

2012 KEYASK TRADITIONAL PLANTS WORKSHOP SUMMARY

October 22-23, 2012

St. Johns United Church, Thompson, Manitoba

Purpose of Notes: These summary notes were shared for KCN community review and approval¹. These notes are intended for public use, including potential use at the Keeyask hearings or other regulatory purposes as required.

Workshop Attendees:

- Ahab Flett (TCN)
- John G. Beardy (TCN)
- Joseph Harvey (TCN)
- Joyce Mayham (TCN)
- Arlene Flett (TCN)
- Lorna Keeper (TCN)
- Obediah Wastesicoot (YFFN)
- Dorothy Redhead (YFFN)
- Stella Chapman (YFFN)
- Wayne Redhead (YFFN)
- Bailey Saunders (YFFN)
- Roberta Spence (YFFN)
- Martina Saunders (YFFN)
- Marie Ryle-Beardy (YFFN)
- Amelia Saunders (YFFN, translator)
- Eric Saunders (YFFN)
- Robert M. Beardy (FLCN)
- Jimmy Lockhart (FLCN)
- Randy Naismith (FLCN)
- Lillian Spence (FLCN)
- Rebecca Beardy (FLCN)
- Wendy Ross (FLCN)
- John Whitaker (CNP, Advisor)
- Adrian Skok (CNP, Advisor)
- Elly Bonny (YFFN, Advisor)
- Monica Wiest (Manitoba Hydro)
- Maria Zbigniewicz (Manitoba Hydro)
- Jackie Krindle (Calyx Consulting)
- Gaylen Eaton (North/South Consultants Inc.)

¹ Cree Nation Partner attendees have reviewed these notes and indicated on March 11, 2013 that they had no comments. The Fox Lake Cree Nation (FLCN) and the York Factory First Nation (YFFN) provided comments on March 13, 2013 and March 7, 2013 respectively. FLCN and YFFN comments have been addressed to their satisfaction.

Workshop Objectives:

- To bring KCNs members and Manitoba Hydro representatives together to share knowledge with respect to traditional plants and Cree worldview;
- To document KCNs knowledge and perspectives on plants, focusing on the Project area;
- To prepare for a future plant field trip; to share knowledge with and prompt interest in plants with KCNs youth; and
- To provide an opportunity for the Partners to continue building positive relationships.

October 22, 2012 – Day 1

Following the opening prayer and round table introductions, Monica Wiest (MW) reviewed the objectives of the 2012 workshop (see above) and some history on previous workshops in 2009 and 2010 which were held at Notigi and the Gillam area respectively.

MW invited people to express their thoughts in a sharing circle which provided opportunity for all participants to reflect and speak on plants. Plant samples, photos and plant books were available as reference materials.

October 23, 2012 – Day 2

Day 2 began with a summary of what was learned the previous day. Participants added their perspectives on the previous day events. Breakout groups were assembled around maps to identify plants of interest and their location. Participants shared knowledge about plants in specific locations. To protect the privacy of the knowledge holders, these maps will not be made public.

In the afternoon, MW led a discussion on next steps, specifically discussing plans for a 2013 field trip and associated planning activities. Participants offered some additional thoughts and the workshop finished with a closing prayer.

On both days, many participants spoke in Cree. Comments from Cree speakers were summarized in English once the Cree speakers had finished. Notes were taken by an English speaker based on the oral translations.

Key concepts recorded from both days include:

Views on the Workshop:

Participants were in general consensus on the following:

- This workshop was regarded as an opportunity to share knowledge among the Cree and also to help the broader community understand the Cree relationships with plants.
- Important that people continue to learn about who they are as Cree and what they relied on for survival.

Plants and Cultural Knowledge / Way of Life:

- The Elders regard all plants as sacred.
- One participant shared the view that plants are no less important than sturgeon or caribou.

- The Cree regard plant knowledge to be important and it is a priority to teach this knowledge to the youth. One goal is to teach the youth about plants through the school.
- Many agreed that youth also need to be taught that the Cree way of understanding the world is just as valid as western science.
- Many participants fondly remember times with grandparents and parents on the land where they were taught by experience about plants. This helped them learn the Cree way of life.
- Participants also spoke about water nourishing the plants, plants nourishing the animals which, in turn, nourish the people.

Plant Practices and the Power of Plants

- In the memory of the Elders, they did not get many doctor or nurse visits to the community (example was for Split Lake). Traditional medicine was used to treat the people. In the past, a healer would often do the healing.
- Plants are regarded to be powerful, with powerful abilities to heal even the very wounded or sick. Some examples of the remarkable healing powers of plants were shared.
- Traditional plants heal relationships with land / *Aski*. They provide strong healing, healthy food and help the mind, body and spirit.
- Being out on the land is healing for the people.
- For medicines to work, you need to have faith in them to work in the way you want them to.

Some of the concepts shared in the 2010 workshop were reiterated by participants including:

- A gift of tobacco is offered to the Creator after harvesting plants (from 2010 workshop).
- A photo must not be taken of a person harvesting plants (from 2010 workshop).
- Plant remains are to be put back to the earth in a quiet place where no one walks (from 2010 workshop).
- Plants are for personal use – never sold (from 2010 workshop).

Plants and Previous Hydroelectric Projects:

- A TCN Elder explained how the environment changed when Manitoba Hydro development began. He explained that plants that were used by his people were destroyed. Animals changed affecting hunters and trappers and fish, for example, at Kelsey were affected by the muddy waters and the change in water plants so much that nothing is there now. He explained that the changes in water levels make it difficult to land your boat and get on and off the shoreline. Standing timber in flooded areas prevent landing a boat in many places. The Cree had regarded the area clean prior to this development.
- Trees and plants that used to be gathered have already been destroyed by development. These areas are now flooded and people have to go further. The rise and fall of the water has affected the shorelines in particular preventing plant growth. Erosion along islands was also mentioned to have affected plant areas.

- The medicine along the Nelson River is already gone because of previous development.

Plants and Keeyask:

- Concerns were raised with respect to Keeyask and Conawapa Projects because of the conversion of lands to waters. Birds, animals, plants and trees that live on land will lose their habitat and the fish will start using the land under the water. Travel to areas will be affected increasingly by the rise and fall of the river. These conditions also affect community life as it remains difficult to get family out on the land. Though there are community goose and moose hunts, these are not the same as getting the family out on the land. Areas that will be affected by Keeyask have vast numbers of plants and because they will be affected, it will prevent the children and grandchildren from going there.
- Plants must be picked from a clean area for them to work. Having continuous developments in the area forces people to go further away. One participant indicated that this is expected to affect both the resources and the medicinal value of plants from Lake Winnipeg to the Hudson Bay.
- Concerns were raised with respect to rehabilitating borrow pits. Unrehabilitated borrow pits are considered eyesores (scars on the land). It was suggested that rehabilitation could include useful plants such as berries instead of weeds or grass.
- TCN Elder and community members expressed concerns that the extents of flooding would affect the Split Lake community and the lands around it directly.

Keeyask and ATK Monitoring Activities pertaining to Plants:

- The TCN advisor suggested thinking about ATK monitoring which each community will have the opportunity to undertake. He suggested a series of visits to the affected areas (for example, four times per year) including community elders and youth on the land.

Medicinal Plants:

- All sorts of plants were and are used in different ways to treat sickness.
- Weekis² were emphasized as the #1 medicine. It was noted that some people get weekis in trade with those who gather it, sometimes from areas far removed from the communities.
- A list of medicinal plants noted at the workshop and their purposes is provided in Table 1 below. It should be noted that this is not a complete list of plants used. It also should be noted that in some instances, plants and their uses discussed reflect individual perspectives while others reflect broad consensus among the KCN communities.

Plants for Food:

- Key foods that come from plants that were mentioned at the workshop are listed in Table 2 below. It should be noted that this is not a complete list of plants harvested or consumed.

² Cree spellings vary.

Other Plant Products:

- Plants used for other purposes were also mentioned in the workshop. A description of the plants and their uses is located in Table 3. It should be noted that this is not a complete list of plants or plant products used for other purposes.

Plants and Mapping:

The objectives of the mapping session were:

- What plants in the Keeyask study area have been gathered by your community in the past? What are the Cree or local names?
- What plants in the Keeyask study area are being gathered by your community now?
- Are there certain locations of the Keeyask study area that are important to your community for gathering these plants?

Maps will not be published but general information shared includes the following:

- Tataskweyak Cree Nation and Fox Lake Cree Nation Members identified areas of active plant harvest on maps³. Though not likely a complete list, plants identified as currently used include blueberries, strawberries, cranberries, cloudberries, Labrador tea, trappers tea, sweet grass, and weekis. Plants noted to be used historically were cattail, sphagnum moss, blackberries, gooseberries, puffballs, strawberry blite and an unidentified plant species used like tobacco (Note: it might be likely that some species are still picked among some community members). People also mentioned creeping juniper, flowers, larch and moose graze areas but did not specify whether these plants were used historically or currently.
- Labrador tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*) was noted to be widely abundant.
- Some areas where trappers tea (*Rhododendron tomentosum*) has been picked and is currently picked will be lost due to flooding. These places are important because they are special areas where family has walked and the area has history. As discussed above, all plants are considered sacred.
- Concerns about the extents of flooding were raised for the Split Lake vicinity including the community of Split Lake. Carscadden Lake also was specifically mentioned.
- Weekis are harvested by all three communities in locations relatively close to communities (Assean Lake, Burntwood River, Kettle River, and the Ripple and Aiken rivers [in areas of those rivers not affected by water fluctuations]). Harvest of weekis was not mapped in areas expected to be affected by the Keeyask Project. A TCN Elder said that the medicine from these areas has been lost already due to water fluctuations. It should be noted, however, that one of the primary TCN knowledge holders was not able to attend the workshop.

³ York Factory First Nation Members chose not to take part in the mapping exercise as they were not comfortable documenting the locations of important plants. Instead, York Factory First Nation Members continued discussions about plants.

Next Steps:

The group discussed next steps to continue to explore this topic. It was suggested that a planning meeting be held in February 2013 to start planning for a summer of 2013 field trip. August was suggested to be the best month for both the plants and the youth (who would be out of school). Some follow-up was suggested with respect to the status of access on the North Access Road and the possibility of staying at the camp or camping to avoid the commute to Gillam or Thompson each day.

Several participants also highlighted the need to incorporate a 'traditional plants' perspective in Keeyask monitoring activities (through the ATK monitoring programs), and in remediation and re-vegetation plans for both the Keeyask Infrastructure Project and the Keeyask Generation Project.

The Fox Lake Cree Nation expressed that the South Access Road area was a priority for further investigation.

Table 1: Medicinal Plants and Uses Shared at the Workshop

Plant	Cree Name ⁴	Other Common Names	Latin Name ⁵	Purpose or Treatment ⁶
Sweet flag	Weekis	Muskrat root, Seneca root	<i>Acorus americanus</i>	Fever; sore throat; for maintaining body temperature in winter (used by trappers).
Labrador Tea		Trappers tea	<i>Rhododendron groenlandicum</i>	Diuretic / water pill; healing mosquito bites and sores. Chewed and put on wounds to stop bleeding.
Puffballs			various	Bleeding (noses).
Sphagnum moss (red/orange)			<i>Sphagnum</i> spp.	Absorbent material for diapers; rash prevention; has healing element.
Spruce (gum)			<i>Picea mariana</i>	Eczema; cover for cuts and sores; typically mixed with other ingredients.
Spruce (cones)			<i>Picea mariana</i>	Disinfectant.
Larch (roots)			<i>Larix laricina</i>	Skin treatment.
Willow (red) (possibly red-osier dogwood)			<i>Salix</i> spp. or <i>Cornus sericea</i>	Leaves cover / close a wound like stitches; also disinfectant from bark.
Birch (root)			<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	Disinfectant.
Common juniper			<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Unknown.
Creeping juniper			<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i>	Coughs, sores. Noted to grow near jack pine.
Cattails			<i>Typha latifolia</i>	Medicine.

⁴ Limited time prevented documenting the Cree names of many plants. When the Cree name was shared, it was recorded.

⁵ Latin names were derived from literature.

⁶ It should be noted that the use of plants in some instances reflect use by individuals while other plants are commonly used among all the KCN. How plants are used may vary across the KCN communities.

Table 1: Medicinal Plants and Uses Shared at the Workshop

Plant	Cree Name⁴	Other Common Names	Latin Name⁵	Purpose or Treatment⁶
Sage			<i>Artemisia</i> spp.	Unknown
Leaves (species not specified)			n/a	Cover for cuts or rashes.
Other Plants mentioned but not found in the Keeyask Area				
Balsam Fir			<i>Abies balsamea</i>	Mixed with other ingredients to treat infections.
Cedar			<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Unknown
Basil				Unknown

Table 2: Plants Used for Food⁷

Plant	Cree Name	Other Common Names	Latin Name⁸
Raspberries		-	<i>Rubus</i> spp.
Blueberries		-	<i>Vaccinium</i> spp.
Bog Cranberries		-	<i>Vaccinium oxycoccos</i>
Cloudberries		-	<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>
Strawberries		-	<i>Fragaria</i> spp.
Birch (root) for Tea		-	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Trappers Tea		Muskeg tea	<i>Rhododendron tomentosum</i>
Cattails		-	<i>Typha latifolia</i>
Other Plants mentioned but not found in the Keyask Area			
Maple Syrup			

⁷ May not be a comprehensive list.

⁸ Latin names were derived from literature.

Table 3: Other Plant Products⁹

Plant	Cree Name	Other Common Names	Latin Name	Use
Birch (bark)		-	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	Bark was used for making art
Sweet grass		-	<i>Hierochloe odorata</i>	Ceremonial
Strawberry blite		-	<i>Chenopodium capitatum</i>	Used for dye
Wood (rotted and turned red)	A tos piy a tik	-	n/a	Burnt to tan hides
Lily pads			<i>Nuphar spp.</i>	Unknown
Unknown		-	n/a	Used as tobacco
Flowers		-	n/a	As gift
Poplar bark		aspen	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	Bark cut in long strands to make string
Spruce		-	<i>Picea sp.</i>	Wood used to make hammers
Other Plants mentioned but not found in the Keyask Area				
None				

⁹ May not be a comprehensive list.