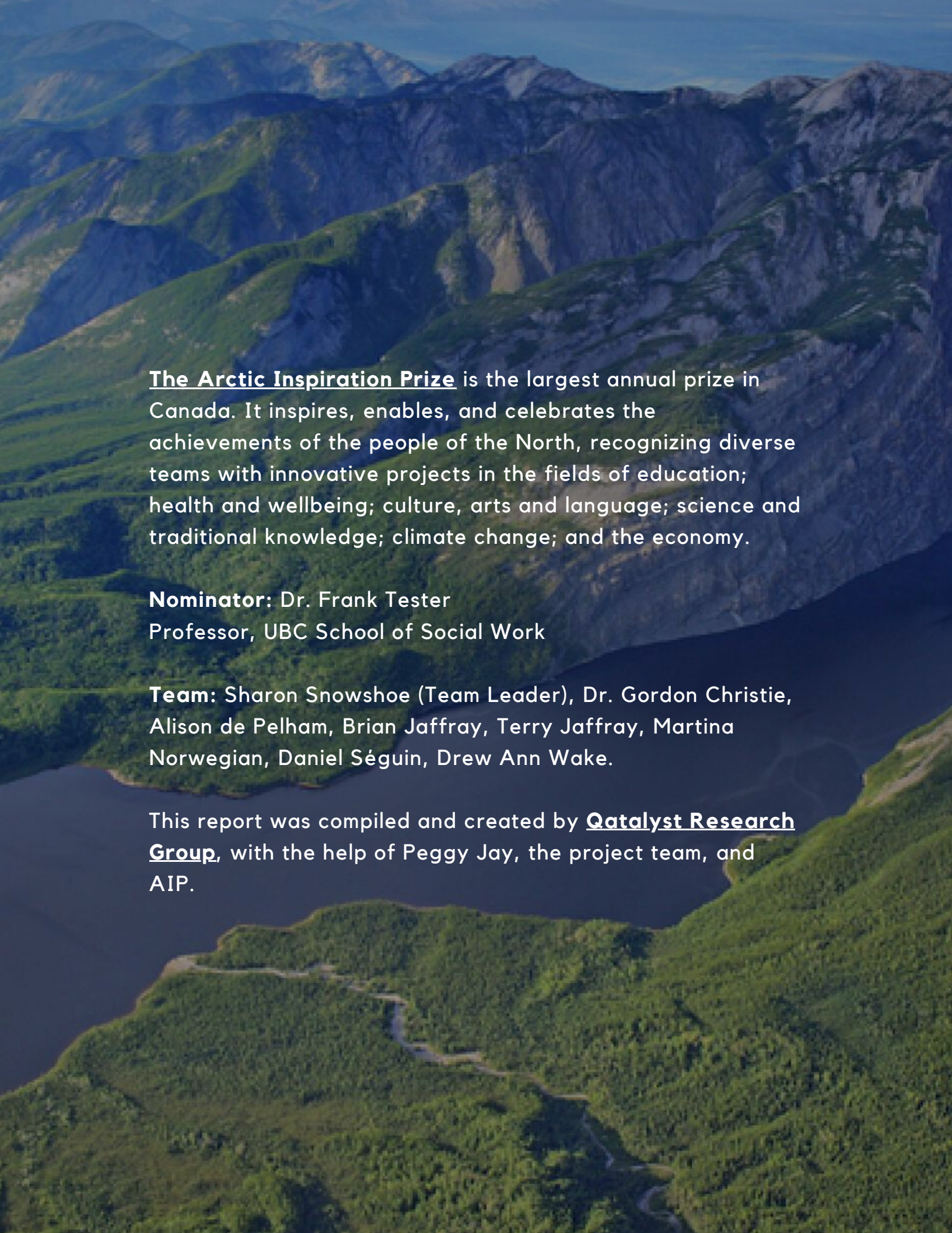




DEHCHO: RIVER JOURNEYS

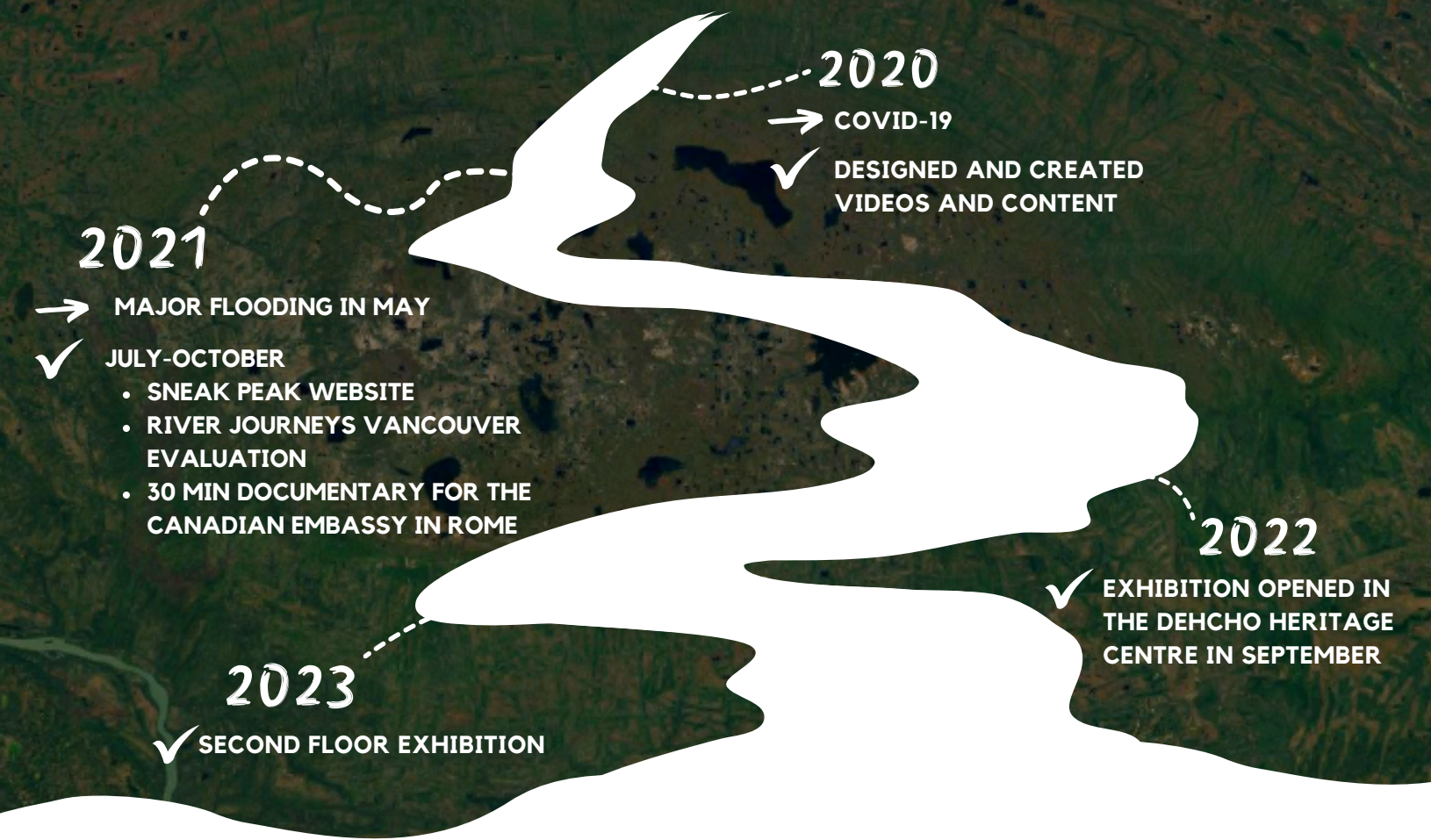
An aerial photograph of a mountain range. The foreground shows a dense green forest covering a hillside that descends towards a dark blue lake. In the background, several mountain peaks are visible, some with patches of snow or light-colored rock. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

The Arctic Inspiration Prize is the largest annual prize in Canada. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the people of the North, recognizing diverse teams with innovative projects in the fields of education; health and wellbeing; culture, arts and language; science and traditional knowledge; climate change; and the economy.

Nominator: Dr. Frank Tester
Professor, UBC School of Social Work

Team: Sharon Snowshoe (Team Leader), Dr. Gordon Christie, Alison de Pelham, Brian Jaffray, Terry Jaffray, Martina Norwegian, Daniel Séguin, Drew Ann Wake.

This report was compiled and created by **Qatalyst Research Group**, with the help of Peggy Jay, the project team, and AIP.



Dehcho Journeys

The Dehcho Journeys exhibit began with a collection of approximately 200 audio tapes of the voices of Elders across the North, collected over time by CBC North for the 'Our Native Land' program.

The project preserved these stories in a museum exhibition on two floors of the Dehcho Heritage Centre in Fort Simpson, NWT:

- 70 short videos were created with the audio stories told by Elders born between 1890 and 1930
- More than 40 short documentaries have been created to complement the museum exhibits
- A 30 minute documentary about the impact of climate change on Arlyn Charlie's family fish camp, told by Elder Mary Effie Snowshoe
- 20 traditional artists from across the NWT and Yukon were asked to produce works for display

Preserving Oral Traditions and Historical Knowledge

"You have to know where you've been and where you are at to know where you are going"

MARTINA NORWEGIAN, 2023

Exhibition Opening ceremony at the Dehcho Heritage Centre in Fort Simpson

(photo credit: Carla Ulrich/CBC)



Content design for iPads available to the visitors in the museum.

The Promises of the 1921 Treaty Commission. Which promises were kept? Click on the video to hear the story!



First Floor Exhibition

The first floor tells the story of the 1900s; what happened, mistakes that were made, and how we got here. Features 25 videos.

Second Floor Exhibition

Justice Thomas Berger led the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry, a Royal Commission into a proposed pipeline across the land of the Inuvialuit and Dene of the Northwest Territories. The second floor focuses on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline inquiry that saw voices rise up in opposition to the development. Features 35 videos.

Fostering Creativity and Innovation

The Dehcho River Journeys project engaged young artists to create innovative ways (voice over animations) to reclaim the stories of their grandparents. Arlyn Charlie shared a story of his great grandmother Annie B. Robert through the animated video Wolves, which featured his grandmother Jane Charlie.



Sharing the voices of the grandmothers and grandfathers gives strength and pride to future generations.

Video: Arlyn Charlie, Pxhere

Photography: Michael Jackson, Peter Mather

Voice Over: Ruth Carroll

New Media Design: Drew Ann Wake

Animation: Markus Radtke

Editing & Sound Design: Daniel Séguin

To watch the full video, please click [here](#).

While Annie B. Robert worked a caribou hide, her three young children were sound asleep; she preferred to work on hides when the children weren't underfoot. As midnight approached, she heard the eerie howls of a large pack of wolves that had surrounded her tent. Fearing for her children's safety, Annie did everything she could think of. She lit several candles, fired her .22 caliber rifle into the darkness, and pounded on the stove pipe and stove.

Then, remembering that she had been told that wolves were afraid of fire she quickly grabbed a burning log from her stove and hurled it towards the pack. The ground shook as hundreds of paws pounded against the snow, and the protective mother.

Recounting the incident to her daughter, Jane, she admitted to being terrified but determined to do everything in her power to protect her family. When Jane asked how many wolves there were, Annie told her there were over two hundred.

Educating Canadians and the World About the North

"Elders are our libraries"

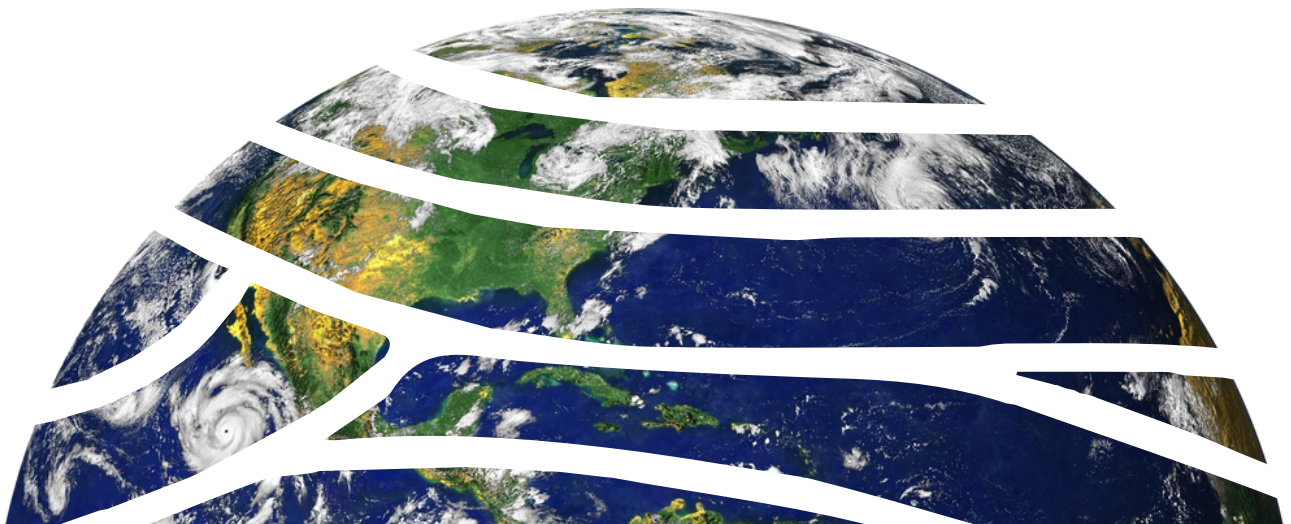
In 2021, a thirty minute long educational video was created by Dehcho River Journeys for the Canadian Embassy in Rome. Innovative and artistic projects such as this seek to share Northern Indigenous history and culture with the world.

The project is helping others understand the North through the eyes of Indigenous artists:

- Supporting Northern teachers to engage students in learning about history, current issues such as climate change and art (photography, film-making, animation, etc) .
- Working with UBC Law School and other departments to produce educational videos about Treaty 11.
- Increased knowledge of, and engagement in debates about Treaty 11 and important historical events among students in the south.
- **Whose History:** The project is shifting the educational direction - Northern people reclaiming their stories and educating Canadians about their history.

"This is the real story of the people that live here"

**MAYOR OF FORT SIMPSON
SEAN WHELLY, 2023**



PROFILE OF AN ARTIST: DITS'II DEEK'IT

Based out of Teet'it Zheh (Fort McPherson), Arlyn Charlie is a multidisciplinary artist. His Gwich'in name is Dits'ii Deek'it, meaning, His Grandfather's Place. Over the course of his life, he has spent a part of his childhood out on the land learning the cultural practices of the Gwich'in often spending time at Dèeddhoo Gòonlii (Scraper Hill) for the summer fish season. Afterwards, he would head into the mountains for the fall hunt of the Porcupine Caribou Herd. Come September he would transition back into school. His education is a combination of both traditional and academic teachings.



Throughout his exploration of a variety of different art forms, from learning the traditional floral patterns of his culture to working with the settings of a camera, and more recently learning the principles of writing, he acknowledges the potential impact of art in one's life. Today he encourages those interested in the arts to explore the mediums of their choosing. He shares his work through social media (@arlyn_charlie), and through his work with the department and their projects such as the AIP Dehcho River Journeys.

Story plays a fundamental role in how he undertakes any given tasks, for story has governed the survival of his people's identity over the course of countless generations. Oral tradition has allowed the information of his people to continue from the beginning of time and beyond the affects of colonialism. He deems story as one of the most important principles of his work and identity. He is greatly honoured to have the opportunities to sit with elders and traditional knowledge consultants, and help document and preserves the vast knowledge they share.

Being an artist has allowed him to embrace the importance of culture and language to one's identity through his creations and projects. He not only stresses the importance of learning both, believing that should one fall, we would lose a vital part of our existence, therefore he uses his various skills to assist in the documentation of information embedded in the stories of the elders. Thus, has allowed him to continue working with the Gwich'in Tribal Council's Department of Culture and Heritage over the years. His work within the exploration of culture and language has allowed him to not only learn, but to also embrace a lot of the traditional teachings rooted in the Gwich'in's identity. In his work he has not only assisted in research being conducted within the Gwich'in Settlement Area, but he has also help create educational materials throughout the years, in the hopes that people would be able to access and gain an understanding of the unique culture that they belong to and who have survived here in the arctic for thousands of years.



ARCTIC INSPIRATION PRIZE

AIP provided seed funding of \$400,000 for the digitalization of audio tapes of the voices of Elders, creation of documentaries, and engagement with artists, youth and Elders. Without AIP funding this would not have been possible. To date, Dechcho River Journeys has raised over \$130,000 from in-kind donations, and is hoping to expand its activities and use the art and video created as part of the curriculum about history and climate change in high schools and universities.