up the Liard Highway
- to introduce the point of view adopted by interpretation in the corridor
- to establish common design elements of interpretive development along the corridor, particularly orientation module design and linking elements of other media design

3.1.4. Messages

- Liard Highway
- corridor features, highlights, attractions
- driving advice
- corridor is the world of the Acho Dene, ancient and abiding

3.1.5. Development Concept

Since this area will be the first contact visitors have with the Liard Highway when travelling from BC, it is imperative they gain a sense of the scope of the adventure that lies ahead should they take the highway into the Territories, and that they have a feeling of security about the trip. This can partially be accomplished through the development of the site and the provision of up-to-date accurate information in the form of signage and brochures. Knowledgeable staff at the visitor centre in Fort Nelson is quite critical to encouraging the use of the Liard Highway. Efforts to increase the Fort Nelson resident/staff awareness of what the highway corridor offers should continue.

The site itself needs to welcome visitors to the Territories and will provide a rest stop, toilets, up-to-date road information signage, picnic tables, and interpretive notes about the trip that lies ahead. The main site sign will set the standards for the quality and installation for all other signs on the highway (see Panel A). This site was considered a high priority by the community.

3.1.6. Interpretive Concept

Drawn into the site by the scale of development and the facilities available, visitors see two large, colourful orientation modules dealing with things to see and do along the Liard Highway. One panel names the route and presents a low angle oblique relief map of the Liard corridor, showing and naming all of the major geographical features and settled places, and clearly marking such features as Nahanni National Park and the Ram Plateau. This first panel also presents an inset map showing the Liard corridor in

relation to the rest of the southern Northwest Territories. Graphics on this panel should show views of the landscapes along the route.

The second orientation module shows tourism features along the corridor in more detail, presenting images of major features like the Deh Cho Visitor Centre, Muskeg River, Nahanni National Park, Blackstone Territorial Park, Bison Viewpoint, Nahanni Winter Road and sites beyond the end of the highway as well. A short text should accompany the images of each site. Also on the second panel should be an interpretive inset presenting the Land of the Acho Dene theme and dealing with the significance of the region.

The net effect of the presentation should be to make visitors much more aware of what lies along the Liard Highway. The result should be to attract more visitors up the Liard Highway immediately and to fix the route in the minds of many others as a place they would like to visit in future.

If a Liard Highway driving guide is produced for the route, it should be dispensed at this location.

3.1.7. Budget

Development Costs

- road works (rest area).....	\$12,000
- furnishings.....	9,000
- design/survey costs.....	2,500

Two Orientation Modules

- panel fabrication at \$3,000 each	\$ 6,000
- support fabrication and panel installation	4,000
- panel research, design and layout	5,000

Total	\$38,500
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3.2. Deh Cho Visitor Centre

3.2.1 Description of Site

The Liard Highway, for several kilometres near Fort Liard, is relatively straight and flat, though there are views to the Mackenzie Mountains to interest travellers. The service centre complex is not easily seen from a great distance down the highway, because of the straight site lines.

The complex includes a number of elements, namely a tank farm, maintenance garage, gas station, restaurant, motel and gift shop. To accommodate the more industrial of these elements, the site was completely cleared and gravelled. This left the site in a less than optimum state for the more tourist related elements. Landscaping of the site is planned in conjunction with the completion of the buildings.

To the north of the Visitor Centre a wooded area, which drops to a small creek, remains intact. This may be used as a Territorial Park (see Panel B).

3.2.2. Purpose of Development

- stimulate visitation to Liard Corridor
- contribute to economic growth of the region particularly in tourism and crafts
- create a strong Economic Development and Tourism presence on the Liard Highway

3.2.3. Messages

- things to see and do in corridor
- peoples of the Northwest Territories
- the world of the Acho Dene - contemporary life
- the world of the Acho Dene - traditional life
- stick around, spend money

3.2.4. Interpretive Concept

The viewing tower of the centre rises somewhat dramatically against the backdrop of mixed wood forest which surrounds the entire visitor service complex. And although the enclosed visitor services space within the visitor centre is only 70 m², the footprint of the building is at least three times that size, making it a truly imposing structure, particularly to visitors who have driven for more than two hours to reach the site from Forts Nelson or Simpson. The architecture will clearly provide the lure necessary to bring visitors in from the highway to stretch their legs and shake some of the road induced numbness out of their minds.

The centre is right in the heart of the land of the Acho Dene and media used on site reflect that fact in their use of native graphic themes and artwork. An orientation module in front of the building adjacent to the parking area shows things to see and do along the segment of the highway on either side of the centre and directs visitors to services and facilities. As the centre will not be open year-round nor 24-hours daily in summer, the orientation panel will also tell how to get emergency help and information.

A presentation area under the extended roof of the building may house displays about how people interact with the land in the region of the Northwest Territories, emphasizing modern residents' ancient roots in the landscape. A portion of the exhibit will show other peoples of the Northwest Territories and the regions they inhabit.

We hope that on the grounds a wall tent can be erected in summer as a venue for demonstrations of life skills, arts and crafts by local people.

Behind the building in an area landscaped for relaxation, a series of interpretive panels shaped like Dene drums will reveal some of the legends of the Acho Dene which emphasize the relationship between the people and the land. Legends on the drums will be told by Dene elders and illustrated by Dene children. The legends themselves will be written in Slavey and English. The effect of the outdoor media will be to place the centre in the cultural and natural landscape we want visitors to become aware of as they drive the highway (see Drawing 2).

The tower provides views of the surrounding landscape but may not afford views of the larger valley. The top of the tower also provides a view of the visitor services area in the building, looking down through the rafters and the flight of cranes to the mounted moose and exhibits within. It may be possible to further interpret the landscape surrounding the centre from the tower but concept development for the tower should wait until the tower has been built and we can determine what the views will really be.

Inside the building, a 70 m² exhibit and lounge area attended by visitor services staff provides orientation to the Liard Corridor and interpretation about the natural and human history of the region. The room is in character with the region - exposed wooden timbers, an open, rafted ceiling, wood floor, sturdy furniture, a high proportion of natural materials in the exhibits and a large stuffed moose and a flight of mounted cranes overhead all contribute to this regional character. A 10 m² staff area has been provided at one side of the public space. The major exhibit piece in the public space is a replica of the highway mounted on a shelf running along two walls of the rectangular room. This highway on a

shelf (see sketches) allows visitors to walk from Fort Nelson to Fort Simpson along the Liard Highway, seeing and interacting with features and attractions along the way. The total length of the shelf will be something in the order of 13 m and we will use the space on the walls above and below the shelf to contribute to the orientation and interpretation program. Our approach is to have visitors learn the Liard Highway as much with their muscles as with their minds by having them walk, in scale from one end to the other.

On the shelf (which will undulate in width but which will maintain a constant height) will be materials representing the landscapes the highway travels through. On the wall above the shelf, display surfaces will be mounted in at least three layers, representing the layered effect of the views from the highway where you see brush first, young poplars behind them, the mature mixed spruce and poplar forest behind that and, in many places, the mountains in the distance beyond. Mounted on these layers will be displays large and small representing the tourism opportunities and major features of the region. Displays may be as small as a cutout of a float plane in conjunction with a rack containing brochures about a fly-in fishing lodge in the area. Displays may be as large as a complete wall section devoted to a major feature like Nahanni National Park (see Drawings 3-6).

Beneath the shelf will be compartments displaying a range of the birch baskets and boxes the Liard area is famous for. In these boxes will be objects, artifacts, materials and publications relating to the displays which can be seen on the wall above the shelf. For example, in the boxes beneath the Nahanni display, there might be a number of books about the area, including such classics as *Dangerous River*, topographic maps, park brochures, and literature from charter operators who take visitors to Nahanni. Furs, rock samples, models, reproduction artifacts, examples of local crafts which may be purchased in the area are other examples of what may be contained in the birch boxes.

A relief model of the region forms a portion of the counter in front of the visitor services staff office to be used by staff in orientating visitors to the region.

The centrepiece of the room is a moose from the area, emphasizing the significant role it plays in native history and culture. Highlighting another form of wildlife in the region is a small flight of cranes or similar birds suspended in the open ceiling above the room.

The balance of the room is occupied by a small lounge area which is provided with a wood stove, sturdy furniture and a work table which people can stand or sit at while they work with the materials from the boxes in the display, often assisted by the visitor services staff. There is a video monitor and videocassette

player in the lounge which can be used by visitors to see productions about the features of the region, the Northwest Territories and tourism operators in the area.

The visitor centre will be a warm, relaxing place which will come as a pleasant and welcome surprise to travellers on the highway who may have expected a tourist facility designed to get people in and back out on the road in a hurry. Everything about the Deh Cho Centre suggests the very opposite - that people should slow down, take a second look at the Liard corridor and see what the land around them really is.

3.2.5. Cost Estimates

Exhibits for public display spaces are generally costed at between \$2000 and \$3000 per square metre. As no mechanical, electronic or electrical engineering will be required for the type of exhibits we propose for this centre, costs will be at the low end of this range. However, the additional costs of shipping completed exhibits to the site and the costs of fabricating other exhibits at a remote site and installing the remainder will raise the average cost somewhat. All things considered, we feel it appropriate to estimate the interior exhibit costs at approximately \$2500 per square metre.

Interior Exhibits

fabrication and installation: 70 m2 at \$2500/m2	\$175,000
research, writing, design, layout, supervision (25%) .	43,750
plus expenses	4,500
Subtotal	<u>\$223,250</u>

Exterior Exhibits

Orientation Module

- panel fabrication.....	\$ 3,000
- support fabrication and panel installation	2,000
- panel research, design and layout	2,500

Native Peoples Exhibit

- fabrication and installation.....	\$10,000
- research, design, layout, supervision.....	5,000

Native Legends On-site Exhibit (6 panels)

- panel fabrication.....	\$ 6,000
- support fabrication and panel installation.....	6,000
- research, design, layout.....	13,000

Subtotal	<u>\$ 47,500</u>
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Total	<u>\$270,750</u>
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Note: the costs do not include furnishing for the office, nor equipment such as phones and facsimile machines.

3.3. Muskeg River

3.3.1. Site Description

The site of the Muskeg River Crossing is perhaps the most scenic one on the Liard Highway within the NWT. By the time the traveller has reached this area he/she has driven through the British Columbia portion of the journey, crossed the sixtieth parallel into the Territories and no doubt stopped at the Visitor Centre. The Muskeg River site lies just to the north of the Visitor Centre. The approaches from both the south and north are quite dramatic as there few visual clues you are coming upon such a site. The area currently has a Dene camp in the southwest sector, what appears to be a food cache on the river bank in the southeast sector, and a well worn campsite - complete with a pole tent frame - in the northwest sector. The river is noted for its spring fishing and would probably be used by travellers as well. It is easily approached from the north side, has extensive fine gravel beaches and invites visitors to stay awhile.

The south bank of the river is quite steep and virtually inaccessible. Tree cover in the area is primarily deciduous with a mix of conifers and an understorey of shrubs. It is very open and easy to move through. In the southeast sector there is a large open "moose meadow" which has a dense grass cover and interesting edge.

3.3.2 Client Rationale for Site Selection

This site provides the opportunity to develop a system that will be appropriate for both tourists and local residents as both groups will use this facility. This is a scenic site where consideration for the terrain will be important. The relationship of the viewer to the site will be on an intimate level where observations of detail can be encouraged. There will be good opportunities for interpretation of natural history and culture.

3.3.3. Purpose of Site Development

- to orient visitors to the section of the corridor in the vicinity of the viewpoint
- to provide a suitable recreational activity for highway tourists
- to establish and develop among visitors the idea that habitation of the Liard Valley is ancient by any culture's standards

3.3.4. Messages

- prehistoric habitation of the Liard Valley
- how people used the life forms of the boreal forest to survive
- quality of life is a culture-dependent concept

3.3.5. Development Concept

There are many visitor services that could be provided at this site. Camping, picnicking, fishing, hiking, and interpretation all currently occur and will continue. This proposed program of site development is intended to compliment the interpretation of the highway, formalizes the picnicking component and adds an interesting hiking experience to the interpretive component. The picnicking is suggested for the northeast sector and would consist of the provision of an access road, parking for a limited number of vehicles (max. 8), picnic tables, fire pits and toilets.

A trail will connect the northeast sector to the northwest and southeast sectors. No development is proposed for the northwest sector. In the southeast sector, development is proposed to consist of the provision of off-road parking, toilets, and a loop trail system which encircles the open "moose meadow". This trail is intended to have a series of interpretive stations along it and to provide a variety of experiences to give visitors a good impression of what it may have been like to live in this area many years ago (see Panel C). The length of the trail would be about 600-1,000 metres, surfaced in chips or gravel. This would be an appropriate length for the audience, location and messages.

3.3.6. Interpretive Concept

This will be the "We Need a Moose Anthropological Nature Trail" - an exotic form of on-site interpretation unlike anything most visitors will ever have experienced. At Muskeg River, we will try to build an empathy between visitors and the ancient people of this valley through the medium of a nature trail. The survival of early people in the valley depended upon game. The moose was the single most important game species because of its great size and the many uses its fur, meat, bones, sinews, antlers and other body parts could be put to. The survival of a small band or family would depend on its ability to hunt moose, particularly during times of scarcity. We want to bring home the realities of this relationship and put visitors in the place of a group of early people who must secure for themselves a moose for these many purposes (see Drawing 7).

The concept of the trail is that a visitor will know from the beginning that interpretation along the trail will relate to the boreal forest in general and moose in particular. It might begin with something as innocuous as what a moose is, what it looks like and tips on how to find one in this dense bush. At first, visitors would not know that we are interpreting an era perhaps 10,000 years ago and a people still in the stone age. As visitors progress around the trail, learning more about the forest and about moose, how to recognize where one has been and where it has gone, we draw them more deeply into the hunt without at first

letting them know how vital it is that we find a moose. By midway in the trail, it becomes increasingly clear why we need to find a moose and visitors find out what tools they have to bring the moose down with. They also learn how dangerous the activity is. They also learn how hearth and home depend on the success of the hunt. We interpret tracking the animal down, killing it and readying it for transport. As visitors near the rest area on the loop trail, we give them glimpses of what the prehistoric encampment may have been like, the many uses the moose will be put to and the happiness, excitement and festivities the successful hunt occasions in the camp.

The trail gives visitors the opportunity to learn what archaeology, anthropology and wildlife biology have uncovered about life in the valley and what modern native people and specialists suppose life may have been like here 10,000 years ago. All this against a backdrop which has changed little in the intervening millennia.

3.3.7. Budget

Development Costs

- road works (rest areas)	\$25,000
- furnishings	15,000
- trail construction	20,000
- design/survey costs	6,000

Nature Trail Media

- installation of 8-12 panels	\$ 6,000
- fabrication of 8-12 panels	12,000
- research, writing, design, layout, supervision	15,000

Total	99,000
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3.4. Tank Site

This site was initially considered as one of the sites for this study but was later abandoned in favour of the site locally known as the Bison Viewpoint or Airstrip Viewpoint.

3.5. Bison Viewpoint/Airstrip Viewpoint

3.5.1. Site Description

This site currently includes a pull-off on the west side of the highway. The pull-off provides garbage cans and parking for up to ten vehicles. On a clear day, the views to the Nahanni Mountains to the west are spectacular - some of the best of the entire journey. The pull-off is located on the height of land and overlooks much of the very dense tree cover (which tends to be in the order of three metres high). The area on the east side of the highway rises quite steeply and those who wish to get better views scramble up the bank. There is no indication of buffalo and the airstrip is not at the viewpoint but nearby.

3.5.2. Client Rationale for Site Selection

This site was selected for inclusion in this study after the study began. Originally, the Tank Site had been designated as an appropriate place to study how a site could be developed to afford distant views and provide for the interpretation of the backcountry which could be seen from such a place. However, client and consultant agreed during early site visits that this was a poor choice and that what has been called the Bison Viewing Area in the Interpretation Plan would make a better site for offering distant views. Bison Viewing Area is a bit of a misnomer as bison are not often seen at this site and, although they are in the Liard area, they are rarely seen anywhere along the highway. As a result, this site was seen as a place where we could look at how we might handle the interpretation of "a large panoramic view suitable to interpretation of a broad general nature".

3.5.3. Purpose of Site Development

- to take advantage of the elevation and location of site to give travellers an uncommonly good view of the Liard Valley

3.5.4. Messages

- geomorphology of Liard Valley
- ecosystems of Liard Valley
- geographic features of interest seen from viewpoint
- history of the Liard Valley
- tourism opportunities in the Liard Valley

3.5.5. Development Concept

It is proposed to make the viewpoint more structured by providing a viewing tower able to support up to ten people at one time. This tower would contain signage describing the view and other items of interest related to the highway interpretive storyline. Picnic tables, toilets and a small loop trail (eg. to walk the dog) would complete the development. This site was considered a high priority by the community (see Panel D).

3.5.6. Interpretive Concept

As there are very few opportunities for visitors to get above the level of the surrounding canopy of the trees, we feel we should take advantage of the chance this site gives to do just that. The concept is simple - get people up above the trees and give them a spectacular view of the region. From a tower on the site, visitors will see the mountains of the Ram Plateau in the distance, the sweeping panorama of the valley and a vast expanse of forest, meadows and small lakes. We want to give visitors this view and we want to tell them how they can get out into that landscape to participate in a variety of enjoyable activities.

Panels mounted at the top of the tower or viewing platform will point out features of the view and explain their significance. Photographs will show aspects of these features which cannot be seen from the tower. This is a good place to depict wildlife viewing opportunities in the company of a guide, canoeing, hiking, climbing, fishing, hunting and the other activities important to the economy of the region.

Visitors might find these messages more interesting coming from the people of the region themselves (not the tourism product messages but impressions of the land and the features we present). It's a wonderful thing to be able to look at a mysterious or engaging view and here a person who really knows the country well tell you things about it you could only know from a lifetime spent in close contact with the land. We would incorporate the host notion in this interpretive development by interviewing and quoting long-time Liard Valley residents about their experiences with and feelings about the landscape. We would also include a few voices from the past - what the spirits of legend and the explorers, elders and long dead writers of the area have said. This approach will add a depth and a dimension to the visitor experience at the site it would not be possible to achieve using only our own words.

3.5.7. Budget

Development Costs

- road works (minor)	\$ 1,000
- lookout	25,000
- furnishings	5,000
- trail construction	3,000
- design/survey costs	6,000

Bison Viewing Tower Exhibits

- install 8 panels	\$ 3,000
- fabricate panels	12,000
- research, write, design, layout, supervise	20,000

Total	\$ 75,000
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3.6. Nahanni Butte Winter Road

3.6.1. Site Description

The site of the Nahanni Butte Winter Road junction with the Liard Highway would go completely unnoticed if signage didn't forewarn travellers of the intersection. The winter road is a very narrow right-of-way (approximately 10 metres) and tree cover is quite even. About five hundred metres west of the intersection is a trapper's cabin which is still in use. At the intersection itself, there are remnants of old fires. These are apparently used by individuals who walked the plus/minus ten kilometres (in the winter!) from Nahanni Butte to the junction and build the fires to warm up by while they wait patiently for a lift to Fort Simpson/Fort Nelson. Also lying around the intersection are the pieces of road maintenance equipment used to build and maintain the road in the winter. This equipment is not what is usually thought of as road building equipment for it is primarily large logs set into a suitable driving surface. In the summer months it lies abandoned on the road edge waiting for cold weather to return. During the summer, the road surface is covered in a tall grass growing over a boggy substrate. This generally makes walking through it (to get to the trapper's cabin) a wet experience. However, there seem to be many small frogs to keep one company.

3.6.2. Client Rationale for Site Selection

This site provides the opportunity to provide interpretation of a subject (the winter road) in a setting that is not particularly attractive in itself. The implications of the topography and climate on transportation can be discussed in both the historical and contemporary context. This interpretation would be of a somewhat detailed nature about a subject than cannot be illustrated in its entirety on the site, requiring the observer to recall other parts of their journey.

3.6.3. Purpose of Site Development

- to provide a rest stop between Fort Liard and Mackenzie Junction
- to improve site conditions which are deteriorating through use
- to help visitors learn something of the society of the valley today

3.6.4. Messages

- modes of transportation in the valley
- community life in the Liard Valley
- cultural tourism opportunities in the Liard Valley

3.6.5. Development Concept

In order to draw attention to the intersection of the winter road and the Liard Highway it is proposed that a selective clearing program be initiated to open the area up and direct the viewer to the winter road right-of-way. This program would have an immediate visual impact. It would also require regular clearing to ensure the visual impressions are maintained. In addition to the clearing it is proposed to provide an off-road parking area for +/- five vehicles, a toilet, picnic tables and fire pit that can be used year round. The road construction equipment is proposed to be gathered together and interpreted along with the other components of the overall interpretive story for the highway.

Because of the trappers cabin, the community representatives suggested that a site 2-3 kilometres down the highway may actually be more suitable for development, though this would need to be worked out with the trappers involved. As the purpose of interpretation along the highway is for an on-site experience, a change of sites would certainly impact the messages told.

3.6.6. Interpretive Concept

At Muskeg River, you met the people of the valley as they were 10,000 years ago. Here, meet them as they are today. This simple on-site exhibit reveals the amazing fact that people live off in the bush beyond what seems to be this impenetrable wall of vegetation. The only evidence of human occupation is this slash through the trees which runs straight into the forest and then seems to be engulfed by the encroaching flora. That and the bits and pieces of construction equipment left to rust in this clearing.

All we want to get across here is the contrast between what life is like at Nahanni Butte and other outposts in the area and what tourists to the region might think could be possible in such a land. We want to explore differing modes of transportation, housing, purchase and barter, subsistence, community life, and, perhaps, if we're good enough at what we do, what life in a land like this can mean to a human being - the pleasures and rewards, the joys and the satisfactions of life on the land.

We don't want to disguise things visitors might find unpleasant but we do want to put them in context. This can be as simple as letting visitors know that what they see as a bug-infested, monochromatic wilderness actually possesses dramatic variety not readily perceived from the road. We don't deny the bugs but we put the bugs in perspective. We don't deny it's a long walk from Nahanni Butte to the Liard Highway in winter to squat with a small fire by the side of the road to wait for a lift but we show that walk from the perspective of the walker, not of someone who has just arrived at this pull off in a motor home.

If you'd like to call this an extension of the host notion, then

we might say we're looking at a whole community hosting this exhibit. We should show Nahanni Butte, scenes of community life, explain the existence of the place, and look into the mechanics, rituals and improvisations which make a full life possible in the country. Stories from the community will be an important component of this exhibit and we can draw upon the oral history recently completed for the area.

3.6.7. Budget

Development Costs

- road works	\$ 6,000
- furnishings	7,000
- clearing	1,000
- design/survey costs	2,000

On-site Exhibit

-two exhibit clusters of three panels each juxtaposed with construction equipment	
-fabrication and installation on site	\$10,000
-fabrication of panels	10,000
-research, writing, design, layout, supervision	17,000

Total	\$53,000
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3.7. Liard and Mackenzie Highways Junction

3.7.1. Site Description

The junction of the Mackenzie Highway and the Liard Highway occurs some sixty four kilometres east of Fort Simpson and two hundred and fifty six (256) kilometres north of the junction in British Columbia. The site currently is the location of a former services centre which is apparently going to be reopened and expanded to include camping, additional visitor services and programs. The existing buildings are single story wood frame construction with cottage style roofs and wood siding. The forested area surrounding the site is primarily deciduous with quite an open understorey. Overall the area is inviting and appears very suited to further development. The Jean Marie River just to the east of the junction is very picturesque and could also serve as an interpretive development site.

3.7.2. Client Rationale for Site Selection

The site to be considered here is the service centre at the junction of Highways 1 and 7. This site provides an example of using an interpretive system within the context of surrounding commercial developments. This will be a situation here a tourist who is already travelling in the NWT will require encouragement to explore another route. Consideration must be given to introducing the traveller to both the Liard and the Mackenzie highways. The interpretation will be of an orientation nature, introducing the theme of the Liard and providing a conclusion for those travelling from Fort Nelson.

3.7.3. Purpose of Site Development

- to orient visitors to the Liard Highway
- to attract visitors up the Liard Highway
- to attract visitors to Fort Simpson
- to attract visitors down the Mackenzie Highway
- to introduce the point of view adopted by interpretation in the corridor
- to establish common design elements of interpretive development along the corridor, particularly orientation module design and linking elements of other media design

3.7.4. Messages

- Liard Highway
- corridor features, highlights, attractions
- driving advice
- corridor is the world of the Acho Dene, ancient and abiding
- Fort Simpson
- Mackenzie Highway

3.7.5. Proposed Development

A previous study conducted on this site by PRP Parks suggested that the provision of visitors facilities as a part of the renewed development of the site would depend on making satisfactory arrangements with new owners. This report reiterates the statement and agrees that with the PRP conclusions for development of the site. These are summarized as follows:

- Provide pull-off and parking to invite visitors to stop and learn about the Liard Highway.
- Provide signage to reinforce travellers knowledge about driving in the NWT and assure them that the trip down the Liard Highway will be a safe and enjoyable one.
- Provide service facilities such as picnic tables, garbage cans, toilets and short loop trail.
- Provide exhibits/signage to the theme messages listed above.

If it is not possible to reach a satisfactory arrangement with the new site owners, an excellent alternative development site exists on the edge of the Jean Marie River.

3.7.6. Interpretive Concept

The concept for interpretation at this site is virtually the same as it is for the Liard and Alaska Highways Junction Site except for one thing: we can't promote the experience of driving down the Liard Highway at the expense of tourism development in Fort Simpson. Therefore, this orientation site should promote travel to both areas, especially if it is possible to steer tourists toward Fort Simpson who have just come up the Liard from Fort Nelson and might be planning to head east right away.

Development and tone at the site is the same as the site proposed for the other junction: two orientation modules. The maps and graphics here will of course include the Fort Simpson area and a portion of the Mackenzie highway corridor to the east.

3.7.7. Budget

Development Costs

- parking	\$ 2,000
- furnishings	7,000
- trails (1,000 m.)	5,000
- design/survey costs	2,000

Two Orientation Modules	
- panel fabrication at \$3,000 each	\$ 6,000
- support fabrication and panel installation	4,000
- panel research, design and layout	5,000
Total	31,000

4. CAPITAL AND OPERATIONS STRATEGY

4.1. Capital Costs

Following is a summary of cost by site type and interpretation/site development: Costs are listed for each site separately in section 4 above.

4.1.1 Development Costs

Site	Design	Construction	Total
Liard/Alaska Juc'n	\$ 2,500	\$ 21,000	\$ 23,500
Muskeg Creek	6,000	60,000	66,000
Bison Viewpoint	6,000	34,000	40,000
Nahanni Butte Winter Road	2,000	14,000	16,000
Liard/Mackenzie Junction	2,000	14,000	16,000
Total	\$18,500	\$143,000	\$161,500

4.1.2 Interpretation Costs

Site	Design	Fabric'n	Installa'n	Total
Visitor Centre	\$48,250	\$222,500		\$270,750
Orientation Sites	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$ 8,000	\$ 30,000
Interp. Sites	\$52,000	\$34,000	\$19,000	\$105,000
Total	\$110,250	\$295,500		\$405,750

The total design and construction budget (site development and interpretation), is estimated at \$567,250, if all sites were designed and constructed together.

4.2. Operations and Maintenance Plan

4.2.1. Highway Sites

The purpose of the operations and maintenance programme for the highways sites is to have the sites open and functioning to the tourists throughout the tourism season, at a high level of service, yet at a reasonable price. In addition, the highway sites should be open for safety and convenience functions during the low season

whenever appropriate.

Government of the NWT

Park officers will need to check sites and contractors as they do for other parks in their region. During the off-season, arrangements should be attempted with Department of Transportation to check the highway sites.

The Department of Public Works would be responsible for major repairs as with other parks. Items requiring opening maintenance include checking/repairing for winter damage and vandalism, replacement of signs, brush clearing, painting (not each season), and safety checks. These checks and repairs would be done pre- and post-season as weather permits. Some items found in fall may need immediate repair in order to prevent winter damage. Other repairs can be done in the spring, but fall detection will assist in planning pre-season work.

Contracts

Duties of operations and maintenance contracts would include:

Weekly items:

-general upkeep - clean and supply washrooms, firewood, removal of garbage, clean picnic tables

Monthly items:

-cleaning signs, repair marking of trails

As needed basis:

-minor repairs - hinges, door handles, etc.

-other items as listed above more frequently if quality of work so dictates

-reporting on condition of sites to Park Officers

The contract should include some clauses on quality of work (as opposed to just quantity of work). The level of cleanliness, access to firewood, potable water etc. should be consistent with signs and quality of service throughout park system (quality standards should be formalized at some point for the park system).

Length of Contract

The park season is now approximately mid-May to mid-September, so operations and maintenance contracts would follow in the same time frame. This may be extended in the future, if decision is made to extend season of other campgrounds. There should be flexibility in long term contracts to allow opening up to one month earlier

and closing up to one month later.

The maintenance of washrooms, safety cabins and garbage services should continue throughout the year at the highway sites. It is suggested that initially this be a separate contract, since this is new for a park contract, and may need more changes than the other, more standard, maintenance contracts. Much less frequency is needed in maintenance for the off season than in the summer.

Renewable contracts should be considered. This is not critical, since the contracts will not involve personal contact and interpretive knowledge of area. However, better long term service may be available if contract can be renewed.

Choosing Contractor

The standard tendering system used for other park contracts would be used to choose the contractor.

Key Issues

The length of season (maintaining the highway sites in the off-season) is a key issue on the highway sites. The Department of Economic Development and Tourism does not now maintain sites in the winter, so this would require a shift in operations.

Costs

The maintenance of the highway sites is typical of other Territorial roadsites day-use areas and pull-offs such as Madeline Lake Boat Launch. No complex items requiring unusual maintenance are suggested in these plans, so maintenance should be straight forward. If only one site is developed, it can be expected to cost considerably more proportionally than if all sites were developed. This is because of the travel costs involved in accessing the sites. Thus a maintenance contract for 5 sites would not cost five times that of one site.

The Department of Transport usually maintain highway pull-offs (empty garbage containers). However, it is suggested that Economic Development and Tourism have all of the maintenance for these sites under one contract. This will simplify management and supervision of the contracts.

Discussions are underway between the GNWT and the BC Government concerning the development and maintenance of

the site at the Liard/Alaska Highways junction. Without including this site, it would likely cost less than the Ingraham Trail contract (due to fewer sites and less traffic), though the distances involved would create a "surcharge". The costs would likely be \$5,000 - \$9,000 per summer season. Extra trails added would likely have the greatest influence on the price, as the time involved in walking trails to check and maintain them is more than simply adding another outhouse.

4.2.2 Visitor Centre

The purpose of the operations and maintenance programme for Economic Development and Tourism is to have the visitor centre open and functioning to the tourists for the specified tourism season with a high quality of service, at a cost as reasonable as possible.

The purpose of the O&M programme for the Development Corporation will of course be different. They will presumably be protecting their investment in the building, trying to make money, and perhaps provide a service to the community. The points noted below are from the perspective of the Department, in order to fulfil their purpose for the building. When negotiating the contract and lease, the needs of the Development Corporation will also form part of the contract. However, such needs should not prevent the Department from fulfilling the tourism functions of the building. As an example, if the Corporation wishes, with the agreement of the Department, to have school children use the building, it should not be during the tourist season, and any damages created would be the responsibility of the Corporation.

Responsibilities of Development Corporation (Landlord)

 Responsibilities of the Development Corporation in taking care of the building that would form part of a lease include:

-opening/closing of the centre for the tourist season (includes any seasonal repairs (windows, etc.), opening water lines, spring cleaning, checking electrical system, etc.). The centre must be cleaned to the satisfaction of the lessee and be in proper working order

-major and minor building repairs to the building (roof, windows, floors, etc.). There should be assurances that the Development Corporation pays for these types of repairs. If they are paid to do such repairs, there is little incentive for the Corporation to prevent such

damage. The Development Corporation should be responsible for ensuring the building remains in good repair over the winter.

-any repairs to the exhibits, if caused by the development corporation while doing their work (e.g., damaged during opening/closing) or through vandalism in the off season

Responsibilities of Government of the NWT (tenant)

Repairs to and upgrading of exhibits (e.g., general wear and tear, loss through stealing by visitors, updating material, etc.) would be the responsibility of Economic Development and Tourism. This would need to be co-ordinated between Region and Headquarters, as some updating of material would be throughout the southern Mackenzie, not solely for the centre.

The management of centre personnel (either contract personnel or staff) would be through the Regional Tourism Officer. The Parks Officers would be responsible for bringing more pamphlets, etc., at the request of the centre personnel.

Hiring and training (see item 4) of the staff would be the responsibility of the Regional staff, but should be co-ordinated with the Fort Smith region and Headquarters. Developing the competency test for centre personnel (see item 3.b) would need co-ordination with the Big River Travel Association as well.

Housekeeping (cleaning, changing light bulbs, etc.) would be the responsibility of Economic Development and Tourism, either through the centre staff or by contract. It is unlikely that a contract for this type of work would be cost effective.

Centre Personnel

The centre should be open for service from 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. daily. Most important will be the personal contact with the visitors. Visitors, having travelled a long way in the confines of their vehicles, will want contact with another human being. And this will be an exotic human being to them - a northerner. Centre personnel must be friendly, willing to assist, and answer the same (perhaps foolish) questions again and again.

Duties would include:

-supplying travel information to public (primary duty)

- light housekeeping (filling brochure racks, dusting, putting away material that tourists have taken out of the baskets, changing light bulbs)
- properly keeping guest registry, completing other GNWT surveys as required; a minor (in terms of time) but important component of job
- sale of fishing licenses should be discussed - this may be at hotel or gas station, but would be best done at the centre
- "interpretation" in the form of more detailed stories, demonstrations, etc. is a secondary though desirable role. A very minor role would be co-ordinating demonstrations. It is unlikely there would be many needed, as this is more an orientation centre than an interpretive centre. Ongoing demonstrations would likely be arranged by regional staff; however, special events, one time (take the opportunity while it's there) events, etc. could be arranged by centre personnel
- reservations should be attempted on a trial basis. Will need to be evaluated over a couple of seasons, as this has not been provided before. Should be commenced in conjunction with other centres, for consistency.
- if there is a day use area beside the centre (going down to the creek), the attendants would be responsible for minor maintenance of that site
- at beginning of season, with the Tourism Officer and Parks Officer, staff are responsible for setting up the displays (from wherever they are stored)
- contractor to provide wood for wood stove, unless the GNWT has a contract for provision of wood to all the campsites/day use areas
- updating of computer programmes for simple items (e.g. deleting incorrect items, changes in operating hours). Centre personnel will need specific training in this, and the programmes should be set up so that simple upgrades can be done easily. Actual repair of computer etc. should be done by supplier or other contractor; the seasonal updating of information on the computer would be done by Regional staff or another contract.

The main tourist season is approximately mid-May to mid-September. This may be extended in the future, but this will not be a full season facility. Until other government tourism function extend their season (e.g., campground, other visitor centres), there is no reason for this centre to have an extended season.

There should be flexibility in the lease and either staff or contracts to allow opening up to one month earlier and closing up to one month later.

Choosing Personnel

Skills needed by the centre personnel will include:

- ability talk with individuals or groups of various ages
- preferably an ability to speak more than one language (e.g. German) but not necessary
- able to perform light housekeeping duties (inside and outside)
- knows how to use a phone and a fax machine
- ability to organize townspeople for demonstrations
- familiar with tourism information for Fort Liard, Region and the NWT
- familiar with the natural and cultural history of Fort Liard, Region and NWT

In order to get personnel with these skills, it is suggested that eligible applicants must pass a competency test. The test would be administered by the Regional Tourism staff. It should involve both an oral (interview type) and written test. Items would include:

- knowledge of ferry operations
- knowledge of local and regional tourism opportunities
- knowledge of local/regional services
- knowledge of various Territorial regulations (fishing, hunting, parks)
- knowledge of local and regional arts and crafts techniques and where they can be purchased
- knowledge of Acho Dene culture
- knowledge of linguistic/cultural groups of the NWT
- knowledge of general climatic conditions
- knowledge of where polar bears are and are not
- knowledge of road safety (driving skills)
- knowledge of tree line/tundra (where is the arctic?)

Staff v.s. Contract Personnel

The duties and requirements of personnel will remain virtually the same whether the personnel are hired as staff members or under contract. The staff will be very important; they should not be a political appointees, and if they are not performing their duties adequately, they should be let go. As important, Economic Development and Tourism should have the capability of rehiring a person who is doing a good job. All this should be possible whether or not the person is hired on staff or by contract. Some factors affecting the choice of whether to go the hire or contract route follow.

* Both staff salaries and contracts bring dollars to the community. However, staff salaries are less politically

attractive than contracts, due to the pressure to privatize all possible services.

* Contract personnel can be more flexible. For the most part, there need only be one person working in the centre at a given time. However, the length of time the centre should be opened (10-14 hours/day, 7 days/week) means more than one staff person would need to be hired.

* Choosing a contractor will be more complex than maintenance contracts, as the assessment of the ability of the contractor to do the work (and the evaluation of whether the contractor is performing adequately) will be less quantifiable than maintenance contracts. Contracts tend to be chosen on lowest bid, except in rare cases. The ability of the Department to have performance criteria ranked highly in the evaluation of the contracts is critical to whether this route should be taken.

* As knowledge and skills will build over the seasons, contracts should be renewable. If contracts cannot be renewed, the contract route is not as acceptable as hiring staff. If hired under contract, there should be clauses that the contractor continues to upgrade their skills. For instance, within two years, the centre's personnel should pass the competency test AND have an interpretive guiding certification. This will help ensure a higher level of safety (first aid, etc.) and service (good interpersonal skills, knowledge of what tourists might want to know).

* Training or site familiarization will be required each season. Personnel should go, with staff from 60th parallel and other visitor centres on the Mackenzie Highway system, along Highways #1, 2, 5, and 7. Highways 3, 4 and 6 are optional for staff from this centre, depending on budget. Also, centre personnel should travel down to Fort Nelson at the beginning of the season. This will give staff a first hand knowledge of what they are telling tourists about. A special part of the training will have to include operating the computer system, as this will be a unique programme. This could be done under contract or by staff, though co-ordinating training of staff may be more readily achieved.

* Costs are likely to be greater if staff are hired rather than contract. A seasonal park officer salary is approximately \$18,000. Assuming this is approximately the classification for the visitor centre personnel, two staff members would cost approximately \$36,000, plus 30% in benefits for a total of \$46,800. Housing would also need to be provided. Contract personnel would likely be

half that price, though housing may still need to be provided.

* Consideration should also be given as to whether GNWT will provide vehicle for staff; not providing vehicle may restrict applications; provision of vehicle is costly and complicated. Vehicles would not be provided for contract personnel.

Key Issues

Residency of Centre Personnel

Preferably, the centre personnel will be qualified individuals from Fort Liard. However, if no, or not enough, qualified people from Fort Liard are found, then the Government will either have to hire qualified people from outside the community, or train the Fort Liard residents. Either way, extra time will be needed in the hiring process, to allow for a lengthy hiring process and training. It should be noted that residents of the NWT should be hired, not outside people. One of the first questions travellers will likely ask is "Do you live in the NWT". They want northerners.

Advantages of Fort Liard residents include:

- no accommodation required
- good knowledge of local area can be expected
- knows local people to hire for special events

Disadvantages of unqualified personnel include:

- training time could be lengthy, depending on the skills of the person(s)
- unqualified staff will give visitors a poor initial/final impression of the Territories
- unqualified staff more likely to give out incorrect information; could be inconvenient and/or dangerous to travellers

Advantages of qualified non-Fort Liard resident:

- good service to visitors

Disadvantages of qualified non-Fort Liard resident:

- likely political repercussions
- no accommodation now available; would need to be arranged

If suitable candidates are not found in Ft. Liard, the GNWT should allow for a trailer on site so that the staff could be accommodated. Another consideration would be for GNWT to provide housing in Ft. Liard, to be used whether the staff are Ft. Liard residents or not.

Training

There is presently no training programme for visitor centre personnel, though the GNWT is developing interpretation training courses. Commitment to developing and administering a programme for centre staff is required. The government should anticipate spending more money on staffing the centre in its first few years of operation, to allow for training of staff and doubling up of people. For example, there may be one or two people trained in interpretation, along with one or two local people that would like to become involved. Each "type" would learn from the other.

Lease

The building will be leased on a long term basis. The occupancy period will be for the full year.

Most exhibit items should be stored in Fort Simpson (likely by DPW) as is the case with the 60th Parallel Centre. Items are too valuable to be left overwinter.

A clause ensuring that any changes to building at joint approval of both parties or similar would be needed.

4.3. Future Works

In order to take this project to the next phase of development it will be necessary to choose and physically define the boundary of each highway site and undertake a detailed site survey of all the facilities. These would include topography with one meter contour intervals, treeline, water edges (if any), existing site development features, and any other site parameters which will influence the ultimate development of the site. In addition it will be necessary to decide upon the extent of the program to be developed at each site. This will include defining the numbers (and types) of vehicles to be parked, the access road standards, the number of site facilities to be provided (i.e. picnic tables, garbage cans, toilets, etc.) and the types of media to be used for the display of the interpretive messages.

We would suggest letting all of the design work for the highway sites as one contract, and all of the work for the visitor centre as one contract. If only one or two highway sites are developed, it may be suitable to combine them with the visitor centre contract.

An alternative to scheduling the work would be let the

orientation signage for all the highways as one contract.
This would assure co-ordination between the highways.

APPENDIX 'A'

MINUTES OF COMMUNITY MEETING

January 11, 1990

In attendance:

Steve Malesku (local contactor)
 Frank Kotchea (Mayor)
 Eva Hope (Craft shop)
 Ester (Craft shop)
 Chris Hopkins (Development Corp)
 Al (Development Corp)

1. Comments concerning Highway Sites

-Nahanni Butte winter road site not necessarily a good one; couple of trappers cabins right beside it. View better 2-3 km further south

-Buffalo viewing (airstrip landing) should be considered a priority since most of the infrastructure is in place, plus it provides such a good viewing area

-border crossing is a priority also - insulting to people to have come all that way just to be greeted by a "lecture" (long series of signs)

-positive response to having Slavey on identification signs

2. Comments concerning the Visitor Centre and Site

The Moose: Some questioned the use of the moose (as it was ordinary, not unique to the area, and likely much too big); some suggested using a dall sheep or deer instead. However, there was agreement that moose are well used by people in the area. Suggested we need some more follow-through to the moose, though, e.g.:

-have some dried meat there
 -have a smoke house and make dried meat
 -stories on how different people cut meat (hunter field butchers (not always done the same way), then (generally) the women do the fine butchering and making of dried meat (again, not always done the same way).

Outside:

-besides a smokehouse (or instead of), a trappers cabin (probably if got the extra area beside the centre) or a wall tent (NOTE: instead of the wall tent underneath the porch, Catherine would rather see specially designed canvas that hangs from the roof, and could be rolled up. This makes sense

in terms of design (would like rather odd to have a tent under a roof; could be rolled up if want whole area open) and vandalism (more likely that someone would take a wall tent, as it is quite useful, v.s. canvas panels)). The wall tent suggested would not be under the roof.

-need a place for a fire. When doing demonstrations outdoors, always done with fire nearby.

-Eva mentioned she had some artifacts; could be used in the travelling exhibit cube, perhaps. I will try to find out more.

-suggestions for the birds ranged from ptarmigan to swans. Swans seem the most likely; other birds suggested were more ground/non-migratory species.

3. Comments on Operations

-may be winter visitors coming for skidoo trips, dog team rides etc. Make sure that exhibits outside are O.K. for the winter (visible above the snow, don't get run over by snow mobiles); idea of opening in the winter was discussed somewhat, but there won't be any new instructions issued to the architect re: all season building.

-concerns voiced over staffing; was a rumour that the person would be from the south, but on the other hand, concern that many local people are not aware of what tourists want

APPENDIX 'B'

CONSERVATION OF STUFFED ANIMALS

Conversation with Bruno Pouliot, Conservator, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, January, 1990

Discussed with Mr. Pouliot the factors to be taken into consideration for the care of a stuffed moose (or similar) and stuffed birds. The following points were noted:

1. Insects

- insect problems likely to be the main concern (beetles, etc.)
- insects and their eggs can freeze over winter, then become active again as the temperature rises
- need to be inspected regularly (at the end of each season); the Conservator should be contacted about this for assistance

2. Temperature Stresses

- skins are mounted on fairly rigid frame, so heat/cold stress should not be significant
- heat (especially dry heat from wood stove) would be more of a problem than the freezing

3. Mould

- mould is a problem when humidity levels are high; fall and spring would be the most critical times; humidity can be 100% at these times
- make sure building doesn't leak
- skins are soaked in Borax, which will inhibit moulds
- a well taxidermed skin won't have a tendency to mould

4. Health Hazards

- some taxidermists use poisons in the fur to inhibit mould and preserve the fur; this should not be used in a animal which will be handled
- usually not used, but should make sure

4. Suggested Taxidermists

- Rendez Vous Taxidermy
- Box 27
- R.R. #1
- Winterburn, Alberta T0E 2N0
- Attention: Mr. Jasper Keiser
- does work for Heritage Centre
- does not use poisons in the fur