



Keeyask Generation Project

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Plan

Askiy Nanakacihetakewin Stewardship Program

Annual Report

ATK-2021-YFFN



ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MONITORING REPORT

ASKIY NANAKACIHTAKEWIN PROGRAM

YORK FACTORY FIRST NATION

REPORT #ATK-2021-YFFN

KEYYASK GENERATION PROJECT

2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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1.0 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Askiy Nanakacihtakewin (A.N.) means, “to watch out for and take care of the lands, waters, wildlife, plants, and people of the land”. “Stewardship” extends beyond “monitoring” and aligns with Ininiw perspectives on caring for Askiy. YFFN Askiy Nanakacihtakewin Stewardship program is designed to incorporate traditional science and Ininiw kiskenihtamowin (ATK), with cultural, educational, and traditional elements.

The program had great success in 2019/2020 and then experienced a significant slow-down in 2020/21 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, program staff hosted traditional camps and informational events in the community. Many new ideas were shared and plans were developed to continue growing the stewardship program. By mid-March 2020, responses to the global COVID-19 pandemic prevented community gatherings, closed the A.N. offices, and required staff to self-isolate after leaving the community for medical and other purposes. Staff have adjusted to telephone and video meetings and held off on community gatherings as intermittent community lockdowns continued into March 2021.

2.0 STEERING COMMITTEE

The Askiy Nanakacihtakewin Steering Committee is a group of elders, knowledge-holders, resource users, Resource Management Board members, and Implementation staff who offer guidance to the program and ensure linkages with other First Nation programs and activities. The group was unable to meet in the fiscal year, but program staff stayed in communication with Steering Committee members and shared informal updates throughout the year.

We sadly acknowledge the passing of two valued members of the A.N. Steering Committee: Amelia Saunders who left us in April 2020, and Doreen Saunders who passed in February 2021. Amelia and Doreen helped to shape the A.N. program and were generous with insights and ideas to build the work. They are dearly missed.

3.0 KEYYASK COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

Program staff represent YFFN on the Keeyask Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC) and Keeyask Caribou Coordination Committee (KCCC). Stewardship Coordinator Darcy Wastesicoot also sits on the Wapusk Management Board and co-chairs the Kischi Sipi Namao Sturgeon Stewardship Committee. Connections to these tables help to tie the program's work to broader management efforts in YFFN's traditional lands.

Activities of the MAC and KCCC were suspended through the spring of 2020, before resuming in the summer. The Keeyask MAC held half-day virtual meetings in June, August, October, December, January, and February of this fiscal year. Discussions at the MAC focussed on monitoring reservoir impoundment in late summer/early fall and discussing possible mitigation measures as part of the Project's Fisheries Act Authorization amendment. The KCCC joined the pre-impoundment MAC meeting in August and held a brief meeting in December of 2020. Some caribou were reported in the region during the December meeting, but large herds were largely absent from the area in 2020/21.

4.0 KEY ACTIVITIES

Significant program activities in 2020/2021 are as follows:

4.1 ON THE LAND MONITORING

In the last two years, YFFN has expanded its monitoring to include regular on-the-land patrols. A.N. Coordinator, Darcy Wastesicoot, takes regular excursions to observe water, wildlife, and harvesting activity. On-the-land monitoring has focused on:

- Observing winter caribou movements and harvest activity
- Monitoring water levels
- Observing ice conditions
- Interacting with local resource users
- Observing zebra mussel establishment in Split Lake; and
- Noting the timing of annual events like spring break-up, pickerel spawning, goose hunting, etc.

4.2 PIPON KAPESIWIN (WINTER CAMP)

Program staff worked to organize their third annual Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Winter Camp in early March 2020. Unfortunately, Pipon Kapesiwin was cancelled in order to maintain community safety through following social distancing precautions related to COVID-19. Traditional foods that had been gathered for the event were donated to support food security during the community lockdown.

4.3 CARIBOU MONITORING

For several years, YFFN's A.N. program has been mapping caribou observations with YFFN resource users to create a record of what they are seeing on the land each year. Observations from 2020/2021 will be recorded as soon as community restrictions allow. Although large caribou herds did not come to the York Landing area in 2020/2021, staff stayed in close communication with Manitoba Hydro and other communities, sharing weekly updates on observations on caribou in the region.



Photo 1: AN staff posted signs along trails and winter roads to promote respectful harvest practices

4.4 STORAGE SHED

The A.N. program has been talking for some time about building a shed to store materials for monitoring, winter camp, and moose camp. This project was able to proceed under COVID-19 restrictions, with a design developed in the summer of 2020, materials purchased in the fall, and construction over the following winter and spring. The shed is built on skids so that supplies can be readily available for the next winter camp.

4.5 IMPOUNDMENT

Program staff took part in intensive dialogue with Manitoba Hydro and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada about the timing of Keeyask reservoir impoundment. When impoundment proceeded in the late summer of 2020, staff monitored local water levels and took part in aerial flights with Manitoba Hydro's technical monitoring team.

4.6 COLLABORATION FOR ATIKOK

Since 2017, First Nations in the Northeast of Manitoba have voiced concerns over hunting activity in the region: an influx of hunters from outside the area; large numbers of animals being harvested; hunters failing to follow traditional protocols for accessing traditional lands; carcasses being left with only small amounts of meat taken; and safety hazards associated with gut piles being left on access routes, among others. These concerns have been discussed at the Keeyask MAC and KCCC. Community members have emphasized the importance of communicating with other First Nations in the region beyond those in the Keeyask Partnership and working together to address their common concerns.

In 2018, the A.N. program was able to leverage funds through the Canada Nature Fund for a project titled *Collaboration for Atikok*. This project consisted of three multi-party meetings in 2019 and 2020 involving eight First Nations. Discussions focused on sharing observations and priorities; building collaboration on caribou monitoring in the region; and supporting Indigenous-led caribou stewardship. The eight participating First Nations were supported by the A.N. staff, who acted as coordinators for the project. The YFFN, WLFN, TCN, and FLCN monitoring programs also contributed by funding production of Respectful Harvest signs to educate visitors and members on respectful harvest practices. The work is continuing into 2021 through a funding contribution from the federal Climate and Health Adaptation program.

4.7 AN NEWSLETTER

GIS Coordinator Darcy Saunders prepared a community newsletter to share information on the A.N. program and activities. The newsletter was distributed to households in York Landing to keep members updated despite the current restrictions on community gatherings.