



**Keeyask Generation Project
Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge Monitoring Plan**

***Askiy Nanakacihetakewin* Stewardship Program Report
ATK-2023-YFFN**



KEYYASK GENERATION PROJECT

YORK FACTORY FIRST NATION

REPORT #ATK-2023-YFFN

***ASKIY NANAKACIHTAKEWIN* STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM:**

2022/2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared by

York Factory First Nation

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PROGRAM TEAM

This report was prepared by Darcy Wastesicoot (YFFN Program Coordinator), Darsee Saunders (YFFN Technical Facilitator), Elly Bonny (HTFC), and Liam Speirs (HTFC).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Askiy Nanakacihetakewin is York Factory First Nation's environmental monitoring and stewardship program. *Askiy Nanakacihetakewin* means "to watch out for and take care of the lands, waters, wildlife, plants and people of the land." Extending beyond simply monitoring, *Askiy Nanakacihetakewin* (AN) is designed to incorporate York Factory First Nation's (YFFN) *Ininiw Kiskenihtamowin* (traditional knowledge), cultural and educational elements in a blend with western science and technology.



Photo 1. York Landing and the Aiken River from the air, May 2023

2022 was a milestone year for the *Askiy Nanakacihetakewin* Stewardship Program. In March, Keeyask became fully operational, triggering several important timelines for the Keeyask Hydropower Limited Partnership communities. This also triggered our program to pivot from monitoring the immediate effects of Keeyask's construction towards monitoring the long-term effects of the operational dam. Throughout 2022, our program and staff continued their core work: monitoring, understanding and responding to impacts of the Keeyask project.

Finally, in December 2022, the Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) contribution agreement between York Factory First Nation and Manitoba Hydro expired, prompting negotiations towards a new agreement. Following negotiations, we signed a new, 5-year funding agreement in January 2023.



Photo 2. *Askiy Nanakacihkewin Stewardship Program staff (left to right): Darcy Wastesicoot (Program Coordinator), Logan Beardy (Bookkeeper), Jimmy Beardy (Cultural Facilitator), and Darsee Saunders (Technical Facilitator)*

2.0 STEERING COMMITTEE

Our Steering Committee is a group of community members who have provided guidance to *Askiy Nanakacihetakewin* since its inception. The Committee typically meets three times per year and includes community members representing the following groups: Elders, youth, women, resource harvesters, Resource Management Board members, and Council members.

Askiy Nanakacihetakewin staff are responsible for organizing, attending and chairing the committee meetings. From time to time, the Committee may request that other individuals sit in during a meeting. The Committee is responsible for guiding our program, building and maintaining links with other community initiatives, and crucially, ensuring strong communication among the various groups within our community.

On March 20, 2023, the Steering Committee convened its first meeting of the year, and first under our new contribution agreement. During the meeting, the Committee members validated our 2023 workplan, and provided suggestions on other lines of work.



Photo 3. Steering Committee Members: Nellie Redhead, Marie Ryle-Beardy, Edwin Beardy, Obadiah Wastesicoot, Elizabeth Beardy, Flora Beardy, Jimmy A. Beardy

3.0 COMMITTEES AND OTHER WORKING GROUPS

Beyond their core work, program staff are responsible for representing our community's interests on other committees and working groups. Our staff participate on:

- The Keeyask Monitoring Advisory Committee (MAC)
- The Keeyask Caribou Coordination Committee (KCCC)
- The Wapusk National Park Management Board
- The Kichi Sipi Namao Sturgeon Stewardship Committee (KSNC)
- The Upper Nelson River Sturgeon Management Board
- Other working groups

Our participation with these committees and groups helps keep our community informed about developments happening in our traditional territory. These committees also act as a forum for sharing ideas, information and knowledge between participating communities.

4.0 MILESTONES

2022 was a milestone year for our program as a whole. Within our program, we also achieved several specific milestones, such as:

4.1 UPDATING OUR VISION AND GOALS

In August 2022, we completed an update to our program's *Vision* and *Goals*, to better align with community priorities. Our new vision and goals will guide *Askiy Nanakacihetakewin's* work over the coming years. Our new vision is:

To become a self-sufficient monitoring program, employing York Factory First Nation members and providing opportunities for knowledge-sharing, mentoring, training, and technical skills building.

4.2 HIRING A DEDICATED BOOKKEEPER

In December 2022, we hired Logan Beardy as a part-time bookkeeper, dedicated to helping our program manage its financial resources. The addition of a dedicated bookkeeper moves several responsibilities formerly managed by the Program Director to this new position. This also had the effect of creating a lasting employment and training opportunity for Logan, providing him with on-the-job experience and opportunities for furthering his education.

4.3 OVERCOMING COVID-19 AND PANDEMIC RESTRICTIONS

In 2022, our community was able to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, health restrictions and other lockdowns that had caused significant challenges for the previous years' work. Emerging from the pandemic, our staff have been able to leverage some new ways of working (including virtual work) in combination with the in-person nature of our daily work.

4.4 MONITORING OUR LANDS AND WATERS

In 2022, on-the-land monitoring continued to be a major focus area for our program. It is essential for our staff to be able to observe the lands, waters, wildlife, culturally significant areas, harvesting activity and other elements within our traditional territory. To do this, our staff conduct regular patrols on the lands and waters around our community and on our broader traditional territories. Led by our Program Director, our patrols focus on:

- Wildlife movements, with special attention devoted to Caribou movements and harvest
- Environmental conditions like water levels and ice conditions

- Observing resource users, both locals and visitors to our territory, and helping others understand the importance of sustainable harvest practices
- Observing zebra mussels, their movements, growth and potential spread in our waterways

Moving into 2023, our objective is to maintain a schedule of bi-weekly patrols. We intend patrols to be conducted by two people, typically one of our program staff plus one other community member who will be paid an honorarium.