

# There Is Still Survival Out There



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Fort McKay First Nations

## 2. Methodology

The Fort McKay traditional land use and occupancy study (TLUOS) used a participatory action research methodology that stressed community control of the project, its conduct and its results. Overall the TLUOS included the participation of the Fort McKay First Nations Chief, Jimmy Boucher, who was succeeded in an election midway through the project by Mel Grandjamb; Lawrence Courtoreille, manager of the First Nation; Fred MacDonald, Cecilia Boucher and Bertha Canter, Fort McKay community trainees; the elders of the community; Alberta Environmental Protection, particularly Gordon Armitage, Forest Superintendent in Fort McMurray and Shirley Nelson, Project Leader, Resource Inventory Section, Edmonton; Canadian Forest Service, particularly Joseph De Franceschi, Chief, Development Coordination, Edmonton; and Terry Garvin, Gordon Hodgson and Mike Robinson of the Arctic Institute of North America (AINA), University of Calgary. Occasional employment was also provided for Raymond Boucher and Willie Grandjambe of Fort McKay who acted as guides to Athabasca River and Gardiner Lakes locations. Altogether the above team used funding from Alberta Environmental Protection and Canadian Forest Service to complete the work. The funding contract was negotiated between the two governments and the Fort McKay First Nations. The work management agreement was negotiated between Fort McKay and AINA, and fund administration was shared between Fort McKay and AINA.

In general terms the methodology followed the participatory action approach outlined in *Mapping How We Use Our Land* (1994) and built on the belief of the project supporters that the elders and current active bush economy participants in Fort McKay wanted to tell their story, to their people, in their own words. Rather than design an intensive interview questionnaire, the three project trainees, Fred MacDonald, Ce-

cia Boucher, and Bertha Canter, and their trainer, Terry Garvin, conducted open-ended interviews based on a practical list of potential interview questions that suggested categories of traditional land use and occupancy. Special attention was paid to letting the interviewees tell their own stories. Rather than focusing on data the interviewers thought important at all costs, the interviewees were encouraged to tell all the related stories they desired, because this was felt to be more truly the Fort McKay way of passing on knowledge.

The Fort McKay TLUOS was launched with a community meeting on 10 February 1994, attended by the First Nations manager, Lawrence Courtoirille, fourteen community elders, and Terry Garvin of AINA. This meeting was held to attain project approval from the elders, the primary participants in the project. They agreed to share their knowledge and experience of bush life on the condition that their First Nations would retain unconditional rights to the use of the information. They desired two basic outcomes from the work:

- to provide help with decisions concerning future land use, and
- to help educate future generations of their people, including their current children.

The elders also requested and received a promise of appropriate notice and time to prepare for interviews, a personal copy of the TLUOS final report and unrestricted access to the TLUOS findings. As well, the elders desired and received a modest gratuity for participating in the work, and the promise of a community feast at its conclusion to celebrate the project, view slides and maps, hear a verbal presentation of the findings, and receive their personal copy of the final report.

The second project meeting was held in Fort McKay on 14-15 March 1994, and it served to introduce the process of participatory action research in a workshop format. This gathering included the First Nations manager, Alberta Environmental Protection personnel, the three recently selected community trainee interviewers, trainer Terry Garvin and AINA computer consultant and project document specialist Gordon Hodgson. The meeting covered collection and recording of traditional land use and occupancy information, project management explanations, and roles of the participants. All of the participants acknowledged that they were in training. The responsi-

bility for interview scheduling and the style of interview was assigned to the First Nations trainee interviewers Fred MacDonald, Cecilia Boucher and Bertha Canter; the lead responsibility for project process and methodology was assigned to Terry Garvin. Technical assistance, focusing on map production, was assigned to Shirley Nelson of Alberta Environmental Protection. Lawrence Courtoirille agreed to monitor First Nations funding administration and Terry Garvin agreed to monitor AINA funding administration.

Each interviewer was supplied with maps at this meeting, and the different map scales and other cartographic issues were discussed. The trainee interviewers agreed to supply their own cameras and tape recorders, and paper, film and office supplies were provided out of the project budget. It was agreed that trainee salaries and expenses would be paid directly by the First Nations administration. Same-day reimbursement for local expenses was promised by the First Nations. AINA agreed to reimburse all AINA professional service staff assigned to the project on a monthly basis, and to invoice the First Nations for their work on a regular basis. Alberta Environmental Protection agreed to supply map materials and transportation to areas that were off the beaten track and unreachable by road or river travel.

At this meeting members of the Fort McKay First Nations suggested that the project should be expanded to include the production of 150 copies of the final project report for local distribution, and the expansion of the project area to include Chipewyan Lake interviews as well. Fort McKay assumed responsibility for this and applied to Forestry Canada for the needed additional funding. This request was later approved.

The TLUOS area was also agreed to at this meeting, and corresponded to the Birch Mountain-Firebag River map produced by Alberta Environmental Protection at a scale of 1:250,000 on a Universal Transverse Mercator Projection. It was decided to use 1:15,000 and 1:100,000 scale maps to record the interview data.

After the training workshop was completed, the TLUOS began in earnest. The following steps were undertaken by the trainer and the trainees:

- an initial interview list was drafted. This list began with the oldest people in the community;

### *Project implementation*

• each trainee interviewer selected the persons he or she wished to interview, and added to that list as the project progressed. Two of the trainees had a preference for interviewing people who trapped, hunted, fished, and lived in the area of their own family trapline. One trainee and the trainer agreed to interview anyone else on the interview list;

• a revised interview question list (see pages 9-13) was prepared, giving species level detail for most categories of food, fur and hides. It was soon noticed in the interview process that instead of symbolizing twelve species of ducks on the maps, a single duck symbol would have to do. Different species information was instead recorded in the written interview notes. As far as possible local species names were used;

• all interviews were conducted by appointment with adequate notice. They were always held at the preferred location of the interviewees;

• interview duration was closely monitored at the start of the TLUOS. It was found that two to three hours was the maximum desired time limit by the elders. Additional interviews were scheduled as required;

• each interview (a total of 67 were conducted) was recorded in writing, on the maps, and on tape, and the majority of the interviews were completed by the trainees;

• each interviewee was photographed, if permission to do so was granted. As well, bush artifacts and property (cabins, canoes, trapline equipment) were photographed with permission;

• each interview was recorded as told, in long hand, by the interviewer after it was completed. There was no editing for spelling, grammar or crosschecking for accuracy at this point;

• the hand written record was next typed by the trainer and stored on computer disk. A copy of the word-processed interview was then returned to the trainee, along with a list of comments or questions which sought clarification on points raised in the interview;

• the trainee next determined if a second interview was necessary, and scheduled and conducted it to gain further information for the maps and written record;

• the trainee passed all additional information in writing to the trainer, and it was added by him to the original typed interview;

• the interviews were next edited for clarity, grammar and spelling, and processed in final form. A copy of these interviews was given to the Fort McKay First Nations for archiving;

• as the interviews progressed, ten categories of data were assembled on eight 1:250,000 mylar base maps from the original 1:15,000-1:100,000 interview maps. With each new interview the base maps became busier, and regional use and occupancy patterns more pronounced. The process of painstakingly transferring data from the interview maps to the 1:250,000 scale mylar base maps took four people 16 hours;

• by the time the mylar base maps were being assembled (May, 1994), Gordon Hodgson had prepared, on Shirley Nelson's suggestion and assistance, a varied array of sticky-backed silhouettes for all of the data types. The original interview maps relied on coloured dots, and in some cases (e.g., birds) segments of coloured dots, to indicate species, harvest areas, cabins, graves, historic sites and forest cover. The silhouettes greatly improved the appearance of the maps, and the elders especially liked seeing lynx and ducks at harvest areas instead of coloured dots;

• when the mylar base maps were finally ready and all interview data had been carefully stuck in place, they were displayed in the Fort McKay community hall. All of the interviewees were invited to come and review the maps to make corrections or additions, and generally verify the data collection process with their relatives and friends;

• during the period 30 May to 1 June, Fred MacDonald, Raymond Boucher, Cecilia Boucher, Terry Garvin and Mike Robinson made a verification and cabin site inventory trip on the Athabasca River from Fort McKay to Point Brule. This trip enabled the photographing of trapping communities and isolated cabins that fell into disuse after the opening of the Mission Residential School in Fort Chipewyan and the opening of the school at Fort McKay in 1948;

• on 2 July Terry Garvin, Gordon Armitage, Fred MacDonald and Willie Grandjambé conducted a helicopter spot check of the corridor from Fort McKay to Gardiner Lakes and associated cabin and grave sites. These sites were also photographed and recorded on the maps;

• all verification additions and corrections were next added to the mylar base maps, and these maps became the master copies for report preparation, which entailed their photographing, reduction and copying for the final report; and

• the final report was prepared by the AINA project members, with guidance and editorial review by the Fort McKay project administration and the trainees.

While the above process was underway, Terry Garvin drafted regular project progress reports for all participants. Phone, fax and written correspondence kept everyone in-

formed of what was happening and when. Because of the good relations amongst the project partners, political changes at Fort McKay, significant new additions to the project budget (by the Canadian Forest Service), and project staff changes were all handled with a minimum of confusion and a maximum of respect. This TLUOS demonstrated the benefits of teamwork, community desire and focus, and funding agency participation in more than just funding.

### Project management

The partners agree that most of the TLUOS information available in Fort McKay is now recorded on the 1:250,000 mylar base maps. The elders stress, however, that the maps should still be treated as open, because inevitably someone will come forward with new information. The project trainees, who are now graduate mappers and interviewers have the skills to keep the process open and alive in the community.

### Project conclusion

It is hoped that the final project report and the maps will now form the basis of the Fort McKay First Nations co-management process for dealing with regional development proponents. When regional land use patterns are understood, it is possible to begin to plan co-management strategies that provide protection for migratory species, conservation areas, heritage sites and rivers, and continued fur and country food harvests. When the TLUOS data are compared with scientific data (e.g., migration routes of big game determined with radio collars and satellite tracking) true co-management analysis is possible, and the best quality conservation decisions can be made in the combined spirit of partnership and stewardship.

Perhaps most important to the elders of Fort McKay is the use of these data for educational purposes in the Fort McKay school and amongst the families of the community. In these pages and maps are a living record of how the bush economy functioned and still functions in the Fort McKay First Nations' traditional land use and occupancy region. It is a proud record of traditional environmental knowledge, lives well lived in the bush and the ongoing presence of opportunity for a life away from cities, megaprojects and bosses. As elder Julian Powder noted, "There is still survival out there."

## Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use Big game, fur bearers, fish and waterfowl

— guide for interviewers —

<b>Big Game</b>	bear: black	_____
moose	grizzly	_____
deer: mule	<b>Fish</b>	_____
whitetail	pickeral	_____
_____	pike (jackfish)	_____
elk	whitefish	_____
caribou: woodland	lake trout	_____
barren land	grayling	_____
_____	perch	_____
buffalo	ling cod	_____
<b>Fur bearers</b>	sucker	_____
lynx	goldeye	_____
bobcat	chub	_____
hare	<b>Waterfowl</b>	_____
rabbit	Canada	_____
wolf	blue	_____
coyote	Ross	_____
marten	snow	_____
fisher	white-fronted	_____
fox	black	_____
wolverine	_____	_____
beaver	Ducks:	_____
muskrat	canvaeback	_____
otter	mallard	_____
skunk	pintail	_____
raccoon	redhead	_____
badger	teal	_____
mink	greater scaup	_____
squirrel: gray	lesser scaup	_____
red	goldeneye	_____
flying	scoter	_____
least	ruddy duck	_____
short tailed	merganser	_____
long-tailed	grebe	_____

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use  
**Fruit plants and birds**

— guide for interviewers —

<b>Fruit Plants</b>	
blueberry	_____
huckleberry	_____
cranberry	_____
bog	_____
lowbush	_____
highbush	_____
saskatoon	_____
pincherry	_____
chokecherry	_____
raspberry	_____
dwarf raspberry	_____
trailing raspberry	_____
red currant	_____
black currant	_____
strawberry	_____
gooseberry	_____
rose hip	_____
twisted stalk	_____
kinnikinnick (bearberry)	_____
dogwood (bunchberry)	_____
common juniper	_____
buffaloberry	_____
hazelhut	_____
<b>Birds</b>	
<b>Migratory birds</b>	
loon	_____
pelican	_____
comorant	_____
swan	_____
seagull	_____
owl	_____
crane	_____
eagle	_____
great blue heron	_____
_____	_____
<b>Upland birds</b>	
grouse:	
pintail	_____
fool hen	_____
ruffed	_____
ptarmigan	_____

Fort McKay First Nations traditional land use  
**Herbs, roots and plants**

— guide for interviewers —

<b>Sweetgrass</b> for decoration for ceremony for spiritual functions	_____
<b>Rat root</b> medicine, sore throat	_____
<b>Mint</b> — preserved or fresh for tea condiments headache relief	_____
<b>Balsam fir tree</b> sap: poultice mix needles: poultice mix	_____
<b>Seneca root</b> medicine-cough	_____
<b>Mountain ash</b> (roots and inner bark) medicine, muscles for poultice	_____
<b>Muskeg plant</b> medicine for colic, fever	_____
<b>Tree fungus</b> transport fire lighter smoke for a bug repellent	_____
<b>Ground fungus</b> open sores, skin rash	_____
<b>Willow fungus</b> air freshener sponge, earache application	_____
<b>Wintergreen</b> relief of cold and flu	_____
<b>Muskeg blackberry</b> drink for heart ailment	_____
<b>Muskeg</b> diaper absorbent sanitary absorbent	_____
<b>Beaver castor</b> (castoreum oil) medicine, cold-flu commercial perfume chewing gum	_____
<b>Skunk juice</b> anaesthetic for toothache	_____
<b>Skunk sack or hide</b> spiritual	_____

## Trees and shrubs

— guide for interviewers —

<b>Birch:</b> firewood bark for baskets bark for handicrafts bark for canoe cover snowshoe frame toboggan runners building material furniture firewood sap for syrup	<b>Willow:</b> basket weaving medicine root for smoke curing craft material material for trap sets mix bark with tobacco	
<b>Tamarack-larch:</b> (Indian hardwood) toboggan runners snowshoe frames firewood furniture fence post medicine-middle layer	<b>Dogwood and alder</b> colour dyeing: hide crafts basket material	
	<b>White and black polar</b> medicine-outer green	
	<b>Balsam Fir</b> sap for glue sap for chewing gum	
	<b>General: spruce, fir, pine</b> <b>tamarack, birch, poplar</b> firewood snowshoe frames sap for medicine sap for sealing roots for sewing bark for smoke curing bark for chinking roof poles for roofing	
<b>White and/or black spruce:</b> logs-house building fence railing firewood		
<b>Jackpine</b> building material hard instruments-scraper		

## Habitat, product location and places

— guide for interviewers —

<b>Land products</b> ochre medicine fruit berries rat root sweetgrass sap, for glue sap, for sealing tree fungus moss pine cones craft supplies hay artesian water building material craft material art material cooking and heating wood		
<b>Land, special areas</b> gardening leisure farming transportation routes First Nation reserved land		
<b>Places:</b> traditional place names burial		
<b>Spiritual</b> heritage homes, old homes, new trapline stopover cabins trails spring camps summer fishing camps fall dry meat camps		
<b>Fish:</b> habitat by species spawning areas dry meat camps		
<b>Animals:</b> moose pasture deer pasture caribou range buffalo range salt licks calving range fur bearer range dens: bear, wolf		
<b>Birds:</b> nesting areas migration routes habitat		