

NORTHWESTERN MANITOBA
COMMUNITY
HIGHLIGHTS
BOOKLET



GREETINGS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The past few years have made gathering in person and traveling impossible. It has been a challenge for Nature United to hold regional meetings in Manitoba, bring community partners together and create opportunities for representatives to meet, share and learn from each other. To celebrate all of the great work in Northwestern Manitoba, we have collaborated to create this community highlights booklet aimed at showcasing recent successes and inspiring each other along the way.

Nature United's Manitoba Boreal Project Team



@ Nature United

About Our Work in Northwestern Manitoba

Project Objectives:

- Support Indigenous leadership and authority over natural resources decision-making and management in Forest Management License Area #2 (FML-2).
- Develop and advance long-term, stable economic activities that benefit local communities in FML-2 and achieve triple-bottom-line (social, environmental and financial) outcomes that align with conservation outcomes.

Community Initiatives Supported:

- Community-led land use planning for traditional territory and Resource Management Areas
- Indigenous Guardian program development
- Moose and water monitoring initiatives
- Community engagement in the 20-year Forest Management Planning process in FML-2
- Exploring ways for Indigenous Nations to assert their decision-making role over their territories and have it recognized by others through: legal recognition of territorial land use plans, establishing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, and shared management agreements with Crown governments
- Economic development action planning in communities
- Exploring opportunities for sustainable financing for Indigenous stewardship in Northern Manitoba

Examples of Our Recent Work:

- Sharing resources from the Indigenous Guardians Toolkit to support Guardian Program planning and development
- Connecting communities who want to work on moose stewardship with a wildlife biologist to help with monitoring and research study design
- Connecting communities who want to monitor water with the Centre for Earth Observation Science (CEOS) for supports such as study design advice and training
- Completing a study on the potential ways to reduce wildfire risk and sequester more carbon in Northwestern Manitoba
- Completing a study on the potential market opportunities for Non-Timber Forest Products
- Bringing together leaders (elected and lands staff) from different communities (virtually and in-person) to share and learn from one another



Nature United Indigenous Guardians Technical Support Team facilitating Guardians breakout sessions on topics such as Indigenous Guardians working with agencies, Indigenous Guardians and moose monitoring, Indigenous Guardians as ambassadors for your Nation, and funding for Indigenous Guardians © Nature United

When We Last Met

Our last regional gathering was held in Winnipeg in February 2020 and focused on exploring Land Use Plans, Indigenous Protected Areas, and Guardians Programs. It was a great opportunity to meet with people from communities across Northern Manitoba engaged in this important work and make the kind of connections it's been more difficult to make over the last couple years.

About Nature United

Nature United was founded as a Canadian charity in 2014, building on decades of conservation in Canada. Headquartered in Toronto, the organization has field staff located across the country. Nature United supports Indigenous leadership, sustainable economic development, and large-scale conservation, primarily in the Great Bear Rainforest, Clayoquot Sound, the Northwest Territories, and Northern Manitoba.

Nature United has been working with Indigenous communities in boreal Manitoba since 2016, supporting their leadership to find solutions for sustainable resource management and lasting conservation results.



Ed Vystrcil presenting on Nisichawayisihk Cree Nations, Land Use Plan © Nature United



Addie Jonasson, Lutsel K'e First Nation, speaking about Thaidene Nënë protected area © Nature United

CHEMAWAWIN CREE NATION

**"The future is delivered by those who create.
Together with Nature United, there is balance
for community and people, lands and resources,
education and employment."**

- Fabian Sinclair, Lands & Trust Services Resource Manager

**"Since being moved from Old Post and coming to our
new area we've had to restart this work."**

- Sheldon Bourassa, CCN Councilor



*Councilor Sheldon Bourassa and LTS Resource Manager
Fabian Sinclair © Marshall Birch*



Water monitoring training held June 2022 © Sheldon Bourassa

Community Initiatives

- Hired staff to lead on natural resource and lands-related issues
- Engaging with forestry activities, including through the Nisokapawino Forestry Management Corporation (NFMC) FML-2 planning process and negotiation of stumpage fee allocations
- Developing a Guardians Program, which will focus on monitoring water quality on Cedar Lake
- Created CCN Resource Management Area signage
- Began economic development planning process, including individual interviews and community meetings
- Exploring revenue generating opportunities including carbon offset and ecotourism initiatives
- Liaising with Manitoba Hydro and community members regarding water levels on Cedar Lake
- Exploring Land Use Planning for both Reserve Lands and the Cedar Lake Resource Management Area
- Working with the Fishers Association to support anglers and industry, through discussions of marketing and eco-certification
- Taking part in the Saskatchewan River Sturgeon Management Board
- Connecting stewardship efforts with on-the-land youth programs run through Jordan's Principle and the Health Department

MANITOBA MÉTIS FEDERATION

Community Initiatives

- Developed a monitoring strategy for species of interest to Red River Métis Citizens
- Held a series of virtual engagement sessions and focus group interviews to provide direction on a flora and fauna monitoring strategy
- Brought together staff, knowledge holders and youth to take part in visits to the site of interest for protection
- Provided wilderness first aid training for staff and Red River Métis Citizens
- Developing a data-gathering platform for this monitoring program, including an online survey tool
- Exploring the next steps for implementation and engagement related to monitoring strategy
- Working towards establishing a Métis Protected Area in the Kettle Hills Blueberry Patch



MMF staff, youth, and knowledge holders gathering at site of interest © MMF



Vegetation quadrats used in monitoring program © MMF

"Years ago, when I was younger, I would come up through here.... especially around end of July, early August. It'd be nothing to see anywhere from 300-1,000 people up here picking berries and camping, this whole area used to become like a little community all over."

- Bob Church, Red River Métis Harvester and Knowledge Holder

"We have a right to the land, but we have a responsibility to protect it and to make sure it is there for future generations."

- Will Goodon, MMF Minister and core member of the Indigenous Circle of Experts

MISIPAWISTIK CREE NATION

“Land provides sustenance for current and future generations. It is connected to spiritual beliefs, traditional knowledge and teachings.”

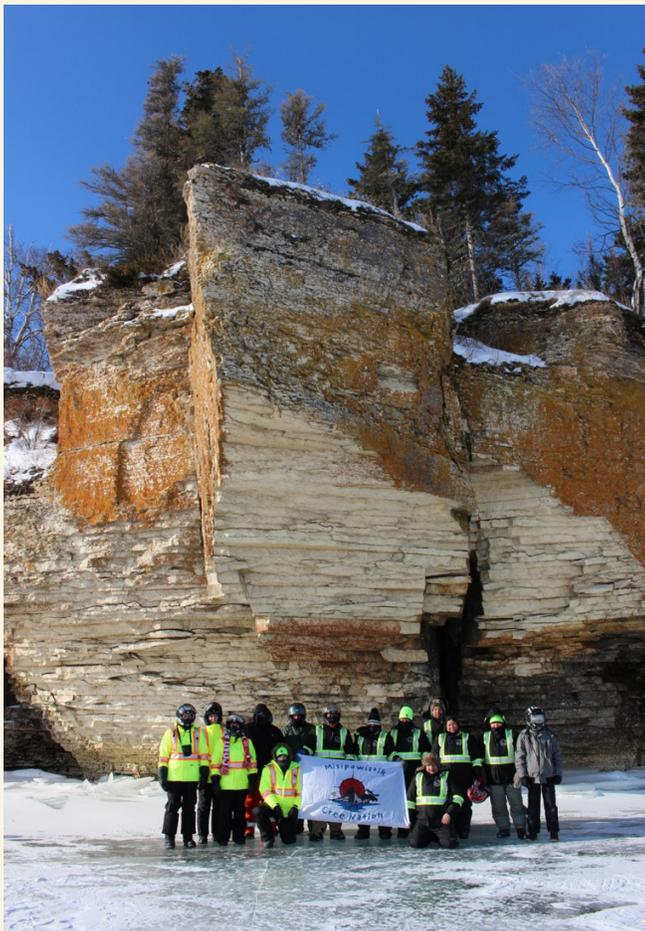
- Bobby Ballantyne, Lands Program Coordinator

“The work we do is important because no one knows our land better than us, the ones who are out on the land every day. It’s up to us to make sure that it is taken care of properly and that things are done in a good way.”

- Devon McLeod, Lands Manager



MCN staff Bobby Ballantyne, Devon McLeod, and Becky Cook with Councilor Tyler Lavalée © Marshall Birch



*MCN kanawenihcikewak Guardians
© MCN Lands Department*

Community Initiatives

- Ongoing operation of the kanawenihcikewak Guardians Program, focusing on monitoring the moose population
- Engaging with NFMC’s FML-2 20-year FMP process
- Initiated Land Relationship Management Planning process
- Staff and Guardians undertook training in Healthy Country Planning processes, environmental monitoring and project management
- Developing plans to expand on moose monitoring work to include a trail camera program
- Began Indigenous Community-based Climate Monitoring project focused on water monitoring efforts
- Sent representatives to attend the Ha-ma-yas Guardians Gathering in British Columbia
- Had brochures outlining moose work and sustainable harvesting practices designed and printed
- Held fall moose camp on the land, which helped connect youth with Guardians

NISICHAWAYASIIK CREE NATION



NCN Guardians with signage on territory © NCN

“People today need to understand the importance of land and how it sustains you -materially, spiritually, and as a Nation.”

- Ed Primrose, Guardians Lead

“Sacred sites are key to the Nation’s survival. They are like our homefires -they’re what sustains our territory and our people.”

- Ed Primrose, Guardians Lead

Community Initiatives

- Finalizing the development of a Land Use Plan for NCN Ancestral Lands
- Working to establish protected and conserved areas in the territory
- Ongoing development and implementation of a Guardians Program connected to Land Use Plan and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area efforts
- Surveyed local community moose harvest on NCN lands
- Conducted helicopter survey of the Leftrook Lake Area
- Created territorial and heritage site signage incorporating Cree language
- Protection of fish spawning areas during spring spawning run at Suwannee River and engaging land users on sustainable harvest
- Leading cleanup efforts along highways, campsites, and cultural areas
- Working towards collaboration with other local programs, including country food programming



NCN Guardians on patrol © NCN

NORWAY HOUSE CREE NATION

Community Initiatives

- Operation of an Aquatic Invasive Species Inspection and Decontamination Program to prevent the spread of AIS, including zebra mussels, to unimpacted water bodies
- Investigation and Remediation of contamination at Areas of Potential Environmental Concern (APECs) resulting from historical land use, including areas impacted by Manitoba Hydro
- Formalizing Guardians Program to incorporate existing stewardship work and additional priority areas
- Representing community on Crown Consultation matters such as the Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel
- Monitoring conditions along developed waterways to identify areas vulnerable to flooding and/or erosion due to water levels and flows
- Worked with the Province to improve land and natural resource management in the territory, including mineral and forestry interests as well as reestablishment of the Resource Management Board
- Engagement with community, elders, and resource users to document the traditional knowledge and identify priority areas
- Incorporating land-based education into school curriculums and connecting with stewardship work
- Commenced PHASE I of the Traditional Area Land Use Plan (TALUP) in the traditional territory



Aquatic Invasive Species decontamination station
© Austin Apetagon



Ground-penetrating radar kickoff event © Loretta Mowatt



Rock paintings at Paimusk Creek © Loretta Mowatt

“For many years, our people enjoyed the pristine nature of our lands and resources, until the governments and industry greatly impacted all our lands, resources and way of life. Our elders tell and remind us to get back to the land to heal ourselves and know who we are. We must help take care of all our lands and resources, and lead a healthy mino pimatisowin.”

- Councilor Dave Swanson

OPASKWAYAK CREE NATION

Community Initiatives

- Hired Land Use Planning Coordinator, who also works closely with the Natural Resource Manager on several files
- Completed staff training in the Healthy Country Planning process for Land Use Planning
- Developing a Land Use Plan for their traditional territory
- Engaging in forestry work, including the NFMC 20-year FMP process, responding to two-year operating plans, and negotiating forestry contracts and stumpage fee allocations
- Developing and implementing programs to monitor moose populations and harvest
- Monitoring water levels and flooding impacts on the Saskatchewan River
- Undertaking work to identify sturgeon spawning areas on the Saskatchewan River
- Exploring expansion of stewardship activities to establish broader Guardians programming
- Ongoing trappers' enhancement program focused on the maintenance of cabins and trapping areas
- Exploring other sustainable economic opportunities, such as ecotourism



Carla Buck, Land Use Planning Coordinator, and Diane Ballantyne, Natural Resources Manager © OCN



Staff and community members at Land Use Planning workshop, summer 2022 © OCN

"The love of the land and being able to see the difference from then to now makes you work even harder to monitor the lands ourselves."

- Diane Ballantyne, Natural Resources Manager

"You can see the passion and hear the passion when someone speaks about what is important for our land use plan."

- Carla Buck, Land Use Planning Coordinator

SAPOTAWEYAK CREE NATION

Community Initiatives

- Hired Natural Resources Coordinator to lead on natural resource and lands-related issues
- Staff worked to identify natural resource management priorities and explore opportunities to address these
- Created a map of Ancestral Lands using Cree names
- Completed Land Use Plan for Reserve Lands and exploring building off this for Ancestral Lands Land Use Plan
- Ongoing community engagement efforts, including meetings, interviews, and surveys, to gather feedback and knowledge on stewardship efforts, lands, and species
- Staff took part in Forest Carbon Inventory Training held by WSFN
- Exploring opportunities for developing a Guardians Program focused on moose monitoring and management identified as a priority
- Exploring options to protect areas under threat on their land
- Developing plans for ecotourism initiative on territory



Staff site visit in Overflowing River © Ivan Copapay



Community members on land for fishing derby
© Ivan Copapay

"I've always been passionate about the land and being a hunter -it helps me with the work I will be going into."

- Ivan Copapay, Natural Resources Coordinator

"I'm proud of the Land Use Plan, the whole planning process and being able to include the Community on the process, gathering information and taking input."

- Christa Copapay, Lands Manager

WUSKWI SIPIHK FIRST NATION

"I am of Anishinaabe and Cree descent and incorporate these First Nations beliefs and values into all of my work for the sake of decolonization and revitalization of the Anishinaabe and Cree culture and ways of life, with the help of my Elders."

- Ben Young, Lands Manager

"The goal of our work in the lands department of Wuskwi Sipiik First Nation is to work towards and secure a better future for our people who will come after we are gone, for many generations."

- Merrick Young, Former staff



*Merrick Young, former staff, and Ben Young, Lands Manager
© Byron Williams*



Forest carbon inventory training © Merrick Young

Community Initiatives

- Hired staff to work on natural resource and lands issues for WSNF alongside Lands Manager
- Organized two forest carbon inventory training sessions for WSNF members and representatives from other communities
- Undertaking forest carbon sequestration offset project for their Reserve and TLE Lands
- Engaging with forestry activities and planning processes in FML-2 and FML-3 tenures
- Negotiating Revenue Sharing for forestry revenue
- Developing a Guardians Program, which will include a focus on water quality monitoring and moose population and harvest monitoring
- Exploring options to protect critical areas under threat on their lands
- Exploring economic development opportunities, including those in-line with stewardship activities
- Negotiated settlement allowing for substantive consultation and engagement, plus studies, related to a 20-Year Forest Plan and Two-Year Operating Plans



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