

Tundra Science Camp

A Cross-Cultural, Outdoor Environmental Education Program Daring Lake, NWT

Background

The Tundra Science Camp is a summer outdoor environmental education program for high school students and teachers in the Northwest Territories. The program includes ten days at the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' "Tundra Ecosystem Research Station" at Daring Lake on the barrenlands. Participants work closely with a variety of instructors including scientists, environmental educators, on-site researchers and Dene elders. The focus is on learning about the land from both scientific and Dene perspectives. Participants experience field research methods in wildlife ecology, ornithology, plant ecology, geology, archaeology and human history. Elders teach their way of knowing the land and traditional skills. Participants also learn about decision-making, resource management and development issues in this diamond mining region of the Northwest Territories.

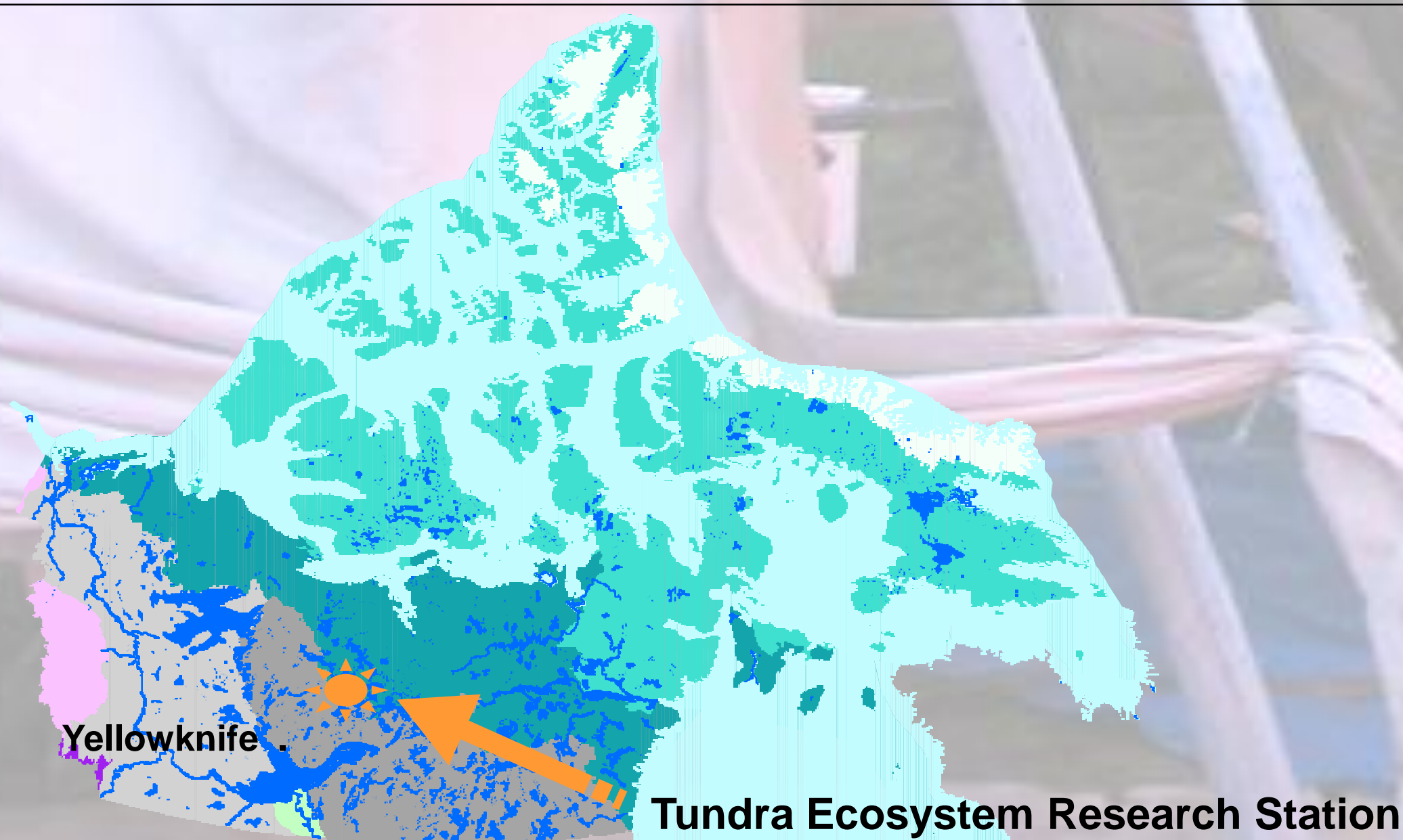
The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) coordinates the Tundra Science Camp and provides core staff. Other territorial government departments also provide staff and the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development helps with logistical support. Local boards of education assist with student recruitment and financial support.

Successes

Since 1995, many students and teachers have participated in this unique outdoor environmental education program. It has inspired young people, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, to embrace science by providing insight into the nature of science, its methodologies and applications in resource management. The diversity of the program and the close contact with instructors have proven to motivate students, helping them refine their interests in science and traditional knowledge. Teachers have gained hands-on skills and knowledge to make their science courses more relevant to northern youth.

Bringing students, educators, elders and scientists together in a camp setting gives everyone involved the opportunity to improve communication skills, understand different cultures and bridge the gap between western science and traditional Dene knowledge.

Graduates often comment that the camp had a profound effect on the way they view science, traditional knowledge and the environment. Many of them have continued with post-secondary education in the sciences and are returning to the North to be employed in the private and public sectors.



Site Information

The Tundra Ecosystem Research Station is located on the barrenlands 300 km north of Yellowknife. The Station is home to environmental research and monitoring programs addressing issues related to industrial development, climate change, contaminants, biodiversity, and species at risk.



For more information visit our site at http://www.enr.gov.nt.ca/live/pages/wpPages/Tundra_Science_Camp.aspx or contact:

Steven Matthews at 867 873-7775 or steven_matthews@gov.nt.ca



Northwest Territories Environment and Natural Resources