

9th Annual Muskwa-Kechika
Environmental Youth Camp
July 2007



2007 Final Report

Submitted to:
Tom Briggs, Chair
MK Outreach Committee

Background

The main purpose of these camps is to provide opportunity to youth that will build leadership skills and encourage them to get involved with the stewardship of their lands. By taking the youth away from their home lives and getting them out on the land, youth are able to focus on the teachings offered by our elders, guest speakers, councilors, and each other. It is hopeful that the youth will integrate the knowledge from these sources to gain a better understanding of themselves and of the issues the MK Management area faces. These youth are the future of the MK and it is important to encourage and educate them so they can make informed decisions in the future.

This year the youth camp was held at Sandpile located 3 ½ hours up the Turnagain River (Map 1). Transportation to the camp was via Jet Boat provided by Tom Vince of Turnagain River Adventures. Six of the youth along with the councilors traveled to Skooks landing from Lower Post to meet the boat. Two more youth were flown in from Kwadacha, the previous day by Angus Air, bringing the total number of youth to 8. The resident elders this year were Mida Donnessey from Liard, Dennis Porter from Daylu, and Leon Johnny from Good Hope Lake.

Participants- Youth, ages 13-19 years of age, were invited from Kwadacha (Fort Ware), Daylu (Lower Post), Good Hope Lake, Ross River, Liard First Nation, Halfway River First Nation, Fort Nelson First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, the Town of Fort Nelson, the Town of Mackenzie, the Town of Watson Lake and the City of Fort St. John. The communities who sent youth included Kwadacha, Lower Post, Good Hope Lake, Liard, Ross River, and McLeod Lake.



Left to Right: Renee McCook, Calvin Dickson Jr., Anton Peters, Trevor Magun, Robby Glada, Jared McCook, Shayla Mitchell, Travis Shepherd.

Elders- Three Elders took part in this year's camp; Mida Donnessey, Leon Johnny, and Dennis Porter. The Elders were a major part of the camp as they possessed traditional knowledge passed down to them by their elders. This knowledge is very precious and by passing it to the youth it may be preserved for many generations to come. There was time set aside every day for the youth to sit, talk, participate, and learn from the elders. The youth learned how to make slippers, sew bead work, make snow shoes, identify useful plants or "medicine", tan moose hide, make babiche, and how to respect the land.



Left to Right: Mida Donnessey, Leon Johnny, and Dennis Porter.

Camp Cooks- Desiree Jones and Fanny Vance were the cooks at this year's camp and boy could they cook!!!! The meals were excellent and there was always more than enough food for all.



Left to Right: Desiree Jones-Porter and Fanny Vance

Camp Councilors- Three camp councilors, Bailey Hayes, Ashley Shepherd and Denelle Spence were hired to assist in carrying out the camp program as well as the camp coordinator, Kris Funk, who oversaw the whole show. Prior to the start of camp Bailey Hayes and Ashley Shepherd took part in the Ghost River Rediscovery Wilderness Skills Training camp to prepare them for their leadership roles in the MK Environmental Youth Camp. Denelle Spence has a Bachelor Degree in Social Work and was available to youth for one-on-one counseling sessions. Kris Funk has gone through Rediscovery training and has been a councilor in previous MK Camps. The camp program consisted of games that taught team building, planning skills and cultural bonding. Other responsibilities of the councilors consisted of ensuring the youth completed their chores, followed camp rules and made sure they gave respect to the elders, guest speakers and each other.



Left to Right- Bailey Hayes, Ashley Shepard, and Denelle Spence

A Day in Camp!!!!!!

- **8:00 Wake Up-** Wake up was at 8am every morning and at times it was a little difficult to coax the youth from their beds, until Leon Johnny told them that water was a good way to get them out of bed.
- **8:15-8:30 Morning Stretches and Group Hug**



Each youth had to pick a stretch to do each morning and then there was the group **Hug**.....



The morning hug was a good way to get to know each other and become more comfortable with everyone in the group.

- **8:30-9:00 Breakfast-** The best part of the morning, the cooks out did themselves time and time again. The youth had several different choices of what to eat every morning.
- **9:00-9:30 Morning Chores-** After breakfast the councilors took their groups to do their scheduled chores which were doing dishes, cleaning the outhouses, or restocking the cabins with wood.
- **9:30- 12:00 then 12:30- 9:00 Group Activities-** After the chores were all done the youth then engaged in several activities until lunch time. These activities included games, sports, guest speakers, and hikes.
 - **Hikes with the Elders-** The youth had the chance to go on hikes with the elders. On these hikes the elders would tell the youth stories and identify plants that are traditionally used by the Kaska.





Robby Glada and Travis Shepard (left) and Mida Donnessey “Grandma Mida” digging up plants.



The youth gathering Sage for Grandma Mida. The youth were taught to give tobacco in thanks when you take plants from the land.

Guest Speakers- Guest speakers from Enbridge Pipeline Inc., TransCanada Pipeline, Explor Data, Abitibi Consolidated Inc., Duke Energy Gas, Canfor, FN National Bank, LGL Limited, Deloitte & Touche, Devon Canada, Western Keltic Mines Inc, Columbia Yukon Mines, Cassiar Magnesium, Logan Resources, Bank of Montreal, AME BC, Encana, CAPP, Boughton, True North Gems, Aurum Geological Consultants, Yukon Electric, Davis and Company, and North American Tungsten, were invited to camp to present to the youth their respective areas of knowledge. In addition Kaska Leadership

were invited. There were several guest speakers who were able to attend the camp including the following:

- **Nadia Joe- CPAWS BC.**



- Nadia discussed several different topics with the youth. On the hikes she would identify plants and refer to the different uses of them. She also talked about global warming and how it is affecting the different types of plants. She got the youth to bring back several different types of flowers to press and identify.

- **Norm MacLean and Malcolm Foy, LGL Limited**



- Malcolm and Norm are both biologists and discussed several different topics with the youth including economic development in the MK area. They brought out the maps they had of the Muskwa Kechika area and discussed the future economic development of the MK area and the environmental implications of possible development.



Youth looking at the MK maps with Norm and Malcolm

- **Tribal Chief Hammond Dick**



- Hammond wowed the youth with some traditional stories and to make sure they were listening he made sure that every few minutes they had to say “Homme”(Yes in Ross River Dialect). The youth heard several stories and found out why a loon has a ring around its neck and learned about Skookum Jim.

- **Steve Jakesta, TransCanada PipeLines Limited.**

- Steve talked to the youth about their traditional lands and how lucky they are to have them. He also discussed the economic development of the MK area and how the youth need to be involved in the future to make sure they have a say in how and when it is developed.

- **Dave Porter, Kaska Nation & BC FN Summit Executive**



- Dave talked to youth about the importance of the camps and why it is important that the youth attend. His speech was given around the council fire and hit home for several of the youth. He discussed the situation present on many reserves these days and the importance of taking care of themselves. He talked about the environment and how it is in such a delicate place at the present time and how it is everyone's responsibility to take care of it. The youth paid him there full attention and it made a big impact on all of them.
- **Activities-** The youth participated in several traditional activities with the elders as their guides.
 - **Making Slippers-** Grandma Mida took charge with the youth and lined them up and started to cut out their tongues for their slippers. With the help of the experienced councilors she taught them how to draw the pattern they wanted on their tongues and then bead the pattern. The youth found this to be tedious

but rewarding work. In the end there was not enough time to finish the slippers but Mida made sure that they all had the material to finish them at home.



Left: Mida Donnessey cutting out the tongues, Middle: Renee sketching out her pattern, Right: Jared examining his bead work.

- **Scraping Moose Hide-** Everyone took part in tanning and scraping the moose hide. Mida taught as she went and made sure that everyone was doing their part and doing it right.



Left: Jared helping "Grandma Mida"; Right: Trevor taking his turn scraping.



In these pictures Anton and Robby show us how it is done.

- **Snowshoes-** Leon Johnny and Dennis Porter were in charge of making the snowshoes but Dennis was feeling under the weather so Leon took the youth under his wing. Making snowshoes is a meticulous and skillful job that takes patient and time. The youth went out and helped gather the spruce trees for the frame of the snowshoes and they also helped Mida cut the babiche that was to be used as the filling for the snowshoes. The youth watched as Leon carved out the snowshoe frames and even got a chance to have a try at the carving themselves.



Left: Renee and Calvin watching and learning; Middle: Anton, Jared, and Robby watching intently; Right: Finished frame.

- **Washing/Swimming-** The youth were give time each day to have a wash in the Turnagain River. It was cold so the youth took some time to get used to it but once they did it was hard to get them out of it. We were blessed with several hot days so we took a little time every day to go for a swim to cool down.



Left: the group going for a swim; Right: Shayla and Renee wading in.



Left: Calvin all wet; Right: Travis and Jared messing around in the water.

- **Hiking-** We set one day aside to take the youth on a Hiking trip to Burgess Lake. We had to jet boat to the trail head and then hiked in for 3 ½ hours to the actual lake. This turned out to be a pretty big hike and tested everybody's physical fitness. It was a very hot day so once we reached the lake everyone got into their swim gear and jumped in. The water was amazing and the beach equally nice. Once in the water both the youth and councilors enjoyed playing some games including Marco Polo and Chicken. On the way back we got caught in a rain storm which soaked pretty much everyone, but at least it got rid of those pesky mosquitoes.



Left: Burgess Lake; Right: Nadia and youth hiking



Left: 1st lake on the hike; Right: Stopping for a break.

- **Horseback Riding-** All of the youth was excited about riding the horses and they all got a chance to do so. With the help of some of the camp wranglers the horses were saddled and the youth and councilors took it in turns to ride.



Left: Travis, Shayla, and Trevor comfortable around the horse; Right: one of the horses taking a drink.

- **Fishing-** once Travis caught the first fish everybody had to have a try at it. The youth spent some of their free time trying different pools along the rivers edge to try and catch the elusive trout and grayling found in the Turnagain.



Left: Calvin getting ready to fish; Right: Travis and Jared trying a new spot.

- **Games-** the youth participated in some games that camp councilors Ashley and Bailey learned while at discovery camp. These included Eagle Eyes, trust games, capture the flag, soccer, doxineye, and MK Olympics.



In this game the person with the blindfold has to learn to use their sense of hearing to detect when someone is near before the thieves get their stick.



The object of this game is to grab the stick from the other team while they try and make you smile, this can be quite hard because the other team can do anything to make you smile.



This game makes the youth work as a team and also helps them gain trust in their fellow campers, because they are lifting you into the air and you can do nothing but give them your total confidence. In these pictures both Renee and Robby are being lifted up.

- **Stick Gambling-** All of the youth were eager to start the stick gambling especially when the found out that there were going to be actual prizes.



There were definitely some veteran stick gamblers in this group and they were more than willing to lend the less experienced a helping hand.

- **MK Olympics-** the MK Olympics consist of several different games including leg wrestling, rope pull, and the relay race.



Left: Ashley and Bailey leg wrestling; Right: Calvin and Shayla give it a try.



The final match between Robby and Travis; and Robby comes out victorious in the leg wrestling.



The object of this game is to make the other person fall off of there stump. Left: Bailey goes down; Right: Anton concentrating hard.



The relay race. The participant must bob for apples, spin around a stick 10 times, and then search for a candy in a pan of flour to finish the race. This is Bailey during and after searching for her candy.

- **Spirit Spot-** Every night the youth would pick out their very own spirit spot away from noise and distraction to reflect on the days events and to become more in tune with nature and their surroundings.



- **Council Fire-** is a sacred fire around which the youth talk about whatever they want. A feather is passed around the fire and the person that has the feather is the only one allowed to speak. The first night around the fire the youth were quite and quickly passed around the fire, but they eventually warmed up to the idea and were soon talking more and more. Ashley and Bailey learned some songs from their previous training and enjoyed teaching the youth how to sing them. We also played a dancing game where whomever had the stick had to dance and you had to do one complete rotation around the fire before you passed the stick on to someone else and they were not allowed to refuse. By the end of camp this was a very popular game around the fire.

Saying Goodbye

- Before we knew it the camp was over. It came too soon for everybody, there was an air of sadness as we all packed up and got our stuff ready to go. We had our final morning stretch and hug and while doing this we said our final goodbyes. There were some tears but everyone exchanged information and promised to stay in touch. Some youth live close to each other and others live far away, but the hope is that everyone will stay in touch, and stay friends for years to come. The camp participants were flown out with Angus Air and enjoyed a final look at the area that is both traditional and important to them and as yet untouched.

We Would Like to Thank the Following.....

- The Muskwa-Kechika Advisory Board
- Western Keltic Mines Inc.
- TransCanada Pipelines Limited
- Deloitte & Touche
- Abitibi Consolidated Inc.
- Columbia Yukon Explorations Inc.
- LGL Limited
- CPAWS BC
- All of the Guest Speakers
 - Nadia Joe
 - Steve Jakesta
 - Norm MacLean
 - Malcolm Foy
 - Hammond Dick
 - Dave Porter
- Tom Vince
- Desiree Jones
- Fanny Vance
- Hope and Faith Vance for making us laugh and making the camp that much happier
- All of the councilors for their hard work and endless patience
- The youth for making it a great learning experience
- Corrine Porter for her hard work in organizing the camp.
- And anybody else that was missed, thank you for making this amazing camp possible.

PICTURES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Getting Ready to go to camp.



CAMP!!!!!!



Left: Travis and Jared all muddy; Middle: Shayla picking sage; Right: Jared and Robby



Left: Robby after the relay; Middle: Ashley and Kris leg wrestling; Right: Jared working the moose hide.



Left: Shayla and Calvin picking soap berries; Middle: Anton and Trevor; Right: Making a dry rack with Leon.



Left: Mida and Leon receiving their gifts; Middle and Right: Desiree and Fanny getting their gifts.



Left: Hope and Faith Vance; Renee with the bird she saved; Ashley after the race.



Leaving Camp by plane.