



Keeyask Generation Project

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Plan

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Report

ATK-2020-FLCN



ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MONITORING REPORT

FOX LAKE CREE NATION

REPORT #ATK-2020-FLCN

**KEYYASK GENERATION PROJECT
2019/2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

Prepared by

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1.0 MAKESO SAKAHIKAN INNINUWAK: ASKI KESKENTAMOWIN - FOX LAKE CREE NATION TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge is the baseline, the First Peoples way of life since time immemorial. This knowledge is spoken, seen, stories shared; learn by doing – a feeling. All is instrumental to the future of our traditional territory.

“We are the Inninuwak, placed here on Aski by Manitou (Mother Earth). We are part of Aski. We are sustained by Aski. We care for Aski.

Aski is the word used by our people for the whole of the land, water, animals, plants, people, and all creatures, as well as interrelatedness and equality of all things. All things are alive, have a spirit, and come from Aski. Aski and all things come from something greater than us – Manitou. Our culture, spirituality, and history are part of Aski. Everyone and everything in Aski are sacred to us.

Our relationship with Aski is important to our culture, identity, spirituality and history. Our relationships are based upon trust and respect for all parts of Aski.

Mino-Pimatisiwin means living a good and honorable life. It includes many things, such as being a good person, respecting Aski, harvesting and consuming healthy Ininew foods, and following the values.

When we act disrespectfully or in a harmful way, we must acknowledge the harm we’ve done and make sincere attempts to put things right and strive for balance and harmony. To set things right, we often use rituals and ceremonies. We maintain our teachings and traditions by living them and teaching them to our youth and future generations”

1.1 FLCN ASKI KESKENTAMOWIN MONITORING PROGRAM

Fox Lake Cree Nation (FLCN) Impact Assessment Unit (IAU)/Environment Department monitor the Keeyask Project footprint, which includes FLCN Traditional Territory. We share this territory with the Keeyask Cree Nation (KCN) partners: Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN), York Factory First Nation (YFFN) and War Lake First Nation (WLFN). These areas have been monitored since the beginning of construction and will be monitored post construction.

The IAU undertake the following activities as outlined in the Aski Keskentamowin Monitoring program, Environment Monitoring Plan, (including a Socio-Economic Plan and Mercury and Human Health Risk Management Plan):

- Gathers ATK from FLCN Elders, resource users, harvesters and youth. Information related to the land, water, animals, people, teachings and spirituality;
- Participates in community gatherings, ceremonies, community information sessions, home visits with Elders/Elder harvester group, harvesting, school visits and monitoring;
- Provides employment opportunities for FLCN members, utilizing their expertise of the land, water and ATK of FLCN traditional territory/Project footprint;
- Community Updates on Project information are shared with FLCN members via Fox Lake Environmental – Facebook page, memos, and information sessions;
- Works with Manitoba Hydro Environmental Site Inspectors, researchers, and persons related to the Project. Monitoring with Manitoba Hydro Environment inspectors at Keeyask for the scheduled inspections – water sampling and contractor site inspections;
- Working together with Manitoba Hydro as partners, gathering, sharing, utilizing and applying ATK and technical science in the on-going planning, development, operation and stewardship of Keeyask;
- Participates in on-going professional development opportunities including GIS exercises, boat patrol operation, maintenance and safety;
- Collaborates with other events within Fox Lake such as community engagements and community harvesting gatherings;
- Participates in fieldwork activities with consultants, advisors and FLCN members;
- Coordinates and facilitates FLCN Trapline Program;
- Attends collaboration meetings, workshops with KCN, First Nations and others related to environmental monitoring;
- Completes seasonal monitoring: land, water, animal, people (including livelihood); and
- On going meetings and updates with resource users and advisors via teleconference

In the Works:

- Library with photo gallery, maps, programs, reports. Material will be available for FLCN members to review;
- Monitoring program: formal training in Environmental Studies. Program will take into account ATK and technical science;
- Mentorship program: Environmental Monitor, Mini Environmental Monitor and Environmental Studies. Promote the importance of protecting Aski;

- Reviewing session of the Aski Keskentamowin Monitoring Program. The background and history of our ATK Monitoring Programs, our shared history and worldview, the guiding principles of our ATK Monitoring Program and the importance of collaborating amongst our communities to develop and implement these programs;
- FLCN community members are involved in the IAU Monitoring Program through surveys, an open door policy at the office, and notification of planned fieldwork activities;
- Seasonal cultural camps – harvesting, knowledge sharing;
- Follow-up monitoring: Lower Nelson River Aski Keskentamowin Study and other studies done in the territory;
- Monitoring development: KCN Community visits;
- Recognition of our FLCN People: Elders, knowledge holders, resource users, harvesters, youth – Past, Present and Future; and
- Daily fact(s), story and ATK – to be posted on FLCN Facebook page



Photo 1: Building the FLCN library

1.2 ATK CARIBOU MONITORING (SNOWMOBILE)

FLCN conducted snowmobile tracking and monitoring of caribou in the Keeyask footprint, prior to impoundment or also known as water-up. This was done to ensure that the rising water levels would not affect the herds that were moving in and out of the area. The main concern with this happening was to minimize or stop fatalities or possible drownings of caribou within the Keeyask reservoir during water up and impoundment. These tracking surveys were conducted twice a week. Resource users came forward with concerns to the office or got word of mouth that our IAU was going ground truthing (collecting information and observations firsthand from the field). The IAU was asked to confirm any sightings or any environmental concerns. Our snowmobile route was decided on a map and it took us as close to Keeyask as possible along the south side of the Nelson River. The route taken was: Leave Gillam towards the KR1,2,3 lines to KN36 construction powerline from Keeyask to the KN36 line then the KN36 lines are followed towards Gillam.

This on average is a 90 kilometre route sometimes more or less depending on weather and which route is to be travelled by snow machine. Tracks were noted, GPS waypoints taken, most herds were noted heading east by Northeast and smaller herds were noted. Hydro line maintenance workers stopped to communicate safety concerns or hazards that should be avoided along the line when they were doing maintenance on tower footings. The IAU were also told by workers of sightings of caribou. Smaller groups of twenty animals or so were seen along said powerline. Also, noted along our specified route were a number of moose tracks along the willows that are new growth under the powerlines. We made three trips along the south shore of Stephens Lake as close to Keeyask while still being mindful of ice conditions. We visited Fox Lake cabins that are located directly downstream of the Keeyask generating station, to warm up and have a bite to eat. No other wildlife was observed, some older tracks that were blown in were noted heading east across Stephens Lake. KCN kept in contact with each other to know where the animals were located. A weekly caribou report was sent in when caribou were spotted or seen by resource users in each other's respective areas of monitoring.



Photo 2: Caribou tracks observed on the Shamattawa winter road

1.3 FLCN COMMUNITY TRAPLINE PROGRAM

FLCN Impact Assessment Unit facilitated the FLCN Community Trapline Program, which started in November 2017. The program ran for three years: 2017-2019, from November to December. Participants ranged from 12 to 17 years of age. When younger participants wanted to participate, a parent or guardian was to accompany them to the trapline. This happens for an eight week period where the traps were checked every 72 hours. Wednesdays, the trappers/mentors checked the traps while the kids were in school. The participants were brought out on Friday evenings to Fox Lake culture camp, until Sunday.

Every year, there was more interest from children and more helpers came on board. Participants were informed of the Manitoba Trapper Education Course, which is mandatory for anyone wishing to trap within Manitoba. A weekend was set aside for the children to participate and receive their trapping license.

The Mentors are Licensed Trappers in the area with first aid certificates, so if a problem arises on the land they are equipped to deal with it.



Photo 3: FLCN community trapline participants

The participants then went to camp where they learn to set up camp, do necessary chores to make camp life easier and comfortable. Participants are taken out to set traps, they are taught to operate a snowmobile, what equipment is needed to trap, what animals make which tracks, basically everything you need to know about trapping. They are shown the proper and most humane way of harvesting animals for their fur. The participants were excited to check the traps and see what animals were caught. The fur is removed from the trap. We usually have to take the animal with the trap on it to be thawed out, then removed from trap to be skinned. Then the trap is replaced. The fur is then prepared, to be sold at the Annual Thompson Fur Tables where the kids get to meet other young trappers and see demonstrations hosted by other trappers from in and out of province. The Trappers/Mentors, young trappers, and camp helpers head to Thompson to sell furs where the monies are divided among the young trappers who are excited to shop for Christmas.



Photo 4: FLCN youth making a conibear cubby (trap)

1.4 FLCN YOUTH RESOURCE COORDINATOR

The Youth Resource Coordinator is a new mentoring position that was implemented to monitor Fox Lake Cree Nations traditional territory while working under the direction of the Fox Lake Impact Assessment Unit and Environmental Monitors. As part of the job description, the Youth Coordinator plans outings with youth of FLCN community and works closely with Fox Lake Elders.

The Youth Resource Coordinator undertakes the following activities:

- Ski-doo excursions along the Stephen's Lake area and Keeyask impoundment site for possible sightings of Caribou tracks;
- Monitors the weather and ice conditions of Stephen's Lake and surrounding lakes and bodies of water in the territory;
- Becomes familiar with the traditional territory and working in all weather conditions;
- Helicopter exploration with Wildlife Resource Consulting Services Manitoba doing an aerial survey for caribou migration;
- At the Project site, shadowing the Manitoba Hydro Environmental team and learning how to do water samples and lab work, clean up spills and witnessed weekly inspections with contractors and sub-contractors;

- Assists the Manitoba Hydro Hydraulics Operations Department with water level monitoring and doing various water samples by helicopter around the Project site; and
- Participates in planned activities with children and youth in the community such as nature walks to identify various medicinal plants and birds with help from Elders, having an “Environmental Monitor for a day” where children and youth get to experience what it’s like to work in the position and go to schools in Gillam and Fox Lake to share with students learnings from the position.



Photo 5: Youth Resource Coordinator assisting the Manitoba Hydro Hydraulics Operations Department drill holes for water sampling



Photo 6: Youth Resource Coordinator digging up the ground after a diesel spill, remediation process

1.5 TRADITIONAL MEDICINES TEACHING

Stefanie Spence (FLCN IAU) shares traditional medicines teaching with students:

On March 5 2020, as a part of the Impact Assessment Unit for Fox Lake Cree Nation, I got to go into Gillam School to share some of the teaching that I was taught about Traditional Medicines. I brought my own medicines. I also talked about attending Sweats, Ceremonies and Gatherings. Also, I got to take the Grade 11 students just outside the school to do a smudge with me as well as the teacher.

With this, I used sage. Sage is a cleansing medicine for the Body, Mind and Soul. It smells very nice and has its own way of cleansing your body. It takes a few minutes. With this you use a seashell or a small gifted bowl, a feather and tobacco. We all stood in a circle and did a Smudge together as I went around with my shell. I really enjoyed doing this with the students at the Gillam School. I look forward to sharing much more as I learn.

A lot of these medicines are Traditional and Natural, they are meant for healing.

Cleansing, Guiding, Comforting, Healing. And of course, anything you may need more of for yourself.



Photo 7: Gillam school, grade 11 participants



Photo 8: Stefanie Spence's smudging set up including a gifted bowl with sage, sweet grass and mint, her own medicine bag, spruce gum, feather and tobacco