



Keeyask Generation Project Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Plan

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Report

ATK-2021-FLCN



ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MONITORING REPORT

FOX LAKE CREE NATION

REPORT #ATK-2021-FLCN

**KEYYASK GENERATION PROJECT
2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) is the baseline, the First Peoples way of life since time immemorial. This knowledge is spoken, seen, stories shared; learned by doing – a feeling. All is instrumental to the future of our 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 Inineew 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 Dept. monitors 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 Monitoring Plan and a Mercury and Human Health Risk Management Plan):

- Gather traditional knowledge from FLCN Elders, resource users, harvesters and youth. Information, related to the land, water, animals, people, teachings and spirituality;
- Participate in community gatherings, ceremonies, community information sessions, home visits with Elders/Elder harvester group, harvesting and school visits and monitoring;
- Provide employment opportunities for FLCN members, utilizing their expertise of the land, water and traditional knowledge of FLCN traditional territory/project footprint;
- Share project information/updates with FLCN members via Fox Lake Environmental – Facebook page, memos, and information sessions;
- Work with Manitoba Hydro Environmental Site Inspectors, researchers, and persons related to the Project. Monitor scheduled inspections with Manitoba Hydro Environment inspectors at Keeyask including water sampling and contractor site inspections;
- Work together with Manitoba Hydro as partners to gather, share, use and apply ATK and technical science in the on-going planning, development, operation and stewardship of Keeyask;
- Participate in on-going professional development opportunities including GIS exercises, boat patrol operation, maintenance and safety;
- Collaborate with other community events within Fox Lake such as Community Harvesting Gatherings;
- Participate in fieldwork activities with consultants, advisors and FLCN members;
- Coordinate and facilitate the FLCN Trapline Program;
- Attend collaboration meeting, workshops, with KCN, First Nations and others related to environmental monitoring;
- Monitor seasonal changes: land, water, animal, people (including livelihood);
- Attend on-going meetings and update sessions 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;
- Aski Keskentamowin Monitoring Program review process. 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;

- Involvement of FLCN community members in the IAU Monitoring Program through surveys, an open door policy, and notification of IAU's planned fieldwork/activities;
- Seasonal Cultural Camps – Harvesting, knowledge sharing;
- Follow-up monitoring: Lower Nelson River Aski Kiskentomowin 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), stories and ATK – to be posted on FLCN Facebook page.

1.2 ATK Caribou Monitoring (Snowmobile)

The Impact Assessment Unit (IAU) Environmental team monitored different areas in our territory throughout the fall and winter seasons. Some of the information we like to report on and document are types of species, habitat, herd size and migration route.

In the fall (late September) we observed Pen Island caribou beginning to migrate through the Stephens Lake area. By late October there were caribou migrating along the Nelson River in herds of at least 4,000 heading east to west. There were more caribou observed south along the KR transmission lines. Although there was no construction in the immediate area during this time, caribou do get affected by the construction areas, it's not their natural habitat.

With COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in place we faced many challenges with the planning phase for monitoring trips. Usually we would welcome resource users and youth who are willing to learn about caribou to come on these excursions with us and share their knowledge.



Photo 1: Caribou crossing to island on the Stephens Lake.



Photo 2: Caribou tracks on the northwest bank of the Limestone River.



Photo 3: Caribou track on Stephens Lake.

1.2 FLCN COMMUNITY TRAPPING PROGRAM

Our annual trapping program objective is to have youth participate and have the opportunity to be a part of Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge. They get to experience life on the trapline, learn about different traps and methods, learn about the equipment, animal identification, learn basic survival skills and story sharing. Also, to monitor and understand the impacts new hydroelectric development (Keewatinohk Converter Station and Keeyask Generating Station) will have on furbearer behavior and how successful the trapping season will be.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and protocols put in place this year, the annual trapping program did not take place. The restrictions also impacted the Fur Table Auction, a place where trappers from all over northern Manitoba go to sell their furs and have the opportunity to discuss the season and how things are out on the land.

Although we weren't able to have our usual trapping program, IAU staff continued to monitor the trapline that is used for the trapping program. This was done to make sure that we did not skip a year in our monitoring efforts. As usual, the trapping season began in November and went until the end of January. In that time, we were able to observe and monitor a few differences compared to last year. We noticed a higher number of animals for harvest. We think animals are returning to the area after BiPole III, and Keewatinohk Converter Station construction. We also noticed more trappers than in previous years, possibly due to COVID, which is a good thing, as we are happy to note more people are taking an interest. We also observed an increase of caribou in the area.

The trapping program is one of our highlights for the year. Every year we look forward to this season. We are hoping to continue with the program in the future as we have sparked interest among the youth in Gillam and Fox Lake Cree Nation.



Photo 4: Youth trapping program at the annual fur table.



Photo 5: Telling stories around the fire during our annual trapping program.

1.3 FIELD TRIP AND MONITORING ACTIVITIES

FLCN IAU along with an Elder and a few summer students went on a field monitoring walking trip. We ventured out to monitor locations where FLCN members previously lived. We came across items which have remained at the locations, including foundations of homes.

Standing back, we watched and waited for our Elder to speak, wondering what he was thinking. He mentioned which families lived in the area. "It looks so different, grown in a lot since I've been back here."

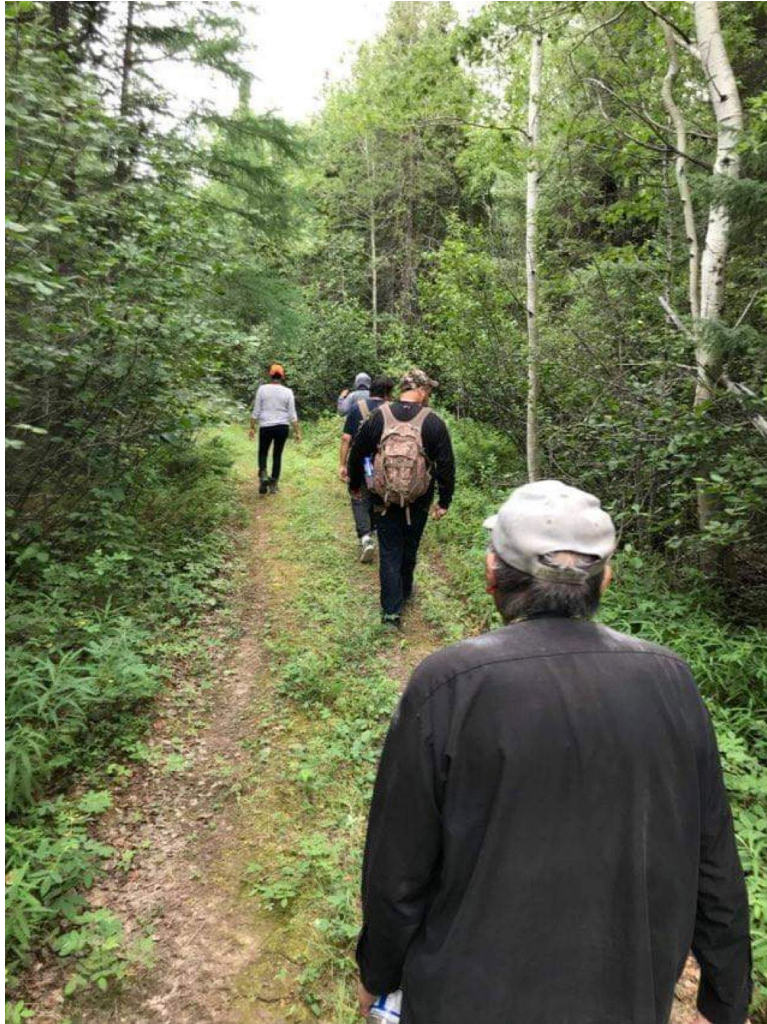


Photo 6: Elder and summer students on field monitoring trip.



Photo 7: Elder observing changes to the land.



Photo 8: Old fire stove on the old Gillam settlement where FLCN members use to reside.



Photo 9: Old housing foundation on the old Gillam settlement where FLCN members used to reside.



Photo 10: IAU workers and summer students with Elder Enoch Ouskun who gave them a tour of the old Gillam settlement.

1.4 TRADITIONAL MEDICINES TEACHING

In the spring, the Impact Assessment Unit went to Gillam School to share some teachings about traditional medicines, sweats and ceremonies. We all got to share our own experiences with sweats, and different ceremonies we attended, then went outside to have a smudge with the Grade 11 students.

During the smudge sage was used. Sage is a cleansing medicine for the body, mind and soul. It has a very nice smell and has its own way of cleansing the body and only takes a few minutes. During a smudge you use a seashell or a small gifted bowl, a feather and tobacco. We all stood in a circle and feathered ourselves in the smoke praying.

Going into the schools and sharing our traditional teachings and knowledge with the students is a highlight of our work. Teaching about traditional medicines is important as it is natural, meant for healing, cleansing, and guiding.

1.5 BERRY HARVESTING

At the end of summer, we took groups of community members out on the territory for berry harvesting. Picking berries has always been a traditional way of life and a form of providing a good healthy source of food for your diet. Our goal for this excursion is to teach and give Fox Lake members a chance to learn about traditional harvesting habits, physical activity, a diet that is wild and natural, and to also get in touch with Mother Earth, listen to nature and get some fresh air.



Photo 11: Harvesting berries with community members.



Photo 12: Our blueberry harvest.