War Lake First Nation

Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program

Keeyask Generation Project

War Lake First Nation

ATK Monitoring Program Report (November 2017 - April 2019)

MAY 2019

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1.0 Background

The Keeyask Generation Project is a 695 MW hydroelectric generating station and associated principal structures, situated 180 km northeast of Thompson and 40 km southwest of Gillam, currently under construction. Located on the lower Nelson River at Gull Rapids, the area is of historical, cultural and emotional importance to the Cree First Nations living there. A reservoir will be created upstream of the structures, which includes a powerhouse complex, a spillway, dams, and dykes.

Through a long process of negotiations, War Lake agreed to form a partnership along with Tataskweyak Cree Nation, York Factory First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation (collectively known as the Partner First Nations) and Manitoba Hydro and ratified the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) in 2009, providing the foundation for the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership (KHLP).

Regulatory approval to start the construction of the Keeyask Generation Project was provided in July 2014 after the KHLP submitted a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project. War Lake First Nation and Tataskweyak Cree Nation, operating as the Cree Nation Partners, predicted and assessed potential project impacts on themselves by using the Overview of Water and Land (OWL) evaluation process, which was based on Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) and used the Mother Earth Ecosystem Model. The findings of the OWL process were published in the Cree Nation Partner's Keeyask Environmental Evaluation Report (2012), which was included with the KHLP's EIS submission.

Part of the commitments made in the EIS included a comprehensive Environmental Protection Program, developed to help the transition from the planning phase to the construction and operation phases of the Keeyask Generation Project with a strong understanding that the physical, cultural and socio-economic environments require continuous protection.

The JKDA recognized the importance of conducting a comprehensive environmental assessment process, including the resulting EIS and Environmental Protection Program, that gave equal respect to ATK and western technical science for assessing and monitoring environmental impacts. ATK and technical studies were conducted to provide a baseline from which to assess project impacts on the physical, aquatic, terrestrial and socio-economic environments as well as on traditional resource use, heritage resources and community health. This two-track approach was an important component for War Lake agreeing to become a partner in the Keeyask Generation Project.

The War Lake First Nation Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program was launched in the summer of 2017. This comprehensive report covers activities undertaken since the start of the program to March 31, 2019.

An Artists Rendering of Keeyask
Photo Credit - Manitoba Hydro

2.0 Program Overview

2.1 Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge

ATK is knowledge that reflects our experience, understanding, wisdom, values, beliefs, norms and priorities governing our relationships with Mother Earth and all her beings, derived and developed through living in our homeland ecosystem since time immemorial. ATK is inextricably linked to our culture and our worldview.

- Page 35, CNP Keeyask Environmental Evaluation Report (2012)

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) was integrated in the Keeyask environmental assessment process and plays an important role in the monitoring of project impacts. The Cree Nation Partners (CNP) approach to using ATK to evaluate past hydroelectric development impacts and the predicted impacts resulting from the construction and operation of Keeyask is modeled on the definition of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) which values the knowledge, beliefs, traditions, practices and worldviews of Indigenous communities about the relationship of living beings with one another and their environment. TEK contributes to the survival of Indigenous communities over countless generations by securing livelihoods through the use and preservation of the environment. TEK is also now recognized by western science as being a valuable body of knowledge, experience and understandings in managing environmental resources and in measuring environmental impacts from human disturbances, including climate change.

Oral traditions are based on knowledge passed on from one generation to the next and or history captures the knowledge and experience gained in one's lifetime – together they provide the foundation for ATK. Research and monitoring requires spoken word opportunities for collecting and recording information, which can include discussion forums, interviews and mapping including Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Mapping (TLUOM). Relying on individual and group interviews and mapping to show the extent and type of land use, information recorded on maps include hunting, trapping, fishing, plant and timber harvesting activity, camp and cabin sites, landscape markers, sacred sites and travel routes. However, ATK is proprietary and sensitive, belonging exclusively to each Indigenous community. The content recorded is protected and only shared with the consent of the knowledge keepers and the community.

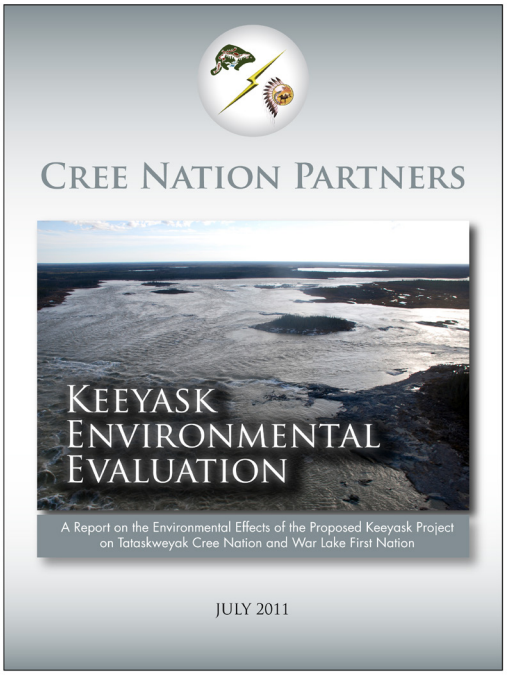
ATK collected can go beyond recording only land use and occupancy. Past and present experiences and observations on language, traditions, values and the balance of spiritual, physical, mental and emotional dimensions are often recorded with Oral History and Oral Tradition interviews and through group discussions. Values include recognizing the spiritual and its interconnectedness with the physical, acknowledging reciprocity or the "belief that as we receive from others, we must also offer to others", and understanding the concept of all things being equal as in "we are part of the natural world with no separation between living and non-living".

Indigenous thought… is holistic, circular and relational. "Indigenous peoples have traditionally seen all life on the planet as so multi-dimensionally entwined that they have not been quick to distinguish the living from the non-living"… all things on the earth: plants, animals, earth, water, air and other humans.

- Page 10- 2004 Aboriginal Research: Berry Picking and Hunting in the 21st Century by Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett

ATK is continuously maintained by Indigenous communities and groups in response to their environment and their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity. Ensuring that knowledge and experiences are passed down from one generation to the next, including collective worldview, values, customs, and ways of doing and thinking, is integral to the preservation of ATK.

2.2 Cree Nation Partners Environmental Evaluation



The Overview of Water and Land (OWL) evaluation process based on TEK guided compensations and partnership negotiations between War Lake and Manitoba Hydro. Both the War Lake 2002 *OWL Process Keeyask Project Draft Report* and the 2002 *Overview of Water and Land (OWL) Summary Report* acknowledged that the OWL process was guided by the Cree worldview. Further OWL studies followed using reference groups to examine the predicted environmental effects of Keeyask, focusing on the relationship of CNP Members to their environment. This comprehensive study process involved meetings, interviews, survey and community engagement, and resulted in War Lake's *Adverse Effects Agreement* and the JKDA.

As partners in Keeyask, CNP participated in the environmental assessment process for the Keeyask Generation Project. A two-track approach was used for completing extensive environmental studies for the Keeyask EIS, which respected both ATK and western technical science. The Cree Nation Partners 2012 *Keeyask Environmental Evaluation Report* was published in 2012 and formed part of the Keeyask Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) completed by Hydro and the partner First Nations the same year. The provisions for Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) environmental monitoring under the Environmental Protection Plan, which was adopted by the Keeyask partnership once Keeyask was approved by regulators, provides the foundation for establishing the War Lake ATK Monitoring Program.

The EIS also included findings from Community Fieldwork Studies conducted and completed by War Lake Members between August 2009 and June 2010. The local fieldwork team conducted Key Person Interviews (KPI) with Members, collected and reviewed community and historical documents, and described an environmental baseline that provides a point of comparison for environmental monitoring activities conducted between November 2017 and April 2019 under the ATK Monitoring Program.

2.3 Keeyask Environmental Protection Plan

An Environmental Protection Plan was developed during the Keeyask environmental assessment process to mitigate, manage and monitor predicted adverse effects during Keeyask construction and operation. During the process, a baseline of conditions was established and described in the Keeyask Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). War Lake's ATK Monitoring Program outlines the fieldwork research necessary to help compare past fieldwork results that helped define a baseline with current findings to determine the following:

- Test predicted effects outlined in the EIS;
- Identify unanticipated effects of the Project;
- Monitor the effectiveness of mitigation measures; and
- Determine if adaptive management is required.

The KHLP committed to an Environmental Protection Plan which carries forward the two-track approach from environmental assessment to environmental monitoring. Each Partner First Nation is responsible for designing and implementing its own ATK Monitoring Program to monitor the environmental effects from Keeyask during construction and operation.

2.4 War Lake ATK Monitoring Program

The War Lake ATK Monitoring Program was designed to provide opportunities for War Lake Members, including Elders, resource users, knowledge holders and youth to record, discuss, and communicate observations and perspectives regarding the effects of Keeyask construction and operation on all aspects of their world. This fieldwork research is conducted with the support and guidance of local fieldwork staff and advisors.

The program is guided by the following community objectives:

- Incorporate ATK in Keeyask monitoring and reporting processes;
- Ensure ATK is given equal weight to western science;
- Provide employment and training opportunities for War Lake Members;
- Provide opportunities for War Lake Members to participate in "on the land" activities;
- Facilitate the transfer of valuable knowledge held by Elders to our youth;
- Facilitate information sharing between Partner First Nations and Manitoba Hydro; and
- Ensure War Lake Members are kept well-informed of all program activities and results.

Two key components drive the Program. Monitoring through "on-the-land" observations and through roundtable discussions with experienced resource users. Members, Elders, knowledge holders and youth get together "on the land" to observe and discuss changes to the land and waterways. Each season, a monitoring trip is planned to spend 3-5 days at a site traditionally used for hunting, trapping and fishing. The second component is Resource Users Roundtables. The resource users' discussion forum provides opportunities for Members to share their experience and knowledge of being on the land to trap, hunt and fish. Discussions are held each season to share knowledge and changes observed in areas that extend from the Landing (Aiken) River to Three Sisters Lake to Fox River. This report will discuss the observations made on three ATK Monitoring Trips and over four Resource User Roundtables.

3.0 ATK Monitoring

3.1 Objectives

War Lake developed its own traditional knowledge-based environmental monitoring program to:

- Identify areas and sites of importance;
- Document observations and traditional knowledge;
- Create a baseline of current conditions;
- Monitor changes to the environment;
- Explore the causes of environmental change; and
- Establish a record for future generations.

3.2 Community Engagement

Community support and involvement are essential for successfully applying traditional knowledge to any research, assessment or monitoring project. War Lake Members established a collaborative approach that respects Cree cultural values using community-based direction and participation to design the War Lake ATK Monitoring Program.

To ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring process, informed consent was obtained from all participants based on the provision of clear information on the objectives of each program event and the following assurances:

- All information collected was owned and controlled by War Lake First Nation;
- All sensitive information would be fully protected; and
- Confidentiality of individual contributions would be fully respected.

The extensive information provided through GPS and mapping activities is considered highly sensitive and will only be shared with parties under the strict direction and approval of War Lake First Nation. Similarly, the rich detail of events and activities identifying War Lake family members will be kept private and preserved for the community as part of their historical legacy. Signed consent and confidentiality forms are kept off-site for security and privacy.

3.3 Site Selection Roundtable

The first War Lake ATK Monitoring Program event, the Site Selection Roundtable, took place on September 7, 2017. Organized by the Keeyask Coordinator responsible for managing community-based monitoring activities and facilitated by two advisors, six resource users including Elders participated. This introductory event was an opportunity to have War Lake Members select the locations for future ATK Monitoring Trips (“on-the-land” trips) based on historical and present-day importance, potential Keeyask impacts and seasonal accessibility. During the discussion, participants shared their experience on the land and their concerns with changes observed. Participants agreed that the ATK Monitoring Program would help with safeguarding land use for future generations.

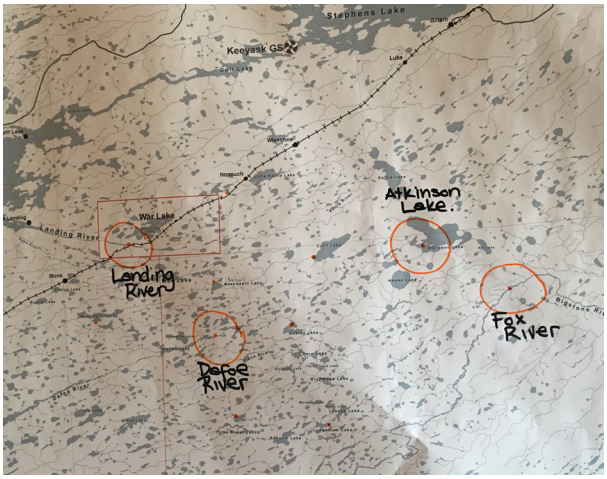
The following areas were identified as preferred locations for ATK Monitoring Trips:

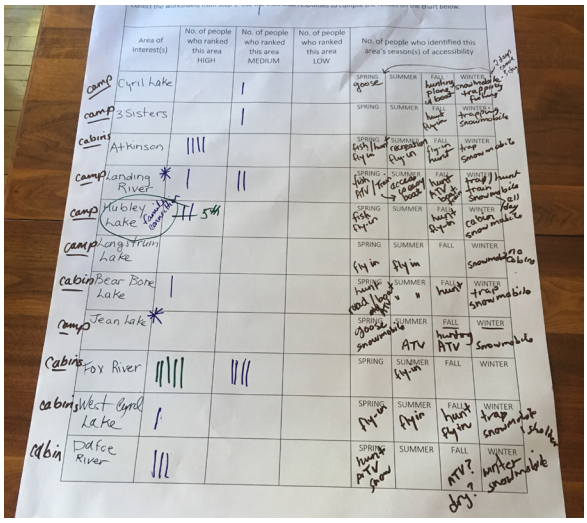
- Fox River;
- Atkinson (Fox) Lake;
- Landing (Aiken) River; and
- Dafoe River.

Other suitable locations for ATK Monitoring Trips were identified:

- War (Princess) Lake;
- Bearbone (Muskwapin) Lake;
- West Cyril Lake; and
- Cyril Lake.

It was understood that such elements as seasonal conditions, participants' interest and availability of knowledgeable fieldwork guides would determine the location for each ATK Monitoring Trip.





3.4 ATK Monitoring Trips

War Lake Members participated in three ATK Monitoring Trips during the November 1, 2017 to March 31, 2019 period.

A group of six participants made up of resource users/knowledge holders, an Elder and 3 youth participated in the first ATK Monitoring Trip (November 1-3, 2017). The Keeyask Coordinator and a Fieldwork Team Leader familiar with the War Lake resource use area organized the trip with the assistance of one advisor. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the ATK Monitoring Trip #1 to War Lake Report.

A group of five participants made up of resource users/knowledge holders, 2 Elders, 6 youth and a Councillor took part in the second ATK Monitoring Trip (July 27-August 1, 2018). Two War Lake resource users with extensive experience in the Atkinson Lake area organized and led the group, acting as the Fieldwork Team Leader and the Fieldwork Assistant respectively and with some assistance from an advisor. Please refer to Appendix 2 for the ATK Monitoring Trip #2 to Atkinson Lake Report.

A group of 10 participants, including resource users/knowledge holders, an Elder, 6 youth, a Councillor, and an advisor, travelled to the cabins at Atkinson Lake from March 12-16th to participate in ice-fishing activities, monitor the environment, and observe the health of local jackfish and pickerel populations. Please refer to Appendix 3 for the ATK Monitoring Trip #3 to Atkinson Lake Report.

In each ATK Monitoring Trip, participants explored the environment, reported on observations made, and shared knowledge of historical importance. Evenings were opportune times for Elders to relay memories of their early experiences on the land and the teachings of traditional ways that were passed on to them.

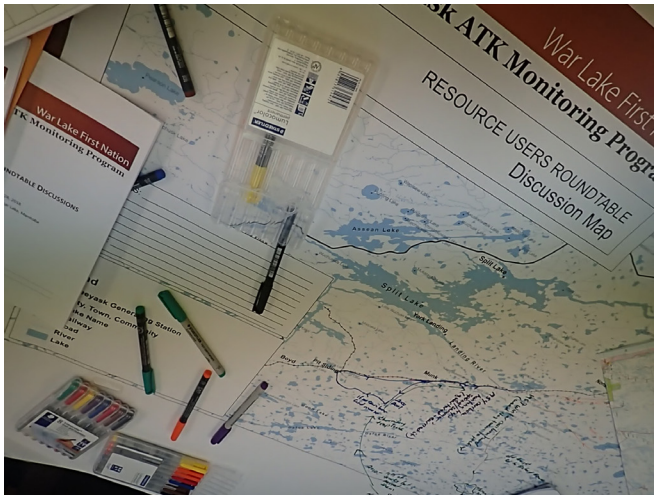
3.5 Resource Users Roundtables

War Lake Members participated in four Resource Users Roundtables (Roundtables) during the 2017-2018 period. The focus of each session was influenced by other ATK Monitoring Program events such as Monitoring Trips to War Lake and Atkinson Lake, other Keeyask monitoring such as the Keeyask Caribou Coordination Committee (KCCC), and topics of interests identified by resource users participating in the program. These sessions were organized by the Keeyask Coordinator and facilitated by an advisor.

In order to foster meaningful discussion and encourage active participation, the Roundtables were limited to a maximum of eight participants and these working sessions were held in one of the War Lake Band Office boardrooms. Although discussion questions were developed for each session, participants directed the shape and content of each session based on recent observations and areas of concern. Observations and experiences shared were organized by themes and subtopics and participants also marked maps provided for each session.

The first Roundtable took place November 28-29, 2017, shortly after the first ATK Monitoring Trip. Six resource users including Elders participated in a session that focused on reconfirming the various lakes and rivers in the traditional resource use area identified during the Site Selection Roundtable as locations of interest. It also presented an opportunity to further explore resource use activity by season including travel routes used to access each area. The participants also identified issues of concern.

The next Resource Users Roundtable took place February 28-March 1, 2018, in advance of planning a second ATK Monitoring Trip. Five resource users and knowledge holders participated in a session that focused on knowledge of the War Lake and Atkinson Lake resource use locations. It presented an opportunity to reconfirm observations made during the first ATK Monitoring Trip and to learn more about the location of the next planned trip.



The summer Resource Users Roundtable took place August 21-22, 2018, shortly after the ATK Monitoring Trip to Atkinson Lake. Seven resource users including Elders participated in a session that focused on the physical environment, including plants and animals, of the resource use corridor extending from Cyril Lake (to the west) to Fox River (to the east).

The last Roundtable of the 2017-2018 period took place November 26-27, 2018. The focus of the session was influenced by the work being conducted by the KCCC with the discussion session focusing on knowledge and experiences related to caribou habitat, movement and harvesting. The session was followed by a day and a half Caribou Mapping Project session the results of which will be reported to the KCCC.

Eight resource users including Elders, youth and the War Lake Chief participated. Two advisors facilitated the joint Resource Users Roundtable and Caribou Mapping Project sessions.

The observations and experiences shared during these sessions are summarized and presented in this report along with those collected during the two ATK Monitoring Trips.

3.6 Communication and Reporting

The War Lake ATK Monitoring program includes an inclusive approach to communication, which is fundamental in gaining and maintaining community support for ongoing monitoring activities. Communication activities in support of the program include community meetings, contributions to the community newsletter, and presentations and exchanges with the KHLP Board of Directors, Keeyask monitoring committees and between other Partner First Nations.

Monitoring activities require note taking, map marking, photography and GPS recordings that are included and reported in ATK Monitoring Trip Reports (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3) and detailed Roundtable Meeting Notes shared with War Lake Chief and Council. Presentations, reports and articles are also prepared regularly for KHLP Board Meetings, Monitoring Advisory Committee Open Houses, Keeyask Cree Nation Community Workshops and other committees upon request. Additionally, overall program reports are prepared annually with summary information provided to Manitoba Hydro for their publically available Keeyask Year in Review report.

Part of the responsibilities of the Keeyask Coordinator is to keep lines of communication open with War Lake Members by having a visible presence at the War Lake Band Office where she is available to answer questions about the AKT Monitoring Program, distribute reports upon request, and work with other staff, including the Julie Lindal School, the Education Coordinator, the Health Director and Chief and Council, to maximize community participation in program events.

4.0 Physical Environment Observations

The following information was recorded through ATK Monitoring Trips and Resource Users Roundtables, which together are presented as **November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations**. War Lake information collected through the Keeyask environmental assessment work conducted in the community in 2009-2010 in support of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is presented for comparative purposes as **August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies**.

4.1 Land and Water

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: War Lake Members interviewed described the areas most frequented for hunting, trapping, fishing and plant gathering in terms of location and seasons accessed. Respondents did not describe specific features on the land or waterways.

> *The Landing River, also known as the Aiken River, is frequently accessed during spring and summer for fishing and by snowmobile and trucks during the winter for trapping. It rises south of the War Lake community and enters Split Lake, 2 km from York Landing and is the path for the winter road that connects the community to York Landing and Split Lake. Another area frequented is further southwest near the rail stop of Munk and is close to War Lake, also known as Princess Lake, which is 10 km southwest of Moosenose Lake, also known as Mooseocoot Lake. According to responses, both areas are important for fishing and trapping. War Lake is the access point for traveling along the Cyril River to Atkinson Lake, also known as Fox Lake, found in the north central area in the Traditional Use Area, over 50 km east of the community. Cyril Lake is located more than halfway along the route to Atkinson Lake, 32 km east of the War Lake community. These areas are highly valued for fishing, trapping and hunting and are mostly accessed in the winter months. Other areas noted by respondents included the Dafoe River, Bigstone River and High Hill River.*

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Areas described as important to War Lake Members include the corridor from the Munk rail stop to West Cyril River, the area between War Lake to Three Sisters Lake, the corridor from Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake to Fox River, and the nearby areas of Landing River and Moosenose Lake. The terrain throughout is muskeg, heavy brush and burn areas making overland travel challenging, especially in the summer months. Overall, there is lots of movement in the waterways and the water is clean throughout areas accessed by War Lake resource users.

Specific descriptions of the landscape and waterways in the traditional resource use area were discussed in one Resource Users Roundtable that focused on the Cyril Lake to Fox River resource use corridor. Those observations were reconfirmed by observations made during the ATK Monitoring Trip to Atkinson Lake.

Land features include:

- A ridge that extends from Landing River to War Lake to Bearbone Lake to Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake and continues east
- The ridge continues south of War Lake
- Another ridge is located north of Cyril Lake and Atkinson Lake
- There are five (5) portages from Bearbone Lake to Cyril Lake and an additional portage from Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake
- One traditional portage can be found near the waterfalls on Dafoe River
- A 1.5 mile portage from Kettle Lake to the north end of Atkinson Lake is now a groomed snowmobile trail that connects to Gillam
- There are six (6) to eight (8) sandy beaches on Atkinson Lake
- Larger stretches of beach are found on the northeast side of Atkinson Lake, including where an old settlement was situated
- A longer beach is also found near the opening to the Little Fox River
- War Lake cabins at Atkinson Lake are located on a small island
- Atkinson Lake also features a reef located almost at the centre of the most open area of the lake
- The southwest side of Atkinson Lake has smaller beaches
- There are three muddy/clay beaches on Cyril Lake
- War Lake cabins at Cyril Lake are located on a rocky shore

Water features include:

- There are ten (10) sets of rapids from Bearbone Lake to Cyril Lake
- A further two sets of rapids are found on the Cyril River to Atkinson Lake
- There are many rapids from Fox River to Bigstone River
- There are waterfalls on the Dafoe River just past the confluence with the Fox River
- Last time the Fox-Dafoe Rivers were explored, the water was too high to determine the number of rapids on the Dafoe beyond the falls
- Cyril Lake is extremely shallow
- The fingers and bays on Atkinson Lake are shallow
- Deepest area of Atkinson Lake is in the area of the exposed reef and extends to the northeast area to where the former settlement was located
- Atkinson Lake can become very choppy and produce whitecaps in the spring and fall – boaters must be cautious traveling in these seasons

4.2 Animals and Plants

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: Questions regarding specific observations or knowledge of animals and plants were not covered during that fieldwork program. Interview respondents noted the most frequently harvested animals when discussing hunting, trapping and fishing. Some noted plant harvesting for medicinal purposes.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Plants and animals were discussed in context with harvesting activities, changes to the environment and specific sightings made by participants of the Resource Users Roundtables and during ATK Monitoring Trips.

Large mammals observed:

- Black bears have been sighted in the traditional resource use area but they are not hunted
- Caribou are hunted in the winter when they cross through the traditional resource use area
- Moose are hunted throughout the traditional resource use area in the fall
- Moose population down in the Munk to West Cyril Lake, War (Princess) Lake to Three Sisters Lake and Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake areas that could be explained by the increase of wolves in the area
- More recently, two bull moose were spotted as well as 3-4 distinct wolf tracks in early 2019 on the winter road to Atkinson Lake
- Evidence of wolves at Atkinson Lake in early 2019 included hearing howling in the early morning and seeing flocks of birds feasting on the remains of wolf kills

Small mammals observed:

- There are field mice, deer mice and lemmings in the traditional resource use area
- An increase in marten population has been observed
- An increase in mice was noted in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area and might be related to less snow and warmer temperatures
- There used to be porcupines but few have been spotted recently
- Chipmunks, flying squirrels and bats are rarely seen
- Changes noted in the region include sightings of groundhogs around rail tracks and roads, skunks possibly moving north, and rats in York Landing (possibly off barge)

Birds observed:

- Canada geese, snow geese, lesser geese, lesser snow geese, and speckle belly geese are found throughout the region and are hunted in the spring
- Sandhill cranes arrive after the geese
- Mallard ducks, black ducks (with beaks that turn orange-red in the spring), pintail blacks, blue and green wing teal ducks (smaller) and fish ducks (sharp beaks) are plentiful on all the lakes in the area
- All ducks are hunted in the spring except for fish ducks
- All the above birds are preyed on by eagles
- Swans, loons, seagulls and arctic tern are observed on all the lakes in the area and are also preyed on by eagles
- Lots of swans have been noted in Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake area
- More unusual is the high number of pelicans and cormorants in the Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake area
- Pelicans are new to the traditional resource use area and are preying on goslings and fish
- Most recently, about 60 pelicans were spotted near the reef on Atkinson Lake where the seagulls congregate
- Osprey and eagles throughout the region – they nest in spruce and poplar trees along rivers and lakes and on power lines
- When out on the land, it is easy to sight eagles chasing or carrying prey
- Marlin, red tail and night hawks are also sighted in the area
- On lake beaches, there are plenty of killdeers, sand pipers, rusty black birds and bunting snow birds (tiny) that feed on water insects
- There are many ravens, crows and black birds throughout the region
- Grey jays (whiskey jacks) are in the area but their nests are hard to find
- Grey jays are very aggressive
- There are plenty of robins, wood peckers (black ones year round and black and yellow ones in spring), and barn and cliff sparrows
- Rarely seen in the traditional resource use area are turkey vultures, magpies, northern shrikes, and humming birds
- Owls found in this area include great grey owls, great horned owls, hawk owls and snowy owls
- Other hunted birds include ptarmigans (winter hunt) and spruce hens, sharp tail grouse and rough grouse (fall hunt)
- More ptarmigans were noted in 2017 in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area

Other small creatures observed:

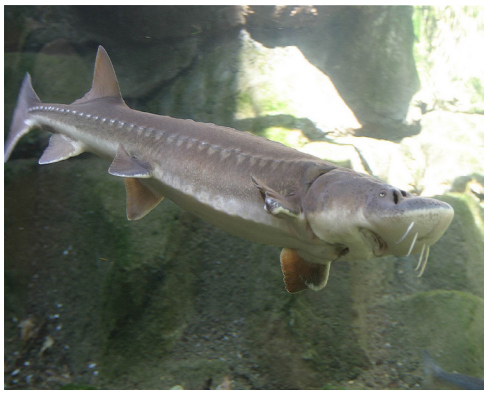
- Plenty of leopard frogs in swamps and ponds throughout the region
- Garter snakes have come into the immediate area on grain trains
- Clams and snails are seen on shorelines of the lakes frequented and are considered otter food
- Otters also feed on crayfish found in area lakes and rivers
- White fish also eat snails and other tiny crustaceans

Furbearing mammals observed and trapped:

- Wolverines, wolves, lynx, fisher and martens have the highest valued furs
- The most difficult animal to trap are wolverines and wolves
- There are grey, white and black wolves in the resource use area
- The hind quarters of lynx are used for food
- Easiest to trap due to high population is marten, which pushed out fisher from the area but a few can still be found
- Fur prices for fox vary by type with white and silver fox being more values than cross and red fox
- More red, white and cross fox observed in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area in 2017
- Otter, beaver and mink are not as valuable as before but still being trapped and sold for fur
- Squirrels, muskrat and weasel are also trapped
- Beaver and muskrat are also trapped for food
- Rabbits are not trapped but snared for food

Fish found in the traditional resource area are:

- Pickerel is a very popular and abundant fish in area lakes
- Small and medium sized pickerel is preferred
- Often mix pickerel with other less desirable fish such as jack-fish for fish patties
- Jackfish (pike) is fished in ice and open water
- Larger size (3ft or more) jackfish is preferred because it is easier to clean than the smaller ones that have too many bones
- Unlike pickerel, jackfish skin needs to be scaled and it has wider bones to cut through
- Some people prefer jackfish to pickerel and often the liver is also eaten
- White fish is also widely fished and consumed and there is no size preference
- Like jackfish, white fish needs to be scaled and cut
- White fish is often roasted, boiled and smoked and fish guts and livers are also eaten
- White fish eggs are often used in bannock
- Tullibee (cisco) is also fished and is very similar to whitefish but smaller
- Preparing sturgeon requires removing fins and cutting bones, and then either boiling or smoking the fish
- Sturgeon is still fished by War Lake Members but with less frequency since accessing rivers on the Hayes River system is further and more costly
- Sturgeon fished from the Hayes River system has darker flesh than sturgeon fished in the Nelson River system
- Sucker is not a preferred fish but is still consumed if caught
- Suckers used to be canned and some people enjoy boiling the heads
- Suckers can also be ground with other fish like jackfish, white fish or pickerel to make fish patties
- Maria if caught is used mostly for eating its liver
- Perch is rarely fished because it is very small and can swim through nets used



One Resource Users Roundtable featured discussion on the different types of plants, trees and berries and their importance to War Lake Members. This focus was included at the request of one of the resource users who had attended multiple sessions. What follows are the observations shared during that session.

Interesting plants found in the traditional resource use area:

- Small "cherry trees" have white flower blooms in late spring and red berries by summer but fruit is never eaten
- Wild mint grows throughout and is appreciated for its good smell but not picked
- Northern tea is gathered and made as a medicinal tea much like Labrador tea which is found further north
- Some Labrador tea plants have been spotted on an island on Cyril Lake
- Another pointed leaf plant grows in muskeg and looks like northern and Labrador teas but has bigger leaves that are picked to use as band-aids – it has antiseptic properties and the leaves are wiped on cuts and bites
- Weekes is found on creeks and river shorelines between Bearbone and Cyril Lakes and is used to help ease cold and flu symptoms
- Some have observed a water plant that resembles a pineapple that is pulled up by beavers and is seen floating on the lake

Trees typically found in the area:

- Lots of spruce, poplar, willow, birch and jack pines in the area
- Lots of tamarack in swampy areas
- Spruce sap is boiled to apply on bites and wounds
- Spruce sap is also used to patch holes on canoes and to treat fiddle strings
- Birch bark is used for numerous items including moose calls, canoes, paddles, runners on dog sleds and axe handles
- Spruce wood best for burning, both dry and green (for slow burns)
- Diamond willow best for smoking fish

Observations about berries:

- Blueberries most abundant in the region with two types noted – one low to the ground with dusty blue fruit and the other are 2 ft high bushes with a darker blue fruit
- Next most abundant are raspberries, followed by strawberries and moss berries – all are used for jams and in pancakes as are blueberries
- Also found in the area are goose berries and cloud berries
- Eating berries influences the taste of certain meats like spruce hens (fall hunt)
- Growth and abundance is influenced by fires and earthworks – often such disturbances cause tremendous re-growth

5.0 Resource Use Discussion

The following information was collected through ATK Monitoring Trips and Resource Users Roundtables, which together are presented as **November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations**. War Lake information gathered through the Keeyask environmental assessment work conducted in the community in 2009-2010 in support of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is presented for comparative purposes as **August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies**.

5.1 Travel Routes, Access and Safety

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: War Lake Members interviewed identified all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles as the most commonly used transportation for accessing sites in their traditional resource use area. They also commented on the importance of the Fall and Spring Access Programs (the Offsetting Programs found in the *War Lake First Nation Adverse Effects Agreement*), which flies families to sites located within the traditional resource use area.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Access to resource use sites near the community is mostly by ATV and snowmobile. War Lake Members fly in to Cyril Lake and Atkinson Lake under the Fall and Spring Access Programs but can access both lakes by snowmobile in early spring. Plans to access Fox River for hunting and fishing will require flying in to the site.

Most frequently used overland routes:

- War Lake is accessible by truck and ATV year round using an all-weather road and is a 20-30 minute drive from the community
- War Lake First Nation maintains the road and it is good most of the year (muddy during spring months) as long as it is plowed during the winter
- War Lake First Nation often builds an ice road extension across the lake
- War Lake Members travel to War Lake by snowmobile in winter and spring using the road and ice road
- The all-weather road used to connect to the winter road to Oxford House
- Resource users that frequent the areas between War Lake and Three Sisters Lake will travel a full day by snowmobile to reach High Hill River
- War Lake Members access Atkinson Lake by ATV and snowmobile during winter and spring
- There are two overland routes to Atkinson Lake with the northern Cyril Lake route taking 2-3 hours and the southern shortcut taking 1-2 hours
- The northern route relies on the annual winter road to the Cyril Lake MTS tower
- The ice road begins at Mile 4 to Cyril Lake following the north side of the river to the MTS Tower and Atkinson Lake
- Referred to as the old freight road, the route connects to the winter road from Gillam to Shamattawa
- War Lake Construction is currently contracted by MTS to build this ice road every 2 years in order to maintain and refuel the Tower (sometimes the road will extend south to the cabins on the Atkinson Lake island when materials need to be hauled in or out of the site by truck)
- The short cut to Atkinson Lake relies on the same ice road to Cyril Lake but Members can follow the south side of Cyril River to the cabins on the Atkinson Lake island using a former dog sled trail
- The southern route saves 45 minutes to an hour depending on trail conditions

Waterway routes:

- In the War Lake traditional resource use area, Members can pull a boat to a launch on a creek 2-3 miles off the all-weather road for open water fishing in the summer
- Boat travel to Atkinson Lake is possible from a launch located at Crooked (Wakicomenaw) Lake to the island site of the cabins
- It can takes about 1-1.5 days with favourable water conditions and 2 days with slower moving water
- The water route is rarely used since it is time consuming and hard work, requiring crossing six portages
- The portages were re-built in 2006 but some require grooming
- Two War Lake Members last accessed Atkinson Lake by boat in 2010
- Retracing the traditional route used by ancestors from York Factory to travel inland is possible
- Starting at Landing River, the waterways cross Crooked Lake to Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake to Fox River to Bigstone River and on to the Hayes River to Hudson Bay

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: The greatest concern to resource users interviewed in relation to access to their traplines and hunting sites in the traditional use area was the issue of cost. Respondents remarked on the high costs of travel and supplies as a barrier to pursuing more extensive hunting, trapping and fishing. More activities take place closer to home because it is too costly to take trips further from the community for longer stays.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Resource users participating in roundtable discussions also identified high costs as a challenge to accessing the land to pursue hunting, trapping and fishing. Gas is expensive and makes flying to resource use sites further away from the community prohibitive. Fuel prices also affect access to resource use sites by ATV and snowmobile. Resource users often need to reduce the distance and frequency of travel because of the high fuel costs. It is common for fuel costs on War Lake to be double that of southern Manitoba. It also impacts travel by boat. Resource users confirmed that equipment purchase and maintenance is costly, making it difficult for more Members to pursue resource use activity.

A major concern for resource users who participated on monitoring trips and roundtable discussions is the increasing number of outsiders accessing War Lake's traditional resource use areas. War Lake Members interviewed in 2009-2010 did not raise this issue. Resource users observed that power lines and a throughway road in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area have given outsiders greater ease to access the area for moose and caribou hunting. Some are hunters from Cree Nations in the area such as Cross Lake while others come as far away as Saskatchewan and Minnesota on special hunting permits. Many of these outsiders are wasteful and not respectful, just taking quarters with them while leaving carcasses behind. War Lake Members often get the blame and Manitoba Conservation is not very effective in policing how these outsiders behave. Resource users also remarked on outsiders accessing Atkinson Lake in the winter, mostly by snowmobile but some people are flying in from Gillam. While at Atkinson Lake for the summer monitoring trip, participants noted evidence of more human traffic from Gillam, including the use of a groomed snowmobile trail to access the lake for ice fishing. In general, War Lake Members are concerned with the higher influx of recreational hunters and fishers from Gillam due to Keeyask construction and the increasing pressure on the environment from this increased activity.

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: War Lake resource users interviewed were asked to describe changes in the land and water over the past 5 to 10 years that impact safe access throughout their traditional use area. Respondents noted changes in the water levels in the last few years that had impacted access to the land, where water levels were too low to use boats safely. Also noted were safety concerns with water levels dropping in the winter, causing hanging ice. Respondents expressed concern with seasonal changes, with the whole region freezing later and thawing out earlier, which presented serious safety issues with resource users potentially falling through the ice.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Changing water levels continue to be a safety concern but most program participants believe it's due to changing weather conditions. In general, the shortening of the winter season makes timing for safe travel unpredictable. The change in frequency and quantity of snow also presents dangers. When there is too little snow, it is very difficult to drive a snowmobile safely. When there is too much snow, it is difficult to break a trail for snowmobiles and ATVs.

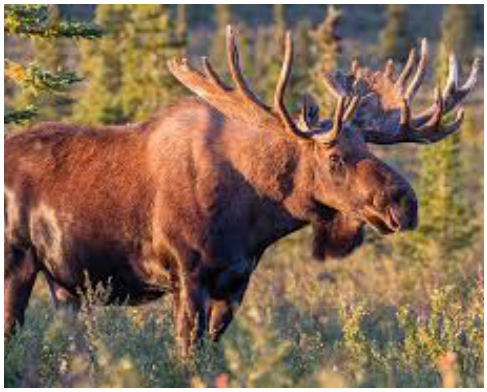
Resource users observed that 2017 water levels had been low in the summer and fall but high in the spring due to heavy snow accumulation in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area even though snowing is less frequent overall. However, when it does snow, it is a major snowfall with unprecedented high snow banks making travel difficult if not impossible and causing lots of run-off in the spring. When trapping in this area, resource users noted less snow on the ground in October and November, which made travel by snowmobile more difficult and dangerous.

There was overland flooding in the spring of 2017 due to the heavy winter snowfalls in the War Lake area. The high spring water levels were normal by summer and low in the fall. Water levels were very low in the summer and fall of 2017 in the War Lake area causing damage to boats.

In the Atkinson Lake area, heavy snowfall was noted in the 2017-2018 winter causing some flooding as evidenced in summer when resource users observed some damage. The dock at the cabin site and a boat moored there had been washed away from shore. Resource users in the area also noted that the sand had been pushed to the shore, elevating the sand bar, which leads to lots of plants being buried and some trees being uprooted. Participants saw evidence of uprooted trees and water damage on many of the beaches visited on the summer monitoring trip to Atkinson Lake.

Resource users also noted that Landing River had experienced extreme water fluctuations in the last 5-10 years including lots of flooding. Lot of debris was observed in the water in recent years. Also noted were the many trees on the riverbank that had been washed out and uprooted.

Moosenose (Mooseocoot) Lake also experienced changes to its water levels over the past 5-10 years such as unusually high water in spring and low water in the summer and fall. An exception was noted in 2016 where the fall water levels were very high. Resource users noted that these fluctuations could be related to changes on the Nelson River, connected by Bob Creek. Butnau River used to connect Moosenose Lake to the Nelson River but is now blocked by a dyke.



5.2 Hunting

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: War Lake resource users interviewed indicated that weeklong hunting trips occur mostly in the spring and fall, sometimes winter, with Members accessing hunting sites by ATV or snowmobile depending on the season. The fieldwork team also reviewed the Moose Hunter Survey conducted by students throughout the months of October and November 2009, which indicated that favoured sites for hunting included Atkinson Lake, Silsby Lake, Cyril Lake, and War Lake.

> *[Hunting] is a highly valued traditional pursuit that is passed on from one generation to the next. As with fishing and trapping, respondents identified benefits as follows: healthy food; traditional activity; ancestral identity; and family and community recreation.*

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: Members hunt chicken and moose in the fall, ducks and geese in the spring, and caribou, when available, in the winter. Moose hunting remains the most important hunt for War Lake Members. Moose hunting occurs in the Munk to West Cyril Lake area, the War Lake to Three Sisters Lake area, and the Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake area. There are cabins located throughout these areas. Hunting in the Fox River area will become more frequent once Members start flying in to the former outfitters camp in the fall season. Closer to home, Members hunt moose in the Landing River area and at Moosenose Lake, where there is one cabin.

Observations about moose hunting:

- Participants of the monitoring trip to War Lake noted a drop in moose population and hunting success in last few years

- It was noted that noise and pollution from Keeyask construction could be influencing moose travel patterns
- Resource users attending roundtable discussions reported less bulls to hunt in the fall of 2017 resulting in less moose kills.
- Some resource users believe that the inconsistent weather is impacting moose habits and movements
- Resource users also noted an increase in the number of wolves throughout the region that could also be having an impact on moose population
- At least one pack was observed travelling around Atkinson Lake in the fall of 2017
- More recently during the monitoring trip to Atkinson Lake in the winter of 2019, multiple wolf tracks were observed and early morning howling heard by participants

Resource users indicated that caribou movement has been unpredictable lately and seems to be migrating south since the 2013 fires. There remains burnt poles and tangled wires from fire damage that could possibly injure animals crossing through the traditional use area including the corridors between War Lake to Three Sisters Lake and Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake. Both corridors also feature power lines and winter roads and these might also impact movement since caribou are very sensitive to noise and light, but some believe the caribou have grown accustomed to the sound of power lines. Given the status and concern for caribou populations, a Resource Users Roundtable was conducted to explore War Lake's history and current activity with caribou. Currently, there are concerns with the Woodland caribou being endangered and Barren Ground caribou following closely behind.

Resource users also noted that lots of caribou passed through the Moosenose Lake area about 5-7 years ago or more. From a distance, the bay looked black with the tons of caribou droppings that littered the shore. A possible reason for caribou passing closer to home is the removal of telephone lines that ran along the rail tracks more than a decade ago. The resource users believed that it probably helped with animal movement. By 2012, caribou herds were spotted more frequently but not every year. Sometimes the herd would cross close to the community but other times they were spotted as far south as Monument (Annesley) Lake, south of Ransom Lake and halfway to Oxford House. Participants remembered the 2013 herd being very large, with upwards of 40-50 crossing the power line and the Nelson River near PR 280. That same year, herds were also sighted in Grand Rapids and Nelson House, and crossing the golf course in Thompson. 2013 also had a herd move in from the north (Coastal).

Other observations about caribou hunting:

- Caribou like tamarack, lichen and muskeg so the herd tends to keep moving through areas that are not bare as a result of burns
- There is now re-growth in the burn areas of the past decades and increased sightings of caribou
- It was also noted that the cows cross ahead of the bulls and have very large antlers, although not as huge as those on the bulls
- Summer resident caribou have been spotted calving on the islands on Stephen's Lake
- Blasting and heavy construction activity disrupt movements but these activities are less intense than they were in 2012 to 2014

During the caribou-focused roundtable discussions, much attention was paid to the influx of outsiders accessing War Lake's traditional use area to hunt caribou.

Recent observations of outsider activity:

- Most notable human impact in the last few decades is the increase in outsiders hunting caribou in the area
- Social media, Facebook in particular, has contributed greatly to this development
- Everyone gets a heads up on the caribou movement and wants to travel for the hunt including sports hunters, Métis and other First Nations
- Some come from as far as La Ronge and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and Alberta
- Other Manitoba First Nations entering the area for the hunt include people from as far north as Lac Brochet and as far south as Norway House
- More worrisome are the sports hunters who have increased their activity in the area for the past many years who are wasteful and disrespectful
- Natural Resources officers did catch up and arrest a hunter from Wabowden who had over harvested, taking 15 carcasses back home and leaving 15 behind
- The incidence is not only infuriating because of the waste but the officers initially blamed War Lake First Nation harvesters for the 15 dead caribou found in the area, which they kept to provide evidence
- In general, sports hunters only take the hindquarters and leave everything else behind while First Nation harvesters will use all of the animal
- Participants of the recent monitoring trip to Atkinson Lake came across more evidence of over-harvesting of caribou by outsiders

A major concern for resource users who participated on monitoring trips and roundtable discussions is the increasing number of outsiders accessing War Lake's traditional resource use areas.

Unfortunately, the monitoring group, which included an Elder and 6 youth, observed a very disturbing and disrespectful caribou slaughter on the side of the winter road. 10-15 caribou were slaughtered: the grisly scene included severed heads and limbs, exposed rib cages, piles of skin, and other equally upsetting scenes. Outside hunters had been observed recently in the area – typically, these hunters only take the hindquarters for meat and antlers for trophies – and at this scene, there was evidence that this was again the case. War Lake is currently seeking an appropriate solution to this worsening situation.

5.3 Trapping

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: According to resource users interviewed, trapping occurs from October to April. Fall activities occur close to the community with trappers spending a few weeks in the bush and traveling by ATV or snowmobile. During the winter, resource users access traplines on snowmobiles and stay for longer durations, using cabins. The studies included a focus on commercial trapping and resource users interviewed were asked about the 6 registered traplines. War Lake Members interviewed did not distinguish between commercial, community and vacant traplines when describing trapping activities in their traditional use area. Trapping and trappers are held in high regard in the community. The value of the commercial harvest fails to capture the significance of trapping to War Lake Members. Respondents identified benefits to trapping as follows: healthy food; traditional activity; ancestral identity; excitement of fur auction; and family and community recreation.

When asked about changes experienced by commercial trappers over the past 5-10 years, respondents noted a significant decrease in commercial trapping activity and provided the following reasons for this decline: aging trapline holders; decline in demand; inability to provide for family; and less availability of animals. Respondents also described a significant increase in the number of martens being trapped over the same time period. Marten ($60 per pelt) were the most trapped followed by beaver ($30 per pelt). Mink, red and white fox, muskrat, and squirrel were also trapped. Of higher value pelts, otter ($120 per pelt) was the most frequently trapped. Negligible trapping of lynx, wolf and wolverine was recorded for that time period.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: War Lake Members trap throughout their traditional use area, often staying on the land for a week or more where they have cabins or checking their traplines daily in areas closer to the community.

Trapping in Munk to West Cyril Lake area is fairly productive with more red, white and cross fox observed in 2017. However, resource users who frequent the area noted that the marten population is down. Trapping productivity in the resource use corridor between War Lake and Three Sisters Lake is significantly down this past year with less martens – for example, a trapper brought in 60 marten pelts in 2016 but only 10 in 2017. In previous years, a trapper could easily trap between 60-70 martens annually. Trapping also occurs in the Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake area. Trapping productivity was reported as decent in the past few years for marten and lynx since both lakes are generally well populated.

Trapping also occurs at Landing River in the area furthest from York Landing. The area has experienced lots of flooding in the last 5-10 years and muskrats and beavers have been flooded out. Trapping also occurs at Moosenose Lake where trappers have observed an increase in beaver population in 2017. There have been no muskrat in that area for at least 20 years – prior to this, War Lake Members used to be able to trap 200 annually.

Other observations made about trapping:

- Easiest animal to trap due to high population is marten which displaced fisher although a few can still be found
- Most difficult to trap are wolverines and wolves
- Beaver, muskrat and the hind quarters of lynx are used for food
- Rabbits are not trapped but snared for food
- Fur prices fluctuate from year to year – currently, the highest valued furs are wolverine ($250-$400/pelt), grey, white and black wolves ($150-$200/pelt), lynx ($80-$100/pelt), fisher ($80-$100/pelt) and martens ($80-$100/pelt)
- Fox prices vary by type with white fox fetching $70/pelt, silver fox at $50-$100/pelt, cross fox at $40-$50/pelt, and red fox for $30/pelt
- Less valued furs are otter ($30-50/pelt), beaver ($20/pelt) and mink ($10-$20/pelt)
- Furs valued at less than $5/pelt include squirrels, muskrat and weasel

Marten was the animal most frequently trapped according to resource users interviewed in 2009-2010 and the price for pelts has increased from $60/pelt to $80-$100/pelt. During that period, otter was considered a high valued fur while current observations indicate that its value has fallen significantly from $120/pelt to $30-$50/pelt. Beaver continues to be a less valued fur.

The intensity and frequency of trapping activity has decreased over time as discussed during roundtable sessions. Resource users interviewed in 2009-2010 also noted this trend. Participating resource users explained that loss of activity is due to the following factors:

- Disappearance and/or population loss of certain furbearing animals
- Price of furs not being high enough to offset the high costs associated with trapping
- As Elders pass away, the total amount of trapping activity is decreasing

5.4 Fishing

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: War Lake Members who were interviewed indicated that most fishing occurs in winter at Atkinson Lake and War Lake, which Members access by snowmobiles. Band-owned cabins are used for longer stays over the winter. Open water fishing occurs in spring and summer on Moosenose Lake, located next to the community, and Landing River, also closely located nearby and easily accessed by train. Members use ATVs or train for day fishing trips.

For War Lake Members, fishing is valued for providing fish for food. Domestic catches are shared with family and the community. Respondents indicated that some Members might sell to other Members depending on the size of their catch. Respondents described the value of fishing with the following terms most frequently: healthy food; traditional activity; ancestral identity; and family and community recreation.

War Lake resource users interviewed noted an increase in the size and number of fish in general. Jackfish, also known as northern pike, appeared to be larger and more numerous in War Lake, Atkinson Lake and Moosenose Lake. White fish were noticeably larger and more numerous in Moosenose Lake. Pickerel, also known as walleye, was mostly abundant in War Lake and Atkinson Lake. Changes in the size and quality of stocks was credited to less commercial activity on major lakes in War Lakes' traditional use area. However, Elders and other respondents expressed some mistrust of the healthiness of fish due to increases in levels of mercury.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: War Lake Members fish in the Munk to West Cyril Lake, the War Lake to Three Sisters Lake, and the Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake resource use corridors that are equipped with trails and cabins. Members only started fishing West Cyril Lake some 2-3 years ago.

It might become accessed more frequently once resource users get to know the water better. Some Members will travel a full day by snowmobile to High Hill River to net fish pickerel, white fish and jackfish. In future, Members hope to fly to Fox River for spring fishing with stays at the former outfitters camp. Fish quality of pickerel, white fish and jackfish is excellent at West Cyril Lake, High Hill River, Cyril Lake and Atkinson Lake.

Fishing at Landing River has decreased significantly since 2010. Polluted water is affecting the quality of the fish and few Members have gone pickerel fishing during the spring run since that time. The fish is described as having very jelly-like flesh that is also too white in colour. Many people miss having easy access to pickerel so close to home. Fishing continues at Moosenose Lake for white fish and jackfish in winter and summer months. Fish stocks are healthy, possibly more plentiful and much improved in quality since the fish plant at Ilford closed in the late 1970s. At that time, there were many floatplanes flying in with commercial catches, polluting the water with fuel.

Other observations about fishing:

- Spring spawning runs are the best time for fishing pickerel
- Both ice and open water fishing are good for catching pickerel
- Setting nets in ice is very labour intensive while ice fishing with rods is easier
- Ice fishing also requires the resource user to move around the lake to harvest more fish than when net fishing in open water
- Jackfish is fished in ice and open water using the same methods as for pickerel
- White fish is usually caught in spring after the thaw and during fall spawning runs
- Mostly fish white fish in open water (spring and fall) using nets
- Also use ice nets in the winter to catch white fish
- Open water net fishing is used to catch sturgeon
- Holes in nets used are small enough so that only adult sturgeon are caught

The winter monitoring trip to Atkinson Lake (Monitoring Trip #3) was focused on ice-fishing and observing the health of the fish. Over the course of 3 days, 45 fish were caught by resource users and youth – 23 pickerel and 22 jackfish. 20 of the jackfish were returned to the water to continue growing, and only the largest jackfish was kept. One other was used as bait. All pickerel were kept and returned to the community for sharing. All fish were observed to be healthy in both colour and overall appearance.

5.5 Other Activities

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: Interview respondents and other community informants identified plant gathering, mostly picking berries, as practiced by War Lake Members. Some Members gather medicinal plants as a traditional pursuit. Respondents identified healthy food and traditional activity as the primary benefit. Plant harvesting occurs in late summer, close to the community, with Members accessing sites by ATV for day trips.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: War Lake Members continue to pick berries in and around the community according to roundtable participants. Resource users described other plants that are gathered and have medicinal value during a plant focused discussion session. Elders passed on much of the knowledge to present day resource users and some continue to practice plant gathering.

Observations about berries:

- After the 2013 fire, blue berries were plentiful in 2014-2015 season but amounts decreased the following two summers
- For the past 10 years, strawberries and raspberries have been sparse
- The berries observed in strawberry and raspberry patches tend to be smaller than normal, almost like they are half grown
- Gooseberries and other berries that used to be plentiful over 10 years ago have disappeared
- Some of the berries not seen in decades are only remembered by their Cree names

Observations about medicinal plants:

- Northern tea is gathered and made as a medicinal tea much like Labrador tea which is found further north
- Some Labrador tea plants have been spotted on an island on Cyril Lake
- Another pointed leaf plant grows in muskeg and looks like northern and Labrador teas but has bigger leaves that are picked to use as band-aids, either used as wipes or held in place on cuts and bites, since it has antiseptic properties
- Weekes is found on creeks and river shorelines between Bearbone and Cyril Lakes and is used to help ease cold and flu symptoms

6.0 Connection to the Land

The following information was recorded through ATK Monitoring Trips and Resource Users Roundtables, which together are presented as **November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations**. War Lake information collected through the Keeyask environmental assessment work conducted in the community in 2009-2010 in support of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is presented for comparative purposes as **August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies**.

6.1 Family Ties and Identity

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: In the 2009 Moose Hunter Survey report that was prepared by students and reviewed by the fieldwork study team, hunters interviewed predominantly indicated that they were taught by their fathers to hunt. They also confirmed the large role family plays in participating in traditional pursuits together. This is supported by interview responses that identified the benefits of hunting as follows: healthy food; traditional activity; ancestral identity; and family and community recreation. Moosenose Lake in particular plays a pivotal role in the lives of War Lake Members, according to those Members interviewed. Respondents indicated the lake's value to the community for recreational activities and traditional pursuits, including family camping, spiritual retreats and fishing.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: War Lake Members who participated in both the ATK Monitoring Trips and the Resource Users Roundtables shared many recollections of their time on the land with family members and how important those experiences were in learning about their traditional ways and the history of their people. Being on the land presented Members with the opportunity to remember the many people who came before them, including references to traditional travel routes used by their ancestors who first travelled inland from York Factory by boat.

Their ancestors would have followed the Hayes River to Bigstone River to Fox River, spending time at Atkinson Lake and then travelling Cyril River through Cyril Lake to Crooked Lake to War Lake and on to Surprise Lake and following the Landing River to Split Lake. By the 1930s, War Lake and Tataskweyak Members settled on the south shore of Atkinson Lake while families from Fox Lake, York Factory and Shamattawa settled on the north shore. These settlements were active until the 1950s when many from the south relocated to Ilford to work on the railway and others from the north moved to the new settlement of York Landing. Resource users remarked on the burial site located near the former north shore settlement site and on the remnants of a former log cabin and dog sled trail that belonged to a family from Split Lake that lived on the south shore.

A series of former dog sled trails continued to be used to get to the traplines in the Cyril Lake to Atkinson Lake area, and many War Lake families would stay in the area during the winter months. This historical importance was the reason the site was selected for the Fall Access Program. War Lake was also a historic stop over location for ancestors travelling between Atkinson Lake and Split Lake.

By the 1930s, the community of Ilford developed and became the hub of the north with the railway and gold prospecting using horse teams, followed by tractor transport and the winter freight road system in later decades. War Lake families have passed down the legend of a gold prospector working the God's Lake mine falling in love with a local Indigenous woman that he called "Princess" which led to calling War Lake Princess Lake.

Dog sleds continued to be used by War Lake families to hunt moose and caribou and to access traplines through the 1940s and 1950s. Hunting parties could be as large as 6 members and would often include a combination of grandparents, parents, siblings, uncles and cousins. Caribou hunting also occurred in the summer, and families would quarter and carry the animal on foot.

Local industry had an impact on the identity of War Lake Members. There is a close connection to the railway, which eventually led to the development of winter road freighting and the commercial fishery. Resource users and other participants shared many recollections of families involved on rail maintenance and road construction work crews, commercial fisher assistants, and fish plant workers. With that commercial activity, there were white families that settled in the area to run businesses that included Thompson, Lindal, Rondeau, Sanderson and Macleod. Many participants recalled working along with their fathers, brothers and cousins to help build cabins or assist with winter net fishing and fly-in open water fishing on Atkinson Lake for commercial fishers. Many War Lake Elders and Members also recall working on various Manitoba Hydro projects for decades starting with Kelsey. They remember using their knowledge of their traditional use area for working on surveying the lands for transmission lines.

To this day, many War Lake families have multiple generations working at Keeyask and on other Manitoba Hydro projects while balancing life living on the Mooseocoot Reserve and practicing traditional resource use activity. Resource users identified the challenges associated with spending time on the land with family and maintaining traditional ways in one roundtable session.

Challenges with spending time and learning on the land:

- It is difficult to make time to get out on the land for long periods when working
- It is rare for a family to go out in the bush for a month or longer
- Trappers used to spend 1-2 months on the land 30-40 years ago while today, a trapper might spend up to 5 days on the land, mostly for the initial set-up and will check on traps on weekend trips
- Trapping was the main source of income for many Elders in the past
- Today the costs are higher than the return on furs so many only trap to maintain the culture and pass it on to their children
- Use and proper maintenance of cabins have become important so that the most can be made of the limited time spent on the land
- Even with the strong desire to maintain tradition and pass on knowledge, accessing the land is a challenge for many families who cannot afford the high costs

6.2 Traditional Ways

August 2009 to June 2010 Community Fieldwork Studies: Hunting is of key importance to War Lake Members. It is a highly valued traditional pursuit that is passed on from one generation to the next, and dates back to when hunting for subsistence was a key influence on where Members would set up summer and winter camps in their traditional territories. It should be noted that hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering activities can and do occur in any combination depending on the season, availability of resources, and individual preference. The structure of the resource use interviews did not elicit descriptions of this more complex relationship between Members and their land and waterways. Respondents described the value of these three traditional pursuits with the following terms most frequently: healthy food; traditional activity; ancestral identity; and family and community recreation.

Some interviews with other knowledge holders focused on other cultural activities. Respondents indicated that less than five women participated in such traditional activities as beadwork, traditional clothing (moccasins, mitts and mukluks), and traditional healing. Respondents also noted a decline in the number of older Members pursuing traditional activities. They believed this would be somewhat offset by the increasing number of youth picking up interest and skills in traditional pursuits.

Respondents described initiatives being delivered through school and youth programming to pass on knowledge of traditional skills. They noted that the school was incorporating ATK into lesson plans, such as teaching children about animal migration patterns. The school was also providing students in Grades 4 to 8 with 45-minute daily lessons in speaking and reading Cree and writing in syllabics.

The community also reported on an initiative, funded through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which had 10 students involved in learning traditional crafts one year and attending a wilderness camp on Moosenose Lake the previous year. Respondents noted positive feedback from students.

War Lake Members interviewed noted that although efforts were being made, more could be done to support transferring traditional knowledge and interest in traditional pursuits to the next generation. ATK transfer from one generation to the next was highly valued and respondents indicated strong support for ongoing programs and for new programs such as Elder and youth storytelling exchanges.

November 2017 to April 2019 Monitoring Observations: The passing of ATK from one generation to the next and the creation of opportunities to learn traditional ways both on the land and in the community continues to be very important to War Lake Members. Trapping was traditionally the most intensive of resource use activities which required Members to spend long periods of time on the land, pursuing other activities such as hunting, fishing and plant gathering while out on the traplines. As Elders pass away, the total amount of trapping activity is decreasing. There is fear that the knowledge of traditional ways will be threatened with the passing of Elders and the loss of active and frequent traditional resource use. The ATK Monitoring Program was designed to learn more about and monitor the environment in War Lake's traditional use area by having Members, including Elders and youth, experience being on the land. That connection to the land also presented opportunities for ATK transfer between Elders and youth.

The connection to the land is strong and evident on the ATK Monitoring Trips. Many stories about when and where and what ancestors did in War Lake's traditional territories are shared during down time. Youth also learn many of the traditional skills of living off the land by doing the day-to-day tasks required to live on a campsite or cabin and exploring the areas frequented for hunting, trapping, fishing and plant gathering. Resource users and Elders are on hand to explain specific techniques and share experiences of how their relatives first learned their skills.

The Resource Users Roundtables presented another opportunity to discuss traditional ways including the traditional role of certain animals and plants in contributing to War Lake Members' ability to survive living on the land under often-harsh conditions. Some of these details are captured under observations of animal and plants. The more recent caribou focused session produced great detail of the cultural importance and traditional uses of caribou for food sustenance, clothing and bedding.

Cultural importance of harvesting caribou:

- Caribou was very important to diet as was moose and geese
- Moose continues to be the preferred meat harvested
- One caribou could feed a family of six for up to two weeks
- Caribou and moose can feed many people or be preserved to feed a family over an extended period of time
- Before freezers were available in the community, families would smoke and dry the meat
- The meat could also be mixed with berries and grease to make pemmican but it was more common to use moose meat
- Other First Nations would foretell of the movement of caribou when groups gathered
- However, War Lake Members did not go out of their way or move long distances to hunt caribou – movement was too variable for it to be a primary or reliable source of sustenance
- What was eaten was often variable from year to year, with little caribou, moose or geese some years
- People would also eat beaver, muskrat, rabbit and other small game so they were not solely dependent on caribou and moose

Traditional uses of caribou:

- Caribou hides were cleaned for making mukluks, moccasins and gauntlets (gloves)
- Men would use the hindquarter bone to scrape off fur and for fleshing (removing the fat)
- Hides would be tanned using smoke
- Women often stretched the hides in water by hand or using ropes to wring it dry
- Women also used to do beading work on clothing made
- Caribou hide could be laid on the ground and used as a mattress

7.0 Closing Remarks

The traditional knowledge that drives War Lake's ATK Monitoring Program is based on an on-going oral tradition and continuing traditional resource use activity that sustain the interaction between people and land. Locations or features in the landscape, connected by routes traveled historically, act as memory tools for stories about people's relationship with their environment.

The values of War Lake Members that were first recorded through the OWL environmental evaluation process and confirmed through the 2009-2010 Community Fieldwork Studies, remain the same and of equal importance:

- Fishing, hunting and trapping for food (ability to provide for family)
- Helping each other by sharing (community meals, family/community recreation, etc.)
- Eating traditional foods (promoting healthier lifestyle)
- Respecting and caring for Mother Earth and all her beings (human and non-human)
- Living on the land in traditional ways (ancestral identity)
- Learning in traditional ways (ATK knowledge transfer)
- Maintaining historical relationship with the land

One notable difference between observations shared in the past and with those discussed through the ATK Monitoring Program is the influx of outsiders accessing resources in War Lake's traditional resource use area. There are a number of factors contributing to this change including increased pressure for resources from other First Nations and Métis, word of mouth sharing of harvesting locations through social media, and the greater number of people living in the region through employment in Gillam, the Keeyask Generation Project and the ***Keewatinohk Converter Station Project***.

Although concerns with the unpredictability of weather including increasing shorter winter seasons and greater fluctuations in water levels based on the amount and frequency of snow were noted by respondents in the 2009-2010 studies, the changing weather patterns are far more pronounced. In the case of water fluctuations in the Landing River, changes in the past 5-10 years have been extreme enough to pollute the water with debris from the wash out of river banks and uprooted trees. Weather or climate change is also contributing to changes in wildlife observed in the region.

Appendix 1 – War Lake ATK Monitoring Trip #1 Report

War Lake First Nation

Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program

ATK Monitoring Trip #1
Summary Report
Destination: War Lake

November 2017

Overview

War Lake conducted an introductory Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Monitoring Trip from November 1 to 3, 2017. War Lake Members, including knowledge holders, resource users, and youth, traveled with the Keeyask Coordinator and an advisor from War Lake First Nation to nearby War Lake (commonly referred to as Princess Lake) to observe and discuss any effects on the local War Lake environment resulting from the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station.

This report will describe the activities undertaken leading up to the trip and while on the land and will provide a summary of observations and insights made by War Lake Members.

The following Members participated on the Monitoring Trip:

- Lillian Spence – Keeyask Coordinator
- Harold Bland – the Group visited the area of War Lake with the permission and assistance of Harold Bland, the registered owner of Trapline #2. Harold participated as the Fieldwork Team Leader.
- James Chornoby – James participated as the Fieldwork Assistant.
- Jennifer Chornoby – Jennifer participated as a knowledge holder.
- Jamie Chornoby Jr. – Jamie participated as a youth.
- Tishuan Chornoby – Tishuan participated as a youth.
- Ethan Laliberty – Ethan participated as a youth.
- Molly Beardy – Molly participated as an Elder and knowledge holder.

Consent and Confidentiality

See Appendix A for a sample of the ATK Monitoring Program Consent and Confidentiality Form signed by all participants. Prior to venturing from Camp to mark the GPS locations of various local trails and to discuss potential effects from Keeyask while on the land, War Lake's advisor reviewed and discussed the Consent and Confidentiality Form to ensure War Lake Members were aware of how the information they provide will be used and protected. All participants agreed to sign the Consent and Confidentiality Form.

Day #1 – In the Community

On October 31, 2017, War Lake advisors Matt Hunt and Melissa Turner travelled by charter from Winnipeg to Ilford to oversee the delivery of equipment purchased by War Lake to undertake Monitoring Trips. These items included an Outfitters Tent (suitable to sleep up to 12), a stove for the tent, an outdoor propane cooking unit, 10 cots, 10 sleeping bags, and other smaller equipment. The Keeyask Coordinator had previously traveled to Thompson to purchase food for the Trip. Upon arrival in Ilford, advisors worked with Members to transport the new equipment to a safe space for overnight storage.

With the assistance of the Keeyask Coordinator, War Lake advisors provided an overview of the purpose of ATK Monitoring Trips to the majority of participants (with the exception of the youth who were still at school.) An opportunity was provided for participants to ask questions about the purpose and logistics of the trip.

Members were eager to get home and finish their final preparations for Halloween, so it was agreed that any further questions could be answered the following day. Advisor Matt Hunt was requested to judge a Halloween decoration contest and selected three houses for cash prizes (unrelated to the Program).

The Group agreed to meet at the Mooseocoot Gas Lodge at 12:00 pm to load the equipment into the vehicles provided by Members and to travel to a predetermined location to set up camp.

Day #2 – Travel to War Lake and Camp Setup

All participants met at the Mooseocoot Gas Lodge at 12:00 pm with three vehicles (two trucks and an SUV) to load the equipment and travel to Camp.

Erecting the Outfitters Tent

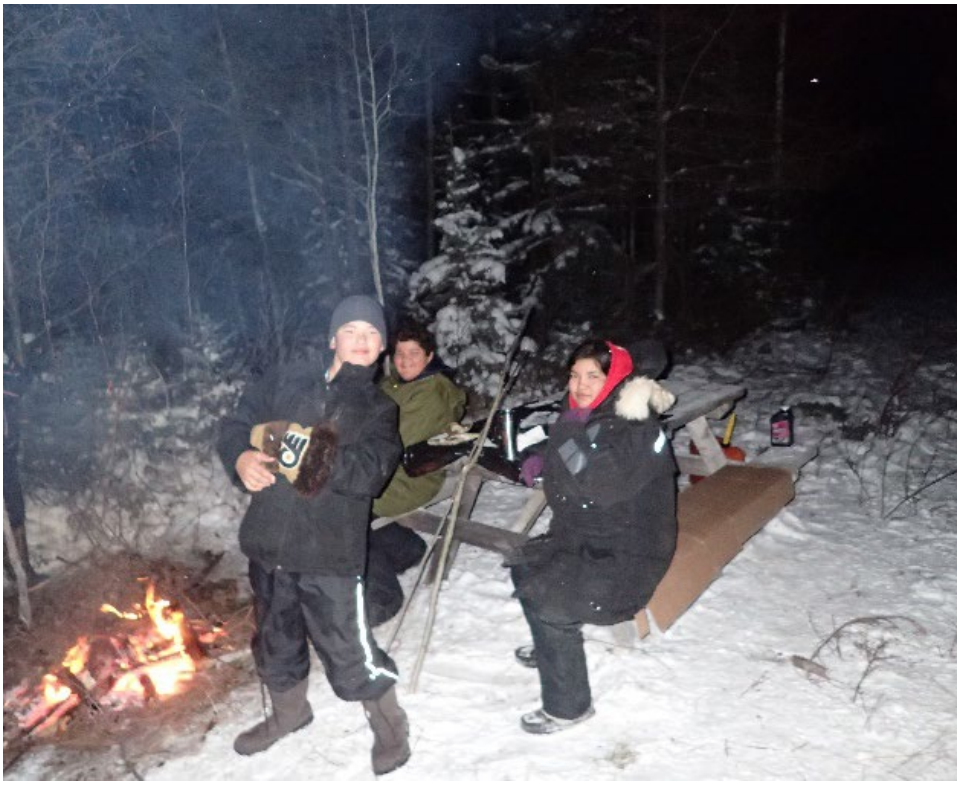
Harold Bland, the registered holder of Trapline #2, had pre-selected a location for Camp based on his knowledge of the land. The selected location included tree protection, a clearing large enough for the Outfitters Tent, and usable firewood. Please see Map 1 to view the location of Camp (and other marked locations visited during the Trip.) A fresh supply of water was also available from nearby War Lake Creek.

From roughly 1 to 5 pm, participants worked together to set up a comfortable and safe camp. This included assembly of the Outfitters Tent, firewood preparation (for indoor and outdoor use), assembly of the sleeping cots and outdoor cooking unit, and other related preparations.

The evening was spent around a bonfire and included storytelling and a wiener roast.

Preparing Local Wood for the Indoor Stove

The First ATK Monitoring Group



War Lake Youth (From Left: Tishuan Chornoby, Ethan Laliberty, and Jamie Chornoby Jr.)

Day #3 – ATK Monitoring at War Lake (Princess Lake)

Participants awoke on Day #2 to a hot breakfast prepared by Elder Molly Spence. Having experienced a colder sleep than expected, Harold Bland agreed to return to the community and bring back some heavy-duty tarps to insulate the tent.

Following breakfast, advisor Matt Hunt reviewed and explained the Consent and Confidentiality Form to participants and offered to answer any questions or concerns. Following the signing of the forms, the group prepared to leave camp for the day to undertake preliminary ATK Monitoring activities.

During the Community Site Selection process, War Lake was identified as an important area, both historically and presently, for War Lake Members. War Lake Members indicated that this was an ideal location for a first Monitoring Trip, as it is close to the community and continues to be used by War Lake resource users. It was noted that many of the smaller waterbodies in this area connect to larger waterbodies in the Keeyask Project area.

Advisor Matt Hunt requested that the youth (Tishuan Chornoby and Ethan Laliberty) operate the GPS unit and the digital camera on the excursion. After reviewing how to operate each device with Tishuan and Ethan, they were able to successfully mark the locations visited on the GPS unit and to take pictures of both the marked locations and camp life.

Following this, the group departed on a trip largely led by knowledge holder and Fieldwork Assistant James Chornoby. As an active Resource User, James provided an overview of existing trails in the area, many of which were formed long before the addition of War Lake Road, which provides access almost all the way to War Lake proper.

James led the Group to five locations, and provided some history and background information about each trail, including the connection of these trails to other vital parts of War Lake's Traditional Land Use Area, including Barebone Lake, Cyril Lake, Atkinson Lake, and other areas. GPS locations and pictures were taken at each area to ensure that a photographic record of the landscape is kept over the years of Keeyask construction and operation.

These five locations can be viewed on Map #1.

GPS Tracking

Location # 1 – War Lake Creek – Fresh Water Supply

Just off War Lake Road runs War Lake Creek, which provided the Group with a fresh and easy-to-access source of water. While marking this location, James Chornoby noted that this portion of War Lake Road, which was visibly higher than the current water level, was flooded in the spring of 2017. Participants noted that War Lake Road currently sits at least three feet higher than the present water level, and commented that the flood was unprecedented in that it flooded a number of feet above War Lake Road, completely submerging it and rendering it unusable.

War Lake Creek

War Lake Creek

Location #2 – War Lake Creek Boat Launch

Roughly 400 meters off of War Lake Road sits the War Lake Creek Boat Launch. This traditional site is used by War Lake resource users to launch boats into War Lake Creek for local fishing or to travel to more remote locations. Ice formation was underway at the beginning of November, with only small patches of flowing water visible.

Entrance to the Boat Launch

War Lake Creek Boat Launch

Jamie Chornoby, Tishuan Chornoby, Jennifer Chornoby, Ethan Laliberty, and James Chornoby

War Lake Creek Boat Launch

Location #3 – Old Trail Junction #1

Old Trail Junction #1

As shown in the picture above, there are many trails off of War Lake Road which lead to more remote areas of War Lake's Traditional Use Area and beyond, often connecting to other major waterbodies, or to areas traditionally used by War Lake and by other First Nations. Some of the trails, such as the one shown above, are less frequently used than others, such as the Trailhead to Shamattawa. Members commented that this trail would still be usable after some light clearing.

Location #4 – Old Trail Junction #2

Old Trail Junction #2

At each location marked by GPS, the Monitoring team, led by knowledge holder James Chornoby, discussed the importance of the location to War Lake. James shared knowledge related to the connections between many of the visited trails.

Location #5 – Trailhead to Shamattawa

Trailhead to Shamattawa

Shown above is the Trailhead to Shamattawa. This trail is commonly used to access more remote areas of War Lake's Traditional Land Use Area.

Location #6 – Mile 4

A Wrapped Leaf Found Inside Firewood

Mile 4 is an area frequented by War Lake Members for camping and social gatherings. This area was recently the victim of an extensive forest fire. With many of the trees considered dead, James suggested that the group work together to harvest firewood to warm the tent and to build a bonfire for that evening. Working together, three trees were felled and later cut and chopped into useable firewood. Many of the trees at Mile 4 had hundreds of holes in them, appearing to have been bored into by small insects seeking shelter for the winter. This was confirmed while splitting firewood collected at Mile 4 when the group discovered a leaf wrapped around unidentified larvae. The insect was returned to a leaf and inserted back into another tree with similar holes.

Larvae Found Within the Wrapped Leaf

Mile 4

Tishuan Chornoby and Lillian Spence

Post-Forest Fire at Mile 4

Post-Forest Fire at Mile 4

The Frozen Lake at Mile 4

Firewood Collected at Mile 4

Camp Life

Who Wants to Work?

Preparing Firewood

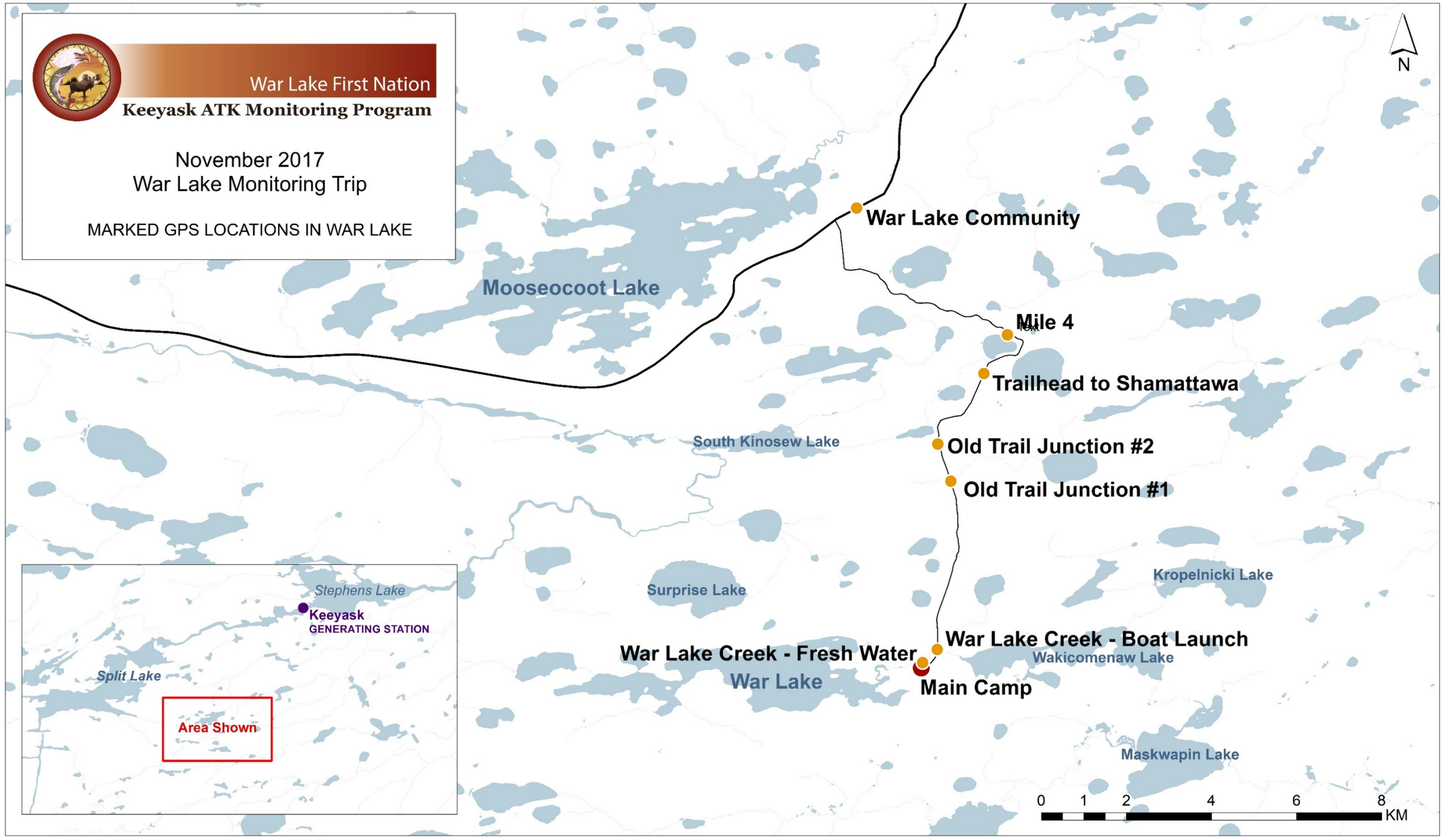
Elder Molly Beardy Preparing Supper

Tishuan Chornoby

Discussions and Observations

While visiting the areas marked on Map 1, the group held a number of informal conversations regarding recent observations on the land. Generally these observations are captured by the following:

- Trapline Holder Harold Bland has trapped far fewer marten than in previous years in the War Lake area;
- Harold Bland and James Chornoby commented on the lack of moose available to War Lake resource users in 2017 – War Lake traditionally experiences moose populations near the community at different times of the year, but so far in 2017 no War Lake resource user has captured a moose;
    - Both also commented that extended family and friends in other local First Nations, such as Tataskweyak Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation, had also experienced very low moose numbers;
    - James and Harold attributed this to Keeyask construction, indicating that this traditional crossing, and the noise and pollution from construction, was most likely affecting moose travel patterns and access to certain areas.


War Lake First Nation
Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program
November 2017
War Lake Monitoring Trip
MARKED GPS LOCATIONS IN WAR LAKE
N
War Lake Community
Mooseocoot Lake
Mile 4
Trailhead to Shamattawa
South Kinosew Lake
Old Trail Junction #2
Old Trail Junction #1
Kropelnicki Lake
Surprise Lake
Stephens Lake
Keeyask
GENERATING STATION
Split Lake
Area Shown
War Lake Creek - Boat Launch
War Lake Creek - Fresh Water
Wakicomenaw Lake
War Lake
Main Camp
Maskwapin Lake
0 1 2 4 6 8
KM

Appendix 2 – War Lake ATK Monitoring Trip #2 Report

War Lake First Nation

Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program

ATK Monitoring Trip #2
Summary Report
Destination: Atkinson Lake

August 2018

Overview

War Lake conducted a second Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Monitoring Trip from July 26 to August 1, 2018. War Lake Members, including knowledge holders, resource users, and youth, traveled with an advisor from War Lake First Nation to Atkinson Lake (also known as Fox Lake) to observe and record current conditions in this traditionally important area and to discuss any effects on the environment resulting from the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station.



This report will describe the activities undertaken while on the land and will provide a summary of observations and insights made by participating War Lake Members:

- Jeff Laliberty – Jeff participated as the Fieldwork Team Leader.
- John Laliberty – John participated as the Fieldwork Assistant.
- Roy Ouskun – Roy participated as a Councillor and knowledge holder.
- Nolan Bloomfield – Nolan participated as a youth.
- Ethan Laliberty – Ethan participated as a youth.
- Allen Spence – Allen participated as an Elder and experienced resource user.
- Molly Beardy – Molly participated as an Elder and camp cook.

Consent and Confidentiality

See Appendix A for a sample of the ATK Monitoring Program Consent and Confidentiality Forms signed by all participants (or guardians in the case of participating youth). Participants who had been involved in previous Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program events had already signed the Consent and Confidentiality Form. A modified Consent and Confidentiality Form for participating youth was reviewed with and signed with guardians prior to leaving the Community. War Lake's advisor also reviewed and discussed the Consent and Confidentiality Form with new participants to ensure War Lake Members were aware of how the information they provide will be used and protected. All guardians and new participants agreed to sign the Consent and Confidentiality Form.

Day #1 – Preparations in War Lake and On Site

On July 26, 2018, War Lake advisor Cristina Usubiaga travelled to War Lake by floatplane from Landing Lake in Gillam to Moosenose (Mooseocoot) Lake in War Lake First Nation to meet with participants and prepare for the trip to Atkinson Lake. On the dock, the Fieldwork Team Leader and Assistant, Jeff Laliberty and John Laliberty, and Elder Allen Spence were ready to board the advance flight to Atkinson Lake with supplies. Two trips were required to bring supplies and gear, which included 5 jerry cans of fuel, a generator, a satellite phone, 8 sleeping bags and many boxes of groceries, which had been purchased earlier by the Keeyask Coordinator. With the assistance of Councillor Dwayne Flett and other staff members, the checklist of remaining supplies to transport was reviewed and confirmed, which included locating 8 life jackets. Other items, including a new boat motor, were expected to arrive with Councillor Roy Ouskun who returned from Thompson by train later that night.

Cristina Usubiaga spent some time confirming travel arrangements with remaining participants, including Elder Molly Beardy and two youth participants. She met with Nolan Bloomfield who was reluctant to go once he heard that the other youth who was scheduled to participate could not make it. Ethan Laliberty volunteered to join the group so Nolan reconsidered. Their respective guardians were approached to obtain permission and consent, including explaining the purpose of the trip and how beneficial it would be to participate. Given the length of the trip, permission was obtained from the Education Coordinator, Thomas Nepitabo, to release the two young men from their summer jobs for a few days.

Arrangements were made to meet at the community dock the next day at 9:00 am with remaining supplies.

Floatplane Arrival at Community Dock

Day #2 – Atkinson Lake Set Up and Monitoring

The remaining participants met at the community dock at Moosenose (Mooseocoot) Lake to fly to Atkinson (Fox) Lake. The first group included Councillor Roy Ouskun, Ethan Laliberty and Nolan Bloomfield and left at about 9:45 after loading up remaining food, luggage, and other supplies. Elder Molly Beardy and advisor Cristina Usubiaga followed on the next flight, arriving to the cabin site shortly after 11:00 am with the remaining foodstuff and luggage.

Prep for Departure from Community Dock

Arrival at Atkinson Lake Island

Jeff Laliberty and John Laliberty had been asked to act as Fieldwork Team Leader and Fieldwork Assistant respectively since both are very familiar with the Atkinson Lake area having trapped, hunted and fished there since they were young. With the help of Elder Allen Spence, the three had set up the main cabin at the community cabin site on a small island on the southeast end of the lake. There was still much more work to be done in clearing the overgrown brush, airing out the rooms and sleeping bags, repairing screens and breaking a wasps' nest that was blocking the entrance to the second cabin.

While the kitchen was cleaned up and foodstuff unpacked by some of the group, the Fieldwork Team Leader and the advisor reviewed the large format maps.

The site map that covered the stretch of land and waters between Cyril Lake and Fox River was taped to the wall in the central area of the cabin. The second regional NTS map was not required since the cabin already had another surveying map of the region taped to another

wall. Personal journals and individual site maps were passed around to each group member and the advisor provided an overview of the purpose of the site visit. While Elder Molly was preparing lunch, the group reviewed different sites of interest on the wall map and discussed how to organize daily outings.

Main Cabin at Atkinson Lake Island Site

After lunch, the boats were pulled out of the shipping container, which serves as the site's storage unit, and motors were mounted and tested. The Fieldwork Team Leader with the help of others including the two youth, prepared for a fishing outing including unfurling the net.

Preparing Net for Fishing

The group then took the larger of two boats to set up the fishing net in a very productive area of the lake. The group that remained behind continued to clear brush and organize the cabin, including removing a wasps' nest and setting up the second cabin for use.

After dinner, the group went out on a 6 km tour across the lake (in two boats) towards the entry of the Little Fox River. A brief stop was made to check on the fishing net set earlier in the day. Some highlights included a check on the fish net (only 2 pickerel caught), a look at the reef populated with seagulls and arctic tern, a stop on a short beach where shells ("otter food") and wolf tracks were spotted, passage through shallow waters and reeds towards the opening to the Little Fox River, and a stop at a long stretch of beach where moose tracks and bear claw marks on a tree with an eagles nest were examined.

Otter Food on Shore

Investigating Wolf Tracks

Bear Claw Marks

Sun Begins to Set

Day #3 – Net Check, Fish Fry and Monitoring

After a breakfast of pancakes and bacon, the Fieldwork Team Leader Jeff Laliberty, Assistant John Laliberty and Councillor Roy Ouskun went to check on the net and hauled some 23 pickerel. There were also some 3 sucker, 3-4 small jackfish and 1 tullibee that were collected and dropped off at the reef where the seagulls and arctic tern nest. It was noted that pelicans, new to the area, were also circling the reef and swooping in to eat seagull goslings. On their return, Jeff and John spent time at the dock cleaning and filleting the pickerel for that night's fish fry dinner.

Jeff and John Clean Fish

Clean and Filleted Pickerel

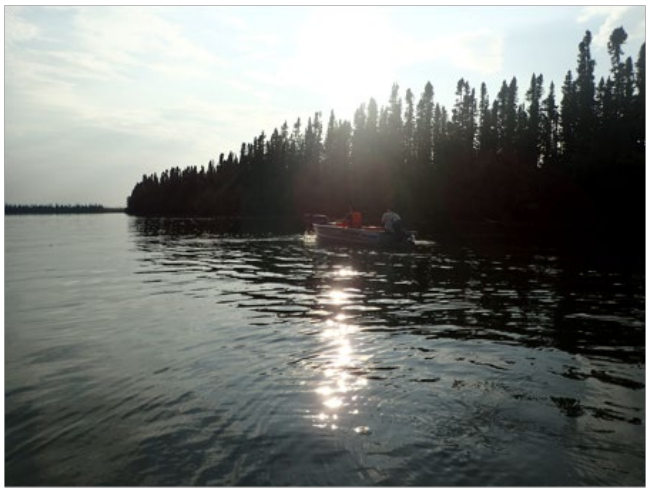
Much of the day was spent on campsite maintenance including pulling and securing the dock back on the beach. Jeff explained that it had drifted away from the beach last spring during high waters. While clearing brush near the shoreline, Jeff noted signs of moose passing through the site such as prints on the shore and scraped tree bark and broken branches. A discussion followed about the number of moose counted the previous fall (40-50 but mostly cows and calves with about 10 bulls) and hunting practices. Bulls aged 5-10 years of age are considered best for meat as they become very lean with age, and 10-15 year olds meat is tough. The age of moose can be determined by the condition of antlers (old moose antlers turn white) and the quality of neck waddle. More discussion followed on the mating and rearing practices of moose.

While reviewing the site map to discuss places to see on the lake over the next few days with Jeff and Roy, discussions turned to weather conditions. It seemed that chances were good that the weather would turn stormy in the next few days. Based on the places identified for monitoring, plans were made for an outing later that day. The wind was blowing in a direction conducive to travelling west to the opening to the Cyril River. Jeff was concerned about how navigable the area would be given the low water levels. He didn't think travel on the river itself

would be possible since the water was too low over the rapids and the portages were overgrown. But it seemed advantageous to at least set out in that direction to confirm conditions.

A consideration brought up while planning excursions for the next few days was whether there would be enough fuel for daily boat trips and running the generator for the cabins. There was also a shortage of water with the group depending on boiled lake water for cooking and tea. Jeff had brought a cup of lake water that had live mosquito larvae – water that most were using for washing up in the mornings. It was decided that a supply drop was called for and arrangement were made with Gillam Air to fly in additional jerry cans of fuel and slats of bottled water.

Advisor Cristina Usubiaga accompanied Jeff, John and Roy to check on the fishing net on the point not far from the cabin site. The water was quite choppy as the wind continued to pick up. There was lot of debris tangled in the net on the end nearest to the shore, probably due to beavers building a lodge nearby.



Roy, John and Jeff Checking Net

As had been discussed earlier, an excursion towards Cyril River was organized for after dinner. Elders Allen Spence and Molly Beardy, accompanied by the advisor, set out to investigate conditions. The boat sped past a long sharp point where the group spotted a large eagle perched on the top of a tree. There was an open water area that led to Cyril River. Crossing directly through the center proved problematic since the water was shallow and full of weeds and lily pads. Moving slowly through the weedy waters, the boat engine sputtered as it got tangled in weeds and mud. Using a barge stick and a paddle, the group managed to move the

boat into deeper water. After cleaning the motor blades, Allen made a second attempt to reach the river and was successful after following a figure eight passageway across the open water.

At the opening of the river, Allen pulled up to an overgrown shore and trail to see if he could find evidence of a cabin that used to be there decades ago. He climbed the embankment and hiked through the heavily wooded area but there was nothing left, the brush had even grown over the foundation. The sun was starting to set so the group headed back to the base camp, treading very carefully through the shallow, weedy waters.

Lily Pads in Shallow Water

Reeds at Cyril River Entrance

Allen Checks Former Cabin Site

Sun Setting over Cyril River

Day #4 – Supply Drop Off, Fishing and Rain

It had rained overnight, bringing out more bugs and the day was cool and overcast. The site map was reviewed and routes with points of interest updated. Thought was given to the prevailing winds and likelihood of a storm moving in while making plans and preparing breakfast. After successfully starting the gas stove, the group enjoyed fresh baked bannock, fried eggs, sausages and bacon.

Discussion about the age and use of the cabin site followed. The two cabins were built in the early 90s and mostly used during hunting and trapping seasons. Typically, country food would be harvested during those visits to the land. The Fieldwork Team Leader explained that to snare rabbits for food during the summer, a person would have to portage elsewhere on the island to set snares. Given the time it would take to check on snares, chances were great that lynx or wolves would have fed on the trapped rabbits. As such, it is most efficient to snare rabbits when one can crisscross the lake on a snowmobile.

Shortly after noon, the floatplane arrived with a resupply of fuel and water. Pat of Gillam Air reported that there was definitely a storm moving in. Since the net had to be checked, Jeff Laliberty and Elder Allen Spence spent some time testing and fixing up the boat motor that was still not running well after being stuck in the reeds. Councillor Roy Ouskun and Assistant John Laliberty joined Jeff in taking the boat out to check and take down the net, hoping to make it back before the storm.

Roy, John and Jeff Set Out to Fishing Site

Rain started while they were out, and the rest of the group spent time in the cabin with Allen demonstrating how a curved long stick is used to determine lodge pathways when setting up beaver traps at entrances.

Once the rain stopped, the group went back outside to do more work clearing the paths leading to the cabins. Roy, John and Jeff returned with another 25 pickerel and one very large (3 ½ ft) jackfish for Allen. Jeff and John cleaned, filleted and packaged the pickerel for freezing while Allen worked on scaling, cleaning, cutting and packaging the 2”x 5” jackfish steaks. The net was also cleaned, folded and stored away.

Roy, John and Jeff Return from Fishing Site

Freshly Caught Pickerel

Fishing Net

Allen Cleaning Freshly Caught Jackfish

After an early dinner, torrential rains prevented the group from setting out on any monitoring outings on the lake.

Day #5 – Monitoring, Fishing and Rain

It was another cold and overcast day. Over a breakfast of hardboiled eggs and toast, youths Nolan Bloomfield and Ethan Laliberty explained to the group that they had woken up in the early hours of the morning in a panic after hearing animal sounds. They were certain that they heard a moose or a bear on the shoreline not far from the dock and were afraid that the animal would approach the cabin. Jeff Laliberty reassured them that it was just a beaver that had been spotted earlier the previous day, swimming past the dock.

View from the Porch

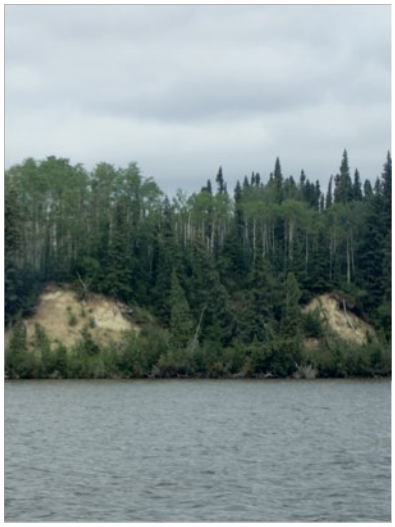
While reviewing photos taken on previous outings, including photos of the reef with seagulls, Jeff shared some interesting bird facts. He explained that eagles usually prey on geese, fish and other birds. Ptarmigans are only spotted and hunted in the winter while geese are usually hunted in the spring when they return from the south. Jeff mentioned that he had spotted a grey jay (whiskey jack) earlier in the morning on a birch tree in front of the cabin. He put out some bannock to entice the bird back, explaining how they are not shy and will on occasion land and perch on a person's arm or head.

Two outings were planned for early afternoon given that it looked like it might be another rainy evening. Jeff explained that heading to the northwest section of the lake would make for a very choppy boat ride given the wind, similar to the outing to Cyril River.

Elders Allen Spence and Molly Beardy, along with advisor Cristina Usubiaga, were up for checking out the trailhead to Gillam on the northwestern shore of the lake. Jeff, Nolan and Ethan were more interested in heading to the southeast end of the lake, near the entrance to the Little Fox River to see such sights as the bear claw marks and the reef with the seagulls.

Point North of Base Camp

Molly was the first to spot a marker to the trail and once on shore, the group saw a sign on the overgrown trail that stated, “Keep Right”. There was a bit of an embankment to climb to get to the trail, and the terrain was very boggy in parts. The group soon returned to the boat to continue east along the northern shore. The landscape was very forested with stretches of cliffs followed by a short stretch that was very green with reeds and then more forested beaches. A few eagles circled the area. The group stopped at a very long and rocky beach that Allen described as another favourite moose hunting site (shown below).



Shortly after, the boat approached the open area of the lake towards the seagull reef where the second group was spotted. Nolan and Ethan had gotten out of the boat to climb the reef and check for goslings.

Seagull Reef

Both groups headed back to the base camp for a barbeque dinner of ribs and sausages. Over dinner, Jeff, Nolan and Ethan shared details of their boat trip to the opening to the Little Fox River where they had veered north and spotted a moose on the eastern shore. After dinner, Nolan and Cristina worked on marking the two routes taken that day on the site map. Fieldwork Assistant John Laliberty accompanied Allen on a boat ride to the open area of the lake, not far from the seagull reef, to try their luck fishing using poles but had to turn back once the storm rolled in at about 7:00 pm.

Allen Teaches Ethan Solitaire

Molly Makes Tea

Day #6 – Clearing, Dry Docking and Bonfire

The skies had cleared and the sun was out, but the weather was still quite cool. After a breakfast of bacon, eggs and bannock, many in the group helped with clearing all of the remaining brush around the cabin. Elder Molly Beardy started collecting garbage from the grounds after clearing and sweeping the porch, and was later joined by others.

A huge pile of debris was made to burn that night in a bonfire. Nolan Bloomfield and Ethan Laliberty helped the Fieldwork Team Leader with cutting down trees and branches, which were added to the bonfire pile. Jeff Laliberty then raked all the dead undergrowth into several 4 to 6 feet long and 1 to 2 feet high piles and slowly burned each one. He explained that burning the leaf and brush debris encourages new plant growth and prevents spread of wildfires.

Jeff Clears and Burns Undergrowth

Ethan Rakes Cut Branches

While some of the group organized and packed items in the storage shed, others started packing Items in the cabin. Molly swept all the rooms in both cabins and washed all floors in order to prepare them for the next guests, scheduled to visit the lake in September for hunting season. Foodstuff and other supplies brought out for the monitoring trip were packed up for either storage or transport.

Fieldwork Assistant John Laliberty and advisor Cristina Usubiaga helped Molly with preparation for dinner early that evening. John seasoned and fried ground beef patties while the advisor helped with the mash potatoes and cream corn.

After dinner, two groups set out by boat one last time. Jeff took Nolan to do some rod fishing near the reef where John, Roy Ouskun and Allen Spence caught up with them. Jeff had caught a few small jackfish (about 2 feet long each), which were thrown back into the water for the seagulls. While there, the group noted at least 60 pelicans to the east of the reef.

The advisor and Ethan continue tidying the grounds around the second cabin, including disposing of what remained of the wasps' nest. They also explored and photographed the brush and muskeg behind the main cabin.

Terrain Behind Main Cabin

Blueberry Bush

As the sun was setting, everyone helped with clearing the dock area and dry-docking the two boats. Afterwards, the group gathered around the bonfire to enjoy the last night on the land. To make it more interesting for Nolan and Ethan, Molly had placed fire colour changers in the bonfire to add blue, green and purple flames. Jeff pointed to the mainland across from the base camp and explained that that was where they went to harvest wood for fires. During winter, wood would be hauled by skidoo and in open water season, the wood would be hauled by boat.

Dock at Sunset

Day #7 – Departure from Atkinson Lake

After a light grab and go breakfast, final cleanup of the cabin and packing up of supplies followed. All but one sleeping bag were packed and taken to the dock. The one that was left behind had been opened up to air in the shipping container/storage shed since it had lots of mould.

Dock Loaded for Departure

Group Prior to First Departure

The floatplane arrived around 9:30 am and took Elder Molly Spence and youth Nolan Bloomfield and Ethan Laliberty back to War Lake along with the sleeping bags and leftover foodstuff that would not keep. The next flight out had Councillor Roy Ouskun, Fieldwork Assistant John Laliberty and advisor Cristina Usubiaga and remaining sleeping bags, foodstuff and equipment. The life jackets provided by Philip Morris were stored in the shipping container for use by War Lake Members who were planning to visit the site in September.

The final two to leave the Atkinson Lake site were the Fieldwork Team Leader and Elder Allen Spence who collected the jerry cans to be returned to Gillam and remaining equipment and tools to return to the community.

Discussions and Observations

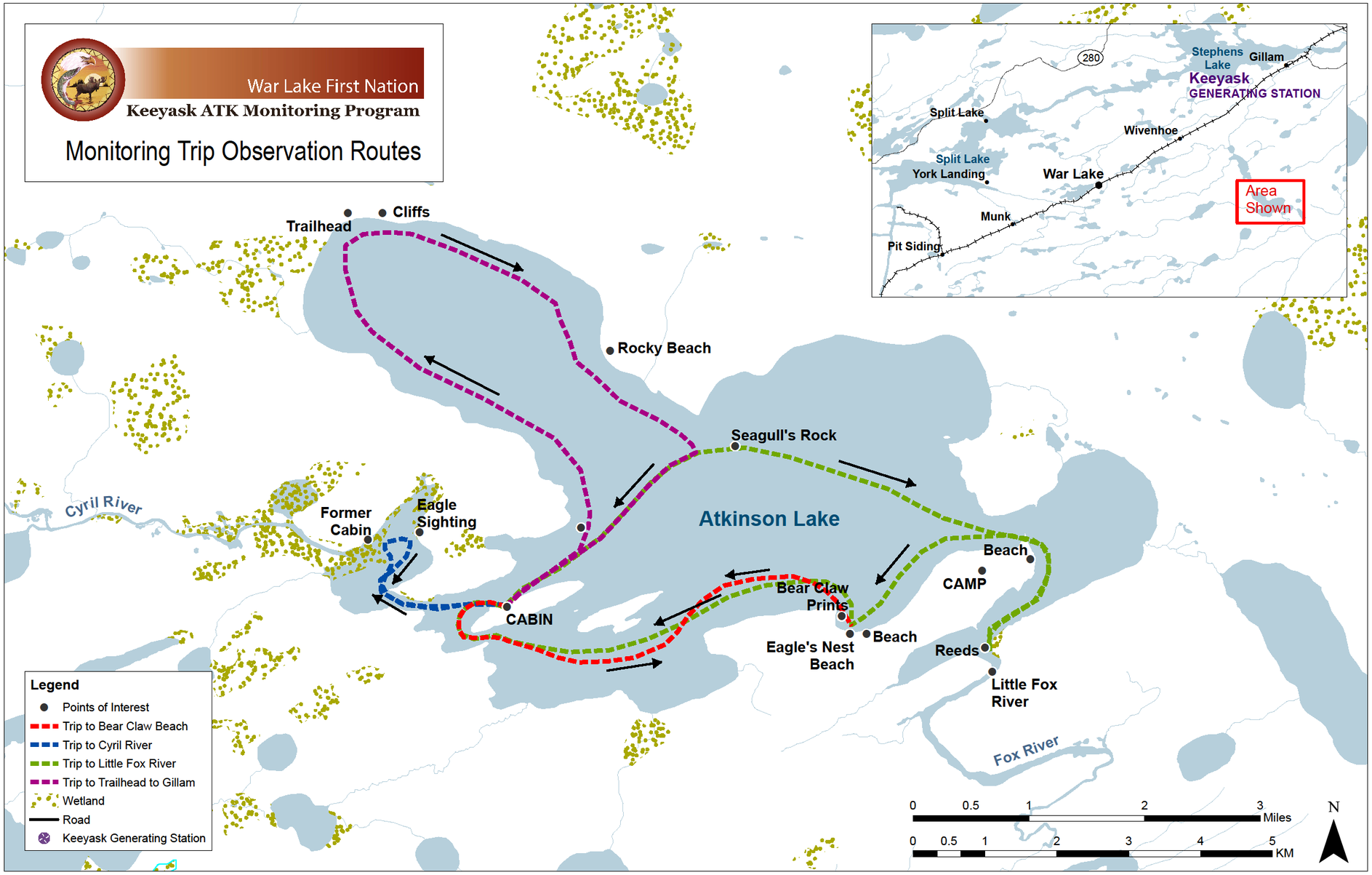
The various areas visited on the lake were recorded on the site map (see Map 1), including the boat routes taken to get there. While visiting the areas marked on Map 1 or working around the cabins, the group held a number of informal conversations regarding recent observations on the land and water of Atkinson Lake. Generally, the following captures observations related to potential impacts of the Keeyask Project:

- There is evidence of more human traffic from Gillam, including the use of a groomed snowmobile trail to access the lake for ice fishing.
- Pelicans are a new bird to the area and are in fairly large numbers
- The lake continues to be clean and the fish plentiful and healthy.

Other remarks and stories shared include:

- In addition to presence of human traffic, other signs of development in the area include the blinking light of the MTS tower at night and commercial flight path to Gillam during the day.
- The large reef in the center of the lake is an important landmark. Other observations include:
    - Cliffs along the northern shoreline;
    - Many long and narrow beaches with pebbly shores;
    - Few deep water spots and the shallow lake bottom is clay;
    - There are stretches of burnt forest (evidence of widespread fire a few years ago); and
    - Some signs of high waters last spring included the unmoored dock and uprooted trees and branches on beaches that were flooded.
- Animals spotted while on the land and water included moose, beavers, lemmings, seagulls, terns, pelicans, killdeers, grey jays and eagles; also spotted moose and wolf tracks and moose and bear markings on tree.
- Descriptions of when, where and how to hunt moose, harvest wood, snare rabbits, trap beaver and set nets for fishing.
- History of cabin sites and communities on the lake and the routes travelled to get there by boat, dog team and snowmobile based on personal experience and knowledge passed down from Elders and grandparents.

Monitoring Trip Observation Routes



Appendix 3 – War Lake ATK Monitoring Trip #3 Report

War Lake First Nation

Keeyask ATK Monitoring Program

ATK Monitoring Trip #3
Summary Report
Destination: Atkinson Lake

March 2019

Overview

War Lake conducted an Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) Monitoring Trip from March 12-15, 2019. War Lake Members, including knowledge holders, resource users, and youth, traveled with an advisor from War Lake First Nation to Atkinson Lake to observe and discuss effects on the War Lake environment resulting from the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station. For this trip, the primary focus of investigations was related to fish characteristics, including health and size, and an opportunity for War Lake youth to fish with experienced resource users and knowledge holders.

This report will describe the activities undertaken leading up to the trip and while on the land and will provide a summary of observations and insights made by War Lake Members.

The following Members participated on the Monitoring Trip:

- Councillor Dwayne Flett – helped to organize participants and community preparation
- Jeff Laliberty – trapline holder and Fieldwork Team Leader
- John Laliberty – Fieldwork Assistant
- Edward Ouskun – Elder, resource user and knowledge holder
- Joe Ouskun – youth
- Tishuan Chornoby – youth
- Mattius Spence – youth
- Chris Fitzner – youth
- Norman Nepitabo – youth
- William Thorassie – youth

Consent and Confidentiality

See Appendix A for a sample of the ATK Monitoring Program Consent and Confidentiality Form signed by all participants. War Lake's advisor reviewed and discussed the Consent and Confidentiality Form to ensure War Lake Members were aware of how the information they provide will be used and protected. All participants agreed to sign the Consent and Confidentiality Form.

Day #1 –Departure and Camp Setup

On the evening of March 11, 2019, advisor Matt Hunt flew into Thompson and stayed overnight, before taking an early charter to War Lake, where he was received by Councillor Flett. From 8 am to noon on March 12, final preparations were made before departing for Atkinson Lake, including:

- Gathering of supplies, including groceries, a chainsaw, ice-augers, fishing equipment, sleeping bags, propane, and other related supplies.
- Fueling of vehicles, including trucks and snowmobiles, at the Mooseocoot Gas Bar.
- Gathering of participants.

Councillor Flett had previously travelled to Thompson to purchase groceries for the trip. War Lake maintains a winter road to the cabins on Atkinson Lake. Two trucks and two snowmobiles departed around noon and arrived at Atkinson Lake around 2:30 pm. Upon arrival, the Group worked together to make camp preparations, including unloading groceries, cleaning the cabins, setting up the generator for electricity in both cabins, firewood collection and preparation for indoor stoves, and other related tasks.

Once camp was prepared, the Group enjoyed a homemade meal prepared by Councillor Flett. Trapline holder Jeff Laliberty joined the group later in the afternoon with additional supplies. The evening was spent planning the next day's activities and playing casual games. The youth also attempted to construct an igloo. Unfortunately, the igloo collapsed and was in need of repair.

Photo 1 – Igloo Construction (prior to collapse)

Photo 2 – Mattius Spence Preparing Firewood

<u>Caribou Slaughter</u>

Just past the halfway mark to Atkinson Lake, the group came upon a grisly and upsetting scene – a slaughter of approximately 10-15 caribou on the side of the winter road. The photos are too graphic to share in this report, unfortunately, but it was clear that outside hunters had committed this act. The slaughter included severed heads and limbs, piles of fur and skin, exposed rib cages, and other equally disturbing scenes. It appeared that those responsible only took the hindquarters and antlers as trophy pieces. This is a situation experienced far too commonly in the War Lake Traditional Use Area. War Lake is currently exploring how to best address this worsening situation. War Lake considers the increased presence of outside hunters to be attributable, in part, to the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station.

Unfortunately, in addition to witnessing the results of disrespectful hunting practices, it appeared that War Lake's cabins at Atkinson Lake had been used by outsiders, with no permission requested.

Day #1 Observations

- Wolf tracks were observed on the winter road to Atkinson Lake for over half the travel distance. At times, there were up to 4 sets of distinct tracks.
- Two Bull Moose were spotted in the bush from the truck on the way to Atkinson.
- Caribou were present in the War Lake Traditional Use Area in high numbers this year, which has led to an increased presence of outside hunters.

Sharing Stories

Elder Edward Ouskun shared a recent story about getting stuck on Atkinson Lake this winter with his partner after his snowmobile stopped functioning and became stuck in ice and slush. A few months prior to this trip, Edward and his partner were fishing Atkinson Lake before their snowmobile broke down. They were forced to walk over 6 kilometers, in very cold and adverse conditions, to the cabins at Atkinson Lake. Edward vividly described the conditions and the difficulty in overcoming the elements to make it back to the cabin. This story served to reinforce the dangers of on-the-land activity at that time of year and served as a cautionary tale for the youth. Luckily, on Day #3, the team spotted a snowmobile in the distance, which turned out to be conservation officers arriving to help remove Edward's snowmobile from the ice.

Photo 3 – Main Cabin at Atkinson Lake

Day #2 – Ice Fishing and Monitoring

On Wednesday morning, after Elder Edward Ouskun suggested setting a fishing net at his preferred location, he took a snowmobile to investigate. Upon his return, roughly an hour later, he informed the group that up to six inches of slush, considered early for this time of year, would prevent the group from setting a net there. He suggested, instead, that the group stay closer to main camp and drill holes closer to the winter road.

Photo 4 – Youth Learning Ice-Drilling Techniques

The group was interested in inspecting the size and health of fish in Atkinson Lake. It was determined that the Group would keep track of fish type and approximate length and conduct visual inspections of captured fish to look for any signs on un-health.

From 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, the Group ice-fished and pulled 12 jackfish and 1 pickerel. The first jackfish was caught by Tishuan Chornoby and the first pickerel by Chris Fitzner. Only the largest jackfish was kept – the largest catch of the trip was made by Joseph Ouskun, who pulled a 24-30 in. jackfish weighing over 5 kilograms.

Photo 5 – Tishuan Chornoby Caught the First Jackfish

Photo 6 – Joe Ouskun Caught the Biggest Jackfish

Photo 7 – Chris Fitzner Caught the First Pickerel

The other jackfish were returned to Atkinson Lake to continue growing. Jeff Laliberty indicated that the pickerel, the more sought after of the two fish, would become more active near sundown. Following supper, the Group returned to their fishing holes and, consistent with Jeff's prediction, the Group pulled 13 more pickerel from 6-9 pm. See below for the full results.

Photo 8 – War Lake Youth, Patiently Waiting

Ice Fishing Session #1 and 2 – 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, 6-9 pm.

Fisherman	Jackfish	Length (approx.)	Pickerel	Length (approx.)
Joseph O.	1 1 1	18-24 in. 18-24 in. 24-30 in.	1 1 1	16-20 in. 16-20 in. 16-20 in.
Dwayne F.	1 1 1	18-24 in. 18-24 in. 18-24 in.	1 1	12 in. 16-20 in.
Chris F.			1	12-16 in.
Mattius S.			1 1 1	12-16 in. 12- 16 in. 16-20 in.
Tishuan C.	1 1	18-24 in. 18-24 in.	1 1 1	16-20 in. 16-20 in. 16-20 in.
William T.				
Norman N.	1	18-24 in.		
Edward O.	1 1	18-24 in. 18-24 in.		
John L.	1	18-24 in.	1	20-24 in.
Jeff L.	1	18-24 in.	1	16-20 in.
TOTAL	**13**		**14**	

Upon visual inspection, both the jackfish and pickerel caught were healthy. No growths or abnormalities were observed, and Members commented that both the jackfish and pickerel were a very healthy colour.

Photo 9 – William Thorassie (left), Chris Fitzner (front), and Joe Ouskun Sharing Techniques (and bait)

Photo 10 – Councillor Flett and Norman Nepitabo Preparing Fishing Rods

Photo 11 – Jeff Laliberty's First Jackfish

Photo 12 – Councillor Flett's First Jackfish

Photo 13 – Joe Ouskun's First Jackfish

Photo 14 – Norman Nepitabo's First Jackfish

Day #2 Observations

- Elder Edward Ouskun heard a small group of wolves howling early in the morning near the cabins
- Large groups of crows were observed feeding on the remains of a number of wolf-kills nearby the cabins.

Photo 15 – War Lake Youth

Day #3 – Ice Fishing and Monitoring

Upon returning on Thursday, the final day of fishing, Mattius Spence occupied a “honey-hole” and caught the first 7 fish of the day, including 6 jackfish and 1 pickerel. William Thorassie, who had not had luck catching a fish, also caught his first jackfish in the morning, and 4 more pickerel in the evening.

Photo 16 – William Thorassie Caught his First Pickerel

Ice Fishing Session #3 - 12-4 pm

Fisherman	Jackfish	Length (approx.)	Pickerel	Length (approx.)
Joseph O.	1	16-20 in.		
Dwayne F.				
Chris F.				
Mattius S.	1 1 1 1 1 1	20-24 in. 12-16 in. 12-16 in. 12-16 in. 12-16 in. 12-16 in.	1	12-16 in.
Tishuan C.	1	16-20 in.		
William T.	1	16-20 in.		
Norman N.				
Edward O.				
John L.				
Jeff L.				
TOTAL	**9**		**1**	

Ice Fishing Session #4 – 6:30-9:00 pm

Fisherman	Jackfish	Length (approx.)	Pickerel	Length (approx.)
Joseph O.				
Dwayne F.				
Chris F.				
Mattius S.			1 1 1 1 1	20-24 in. 16-20 in. 16-20 in. 16-20 in. 16-20 in.
Tishuan C.				
William T.	1	16-20 in.	1 1 1 1	20-24 in. 20-24 in. 20-24 in. 16-20 in.
Norman N.				
Edward O.				
John L.				
Jeff L.	1	20-24 in.		
TOTAL	**2**		**9**	

In total, 48 fish were caught including 24 jackfish and 24 pickerel. 22 of the 24 jackfish were released. Two jackfish were kept – the first was the largest at approximately 24 inches, and one other was used for fishing bait.

All 24 pickerel were brought back to the community for sharing. Each of the 6 youth were provided 4 pickerel to share with their family. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the group was unable to hold a session on safe and proper techniques for dressing the fish.

Photo 17 – John Laliberty Caught the Biggest Pickerel

Photo 18 – Mattius Spence Caught his First Pickerel

Photo 19 – Joe Ouskun Caught his First Pickerel

Edward Ouskun had made an early morning trip to his home in Gillam by snowmobile to retrieve a few materials required to set a net near the location of the fishing holes. War Lake youth observed and participated in the process, as many had not set a net in this fashion before. Edward showed them the proper technique for safely drilling holes to eventually create a hole large enough to place the jigger in the water. He then showed them how to secure the jigger and track its movement under the ice to a spot roughly 100 metres away. Next, a second hole was drilled near the presumed location of the jigger. At this point, however, it was 9:00 pm and it had become too dark to finish the process. After securing the jigger, and with the group leaving in the morning, Edward committed to finishing the process in the morning, including setting of the 100 meter, 4.5 in. mesh net.

Photo 20 – Learning to Set a Net from Elder Edward Ouskun

Day #3 Observations

- A flock of crows was spotted at the remains of another wolf kill near the fishing holes.

Photo 21 – A View from the Cabins at Atkinson Lake

Day #4 – Camp Closure

On Friday morning, the Group had an early breakfast prepared by Councillor Flett and then began the process of shutting down the camp. This included returning items such as generators to the storage units, cleaning the cabins, ensuring food was properly packed or stored to avoid attracting bears, packing the trucks, and returning to War Lake on the winter road.

Photo 22 – War Lake Monitoring Group Prior to Departure