



Keeyask Generation Project Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Plan

Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Report ATK-2023-FLCN



KEYYASK GENERATION PROJECT

FOX LAKE CREE NATION

REPORT #ATK-2023-FLCN

ABORIGINAL TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE MONITORING 2022/2023 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 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

1.1 FLCN ASKI KISKINTAMOWIN 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 these areas and territories 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 continue to be monitored post construction.

¹ Paraphrased from: Keeyask Generation Project: Response to EIS Guidelines – Chapter 2: Partners’ Context, Worldviews and Evaluation Process (pgs. 2-3)

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

- Monitor seasonal changes: land, water, animal, people (including livelihood);
- Gather traditional knowledge from FLCN Elders, resource users, harvesters and youth. Information, related to the land, water, animals, people, teachings and spirituality;
- Participate in ongoing resource users forums, community gatherings, ceremonies, community information sessions, home visits with Elders/Elder harvester group, harvesting and school visits;
- Provide employment opportunities for FLCN members, utilizing their expertise of the land, water and traditional knowledge of FLCN traditional territory/project footprint;
- Participate in fieldwork activities with consultants, advisors and FLCN members;
- Work together with Manitoba Hydro as partners to gather, share, use and apply ATK and technical science in the operation and stewardship of Keeyask;
- Share project information/updates with FLCN members via Fox Lake Environmental – Facebook page, memos, and information sessions;
- Participate in on-going professional development opportunities including GIS exercises, office administration training, snow machine safety, boat patrol operation, maintenance and safety;
- Collaborate activities with other Fox Lake events such as Community Harvesting Gatherings;
- Attend collaboration meeting, workshops, with KCN, First Nations and others related to environmental monitoring;

The Fox Lake ATK team consists of three full time staff members and one staff who splits their time between ATK and the Mercury and Human Health program. The ATK program focusses on the following activities:

- Community and Youth Trapping Program;
- Caribou, moose, goose and fish monitoring & mapping;
- Community harvesting events;
- Monitoring of heritage sites and traditional territory to observe changes to the land, water and animals;
- Visiting the Keeyask site to observe the post-impoundment environment and operating systems;
- Engaging with youth through student visits, youth camps on the land, and the summer student program; and
- Teaching youth about caribou conservation and respectful harvesting on FLCN territory.

2.0 FLCN ATK 2022/2023 HIGHLIGHTS

The FLCN ATK team had a busy year as COVID restrictions were lifted and community activities began ramping up. The ATK team also had three new staff members join the program so there was lots of training and new ideas. Below are the highlights from this year's ATK activities.

2.1 FLCN YOUTH GOOSE HUNTING CAMP

In the spring of 2022, ATK staff coordinated a youth goose hunting camp for FLCN youth. The ATK staff led the youth through a variety of field skills to pass on teachings about respectful goose harvesting techniques and practices. Activities at the camp included building hunting blinds, fire making, and tree identification.

It is important to monitor the goose population in the area because geese are important for the community harvest. The ATK monitors and community resource users noted that the goose population arrived much later than normal in the spring of 2023.

2.2 WATERWAYS CANOE PROGRAM

For two weeks in the summer and two weeks in the fall of 2022, Waterways Recreation led ATK staff and FLCN youth and adults in an informative Canoe program that involved boat rescue, steering techniques, and capsizing recovery. The training took place on Stephen's Lake at the Dyke 4 boat launch. This program aims to involve participants in culturally relevant activities that are both safe and promote health and well-being.



Photo 1: Youth Waterways Canoe program orientation



Photo 2: Youth applying skills during Waterways program

2.3 KSNC STURGEON CULTURAL CAMP

The first ever *Kischi Sipi Namao* Committee (KSNC) Sturgeon Cultural Camp was held on September 21-22, 2022 at the FLCN Cultural Camp north of Gillam, near Fox Lake and the Limestone GS. Elders, youth, and resource users from FLCN and York Factory First Nation (YFFN), and KSNC committee members participated in the event. Activities included resource users demonstrating how to set sturgeon nets on the Nelson River, Elders filleting sturgeon while sharing stories of traditional uses, boiling and smoking sturgeon, and water quality sampling on the Nelson River.



Photo 3: FLCN ATK monitors with the sturgeon caught for the KSNC Sturgeon Cultural Camp

2.4 ATK CARIBOU MONITORING

The Impact Assessment Unit (IAU) Environmental team monitored different areas in the territory throughout the fall and winter seasons. Some of the information report on and document are types of species, habitat, herd size and migration route. It is important to monitor caribou movements because these animals are important for community harvesting and can be impacted by

construction projects. In addition to monitoring, the FLCN ATK team's mission is to teach youth about caribou conservation and respectful harvesting on FLCN territory.

Caribou monitors (ATK staff and knowledgeable community resource users) were divided into two groups to cover the Fox lake territory. The first group was stationed near the FLCN Fish Camp, and the second group worked downstream, close to the Wier River and FLCN Cultural Camp. Monitors also traveled along the South Access Road to follow the caribou's normal migration route. The monitors travelled approximately 140 – 180 kilometers each day looking for signs of caribou including tracks, scat, and visual confirmation of animals.

Very few caribou observations were made during the winter season with less than ten caribou counted near the Henday Generating station. Although there was no construction in the immediate area this year, broader migration patterns, which covers a wide territory, can shift due to construction activities in the region.

Although it was a low year for caribou in the FLCN area, the moose population was high. Many moose were observed by the community with many animals sighted off Provincial Road 280. Additionally, many wolves were also observed.

Upcoming plans for the FLCN ATK team include working with community members and resource users to map the caribou activity in the area. The goal is to understand the changes in caribou migration patterns from an ATK perspective.



Photo 4: Caribou tracks along South Access Road



Photo 5: Wolf track along the South Access Road

2.5 ICE FISHING AT FLCN FISH CAMP

The FLCN ATK team began ice fishing on Stephens Lake in different areas around Fox Lake fish camp, Keeyask and Gull Lake. They were going out every weekend from end of February to end of March on Stephens Lake. During this time only one jack fish was caught, but when they started going across the dam to Gull Lake there were 5 jack fish caught and varied in size from 16-20 inches. Staff and resource users were advised that fish from Gull Lake have high mercury levels as a result of Keeyask impoundment and were not recommended for regular consumption. It was suggested they have their hair mercury levels tested, if fish caught were going to be consumed.



Photo 6: FLCN Resource User using an auger to drill through the ice for fishing



Photo 7: Ice fishing around the FLCN Fish Camp

2.6 SPRING EQUINOX CAMP

On March 14, 2023, ATK staff collaborated with HGD and Frontier School for a weeklong Spring Equinox Camp for local students in grades 5 and 6. The youth were introduced to many culturally relevant activities including how to build shelters in the bush, chopping wood, snowshoeing, and playing games. Other activities included making Bannock on a fire, tea boiling, medicine teachings and a presentation from the Mercury and Human Health community coordinators. The ATK team expressed the importance of teaching youth and kids fundamental land-based skills.



Photo 8: Spring Equinox Camp orientation



Photo 9: FLCN Mercury and Human Health Coordinators presenting to the youth at Spring Equinox Camp



Photo 10: Student chopping wood for frame of shelter



Photo 11: Students building a shelter from surrounding environment



Photo 12: Fire built by ATK staff and students during camp



Photo 13: Shelter built by students and ATK staff at FLCN camp site

3.0 CONCLUSION

The 2022/2023 year was active for the FLCN ATK team, with in-person activities beginning again after COVID-19 restrictions. The FLCN ATK team is happy and grateful to be able to work on the land and with the community again. It is important for the ATK team to continue to learn from the community Elders and Resource Users, and to pass those teachings on to the next generation.



Photo 14 & Photo 15: Members of the FLCN ATK team