



At Home on the Land

Workshop Participants

Environmental monitors-in-training

John Tobac – Fort Good Hope
Louise Yukon – Norman Wells
Charles Oudzi – Colville Lake
Joanne Krutko – Tulít'a
Peter Silastiak, Jr. – Tulít'a
Kristen Yakelaya – Tulít'a

Elders, harvesters and community members

Theresa Etchinelle – Tulít'a
David Etchinelle – Tulít'a
Michael Etchinelle – Tulít'a
Gilbert Turo – Youth, Fort Good Hope
Archie Erigaktuk – Youth, Tulít'a

Sahtú Environmental Research and Monitoring Forum members

Michael Neyelle – Pehdzo Got'ıne
Gots'ę Nákedi
Jimmy Dillon – Délıne

Scientists / researchers

Krista Chin – Cumulative Impact
Monitoring Program (GNWT)
Morag McPherson – Fisheries and
Oceans
Robin Bourke – Golder & Associates
Stephanie Behrens – GNWT-ENR Sahtú
Region
Ken Caine – University of Alberta
James Hodson – GNWT-ENR Wildlife
Heather Sayine-Crawford – GNWT-ENR
Sahtú Region
Lisa Smith – GNWT-ENR Forestry
Dave Polster – contractor for
GNWT-ENR Forestry
Samuel Haché – Canadian Wildlife
Service (Environment Canada)

Camp staff

Leon Andrew – Dene language
specialist, interpreter, co-facilitator
Deborah Simmons – co-facilitator
Shauna Morgan – co-facilitator
William Horassi – camp attendant
Valerie Desjarlais – cook
Jeanie Bavard – cook

Sahtú Cross-Cultural Research Camp at Taalé Túé (Stewart Lake)

July 12-19, 2014

Making a home in the bush as we practise research and monitoring

The Sahtú Cross-Cultural Research Camp at Taalé Túé (Stewart Lake) was an important opportunity for Dene/Métis knowledge holders, scientists, and environmental monitors-in-training to learn about each other's ways of monitoring the land, water and wildlife. Taalé Túé was chosen as the site for the eight day camp because it is near shale oil exploration leases, and it is a cherished traditional camp for some Shúhtagot'ıne people of Tulít'a.

Each day at camp included many kinds of learning: doing chores together, eating together and sharing stories, checking fish nets and making dry-fish, meetings about ongoing research in the region, fieldwork to collect information on water and wildlife, looking at maps, and having fun together (hand games,



leg wrestling, hiking, canoeing). Harvesters even got a moose one evening! Everyone worked together to clean the animal and prepare dry-meat. By the last day, everyone was joking and teasing one another, and the Camp basically ran itself, since everyone was so familiar with each other and their daily tasks.

To protect this land, we need to collect the baseline information. We've learned how to collect information from the land, and we can use that when oil companies come here. After they leave, we can do another study and find out what has changed. That's how we learn about the effects of these oil and gas and mineral companies. The studies that we do are for our people, our young people, our future generations. — Michael Neyelle

I kept remembering the word that was used in the Berger Inquiry Report: "homeland." Down south, a lot of people think of going out into the bush as 'roughing it.' When you get to live with people in their homeland, they're actually just keeping the home up. The way in which this place became a home for everybody really fast is just amazing to me. And at the same time we're doing research. That's incredible.
— Deborah Simmons

I want to understand more so we can help the elders in town understand what industry is doing and what all the scientific terms and little gadgets mean. The elders think that what they're doing is destroying the land and it scares them. — Peter Silastiak, Jr.

Training community members in environmental research and monitoring



Among the camp participants were Sahtú community members (mostly young people) who are training to become the first-ever group of certified environmental monitors from the Sahtú Region! It is important that these monitors are trained in both scientific and traditional ways of knowing and monitoring the land.

The scientists who attended the camp promised to keep in touch with the Sahtú monitors-in-training, to help them get jobs as fieldwork assistants and to help guide them as they pursue further education.

What we learned from one another

Camp participants learned some scientific ways of studying the land and water, including:

- how to tell how clean a stream is by collecting bugs that live at the bottom
- how to measure stream flow and test water quality
- how to tell how old a tree is without cutting it down
- where to find permafrost, and measuring how close it is to the surface
- what kinds of plants grow back on seismic lines
- listening to bird songs to find out how many songbirds live in the forest
- how to trap voles and mice, and count pellets, to find out about populations of small mammals



Participants also learned how traditional knowledge experts understand the land and water, through daily camp activities such as hiking, hunting for moose, fishing and checking nets, making dry-fish, collecting moss, collecting spruce boughs, and berry picking.

I was particularly impressed about the curiosity of the community members regarding forest birds. Although they are more familiar with waterfowls and raptors, they showed a lot of interest in the field guides that we provided and requested CDs with songs from birds of the region. — Samuel Haché

It was good to go out with my grandpa Jimmy and be able to listen to him and how he talks, how he does things out on the land. He does things differently. And I try to observe everything he does, and why he does it, for safety reasons, and to show respect. — Archie Erigaktuk

I always had a feeling towards researchers, as if they were coming in and invading our territory, but it's through understanding that I got to appreciate what they're doing. I think it's about time we start working together. — John Tobac

Even though it was a whole week away from work, the amount of progress we've made here would have taken months and months of meetings and travel, and it wouldn't have even come close to this type of outcome. — Krista Chin

It's so different than if you just come in for a meeting in Norman Wells and then leave again. This way I get to meet people and get to know some of the people. I think it creates a lot more potential for having working relationships in the future. It also definitely gives me a good appreciation for how interested everybody is. I'm actually kind of surprised at how much interest there is in the vegetation research. — Lisa Smith

What difference did the camp make?

Participants agreed that a huge amount was accomplished during their week together in the bush: baseline data was collected, research methods were learned and practised, and everyone got a much better understanding of where others were coming from.



What's next?

A draft report will be prepared about the Camp, which all participants will get a chance to review and give feedback on. Photos and materials from the Camp will be posted online, to be accessed through the ʔehdzo Got'ıne ʔots'ę Nákedı website: www.srrb.nt.ca.

Participants are eager to start planning the next Sahtú Cross-Cultural Research Camp, in order to build upon the great success of this first Camp. A second Camp could be held in a different part of the Sahtú Region that is also affected by shale oil activities. Please spread the word and contact the ʔehdzo Got'ıne ʔots'ę Nákedı if you are interested in supporting or participating in a future camp.

Thanks to our funders

NWT Environment and Natural Resources

NWT Municipal and Community Affairs

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program



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